



ARTS & CULTURE

Museum to Hold Largest Showing of Vermeer's Paintings

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The national **museum** of the Netherlands is holding the largest show ever of paintings by Dutch artist Johannes Vermeer.

The Rijksmuseum is in the capital, Amsterdam. It has placed 28 paintings on exhibit. It says they represent about half of the 17th century artist's body of work.

Vermeer is known for his expertise at representing light in his paintings. His subject was often common household objects. The artist worked slowly on his paintings and died at the age of 43. He likely never saw so many of his own works together at one time.

Rijksmuseum director Taco Dibbits said Vermeer had a large family and busy life as an art dealer. Still, he said, the painter was able to create works of quiet beauty.

"It's this ... complete **focus** and **tranquility** in his paintings that we still love today," Dibbits said.

The show includes some of Vermeer's most famous works, including Girl With A Pearl Earring (1664) and The Milkmaid (1659). Visitors can also see his two known outdoor paintings and several others of women playing instruments, reading and working.

"We're really coming closer to Vermeer than we've ever been," said Pieter Roelofs, the Rijksmuseum's Head of Paintings and Sculpture.

What is "striking" about Vermeer, Roelofs said, "is that in his paintings, it's mostly women who are the protagonists," meaning the main subjects. The expert noted that Vermeer had seven daughters.

Roelofs said Vermeer's works are more than something a good eye and skilled hand can create. Recent examinations show the Milkmaid was repainted several times.

Writer Tracy Chevalier attended an event for the show before it opened. She wrote the popular book *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, a historical **fiction** based on the painting. It later became a movie.

Chevalier said the show presents Vermeer as a quiet and private man.

"His paintings are so quiet and there are no children ... he must have **compartmentalized** his life and said 'no, no kids in the studio'."

Museums in Germany, France, Japan, Britain, Ireland and the United States helped with the public showing, which opens on Friday and runs until June.

I'm John Russell.

John Russell adapted this story for VOA Learning English from reports by Reuters and the Associated Press.

Words in This Story

museum – *n.* a building in which interesting and valuable things (such as paintings and sculptures or scientific or historical objects) are collected and shown to the public

focus – *n.* a state in which the small details of a picture or image can be clearly seen

tranquility – *n.* the quality or state of being quiet and peaceful

fiction – *n.* something told or written that is not fact; a made-up story

compartmentalize – *v.* to separate (something) into sections or categories

