

The Golden Age of Dutch Art



Utrecht Summerschool

20 – 31 July 2026

Course director: Anna Koldeweij MA

WELCOME

Learning all about Rembrandt's *Nightwatch*, Johannes Vermeer's *Girl with the Pearl Earring* or the former Town Hall, now Palace, at Dam Square in Amsterdam is only one aspect of this course. *The Golden Age of Dutch Art* also takes you out of the classroom and into cities, museums and monuments. You will not be able to get much closer to the actual masterpieces themselves! And it gets better: what you learn in class and during the on-site excursions will add depth and value to your own travels. This course takes you back in time, to the Dutch seventeenth century, the so-called 'Golden Age', the early modern period, when Dutch ships sailed the oceans from the Americas to the Indies, and this tiny republic, the first of modern history, dominated the world's stage. So buckle up and hold on tight; enjoy the journey!

Regards,

Anna Koldeweij MA

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Day-to-day program

This course includes lectures in the classroom, independent literature study as well as on-site excursions. You will be asked to participate in class as well as during the excursions: to ask relevant art historical questions and discuss artworks and their meaning, together in class or as group or individual short presentations. The literature will help you to remember what is taught in class, in preparation for the final exam. The program includes coffee and lunch breaks as well as time for self-study and preparation time for the presentations.

WEEK 1

Monday 20 July 09:30-c.15:45, Drift 23, Classroom 113

- 09:30-12:00 Welcome
- Lecture 1: *What to expect from this course? Introduction on Dutch art*
- Registration museum cards
- Presentation prepared assignment (students): Tell the group something about yourself and your motivation to follow this course by showing them your favourite Dutch artwork
- 12:00-13:00 Lunch break
- 13:00-15:00 Lecture 2: *Predecessors of the 17th century: Early Netherlandish Art and Renaissance in Northern Europe*
- 15:00-15:30 Lecture 3: *Women and words: women and their books in the visual culture of fifteenth century Burgundy*
- 15:30-15:45 Short introduction University Library

Tuesday 21 July 09:30-11:30, Drift 23, Classroom 113 and 12:30-c.17:00, excursion + optional drinks

- 09:30-11:30 Lecture 4: *The beginning of the Dutch 'Golden' Age, A historic background*
- Lecture 5: *Genre painting and the organization of the arts in the Dutch 17th century*
- 11:30-12:20 Lunch break
- 12:20 Afternoon excursion in Utrecht, start at Domplein
- 12:30-13:30 Dom tower, guided tour
- 13:30 Museum Catharijneconvent, Guided tour by Alison [Group 1]
 St. Eloyen Gasthuis, Guided tour by Anna [Group 2]
- 15:30 St. Eloyen Gasthuis, Guided tour by Anna [Group 1]
 Museum Catharijneconvent, Guided tour by Alison [Group 2]
- c.17:15 Optional closing drinks (surprise location)

Literature:

1. H.J. Helmers & G.H. Janssen, "Introduction: Understanding the Dutch Golden Age", in: H.J. Helmers & G.H. Janssen, *The Cambridge Companion to the Dutch Golden Age*, Cambridge 2018, p. 1-12.
2. M. IJsselstijn, "Utrecht", in: R. Rutte & J.E. Abrahamse, *Atlas of the Dutch Urban Landscape*, Bussum 2016, p. 136-139.

Wednesday 22 July 09:30-c.17:00, Drift 23, Classroom 113

09:30-14:00 Lecture 6: *The 'Nature Genres' (Landscapes to Still Lifes)*

Lecture 7: *The Famous Masters, part I (Rembrandt van Rijn)*

Afternoon Time for self-study in groups
Prepare for the (group) assignment: *17th century art from your home country*
(Thursday in class)

Literature:

3. E. Gombrich, "The Mirror of Nature, Holland seventeenth century", in: E. Gombrich, *The Story of Art*, London 1967, p. 413-433.

Thursday 23 July 09:30-c.15:30, Drift 23, Classroom 113

09:30-12:30 Lecture 8: *East meets West, the influence of the international trade on the Dutch 17th century and its art*

12:30-13:30 Lunch break

13:30-15:30 (Group) presentations in class: *17th century art from your home country*

Literature:

4. P. Roelofs, "Painting Asia; Oriental luxury goods and exotic curiosities in Dutch paintings" & F. Diercks, "Inspired by Asia; Responses in the Dutch decorative arts" in: ex.cat. *Asia in Amsterdam; The culture of luxury in the Golden Age*, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam 2015, p. 229-253.

Friday 24 July 09:00-c.18:00, excursion

09:00 Departure by bus from Utrecht to Leiden, Meeting point 1

10:30-12:30 Museum De Lakenhal, assignment

12:30-14:00 Lunch break

14:00-17:00 Museum of your choice: Rijksmuseum van Oudheden (National Museum of Antiquities), Japanmuseum SieboldHuis, Wereldmuseum, or Rijksmuseum Boerhaave, assignment

17:00 Departure by bus from Leiden back to Utrecht

Deadline Pick subject for your final presentation in the Mauritshuis

Literature:

5. R. Rutte, "Leiden", in: R. Rutte & J.E. Abrahamse, *Atlas of the Dutch Urban Landscape*, Bussum 2016, p. 108-111.

WEEK 2

Monday 27 July 09:30-15:00, Drift 23, Classroom 113

- 09:30-12:30 Lecture 9: *The Famous Masters, part II (Frans Hals, Johannes Vermeer & contemporaries)*
- 12:30-13:30 Lunch break
- 13:30-15:00 Lecture 10: *Women Artists in the Golden Age of Dutch Art*

Literature:

6. W. Franits, "Genre painting", in: H.J. Helmers & G.H. Janssen, *The Cambridge Companion to the Dutch Golden Age*, Cambridge 2018, p. 268-288.
7. E.A. Honig, "The Art of Being 'Artistic': Dutch Women's Creative Practices in the 17th Century", *Woman's Art Journal*, vol.22 (2001-2002), no.2, p. 31-39.

Tuesday 28 July All day

- All day Time for self-study
Prepare for your Rijksmuseum tour (Wednesday in Amsterdam) and/or your Mauritshuis presentation (Thursday in The Hague) by studying the literature handed out to you, and assemble extra literature about your object. Do not forget to make a handout.
Prepare for your final exam.
- 17:00 **Deadline:** Hand in your Rijksmuseum guided tour via email to Anna

Wednesday 29 July 09:00-c.18:00, excursion

- 09:00 Departure by bus from Utrecht to Amsterdam, Meeting point 1
- 10:00-11:00 Rembrandthuis, individual museum visit [Group 1]
Rembrandthuis, workshop printmaking [Group 2]
- 11:00-12:00 Rembrandthuis, workshop printmaking [Group 1]
Rembrandthuis, individual museum visit [Group 2]
- 12:00-13:30 Lunch break + Walk to the Rijksmuseum
- 14:00-17:00 Rijksmuseum, Introduction to the Gallery of Honour, tours
+ individual museum visit
- 17:00 Departure by bus from Amsterdam back to Utrecht
- 20:00 **Deadline:** Hand in your Mauritshuis presentation handout via email to Anna

Literature:

8. J.E. Abrahamse, "Amsterdam", in: R. Rutte & J.E. Abrahamse, *Atlas of the Dutch Urban Landscape*, Bussum 2016, p. 28-31.

Thursday 30 July 09:00-c.18:00, excursion

This excursion day the students will guide the group, based on their new knowledge about Dutch art: individual presentations on location, about the highlights of Dutch art in The Hague.

09:00 Departure by bus from Utrecht to The Hague, Meeting point 1

10:30-13:00 Mauritshuis visit: presentations + tours [group 1]

Half day off [group 2]

13:00-13:30 Lunch break

13:30-16:30 Half day off [group 1]

Mauritshuis visit: presentations + tours [group 2]

17:00 Departure by bus from The Hague back to Utrecht

Friday 31 July 10:00-12:00, Drift 23, Classroom 113 and 12:00-c.13:30, optional

10:00-12:00 Exam

12:00-c.13:30 Closing lunch (optional), including distribution of the certificates

COURSE CONTENT & STRUCTURE

The course will follow both a thematical and a chronological order. In the first days we will discover when, where from and how the Dutch 'Golden Age' was able to start and became so successful, so glorious, so 'golden'. The first days will give insight in the (religious) significance of art in the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance in Northern Europe. An excursion in Utrecht will visualize what you learned in class. In the following lectures and excursions you will be given an overview of the art of the 17th century in the Netherlands, ordered by genre and material. Most famous are, of course, well known painters like Rembrandt, Vermeer and Frans Hals. Eye opening will be the decorative arts and architecture!

With every work of art we study, we will try to answer some of the following questions:

- What sort of object are we actually looking at?
- What does it depict? What does it demonstrate? What is it about?
- How do we know when it was created?
- What role did it play in the development of the arts during that era?
- Who was it made for?
- Why was it made? What did it mean for the person or institution it was made for?
- What was its significance within the society in which it was created?

During the lectures we will always have the works of art in front of us, either in the form of a power point presentation or as real objects in the museums. Once or twice the students will be asked to prepare a short presentation during the lesson.

Objectives

By the end of the course students will demonstrate the ability to:

Learning objectives

1. Identify and apply (some of) the key concepts in (Dutch) Art History
2. Summarize the characteristics of Dutch 17th century art
3. Understand the possible cultural ideas and ideals behind works of art
4. Understand the significance of art in history
5. Have a basic idea of the main discussions within Dutch art history

Skill development

1. Write and talk about art in a clear and comprehensible manner
2. Reconstruct the original context and significance of works of art
3. Have a (more) professional view on art as a whole

ASSESSMENT

The following types of assessment play a role in the final grade of the students:

When	Type of assessment	% final grade
Continually	Participation This course is interactive, so you are expected to actively engage in the discussions, in class as well as during the excursions. Your participation will be assessed by way of: • your active contribution; • doing your homework; • asking questions during class and excursions; • showing up on time; • working and studying in a constructive way with other students during tuition and self-study; • bringing all requested course materials; • the assignments during the course, including your Rijksmuseum tour and handout.	20 %
30 st July	Final presentation and handout During the last excursion you will be the experts! We will spend the day in Amsterdam discovering various highlights of the Dutch 17th century. Based on your new knowledge about Dutch art, each student will present one object, chosen from a list earlier during the course. You will present in front of the original piece of art. The presentation takes 5-10 minutes and includes the basic information (maker, title, date) very briefly. Besides that: choose one interesting question, which you will be able to answer. This can be whatever you like, as long as it is relevant for the audience of new art-historians. The essentials of your presentation and the sources of information (literature references, at least 3 scientific sources) should be included in a handout (maximum 1 page). Make sure you send the handout by email to Anna on Wednesday 29 th July, 20:00.	30 %
31 st July	Exam The final exam consists of five or six open essay questions. Rather than focusing on facts and figures, the (essay) questions are about your understanding of the material. They will be based on the things we talked about in class and during the excursions, as well as on the accompanying literature.	50 %
	Further requirements In order to pass the course, you must have attended at least 80 percent of the time. Absence must be reported to the course director in advance with valid reason. In accordance with the general policy of Utrecht University, there is zero tolerance for any form of fraud and plagiarism. Please keep this in mind when preparing for your presentations and papers.	

TEACHER INFORMATION & CONTACT DETAILS

TEACHER INFORMATION

The course is taught by Anna Koldeweij (1989), who is widely trained in early modern Dutch art, culture and history. She studied Art History at the Radboud University Nijmegen and completed her studies cum laude in 2012 with a master thesis on the Amsterdam portrait painter Juriaan Pool (1666-1745).

Koldeweij's research interests are concentrated on the 17th to 19th century and especially include Dutch art, paintings as well as applied arts. She worked on various (research) projects for museums, art galleries and private collections, from which several publications have developed.

At the moment she is working on a PhD thesis about the artist couple still life painter Rachel Ruysch (1664-1750) and the aforementioned portrait painter Juriaan Pool and their network in seventeenth century Amsterdam. Besides that, she is preparing an extensive catalogue about base metal candlesticks (14th-18th century) for a private collector in the USA.

CONTACT DETAILS

Course director	Anna Koldeweij	+31 6 45279748 a.c.koldeweij@uu.nl
Course assistant	Alison Botham	+44 7773 776291 alisonmbotham1@outlook.com
Utrecht Summerschool		+31 30 2534400 summerschool@uu.nl

LOGISTICS

COMFORT

Clothing

Dutch weather is unpredictable. It is useful to bring a sweater, an umbrella or a raincoat on excursions, particularly those that last all day. Be sure to wear comfortable shoes, as there will be a lot of walking and standing.

Food

Lunch is not included in the course fee. There will be time to buy your own lunch during breaks. Most places we visit will have sandwich shops etc. nearby. Usually, though, they are aimed at tourists and very expensive, so if you want to save money, bring some packed lunch from home.

Other

We will be visiting some beautiful places, so bring a photo camera and/or a sketchbook. Also have a notebook and a pencil (ballpoints are not allowed in most museums) with you, to take notes during museum visits.

TRAVEL

Getting to the bus

We will travel by touring car. The price is included in the course fee. The bus will leave from the Meeting point, which is across the road from the Summerschool office, at the foot of the statue of Saint Willibrord (see Maps). The bus will also take us back to Utrecht, but during rush hours we might not be dropped at the meeting point. If you decide to stay longer in a city and travel back on your own, you may, but please inform your instructor in time. For excursions in Utrecht, we will meet at the same Meeting point.

Being on time

Excursions take place on a daily basis. Therefore, it is extremely important that travel runs smoothly. It is your own responsibility to arrive at the bus stop and the meeting point in time. Because you cannot anticipate delays, we advise you to arrive at the meeting point 10 minutes before the bus leaves. The bus will leave at the exact time mentioned in the day-to-day program.

Public transport

If you miss the bus, you can decide to travel to the museum by train. In this case, you can call someone from the Summerschool for travel directions. Do not call your course instructors, because this will disturb them in teaching the class. To travel by train you need to buy a ticket from a machine at the station, or at the ticket office. Note that there are different machines for paying with coins, debit or credit card. If you stay in the Netherlands for a longer while, you may decide to purchase an anonymous OV-chip card: <https://www.ov-chipkaart.nl/purchase-an-ov-chipkaart/anonymous-ov-chipkaart.htm>. For travel directions in the different museum cities, try out: <http://9292.nl/en>. This website will provide you with accurate travel instructions (bus, metro, train, foot).

AT THE MUSEUM

Cards and Coins

All museums require (large) bags, umbrella's, etc. to be placed in a cloakroom. Often free lockers are provided for this, which work with 1 euro coins (sometimes 50 cent coins). Make sure you have some coins with you with every visit. Entrance to most museums is free with a 'Museumcard', which you will receive on the first day. You will have to bring this card with you to every excursion. If you forget it, you will have to buy the entrance ticket yourself. The Museumcards are valid for one year after registering at the Museumcard website: <https://www.museumkaart.nl/registreren>, which we will do together on the first day. Remember to take your Museumcard, wallet, phone, notebook, and pencil out of your bag, before we enter the museum. You can bring a little bag for this purpose.

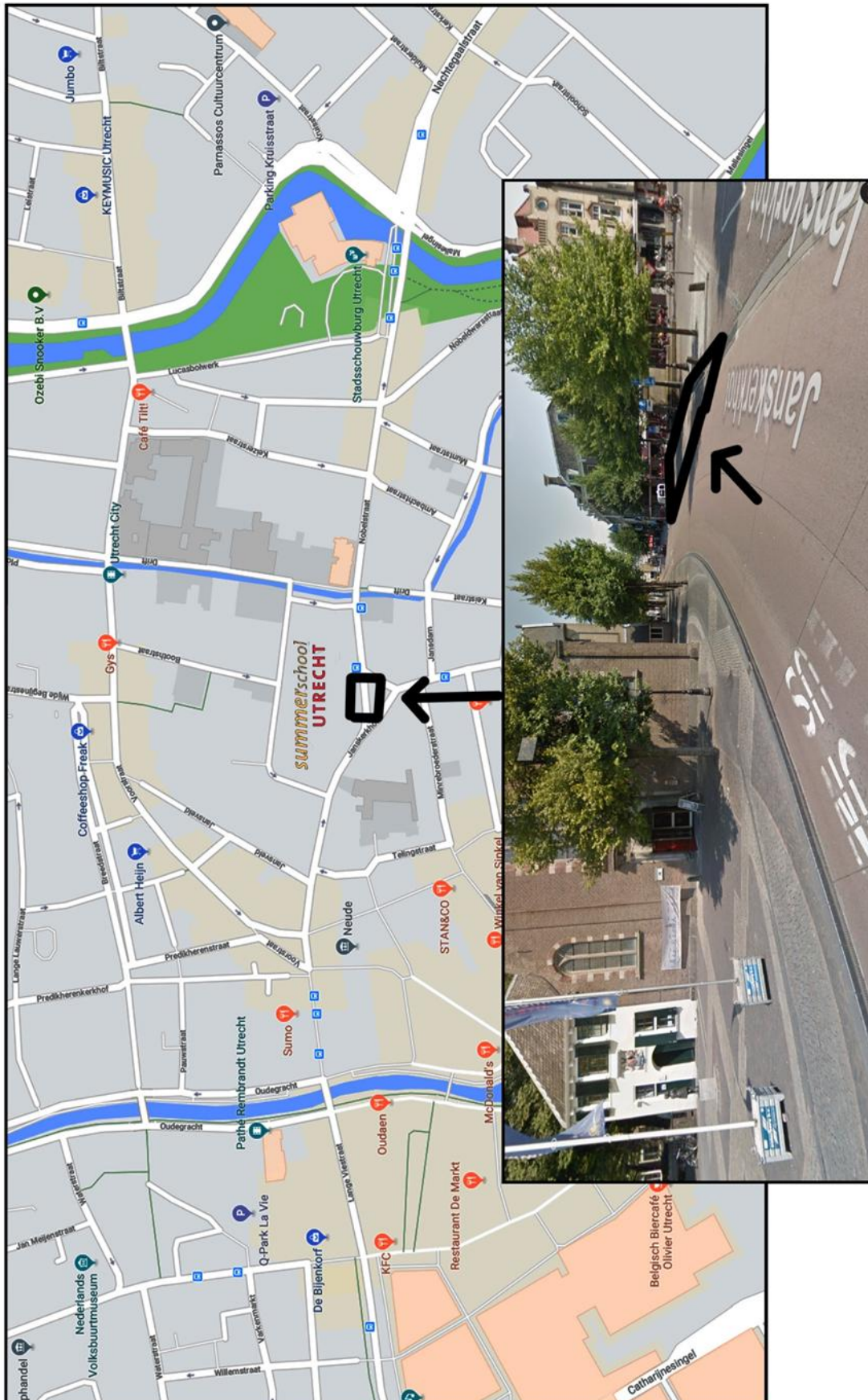
Museum Etiquette

Most important during museum visits: do not touch the artworks! Most museums are not too fond of large groups, and usually we will have to split up in groups of maximum fifteen. Again, it is important that you are aware of the time and the different meeting places in the museum, so we do not lose time waiting. If we stand still in front of a painting for a presentation or discussion, try to be an attentive listener, and try to take up as little space as possible, for other visitors to be able to pass through.

MAPS

Meeting point 1

Across the road from the Summerschool office, at the foot of the statue of Saint Willibrord



FURTHER READING

* in bold are the books from which parts were read during this course

- **ex.cat. *Asia in Amsterdam; The culture of luxury in the Golden Age*, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam 2015.**
- S. Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century*, Chicago 1983.
- A. Blankert, *Selected writings on Dutch painting: Rembrandt, Van Beke, Vermeer and others*, Zwolle 2004.
- C. Brown, *The Dutchness of Dutch Art*, Amsterdam 2003.
- W. Franits, *Seventeenth-Century Dutch Genre Painting: Its Stylistic and Thematic Evolution*, New Haven/London 2004.
- W. Franits, *The Cambridge Companion to Vermeer*, Cambridge 2001.
- R.H. Fuchs, "The World as Image, Seventeenth-century landscape and still-life", in: R.H. Fuchs, *Dutch Painting*, London 1994, p. 103-142.
- **E. Gombrich, "The Mirror of Nature, Holland seventeenth century", in: E. Gombrich, *The Story of Art*, London 1967, p. 413-433.**
- M. Hell, E. Los & N. Middelkoop, *Portrait Gallery of the Golden Age*, Zwolle 2014.
- **H.J. Helmers & G.J. Janssen, *The Cambridge Companion to the Dutch Golden Age*, Cambridge 2018.**
- **E.A. Honig, "The Art of Being 'Artistic': Dutch Women's Creative Practices in the 17th Century", *Woman's Art Journal*, vol.22 (2001-2002), no.2, p. 31-39.**
- E. de Jongh (et al.), *Faces of the Golden Age: Seventeenth-Century Dutch Portraits*, ex.cat. Prefectural Museum of Art, Yamaguchi 1994.
- E. de Jongh, *Questions of meaning. Theme and motif in Dutch seventeenth-century painting*, Leiden 2000.
- C. van Mander, *Dutch and Flemish painters*, New York 1936 [reprint].
- F.G. Meijer, *Dutch and Flemish Still-life Paintings*, The Ashmolean Museum Oxford, Zwolle 2003.
- S.D. Muller, *Dutch Art: an Encyclopedia*, Abingdon 2013.
- S. Nash, *Northern Renaissance Art*, Oxford 2008.
- N. Pevsner, *An Outline of European Architecture*, Baltimore 1943.
- M. Prak, *The Dutch Republic in the seventeenth century: the Golden Age*, Cambridge 2005.
- R. Priem; P. Hunter-Stiebel (ed), *Rembrandt and the Golden Age of Dutch Art; Treasures from the Rijksmuseum*, Amsterdam, Dayton 2006.
- P.J. Rietbergen, *A Short History of the Netherlands*, Amersfoort 2019.
- J. Rosenberg, S. Slive, E.H. ter Kuile, *The Pelican History of Art; Dutch Art and Architecture 1600-1800*, Baltimore 1966.
- **R. Rutte & J.E. Abrahamse, *Atlas of the Dutch Urban Landscape*, Bussum 2016.**
- P.C. Sutton, *The golden age of Dutch landscape painting*, Madrid 1994.
- A. Tummers, ex.cat. *The Art of Laughter*, Frans Hals Museum Haarlem, Zwolle 2017.
- L. de Vries, *How to create beauty: De Lairese on the theory and practice of making art*, Leiden 2011.
- D. Watkin, *A History of Western Architecture*, London 2005.
- M. Westermann, *A Worldly Art; The Dutch Republic 1585-1718*, New Haven/London 2007.
- M. Westermann, *Art & Home, Dutch Interiors in the Age of Rembrandt*, Zwolle 2001.
- E. van de Wetering, *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, accessible via: <https://rembrandtdatabase.org/literature/corpus>.
- Or feel free to ask Anna if you are looking for something specific.