

Part 1:

Name of event: Summer Institute for Netherlandish Art

Name: Evelyn Earl

Job title: Currently Assistant Curator, future PhD student

Organisation: Chitra Collection, UCL

The Summer Institute for Netherlandish Art was co-organised by the Rijksmuseum, Netherlands Institute for Art History (RKD), Centre for Netherlandish Art (CNA) at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA) and Harvard Art Museums. Over the course of two weeks in and around Amsterdam and Boston, sixteen emerging experts took part in numerous lectures, workshops, tours and seminars led by an interdisciplinary team of researchers, curators, conservators, educators and scientists.

The course was almost entirely object-focused, with works of art leading our discussions regarding conservation, display, attribution and a range of art-historical topics. This approach offered unprecedented opportunities for close engagement with extraordinary works of art. For instance, we viewed Michaelina Wautier's *Five Senses* (1650) under a microscope at the MFA and examined the surfaces of Rembrandt's *The Night Watch* (1642) and Paulus Potter's *The Bull* (1647) in the conservation studios of the Rijksmuseum and the Mauritshuis. Equally striking was the rare chance to study Gesina ter Borch's three notable albums in the Rijksmuseum print room. I had never before developed such a technical understanding of Dutch seventeenth-century painting, drawing and printmaking - a skill that I hope to utilise in my forthcoming Wolfson-funded PhD in the History of Art at University College London.

Alongside these tours, lectures and seminars, we benefited from practical activities that deepened our understanding of seventeenth-century artistic processes. This included learning to etch on glass during a workshop at the CollectieCentrum Nederland and experimenting with early modern drawing methods at Harvard Art Museums, creating our own works in metal-point, ink and charcoal. Approaches to the decorative arts were especially useful for me, as my project on tea in Anglo-Dutch visual and material culture will address paintings alongside furniture, ceramics and silverware. These sessions included 'Hands on with Dutch Silver' at the MFA as well as a lecture exploring the long-forgotten woodworking techniques employed to create the remarkable ebony cabinets by Herman Doomer in the Rijksmuseum.

Beyond individual objects, the course also encouraged us to think critically about display and interpretation. As the Rijksmuseum is planning a complete rehang of its galleries, the curators led tours of the rooms, discussing potential limitations that they might encounter. We were invited to critique the current presentation and suggest solutions for the future: an enriching

and thought-provoking experience. Similarly at Harvard Art Museums, I enjoyed an exercise in curating our own exhibitions of Dutch prints and drawings for the rotating display within the gallery. From a selection of works by Rembrandt and his followers, our group created a visually engaging and thoughtful exhibition exploring 'Labour and Rest' in and around the Dutch home.

The course provided me with invaluable professional connections, refined research methods and a deeper knowledge of key public and private collections in the Netherlands and in the US. Encountering these new objects will be crucial as I plan my doctoral research and future exhibitions with the Chitra Collection where I am currently a curator. I hope to share insights from this course through conferences, publications and curatorial projects. One object that has already sparked new research was a tortoiseshell tea caddy inlaid with engraved silver by Hendrik Voet (1700) at the MFA, which I selected as the focus of my final presentation. Practical activities at the RKD have clarified how I plan to conduct provenance and historiographic investigation.

Outside the formal course schedule, perhaps most inspiring of all were the conversations with fellow participants, whose projects spanned a fascinating range of topics. Broader discussions on studying Dutch art within a global context, decolonial methods and thinking critically about collaboration were extremely valuable and have begun to shape the way I think about my own research. These experiences - from close looking to curatorial exercises and theoretical debates - will directly inform not only my forthcoming PhD on Anglo-Dutch visual and material culture but also my future curatorial practice.

Images

Please supply at least three images from the visit. We ask that images are clearly indicated in the report using the following pattern.

file name: Paulus Potter.JPG



Credit Line

Myself and fellow participants posing with Paulus Potter's *The Bull* at the Mauritshuis alongside Senior Programme Manager at the Center for Netherlandish Art at the MFA Dr. Nicole Cook and paintings conservator Dr. Abbie Vandivere.



Image 2

file name: Michaelina Wautier.JPEG

Credit Line

Peering through the microscope at Michaelina Wautier's *Sight* at the MFA, finding her fingerprint embedded in the paint surface.

Image 3:

File name: Hendrik Voet.jpeg



Hendrik Voet, *Tea Caddy*, 1700 on display in the MFA.