



Release Date: September 2, 2015

Vermeer's Exquisite *Woman in Blue Reading a Letter* Returns to the National Gallery of Art, Washington, September 19 through December 1, 2015



Johannes Vermeer, *Woman in Blue Reading a Letter*, c. 1663, oil on canvas, 46.6 x 39.1 cm (18 3/8 x 15 3/8 in.), Rijksmuseum. On loan from the City of Amsterdam (A. van der Hoop Bequest)

Washington, DC—The Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam has lent one of its great treasures—[Johannes Vermeer's *Woman in Blue Reading a Letter*](#) (c. 1663)—to the National Gallery of Art in celebration of the 20th anniversary of the landmark [Johannes Vermeer](#) exhibition, which opened here in November 1995 before traveling to the Royal Cabinet of Paintings Mauritshuis, The Hague, in March 1996.

This luminous masterpiece, recently restored at the Rijksmuseum, will be displayed from September 19, 2015, through December 1, 2016, in the Dutch and Flemish Cabinet Galleries. It will hang with Vermeer paintings from the Gallery's own collection, including [Woman Holding a Balance](#) (c. 1664) and [Girl with a Red Hat](#) (c. 1665/1666)—the latter newly returned after being featured in *Small Treasures*, an exhibition shown in Raleigh, North Carolina, and Birmingham, Alabama—as well as [Girl with a Flute](#) (1665–1675), attributed to Vermeer.

"Like many of Vermeer's paintings, *Woman in Blue Reading a Letter* has a calm and reflective mood, but it also leaves much for the viewer to decipher about the woman's emotions and the letter's contents," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "We are thankful to the Rijksmuseum for this generous loan to mark an extraordinary cultural event."

The installation is organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington. The curator is Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr., the Gallery's longtime curator of northern baroque painting and a renowned Vermeer expert. The Gallery's third painting by Vermeer, [A Lady Writing](#) (c. 1665), will be on loan to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, during the installation in Washington.

Little is known about Vermeer (1632–1675), whose paintings have been hailed as some of the supreme achievements of the Dutch golden age. In 1995 and 1996, *Johannes Vermeer*, the first exhibition ever devoted solely to the Delft master's art, featured 21 of the existing 35 works known to have been painted by him. The paintings were drawn from museums and private collections in Europe and the United States. Aside from *Woman in Blue Reading a Letter*, other masterpieces on display were *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (c. 1665/1670) and *View of Delft* (c. 1660–1661), both from the Royal Cabinet of Paintings Mauritshuis, The Hague.

That intimate, once-in-a-lifetime Vermeer exhibition drew accolades from media worldwide and attracted long lines of visitors, many of whom braved the freezing temperatures and snow that enveloped Washington that winter. Two extended federal government shutdowns and an enormous blizzard that closed the Gallery for days only heightened public interest in this remarkable event.

The 1995–1996 Vermeer exhibition was organized by the National Gallery of Art and the Royal Cabinet of Paintings Mauritshuis, The Hague. Curators were Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr., and Frederik J. Duparc, then director of the Mauritshuis.

Related Activities

Lecture

The Vermeer Phenomenon

November 15, 2:00–3:30 p.m.

East Building Auditorium

Maygene Daniels (chief of Gallery Archives), Arthur Wheelock (curator of northern baroque paintings), and Deborah Ziska (chief of press and public information) give a lecture about the Vermeer exhibition's origins, importance, popularity, and impact.

Gallery Talk

"Woman in Blue Reading a Letter" by Johannes Vermeer

September 24–28, 30, 12:00 p.m.

October 8, 21–23, 27–29, 2:00 p.m.

West Building, Main Floor, Rotunda

Diane Arkin or Eric Denker (30 mins.)

General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets at Constitution Avenue NW, and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. For information call (202) 737-4215 or visit the Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov. Follow the Gallery on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt, Twitter at www.twitter.com/ngadc, and Instagram at <http://instagram.com/ngadc>.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:

Department of Communications

National Gallery of Art

2000B South Club Drive

Landover, MD 20785

phone: (202) 842-6353

e-mail: pressinfo@nga.gov

Anabeth Guthrie

Chief of Communications

(202) 842-6804

a-guthrie@nga.gov

Subscribe to Our E-mail Newsletters

Stay up to date with the National Gallery of Art by [subscribing to our e-mail newsletters](#): Web, educators, family programs, fellowships/internships, films, lectures, music programs, and teen programs. Select as many updates as you wish to receive. To edit your subscriber information, please go to our [subscription management page](#).

PRESS KIT

Exhibition Press Release

CURATOR BIOGRAPHY

Curator Biography:

[Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr.](#)

ONLINE RESOURCES

Exhibition Pages:

[Vermeer's "Woman in Blue Reading a Letter" from the Rijksmuseum](#)

September 19, 2015–December 1, 2016

[Johannes Vermeer](#)

November 12, 1995–February 11, 1996

NGA Online Editions:

[Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century](#)

Questions from members of the media may be directed to the Department of Communications at (202) 842-6353 or pressinfo@nga.gov

The public may call (202) 737-4215 or visit www.nga.gov for more information about the **National Gallery of Art**.

RSS (NEWS FEED)

http://www.nga.gov/content/dam/ngaweb/press/rss/press_feed.xml

NGA NEWSLETTERS:

Stay up to date with the National Gallery of Art by **subscribing to our e-mail newsletters**: Web, educators, family programs, fellowships/internships, films, lectures, music programs, and teen programs. Select as many updates as you wish to receive. To edit your subscriber information, please go to our **[subscription management page](#)**.



© 2017 National Gallery of Art
