

SECRET BEAUTY

Vermeer's mystery unravelled in *Views on Vermeer*

We see thousands of pictures every day. We experience reality through television, magazines, advertisement, the internet, and movies. How is it possible that a simple picture of a girl with a pearl earring has such an enormous impact on millions of people all over the world?

More than three hundred years after Johannes Vermeer (1632-1675) created his small and impressive oeuvre of only 35 paintings, he seems to have painted our own world and our own personal life. We really feel related to the few ladies and scientists Vermeer painted. Vermeer's world, in a mysterious way, seems so familiar to us in our day and age. In 2006, the *'Girl with a Pearl Earring'*, the *'Mona Lisa of the North'* was chosen to be 'the most beautiful painting ever made'.

The documentary *'Secret beauty'* unravels the unique and contemporary character of Vermeer's painting. In the film, influential filmmakers, photographers, philosophers and scientists show us why Vermeer's paintings are so important today. The film shows how Vermeer influenced these current cultural opinion leaders, and explains how it affects our way of looking at our own world. By showing the contemporary world of pictures that surrounds us, we become aware of the unparalleled influence of Vermeer on people who create the world today. Vermeer's light, his use of colour, his balanced compositions, and the mysterious psychology of his painted ladies will be explored in this film inspired on the work of the master.

With:

- **Wim Wenders** is director of films like *'Im lauf der Zeit'*, *'Paris Texas'* and *'Himmel uber Berlin'*. For Wenders Vermeer's light and compositions are essential for understanding modern film making.
- **Peter Webber** is director of the movie *'Girl with a pearl earring'*. For Webber Vermeer is an artist who made pictures that are more real than reality. Reinventing Vermeer on the silver screen was an enormous challenge.
- **Mario Testino** is a fashion photographer who shot for Vogue, V, and Vanity Fair. He is famous for the celebrities he worked with like Lady Diana, Julia Roberts, Meg Ryan, Kate Moss, and Madonna. For Testino Vermeer is a magician who celebrates his subjects and he is the absolute master of light.
- **Alian de Botton** is a writer and television producer. He is known for an approach to writing, in which he seeks to discuss various subjects in a philosophical style while maintaining relevance to everyday life. De Botton has specific philosophical reasons why we love Vermeer today.
- **Dr. Lawrence Weschler** is former staff journalist of the New Yorker and currently director of the Institute for the Humanities of the New York University. He wrote *'Vermeer in Bosnia'* (2004) about the remarkable capacity of Vermeer's work to heal.
- **American professor dr. Geoffrey Batchen** is one of the most influential scientists on photography. He is fascinated about the impact of Vermeer's painting on us today and the way Vermeer seems to have created a recognisable internal world.
- **David Hockney** is one of the most influential painters of our time. He is also the writer of *'Secret Knowledge. Rediscovering the Lost Techniques of the Old masters'*. Hockney discovered that the old masters from the 15th century had a scientific interest in what they really saw. Especially Vermeer.
- **Erwin Olaf** is one of the most successful Dutch photographers. He makes commercial work and internationally appreciated art. After making baroque work in his earlier career he ended up making very successful photos that are inspired on Vermeer.

Duration: 52 minutes

Directors: Hans Pool and Koos de Wilt

Producer: Lagestee Film BV / AVRO Television



Views on Vermeer

A Film by Hans Pool and Koos de Wilt

Johannes Vermeer died nearly 350 years ago, but his work continues to evoke inspiration and passion. Although New York is home to a third of the world's surviving Vermeer paintings, VIEWS ON VERMEER also travels to Holland, France, London and Washington to introduce us to artists, writers and photographers whose lives and work have been touched by the painter from Delft.

Some work depicted in the film is directly inspired by Vermeer while others for whom the connection to the old master is less direct – yet no less vital. A central sequence of the film juxtaposes the work of "Girl with a Pearl Earring" novelist Tracy Chevalier with that of Steve McCurry – the photographer who shot the famous Afghan girl photo that appeared on the cover of National Geographic. For Chevalier, the Vermeer painting on which she based the book was not simply a portrait; it captured a moment in a relationship. McCurry compares the Afghan girl – seeing a western male for the first time – to the girl with the pearl earring. Each demonstrates a moment when "the mundane becomes magical."

It is thought that the widespread admiration for Vermeer arises from the sense of peacefulness that infuses his work. Dutch photographer Erwin Olaf says what he has learned about portraiture from Vermeer is that "nothing really happens." One woman reads a letter. Another pours milk. Both of their actions are captured in a moment of stillness. While we are surrounded by inexpensive digital equipment that offers the illusion of instantly photographing or filming reality, the work of Vermeer and the artists he has influenced is an invitation to the opposite approach. As artist Chuck Close says, "Vermeer painted the situation of bricks, rather than individual bricks." In this way he captures something fundamental about reality - something beyond the purely physical.

VIEWS ON VERMEER is an invitation to discover or to re-discover this renowned painter's work, and to appreciate it in new ways.

52 minutes / color / 2009

