



*Class Distinctions: Dutch Painting in the Age of Rembrandt and Vermeer* will be the first exhibition to consider seventeenth-century Dutch painting in light of the new Republic's social structure. Although Holland at the time was relatively democratic, class distinctions still had meaning. Through approximately 75 carefully selected and arranged works, the viewer will be presented with the ways in which Dutch paintings reflect various socio-economic groups—or, more precisely, the ways these groups wanted to be depicted, were perceived to be by those depicting them, or were desired to be by those buying such depictions. The show will also afford an exploration of the locations and circumstances that brought these groups together. By examining how class distinctions were expressed and the associations each had, a sharper picture of Dutch society and a more nuanced understanding of the pictures it produced will emerge.

We will show portraits, genre scenes, landscapes, and seascapes of the highest quality by a wide variety of artists who worked throughout the century. Each of the exhibition rooms—subdivided into thematic sections—will reflect a specific class and, within that class, particular categories that pertain to it. The last room will be devoted to “Where the Classes Meet,” subjects that reflect the porous nature of The Netherlands in the seventeenth century and will feature a case of decorative arts objects used at table by each class.

The following scholars have served as advisors to the exhibition and have contributed the following essays to the catalogue:

- Henk van Nierop, University of Amsterdam emeritus: *The Anatomy of Society*
- Herman Roodenburg, Meertens Instituut: *Smelling Rank and Status*
- Marieke de Winkel, free-lance costume historian: *Ambition and Apparel*
- Sanny de Zoete, linen historian: *Laying the Table*
- Eric Jan Sluijter, University of Amsterdam emeritus: *Ownership of Paintings in the Dutch Golden Age*

In addition to writing essays on each of the class subdivisions, Ronni Baer, senior curator of European paintings at the MFA, is the general editor of the volume.

The exhibition will be on view at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, from mid-October 2015 through mid-January 2016, after which it will move to the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City for a three-month run.