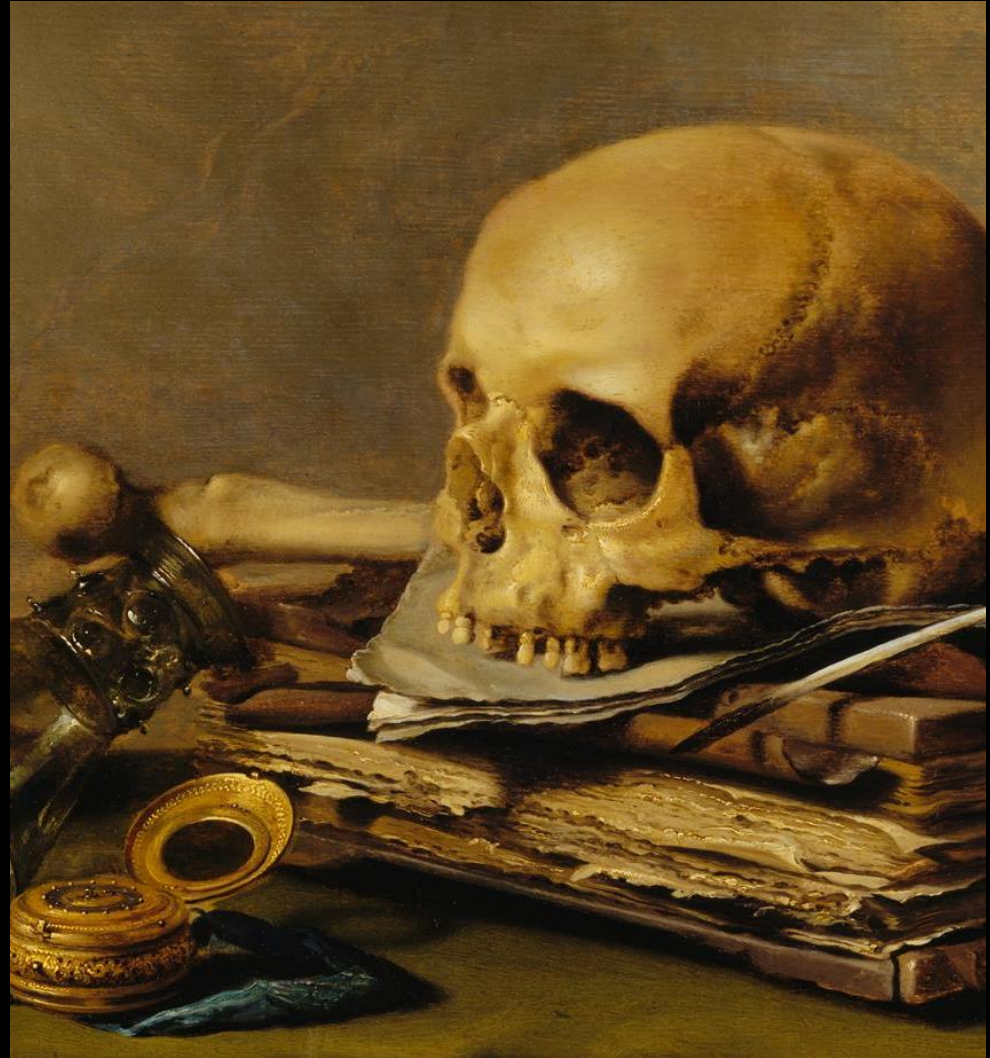


Making Sense of Things: Dutch Still Life

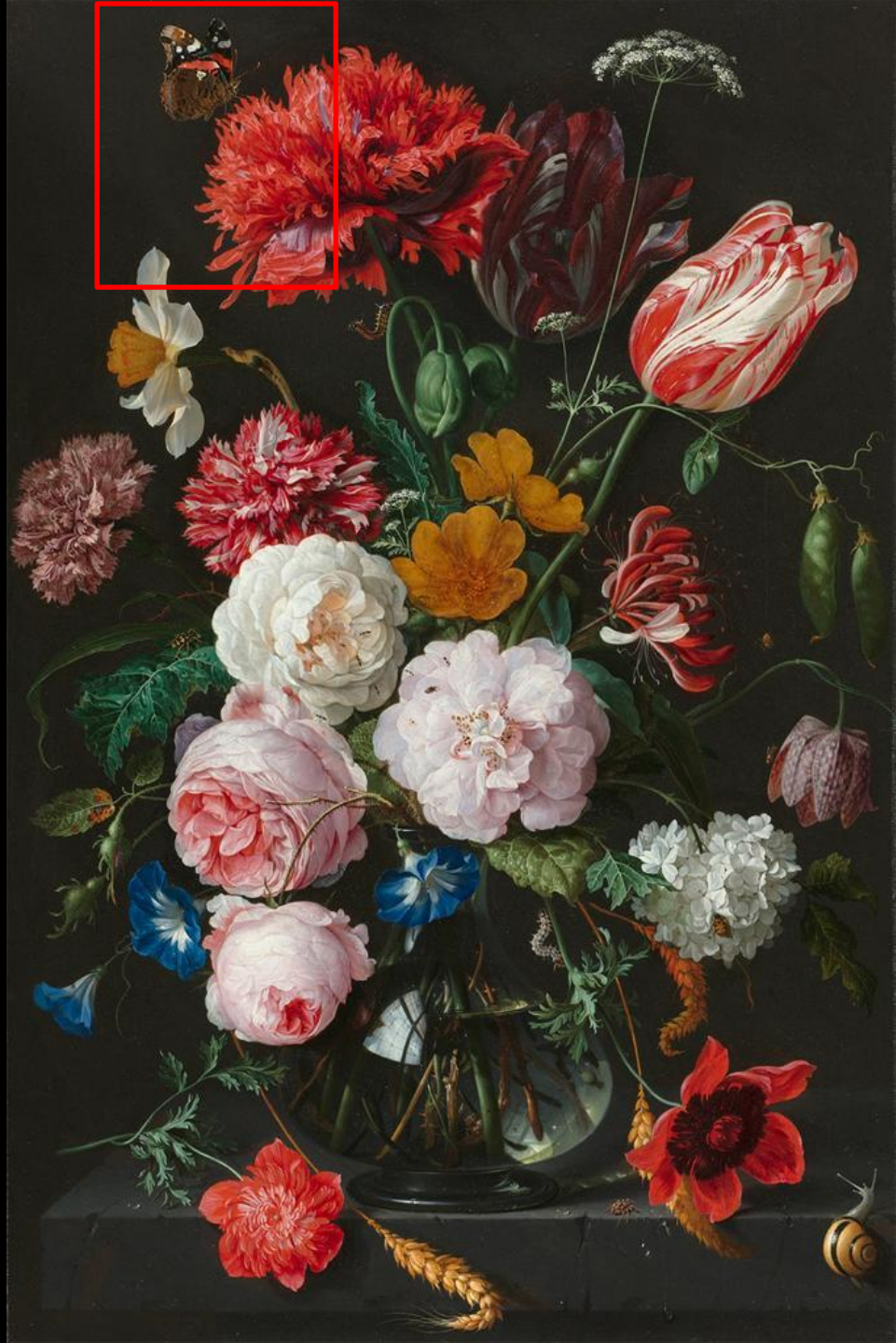


Dutch still life paintings

- Relatively new genre that flourished in the Dutch Republic
- Different types of still lifes: vanitas, “breakfast,” “pronk”, floral
- Possible meanings of still life imagery to 17th-century viewers
 - Deals with tensions between economic prosperity and religious teachings of Calvinism
 - Associated with the study of curious natural and exotic specimens
 - Celebration of artistic skill



Jan Davidsz de Heem, *Still Life with Flowers in a Glass Vase*, 1650-83



Vanitas

Type of painting concerned with the fragility of human existence, desires and pleasures in the face of the inevitability and finality of death.

Jacques de Gheyn II,
Vanitas, 1603



Official religion of the Dutch Republic

- Reformed Church, which followed Calvinism—branch of Protestantism
- Teaches austerity, piety, frugality
- Warns against pride in worldly possessions or accomplishments

But according to historian Simon Schama, the Dutch also ...

[This system] embraced money; power; authority; the gratification of appetite; the indulgence of domestic epicureanism in food, drink, costume, and furnishing; the collective celebration of community in ritual feasts and banquets; the innocence of fairs and pastimes; and the nobility of arts and science.

Schama, *Embarrassment of Riches* p. 113.

Vanitas

Type of painting concerned with the fragility of human existence, desires and pleasures in the face of the inevitability and finality of death.

Jacques de Gheyn II,
Vanitas, 1603



De Gheyn, *Vanitas*, 1603 (detail)

Extinguished flame



Coins

Flowers

More Coins



De Gheyn, *Vanitas*, 1603 (detail)

Bubble with reflections of symbols of illness and torture



De Gheyn, *Vanitas*, 1603. Details

L: Democritus, the ancient Greek philosopher who laughed at human folly

R: Heraclitus, the ancient Greek philosopher who wept instead



Vanitas

Type of painting concerned with the fragility of human existence, desires and pleasures in the face of the inevitability and finality of death.

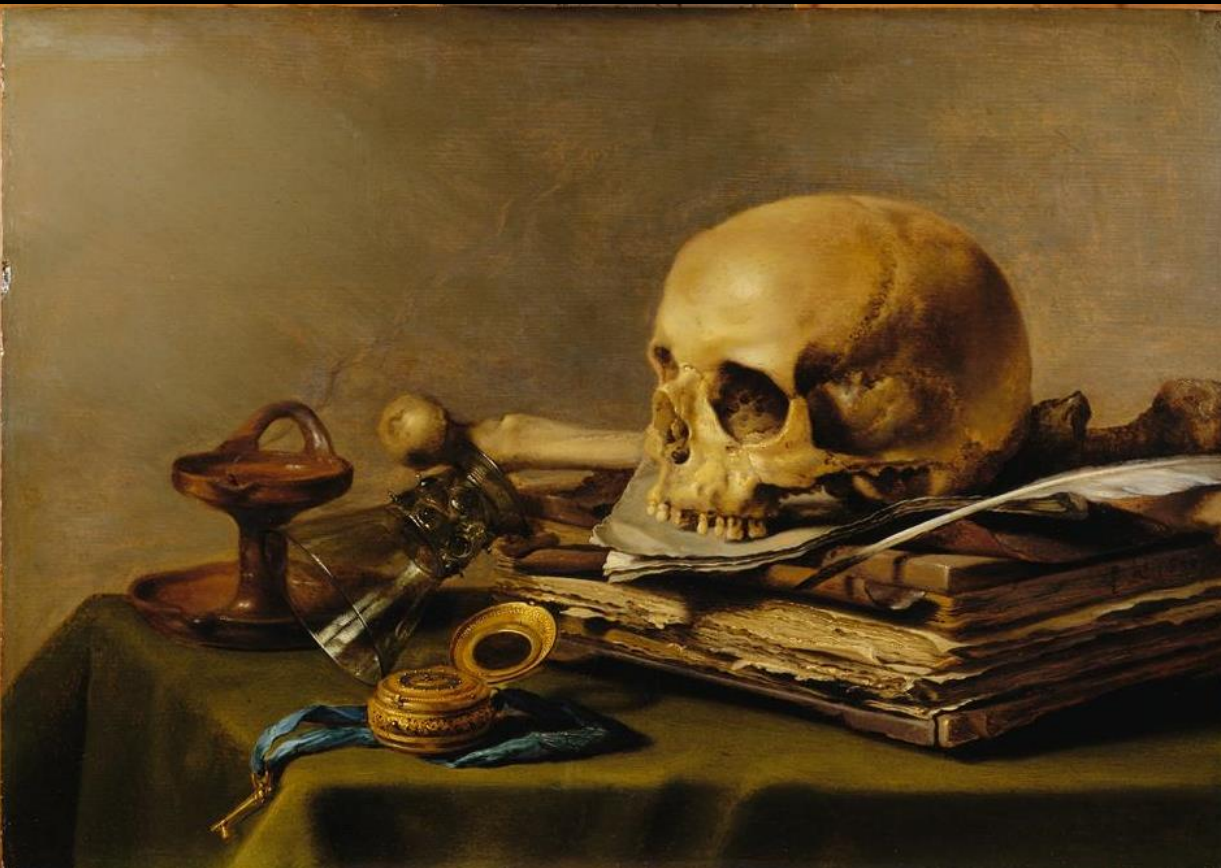
Jacques de Gheyn II,
Vanitas, 1603



Pieter Claesz, *Vanitas Still Life*, 1630



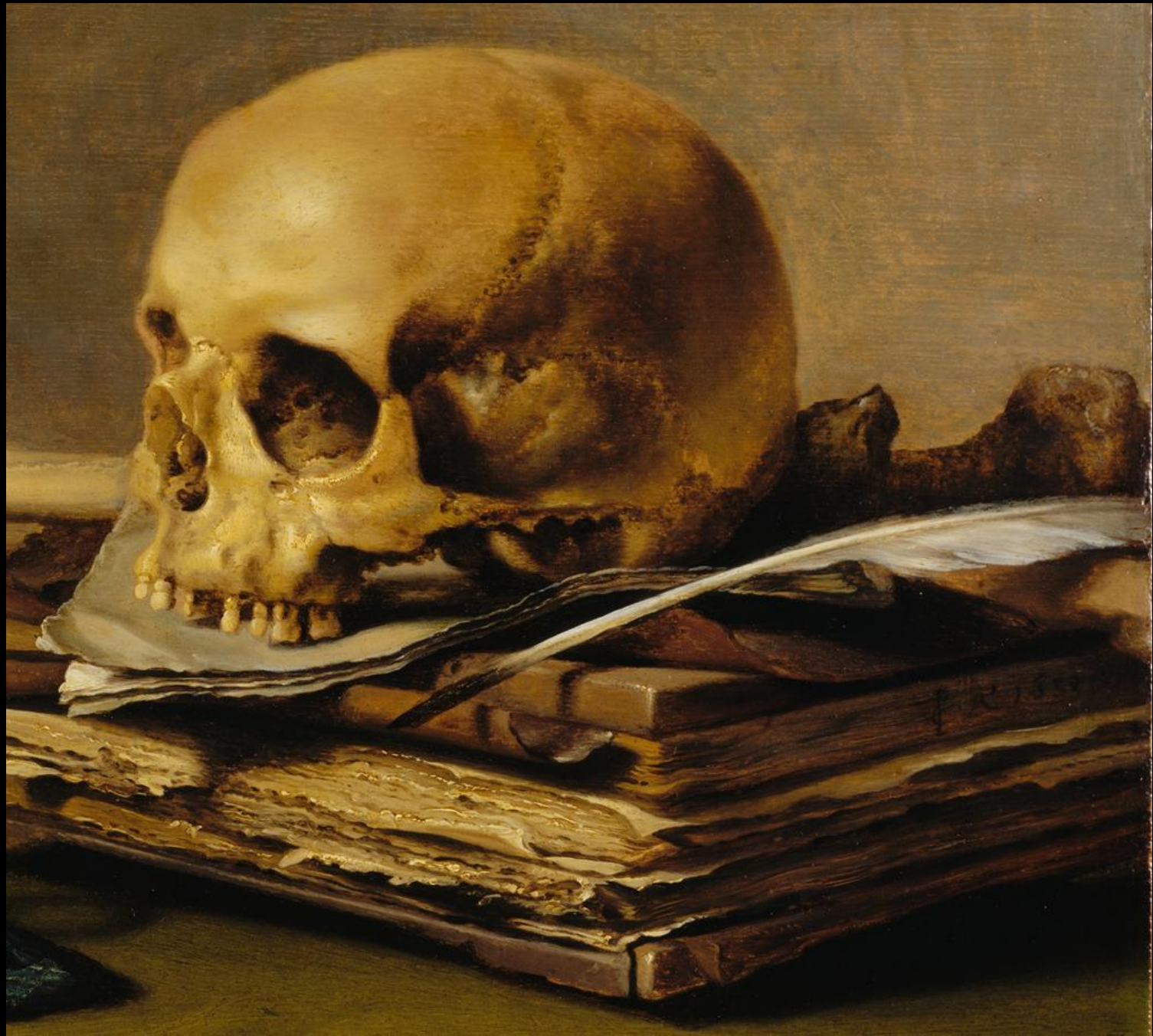
Pieter Claesz, *Vanitas Still Life*, 1630



Pieter Claesz
(1597/8-1661)

- The most prominent still life painter from Haarlem
- Pioneered style in 1630s and 1640s based on a restricted palette of earth tones and grays
- Expert at capturing the effects of light reflecting off or refracting through different materials

Claesz, *Vanitas Still Life*, 1630 (detail)



Claesz, *Vanitas Still Life*, 1630 (detail)



The watch: symbol of technological advancement and the passage of time.

So-called “banquet” or “breakfast” still life: Claesz, *Still Life with Tazza*, 1636



Careful rendering of the effects of light reflecting off pewter, gilded silver, glass, bread, lemon skin and flesh, etc.



Careful rendering of the effects of light reflecting off pewter, gilded silver, glass, bread, lemon skin and flesh, etc.



So-called “banquet” or “breakfast” still life: Claesz, *Still Life with Tazza*, 1636





Willem Claez Heda, *Still life with Mince Pie*, 1635



Pieter Claesz, *Still Life with Stoneware Jug, Wineglass, Herring and Bread*, 1642