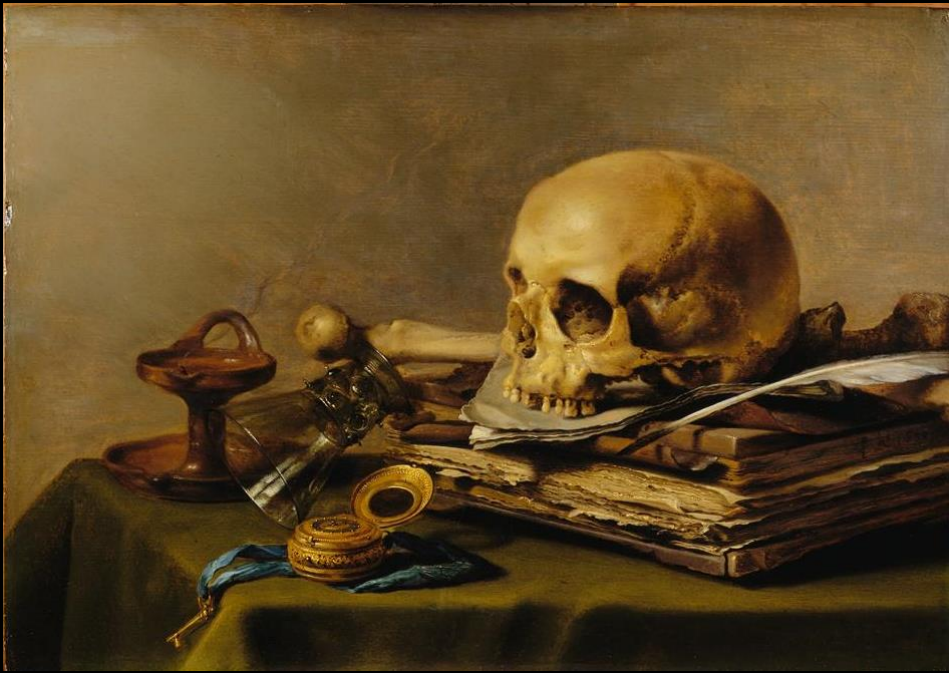


Cornelis Gijsbrechts, *The Reverse of a Painting*, 1668-72



So far, in the Dutch section, we have mostly looked at how new genres communicated meanings to 17th-century viewers. We have discussed how seemingly realistic landscapes and still life paintings could express deeper messages.



Pieter Claesz, *Vanitas Still Life*, 1630



Ruisdael, *Mill at Wijk bij Duurstede*,
c. 1670.

But we also considered the craftsmanship displayed in the paintings: some artists' ability to show exquisite details.

Rachel Ruysch, *Still Life with Flowers on a Marble Tabletop*, 1716 (detail)



Ter Borch, *Gallant Conversation*, c. 1654-55 (detail)



Playing with Vision:
Dutch *trompe l'oeil* and peep boxes





Cornelis Gijsbrechts

- Painter who worked in Flanders, Dutch Republic, Germany, and Denmark.
- Known for his **trompe l'oeil** paintings.
- Became court painter for King of Denmark

Trompe l'oeil painting

Illusionistic painting designed to “fool the eye”; creates the momentary illusion that the painted imagery exists in three-dimensional reality.

Gijsbrechts, *Cut-out Easel*, 1670

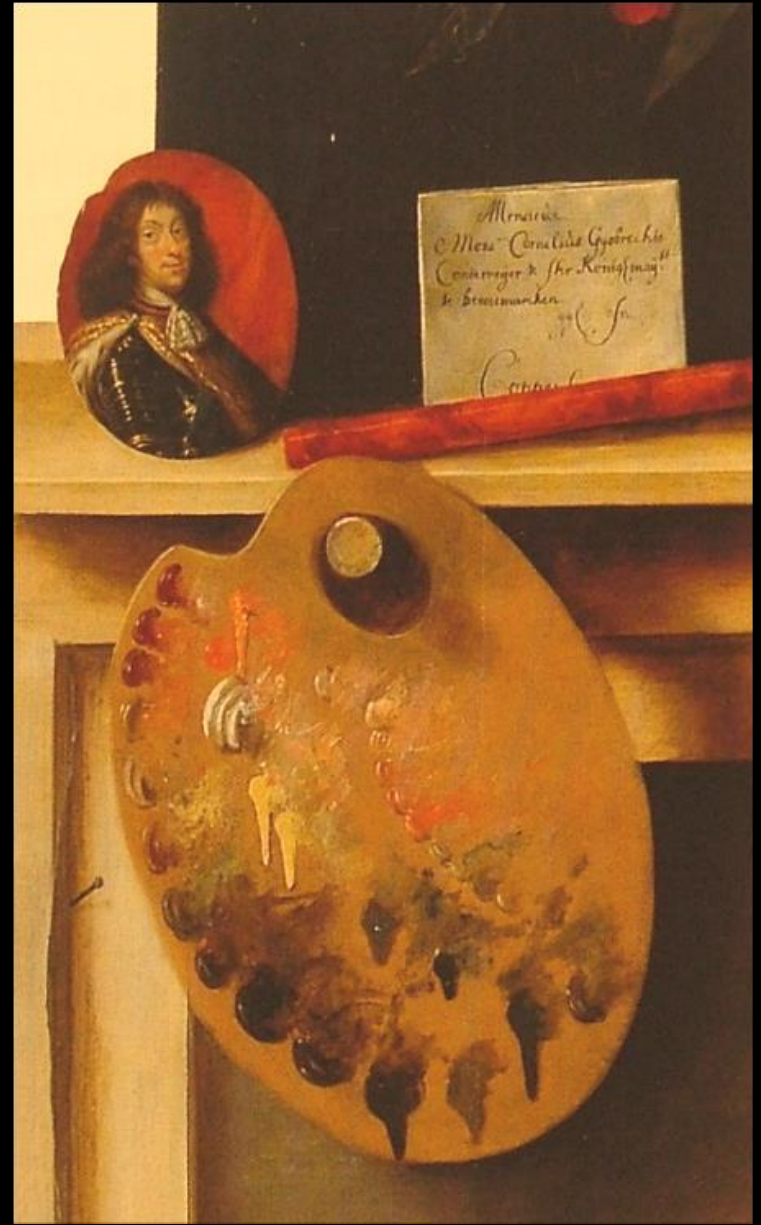
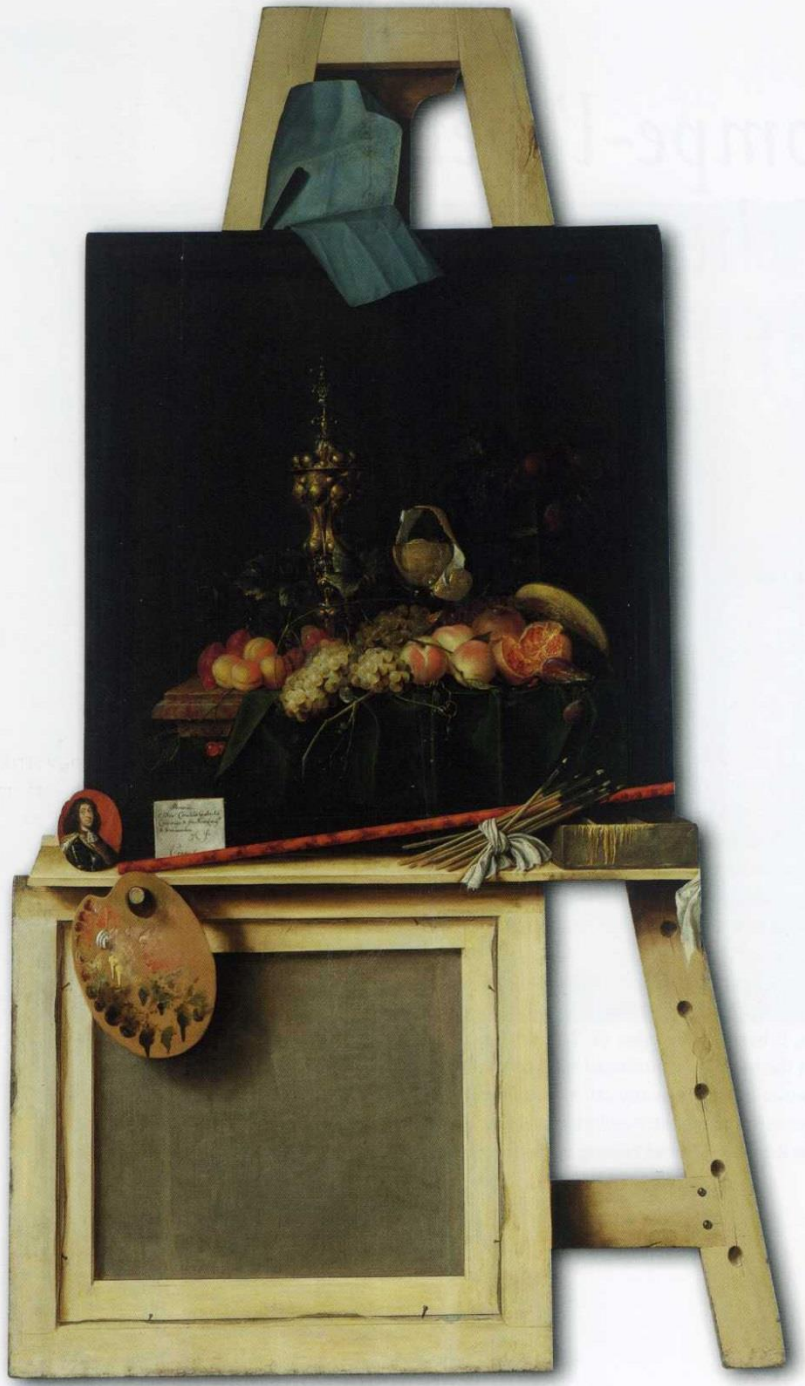


Gijsbrechts, *Cut-out Easel*,
1670

Trompe l'oeil

Illusionistic painting designed to “fool the eye”; creates the momentary illusion that the painted imagery exists in three-dimensional reality.

Gijsbrechts, *Cut-out Easel*, 1670.
Oil on cut-out board

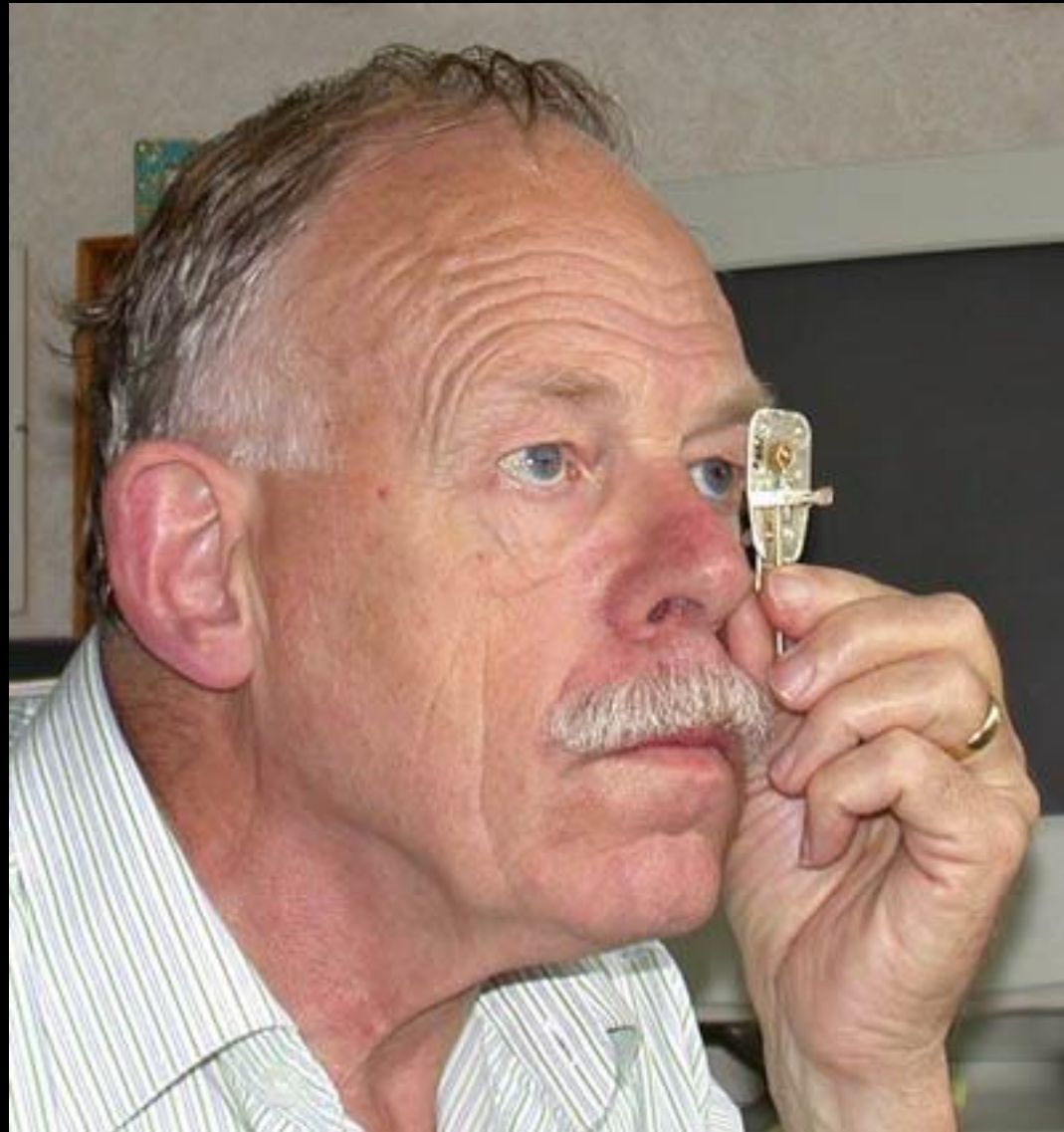
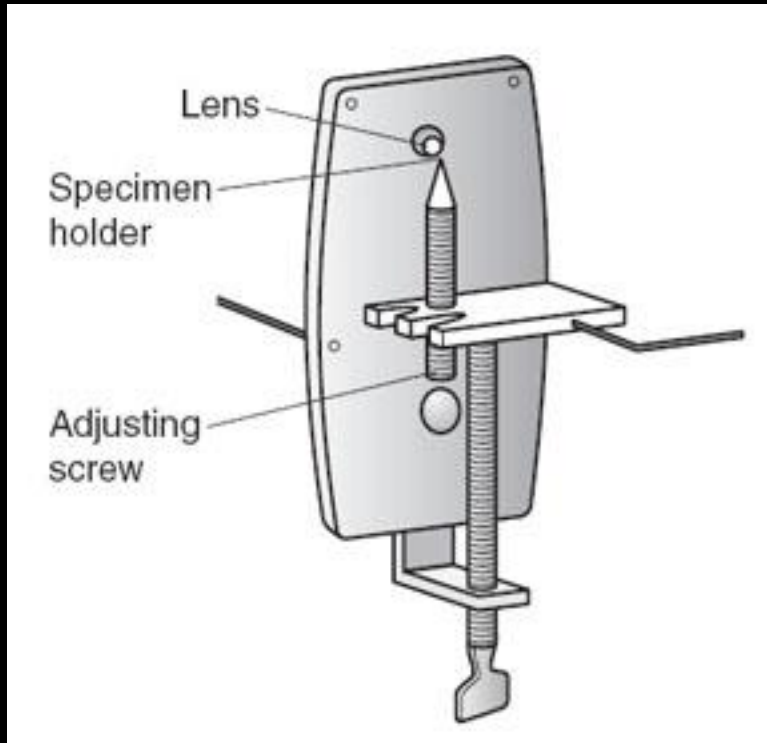


Dutch Interest in Vision

The Dutch contributed to the advancement of lens technology in the 17th century, and they made some of the earliest modern telescopes and microscopes.



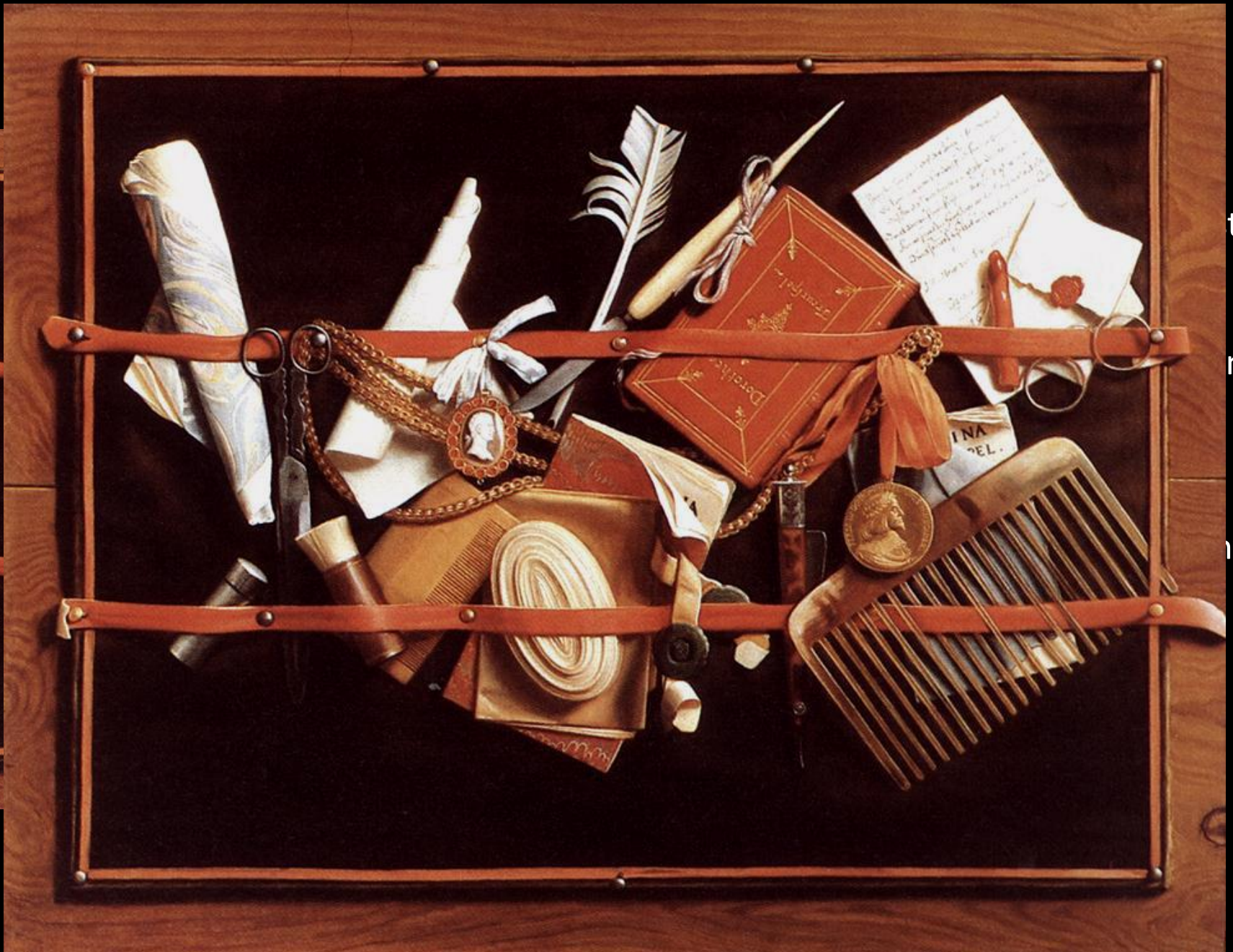
Microscope invented by Anton van Leeuwenhoek, 17th-century citizen of Delft.



Technology expands vision, but also stimulated discussions about the limitations and reliability of human senses. If some things cannot be seen without the help of instruments, can we trust our eyes?

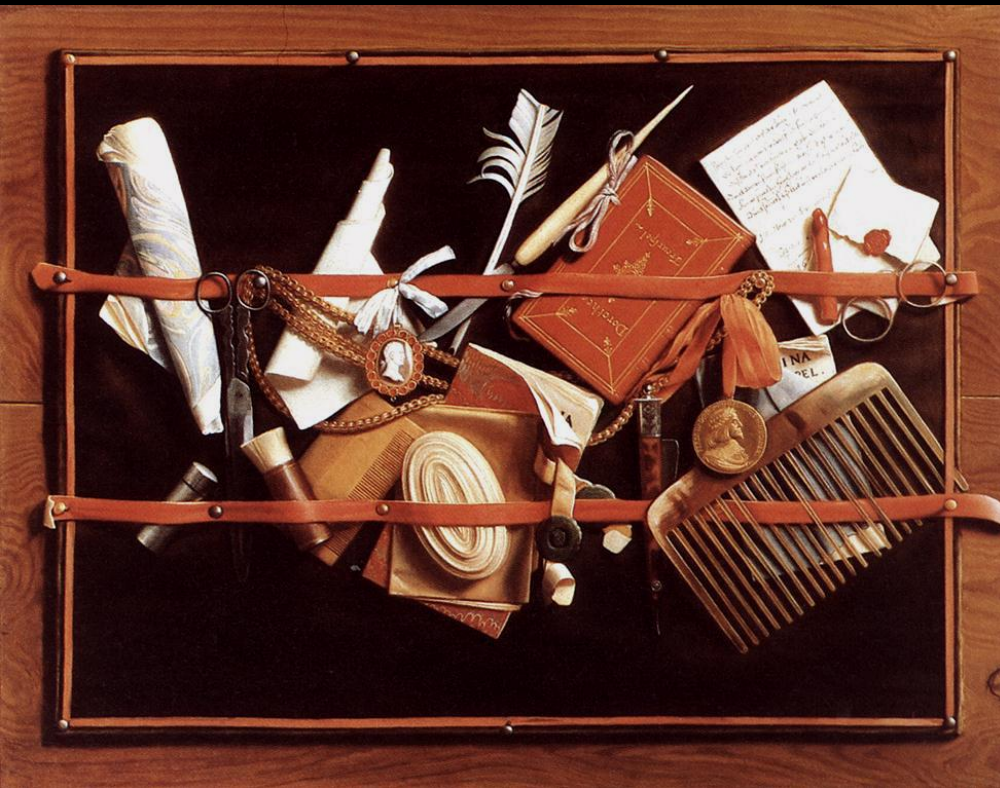


Samuel van Hoogstraten, *Letter Rack*, c. 1670



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Van Hoogstraten, *Letter Rack*, c. 1670

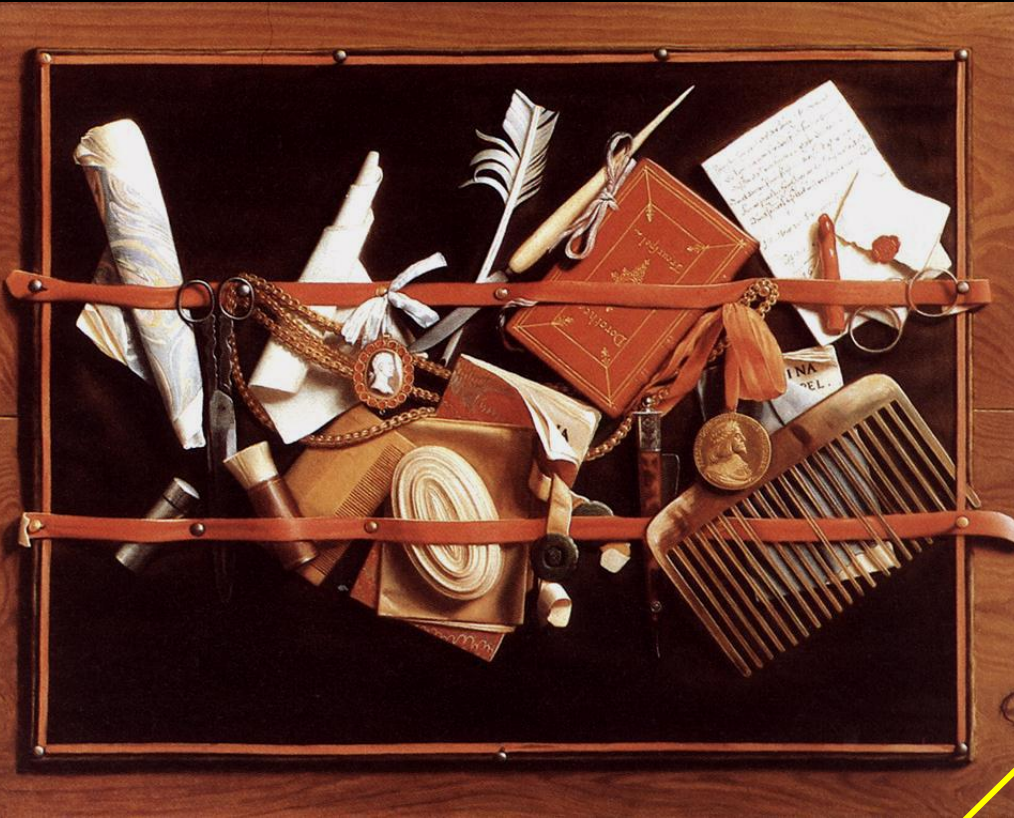


Willem Kalf, *Still Life with Nautilus Cup*, c. 1662



Samuel van Hoogstraten, *Letter Rack*, c. 1670

Letter addressed to Van Hoogstraten



A play he wrote

Medal and gold chain awarded to him
by Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand III



Samuel van Hoogstraten,
Perspective Box, c. 1655-60



Samuel van Hoogstraten, *Perspective Box*, c. 1655-60



- Consists of five panels: top/ceiling, back, 2 sides, base
- Front left open to let in light
- No objects are placed in the box; all images are painted on the panels

Ceiling of the box

Back wall



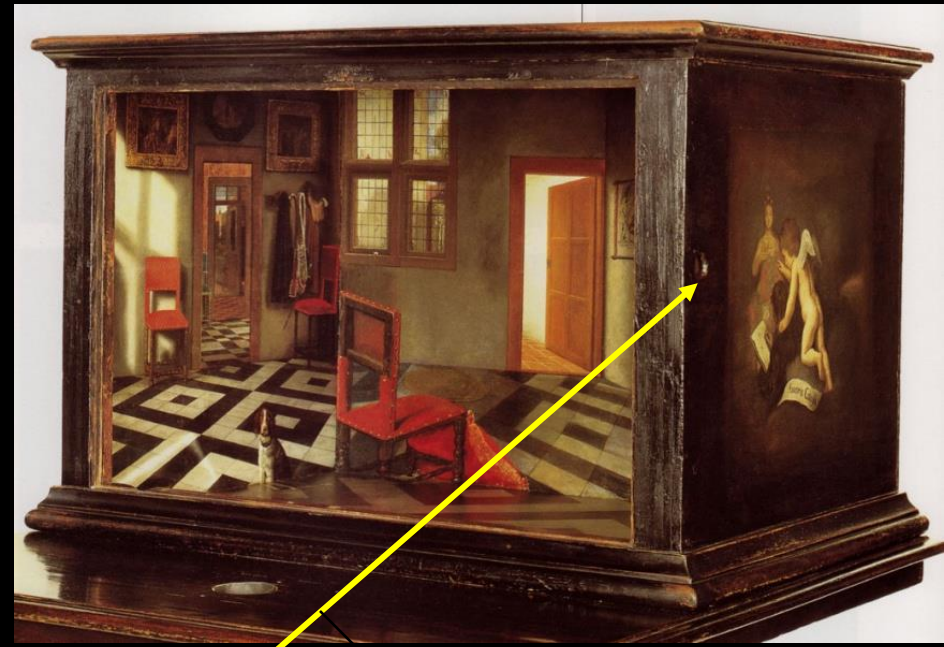
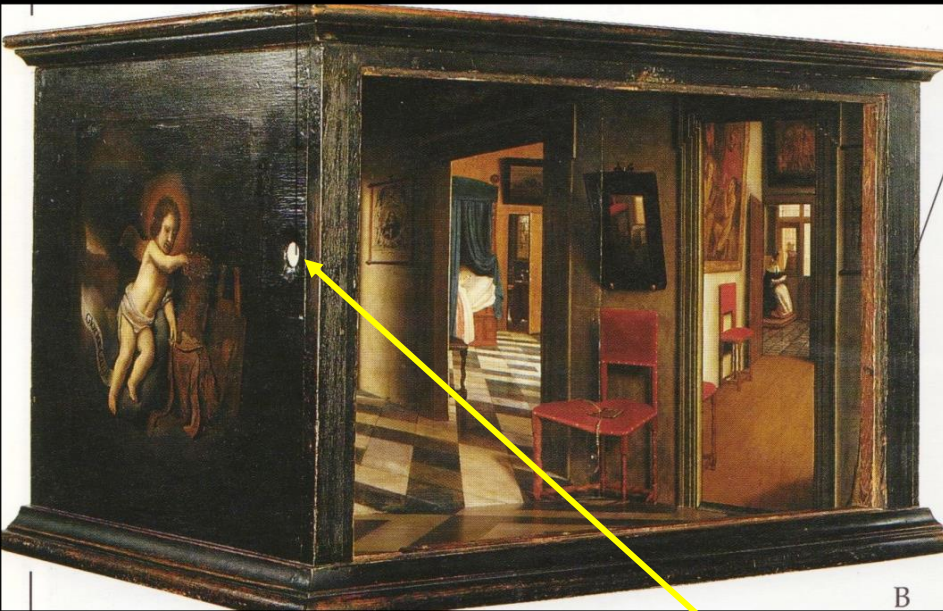
Side wall

Side wall



Base/floor

Samuel van Hoogstraten, *Perspective Box*, c. 1655-60



Two peep holes

Van Hoogstraten's Perspective Box installed at the National Gallery in London.
The visitor on the left is looking through the peep hole.





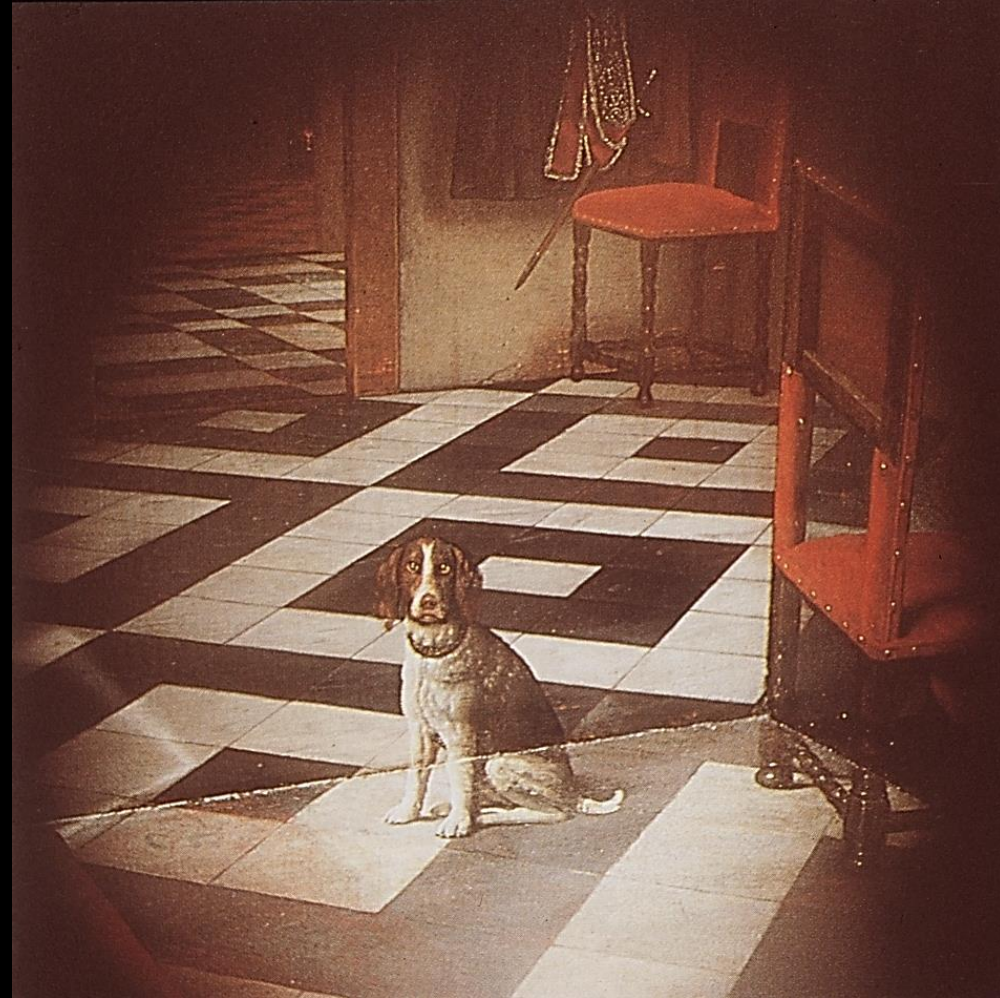
Samuel van Hoogstraten,
Perspective Box, c. 1655-60

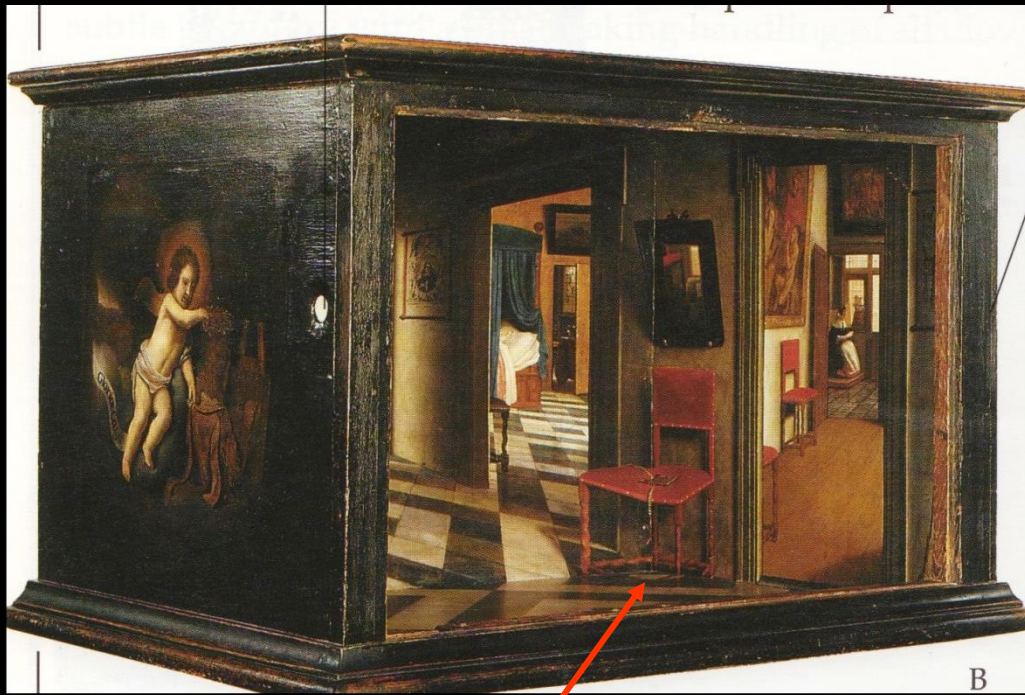
Detail



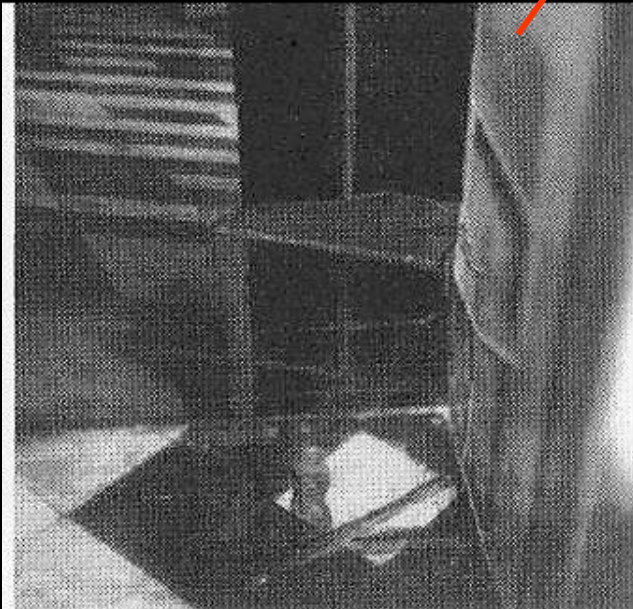
The upper half of the dog is painted on the left side wall and the lower half on the base panel. Part of the chair is painted on the back wall and part on the base. The floor tiles are crooked and climbing up the left wall.

The dog, the chair and the floor tiles seen through one of the peep holes.



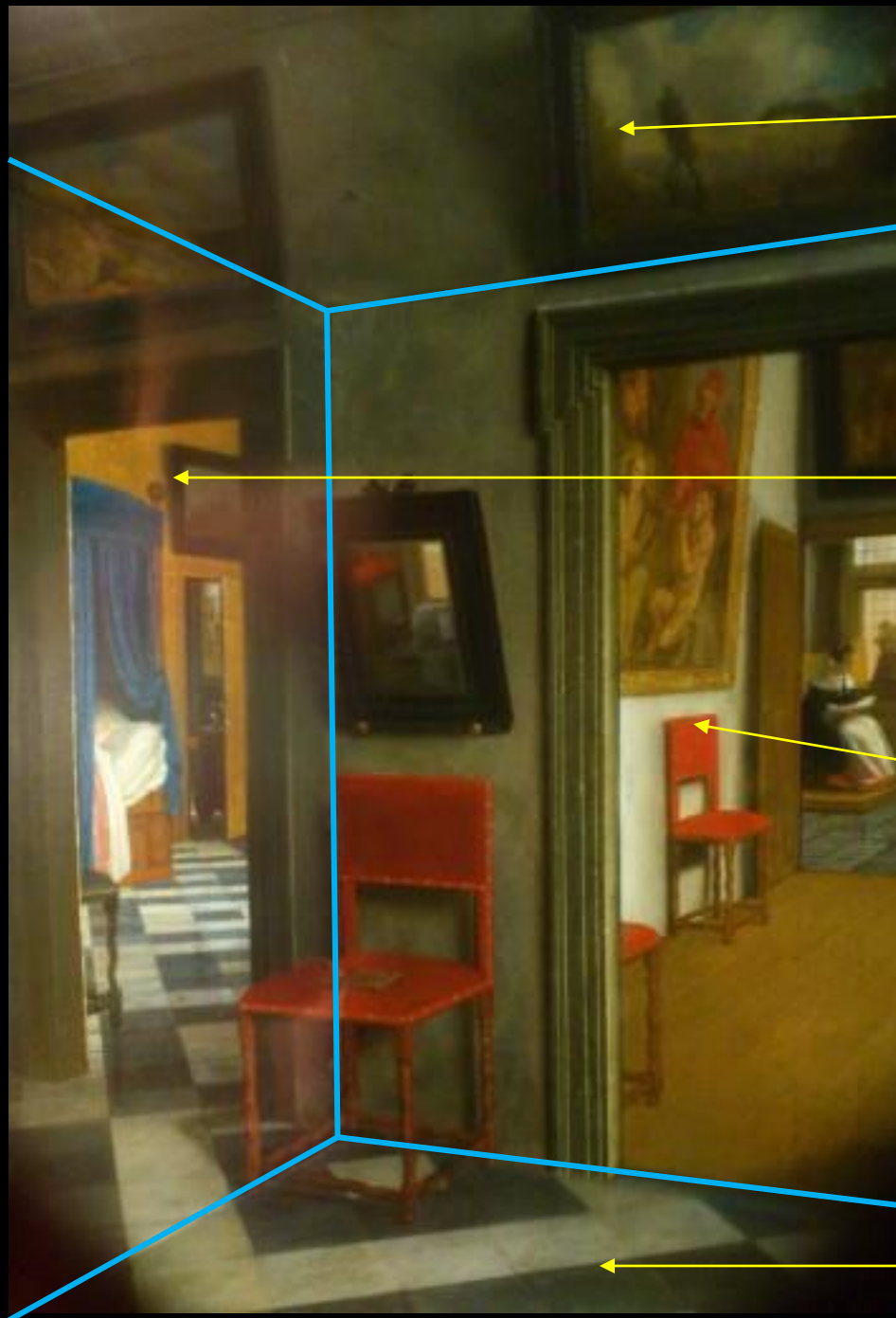


A chair in the corner painted over three panels (back wall, side wall, base), and the chair as seen through a peep hole.





Part of right side wall, ceiling,
back wall, and floor through
peephole.



Ceiling/top panel of the box

Back wall

Side wall

Base

Ceiling of the box

Back wall



Side wall

Side wall



Base/floor



Samuel van Hoogstraten,
Perspective Box, c. 1655-60

Part of right side wall, ceiling,
back wall, and floor through
peephole.

Playing with Vision:
17th-century Dutch trompe l'oeil and peep boxes

- Definition of trompe l'oeil painting: illusionistic painting designed to “fool the eye”; creates the momentary illusion that the painted imagery exists in three-dimensional reality.
- Skillful and witty, but also asks questions about the reliability of vision
- Most masterful examples were produced for the nobility and elite merchants—these were labor-intensive works, making them expensive
- Dutch works that deal with questions of vision were made in the context of wider intellectual interest in visual technology, e.g., microscope and telescope