

The Girl With a Pearl Earring is Fake



Miles Mathis

First published December 11, 2021

As usual, this is just my professional opinion, but this time it is based on my skills as a portrait painter.

In *Fake or Fortune*, the popular English series that has now entered its ninth season, Fiona Bruce tells us in an early episode that nearly half the art market may be fake; and in another episode on the famous forger van Meegeren she admits that many forgeries are still in major museums. There we see that van Meegeren fooled all the experts at the huge Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam with some very ugly paintings that look nothing like Vermeer or any other paintings of that century. That museum paid millions for paintings they are now using as target practice in their backrooms. But despite that, you are supposed to think art experts are still experts. Those old art experts were ninnies, but the new ones are a different breed, I guess. At the end of every show, Bruce and her buddy Philip Mould bring in some art expert to make a final ruling on a painting, and we are expected to bow to them as if they are real authorities. And of course no one ever asks a real art expert—a talented artist—what they think. No one has ever considered doing that, for what are obvious reasons: if they admitted the most talented artists had the best eyes, all these experts would be out of a job. They don't want me or anyone like me making pronouncements, because they wish to save all pronouncing for themselves.

So although they admit forgeries are in museums even now, they want you to think they are relatively minor works by relatively minor artists. They aren't.

I have previously outed the recent [Leonardo as a fake](#), as well as two others; and before that I outed several important Raphaels as fakes [in my paper on Dresden](#). Here I will out one of the most famous paintings in the world, made all the more famous by a recent Hollywood movie of the same name where Scarlett Johansson plays the girl. I have already shown you how that movie is propaganda in one way: it sells [David Hockney's ridiculous theory of camera obscuras](#). But it also sells this painting as genuine, which of course helps the Mauritshuis Museum and its curators and experts, as well as all the other “experts” who have signed off on—or kept quiet about—this painting.

Honestly, I knew this painting was fake at a glance, the first time I saw it, and I have already alluded to that in a previous paper. However, I felt it was necessary to return to the subject to hit it with more gusto. I am sure this painting will be outed as a fake at some point, so I want to be on record having predicted it. How did I know at a glance? **Because the painting isn't any good.** It has a shocking lack of finish for a painting of that period, just being blocked in. The expression is also Modern: the girl doesn't look like a model of that period for so many reasons. The craquelure is too consistent, and it doesn't have any of the other expected damage. Beyond that, it doesn't fit Vermeer's *oeuvre*. He didn't paint anything else like that. He wasn't a painter of life-size busts, or even half-size busts. He was a painter of miniatures. And he wasn't known for being loose, he was known for being tight. So this painting is almost as bad as a matter of forging as the van Meergerens. The only difference is that she is pretty and they were ugly. But the paint quality here is almost as ugly.

The whole thing is bad, but the worst part is the white collar and the blouse. The collar is just a blob, with two or three tones and no edge variation. Likewise for the blouse, which is basically just two tones blocked in. When did Vermeer or any other professional 17th century artist paint like that? That is completely modern. It is the way they teach portrait painters to paint *now*, when they bother to teach them anything. It wasn't how anyone painted back then, being lazy *alla prima*.

Also, do you really think Vermeer, a lover of detailed and colorful backgrounds, would choose a solid black background for this portrait? The whole thing is the opposite of delicate.

So I guess this painting was passed on a materials check. The forger used an old canvas and the correct colors, then cracked it in the oven. The museum desperately wanted a new Vermeer, so they let it pass. But otherwise it is pathetic. It shouldn't have fooled anyone.

Also interesting is that someone is trying to give you a clue here, since at Wikipedia they currently publish an absurdly large jpeg, where you can study the details. There you can see the pearl earring is actually a ghost, consisting of little more than an outline and a highlight, with no connection to the ear. Do you really think the miniaturist Vermeer would paint it like that? It is so bad they now suggest it may not be pearl at all, but tin!

Besides, Vermeer had already painted this large teardrop pearl in his famous *Mistress and Maid*, which is obviously where the forger got his idea. But there it isn't painted anything like that.



It is obviously meant to be the same pearl, but the forger painted it so poorly some experts are now trying to apologize for it by claiming it is tin. I included part of the scarf, so you can see how poorly that is painted as well.



They try to tell us that they have discovered tiny eyelashes, but you can see for yourself they are making that up. Those aren't eyelashes, they are just spreading of the black pigment. You see the same spreading around the iris and pupil of the far eye there, and I don't think those are eyelashes. But that's how brainless these people are: they think that someone who painted the blouse with two broads tones would paint eyelashes you can only see with a magnifying glass.

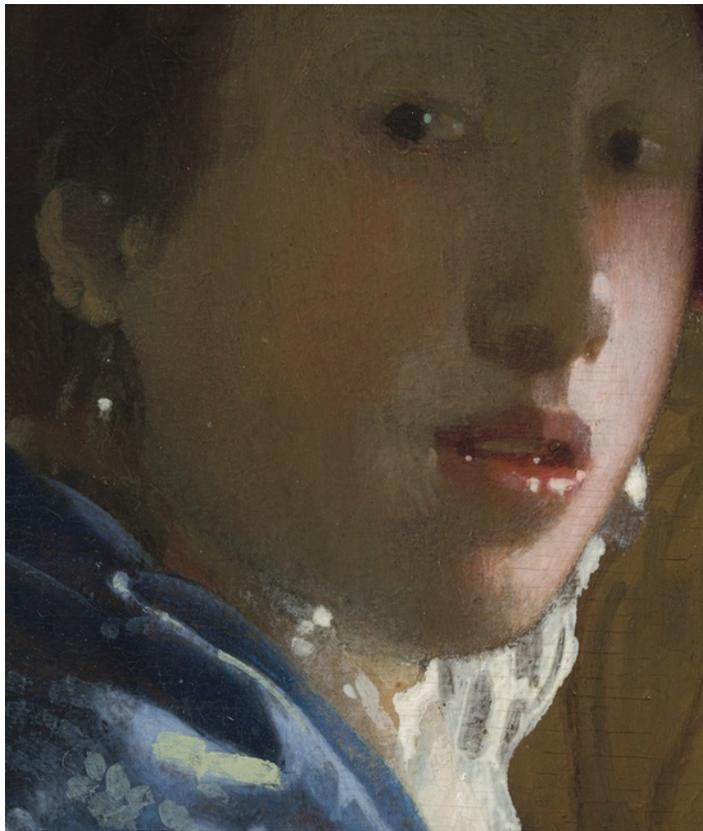
The spreading of the black doesn't suggest eyelashes, it suggest **improperly made paint**. The dimwit who faked this must have had someone hand-grind some black paint with 17th century pigments like bone or carbon black, but it looks like the grind didn't really work, with the pigment being too course or

not properly ground into the oil. We can also see how thinly this was painted, which again points to modern amateurs.

I see only three or four colors used there, five if some smalt was added to the black. And even in the shadow above the eye, you can see that the black was not properly ground, since it has pebbled. A professional portrait painter will normally use a broader range of tones around an eye, to indicate cooler and warmer areas. I commonly use eight to ten. And even the touchlight is dashed in clumsily. No effort has been made to indicate the red in the inner corner of the eye, and the lower eyelid not only has no eyelashes, it has no indication of the lid at all. It is just a blur.

I also find the way the inside of the iris is painted to be strange, especially since this is supposed to be Vermeer—a miniaturist who should notice detail. I paint rather loose, but I would never elide from the inside of the iris to the tear duct like that. Do you see how the round iris isn't round here, being squashed over into the tear duct, as if the two edges were the same? That's very lazy painting. Not loose, just lazy.

If we compare *Girl with a Pearl Earring* to a Vermeer painting much like it, *Girl with Red Hat*, we again find no match in technique. The artist of the latter has dabbed in the face with small vertical strokes, then blended them, but we don't see that in the former.



And although the latter is smaller, being about 9 inches high rather than 18, the blouse and collar is painted with much more virtuosity and detail. *The Girl with a Red Hat* is painted with much more mastery: notice how the white collar, probably lace, has a transparency that is brilliantly suggested in an offhand way. It isn't just an opaque crusty blob. It flows. And it flows into a delicate background of a complex yellow-brown tone, not a black pool of nothing. Although the same pearl earring has

gone transparent here, and the ear is very sketchy, I don't see the same hand at work. Possibly the forger of *Girl with a Pearl Earring* borrowed his treatment of the earring from this work, but it was ill-advised, seeing that his head was almost twice as large and not in so much shadow.



Girl with a Pearl Earring doesn't even match the style of the painting it most resembles, *Study of a Young Woman* at the Metropolitan. Though this is where the forger borrowed his size, everything else fails to match. I don't think either one is by Vermeer, but they aren't by the same hand regardless. The latter has a dark background, but it is a luminous dark brown, not a dead black. The scarf of the latter is brilliantly painted in smooth strokes of the period, and the cape is also very much better, painted with real virtuosity in places (lower right corner). In fact, the cape looks mostly repainted, since the upper parts are very clunky, not matching the lower right. So although *Study* may mostly be from that period, *Girl with a Pearl Earring* is not. *Girl with a Pearl Earring* is a much later fake, using *Study* as a guide for size, pose, and basic treatment on the eyes. The forger wanted to create a similar painting, but use an attractive model instead of this homely child with a wide mouth and plucked or receding hairline. *Study* could easily have been used as a guide, since it didn't come to the Met until 1979. In the 1870s it was in Brussels, in the collection of Prince d'Arenberg, the importance of which will be clear to you by the end of this paper.

And here's the clincher for accountants out there, with no eye. **The painting has no provenance.** It was bought at auction in **1881** and cannot be tracked before that. It was bought at that time for two guilders by an **army officer**. He supposedly bid on it on the advice of Victor de Stuers, an art historian who is the one who chose the architect for the Rijksmuseum. But this story makes no sense, as you see, because it doesn't explain why the genius de Stuers didn't bid on the painting himself. He could have gotten it for the Rijksmuseum for three guilders, but it instead went to the Mauritshuis in The Hague instead, when the heirless army officer gave it to them in his will. That tidy, isn't it? De Stuers was an artist himself, and high up in the art world, which tells me he must have been involved in this fake. Probably not as the artist, but almost certainly as the enabler of this fraud.

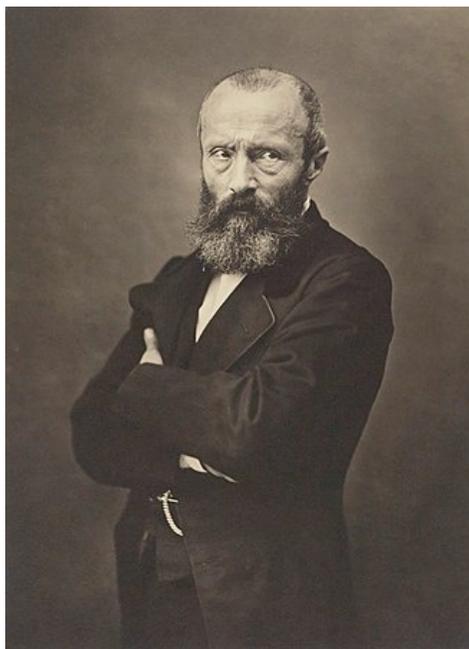
But to round out this critique and fill it in, let us do the usual: go down the Wikipedia page circling contradictions and inconsistencies. Very little is known of Vermeer, but he was allegedly born on **Halloween**. You may think that is just a coincidence, but we have always found it to be a marker. It tells me we are already inside a con.

Here's something most people don't know: Vermeer's maternal grandfather Balthasar Gerrits was arrested for. . . **counterfeiting**. Faking paintings, I guess. Vermeer's father Reijnier Janszoon was a **silkworker**, meaning he was almost certainly Jewish. Reijnier did indeed deal in paintings as well as silk, so if the family was counterfeiting, it was probably art. Vermeer was also a Reyersz and a Baltens. We aren't told where the name Vermeer comes from, indicating it was a fake name like Stalin or Lenin. Vermeer's real name was Johannes Reijnerzoon, but they have to bury that because it would be too obvious that he was a . . . **Reiner**, as in Carl Reiner. Jewish. His father is the one who made up the name Vermeer to hide behind as a crypto-Jew, which he did after being caught as a counterfeiter. At first he took the name Vos, meaning. . . **Fox**. We have seen that before, haven't we? Tied to the Quakers? He later took the name Vermeer, which doesn't mean "from the lake" or something. It means "far more". As in, "we charge *far more* than it is worth".

Vermeer was an early **Calvinist**, though we are told he had to convert to Catholicism to marry the wealthy Catharina Bolenes. We can be sure she was Jewish as well, both due to the name and to the source of the wealth. Also due to the fact that Vermeer's mother-in-law Maria Thins was a famous and early devotee of the **Jesuits**, who were themselves Jewish. Two of Vermeer's children were named for the top Jesuits: Franciscus and Ignatius.

Vermeer was also involved in fraud, forging his mother-in-law's name to borrow money, then right after that dying mysteriously at age 43. This indicates to me he probably faked his death to avoid jail. The usual with these people. Maybe he had a big life insurance policy as well.

Strangely, they didn't realize how great Vermeer was in the past. No one mentioned him from about 1660 to about 1860, and he wasn't included in many surveys of Dutch art during those centuries. Then suddenly, a guy named Theophile Thore-Burger, an art critic of course, rose from the ground claiming to have found **66** Vermeers, though the "experts" have now ditched 22 of those as fakes.



That's Theophile, which means god-lover. Doesn't really look like a god-lover, does he? But he doesn't look any more shady than your average art critic. This guy levitated from some grave in 1848, just in time to infiltrate the nascent Republican movement. He was yet another crypto-Jew and Communist, probably hired by the same people that hired Marx and Engels—meaning, the Rothschilds. He immediately founded a newspaper *La Vraie Republique*, which should have been called *La Fausse Republique*. So, just the sort of person you would expect to be involved with a rediscovery of Vermeer. The head of the Second Republic Cavaignac banned him, but he just went to Brussels and kept publishing his dreck. He returned to Paris after the amnesty of 1859 and began promoting his fake Vermeers in 1860. He died or became a zombie in 1869.

Vermeer's dealer Gerrit Reynst was also accused of fraud. After his death, his collection was auctioned and his dealer sent 13 works to the Elector of Brandenburg Frederick William. Frederick sent 12 of the 13 back as forgeries. So it was just as bad back then.

Strangely, Vermeer never had any pupils and no one outside of Delft had ever heard of him in his lifetime. He did no drawings and when he died his studio had almost nothing in it of value, and nothing you would expect in an artist's studio. *No camera obscura was listed.* *Neither were paints or brushes.*

Although Vermeer was supposed to be poor and died destitute, his paintings are full of very expensive lapis lazuli, more expensive than gold.

Next we learn that Vermeer painted very slowly, producing only three (small) paintings a year. That also conflicts with the style of *The Girl with a Pearl Earring*, since that was painted very quickly. I could paint it in a matter of hours, as could any number of my colleagues. My students have seen me paint portrait demos with that amount of finish or more in one sitting, double that size.

In fact, I could paint a *better* portrait of that girl in that costume in under four hours.

I would never be caught painting a clunky white collar like that, for one thing. And the bravura brushwork the artist has attempted in the headscarf is not really bravura at all, as you saw in the detail above. To any top portrait painter with a real bravura style, that just looks amateurish. If you don't believe me, ask Jeremy Lipking or Paul Oxborough or Quang Ho or Dan Gerhartz or dozens of other living artists I could list. As I say, that style isn't 17th century, it is bad 19th or 20th century, by someone trying to be Sargent or Sorolla or Landseer or Lawrence, but failing. We would call it advanced student work, advanced atelier, but not professional. If you entered that in a portrait contest, it would be dismissed as student grade.

I am not criticizing Vermeer here, you understand, since this isn't a Vermeer. I like some of his other paintings, which are charming. Oversold, but charming.

I had never previously studied Vermeer's *oeuvre* closely, but now that I have for this paper, I would say that most or all of his works are fakes. For one thing, the floor of his studio is depicted in five different ways, with small tiles, large x-tiling, blue-separated tiling, and no tiling. The windows are also extremely variable.



Girl Reading a Letter at an Open Window is in a different hand from the rest, being far scrabblier. The window is wrong, and the curtain is very clunky. They admit this painting wasn't "properly identified" until 1860, though it was identified by the shyster Thore-Burger (see above). Restoration last year revealed a large and very bad Cupid painting in the background, and you can see why someone painted it out: it looks like nothing Vermeer would have done or included. That Cupid painting, like the curtain, is a disaster.** So, for that matter, is the table in front. Another red flag on this painting is that it was one of the paintings the Russians allegedly took from Dresden after the bombing. That links us to my commentary on Raphael's *Sistine Madonna*, another horrible and obvious fake "saved" from Dresden and stolen by the Russians, **that also contains a green curtain on a rod**. Well, what do you know! I didn't see that coming in. Funny that no one has ever noticed that before. Just a coincidence, I'm sure. We will come back to that.

With further study, I have news for you: Cupid is stepping on **masks** there, which is of course another clue to the con being worked here. Another reason that was painted over: too obvious.

The Procuress also looks like a bad fake to me, from a very different hand and mind. I see no similarities between it and the other Vermeers.

Same for *The Astronomer* and *The Geographer*, which were painted by the same person, but that person is not the same as the person who painted any of the others. Both can only be traced back to 1713, so although they are signed, we may assume the signature is fake. The window and floor don't match Vermeer's studio, and the paint handling is also different.



Christ in the House of Martha and Mary is another joke, and I can't believe anyone believes this attribution to Vermeer. It is 63" tall and very poorly done, looking nothing like a Vermeer in any way, other than the light coming from the left. Christ's head and drapery are an absolute trainwreck, being amateurish in the extreme, and none of the hands are painted like Vermeer painted hands. It is the worst fake I have seen since Titian's *Sacrifice of Isaac*:



Look at that donkey in the corner! You have to laugh. I always have a big belly laugh everytime I see that. The painting is in Venice, but I am told they have it in storage. I hope so.

The late *Allegory of Faith* is also an obvious mis-attribution, since it again betrays a very different hand than that of the others. The hands and arms aren't painted anything like the others, the drapery folds are squarer, the skintones are different, and the marbling in the floor is different. The Freemasonic floor is the only reason to think of attributing this to Vermeer, but everything else—including the canvas size—is a far miss. It lacks all subtlety in allegory, having a snake squashed by a brick, no less. And it is notably unsigned.

Diana and her Companions is another crappy unsigned work that looks nothing like a Vermeer, with arms painted like flat noodles and leaves painted like dried moss.

So that leads us to this question: was Vermeer completely manufactured by Thore-Burger and other Jewish historians and art critics and dealers? Of the 66 paintings Thore-Burger claimed, the “experts” have already thrown out 1/3rd as fakes, which you have to admit wasn't a good sign. Anyone that is 1/3rd dishonest is probably completely dishonest, so we should immediately doubt the other 2/3rd, right? I have just shown you that another third is fake, leaving us with only about a dozen. But although I don't want to hit them all, even these don't match. *The Milkmaid* is really a different style once again,

with mysterious tiling at the bottom of the walls. *The Girl with the Wineglass*, ditto. *The Music Lesson*, ditto. So there may be only a handful here from the same hand, and with more study I might be able to separate them out as well. Are these from the same hand as the Vermeer who did the two cityscapes? Maybe, maybe not. But you can already see that the whole Vermeer story has completely fallen apart. Given the history we are sold, this guy may be another ghost. They may have gathered together some similar unsigned paintings from a couple of centuries, forged signatures on them, and attached them to this crypto-Jewish counterfeiter and dealer from Delft. The whole thing looks like a scam from the get-go, composed to create another big-name Dutch artist like Rembrandt that they could charge “far more” for.

But let's return to the link I uncovered between Vermeer and Raphael fakes from Dresden:



I have previously commented on the gaucherie of that framing on the *Sistine Madonna*, with the thin curtain rod at the top and the faux bar at the bottom that the bored cherubs are resting on. Raphael would never have stooped to something like that, which is a modern trope. I notice that since I published that in 2016, most places on the internet, including Wikipedia, have cropped the image to hide that. Wikipedia hides the bar at the bottom, having the image appear to end with the cherubs. And even the museum in Dresden crops the image at the top, making the curtain rod less noticeable. Very strange, as I think you will admit. Almost as if they are responding to my critique, hiding from it. Or, not “almost as”. Exactly like, since I can see that is what they are doing. I also notice something I didn't notice before: Saint Sixtus has laid his mitre on that bar as well. He is why this is called the *Sistine Madonna*. Sixtus=Sistine. The Sistine Chapel was named for Pope Sixtus IV, but the Sistine Madonna was named for the much earlier Saint Sixtus II*, Pope of the 3rd century. I think he is another clue here, that clue being easier to read with his companion on the other side Saint Barbara. These two saints are very strange ones for Raphael to be painting here on either side of the Mother and Child, seeing that Barbara has some very weird attributes. To start with, she was from Heliopolis, which is. . .

Phoenicia. Now Baalbek in Lebanon. Note the name Baal, there: he was the high god of the Phoenicians, same as El. Barbara is still the patron saint of artillerymen, bombers, and mathematicians. Her insignia is a cannon. Intrigued yet? Why do guys working with explosives need a patron saint? We find similar markers with Saint Sixtus, who reversed the bulls of his predecessor Stephen I, making up with Stephen's archenemy, St. Cyprian of Carthage. Carthage was also Phoenician, remember.

Barbara, like Vermeer, appears to be another fiction. Although she is said to have lived in the time of Sixtus II, she was unknown until at least three centuries later. She didn't become a cult until the 9th century, and then only in the east. She wasn't accepted in Rome until the 12th century. In 1969 she was removed from the official list of saints, since even the “experts” in the Church were ready to admit she was fictional.

At no other time did Raphael paint Saint Barbara. He painted St. Catherine twice, St. Anne, St. Lucy, St. Elizabeth, and St. Margaret, but never St. Barbara. So this painting makes no sense on any level.

But that green curtain now links it to the Vermeer fake, telling us they were faked by the same artist in the same studio. Not only is the curtain rod very thin and of the same color (wood or brown metal), it seems to have the same little rings of the same diameter.

Which of course begs the question: was there ever a real *Sistine Madonna*? Did this fake replace the original after the war, the original being the one praised by Vasari and everyone else? Or was that story made up as part of its fake history? Was the real one destroyed in the firebombing? Probably not, since I have shown that firebombing was also mostly faked. If the Vermeer goes back to the late 1800s, then the Raphael would also have to go back to that time, since they were faked by the same person or same studio of forgers. Which would indicate this conjob goes back long before WWII, and includes a long historical list of high-ranking liars and frauds. If the *Girl with a Pearl Earring* was faked at the same time as the *Girl in the Window* and the *Sistine Madonna*, it indicates the studio of forgers was connected to Victor de Stuers, who we saw above. De Stuers was the first head of the conservation department in the Netherlands and an early bigwig at the Rijksmuseum, which you can see would have given him the power to pull off something like this. Stuers is probably the Dutch equivalent of Stuart. Victor's father was a general in the Dutch East India Company.

But there is something else to notice on the *Girl in the Window*. When they restored it last year, you can see they removed a couple of inches all the way round, uncovering some weirds areas in the margins. They lost part of the curtains to your right, and also the area above the curtain rod. These areas were allegedly painted in “after the death of Vermeer”, but that makes no sense, being that Vermeer never left strange margins like that on his canvases. This proves the painting is fake as much as anything else, but everyone is pretending not to notice that.

Added December 12, 2021: a Dutch reader wrote in with more evidence the Vermeer story is a joke. I am simply pasting his email here:

Grandfather Jan Reyersz, a strange name since his father is called Reynier, not Reyer. He married with Cornelia Goris, her father is called Gregorius, so apparently Gregorius Goris (a joke I guess).

They get a son called Reijnier Vos, this is another joke referring to the Dutch mediëval epos Reinaart de Vos, every Dutchman learns about this work in school.

He married with Dignum Balthasars (why not Balthasardr?) you know the semitic origin of the name Balthazar. She is the daughter of Balthasar Gerrits, another joke referring to Balthasar

Gerards, the fake murderer of William of Orange (you only have to check the given names of his entire family, all very common french names, to realize the guy didn't exist. Every dutchman will immediately think of Gerards when hearing the name Balthasar Gerrits).

From the marriage Vos and Balthasardr we get Joannes Vermeer, our painter, marrying Catharina Reiniersdr Bolnes (*another* Reinier? Not a very common name).

They get a son Jan Vermeer who married Maria **Anne Frank**, another joke since the famous Anne Frank's real name was Annemarie, or maybe Anne-Marie). Which indicates much of the Vermeer history was pegged together after WWII, confirming your link to Dresden.

*And also for the Monastery of San Sisto, Piacenza, where it was allegedly to be installed.

**It is the same cupid painting in the background of the *Lady Standing at a Virginal* at the National Gallery, London, proving that one was faked by the same studio.