

FFCC Review Activity

Natalie Tonra

Name of Work	Woman Holding a Balance
Artist	Jan Vermeer
Style	Dutch Baroque

Image of the Work:



Form

Vermeer uses oil paint on canvas for this work. He uses a combination of light and dark colors to create light, shading and a sense of depth in the work. He uses a combination of dull and light colors to convey a sense of calmness throughout the work.

Function

This work has been said to have a myriad of functions. Many claim this work has a religious function due to the Last Judgment scene that is depicted in the painting. This painting is also said to be a vanitas painting. The presence of the scale that the woman is shown holding is what makes this work a vanitas painting because the scale symbolizes the transient nature of earthly pleasures. Furthermore, this work is said to be a genre scene because it depicts a brief moment in time during the 17th century in Holland. This work gives us a glimpse of what life was like for the wealthy people of the 17th century in Holland.

Content

This work depicts a wealthy Dutch woman, standing by a window and weighing jewelry on a small scale. It can be inferred that the woman depicted is wealthy due to the luxurious clothes she is seen wearing. She wears a fur-trimmed jacket, which is a luxurious item. This work also shows the Last Judgment scene that depicts the second coming of Christ in which Christ is said to judge the living and the dead on the content of their characters. There is also a mirror that is shown facing the woman. Various jewels, pearl necklaces, and a gold chain are shown before the woman on the table.

Context

Artist Jan Vermeer painted this work in 1622-1623. Vermeer was known for his brilliant paintings that convey a sense of harmony and serenity. This work is no exception. Vermeer was not as much of a renowned artist as he is in the present day, while he lived. He died in debt, and suffered as a result of the fall of the Dutch economy in 1672. Not much is known about Vermeer's early life, but later in life he married a Catholic woman, converted to the faith, and had 11 children. This work is considered to have religious context due to the presence of the Last Judgment scene shown in the painting. The scale is also said to symbolize the transient nature of earthly goods, and how their importance on earth will not be reflected on judgment day. This work did not amass the cultural significance and the respect that it deserves until much later after Vermeer's time.