

PRESS KIT



CLOSE TO
Vermeer

A FILM BY Suzanne Raes

KINO LORBER



Netherlands / 2023 / 78 min / Color
In Dutch and English with English subtitles

PUBLICITY CONTACTS

Kate Patterson
kpatterson@kinolorber.com
Juan Medina
jmedina@kinolorber.com

DISTRIBUTOR CONTACT

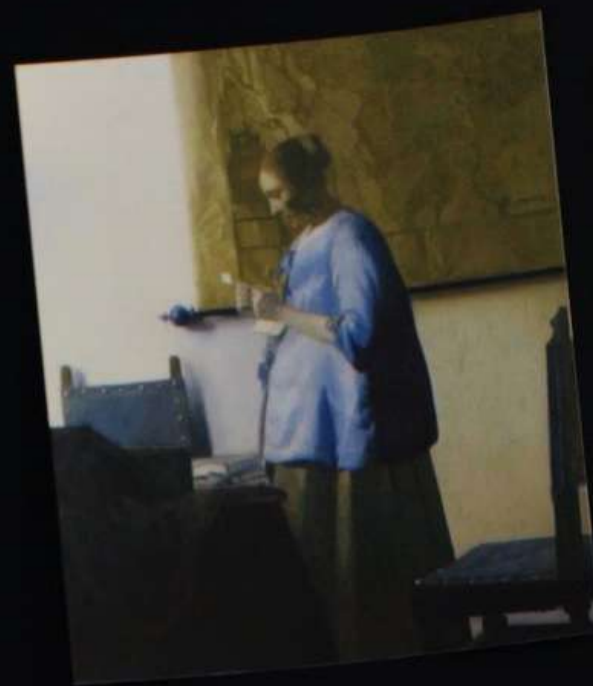
Maxwell Wolkin
mwolkin@kinolorber.com

About the film

In *Close to Vermeer*, award-winning director Suzanne Raes gives us a unique insight into the realization of the largest Vermeer exhibition ever. She films Rijksmuseum curators Gregor Weber and Pieter Roelofs and conservators Abbie Vandivere and Anna Krekeler in their mission to shine a new light on Johannes Vermeer. For although *The Milkmaid* and *Girl with a Pearl Earring* are world-famous, we know little about the painter himself. No self-portraits, no letters, no notes; a small oeuvre is all that the Dutch Master left behind.

This fascinating documentary shows everything from the quiet diplomacy required to get the Vermeers to the Netherlands and the new knowledge gained by scanning the paintings layer by layer, to the shocking world news that one work may not be by Vermeer after all. Slowly we discover how Vermeer was able to depict reality so differently from his contemporaries.

But above all, *Close to Vermeer* shows the infectious love of the curators and other protagonists for Vermeer's art. As Weber lovingly puts it, "A good exhibition should change your view of the world. Vermeer can really do that."



The main characters



GREGOR WEBER
Head of Fine and Decorative Arts
Rijksmuseum



PIETER ROELOFS
Head of Paintings and Sculpture
Rijksmuseum



ABBIE VANDIVERE
Paintings Conservator and Researcher
Mauritshuis



ANNA KREKELER
Paintings Conservator and Researcher
Rijksmuseum



JONATHAN JANSON
Painter and Curator of Essential Vermeer

SUZANNE RAES

director

Suzanne Raes has been working as an independent filmmaker for more than 20 years. Her early films a.o. The Houses of Hristina (2007), The Rainbow Warriors of Waiheke Island (2009), and The Successor of Kakiemon (2012) premiered at IDFA and won several awards at international film festivals. Her film Come Closer about Boudewijn de Groot received the IDFA Music Audience Award in 2015.

For her film about the Rotterdam social service, Quid pro quo (2015) Raes won a Golden Calf, the most important film award in the Netherlands. More recent the co-production Ganz, How I Lost My Beetle had a successful theatrical release and has been broadcasted in the Netherlands, Germany and Switzerland.



Filmography (selection)

2022

Two Men - Ivo van Hove & Jan Versweyveld, 73',
Best Documentary Feature Bruges International Film Festival 2022

2020

Heart of Democracy - 87'

2019

Ganz; How I lost my Beetle, 88'

2019

MS, 55'

Paris Science Grand Prix, Student Award en ADAV Award

2015

Boudewijn de Groot – Come Closer, 90',
IDFA Music Audience Award 2015

2012

The successor of Kakiemon, 49',
FIFA Liliane Stewart Award for Design Arts 2013,
nominated Best Mid Length Documentary IDFA 2012

2009

The Rainbow Warriors of Waiheke Island, 90',
FICA International Festival of Environmental Films Award,
Mujeres en Direction Award, Rodos Eco Films Award

2007

The Houses of Hristina, 52'



Director's statement

In early 2021, I had my first conversation with Gregor Weber and Pieter Roelofs of the Rijksmuseum about a possible film on the 2023 Vermeer exhibition. This meeting, like almost everything else at the time, took place online. The exhibition was still an abstract event in the future. The intense process of negotiation and diplomacy, as well as the enormous organization that such a large exhibition entails, had yet to take off.

Fast forward two years and half a million exhibition tickets have been sold and my film, released just two weeks after the exhibition opened, is finished.

Old paintings are like a time machine: they have the power to connect you to people and places from centuries ago. I think my image of the 17th century has been largely shaped by Vermeer's work. Even more than to Rembrandt's characters or Jan Steen's debauched scenes, I am drawn to Vermeer's paintings. The stilled movements and characters he portrayed make you, the viewer, a witness to what was once everyday life. You are close to these people, the room with the large window to the left, the filtered light, the carefully arranged scene. Sometimes the person portrayed is deeply absorbed in reading a letter, pouring milk, looking through a telescope. In the few instances she looks straight at you, she sees straight into your soul.

From the very first interviews I did for this film, I realized how deep this love of Vermeer runs. One of the main characters, Gregor Weber, got a lump in his throat when he tried to put it into words. It was precisely this meaningful silence, this indescribable feeling the paintings evoked in him, that became my guideline for the film *Close to Vermeer*.

In addition to Gregor and Pieter, I filmed a number of younger conservators who are at the heart of international Vermeer research. Abbie Vandivere uses her Vermeer-blue hair to show her love for the *Girl with a Pearl Earring*. She led the major new research of this iconic painting, and I filmed her as “her Girl” was brought from the Mauritshuis in The Hague to Amsterdam.

We filmed the debate around new discoveries in Vermeer’s oeuvre and were close to the successes and disappointments of the team in trying to bring as many Vermeers to Amsterdam as possible. One unexpected event that caused quite a stir among my protagonists, was The National Gallery of Art in Washington publishing a study in which they claimed that one of their Vermeers was not actually painted by Vermeer. Perhaps by someone close to him?

The pace of the film is deliberately slow at times, forcing you to take your time and observe Vermeer’s paintings in detail. I noticed in the editing that many scenes improved when I took more time. As a result, this film also became a film about looking, and about the indescribable feelings this can evoke.

Suzanne Raes



DOCMAKERS

Ilja Roomans - Producer

Docmakers is a collective of awardwinning documentary filmmakers Aliona van der Horst, Fabie Hulsebos, Suzanne Raes, Sanne Rovers, Yan Ting Yuen and producer Ilja Roomans. We love films that require stamina, but we get just as excited about unusual, surprising, or time-sensitive projects that need more of a flexible approach. Producer Ilja Roomans has 20 years of experience producing both Dutch productions and international co-productions.

Recent work: Your Body to the Sun by Aliona van der Horst (International Competition IDFA 2021, Golden Conch Award Mumbai International Film Festival) and Master of Light by Rosa Ruth Boesten (SXSW 2022 Best Documentary Feature Award, San Francisco FilmFestival McBaine Documentary Feature Award, Special Mention Best Cinematography Atlanta Film Festival, Sheffield DocFest 2022 Best First Feature Documentary Award, winner NFF Debut Competition, Cinema Doc Eye Spotlight Award 2023). www.docmakers.nl

Credits

Written and Directed by
Suzanne Raes

Produced by
Ilja Roomans

Director of Photography
Victor Horstink

Sound Recording & Sound Design
Alex Booy

Editor
Noud Holtman

Music
Alex Simu

Line Producer
Lieke van den Ouwelant

Color Grading
John Thorborg

Finishing
Jan Jaap Kuiper

Poster & Title Design
Joost Hiensch

Trailer
Intermission Film

Subtitles
Harry Pallemans

Commissioning Editor NTR
Diana Tromp

World Sales
Deckert Distribution

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