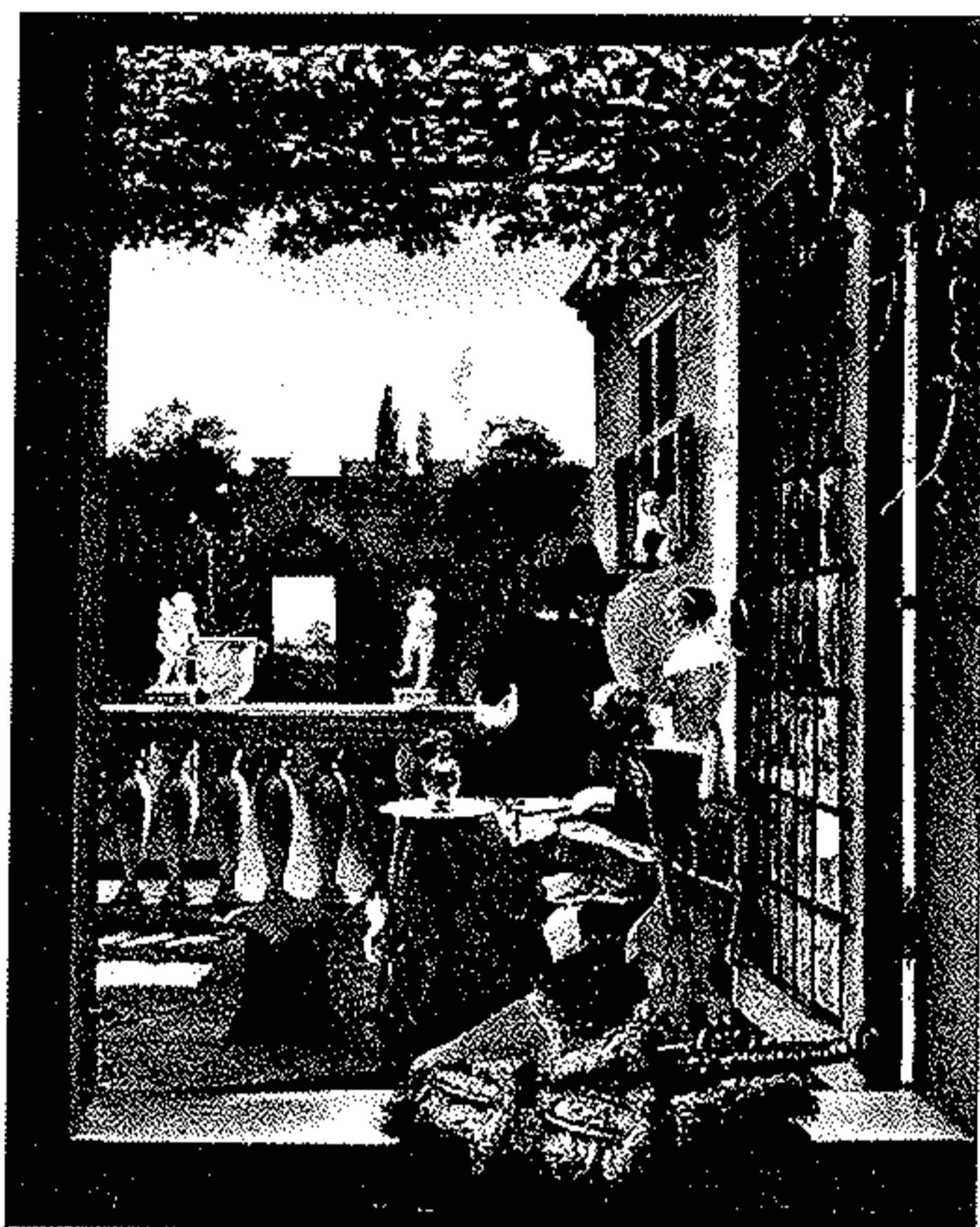


Transparency 9



Unknown Dutch (Delft) Artist *The Terrace*, c. 1660 Oil on canvas; 42 1/16 in. x 34 3/8 in. (106.9 x 87.4 cm) Robert A. Waller Memorial Fund, 1948.81

On an open terrace filled with beautiful objects, a man offers a young woman a glass of wine. The unknown artist of this painting composed his work so that the canvas becomes a window into the couple's world. The wooden frame of the glass window, set in the near **foreground**, creates a *trompe l'oeil* (trohmp LOY) effect, giving the viewer the feeling that he or she is standing just inside the window peering out. Trompe l'oeil is a French term meaning "to fool the eye," and it describes an effect that many 17th- and 18th-century artists used to draw their viewers' eyes and imaginations into the created worlds of their paintings. Here, space is divided into four zones by repeated geometric architectural forms and light effects that pull you into the **composition**. The first zone is that closest to the viewer—the window frame and the space in front of the frame. On the sill rests a soldier's belt and sword, which, lying at an angle, draw the eye into the second zone of the composition. Here, the man and woman stand near a table and chairs strewn with musical instruments, sheet music, a

Middle Eastern rug, and fine pottery. This area is covered by grape vines, bounded on the right by the wall of the house and at the rear by an ornate railing. Beyond, in the third zone, a man and woman leaning out of a second story window look over a walled garden. This area is divided from the fourth and farthest zone by a tall, garden wall, which is pierced in the center by an open doorway. In the distance you find a glimpse of open parkland or farmland of the **Netherlands**.

The artist who painted this work used linear perspective (figure 32) to create the illusion of space receding into the distance. In this system, "real world" horizontal lines that describe the tops of windows, doors, bricks, and table tops become diagonal lines that appear to converge at an invisible point located in the center of the garden doorway called the vanishing point. Linear perspective creates the illusion that objects become smaller as they recede into the distance. This illusion is most obvious in the design of the terrace tiles, in which

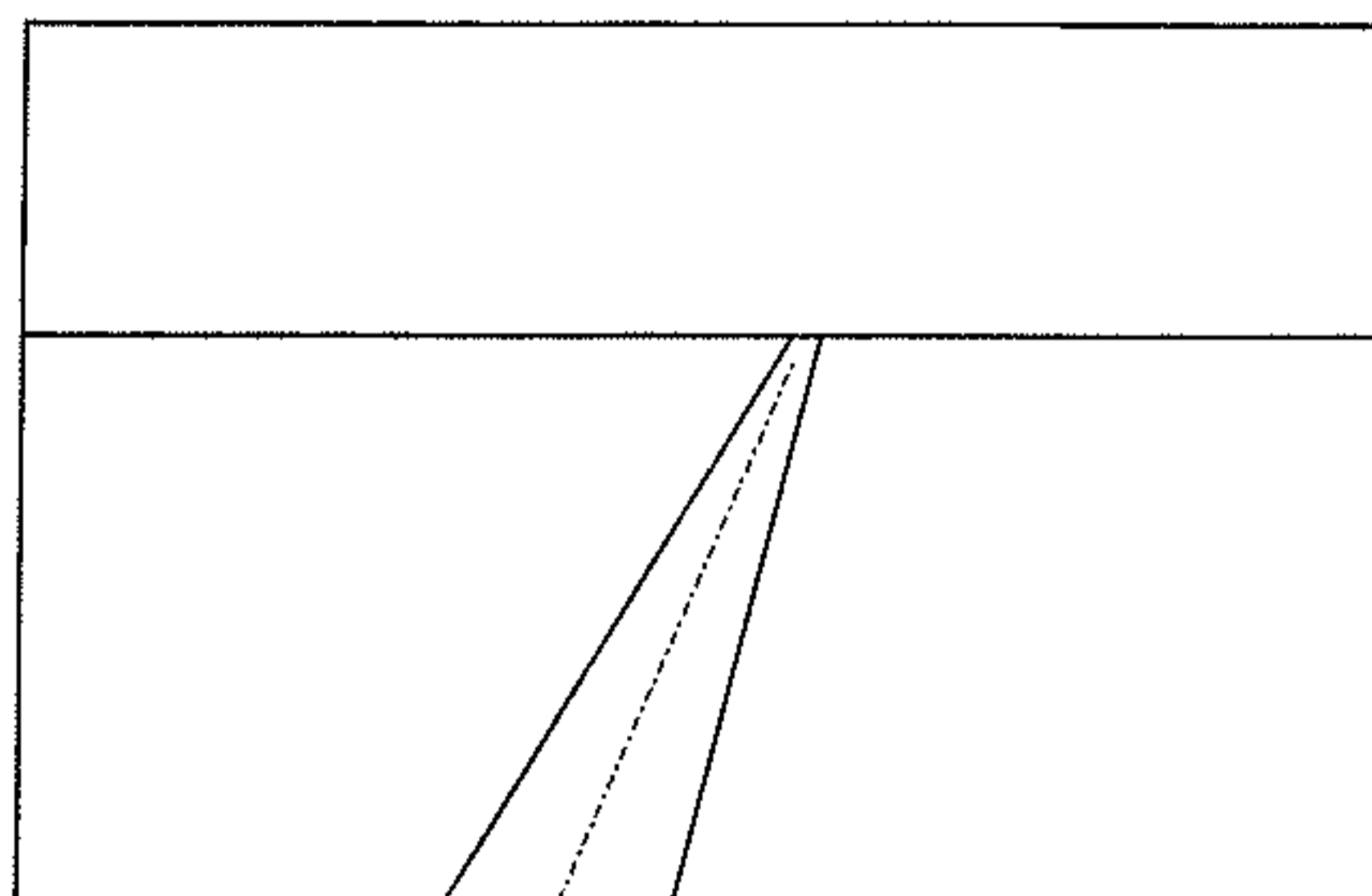
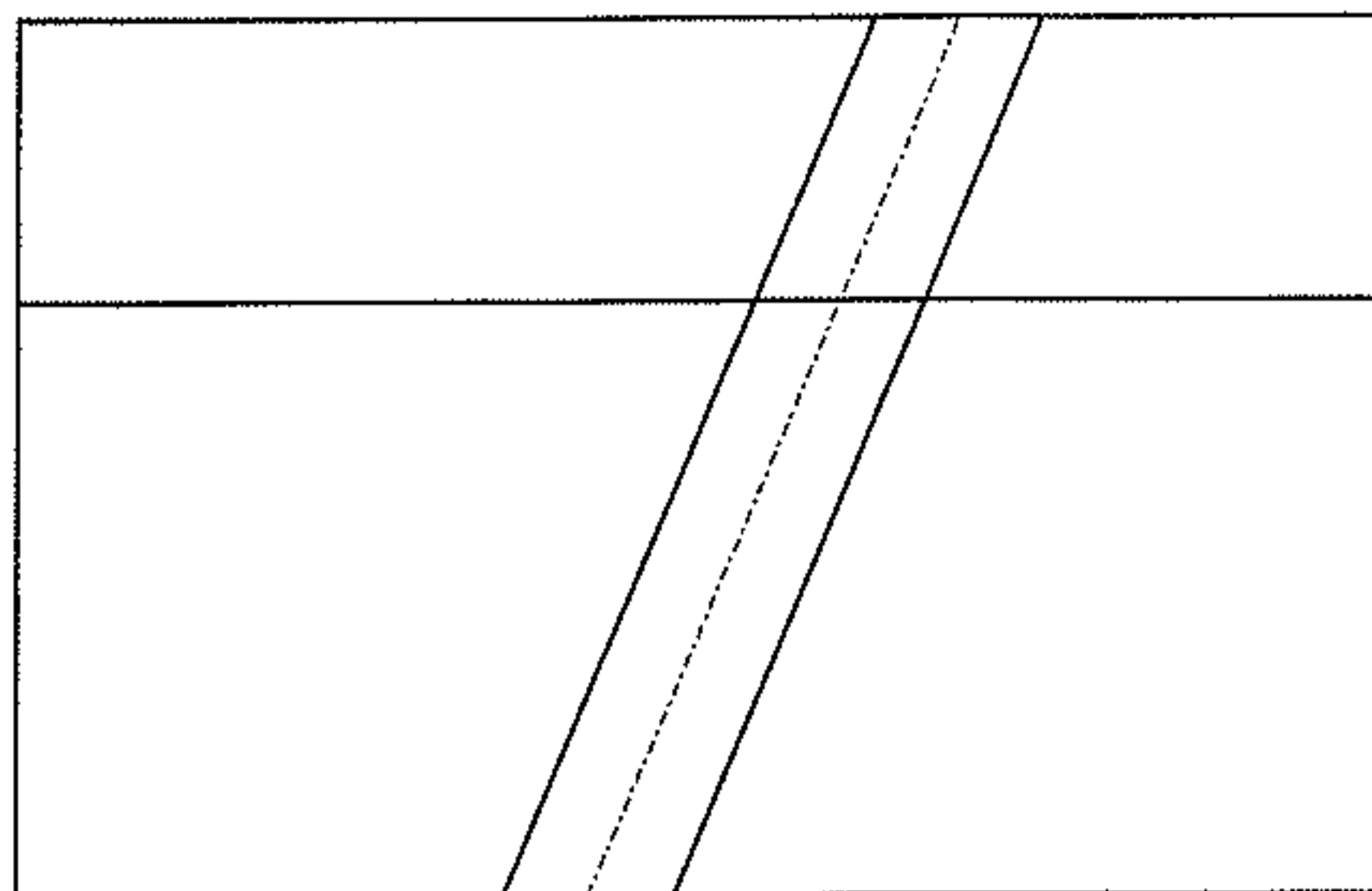


FIGURE 32
Illustration of linear perspective

the checkered tiles at the rear of the terrace are smaller than those at the front. Additionally, the artist employed a convention called atmospheric perspective, in which distant objects or landscape elements are lighter and **cooler** in **hue** than objects in the foreground, to give the appearance that they are far away.

SCIENCE, PERSPECTIVE, AND THE CAMERA OBSCURA

Seventeenth-century artists were well educated in the system of linear perspective. It had been developed and perfected more than a century earlier during the **Renaissance**. Yet some artists of the time also used a device called the *camera obscura* to help them further understand how to create convincing illusions of three-dimensional space on two-dimensional surfaces.

Simply, the camera obscura (an Italian term meaning “dark room”) is a dark, enclosed space with a small hole at one end that, when light shines through it, projects onto the opposite surface an inverted (upside-down) image of whatever is outside the space. This type of device (as found in the exhibition installation) may be as large as an entire room or as small as a portable box. Using such devices, artists could record scenes with a high degree of accuracy. They merely had to trace the images projected through the pinhole onto their drawing surface. The lines and shapes that were traced, rather than sketched, provided a very precise three-dimensional effect.

EXPLORING THE GLOBE

Within this perspectival space are arrayed a great variety of beautiful objects. Dutch culture was one of exploration and global trade. Voyages that the Dutch and other Europeans undertook to open new trade routes brought great wealth and exotic materials back to their nations. In the formation of the **Dutch East India Company**, trade flourished (figure 33). The artist who painted *The Terrace* displays a diverse collection of goods—both local and foreign—that might have filled the 17th-century Dutch home. The rug draped over the table would have been obtained through trade with Persia (modern Iran). The woman’s pearl necklace and the man’s velvet cloak were also most likely exotic imports. The pearls may have been brought from India, the Persian Gulf region, China, or Japan, all centers of pearl production at this time. The man’s cloak appears to be made of velvet. The technique

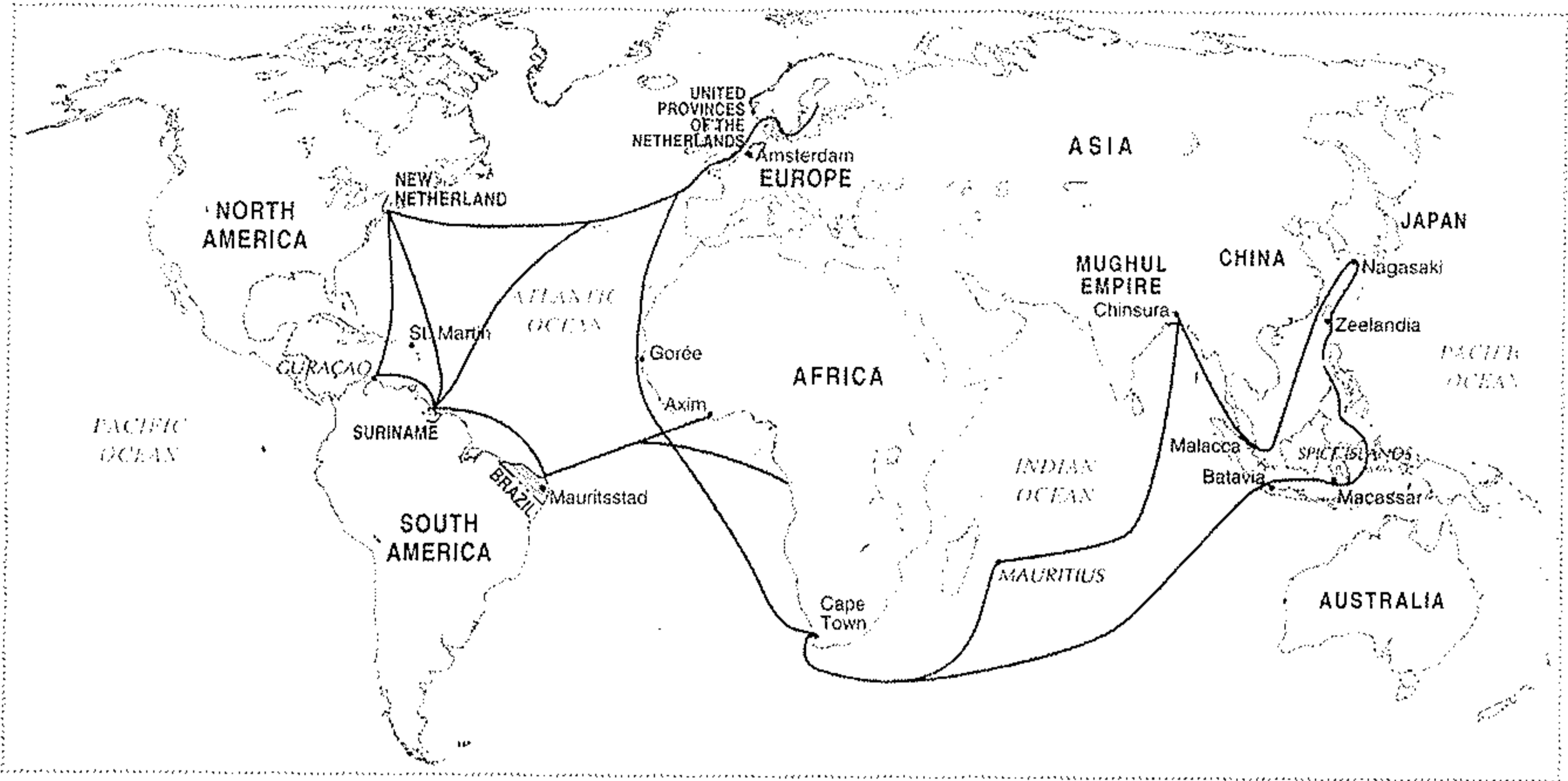


FIGURE 33

Trade routes of the Dutch East India Company in the 17th century

of weaving velvet from silk fiber on shuttle looms was developed in China, and places such as Persia, India, Italy, and **Turkey** were later known for producing rich versions of the fabric.

A number of items seen in this painting, even if not imported, show off the owner's tastes for finely handcrafted and valuable objects. The blue-and-white design featured on the ewer, or pitcher, which was probably made in the town of Delft, was most likely rooted in the traditional blue and white designs of Chinese **porcelain**. Other highly valued objects we see in *The Terrace*, such as the violin, cello, sword, books, sheet music, sculptures, wine glasses, and silver tray, may have been imported or made locally.

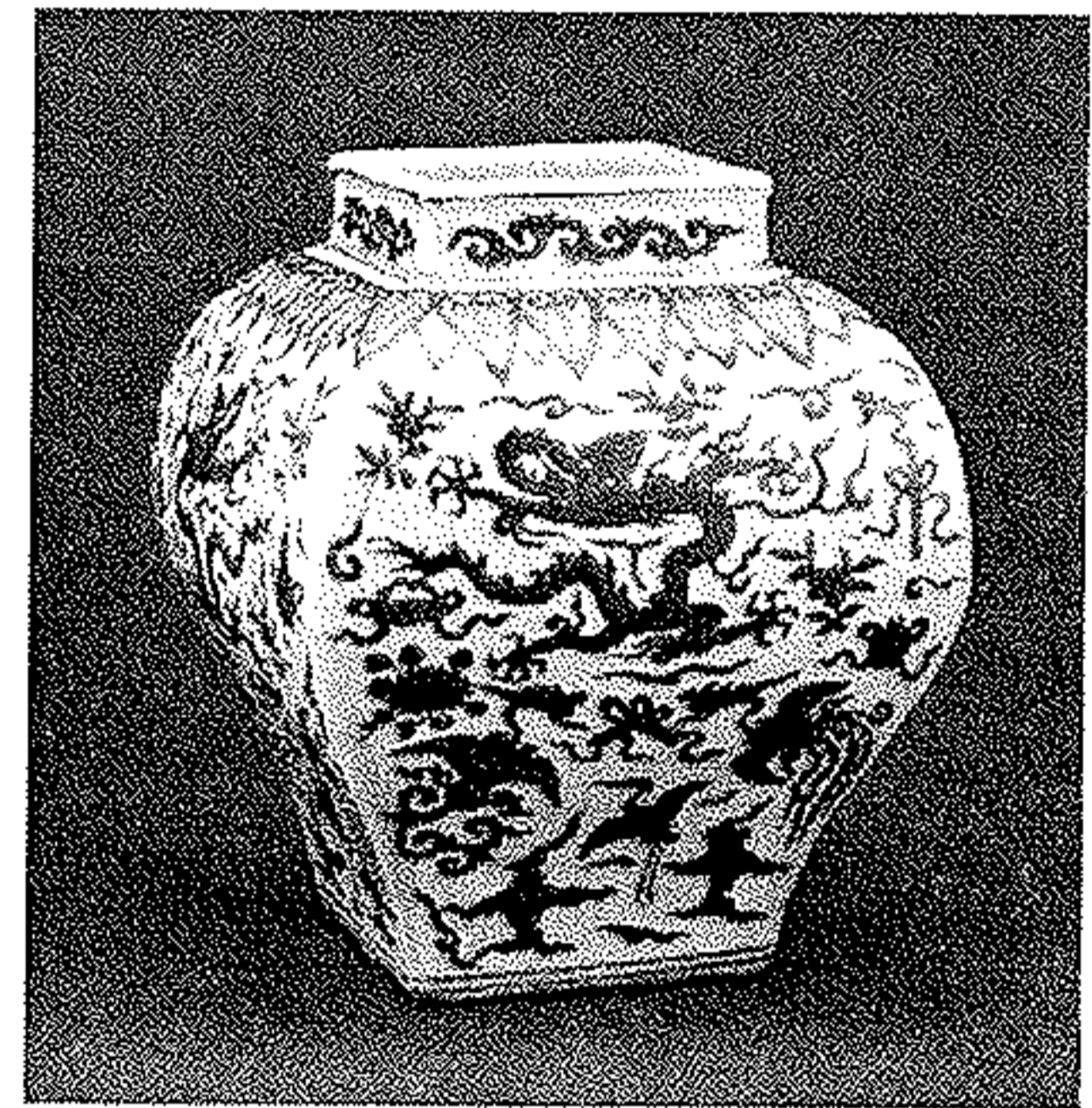


FIGURE 34

China. Square Vase, Ming dynasty, 1573–1620.
Porcelain; h. 7 7/8 in. (20.16 cm)
Gift of Russell Tyson, 1954.472

Chinese Blue and White

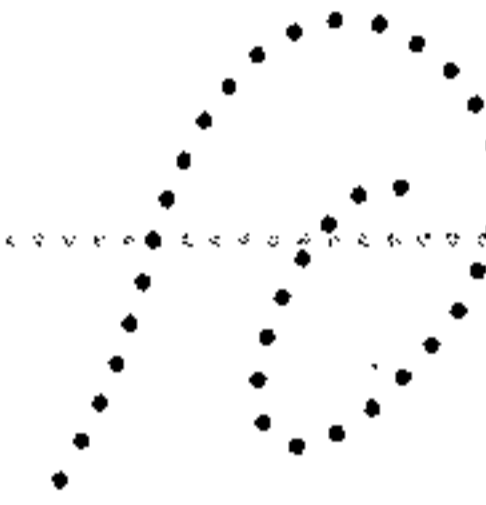
Blue-and-white porcelain was developed in China as early as the Yuan Dynasty (1280–1368) (see *Street Scenes in Times of Peace*, page 63) using cobalt blue **pigment** imported from the Middle East. The local Dutch production of blue-and-white was spurred on by a European craze for all things Chinese, especially blue and white porcelain. While the Dutch were not able to produce true porcelain, they did produce a less durable but welcomed

substitute of tin-glazed earthenware, a type of pottery commonly called "delftware." Blue and white patterns on Dutch delftware were often Chinese in inspiration. An actual Chinese vessel in the Art Institute's collection, *Square Vase* (figure 34) shows the prized blue-and-white designs with typical, traditional Chinese **motifs**, such as dragons, cranes, phoenixes, clouds, flutes, and angle-shaped jade chimes.

THE MEANING OF OBJECTS IN DUTCH PAINTING

Traditionally in Dutch painting, everyday objects convey alternative meanings. Often whole paintings carried **symbolic** messages, which Dutch people of the period would have immediately understood. In much the same way, we understand that the bald eagle is the symbol of America, or that a red octagon means “stop.” The young woman’s string of pearls is associated with Venus, the Roman goddess of love and beauty, who emerged from the sea in a shell. **Putti** (shown here as statues) are **Cupid’s** attendants and are associated with love, especially when shown wearing ice-skates, as the putto in this image. The presence of musical instruments suggests that the man and woman were making music together, a symbol of harmony. The guitar is an **emblem** of alliances. Musical instruments have long been associated with sacred and profane love, but in certain settings some instruments may suggest vice rather than virtue. Here, the couple has left their music making to stand in the corner of the terrace, where the man offers the woman a glass of wine. This gesture may symbolize an amorous offer, or perhaps temptation. The presence of the sword in the foreground suggest that the man has put aside war for love or has let down his guard. The sword may also be a **vanitas** symbol, pointing out the vanity of earthly existences, since worldly pleasures are fleeting. The hindquarters of a dog are visible to the left of the table. The dog usually represents faithfulness, but it also may have a double meaning. Does the dog symbolize the couple’s faithfulness to each other? Or is it meant to be a reminder to one of them of their supposed faithfulness to a spouse not present in the scene? Could the man or woman looking down from the second story window be the mate of one of the people standing in the terrace? All of the signs in the painting seem to point to a narrative about love, and yet they are sufficiently open-ended as to the leave their interpretation up to the viewer.

The meaning of the painting is not only enigmatic, but the name of the painter of the work is also unknown. Since several well-known artists who worked around this time in the small Dutch city of Delft were interested in perspective, this painting was probably made there. Yet until further scientific and art historical research is completed, the identity of this artist will remain unknown.



Science and Art

The impulse to use new technologies to represent the world points to an underlying drive in Dutch culture to combine art and science. Their interest in science may be seen also in maps from this time period, which provide detailed (though slightly skewed) information about the shapes and arrangements of the Asian, Africa, and South American continents, all of which had been **circumnavigated**. The Arctic circle, Antarctica, Australia, and the western portion of North America are less complete, as these areas of the world were yet to be thoroughly explored. Cartography is an example of how innovative science and imaginative arts come together. Maps are conceptual representations of the world as seen from an aerial view—a view that no person in the 17th century had experienced firsthand—made through the process of scientifically surveying each continent and mathematically scaling down its topography using a grid.

Classroom Applications

Transparency 9

Unknown Dutch (Delft) Artist. *The Terrace*, c. 1660

1. Fooling the Eye

The unknown painter of *The Terrace*, like many of his Dutch 17th-century contemporaries, reproduced objects in so much detail that we are often tricked into believing the objects are real. The device of the frame in the painting which projects into the viewer's space is often referred to as *trompe l'oeil*, a French term that means to fool the eye. The details in *The Terrace* activate each of our five senses and entice us to look more closely at the picture. Encourage students to imagine they are standing inside the picture frame. Ask them to complete the following sentences and share responses as a class.

- I see...
- I smell...
- I hear...
- I feel...
- I taste...

State Learning Standards: 3B, 25A

2. Around the World and Back Again

From the early years of the 17th century, Dutch explorers and merchants from the newly formed Dutch East India Company traveled the world in search of exotic goods and luxury items to bring back to the Netherlands. The artist includes some of these goods.

- Persian rug, probably from modern-day Iran
- blue-and-white porcelain ewer (pitcher) inspired by traditional Chinese porcelain
- cello, probably from Italy
- guitar, probably from Spain

Have students locate the countries in which these objects probably originated on a world map. Ask students to chart their travels to the Netherlands and estimate the distance the objects may have traveled before becoming part of this composition. Discuss how objects provide clues about far away places.

State Learning Standards: 7A, 17A, 18A, 27B

3. Symbols of Love

The stone sculptures in the background of *The Terrace* represent *putti*. A *putto* (singular) is a child figure, often depicted with wings, who is commonly associated with Cupid. Discuss why this chubby child represents love. What are some other symbols of love? Have students draw their favorite symbol of love. How does this symbol represent love?

Discuss why these *putti* were included in this painting. What are some other references to love that you see? Instruct students to create a love story between one of the couples in the painting. Encourage them to pay careful attention to the clues the artist gives about these figures. How did the couple meet? What are they saying to another? What will happen next? Display stories alongside the drawings students made of popular love symbols.

State Learning Standards: 2A, 3B, 26B

4. Size Is Relative

The artist who painted this work manipulated the size of the objects in *The Terrace* to help him represent a three-dimensional world on a two-dimensional painting surface. Have students measure the two figures on the terrace and the objects in the foreground of the painting. How do the sizes compare? Is this the normal scale relationship of human figures to objects? Discuss how our eye perceives the size of something close up versus something in the distance. As a class, calculate the ratio of the figures to the objects.

State Learning Standards: 7B, 12A, 25A

5. The Camera Obscura

Review the camera obscura with students (page 74). Create a small camera obscura using the following instructions from the Exploratorium Web site: www.exploratorium.edu/science_explorer (Check the site for step-by-step illustrations.)

- Take the plastic lid off a cylindrical potato chip can and wipe the inside clean. Save the lid.
- Draw a line with a marker all the way around the can, about 2 inches up from the bottom. Then cut along that line so the tube is in two pieces. The shorter bottom piece should have the metal end.
- Make a hole in the center of the metal with the thumbtack.
- Put the plastic lid onto the shorter piece. Place the longer piece of the can back on top of the shorter piece. Tape all the pieces together. To keep light out of the tube, tape an approximately one-foot long piece of aluminum foil or black construction paper along the length of the tube. Wrap the foil all the way around the tube twice, then tape the loose edge of the foil closed.
- Go outside on a sunny day. Close one eye and hold the tube up to your other eye. Cup your hands around the opening of the tube so the inside of the tube is as dark as possible. Look through the tube. The lid creates a screen that displays upside-down color pictures of the world around you!

Why does this work? Discuss how rays of light travel in a straight line. The rays of light from the image cross as they pass through the hole. The hole in the camera allows a small amount of light to enter the can, just as the iris of our eye controls the amount of light allowed in our eye. Too little or too much light can obscure details. Discuss further connections between the function of our eye and the camera obscura. (Consult the Exploratorium Web site for more information and illustrations on how light travels.)

State Learning Standards: 12A, 26A

6. An Open Window

The Renaissance art theorist and architect Leon Battista Alberti (1404–1472) was the first to compare looking at a painting to looking through an open window. He equated the picture surface (usually canvas or wood) with the window and the painted image with the view. Similarly, the stage of a theater features curtains that open and close to remind viewers that an illusion is being unveiled. The artist of *The Terrace* played with Alberti's **metaphor** by painting a real window through which we view the scene. Define the term "artifice" and discuss its role in art making. How do artists create an illusion of reality? Have students draw the view they see outside their window or doorway, making sure to include the frame of the window or doorway in their compositions. Encourage them to reproduce what they see with so much natural detail so as to fool the spectator's eye.

State Learning Standards: 25A, 26B

