

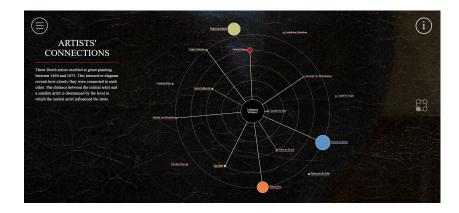
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Connect Vermeer

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Created by a team at the National Gallery of Ireland to complement the exhibition, Vermeer and the Masters of Genre Painting: Inspiration and Rivalry, Connect Vermeer is a well-crafted digital research platform that allows users to explore connections between

artworks and artists. The focus of this resource is not just the work of Johannes Vermeer, but the interplay between his work and that of other Dutch artists between 1650 and 1675. With rich content mined from the Netherlands Institute for Art History (RDK), Connect Vermeer would be of particular use to scholars focusing on genre painting of the Dutch Golden Age.

The website's architecture allows the user to hone in on the concepts about which they are interested, while still providing the opportunity to branch out and wander. It is easy to lose oneself in the complex network of connections between Vermeer and his contemporaries, but the central web provides an organized model for navigation. As noted in the text on the main page, each artist's position in the web indicates the strength of his connection to the central artist. By selecting one of the artists, the web rearranges to show a new configuration of influences.

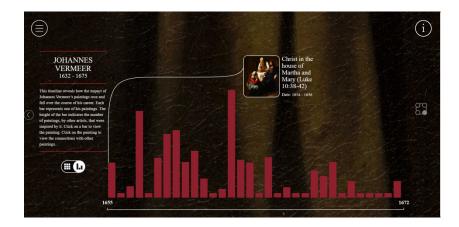
Though it is not immediately clear, by selecting the central artist, a red text box appears so the user can learn more about the specific artist. By clicking the "View Paintings" button, the user is transported to a page with thumbnails of the artist's works. From there, the user can also choose to toggle the view to reveal a bar graph indicating how the impact of the chosen artist's paintings rose and fell over the course of their career as they influenced more or fewer fellow artists. Influence entails connections such as similarities in subject matter, composition, and technique. Toggling back to the paintings page, the title of each painting is easily revealed by hovering the mouse over the thumbnail.



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Clicking on a painting's thumbnail reveals a larger version of the image and basic information such as title, date, medium and location; however, there is no zooming capability. Branching off from the central work are other small thumbnails with text indicating whether the work was inspired by or stimulus for the central work. When the information button in the top right hand corner is clicked, text boxes appear explaining navigation and the path of influence. The result of discussion between art historians and computer scientists, the backend of this project is built on a formalised ontology which encodes connections between the network of artists and works of art as linked data.



Connect Vermeer is a stunning resource when accessed on a desktop browser; however, mobile or tablet browsing is not supported. This is unfortunate as the website would be useful accompaniment to a gallery visit and would allow for on-the-spot comparisons. However, it does have the benefit of being a free resource that does not require an account or specific software. Usability is improved through the inclusion of an introductory video that explains the purpose and navigation of the platform.

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Overall, the amount of work dedicated to this project is evident. Non-academics may find this resource visually appealing and informative, but may be overwhelmed by the complexity of the resource and get lost in the multitude of visual information with a lack of textual explanation. For scholars, especially for historians and those with an interest in art of the Dutch Golden Age, this research platform is a valuable resource that acts not only as an informative companion to the National Gallery of Ireland's exhibition, but also as a standalone resource.