Art is a form of thinking, and painting is capable of offering us a thought, rather than a meaning or a narrative. That painting can give us a way "into" philosophical issues by offering us as viewers an entrance to its pictorial realm has been a a recurring trope in the history of art. (p2)

> Diderot builds on a medieval tradition in which meditative images evoked forms of prayers comprising various mnemonic and affective processes that were meant to lead one away from bodily existence toward a more spiritual state. [...] Not only were viewers instructed to emulate the actions of donors depicted in many of these paintings and join in their devotion, but they were invited "into" paintings to dwell in their interiors alongside, for example, the Virgin Mary. (p.2)

Pieter Stevens's *Wooded Landscape* is created at the tail of this tradition (pp.2-3)

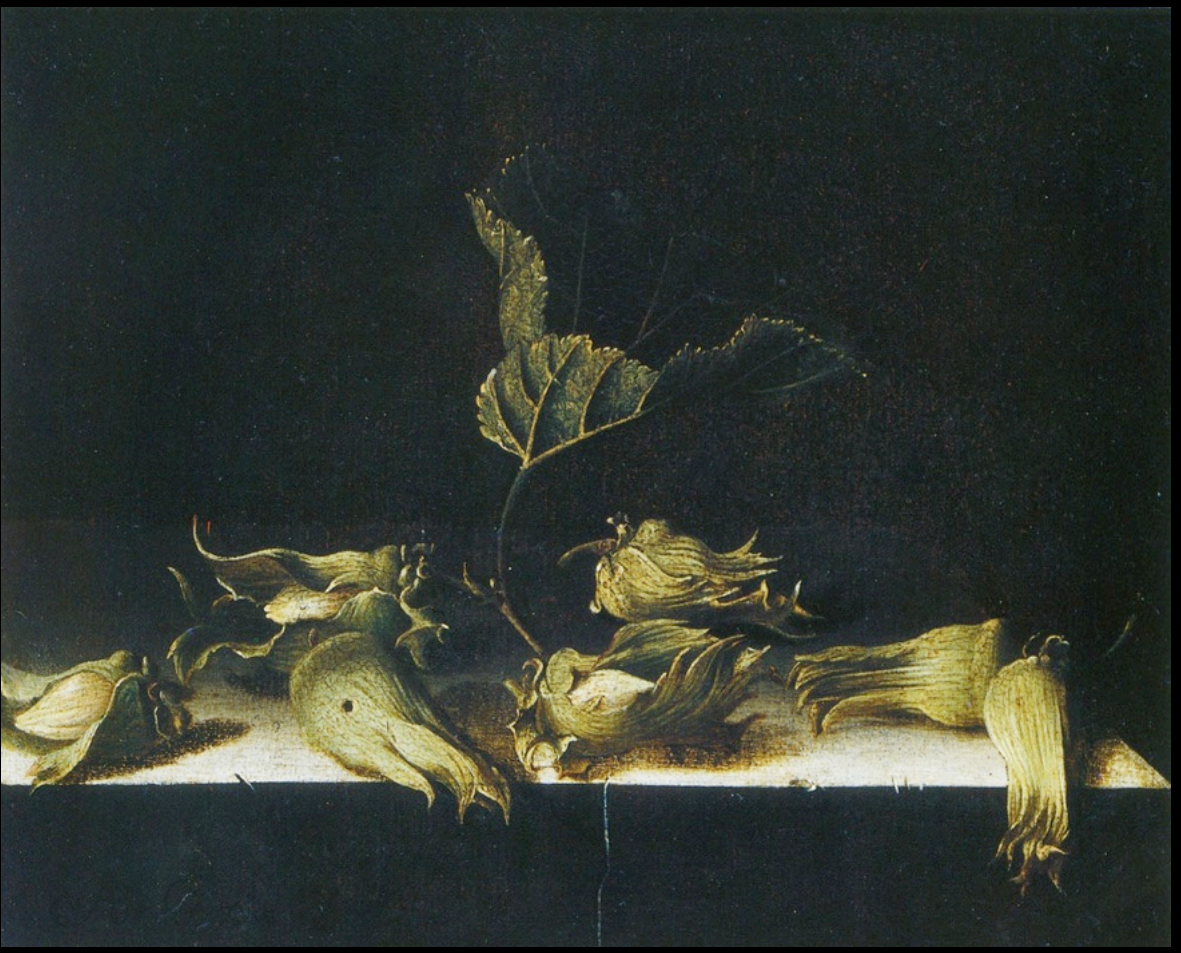
One of the two things is usually lacking in the so-called *Philosophy of Art*: either philosophy or art. (Friedrich Schlegel)

> Bisschop has depicted a domestic corner that is usually overlooked in painting, a kind of hallway probably scarcely noticed even by a seventeenth-century person passing through it.At first sight, such a small and marginal picture demands very little from us, as viewers. There are no symbols to decipher, no clues given as to what exactly is depicted here. And yet this small, boxlike space is open te speculation. Something has left the scene that w would like to retrieve. [...] We are asked not to decipher, but to muse. (pp.21-22)

If there is such a thing as an early modern action painting, [Van Wieringen's *Battle of Gibraltar* would be] one of the finest examples. Lessing would have been satisfied: there is no danger for stasis or mortification. When [Lessing] claimed that the depicted moment could not be fruitful enough, [this painting] could have served as his example. (p.42)

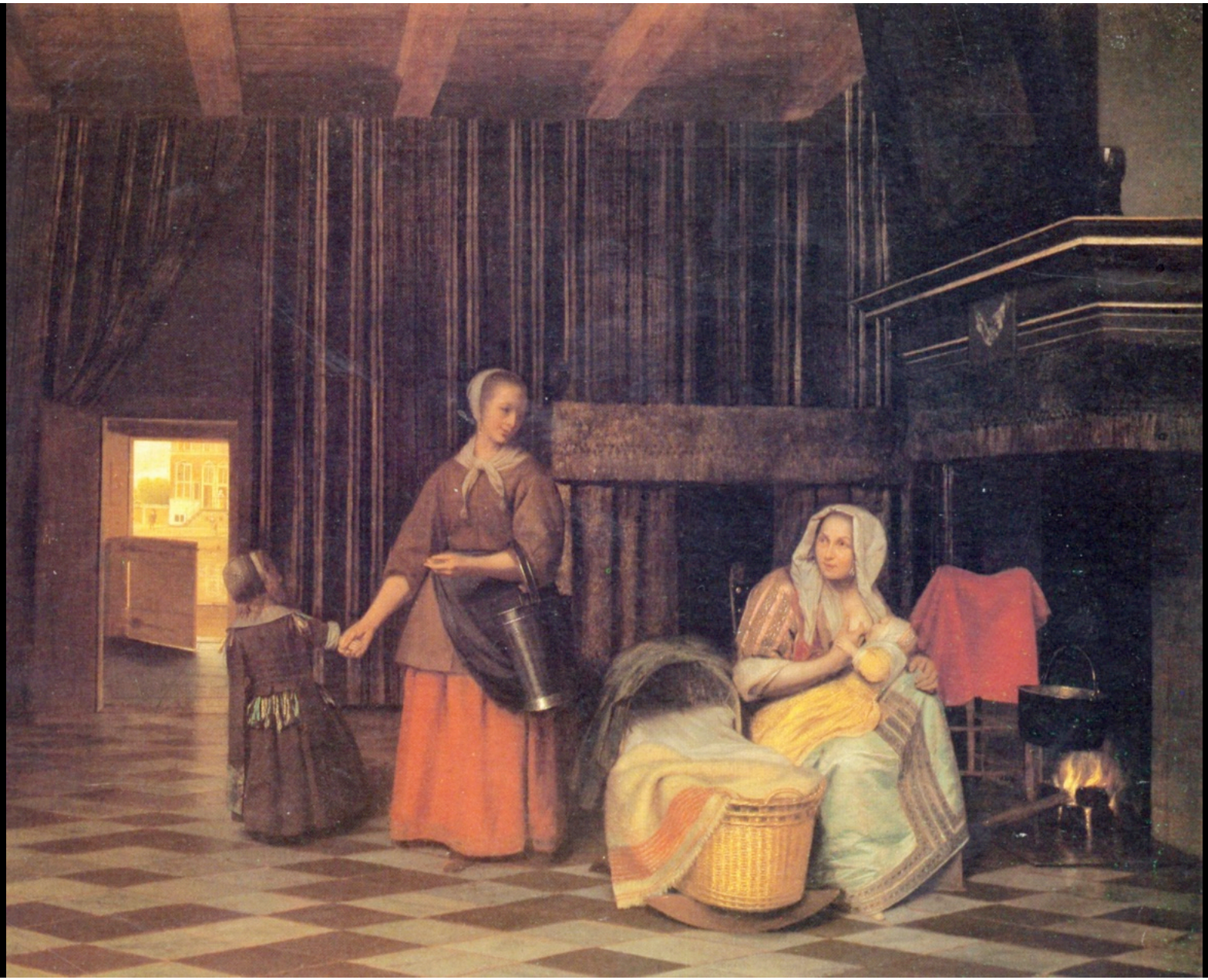
Nothing could be further from this spectacular early modern action painting than Adriaen Coorte's *Still Life with Hazelnuts*. [...] Compared to Van Wieringen's exuberant and boisterous composition, full of noise and movement, Coorte's piece is simple, small and somehow very silent. To Lessing, this would be an instance of petrified nature, an example of a spatiality that resists incorporation into the temporal movement of the imagination. (p.42)

Coorte manages with minimal means to break through patterns of expectation to confront us with a scene that is entirely without action. Even such common tropes in flower still lifes as a fallen petal or a crawling insect suggesting activity have been left out. And yet, Coorte's hazelnuts seem to breathe or vibrate. Coorte demonstrates that action and activity are not the same as movement, and that paintings like these can offer unpitched instances of stillness. (p.43)



The more we look, the more we realize that there is actually very little going on in this painting. Compared to other so-called *seeing-throughs* or *doorsiens* characteristic of seventeenth-century Dutch art in which the beholder is made an accomplice in the act of spying on a hidden scene, there is little excitement. (p.76)

The idea that painting enables the beholder to somehow enter its space and dwell within it has been explored since antiquity, and examples rum from the vivid *ekphrases* of Philostratus to an episode in Akira Kurosawa's *Dreams* (1990), in which an aspiring painter literally walks around in Vincent van Gogh's painting. (p.77)

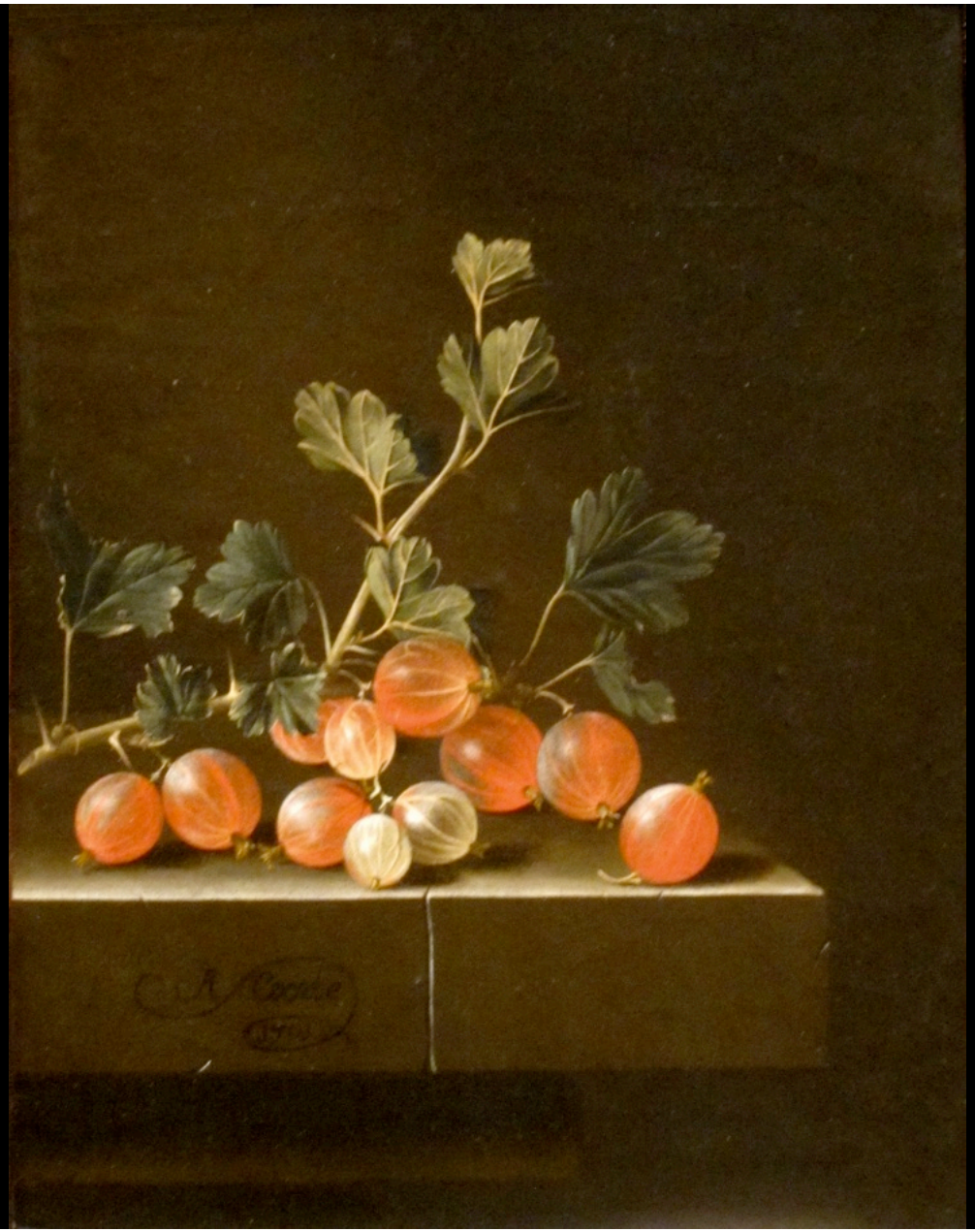


Our reading of this image may have been arrested by the tulip's upside-down position, but our wanderings have not quite come to a full stop. Something is pending in this image. [...] If we look closely at his intricate composition with the diving tulip at its heart, we become aware of a game played our on the surface of th leaves, or rather, on the plane of the painting. The tulip may seem as if it has been displaced by sheer change; however, it has triggered a series of consequences, including that its upside-down position has caused a dewdrop on one of its petals slowly to slide. (pp.111-112)

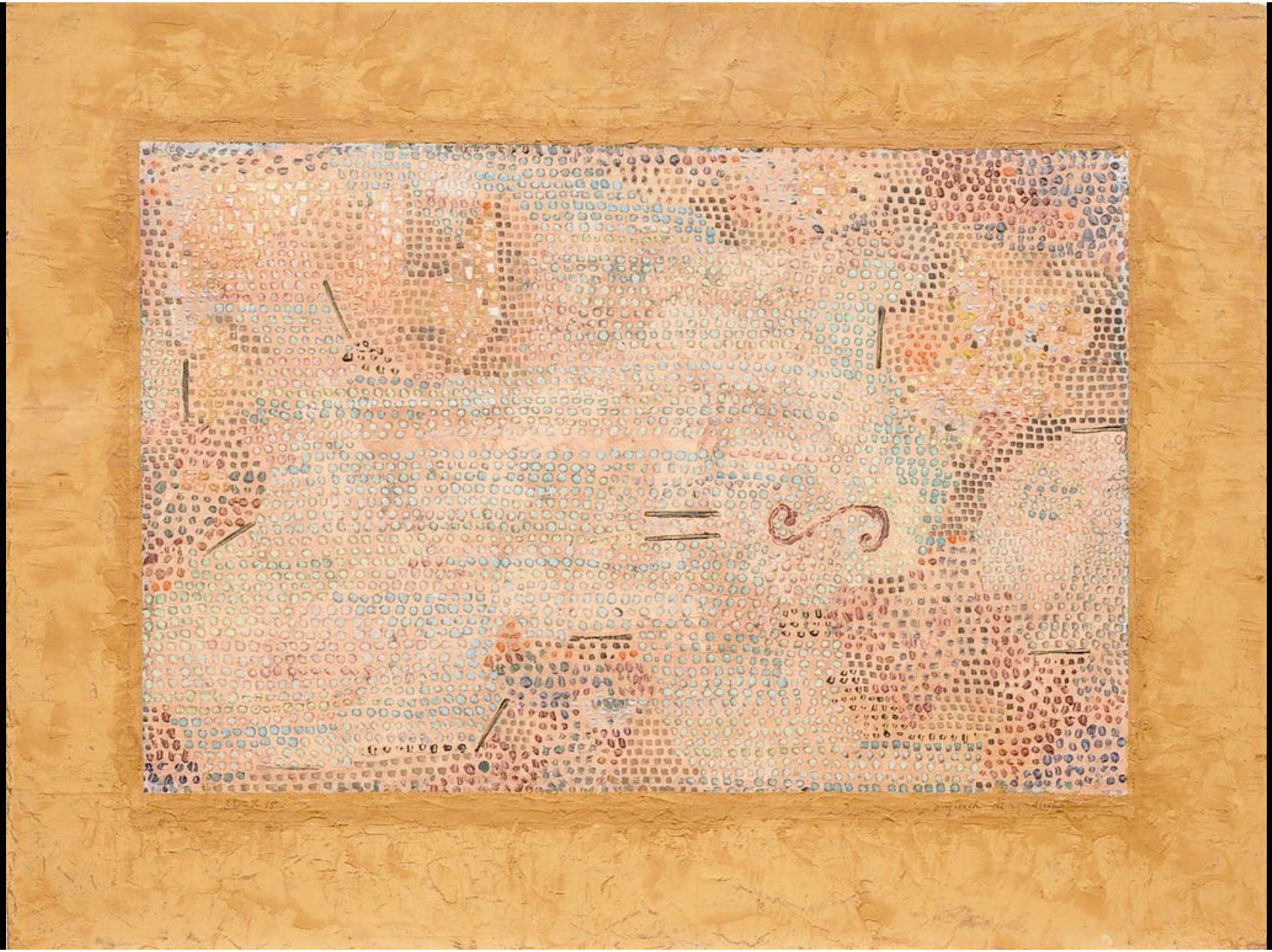
Van Huysum's dewdrops and highlights show how blobs of paint seem to 'lift' themselves from their support, creating an in-between space. This kind of thickness allows for a meditation on surface and ground, on transparency and realism, and on the status of a pictorial sign that has transcended its representative function to make a philosophical statement *in paint*. (p.113)

If we bend towards it and peer closely, what is otherwise quite a sweet picture turns into a rather disconcerting image. The medlars on the ledge's edge slowly begin to lose their familiarity as fruites we might pick up and eat. They do not lie there quietly but threaten to plunge into the depths of the image, as if hanging from invisible threads. Though a vague indication of the stand underneath the table offers some sense of stability, we are not sure how much more darkness surrounds this little place that appears as if it were a corner not of a table but of the world itself, with the universe expanding around it. This is no ordinary kitchen table. Where exactly are we?

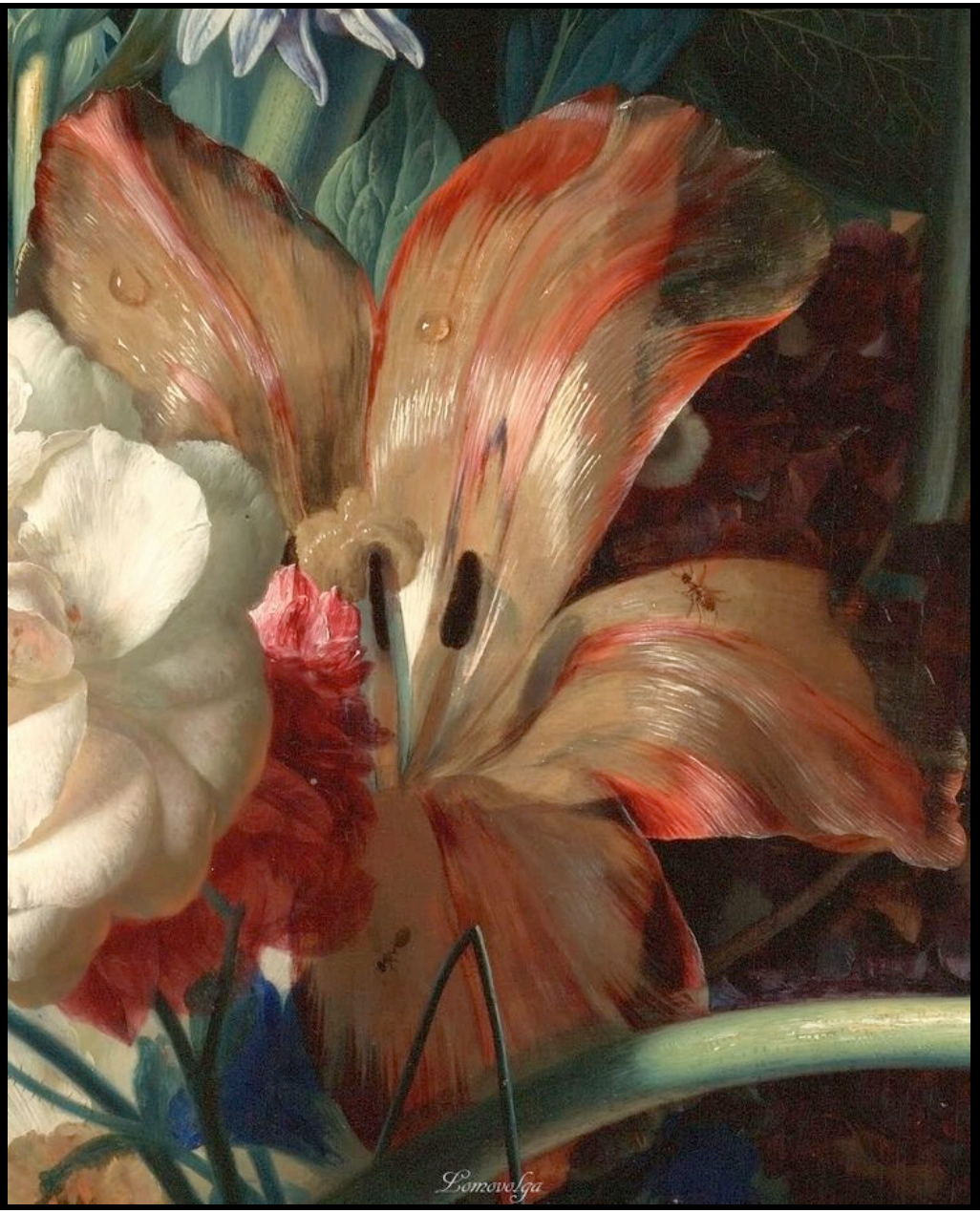
Coorte seems to have been genuinely interested in issues of suspension, balance, and approximation. For instance, in the still life with gooseberries, a spray of the beautiful translucent fruits hangs over the edge in precarious balance. (p.114)



In a dense essay originally published in 1973 in *Fenêtre jaune cadmium, ou, les dessous de la peinture*, Hubert Damish wonders to what extent all Klee's marks should be considered figurative, or in contrast be read as signs. If the latter is the case, Damisch raises the question as to what precisely constitutes are ader here. Clearly, Klee is making a statement, a proposition even, when claiming with this painting that something equals infinity. But what elements in the picture are her equal to infinity as such? In addition, we are not sure that the 'S' on its side is a proper mathematical sign, as strictly speaking, as it only resembles the mathematical sign ∞ but does not equal it. (p.121)



The same philosophical sophistication we find in Klee's *Equals Infinity* is apparent in Van Huysum's flower painting. In spite of the small size, these dewdrop blow up the notion of transparency to gigantic dimensions, raising the issue of the readability of pictorial transparency. Placed midway between the petal and the bee, the dewdrop, like Klee's blob, is a reflection on the concept of a point, and it is equally a reflection on the extent to which, in pain, something can be vanishing, the appearance of a dewdrop, in this case. As we have seen, the transparency of the dewdrop *as concept* only becomes visible through its opposite: the opque, ultimate highlight of impenetrable white; a little blob of white that gives the transparency direction and shape. (p.132)


LomovIga

It seems as if we are not wuite looking at a street corner in New York but staring into an abyss of transparent, superimposed images whose outlines dissolve in their mutual play. This kind of layered reflection is typical of Estes's urban landscapes in general, and his oeuvre as a whole. [His] oeuvre's declared subject matter is *shine*. (p.140)

Unlike what transpires in Dutch are, this shine in Estes acquires a 'thickness' in the double sense of the term 'reflection', as both surface quality and contemplative depth. [...] The excessive use of reflection in Estes's *Central Savings* is an indication that this painting may 'appear' in a Hegelian way, wittingly of unwittingly, as a reflection of a deeper consciousness. (p.141, cf. p.152, p.155)


CENTRAL SAVINGS

Playing with the limitations of its medium, Estes's painting fits perfectly into a long art-historical tradition, represented most famously by such works as Diago Velázquez's *Las Meninas* (1656) and Jan van Eyck's *Arnolfini Portrait* (1434), of self-reflexive images that often pose conundrumsa for their viewer through ambigiupus reflections. (p.141)

This picture recalls a Rorschach blot, as the two sides would fold in on each other, but the reflection is not picture perfect. [...] The display of glasses directs us to question what we see, not just between the urban view on the left and its distorted double on the right, but what the entire work makes use see: namely, that it is neither a window nor a mirror nor an image of the world, but the treatment that our vision of it has undergone since photography's invention. (p.145)


Prescriptions Filled

For his celebrated Documenta 5 in 1972, Harald Szeemann took the relation between reality and images as the thematic thread of his exhibition, dividing it into seventeen sections. [...] The Documenta pictures all embrace the boredom of everyday life by representing it just as it appears. "Photorealists painted tastelessly a tasteless world", Jean-Claude Lebenstejn wrote in 1981. (pp.145-147)

Bechtle: *'61 Pontiac*

Cottingham: *Roxy*

Estes's *Double Self Portrait* is an example of a contemporary model of pictorial reflexivity akin to *Las Meninas*. Given the near-total dismissal of substitutability as a model, and in light of the related concepts of the inauthentic and the lack of authorship, it is significant that Foster, to fit his larger art-historical paradigm of unsubstitutability, select what is for Estes an atypical work. (p.150)

While Estes's work might deceive the eye in letting it think that it is a photograph, it is essentially very different from what a photograph is. [Its] illusionism comes off spectacularly well in reproduction when the paintings are scaled down to the size of photographs as we generally know them, but when we see the actual paintings we marvel at how much they are *like* photographs, but not identical to them. (p.151)


Coca

In light of the history of philosophical reflection, as well as the origins of paintin, we may wonder what kind of statement Estes is trying to make here. In many respects, as shadow cast from an object onto surface, which is in fact of the object, is in structural terms the opposite of a reflection which is a part neither of the object nor of the surface off which it bounces. We expect, in *Double Self Portrait*, to see Estes's likeness, but what we get is the collapse of reflection and shadow, of image and semblance. These elements folding onto each other, the actual likeness disappears. Whereas in his cityscapes Estes lets the two most persistent metaphors of painting – window and mirror – coincide tp such an extent that his canvases become simultaneously both and neither, in this *Self-Portrait* we witness the fusion of two other major art-historical concepts: shadow and reflection. (p.161)


NO SMOKING

It has been suggested that this self-portrait was inspired by Lee Friedlander's *New York City* (1966), in which we see Friedlander's looming shadow cast on the back of a woman walking in front of him, a gesture he repeats several times in his oeuvre. In Friedlander's photograph the shadow is unambiguous, while the question arises as to what Estes's silhouette, seeming to combine a reflection of the window and a shadow cast on it, actually is. (p.160)

The subject of the tableau underscores this object's awareness as a clock-painting. The laboring figures do double duty, standing for different temporalities: the to-and-fro movements of the two sowing men in the foreground represent repetition [...]. Apparently, this *tableau mécanique* was considered to be an instrument, an example of mechanical ingenuity meant to inspire awe. It is also a typical instance of a philosophical tool or instrument that exemplifies a particular problem. Indeed, this clock-painting was likely an active participant in a lively debate on mechanical philosophy, initiated by Descartes and Boyle, who assumed that the world is build not of organisms, but of discrete units of moving matter that operate together like a machine – like a clock. (p.166)