



## Gut Trinken und Essen

Oil on panel by David Stuart MacLachlan Hoornstra, 2013

*A toast to Jan VerMeer, Metzger's German-American Restaurant in Ann Arbor and four friends, including Walter Metzger.*

Ann Arbor artist David Hoornstra has been a regular at Metzger's since 1973, when, as an art student at Michigan, he began bringing the U-M Fencing Club in after practice.

In 2008 he began having weekly lunches at Metzger's with Dr. Henry "Hank" Swain, Hank's wife Vicki and David's best friend, David Craig. Hank loved to tell stories of WWII, espionage and deception. One such story led to the creation of this painting.

Before and during the war, Han Van Meegeren's neighbors wondered how the failed Dutch artist could sustain a lifestyle that included a house in the French Riviera, a mansion in Amsterdam and parties on a grand scale. After the war they found out. An officer knocked on his door and asked why his name was on a receipt among Hermann Goering's papers ... for *millions* ... for a Vermeer.

Charged with selling Dutch national treasures to the enemy, Van Meegeren stonewalled for six months before telling his unlikely story. "Those are *not* national treasures," he said. "I painted them myself." When no one believed him, he said "bring me paints and canvas." He then proceeded to create two more never-before-seen Vermeers. Like his other fakes, they were a museum curator's dream, appearing to have come from the unknown middle period of Vermeer's works.

They bore a family resemblance to not only two paintings for which Goering and Hitler had paid millions, but to another in the Amsterdam Rijksmuseum. Van Meegeren's close ties with art dealers and museum curators had provided him the insider knowledge to tempt and fool the top experts in the country. The treason charge was dropped, but the new trial, for forgery, was attended by every person who could possibly squeeze in. Van Meegeren became a national folk hero for fooling the Nazis.

When he heard this story, David Hoornstra was already trying to emulate the Dutch masters. He had enjoyed the book and movie about Vermeer *Girl with the Pearl Earring*. One day at Metzger's, he and Hank noticed waitress Lisa DeLong pouring water under the Vermeer-esque window light from the upper left. Referring to another

famous Vermeer, David said "Do you suppose she could be *The Milkmaid*?"

One thing led to another. David designed a quadruple portrait with Lisa as the waitress, dressed and posed like the Milkmaid. Hank and David Craig would be patrons in costumes from two more Vermeer paintings. The restaurant was disguised with elements from six other Vermeer paintings but kept its own distinctive stained glass, steins, heraldic shields, woodwork and the "Gut Trinken und Essen" sculpture, a landmark since 1938. As the proprietor in seventeenth-century Dutch costume, John Metzger suggested his father, Walter. He also provided a prized pitcher for the "milkmaid." On her own initiative, Lisa wore a pearl earring.

Sandwiched between other works, the painting took over two years, starting with carefully-posed reference photos. From the start, it was intended to end up in the restaurant. It was completed on July 20, the last day of the 2013 Ann Arbor Art Fair. That same day, at Hank's 90th birthday celebration, the painting was presented to Walter Metzger.

Since then, the documentary *Tim's Vermeer* has demonstrated how Vermeer probably used optical instruments in the creation of his uncannily realistic masterpieces. "David's Vermeer" used Photoshop to assemble and organize the reference photos with elements from Vermeer's paintings in over 80 layers to establish the layout. But the painting itself used only traditional methods, no optical tricks.

Vermeer signed two of his paintings on the cabinet seen in this one. Taking advantage of the double vowels in both Dutch names, David *signed his own name* disguised to resemble that of the master.

For more on David's work, visit: [davidclassicdesign.com](http://davidclassicdesign.com)