



WOMAN HOLDING A BALANCE, BY JOHANN VERMEER

Woman Holding a Balance: Description and Analysis

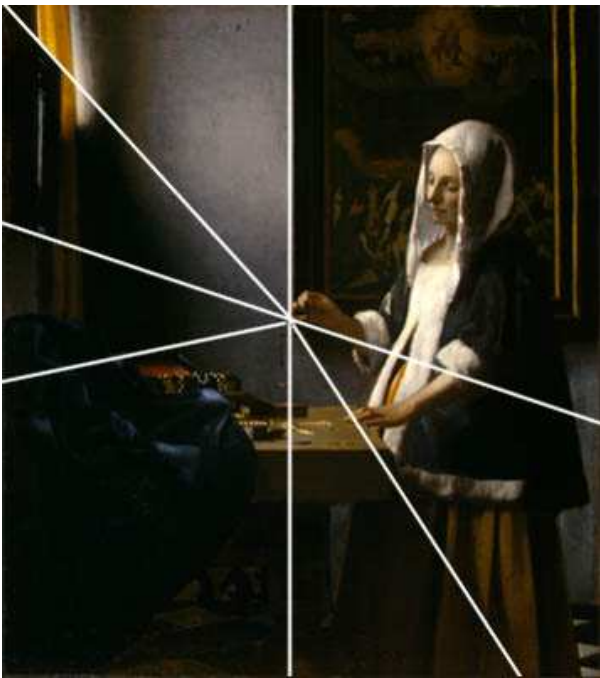
Often in pictures such as *Woman Holding a Balance* Vermeer portrayed a figure who is self-contained and quietly engrossed in a domestic task. Light flows from a window, accentuating a hand, a sleeve, a face. It washes across the wall, revealing a painting of *The Last Judgement*. It shimmers across gold and pearl jewellery. In the centre hangs a balance, empty but for the light itself.

Dressed in a blue, fur-trimmed jacket, a woman stands alone before a table in the corner of a room. She holds the balance in her right hand and with lowered eyes waits for it to come to rest. A blue cloth, some open boxes, two strands of pearls, and a gold chain lie on the table. While the woman seems psychologically removed from us, her graceful figure and serene face suggest an inner peace.

She is oblivious to our presence. Her pensive stillness suggests she may be weighing something more profound than jewellery. In waiting for the balance to rest at equilibrium, she acknowledges the importance of judgement in assessing her own actions. *Woman Holding a Balance* captures that brief moment when a familiar action is lifted to the eternal.

Woman Holding a Balance embodies a spiritual principle that is often manifest in Vermeer's work: the need to lead a balanced life. Though Vermeer's working methods remain a mystery, it is clear that he constructed this composition with extreme care. Orthogonal lines to the vanishing point meet precisely at the woman's finger. The frame behind her reinforces this focus.

The balance point of the scales is exactly at the centre of the painting. The woman's hands, the jewellery, and the tabletop form the shape of a pyramid. This imaginary pyramid supports the woman's hand and encloses the balance. Vermeer frequently modified the scale and even the shape of objects to achieve a desired effect.



[Word Order](#)