

**“With Almost Scientific Precision”.**  
**The impact and current relevance of the development  
of a methodology in the search for meaning in musical  
still-lives of the Dutch Golden Age**

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In the past decades scholars including Erwin Panofsky, Ingvar Bergström and Svetlana Alpers all appear to dismiss the possibility of an iconographical approach to Dutch Still-Life painting (albeit from somewhat polarised positions) how is the music iconologist to tap this rich vein of research material? Is it indeed relevant to do so?

Without doubt the “almost scientific precision” with which the *fijnschilderen* rendered their subject matter might give weight to these scholars’ denials of narrative content beneath the formal-visual aspects. Can the veiled meanings behind the realism of musical motifs in the Dutch Golden Age be in fact so obvious as to be without longevity?

This paper argues that such views are ultimately reductionists and have resulted in the dismissal of this repertoire to the detriment of music iconologists. And if this is so then how should we use the tens of thousands of paintings of the period in a more scientific manner to inform the study of iconology, musicology, sociology and art history.