RobArte

QUICK GUIDE

STARTING PROTOCOL

SOLVE THE CASE FILE IN 5 STEPS

Read, observe, eliminate and verify: no knowledge of art required.

YOUR MISSION

01 WHO
Identify the thief.

02 WHERE
Determine the exact cell.

03 WITH WHAT
Deduce the object used.

04 WHICH WAY
Find the exit.

1 READ PAGES 1, 2 AND 3

Learn about the theft and the suspects; study the floor plan; then apply the clues, case rule and statements. Page 4 explores the artwork in greater depth but adds no clues.

2 COMPLETE THE GRID

Each suspect occupies one cell with their object. No two people may share a row or column. Use the initials to record your deductions.

3 INTERPRET EACH FACT

The clues are always true. The rule establishes the special condition of the case. Treat each statement as one unit: a suspect tells the whole truth or lies throughout.

4 CHECK THE THEFT AND ESCAPE

The thief must be horizontally or vertically adjacent to the artwork, never diagonally. The route to the exit cannot cross people, obstacles or cells monitored by cameras.

5 CLOSE THE CASE

Record the thief, cell, object and exit only when everything fits. If you get stuck, consult the additional clue before looking at the solution.

REMEMBER Exits are openings in the grid.
Each camera arrow shows its direction of surveillance.

THE ARTWORK HAS DISAPPEARED

DIFFICULTY A

Girl with a Pearl Earring

Four intact screws. An open backing. No fingerprints.



Johannes Vermeer, Girl with a Pearl Earring, c. 1665. Google Arts & Culture / Wikimedia Commons. PDM 1.0. Cropped, tonal adjustment and B&W conversion.

ARTWORK RECORD

Girl with a Pearl Earring

Johannes Vermeer · c. 1665 · oil on canvas · 44.5 × 39 cm · Mauritshuis, The Hague · Inventory 670

DID YOU KNOW...?

It is not a portrait, but a tronie: a study of an imaginary character.

THE THEFT REPORT

During a technical test, a dust curtain concealed the wall for three minutes. When it was raised, the frame was still hanging, but the canvas had disappeared. The backing board rested on the floor, and its four screws showed no scratches or deformation.

SUSPECTS



Noor van Leeuwen

Conservator

She asked to examine a glaze before the gallery opened to the public.



Pablo Cortés

Audiovisual technician

He programmed the dust curtain and the lighting tests.



Eva Kramer

Insurance appraiser

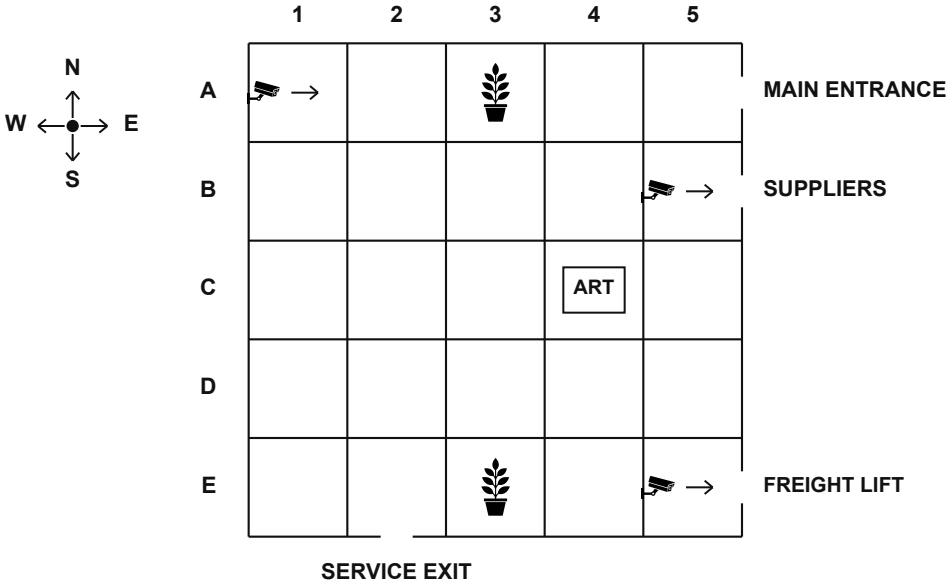
She temporarily lowered the gallery's risk rating.



Tomás Baeza

Exhibition designer

He replaced a panel and checked the loading access.



OBJECTS	EXITS	ELEMENTS
CS- Cooling spray **WC-** Wire cutters **PS-** Precision screwdriver **FP-** Flexible probe	**ME-** Main entrance **SP-** Suppliers **SE-** Service exit **FL-** Freight lift	• Artwork • Tall plant

INVESTIGATION NOTEBOOK

ADDITIONAL CLUE AVAILABLE

PERSON **CELL** **OBJECT** **EXIT**

Clues and statements

Compare the verified facts with the suspects' statements.

CLUES

01 The conservator was in row A.

02 Pablo was three columns to Noor's right.

03 The cooling spray was in row A.

04 The wire cutters were in row B.

05 The flexible probe was in column 1.

06 The main entrance corresponded to the cooling spray.

07 The suppliers' entrance corresponded to the wire cutters.

08 The freight lift corresponded to the flexible probe.

09 Only a precision screwdriver could remove those screws without leaving marks.

CASE RULE

All statements are true.

STATEMENTS

NOOR VAN LEEUWEN

"I stayed in column 2, near the left side of the gallery."

PABLO CORTÉS

"During the test, I was in the row immediately below Noor."

EVA KRAMER

"I was aligned with the painting and below row C."

TOMÁS BAEZA

"I was exactly one row below Eva, in the same column as the flexible probe."

The artwork file

A gaze constructed with light

The young woman seems to have turned towards us in mid-motion. Her parted lips, the gleam in her eyes and the light on the earring create an immediate sense of presence. Yet behind that apparent simplicity lies a painting carefully built in layers.

WHAT SCIENCE HAS MADE VISIBLE

In 2018, an international team examined the painting with digital microscopes, scanners and analytical techniques that made it possible to study its materials without damage. The research revealed details that are now almost imperceptible and showed how greatly the painting has changed since it left Vermeer's studio.

THREE DETAILS TO NOTICE

1. Tiny eyelashes

To the naked eye, the eyes appear to have no eyelashes. Microscopic analysis and X-ray maps detected tiny hairs painted in brown tones around both eyes.

2. The vanished curtain

The background was not originally an empty black space. Scientific imaging revealed diagonal lines and colour variations indicating a folded green curtain. Its pigments deteriorated until it became almost completely dark.

3. A jewel made of paint

The earring is an illusion created with just a few white brushstrokes, some opaque and others translucent. Vermeer did not even paint a complete outline or the hook that should attach it to the ear.

AN INTERNATIONAL PALETTE

The research identified natural ultramarine, indigo, cochineal, vermilion, lead white and other pigments. Their raw materials came from different parts of the world and reached Dutch workshops through the extensive trade networks of the seventeenth century.

FROM FORGOTTEN PAINTING TO ICON

In 1881, the neglected painting was purchased by collector Arnoldus Andries des Tombe for just 2.30 guilders. After his death, a secret will revealed that he had bequeathed twelve paintings to the Mauritshuis. Among them was the young woman who would become its most famous image.

Sources: Mauritshuis · Girl in the Spotlight project · Vandivere, Wadum and Leonhardt, Heritage Science 8, 20 (2020) · Adapted text.