

Dutch windows

by [Steven Peterson](#) in the [March 9, 2022](#) issue

Walking through Hoofddorp in the evening dusk
I pass a row of houses, brick and square,
each with a large plate-glass window exposing
a neat and tidy living room inside.

I heard somewhere the Dutch don't draw their shades,
don't close their curtains, even at night.
They need to show they have nothing to hide.

Is this some remnant of their once-held faith?
Whatever the reason for their odd habit,
they've clearly kept it up, so now I view
a mother at her laptop by a lamp,
a child practicing a mute piano,
a father in a tracksuit passing through,
all in a picture frame, a stagelike cube.

Dutch windows and Dutch art mix in my mind
while those I watch slip back four centuries,
dress for its age, and pose as in the past,
completely still, yet animated by
pure gesture and expression, linking life
to light from one clear source, making us look,
and look, until that light is gone at last.