For admirers of Carel Fabritius, the monographic exhibition of 2004-2005 in The Hague and Schwerin was an indispensable experience. As in Vermeer and the Delft School, the present writer's exhibition of 2001, the four indisputable Delft-period works (the View in Delft of 1652, the Self-Portrait, The Sentry, and The Goldfinch of 1654), plus the Rotterdam Self-Portrait of about 1648 (?), were seen together, and revealed again how the artist managed to pursue a program of direct observation and at the same time explore a variety of manners, to a degree that allows even the most skeptical critics to compare pictures by Rembrandt and Vermeer, fijnschilders and impressionistic painters, with works that date from a period of perhaps no more than six years. The connoisseur must further contend with the fact that, at present, a crucial span of four years in the artist's career, 1650 to 1653, is represented by no certain evidence other than the miniature townscape A View in Delft.

1 Here attributed to Carel Fabritius, Diana (Venus and Adonis?), about 1643-45, oil on canvas, 119.7 x 107.7 cm, Vaduz, Collection of the Prince of Liechtenstein.
Cleaning of the *Abraham de Potter*, dated 1649 (see p. 87, fig. 21), has made it fit more clearly into our received idea of Fabritius, “who can be considered a link between [Vermeer] and Rembrandt,” and the illusionistic nail in the whitewashed, weathered wall behind the figure attaches the now vivid portrait to the *View in Delft* and *The Goldfinch*.

However, a fresh appreciation of the portrait’s technical qualities cannot be said to simplify our understanding of the painter’s development (can it be close in time to the Rotterdam Self-Portrait?), nor would the recovery of the large *Family Portrait* dated 1648 be likely to do the same. Adding to this mixture the duke of Westminster’s pair of formal portraits in the style of Rembrandt, and, by extension, the *Portrait of an Unknown Woman* in Toronto (see p. 141, fig. 2) – something this scholar is not inclined to do – would only underscore the point that Fabritius’s mature work (he was twenty-six in 1648, and one of Rembrandt’s most gifted former pupils) reveals a greater stylistic and qualitative range than the memory of his most famous paintings would suggest.

As reviewed in the exhibition catalogue, pictures that Fabritius probably or certainly painted in Delft are known only from documents. Some writers have employed the historical shorthand of supposing that the Delft explosion of 1654 “not only cost Fabritius his life but must have destroyed much of his work as well,” as if the artist had sent the three surviving pictures of 1654 to safer quarters before that...