

Introducing... Rococo

Dates	Wednesday 14 and Thursday 15 April 2021
Times	18.00-20.00
Location	Zoom (online)
Tutor	Jacqui Ansell
Level	All Levels



François Boucher, *Madame de Pompadour*, 1759 (crop)

Course Description

What is the Rococo style, and when, where and why did it originate? Through lively and richly-illustrated talks we'll address these questions and more, drawing our examples from the fine and decorative arts.

Dress, décor, ceramics, sculpture and furniture all exhibited the sinuous lines of the Rococo. The pretty pastel colours and sensuous (often sensual) subject matter of artworks by Boucher and Fragonard epitomise this exuberant 18th-century style, as does the Sèvres porcelain championed by Madame de Pompadour – the mistress of King Louis XV. We'll explore the key characteristics of Rococo, in relation to the Baroque style that preceded it, and Neoclassicism that came after. In doing so, we'll examine the reasons why it was admired in its own time, subsequently collected and so abundantly displayed at the Wallace Collection.

Session One: A Masterpiece, A Mystery, and the Marquesses of Hertford

Beginning with a curious case study of a painting that epitomises the Rococo, we ask why this style was so revered and then so reviled. To answer this question, we must dig deeper and identify the aspects that characterise this complex and courtly style. We'll go back to the Baroque to compare and contrast motifs and materials – using furniture by masters such as Boulle, Cressent and Caffieri as case studies. Whilst we begin in France, we'll also consider the ways in which elements of Rococo were received in Britain – with analysis of works by Hogarth in particular. We'll also consider the changing tastes that formed the Wallace Collection – with a consideration of how key works of the mid-18th century came to be collected and displayed in 19th-century London.

Session Two: Flirtation and Frivolity? Madame de Pompadour – Leader of Fashion

Having securely identified the aspects that characterise the Rococo style, we move on to consider the life and achievements of Madame de Pompadour – the great 'influencer' of her day. She rose from life as plain *Mademoiselle Poisson* (Miss Fish) to the title of official mistress to Louis XV, who awarded her the title of *Marquise de Pompadour*. We consider her role as fashion leader (in terms of dress and deportment) and as a consumer of luxury goods, whose producers she inspired. Her passion for fashion, and promotion of the productions of the Sèvres porcelain factory will be examined, as will the transition away from the Rococo style towards Neoclassicism. The socio-political reasons for tastes shifting away from the fussy, 'feminine' and flirtatious Rococo in favour of a more austere style, will be explored and explained.

Course Tutor

Jacqui Ansell gained an MA from the Courtauld Institute enabling her to decode and date dress in art. As an experienced gallery educator she has devised and delivered numerous courses for the Wallace Collection and the National Gallery. She is an accredited lecturer for The Arts Society, and Senior Lecturer at Christie's Education writing, presenting and tutoring online courses in Art History and Luxury. Publication topics include Court Dress and Welsh Dress and a forthcoming, richly-illustrated book about Vincent van Gogh's time living in Ramsgate, Kent in 1876 – Jacqui's hometown.

Previous Skills, Knowledge or Experience

None required. This course is designed as an introduction to the subject.

Joining Information and Format

This course will be taught through Zoom. For more information, including instructions on how to download and use the system, please visit www.zoom.us/support.

Each course session duration is 120 minutes, including a 5-minute break and short Q&A session with the tutor.

Participants will be emailed the Zoom Webinar ID and Passcode 48 hours in advance.
