

Black Presence in the Wallace Collection

Dates	Tuesday 19 and Wednesday 20 March 2024
Times	18.00–20.00 GMT
Location	Online (Zoom Webinar)
Tutor	Michael Uhajuru FRSA
Level	All Level



Jean-Marc Nattier, *Mademoiselle de Clermont en Sultane*, 1733 (detail)

Course Description

Portraying kings, princesses, slaves and servants, as well as individuals, the Wallace Collection displays objects from the 16th to the 19th centuries that include diverse and multifaceted depictions of Black figures. These fascinating works provide a unique lens through which we can learn more about the representation and roles of Black individuals in European society.

While the depiction of Black figures is often explicit, there are occasions when a more nuanced exploration is required in order to unearth implicit or concealed presence. Join us to uncover and elucidate Black presence in art, and increase your understanding of representations of Black individuals in the Wallace Collection and other art collections.

Session One: The Explicit Black Presence in the Collection

We'll begin our course by considering ways to critically engage with paintings that depict Black figures, focusing on works by artists including Watteau, Boilly, Rubens, Flinck, Nattier, Reynolds, and Roqueplan. We'll also look closely at 17th-century Italian marble busts and Ashanti gold objects. Our engagement with these objects will increase our understanding of the representation and significance of Black individuals in historical and cultural artefacts.

Session Two: The Implicit Black Presence in the Collection

Our second session will involve an examination of paintings by Titian, Lemoyne, Velázquez, Hals, Lawrence and Gainsborough to uncover implicit Black presence and its implications. Beyond paintings, we'll consider the significance of materials used in the construction of furniture and the intricate designs of the Wallace Collection's cabinets, to reveal a less obvious Black connection. Our course will close with a review of ideas discussed, as well as recommendations for further exploration through both visual analysis and reading.

Course Tutor

Michael Ohajuru is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts (2022), Senior Fellow of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies (2017) and holds Honours degrees in Physics (1974) and Art History (2008). He blogs, writes and speaks regularly on the Black presence in Renaissance Europe, including at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and in London at the National Gallery, Tate Britain, British Library, National Archives and the V&A. He is the founder of the Image of the Black in London Galleries gallery tours, and the Project Director and Chief Evangelist of The John Blanke Project – an art and archive project celebrating John Blanke, the Black trumpeter to courts of Henry VII and Henry VIII. Michael is also co-convener of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies' What's Happening in Black British History series of workshops, and founder member of the Black Presence in British Portraiture network.

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 Webinar](#). Each course session duration is 120 minutes, including a five-minute break and time for Q&A with the tutor.

Tickets are for both dates. Ticket holders will be emailed the Zoom link, Webinar ID and Passcode 24 hours in advance of the first course session, which should be retained for accessing both sessions of the course.

Course Recording

This course will be recorded. Within 48 hours of each course session, ticket holders will be emailed a link to view the recording, which will be available for two weeks only.
