

A Passion for Fashion: Decoding Dress

Dates	Wednesday 17 and Thursday 18 September 2025
Times	18.00–20.00 BST
Location	Online (Zoom)
Tutor	Jacqui Ansell
Level	All Levels



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

Course Description

As London Fashion Week comes to the capital this September, what better time to investigate the changing fashions that can be discovered in the Wallace Collection?

Join dress historian Jacqui Ansell as she leads us through a range of styles, accessories and functions, from the Renaissance to the Regency era. We'll focus on key artworks by artists including Crivelli, Rembrandt, Reynolds and Vigée Le Brun to help us decode dress. Not only will you learn about changing fashion trends, you'll understand how dress can reveal fascinating insights into history.

Session One: Clothing or 'Costume'? 1450-1700

We'll begin in the Renaissance period with a discussion of the form and function of fashions worn in life, as well as those that are richly represented in art. We'll also look at the textured textiles recreated in paint by Rembrandt and his circle during the 17th century, to learn about the distinctions between fashion and fantasy. Through close consideration of works by Van Dyck, Hals, Metsu, Netscher and Steen, we'll discover the key role that cloth and clothing played in 17th-century Netherlandish art.

Session Two: Rococo to Regency 1700-1830

Our second session takes us from the 'big wigs' of Louis XIV's court, to the frilly and frothy French fashions of Madame de Pompadour, and to the more restrained and tailored silhouette of Jane Austen's time. You'll learn about the role played by George IV as a follower of fashion in relation to Lawrence's portraits of him. And we'll examine the depictions of society beauties created by Gainsborough and Reynolds in light of their ambition to create images with an enduring appeal.

Course Tutor

Jacqui Ansell is an art historian and educator, accredited by The Arts Society, who lectures frequently at major London galleries. After several years writing, presenting and tutoring courses for Christie's Education, she now offers tailor-made tours of London galleries and works freelance, offering her expertise in decoding and dating paintings. You'll find articles by Jacqui on the Wallace Collection website, which discuss the form and meaning of dress in portraits – her specialist 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.
