

Back to the Future

Dates	Tuesday 11 and Wednesday 12 November 2025
Times	18.00–20.00 GMT
Location	Online (Zoom)
Tutor	Dr Ben Street
Level	All Levels



Nicolas Poussin, *A Dance to the Music of Time*, about 1634-6 (detail)

Course Description

How is art from the past, here at the Wallace Collection and beyond, inextricably linked to the creation of modern and contemporary art? Discover the connections and continuing relevance of historical works, here at the Wallace Collection and beyond, on art that was made centuries later.

By comparing Frans Hals's 17th-century work with that of 19th- and 20th-century vanguard artists such as Sargent, Whistler and de Kooning, we'll see how his exuberant and dazzling brushwork sparked inventive pictorial responses in these later artists. We'll also examine the classically-informed paintings of 17th-century artist Poussin, and how they relate to the audacious works produced by modern and contemporary artists including Cézanne, Matisse and Hockney.

Session one: Frans Hals in the Modern Age

We'll begin our course with Hals's 'rediscovery' centuries after his death, which initiated ground-breaking artistic experimentation amongst avant-garde painters. As we trace the influence of Hals's portraits on the development of modern painting, we'll see how artists including Manet, Van Gogh, Sargent and Whistler found inspiration in his loose, liberated and expressive brushwork. We'll also follow this influence into abstract paintings by Willem de Kooning, Joan Mitchell and others, demonstrating Hals's profound legacy.

Session two: Nicolas Poussin in the Modern Age

In our second session, we'll turn to Nicolas Poussin's classically-informed, 17th-century paintings, the influence of which were transformative for modern art. From Jacques-Louis David's revolutionary paintings to the modernism of Cézanne and Puvis de Chavannes – and even the progressive practices of Picasso and Matisse in the first decades of the 20th century, we'll see how Poussin's influence was enormous. We'll also discuss later artworks that reflect Poussin's example, including work by Balthus, Hockney and Cy Twombly.

Course Tutor

Dr Ben Street is an art historian and author. He has worked as a lecturer, educator and mentor for many museums and educational institutions including the National Gallery, Tate, the Royal Academy of Arts, Dulwich Picture Gallery, Christie's Education, Sotheby's Institute of Art, the Museum of Modern Art and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. He is currently a tutor at the University of Oxford and the University of East Anglia. He is the author of several books on art and has written for publications including museum catalogues, monographs and magazines. He has made expert contributions to TV and radio programmes for the BBC, and has recently received his PhD on the late work of Philip Guston, from the University of East Anglia.

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.
