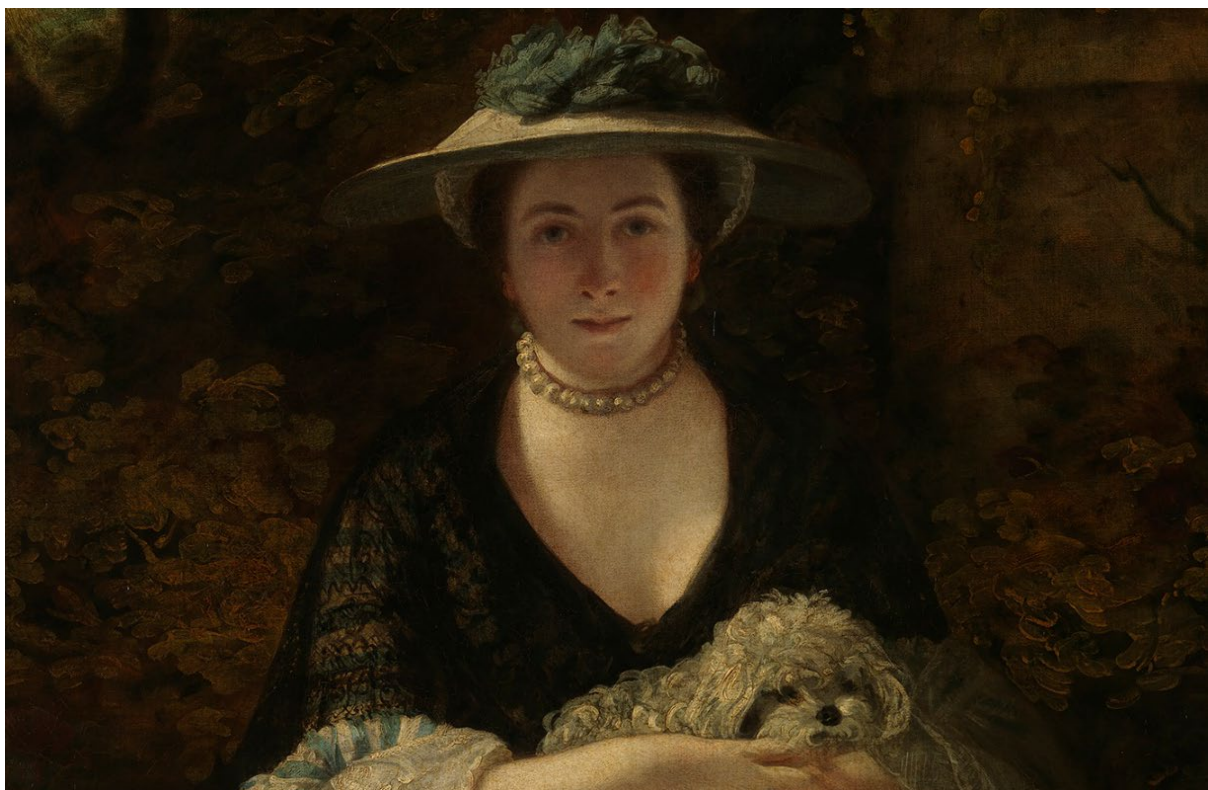


Women of the Wallace: Personalities, Patrons and Painters

Dates	Wednesdays 4, 11 and 18 March 2026
Times	18.00–20.00 GMT
Location	Online (Zoom)
Tutor	Jacqui Ansell
Level	All Levels



Joshua Reynolds, *Miss Nelly O'Brien*, about 1762-64 (detail)

Course Description

In the 1970s, artist Judy Chicago imagined a vast dinner party to which noted women of the past were invited. What if we could do the same for the women of the Wallace Collection and ask them to tell their stories?

Join art historian Jacqui Ansell as she uncovers the ways in which women dominate the Wallace Collection through depictions of mythical figures, muses and mothers. As well as investigating such idealised imagery, we'll also delve deeper to consider real female agency behind the scenes, in women's roles as collectors and makers. Our examination will also reveal surprising connections between women painters of the past and contemporary artists.

Session One – Renaissance to Rococo: Women of Myth and Legend

In our first week, we'll set the groundwork for more in-depth discussion of female agency by exploring the stories of mythical women. From the walls of the Wallace Collection, scantily-clad nymphs and shepherdesses catch the eye. Goddesses and legendary beauties abound, with postures and poses that seem designed to appeal to the male gaze. How have viewers respond to these works by Titian, Greuze and Boucher, and which legendary women have intriguing stories to tell?

Session Two –The Ideal and the Real: Mothers, Maids and Mistresses

Focusing on 17th-century Dutch art and portraits by Reynolds and Gainsborough, in week two we'll consider the notion of women as ideal wives and mothers, and the extent to which paintings promoted these social roles. Amongst the real women we'll discuss as patrons and collectors are French Queen Marie Leszczyńska, and her husband's mistress, Madame de Pompadour. Returning to Britain we will explore the personalities and achievements of Nelly O'Brien and actress Mary Robinson – much more than pretty faces.

Session Three – Making their Mark: Women Artists and Patrons

In our final session we'll focus on famous artists Rosalba Carriera and Élisabeth-Louise Vigée Le Brun, and the lesser-known miniaturist, Penelope Carwardine. We'll also look at Rosa Bonheur, who led an unconventional life for her time, with a love of animals reflected in works at the Collection. Having gained a fuller picture of the lives and achievements of the women on the walls, and behind the scenes, we'll reflect on the question 'which artists would you like to invite to a fantasy dinner party?'.

Course Tutor

Jacqui Ansell is an experienced 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 will 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 all 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 all 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.
