

Painting Italy

Dates	Tuesday 13 and Wednesday 14 October 2026
Times	18.00-20.00 BST
Location	Online (Zoom)
Tutor	Clare Ford-Wille
Level	All Levels



Gaspard Dughet, *The Falls at Trivoli*, P139, 1661-1663. © The Wallace Collection.

Course Description

Inspired by Winston Churchill's love of painting Italy, discover how artists have immortalised the captivating vistas of the Italian Peninsula in this two-session course.

Learn how the lakes and the Abruzzi mountains north of Rome, and the fearsome Dolomites, have been a constant attraction for painters from all over the world, who flocked to capture these matchless landscapes across the centuries. Trace the history of this tradition from the Italian landscape's beginning as mere backgrounds in Renaissance frescoes and in the work of Leonardo and Titian, to its emergence as a dominant subject in the work of visiting painters from the 17th to the 19th century. Finally, we'll explore how the Italian landscape was reimagined in the second half of the 19th century by the Macchiaioli, who painted directly in the open air using a fascinating free technique of patches, known as *macchia*.

Session One

We will explore how Italian landscape begins to emerge in the background of fresco cycles, particularly associated with St. Francis of Assisi, in the 14th century and then develops further in 15th century frescoes by Benozzo Gozzoli and Ghirlandaio. Leonardo da Vinci was inspired to visit areas which he drew and then used as inspiration in the background of his religious subjects and portraits. Venetian artists such as Bellini, Giorgione and Titian were inspired by the Venetian hills, north of Venice and their landscape vistas in turn delighted artists such as Claude, Poussin and Dughet, during the 17th century.

Session Two

The 18th century saw the arrival of many visitors fascinated with Italy's landscapes such as Grand Tourists who purchased landscapes of Italy for their grand houses in England, which in turn were imitated in their gardens, leading to the development of the Picturesque landscape garden in England. Tourists also expected their portraits to have recognisable landscape views in the background behind them as in their portraits by Pompeo Batoni. Artists also continued to flock to Italy as the demand for Italian landscape grew, especially scenes of eruption or fireworks as in the work of Joseph Wright of Derby. The course will end with an opportunity to examine the inspiration of Italian landscape in the 19th century in the work of the German Nazarenes and, in the second half of the 19th century, the new modern techniques and direction taken by the Italian Macchiaioli following the political impact of the *Risorgimento*.

Course Tutor

Clare Ford-Wille was an Associate Lecturer at Birkbeck College, University of London and lectures regularly for many institutions including the V&A Museum, the National Trust, The Arts Society, the Art Fund as well as leading groups to places of art historical interest in Europe, Armenia and the USA.

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.
