

Fashion Icons

Dates	Tuesday 29 and Wednesday 30 September 2026
Times	18.00–20.00 BST
Location	Online (Zoom)
Tutor	Jacqui Ansell
Level	All Levels



Attributed to Steven van der Meulen, *Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester*, c. 1560–65. ©The Wallace Collection.
François Boucher, *Madame de Pompadour*, 1759. ©The Wallace Collection.
Jean-Baptiste Isabey *Rose Maystre, second wife of the Artist*, 1831. ©The Wallace Collection.

Course Description

Join dress historian Jacqui Ansell for a rich investigation of the fabulous fashions of the past, exploring ways in which Wallace Collection masterpieces have inspired costume and couture designers of the present.

From 'The Tudors', through 'Versailles' to 'Bridgerton' discover ways in which courtly clothing has been adapted for stage and screen to convey power and sex appeal. Delve deeper into the lives and wardrobes of famous fashionistas such as Louis XIV, Madame de Pompadour, Marie Antoinette, George IV and Empress Eugénie as we investigate ways in which styles were set and shifted throughout Europe from the 1560s-1860s.

Session One – Courts, Clothing and Cultural Rivalry: Renaissance to Baroque

The superb portrait of *Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester*, c. 1560–65, attributed to Steven van der Meulen, provides the starting point for our discussion of seductive styles worn by courtiers to curry favour – and as inspiration for costume designers today. Considering Frans Hals' *Laughing Cavalier* we'll focus on how clothing was used to convey identities in the era of Van Dyck and Charles I. We'll go on to gain insights from diarist Samuel Pepys into the ways fashion was used to express cultural rivalry between individuals and even key European political powers in the age of Charles II and Louis XIV.

Session Two – Marie-Antoinette, George IV and Empress Eugénie: Fashion Victims?

We'll discuss how the rich rococo styles set by Madame de Pompadour spilled over into the era of Marie-Antoinette, with the appearance of both women inspiring portraits and later screen interpretations. Exploring ways in which these women were depicted exposes gendered agendas, which can also be interrogated in terms of George IV's reputation as a 'dedicated follower of fashion'. Finally, the styles of Jane Austen's era, in which TV series 'Bridgerton' is set, are well represented by miniatures in the Wallace Collection, an investigation of which will allow us to delve deeper into the dynamics of appearance and reality in the depiction of dress.

Course Tutor

Jacqui Ansell has an M.A. in art & dress history from the Courtauld Institute and is an experienced lecturer accredited by The Arts Society. Formerly an Education Officer at the National Gallery and Senior Lecturer with Christie's Education, she now offers tailor-made tours of London galleries and works freelance as an expert in decoding and dating paintings. You will find articles by Jacqui on the Wallace Collection website about Rococo, and fashion as depicted by Reynolds and Fragonard. Her latest book 'Fashion' was recently published by Yale and the National Gallery.

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.
