

Making Connections with Art: Still Life

Dates	Tuesdays 23 February; 2 and 9 March 2021
Times	18.00-19.45
Location	Zoom Webinar
Tutor	Jo Rhymer
Level	All Levels



Jan Weenix, *Flowers on a Fountain with a Peacock*, c.1700-c.1710 (detail)

Course Description

The Wallace Collection's extraordinary range of painting and sculpture offers inspiring and thought-provoking images which are as relevant today as when the works were first created. Discover how we can make meaningful connections with them by looking slowly.

This three-session course is designed to help you develop visual analysis skills by looking at paintings in detail. Concentrating on a small number of still life works, you'll develop core skills in active looking that can be applied beyond the course, as well as increasing your familiarity with the artworks selected.

Still life paintings – the representation of inanimate objects – can be traced as far back as Greco-Roman images and the subject remains popular with artists and viewers today. While the items depicted are mostly inactive, we'll discover that the paintings are nevertheless alive with their intriguing compositions, textures, use of colour and potential meanings. There is often more to still life paintings than initially meets the eye and their invitation to sustain close exploration, offers delight to the keen observer.

Session One: Objects and Meaning

The main focus of our course is paintings in the Wallace Collection but to set the scene, our first session begins by looking briefly at Roman depictions of inanimate objects. Our focus will be a wall painting from Herculaneum and a mosaic from Pompeii. We'll discuss how Roman paintings, influenced by ancient Greek representations, depict still life objects associated with ideas of hospitality and affluence. When we look at a 17th-century Dutch painting from the Wallace Collection, we'll see how depicting still life continued to provide artists with opportunities to display their extraordinary skill just as it had in the ancient world. We will also make connections with how the transitory nature of life was an important theme, not only in a Roman mosaic but also Dutch paintings of the 1600s.

Session Two: Objects and Values

We'll begin our second session by looking at Antoine Vollon's 19th-century still life painting, *Curiosités*, which is in the Musée d'Orsay's collection in Paris. This fascinating painting depicts a host of possessions including armour, a Limoges casket, a 16th-century Venetian wine glass and a bust of Dante to name but a few of the highly valued objects arranged in the scene. When Vollon painted them, the objects belonged to the sculptor, arts administrator, and collector, the comte de Nieuwerkerke. In 1871, Sir Richard Wallace purchased Nieuwerkerke's collection and many of the objects represented in Vollon's painting are now part of the Wallace Collection.

We will then focus on one of the works shown in Vollon's painting – Jean de Court's plaque depicting *Marguerite de France as Minerva* – in order to consider the significance of the still life elements represented alongside her image. To complete this session, we will investigate a monumental still life painting by Frans Snyder. Is the painting concerned with portraying abundance and displaying the skills of the artist, or are additional interpretations feasible?

Session Three: Nature and Artifice

In our final session, we'll continue our discussion around ideas of bounteous display to consider the extent to which artists Jan Weenix, Jan Jansz. de Heem and Jan van Huysum represent nature in a 'truthful' way. How can a painting offer the viewer something that the eye might not see in 'real life' and how can we experience these works in a meaningful way today, either in reproduction or in the museum setting?

Course Tutor

Jo Rhymer is a history of art lecturer. She has broad experience of working in museum and gallery learning departments and was previously Head of Adult Learning Programmes at the National Gallery. She leads tours in the UK and abroad and lectures for various organisations including the Institute of Continuing Education at the University of Cambridge and the Victoria & Albert Museum. Her particular interests include 19th-century French art, representations of women and women artists.

Previous Skills, Knowledge or Experience

None required. This course is designed as an introduction to the subject.

Joining Information and Format

This course will be taught through Zoom Webinar. For more information, including instructions on how to download and use the system, please visit www.zoom.us/support.

Each course session duration is 105 minutes, including a five-minute break and Q&A session with the tutor.

Participants will be emailed the Zoom Webinar ID and Passcode 48 hours in advance of the first course session.
