

Introducing... Watteau and His World

Dates	Saturday 17 and Sunday 18 July 2021
Times	11.00–13.00 BST
Location	Zoom (online)
Tutor	Jacqui Ansell
Level	All Levels



Antoine Watteau, *Voulez vous triompher des Belles?*, c.1714-17 (detail)

Course Description

Watteau was born in the reign of Louis XIV – the absolute monarch who styled himself ‘The Sun King’. In 1684 as Jean-Antoine Watteau entered the world, the finishing touches were being put to the Hall of Mirrors at the Palace of Versailles, the scheme designed to magnify the magnificence of the King. The artists and artisans of Louis XIV’s court, such as the great furniture maker André-Charles Boulle, created a visual culture dominated by the grandeur and gravitas of the Baroque. Watteau’s innovative art was to lighten the palette of artists, and lighten the mood of their art, to pave the way for the delicate pastel colours and frivolous subject matter of the Rococo style.

Thanks to the enlightened taste of its founders, the Wallace Collection is a showcase for many of Watteau’s most important artworks. In exploring the life and legacy of this intriguing artist, we will also revel in details of the rich tapestry of ideas and objects that made up Watteau’s world.

Session One - Watteau's Life: The Man, the Myths and the Masterpieces

Watteau's career was cut short by his death from tuberculosis aged 36. Despite the short duration of his working life, he made a unique contribution to 'High Art' with his '*Fêtes Galantes*' - scenes of the rich at play. The fact of his premature death has often overshadowed interpretations of his life, as scholars argue that an air of melancholy dominates the scenes of leisure and pleasure that he depicts. We will explore such ideas, and also meet many of the popular characters from the *Commedia dell'arte* that populate his canvases. Explanation of the rich symbolism and material culture of the court of Louis XIV will help us to understand Watteau as we take a closer look at many of his masterpieces (as well as those by Charles Le Brun and André-Charles Boulle) in the context of the Wallace Collection and wider world.

Session Two - Watteau's Legacy: Inspiring Innovation

As a bridge between Baroque and Rococo styles, Watteau's work has intrigued generations of artists and collectors. Within the Wallace Collection there are numerous examples of his art, but also that of artists such as Pater and Boucher who followed in his footsteps and developed their own styles and subject matter. Famous fashion designers such as Vivienne Westwood have been inspired by the sumptuous silks and satin garments immortalised in his paintings. We will delve deeper into an examination of his drawings and explore the potent appeal of his artwork in his own lifetime and beyond.

Course Tutor

Jacqui Ansell gained an MA from the Courtauld Institute enabling her to decode and date dress in art, and to educate others in this field. As an experienced gallery educator, she has devised and delivered numerous courses for the Wallace Collection and the National Gallery, and is an accredited lecturer for The Arts Society. As Senior Lecturer at Christie's Education, she is currently writing, presenting and tutoring online courses in Art History and Luxury. She is particularly interested in exploring the links between furniture, fashion and fine art (and the wider cultural history of the long eighteenth-century).

Previous Skills, Knowledge or Experience

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

Joining Information, Format and Recordings

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 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.

This course will be recorded. Following each session, ticket holders will be emailed a link to view the recording, which will be available for one week only.
