

Making Connections with Art: Portraits

Dates	Tuesday 2, 9 and 16 November 2021
Times	18.00-19.45 GMT
Location	Zoom Webinar
Tutor	Jo Rhymer
Level	All Levels



Gainsborough, *Mrs Mary Robinson (Perdita)*, 1781 (detail)

Course Description

The Wallace Collection's outstanding paintings are as inspiring and thought-provoking today as when they were first created. Discover how we can make meaningful connections with them by looking slowly.

Portraiture's origins can be traced back to the ancient world and the depicting of specific individuals has remained a popular subject in western European painting. The Wallace Collection boasts a wide range of fascinating historical portraits, but separated from the time in which they were created, how can we engage with them? Concentrating on just a small selection of works, we'll develop approaches that increase our interaction with them; we'll also consider issues of resemblance, identity and function associated with the genre.

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

Session One: Public Face, Family Face

Beginning with two portraits in the Wallace Collection from the 15th and 16th centuries, we'll think about the origins of portraiture, and how a portrait might function as possibly a commemorative object, a status symbol, a form of resemblance, or a political device, as well as an opportunity for aesthetic display.

Before looking at painted portraits, we'll consider a portrait medal of Cosimo de' Medici to think about its intended purpose and to think why references to ancient Rome were made in 15th-century Italian portraiture. We'll also compare the Wallace Collection's portrait of Eleonora of Toledo with a portrait showing the same sitter with her son, painted by Bronzino, housed in the Uffizi Gallery. How might the painting convey power as well as display ostentatious wealth? Following on from this, we'll look at other representations of family members to consider the effects of potentially more intimate portraiture.

Session Two: Different Faces of Women's Portraits

Taking Henry Bone's miniature of *Lady Cockburn and Her Three Eldest Sons* in the Wallace Collection as a starting point, our second session will include an exploration of the painting by Joshua Reynolds that inspired the miniature, and an allegorical painting of *Charity* by Van Dyck, which influenced Reynolds. How might a portrait miniature function differently from a full-scale painting, and how might an allegorical figure of Charity relate to an 18th-century family portrait?

We'll also explore three portraits of the actress Mrs Mary Robinson, who was briefly the mistress of the Prince of Wales (later George IV). In Gainsborough's large-scale painting, she is shown holding a portrait miniature depicting the prince. What is our role in viewing this portrait and how does the work compare with Hazlitt's miniature of the actress? We'll also explore Reynolds's painting, which might be the result of collaboration with the sitter.

Session Three: Frans Hals and the Male Portrait

Even in those works where his palette is restricted and his figures are soberly attired, Frans Hals created portraits that exude a sense of immediacy and life. In our final session, we'll focus particularly on a small selection of works featured in the Wallace Collection's exhibition *Frans Hals: The Male Portrait*. How is the artist's own personality conveyed as well as that of his sitter, and how can we connect with these aspects?

To conclude the course, we'll look closely at the Wallace Collection's celebrated painting *The Laughing Cavalier*, with its exuberant colours, dazzling brush strokes and engaging sitter. One of the outstanding qualities of this painting is the exquisitely rendered detailing of embroidery on the man's sleeve, which is prominently displayed for our inspection. How might the stitched features, including those of tongues of fire and winged arrows, potentially contribute to the meaning of the painting, and what can close looking reveal?

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, is an accredited lecturer for the Arts Society, lectures for various organisations including the V&A, and is a Panel Tutor for the

Institute of Continuing Education at the University of Cambridge. Her particular interests include 19th and early 20th-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 time for Q&A with the tutor.

Tickets are for all three 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 subsequent 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 one week only.
