

Introducing... Fragonard and *The Swing*

Dates	Wednesday 1 and Thursday 2 December 2021
Times	18.00-20.00 GMT
Location	Zoom Webinar
Tutor	Gayna Pelham
Level	All Levels



Fragonard, *Les hasards heureux de l'escarpolette (The Swing)*, about 1767-68 (detail)

Course Description

The Rococo artworks in the Wallace Collection are internationally renowned. On this evening course, we'll focus on perhaps the most celebrated example: Jean-Honoré Fragonard's *The Swing*. But why is the painting so famous? To better understand its iconic status, we'll explore the painting in context, looking at the period in which it was made alongside other extraordinary examples of Rococo artworks in the Wallace Collection and beyond. We'll also look at Fragonard's life and work, considering his wide interests which encompassed not only painting, but also printmaking.

The Swing will take centre stage in our exploration. We'll discuss its subject matter and composition, while considering its position within Fragonard's extensive artistic production. We'll also address the painting's influence and lasting legacy across the arts – both its impact in the 18th century, as well as its reception in the 20th and 21st centuries.

Session One - Fragonard: Life and Context

The Rococo style emerged in France in the 1720s and 1730s, following the death of Louis XIV and manifesting as a reaction by craftsmen and designers to the Baroque grandeur seen at Versailles. Rococo's rebellious form was first evident in objects such as furniture and ceramics before its influence appeared in art and architecture; in our first session, we'll explore some of the many superb examples in the Wallace Collection.

We'll go on to look in depth at Fragonard's life and art, and we'll discuss some of his most important paintings, drawings and prints. It's perhaps surprising to learn that for an artist who was so prolific and successful during the middle part of his life, he died in relative obscurity. To understand why, we'll consider the changing political times and impact of the French Revolution.

Session Two - *The Swing*: Subject, Influence and Legacy

The Swing is now considered to be not only Fragonard's most important painting but also a masterwork of Rococo style. In our second session, we'll explore the painting's composition and the techniques Fragonard used to create this exquisite work. With its seemingly frivolous subject matter of a young woman on a swing being pushed by an elderly man, the meanings surrounding the image are complex and fascinating and we'll discuss its different interpretations.

We'll finish our course by considering *The Swing's* significance within the Wallace Collection and how its reputation has changed and grown over time. As well as influencing other art and artists, we'll see that the painting has shaped music and opera, as well as film. We'll look briefly at these art forms to discover the continuing fascination of Fragonard's most provocative and intriguing masterwork.

Course Tutor

Gayna Pelham has been a lecturer in art history for over 15 years, teaching for a wide range of institutions including the National Gallery, National Portrait Gallery, the Courtauld Gallery and the Wallace Collection. She is also a practising artist and teaches drawing and painting, specialising in teaching adults who really feel that they cannot draw.

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 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 one week only.
