

Techniques of the Old Masters

Dates	Wednesday 6 and Thursday 7 July 2022
Times	14.00–16.00 BST
Location	Online (Zoom Webinar)
Tutor	Dr Chantal Brotherton-Ratcliffe
Level	All Levels



Vincenzo Foppa, *The Young Cicero Reading*, about 1464

Course Description

Discover how some of the finest paintings in the Wallace Collection were created. We'll look closely at both materials and techniques to understand more about the processes of making a so-called Old Master painting, from paint brushes and pigments to the handling of paint and image composition.

We'll examine some of the earliest paintings in the Collection to understand the constraints imposed by painting with egg tempera – coloured pigments mixed with an egg yolk binder – and consider how, for artists including Rembrandt, Velázquez and Rubens, the use of oil paints enabled them to depict sumptuous colours and palpable textures.

Prior to the invention of synthetic pigments, natural colours were both difficult to handle and limited in range; we'll also consider how artists overcame these challenges to create a variety of purples, greens and reds to bring their paintings to life.

Session One

In our first session, we'll focus on early works and materials such as fresco, egg tempera and oil paint. Painting on wooden panels is very different from painting on canvas, and we'll explore these differences by looking at paintings by Cima and Titian.

We'll also see how designing pictures, when the paint was unforgiving, meant that artists had to think very differently from artists working today. In the second half of this session, we'll explore the ways in which artists in the 15th and 16th centuries constructed their pictures, focussing on how they planned spatial effects to work within the frames – an important aspect of picture-making at the time.

Session Two

On day two, we'll move from Southern Europe to look at artists working in Northern Europe, particularly Rubens, Hals, Rembrandt and their contemporaries – all of whom used oil paint to create sensual and evocative textures. We'll examine pigments and their idiosyncrasies, their dictatorial character, and the importance of colour choices.

In the 18th century, painting production moved away from the learning and training associated with artists' workshops, with their emphasis on the tradition of craft, to studying in academies. Rather than making their materials, later artists tended to buy them, and we'll see that using different pigments and unexpected methods and materials led to mixed results. We'll also take a closer look at the works of Boucher, Canaletto, Watteau and Reynolds to understand the range of new materials available in the 18th and early-19th centuries, which opened up new possibilities for painting.

Course Tutor

Dr Chantal Brotherton-Ratcliffe graduated from Edinburgh University with an MA in History of Art and completed her PhD at the Warburg Institute, University of London. She trained briefly as a paintings conservator and has worked as a lecturer for over 30 years at Sotheby's Institute of Art, and for a number of institutions including the National Gallery and the Royal Academy, teaching a wide range of topics within 15th-, 16th- and 17th-century European art. Her interest is in the approach of the traditional connoisseur, teaching the analysis of those stylistic features of a painting or work of art that can tell us who the artist is, and when a painting is a copy, good or bad.

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](#). 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.
