

The Seasons: A Closer Look

Dates	Wednesday 5 and Thursday 6 October 2022
Times	18.00-20.00 BST
Location	Online (Zoom Webinar)
Tutor	Jo Rhymer
Level	All Levels



Aert van der Neer, *A Skating Scene*, about 1655 to about 1660 (detail)

Course Description

Whether literal or personified, the depiction of the seasons has challenged and inspired artists for centuries. As we transition from summer to autumn, journey through seasonal changes as seen in a selection of works in the Wallace Collection. We'll consider the viewer's participation in depicted seasonal scenes – how we are invited to imagine the warmth of summer sunshine or to feel the chill of an icy winter – and discuss how an artist's technique and palette contribute to these effects.

Our discussion will also include the influence of Greek and Roman mythologies. Although our main focus is paintings, we'll look at four statuettes in the Collection to explore how the personification of the seasons necessitates the artist's – and the viewer's – creative imagination.

Session One: Time and Meaning

The passing of the four seasons marks the passage of time. In our first session, we'll reflect on transience by looking at Poussin's enigmatic painting, *A Dance to the Music of Time*. Poussin depicts figures moving in response to music, played by Father Time on a lyre. How might the seasons be linked to meanings within this work?

We'll also look closely at four 18th-century statuettes of allegorical figures. One features the Roman goddess, Ceres, whose daughter Proserpina was abducted by Pluto and taken to the underworld. We'll consider how Proserpina's story explained the creation of the seasons, and why Greek and Roman mythology persisted as an inspiration for artists.

Session Two: In the Open Air

In our second session we'll journey through diverse representations of the four seasons. We'll explore paintings by the 17th-century Dutch artist Aert van der Neer, made during the period of the 'Little Ice Age' when severe winters were commonplace. His wintry landscape scenes testify to the icing over of waterways, showing figures adapting to the intense conditions.

By contrast, we'll also look at works by French painters Nicolas Lancret, François Boucher and Camille Roqueplan, which impart a sense of warmth and wellbeing. Lancret's depiction reveals, perhaps unwittingly, that not all of those depicted have the opportunity to enjoy a warm summer's day, and we'll discover that looking closely can reveal fascinating insights into social history.

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 and lectures for various organisations including the V&A Museum; she is also a Panel Tutor for the Institute of Continuing Education, University of Cambridge. Her particular interests include 19th-century and early 20th-century French art, as well as the visual skills and benefits involved in sustained looking at paintings.

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.
