

The Childhood of Christ in Art

Dates	Tuesday 6 and Wednesday 7 December
Times	2022 18.00-20.00 GMT
Location	Online (Zoom Webinar)
Tutor	Dr Richard Stemp
Level	All Levels



I. D. C., *The Virgin and Child Seated on Clouds* (Plaque), about 1590 to about 1625 (detail)

Course Description

In the Christian Church, the beginning of December marks the start of Advent: the period leading up to Christmas that focuses on the preparations for the birth of Jesus. What better time to look at the ways in which the childhood of Christ is depicted in art?

Over two sessions, you'll learn how the biblical narrative was combined with ideas from diverse sources to create the familiar image of Christmas. We'll distinguish the different elements of the story, explore the ways in which they were interpreted, and discuss the wider implications for art and faith. The intricacy and subtlety of some of the Wallace Collection's smaller works, sometimes difficult to see close-up in the museum, will be spectacularly revealed through the use of detailed imagery throughout the course.

Session One

Like many Christmas services, we'll start our course with the *Annunciation*, when the Angel Gabriel told Mary she was to become a mother. We'll discuss the *Visitation*, when Mary visited her cousin Elizabeth, pregnant with John the Baptist, and *The Dream of St Joseph*, when the humble carpenter learnt the nature of Mary's pregnancy. We'll also look at the *Nativity* in this session - the birth of Christ - and the arrival of the Shepherds who were the first visitors to greet the infant Christ.

Fascinating works from the Collection will be our primary sources. We'll draw on familiar paintings as well as lesser-known material including sculpture, ceramics, furniture and armour.

Session Two

By today's standards, the Wise Men arrived late for Christmas: Epiphany is celebrated on 6 January - the reason for having '12 Days of Christmas'. In our second session, we'll consider why we refer to these figures as Three Kings, given that neither their number nor status features in the Bible.

Their arrival will also begin our exploration through art of the little-known childhood of Christ, and of the Holy Family - the subjects of so many paintings. Our course will conclude by looking at two episodes marking the end of Jesus's youth: the *Baptism*, and the *Wedding at Cana*, both of which were once also celebrated on the Feast of the Epiphany.

Course Tutor

Dr Richard Stemp is a graduate of Clare College, University of Cambridge, where he also completed his PhD on *Sculpture in Ferrara in the 15th Century*. After a year at the Academy of Live and Recorded Arts he has shared his time between art and acting. Richard was a lecturer at the National Gallery for 24 years, and has worked regularly for London's leading museums including Tate, Buckingham Palace and the V&A. His books include *The Secret Language of the Renaissance* and *Churches and Cathedrals*, he has also written and presented two series for Channel Four: *Art in the National Gallery* and *Tate Modern*.

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.
