Programme

The Artist and the Book

Autumn term online live sessions: Tuesdays, 5 November–10 December 2024, 14.00-16.30 GMT.

Watch lecture recordings on demand, available at the end of each day, until Tuesday 21 January 2025.

Overview

This course brings a unique V&A perspective to the history of the book, focusing on the role and achievements of artists, artisans and designers in its material forms, and on its special capacity as a sphere for artistic creativity. Case studies illuminate a complex, wide-ranging story, from medieval manuscripts to graphic novels.

The look of language, its written or printed characters, influence how text is understood, studied and used. The power of pictures on a page, the ability for letters and words to become pictures, and the way words and images interact will be examined, in relation to how they were originated and physically made. Some book formats beyond the codex will be explored, as well as the craft and art of book bindings and covers. The ways in which artists have been drawn to the book, and how they responded to its potentials and constraints, is a touchstone of the course. Aspects of the close and continuing relationship between photography and the book will be considered.

Your course leaders

Elizabeth James and Dr Catherine Yvard

Elizabeth James is Senior Librarian for Collections and content at the National Art Library (NAL), V&A. She has researched, published and taught on topics in book history, art-historical publishing and artists’ books.
Dr Catherine Yvard is Collections Curator at the NAL. Specialising in late medieval illuminated manuscripts, she teaches regularly and has published internationally.

The National Art Library is the V&A’s department for the art and design of the book: the course is taught by Library curators, drawing on its rich collections, as well as other V&A experts and guests.

**Week 1 – 5 November 2024**

13.50 Welcome
14.00 Artful letters across cultures Catherine Yvard, Tim Stanley, Nick Barnard
15.30 Text as image: illuminated experiments and experimental typography Catherine Yvard, Elizabeth James

**Week 2 – 12 November**

14.00 Telling a story through pictures: early printed books and comics Catherine Yvard, Marc Ward
15.30 Image-led genres: from emblem books to livres d’artistes Elizabeth James

**Week 3 – 19 November**

14.00 Augmented illustration: aesthetic, economic and erotic drives Richard Espley
15.30 Art as reading response: illustration and subversion Elizabeth James

**Week 4 – 26 November**

14.00 Photographers and the book Jen Reeves
15.30 Art of the comic, Marc Ward, Elizabeth James
Week 5 – 3 December

14.00  Bound to impress Catherine Yvard, Guest TBC
15.30  Bound to sell Richard Espley

Week 6 – 10 December

14.00  Books in motion: experiments with structure and shape Amy Orr, Catriona Gourlay
15.30  Book as an art practice Elizabeth James, Guest TBC

Note: V&A Academy programmes are subject to change without notice