

Programme

History of Jewellery

Details

Tuesdays, 29 April 2025 – 15 July 2025, Online.

Watch lecture recordings on demand, available at the end of each day, until Tuesday 7 October.

Overview

This course reveals the history of jewellery transcending borders and centuries with an emphasis from the Middle Ages till today and gives insight into the collection of 3,500 jewels in the V&A's William and Judith Bollinger Jewellery Gallery, other museum departments and major international museum collections. Beyond a chronology various themes will be explored, as well as the century-long traditions of making jewellery, the use of prints and drawings as inspiration and the effect of innovative modern technologies. Changes in economy and society were significant in the choice of jewels and materials, as were new trends in dress fashions. Styles were often influenced by international trade and art movements. Jewels are more than simply adornment and symbols of status, they are worn as a sign of authority and distinction, symbols of faith, protective amulets, and personal to the wearer express devotion, love, grief and hope. In essence jewellery is more than adornment, it accompanies the wearer through life from cradle to grave marking special occasions.

Your course leader

Beatriz Chadour-Sampson is an international jewellery historian, author and lecturer. She was consultant curator to the redesigning of the William and Judith Bollinger Jewellery Gallery and guest curator of the 'Pearls' exhibition at the V&A. She curated the Alice and Louis Koch Collection, in the Swiss National Museum, Zurich, and Gübelin Gem Museum in Lucerne.

Guest speakers on this course include: Rachel Church, Helen Molesworth, Jenny Rourke, Jane Perry, Sandy Jones, Silvia Weidenbach and Sarah Rothwell.

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

Week 1 – 29 April

10.30 Why do we wear jewellery – the meanings behind jewellery **Beatriz Chadour-Sampson**

12.00 Transcending cultures and centuries in Antiquity, and the attraction and inspiration in later jewellery designs in Europe **Beatriz Chadour-Sampson**

Week 2 – 6 May

10.30 Early Christianity, the Middle Ages between faith and superstition **Beatriz Chadour-Sampson**

12.00 When diamonds were a man's best friend - the history of male jewellery **Rachel Church**

Week 3 – 13 May

Alternatives to Reality

10.30 Jewels as symbols of status and diplomatic gifts at the Renaissance Courts in Europe and Queen Elizabeth I of Britain **Beatriz Chadour-Sampson**

12.00 Global trade, shipwrecks, pearls and gemstones **Beatriz Chadour-Sampson**

Week 4 – 20 May

10.30 From Baroque Splendour to Rococo Elegance **Beatriz Chadour-Sampson**

12.00 The art of gem engraving, a world in miniature: cameos and intaglios in jewellery **Rachel Church**

Week 5 – 27 May

10.30 Napoleon and Josephine – a return to luxury **Beatriz Chadour-Sampson**

12.00 Queen Victoria of Britain and Empress Eugenie of France – as style icons **Beatriz Chadour-Sampson**

Week 6 – 3 June

10.30 Political jewellery for patriots, revolutionaries and rebels **Rachel Church**

12.00 European History told through rings **Beatriz Chadour-Sampson**

Week 7 – 10 June

10.30 From Historicism to the Belle Epoque and a changing society **Beatriz Chadour-Sampson**

12.00 Art Nouveau in France, Jugendstil in Germany, Vienna Workshops, Arts and Crafts in Britain – different styles and common ideals **Beatriz Chadour-Sampson**

Week 8 – 17 June

10.30 Jewels of the Empire Ball **Jenny Rourke, Head of Archive and Heritage, Cartier UK**

12.00 Cartier the V&A exhibition: Behind the scenes **Helen Molesworth**

Week 9 – 24 June

10.30 Traditional Jewellery in Europe from Iceland to the Mediterranean, Portugal to Russia
Jane Perry and Beatriz Chadour-Sampson

12.00 Jewellery designs, prints and drawings, how did it evolve and new techniques today
Sandy Jones

Week 10 – 1 July

10.30 Goldsmiths' techniques over centuries **Emefa Cole and Beatriz Chadour-Sampson**

12.00 Modern day technologies in jewellery making **Silvia Weidenbach**

Week 11 – 8 July

10.30 Art Deco, Modernism and glamour in jewellery **Beatriz Chadour-Sampson**

12.00 Modernism in Scandinavia, Nordic jewellery and its influence **Sarah Rothwell**

Week 12 – 15 July

10.30 Breaking with traditions 1945-2000 **Beatriz Chadour-Sampson**

12.00 High end jewellery vs artist jewellery **Beatriz Chadour-Sampson**

13.00 Meet and Greet: Bring along your favourite jewel and share your story