

Programme

Classicism: Enlightenment to Modernity

Details

Mondays, 28 April 2025 – 21 July 2025, 10.30–16.30. Online.

Watch lecture recordings on demand, available at the end of each day, until 13 October 2025

Overview

The civilisations of Ancient Greece and Rome have provided a seemingly inexhaustible source of inspiration for European art, design and architecture. This course investigates the afterlife of the classical era, exploring the ways in which classical themes, motifs and styles were re-discovered and interpreted in the modern age.

From the 18th century onwards, artists and scholars developed an increasingly sophisticated knowledge of the antique world, grounded in close study of art works and archaeological excavations in Greece and Italy. While some continued to see classicism as a standard for ideal beauty, others viewed antiquity as humanity's golden age in society and government, and hoped to inspire its revival through their architecture and art. On a lighter level, many painters and sculptors looked to classical history and mythology as sources for narrative subjects, or to feed the general public's seemingly insatiable appetite for images of daily life in Athens, Rome and Pompeii. By the 20th century there was no clear consensus on what the classical tradition meant. Still, the majority of artists – whether they were innovators or traditionalists – continued to insist that classicism had an essential role to play in their work. This course emphasizes that classicism is a living tradition, re-invented to meet the needs and interests of each new age.

Your course leader

Dr Kathy McLauchlan, art historian specialising in French painting and lecturer with the Arts Society, Morley College and Oxford University.

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

Week 1 – 28 April

Pompeii and Herculaneum

10.20 General Introductions

10.30 Introduction to the Course **Kathy McLauchlan**

12.00 From Destruction to Rediscovery **Steve Kershaw**

14.00 Pathetic Spectacle, Awful Warning: The Afterlife of Pompeii's Destruction **Justine Hopkins**

15.30 Spotlight Session: Classicism at the V&A **Justine Hopkins**

Week 2 – 5 May (pre-recorded)

Inventing a New Classicism

10.30 10.30 Tourism and the Market in 18th-Century Rome **Clare Ford-Wille**

12.00 Winckelmann and his Circle **Kevin Childs**

14.00 The New Classicism in Art **Kathy McLauchlan**

Week 3 – 12 May

Antiquity in the Museum

10.30 Elgin, the Marbles and the British Museum **David Bellingham**

12.00 Sir John Soane and his Museum **Clare Ford-Wille**

14.00 The Marquis, the King and the necessary Goddess: Venus de Milo at the Louvre
Justine Hopkins

15.00 Spotlight Session: Thomas Jefferson's Monticello **Alley Marie Jordan**

Week 4 – 19 May

Ideal Form

10.30 Taste and the Antique **David Bellingham**

12.00 Canova's Living Classicism **Justine Hopkins**

14.00 Fashioning the Body: Classicism in Dress, 1750-1900 **Clare Rose**

Bank Holiday – 26 May

No Sessions on this Date

Week 5 – 2 June

Visions of Grandeur and Renewal

10.30 Classicism and Revolution **Kathy McLauchlan**

12.00 Imperial Capital - Paris as a New Rome **Clare Ford-Wille**

14.00 'Athens on the Isar': Ludwig I and Munich **Clare Ford-Wille**

15.00 Meet & Greet **Kathy McLauchlan**

Week 6 – 9 June

Classicism in a Romantic Age

10.30 Challenging the Legacy of Rome **Kathy McLauchlan**

12.00 Rising, Declining, Falling: Rome and the Romantic Vision **Justine Hopkins**

14.00 "How can man die better?" History, Legend and the Making of 'Romanitas' **Justine Hopkins**

15.30 Spotlight Session: Micromosaics from the Gilbert Collection **Jessica Insley**

Week 7 – 16 June

Bringing Rome to Life

10.30 in Firemen's Helmets – Classicism Neo Grec Style **Kathy McLauchlan**

12.00 The Past Revived: Victorian Visions of Rome **Justine Hopkins**

14.00 Deutschrömer: German Artists in Italy **Kevin Childs**

Week 8 – 23 June

New Discoveries, New Visions

10.30 Greek explorations **Steve Kershaw**

12.00 Schliemann at Troy and Mycenae **James Renshaw**

14.00 Colouring the Antique **Kathy McLauchlan**

15.30 Spotlight Session: Pergamon Museum **Steve Kershaw**

Week 9 – 30 June

Classicism for a Modern Age

10.30 A Living Tradition **Kathy McLauchlan**

12.00 De Chirico's Dream of Antiquity **Justine Hopkins**

14.00 Antique Surreal **Justine Hopkins**

15.30 Spotlight Session: Jean Cocteau and Classicism **David Bellingham**

Week 10 – 7 July

New World Order

10.30 Mussolini and Romanità **David Bellingham**

12.00 Hitler's Germany and the 'First Reich' **Kevin Childs**

14.00 Nation, Empire, Master-Race: the modern Olympics from 1896 to 1936 **James Renshaw**

Week 11 – 14 July

Classic Modernity

10.30 Modern Classicism in Architecture **Greg Votolato**

12.00 Modern Classicism in Design **Greg Votolato**

14.00 Case Study: Mies Van de Rohe **Greg Votolato**

15.30 Spotlight Session: Glass **Justine Hopkins**

Week 12 – 21 July

Classicism Now

10.30 Antiquities on Display **David Bellingham**

12.00 ‘Another attitude to time’: Antony Gormley on Delos **Justine Hopkins**

14.00 And then we saw the Daughters of the Minotaur’: Classic Myths and Modern Artists
Justine Hopkins