

Programme

Gold: A History

Details

Thursdays, 1 May – 5 June 2025. Online. Watch lecture recordings on demand, available at the end of each day, until 17 July 2025.

Overview

This 6-week online course will look at the fascinating history of gold, and explore its sociocultural relevance as emblem of wealth, power, and allure across centuries and around the globe. From ancient treasures to contemporary jewellery, global trade networks to innovations in craftsmanship, we'll delve into how gold as a material has shaped economies, cultures, and an extraordinary variety of artistic expression. Guided by V&A curators, leading metalworkers, and world-class experts, each session invites you to engage with the richness of V&A's collections and with gold artifacts of global significance. Weekly guest speakers, including jewellers Emeфа Cole and Ute Decker, historians Professor Peter Oakley and Alice Minter will provide unique insights into gold's influence on art and design, from its role in religious artifacts to fashion.

Your course leader

Dr Frances Parton is a curator and historian specialising in decorative arts, especially metalwork and jewellery. She is currently Deputy Curator at the Goldsmiths' Company, which has a fascinating collection of historic and contemporary silver, modern and contemporary jewellery, and art medals. Her most recent publications include *Life & Legacy*, *Dorothy Hogg*, and *A World of Invention*, *Rings in the Goldsmiths' Company Collection* with Dora Thornton. Previously, Frances has worked at the V&A, the Fitzwilliam, the National Army Museum, English Heritage and the National Trust. Her PhD is in early medieval European history, and she is a Freeman of the Worshipful Company of the Gold and Silver Wyre Drawers.

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

Week 1 – Thursday 1 May 2025

Introduction to Gold

10.20 Introduction **Frances Parton**

10.30 Gold: Materiality and meaning **Rachel Church, Independent Scholar**

12.00 The Goldsmith in the Middle Ages: Devotion, Identity and Influence **Dr James Robinson, Keeper of the Decorative Arts & Sculpture Department, V&A**

Week 2 – Thursday 8 May 2025

13th – 15th centuries

10.30 Gold of the Americas **Dr Kirstin Kennedy, Curator of Metalwork, 1450 – 1900, V&A**

12.00 Gold trade and craftsmanship in West Africa **Emefa Cole, Curator of Jewellery (Diaspora), V&A**

Week 3 – Thursday 15 May 2025

15th – 17th centuries

10.30 Princely collections of the Renaissance **Dr Lisa Skogh de Zoete, Independent Scholar**

12.00 Gold in the golden age of the Mughal Court: 1560 – 1660 **Dr Susan Stronge, Senior Curator, Asia Department, V&A (recorded)**

Week 4 – Thursday 22 May 2025

18th – 19th centuries

10.30 Objects in Focus: Gold Boxes **Alice Minter, Senior Curator Gilbert Collection, V&A**

12.00 Changing fashions and innovations **Dr Beatriz Chadour-Sampson, Art Historian and Author**

13.00 Meet & Greet **Frances Parton**

Week 5 – Thursday 29 May 2025

20th – 21st centuries

- 10.30 Gold in the hands of artists **Didier and Martine Haspeslagh, Jewellery Collectors and Dealers**
- 12.00 Making in Gold:1945-2010s' **Becky Knott, Curator of Modern and Contemporary Metalwork, V&A**

Week 6 – Thursday 5 June 2025

Gold and ethics

- 10.30 Contemporary gold craft and techniques led by **Emefa Cole, V&A Curator of Jewellery (Diaspora)** with **Ute Decker, artist, goldsmith and jeweller** and **Giovanni Corvaja, jeweller**
- 12.00 Panel discussion: Mining, recycling, sourcing led by **Dr Peter Oakley, Professor of Material Culture and Co-Lead of the Material Engagements Research Cluster at the Royal College of Art**, including **Dr Gregory Valerio MBE, Social Entrepreneur** and **Arabel Lebrusan, MA RCA CSM; artist, jeweller and creative activist**

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