

V&A Academy

ARTS OF CHINA



Introduction

From ancient jade and bronze to later paintings, textiles, ceramics and decorative arts, this course follows the development of Chinese art up to the modern period.

From ancient tombs to the imperial palaces of Beijing, this course traces the rich artistic and cultural history of China. Jade, bronze and ceramic artefacts provide some of the earliest evidence of sophisticated art forms, reflecting aspects of diverse belief systems and ritual practices. Trade and religion connected often distant communities, along the fabled Silk Routes on land and sea, introducing new artistic currents and the influx of luxury items to China – silver, glass, ivory and precious stones – and the export of silk and ceramics prized as rare commodities abroad. From tea wares to court robes and literati treasures, the V&A collection reflects the wealth of artistic traditions found across China throughout the imperial period and up to the modern age.

Information

Mondays, 22 September – 24 November, 11.00-15.30. Onsite and Online.

Watch lecture recordings on demand, available at the end of each day, until 2 February 2026.

Your course leader

Dr Helen Glaister is an art historian specialising in Chinese Ceramics and Decorative Arts. She worked at the British Museum and Birkbeck before joining the V&A as Course Directors, Arts of Asia. Helen was awarded her MA and PhD from SOAS, University of London where she regularly teaches. Current research focuses collections history, Chinese lacquer and ceramics of the late modern period.

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

Week 1 – 22 September

Early China

- 10.45 Course Welcome **Helen Glaister**
- 11.00 Jade: Neolithic- Han Dynasty **Carol Michaelson**
- 12.30 Ancient Bronze: Zhou Dynasty **Carol Michaelson**
- 14.30 Qin Shin Huangdi Mausoleum **Carol Michaelson**

Week 2 – 29 September

Ancient Tombs

- 10.00 Gallery Talk (Group A): Ancient Jade and Bronze **Helen Glaister**- *additional tickets only*
- 11.00 Ancient Tombs: Fu Hao, Marquis Yi of Zeng, Mawangdui **Helen Glaister**
- 12.30 Imperial Han Tombs **James Lin**
- 14.30 Early Ceramics: Neolithic- Han Dynasty **Helen Glaister**
- 15.30 Gallery Talk: Ancient Jade and Bronze **Helen Glaister**- *additional tickets only*

Week 3 – 06 October

Art and Religion along the Silk Routes

- 10.00 Gallery Talk (Group A): Buddhism in China **Helen Glaister**- *additional tickets only*
- 11.00 Mapping the Silk Routes: Past and Present **Helen Glaister**
- 12.30 Early Buddhism in China **Helen Glaister**
- 14.30 Dunhuang and the Arts of the Mogao Caves **Helen Glaister**
- 15.30 Gallery Talk (Group B): Buddhism in China **Helen Glaister**- *additional tickets only*

Week 4 – 13 October

Early Painting and Calligraphy

- 11.00 Early Painting and the 'Admonitions Scroll' **Elaine Buck**
- 12.30 Landscape Painting of the Five Dynasties and the Song
Elaine Buck
- 14.30 Landscape Painting of the Southern Song **Elaine Buck**

Week 5 – 20 October

Ceramics

- 10.00 Gallery Talk (Group A): Ceramics in Early China
Helen Glaister- *additional tickets only*
- 11.00 Sui and Tang Ceramics **Helen Glaister**
- 12.30 Kiln wares of the Song dynasty **Helen Glaister**
- 14.30 Song Ceramics for Ritual, Scholarly Pursuits and Epicurean
Enjoyment **Rosemary Scott**
- 15.30 Gallery Talk (Group B): Ceramics in Early China
Helen Glaister- *additional tickets only*

Week 6 – 27 October

Yuan Dynasty Art and Culture

- 11.00 Mongol Court Dress and Textiles **Yingbai Fu**
- 12.30 Horses in the Art and Visual Culture of the Yuan Dynasty
Yuxi Pan
- 14.30 Yuan Ceramics **Helen Glaister**

Week 7 – 03 November

Ming Painting and Architecture

- 11.00 Portraiture and Figure Painting of the Ming Dynasty
Mariana Zegianini
- 12.30 Landscape Painting of the Ming Dynasty **Mariana Zegianini**
- 14.30 Building the Forbidden City **Frances Wood**

Week 8 – 10 November

Ming and Qing Ceramics

- 10.00 Gallery Talk (Group A): Ceramics in Late China **Helen Glaister**- *additional tickets only*
- 11.00 Ming Ceramics **Ivy Chan**
- 12.30 Qing Ceramics: Shunzhi- Yongzheng **Helen Glaister**
- 14.30 Ceramics from the Qianlong until the end of Empire
Helen Glaister
- 15.30 Gallery Talk (Group B): Ceramics in Late China **Helen Glaister**- *additional tickets only*

Week 9 – 17 November

Qing Decorative Arts and Textiles

- 10.00 Gallery Talk (Group A): Chinese Decorative Arts
Helen Glaister- *additional tickets only*
- 11.00 Ming and Qing Lacquer **Helen Glaister**
- 12.30 Glass, Cloisonné and Enamels **Helen Glaister**
- 14.30 Qing Textiles **Sau Fong Chan**
- 15.30 Gallery Talk (Group B): Chinese Decorative Arts
Helen Glaister- *additional tickets only*

Week 10 – 24 November

Qing Painting

11.00 Seventeenth Century Painting **Nixi Cura**

12.30 Eighteenth Century Painting **Nixi Cura**

14.30 Nineteenth Century Painting **Zhang Hongxing**