

V&A Academy

SKETCHING PORTRAITS

V&A

Introduction



SKETCHING PORTRAITS

Spend six weeks with one of the UK's leading drawing teachers, Jake Spicer, as we cover the fundamentals of portrait drawing, combining practical observational skills with focused examination of the elements that make up a face. The aim of the course is to help you to establish a competent and responsive portrait drawing practice, helping you to make clearer observations and more confident mark-making.

Jake Spicer is a visual artist, author and educator. He is head tutor of 'Draw' in Brighton, which he founded in 2009, and a co-director of 'The Drawing Circus'. Jake has written a series of best-selling instructional books, and is a regular tutor with, among other, the V&A and Cass Art as well as Derwent Pencils, for whom he is an ambassador.

Information

Tuesdays, 04 November – 09 December 2025

Afternoon Session 14:00 – 16:00

Evening Session 18:00 – 20:00 GMT

This course will be delivered online via Microsoft Teams. You will be issued with a V&A Academy Teams account and log in information prior to the start of the course.

Jake will deliver one 2 hour live session per week. There will be additional live weekly Spotlight Sessions with invited speaker. To get the most from this course, we recommend allocating around 6 hours a week to complete the live sessions and portfolio tasks

Materials are not provided, please see a list of materials below.

There will be a maximum of 24 participants in the session.

Recordings of the sessions will be available for 6 weeks after the end of the course.

Suitable for complete beginners or those with some experience of drawing. Suitable for participants aged 18 and over.

MATERIALS & TOOLS

A hardback sketchbook or loose cartridge paper secured to a drawing board

A comfortable place to draw from, where you can see your computer at eye level while drawing from the screen

Willow charcoal

A plastic/vinyl eraser

3B & 6B graphite pencils or similar

A sharpener

A cheap ballpoint or fineliner pen

Week One: Tuesday 04 November

An Introduction to sketching portraits

Jake Spicer

We will begin the course with an overview of the skills and attitudes that underpin observational portrait sketching, starting with a series of energetic exercises that focus on establishing drawing as a regular habit

Thursday 06 November: Spotlight Session

18:00 – 19:00

Emily Knight

Portraits in the V&A Collection with **Emily Knight**, Property Curator, National Trust

Week Two: Tuesday 11 November

Turns and Tilts of the Head

Jake Spicer

In week two we'll look at the challenges associated with drawing the head from different angles, exploring turns of the head and tilts back and forward.

Thursday 13 November: Spotlight Session

18:00 – 19:00

Chloe Briggs

Virtual Studio Visit with Artist **Chloe Briggs**

Week Three: Tuesday 18 November

The Neck and Shoulders

Jake Spicer

Often overlooked in favour of the face, our third week will focus on the contribution that the head and shoulders make to the expression and structure of a portrait.

Thursday 20 November Spotlight Session

18:00 – 19:00

Peter Jones Field

Virtual Studio Visit with Artist **Peter Jones Field**

Week Four: Tuesday 25 November

Structural Features: The Nose and Ears

Jake Spicer

In week four we'll zoom in on the features of the face, looking at how the nose and ears contribute to our understanding of structure in the head and how we can use their shape and position to improve the proportions of our drawings

Thursday 27 November

18:00 – 19:00

TBC

TBC

Week Five: Tuesday 02 December

Expressive Features: The Mouth and Eyes

Jake Spicer

Continuing our focus on features we'll take a look at expressive features of the face, the seat of likeness and identity in a portrait.

Thursday 04 December: Spotlight Session

18:00 – 19:00

Ruth Millington

The Role of 'The Muse' with author and curator **Ruth Millington**

Week Six: Tuesday 09 December

Hair & Clothing

Jake Spicer

We'll conclude the course with an exploration of the shape and texture of hair and clothing followed by a wrapping up of all of the elements we have covered.

Thursday 11 December: Spotlight Session

18:00 – 19:00

Sue Tilley

A View from the Other Side – what is it like to sit for a portrait with Artists' Model

Sue Tilley