

V&A Academy

ART AND THE CITY: ANTIQUITY TO RENAISSANCE



Introduction

Gain a unique perspective on the development of the arts by exploring their vibrant relationship between art, artists and the metropolis.

The history of western civilization is interwoven with the growth of its cities, and in antiquity as today urban communities thrived on stories and images which described their origins and defined their identities. As cities developed, the arts increasingly came to symbolize their wealth and power, while painters, sculptors and architects shaped the urban environment. Expert lecturers trace the rise of the city in history and myth, with case studies on Babylon, Petra, Islamic cities of Spain, Italian city states and the rise of Venice.

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 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 – 22 September

Introduction

- 10.45 Introduction to the Course
- 11.00 Introducing the Art of the City **Kathy McLauchlan**
- 12.30 Beginnings of the City **Sue Rollin**
- 14.30 Babylon **Sue Rollin**

Week 2 – 29 September

The City in Art and Myth

- 11.00 11.00 Tales of the City **Justine Hopkins**
- 12.30 The City & Civilization **Justine Hopkins**
- 14.30 Art and the City **Justine Hopkins**

Week 3 – 06 October

Cities of Greece

- 11.00 City State **David Bellingham**
- 12.30 Art and Architecture of Athens **David Bellingham**
- 14.30 Alexandria and other Hellenistic Cities **James Renshaw**

Week 4 – 13 October

Rome & its Empire

- 11.00 Art of Rome – Republic to Empire **Steve Kershaw**
- 12.30 Life and Art in Pompeii and Herculaneum **Steve Kershaw**
- 14.30 Pompeii and Herculaneum – The final Day **James Renshaw**
- 14.30 Online Meet & Greet with **Kathy McLauchlan**

Week 5 – 20 October

Rome and its Legacy

- 11.00 Rome in the Later Empire **James Renshaw**
- 12.30 Rome and its Transformations **Cecily Hennessy**
- 14.30 Milan **Cecily Hennessy**

Week 6 – 27 October

Cities of Faith

- 11.00 Constantinople – Constantine to Justinian **Cecily Hennessy**
- 12.30 Ravenna **Cecily Hennessy**
- 14.30 Jerusalem – City of Heaven **Cecily Hennessy**

Week 7 – 03 November

Centres of Power

- 11.00 London 1040-1270: the Creation of an International Centre of Art **Sally Dormer**
- 12.30 Palermo between the 12th and 13th Centuries **TBC**
- 14.30 Avignon: Papal Capital **Sally Dormer**

Week 8 – 10 November

Cities of al-Andalus

- 11.00 Early Islamic Cities **TBC**
- 12.30 Cordoba: Caliphal Splendour **Sue Rollin**
- 14.30 Granada: Last Flowering of al-Andalus **Sue Rollin**

Week 9 – 17 November

Art of Venice

- 11.00 Rise of a City **Kevin Childs**
- 12.30 Venice and the Fourth Crusade **Sally Dormer**
- 14.30 City of Empire **Antonia Gatward**

Week 10 – 24 November

Display and Magnificence

- 11.00 The Italian City States in the late Middle Ages **John Renner**
- 12.30 Florence: from City to Court **TBC**
- 14.30 City State: Siena **Sally Dormer**