

V&A Academy

FLORENCE AND THE INVENTION OF THE RENAISSANCE



Introduction



When the artist and writer Giorgio Vasari published the first edition of his magisterial *Lives of the Artists* in 1550, he was articulating theories about the ‘rebirth’ of art and the classical world in Italy that had been current for decades. Being loyal to his adopted city of Florence he easily placed her at the centre of this cultural explosion.

This study day will explore why we still think of Florence as the cradle of what we call the Renaissance. We will consider Vasari’s role in codifying our notions of art history and the pivotal character of Florentine artists in shaping that history. With a mix of lectures highlighting seminal moments in this ‘invention’ as well as Vasari the man, Q&As and object spotlights, we will consider what the idea of the Renaissance meant to Vasari and his contemporaries. We will also examine drawings and original editions of the *Lives* from the V&A’s collections, thereby bringing to life the world of Renaissance Italy as well as the intellectual milieu that informed Vasari’s work.

Information

Thursday 5 February 2026

10:30 – 16:00

This study day will be held on site at V&A South Kensington or online.

For those joining us in-person, lunch is not included, however, tea and coffee will be available upon arrival.

All lecture resource sheets and presentation slides will be made available after the study day.

This study day will not be recorded.

Suitable for ages 18 and over.

Thursday 5 February 2026

Florence and the Invention of the Renaissance

V&A South Kensington or online

Dr Kevin Childs

10:30 Introduction and Lecture: Vasari and His World”

Dr Kevin Childs

11.45 Florence and the Revival of the Classical World

Dorigen Caldwell

13.00 Lunch

(not provided)

14.00 Object Spotlight: Vasari’s Lives and the Collection of Art: Editions of the Lives and Drawings as Art Objects

Dr Kevin Childs and Dorigen Caldwell

14.30 In Conversation: Renaissance or Continuity in the History of Florentine Art

Dr Kevin Childs and Dorigen Caldwell

15.30 Q&A