

V&A Academy

SPANISH ART FROM AL ANDALUS TO THE RENAISSANCE



Introduction

This 5 week course will begin with the arrival of the Arabs and Berbers in what would be known as Al Andalus in 711. It will explore the rich and varied culture which flowered over several hundred years; some of which is still visible in Spain today. We will explore great buildings in Toledo, Cordoba, Granada and other cities; the Cordoba Mosque will be a key example as well as the Alhambra in Granada. With the rich collection in the V&A we will also look at textiles, ivories and more to find meaning in what was preserved after the reconquest of Spain. The dominance of the Catholic Church and its powerful Inquisition gave rise to another wave of an extraordinarily diverse visual culture, culminating in a so called 'Golden Age' of Spain which is fascinating to unravel. The court of Philip 2nd and his building of the Escorial will be discussed as well as artists such as El Greco, Zurbaran, Ribera and Murillo. Polychrome sculptures made religion come to life and Still Life painting made visible the impact of the discovery of the Americas. The course will end with Velazquez in Seville and then in Madrid where his court paintings give great insights into 17th Century Spain.

Information

Tuesday, 20 January – 17 February 2026, 10.30-13.00. Online.

Watch lecture recordings on demand, available at the end of each day, until 24 March 2026.

Your course leader

Dr Jacqueline Cockburn is an art historian and linguist. After a career in academic teaching at Birkbeck college, University of London and Westminster School, she is now a freelance lecturer. Jacqueline is Managing Director of Art and Culture Andalucía running residential courses in Andalucía, Southern Spain in the art and culture of the region.

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

Week 1 – Tuesday 20 January 2026

10.20 Introduction

19.30 The History and Material Culture of Al Andalus; Islam on the Rise **Ian Cockburn**

12.00 Dispelling and Preserving Islamic Spain **Jacqueline Cockburn**

Week 2 – Tuesday 27 January 2026

10.30 The Alhambra **Tom Nickson**

12.00 The Road to Santiago de Compostela, art and architecture
Ian Cockburn

13.00 Meet & Greet **Jacqueline Cockburn**

Week 3 – Tuesday 3 February 2026

10.30 ‘Sex and Power – the role of women in Habsburg Spain’
Gail Turner

12.00 Philip II at El Escorial **Gail Turner**

Week 4 – Tuesday 10 February 2026

10.30 El Greco of Toledo **Jacqueline Cockburn**

12.00 Looking at the Overlooked; Spanish Still Life Painting
Jacqueline Cockburn

Week 5 – Tuesday 17 February 2026

10.30 The Word and The Book; reading Spanish painting and sculpture
Jacqueline Cockburn

12.00 Velazquez at Court in Madrid **Jacqueline Cockburn**