

V&A Academy

TEXTILES: MATERIALS, TECHNIQUES & HISTORY



Introduction

Textiles are very fragile and even the most sturdy is vulnerable to wear and tear, to damage by insects, by dampness, even by the light we need to see them. They are often fabrics of great beauty but under normal circumstances they do not last. In the modern world textiles are seen as transient accessories to our life and are relatively inexpensive to replace, but throughout history textiles have been the most obvious expression of our personal values. Lustrous silk, crisp linen, soft wool and brightly coloured cotton clothe our bodies and decorate our homes. They are *the* most intimate form of all the decorative arts, but how well do we know them?

In this course you will discover where historical textiles have survived and will become familiar with the materials and techniques used to produce an infinite variety of fabrics and patterns, from enormous tapestries and carpets to gossamer-like webs of lace, from glittering embroidery to muted tweeds.

Information

Thursdays, 22 January – 26 March, 10.30-13.00. Online.

Watch lecture recordings on demand, available at the end of each day, until 4 June 2026.

Your course leader

Jennifer Wearden was a textile curator in the V&A for 28 years has authored/co-authored several V&A publications including *Samplers*, *Ottoman Embroidery*, *World Dress in Detail*, *Oriental Carpets* and *Iranian Textiles*. More recently she has been delivering courses on the history of textiles and dress for the V&A Academy.

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

Week 1 – 22 January

- 10.20 Welcome **Jennifer Wearden**
- 10.30 Textiles in the Egyptian Desert **Jennifer Wearden**
- 12.00 Textiles in the Peruvian Desert **Jennifer Wearden**

Week 2 – 29 January

- 10.30 Textiles from the Silk Roads **Jennifer Wearden**
- 12.00 Textiles in Church Treasures **Jennifer Wearden**

Week 3 – 5 February

- 10.30 Wool **Jennifer Wearden**
- 12.00 Bast Fibres and the Agony of Flax **Jennifer Wearden**

Week 4 – 12 February

- 10.30 The Secret of Silk **Jennifer Wearden**
- 12.00 Cotton, Minerals & Man-made Fibres **Jennifer Wearden**

Week 5 – 19 February

- 10.30 Spinning and Looping **Jennifer Wearden**
- 12.00 Looping & Braiding **Jennifer Wearden**

Week 6 – 26 February

10.30 Simple Woven Textiles **Jennifer Wearden**

12.00 Tapestry Weaving & Carpet Knotting **Jennifer Wearden**

Week 7 – 5 March

10.30 Complex Woven Textiles **Jennifer Wearden**

12.00 The Industrial Revolution's Effect on Textiles **Jennifer Wearden**

Week 8 – 12 March

10.30 Dyes and the Sources of Dyes **Jennifer Wearden**

12.00 Resist-patterning **Jennifer Wearden**

Week 9– 19 March

10.30 Embroidery Techniques **Jennifer Wearden**

12.00 Embroidered Textiles **Jennifer Wearden**

Week 10 – 26 March

10.30 Printed Textiles **Jennifer Wearden**

12.00 Trading Textiles through the Ages **Jennifer Wearden**