

V&A Academy

ARTS OF JAPAN

V&A

Introduction

From the emergence of primitive Shinto in ancient Japan, this course follows the development of Japanese art, craft and design up to the present. The advent of Buddhism exerted a great influence, notably through sculpture, painting, calligraphy, and architecture which developed steadily, becoming the dominant influence on all the arts up to the tenth century.

By the 12th century, the ruling military elite had become important patrons of the arts, evident in the swords, armour, and the warrior aesthetic of the samurai. The culture of the townspeople during the Edo period (1615-1868) transformed concepts of decoration and design, as seen through ukiyo-e prints, fashionable dress, lacquerware, ceramics, and metalware.

Contact with the West, at first limited, had by the nineteenth century opened Japan to new markets and influences, resulting in a great melding of art forms and aesthetics. The engagement of Japan with global currents in architecture and design, fashion and photography shaped the production of innovative art forms at home and abroad up to the present, significantly contributing to emerging technologies and popular culture.

Information

Mondays, 19 January – 23 March, 11.00-15.30. Onsite and Online.

Watch lecture recordings on demand, available at the end of each day, until 1 June 2026.

Your course leader

Dr Helen Glaister is an art historian specialising in Chinese Ceramics and Decorative Arts. She worked at the British Museum and Birkbeck before joining the V&A as Course Director, Arts of Asia. Helen was awarded her MA and PhD from SOAS, University of London where she regularly teaches. Current research focuses on collections history, Chinese lacquer and ceramics of the late modern period.

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

Week 1 – 19 January

Early Japan

- 10.45 Course Welcome **Helen Glaister**
- 11.00 Shinto **Linda Gilaizeau**
- 12.30 Arrival of Buddhism **Meri Arichi**
- 14.30 Heian Court Culture **Meri Arichi**
- 15.45 Online Meet and Greet with Helen Glaister

Week 2 – 26 January

Gardens, Theatre and Samurai

- 11.00 Samurai **Oleg Benesch**
- 12.30 Japanese Gardens **Robert Ketchell**
- 14.30 Noh Theatre **Ashley Thorpe**

Week 3 – 2 February

Arts of the Tea Ceremony

- 11.00 The Way of Tea **Natalie Leon**
- 12.30 Tea Wares and the Tea Ceremony (chanoyu) **Amy Raphael**
- 14.30 Architecture and Tea Rooms **Suzanne Perrin (online)**

Week 4 – 9 February

Early Interactions with Europe

11.00 The Encounter with Europe **Anna Jackson**

12.30 Export Ceramics **Menno Fitski**

14.30 Export Lacquer **Menno Fitski**

Week 5 – 16 February

Pictorial Arts of the Edo Period

11.00 Edo Painting **Monika Hinkel**

12.30 Salon Culture **Akiko Yano**

14.30 The Printed Books in Early Modern Japan **Laura Moretti**

Week 6 – 23 February

Edo Decorative Arts

11.00 Concepts of Decoration **Nicole Rousmaniere**

12.30 Ceramics **Nicole Rousmaniere**

14.30 Lacquer **Masami Yamada**

Week 7 – 2 March

Culture of the Townspeople

11.00 Ukiyo-e **Monika Hinkel**

12.30 Kabuki and Bunraku **Andrew Gerstle**

14.30 Edo Dress **Anna Jackson**

Week 8 – 9 March

Meiji Period

11.00 International Exhibitions **Mary Redfern**

12.30 Dining and Diplomacy **Mary Redfern**

14.30 Meiji Ornamental Textiles **Clare Pollard**

Week 9 – 16 March

Twentieth Century Art and Design

11.00 Mingei Movement **Yuko Kikuchi**

12.30 Kimono **Anna Jackson**

14.30 Modern Studio Craft **Masami Yamada**

Week 10 – 23 March

Modern Japan

11.00 Japanese Photography **Fiona Rogers**

12.30 Manga **Nicole Rousmaniere**

14.30 Architecture **Helena Capkova**