

V&A Academy

THE PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION

V&A

Introduction

This online course will give you the foundations for creating meaningful interpretation, as well as the tools you need to produce your interpretation plan and strategy. Using real-life case studies and examples, this course will support you in putting learning into practice in a way that is relevant and engaging for your audiences.

Over the duration of the course, participants will gain an understanding of a broad range of current thinking and critical approaches to interpretation and learn new methods of developing an interpretation strategy. Each week we will focus on a different area of interpretation, using real-life case studies. Together we will cover understanding interpretation; audience research and evaluation; interpretation for permanent galleries vs temporary exhibitions; interpretation for families; inclusion and diversity; and digital interpretation.

Information

Tuesdays, 17 February – 24 March 2026, 13.00 – 16.00. Online.

Watch session recordings on demand, available at the end of each day.

Your course leaders

Polly Richards is an independent interpretation and master planning consultant with over 20 years of experience in the sector. Since going freelance in 2018 she has worked with museums and heritage sites in the UK including the Birmingham Museums Trust, The National Gallery, The National Trust, Royal Museums Greenwich, Salisbury Cathedral and Science Museum

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

Week 1 – 17th February 2026

Introduction: Understanding Interpretation

- 13.00 Welcome and Introduction
- 13.15 The Basics of Interpretation (part 1)
- 14.15 The Basics of Interpretation (part 2)
- 15.15 Interactive Group Task

Week 2 – 24th February 2026

Audience Research and Evaluation

- 13.00 Pre-record - Knowing Your Audience
- 14.15 Case Study: Raphael
- 15.15 Audience Task

Week 3 – 3rd March 2026

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 13.00 Access for All
- 14.00 Design and Disability Exhibition at the V&A
- 15.15 Interactive Task

Week 4 – 10th March 2026

Diversity and Inclusion

- 13.00 Representing Diversity and Being Inclusive
- 14.15 Interpretation at V&A Storehouse
- 15.15 Inclusive Voices

Week 5 – 17th March 2026

Digital Interpretation

- 13.00 Introduction to Digital Interpretation
- 14.30 Case Study – Secret Seekers
- 15.30 Reflection and Evaluation

Week 6 – 24th March 2026

Interpretation for Families

- 13.00 Introduction to Interpretation for Families
- 14.00 Pre-record – Interpretation for Families
- 14.45 Young V&A: Q&A with Bryony Shepherd, Head of Interpretation, V&A
- 15.00 Case Study: Family Exhibitions