

V&A Academy

LONDON: THE GLOBAL CITY 1851 - 2020



Introduction

A city shaped by empire, war and decolonisation, London has gone from the heart of a vast and powerful Empire, an unrivalled centre of global trade and finance to becoming a global melting pot, shaped by the twin forces of modernisation and migration, seen in its architecture, art and design. This term course will explore the rich cultural and social history of a city whose fortunes waxed and waned with rise and fall of Imperial Britain, but which has always been sustained by the creativity and genius of its peoples, drawn from the four corners of the globe. Drawing on the work of cultural and social historians, V&A curatorial staff, and experts on art, design and fashion, we will explore the vicissitudes of London's greatness as a world city, from the creation of Albertopolis to the dawn of the new millennium.

Information

Wednesdays, 22 April – 24 June 2026, 11.00-15.30. Onsite and Online.

Watch lecture recordings on demand, available at the end of each day, until Wednesday 2 August 2026

Your course leader

Mike Berlin is a Lecturer at Birkbeck College, University of London. He is a specialist in the social history of early modern London and has published extensively on the history of London's guilds. Before joining Birkbeck, he was a research officer at the Centre for Metropolitan History, Institute of Historical Research.

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

**Gallery talks will not be recorded; additional ticket holder will receive further details where to meet. Usually Exhibition Road Entrance, Blavatnik Hall*

Week 1 – Wednesday 22 April 2026

- 10.45 Introduction **Mike Berlin**
- 11.00 The Great Exhibition: a world of things **Mike Berlin**
- 12.30 Mapping Poverty: Charles Booth **Sarah Wise**
- 14.30 Popular Theatre: Music Hall, Melodrama and Modern Theatre **Giles Ramsay**
- 15.30 Meet & Greet **Mike Berlin** (Online Audience)

Week 2 – Wednesday 29 April 2026

City of Dreadful Delight

- 10.00 Gallery Talk **Jo Banham** (Group A) *additional ticket holders only**
- 11.00 Policing London and the White Slave Trade **Sarah Wise**
- 12.30 Queer London **Matt Cook**
- 14.30 Radical London **David Rosenberg**

Week 3 – Wednesday 6 May 2026

London Enlightened and Entertained

- 11.00 Creating a modern art world in London, c. 1851-1914 **Marie Tavinor**
- 12.30 “You can’t Jazz in a Crinoline”: London in the Jazz Age **Mike Berlin**
- 14.30 History of the South Kensington Museum **Julius Bryant**

Week 4 – Wednesday 13 May 2026

Shopping, Domesticity and the Pleasure of the City

- 10.00 Gallery Tour (Group A) – additional ticket holder only *
- 11.00 The Department Store **Sonia Ashmore**
- 12.30 The Suburban Villa **Rosemary Yallop**
- 14.30 Plutocratic London, 1880-1914 **Steve Brindle**

Week 5 – Wednesday 20 May 2026

London and the New Century

- 11.00 London and the Empire **Mike Berlin**
- 12.30 Drugs and Clubs **Marek Kohn**
- 14.30 Suffragettes City **Mike Berlin**

Week 6 – Wednesday 27 May 2026

‘Moderne to Modern’ in the Metropolis

- 10.00 Gallery Talk (Group A) – *additional ticket holders only**
- 11.00 London theatre 1900-now **Giles Ramsay**
- 12.30 The Golden Age of London Transport **Mike Berlin**
- 14.30 Cinemas, Shops, Factories and Deco Style **Mike Berlin**

Week 7 – Wednesday 3 June

London at War and at Peace

- 11.00 London and the Great War **Mike Berlin**
- 12.30 The Hitler Émigrés and the London Art World **Monica Bohm-Duchen**
- 14.30 London and the Second World War **Jerry White**

Week 8 – Wednesday 10 June 2026

Mid Century Modern: rebuilding post war London

- 10.00 Gallery Talk (Group A) – additional ticket holders only*
- 11.00 Mid-century Modern: Rebuilding Post War London **Mike Berlin**
- 12.30 The Refugees That Made the Festival of Britain **Harriet Atkinson**
- 14.30 Soho from the forties to the sixties **Mike Berlin**

Week 9 – Wednesday 17 June 2026

A New London

- 11.00 London Fashion of the sixties **Jenny Lister**
- 12.30 Windrush and Beyond **Colin Grant**
- 14.30 David Bowie's London **Geoffrey Marsh**

Week 10 – Wednesday 24 June 2026

Soft City, Big Bang and beyond: London since the 1970s

- 10.00 Gallery Talk (Group A) – additional ticker holders only*
- 11.00 Tower Blocks and Regeneration **James Hulme**
- 12.30 The Bengali East End **Ansar Ahmed Ullah**
- 14.30 Big Bang to Millennium Dream **Mike Berlin**

London course series

This course is part of the London course series over three terms, available online, in-person or in-person with gallery tours.

London: The Global City 1851 – 2020 - Summer term (April 2026)

A History of London: 1066-1666 - Autumn term (September 2026)

London 1666-1851: Emporia and Empire – Spring term (January 2026)

Walking tours

Stratford Walking Tour: London from the East with Mike Berlin

Friday 19 June 2026

Hackney Wick & Fish Island Walking Tour: Sense of Place with Colin

Thursday 17 July or 24 July

South Kensington Walking Tour with Mike Berlin

Friday 8 May, 22 May 2026

Hampstead Walking tour with Christine Lalumia

Friday 24 April 2026 – sold out