

V&A Academy

THE COSTUME OF POWER: FASHION IN RENAISSANCE ITALY

Thursdays

8 October – 5 November 2026





Introduction

Join us for a five-week course exploring the art of dressing in the Italian Renaissance. From luxury textiles to sartorial texts, this is a fascinating journey through Renaissance clothing.

This five-week course, dedicated to the art of dressing in the Italian Renaissance, will explore a fascinating story of taste, enterprise, power, and social conventions. From the early 15th century, through to the early 17th century, we will explore the different regions and cities - including Venice, Florence and Milan - where luxury textiles were produced during the Renaissance (silk, velvets and lace, for example).

Paintings, sculptures, and other forms of artistic production will be our primary source for investigating fashion practices (the V&A Collections providing wonderful examples full of true-to-life details), whilst written sources from the period also become a lens to study the clothing cultures of the elite members of the Italian courts.

Finally, we'll discover the fast-developing field of research that underpins the precise reproduction of Renaissance clothing. The course does not require any prior knowledge and is suitable for anyone with an interest in fashion and textile history, Renaissance art, and Italy in general, as well as those interested in recreating period clothing, or costumes for theatre, film or television.

Information

Thursdays, 8 October – 5 November 2026. 10.30-13.00. Online.

Watch lecture recordings on demand, available at the end of each day, until 8 December, 2026.

Your course leader

Virginia Arabella Hill is an Anglo-Italian dress historian based in Milan, Italy. She gained her BA degree in History of Art from East Anglia University, Norwich and her MA degree in History of Dress from the Courtauld Institute of Art, London.

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

Week 1 – 8 October 2026

- 10.20 Welcome, **Virginia Arabella Hill**
- 10.30 Introduction to the Course, **Virginia Arabella Hill**
- 12.00 The luxury clothing industry in Renaissance Venice, **Isabella Campagnol**

Week 2 – 15 October 2026

- 10.30 The representation of fashion in Italian Renaissance art, **Virginia Arabella Hill**
- 12.00 Men's wear in Renaissance Florence, **Elisabeth Currie**

Week 3 – 22 October 2026

- 10.30 Contemporary writing on fashion in Renaissance Italy, **Dr. Eugenia Paulicelli**
- 12.00 Foreign influences on Italian fashion in the 1500s, **Virginia Arabella Hill**

Week 4 – 29 October 2026

- 10.30 Dress in Caravaggio's paintings, **Dr. Elisabeth Currie**
- 12.00 Recreating Renaissance fashions in Italy today, **Nicola Trotta**

Week 5 – 5 November 2026

- 10.30 The history of lace of Renaissance Italy, **Marialuisa Rizzini**
- 12.00 Closing lecture, **Virginia Arabella Hill**