

V&A Academy

ANTIQUE TO EARLY CHRISTIAN 500 BCE-500 CE

Tuesdays

29 September – 1 December 2026





Introduction

Discover the civilisations of Ancient Greece and Rome and gain a unique perspective on the classical tradition. Gain new insights in the Homeric myths and their representation in sculpture and vase-painting, the architecture of Athens and Rome, and the rich decoration and furnishings revealed at Herculaneum and Pompeii. Then consider the afterlife of the ancient world as the Roman Empire began to fragment and Christianity steadily assumed greater influence until it became the main religion under the Emperor Constantine in 313. Explore how painters, sculptors and masons developed a specific and distinctive Christian visual vocabulary laced with re-interpreted classical themes, motifs and styles, which continued to exert an enormous impact on European art and architecture.

Information

Tuesdays, 29 September – 01 December, 2026. online or in person.

Watch lecture recordings on demand, available at the end of each day, until 09 February, 2027.

Your course leader

Dr Kathy McLauchlan, art historian specialising in French painting and lecturer with the Arts Society, Morley College and Oxford University.

Your course series

This course is part of the The Story of Art at the V&A course series, which spans 3 terms running from September through June. To find out more about the other courses in this series, [take a look at our course listings](#) or speak to your course leader.

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

Week 1 – 29 September

Introduction: Origins

- 10.50 Introduction by Course Leader Kathy McLauchlan
- 11.00 Introduction to the Classical World, **Steve Kershaw**
- 12.30 World of Homer, **James Renshaw**
- 14.30 Archaic Greece, **James Renshaw**
- 15.35 Online Live Discussion, **Kathy McLauchlan**

Week 2 – 06 October

Greece: Art & Architecture

- 11.00 Classical Greece, **Andrew Mylne**
- 12.30 The Greek Temple, **James Renshaw**
- 14.30 Athens: the City & its Golden Age, **James Renshaw**

Week 3 – 13 October

Form and Meaning in Painting and Sculpture

- 10.00 Gallery Talk: A Temple of Art: the Classical World and the Making of the V&A (Group A), **Katherine Dunleavy** *In Person learners only*
- 11.00 Ceramics, **Claudia Daniotti (delivered online)**
- 12.30 Male Figure Sculpture, **Steve Kershaw**
- 14.30 The Parthenon Frieze, **Steve Kershaw**
- 15.30 Gallery Talk: A Temple of Art: the Classical World and the Making of the V&A (Group B), **Katherine Dunleavy** *In Person learners only*

Week 4 – 20 October

Power & Splendour

- 11.00 Alexander the Great, **Kevin Childs**
- 12.30 Hellenistic Architecture, **Kevin Childs**
- 14.30 Greek Dress, **Jennifer Wearden**

Week 5 – 27 October

The Female Figure

- 10.00 Gallery Talk: Illustrating Myth in Art & Design (Group A),
Katherine Dunleavy *In Person learners only*
- 11.00 Women in Myth and Society, **Claudia Daniotti (delivered online)**
- 12.30 Female Figure Sculpture, **Steve Kershaw**
- 14.30 Athena as Model and Exemplar, **Steve Kershaw**
- 15.30 Gallery Talk: Illustrating Myth in Art & Design (Group B),
Katherine Dunleavy *In Person learners only*

Week 6 – 3 November

Rome and the Classical Tradition

- 11.00 Rise of the City in Myth and History, **Steve Kershaw**
- 12.30 Greece in Rome: Borrowings and Innovations, **Niamh Bhalla**
- 14.30 Models of Republican Virtue: Portraiture, **Niamh Bhalla**
- 15.35 Online Live Discussion, **Sally Dormer**

Week 7 – 10 November

Life and Art

- 11.00 Pompeii and Herculaneum: 79 AD, **James Renshaw**
12.30 Paintings & Mosaic in Roman Interiors, **Katherine Dunleavy**
14.30 Roman Dress, **Jennifer Wearden**
15.30 Demonstration: Emblema (Group B), **Eniko Leanyvari**
In Person learners only

Week 8 – 17 November

Grandeur & Decline

- 10.00 Gallery Talk: Consular Diptychs (Group A), **Sally Dormer**
In Person learners only
11.00 Nero, Rome and the Golden Palace **David Bellingham**
12.30 City of Marble, **David Bellingham**
14.30 Art of Late Antiquity, **David Bellingham**
15.30 Gallery Talk: Consular Diptychs (Group B), **Sally Dormer**
In Person learners only

Week 9 – 24 November

From Pagan to Christian

- 10.00 Gallery Talk: The Symmachi Panel (Group A), **Sally Dormer**
In Person learners only
11.00 Christian Art before the Edict of Milan, **Sally Dormer**
12.30 Case Study: The Arch of Constantine **Steve Kershaw**
14.30 Constantine and Constantinople, **Steve Kershaw**
15.30 Gallery Talk: The Symmachi Panel (Group B), **Sally Dormer**
In Person learners only

Week 10 – 1 December

The Birth of Christian Art

10.00 Gallery Talk: Coptic textiles in the V&A (Group A), **Helen Persson**

In Person learners only

11.00 Early Christian Architecture in the 4th and 5th centuries,

Richard Plant

12.30 Ivories, **Sally Dormer**

14.30 Goldsmiths Work, **Sally Dormer**

15.30 Gallery Talk: Coptic textiles in the V&A (Group B), **Helen Persson**

In Person learners only