

THE NATIONAL GALLERY

STORIES OF ART: 1600-1700

Wednesdays 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 March, and 5 April 2023, 5.30–7.30pm

(Please note: We are on Greenwich Meantime (GMT) for weeks 1-5 and British Summer Time (BST) for week 6).

Course tutor: Lucrezia Walker

This six-week course highlights new directions taken in the 17th-century, exploring the most important artists, works and concepts, in the context of cultural, political and social history of the period. From the Habsburgs of Spain to Charles I of England, the art patronage of absolute monarchs furnished opulent palaces in the 17th century. Yet, this period also saw the formation of the modern art market, with artists catering for middle-class collectors. The Baroque was the leading style of the period, its theatricality appealing to emotions and expressing Counter-Reformation ideals. At the same time, Dutch scenes of everyday life and objects flourished on the art market.

Each two-hour session includes an hour-long talk delivered by course tutor **Lucrezia Walker**, followed by a short break and further discussion.

Week 1: The Power and the Glory

We start in Rome, the Eternal City, home of the catholic church and destination for every ambitious artist. We look at Baroque Rome, created by the greatest artist of his age, Gianlorenzo Bernini. As the English diarist John Evelyn remarked in 1644 of this artist's extraordinary achievements: 'Bernini painted the scenes, cut the statues, invented the engines, composed the music, wrote the comedy and built the theatre'. Bernini's hand was instrumental in transforming Rome into the great baroque statement city. In the second part of our session we will focus on the power of the patron, and how a collection might glorify its collector. We will look at collections of King Charles I and Charles II, and consider what a great collection says about the collector himself.

Week 2: Caravaggio and the Counter-Reformation

In this session, we explore the art of Caravaggio, a key painter of the Counter-Reformation, and his influence on his contemporaries such as Orazio Gentileschi over the following decades. We consider how Caravaggio's paintings helped revive Catholic art after the Reformation, and focus on the art of Artemisia Gentileschi, Elisabetta Sirani and Lavinia Fontana, and consider the role of women artists in this period.

Week 3: The Embarrassment of Riches: Painting the Dutch Republic

In this session we will look at how the development of the Reformed Church in the Low Countries affected patronage and paintings. The church was no longer the powerful patron it had earlier been, so who were the new patrons in the Golden Age of Dutch Art? Holland was the richest country per capita in 17th-century Europe. We will focus on new genres of paintings including the birth of the still-life, often as a meditation on mortality, and look at

the development of the modern art market – artists painting ‘on spec’, and selling via agents and in picture shops to a wealthy mercantile society.

Week 4: Spanish Art of the Golden Age

The art of Spain in the 17th-century has a gravity and power that still resonates with artists today. This session explores El Greco, Zurbarán, Velázquez and Murillo's powerful responses to faith. We consider what is it about the work of Velázquez that inspired Manet, Picasso, Dalí, Bacon and Richard Hamilton to recreate his most famous works?

Week 5: Flemish Baroque art

Today we explore the work and influence of Rubens and his pupil Van Dyck. With a workshop of over fifty assistants, Rubens supplied portraits, landscapes, mythological and allegorical subjects as well as some of the finest Counter-Reformation altarpieces to the greatest rulers in Europe. Van Dyck, in turn, became the leading court painter in England, his relaxed elegance impacting on English portrait painting for the next 150 years. After the break we will be joined by connoisseur **Dr Chantal Brotherton-Ratcliffe**, who will give insight into Rubens's and Van Dyck's studio practices and reveal how you can distinguish their brushstrokes.

Week 6: Dreaming in Rome

Claude and Poussin were pioneers of the new genre of landscape painting. They sketched in the Roman Campagna together, infusing their paintings with an idealised classicism their patrons delighted in. What kind of impression of Italy was being projected to those who had never been there by these arcadian views of the Roman Campagna? After the break we will look back at the themes, artists, paintings, questions and reflections raised over the past six sessions.

Your tutor

Lucrezia Walker was formerly Lay Canon at St Paul's Cathedral with portfolio to the visual arts. She trained as an art historian, and in addition to her work for the National Gallery, lectures for Tate and directs the art history department of the University of North Carolina's Study Abroad Art History Programs. She was former galleries correspondent for the Catholic weekly 'The Tablet'. Her research specialism is art in sacred spaces.

Taking it further

Rosa Giorgi, *European Art of the Seventeenth Century*, Getty Publications, 2008

This book provides a useful overview of the seventeenth century, an era of absolute monarchs, the Habsburgs of Spain and Louis XIV of France, whose patronage of the arts helped furnish their opulent palaces. It was also the beginning of a new era of commercialism, in which artists increasingly catered to affluent collectors. It highlights the most important artists, works, concepts, and theories of the period with 400 full-colour illustrations, and examines the Baroque, with its roots in classicism but with a new emphasis on emotionalism and naturalism, as the leading style of the period. It focuses on Caravaggio, whose innovations in the use of light and shadow were an influence to many, notably Rembrandt; the sculptor, painter, and architect Bernini, Rubens, Poussin, Velazquez, and Vermeer.

Andrew Graham-Dixon, *Caravaggio: A Life Sacred and Profane*, Penguin 2011

In a bravura performance, Andrew Graham-Dixon explores Caravaggio's staggering artistic achievements, delving into the original Italian sources to create a masterful profile of the

mercurial painter who lived the darkest and most dangerous life of any of the great painters. The worlds of Milan, Rome and Naples through which Caravaggio moved and which are brilliantly described in this book. On the streets surrounding the churches and palaces, brawls and swordfights were regular occurrences. In the course of this desperate life Caravaggio created the most dramatic paintings of his age, using ordinary men and women to model for his depictions of classic religious scenes.

Online resources

If you are unable to visit the newly-renovated Room 32 at the National Gallery here is a link to its contents: <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/visiting/floorplans/level-2/room-32>

See also: [_art1/beginners-guide-baroque1/a/baroque-art-in-europe-an-introduction](#)
Independent visits

Independent visits - Here are some suggestions for independent visits.

London

National Gallery

Visit Room 32 to view the collection of Italian Baroque Art including works by Caravaggio and Luca Giordano. Room 18 now houses our paintings by Rubens and Room 22 houses Rembrandt's late work. There is a downloadable resource for Art Teachers to this subject: <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/learning/teachers-notes/rembrandt-the-late-works-teachers-resource>

The Wallace Collection

In the Great Picture Room are works by Rubens, Rembrandt, Van Dyck, Murillo and Velasquez. Here are Frans Hals' *Laughing Cavalier* and Poussin's *Dance to the Music of Time*. Leading off from this splendid room are four small rooms of Dutch 17th-century landscapes, seascapes, townscapes, and genre scenes including works by Jan Steen and Pieter de Hooch. There is also Rembrandt's portrait of his son Titus

The V&A

The Victoria & Albert Museum has a good collection of 17th-century artwork in diverse visual media which can be seen at the gallery or viewed with useful interpretations of the collection in the V&A's excellent online resource: <https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/the-baroque-style>

Dulwich Picture Gallery

Contains several 17th-century masterpieces by Poussin, Rembrandt, Rubens, van Dyck, Reni and Murillo as well as focussing on the 17th-century. In addition, two exhibitions this year focus on the 17th-century:

Son of Rubens - until 2 April 2023

Abstract Expressionist painter Anthony Daley presents a new body of work, which explores his career-long fascination with the work of 17th century Flemish artist Peter Paul Rubens. Rubens was famed for his mastery of colour and texture through the medium of paint. Inspired by the Gallery's collection, Daley will reveal how the art of the past continues to offer fresh source material.

Mary Beale: Experimental Secrets - 12 April - 3 September 2023

This exhibition will shed new light on the work of 17th-century painter, Mary Beale (1633-1699). Featuring brand new research, the display will reveal Beale to be a technically

innovative painter and uncover exciting new details about her workshop practice and life in her 'painting room'.

Hampton Court Palace, The Royal Collection contains a number of Baroque masterpieces including some dazzling examples of the work of Antonio Verrio.

Outside London - UK

Kings College Chapel Cambridge contains Rubens' *Adoration of the Magi* and **The Ashmolean Museum's** in Oxford Baroque Art Collection contains paintings and sculptures by some of the greatest baroque masters.

The Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool. The Gallery's Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque displays (Rooms 1-4) are currently closed to visitors during major refurbishment of these galleries. There are paintings, sculpture, silverware, ceramics and glassware dating from 1600 to the early 1700s from Britain, France, Italy, Spain and The Netherlands. These galleries will reopen with a special exhibition in July 2023.

The **Scottish National Gallery** in Edinburgh has masterpieces by El Greco, Poussin, and works by 17th-century Dutch and Flemish artists.

Europe

The **Prado** in Madrid contains some of the greatest masterpieces of the Spanish Golden Age and the **Louvre** in Paris, amongst its many treasures, contains Rubens' sequence of large paintings commissioned by Catherine de' Medici.

Exhibitions

The Rijksmuseum Amsterdam is displaying 28 Vermeer paintings for the largest exhibition ever by this world-famous Dutch painter. From 10 February – 4 June 2023. Should you travel to Amsterdam for the Vermeer exhibition you might like to make a long weekend of it, and travel to his native Delft, the city in which he was born, raised, worked and died. You can cross the same canals and wander the same picturesque streets Vermeer daily traversed 350 years ago, and enjoy visiting the excellent Vermeer Centre and the Prinsenhof which gives an excellent backdrop to Vermeer's century. From Delft you might visit Den Haag and the Mauritshuis to see the work of the Dutch 17th-century masters such as Pieter de Hooch. Nearby are the cities of Leiden and Utrecht, home to Rembrandt, and the Dutch Caravaggists respectively. Their historic city centres where cobbled streets, narrow bridges over canals framed with 17th-century houses provide the dreamscape to Dutch 17th-century painting.

Vermeer is the Artist in Focus for our online session on 12th April, and I hope you will join us for that then.

Spain and the Hispanic World: Treasures from the Hispanic Society in New York (21 January–10 April) on show at the Royal Academy contains work by El Greco, Velázquez and Zubarán.

Later in the year **Frans Hals** will be the subject of the National Gallery's autumn exhibition, the first major retrospective of Hals in more than thirty years (30 September 2023 – 21 January 2024). A new generation can discover why he deserves his place as one of the greatest painters in Western art. Some fifty of Hals's finest works will be brought together, including the exceptional, first-ever loan of his most famous picture *The Laughing Cavalier* from the Wallace Collection. From small works to large group portraits, genre scenes, and marriage portraits reunited for the first time from international collections, visitors will see the very best of his life's work.