

A History of Museums: 1550–2024 (online, 20 Feb–26 Mar 24)

online / V&A Learning Academy Course, Feb 20–Mar 26, 2024

Deadline: Feb 20, 2024

Dr Caroline McCaffrey-Howarth

Booking is now open for this exciting online course led by Dr Caroline McCaffrey-Howarth for the V&A Learning Academy. 'A History of Museums' examines the ways in which museums and their collections have evolved: from their elite beginnings, to their role as symbols of cultural education, and to their place today in a postcolonial society. From early modern princely palaces and porcelain china cabinets, to contemporary debates for decolonising the museum, this 6-week course traces the history of museums, 1550–2020. Expert speakers will take us from the creation of Cabinets of Curiosity, through to the Grand Tour and the French Revolution, and the creation of the first museums. This course sheds light on lesser-known stories, especially the role of women, Jewish collectors and Nazi restitution, up to current curatorial approaches by curators and artists. Throughout, it engages with the wider relationship between museums and the empire, and questions to what extent we can decolonise the museum today.

Other guest lecturers include: Dr Misha Ewen (University of Bristol); Dr Olivia Horsfall Turner (V&A); Subhadra Das (UCL), Dr Barbara Lasic (Sotheby's Institute); Dr Jacques Schumacher (V&A); Dr Julius Bryant (V&A), Dr Isobel Macdonald (UCL) and Dr Sophie Morris (The Gilbert Collection).

Course Programme:

Week 1 – Tuesday 20 February: 16th–17th Centuries

13.45 Welcome and Introduction: From Cabinets of Curiosity to the Post-Colonial Museum

Dr Caroline McCaffrey-Howarth

14.00 The Kunstkammer: from crocodiles to shells to porcelain rooms

Dr Caroline McCaffrey-Howarth

15.30 Kunstkammer objects in the Gilbert Collection

Dr Sophie Morris, Curator, The Gilbert Collection

Week 2 – Tuesday 27 February: 18th Century

14.00 Grand Tour Collecting and Taste, from the Uffizi to the English Country House

Dr Adriano Aymonino, Buckingham University

15.30 French Revolution, Napoleon and Creating the Louvre, Europe Galleries

Dr Barbara Lasic, Senior Lecturer, Sotheby's Institute

Week 3 – Tuesday 5 March: 19th Century

14.00 British slave-ownership, 19th Century art collecting and the development of museums

Dr Hannah Young

15.30 Owen Jones and the formation of the V&A collections

Dr Olivia Horsfall Turner, Senior Curator, Architecture and Design, V&A

Anytime: Recorded session: The founding of the South Kensington Museum, Dr Julius Bryant, V&A

Week 4 – Tuesday 12 March: 20th Century

14.00 Lady Charlotte Schreiber: Women Collectors and the Public Museum

Dr Caroline McCaffrey-Howarth

15.30 Post-WWII, Provenance and Restitution

Dr Jacques Schumacher, Provenance Research Curator, V&A

Week 5 – Tuesday 19 March: 21st Century

14.00 Can you decolonise the museum?

Subhadra Das, UCL

15.30 The Past and Future of the British Museum

Dr Isobel Macdonald, former Project Curator, British Museum

Week 6 – Tuesday 26 March: Museums and their Future

14.00 Artist in focus Matt Smith, Ceramics Artist, Queering the Museum

15.30 Roundtable Panel Discussion: The future history of museums

Dr Misha Ewen, University of Bristol; Simon Sladen, Senior Curator, Theatre & Performance, V&A;

Brendan Cormier, Chief Curator, V&A East

--

Tickets £120, via: vam.ac.uk/event/kBEkY7V5BGm/o23065-a-history-of-museums-1550-to-2024#testimony

Reference:

ANN: A History of Museums: 1550-2024 (online, 20 Feb-26 Mar 24). In: ArtHist.net, Feb 4, 2024 (accessed Jul 16, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/41129>>.