

## Life Stories: Madame de Pompadour

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<b>Dates</b>	Mondays 11, 18 and 25 November 2024
<b>Times</b>	18.00-20.00 GMT
<b>Location</b>	Online (Zoom Webinar)
<b>Tutor</b>	Jacqui Ansell and Dr Barbara Lasic
<b>Level</b>	All Levels



François Boucher, *Madame de Pompadour*, 1759 (detail)

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### Course Description

Many of the Wallace Collection's outstanding and internationally renowned rococo objects owe their existence to the patronage of Madame de Pompadour. Over the course of three sessions, we'll learn about Pompadour's extraordinary life - how she rose from ordinary beginnings to become King Louis XV's mistress and subsequently one of the most powerful women in 18th-century France.

Looking closely at key objects from our collection, we'll discover how the outstanding paintings and Sèvres porcelain, exquisite furniture and oriental lacquer that Pompadour amassed not only revealed her taste, but could also enhance her reputation and status. In addition to her patronage, we'll also discuss the amateur prints that she produced, which reveal her own creativity.

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### **Session One: Setting the Scene**

We'll begin by considering how the high-ranking Marquise de Pompadour began her life as Mademoiselle Poisson – plain 'Miss Fish'. What was her family background, and how and when did she make her meteoric rise to the influential position of official mistress to King Louis XV? And even more importantly, how did she reach the position of lady-in-waiting to the Queen? We'll set the scene by examining her biography with reference to the social structures of the courtly culture within which she was enmeshed.

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### **Session Two: The Divided Family**

Widely considered to be the presiding queen of the Rococo, Madame de Pompadour was a formidable patron of the arts. In our second session, we'll explore her support of painter and designer François Boucher, plus her architectural patronage and numerous acquisitions of magnificent Sèvres porcelain, exquisite veneered furniture, and precious oriental lacquer. We'll also consider her own artistic talent as an amateur printmaker.

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### **Session Three: Power and Legacy**

While contemporaries criticised Madame de Pompadour for 'meddling' in politics, posterity recognises her considerable contribution to culture as a patron of the arts. In our final session, we'll discover a treasure trove of books, and rich clothing described in her inventories and depicted in her portraits. In the context of the repudiation and revival of the Rococo style, we'll also discuss ways in which she has been portrayed in literature, film and even television.

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### **Course Tutors**

**Jacqui Ansell** is an experienced lecturer and art historian, with a specialist training in dress history from the Courtauld Institute of Art. She uses this skill to date and decode details of clothing in paintings, to help us to distinguish fashionable from fancy dress, and therefore the stories that artists wish to tell. Jacqui works on the public programmes of the National Gallery, National Portrait Gallery and the Wallace Collection, as well as a consultant for Philip Mould, and Christie's. She has written and recorded online courses for Christie's Education, the latest being "*Old Mistresses*": *Fame, Fortune and Female Artists 1500-1900*.

**Dr Barbara Lasic** is a Senior Lecturer in Art and Design History and Research and Knowledge Lead at Sotheby's Institute of Art in London. She is also a regular Consultant Lecturer at the V&A Museum and the Wallace Collection. Prior to her academic career, Barbara worked at the V&A Museum as part of the curatorial team involved in the redevelopment of the 'Europe: 1600-1800' galleries, and she held curatorial positions at the Wellcome Trust and the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich. Barbara has published on the subject of French decorative arts, the history of taste and the history of collecting, and museum architecture.

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### **Previous Skills, Knowledge or Experience**

None required. This course is designed as an introduction to the subject.

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### **Joining Information and Format**

This course will be taught through [Zoom Webinar](#). Each course session duration is 120 minutes, including a five-minute break and time for Q&A with the tutor.

Tickets are for all dates. Ticketholders will be emailed the Zoom link, Webinar ID and Passcode 24 hours in advance of the first session, which should be retained for accessing all sessions.

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**Course Recording**

This course will be recorded. Within 48 hours of each course session, ticket holders will be emailed a link to view the recording, which will be available for two weeks.

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