

The Power of the Paris Salon

Dates	Monday 27 and Tuesday 28 January 2025
Times	18.00–20.00 GMT
Location	Online (Zoom)
Tutor	Dr Kathy McLauchlan
Level	All Levels



Meissonier, *An Artist showing his Work*, 19th century (detail)

Course Description

Learn about the 19th-century art world and discover how reputations were won and lost in the influential Paris Salon. Focussing particularly on artists featured in the Wallace Collection including Eugène Delacroix, Horace Vernet, Richard Parkes Bonington, Paul Delaroche and Ernest Meissonier, we'll explore how they competed for the attention of both the public and critics. Equivalent to London's Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, we'll consider how the Salon was by far the most important display of contemporary French art. Too often dismissed as a respectable and conservative backdrop to the work of the avant-garde, we'll also see why it was in fact a dynamic and unpredictable marketplace.

Session One: Rebels in the Establishment

Writing in 1824, the French author Stendhal observed that French painting was 'at the dawn of a revolution'. He was referring to the work of artists we know as the Romantics – figures such as Delacroix, Delaroche and Vernet. We'll learn how they used the Salon as a showcase to present their fresh and often controversial vision of the world, effectively challenging the French art tradition from within one of its most prestigious institutions.

Session Two: Painting for the Public

In our second session, we'll learn how the Paris Salon was often denigrated as a common marketplace – an exhibition designed for a mass audience rather than an educated elite. We'll see how it became a focus for debate over the purpose of art: who was it for, and what was it for? Some of the leading painters of the mid-19th century including Ernest Meissonier and Thomas Couture – teacher of Edouard Manet – wrestled with these questions as they sought to establish themselves within the competitive world of French art.

Course Tutor

Kathy McLauchlan graduated from Oxford University and the Courtauld Institute with a PhD on French 19th-century painters in Rome. A lecturer specialising in 19th-century art history, she is currently a course director at the V&A Museum where she organises courses and study days on the history of art and design. She teaches at several institutions, including The Arts Society and Art Pursuits.

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 both dates. Ticket holders will be emailed the Zoom link, Webinar ID and Passcode 24 hours in advance of the first course session, which should be retained for accessing both sessions of the course.

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.
