

Leisure and Love in 18th-Century French Paintings

Dates	Tuesday 6 and Wednesday 7 May 2025
Times	18.00–20.00 BST
Location	Online (Zoom)
Tutor	Clare Ford-Wille
Level	All Levels



Nicolas Lancret *The Little Dog shaking Money and Gems*, around 1737-1738 (detail)

Course Description

How did themes in French painting change during the 18th century? In order to understand how new subjects expanded and flourished, we'll look closely at a selection of superb examples now in the Wallace Collection. We'll investigate intriguing scenes by Lancret, Pater, Greuze and Fragonard, alongside those made by artists who are less well-known today, including Louis-Léopold Boilly and Gabriel-Jacques de Saint-Aubin. In deciphering the potential meanings of these artworks, which present detailed scenes of flirtatious encounters and leisurely pursuits, we'll consider their function and significance within the wider artistic and cultural landscape of 18th-century France.

Session One

In our first session, we'll learn how Watteau broke the mould with his innovative and intriguing *fêtes galantes* paintings. We'll find out how these depictions of convivial gatherings in idealised parks, inspired Lancret and his contemporaries to create new subjects. We'll learn how the theme of love would often play a pivotal role in paintings, and how some works present complex layers in which a dish of fruit, or the image of a dog, might imply more than first meets the eye.

Session Two

In our second session, we'll consider works produced in the latter half of the 18th century, when scenes of leisure and love became evermore varied, not least in size and ambition. We'll contrast large-scale decorations made for aristocratic reception rooms with modest-sized works designed for middle-class interiors. We'll also identify how some subjects can infer a satirical or tongue-in-cheek commentary, as exemplified by Greuze's *The Broken Mirror* and Boilly's *The Dead Mouse*.

Course Tutor

Clare Ford-Wille lectures regularly for many institutions including the V&A, the National Trust, The Arts Society, the Art Fund as well as leading groups to places of art historical interest in Europe, Armenia and the USA. She was previously an Associate Lecturer at Birkbeck College, University of London.

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.
