

## A Golden Age of British Portraiture? - the eighteenth century

<b>Date/Time</b>	Tuesdays 20 February–19 March 2024 2-4pm	<b>Price</b>	£ 99
<b>Venue</b>	Online	<b>Lecturer</b>	Dr Prasannajit de Silva

In 1712, a correspondent in the *Spectator* wrote that 'Face-Painting is no where so well performed as in England.' This statement indicates the dominance of portraiture in British art of the time. And this dominance, coinciding with a period of rapid economic expansion, led to a flourishing marketplace for portrait painters and to a rich variety of paintings.

This course will explore British portraiture across the eighteenth century, during which it remained the most persistently popular genre of art. But why and how did it thrive? And what forms did it take?

Over five weeks, we will look at a wide range of portraits – by figures such as William Hogarth, Johan Zoffany, Allan Ramsay, Joshua Reynolds and Thomas Gainsborough – within their broader social and historical contexts. We will consider how artists sought to establish themselves in a competitive field, how the genre evolved over the period, and how some different groups of sitters were portrayed.

1. Practicalities. The business of portraiture & Displaying and disseminating portraits
2. The Conversation Piece. The rise and fall.....and rise and fall of the conversation piece
3. Styles. Reynolds and historical portraiture & Gainsborough and sensibility
4. Fame. Theatrical portraits & royal portraits
5. Family. Families & children

A recording of each session will be made available for one week after the event.

### Lecturer

**Dr Prasannajit de Silva**'s main interests relate to British visual culture of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in its broader social context, both at home and around the Empire. He completed his doctorate in 2007, researching the art of the British in India during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. He has had teaching roles at the University of Sussex and at Birkbeck, University of London, and currently lectures for various organisations including the Arts Society and the WEA.