

# The Royal Academy of Arts

Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal\\_Academy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Academy)

The Royal Academy of Arts is an art institution based in Burlington House on Piccadilly, London, England. The Royal Academy of Arts has a unique position in being an independent, privately funded institution led by eminent artists and architects whose purpose is to promote the creation, enjoyment and appreciation of the visual arts through exhibitions, education and debate.



## History

The Royal Academy of Arts was founded through a personal act of King George III on 10th December 1768 with a mission to promote the arts of design through education and exhibition. The motive in founding the Academy was twofold: to raise the professional status of the artist by establishing a sound system of training and expert judgment in the arts and to arrange the exhibition of contemporary works of art attaining an appropriate standard of excellence. Behind this concept was the desire to foster a national school of art and to encourage appreciation and interest in the public based on recognised canons of good taste.

Fashionable taste in 18th century Britain centered on continental and traditional art forms providing contemporary artists little opportunity to sell their works. From 1746 the Foundling Hospital, through the efforts of William Hogarth, provided an early venue for contemporary artists to show their work in Britain. The success of this venture led to the formation of the Society of Artists and the Free Society of Artists. Both these groups were primarily exhibiting societies and their initial success was marred by internal fractions amongst the artists. The combined vision of education and exhibition to establish a national school of art set the Royal Academy apart from the other exhibiting societies. It provided the foundation upon which the Royal Academy came to dominate the art scene of the 18th and 19th centuries supplanting the earlier art societies. Sir William Chambers used his connections with King George III to gain royal patronage and financial support of the Academy and the painter Sir Joshua Reynolds was made its first President.

Its forty founder members, all admitted on 10 December 1768, included a father/daughter combination (George Michael Moser and Mary Moser) and two sets of brothers (George Dance the Younger and Nathaniel Dance-Holland, and Paul and Thomas Sandby).

## Activities

The Royal Academy does not receive financial support from the state or crown. One of its principal sources of revenue is hosting temporary public art exhibitions. These are of the highest quality, comparable to those at the National Gallery, the Tate Gallery and leading art galleries outside the United Kingdom. In 2004 the highlights of the Academy's permanent collection went on display in the newly restored reception rooms of the original section of Burlington House, which are now known as the "John Madejski Fine Rooms".

Under the Direction of the Exhibitions Secretary Norman Rosenthal the Academy has hosted ambitious exhibitions of contemporary art including in 1997 "Sensation" the collection of work by Young British Artists owned by Charles Saatchi. The show created controversy for including a painting of Myra Hindley that was vandalised while on display.



*An early Summer Exhibition at the Academy's original home in Somerset House.*

The Academy also hosts an annual Royal Academy summer exhibition of new art, which is a well known event on the London social calendar. It is not as fashionable as was the case in earlier centuries, and has been largely ignored by the trendy Brit Artists and their patrons; however Tracey Emin exhibited in the 2005 show. In March 2007 this relationship developed further when Tracey Emin accepted the Academy's invitation to become a Royal Academician, commenting in her weekly newspaper column that, *"It doesn't mean that I have become more conformist; it means that the Royal Academy has become more open, which is healthy and brilliant."*<sup>[1]</sup>

Anyone who wishes may submit pictures for inclusion and those which are selected are displayed alongside the works of the Academicians. Many of the works are available for purchase.

In 2004 the Academy attracted press and media attention for a series of financial scandals and reports of a feud between Rosenthal and other senior staff that resulted in the cancellation of what would have been profitable exhibitions.<sup>[2]</sup> In 2006, it attracted further press by erroneously placing only the support for a sculpture on display in the belief that it was the sculpture, and then justifying it being kept on display.<sup>[3]</sup>

The Academy has received many gifts and bequests of objects and money. Many of these gifts were used to establish Trust Funds to support the work of the Royal Academy Schools by providing "Premiums" to students displaying excellence in various artistic genre. The rapid changes that pulsed through 20th century art have left some of the older prize funds looking somewhat anachronistic. But efforts are still made to award each prize to a student producing work that bears a relation to the intentions of the original benefactor.

1) *The Independent*

2) Higgins, Charlotte (2004-06-10). "Feud at top 'tearing Royal Academy apart'". *The Guardian*.

<http://arts.guardian.co.uk/news/story/0,,1235218,00.html>. Retrieved on 2007-03-07.

3) BBC (2006-06-14). "Empty plinth sidelines sculpture".

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/england/southern\\_counties/5081744.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/southern_counties/5081744.stm). Retrieved on 2007-03-07.

4) Kennedy, Maev (2007-03-28). "Gallery director quits after policy tussle". *The Guardian*.

<http://arts.guardian.co.uk/art/news/story/0,,2044483,00.html>. Retrieved on 2007-03-30.

# Presidents

<i>President</i>	<i>Served</i>
Sir Joshua Reynolds	1768–1792
Benjamin West	1792–1805
James Wyatt	1805–1806
Benjamin West	1806–1820
Sir Thomas Lawrence	1820–1830
Sir Martin Archer Shee	1830–1850
Sir Charles Lock Eastlake	1850–1865
Sir Francis Grant	1866–1878
Lord Leighton	1878–1896
Sir John Everett Millais	February-August 1896
Sir Edward Poynter	1896–1918
Sir Aston Webb	1919–1924
Sir Frank Dicksee	1924–1928
Sir William Llewellyn	1928–1938
Sir Edwin Lutyens	1938–1944
Sir Alfred Munnings	1944–1949
Sir Gerald Kelly	1949–1954
Sir Albert Richardson	1954–1956
Sir Charles Wheeler	1956–1966
Sir Thomas Monnington	1966–1976
Sir Hugh Casson	1976–1984
Sir Roger de Grey	1984–1993
Sir Philip Dowson	1993–1999
Phillip King	1999–2004
Sir Nicholas Grimshaw	2004–Present

