



THE ROYAL ACADEMY
SUMMER EXHIBITION
(1769-1869)

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Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792), *Mrs Abington*, 1771, Yale Center for British Art

- There have been over a **quarter of a million** paintings exhibited at the Royal Academy over 250 years. From these I have had to narrow it down to about 50 which I have divided into two talks. To do this is looked for the most controversial as controversy is often a precursor of change and change helps us define periods and movements in art.
- Controversy arose from works depicting
 - Women shown in a non-conforming ways and works by women artists,
 - social realism, poverty and the harsh realities of life,
 - history painting that criticised heroes or events seen as heroic,
 - works that were seen as unfinished, such as Impressionistic works
 - and any work that broke the rigid conventions of society
- But first I need to explain what the Royal Academy is, how it was formed and the role and format of the Summer Exhibition.

NOTES

- When the **Royal Academy** was founded in 1768 one of its key objectives was to establish an annual **exhibition**, open to all artists of merit, which could be visited by the public. The first **Summer Exhibition** took place in 1769; it has been held every year since. There have been **838 Royal Academicians**.
- The Royal Academy was founded on 10 December 1768 by King George III. The aim was to raise the status of artists in Britain by introducing a system of training and the annual exhibition of works of art judged to be of an appropriate

standard of excellence.

- The instrument of foundation named 34 founder members and allowed for a total membership of 40. The founder members were **Joshua Reynolds**, John Baker, George Barret, Francesco Bartolozzi, Giovanni Battista Cipriani, Augustino Carlini, Charles Catton, Mason Chamberlin, **William Chambers** (architect and the first Treasurer), Francis Cotes, George Dance, Nathaniel Dance, **Thomas Gainsborough**, John Gwynn, Francis Hayman, Nathaniel Hone the Elder, **Angelica Kauffman**, Jeremiah Meyer, **George Michael Moser**, **Mary Moser**, Francis Milner Newton, Edward Penny, John Inigo Richards, **Paul Sandby**, **Thomas Sandby**, Dominic Serres, Peter Toms, William Tyler, Samuel Wale, **Benjamin West**, **Richard Wilson**, Joseph Wilton, Richard Yeo, Francesco Zuccarelli. William Hoare and **Johann Zoffany** were added to this list later by the King and are known as nominated members. Among the founder members were two women, a father and daughter, and two sets of brothers.
- The first Royal Academy exhibition of contemporary art, open to all artists, opened on 25 April 1769 and ran until 27 May 1769. 136 works of art were shown and this exhibition, now known as the **Royal Academy Summer Exhibition**, has been staged annually without interruption to the present day.
- 1768, Royal Academy is founded
- 1769, the first exhibition, how pictures were hung, skied, on the line, *Somerset House etching of George III*, *cartoon of floating visitors from Punch*
- Thomas Gainsborough argument with the RA
- 1794, disillusionment, *The Morning Post* attacked the RA for descending "into a parade of the hackneyed and incompetent amongst the little dirty paltry aristocracy of the Royal Academy."
- David Wilkie, *Waterloo and the history of the railing off of pictures*
- Turner v. Constable, 1832, *The Opening of Waterloo bridge and Dutch ships in a gale*, *Helvoetsluys*
- 1849 Millais, *Christ in the House of His Parents* was one of the most controversial paintings of the nineteenth century.
- Emily Osborne, *Nameless and Friendless*, highlighted the misogyny of the Academy.
- 1877, Grosvenor Gallery opened providing an alternative, prestigious

exhibition space for modern art

- 1881, *A Private View at the Royal Academy, 1881* by William Powell Frith, depicting Oscar Wilde and other Victorian worthies at a private view of the 1881 exhibition
- 1914 John Singer Sargent, *Henry James*. One hundred years ago, on 4 May 1914, the Suffragette Mary Wood turned up on the opening day of the Royal Academy's annual Summer Exhibition and hacked at a painting by the esteemed Royal Academician John Singer Sargent with a meat cleaver while shouting "Votes for women!" The work was a portrait of the author Henry James; Wood smashed the glass and managed to slash the canvas three times. The attack happened around half past one; the crowd in the gallery was thinning for lunch but still those civilised appreciators of culture turned on her. "Lynch her!" they shouted.
- 1947, *Winter Sunshine, Chartwell* by Churchill, submitted under name David Winter
- 1951, Alfred Munnings was an outspoken critic of Modernism; a clear demonstration that the RA was out of touch and out-of-date. In a drunken after-dinner speech given in 1949 he declared that if he saw Picasso walking down the street he would kick him up the backside.
- A watercolour of a Norfolk farm building by Prince Charles, submitted anonymously and signed "C" was chosen for the 1987 summer show.
- Over £70,000 prize money is awarded each year at the summer exhibition including the prestigious £25,000 Charles Wollaston Award for most distinguished work. Winners include
 - R.B. Kitaj (1997),
 - David Hockney (1999),
 - Jake and Dinos Chapman (2003) and
 - Jeff Koons (2008).

CONTROVERSIES

some strong contenders for the title of most controversial works exhibited at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition in the 19th century:

- **Paintings with Social Commentary:** The 19th century saw a rise in social realism. Works depicting poverty, labor struggles, or the harsh realities of life for the working class could be seen as attacks on the status quo and generate outrage. Think paintings by artists like William Frith or John

Everett Millais that tackled social issues.

- **Nudes or Works with Sexuality:** Nudity, especially female nudity, was a constant source of debate. Paintings that presented the nude in a non-idealized way, or with any hint of sensuality, could be considered scandalous. Artists like Ford Madox Brown or Walter Sickert might be included here.
- **Historical Paintings with Unflattering Portrayals:** History paintings were a major genre, but some challenged traditional narratives. Works portraying historical events in a more critical light, or questioning the heroism of national figures, could spark controversy. Look for artists like William Etty or Benjamin Robert Haydon who might have ruffled feathers.
- **Early Works of Impressionism or Romanticism:** New artistic movements often faced resistance. Early Impressionist works by someone like John Singer Sargent with their loose brushwork and focus on light, might have been seen as unfinished or sloppy. Similarly, the dramatic and emotional works of Romanticism could be considered melodramatic or overly theatrical.
- **Works by Women Artists:** The Royal Academy was a male-dominated institution. While some women artists achieved recognition, their work often faced additional scrutiny. Look for paintings by Rosa Bonheur or Laura Knight who challenged expectations of what female artists should depict. (Google Gemini, 6/5/2024)

OTHER ACADEMIES

- The first academy of art was founded in Florence in Italy by Cosimo I de' Medici, on 13 January 1563, under the influence of the architect Giorgio Vasari who called it the Accademia e Compagnia delle Arti del Disegno (Academy and Company for the Arts of Drawing).
- Another academy, the Accademia di San Luca (named after the patron saint of painters, St. Luke), was founded about a decade later in Rome.
- Accademia di San Luca later served as the model for the Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture founded in France in 1648, and which later became the Académie des beaux-arts.
- The Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture was reorganized in 1661 by Louis XIV whose aim was to control all the artistic activity in France.
- An important 'battle of styles' took place between supporters of Peter Paul

Rubens and supporters of Nicolas Poussin ('poussinistes'). The later argued that line (disegno) should dominate art, because of its appeal to the intellect, while followers of Rubens ('rubenistes') argued that colour (colore) should dominate art, because of its appeal to emotion. The debate continued into the early 19th century with the distinction between Neoclassicism typified by the art of Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres and Romanticism typified by the work of Eugène Delacroix. Debates also occurred over whether it was better to learn art by looking at nature, typified by the work of John Constable, or to learn by looking at the artistic masters of the past as typified by the work and lectures given by Joshua Reynolds.

- Academies using the French model formed throughout Europe, and imitated the teachings and styles of the French Académie.

REFERENCES

<https://chronicle250.com/> A summary of all the Summer Exhibitions from 1769 to 2018

<https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/article/magazine-great-spectacle-summer-exhibition-jenny-uglow>

<https://royal-academy-production-asset.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/b0466dcd-6cf9-4f8a-b153-337653121764/The+Great+Spectacle+-+Merged.pdf>

'The Great Spectacle: 250 Years of the Summer Exhibition, Royal Academy, 12 June 2018 – 19 August 2018'

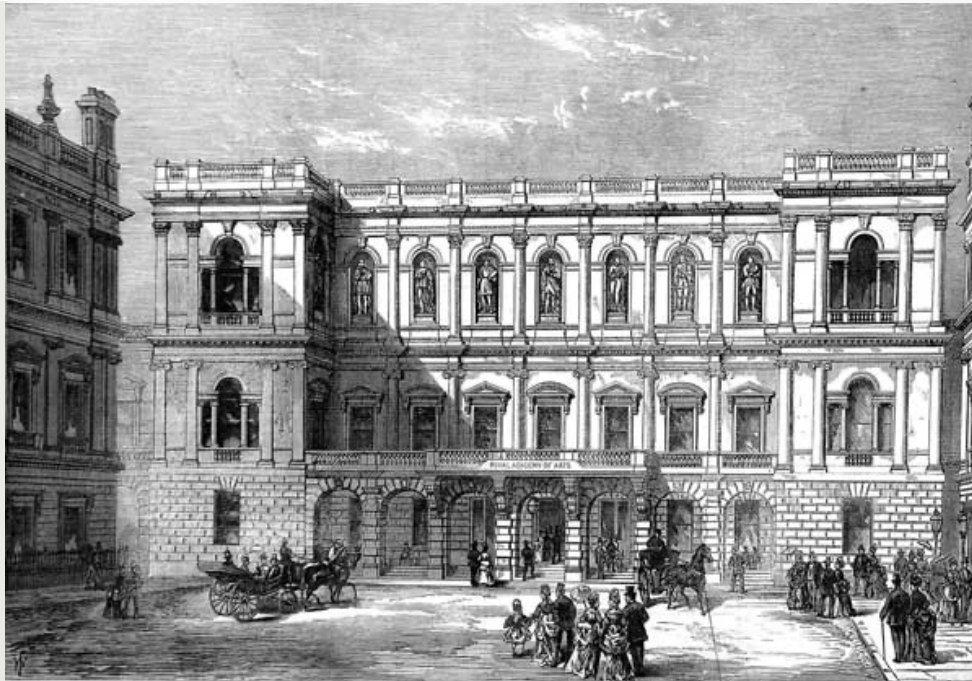
Brandon Taylor, *Art for the Nation: Exhibitions and the London Public 1747-2001* (1999)

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Burlington House, 1874, showing extra floor and portico

Engraving of the first Royal Academy premises in Pall Mall (now the Institute of Directors which opened in 1828, opposite the Royal Opera Arcade, the first arcade in the world opened in 1818 next to the King's Theatre in Haymarket, later renamed Her Majesty's Theatre and dedicated to Italian opera. Opera moved to the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden in 1846)

Giovanni Antonio Canal (1697-1768, 'Canaletto'), *Old Somerset House from the River*, c. 1746-50, private collection

New Somerset House, designed by Sir William Chambers, Waterloo Bridge was opened in 1817 (the current bridge was completed in 1945)

Edmund Walker (1813-1814), lithographer Thomas Picken (active 1838, died 1870), *Trafalgar Square, with the National Gallery, and St. Martin's Church*, published 1 May 1852, colour lithograph

Burlington House, prior to Royal Academy moving in and after. Burlington House 1860 compared with 1874 shows extra floor and portico.

- It all began in 1768 when a group of artists (including William Chambers supported by Richard Wilson, Benjamin West and Paul Sandby and, after some hesitation, Joshua Reynolds) petitioned the king, George III, to grant a royal charter to a new art academy. The aim was to be self-financing from entrance fees for a Summer Exhibition and so the King agreed and Joshua Reynolds agreed to become the first President.
- It taught art at the Royal Academy School, it held a Summer Exhibition and it

appointed **40 Academicians**.

- It was originally housed here in **Pall Mall** (1768-1771) for **4 years** although the Summer Exhibition continued to be held there until 1779,
- (CLICK) then at **Old Somerset House** (1771-1780) for **9 years**
- (CLICK) then **New Somerset House** (1780-1837, designed by William Chambers) for **57 years**,
- (CLICK) then the east wing of the **National Gallery**, Trafalgar Square (1837-1868) for **31 years**, designed by another RA **William Wilkins**
- (CLICK) and finally at Burlington House, Piccadilly (1868-today) until the present day, **156 years**. For those that don't know London all the locations were within a mile of each other.
- Burlington House façade was designed by Colin Campbell and
- (CLICK) extended in the 1873 by Sidney Smirke (1797-1877) who had designed the famous circular reading room at the British Museum (1857).
- Once founded, the Royal Academy controlled fine art in England from training to exhibiting throughout the last part of the eighteenth and most of the nineteenth century.

NOTES

- As early as 1749 the Society of Dilettanti met at the King's Arms in Pall Mall and considered a proposal for the foundation of an academy for artists.
- The first meeting of the Royal Academy was held on 14 December 1768.
- The premises in Pall Mall were leased by the artist Richard Dalton (1715?–1791), King's librarian and keeper of the King's pictures. He rented the premises to establish a print warehouse, a venture that failed and so the building was available for the Royal Academy. The precise financial arrangements between the King, Richard Dalton and the Royal Academy are unclear.
- Joshua **Reynolds** gave 15 lectures called *Discourses* over the first 21 years. Reynolds' annual lectures have become famous as the first public lectures on the nature of art given in Britain. Reynolds made many famous remarks including his belief that painting '**is not the industry of the hands, but of the mind**' and that a painter '**stands in need of more knowledge than is to be picked off his palette**'. This goes back to the Italian Renaissance belief that painting is not just a craft but is a humanist endeavour that requires inspiration, creativity and knowledge, particularly of the classics.

REFERENCES

<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vols29-30/pt1/pp346-348>

TWENTY FIVE KEY WORKS EXHIBITED BY ACADEMICIANS OVER 250 YEARS

* Thomas Gainsborough	1768	Foundation member
Angelica Kauffman	1768	Foundation member
* Joshua Reynolds	1768	Foundation member; President
1768–92		
* Benjamin West	1768	Foundation member; President
1792–1805, 1806–20		
Richard Wilson	1768	Foundation member
Johann Zoffany	1769	Nominated member
Philip de Loutherbourg	1781	
George Stubbs	1781	
Joseph Wright		1784
* Henry Fuseli	1790	Professor of Painting 1799–1803,
1810–24; Keeper 1803–10?		
Thomas Lawrence	1794	President 1820–30
Martin Archer Shee	1800	President 1830–50
* J. M. W. Turner	1802	Professor of Perspective
James Ward	1811	
* David Wilkie		1811
Charles Lock Eastlake	1827	President 1850–65
William Etty	1828	
* John Constable	1829	
Edwin Henry Landseer	1831	
John Rogers Herbert	1846	
William Dyce	1848	
Richard Redgrave	1851	
* William Powell Frith	1852	
George Gilbert Scott	1860	

* John Everett Millais	1863	President 1896	
Thomas Woolner	1875	Professor of Sculpture 1877–79	
Edward Poynter	1876	President 1896–1918	
William Quiller Orchardson		1877	
Briton Rivière	1881		
Hamo Thornycroft	1888		
* Hubert von Herkomer	1890		
John William Waterhouse	1895		
* John Singer Sargent	1897		
* George Frederic Watts	1897		
George Clausen	1906		
Henry Scott Tuke	1914		
Frank Brangwyn	1919		
Edwin Landseer Lutyens	1921		
Giles Gilbert Scott	1922		
Augustus John		1928	
* Dame Laura Knight	1936		
Harold Knight		1937	
Meredith Frampton	1942		
* Winston Churchill	1948	Honorary Academician Extraordinary	
* John Nash	1951		
Eduardo Paolozzi	1979		
* Peter Blake	1981		
Allen Jones	1986		
* David Hockney	1991		
* R. B. Kitaj	1991		
Anish Kapoor		1999	
Eileen Cooper elected Keeper, 2011		2001	First woman to be
Richard Long	2001		
Fiona Rae	2002		
Zaha Hadid	2005		

* Tracey Emin		2007
* Jenny Saville		2007
* Gillian Wearing	2007	
Tacita Dean	2008	
* Cornelia Parker	2009	
Phyllida Barlow	2011	

Recently Elected

Louisa Hutton		2014
Cathie Pilkington	2014	
Rebecca Warren	2014	
Rebecca Salter		2014
Brian Catling	2015	
Farshid Moussavi	2015	
Vanessa Jackson	2015	
Sonia Boyce	2016	



Richard Earlom (1743–1822), after a watercolour by Michel Vincent 'Charles' Brandoin, *The Exhibition at the Royal Academy in Pall Mall, 1771-72*, Royal Academy of Arts.

Richard Earlom (1743–1822), after a watercolour by Michel Vincent 'Charles' Brandoin, *The Exhibition at the Royal Academy in Pall Mall, 1771-72*, Royal Academy of Arts.

James Barry, *The Temptation of Adam*

Thomas Gainsborough, *Mr. Nuthall and Captain Wade*

- This is the earliest known engraving of the Summer Exhibition showing the range of people attending. It shows the final year at 125 Pall Mall illustrating the small size of the rooms. In 1771 the Royal Academy moved to Old Somerset House but the exhibition was held at Pall Mall until 1779. The following year it was moved to the new purpose-built rooms in New Somerset House.
- On the centre wall you can see **James Barry's** painting *The Temptation of Adam* (now in the National Gallery of Ireland), given pride of place. It is an example of a 'history painting'. It was generally praised but some found the nudity shocking as it was explained that they visited the exhibition with their wives and daughters. On either side of *The Temptation of Adam* are two full-length portraits by **Thomas Gainsborough**, of a Mr Nuthall and Captain Wade. Large-scale portraits of important people were also given prestigious positions in the display – not least because many members of the Academy made a comfortable living from such commissions.
- After it moved into its new premises in Somerset House it had more space to exhibit and it generated fees from the entrance payment for the Summer

Exhibition, from catalogue sales and from charging commission on paintings sold at the Exhibition. In 1780, it brought in fees of £3,069 and this was the last time it needed financial support from the King (the 'privy purse'). Attendance continued to grow and the Academy quickly grew prosperous.

REFERENCES

- The entrance fee was 1 shilling and the catalogue an extra 6d (later increased to 1 shilling).



John Opie (1761-1807, a Cornish historical and portrait painter), R.A. elect, *Assassination of Rizzio*



James Northcote (1746-1831, English painter and student of Joshua Reynolds), R.A. elect, *The Death of Wat Tyler*



Engraving of 'The Exhibition of the Royal Academy 1787'

Pietro Antonio Martini (1738-1797), *The Exhibition of the Royal Academy, 1787*, engraving on paper, hand-coloured, 36.1 x 49.9 cm, British Museum

John Opie (1761-1807, a Cornish historical and portrait painter), R.A. elect, *Assassination of Rizzio*

James Northcote (1746-1831, English painter and student of Joshua Reynolds), R.A. elect, *The Death of Wat Tyler*

- This is the new location the great room at the top of New Somerset House in what is now the Courtauld Gallery. The great room is shown crowded with visitors, drawn with detailed realism, but with a certain humorous intention. In the centre foreground is the Prince of Wales, holding his hat, cane, and catalogue, next Sir Joshua Reynolds, holding his ear-trumpet and pointing out the pictures.
- Paintings were hung with their frames touching and their position was decided by a Hanging Committee. The most prestigious, generally the largest paintings, were exhibited with the **bottom edge eight foot from the floor**. This position was occupied by **'swagger' portraits and history paintings**. It was 2-3 feet above head height and known as being hung on **the line**. This meant the works could be seen even when the rooms were packed. The paintings at the top could barely be seen and were said to have been **'skyed'**.
- The pictures are numbered and can be identified from the R.A. Catalogue, the two largest and most conspicuous history paintings are

- (CLICK) These two either side of the room.
- (CLICK) On the left the *Assassination of Rizzio* by **John Opie** (1761-1807, a Cornish historical and portrait painter), R.A. elect, regarded as the leading work of the exhibition and
- On the right **James Northcote** (1746-1831, English painter and student of Joshua Reynolds), also R.A. elect, *The Death of Wat Tyler*, leader of the Peasant's Revolt of 1381.

NOTES

- The Greek 'ΟΥΔΕΙΣ ΑΜΟΥΣΟΣ ΕΙΣΙΤΩ' means 'Let no stranger to the Muses enter' and was inscribed over the entrance door to the Great Exhibition Room at Somerset House. This aphorism indicates the type of visitor expected by the Royal Academy. The aim was not to educate the general public but to show and sell artists and their works to those already familiar with fine art.
- The number of pictures increased each year from 547 in 1781 to 1,165 in 1821 so they had to be **hung frame to frame**. The position was determined by the Hanging Committee and the position of a painting was critical to it being seen. Small pieces and pieces by lesser known artists were skied and we shall see later that Constable created his 'six footers' to be large enough to be placed on the line. Although Thomas Gainsborough was a founding member he broke with the Academy in 1784 when his portraits of the royal family were skied.
- **David Rizzio was Mary Queen of Scots's secretary** and he was stabbed 56 times by her husband Lord Darnley and his accomplices as he was jealous of their friendship. Mary was seven months pregnant with the future James VI and Darnley suspected Rizzio of being her lover.
- What Tyler was leader of the Peasant's Revolt and was killed by William Walworth Lord Mayor of London at Smithfield in 1381.
- Thomas Gainsborough, a founder, had his (unreasonable) request to have a painting hung at 5.5" refused and exhibited at Schomberg House, Pall Mall (where he lived at No. 80 from 1774 to his death in 1788). Next door (No. 81) was the Temple of Health and Hymen with its 'celestial bed' and electrical bed that allegedly cured infertility hired out at £50 a night. No. 81 also housed a high-class brothel and gambling den.

REFERENCES

<https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=qqbIDAAAQBAJ> *A Guide to Eighteenth Century Art*, Linda Walsh, p. 157

Thomas Rowlandson, *Exhibition 'Stare Case'*, hand-coloured engraving, c. 1811



Thomas Rowlandson, *Exhibition Stare Case*, a print, London, England, around 1811

John Russell (1745-1806), *A Porter at the Royal Academy*, 1792, Courtauld, note the people on the staircase in the background.

- This engraving by Thomas Rowlandson is making fun of their visitors to the Summer Exhibition. It is called Stare Case because the women have fallen down the steep staircase exposing their naked nether regions as women at this time did not wear knickers.
- This work has a special appeal for me as I used to ascend this steep staircase most days for lectures in the hall at the top when I was a student at the Courtauld.

NOTES

- **Thomas Rowlandson's *Exhibition Stare Case***. The Royal Academy exhibition was held at the top of the East wing of the North front of **New Somerset House** (1780-1837) for **57 years** (now the **Courtauld Institute**). The very steep stairs, still there today, gave rise to this cartoon. This print is based on a drawing which was probably made in **around 1800**. It shows visitors to the Royal Academy tumbling down a steep staircase at Somerset House, now the Courtauld Institute of Art. The first major contemporary art exhibition in London was staged in 1760 by the Society of Artists. The Royal Academy held its first exhibition in 1769, but it was not until 1780 that the Academy exhibited

at the **newly rebuilt Somerset House**. Here **Sir William Chambers** designed a **new complex of government buildings** with the Royal Academy as its centrepiece. He proclaimed it 'an object of national splendour as well as convenience' and 'a monument to the taste and elegance of His Majesty's reign'. These boasts form the background to Thomas Rowlandson's caricature. The **first exhibition** attracted **61,381 visitors** and, inevitably, the building became extremely crowded. Rowlandson suggests that the **architect was more interested in the visual effect of his staircase than in its practical utility**. He also plays with two commonplace observations about exhibition audiences: that **some female spectators came to be seen as much as to see** and that some **male spectators were more interested in living flesh than in painted nudes**. Put these three factors together and you get a typically energetic and mildly erotic composition. Sir William Chambers staircase was impractical, visitors came to be seen, men more interested in lady visitors.

Notes

- **Old Somerset House** started in 1547 when Edward Seymour became Lord Protector and Duke of Somerset when Edward VI came to the throne. Seymour owned the land but had to demolish churches and houses; a move that was so unpopular it resulted in him briefly being interred in the Tower of London. By 1551 it was virtually complete at a cost of £10,000. It was a courtyard Tudor structure but the Strand entrance façade had Ionic and Doric columns creating one of the earliest classical facades in England. The architect was either John Thynne or John of Padua. The same year Seymour was tried for treason and executed in 1552. The building was occupied by Princess Elizabeth until her accession in 1558. It was then used to house foreign diplomats until 1603 when James I gave it to his wife Anne of Denmark who renamed it Denmark House. It became the centre of English social and artistic life. It was extended and enhanced to Inigo Jones's design at a ruinous cost of £34,500, one of the most expensive of James I's buildings. When Charles I became king in 1625 it passed to his wife Henrietta Maria who further extended it including a Roman Catholic chapel designed by Inigo Jones. During the Civil War it became General Fairfax's quarters and was used to house the royal collection for sale. The collection was enormous and included some 1,760 pictures, including works by Leonardo, Raphael, Michelangelo, Correggio, Titian, Tintoretto,

Holbein and Van Dyck, amongst others. Inigo Jones died at Somerset House in 1652. Following the restoration in 1660 Henrietta Maria, now Queen Dowager returned to Somerset House. When Charles II died in 1685 his wife Catherine of Braganza took up residence, also as Queen Dowager, and Christopher Wren supervised another major redecoration. When William and Mary came to the throne there was considerable antagonism between them and the Catholic Catherine. During the 18th century it was used for grace and favour apartments, masquerades (fancy dress dances), foreign embassies and army units as it gradually fell into such ruin that a new building was proposed. One of the last occupants of the old building and one of the first of the new was the Royal Academy.

- **New Somerset House** replaced the Tudor building on the site. The justification for the building was to centralise Government departments at one location to increase efficiency. Parliament debated whether to build a cheap building or a prestigious building. With the death of the first architect, William Robinson, and the appointment of William Chambers the decision was made for them and the costs escalated over the years as Chambers built an enormous prestigious structure. The main part of the building was completed in 1801 at a cost that was nearly double Chambers's original estimate. One reason for the increased cost was that the enormous structure was built on poor, steeply sloping soil down to the river's edge. In the 1820s it was decided to complete the eastern part and build King's College which was designed by Robert Smirke (1780-1867), who had just completed the British Museum. With the completion of Waterloo Bridge in 1811 the west side of the building was exposed and its unattractive brick façade attracted criticism. James Pennethorne (who had trained under John Nash) was appointed in 1849 to build a New Wing to the west.

Satire & The Royal Academy

- Around 1810 Rowlandson etched a number of plates for the publisher Thomas Tegg, who sold cheap and crudely coloured caricatures like this one.
- The Royal Academy depended on proceeds from the exhibition including catalogues. Artists depended on selling paintings. Works were reviewed in April and the exhibition was end April to early June. When it moved to Somerset House in 1780 it increased in size and the RA made a profit for

the first time. 489 works in 1780 grown to 1,195 by 1797 then remaining at 900-1,200. 48,000 visitors between 1780 and 1798, growing to 56,000 by 1808, then 67,000 by 1818.

- It was a highlight of the London social calendar.

Robert Cruickshank

- Isaac Robert Cruikshank, sometimes known as Robert Cruickshank (27 September 1789 – 13 March 1856) was a caricaturist, illustrator, and portrait miniaturist, the less well-known brother of George Cruikshank, both sons of Isaac Cruikshank. Born in Middlesex, where he and his brother George attended school in Edgware. He illustrated a number of books in the 1820s and collaborated with his brothers on a series of 'London Characters' in 1827. He illustrated Miguel de Cervantes' novel *Don Quixote* as well as William Hogarth and Gustave Doré.

Thomas Rowlandson

- Thomas Rowlandson (13 July 1756 – 21 April 1827) was an English artist and caricaturist. He was born in Old Jewry in the City of London, his father had been a weaver but went into trade and went bankrupt in 1759. The family moved to Richmond, Yorkshire but his uncle's widow probably paid for his education in London. Rowlandson was educated at the school of Dr Barvis in Soho Square, then "an academy of some celebrity," where one of his classmates was Richard Burke, son of the politician Edmund Burke. As a schoolboy, Rowlandson "drew humorous characters of his master and many of his scholars before he was ten years old," covering the margins of his schoolbooks with his artwork. He spent two years at a drawing academy in Paris and spent six years studying at the Royal Academy while travelling to Paris. When his aunt died he inherited £7,000 but spent it all on dissipation including gambling sometimes for 36 hours at a time. He fell into poverty and took up caricature to earn money. One of his most famous was his illustration of William Combe's *Tour of Dr Syntax in Search of the Picturesque* (1812), a poetic satire of William Gilpin's originator of the picturesque. He also produced erotic prints. He is often more gentle and comic than James Gillray.

Tom and Jerry

- An exciting introduction to what London has to offer a young man in the 1820s. It gives an idea of, for example, what it was like to go to the theatre. It uses the slang of the period some of which is so recent it is explained in footnotes.
- <http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=rfowj2M-XxAC&pg>



Johann Zoffany (1733-1810), *The Portraits of the Academicians of the Royal Academy, 1771-72*, Royal Collection



Angelica Kauffman (1741-1807), *Self-portrait, 1770-1775*, National Portrait Gallery



George Romney (1734-1802), *Mary Moser, 1770-71*, National Portrait Gallery

Johann Zoffany (1733-1810), *The Portraits of the Academicians of the Royal Academy, 1771-72*, Royal Collection

George Romney (1734-1802), *Mary Moser, 1770-71*, National Portrait Gallery

Angelica Kauffman (1741-1807), *Self-portrait, 1770-1775*, National Portrait gallery. One of 25 self-portraits as a mentally alert creative artist with pencil, paintbrush or harp. She gazes out forthrightly.

- This shows most of the Academicians who founded the Royal Academy.
- It was painted in 1771, three years after the Academy was founded and it shows all the members of the Academy except for the **two female founders whose portraits on the wall**. (CLICK) One is **Mary Moser** (1744-1819), one of the most celebrated artists of 18th-century Britain, and the other is the even more famous (CLICK) **Angelica Kauffman** (1741-1807).
- Why aren't they in the room?
- This is a life drawing class with a naked man. There was not actually a rule banning them but it would have been unthinkable, highly improper and indecent for them to attend.
- Why was it important to attend life drawing?
- The **main activity of the Royal Academy School was to teach life drawing** as this was regarded as the most difficult skill to acquire. Students started by drawing casts of classical figures and it was only when these drawings were regarded as proficient that they were allowed to attend the life drawing class.

Most life drawing was of men as it was regarded as important to represent men accurately in the highest form of art, namely history painting, of which more later.

- What is odd about this life drawing class?
- Only one member has any drawing implements and that is bottom left, a self-portrait of Johann Zoffany holding his palette. The other members are all discussing the pose demonstrating that art is not just a mechanical skill but one that engages the intellect and a good understanding of classical literature. They could be discussing a classical pose as part of a history painting. It is not going too far to say that **the Royal Academy was created in order to further the art of history painting in England**. Thanks to Angelica Kauffman and Benjamin West (the second president) it did become popular for a brief period **before portraits of the great and the good as well as their horses and dogs took over**.

NOTE

- Kauffman on left, Mary Moser (1744-1819) on right.
- Moser's father George Moser putting on the noose.
- Richard Cosway (1742-1821, RA 1770), Moser's lover bottom-right with cane (the canvas was extended to include him). Cosway was separated from his wife Maria. Maria ('Mariah') Cosway (1760-1838, born Hadfield) was a gifted artist who gave up her career on the command of her husband. He did possibly to protect her reputation and in time she started to paint again. She was an Italian-English artist who had an affair with Thomas Jefferson, American Founding Father, principal author of the Declaration of Independence 1776 and third President of the US. They corresponded for the rest of their lives. She was a devout catholic all her life. It was thought to be a marriage of convenience as he was 20 years her senior and a libertine. Cosway was once a more famous artist than Gainsborough and his portraits were the rage in Regency London. He became Principal Painter to the Prince of Wales.
- In October 1793, Mary Moser married Hugh Lloyd and retired from painting, only exhibiting as an amateur. Shortly after the marriage, in 1793, Cosway and Mary Moser had an open affair that lasted 6 months during which they travelled around Europe. Mary Moser was 50 and his ex-wife Maria 33 yet he described her as 'more sexually responsive' in bed.
- Angelica Kauffman was Swiss born Austrian who was taught by her father.

She acquired several languages and was a skilled musician. It is not known how she learnt to paint the male nude as her speciality was history painting. Her first marriage was a disaster but in 1781 he died (she had been separated) and she married Antonio Zucchi a Venetian artist and retired to Rome where she met Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Zucchi died in 1795 and she continued to contribute to the RA her last exhibit was 1797 and she died in 1807. She was honoured at her funeral in the same way Raphael had been honoured.

- There was a tradition of representing absent but venerated members of a body through *imago clipeata* (literally 'portraits on a round shield from the practice in the Roman world of showing ancestors and famous people on round shields in people's homes).

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Angelica Kauffmann (1741-1807), *Hector taking leave of Andromache*, 1768, 134.5 x 178 cm, National Trust, Saltram

Angelica Kauffmann (1741-1807), *Hector taking leave of Andromache*, 1768, 134.5 x 178 cm, National Trust, Saltram, Devon, displayed at the first exhibition in 1769.

- This is one of the much admired paintings by Angelica Kaufmann.
- Hector, son of the King of Troy, is preparing to go off to war. He is holding the hand of his wife Andromache (pronounced 'andro-MARKY' or 'androm-akee'), in front the gates of Troy. A nurse is holding their son Astyanax (pronounced 'uh-STY-uh-naks'). The child prefers to look into her eyes rather than towards his father, perhaps because his father is dressed for war. It is a scene from Homer's epic poem 'The Iliad'. (Art UK)
- **Angelika Kauffmann** (1741–1807, aged 66) (usually known in English as Angelica Kauffman) was a Swiss-born Austrian Neoclassical painter who had a successful career in London and Rome. Remembered primarily as a history painter, Kauffmann was a skilled portraitist, landscape and decoration painter. She was one of the two female founding members of the Royal Academy in London in 1768. Her father was relatively poor but a skilled painter who trained his precocious daughter who was a **child prodigy**. She acquired several languages from her mother, read avidly and was a talented musician. **By the age of 12 she was painting bishops and nobles.**
- Before coming to Britain she was a very popular portrait painter in Rome as she spoke Italian, English, French and German. One person wrote, 'She may be styled beautiful and in singing may vie with our best virtuosi.'

- She was persuaded to come to London by Lady Wentworth whose rank **opened society to her**, and she was well received everywhere, **the royal family especially showing her great favour**. She became so famous and so popular that the Danish ambassador said, "The whole world is Angelicamad".
- Her **firmest friend**, however, was **Sir Joshua Reynolds** who called her 'Miss Angelica' or 'Miss Angel'.

HISTORY OF WOMEN AT THE RA

- The RA excluded women until 1860 even though two of the founding members were women.
- In 1860 Laura Herford's (1831-1870) was accepted for the RA School based on a painting using her initial 'L. Herford'. This was at the suggestion of the President Sir Charles Eastlake. Thirteen other women were accepted over the next few years. Women were only allowed to draw from casts and the draped model. Women were excluded from the life class although there was some provision made in 1893. In 1863 the Council decided its constitution did not allow women painters (in the Instrument of Foundation, Academicians ... shall all of them be ... **Men of fair moral Characters**'). In 1903 women were allowed to study living nudes in separate classes.
- **Slade took women** from its founding in **1871**.
- The Society of Female Artists was founded in 1856, it became the Society of Lady Artists in 1872 and the Society of Women Artists in 1899.
- 1870s and 80s women petitioned RA in vain to attend life classes.
- There were private art schools 1880s and 90s like French atelier
- Rich women attended classes in Paris, Munich, Dusseldorf and Antwerp
- Lady Butler was nominated three times to the RA 1879-81 and turned down.
- Annie Laura Swynnerton and Laura Knight (1877-1970, née Johnson, attended Nottingham School of Art 1890-4, aged 13) were made ARA in the 1920s and Laura Knight a RA in 1936.

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Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792), *Mrs Abington*, 1771, 76.8 x 63.8 cm, Yale Center for British Art



Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792), *Mrs Abington*, 1771, 76.8 x 63.8 cm, Yale Center for British Art

- I am cheating with this painting by Joshua Reynolds. It was long believed that it was exhibited at the Summer Exhibition of 1771 but new research has shown it a very different picture of the famous actress Mrs Abington was exhibited.
- This was a private picture possibly commissioned by the actress or one of her admirers. It has always been a puzzle to me as it would clearly have been considered improper if exhibited publicly. We now know it was in fact a different portrait of Mrs Abington that was exhibited in 1771.
- Fanny Abington grew up in the slums of London, started as a flower girl and street singer and went on to become one of the leading actresses of her day. She is shown as Miss Prue in William Congreve's *Love for Love*. She learnt French and French fashion and was witty and clever which won her a distinguished position in society to the extent that women of fashion copied her clothing.
- Joshua Reynolds made a calculated decision to associate himself with the demimonde of women who moved in high society but who flouted convention.

PORTRAITURE

- This portrait shows Fanny Abington as Miss Prue in William Congreve's (1670-1729) Restoration bawdy comedy, *Love for Love* (1694), Miss Prue is a naïve country girl seduced by a predatory, half-witted dandy.

- **Frances ('Fanny') Abington** (1737-1815), born Frances Burton, daughter of a private **soldier**, grew up in the slums round Drury Lane, began as a **flower girl ('Nosegay Fan')** and street singer and became one of the **leading actresses** of her day. After her **unhappy marriage** to her music teacher James Abington she was called back to the stage by **David Garrick** where she remained for 18 years. Her acting was noted for having '*not the least tincture of the theatrical*' (James Northcote, 1772). Before becoming an actress she learnt French and French fashion and later worked in a brothel. She was witty and clever which won her a distinguished position in society. Women of fashion copied her clothing.
- Joshua Reynolds made a calculated decision to associate his art with the demi-monde of women who moved among the social elite but whose sex lives flouted polite codes of behaviour. For example, 'Kitty' Fisher, Elizabeth Hartley and Nelly O'Brien. So, again we see the limits of what is acceptable in an established conventional genre being tested, and this time by the President of the Royal Academy.
- Adopting what was then taken to be a **suggestive**, or at least unrefined, pose—**unthinkable for a lady**—the work is both a portrait of unusual directness and candour, her thumb coyly hovering on the lower lip, and a "historical" picture, whose associations went beyond the subject's likeness, which Horace Walpole thought "easy and very like"

BIO:REYNOLDS

- '**Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792, aged 68) was the leading English portraitist of the 18th century.** Through study of ancient and Italian Renaissance art, and of the work of Rembrandt, Rubens and Van Dyck, he brought great variety and dignity to British portraiture. Reynolds was **born at Plympton in Devon**, the son of a headmaster who was a fellow of Balliol College, Oxford: a more educated background than that of most painters. Reynolds did not attend university and was **apprenticed** in 1740 to the fashionable London **portraitist Thomas Hudson**, who also trained Wright of Derby. He spent 1749-52 abroad, mainly in **Italy**, and set up practice in London shortly after his return. He soon established himself as the leading portrait painter, though he was **never popular with George III**. He promoted the "**Grand Style**" in painting which depended on idealization of the imperfect. He was a **founder and first president of the Royal Academy of Arts**, and was knighted by George III in 1769. He is remembered for his

series of lectures at the Royal Academy called his **Discourses** that he gave between 1769 and 1790. In 1784 Allan Ramsay died and the office of Principal Painter in Ordinary to the king became vacant. **Gainsborough** felt that he had a good chance of securing it, but Reynolds felt he deserved it and threatened to resign the presidency of the Royal Academy if he did not receive it. He was appointed to the post but later regretted it as **'I think a certain person [George III] is not worth speaking to, nor speaking of'**. He was a **key figure in the intellectual life of London**, and a **friend of Dr Johnson**. When the Royal Academy was founded in 1768, Reynolds was elected its first President. Although believing that **history painting was the noblest work** of the painter, he had little opportunity to practise it, and his greatest works are his portraits. His paintings are not perfectly preserved due to faulty technique. The **carmine reds have faded, leaving flesh-tones paler than intended**, and the bitumen used in the blacks has tended to crack.' (National Gallery)

- 'Sir Joshua Reynolds ... was the most famous and honoured artist of his time, a figure so central to British art history that his statue still greets visitors to the Royal Academy.' (The Guardian) However, his reputation has faded today perhaps because, although at the time he experimented with materials, he is today regarded as a safe painter of his time.

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Joseph Wright of Derby (1734-1797),
The Dead Soldier, c. 1789, 101.6 x 127
cm, Yale Center for British Art



Joseph Wright of Derby (1734-1797), *The Dead Soldier*, c. 1789, 101.6 x 127 cm, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

- History paintings were **meant to celebrate heroism** in battle but this painting by Joseph Wright of Derby shows a dead soldier and his grieving wife. However, its impact was so great that it was highly praised by most critics and was seen as a modern-day alternative to the neo-classical style of Kaufman.
- Considered at the time of its creation to be one of Wright's most important paintings, ***The Dead Soldier*** was shown to great acclaim at the **Royal Academy in 1789**. It affected viewers with the **pathos** of its figures, even reducing one of **Wright's friends to tears**. Wright referred to a long poem by John Langhorne that emphasises the **bleak future of the infant** as the mother weeps over her fallen husband. Wright presents not with ancient history, mythology or a biblical story but with a moment from **contemporary life**. The cloth separates and isolates the moving scene from the battle that still continues in the background. The husband's figure is drastically foreshortened and the joining of the three hands poignantly unites the figures. The shallow relief of the figures suggest a neoclassical painting but the sweeping curves and the detailed landscape provide a **Romantic setting**.
- He produced many versions of this painting but this is thought to be the first.

BIO:WRIGHT OF DERBY

- **Joseph Wright of Derby** (1734-1797, aged 62) has been described as 'the first

professional painter to express the spirit of the industrial revolution' (Francis Klingender, *Art and the Industrial Revolution*).

- He was the third of five children of a **solidly professional family in Derby** (his father was a lawyer) and he was educated at **Derby Grammar School** teaching himself to draw by **copying prints**. When he was 17 he went to London for two years and trained under **Thomas Hudson**, then the most highly reputed portraitist in London and master of Joshua Reynolds from 1740-44. He returned to Derby and painted portraits for three years before going back to London to complete his training.
- His colleagues believed that a career for an artist could only be found in London but Wright chose to **spend most of his life in Derby** among his friends and family and he received abundant commissions from Midlands society.
- **Early Portraits: 1760-1773. Portraits were to become the mainstay** of his career but he eventually found the **greatest pleasure in landscape painting**. Wright rarely flatters and some of his most sympathetic portraits are of children. It was at this time that he learned to concentrate on the play of light over faces and objects.
- Wright was connected with but not a member of the **Lunar Society** as he lacked scientific knowledge but it meant that he socialised with some of the greatest minds of the industrial age. He exhibited at the Society of Artists and later at the Royal Academy. He was called Wright of Derby in 1768 to distinguish him from Richard Wright of Liverpool as first names were not used. Even though Richard Wright is now unknown the name has stuck until the present day.
- **Candlelight: 1765 onwards**. He exhibited about 35 pictures at the **Society of Artist** from 1765 onwards and about **half of them were 'candlelights'**, in which a hidden source of light illuminates the painting. They were known as **'fancy paintings'** in the late eighteenth century. They were **not initially dramatic scientific experiments** but included scenes such as this with girls dressing a kitten or boys blowing bladders. In these paintings Wright demonstrates his knowledge of the well-known technique of chiaroscuro, or more accurately **tenebrism**, a dramatic form of chiaroscuro. Wright was known for his attention to detail and precision in the representation of textiles, texture, and surfaces.
- **Society of Artists: from 1769 to 1771** Wright served on the board of directors of the Society of Artists. He later exhibited at the Royal Academy

but **like Thomas Gainsborough he quarrelled over the hanging of his paintings** and in a radical display of independence he withdrew them and **set up a one-man show at Covent Garden in 1785**. Gainsborough had withdrawn his work from the Royal Academy and display his work at Schomberg House, his home and studio in Pall Mall, the previous year.

George Morland (1763–1804)
, *Morning (The Benevolent Sportsman)*, 1792, 101.6 x
137.2 cm, The Fitzwilliam
Museum



George Morland (1763–1804), *Morning (The Benevolent Sportsman)*, exhibited 1792, 101.6 x 137.2 cm, The Fitzwilliam Museum

- **George Morland** (1763–1804, aged 41) **began to draw at three** and was an **honorary exhibitor at the Royal Academy at the age of ten**. It is said his **father locked him in an attic and forced him to copy paintings** but Morland hid some drawings and lowered them out of his window at night. His friends would sell them and they would spend the **money on drink**. By the age of 17 he was well known among dealers and artists of repute and when he left home he started **a life of hard work and hard drinking almost without parallel in the history of art**. He **married Anne Ward** and during the 1780s was a reformed character. **Anne Ward** a beautiful and virtuous woman who was deeply attached to him despite his dissolute behaviour. She was the sister of James Ward whose *Gordale Scar* is still exhibited at Tate Britain. Sadly, he started drinking again and left her although he paid her an allowance for the rest of his life.
- **His art was so popular** that, although he received only a fraction of what each painting was worth he could **easily live for a week on a day's work**. He was besieged by dealers who came to him with a purse in one hand and a bottle in the other. The amount of work he got through was prodigious. **He would paint one or two pictures a day**, and once painted a large landscape with six figures in the course of six hours. Every financial demand that was made upon him was paid by a picture that was worth many times the value of the account to be

settled.

- In November 1799, Morland was at last **arrested for debt**, but was allowed to take lodgings 'within the rules,' and these lodgings became the rendezvous of his most discreditable friends. During this confinement **he sank lower and lower**. He is said to have often been **drunk for days** and to have generally slept on the floor in a helpless condition. He was released from debtors prison but his **health was ruined and he died in a sponging house in 1804 aged 41**. His **wife died three days** later from convulsive fits brought on by the news of his death according to Walter Gilbey in his *George Morland: His Life and Works*. In his last eight years **he painted 900 paintings** and over 1,000 drawings and **over his life he painted over 4,000 pictures**.

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David Wilkie
(1785–1841),
Chelsea
Pensioners
Reading the
Waterloo
Dispatch, 1818-
1822, 97 x 158
cm, Apsley
House

David Wilkie (1785–1841), *Chelsea Pensioners Reading the Waterloo Dispatch*, 1818-1822, 97 x 158 cm, Wellington Museum, Apsley House

- This was commissioned by Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington in August 1816 and exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1822. After the exhibition Wilkie asked, and was **paid, 1,200 guineas**, an **exceptionally high fee**. He was paid **another 1,200 guineas** by the publishers for the right to reproduce the **painting as a print**.
- It was **so popular that a rail had to be installed to hold back the crowds, the first time this had happened**. The next time was for Frith's *Derby Day* in 1858.
- This is a combination of **genre painting and history painting** and shows a historic event in contemporary clothing.
- It shows the Duke of York public house in Jew's Row off King's Road Chelsea opposite the Royal Hospital Chelsea shown on the left.
- It shows **one soldier reading the 'Waterloo gazette', a dispatch written by the Duke of Wellington immediately after the battle on 18 June 1815**. The dispatch was dated 19 June and was printed in the *London Gazette* on 22 June. The paper gave a **numbered guide to all the main characters** in the painting including the Chelsea pensioner reading the dispatch, who was at the Battle of Quebec with General Wolfe in 1759. A **pregnant soldier's wife** is shown waiting for news of his fate, a **veteran is shown eating an oyster despite this being illegal in June**, a **black bandsman from the 1st Foot Guards** who **witnessed the execution of Louis XVI in 1793** and an **old soldier** who fought

with the marquis of Granby in the **Seven Years War in the 1750s and 60s.**

BIO:WILKIE

- **David Wilkie** (1785-1841) was born in Fife, the son of a Reverend. Trained in **Edinburgh** and painted in the style of **David Teniers the Younger** (Flemish, Antwerp, 900 paintings) stories of common life.
- Went to London 1805 aged 20 and enrolled in **RA School**. No money so turned to **portraiture** and a genre subject was commissioned and accepted by the RA and hung in prime position.
- Patron Sir **George Beaumont**, by 1807 President Benjamin West already considered him a great painter.
- ARA 1809 **RA 1811**.
- In 1820 he was commissioned by the Duke of Wellington to paint **Chelsea Pensioners** (1822) for which he paid 1,200 guineas cash.
- His mother and eldest brother died in 1824 and his other older brother died in 1825. Both brothers left children to be taken care of. He had long been prone to **nervous illness**, brought on by anxiety and by 1825 he had become **too tense paint** and he travelled abroad.
- His **European travels** resulted in a looser less detailed style.
- He was made **Painter in Ordinary** to George IV (following Thomas Lawrence) and William IV the same year (1830) and then Queen Victoria. He found portraits difficult and failed with Victoria.
- He was knighted in 1836 and made chevalier of the Légion d'honneur in 1841.
- He went to the **Holy Land** in 1840 and made many sketches and his style may have changed again on his return but he **died suddenly** on the **steamer home** and was buried at sea.
- He **never married** and was a private man.

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John Constable (1776-1837),
The Leaping Horse, 1825, 142
x 187.3 cm, Royal Academy



John Constable (1776-1837), *The Leaping Horse*, 1825, 142 x 187.3 cm, Royal Academy

- John Constable was a **controversial painting because of what was seen as his too bright greens and white speckled trees**. However, by the mid-1820s he had started to achieve critical acclaim if not commercial success. His large, bright and animated painting started to be admired by many.
- This is one of his so called six-footers. He started painting them in 1819 with the aim of making his reputation as a serious landscape painter. These large canvases also had the benefit of being placed on the line because of their sheer size.
- *The Leaping Horse* is **the sixth and last of the large River Stour scenes** exhibited between 1819 and 1825. It shows a rider urging a barge horse to jump over a barrier on the towpath. It is set at a site called the Float Bridge, further towards Dedham upstream from Flatford.
- The painting is **deliberately 'grand' in conception** and recalls some of the great equestrian portraits of the past by Leonardo and Velazquez. It is less specific in its sense of a particular moment than Constable's earlier Stour paintings: instead of being set at noon, for instance, it focuses on wind and light in a more abstract and generalised fashion. Constable uses the turbulent sky to echo the energetic movement of horse and rider.
- Significantly, Constable takes liberties with the actual topography of his scene, moving Dedham Church from its actual position. While his frequent changes to

the full-scale sketch and finished canvas show his increasing concern to get a satisfying composition, the church is also a powerful spiritual presence in Constable's personal landscape (based on Tate).

- Over the sluice is the small wooden bridge and wooden barrier. It is over this barrier the horse jumps – local Suffolk barge horses were specially trained to jump over three-foot-high barriers erected along the tow-path in order to keep cattle from straying. The bridge marks a county boundary and the horse is leaping from Essex to Suffolk.

NOTES

- The netting under the bridge is an elibray or eel trap.
- Constable was made an ARA in 1819, aged 43, and a RA in 1829, aged 52.

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Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775–1851), *Calais Sands at Low Water: Poissards Collecting Bait*, 1830, 68.5 x 105.5 cm, Bury Art Museum

Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775–1851), *Calais Sands at Low Water: Poissards Collecting Bait*, 1830, 68.5 x 105.5 cm, Bury Art Museum

- Turner was notoriously controversial in later life with many of his pain sting.
- This picture of Calis Sands at low-water was shown at the Royal Academy in 1830. At one level the picture is a **view of Calais** with enough recognisable elements in it to establish the location, notably the jetty and Fort Rouge on the left-hand side. At another level it is a scene from everyday life with **fisherwomen busy gathering bait** on the beach in order to bait the lines for the next day's fishing. However, the real subject would appear to be the **spectacular sunset** that dominates about half of the picture surface and illuminates the seemingly limitless expanse of sand, water and sky, creating long shimmering reflections and subtle blends of colour." (Art UK)
- Turner began this work shortly after his **beloved father's death** and it is tempting to see **the desolation as reflecting his mood**. The women are **bowed low as if in mourning** and the setting sun symbolises the **end of a life**. Turner exhibited this in 1830 and he continued to exhibit until the year before his death, rarely missing a season. He became an institution in himself and many anecdotes circulated about him particularly his behaviour on varnishing days when artists were allowed to put the finishing touches to their paintings before the exhibition opened. Turner would use varnishing day to complete and, it is rumoured, virtually paint a complete work.

NOTES

- A 'poissarde' is a fishwife.

BIO:TURNER

- **Joseph Mallord William Turner** (1775-1851) Turner was born in 1775, according to his own account on St. George's Day, 23 April. He was the son of William Turner (1745–1829), barber and wig-maker, of 21 Maiden Lane, Covent Garden, and his wife, Mary Marshall (1739–1804). He was baptised 'Joseph Mallad William' on 14 May, a mistake for 'Mallard'. He started to use the initials 'J.M.W.' about 1802 as there were other artists called Turner. It was about this time that he made it clear that his middle name was 'Mallord' not 'Mallard' (or 'Mallad'). His mother's family name had originally been 'Mallard'.
- Turner was an **unusual character, very strong-willed** he retained his cockney accent and was a **very poor presenter**. To many he **was cold and arrogant with a hard demeanour** yet his undoubted genius attracted loyal friends and created enemies. There are stories of his **meanness** yet he **left his money to a charity** for poor artists. He would charge 250 guineas for a painting and then add 20 guineas for the frame. He was **Sly and secretive**, sexually active but resolutely single. Many looked down on him as uncouth as he kept his Cockney accent and his clothes were often covered in paint. The well-off Walter Scott wrote, '**He will do nothing without cash, and anything for it. He is the only man of genius I ever knew who is sordid in these matters.**' He worked fantastically hard and claimed his workload would have killed any other artist.
He could not stop drawing and painting. He took notebooks everywhere and continually sketched all day long.
- **He loved to travel** all over Europe and sketched everywhere he went.
- **He was controversial.** When young he wooed and wowed the establishment and later in life he upset them. His energetic brushwork, lack of detail and sweeps of colour caused some to describe him as mad. Even his **devoted patron John Ruskin** was bemused by his late works.
- He **never married** and lived with **Sarah Danby** with whom he probably had two daughters, **Evelina**, born in 1800/01, and **Georgiana**, born some ten years later. He once said, '**I hate married men**, they never make any sacrifice to the arts but are always thinking of their duty to their wives and their families, or some rubbish of that sort. Sarah Danby's relationship with

Turner ended about 1813. In the early 1830s **Margate became his second home** and he settled there with his landlady **Mrs Sophia Caroline Booth** after her second husband died. He lived there under a false name and had carriages drop him a few streets away from his house. Later they moved to **World's End** near **Cheyne Walk**, Chelsea and he lived with her for about 18 years as Mr Booth as was known locally as Admiral Booth. He died in the house of **cholera** and his last words may have been 'The Sun is God'. He is buried alongside Sir Joshua Reynolds in St Pauls Cathedral. Chelsea was a poor area with bad drains and flooding that meant it had one of the highest rates of mortality from cholera of any area north of the Thames.

- He was close **friends with his father** and his death in 1829 had a profound effect on Turner including bouts of depression.
- He was a habitual user of **snuff** and was given a gold snuff box by the King of France.
- **His lectures** were described by Frith as 'stammerings, the long pauses, the bewildering mystery of it all'. His commentary on some prints was described as 'the most extraordinary composition I have ever read. It is impossible for me to correct it, for in some parts I do not understand it'. His friend George Jones explained that '**Turner's thoughts were deeper than ordinary men can penetrate** and much deeper than he could at any time describe'.
- **Unlike many artists he was very interested in all the latest scientific developments.** Turner gave lectures on perspective but his lecturing style meant they were poorly attended. Although many writers, such as **Dickens, were horrified by factories Turner was inspired by new developments** and technology. In *Snow Storm - Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth* (exhibited 1842) the sea and sky merge. Turner found a new way to paint flux and vortices.
- Turners **mother was sectioned to Bedlam** (Bethlem Royal Hospital) when he could have arranged private treatment and she died in Bedlam in 1804, the same year he moved to impressive new premises in Harley Street. He never once visited her.
- Turner knew **Mary Somerville** well and she was any early populariser of science and explained Faraday's ideas.
- A series of articles by Edward **Ripplingille** (c. 1790-1859) entitled 'Personal reflections of artists' was published, mostly posthumously, in the *Art Journal*. Among them is the famous description of J. M. W. Turner on

varnishing day at the Royal Academy. Rippingille saw him painting but they could not understand how he did it.

- His **will was contested** by his cousins on the grounds that the money he left to found a charity for 'decayed English artists (Landscape painters only) and single men' had not been properly registered in the court of chancery and so the will was invalid. It took three years to reach a settlement which meant abandoning the charity, giving all his property and engravings to his relatives and leaving all his finished and unfinished pictures, drawing and sketches to the National Gallery.

- **A BRIEF CHRONOLOGY**

- **1775** Birth of Turner in Maiden Lane, possibly on 23 April. Baptised at St Paul's Church, Covent Garden, on 14 May.
- **1783** Death of younger sister, Mary Ann, aged 4.
- **1789** Starts attending classes at the Royal Academy Schools.
- **1790** Watercolour accepted by the Royal Academy for the first time: *The Archbishop's Palace, Lambeth*.
- **1793** Outbreak of war between Britain and France.
- **1796** Oil painting accepted by the Royal Academy for the first time: *Fishermen at Sea*.
- **1799** Elected an Associate member of the Royal Academy. Moves from his father's house in Covent Garden to Harley Street.
- **1800** Mother admitted to Bethlem Hospital.
- **1802** Elected a full member of the Royal Academy and presents *Dolbadern Castle* as his 'Diploma picture'. Makes the first of many visits to France and Switzerland.
- **1804** Death of Turner's mother in Bethlem Hospital. Turner opens a gallery in his own house to show his pictures
- **1807** Elected Professor of Perspective at the Royal Academy. Starts issuing his *Liber Studiorum*.
- **1809** Moves round the corner from Harley Street to Queen Anne Street West, retaining his gallery.
- **1812** Paints *Snow Storm: Hannibal and his Army crossing the Alps*.
- **1815** Paints *Dido building Carthage* and *Crossing the Brook*. Defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo and return of peace to Europe.

- **1817** First of several visits to the Low Countries and Germany.
- **1819** First of several visits to Italy.
- **1820-1** Creates a new gallery at his house.
- **1828** Uses a studio in Rome and exhibits three paintings there.
- **1829** Paints *Ulysses deriding Polyphemus*. Death of Turner's father.
- **1834** Witnesses the burning of the Houses of Parliament.
- **1835** Makes a tour which includes Copenhagen, Berlin and Prague.
- **1836** Criticism of Turner's art in the press arouses the anger of the 17-year-old John Ruskin.
- **1839** Paints *The Fighting Temeraire*.
- **1843** Ruskin begins publishing *Modern Painters* in Turner's defence.
- **1844** Paints *Rain, Steam, and Speed*.
- **1845** Last trip abroad, to the north French coast.
- **1845-6** Serves as Acting President of the Royal Academy during the illness of the President.
- **1850** Exhibits for the last time at the Royal Academy.
- **1851** Death of Turner in Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, on 19 December. Buried in St Paul's Cathedral on 30 December.



J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851), *Helvoetsluys – The City of Utrecht, 64, Going to Sea*, exhibited 1832

John Constable (1776-1837), *The Opening of Waterloo Bridge ('Whitehall Stairs, June 18th, 1817')*, exhibited 1832, 130.8 x 218 cm

John Constable (1776-1837), *The Opening of Waterloo Bridge ('Whitehall Stairs, June 18th, 1817')*, exhibited 1832, 130.8 x 218 cm

J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851), *Helvoetsluys – The City of Utrecht, 64, Going to Sea*, exhibited 1832, Confronted in Royal Academy exposition 1817 to Constable's *Opening of Waterloo Bridge*

- “Over seven feet in length, this is the **largest of Constable’s** exhibition canvases and the result of **thirteen years of planning**. It commemorates the **opening of Waterloo Bridge** - and the second anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo - on 18 June 1817, an occasion celebrated with tremendous pomp and ceremony which Constable attempted to recapture in a whole series of drawings and oil sketches, dating from 1819 onwards.” (Tate)
- The story is told of how **Turner used varnishing day** to try to avoid having his painting overwhelmed by this nearby Constable.
- (CLICK) It is said that on varnishing day, three days before the exhibition opened, Turner saw Constable's painting, got out a brush and proceeded to add the bright red body near the centre of his painting to give it the extra punch needed to stand up against Constable's enormous panorama.

NOTES

- Constable moved from Suffolk to London in 1817 and presumably witnessed the festivities, but it was another two years before he conceived the idea of capturing the event on canvas. The subject offered Constable, a staunch

royalist, the opportunity to record for posterity a significant historical occasion. The picture shows the **Prince Regent about to board the Royal barge at Whitehall stairs. The Lord Mayor's barge** is situated prominently in the right foreground, its billowing red standard leading the eye back to the pale horizontal line of the bridge and the distant **dome of St Paul's Cathedral**. Beyond the left-hand end of the bridge is **Somerset House**, the home of the Royal Academy, where the picture was exhibited in 1832.

- Towards the centre of the bridge a puff of smoke indicates the firing of a gun salute. In the foreground is separated from the main scene by a long parapet surmounted by urns, and Constable draws the viewer's attention to two small boys, engrossed in some activity of their own, oblivious of the day's events.
- One of Constable's later works, the picture owes a debt to the Thames pictures of Canaletto and the great 'historical' landscapes of Claude Lorrain. Technically, the picture is distinguished by its **animated surface** and variety of handling. The thin brown underpainting is visible in places; elsewhere Constable has **used the palette knife** to build up a thick impasto. The vigorous application of paint is particularly obvious in the foreground of the picture, where bold touches of red, green and white bring the picture to life. On witnessing the **brilliant colour of Constable's painting**, hanging beside his cool-toned seapiece, *Helvoetsluys* (private collection, London), at the Royal Academy exhibition, **Turner is said to have added a bright red buoy to his own work**, in order to redress the balance.
- Constable's married life was begun in Holborn at 1 Keppel Street, within convenient walking distance of the Royal Academy, then at Somerset House. The new Waterloo Bridge was opened in the same reach of the Thames and on his frequent visits to the Academy Constable was able to watch the progress of its construction. He also saw the opening ceremony and, after years of procrastination, finished his only large painting of a central London scene, *The Opening of Waterloo Bridge Seen from Whitehall Stairs, June 18th, 1817*. But Maria was showing signs of an inherited tendency to tubercular consumption, and the air of Keppel Street did not suit her. So from 1819, in a first attempt to find healthy conditions for her and the children, Constable took lodgings in Hampstead. It was then a small village in fairly rural surroundings, about three miles from his London studio, on a low ridge overlooking the Thames Valley to the south and open country to the north and west. On the London skyline the dome of St. Paul's

was a prominent landmark. Due west about seven miles away, Harrow Hill with its church was another feature that Constable included again and again in his sketches. The position of Hampstead made it an admirable observatory for the study of cloud formations, and it was here that Constable embarked on the systematic recording of skies and their related weather that became such an original and important part of his practice

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William Etty (1787-1849), *The Sirens and Ulysses*, 1837, 297 x 442.5 cm, Manchester Art Gallery

William Etty (1787-1849), *The Sirens and Ulysses*, 1837, 297 x 442.5 cm, Manchester Art Gallery

- **William Etty** was, I believe, he was **the first** to exhibited the **unidealised female nude at the Summer Exhibition** By the 1820s, he was one of **the most prominent artists** in the country and became a full member of the Royal Academy in 1828. His *The Sirens and Ulysses* is a typical example of his work. Notice the discrepancies in bodily shape between each of the Sirens, and the bulge of the middle Siren's thigh as she kneels. As one critic said at the time, Etty's "**Sirens ... are Academy models, whose personal defects the painter has not corrected.**"
- The story is from Homer's *Odyssey* which tells of Sirens who entice sailors to their island with songs so enchanting that men die listening. Ulysses escapes the Sirens by having himself tied to his ship, and by ordering his men to stuff their ears with wax. Around them are strewn the decaying remains of dead sailors. In the background to right is Ulysses' ship, Ulysses bound struggling to the mast, surrounded by his men, struggling with the sails of the boat.
- It is Etty's favourite subject, a grand history painting combined with sensuous figure painting. Etty was often derided by critics for the overt nudity in his work and was particularly scorned for this painting because of the way he combines sexuality, nudity and death.

NOTES

- The painting was bought from the artist by Daniel Grant, a Mancunian cotton mill owner. Transferred from the Royal Manchester Institution.
- William Etty RA was an English artist best known for his history paintings containing nude figures. He was the first significant British painter of nudes and still lifes. Born in York, he left school at the age of 12 to become an apprentice printer in Hull.

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John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *Isabella*, 1848-9

John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *Isabella*, 1848-9, Walker Art Gallery

- It is 1848 and we come to a turning point in British art. Arguably the first modern art was created then by the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. A group of young men that formed to create a revolutionary new form of art that rejected all the Old Masters since the time of Raphael, Hence calling themselves the Pre-Raphaelites. They described the leading academic painter Sir Joshua Reynolds as Sir Sloshua as they believed the painting style he taught had nothing to do with the accurate representation of reality.
- The three original Pre-Raphaelite artists were Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Holman Hunt and shown here John Everett Millais.
- This is Millais's first work in the Pre-Raphaelite style. It was completed in 1849 when Millais was only 19 and exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1849. Millais was a **child prodigy** of a **wealthy family** from St Ouen (pronounced 'won' as in 'wander'), Jersey, who supported his talents. He went to **Sass's** (a prep school for the Royal Academy) in **1839 aged 10** but only needed one year there and he went to the **Royal Academy** school in **1840 aged 11**. He was **honest, sincere** and other **artists were awed** by his talents and charmed by his personality. He was **committed to art** and according to Hunt he **never wasted a moment** in his dedication to painting.
- **In 1850 they showed five paintings (three by Millais) and in 1951 eight works at London exhibitions.**

- The Pre-Raphaelites are startlingly innovative and do not follow the practices of the artists working before Raphael but seeks inspiration from them for a thoroughly modern set of techniques.
- They believed that art had gone astray after Raphael as artists started to copy other artists and use agreed painting conventions rather than looking at nature. They found the classical poses and elegant compositions of Raphael in particular had been a corrupting influence on the academic teaching of art, hence the name 'Pre-Raphaelite'. In particular, the group objected to the influence of Sir Joshua Reynolds whom they called 'Sir Slosua'. To the Pre-Raphaelites, according to William Michael Rossetti, 'slosy' meant 'anything lax or scamped in the process of painting ... and hence ... any thing or person of a commonplace or conventional kind'. In contrast, the brotherhood wanted a return to the abundant detail, intense colours and complex compositions of Quattrocento Italian art.
- In summary, **their style involved:**
 - The **bright colours** of nature, painted on bright white to increase their brilliance.
 - **Detail** painted from nature rather than 'slosy' conventions. This was very slow.
 - **Distorted perspective**, such as the elongated right side of table with crowded flattened figures like playing cards.
 - **Elimination of chiaroscuro** and the exaggeration of the intensity of colours, note the black and white servant whose yellow legs merge into the background. Chiaroscuro is the contrast between light and dark that is used by artists to create sense of volume and if exaggerated to create a dramatic theatrical effect. Now usually only commented upon when the artists uses extreme contrasts, such as Caravaggio. A **lack** of chiaroscuro introduces **subtlety and flatness** that draws attention to the work as simply colours applied to a **flat surface**, a **modern theme** in art that rejects '**dishonest**' art that tries to create the **illusion of three-dimensionality**.
 - **Natural angular poses** are characteristic of medieval art not

classical or Renaissance.

- There is an **all over precision**. Millais does not draw the viewers attention to one part by painting that in detail and leaving other areas loose.
- **Medieval setting** and based on a Keats's poem.
- They painted their **friends** rather than use professional models in order to achieve a natural look
- They **did not idealise** their models or subjects.
- The painting includes **elaborate symbolism** and motifs.
- The **humour of the kick** jars with the seriousness of the subject suggesting genre paintings such as Hogarth's *Marriage a-la-mode* (the marriage settlement includes sitting around a table arguing about a marriage, one difference is the 'young lovers' look in opposite directions in Hogarth).
- History subjects were painted using real models and **authentic objects** when possible.
- They often painted **historical subjects**, biblical subjects or medieval tales. This utilized the status of the history painting by applying it to genre paintings.

ISABELLA

- The painting illustrates an episode from **John Keats's poem, *Isabella, or The Pot of Basil***, which describes the relationship between Isabella, the sister of wealthy medieval merchants, and **Lorenzo, an employee** of Isabella's brothers. It depicts the moment at which Isabella's brothers realise that there is a romance between the two young people, and they **plot to murder Lorenzo** so they can **marry Isabella** to a wealthy nobleman. Isabella, wearing grey at the right, is being handed a **blood orange** on a plate by the doomed Lorenzo. A cut blood orange is symbolic of the neck of someone who has just been decapitated. This refers to Isabella cutting off Lorenzo's head to take it with her after finding him buried. One of her brothers violently kicks a frightened dog while cracking a nut. Keat's poem was in turn based on one of the tales from Giovanni's Boccaccio's *Decameron* (c. 1352).

- Millais and his colleague William Holman Hunt had both produced drawings illustrating episodes from the poem, but only Millais worked his up into a full painting. Both drawings used distorted perspective and angular poses characteristic of medieval art, by which the Pre-Raphaelites were influenced.
- The painting is structured **with deliberately distorted perspective**, elongating the right hand side of the table and flattening the figures ranged along it. Following Pre-Raphaelite theory, Millais almost eliminates chiaroscuro (light and dark) and exaggerates the intensity of juxtaposed colours and tones - as evidenced in the flat black tunic set against the sharply modelled white cloth of the servant at the right, whose lower body virtually disappears as his yellow stockings semi-merge with the background.
- Millais also carefully characterises each figure with equal precision. Another distinctive Pre-Raphaelite feature is the inclusion of images and patterns within the image as a whole. Each of the plates has a distorted picture glazed into its surface. The base of the bench on which Isabella sits contains a carving depicting a kneeling figure under which appear the **letters PRB** (standing for Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood).
- The central motif of the thuggish brother's kicking leg and upturned chair further disturbs the equilibrium of the composition, as does the deliberately confusing 'crowding' of the figures on the table and elaboration of motifs.
- The figures are **based on friends of Millais. Rossetti is drinking on the right** side of the table. His **brother William Rossetti is Lorenzo** passing the cut blood orange. The **wife of Millais's half-brother is Isabella** and his **father**, John William Millais, is the **elderly man dabbing his mouth**. The artist Walter Deverell and F. G. Stephens are the two brothers on the left and the **brother kicking the dog is John Harris, a man who had bullied Millais** at the Royal Academy School and who he painted from memory. Millais certainly **got his own back** by showing him as a **bully of poor dumb animals** for all time to millions of people. The shadow of the arm on the table alongside the **spilt salt** signifies that he will carry out the murder as salt symbolises life and spilt salt death. I think the shadow of the arm could also signify something else which is reinforced by the salt signifying spilt or wasted life.
- The white rose and the passion flower symbolise their love and the dog with its head in Isabella's lap symbolizes Lorenzo's devotion to her. The pot of basil on the balustrade on the right may be the one she puts his head in.

The majolica plates all have different designs and one has David beheading Goliath and another shows Prometheus having his entrails pecked out by an eagle, both a reminder of the violence to follow.

- The painting was sold to a tailor for £150 and a new suit.

(Research thanks to mydailyartdisplay.wordpress.com)

NOTES

- The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood did not have a formal prospectus but their views are clearly put forward in *The Germ*, an unsuccessful magazine they published as four issues in 1850.

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John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *Christ in the House of His Parents*, 1850, Tate Britain

John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *Christ in the House of His Parents*, 1850, Tate Britain

John Rogers Herbert (1810-1890), *Our Saviour Subject to His Parents at Nazareth*, 1847, Guildhall Art Gallery

- I am showing another work by Millais as it became so controversial.
- Millais, untitled, *'And one shall say unto him, What are those wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends'* (Zechariah, 8:6).
- Despite Millais's role intentions it was described in the *Art Journal* as *'The improprieties are manifold ... the coarsest representation of humanity ... even more revolting than the flayed Marsyas.'* The work of Overbeck is mentioned as precursor of *'some of the worst followers of the Giotteschi'*.
- This critic was not alone. The reaction to Millais's painting was unprecedented. The term 'ugly' was rarely used by critics to describe fine art yet this painting was described not only as ugly but as hideous, loathsome and disgusting. The most unfavourable was the satirical piece by Dickens in his *Household Words*. Dickens described Mary as 'horrible in her ugliness' and clarified what he meant by ugly:
 - *Wherever it is possible to express ugliness of feature, limb, or attitude, you have it expressed. Such men as the carpenters might be undressed in any hospital where dirty drunkards, in a high state*

of varicose veins, are received. Their very toes have walked out of Saint Giles's.

- In particular what the critics objected to was summed up by the *Art Journal*, "**the most beautiful soul must have the most beautiful body**". The *Times* critic wrote that the picture 'is, to speak plainly, revolting' and there was 'no conceivable omission of misery, of dirt, and even disease, all finished with the same loathsome minuteness'.

NOTES

- **Saint Giles** was an area that was well known for its crime and had 'the worst living conditions in all of London's history'. *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* wrote that the painting contained '**Ricketty children, emaciation and deformity**' and '**we can hardly imagine anything more ugly, graceless, and unpleasant**'. Dickens also described Christ as '**hideous, wry-necked, blubbering**' and the whole painting with its '**ugliness of feature, limb, or attitude**' expressing '**what is mean, odious, repulsive, and revolting**'. In the painting, Christ has red hair, which was traditionally associated with Judas Iscariot and red hair regarded as both 'ugly' and a 'sign of degeneration'. Mary's eyes are almost closed and ringed in black and her brow is heavily lined, which combined with the twist of her neck, gives her a distorted appearance and Joseph's arms are veined and muscular, his nails are dirty, his left knee is damaged and his toenails are broken.
- In the *Art Journal* Ralph Wornum wrote: '**the most beautiful soul must have the most beautiful body**' indicating that the moral worth of a character, in this case the Holy Family, must be signified by a beautiful body. *The Times* critic wrote that the picture 'is, to speak plainly, revolting' and there was 'no conceivable omission of misery, of dirt, and even disease, all finished with the same loathsome minuteness'. *The Athenaeum* also wrote that 'we recoil with loathing and disgust' at the 'pictorial blasphemy'. What is morally shocking to the reviewer is the minute detail, which suggests we are looking at something that is forbidden and so it must be seen only in some generalised or modified form.

- The room is **unnaturally bright** and evenly lit and the source of the light is on the left. In Millais's preparatory sketches, there is a **window on the left**, which is cut off in the final painting and is the notional source of the light. The figures have the **idiosyncratic features** associated with particular people and we know that they were modelled by Millais's family and friends. Millais went to a carpenter's shop in Oxford Street to sketch its interior in order to represent a carpenter's tools and method of working accurately. The tools are those of a nineteenth-century carpenter and the clothes are a mixture of Middle Eastern, conventional religious symbolism, such as Mary's blue dress and St. John's animal fur, with nineteenth-century additions, such as Christ's smock. Clearly, Millais was not trying to reproduce a historically accurate carpenter's shop but an accurately observed contemporary carpenter's shop with figures that were modelled on friends and family. The critics pointed out that the painting is full of anachronisms such as the mixture of costumes from different periods and the Victorian carpenter's tools. However, the art historian Michaela Giebelhausen believes that Millais carefully constructed these anachronisms in order to create an ahistorical setting. In the eighteenth century, she points out that such an ahistorical setting was associated with religious devotion as it prevented a painting from being seen as a genre painting set in a particular time and period.
- Christ's small stature compared with the height of the table also suggests that Millais was representing an accident resulting from **childish enthusiasm** rather than a stage-managed event. This is also suggested by the assistant at the left ignoring the interruption to his work, Joseph's perfunctory examination and the look of 'I told you not to meddle' on St. John's face. Mary is holding her head back for a kiss suggesting she is the injured party and St. Anne offers practical assistance rather than comfort. Through the open entrance, a group of sheep stare over a fence inquisitively suggesting there could have just been a noisy scene. Millais linked the highest spiritual subject, the Holy Family, with the lowest rung of society, the urban poor, and turned a spiritual prefiguration into an everyday accident.

- By associating themselves with artists that pre-dated the formation of Protestantism the Pre-Raphaelites linked themselves with Puseyism, the Oxford Movement, and the widely resisted move towards Catholicism. This was reinforced by their unconventional approach to religious symbolism. The painting was therefore seen to be subversive and an attempt to undermine Protestant beliefs. This aspect of the Pre-Raphaelite movement is spelled out in Max Nordau's *Degeneration*.
- It is clear from the critical reaction that this painting was **revolutionary** and was seen as an extreme attack on the conventions used to represent religious subjects. Fourteen years later, in Paris, Manet caused a similar reaction by undermining bourgeois notions of respectability with *Olympia* (1863, exhibited 1865).
- The critical response changed over the years and **by 1898** the painting was '**passionately admired, and even loved**'. By the end of the century, the painting was no longer regarded as ugly and 'blasphemous'. This might be because Millais had become accepted as a member of elite society but the painting had also lost its ability to shock as the changes it brought about in the way we see the world had become established.
- John Rogers Herbert (1810-1890), *Our Saviour Subject to His Parents at Nazareth*, anticipated Millais's *Christ in the House of His Parents*. It was praised but the prestigious *Art Journal* (1847) criticized it in a way that was a foretaste of the more extreme criticism Millais was to receive three years later:
- "The style of the work is a deduction from early Italian Art modified by more advanced experiences. It is a work of much merit; but most defective where we should most look for excellence; the character of the Saviour — in youth — has been utterly mistaken; there is in it nothing of that high feeling and perfect grace — grace of heart as well as mind — inseparable from our ideas of the character: the expression is, indeed, rather repulsive than inviting ; it gives us no glimpse of the mighty hereafter of the Divinity who had taken our nature upon him."

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William Powell Frith (1819-1909), *Ramsgate Sands (Life at the Seaside)*, 1852-4

William Powell Frith (1819-1909), *Ramsgate Sands (Life at the Seaside)*, 1852-4

- Before *Ramsgate Sands* Frith depicted figures from history or literature but this was the **first time** the **contemporary Victorian crowd** had been painted. The idea of **painting modern life** was a **revolutionary idea** of the Impressionists inspired by the writing of Charles Baudelaire but Frith's pictures **predates** the Impressionists by **twenty years**.
- Many of Frith's fellow artists were against the idea of painting modern-life and one called it '**a piece of vulgar Cockney business**' and another '**a tissue of vulgarity**'. However, **the public loved it** and it was an immediate an **enormous success**. It was one of the few paintings at the Royal Academy for which a **guard rail had to be installed** to keep the public back – the ultimate sign of success. In all, Frith had six guard rails over the years.

NOTES

- It was bought from the artist by Messrs Lloyd who sold it to **Queen Victoria** the same year, 1854, for **£1,000**, the same price he paid but he retained reproduction rights and Frith may have earned as much as £3,000 from the sales. Although this was the price they paid they retained engravings and print rights so it was a highly lucrative deal. Victoria had **stayed in Albion House** (built 1789) in Ramsgate before she became Queen. This is the highest house in the middle of Frith's painting. Victoria stayed in Ramsgate aged 16 she nearly died of typhoid and Sir John Conroy forced a pen into her hand to try to force

her to sign authority to him, she resisted.

- Victoria had also entered the sea from a **bathing machine** in **Osborne**, Isle of Wight for the first time in **1847**. She wrote in her
 - *'drove down to the beach with my maid & went into the bathing machines, where I undressed & bathed in the sea (for the 1st time in my life), a very nice bathing woman attended me. I thought it delightful till I put my head under water, when I thought I should be stifled.'*

Queen Victoria's Journal, 30 July 1847

- It was inspired by a **holiday Frith** and his family took to Ramsgate in **1851**. He always painted from **real people** and liked to use friends and family as he found professional models often turned up drunk and had no sense of responsibility. The artist included a **self-portrait** (peeping over the shoulder of the man on the far right), while the **little girl** paddling in the centre staring directly at the painter is thought to have been his **daughter**.
- My professor at the Courtauld devoted a large part of her **doctoral thesis** to this painting and she **examined and analysed every person** and their **social role** within society. Seaside holidays or weekends had become possible with the advent of the railway. Trains first reach Ramsgate in 1846 and although it involved changing at Canterbury the old station was in the centre of the town near the beach.
- The bathing machines had a curtain that could be lowered to sea level but **men** were allowed to **bathe nude** until the 1860s. Some resorts employed a **dipper** whose job was to **push people under water** and then help them back into the bathing machine. The machine was developed in Margate about 1750 when most people bathed naked. Legal segregation of bathing areas ended in 1901 and the machines became extinct by 1820. Poorer people from London came to the seaside by train and as they could not afford bathing machines they often bathed naked. In 1874 a **rector wrote** in his diary that he had to adopt the **detestable custom of bathing in drawers**, he wrote, *'If ladies don't like to see men naked why don't they keep away from the sight?'* Boys and young men would **bathe naked** even in the **Edwardian Era** but **middle class girls and women** always had to be **fully covered** with clothes that did not expose their shape.
- Frith is showing a world of mixed sexes, ages, classes and

occupations but he maintains the important **class distinctions** and generally the lower classes are shown as deferential and respectful. There is an intellectual air among the entertainment and **seven woman are reading books**. One man is an **idler** and another appears to be **flirting** and two people are potentially voyeurs with telescopes watching women bathing. However, one is an old man and the other a young girl. No bathers are shown in the painting and there are no coarse or vulgar displays.

- Granite Obelisk (known as the Royal Tooth Pick) erected 1822 to commemorate the departure (1820) and safe return of King George IV from Ramsgate Harbour. He was so pleased with his reception he named it a 'Royal Harbour' (the only one). Beyond the obelisk is the Royal Harbour, important during the Napoleonic Wars. The first railway was 1846.
- Augustus Pugin, George du Maurier, James Tissot, Vincent van Gogh, Wilkie Collins and Jane Austen stayed in the town.
- Frith went on to paint many other scenes of everyday life such as *The Derby Day* (1858) and *The Railway Station* (1862) for which Frith was paid an astonishing **8,000 guineas**.
- **So 15 years before Claude Monet (1840-1926) was brave enough to paint a modern-life railway station (*La gare Saint-Lazare*, 1877) Frith was making a fortune from the same daring subject matter.**

BIO:FRITH

- **William Powell Frith** (1819-1909) was born in Yorkshire to a house steward and cook and his parents took a keen interest in art.
- He was sent to **school in Dover** where he indulged in drawing.
- His formal training was at the **Sass Academy** and then the **RA School** in 1837 (aged 18).
- His **father died** and his mother moved to London and he **made money portrait** painting (Lincolnshire farmers at 5-15 guineas).
- Member of **the Clique**, which included **Augustus Egg, Richard Dadd** and **Henry O'Neil** and rapidly established himself as a genre painter.
- His painting was at **odds with the RA** but his character and incident,

sparkling detail and high finish made his work popular and suitable for engraving.

- 1840 travelled abroad and had his first painting exhibited at the RA.
- ARA 1845 and RA 1852 (aged 33).
- He was friends with **Charles Dickens** and centre of the literary life of London.
- In 1851 he visited **Ramsgate** and decided to take a commercial risk investing in *Ramsgate Sands (Life at the Seaside)* and it was a success and sold to Lloyd then Queen Victoria for £1,000.
- His second panorama, *Derby Day* was a stroke of genius, few paintings have ever earned such universal acclaim.
- **He had a wife with 12 children and a mistress with 7.**
- **He was an artist with a well developed business sense and he remained in the news throughout his life.**
- **Six of his paintings** had to be **railed off** and his three most important works, *Ramsgate Sands*, *Derby Day*, and *The Railway Station*.
- He was criticized for his **artistic philistinism** by **John Ruskin**, **Whistler** and **Oscar Wilde**, and later **Roger Fry** and he was a **staunch reactionary** criticising the Aesthetic Movement, Oscar Wilde and Impressionism.

REFERENCES

<https://www.rct.uk/collection/405068/ramsgate-sands-life-at-the-seaside>

Emily Mary Osborn or Osborne
(1828-1925), *Nameless and
Friendless*, 1857



Emily Mary Osborn or Osborne (1828-1925), *Nameless and Friendless*, 1857

- **Problem of being a woman artist:** selling their work, Emily Osborn was successful but was **never made an Academician**
- The **Art Journal** on Emily Mary Osborn, *Nameless and Friendless* (1857):
 - **'A poor girl has painted a picture, which she offers for sale to a dealer, who, from the speaking expression of his features, is disposed to depreciate the work. It is a wet, dismal day, and she has walked far to dispose of it; and now awaits in trembling the decision of a man who is to become rich by the labours of others.'**
- Osborn began showing her work at the **Royal Academy** when she was **just 17** and continued to do so over a period of **40 years**. She was the eldest of nine and grew up in Tilbury, whose surroundings 'were not such as to develop artistic proclivities' but when she was 14 the family moved to London and she attended the Dickinson Academy and studied under Mr. Mogford and then Mr. Leigh at Maddox Street and then his gallery at Newman Street. He trained her without charge for a year. She sold a portrait at the Royal Academy for 200 guineas when she was 17 and sold another to the Queen.
- This is her **most famous work** which has been called '*The most ingenious of Victorian widow pictures.*' A **recently bereaved woman** is attempting to make a living as an artist by offering a picture to a dealer while **two 'swells'** on the left stare at her distracted from the **bare legged ballet dancer** they have been

previously **ogling**. She nervously pulls on a loop of string while the dealer disdainfully judges her work.

EMILY MARY OSBORN

- It has been suggested that this painting relates to **Mary Brunton's novel *Self-Control*** published in 1810 but **republished** in **1850**. This describes the **struggles** of a self-motivated **female artist** to **sell her pictures** in order to help save her father from **financial ruin**.

BIO:BRUNTON

- **Mary Brunton** (1778-1818), Scottish novelist. She was taught languages and music by her parents (Colonel Balfour) and eloped to marry a Scottish minister. They did not have children until she became pregnant at 40 and died after giving birth to a stillborn son. She wrote *Self-Control Discipline* and *Emmeline*. Popular at the time for their strong moral and religious stance combined with sexuality (what Jane Austen called 'vulgarity').

BIO:BODICHON

- **Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon** (1827-1891), leading artist, educationalist, feminist and activist for women's rights. Extra marital child of a milliner and Whig politician Leigh Smith. Met at Langham Place North Regent Street (next to the BBC). Her summary of the laws concerning women (1854) helped with the passing of the Married Women's Property Act in 1882. In 1857 (aged 30) she married an eminent French physician (Bodichon) and from then on wintered in Algiers. She set up the *English Women's Journal* (1858). In 1866 she helped set up a scheme for giving women university education, first at Hitchin and this developed into Girton College, Cambridge. She studied painting under William Holman Hunt and exhibited at the Royal Academy and showed originality and talent and was admired by Corot and Daubigny. She was George Eliot's most intimate friend.

SOCIETY OF FEMALE ARTISTS

- The **difficulties** experienced by women in exhibiting and selling their works led to the **formation** of the **Society of Female Artists** in **1857**, the year *Nameless and Friendless* was first exhibited at the Royal Academy. Emily Mary Osborn was a member of this group and one of the artists associated with Barbara Bodichon's Langham Place circle and campaign for women's rights.

- Osborn was a member of the Society and a member of **Barbara Bodichon's** Langham Place circle that campaigned for **women's rights**. Despite the problems faced by women artists Osborn went on to develop a successful career.

Reviews of Exhibitions of the Society of Female Artists:

The Illustrated London News, 6 Jun 1857:

Strength of will and power of creation belonging rather to the other sex, we do not of course look for the more daring efforts in an exhibition of female artists: but observation, taste, or the art of selection, and various other qualities adapted to the arts, are to be found in this Oxford-Street display.

The Art Journal, 1 May 1858:

*...that which we see at the Egyptian Hall is the result of assiduous self-tuition, for we have no school for the instruction of **ladies** in painting from the **living model**. Labouring under such **disadvantages** as the female student does, we are not disappointed to see here so many **drawings of flowers**, fruit, and still-life objects – we are only surprised into exultation to see so much excellence in the higher departments of art...*

WOMEN IN ART

- The **RA excluded women** until **1860** even though two of the founding members were women.
- **Slade** took women from its founding in 1871.
- **Laura Herford's** (1831-1870) in **1860** was accepted for the RA School based on a painting using her initial 'L. Herford'. This was at the suggestion of the **President** Sir Charles Eastlake. **Thirteen** other women were accepted over the next few years. Women were only allowed to draw from casts and the **draped model**. Women were excluded from the life class although there was some provision made in 1893. In **1863** the Council decided its **constitution** did not allow women painters (in the Instrument of Foundation, Academicians ... shall all of them be ... Men of fair moral Characters'). In **1903** women were allowed to study living nudes in separate classes.
- **The Society of Female Artists** was founded in **1856**, it became the Society of Lady Artists in 1872 and the Society of Women Artists in 1899.
- 1870s and 80s women **petitioned RA** in vain to attend life classes.
- There were private art schools 1880s and 90s like French atelier

- **Rich women** attended classes in **Paris**, Munich, Dusseldorf and Antwerp
- **Lady Butler** was **nominated** three times to the RA 1879-81 and turned down.
- **Annie Laura Swynnerton** and **Laura Knight** (1877-1970, née Johnson, attended Nottingham School of Art 1890-4, aged 13) were made **ARA** in the **1920s** and **Laura Knight** a RA in **1936**.

REFERENCES

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emily_Mary_Osborn

John Brett (1831-1902),
The Val d'Aosta, 1858



John Brett (1831-1902), *The Val d'Aosta*, 1858, exhibited 1859

- There were still many critics of Pre-Raphaelitism and this work by John Brett was seen as a continuation of their style and philosophy of 'truth to nature'.
- This is Val d'Aosta in northern Italy his most famous painting exhibited in 1859.
- Brett studied with Richard Redgrave and at the Royal Academy School. He was interested in the ideas of John Ruskin and William Holman Hunt whom he met through a friend Coventry Patmore. He visited Switzerland and came under the influence of John William Inchbold. His name was made when he exhibited *The Stonebreaker* and the geological and botanical detail impressed Ruskin predicting he would paint a masterpiece if he visited Val d'Aosta in Italy. He went there partly funded by Ruskin and exhibited it in 1859 to high praise from Ruskin who bought the painting.
- Other critics called it a 'gravestone for Post-Ruskinism'. Even Ruskin had his criticisms and wrote:

A notable picture truly; a possession of much within a few feet square.

*Yet not, in the strong, essential meaning of the word, a noble picture. It has a strange fault, considering the school to which it belongs—it seems to me **wholly emotionless**. I cannot find from it that the painter loved, or feared, anything in all that wonderful piece of the world. There seems to me **no awe of the mountains** there—**no real love of the chestnuts** or the vines. Keeness of eye and fineness of hand as much as you choose; but of emotion, or of intention,*

*nothing traceable. Not but that I believe the painter to be capable of the highest emotion: anyone who can paint thus must have passion within him; but the passion here is assuredly not out of him. He has cared for nothing, except as it was more or less pretty in colour and form. I never saw the mirror so held up to Nature; **but it is Mirror's work, not Man's.***

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THE ROYAL
ACADEMY
SUMMER EXHIBITION

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Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792), *Mrs Abington*, 1771, Yale Center for British Art

- That completes the first hundred years of the Summer Exhibition, Part 2 covers the next 150 years to complete a quarter of a millennium of great art.
- Thank you for your time and attention.