



Royal Academy of Arts

The Great Spectacle

250 Years of the Summer Exhibition

The Great Spectacle: 250 Years of the Summer Exhibition

The John Madejski Fine Rooms, Weston Rooms, Galleries I and II

12 June – 19 August 2018

The Royal Academy's Summer Exhibition is the world's longest running annual exhibition of contemporary art and has been held each year without interruption since 1769. Staged to coincide with the 2018 Summer Exhibition, *The Great Spectacle* tells the story of the annual show by featuring highlights from the past 250 years. The exhibition includes over 80 paintings, sculptures, drawings and prints from the first Summer Exhibition through to the present day by artists such as Sir Joshua Reynolds, Angelica Kauffman, Elizabeth Butler, Thomas Gainsborough, Thomas Lawrence, John Constable, J.M.W. Turner, John Everett Millais, Sir Frederic Leighton, John Singer Sargent, Peter Blake, Tracey Emin, Zaha Hadid, Sir Michael Craig-Martin, David Hockney and Wolfgang Tillmans, amongst others.

Since 1769, the Summer Exhibition has played a central role within London's art world. This great spectacle, dominated by the famously crowded and collage-like arrangement of pictures across the RA's walls, has captured the interest of millions of visitors. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the exhibition provided the main forum within which artists and architects could showcase their individual practice and compete with their rivals for popular and critical acclaim. Today, the exhibition continues to feature works by distinguished painters, sculptors, printmakers, photographers and architects as well as up-and-coming artists.

The Great Spectacle offers a unique view into the history of the RA. It focuses on moments in which the Summer Exhibition made an especially significant impact within the British and European art world, and on pictures that experienced particular success or failure within the exhibition space.

The exhibition is arranged in chronological sections: *A Georgian Parade*; *The Rise of Genre Painting*; *The Triumph of Landscape*; *The Pre-Raphaelites Arrive*; *Victorian Acclaim*; *Dealing with the Modern*; *Exhibiting Architecture*; *Post-War Visions* and *New Sensations*. Each section gives a sense of the variety and richness of the Summer Exhibition, offering visitors a fascinating, ever-changing journey through British art.

Highlights include Angelica Kauffman's *Hector Taking Leave of Andromache* (National Trust), shown in the first exhibition of 1769; Joshua Reynolds's *Joanna Leigh, Mrs Richard Bennett Lloyd Inscribing a Tree* (Rothschild Family), exhibited in 1776; Joseph Wright of Derby's *The Dead Soldier* (University of Michigan Museum of Fine Art) exhibited in 1789; John Constable's *The Leaping Horse* (Royal Academy of Arts, London), exhibited in 1825; John Everett Millais's *Isabella* (Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool), exhibited in 1849; John Singer Sargent's portrait of the author *Henry James* (National Portrait Gallery, London), which was famously slashed by the suffragette, Mary Wood in the Summer Exhibition 1914; Sir Winston Churchill's *Winter Sunshine, Chartwell* (National Trust), submitted in

1947 under the pseudonym David Winter; Pietro Annigoni's *Queen Elizabeth II* (Fishmonger's Hall, London), which commanded huge crowds when exhibited in 1955; Tracey Emin's iconic *There's a Lot of Money in Chairs* (Private collection), exhibited in 2001; Michael Craig-Martin's *Reconstructing Seurat (Orange)* (Private collection), exhibited in 2007; and Wolfgang Tillmans's *Greifbar 1* (Courtesy of the Artist), which was awarded the Wollaston Award in 2014.

The exhibition also features William Powell Frith's, *A Private View at the Royal Academy, 1881* (a Pope Family Trust, c/o Martin Beisly), exhibited in 1883, depicting the characteristic hang of the Summer Exhibition. Among the architectural drawings on display are Joseph Michael Gandy's, *Public and Private Buildings Executed by Sir John Soane between 1780 and 1815* (Sir John Soane's Museum, London). In addition, letters, catalogues and photographs provide a fascinating insight into the historical context of the Summer Exhibition.

Organisation

The Great Spectacle: 250 Years of the Summer Exhibition is curated by Mark Hallett, Director of Studies at the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, and Sarah Victoria Turner, Deputy Director for Research at the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, in collaboration with Per Rumberg, Curator at the Royal Academy of Arts.

Accompanying Book

The Great Spectacle: 250 Years of the Summer Exhibition is accompanied by a comprehensive book by Mark Hallett and Sarah Victoria Turner, with Jessica Feather.
Softback: £21.95

Dates and Opening Hours

Open to public: Tuesday 12 June – Sunday 19 August 2018
10am – 6pm daily (last admission 5.30pm)
Late night opening: Fridays until 10pm (last admission 9.30pm)

Admission

£16.00 full price (£14 without Gift Aid donation); concessions available; children under 16 and Friends of the RA go free.

Tickets

Tickets for *The Great Spectacle: 250 Years of the Summer Exhibition* are available daily at the RA or online at www.royalacademy.org.uk. Group bookings: Groups of 10+ are asked to book in advance. Telephone 020 7300 8027 or email adultgroups@royalacademy.org.uk.

Images

Publicity images for *The Great Spectacle: 250 Years of the Summer Exhibition* can be obtained from Picselect, the Press Association's image service for press use. Please register at www.picselect.com and once registered go to the Royal Academy folder in the Arts section of Picselect.

Social Media

Join the discussion about the exhibition online at:

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#TheGreatSpectacle

#RA250

Summer Exhibition 2018

Main Galleries, The Sackler Wing of Galleries and The Ronald and Rita McAulay Gallery

12 June – 19 August 2018

The Royal Academy's annual Summer Exhibition celebrates its 250th anniversary in 2018. To mark this momentous occasion, the exhibition is co-ordinated by Grayson Perry RA.

For further information: <https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/exhibition/summer-exhibition-2018>

About the Royal Academy of Arts

The Royal Academy of Arts was founded by a group of artists and architects, under the patronage of King George III, in 1768. It has a unique position in being an independent, privately funded charity led by eminent artists and architects whose purpose is to promote the creation, understanding and appreciation of the visual arts through exhibitions, education and debate.

The Royal Academy has launched a new campus as part of the celebrations of its 250th anniversary year. Following a transformative redevelopment, designed by the internationally-acclaimed architect Sir David Chipperfield RA and supported by the National Lottery, the new Royal Academy of Arts reveals more of the elements that make the RA unique – sharing with the public historic treasures from its Collection, the work of its Royal Academicians and the Royal Academy Schools, and its role as a centre for learning and debate about art and architecture – alongside its world-class exhibitions programme. www.royalacademy.org.uk

For public information, please print 020 7300 8090 or www.royalacademy.org.uk

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