



STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL 10AM ON MONDAY 16 MAY 2016

THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF ARTS UNVEILS A MONUMENTAL PUBLIC ARTWORK BY ROYAL ACADEMICIAN YINKA SHONIBARE ON THE FAÇADE OF BURLINGTON GARDENS

The Royal Academy of Arts today unveiled a major large-scale public artwork by Yinka Shonibare MBE RA. It will wrap around the scaffolding on the façade of Burlington Gardens whilst the building is undertaking a transformative redevelopment in the lead up to the Royal Academy's 250th anniversary in 2018. *RA Family Album*, 2016, consists of over 160 black and white photographs and prints, showcasing the people who have made the RA an inclusive place for artists, creativity and learning since its foundation in 1768. The 71m width design is topped by one of Shonibare's renowned colourful fabric designs which drips down over the images.

Shonibare worked closely with the Royal Academy's archive to collate a broad range of photographs and prints which best represent his view of the RA story. Combining archival and contemporary images, his monumental work reveals the exhibitions, events, guests and visitors, social and academic events, Royal Academicians, members of staff, RA Schools students and behind-the-scenes stories, bringing life at the RA to the outside world.

Well-known figures featured on the wrap comprise Sir David Attenborough, Mary Beard, Dame Joan Collins, Fearne Cotton, Jamie Cullum, Sophie Dahl, Mariella Frostrup, Howard Jacobson and Dame Vivienne Westwood, amongst others. Royal Academicians include El Anatsui, Ron Arad, Sonia Boyce, Eileen Cooper, Michael Craig-Martin, Tracey Emin, Vanessa Jackson, Christopher Le Brun, Farshid Moussavi, Cornelia Parker, Grayson Perry, Richard Rogers, Bob and Roberta Smith and Shonibare himself.

A number of historical images of the Royal Academy have been incorporated into the work. Photographs consist of the Joshua Reynolds statue after it was installed in 1931, King George V and Queen Mary visiting the Summer Exhibition in 1933, unpacking work for the *International Exhibition of Chinese Art* in 1935 and an RA Schools lecture in 1953. There are also a variety of prints and engravings from the RA Collections such as *Private View, Royal Academy* by W. P. Frith, 1881, *The Lecture Theatre, London University* from *The Illustrated London News*, 1870, *Drawing from Life at the Royal Academy* by A. C. Pugin and Thomas Rowlandson, 1808, and the painting, *The Royal Academicians in General Assembly*, by Henry Singleton RA, 1795.

RA Family Album, 2016, will remain on the façade of Burlington Gardens until the end of the year. An accompanying digital project on the RA website will enable members of the public to have a closer look at the images and discover the stories behind them. For more information please visit www.royalacademy.org.uk/FamilyAlbum.

Yinka Shonibare MBE RA said: 'Before I was a Member I always thought the Royal Academy was quite mysterious. With this work I'm trying to bring the inside outside. It is a history but will also show the contemporary face of the RA; an organisation that is diverse and I wanted to express that. It's traditional and subversive, paint democratically drips on everyone.'

Christopher Le Brun, President of the Royal Academy, said: 'While Burlington Gardens is wrapped in scaffolding for the RA's redevelopment, it presented us with a unique opportunity to create a colossal public art work in the heart of London. As an artist-led institution, it was natural for us to invite one of our fellow Royal Academicians to create a design and we are delighted that Yinka Shonibare has taken up the challenge.'

Charles Saumarez Smith CBE, Secretary and Chief Executive of the Royal Academy, said: 'Burlington Gardens will be physically transformed by the Royal Academy's redevelopment, uniting it with Burlington House to create new spaces for the RA and its visitors. With *RA Family Album*, Yinka Shonibare brings a large-scale and dramatic visual representation of the RA to the outside world showing its history, stories, people and evolving character as we approach our 250th anniversary in 2018. We are opening up the RA as never before and this work shows that it is a place for everyone.'

The RA's redevelopment is led by the internationally-acclaimed architect Sir David Chipperfield RA and supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). The plans will link Burlington House on Piccadilly and Burlington Gardens for the first time, uniting and revitalising the two-acre site. It will include the conservation of the façade of Burlington Gardens, one of the grandest unrestored buildings in central London, as well as providing a double-height lecture theatre, a new Clore Learning Centre, space to exhibit more works from the RA Collections, refurbished galleries for temporary exhibitions and extended space for the RA Schools. In 2018, the RA will be able to reveal the elements that make it unique and share with the public the historic treasures in its Collection, the work of its Academicians and the RA Schools, alongside its world-class exhibitions programme.

Notes to Editors:

About Yinka Shonibare MBE RA

Yinka Shonibare studied at the Byam Shaw School of Art and Goldsmiths, University of London. Shonibare's West African heritage has been at the heart of his work since he started exhibiting in 1988, when he began using 'Dutch-wax' dyed fabrics, commonly found in Western Africa, both for wall-mounted works (as pseudo paintings) and for sculpted figures. He was a Turner Prize nominee in 2004 and awarded the decoration of Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire. He was notably commissioned by Okwui Enwezor at Documenta 11 in 2002 to create his most recognised work *Gallantry and Criminal Conversation* that launched him on an international stage. He has exhibited at the Venice Biennial and internationally at leading museums worldwide. In September 2008, his major mid-career survey commenced at the MCA Sydney and toured to the Brooklyn Museum, New York in June 2009 and the Museum of African Art at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC in October 2009. In 2010, he won the Wollaston Award for his work *Crash Willy*, 2010, in the Royal Academy's Summer Exhibition and *Nelson's Ship in a Bottle*, 2012, became his first public art commission on the Fourth Plinth in Trafalgar Square, London. In 2013 Shonibare became a Royal Academician.

History of Burlington Gardens

In 2001 the RA acquired Burlington Gardens, which was designed by Sir James Pennethorne (1801-1871) as the headquarters for the University of London on a site which had previously been part of the garden of Burlington House. It was opened by Queen Victoria in 1870. Regarded as Pennethorne's masterpiece, it stands as an important example of mid-Victorian architecture demonstrating a meeting of both neo-Classical and neo-Gothic styles. As originally built, Burlington Gardens featured impressive spaces, including a grand triple-height lecture theatre and a double-height examination room, together with the first-floor Senate Rooms and Laboratory spaces. The interior of the building has undergone many changes during its occupation by former tenants including the Civil Service Commission from 1902, the British Academy from 1928 and the British Museum's Museum of Mankind from 1970. Most notable are the removal of the lecture theatre and examination room in 1928 and the creation of Edwardian architect Arnold Mitchell's British Academy Room in 1929. This fascinating architectural and social history contributes to the national and international significance of Burlington Gardens, which is today widely recognised.

RA Burlington Gardens Festival 2016

Saturday 2 July 2016

Burlington Gardens

12 – 6pm

For the second year, the Royal Academy of Arts will host a free street party, the RA Burlington Gardens Festival, to celebrate the history and future of the building as it is transformed as part of the RA's redevelopment which will be complete in time for the 250th anniversary in 2018. This year, the festival will be inspired by Yinka Shonibare RA's work covering the façade of Burlington Gardens, *RA Family Album*, 2016. The festival is in association with Brown's London Art Weekend 1 – 3 July 2016.

About the Royal Academy of Arts

The Royal Academy of Arts was founded by King George III in 1768. It has a unique position in being an independent, privately funded institution led by eminent artists and architects whose purpose is to be a clear, strong voice for art and artists. Its public programme promotes the creation, enjoyment and appreciation of the visual arts through exhibitions, education and debate.

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For further press information, please contact Annabel Potter on 020 7300 5615 or annabel.potter@royalacademy.org.uk

**For public information, please print 020 7300 8000 or www.royalacademy.org.uk
Royal Academy of Arts, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1J 0BD**