

America after the Fall: Painting in the 1930s**The Sackler Wing of Galleries**

25 February – 4 June 2017

2009-2017 Season supported by



In February 2017, the Royal Academy of Arts will present *America after the Fall: Painting in the 1930s*, an exhibition chronicling the turbulent economic, political and aesthetic climate that dominated the decade following the Wall Street Crash of 1929. Drawn from collections across the USA, *America after the Fall* will showcase forty-five seminal paintings by some of the foremost artists of the era. For the very first time, Grant Wood's iconic painting *American Gothic*, 1930 (Art Institute of Chicago), will be exhibited outside North America. The exhibition will also feature works by Thomas Hart Benton, Georgia O'Keefe, Philip Guston, Edward Hopper, Alice Neel and Jackson Pollock.

The devastating impact of the Great Depression, brought about by the Wall Street Crash and followed by the Dust Bowl, caused America to enter the 1930s in flux. Over the next decade, the consequences of economic insecurity and social hardship, fuelled by mass urbanisation, industrialisation and immigration, reverberated throughout the country, as it struggled to rebuild. Artists endeavoured to capture these rapid changes, seeking to redefine American identity in their work, inadvertently creating a debate over what would become the national art form.

This focused survey of American art is marked by the rich diversity of artistic output. Artists experimented with styles ranging from Abstraction to Regionalism and Surrealism, in order to engage with issues including populism, labour and social protest. Regardless of style, many artists hoped their work could help repair a democracy damaged by economic and political chaos. These artistic developments were also a precursor to the major post-war movements of Abstract Expressionism and Pop Art.

America after the Fall: Painting in the 1930s will be arranged around thematic sections. ***Industrial Life*** will examine how artists addressed the power of manufacturing and labour. ***Urban Life*** will capture the role of the city and mass entertainment. ***Looking to the Past*** will reveal how artists in the Depression era looked back at American history, myths and culture for inspiration. ***Country Life*** will show how Regionalist artists, such as Thomas Hart Benton idealised the rapidly disappearing rural America. The trauma of the period, whether from the rise of Fascism or economic uncertainty, will be explored in ***Visions of Dystopia***. Finally, ***Looking to the Future*** presents work by artists such as Arthur Dove and Jackson Pollock, who created dynamic paintings that abandoned figuration and served as a foundation to Abstract Expressionism.

Among the exceptional works that represent this decade in American history will be Georgia O’Keeffe, *Cow’s Skull with Calico Roses*, 1931 (Art Institute of Chicago), Charles Sheeler, *American Landscape*, 1930 (Museum of Modern Art, New York), Jackson Pollock, *Untitled*, c. 1938-41 (Art Institute of Chicago), Philip Guston, *Bombardment*, 1937 (Philadelphia Museum of Art), Edward Hopper, *Gas*, 1940 (Museum of Modern Art, New York), Alice Neel, *Pat Whalen*, 1935 (Whitney Museum of American Art, New York) and Thomas Hart Benton, *Cotton Pickers*, 1945 (Private Collection). These ground breaking paintings highlight the relationship between art and national experience, demonstrating how creativity, experimentation and revolutionary vision flourished during a time of great uncertainty.

Organisation

America after the Fall: Painting in the 1930s has been organised by the Art Institute of Chicago, in collaboration with the Royal Academy of Arts, London, and Etablissement public du musée d’Orsay et du musée de l’Orangerie, Paris.

Catalogue

America after the Fall: Painting in the 1930s is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue. Authors include Judith A. Barter, Field-McCormick Chair and Curator of Art, Sarah Kelly Oehler, Gilda and Henry Buchbinder Associate Curator of American Art, Annelise K. Madsen, Assistant Curator of American Art, all at the Art Institute of Chicago; Sarah L. Burns, Professor Emerita at Indiana University and Teresa A. Carbone, Program Director for American Art at the Henry Luce Foundation.

Dates and Opening Hours

Press View:	Tuesday 21 February 2017, 10am – 2pm
Open to public:	Saturday 25 February – Sunday 4 June 2017 10am – 6pm daily (last admission 5.30pm)
Late night opening:	Fridays until 10pm (last admission 9.30pm)

Admission

£13.50 full price (£12 without Gift Aid donation); concessions available; children under 16 and Friends of the RA go free.

Tickets

Tickets for *America after the Fall: Painting in the 1930s* are available online at www.royalacademy.org.uk or telephone 020 7300 8090.

Images

Publicity images for *America after the Fall: Painting in the 1930s* 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.

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#AmericaAftertheFall

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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.

The RA is undergoing a transformative redevelopment which will be completed in time for its 250th anniversary in 2018. 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. The redevelopment will also reveal the elements that make the RA unique, sharing with the public the historic treasures in its Collection, the work of its Academicians and the RA Schools, alongside its world-class exhibitions programme. For more information on the RA visit www.royalacademy.org.uk/ra250#video

**For public information please print 020 7300 8090 and www.royalacademy.org.uk
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