



Large
Print

Angelica Kauffman

The Jillian and Arthur M.
Sackler Wing of Galleries

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- You will be prompted with a set of text import options.
- Click “Open file” once you have selected your settings and Voice Aloud will begin reading your file.

Angelica Kauffman

Sackler Galleries

1 March 2024 – 30 June 2024

Contents

Introduction	Page 5
From Italy to England	Page 9
Kauffman and The Royal Academy	Page 19
Return to Rome	Page 35

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Audio tour



Main commentary



Descriptive commentary



51 Self-portrait in all'antica Dress



Penelope at Her Loom



Poor Maria



52 Eleanora Sucking the Venom
Out of the Wound of Her
Husband, King Edward I



The Academicians of the Royal Academy



Portraits in the Characters of the Muses
in the Temple of Apollo



Her Majesty Queen Charlotte Raising the
Genius of the Fine Arts



53 Design



Return to Rome



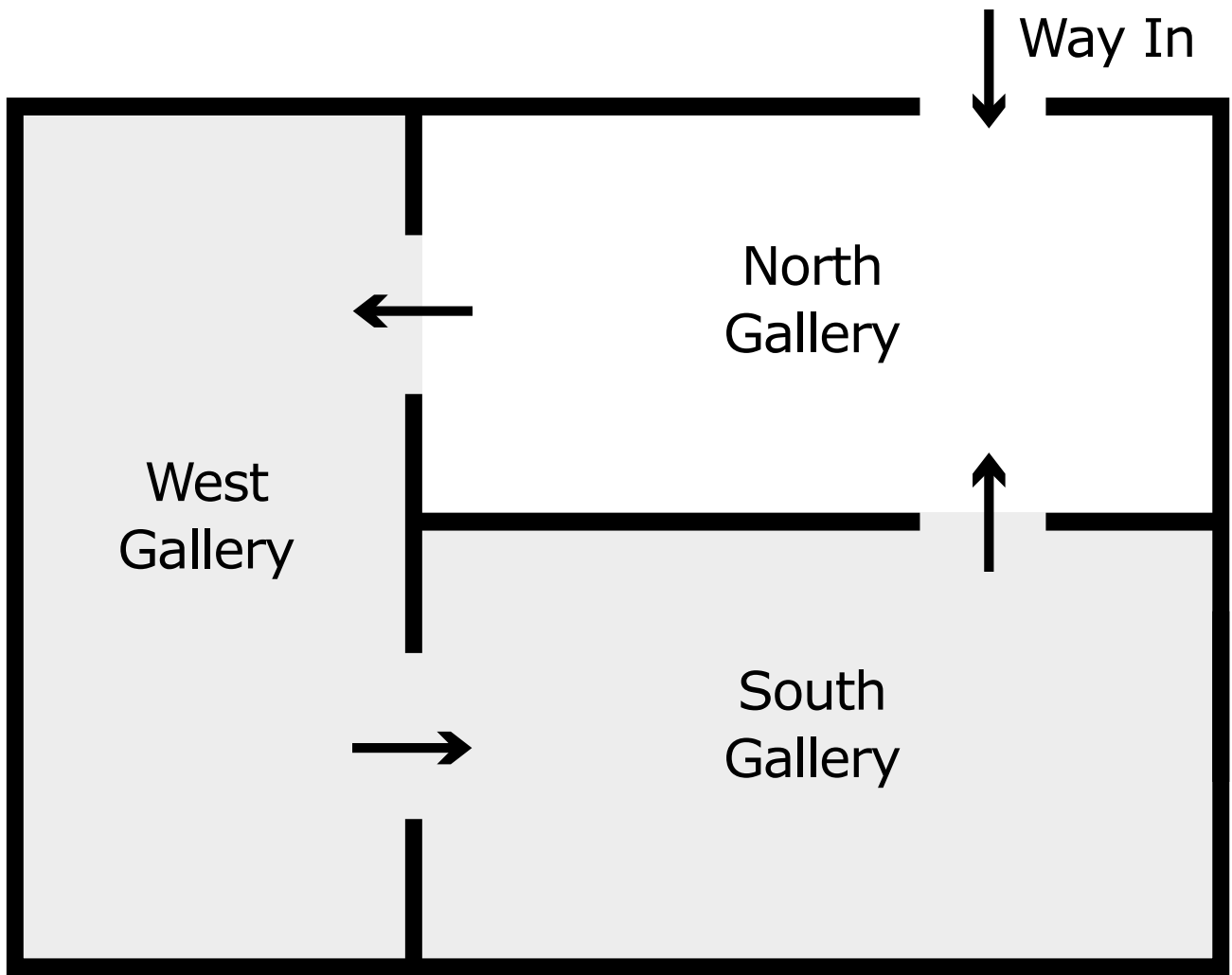
Death of Alcestis



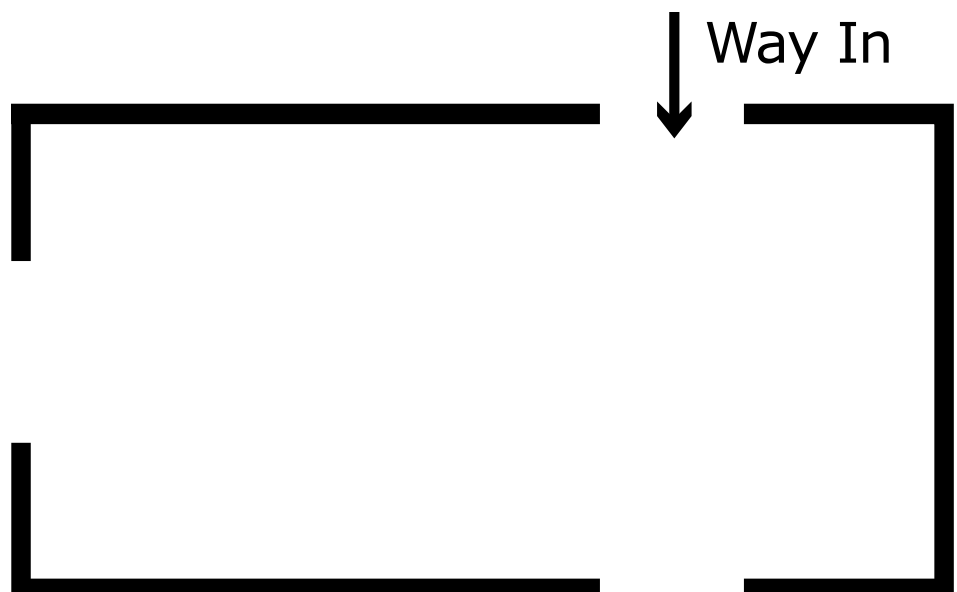
Portrait of the Impromptu Virtuoso
Teresa Bandettini Landucci as Muse



54 Portrait of Emma, Lady
Hamilton, as Muse of Comedy



You are in North Gallery



Introduction to exhibition

Angelica Kauffman

Angelica Kauffman was one of the most celebrated artists of the late eighteenth century, described by a contemporary as “the most cultivated woman in Europe”.

Born in 1741 in Chur, Switzerland, she trained and worked in Italy before moving to London in 1766. Two years later, she was one of only two women artists to be a Founding Member of the Royal Academy of Arts. In 1782 Kauffman settled in Rome where her famous studio attracted visitors from across Europe.

In both England and Italy, Kauffman painted the most influential figures of her day and reinvigorated the genre of history painting with her focus on female protagonists.

Throughout her career, Kauffman painted a great number of self-portraits and self-referential images. Through these works, she explored her identity as an artist and shaped her own reputation.

List of works clockwise in order of hang

Self-portrait in the Traditional Costume of the Bregenz Forest

1781

Oil on canvas

This self-portrait was particularly important to Kauffman and later served as the frontispiece to the first biography of the artist, published in 1810. Echoing a much earlier portrait that hung in the Grand Duke of Tuscany's legendary gallery of artists' self-portraits, it shows Kauffman in the traditional costume of her father's birthplace in Schwarzenberg, Austria, her hat tilted, looking straight at the viewer.

TLM, Ältere kunstgeschichtliche Sammlung, Innsbruck

Self-portrait in all'antica Dress

1787

Oil on canvas

Kauffman presented this painting to the Grand Duke of Tuscany to be “less unworthy” than her earlier self-portrait of 1757–59 that was already in his collection. Showing her agelessly idealised, seated in a loggia, with a stylus and a drawing board, brushes and palette within reach, it has become one of the most iconic images of the artist.

Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence

Self-portrait with Stylus and Portfolio

1784

Oil on canvas

Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen Munich –
Neue Pinakothek

From Italy to England

In the late 1750s and early 1760s, Kauffman lived in Italy. As a woman, she could not formally enrol at an academy but, with her artist father, studied Classical sculpture and the works of the Old Masters. Her early history paintings, such as 'Penelope at her Loom', show how she applied her knowledge of Renaissance and later religious painting to subjects drawn from Classical literature.

Kauffman's early portraits depict high-ranking British visitors to the Continent on their "Grand Tour" as well as scholars, artists and others she met in Italy. These works convey a sense of ease and familiarity; Kauffman's implied closeness to celebrated sitters, including the German art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann and the English actor and playwright David Garrick, increased her own fame.

Encouraged by her popularity among British patrons in Italy, Kauffman moved to London in 1766. She rapidly established herself among the city's cultural elites and stayed for fifteen years. While the artist was in great demand as a portrait painter, she made a point of showcasing her history paintings at the Royal Academy's annual exhibitions.

Portrait of Johann Joachim Winckelmann

1764

Oil on canvas

Kauffman met the art historian and antiquarian Johann Joachim Winckelmann in Rome in 1763, and painted his portrait when she was only 22. Praised for a close resemblance to the renowned scholar, it presents him dressed informally and seemingly lost in thought, implying the closeness of their friendship. The only allusion to Winckelmann's pioneering study of Classical art is the ancient Greek bas-relief of the Three Graces on which his book is propped.

Kunsthaus Zürich, Donated by Conrad Zeller, 1850

Penelope at Her Loom



1764

Oil on canvas

Brighton & Hove Museums

Portrait of David Garrick

1764

Oil on canvas

David Garrick, at the time Britain's most famous playwright and actor, met Kauffman and sat for this portrait while he was visiting Naples. Kauffman sent it to be exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1765, where the acclaim it received acted as a calling card ahead of her arrival in London. Kauffman shows Garrick in an unusual pose, twisting in his chair to face the viewer, as if offering a glimpse of the real person behind the roles.

Exhibited 1765

The Burghley House Collection

Portrait of Martha Cocks in Turkish Dress with Embroidery Frame

1772

Oil on canvas

Eastnor Castle Collection

Shakespeare's Tomb

1772

Oil on copper

The Burghley House Collection

Poor Maria



1777

Oil on copper

In addition to her extensive repertoire of Classical subjects, Kauffman also depicted scenes from British literature. In the 1770s, Kauffman broadened her repertoire to include emotive allegorical subjects in small oval forms.

These paintings were aimed at the interior decoration market and were widely popular. In 'Poor Maria', Kauffman illustrates the sorrowful Maria from Laurence Sterne's 'Sentimental Journey through France and Italy' (1768). Prints based on this painting were circulated all over Europe.

The Burghley House Collection

Eleanora Sucking 4 52

the Venom Out of the Wound of Her Husband, King Edward I

1776

Oil on canvas

Kauffman was one of the first artists to exhibit scenes from early English history at the Royal Academy. This painting shows Eleanor of Castile saving the life of her husband, the future King Edward I.

While on the Ninth Crusade in the Middle East, he was attacked with a dagger that was thought to have been poisoned. A later, fanciful account of the incident - depicted here - credited Eleanor with sucking the poison from Edward's wound in a display of heroism and marital devotion.

Exhibited 1776

Private collection, Vorarlberg

Armida Begs Rinaldo in Vain not to Leave Her

1776

Oil on canvas

Exhibited 1776

English Heritage, Kenwood

Rinaldo and Armida in the Magic Garden

c. 1772

Oil on canvas

English Heritage, Kenwood.

The Ernest Edward Cook Bequest presented by the Art Fund

Cleopatra Adorning the Tomb of Mark Antony

c. 1769-70

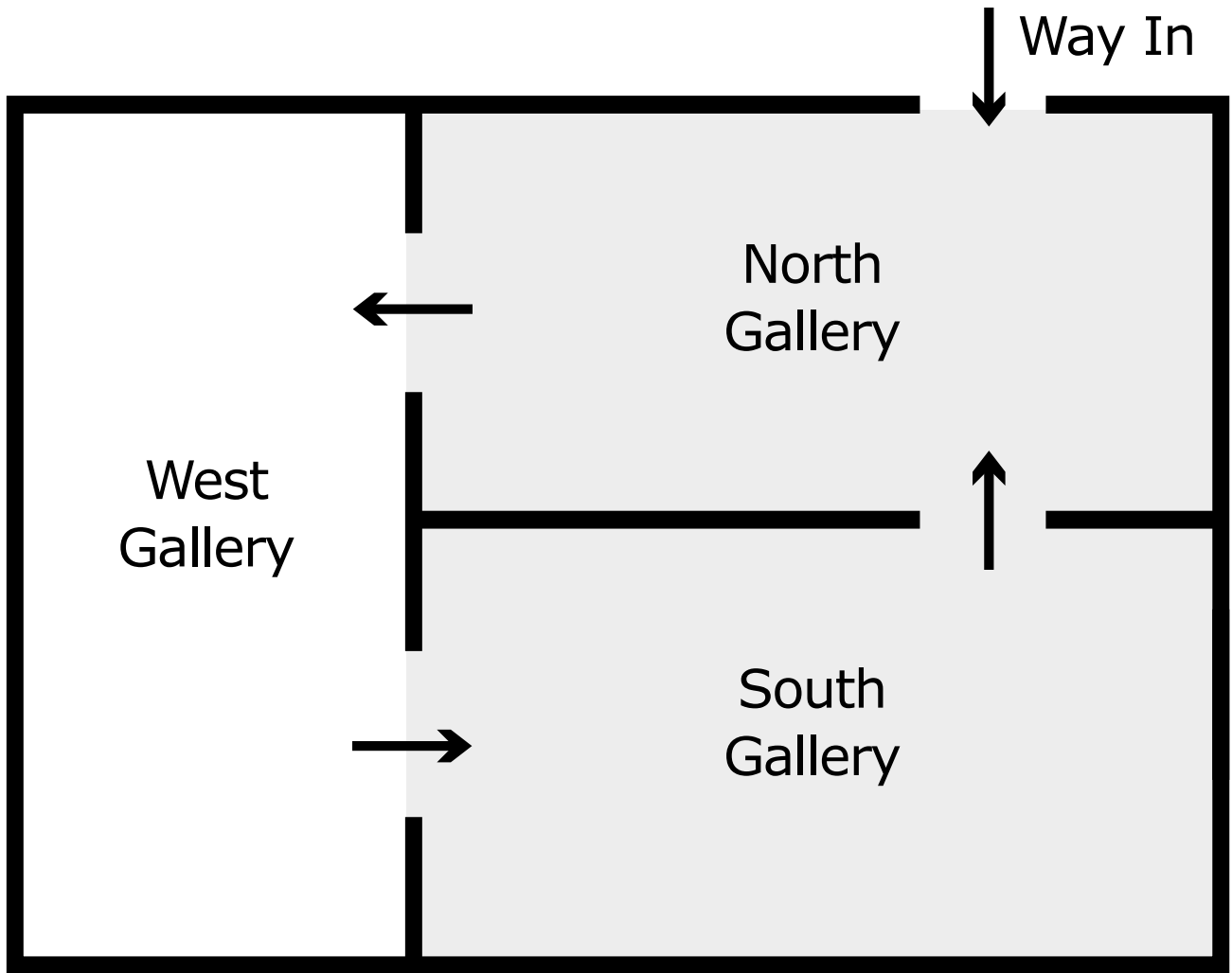
Oil on canvas

Kauffman portrays the grieving Cleopatra accompanied by her servants at the tomb of her lover, the Roman general Mark Antony. Rather than focusing on the deceased hero or Cleopatra's eventful political life, Kauffman presents the heroine in the relatable role of the grieving widow.

Kauffman captures the mourners during their graceful yet melancholic ritual of decorating Antony's tomb with garlands.

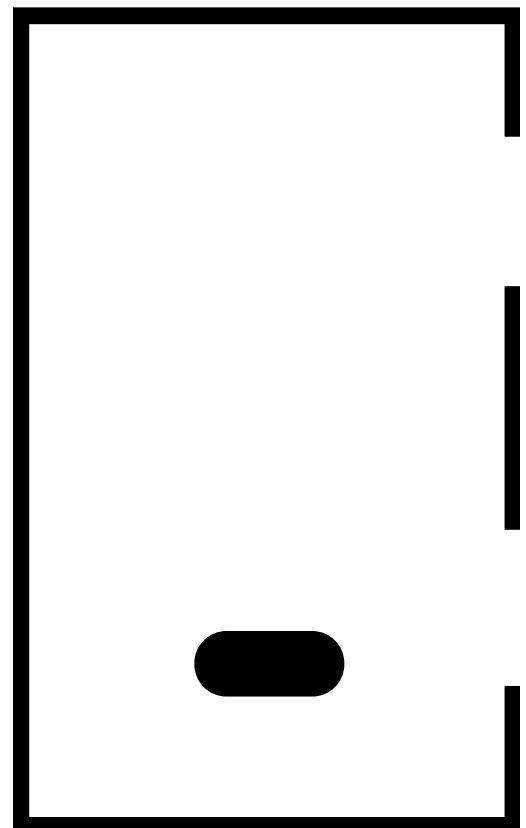
Exhibited 1770

The Burghley House Collection



You are
in West
Gallery

 Seating



Kauffman and The Royal Academy

In 1768, Angelica Kauffman was one of only two women artists among the 36 Founding Members of the Royal Academy (the other being the painter Mary Moser).

The new institution sought to raise the professional status of artists in Britain through the promotion of history painting. In this context, Kauffman was an ideal candidate for membership. Her swift acceptance into the inner circles of the London art world was also supported by the important connections she made. Within months of arriving in London, she had become friends not only with 'England's first painter' Joshua Reynolds, but had also secured commissions from royal women including Queen Charlotte.

The Royal Academy's prestigious annual exhibitions proved crucial to Kauffman's career and reputation.

The history paintings and portraits she exhibited there were met with great interest and, for the most part, critical acclaim. Through reproductive prints after these works, Kauffman became widely known in Britain and beyond.

The late 1770s marked a particular high point in Kauffman's Academy career. In 1779 she showed seven of her own paintings at the RA exhibition and was also celebrated as a 'living muse' in a group portrait of distinguished women. The following year, her four ceiling paintings depicting the 'Elements of Art' were unveiled in the Academy's new rooms at Somerset House. Although she left London in 1781, Kauffman continued to exhibit at the Royal Academy until 1797.

List of works anti-clockwise in order of hang



Richard Samuel

Portraits in the Characters of the Muses in the Temple of Apollo

1778

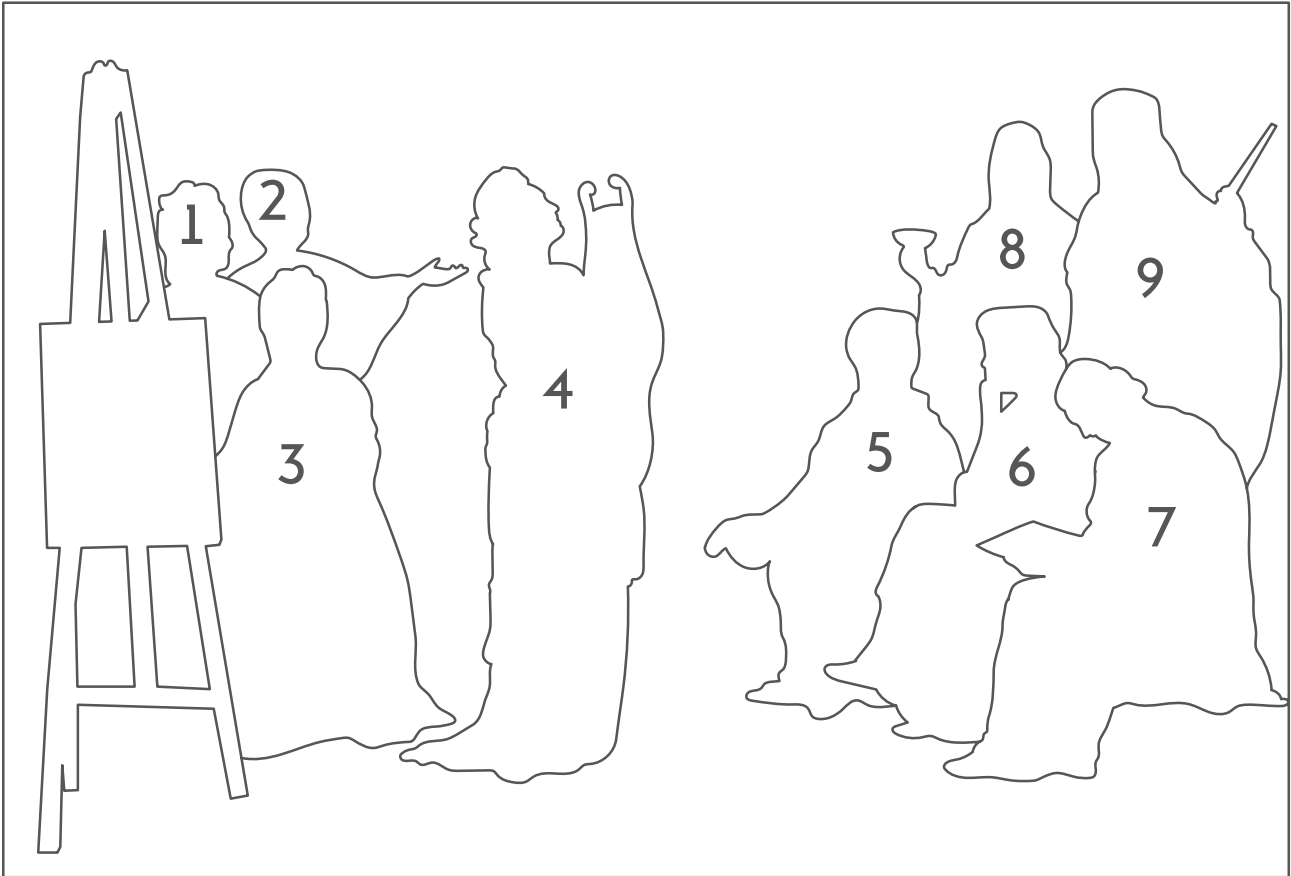
Oil on canvas

This imposing portrait celebrates some of the best-known creative and intellectual women in late-eighteenth-century Britain. Angelica Kauffman is the only artist in the group, shown seated at an easel on the left-hand side. The portraits are idealised and based on secondary sources, but Samuel's work is nevertheless remarkable in defining the women by their professional status. The respectful depiction of Kauffman here indicates her high standing at the time.

Exhibited 1779

Lent by the National Portrait Gallery, London.

Acquired 1972



Portraits in the Characters of the Muses in the Temple of Apollo

1. Elizabeth Carter, scholar and writer
2. Anna Letitia Barbauld, poet and writer
3. Angelica Kauffman
4. Elizabeth Ann Sheridan, singer and writer
5. Catharine Macaulay, historian and political polemicist
6. Elizabeth Montagu, writer and leader of the
Bluestocking Society
7. Elizabeth Griffith, playwright and novelist
8. Hannah More, religious writer
9. Charlotte Lennox, writer



Johan Zoffany

The Academicians of the Royal Academy

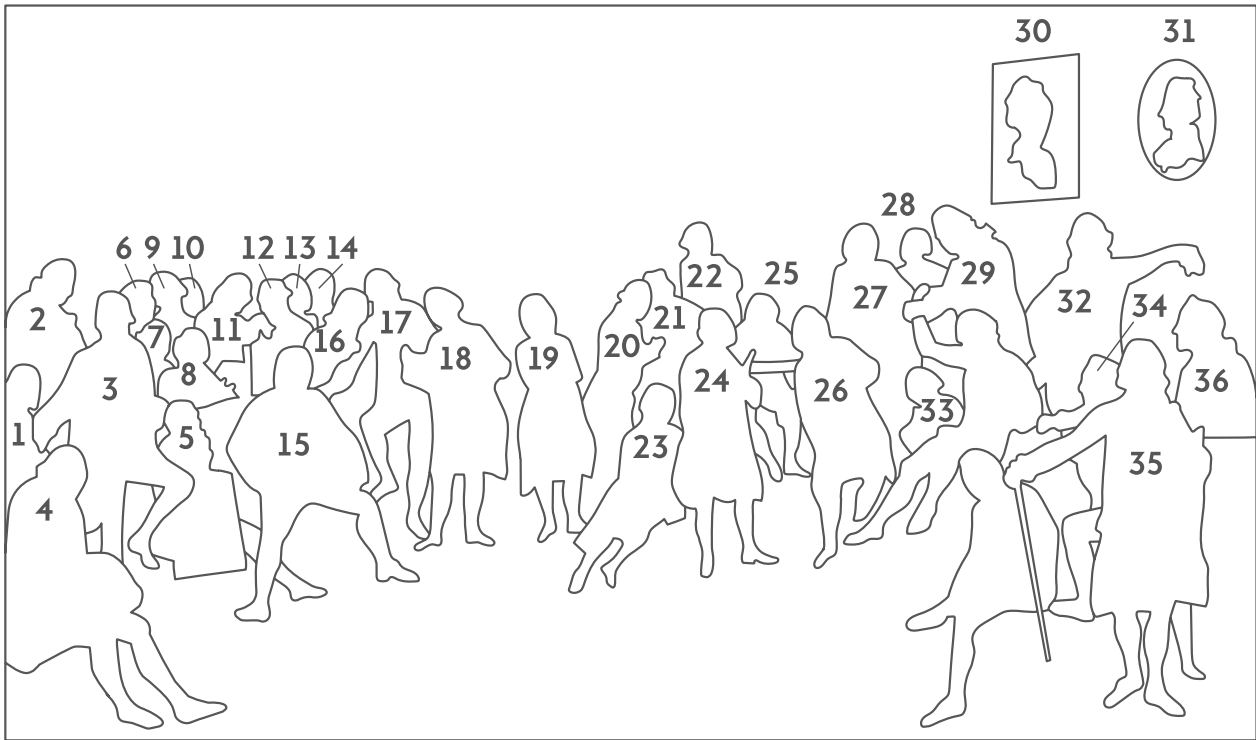
1771–72

Oil on canvas

Zoffany's group portrait celebrates the founding of the Royal Academy showing the Members gathered in their life drawing room. As women, Angelica Kauffman and Mary Moser were excluded from the life class on moral grounds but Zoffany managed to include them by featuring their likenesses as portraits on the wall. This device, however, emphasises their difference from their male peers.

Exhibited 1772

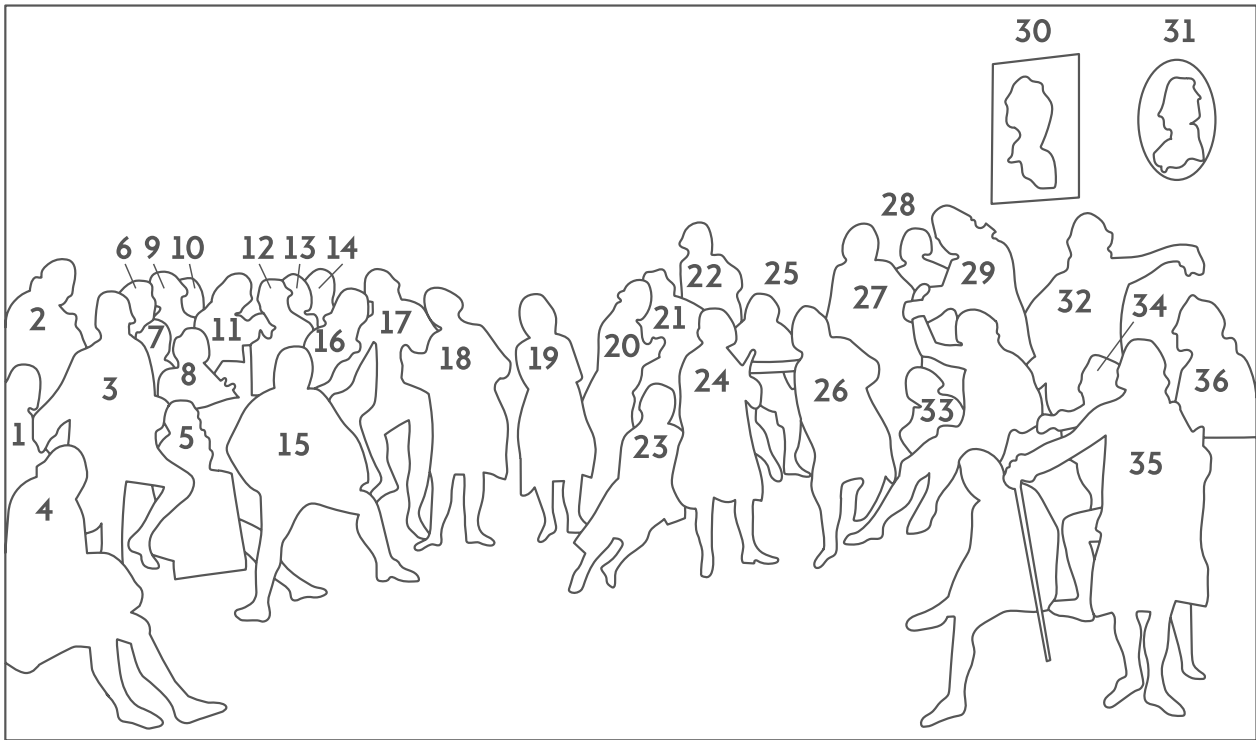
Lent by His Majesty The King



The Academicians of the Royal Academy

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. John Gwynn | 11. Paul Sandby |
| 2. Giovanni Battista Cipriani | 12. Thomas Sandby |
| 3. Benjamin West | 13. William Tyler |
| 4. Johan Zoffany | 14. John Inigo Richards |
| 5. Mason Chamberlin | 15. Francis Hayman |
| 6. Tan-che-quu, visiting artist from China (not a Royal Academician) | 16. Francis Milner Newton |
| 7. George Barret | 17. Sir William Chambers |
| 8. Joseph Wilton | 18. Sir Joshua Reynolds |
| 9. Jeremiah Meyer | 19. William Hunter, Professor of Anatomy (not a Royal Academician) |
| 10. Dominic Serres | 20. Francesco Bartolozzi |

(continued over)



21. Agostino Carlini

22. Richard Wilson

23. Charles Catton The Elder

24. Richard Yeo

25. Samuel Wale

26. Francesco Zuccarelli

27. Edward Penny

28. Peter Toms

29. George Michael Moser

30. Angelica Kauffmann

31. Mary Moser

32. Nathaniel Hone

33. Edward Burch

34. Joseph Nollekens

35. Richard Cosway

36. William Hoare

Portrait of Joshua Reynolds

1767

Oil on canvas

Kauffman was introduced to the artist Joshua Reynolds shortly after she arrived in London. They quickly became friends and agreed to paint each other's portraits. Kauffman portrayed Reynolds in his studio seated at his easel with a desk full of books and a bust of Michelangelo, his artistic hero, to his side. Kauffman's friendship with Reynolds and good relations with Queen Charlotte helped ensure her place among the Founding Members of the Royal Academy in 1768.

National Trust Collections (Saltram House, The Morley Collection (accepted in lieu of tax by H.M. Treasury and transferred to the National Trust in 1956))



Thomas Burke, after
Angelica Kauffman

Her Majesty Queen Charlotte Raising the Genius of the Fine Arts

1772

Mezzotint

Kauffman's commissions from royal women were an important marker of her success in London and contributed to her inclusion as one of the Founding Members of the Royal Academy. In 1767 she painted Queen Charlotte with her eldest son, George (later King George IV), in the guise of the "Genius of the Fine Arts". The painting is now lost but its appearance is recorded in this large mezzotint. Prints after Kauffman's paintings proved hugely popular and helped to make her famous throughout Europe.

Royal Academy of Arts, London

Letter from Angelica Kauffman to the Council of the Royal Academy

April 1775

In 1775 Nathaniel Hone sent 'The Conjuror' to the Royal Academy's annual exhibition. This painting satirised Joshua Reynolds for his reliance on the Old Masters but also took aim at Kauffman who was thought to be represented as the child at the conjuror's knee and depicted in the background among a group of cavorting naked artists. In this letter she demands that the Academy remove the painting from the exhibition.

Royal Academy of Arts, London

'Gentlemen, I have had the honour of a visite [sic] from Sir Will Chambers – the purpose of which was to reconcile me to submit to the exhibition of a picture which gave me offence, however I may admire the dignity of the gentlemen – who are superior to the malignity of the author, I should have held their conduct much more in admiration, if they had taken into consideration a Respect to the sex which it is their glory to support.

If they fear the loss of an Academician who pays no respect to that sex – I hope I may enjoy the liberty of leaving to them the pleasure of that Academician and withdrawing one object who never willingly deserved his or their Ridicule.

I beg leave to present my Respects to the Society and hope they will always – regard their own honour – I have but one request to make to send home my Pictures. If that is to be exhibited'.

'I am Gentlemen
Your most obedient
Angelica Kauffman
Golden Square'

'Tuesday morn'

Attributed to Nathaniel
Dance

Portrait of Angelica Kauffmann

c. 1764-66

Watercolour on paper

National Galleries of Scotland. Lady Sybil Grant Bequest
1956

Colouring

c. 1778-80

Oil on paper

Victoria and Albert Museum, London,
bequeathed by H. H. Harrod

Invention

c. 1778-80

Oil on paper

Victoria and Albert Museum, London,
bequeathed by H. H. Harrod

Design

c. 1778-80

Oil on paper

Victoria and Albert Museum, London,
bequeathed by H. H. Harrod

Composition

c. 1778-80

Oil on paper

Victoria and Albert Museum, London,
bequeathed by H. H. Harrod

Composition

1780

Oil on canvas

Royal Academy of Arts, London

Design



1780

Oil on canvas

The high point of Kauffman's Royal Academy career was her commission for a set of ceiling paintings to adorn the Council Room at New Somerset House. The "Elements of Art" represent the key stages in creating an artwork: 'Invention, Design, Composition and Colouring'. Diverging from tradition, all four are personified as women. The figure of Design draws the famous 'Belvedere Torso', a plaster cast of which was on display in the Academy's new rooms.

Royal Academy of Arts, London

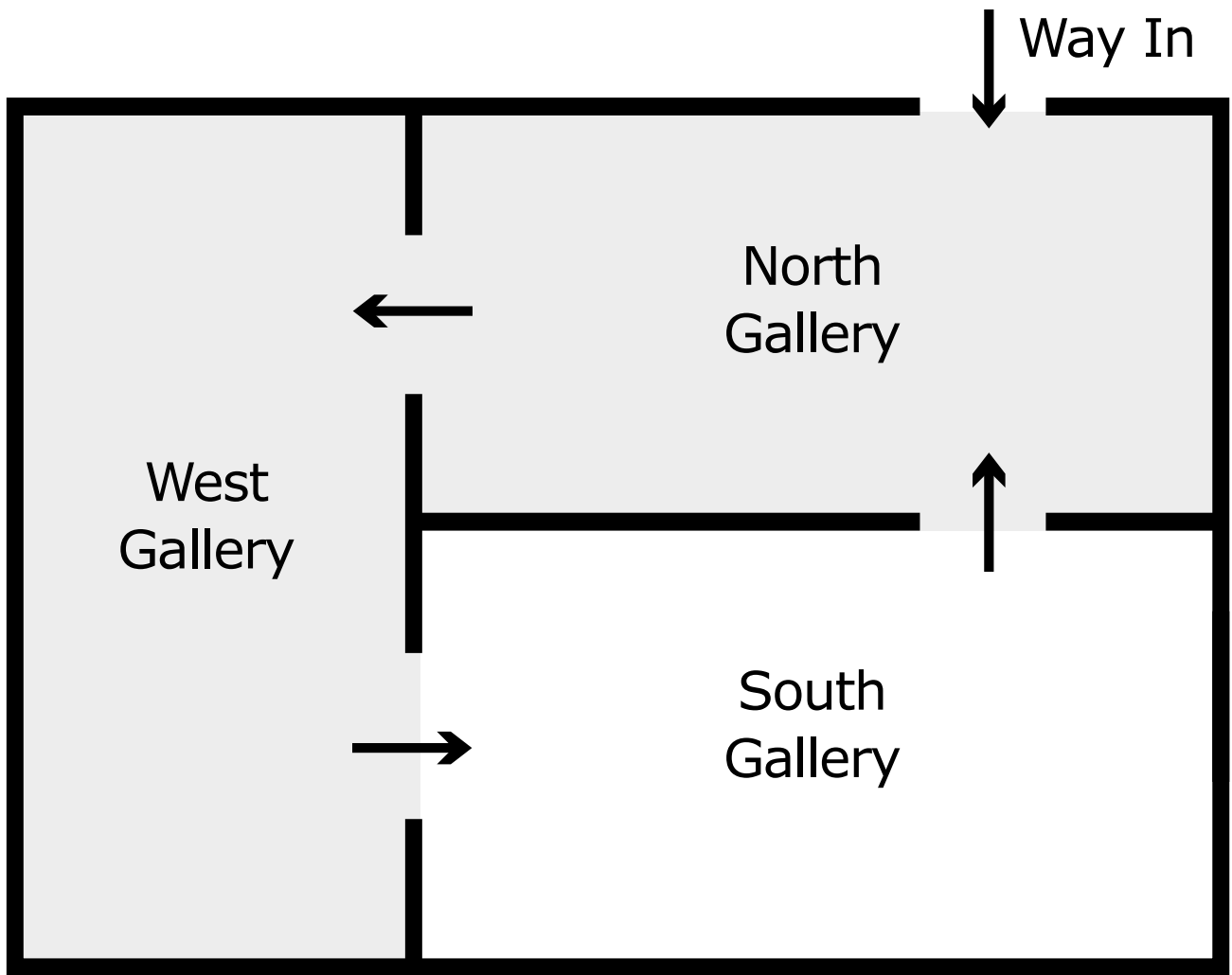
Self-portrait with Bust of Minerva

c. 1780-84

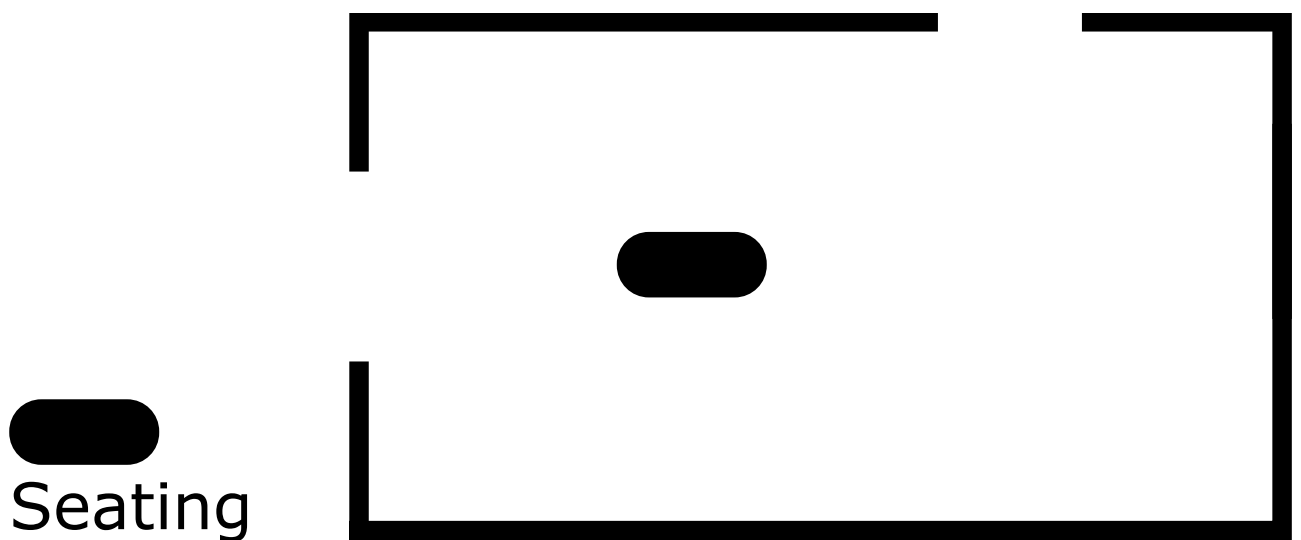
Oil on canvas

Kauffman painted this self-portrait at a pivotal moment, around the time that she left London to return to Italy. Holding a stylus and a portfolio of drawings, she sits with a bust of the goddess Minerva by her side. This may be part of an artistic dialogue with Joshua Reynolds; Minerva features in the same position as the bust of Michelangelo in his grand self-portrait of 1780. Reynolds, in turn, had taken this motif from Kauffman's portrayal of him in 1767.

Grisons Museum of fine Arts, on deposit from the Gottfried Keller Foundation, Federal Office of Culture, Bern



You are in South Gallery



Return to Rome

Angelica Kauffman returned to Italy as an established artist. In 1782 she settled in Rome, which remained at the heart of the Grand Tour at this time. While she extended her international clientele during this period, Kauffman continued to receive many commissions from British patrons.

The most remarkable and pioneering of Kauffman's later portraits are those she painted of herself and of female friends and fellow creatives. Kauffman often depicted these sitters in the guise of one of the nine muses of Classical mythology. Rather than passive conduits of inspiration, however, Kauffman's women – such as the famous model and performer Emma, Lady Hamilton – are powerfully portrayed as muse and creator combined.

Kauffman's history paintings from her Roman period become more ambitious in tone, often featuring complex compositions, and continue to focus on narratives highlighting female characters. Kauffman's 'Self-portrait at the Crossroads between the Arts of Music and Painting' merges portraiture with history painting, presenting a scene from her own life on the same scale and with the same gravitas as an episode from Classical literature or mythology.

Central showcase

Memoria delle pitture [sic] fatte d'Angelica Kauffman

December 1781–November 1795,
January 1796–November 1798

Antonio Zucchi, Kauffman's second husband, kept a meticulous register of all pictures the artist painted upon her return to Italy.

The entries include the date, a detailed description and not least the price charged for each work. When Kauffman had received payment, the entry was crossed out. All pictures in this gallery can be identified in the 'Memoria'. Kauffman continued the register after Zucchi's death in 1795.

Royal Academy of Arts, London

List of works anti-clockwise in order of hang

Michael Novosielski (1750–1795)

1791

Oil on canvas

Kauffman continued to attract clients for her lively portraits once she had returned to Italy. One such commission was this portrait of the Anglo-Polish architect and theatrical-set designer Michael Novosielski, who is shown holding a compass and pointing to his design for the King's Theatre in London.

National Galleries of Scotland.

Bequest of Mrs Elizabeth Stewart 1879

Portrait of Charles Brudenell-Bruce, later 1st Marquess of Ailesbury

1795

Oil on canvas

Private collection

Portrait of Henrietta Maria Hill, later Brudenell-Bruce and Marchioness of Ailesbury, as the Muse Erato

1792

Oil on canvas

This portrait shows Henrietta Maria Hill, daughter of the 1st Baron Berwick of Attingham. The lyre and the pink roses on the wreath that Henrietta holds suggests that Kauffman depicted her as Erato, the muse of love poetry. The sitter's future husband, Charles Brudenell-Bruce, highly praised this portrait and commissioned Kauffman to paint his own likeness as a counterpart to Henrietta's. Kauffman shows him in seventeenth-century dress, emulating the grand "swagger portraits" of Anthony van Dyck.

Private collection

Portraits of Domenica Morghen and Maddalena Volpato as Muses of Tragedy and Comedy

1791

Oil on canvas

Kauffman painted her two friends Domenica and Maddalena as the muses of tragedy and comedy respectively. The proximity of the sitters alludes to a sisterly relationship between the forms of drama that they represent. Domenica sits with the mask of Melpomene, muse of tragedy, on her lap while her sister-in-law Maddalena holds a shepherd's crook, one of the symbols used to represent Thalia, the muse of comedy.

National Museum in Warsaw

Portrait of Emma, 12 54 Lady Hamilton, as Muse of Comedy

1791

Oil on canvas

Here Kauffman portrays Emma Hart, Lady Hamilton, who was well known for performing a series of “attitudes” imitating the poses of Classical figures. Kauffman highlights Lady Hamilton’s theatrical talents, capturing her stepping on to a stage transformed into Thalia, the muse of comedy, which is signified by the laughing mask that she is holding in her right hand.

Private collection

Portrait of the Impromptu Virtuoso Teresa Bandettini Landucci as Muse

1794

Oil on canvas

Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf

Self-portrait at the Crossroads between the Arts of Music and Painting

1794

Oil on canvas

Kauffman depicts herself between personifications of the arts of music and painting, in a composition that alludes to the story of Hercules at the crossroads, where he was presented with the choice between a life of vice or one of virtue.

The picture looks back to a key turning point in the artist's life: a gifted singer and clavichord player, she eventually decided to abandon her musical career to devote herself entirely to painting.

National Trust Collections (Nostell Priory, The St. Oswald Collection). Purchased by private treaty with the help of a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund 2002.

Letter from Joseph Bonomi to Benjamin West, with annotations by Benjamin West, 21 December 1807

Joseph Bonomi wrote this letter to Benjamin West, President of the Royal Academy, to inform him of Kauffman's death in Rome on 5 November 1807. It describes Kauffman's passing and her funeral in the church of Sant'Andrea delle Fratte organised by the sculptor Antonio Canova "& other virtuosi friends".

The letter was read in full at the General Assembly on 23 December 1807.

Royal Academy of Arts, London

The text is a transcription of a letter Bonomi had received from his “correspondent in Rome”, one M. A. Borsi.

Gentlemen, two days past I received this letter From Mr Bonomi

Dear Sir

This Morning I received a letter from my Correspondent in Rome, Dr M.A. Borsi, concerning the death of Mrs Angelica Kauffman, which I shall transcribe word for word.

“Rome 7.th November 1807

Dear Sir,

What for some time I foresaw, after about twenty days confinement in bed, with the greatest tranquillity of spirit, always present to herself, having twice received the blessed Sacrament & two days before Extreme Unction, perfectly resigned, courageously met the death of the Righteous on Thursday last 5.th. Inst. at half past two in the afternoon, the great Woman, the always illustrious, holy & most pious Mrs Angelica Kauffman. I shudder in acquainting you with such unfortunate news, knowing the grief that it will cause to you, & to Mrs Bonomi. I shall now relate the particulars of her Illness, & Funeral.

During her severe illness all her numerous friends, did what they could to restore her, & everyone was grieved in the apprehension of losing her, You may easily believe more than I can express how much their grief increased at her Death, I only therefore shall mention, that they vied with each other, in endeavouring to perform their last duties in the most decorous obsequies; celebrated this morning in the Church of S. Andrea delli Fratti, conducted by Canova, & other virtuosi friends. The Church was decorated as is customary for Nobles; at 10 o'clock in the morning the Corpse was accompanied to the Church by two very numerous Brotherhoods, 50 Capuchins Priests.

The bier was carried by some of the Brotherhood, but the four Corners of the Pall, by four Young Ladies properly dressed for the occasion, the four tassels were held by the four first Gentlemen of the Academy, these were followed by the rest of the Academicians & Virtuosi who carried in triumph two of her Pictures; & every one with a large wax taper lighted."

This, Sir, is the melancholy account I thought it my duty to acquaint transmit to you as President of the R. Academy. Be pleased, You & Mrs West to accept my and Mrs Bonomi's Compliments & I have the honor to be,

Dear Sir,

Your obedient humble Servant

Joseph Bonomi

76 Gt Titchfield Street

Monday Afternoon Decr 21:st 1807

Christ and the Samaritan Woman

1796

Oil on canvas

Kauffman was not well known for her religious works, but this picture is a rare exception. It was one of the two canvases – mentioned in the letter by Joseph Bonomi, shown nearby – that were carried in triumph at Kauffman's funeral procession in Rome on 7 November 1807.

Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen Munich – Neue Pinakothek

Ulysses on the Island of Circe

1793

Oil on canvas

Loan from the Barrett Swiss Collection in memory of Nona Barrett

Death of Alcestis

1790

Oil on canvas

Kauffman draws on Euripides' tragedy Alcestis (438 BC) to depict a scene where Queen Alcestis sacrifices herself in place of her husband, Admetus, in fulfilment of a bargain made by him with the Fates. Exhibited in 1791, this was one of a select group of paintings shown at the Royal Academy following the artist's return to Rome. The expression of grief on Admetus' face highlights the role reversal of the mourning wife and the heroic husband.

Exhibited 1791

Vorarlberg museum, Bregenz

Self-portrait in the Character of Design Listening to the Inspiration of Poetry

1782

Oil on canvas

English Heritage, Kenwood. The Ernest Edward Cook

Bequest presented by the Art Fund

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Please contact us for more information.

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