



RWA

Primary: Activity Pack 03

Exhibitions for Everyone



This Activity Pack was created by: **Royal West of England Academy**, Queen's Road, Clifton Bristol BS8 1PX
The RWA is a self-supporting, independent charity (1070163). If you have enjoyed this activity please consider making a donation to support the RWA by visiting rwa.org.uk/support-us

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RWA is Bristol's first public art gallery. It was built in 1858 with money from Ellen Sharples – a Bristol artist herself – as a place for people to see and make art. Today we show the work of famous and less wellknown artists in our main exhibitions, and lots of people visit to see it.

Our current exhibition is: 168 Annual Open Exhibition

In previous Activity Packs, we looked at the artists of St Ives in the 1940s-60s. In this pack we will be exploring the lives and works of some of the most exciting artists in the current exhibition and past open exhibitions.

The RWA has put on 'open exhibitions' since 1852. These exhibitions are not presented in the same way as others that have themes or stories that guide visitors around the artworks. Open exhibitions mean that *anybody* can present their artwork to the panel of selectors, and hope that their work gets chosen for the exhibition. You don't have to be a famous artist, you don't have to have a studio in London, you don't even have to be trained as an artist – you could be self-taught and still your work might be selected.

Once the selectors have chosen artwork from *thousands* of submissions, the selected artworks (around 600 pieces) are hung in the galleries.

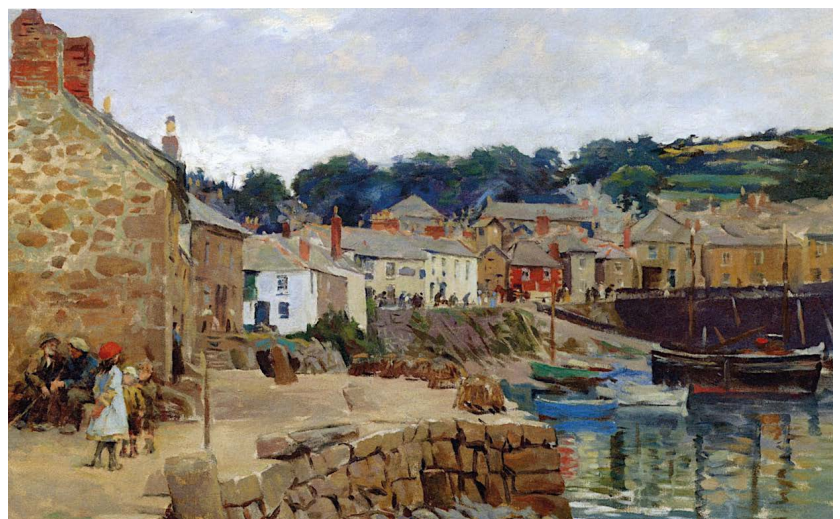
Some early and famous artists to exhibit at RWA Annual Open:

1861 Valentine Bartholemew: an early member of the Society of Painters in Water Colours, he had a special talent for flower painting. His paintings were large scale and full of detail. For many years he held the post of 'Flower Painter to the Queen'. Can you work out which queen that would have been?

1877 John Constable, RA: His painting 'The Lord Mayor's Day on the Thames on the Opening of Waterloo Bridge' was shown at RWA over forty years after his death. He is famous particularly for his paintings of cloud formations and English landscapes, including 'The Hay-Wain' which earned him two gold medals. Which artist today would you award a gold medal to?

1933 Stanhope Forbes: An artist who painted scenes of everyday life in Cornwall, such as fishing, eating, boating, or even rain falling on a man and his horse after a long day's work. He was married to Elizabeth Forbes, an artist in her own right and with whom he opened the Newlyn Art School.

1972 Sir Hugh Casson: As an architect and interior designer, he was known for his role as director of architecture of the Festival of Britain in 1951, designing a building for the Royal College of Art and the interior of the royal yacht, Britannia. He exhibited four artworks at the 120th Annual Open Exhibition at RWA!



Stanhope Forbes,
Mousehole near Newlyn,
1919

Invited Artists



Each year, high profile artists are invited to exhibit their work at the Annual Open exhibition at RWA.

This year, one of the invited artists is Frank Bowling OBE RA. Can you find out what the letters stand for after his name?

Richard Sheridan Patrick Michael Aloysius Franklin Bowling is better known as the artist, Frank Bowling. He was born in 1934 in British Guiana, a country on the northern mainland of South America and part of the Caribbean region. His art education took place in London, and in 1962 he graduated from the RCA with a silver medal for painting.

He spent time living and working in both New York and London as his paintings over the years moved from figurative (looking like people) to abstract (not recognisable as anything, purely shapes and colours).

He has been inspired and influenced by English landscape painting and American abstraction. English landscape painting really took off during the early 1800s, particularly because of the work of John Constable and J.M.W. Turner. American Abstraction is a post-war movement developed in New York in the 1940s. Examples of two very different painters from this time are Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko.

Look up these styles and artists to see how they might have informed the way Bowling's work developed.

Colour and texture

In 'Boo', pieces of canvas are stitched together and paint has been applied to the surface in different ways. If you have some scrap fabric and a needle and thread, try stitching together your own canvas to paint on. Enjoy the layers of paint jumping backwards and forwards as you look at the painting.



Frank Bowling, *Boo*, 2003 Acrylic on canvas

Look out for the Junior Drawing School workshop inspired by Frank Bowling's work! It will be led by Victoria Willmott during the December school holidays (see RWA website)

RWA Junior Drawing School

Patterns and Lines



Frank Bowling, *Hafenlicht*, 2007 Acrylic on canvas

How does Frank Bowling make it look as though you can see some shapes moving and some staying so still in 'Hafenlicht'?

Try painting using tools other than a paintbrush in the way you would normally use it. For example, you could make dots with the wrong end of a paintbrush, or lines with a twig dipped in paint, or you could blow paint with a straw.

Artists and their ideas

There is so much to see in 168 Annual Open – painting, printing, sculpture, architecture, you name it, it's probably there. How did so many artists come up with so many ideas? What inspires and influences them? Have a look at some of the work and see if you can imagine the thought-processes that lie behind the finished pieces.



Karl Singporewala is an architect and a sculptor. This piece, called 'Doppel Communion' is photo etched brass. Can you imagine what he might have been thinking about when he came up with the idea? Why do you think the brass is

covered by a glass cloche (dome)? What other objects have you seen under glass?

Doppel Communion



Robert Strange

This coloured pencil drawing is called '3 Rusty Hinges'. How has the artist, Robert Strange, managed to make such a simple subject seem extraordinary? Have you got some coloured pencils at home? Try your own observational drawing of something 'ordinary' that you see lying around.

3 Rusty Hinges



The Future is not what it used to be

Niki Hare's painting is called 'The Future is not what it used to be'. Do you think it would have the same impact if we were not living through this time of Covid-19, inequality and injustice? The style of lettering and the contrast with the background might remind you of protest banners and stencilled slogans. Why not try making your own painting out of words? What do you want to say?



Ruby Walker's photograph has captured Black Bristolian women who are designers, filmmakers and activists, inspiring the next generation. Look at how they fill the space in the photo and represent young people's hopes for a secure future. What does it make you think about?

Ruby Walker

A journey through time



A brief history of Open Exhibitions at the Royal Academy and RWA. Use the timeline below to prompt a piece of creative writing that uses an Annual Open Exhibition as the setting for your characters.

1769

The Summer Exhibition (at the Royal Academy [RA] in London) has been held every year since 1769 and is the world's oldest open submission exhibition – which means that anyone can enter artwork to be considered for inclusion.

1800s

History painting and portraits commissioned by the rich and famous (painted by the celebrated artists of the day) were hung at eye level at the RA. Why do you think this was?

1939-45

1939-45: Every year for 168 years the RWA has held its Open Exhibition, except during WW2 when the building was used by GIs who were stationed there. Do you think any of the soldiers drawing and painting while they stayed at the gallery?

Present

Today, we are committed to an open invitation to the public to submit work for an annual show and we enjoy the work of new and emerging artists being in the same exhibition as some famous artists. If your painting could be hung next to a painting by any famous artist, whose would you choose?

1700s

In the 18th century all paintings were of people/animals. Right the way across the rooms, as many pictures as possible were squeezed in frame-to-frame, right up to the top of the walls. Who do you think hung all the pictures up?

1844

RWA first Open Exhibition held. RWA would have followed a similar format as the larger RA in London, so in the past we would have seen artworks crammed into the galleries all the way up the walls. What do you think it felt like to be an artist whose painting was hung right at the top of the wall? Do you think visitors could see it?

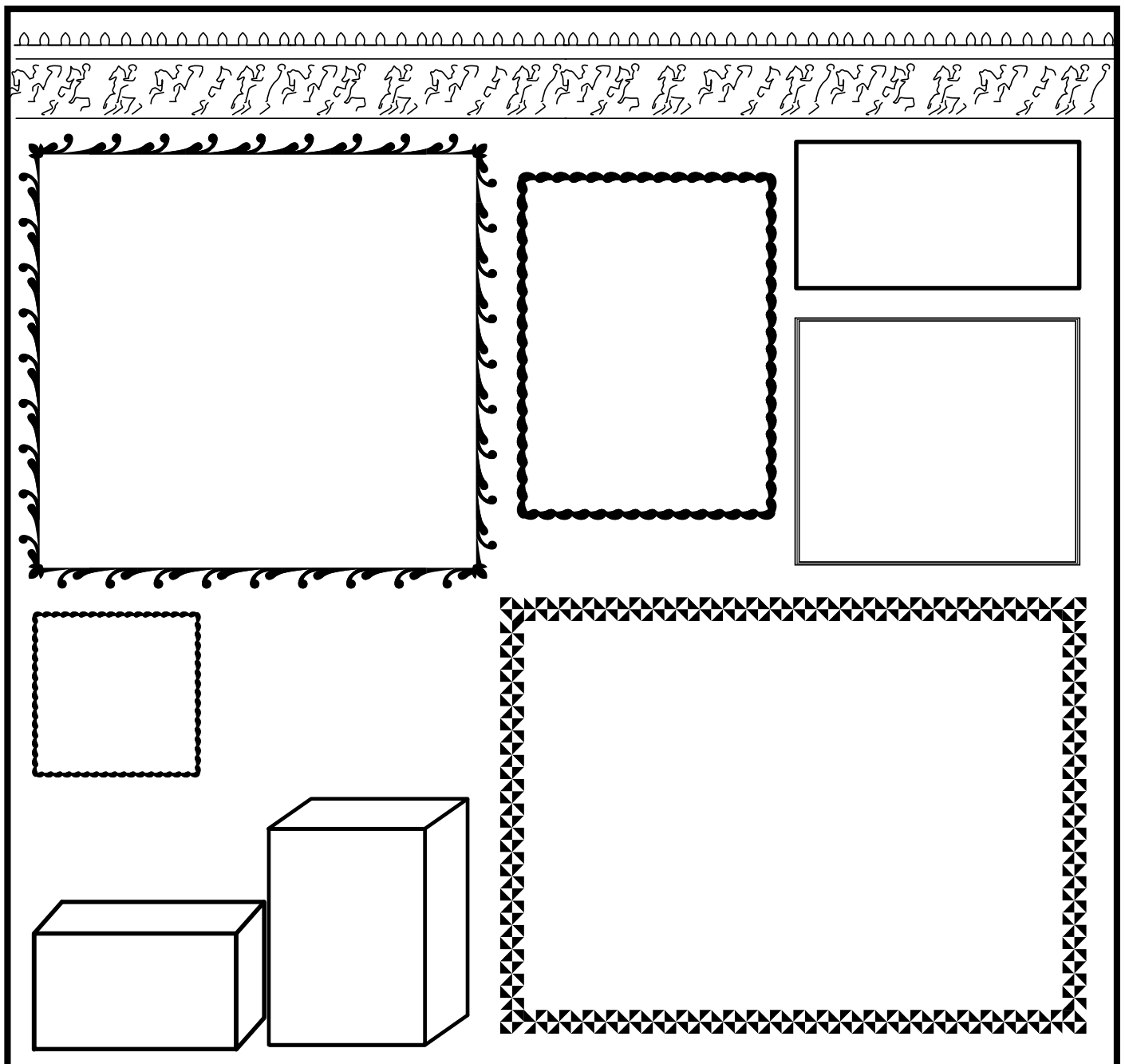
RWA Open Exhibitions used to be called Autumn Exhibitions because they were traditionally held in the autumn, so that artists could submit work to be shown in the Summer Exhibition in London and then also in the later in the year at the RWA in Bristol.

Exhibitions in the Future



Imagine how Annual Open Exhibitions might look in the future. Draw in your idea of a future Annual Open exhibition into the empty frames.

You could choose whether to make an exhibition of paintings inspired by artists from different decades with different styles, or to invent new styles of your own. What might the subject matter be in the future? Will artists in 100 years time be making paintings that look back on the 2020s? Will RWA be showing only portrait paintings again? Will we only see digital or virtual work? Which pieces will be the prizewinners?



An Artists' Exhibition



RWA Annual Open exhibitions attract more visitors than other exhibitions. Why do you think this is?

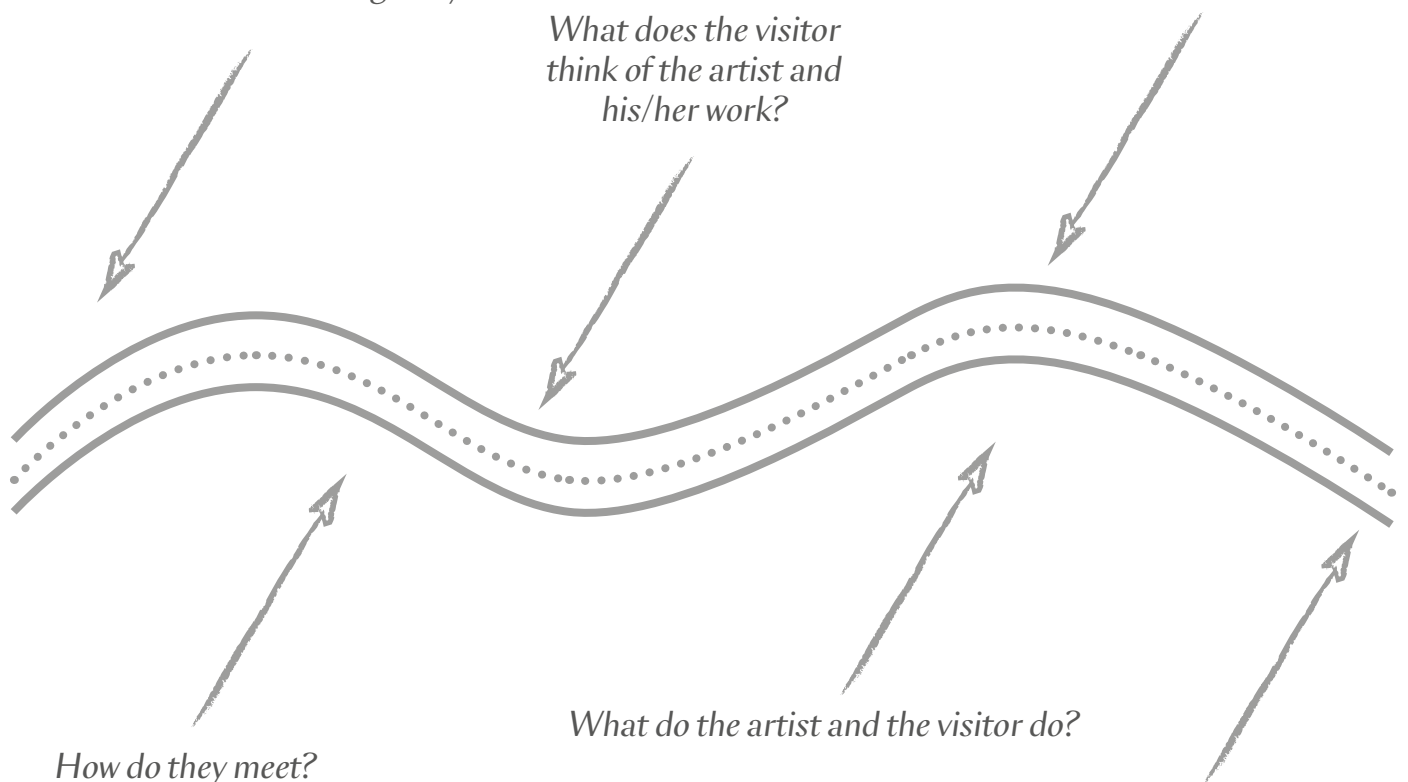
Can you imagine who some of the artists were, and some of the visitors over all those years? Often artists are there when visitors are looking at the paintings and sculpture, because there are so many artists showing their work.

Write your own poem or short story about an encounter between an artist and visitor in the past.

What happens while they are there, does one of the artworks come crashing down off the wall? Does someone spill something over a painting? Does one of the animal sculptures suddenly come to life?

In what year do your chosen artist and visitor meet in RWA gallery?

What does the visitor think of the artist and his/her work?



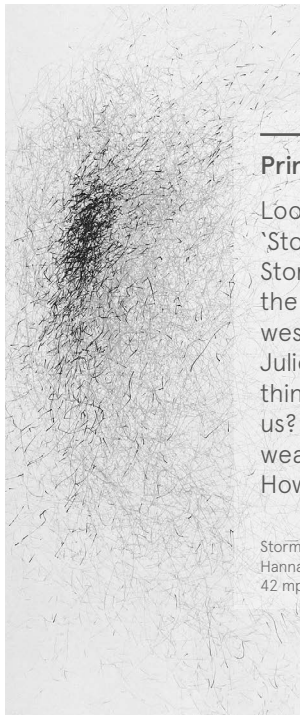
How do they meet?

What do the artist and the visitor do?

How does their encounter end?

Variety Show

Annual Open Exhibitions are packed with a wide variety of artworks in the different disciplines of painting, printing, drawing, sculpture and film. Let's look at some examples in each medium.



Printing

Look at the screen print, 'Storm Hannah (white) - Storm Hannah through the Plum Tree, 42 mph westerly, 155 minutes' by Julie Leach. What do you think the long title tells us? Try making your own weather-inspired image. How will you title it?

Storm Hannah (white) - Storm Hannah through the Plum Tree, 42 mph westerly, 155 minutes



Painting

Simon Garden's painting 'Airstream' is magical and dreamlike. Have you recently drawn what is in your imagination? Or painted a dream you had? Try it!

Airstream

Drawing

This exquisite drawing by Meg Buick is so full of movement. What do you notice? Have you ever tried to make such a detailed drawing? Give it a go.

The Elephant and the Sun



Performance & Poetry

Creative producer and director, Josephine Gyasi wrote 'What Are Your Plans?' in response to the killing of George Floyd on 25th May 2020. The poem and a short film are shown in the RWA exhibition. The full poem can be found here:

rising.org.uk/what-are-your-plans/

Using writing, music, painting or another art form, make a piece of work that expresses your feelings about racism, inequality and injustice.

WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS?

I'm sick of death

I'm sick to death

I'M SICK OF DEATH...



Fallen Minotaur

Sculpture

What strikes you most about this sculpture by Beth Carter? Isn't it amazing to think that it is made of bronze? Does the Minotaur make you think or feel anything? Do you think there is a story behind the sculpture?

Colouring in for Younger Learners



Colour in the Owl

How many animals can you find in the 168 Annual Open Exhibition? You can either look in the galleries or online. Let us know how many you counted!

You can copy the strong black outline here to make many more animals of your own, or colour in this one.

