



RWA

Secondary: Activity Pack 03

Exhibitions for Everyone



This Activity Pack was created by: Royal West of England Academy, Queen's Road, Clifton Bristol BS8 1PX
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RWA is Bristol's first public art gallery. It is in a beautiful building on Queens Road built in 1858 with a legacy from Ellen Sharples – an artist herself – for the promotion of fine art. Today we showcase the work of world-class, high profile artists in our main exhibitions, workshops and events.

Our current exhibition is: 168 Annual Open Exhibition

In this Activity 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 168 Open Exhibitions. These exhibitions are not presented in the same way as others that have themes or narratives that guide visitors around the artworks. Some of the earliest and most famous artists to exhibit at RWA Annual Open include:

1849 Valentine Bartholemew: He exhibited at RWA in an autumn exhibition called Works of Living Artists. An early member of the Society of Painters in Water Colours, he had a special talent for flower painting. His paintings are large in scale and full of detail. For many years he held the post of 'Flower Painter to the Queen'

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.

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.

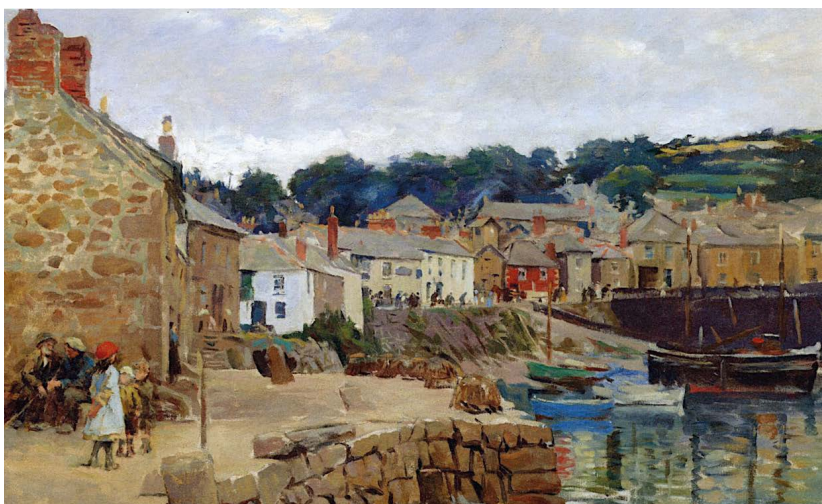
1972 Sir Hugh Casson: As an architect and interior designer, he was known for his role as director of architecture of the Festival of Britain in 1951, designing a building for the Royal College of Art and the interior of the royal yacht, Britannia. He exhibited four artworks at the 120th Annual Open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

Open exhibitions mean that *anybody* can present their artwork to the panel of selectors, and hope that their work gets chosen for the exhibition.

The selection panel changes each year, and is always made up of the Academy's President, Academicians, and external selectors, which can include curators, art critics, historians, collectors, writers, museums or gallery directors and established artists.

This year it included the RWA President, Fiona Robinson. She says she looked for artworks 'that are fresh and original, that surprise, delight, take risks and that challenge'.

Once the selectors have chosen artwork from *thousands* of submissions, the selected artworks (around 650 pieces) are hung in the galleries. Self-taught, unknown or emerging artists can find their work is hanging next to famous, art-school trained artists' paintings and sculpture.



Stanhope Forbes, *Mousehole*
near Newlyn, 1919

Invited artist Frank Bowling



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.

Layers of Emotion

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.

Bowling was the first black artist to be elected as a Royal Academician in 2005.

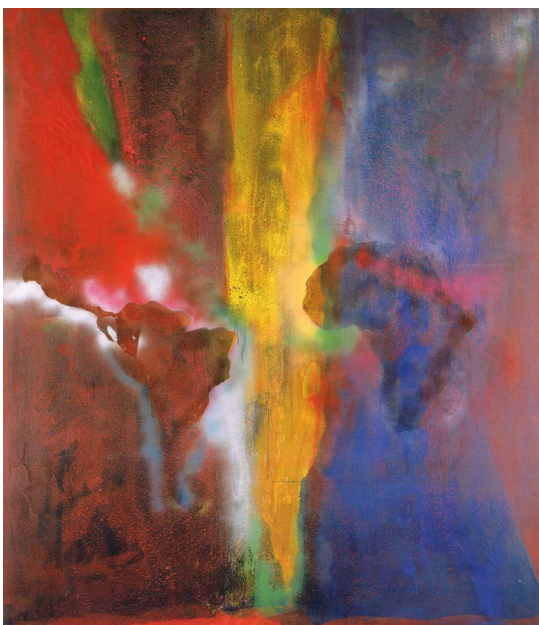
He spent time living and working in both New York and London. During the 1960s he made paintings by projecting map outlines onto canvas, working on a larger scale and moving into 'abstraction'. In the 1970s he focused on colour, sometimes pouring paint onto tilted canvases and in the 1980s he used acrylic gel and foam in his paintings. The 2000s saw his work become more sombre after the death of his son, and through the 2010s more layers of colour appeared.

Looking at 'Night Journey', one of Frank Bowling's early works, as inspiration - make a layered page in your sketchbook using maps or outlines of places that are important to you, and choose colours that describe your emotions.

How do the layers of imagery affect how we look at the painting as a whole?



Frank Bowling, *Pouring Over 2 Morrison Boys & 2 Maps I*, 2016
acrylic on canvas



Frank Bowling, *Night Journey*, 1968-69, acrylic on canvas, 328 x 269 cm

Pour it out

Bowling 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.

Look up these styles to see how they connect with Bowling's work.

One of the ways in which Bowling applied paint to the canvas was by pouring it. See if you can find out about pouring paint and think about why this was shocking when it was first seen in the late 1940s, and how and 'color field painting' developed in the 1950s.

How does it affect the 'energy' of a painting? How do the layers of imagery affect how we look at the painting as a whole?

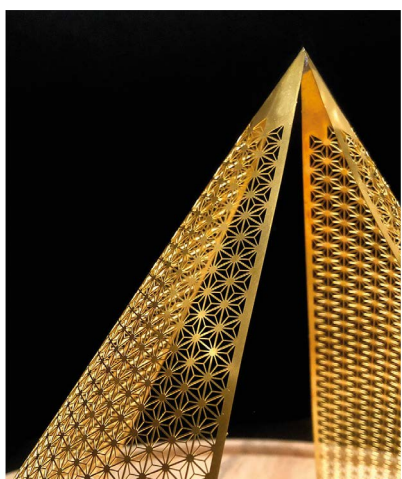
Look at the work of Jackson Pollock, Morris Louis, and Helen Frankenthaler.

Artists and their ideas

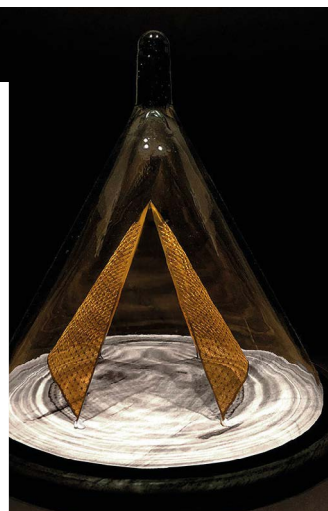
There is so much to see in 168 Annual Open – painting, printing, sculpture, architecture, you name it, it's probably there. How did so many artists come up with so many ideas? What inspires and influences them? Have a look at some of the work and see if you can imagine the thought-processes that lie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

Karl Singporewala is an architect and a sculptor. This piece, called 'Doppel Communion' is photo etched brass.

If an architect makes a model or design for a building, is that in itself a sculpture? What are the differences and similarities between designing public sculpture and public buildings?



Doppel Communion



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.

The Future is not what it used to be



3 Rusty Hinges

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? Look closely at the use of colour (for example, rust is not simply 'orange'). Challenge yourself to complete a page in your sketchbook using only coloured pencils.

Invited artist

Rebecca Salter PRA



Take some time to study this painting carefully. The artist, Rebecca Salter PRA, is the other invited artist at the 168 Annual Open Exhibition.

Rebecca Salter studied in Bristol and then at Kyoto City University of the Arts in Japan, where she lived for six years. She studied traditional Japanese woodblock printing and she creates both prints and paintings. The fine and delicate marks made on papers and canvas have been influenced by her time in Japan. Her work is incredibly detailed and takes a long time to make.

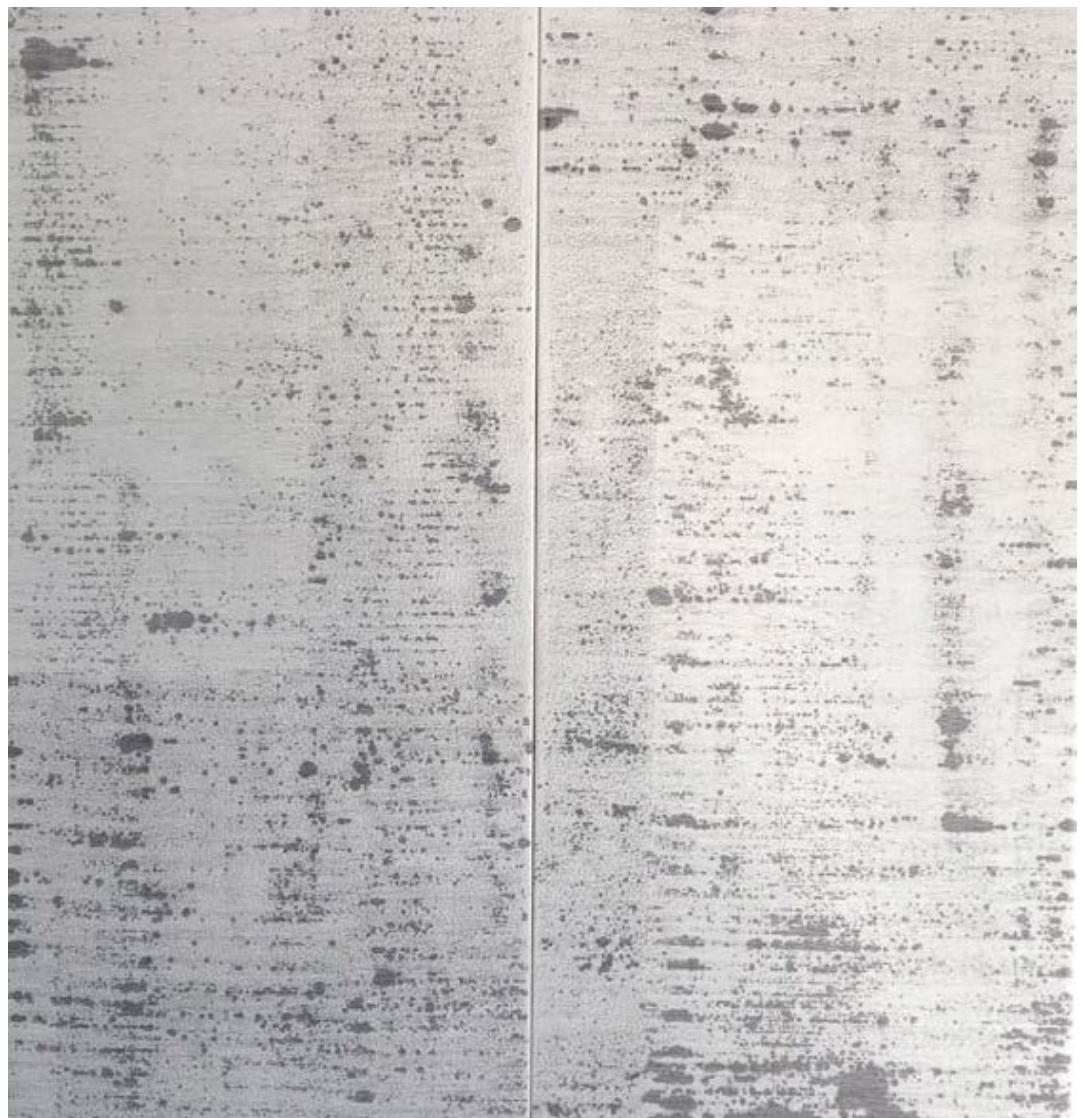
Where is your eye led? Do you think there is movement in this painting?

If you can zoom in, look at the mark-making in different areas.

Write a critique of this painting. Take into account its title (why is it a number?), when it was created, what you think the artwork does and says, what it makes you think about or reminds you of, and how it makes you feel.

Compare and contrast this painting with two of her others. You can challenge yourself to write this as a short essay, or just one or two paragraphs. Start by writing a mind-map or diagram of all the things that come into your mind as you concentrate on this artwork.

Try to push your critical writing further than you have previously, and write as though you are aiming to get it published. Who are you writing for? What do they know already, if anything?



Rebecca Salter, *Untitled JA9*, 2020, mixed media on muslin on linen, 160 x 150cm, 63 x 59ins

A brief history of Open Exhibitions at the Royal Academy and RWA

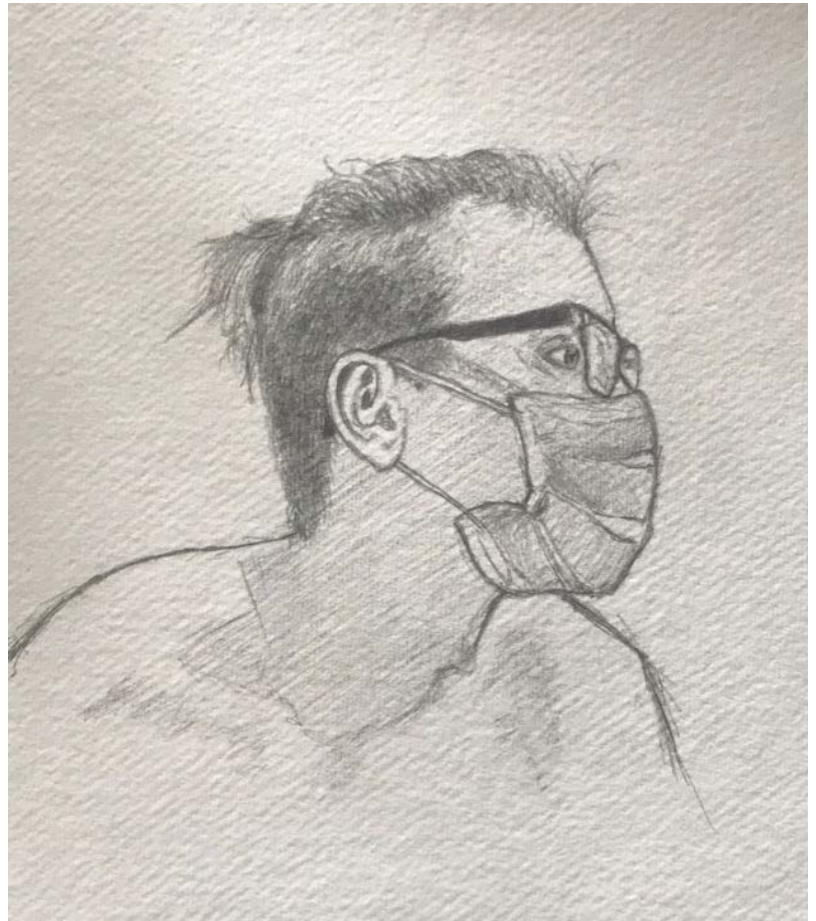
The Summer Exhibition (at the Royal Academy [RA] in London) has been held every year since 1769 and is the world's oldest open submission exhibition – which means that anyone can enter artwork to be considered for inclusion.

In the 18th century all the exhibits were figurative. 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.

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 during the 1800s. It was in 1844 that the RWA first Open Exhibition was held before the building was even built. 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.

In 1875, a large collection of JMW Turner watercolours supported the wider exhibition, which over 2000 people and 3000 school children visited.

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. 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.



'Quarantine Blues' by James Rowe (aged 17). This pencil drawing was exhibited in the online RWA exhibition of Yr 11 – Yr 13 work in May 2020.

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.



Daniella, Anna Emmett Martin (age 18) QEH School

Did you know that there is **no minimum age** limit for submissions to the Annual Open? There has been a painting by a 15-year-old selected before... so perhaps that gives you something to think about. Will you submit work for selection next year? Have a look at the very high standard of the work shown this year, and set your sights on something ambitious!

Voices and Listening

RWA Annual Open exhibitions attract more visitors than other exhibitions. It might be because there is a greater representation of artists across Bristol and the Southwest than in other exhibitions.

How have you seen increased representation of the voices of young people across Bristol over recent months? For example, look at the impact of Rising Arts Agency's 'Whose Future' campaign across the city. Young creative people made a huge impact with this poster campaign, which shouted loudly about racism, access issues and the climate crisis, getting people to pay attention to these and other current issues.

Some of the works in this year's Annual Open deal directly with issues of racism, injustice and inequality. Look at these artworks carefully and use them to inform a piece of work in response. You can do this in writing, music, painting or another art form, to make an expressive piece of work.



Harry Lloyd-Evans,
Representation-matters

Visibility

What does Harry Lloyd-Evans' photograph, 'Representation Matters', express? Think about what fills the image, and what the photographer needed to do to capture the moment. Talk to your peers and your family about why representation matters.

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/

Have you ever made a piece of art in direct response to an event that has happened in your lifetime? Draw a couple of ideas into your sketchbook.

WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS?

I'm sick of death

I'm sick to death

I'M SICK OF DEATH...



Ruby Walker's photograph has captured Black Bristolian women who are designers, filmmakers and activists, educating and inspiring the next generation. Look at how they fill the space in the photo and represent young people's hopes for a secure and empowering future. What are your hopes for the future? Write them in a letter and send it to someone in authority (e.g. cultural leader, mayor, MP) calling them to action so that your hopes can become real possibilities.

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 the viewer? Think of something intangible (unable to be touched) and enjoy some playful drawing to try and capture the nature of it just with pencil and paper.



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



Airstream

Painting

Simon Garden's painting 'Airstream' is magical and dreamlike. How do you interpret it, as sinister, as joyful, as creepy or as playful? Map out a dream of your own in a similar way, fitting as much of the dream as you can into one image, but in your own style.

Sculpture

In this bronze sculpture by Beth Carter, the title tells us that the Minotaur has fallen. Consider what struggle might have gone on. The Minotaur is, throughout history, a mythical symbol of exaggerate 'maleness'. Does this particular character seem to say something different?



Fallen Minotaur



The Elephant and the Sun

Drawing

This exquisite drawing by Meg Buick is so full of movement. Look closely at the marks she has made to distinguish land from sky and animal from cloth. Often we use animals as symbols in art. What might the elephant symbolise? If you have never made an animal before, you might enjoy seeing other people having a go in Episode 2 of Grayson's Art Club from May 2020 (Channel 4), and trying your own.

Conclusion



Express yourself

Over the hundreds of years that the RWA has held Annual Open exhibitions, tastes, styles, techniques and processes have all changed and developed. Artists throughout history have explored their own means of expression.

Think about some of the challenges that face artists today. For example, how do new and emerging artists get their work seen, and by whom? How can artists make a living from selling their work? What if the work that an artist is compelled to make is not a physical object? What if it is not sellable?

Find an artist in the 168 Annual Open Exhibition that intrigues or inspires you. Write to them to ask them about how they got to their current stage of career. Send your letter to RWA to send on to the artist. Perhaps you will even be able to inspire them, by sending an image of something you have created?

Post your pictures and use @RWABristol or @royalwestofenglandacademy to connect with us.

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Peter Ford RWA, *Plantation 1*,
paperwork and relief print, 122x89cm,
RWA Permanent Collection