



Nineteenth-Century British Art and the Death of the Academic Tradition

- **This lesson is about the death, or more accurately the gradual decline, of academic painting but let's talk first about what it was and how it began.**
- Academic painting was art that was **acceptable** to the Royal Academy as described by Sir Joshua **Reynolds** in his lecture series called the **Discourses**.
- The Royal Academy of Arts was founded in **1768** and it exerted an **enormous** influence over the development of art during the nineteenth century. The equivalent in France was the Académie de peinture et de sculpture ("Academy of Painting and Sculpture") founded by Cardinal Mazarin in 1648 and renamed the Académie des Beaux-Arts ("**Academy of Fine Arts**") in 1816.
- We look at the ways in which the Royal Academy imposed a **hierarchy of genres** or types of art and how it created a standard for **educating artists** and defined what was **acceptable** in art. Most important for the artist, the Royal Academy created an artist's **reputation** and a **marketplace**. Paintings were exhibited each year at an annual public exhibition.
- There were other venues for artists to exhibit their work but it was not until the opening of the **Grosvenor Gallery** in 1877 that artists had a substantial alternative venue for exhibiting their art in public.
- We will also see how many artworks unsettled and eventually **destroyed this hierarchy** by redefining the genres.

Notes

Other Societies, Academies and Exhibitions

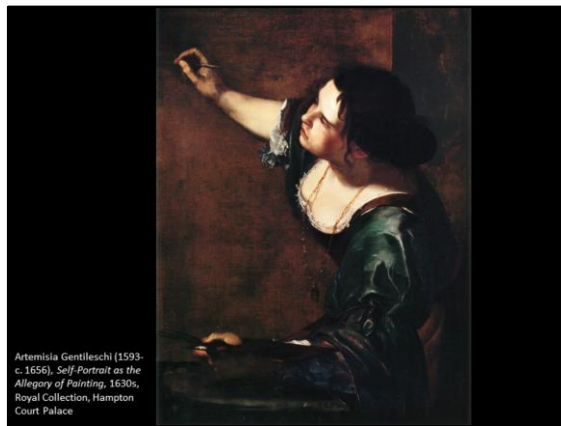
- **Dilettante Society, about 1732**, Horace Walpole condemned it as a society whose entrance qualifications were having been on the Grand Tour and being drunk. Its early membership included several dukes but by Joshua Reynolds, David Garrick, Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight, and others joined later.
- **St. Martin's Lane Academy 1735**, a precursor to the Royal Academy and founded by William Hogarth. A life-drawing class was set up by Sir Godfrey

Kneller in 1711 and taken over by Sir James Thornhill in 1718. Thornhill carried on running the classes until his death in 1734 when his son-in-law Hogarth took over and used the equipment to set up the St. Martin's Lane Academy.

- **Foundling Hospital 1742:** built in Bloomsbury Fields for foundlings but became the first contemporary gallery for British art. The exhibitions of pictures at the Foundling Hospital, which were organized by the Dilettante Society, led to the formation of the Royal Academy in 1768. William Hogarth, who was childless, had a long association with the Hospital and was a founding Governor. He designed the children's uniforms and the coat of arms, and he and his wife Jane fostered foundling children. Hogarth also decided to set up a permanent art exhibition in the new buildings, encouraging other artists to produce work for the hospital. Several contemporary English artists decorated the walls of the hospital, including Sir Joshua Reynolds, Thomas Gainsborough, Richard Wilson and Francis Hayman.
- **RSA 1754:** The **Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce** (RSA) is a London based, British organisation committed to finding practical solutions to today's social challenges. Founded in **1754** as the Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufacture and Commerce, it was granted a Royal Charter in 1847. It hosted the first exhibition of contemporary art in **1760**. Thomas Gainsborough and Sir Joshua Reynolds exhibited at this first exhibition.
- **RA 1768:** The **Royal Academy** had 34 founders out of 40 possible.
- **BI 1805:** The **British Institution** (in full, the **British Institution for Promoting the Fine Arts in the United Kingdom**; founded **1805**, disbanded 1867) was a private 19th-century society in London formed to exhibit the works of living and dead artists; it was also known as the Pall Mall Picture Galleries or the British Gallery. Unlike the Royal Academy it admitted only connoisseurs, dominated by the nobility, rather than practicing artists.
- **RWS 1804:** The society was founded as the *Society of Painters in Water Colours* (sometimes referred to as the **Old Water Colour Society**, and just Old Society) in **1804** by William Frederick Wells. The members were from the Royal Academy where they felt that their work commanded insufficient respect and attention. In 1812, the Society reformed as the Society of Painters in Oil and Watercolours, reverting to its original name in 1820. The Society obtained its Royal charter 1881 as the Royal Society of Painters in Water Colours. In 1988, it changed its name again to the **Royal Watercolour Society**, by which it had always previously been generally known.
- **RBA 1823:** The **Royal Society of British Artists** (RBA) is a British art body established in 1823 as the Society of British Artists, as an alternative to the Royal Academy. However, for much of the nineteenth century it was mostly filled with paintings rejected by the Royal Academy. Whistler joined in 1884

and was made President in 1886. In 1887, the Jubilee year, Whistler presented Queen Victoria with an illustrated album and she was so pleased she gave it the title 'Royal'. The dispute with the RA caused Whistler to ask his members to resign from the RA and the controversy resulted in his defeat by one vote at the AGM and so he and 25 others resigned.

- **RI 1831:** The ***New Society of Painters in Water Colours*** was founded in **1831**, competing with the Royal Watercolour Society (RWS). The New Society differed from the RWS in policy, by exhibiting non-members' work also. Both societies challenged the Royal Academy's refusal to accept the medium of watercolours as appropriate for serious art. In 1863 there was a name change to the **Institute of Painters in Water Colours**. In 1883 it acquired its own premises at Piccadilly. In 1885 it added "**Royal**" to its title by command of Queen Victoria. When the lease to the Piccadilly premises ran out in 1970, it moved to the Mall Galleries, near to Trafalgar Square.
- **Grosvenor Gallery**, founded by Sir Coutts Lindsay and his wife Blanche in **1877**, New Bond Street and it held an exhibition every year until 1890. It provided an alternative to the Royal Academy for artists such as James McNeill Whistler, Edward Burne-Jones and Walter Crane.
- **NEAC 1885:** The New English Art Club was founded as an alternate venue to the Royal Academy. Artists returning from Paris held the first exhibition in 1886 including Thomas Cooper Gotch, Frank Bramley, John Singer Sargent, Philip Wilson Steer, George Clausen and Stanhope Forbes.



Artemisia Gentileschi (1593-c. 1656), *Self-Portrait as the Allegory of Painting*, 1630s, Royal Collection, Hampton Court Palace

- The first art academy was the **Academy of Fine Arts Florence**, which was created in **1563** by Cosimo de' Medici and Vasari. It was both the city guild and the artists of Cosimo's court. It emphasized '**Disegno**' (design, line, drawing, planning, thoughtful) rather than '**colorito**' (colour, emotional, direct, spontaneous), a distinction that pervades later art up to the nineteenth century.
- Britain was one of the **last countries** in Europe to create a national art academy. The principal reason was that in most countries art was seen as a propaganda weapon used by governments, towns and wealthy people. In Britain the government never regarded art as important and the Royal Academy was only successful because it cost George III nothing as the admission charge to the annual exhibition covered all the costs.
- I have selected a painting that is currently on display at Hampton Court Palace. It is by Artemisia Gentileschi (1593-c.1656) who was the **first woman** to be admitted to the **Academy of Fine Arts Florence** in 1616.
- She was the most accomplished painter of her generation after Caravaggio but sadly she is known today for being raped by another artist. She was the eldest child of the painter Orazio Gentileschi and worked in his workshop. Orazio hired the painter Agostino Tassi (1578-1644) to tutor his daughter. Tassi was a minor painter who is best known today for raping Artemisia. In the ensuing 7-month rape trial, it was discovered that Tassi had planned to murder his wife, had committed incest with his sister-in-law and planned to steal some of Orazio's paintings. At the end of the trial Tassi was imprisoned for one year but his verdict was annulled and he was free in 1613. The most appalling aspect of the trial was that Artemisia was tortured using thumbscrews to verify her testimony.
- For this painting it is likely that Artemisia used Cesar **Ripa's Iconology**, a widely used handbook of symbols, that specified *Pittura* (Painting) should be personified by a picture of a woman wearing a **gold chain** with a pendant **mask** for **imitation**, **unruly locks** for **inspiration**, a **colourful gown** for **skill** and a **gagged mouth**

symbolising painting as mute poetry. The gag is absent but perhaps the painting itself signifies that women were never listened to as artists.

- The dynamic pose is one of the **most creative** in all self-portraits. The remarkable thing about this work is that it shows her as a working artist **getting dirty**. Artists during and after the Renaissance were always keen to **disassociate** themselves from **manual work**. It was concerned with status, artists wanted to emphasize the **intellectual** aspect of painting, the **mathematics** of perspective and the erudition of their **classical scholarship** rather than the **manual work** of putting paint on canvas. This is a profound message from Gentileschi.
- **Key point:** the British government has never subsidised or promoted art or design to the detriment of British industry. We shall see later how this policy restricted trade in the nineteenth century because of the lack of good designers.

Notes

- The Academies were to do with **protecting jobs** and **conveying status**.
- In **1648, Louis XIV of France** founded the '**Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture**' and Cardinal Mazarin modelled it on the Academy of St Luke in Rome. In France, in **return for status** artists became part of the **state establishment** and in 1661 became dedicated to the **glorification** of Louis XIV and a '**royal style**', i.e. a classical style. It reached its greatest power under the directorship of Charles le Brun. In 1793 the 'Royal' was dropped and in 1816 it became the *Académie des beaux-arts* when it combined with music and architecture and became one of the five academies of the *Institut de France*.
- **And some others...**
 - Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp (Belgium), 1663.
 - Royal Academy of Art, The Hague (Netherlands), 1682.
 - Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna (Austria), 1692.
 - Danish Royal Academy (Denmark), 1754.
 - The Russian Academy of Arts, St. Petersburg (Russia), 1757.

A Brief Background to Art Academies

- One of the earliest and most important European academies was the Academy of Fine Arts in Florence. The Accademia e Compagnia delle Arti del Disegno, or 'academy and company of the arts of drawing', was founded in 1563 by Cosimo I de' Medici under the influence of Giorgio Vasari. It was made up of two parts: the Company was a kind of guild for all working artists, while the Academy was for more eminent artistic personalities of Cosimo's court, and supervised artistic production in Tuscany. It was later called the Accademia delle Arti del Disegno. Artists included Michelangelo Buonarroti, Francesco da Sangallo, Agnolo Bronzino, Benvenuto Cellini, Giorgio Vasari and Giambologna were members.
- Most members of the Accademia were male; Artemisia Gentileschi was the first woman to be admitted in 1616 when she lived in Florence. This is believed to be a self-portrait where she presents herself as the epitome of painting. Artemisia Gentileschi was an Italian Baroque painter who is today considered one of the most accomplished artists in the generation following Michelangelo Merisi da

Caravaggio (1571?-1610). Her skill as an artist has long been overshadowed by the story of how she was raped by Agostino Tassi (1578-1644) and then had the bravery to take her rapist to court, suffer thumbscrews which were used to test that she was telling the truth and win. The trial lasted seven months and it was discovered he had planned to murder his wife, had committed incest with his sister-in-law and planned to steal her father's paintings. He was imprisoned for two years but released the following year.

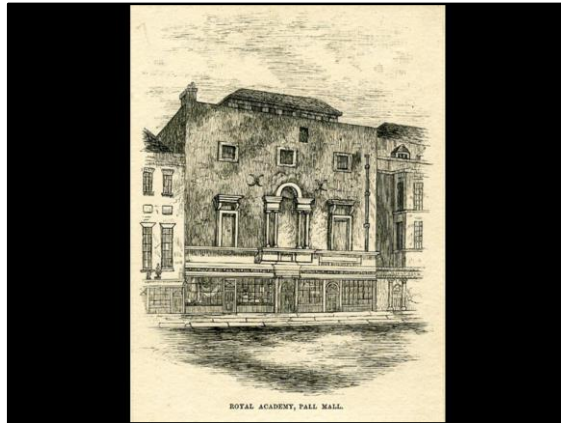
- There was no ancient Greek muse of painting as it was held in low regard. Plato regarded painting as producing a copy of reality and therefore taking us further away from the ultimate forms or ideas beyond reality. Renaissance artists established painting as an important art form by pointing out the intellectual skill needed to produce a history painting rather than the manual skill of mixing colours and producing a likeness. The formation of the Academy in Florence established artists as important members of the court and it opened a gap between fine art and applied or decorative art.
- In France, the first private academy to become 'official' and to this day the most prestigious of governmental academies is the Académie Française ('French Academy'), founded in 1634 by Cardinal Richelieu. It is concerned with the French language. In the fine arts, the Académie de peinture et de sculpture ('Academy of Painting and Sculpture') was founded by Cardinal Mazarin in 1648. Apart from a short break at the time of the French Revolution it remains until today. It holds an annual exhibition known as the Salon. The "**battle of styles**" was a conflict over whether **Peter Paul Rubens** or **Nicolas Poussin** was a suitable model to follow. Followers of Poussin, called "poussinistes", argued that line (**disegno**) should **dominate** art, because of its appeal to the intellect, while followers of **Rubens**, called "rubenistes", argued that color (**colore**) should dominate art, because of its appeal to emotion. The debate was **revived** in the early 19th century, under the movements of **Neoclassicism** typified by the artwork of Jean Auguste Dominique **Ingres**, and **Romanticism** typified by the artwork of Eugène **Delacroix**. Debates also occurred over whether it was better to learn art by **looking at nature**, or to learn by **looking at the artistic masters** of the past.

References

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Accademia_di_Belle_Arti_di_Firenze

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artemisia_Gentileschi

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acad%C3%A9mie_royale_de_peinture_et_de_sculpture



Engraving of the first Royal Academy premises in Pall Mall

- In England the Royal Academy was not set up until **1768**
- It has **moved** over the years. It started in Pall Mall and moved to the Old then New Somerset House, then the National Gallery, then Burlington House.
- The first president was Sir Joshua **Reynolds** (who gave 15 annual *Discourses* over 21 years).
- It taught art, it held a Summer Exhibition and it appointed **40 Academicians**.

Key point: Once set up, the Royal Academy was powerful and controlled fine art from training to exhibiting

Royal Academy

- Founders: **Sir William Chambers**, architect, and friend of George III, Joshua **Reynolds**, Thomas **Gainsborough**, Angelica **Kaufmann**, Mary **Moser**, George Michael Moser (father Mary Moser and goldsmith to George III), Thomas and Paul **Sandy** (brothers), **Benjamin West** and **Richard Wilson**. **Johann Zoffany** was added later. The open Annual Exhibition started in 1769 and 136 works were shown.
- It was originally housed in **Pall Mall** (1768-1771, **4 years**), the **Old Somerset House** (1771-1780, **9 years**), then **New Somerset House** (1780-1837, **57 years**, designed by **William Chambers**), east wing **National Gallery**, Trafalgar Square (1837-1868, **31 years**, designed by another RA **William Wilkins**) then Burlington House, Piccadilly (1868-today, **146 years**).

In England, it took much longer for an art academy supported by Royalty to be created. It was not until 1768 that George III was convinced that a Royal Academy should be created and this was only because it was **self-financing** from the entrance fee to the annual exhibition. It was at first housed in a building in Pall Mall on the south-side facing Market Lane (now the Royal Opera Arcade); the site is now occupied by the Institute of Directors. In 1771 it move to Old Somerset House in the Strand and when the site was redeveloped in 1780 it occupied the new building designed by **William Chambers**. In **1837** it moved to the east wing of the newly

completed **National Gallery** in Trafalgar Square designed by **William Wilkins** (1778-1839, architect, classical scholar and archaeologist). In **1868** it moved to **Burlington House** in Piccadilly where it remains today.

The original aim was to establish 40 artists known as Royal Academicians (RA) and the following year the category of Associate Royal Academician (ARA) was introduced as a stepping stone. It was also agreed to hold an annual exhibition known as the Summer Exhibition and to open a School for artists who would be taught by the RAs. Its most important founding members were Thomas Gainsborough, Joshua Reynolds, Angelica Kaufmann, Mary Moser, Paul Sandby, Benjamin West, Richard Wilson and Johann Zoffany.

In his **fifteen Discourses** given between **1769 and 1790 (21 years)** Joshua Reynolds laid down the attributes of fine art. He stressed the importance of copying the Old Masters, and of drawing from casts after the Antique and from the life model. He argued that such a training would form artists capable of creating works of high moral and artistic worth and he endorsed the categories, or genres, of painting established by the French Academy. In France the government commissioned such grand paintings for town halls and government buildings but there was no market in England.

Somerset House

- Old Somerset House was partly designed by Inigo Jones and later Christopher Wren.
- Edward Seymour, Protector of Edward VI built a residence on the site in 1547. This required churches and chapels to be demolished which led to his imprisonment in the Tower although he was quickly released. It was finished in 1551 and cost £10,000. It had a courtyard and a Strand façade. The architect is not known but may have been John Thynne. He was arrested that year for treason and executed in 1552.
- It was then occupied by Princess Elizabeth until her accession in 1558 when she moved to Whitehall and St. James and used it for council meetings and to house foreign diplomats.
- It became the residence of the queen consort which is why it was called Denmark House after Anne of Denmark, wife of James I. It became the centre of English social and artistic life. Anne rebuilt it in 1609 to Inigo Jones's design with nine arches to the Strand. The cost was £34,500 the most ruinously expensive exercise of James I's reign.
- Charles 1 came to the throne in 1625 and his wife Henrietta Maria of France, a Roman Catholic, extended the house using Inigo Jones, John Webb and Nicholas Stone. Jones built the queen's Catholic chapel. Jones died at Somerset House in 1652.
- It was used as General Fairfax's headquarters. The royal collection was gathered at Denmark House in 1649 and sold in lots; some 1,760 pictures, including works by Leonardo, Raphael, Michelangelo, Correggio, Titian, Tintoretto, Holbein and Van Dyck, amongst others.

- Oliver Cromwell died in 1658 and was laid in state at Somerset House. John Evelyn records in his diary, "It was the joyfulest funeral I ever saw; for there were none that cried but dogs..." because it meant the end of the strict puritan rule.
- Pepys records Charles II climbed the wall of Somerset House to visit Frances Teresa Stewart the Lady of the Bedchamber to Catherine of Braganza. She took up permanent residence in 1685 as Queen Dowager following Charles II's death and ordered major renovations. William and Mary restricted her Catholic servants and in 1693 she became Regent of Portugal and left England, the last queen to reside in the building.
- In the 18th century it was used as grace and favour apartments and for masked balls or masquerades, both private and public by subscription. The Guardian wrote, "The being in disguise takes away the usual checks and restraints of modesty..." and one notorious society lady "appeared as Iphigeneia for the sacrifice, but so naked the high priest might easily inspect the entrails of the victim"!
- From 1722 the Horse and the Foot Guards used it and it fell into disrepair, Vanbrugh said it was the 'most out of repair' of all the royal palaces. George III agreed to pull the palace down and Buckingham Palace took its place as the official house for the queen. Buckingham House was a large town house built for the Duke of Buckingham in 1703. It was acquired by George III in 1761 (for £21,000) for Queen Charlotte and was known as the 'Queen's House'. It was enlarged in the 19th century by John Nash. It became the official palace of the British Monarch on the accession of Queen Victoria.
- The demolition of Old Somerset House began in 1775. The Royal Academy was one of the last residents of the old and became one of the first of the new.
- Sir William Chambers, one of the founders of the Royal Academy designed and built the new Somerset House and by 1780 the North Wing, fronting the Strand was complete. The design was based on Inigo Jones's drawings of the riverfront of the former building. Chambers died in 1796 and it was completed by James Wyatt. This did not include the West wing on Waterloo Bridge and the Thames came up to the arches of the South Wing.
- James Pennethorne built the West wing extension facing the entrance to Waterloo bridge 1849-56.
- Joseph Bazalgette built the embankment in 1864-70.

Burlington House

- Five learned societies
- Piccadilly was a country lane and some large country houses were built on the north side in the 17th century including Sir John Denham in 1664, red brick hipped roof. Sold to the 1st Earl of Burlington in 1667. In 1704 the 3rd Earl built colonnades and a Baroque interior. In 1717-8 it was restarted in the new strict Palladian style with the interior the first by William Kent. Lord Burlington switched his energies to Chiswick House and it was sold in 1815 for £70,000 and changes made. Burlington Arcade was built in 1819.
- In 1854 it was sold to the Government for £140,000 to be demolished as a site for the University of London but the opposition meant that in 1857 learned societies moved in including the Royal Academy in 1867. It employed Sidney Smirke (Carlton

Club, Pall Mall and reading room at British Museum) to build galleries on the gardens to the north and he added a third storey. The Piccadilly frontage was added in 1873 by Charles Barry.



Johan Zoffany (1733-1810), *The Portraits of the Academicians of the Royal Academy*, 1771-72, Royal Collection

- Johan Zoffany, **cannibal**, founding RA
- Note all the **symbolism**, thoughtful workers
- Mock **School of Athens** with Reynolds (Plato) and William Hunter
- **Chinaman**
- Two female founder academicians but only as portraits. **Why?**
- This is a painting by Johan **Zoffany** showing the original academicians. Zoffany was a **German painter** active in England and was one of the **founding members** of the Royal Academy and a **court painter**. He lived at **Strand-on-the-Green** and is buried at St Anne's Church, Kew near to Thomas Gainsborough. He is best known as 'the first and last Royal Academician to have become a **cannibal**'. He was shipwrecked on the Andaman Islands (south of Burma) when returning from Lucknow in central North India; the starving survivors drew lots and a young sailor was duly eaten.
- Zoffany depicts himself **far left** at the bottom, the only artist holding the tools of the trade.
- Note the working symbols, the classical casts and the simple use of **packing cases** as seats. They are **discussing** the nude not drawing emphasising the key importance of the **intellectual** element of drawing or 'designo' as first defined by Renaissance artists in Florence. The model in the foreground adopts the pose of **Spinario**, a famous classical statue. The flames of the candles show Newton's **spectrum of colours** emphasising the scientific and technical in art and the pre-eminence of British intellect. The students sit at the semi-circular bench and each has an individual candle and there is one central light. There are two male models and various casts of bodies and body parts including a **female torso** bottom **right** into which the Academician and dandy Richard Cosway **thrusts his cane**.

Key point: the Royal Academy reinforced painting as a male dominated world



Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino (1483-1520, 'Raphael'), *The School of Athens*, 1509-1510, Apostolic Palace, Vatican City

- It is a **good-humoured**, mock-heroic, **pastiche** of **Raphael's *School of Athens*** with Sir Joshua **Reynolds** (1723-1792) with **ear trumpet** and **William Hunter** (1718-1783) to his right playing the roles of Plato and Aristotle. Hunter was a **Scottish anatomist**, physician and the outstanding obstetrician of his day who lectured on anatomy at the Royal Academy. He is a scientist shown deep in thought reinforcing the idea of art as an intellectual activity rather than a manual craft. It is also clear that the session is good humoured, chatty and fun like a **gentleman's club** unlike what were regarded as the **decedent French** or the serious, **brooding Italians**.



Johan Zoffany (1733-1810), *The Portraits of the Academicians of the Royal Academy*, 1771-72, Royal Collection

- There are two **oddities**, the **Chinaman**, fifth from the left (can you find him?), **Tanche-qua** was visiting London and was not a member. Oliver Goldsmith, the RA Professor of Poetry wrote a series of letters supposedly written by a Chinaman visiting London.
- The other notable inclusion are the two portraits on the right of **Angelica Kauffman** (1741-1807, No. 30) and **Mary Moser** (1744-1819, No. 31). (Note, Moser's father **George Moser** was the Keeper and is seen **posing the model**, No. 29). They were part of the original membership as they were well known competent artists. However, from the beginning, women were excluded from holding any office within the organization and from assuming lectureships or attending life classes. After Kauffman and Moser died, the Royal Academy discouraged women from studying art in its school and failed to invite another woman painter to join until 1922, when Annie Louisa Swynnerton (1844-1933) achieved associate Royal Academy membership. The first full member was **Laura Knight** (1877-190, *née Johnson*) in 1936 170 years later. In 1843 a **Female School of Art and Design** was set up and part funded by the Academy and this discouraged women from joining the academy. In **1860, Laura Anne Herford** was admitted to the **Antique School** by judges who did not know she was a woman as she used her initials. Soon after, a few more women artists were admitted including **Louisa Starr** who won medals in 1865 and 1867.

Notes

- **Four male models** held a pose for two hours at a time aided by a staff or, as seen, a **rope**. A **female model** sat three nights a week, every other week but were regarded with suspicion being regarded as no better than **prostitutes**. No unmarried men under 20 were permitted to draw the female nude. Women artists were not allowed to draw any nude, including the female nude, until 1893 when the partly draped figure was introduced into a female life class. There is a full length drawing by Mary **Moser** of a standing **female nude** suggesting she may have

had the opportunity, perhaps at **St. Martin's Lane Academy** where her father provided models (but it may have been copied). Kauffman copied drawings by other artists, casts of Classical sculpture and heads and limbs of clothed models.

- There were **women prodigies**, for example, **Helen Beatson** exhibited a picture in 1779 at the age of 11.
- **Footnote:** In the life class today is the **crucified cast** of **Joseph Legg**, an 80-year old Irishman who was **hanged** on 2 November 1801 and then while still warm **crucified** to show the academicians how a real corpse would hang. It was carried out by three academicians Benjamin West (No. 3), Richard Cosway (No. 35) and Thomas Banks.

KEY

Unless otherwise stated, artists are founder members of the Academy:

1. John Gwynn (1713–86), architect
2. Giovanni Battista Cipriani (1727–85), painter
3. Benjamin West (1738–1820), given a posture resembling his heroic history paintings and derived from the standing figure at the left foreground of the School of Athens; given prominence as an artist favoured by the King
4. Johan Zoffany, as if introducing his work, made RA by royal nomination in 1769
5. Mason Chamberlin (1727–87), portrait painter
6. Tan-che-qua, Chinese artist visiting London
7. George Barret (1732–84), landscape painter
8. Joseph Wilton (1722–1803), sculptor
9. Jeremiah Meyer (1735–89), miniature painter
10. Dominic Serres (1719–93), marine painter
11. The brothers Paul (1725–1809)
12. and Thomas (1721–98) Sandby, behaving fraternally, the former wearing Windsor uniform, though the latter was Deputy Ranger of Windsor Great Park
13. William Tyler (1728–1801), sculptor and architect
14. John Inigo Richards (1731–1810), painter
15. Francis Hayman (1708–76), popular painter of the St Martin's Lane generation, resembling Falstaff from one of his own compositions
16. Francis Milner Newton (1720–94), painter
17. Sir William Chambers (1723–96), architect and treasurer of the Academy
18. Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723–92), first President
19. William Hunter (1718–83), famous surgeon and Professor of Anatomy at the Academy
20. Francesco Bartolozzi (1727–1815), engraver
21. Agostino Carlini (c.1718–90), sculptor and painter
22. Richard Wilson (1714–82), landscape painter; it was said that Zoffany painted and then removed a coat of arms of pipes and tankards to allude to Wilson's drunkenness
23. Charles Catton The Elder (1728–98), satirical painter appropriately adopting the pose of the Cynic, Diogenes, from Raphael's School of Athens
24. Richard Yeo (c.1720–79), medallist
25. Samuel Wale (1721–86), painter

26. Francesco Zuccarelli (1702–88), landscape painter given prominence as an artist favoured by the King
27. Edward Penny (1714–91), painter
28. Peter Toms (c.1728–77), painter
29. George Michael Moser (1706–83), enamellist and Keeper of the Academy, here setting the model's pose and holding the sling to support his hand in comfort
30. Angelica Kauffmann (1741–1807), history painter, represented as a portrait hanging on the wall, as it was considered improper for a woman to attend the life school
31. Mary Moser (1744–1819), flower painter, represented as a painting for the same reasons as the above
32. Nathaniel Hone (1718–84), famously arrogant portrait painter given here a suitable swagger; his shadow across a canvas perhaps alludes to the supposed origin of painting (a Corinthian maid tracing her lover's shadow)
33. Edward Burch (1730–1814), miniature painter and gem-cutter elected in 1771
34. Joseph Nollekens (1737–1823), sculptor elected in 1772
35. Richard Cosway (1742–1821), flattering portrait painter and famous dandy, here looking the part and perhaps denigrating the antique with his cane, elected in 1771. Had an open affair with Mary Moser.
36. William Hoare (1707–92), portrait painter working in Bath



Engraving of 'The Exhibition of the Royal Academy 1787', 36.1 x 49.9 cm, painted by Johann Heinrich Ramberg (1763- 1840) and engraved by Antonio Martini Pietro (1738- 1797).

- In May, 1770 Horace Walpole reported that '***The rage to see these exhibitions is so great, that sometimes one cannot pass through the streets were they are***'. 60,000 visitors attended the rebuilt Somerset House in 1780. This shows not so much the public support for fine art but that the royal patronage made it a place to be seen and to see other people in society. Here we see **The Prince of Wales** being shown round the exhibition by Sir Joshua Reynolds.
- At the Exhibition paintings were hung frame-to-frame, floor to ceiling. They could be **skied** or, the best position, '**on the line**'. Most were portraits and many were full length, so called **swagger portraits**. The **Varnishing Days** were three days before the exhibition opened when RAs and ARAs could put finishing touches to their pictures. The Varnishing Days were a major social occasion when Academicians could meet, often for the only time each year. There was a Royal Private View, a Private View for high society and a Banquet on the final Saturday before the exhibition opened on the first Monday in May each year.
- There was a wooden line around the room at Somerset House and the description 'on the line' has been defined by some art historians as when the top edge of the painting was level with the ledge which was eight feet from the floor. Others have defined it as when the bottom edge of the painting rested on the ledge. There are few historic descriptions of exactly how paintings were hung and this engraving is good evidence. Because of the crowds it is likely that a painting needed to be large and above the heads of the crowd to be seen. The paintings below the line appear to be small and because of the crowds easily missed.
- The crowds and the difficulty of seeing anything shows why Constable painted six-footers that would be hung on the line.
- Gainsborough, a founder, had his (unreasonable) request have a painting hung at 5.5", across the line, refused and he instead exhibited it at Schomberg House, Pall Mall (where he lived at No. 80 from 1774 to his death in 1788). Incidentally, next door was No. 81 which included the Temple of Health and Hymen with its 'celestial

bed' (an electrical bed that allegedly cured infertility) hired out at £50 a night and a high-class brothel and gambling den.

Key point: the Summer Exhibition became a major society event.

Notes

- V&A note on the engraving they own, 'The Prince of Wales is being shown around the Royal Academy's summer exhibition at Somerset House. This annual exhibition presented work by contemporary artists. It began in 1769 and became a major fixture in London's artistic and social life - an opportunity to buy art, exercise taste and be seen.'
- By the 1870s the 'Exhibition of the Works of Living Artists' came to be known as the Summer Exhibition. The RA charged a shilling to keep out '*the noxious effluvia of the vulgar herd*' (newspaper report mentioned by BBC). I have not been able to find this quote but Chambers's *Edinburgh Journal* in **1853** lists many events that **cost a shilling** - exhibitions, lectures, the Zoological gardens, Cremorne Gardens, a single French, German or Italian lesson, singing, violin or flute lesson, a guide through the ruins of a castle or country house, charged by a fortune teller and paid by a 'simple servant girl', popular books for the railway, journals, music sheets, opera librettos, box of paints, notepaper. It is a morally respectable amount, we wait for change from a shilling but not for sixpence, and a half crown is a major transaction.
- From 1869 to 1878 average attendance was c. **300,000** (£15,000 at 1s entrance). From 1879, the first year of Leighton's Presidency, until 1899 average attendance was 355,000. There was a huge increase in **numbers of works** submitted from **136 in 1769**, 6,415 in 1879 to **12,408 in 1896** (and **13,000 today**).

Summer Exhibition

- The summer exhibition was held in the great room at Somerset House and noble society gathered in a room whose walls were covered with paintings from floor to ceiling. In the centre of the room is the Prince of Wales, wearing a red jacket and standing next to Joshua Reynolds.
- The number of pictures increased each year from 547 in 1781 to 1,165 in 1821 so they had to be **hung frame to frame**. The position was determined by the Hanging Committee and the position of a painting was critical to it being seen. Small pieces and pieces by lesser known artists were skied and Constable created his 'six footers' to be large enough to be placed on the line. Although Thomas Gainsborough was a founding member he broke with the Academy in 1784 when his portraits of the royal family were skied.



- Who painted *The Exhibition of the Royal Academy, 1787*? Drawing by Johann Ramberg (1763-1840), possibly lost. Engraved by Pietro Martini (1738-1797), who also engraved the picture of the French Salon. **‘Possibly lost’** is a strange expression, it is because we have a **drawing by Ramberg** but the paintings on the wall are not shown but the people are shown in great detail. A news report at the time mentions the drawings great exactness. So there may be another drawing, now lost, or the writer may have been referring to the engraving and the engraver added the detail or the writer may have been describing the people. See Vicenç Furió, *Seeing Art History: Pietro Antonio Martini’s Engravings on the Exhibitions of Paris and London in 1787* (2004).
- Who commissioned Zoffany to paint *The Portraits of the Academicians of the Royal Academy*? George III, and it is still in the Royal Collection. **Zoffany** was born Johannes Josephus Zoffaly in Frankfurt-am-Main in 1733 and when 17 he travelled to **Rome** to be trained as a portrait painter. On his return he painted **frescoes** for the new palace of Trier. In **1760** he travelled to London where he met David Garrick who commissioned him to produce some **conversation pieces**. These showed a group of people in a room (a family or friends or members of a society) engaged in conversation and other social activities. This **made his name** in London and commissions started to roll in, one from the **Prime Minister John Stuart, 3rd Earl of Bute**. Bute introduced Zoffany to **George III** and his wife **Queen Charlotte** in 1763. Both were impressed and commissioned him to paint their family. The **Academy** was set up by royal appointment in December 1768 and in November 1769,

‘his Majesty had been pleased to appoint Mr Johann Zoffany to be one of the forty Academicians’.
- George III then asked him to **paint the academicians** which he completed in 1772. The king and queen were **so pleased** they then commissioned him to paint the **Tribuna of the Uffizi in Florence** and he travelled there in 1772. He did not complete the work until **1777 (Click)** and on his **return in 1779 three disasters** occurred. **Conversation pieces** had gone **out of fashion** and his second strength, **portraiture**, was now dominated by Thomas **Gainsborough**, Joshua **Reynolds** and the upstart George **Romney**. The third disaster was of his own making – Zoffany included **two lewd jokes** in the painting, a group examining the backside of the **Venus de Medici** and more seriously a portrait of two well known

homosexuals, Thomas Patch and Sir Horace Mann. The king paid for the painting but he and the queen were **so shocked** Zoffany never received another royal commission and in **1783** decided to go to **India** to find rich patrons. He **succeeded, sending home £66,000** and six years later returned a rich man. It was on his return from Lucknow that his ship was shipwrecked and he and the crew had to **eat a dead sailor** to survive. He died in **1810** aged 77.

- Zoffany left mistresses and illegitimate children behind him wherever he went.
- **One shilling** (a twentieth of a pound) was regarded as the standard charge for all events of this type through the Victorian era. Most venues had a higher priced entrance on certain days or for better facilities. At the theatre the one shilling seats were for servants in the upper gallery, seats in a box cost five shillings. Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens charged one shilling which included all the entertainments. The Great Exhibition introduced a one shilling entrance. Even though it was enough to keep out the poor the popularity of the exhibition shows that cost did not deter many people. A lady's maid or valet might earn 10 shillings a week all found, a Post Office clerk 35 shillings a week.
- **Silver shilling**. The name 'shilling' comes from an Anglo-Saxon accounting term equivalent to the value of a cow in Kent ('the Kentish shilling') or a sheep elsewhere (they had no coins). The weight of the modern shilling was fixed by the Great Recoinage of 1816 following the economic problems precipitated by the Napoleonic Wars. In 1920, along with other national coins, the silver content was reduced from 92.5% (sterling) to 50%, and in 1947 to pure cupro-nickel.



Engraving of the French Salon of 1785 at the Louvre

- For comparison purposes this is an engraving of the French Salon at the Louvre in 1785, about the same period. The room is less crowded and the most notable difference is that the majority of the paintings are history paintings. There is no 'line' and, in general, the larger paintings are displayed higher up the wall.



Thomas Rowlandson, *Exhibition Stare Case*, a print, London, England, around 1811

- The Royal Academy exhibition was held at the top of the East wing of the North front of **New Somerset House** (1780-1837) for **57 years** (now the **Courtauld Institute**). The very steep stairs, still there today, gave rise to this cartoon.
- This was a time of biting **satire**. This print is based on a drawing which was probably made in **around 1800**. It shows visitors to the Royal Academy tumbling down a steep staircase at Somerset House, now the Courtauld Institute of Art. The first major contemporary art exhibition in London was staged in 1760 by the Society of Artists. The Royal Academy held its first exhibition in 1769, but it was not until 1780 that the Academy exhibited at the newly rebuilt Somerset House. Here **Sir William Chambers** designed a new complex of government buildings with the Royal Academy as its centrepiece. He proclaimed it 'an object of national splendour as well as convenience' and 'a monument to the taste and elegance of His Majesty's reign'.
- These boasts form the background to Thomas Rowlandson's caricature. The first exhibition attracted **61,381 visitors** and, inevitably, the building became extremely crowded. Rowlandson suggests that the **architect was more interested in the visual effect of his staircase than in its practical utility**. He also plays with two commonplace observations about exhibition audiences: that **some female spectators came to be seen as much as to see** and that some **male spectators were more interested in living flesh than in painted nudes**. Put these three factors together and you get a typically energetic and mildly erotic composition.
- Sir William Chambers staircase was impractical, visitors came to be seen, men more interested in lady visitors.

Key point: the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century were a time for biting satire aimed at the highest levels of society.

Notes

- **Old Somerset House** started in 1547 when Edward Seymour became Lord Protector and Duke of Somerset when Edward VI came to the throne. Seymour

owned the land but had to demolish churches and houses; a move that was so unpopular it resulted in him briefly being interred in the Tower of London. By 1551 it was virtually complete at a cost of £10,000. It was a courtyard Tudor structure but the Strand entrance façade had Ionic and Doric columns creating one of the earliest classical facades in England. The architect was either John Thynne or John of Padua. The same year Seymour was tried for treason and executed in 1552. The building was occupied by Princess Elizabeth until her accession in 1558. It was then used to house foreign diplomats until 1603 when James I gave it to his wife Anne of Denmark who renamed it Denmark House. It became the centre of English social and artistic life. It was extended and enhanced to Inigo Jones's design at a ruinous cost of £34,500, one of the most expensive of James I's buildings. When Charles I became king in 1625 it passed to his wife Henrietta Maria who further extended it including a Roman Catholic chapel designed by Inigo Jones. During the Civil War it became General Fairfax's quarters and was used to house the royal collection for sale. The collection was enormous and included some 1,760 pictures, including works by Leonardo, Raphael, Michelangelo, Correggio, Titian, Tintoretto, Holbein and Van Dyck, amongst others. Inigo Jones died at Somerset House in 1652. Following the restoration in 1660 Henrietta Maria, now Queen Dowager returned to Somerset House. When Charles II died in 1685 his wife Catherine of Braganza took up residence, also as Queen Dowager, and Christopher Wren supervised another major redecoration. When William and Mary came to the throne there was considerable antagonism between them and the Catholic Catherine. During the 18th century it was used for grace and favour apartments, masquerades (fancy dress dances), foreign embassies and army units as it gradually fell into such ruin that a new building was proposed. One of the last occupants of the old building and one of the first of the new was the Royal Academy.

- **New Somerset House** replaced the Tudor building on the site. The justification for the building was to centralise Government departments at one location to increase efficiency. Parliament debated whether to build a cheap building or a prestigious building. With the death of the first architect, William Robinson, and the appointment of William Chambers the decision was made for them and the costs escalated over the years as Chambers built an enormous prestigious structure. The main part of the building was completed in 1801 at a cost that was nearly double Chambers's original estimate. One reason for the increased cost was that the enormous structure was built on poor, steeply sloping soil down to the river's edge. In the 1820s it was decided to complete the eastern part and build King's College which was designed by Robert Smirke (1780-1867), who had just completed the British Museum. With the completion of Waterloo Bridge in 1811 the west side of the building was exposed and its unattractive brick façade attracted criticism. James Pennethorne (who had trained under John Nash) was appointed in 1849 to build a New Wing to the west.

Satire & The Royal Academy

- Around 1810 Rowlandson etched a number of plates for the publisher Thomas Tegg, who sold cheap and crudely coloured caricatures like this one.

- The Royal Academy depended on proceeds from the exhibition including catalogues. Artists depended on selling paintings. Works were reviewed in April and the exhibition was end April to early June. When it moved to Somerset House in 1780 it increased in size and the RA made a profit for the first time. 489 works in 1780 grown to 1,195 by 1797 then remaining at 900-1,200. 48,000 visitors between 1780 and 1798, growing to 56,000 by 1808, then 67,000 by 1818.
- It was a highlight of the London social calendar.

Robert Cruickshank

- Isaac Robert Cruickshank, sometimes known as Robert Cruikshank (27 September 1789 – 13 March 1856) was a caricaturist, illustrator, and portrait miniaturist, the less well-known brother of George Cruikshank, both sons of Isaac Cruikshank. Born in Middlesex, where he and his brother George attended school in Edgware. He illustrated a number of book in the 1820s and collaborated with his brothers on a series of 'London Characters' in 1827. He illustrated Miguel de Cervantes' novel Don Quixote as well as William Hogarth and Gustave Doré.

Thomas Rowlandson

- Thomas Rowlandson (13 July 1756 – 21 April 1827) was an English artist and caricaturist. He was born in Old Jewry in the City of London, his father had been a weaver but went into trade and went bankrupt in 1759. The family moved to Richmond, Yorkshire but his uncle's widow probably paid for his education in London. Rowlandson was educated at the school of Dr Barvis in Soho Square, then "an academy of some celebrity," where one of his classmates was Richard Burke, son of the politician Edmund Burke. As a schoolboy, Rowlandson "drew humorous characters of his master and many of his scholars before he was ten years old," covering the margins of his schoolbooks with his artwork. He spent two years at a drawing academy in Paris and spent six years studying at the Royal Academy while travelling to Paris. When his aunt died he inherited £7,000 but spent it all on dissapations including gambling sometimes for 36 hours at a time. He fell into poverty and took up caricature to earn money. One of his most famous was his illustration of William Combe's *Tour of Dr Syntax in Search of the Picturesque* (1812), a poetic satire of William Gilpin's originator of the picturesque. He also produced erotic prints. He is often more gentle and comic than James Gillray.

Tom and Jerry

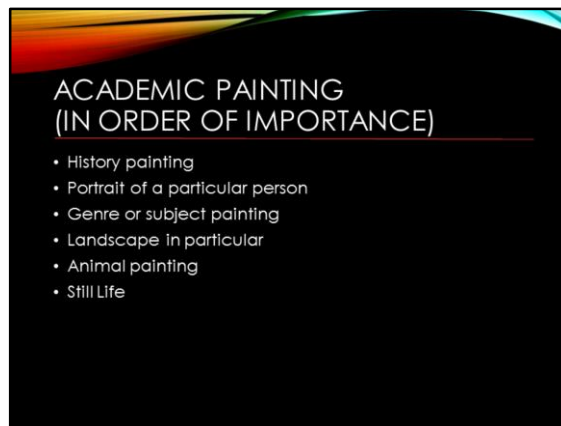
- An exciting introduction to what London has to offer a young man in the 1820s. It gives an idea of, for example, what it was like to go to the theatre. It uses the slang of the period some of which is so recent it is explained in footnotes.
- <http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=rfovj2M-XxAC&pg>



Engraving, 'A Shilling Well Laid Out, Tom and Jerry at the Exhibition of Pictures at the Royal Academy', 1821

- Tom and Jerry at the Summer Exhibition in 1821.
- In ten years everything has changed – none of the men wear **wigs**.
- This is the year **Constable** displayed *Landscape: Noon (The Hay Wain)* 'on the line' but it failed to find a buyer.
- We see ladies slim and men in **Regency fashions**. A wide variety of classes and races and the view that a visit to the Royal Academy was **money well spent**. Notice that the majority of paintings are portraits. This image depicts the elegant **Corinthian Tom** (centre left) and his protégé, the former rustic **Jerry Hawthorn** (with his back to us)—the two main characters from **Pierce Egan's** popular **journal, *Life in London***—attending the Annual Exhibition of the Royal Academy. The stories also included Dr Logic. **Tom and Jerry** became bywords in London society and their images appeared on tea trays, snuff boxes, fans, and screens.
- People were learning **how to look at art for the first time**. When Tom proposed a visit to the exhibition he said,

That, to a person who is not a connoisseur in paintings, a visit to the Exhibition is a treat; but, to the real lover and promoter of the fine arts, in order to witness the improvement of the experienced artists, and the rising talents of the young painter since the last season, is an inexpressible pleasure.
- Tom suggested not a course of art history but three or **four visits** to the exhibition, one to mark the catalogue, one to look at those selected, a third to strengthen familiarity and a fourth devoted to criticism.



Academic Painting

Getting back to serious business. The first President of the Royal Academy, Sir Joshua **Reynolds**, gave a series of lectures, called **Discourses** (15 between 1769 and 1790) in which he identified the various types or genres of painting and their relative importance:

1. History painting was the most important and was typically a classical or Bible story that made a **moral point**
2. Portraits of a particular person, a full length portrait of an important person was called a **swagger portrait**
3. Genre or subject painting, typically **humorous** and with a **moral lesson**
4. Landscapes of particular places, a general landscape with **classical** buildings and identifiable figures was a history landscape
5. Animal painting, sometimes **mimicking** human behaviour and making a **moral or humorous point**
6. Still Life, such as flower painting was the least important and was considered suitable for **lady artists** as a hobby

The reason for this hierarchy was that the grandest purpose of art was seen to be **intellectual** - to '**render visible the universal essence of things**' (Leonardo da Vinci) rather than the '**mechanical copying of particular appearance**'. It was generally agreed that history painting should have a mythological or historic subject, should not represent textures or materials realistically and should compose multiple figures with **decorum and grace** and **historically accurate** and should make the **moral clear**. **High born** figures must be **clearly separated** from low born beggars and the **poor** must meet **acceptable** standards of pose and decorum. All figures should be **purged** of anything **incidental**.



Benjamin West (1738-1820), *The Death of General Wolfe*, 1770, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

- The first and by far the most important category was **history painting**.
- It is not an historical event, it could be mythological, it is a biblical or classical scene that ennobles the viewer.
- This painting created a minor scandal as the figures are wearing **contemporary clothes**, George III refused to buy it
- Benjamin West was **pushing the limits** of history painting and changed what was acceptable
- General Wolfe is **Christ-like**, wearing ordinary clothes, in blue Dr. Thomas Hinde, Simon Fraser in green was not there, only 4 of 14 were
- Runner approaching with news of victory
- Native American warrior, sign of deep thought, inspired by ‘**noble savage**’ (not Rousseau), 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury – people are essentially good (as opposed to Thomas Locke’s ‘solitary, poor, nasty, brutish’. 18thC sentimentalism – David Hume – moral judgements are essentially emotional not rational, as opposed to Immanuel Kant.

History Painting

This is a history painting, the highest academic genre of painting. It tells a noble story and should show man in general not a particular man. This painting is therefore, arguably, not a history painting. The figures are not classical and many—including Sir Joshua Reynolds and West’s patron, Archbishop Drummond—strongly urged West to avoid painting Wolfe and others in modern costume, which was thought to detract from the timeless heroism of the event. They urged him to paint the figures wearing togas. West refused, writing, ‘the same truth that guides the pen of the historian should govern the pencil [paintbrush] of the artist.’ After its completion, George III refused to purchase it because the clothing compromised the dignity of the event. The work, however, eventually overcame all objections and helped inaugurate more historically accurate practice in history painting. So this painting is important as it started the change in what was regarded as a history painting and ultimately it started to undermine the entire hierarchy of academic genres.

Benjamin West was depicting the death of General James Wolfe during the 1759 Battle of Quebec of the Seven Years' War (1754-1763, a war involving most of the great powers). Britain gained a large part of North America from France (called new France) and Florida from Spain but ceded Florida to Spain and returned Cuba and the Philippines to Spain.

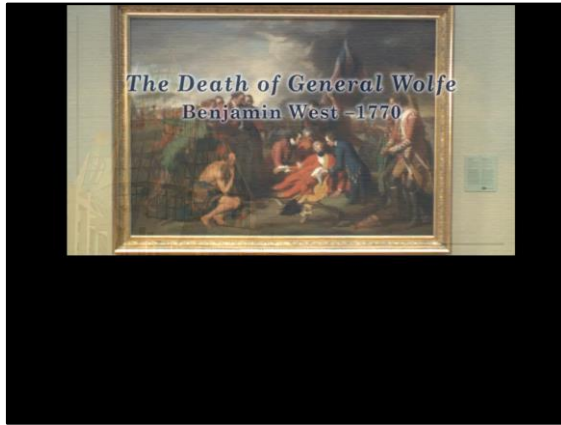
William Woollett's engraving was the best known copy of West's original and became popular around the world

The Death of General Wolfe is currently in the collection of the National Gallery of Canada, the Royal Ontario Museum (Canadian art collection), as well as the William L. Clements Library at the University of Michigan. The fourth copy produced resides at Ickworth House, Suffolk, England. There are five known portraits by the author. Wolfe's death and the portrayal of that event by Benjamin West make up half of Simon Schama's historical work *Dead Certainties: Unwarranted Speculations* (1991).

This type of painting was not open to women as they could not attend life classes and learn to draw the nude male body.

Benjamin West

Anglo-American painter (born Springfield, Pennsylvania) of historical scenes around and after the time of the American War of Independence. He was the second president of the Royal Academy in London, serving from 1792 to 1805 and 1806 to 1820 (James Wyatt, architect, the Destroyer of cathedrals was in between). He was offered a knighthood by the British Crown, but declined it, believing that he should instead be made a peer. A friend of Benjamin Franklin, painted *Death of Socrates* and met John Wollaston who had been a famous painter in London. Travelled to Italy and copied Titian and Raphael. Went to London in 1763 and never returned to America. Appointed historical painter to the court at £1,000 a year, encouraged George III to found the Royal Academy. *The Death of General Wolfe* is his most famous painting.



Video on Benjamin West's painting



Benjamin West (1738-1820), *The Death of General Wolfe*, 1770, detail of Native American, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

- Native American warrior, sign of deep thought, inspired by ‘**noble savage**’ (not Rousseau), 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury – people are essential good (as opposed to **Thomas Locke’s** ‘*solitary, poor, nasty, brutish*’. 18thC sentimentalism – David Hume – moral judgements are essentially emotional not rational, as opposed to Immanuel Kant.
- The depiction of the North-American native warrior in the painting — kneeling with his chin on his fist, looking at General Wolfe — has been analyzed in various ways. In art, the touching of **one’s face** with **one’s hand** is a sign of **deep thought** and **intelligence** (thus **Rodin’s *The Thinker***, **Michelangelo’s** funerary statue of the little known **Lorenzo di Piero de’ Medici**, known as Piero the Unfortunate, in the **Medici Chapel**, unfinished when Michelangelo left in 1534, and many third century Greek Early Hellenistic statues of philosophers).

Notes

- Some consider it an idealization inspired by the concept of the ‘noble savage’. The term was first used **sarcastically** by **Charles Dickens** who wished to **disassociate** himself from the ‘**feminine**’ **sentimentality** of 18th and early 19th-century romantic primitivism. The idea that humans are **essentially good** is associated with **3rd Earl of Shaftesbury** as a reaction against **Thomas Hobbes’s *Leviathan*** in which he holds the natural state is a ‘**war of all against all**’ and men’s lives are ‘**solitary, poore, nasty, brutish and short**’. Jean-Jacques Rousseau never used the phrase noble savage (French *bon sauvage*) but many wrote about the ‘good savage’. Michel de **Montaigne** compared cannibals of Brazil with the worse barbarism of burning people alive for disagreeing about religion.
- The word ‘**savage**’ did not have the same **connotations** as today and meant something similar to ‘wild’ as in ‘wildflower’. The idea of the noble savage goes back to the untutored but noble knight Parsifal (13th Century Arthurian hero **Parsifal**) and even the Biblical shepherd boy David.



Benjamin West (1738-1820), *The Death of General Wolfe*, 1770, detail of general Wolfe, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

- General Wolfe is **Christ-like**, wearing ordinary clothes, in blue Dr. Thomas Hinde, Simon Fraser in green was not there, only 4 of 14 were. It was accepted as a history painting as it conveys an idea and a clear moral message. General Wolfe is depicted as a Christ-like figure and West painted an additional and nearly identical painting of the same scene with the same clothes for King George III in 1771. Formally it has a triangular composition, made by the top of the flag (as the apex) and the positions of the men and it resembles Christian 'Lamentation' scenes, where Christ is held in the embrace of the Virgin Mary following being taken down from the cross.
- On the ground in front of Wolfe is his musket, his cartridge box, and bayonet. Wolfe went into battle armed as his men were, although his musket was of higher quality. His dress is also of note. He is wearing a red coat, a red waistcoat, red breeches, and a white shirt. Such dress was rather simple, especially for a commanding officer.
- Next, to Wolfe in the blue jacket is **Dr. Thomas Hinde** who is attempting to stem the bleeding from Wolfe's wounds. The general later died in the doctor's hands.



Benjamin West (1738-1820), *The Death of General Wolfe*, 1770, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

- In the background, and to the **left** of the men surrounding Wolfe, an approaching **runner is depicted**. He is waving his hat in one hand to attract their attention, and with the other hand carries a captured flag with the Fleur-de-lis (a symbol of France) - symbolic of the news relayed to the dying Wolfe that the **French** were being **defeated**.
- The inclusion of **Simon Fraser**, Lieutenant Colonel of the 78th Fraser Highlanders (behind the man in green uniform, identified in the painting as Sir William Johnson or Sir William Howe) is interesting, as General Wolfe had always spoken highly of Fraser's regiment, yet Fraser was **not at the battle**, as he was recovering from **wounds** received earlier. In the painting, Fraser wears the Fraser tartan, which was probably worn by officers in that regiment.
- All in all only **four of the fourteen men** depicted were actually at the battleground. Monckton, severely wounded, had been removed from the field. Major Isaac Barre had been blinded as was some way away. They were **no Native Americans with Wolfe at Quebec**.
- Wolfe is supported on his left by surgeon **Mr Adair**, on his right his aide-de-camp, Captain Hervey Smyth, behind him is adjutant-general, Major Barre. The soldier beside the officer holding the ensign is Colonel Williamson, commander of the artillery. The most prominent figure in the left group is brigadier-General Monckton, second in command, and behind him to his right is Captain Debbeig, engineer. Sir William Howe or Sir William Johnson is behind the Native American. The officer **holding the ensign** behind Wolfe is **Lieutenant Henry Browne** (the only person who was **definitely there** with Wolfe), behind Monckton and to his left Colonel Napier (rejected by some) and the man between Monckton and Howe is Simon Fraser.
- Although West said truth should 'govern the pencil of the artist' he was referring to the contemporary dress. He never intended this to be historically accurate as he said a hero should not be seen dying like 'a common soldier under a bush'.

- Soldiers who were there were not included for various reasons. One, **General Hale, refused to pay the £100 demanded by the publisher** to be included in the engraving when 'his own country knew so very well', that 'he fought in the hottest part of the battle'. In addition, there were dozens, including **four surgeons, who claimed to have been with Wolfe when he died.**
- **William Woollett's engraving** was the best known copy of West's original and became popular around the world. *The Death of General Wolfe* is currently in the collection of the National Gallery of Canada, the Royal Ontario Museum (Canadian art collection), as well as the William L. Clements Library at the University of Michigan. The fourth copy produced resides at Ickworth House, Suffolk, England. There are five known portraits by the author. Wolfe's death and the portrayal of that event by Benjamin West make up half of Simon Schama's historical work *Dead Certainties: Unwarranted Speculations* (1991). Woollett used a mirror to ensure the engraving would be the right way round. After Woollett's death additional copies were pulled from the plate and the quality deteriorated. This caused a scandal and the culprit was finally caught. The fact that West continued to receive royalties from these poor quality engravings was quietly overlooked.
- The image was used on tea trays and other household items and it was the inspiration for other artists, such as Watteau's *Death of General Montcalm*. It was also referenced by satirists such as James Gillray's *The Death of the Great Wolf* showing Prime Minister William Pitt surrounded by his cabinet ministers and others. Gillray is contrasting the heroic Wolfe with the anti-heroic Pitt who, at this time, was restricting the freedom of Englishmen by repressive new treason and sedition laws. The flag contains the white horse of Hanover.
- There is a book about this painting, *Behold the Hero: General Wolfe & the Arts in the Eighteenth Century*, by Alan McNairn (1997).
- This type of painting was not open to women as they could not attend life classes and learn to draw the nude male body.

Benjamin West

Anglo-American painter (born Springfield, Pennsylvania) of historical scenes around and after the time of the American War of Independence. He was the second president of the Royal Academy in London, serving from 1792 to 1805 and 1806 to 1820 (James Wyatt, architect, the Destroyer of cathedrals was in between). He was offered a knighthood by the British Crown, but declined it, believing that he should instead be made a peer. A friend of Benjamin Franklin, painted *Death of Socrates* and met John Wollaston who had been a famous painter in London. Travelled to Italy and copied Titian and Raphael. Went to London in 1763 and never returned to America. Appointed historical painter to the court at £1,000 a year, encouraged George III to found the Royal Academy. *The Death of General Wolfe* is his most famous painting.



Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792), *Mrs Abington*, 1771, 76.8 x 63.8 cm, Yale Center for British Art

- Joshua Reynolds, *Mrs Abington* as Miss Prue in - *Love for Love* - by William Congreve
- Frances (**'Fanny'**) Abington became one of the leading actresses – witty, clever, not theatrical
- Reynolds **pushed the limits** of the acceptable by painting portraits of women who floated polite social codes

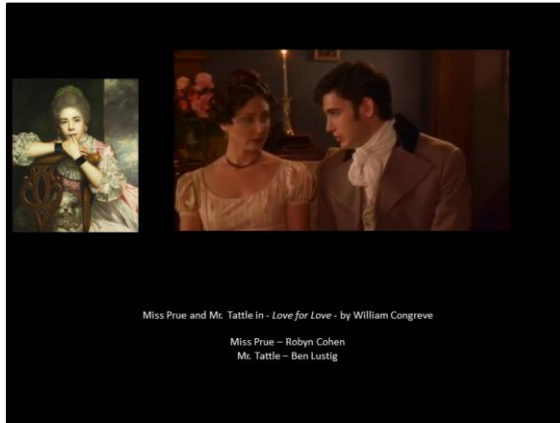
Portraiture

- This portrait shows Fanny Abington as Miss Prue in William Congreve's (1670-1729) Restoration bawdy comedy, *Love for Love* (1694), Miss Prue is a naïve country girl seduced by a predatory, half-witted dandy.
- **Frances ('Fanny') Abington** (1737-1815), born Frances Burton, daughter of a private **soldier**, grew up in the slums round Drury Lane, began as a **flower girl ('Nosegay Fan')** and street singer and became one of the **leading actresses** of her day. After her **unhappy marriage** to her music teacher James Abington she was called back to the stage by **David Garrick** where she remained for 18 years. Her acting was noted for having '*not the least tincture of the theatrical*' (James Northcote, 1772). Before becoming an actress she learnt French and French fashion and later worked in a brothel. She was witty and clever which won her a distinguished position in society. Women of fashion copied her clothing.
- Joshua Reynolds made a calculated decision to associate his art with the demi-monde of women who moved among the social elite but whose sex lives flouted polite codes of behaviour. For example, 'Kitty' Fisher, Elizabeth Hartley and Nelly O'Brien. So, again we see the limits of what is acceptable in an established conventional genre being tested, and this time by the President of the Royal Academy.
- Adopting what was then taken to be a **suggestive**, or at least unrefined, pose—**unthinkable for a lady**—the work is both a portrait of unusual directness and candour, her thumb coyly hovering on the lower lip, and a "historical" picture,

whose associations went beyond the subject's likeness, which Horace Walpole thought “easy and very like”

Notes

- Hepplewhite chair



- This is a short extract from the play that Mrs Abington appeared in as Miss Prue. We can see the combination of naiveté, beauty and enthusiasm.



James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), *Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl*, 1861-2, National Gallery of Art, Washington

- This is an example of a **painting that was unacceptable** to the Royal Academy.
- It is a portrait of **Joanna Hiffernan**.
- This is one of his earliest paintings in the new style with a title linking it to the abstract nature of music.
- It was first shown at the **Salon des Refusés** in 1863 (with Édouard Manet's *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe*, *The Luncheon on the Grass*) and critics had many interpretations of the meaning.

Key point: what is the painting about, Whistler would say it is just an arrangement of colours

Notes

Whistler's *The White Girl* – Joanna Hiffernan

- This full-length painting is a portrait of **Joanna Hiffernan** (c. 1843-after 1903) and Irish artists' model and muse romantically linked to Whistler and the French painter Gustave Courbet (1819-1877). Whistler had a **six-year relationship** with her starting in 1860. She had to move out when **Whistler's mother** visited in **1863**. She was described as not only beautiful but intelligent and sympathetic and was Whistler's constant companion. When they broke up, possibly because of her affair with Courbet when Whistler was away in South America, she helped to raise Whistler's son (**Charles James Whistler Hanson**, 1870-1935), the result of an affair with parlour maid **Louisa Fanny Hanson**. In 1861 she sat for this picture in a studio (Boulevard des Batignolles) in Paris. In the 1870s and 80s he lived with his model-mistress Maud Franklin and in 1888 he married Beatrix Godwin ('**Trixie**') the widow of the architect E. W. Godwin who has designed his house. The first five years of their marriage were happy but she developed cancer and became completely addicted to morphine for pain relief. She died in 1896 and Whistler never really recovered. He died in 1903.
- At Whistler's funeral a veiled woman appeared and when she raised the veil the

art collector Charles Lang freer recognised it as Hiffernan immediately. She stood for nearly an hour beside the coffin. The same day Maud Franklin come to the funeral.

- This painting was originally called *The White Girl* but he later started to refer to it as *Symphony in White, No. 1* to emphasise his commitment to his 'art for art's sake' philosophy. It was rejected by the Royal Academy and the Salon in Paris but accepted at the **Salon des Refusés** in **1863**. The Salon des Refusés was held as a result of the Salon jury **refusing two-thirds** of the paintings submitted including paintings by **Courbet**, **Édouard Manet** and **Camille Pissarro**. **Emperor Napoleon III** heard of the artists' complaints and, sensitive to public opinion, he decided to display the rejected works to allow the public to decide. This painting and Édouard Manet's *Déjeuner sur l'herbe* are the two most famous works on display. More than a **thousand visitors a day** crowded in critics had mostly favourable views of this painting. One thought it showed a new bride's lost innocence, others linked it to **Wilkie Collins's** novel, *The Woman in White* (1860), others thought she was a ghost or apparition. French critics linked it to the English Pre-Raphaelite movement and so regarded it as somewhat eccentric.
- The woman holds a lily and there are flowers scattered on the floor. Art historians have found the most the interesting element is the bear or wolf skin rug she is standing on. Whether it is a **bear or a wolf** has been debated and the animal's face contains elements of both. It is generally regarded as signifying **animal passions** which have been controlled by the woman or women. When the painting is hung at the normal height it is the most obvious element of the painting but **critics** at the time **did not comment** on it. Perhaps we try to read too much into paintings. Whistler in a letter to George du Maurier described it as
 - *'...a woman in a beautiful white cambric dress, standing against a window which filters the light through a transparent white muslin curtain – but the figure receives a strong light from the right and therefore the picture, barring the red hair, is one gorgeous mass of brilliant white.'*
- In other words, like many artists, he described it formally in terms of light and colour. The 'Symphony' title also suggest he intended it to be an abstract assembly of formal elements rather than a symbolic painting with a deep meaning. However, as meaning is brought by the viewer we are entitled to interpret it as we wish.



Abraham Solomon (1824-1862), *Waiting for the Verdict*, 1857, Tate Britain

- **Typical genre or subject painting**, very popular.
- Tells a moral or humorous or human interest story
- Courtroom scenes were popular and engravings sold well
- Red poppy - consolation

Genre painting

Paintings about trials, sentencing and courtroom incidents were extremely popular during the Victorian period. Solomon sets the scene in a dark anteroom. The family's hopelessness is evident from the gentleman with his head in his hands and the woman's desperate expression. A sense of suspense is suggested by the woman who looks over her shoulder anxiously as the door of the courtroom opens. Despite the gloomy subject matter, both this picture and the sequel, *Not Guilty* (the next slide), were well received. Prints reproducing them sold well across the country.



Abraham Solomon (1823-1862), *Not Guilty (The Acquittal)*, 1857, Tate Britain

- Wrongly accused, the guilty man is escaping
- Not all genre paintings had happy endings, this picture was less successful than the previous
- We see the verdict. It seems he was wrongly accused or the victim of a malicious charge. In the background a bystander points accusingly at a man leaving the courthouse. It is clear that the guilty man is escaping and the original charge was malicious.
- The father is overjoyed at the news and tries to thank the lawyer who is busy and trying to leave to join his friends. The wife is relieved and even the baby is delighted. The boy has woken up and put on his hat and appears anxious to open the hamper with lunch in it. We shall see later that not all genre paintings had a happy ending particular when someone had broken the strict Victorian moral code.



Abraham Solomon (1824-1862), 1854, First Class: The Meeting ... and at First Meeting Loved

- The Solomon family was one of the first Jewish families to be accepted in London society. All the eight children were well known in different ways.
- Abraham Solomon became a well known genre painter.
- This painting was regarded as shocking as both the young lady and the man are acting immorally. The two have met on a train but before the young man can talk to the daughter he would be expected to ask her father's permission. The corruption of morals proved too much as Solomon painted a second version the following year...

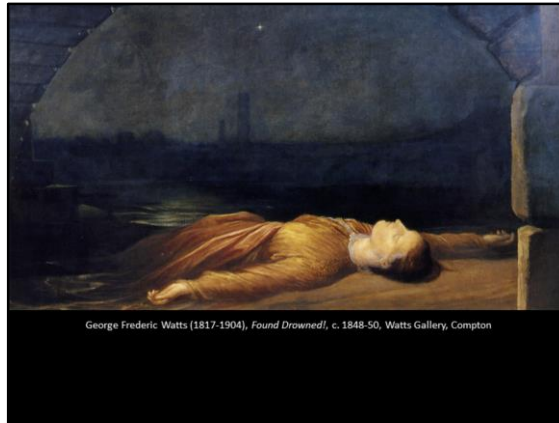
Abraham Solomon

- His **father** was one of the **first Jews** to be admitted to the **freedom of the City of London**. His younger brother **Simeon** was an acclaimed Pre-Raphaelite. His sister **Rebecca** exhibited domestic scenes at the RA. Abraham entered Sass's School of Art aged 13 and won a silver medal in 1838 (aged 14) from the Society of Arts. He became a student at the Royal Academy and won a silver medal twice. He died in Biarritz of heart disease in 1862 aged 39.
- Railway travel was seen to be inherently more immoral than travelling in a horse-drawn coach because of its unnatural speed, rhythmic and comfortable progress and its modernity.



Abraham Solomon (1824-1862), 1855, *First Class: The Meeting*. “*And at first meeting loved*”, 20.3 x 25.4 cm, Yale Center for British Art

- In the second version the young man talks to the father while the young lady looks quietly on.
- Although Solomon toned down his social comment the two paintings illustrate the changes taking place in society, albeit, slowly over the next fifty years.



George Frederic Watts (1817-1904), *Found Drowned!*, c. 1848-50, Watts Gallery, Compton

George Frederic Watts (1817-1904), *Found Drowned!*, c. 1848-50, Watts Gallery, Compton

Social Realism

- While the public were concerned about the morality of Abraham Solomon's train travel the reality for many women was that without a man to protect her finding work was very difficult and prostitution and suicide were common fates.
- In the late 1840s a few artists started to paint the reality of life for the poor.
- Watts painted four social realist paintings between 1848 and 1850.
- When Watts returned to London from Italy he was traumatized by the extremes of riches and poverty that he could see all about him.
- It is almost certain that the idea for the painting came from Watts having read *The Bridge of Sighs*, the poem written by Thomas Hood just before his death in 1845.
- Watts didn't show his **realist paintings publicly** for another **30 years** and **never attempted to sell** them. He understood that the Victorian public **would not tolerate** - and certainly would not hang on their walls - works that told such brutal truths about the society they lived in.
- The background of the painting is the London skyline and we are viewing it from under **Waterloo Bridge** and in the distance we can just make out **Hungerford Suspension Bridge**. Waterloo Bridge had been a common place for **suicides** with people throwing themselves off the structure into the Thames. In the foreground Watts has painted a "fallen woman", a reasonably common subject in Victorian paintings. She has drowned and been washed up on the shores of the Thames. Was it an accident or had life proved just too much for her to bear? In those days, female suicides caused by adulterous relationships or financial hardship, which then led to prostitution, were not uncommon happenings. Her body is lit up and is in stark comparison to the darkened background. Her dress still floats in the murky polluted waters. She is lying on her back with her arms stretched out in a cruciform adding religious symbolism to the picture. In her left hand she is clutching hold of a chain, attached to which is a heart-shaped locket and this again makes us believe that unrequited love may have had some bearing on the

situation. In the night sky we see a very bright pin-point of light which could be a star of the planet Venus and Watts probably added this as a symbol of hope that maybe there will be a better after-life for the dead woman. Look at the young woman's face. It appears calm. Maybe at last she is at peace with herself.

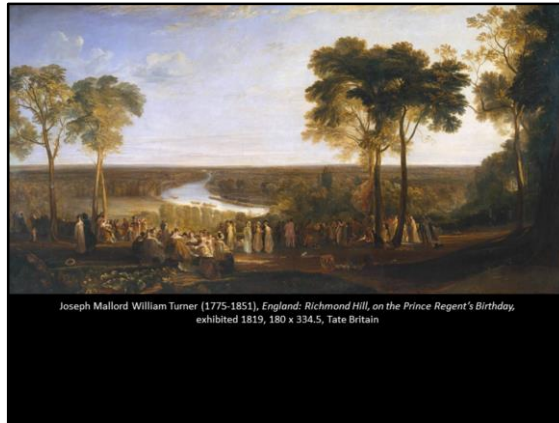
Notes

George Frederick Watts

- Popular English Victorian painter and sculptor associated with the Symbolist movement. He said "***I paint ideas, not things.***" Watts became famous in his lifetime for his allegorical works, such as *Hope* and *Love and Life*. These paintings were intended to form part of an epic symbolic cycle called the "**House of Life**", in which the emotions and aspirations of life would all be represented in a universal symbolic language.
- Won first prize in the competition to promote narrative painting of patriotic subjects for the Houses of Parliament at Westminster in 1843. The prize funded a three year stay in Italy.
- He met **Henry Prinsep** (member of the Council of India) and his wife Sara and her seven sisters, one of who became Julia Margaret Cameron. He lived with them for **21 years** in Little Holland House.
- In the 1860s his work was influenced by Rossetti. In 1864 he married **Ellen Terry**, 30 years his junior when she was 16. She eloped with another man after less than a year and the divorce took until 1877.
- Made an academician in 1867. Refused a baronetcy twice. Commissioned New Little Holland House in the 1870s and bought a house on the Isle of Wight.
- In 1886 at 69 he married Mary Fraser Tytler a Scottish designer and potter aged 36 and in 1891 he bought land near Compton, south of Guildford and built 'Limnerslease'.

Watts and Social Realism

- This is one of four social realist pictures that Watts painted between 1848 and 1850.
- '**Found Drowned**' is a **legal term** used in a **coroner's inquest** and the heading used in newspapers to report bodies that had been found in the Thames who were typically women. This woman looks as if she has just been pulled from the Thames as her feet are still in the water. There is a chain and heart shaped locket in her hand suggesting the cause of her suicide. The setting is under Waterloo Bridge, well known for illegal suicide and the drama is increased by her outstretched pose, illuminated face and the star which suggest she is a **martyr to the injustice** of the way in which women were treated in society. Her **plain clothes** suggest **poverty** and in the distance we see the heavily industrialised south bank near Hungerford Bridge contrasting the **wealth of capitalism** with the **despair** brought about her **poverty**.
- This was one fate that befell a woman that had fallen on hard times. The other was prostitution which was the other scandal in Victorian London.



Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851), England: *Richmond Hill, on the Prince Regent's Birthday*, exhibited 1819, 180 x 334.5, Tate Britain

Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851), *England: Richmond Hill, on the Prince Regent's Birthday*, exhibited 1819, 180 x 334.5 cm, Tate Britain

Landscape

- The fourth genre of painting recognised by the Royal Academy was the landscape.
- Turner painted this great panorama of the Thames after the Napoleonic War. It shows the view from Richmond Hill, looking west towards Twickenham, and brought Turner's early series of river scenes to a splendid conclusion. The scene is treated in the grand, classical manner of the seventeenth-century French artist, Claude Lorrain. It presents an Arcadian vision of English scenery, with an explicitly patriotic message in the reference to the birthday of the Prince Regent.
- The Prince's official birthday, **23 April**, was also St George's Day (the patron saint of England) and Turner's own birthday
- The poets Alexander Pope and James Thomson, whose 'Summer' he quoted with the picture, and the painter Joshua Reynolds had lived at Richmond or nearby at Twickenham where Turner had his own property, Sandycombe Lodge (which falls within the picture).
- Turner had known this view since childhood and he painted watercolour views of this scene both before and after this oil painting.
- The Prince Regent had ridden to Richmond Hill in 1818 from Kew Palace on 10 August, two days before his actual birthday.
- The *Annals of Fine Art* recommended he pumice it down, coat it with priming and paint another picture like that of Carthage.
- It may have been painted specifically to procure Royal patronage.
- It was exhibited with the verse (which was hung upon a tree at the top of the hill),

'Which way, Amanda, shall we bend our course?
The choice perplexes. Wherefore should we chuse?
All is the same with thee. Say, shall we wind
Along the streams? or walk the smiling mead?
Or court the forest-glades? or wander wild
Among the waving harvests? or ascend,

While radiant Summer opens all its pride,
Thy Hill, delightful Shene?'

James Thomson (1700-1748, he wrote the lyrics of '*Rule Britannia!*' and died in Richmond), *The Four Season: Summer*



Louise Ingram Rayner (1832-1924, died aged 92) and a cityscape, *The Poultry Cross, Salisbury*, 1870, Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum

Landscape

- In order to illustrate landscape I have not selected a Constable or Turner but a watercolour by Louise Ingram Rayner (1832-1924). It is a cityscape, a type of landscape showing *The Poultry Cross, Salisbury* in 1870. I selected it has a fine sense of place, one can almost imagine oneself back in the Victorian era and it is an example of a watercolour, which was regarded as a lesser form of art.
- She was from a family of artists and learned from her father. She first exhibited at the RA when she was 20.
- She switched from oils to watercolour and exhibited at Society of Lady Artists, The Royal Academy, Royal Watercolour Society and the Royal Society of British Artists.
- She travelled across the country painting scenes for 50 years. She captured picturesque scenes of 'olde worlde' Britain.
- Her paintings were very popular as engravings and as jigsaws.

Louise Ingram Rayner

- Rayner was born in Matlock Bath in **Derbyshire**. Her **parents** Samuel Rayner and Ann Rayner (née Manser) were **both noted artists**, Samuel having been accepted for exhibition at the Royal Academy when he was **15**. **Four of Louise's sisters** — Ann ("Nancy"), Margaret, Rose and Frances — and her **brother** Richard were also **artists**. The family lived in Matlock Bath and Derby until 1842 (she was 10) when they **moved to London**.
- Rayner studied painting from the age of **fifteen**, at first with her father and later with established artist friends of the family such as George Cattermole, Edmund Niemann, David Roberts and Frank Stone. Her first exhibited work, an oil painting entitled *The Interior of Haddon Chapel*, was shown at the Royal Academy in **1852** when she was **20**, the first of a series of oils.
- From **1860**, however, her medium was **watercolour**, which she **exhibited for over 50 years** through organisations including the Society of Lady Artists, The Royal Academy, Royal Watercolour Society and the Royal Society of British Artists.

- She lived in Chester in the Welsh Marches but **travelled** extensively, **painting British scenes**, during the summers in 1870s and 1880s. Her paintings are **very detailed** and highly **picturesque** populated street scenes capturing the "**olde worlde**" character of British towns and cities in the booming Victorian period. Her paintings are very popular today as prints and on **jigsaw puzzles**. Around 1910 she moved with her sister to Tunbridge Wells, and later to St Leonards, where she **died in 1924 aged 92**.
- Rayner's work is represented in the collections of at the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum (Bournemouth), Derby Museum and Art Gallery and the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, which possesses 23 of her watercolours, the largest in any public collection.



James Abbott McNeill Whistler, *Nocturne: Blue and Silver – Chelsea*, 1871, Tate Britain

- This is an example of a painting that was not acceptable to the Royal Academy.
- It was still six years before the Grosvenor Gallery opened and Whistler exhibited a similar painting that led to the famous trial of Whistler v. Ruskin (1878).

Key point : Whistler’s landscapes broke with many traditions and led to the Whistler v. Ruskin trial about the nature of art

Art for Art’s Sake Landscape

- I have selected another painting from roughly the same year 1870-71 to show a more modern landscape, in this case a riverscape, that reminds me of the first one we saw by Thomas Girtin. This is the first of Whistler’s Nocturnes, a name suggest by his patron Frederick Leyland. Whistler’s aim was to convey a sense of beauty and tranquillity. He wrote ‘By using the word 'nocturne' I wished to indicate an artistic interest alone, divesting the picture of any outside anecdotal interest which might have been otherwise attached to it. A nocturne is an arrangement of line, form and colour first’ (quoted in Dorment and MacDonald, p.122).
- Whistler had been inspired one evening while returning one evening by steamer from Westminster. He had a procedure for creating these riverscapes. He would go out on a boat rowed by his neighbour and boat builder Walter Greaves at 10 Lindsey Row Chelsea (Whistler lived at 7 Lindsey Row). Coincidentally his father had rowed J. M. W. Turner on the Thames at the same spot. Whistler would then look at the scene, turn his back on it and then try to verbally describe it building by building. If he made a mistake he would turn back and relearn the scene before trying again.
- Having memorized the scene the next day he would prepare the special ‘sauce’ he used to paint the picture on a panel. It was essentially a thinned oil paint that was so runny he had to paint on horizontal panels. He would prepare the panels using

dark grey paint and then apply the sauce to create a contrasting sense of luminosity. Typically, he would regard most attempts as failures and would start again. The paintings were therefore produced quickly but it took a long time to produce an acceptable picture.

- The view is Battersea looking across to Chelsea, and it is possible to make out the tower of Chelsea Old Church on the right which also features in Girtin's watercolour. In the foreground, a low barge and the figure of a fisherman are indicated with the minimum of detail, and the influence of Japanese art is evident in the restricted palette and the economy of line. The Times (14 November, 1871), wrote 'painting should not aim at expressing dramatic emotions, depicting incidents of history or recording facts of nature, but should be content with moulding our moods and stirring our imaginations, by subtle combinations of colour.'

Walter Greaves

Whistler employed Greaves and his brother as studio assistants and taught them to paint in an impressionistic style. Later, when Whistler moved house he broke off contact with them. They had by then abandoned boat building and tried to make a living as artists but fell onto harder and harder times even though Walter Greaves paintings are of high quality. In 1911 his paintings were discovered by a dealer and exhibited creating an overnight sensation. However, when a critic suggested Greaves had inspired Whistler the latter's American friends retaliated and accused Greaves of stealing Whistler's half-finished paintings, finishing them and selling them as his own. Although untrue this damaged his reputation and the exhibition was closed. It was not until 1921 that three prominent artists rescued Greaves and his reputation and they found a retirement home for him at Charterhouse.



Edwin Henry Landseer (1802–1873), *The Old Shepherd's Chief Mourner*, 1837, Victoria & Albert Museum

- The final two categories of painting were animal paintings and still life.
- **Sentimental animal** paintings were popular with the public and various collectors
- This painting combines this with **death**, another popular Victorian subject and was very popular as a print
- Landseer was a **child prodigy** exhibiting drawings at the RA when he was 13
- His passion was drawing and painting animals, he is best known for the lions in **Trafalgar Square**.
- He taught **Victoria and Albert** to etch.
- In 1866, he was elected **President** of the RA but declined.
- In his late 30s he had a nervous breakdown and from then on he suffered from melancholy, hypochondria, and depression, often aggravated by alcohol and drug use, in 1872 he was declared insane.
- One of his last paintings was a life size equestrian portrait of Queen Victoria in 1873 (made from earlier sketches).

Animal painting

Oil paintings with sentimental scenes of animals became popular with the Victorian public and with collectors such as **John Sheepshanks** (1787-1863, a cloth manufacturer who presented his entire collection to the South Kensington Museum, now the Victoria & Albert Museum, in 1857) and the **Rev. Chauncy Hare Townshend** (1798-1868, a poet, clergyman, mesmerist, hypochondriac and friend of Charles Dickens who left his enormous collection which included 1,411 paintings to the Victoria & Albert Museum).

Landseer's choice of subject illustrates the Victorian obsession with the trappings of death, combined here with his speciality, the accurate and almost anthropomorphic representation of dogs and other animals. Its mixture of pathos and realism appealed to all sections of society, and the critic Ruskin praised the fine technique and the

subtle choice of details. This painting was exhibited at the **Royal Academy in 1837** and proved a **great success**, particularly as an **engraving** after this picture was published and sold widely in the following year.

Edwin Henry Landseer

Landseer was a **child prodigy**, exhibiting some drawings at the Royal Academy when he was only **13**. From an early age he was a frequent visitor to the menagerie in Exeter Change in the Strand, London, where **he drew lions, monkeys** and other animals. Animals remained the main subjects of his art. Queen Victoria collected his paintings, as did John Sheepshanks. The two biggest collections of his work are in the Royal Collection and Victoria and Albert Museum.

The best known of Landseer's works, however, are sculptures: the lions in Trafalgar Square, London.

Landseer was born in London, the son of the engraver John Landseer A.R.A. He studied under several artists, including his father, and the history painter Benjamin Robert Haydon, who encouraged the young Landseer to perform **dissections** in order to fully understand animal musculature and skeletal structure. Landseer's life was entwined with the Royal Academy. At the age of just 13, in 1815, he exhibited works there. He was elected an Associate at the age of 24, and an Academician five years later in 1831. He was **knighted in 1850**, and although **elected President in 1866** he **declined** the invitation.

In his late 30s Landseer suffered what is now believed to be a substantial nervous breakdown, and for the rest of his life was troubled by recurring bouts of melancholy, hypochondria, and depression, often aggravated by alcohol and drug use. In the last few years of his life Landseer's mental stability was problematic, and at the request of his family he was declared insane in July 1872.

Landseer's appeal crossed class boundaries: reproductions of his works were common in middle-class homes, while he was also popular with the aristocracy. Queen Victoria commissioned numerous pictures from the artist. Initially asked to paint various royal pets, he then moved on to portraits of ghillies and gamekeepers. Then, in the year before her marriage, the queen commissioned a portrait of herself, as a present for Prince Albert. He taught both Victoria and Albert to etch, and made portraits of Victoria's children as babies, usually in the company of a dog. He also made two portraits of Victoria and Albert dressed for costume balls, at which he was a guest himself. One of his last paintings was a life-size equestrian portrait of the Queen, shown at the Royal Academy in 1873, made from earlier sketches. The black and white Newfoundland dog painted by Landseer is called a Landseer.

When he died flags flew at half mast and shops and houses lowered their blinds. Landseer was a friend of John Everett Millais who finished his last three unfinished paintings.



William Henry Hunt (1790-1864), *Primroses and Bird's Nest*, 1840s, Watercolour on paper, Tate Britain

- Still life was the **lowest category** and a fashion developed for bird nest subjects, he was known as **'Bird-nest' Hunt**.
- He was, says John Ruskin, all in all, the **finest ever painter of still life**. He had a Hunt in his bedroom.
- He was a master of the **technique** and his sense of **colour** is equal to any other English artist.
- No relation of William Holman Hunt.

Still Life

The painting of still life derived from the great Dutch still-life paintings of the 16th and 17th centuries. However, the Victorians brought about changes and painted still life more naturalistically, on mossy banks. In a quest for originality artists began putting birds' nests in their paintings and it became very popular. Hunt became famous for his bird nest subjects and was called 'Bird-nest' Hunt.

Thackeray said **'If I were the Duke of Devonshire, I would have a couple of Hunts in every room in all my houses'**. John Ruskin hung one in his bedroom at Brantwood. He had many imitators – William Cruikshank, William Hough, John Sherrin and Helen Cordelia.



Engraving of the Grosvenor Gallery, 1877

The Grosvenor Gallery, 1877

- The Royal Academy was not the only venue but it was the biggest, most prestigious and part of the social calendar. However, by the 1870s it was dominated by portraits and populist paintings produced for profit so there was an opportunity for a new exhibition of '*avant garde*' art.
- In 1877 the Grosvenor became the second exhibition for high society.
- The atmosphere was very different from the Royal Academy. Paintings were hung with space between them and the rooms were designed for discerning viewing rather than sales.
- There were other exhibitions but mostly watercolour and there was a prejudice against watercolour

Key point: there was no real alternative to the Summer Exhibition for oil painting until the Grosvenor Gallery opened in 1877

Alternatives to the Royal Academy

For a hundred years the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition was the main venue for artists to exhibit their work and so the **RA controlled the art market**. However, there were **other ways** artists could sell their work such as **one-man shows**, **dealers**, selling directly to wealthy collectors and **selling engravings**. Dante Gabriel **Rossetti**, for example, although a student of the Royal Academy never exhibited there. From early in his career he established relationships with a number of collectors, such as Frederick Richards Leyland, who continued to buy all the work he produced throughout his life.

The British Institution (in full, the British Institution for Promoting the Fine Arts in the United Kingdom; founded **1805**, disbanded 1867) was a private 19th-century society in London formed to exhibit the works of living and dead artists; it was also known as the Pall Mall Picture Galleries or the British Gallery. Unlike the Royal Academy it admitted only **connoisseurs**, dominated by the **nobility**, rather than practicing artists to its membership, which along with its conservative taste led to

tensions with the British artists it was intended to encourage and support. In its gallery in Pall Mall the Institution held the world's first regular temporary exhibitions of Old Master paintings, which alternated with sale exhibitions of the work of **living artists**; both quickly established themselves as popular parts of the London social and artistic calendar. From 1807 prizes were given to artists and surplus funds were used to buy paintings for the nation.

The ***Society of British Artists*** in London was founded in **1823**, for the annual exhibition and sale of the works of living artists of the United Kingdom, in the various branches of painting, sculpture, architecture, and engraving. It was in Suffolk Street, Pall Mall East and it had a summer and winter exhibition.

There was an enormous prejudice against watercolours. The ***Royal Society of Painters in Water-Colours***, was organized in **1804** but by 1813 had to admit oils and became the *Society of Painters in Oil and Water Colours* although by 1821 it reverted to the old name. The *Royal Institute of Painters in Water-Colours*, originally known as the ***New Society of Painters in Water-Colours***, was founded in **1831**. It is an offshoot of the older society, and the result of a secession of dissatisfied members.

Dudley Gallery, 1864

The Dudley Gallery in London has been in existence since 1864 but, although it was a rival to the Royal Academy exhibition, it still followed its crowded hanging standards. Its first exhibition was held in the month of April, 1865. It was one small room inside the larger **Egyptian Hall**. It was organized for the public display of **water-color pictures** by painters who were not members of the regular water-color societies, and who in consequence were not permitted to send their works to those galleries. It had no regular membership; the pictures were selected or rejected by a committee of management, and the exhibitions were open to all artists whose merit or skill entitled their works to the consideration of the public. In 1883 this gallery passed under new management and became The Dudley Gallery Art Society with about a hundred and fifty members. The Duke of Argyll is President, and the name of John Ruskin appears in the list of the Council.

Grosvenor Gallery, 1877

The big change took place with the opening of the Grosvenor Gallery in 1877, on New Bond street. It was under the management of **Sir Coutts Lindsay**. Its exhibitions were made up of the works of living painters and sculptors who were invited by Sir Coutts Lindsay to contribute. The pictures were not placed closely together but a space of at least one foot was allowed on every side of each work, and they were all hung in the light and position best suited to them. The whole effect was of a private salon. It provided a venue for those artists the Royal Academy did not like, such as Edward Burne-Jones. It was John Ruskin's review of Whistler's work that led to the famous trial I will be talking about later.

ACADEMIC PAINTING

- Royal Academy founded 1768 to teach and encourage art
- Joshua Reynolds, taught:
 1. History
 2. Portrait
 3. Genre
 4. Landscape
 5. Animals
 6. Still life
- And to follow the Old Masters
 - Raphael, Michelangelo, Titian, Poussin, Claude



James Abbott McNeill Whistler, *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket*, 1874, Detroit Institute of Arts

- Royal Academy founded 1768 to teach and encourage art
- Joshua Reynolds, taught the genres and their hierarchy:
 - History
 - Portrait
 - Genre
 - Landscape
 - Animals
 - Still life
- And told students to follow the example of the Old Masters:
 - Raphael, Michelangelo, Titian, Poussin, Claude
- But by the time the Grosvenor Gallery opened the power of the Academy and the importance of academic painting had declined.