



MARY MOSER
(1744-1819)

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- This Mary Moser but who was she? Few have heard of her today yet she was **the youngest ever Royal Academician**, and (in 1805) she was even **proposed as a candidate for the presidency the most prestigious appointment in art in the country**.
- I will explain why she was so well regarded some of the difficulties faced by women artists.
- Mary Moser (1744-1819) was principally a flower painter and so I will also explain why flower painting was so important.
- You may be thinking flower painting was respectable and unadventurous but you will see later that her life was a lot more exciting than that.

NOTES

- "MOSER, Mary (1744-1819). Painter. Daughter of George Michael Moser, an enamel painter and gold-chaser from Switzerland. He moved to England around 1726. Decorated furniture initially, but was also employed by the King to execute two enamels for a watch. Also designed the Great Seal of England for George III. George Moser remained in England and married. Mary is thought to have been his only child, born in 1744. She was a diligent student and

became a flower and figure painter. In 1758 and 1759 she was awarded premiums of five guineas each from the Society of Arts for her drawings. The Society was founded in 1754, its object being to award premiums to young people under 16 who showed most promise in drawing. Mary was 14 when she won her first premium and 15 when she won her second. When the Royal Academy was founded in 1768, George Moser was elected Keeper, and was given apartments in Somerset House. By this stage, Moser had been manager and treasurer of a private academy for artists in St Martin's Lane for almost 30 years. Mary Moser supported the founding of the Royal Academy along with her close friend and fellow artist, Angelica Kauffman. Both were elected Members, the only females. Only one other flower painter besides Mary was elected (John Baker). Mary exhibited at the Royal Academy between 1769 and 1802, showing 36 works, including flower studies. Exhibited works included: Venus and Cupid, Proserpine Gathering Flowers and A Landscape. For a while, she pursued painter Henry Fuseli, but he rejected her advances.

- Queen Charlotte and Princess Elizabeth were clearly fond of Mary Moser, and she was commissioned to decorate an entire room at Frogmore with flowers. It was afterwards called 'Miss Moser's Room'. She was paid a considerable £900 for the work. Mary Moser is reputed to have been difficult and troublesome, and one of her rows was recorded in Smith's Life and times of Nollekens. But she is also said to have had a good sense of humour, and her father was very fond of her. She lived with her parents for much of her career. George Moser, who probably taught his daughter much of what she knew, died in 1783. In the late 1790s Mary married Captain Hugh Lloyd. Thereafter her output diminished. This was due not to marriage but to worsening eyesight. She survived her husband by several years.

Nollekens, a good friend, bequeathed her £100. When Mary died, she left painter Maria Cosway a small sum in her will. Mary was buried with her husband. Sir Joshua Reynolds praised Mary Moser's work in her lifetime. Zoffany painted a picture of the Royal Academy's early supporters in a group. In the background were portraits of Mary Moser and Angelica Kauffman, the latter from a picture by Sir Joshua Reynolds. Peter Pinder alludes to painters Mary Moser and Mary Benwell, mistakenly calling the latter Sarah:

Thus shall I hurt not only group composers

From Sarah Benwell's brush to Mary Moser's.

- In 1905, in *Women Painters of the World* (London, Hodder & Stoughton), Walter Shaw Sparrow included an illustration of Mary Moser's *Vase of Flowers*. Her works can be found in the Tate Gallery. " (Sara Gray, *The Dictionary of British Women Artists*, Lutterworth Press, 2009, p. 191)

PRINCIPAL WORKS

(All exhibited at the R.A.)

1. Flower Piece, in oils, 1769
2. Flower Piece, in water colours, 1769.
3. Flower Piece. Presentation work, 1770.
4. Flower Piece, 1771.
5. Flower Piece
6. and its Companion ;
7. Hebe, 1772.
8. Flower Piece, 1773.
9. Flower Piece, 1773.
10. Piece of Flowers ;
11. The Muse Erato, 1774.

12. A Piece of Flowers, 1775.
13. Small Flower Piece ;
14. Venus and Cupid, 1776.
15. Piece of Flowers ;
16. Girl making a Garland, 1777.
17. Belphebe (Spenser's "Fairy Queen,"), 1778.
18. A Gentleman
19. A Young Gentleman ;
20. Contemplation ;
21. Flowers, 1779.
22. Flower Piece ;
23. Theseus finding his father's sword and sandals (Plutarch), 1783
24. Medora and Angelica (Ariosto);
25. Portrait of a Gentleman ;
26. Aminia (Tasso), 1784.
27. Flowers, 1785.
28. Atalanta and Hippomenes (Ovid), 1788.
29. Flowers ;
30. Cymon and Iphigenia (Dryden), 1789.
31. Proserpine gathering Flowers (Ovid), 1790.
32. A Landscape, 1792.
33. Flowers, 1797.
34. Scene from the "Mysteries of Udolpho," 1798.
35. The Priest of Bacchus stabs himself at the Altar, 1800

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Mary Moser (1744-1819), *Self-Portrait*, c. 1770-1771, 73 x 61 cm, Museum Zu Allerheiligen, Schaffhausen



George Romney (1734-1802), *Mary Moser* (1744-1819), 1770-71, 76.3 x 64.2 cm, National Portrait Gallery

George Romney (1734-1802), *Mary Moser*, 1770-71, 76.3 x 64.2 cm, National Portrait Gallery
 Mary Moser (1744-1819), *Self-Portrait*, c. 1770-1771, 73 x 61 cm., Museum Zu Allerheiligen, Schaffhausen

- This portrait is by **George Romney** and this is the best known portrait of her. She was born in England and, with Angelica Kauffman, was one of the founders of the Royal Academy and she was one of the **most celebrated women artists of the 18th century**.
- She sat for this portrait two years after the Royal Academy was founded. In it she is painting a still life of fruit and foliage and she has half turned to look at us. She is wearing a **form of classical dress**, and her dark hair is casually bundled. **She wears no jewellery and no cosmetics** and she is at work holding a paintbrush. She has an **enigmatic 'Mona Lisa' smile**, she isn't solemn, but isn't smiling either. One interpretation I quite like is that she has reluctantly agreed to be painted by the leading portrait painter of the day because it will serve to advertise this new academy, but actually, she has been interrupted in her work and

seems to be saying 'I will do this, because it will help the **Academy but don't take too long**'.

- I said this was painted shortly after the Royal Academy was founded and the **principal founder was William Chambers** (1723-1796). He had to work hard to gather the best people together and the two women founders were important additions. However, once the all-male Royal Academy committee was established there were no further full female members until Dame Laura Knight in 1936, 117 years later.
- Interestingly, **George Romney (1734-1802) never joined the Royal Academy despite his enormous success**. He was asked, **urged even**, to exhibit there but he did not even apply to join. This cost him valuable royal patronage and support from others connected at court but **he maintained that a good artist should succeed without such cronyism**. He did succeed without the support of being an Academician and it was only towards the end of his life that he **expressed the slightest regret for his views**.
- (CLICK) **More surprising is this little known self-portrait**. It was long assumed to be a copy of the Romney portrait but it is being researched to find out if it was painted first. Notice it is not an exact copy and the changes are interesting. She has pushed the painting of the fruit into the background to place more emphasis on her face which is less idealised. She is certainly a competent portraitist although for me Romney has captured a living person.

NOTES

- It was "... Long in the possession of Moser's Swiss family, this painting was originally assumed to be a copy after her portrait by George Romney. Now dated to the same period, **the canvases are nearly identical. Moser's could be a copy, but**

in fact it is unclear which came first. Perhaps because Moser has never been studied as portraitist, no scholar has yet deciphered the relationship between these two paintings. Copying paintings is a form of Academic training to which Moser would have had access; if hers is modelled after Romney's work, it is telling that she placed less emphasis on the fruit than on herself, that she changed the foliage, and that the paint on her palette appears larger and messier, more convincingly in use. Her own features also seem slightly less polished—and thus, perhaps, truer to form. Yet whether executed first or second, Moser's version reveals a precise, targeted, and culturally conscious self-fashioning that expanded her identity as a painter of floral pieces. By presenting herself at work, Moser proved herself a competent portraitist and limner of the human form. By showing herself in a classical painter's robes, an unusual visual choice for a woman artist at this time, Moser emphasised her professional over her gendered identity. And, while famous for her watercolours, she claimed higher artistic status by showing herself working in oils."

- Mary Moser is reputed to have been difficult and troublesome, and one of her rows was recorded in Smith's Life and Times of Nollekens, an artist we will return to later. But she is also said to have had a good sense of humour, and her father was very fond of her. She lived with her parents for much of her career.
- In the 1790s, Moser received a prestigious commission from Queen Charlotte to paint a floral decorative scheme for Frogmore House in Windsor, Berkshire, for which she was paid £900. This was one of her last professional works as, following her marriage to a Mr. Hugh Lloyd in 1793, aged 49, she retired and began exhibiting as an amateur. She had an open affair with Richard Cosway, who was then separated from his wife Maria and travelled with him for six months on a sketching tour

in 1793. In his notebooks he made 'lascivious statements' and 'invidious comparisons between her and Mrs Cosway', implying that she was much more sexually responsive than his wife.

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Carl Marcus Tuscher (1705–1757),
George Michael Moser and His Wife Mary, 1741–43, 72.5 × 73cm,
Museum of the Home



Carl Marcus Tuscher (1705–1751), *George Michael Moser and His Wife Mary*, 1741–43, 72.5 × 73cm, Museum of the Home, Shoreditch (formerly the Geffrye Museum)

- **These are her parents.** She was the only daughter of **George Michael Moser** (1706–1783), a leading artist and gold chaser who became **drawing master to the Prince of Wales**, the future George III.
- They moved to England before she was born and her artistic talents were clear early on. She she **won her first medal** from the Society of Arts, for her flower drawings **when she was 14**.
- As drawing master to the Prince her father **knew all the celebrities** of the day such as Samuel Johnson and Oliver Goldsmith. This meant that Mary grew up **surrounded by the rich and famous and the intellectual elite of the day**. She was a **hard-working and dedicated professional**. Surprisingly, she was so **near sighted** she had to sit with her **nose an inch from the canvas** and as was pointed out at the time "**it is astonishing with such an infirmity she could display such harmony**".

NOTES

- Mary Moser was born on October 27, 1744. At the age of 14, she won her first medal from the Society of Arts, for her flower drawings. About ten years later, she became, at just 24 years old, the youngest Founder of the Royal Academy of Arts. She died on 2 May 1819, aged 74.
- **George Moser was born in Schaffhausen, Switzerland and came to England around 1726.** He became the leading gold chaser in England, settled down and married Mary Guynier, herself the daughter of an artist. Their only child Mary was born in 1744. She won her first medal for flower painting when she was 14. Her father knew all the celebrities of the day such as Samuel Johnson and Oliver Goldsmith, and was drawing master to George III when he was Prince of Wales. This meant that Mary grew up surrounded by the rich and famous and the intellectual elite of the day. She was a hard-working and dedicated professional. Surprisingly, she was so near sighted she had to sit with her nose an inch from the canvas and as was pointed out at the time "it is astonishing with such an infirmity she could display such harmony".
- **She grew up at a time when painting, in fact almost any job, was dominated by men.** Although her father was a very good teacher and later taught students at the Royal Academy she had no access to life drawing classes. Just to show how extreme the prejudice, James Boswell recorded that Samuel Johnson thought portrait painting was an improper employment for a woman as "**staring at men's faces, is very indelicate in a female.**"[1] In the film "The Danish Girl" (2016) the woman artist Gerda Wegener (1886-1940), played by Alicia Vikander, is painting a portrait of a man and comments "**It's hard for a man to be looked at by a woman. Women are used to it of course, but for a man to submit to a woman's gaze It's unsettling.**"

- "This is a double portrait of Swiss-born émigré George Moser (1706-1783) and his wife [Mary Guynier], previously thought to be his daughter Mary (1744-1819), the well known flower painter. Moser came to England in 1726 becoming the leading gold chaser and enamelist of his day. He was a founder member of the Royal Academy and was its first Keeper. The couple are shown in a formal landscape with classical statuary and seating and are wearing informal fashionable clothes. Tuscher, born in Germany, was in London for just two years, becoming Court Painter to Christian VI of Denmark. Signed by the artist with the initial 'T' on the dog's collar." (Museum for the Creative Arts, website)
- Carl Marcus Tuscher (1705–1757) was born in Nuremberg to humble parents. He was apprenticed to a painter and did so well he won a scholarship to Rome. He was employed by Baron Stosch to organise his collection of art and he studied the classical languages. Stosch was a British spy and fled to Florence and after several years he visited Naples and then left for France, Holland and England. He assisted in a drawing academy run by George Moser when he painted this portrait. He went on to Copenhagen where he was made court painter and architect to Christian VI of Denmark and he died there eight years later after a long illness aged only 45.

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Mary Moser (1744-1819),
Flowers in a Basket, 1765,
V&A



Mary Moser (1744-1819), *Flowers in a Basket*, 1765, V&A

- This is an early example of Moser's flower painting, painted when she was 21 and when she was already recognised as **one of the leading flower painters in Britain. Flower painting was very popular** as a permanent alternative to a vase of flowers and it was also **in demand for decorative designs for vases and tableware, a big market.**
- This was painted only **three years before the Royal Academy was founded** and so it was paintings like this that established her reputation and led to her being invited to join as the **youngest founding member.**
- Let us step back and look at how the Royal Academy came about as it was important for her career.

NOTES

- Flowers in a basket, chrysanthemums, lilies, nigella, convulvulus, delphiniums.



The Foundling Hospital, Holborn, London: a bird's-eye view of the courtyard, numbered for a key. Coloured engraving after L. P. Boitard, 1753

William Hogarth (1697–1764), *Portrait of Captain Thomas Coram*, 1740, 239 × 147.5 cm, Foundling Museum

- This is Thomas Coram by William Hogarth. **In terms of timescale Hogarth died the year before the previous flower painting by Mary Moser** and four years before the Royal Academy was founded but Hogarth had his own school.
- **At the beginning of the eighteenth century fine art was the province of the wealthy**, there were **no public galleries** and **no active discussion** about art. The few who knew about art had been on the **Grand Tour** and **seen works in Italy**. **By the end** of the century there were **public exhibitions, an active art market and general discussion of art in the press** and Hogarth had an **important role to play in this**.
- His art **appealed directly to the new middling sort**. Compare his art with that of his father-in-law Sir James Thornhill (1675/6-1734)

who painted huge Baroque allegorical decorative schemes. Hogarth, particularly his use of prints brought art to a much wider audience as did the public art gallery.

- (CLICK) Coram founded the **Foundling Hospital** (in 1739) for abandoned children. It was visited by the rich and famous as a form of entertainment and it became the **first public art gallery in England**.
- At the same time artists were forming **art societies and schools** where artists could meet to share ideas and provide a school for teaching young artists, particularly life drawing, the ultimate skill. They also organised public exhibitions for the work of their members and sometimes non-members. This **increased public awareness of art**.

NOTES

- Thomas Coram (1668-1751) returned to London in 1704 after eleven years in America to find the country was a powerhouse of industry and invention, global trade and wealth. However, he also found desperate poverty in the streets of London. Poor parents were unable to feed their children and many abandoned them in the streets. Coram campaigned for seventeen years until he received a Royal Charter from George II in 1739 which enabled him to found his Foundling Hospital to care for abandoned children.
- William Hogarth and George Frideric Handel helped Coram establish the Hospital and make it one of London's most fashionable venues. Hogarth encouraged leading artists of the day to donate work, thereby establishing the UK's first public art gallery.
- "When Thomas Coram (1668-1751) returned to London in 1704 after eleven years in America, it was to a city that was a powerhouse of industry, invention, global trade and wealth. It

was also noisy, disease-ridden, polluted and the site of desperate poverty. The situation for children was particularly bleak with soaring mortality rates. Parents who were unable to care for their babies due to poverty or illegitimacy had few options, and many chose to abandon them in the street – it is estimated that around a thousand babies a year were abandoned in London. It was this clear need for practical action that spurred Coram to start his campaign.

- After 17 years of tireless campaigning, Thomas Coram finally received a Royal Charter from King George II in 1739, enabling him to establish his Foundling Hospital to care for and educate some of London's most vulnerable citizens. Instrumental in helping Coram realise his vision were the artist William Hogarth and the composer George Frideric Handel, who helped establish the Hospital as one of London's most fashionable venues. Hogarth encouraged leading artists of the day to donate work, thereby establishing the UK's first public art gallery. Handel donated an organ and conducted annual benefit concerts of Messiah in the Hospital's chapel. Their creative generosity set the template for the ways in which the arts can support philanthropy.
- From 1741 when the first babies were admitted, to 1954 when the last pupil was placed in foster care, the Foundling Hospital cared for and educated around 25,000 children. The Foundling Museum opened in 2004. The building at 40 Brunswick Square was constructed in the 1930s on the site of the Foundling Hospital, and incorporates many architectural features from the original eighteenth-century building."^[1]

REFERENCES

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Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646–1723), *Self-portrait*, 1685, 75.6 × 62.9 cm, National Portrait Gallery

1711 Kneller Academy of Painting



William Hogarth (1697–1764), *Self-portrait*, c.1735, 54.6 x 50.8 cm, Yale Center for British Art

1734 St Martin's Lane Academy

Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646–1723), *Self-portrait*, 1685, 75.6 × 62.9 cm, National Portrait Gallery

William Hogarth (1697–1764), *Self-portrait*, c.1735, 54.6 x 50.8 cm, Yale Center for British Art

- **Before even the Foundling Hospital** this artist, Godfrey Kneller founded the **Kneller Academy of Painting and Drawing** (from 1711 until 1716). Kneller painted every monarch from Charles II to George I and **influenced artists** such as, **William Hogarth (1697-1764)**, **Allan Ramsay (1713-1784)**, **Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792)**, **Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788)** and **Joseph Wright of Derby (1734-1797)**.
- Kneller was succeeded at the Academy by **James Thornhill** five years later and Thornhill then **set up his own school** and was himself succeeded on his death in 1734 by (CLICK) his son-in-law **William Hogarth who set up perhaps the most famous teaching school St Martin's Lane Academy...**

NOTES

- Before the Foundling Hospital, the first British academy of art was

the Kneller Academy of Painting and Drawing (also called the Academy of Painting) founded in 1711 by Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646-1723) in Great Queen Street. His influence on British art is shown in the work of William Hogarth (1697-1764), Allan Ramsay (1713-1784), Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792), Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788) and Joseph Wright of Derby (1734-1797) each of whom absorbed elements of his style. His range and industry was remarkable, he painting every monarch from Charles II to George I. His teaching at the Kneller Academy had a powerful impact on succeeding generations and he is one of Britain's most prolific portraitist.

- Sir James Thornhill succeeded him as governor of the Academy in 1716 and then set up his own school at his house in Covent Garden. On his death in 1734 his student and son-in-law William Hogarth (1697-1764) set up the St Martin's Lane Academy that provided life models for use of its members. The treasurer was George Moser for 30 years until the founding of the Royal Academy.

Johann Zoffany, *A Life Class at St Martin's Lane Academy*, 1761-62,
50.5 x 66cm, Royal Academy



Johann Zoffany, *A Life Class at St Martin's Lane Academy*, 1761-62,
50.5 x 66cm, Royal Academy

- And here it is, "**The St Martin's Lane Academy**" (founded in 1735). William **Hogarth** (1697–1764) married Sir James Thornhill's (1675-1734) daughter and in due course took over Thornhill's academy and then founded this one after Thornhill died. It continued to operate until 1767 when its furnishings and materials were removed to Pall Mall for use in the new Royal Academy Schools.
- This is a painting of the life class. About **80 artists** were associated with the Academy and **30 to 40 artists enrolled for each season which offered life drawing classes every evening from October to March for two guineas**. Life drawing was **mostly from the male model** as we see here, but St Martin's was the **only drawing school in London** that offered a **female model twice weekly**. Among the **artists who attended** were amongst them the most well-known artists of the period, including **Thomas Gainsborough, Allan Ramsay, Richard Wilson, Johann Zoffany and Richard Cosway**, who we shall see later was intimately associated with Mary Moser.

- It was the **centre of artistic training in London** until it became **subsumed into the Royal Academy**. In the **centre foreground looking at us is George Michael Moser** (1704–1783) who by 1760 was director of this academy. He had been organising life classes in London since the 1730s and **he went on to be the first Keeper of the RA Schools**.

NOTES

- Other identified figures include John Malin who is shown reaching into the cupboard, and who later became the porter and occasional model at the RA Schools. To his right is Giuseppe Marchi who travelled from Italy in 1752 to be the studio assistant of Sir Joshua Reynolds. At the back of the room are casts of antique busts and framed life drawings in chalk, both of which would have been present to act as fine exemplars for artists attending this academy." (Royal Academy website)



Joshua Reynolds, Portraits of the Society of Dilettanti, 1777-79

1732 The Society of Dilettanti



Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce

Founded 1754, building opened 1774, became Royal in 1908

Joshua Reynolds, Portraits of the Society of Dilettanti, 1777-79

- **There were other societies.** An early society **with a different aim was the Society of Dilettanti.** It was a society of **noblemen and scholars who sponsored the study of ancient Greek and Roman art.** Established about 1732, it **still meets to discuss art.** Horace Walpole (in 1743) said the nominal qualification was having been to Italy and the **real one was being drunk.** The Society became quite wealthy and sponsored a student to travel to Rome and Greece. It has 60 members elected by secret ballot.
- (CLICK) The other society founded at this time was **William Shipley's Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce** (a long name which was abbreviated to the Society of Arts) was founded in 1754. **Shipley encouraged women to become members early on.** In 1774 the Adams brothers built this building in John Adam Street. In 1908 it received Royal patronage and today it is more commonly known as the **Royal Society of Arts** or the RSA.

NOTES

- It was created as a London dining club for **those who had been on the Grand Tour** and its toast was, and still is, 'Seria ludo' ('to take matters seriously in a light-hearted spirit'). The group was initially led by Sir Francis Dashwood and contained several dukes, Sir William Hamilton, the Duke of Leeds and it was later joined by Joshua Reynolds (from 1766), David Garrick, Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight (from 1781).

Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792), *Self-portrait*, c. 1748 (1747-1749), 63.5 × 74.3 cm, National Portrait Gallery

1761 Society of Artists of Great Britain



Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792), *Self-portrait*, c. 1748 (1747-1749), 63.5 × 74.3 cm, National Portrait Gallery

- This is **Joshua Reynolds** who with some other artists broke away from Shipley's Society of Arts and formed the **Society of Artists of Great Britain** (in 1761), a confusingly similar name.
- Four years later, (in 1765) his Society then comprising 211 members **obtained a Royal Charter** (as the "Incorporated Society of Artists of Great Britain"). (It continued exhibiting until 1791 when it was dissolved. From 1761 to 1783 it was called the 'Free Society of Artists'.)
- Meanwhile, Shipley's **Society of Arts split** following a leadership dispute between two leading architects, **Sir William Chambers** (1723-1796, Somerset House) and **James Paine** (1717-1789, over 90 building works including Richmond, Chertsey and Kew bridges, and the second Walton bridge of six, Canaletto painted the first Walton bridge).
- James Paine continued to run the society and **William Chambers** used his **strong connections with George III** to persuade the King

to endorse the formation of **The Royal Academy of Arts** in December 1768.

- Chambers persuaded **Joshua Reynolds and 34 other leading artists to join and Reynolds was voted in as the first President.** (The Royal Academy was also supported by Richard Wilson, Benjamin West and Paul Sandby.) It taught art in its school, held a Summer Exhibition and limited its membership to **40 Academicians.**
- (George Moser became the Keeper of the Royal Academy Schools. In this role he oversaw the artistic education of Schools students for the next 15 years, teaching pupils including William Blake.)



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

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

- This is a well-known painting by Johann Zoffany one of the founding members of the Royal Society of the original members and guests.
- It is the Royal Academy life drawing class but there is something odd about it?
- (CLICK) **First the two female Academicians** Angelica Kauffman (1741-1807) and Mary Moser (1744-1819) **were never allowed in the life drawing class**. There was no rule against it but it would have been **too embarrassing for all concerned**. Instead they are **represented by portraits on the righthand wall**. Angelica Kauffman is on the left, the rectangular canvas, with Mary Moser on the right, in an oval and wearing a yellow flower. They were not even allowed to attend dinners or committee meetings or vote even though the petition to the King included their signatures.
- What I was really thinking was odd is that it is a life drawing class but **only one Academician had a drawing instrument** (CLICK) and that is a self-portrait of Johan Zoffany holding a palette. The reason they

don't need drawing instruments is that they are having an intellectual dispute about the classical pose the model should take or some other intellectual activity. **The painting supports the Renaissance view that painting is not just a skill but is a humanist endeavour that requires inspiration, creativity and knowledge**, particularly of the classics.

- (CLICK) Just left of centre are the two key founders **Sir William Chambers** (1723–96), architect and treasurer of the Academy and **Sir Joshua Reynolds** (1723–92), first President **with an ear trumpet**.
- (CLICK) I mentioned a guest, circled is **Tan-che-qua, a Chinese artist visiting London**.
- (CLICK) **George Moser (1706–83) is setting the model's pose** and holding the sling to support his hand in comfort.
- (CLICK) The final person to remember is **Richard Cosway (1742–1821), a flattering portrait painter and famous dandy**, here looking the part and denigrating the antique female torso by poking it with his cane.

NOTES

- 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' as when he was shipwrecked when returning from Lucknow in India the survivors held a lottery in which the loser was 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 'disegno' as first defined by Renaissance artists in Florence.

- The model in the foreground adopts the pose of Spinario, a famous classical statue in which a boy pulls a thorn from the sole of his foot.
- 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 an Academician thrusts his cane.
- The other oddity is the person from China, fifth from the left (can you find him?), Tan-che-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) and Mary Moser (1744-1819). (Note, Moser's father George Moser was the Keeper and is seen posing the model). 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 organisation 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.

- 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 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, Richard Cosway 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

36. William Hoare (1707–92), portrait painter working in Bath



Henry Singleton (1766-1839), *The Royal Academicians in General Assembly, 1795*, Royal Academy of Arts

Henry Singleton (1766-1839), *The Royal Academicians in General Assembly, 1795*, Royal Academy of Arts

- This is an important group portrait of the early Royal Academicians. It was painted 27 years after the foundation and shows the Academicians meeting to judge which young artists should be awarded medals.
 - (CLICK) **Angelica Kauffman and Mary Moser are shown on the right hand of (CLICK) the President Benjamin West** (1738-1820). They are at the apex of the picture but Kauffman and Moser did not attend meetings of the General Assembly, so would not have been present. Benjamin West was an American artist who went on a Grand Tour of Europe and when he reached London he stayed for the rest of his life.
 - (CLICK) **Joshua Reynolds** (1723-1792) **was dead by this date** but his portrait is top right.
 - (CLICK) **Sir William Chambers** (1723-1796) is seated centrally.

NOTES

- They are in the Council Room of Somerset House.
 - John Singleton Copley is standing facing Joseph Farrington.
 - William Hodges is far left facing Sir Thomas Lawrence and behind them are the three architect members.
 - One the far right are the three sculptor members and above them the Apollo Belvedere and Laocoön.
- The artist Henry Singleton (1766-1839) was born in London in 1766, part of an artistic family. He should not be confused with the American artist and Academician John Singleton Copley (1738-1815). Henry Singleton was raised by his uncle and he was working as a professional artist by the age of 16. He entered the Royal Academy Schools in 1783 and exhibited at the Royal Academy for 55 years from 1784 until his death. Despite painting this important group portrait, **Singleton never became an Academician himself**. He was twice rejected for Associateship, in 1807 and 1811. Singleton first rose to prominence as a history painter. He never fulfilled his potential in this genre but remained popular throughout his life, particularly as a portrait painter. He lived in comfortable circumstances in London and died at the house of a friend in 1839.



History Painting



Portrait



Genre or Subject Painting



Landscape



Animal Painting



Still-Life

Benjamin West (1738-1820), *Cleombrotus Ordered into Banishment by Leonidas II, King of Sparta*, 1768, 138.4 × 185.4 cm, Tate

Joshua Reynolds, *Lady Talbot*, 1782, 234.3 × 146 cm, Tate Britain

Nathaniel Bacon (1585–1627), *Cookmaid with Still Life of Vegetables and Fruit*, c.1620–5, 151 × 247.5 cm, Tate Britain

Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788), *Sunset: Carthorses Drinking at a Stream*, c.1760, 143.5 × 153.7 cm

George Stubbs (1724-1806), c. 1762, *Whistlejacket*, 296.1 × 248 cm, National Gallery

Balthasar van der Ast (1593/1594–1657), *Flowers in a Vase with Shells and Insects*, c. 1630, 47 × 36.8 cm, National Gallery

- Before I return to Mary Moser I need to position flower painting in the **hierarchies of painting** sometimes called the hierarchy of genres. It was established in 16th century Italy that is during the Renaissance and it was refined by the French Academy. It **held sway for some 300 hundred years** and was formalised, reinforced and promoted by all the art academies across Europe. The hierarchy was:

- History painting

- Portrait painting
 - Genre or Subject painting
 - Landscapes and cityscapes
 - Animal painting
 - Still life
- All artists and connoisseurs at this time would have instantly categorised each type of painting within the strict hierarchy. The hierarchy reflected a Platonic belief in idealism over realism. The lowest category, still life, was regarded as a 'mechanical copying of a particular appearance' whereas history painting rendered visible the universal essence of things and their most noble and uplifting spirit.
 - A history painting required a detailed knowledge of anatomy which was impossible for a woman artist to learn as they were barred from life drawing classes as we shall see in the next painting. History painting also required a detailed knowledge of classical literature as the artist had to capture the exact moment and the feelings captured in the faces to express the noble thoughts that would elevate the painting beyond a mere mechanical painting of models.
 - The hierarchy arose from **philosophical debates** about the relative importance of painting with respect to poetry, sculpture and architecture as intellectual activities. Leon Battista Alberti, Leonardo da Vinci, and Giorgio Vasari were all concerned and debated the question. During the Renaissance landscape, genre scenes and still lifes hardly existed as established genres, and so the debate was with respect to history including biblical subjects compared to portraits.
 - The new genres of landscape, genre painting, animal painting and still-life developed during the 17th century, with the virtual cessation of religious painting in Protestant countries, and the

expansion of picture buying by the prosperous middle class. The hierarchy was extended in 1667 by André Félibien, a historiographer, architect and theoretician of French classicism and this became the classic statement of the theory for the 18th century as shown here.

- (CLICK) ***Cleombrotus Ordered into Banishment by Leonidas II, King of Sparta*** concerns an incident from ancient Greek history. Leonidas, king of Sparta, was usurped by his son-in-law, Cleombrutus. When Leonidas returns looking for revenge, **his daughter pleads for her husband's life**. Leonidas is moved by her tears, and commutes Cleombrutus's death sentence to banishment.
- (CLICK) Next down the hierarchy was **portrait painting**. This is by the first President of the Royal Academy. **Who was it by?** Yes, **Joshua Reynolds**. It is a portrait of **Lady Talbot** and Reynolds elevated it to a type of history painting by giving his portraits a classical setting.
- (CLICK) The third type was called **genre or subject painting**. It had to contain **one or more people** but it was not a portrait. The people were there to set the scene or tell a story but it **might be humorous not elevating and noble**. This was painted, unusually by a nobleman, **Nathaniel Bacon** (1585–1627), and it was painted in 1620, the first subject painting in the history of English art.
- (CLICK) The final three categories were rarely painted during the Renaissance. There was **landscape painting** which might contain humans but only as part of the landscape. **Such human additions are called staffage**, merely human or animal accessories. **Who knows this painting?** It is by **Thomas Gainsborough** another contemporary of Angelica Kauffman.
- (CLICK) Fifth down the hierarchy was **animal painting**. Animals

were admired for their beauty or **they could represent human emotions. Who knows this painting?** It is **Whistlejacket** by **George Stubbs**. The audacious plain background said to be the idea of the owner the Marquess of Rockingham created a stir and challenged the hierarchy of painting and the lowly place of animal painting.

- (CLICK) Finally, the type of painting Mary Moser specialised in. Still-life could be elevating as there was a type of still-life called **memento mori**, literally '**remember you have to die**'. Such painting might contain a skull or perhaps a wilting flower. This is a Dutch flower painting from the previous century by **Balthasar van der Ast**.
- All artists and connoisseurs at this time would have **instantly categorised** each type of painting within the **strict hierarchy**. Copying something from nature realistically was regarded as a basic skill that anyone could acquire with training so the lowest category, **still life**, was regarded as a '**mechanical copying of a particular appearance**' whereas **history painting rendered visible the universal essence** of things and their most **noble and uplifting spirit**.

NOTES

- The hierarchy arose from philosophical debates about the relative importance of painting with respect to poetry, sculpture and architecture as intellectual activities. Leon Battista Alberti, Leonardo da Vinci, and Giorgio Vasari were all concerned and debated the question. During the Renaissance landscape, genre scenes and still lifes hardly existed as established genres, and so the debate was with respect to history including biblical subjects compared to portraits.
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- **Whistlejacket**—One of the most important British paintings of the eighteenth century, Whistlejacket is probably the most well-known portrait of a horse. It is also widely acknowledged to be George Stubb's masterpiece. The Arabian chestnut stallion had won a famous victory at York in 1759, but by 1762 had been retired from racing. He belonged to the 2nd Marquess of Rockingham, who commissioned Stubbs to paint a commemorative life-size portrait of his prize horse on a scale that was more appropriate for a group portrait or historical painting.
- **Lady Talbot**—this is a full-length, life-size portrait of a contemporary female aristocrat which was originally exhibited as 'Portrait of a Lady' but which we now know was Lady Talbot. It was commissioned by her husband the 1st Earl Talbot as a companion to his portrait painted by Pompeo Batoni when he on the Grand Tour. The statue in the background is Minerva the goddess of wisdom and strength and it gives the painting a classical dimension. Lord Talbot had a classical sculpture known as the Ludovisi Mars (in the national Museum, Rome) representing martial values. Typically, the man wears contemporary dress while, as here, his wife wears a more playful historicising fancy dress.

REFERENCES

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hierarchy_of_genres

NON-FLOWER PAINTINGS BY MARY MOSER

1. Hebe, 1772
2. The Muse Erato, 1774
3. Venus and Cupid, 1776
4. Girl making a Garland, 1777
5. Belphebe (Spenser's "Fairy Queen,"), 1778
6. A Gentleman
7. A Young Gentleman
8. Contemplation
9. Theseus finding his father's sword and sandals (Plutarch), 1783
10. Medora and Angelica (Ariosto)
11. Portrait of a Gentleman
12. Aminia (Tasso), 1784
13. Atalanta and Hippomenes (Ovid), 1788
14. Cymon and Iphigenia (Dryden), 1789
15. Proserpine gathering Flowers (Ovid), 1790
16. A Landscape, 1792
17. Scene from the "Mysteries of Udolpho," 1798
18. The Priest of Bacchus stabs himself

Mary Moser (1744-1819), *Standing female nude*, black and white chalk on grey-green paper, 49 × 30.2cm, Fitzwilliam Gallery



Mary Moser (1744-1819), *Standing female nude*, black and white chalk on grey-green paper, 49 × 30.2cm, Fitzwilliam Gallery

- I am only listing these paintings to show that in fact Mary Moser was not just a flower painter but unfortunately very few of these paintings survive. **Only one of her sketches remains.**
- In order to represent the human figure accurately the art student had to learn anatomy and one way to do this was to draw the nude so that the clothed figure could be painted accurately.
- So how did Mary Moser obtain this skill? (CLICK) We don't know but the speculation was that her **father obtained models for her and chaperoned her while she drew.** This nude drawing of a woman is by Moser and a woman model may have been easier for her to arrange, but she must have also sketched men.
- It is difficult to over emphasise the importance of life drawing. It was the centre of instruction at art academies across Europe. Denis Diderot (1713-1784), in his *Encyclopédie* (1751-72) defined an *académie* as 'a **public school where painters go to draw and paint, and sculptors to model, after a nude man called the**

model'. One possibility is that Angelica Kauffman and Mary Moser drew the male model with his middle section draped and with a chaperone present. Draping the male model was a common practice when women artists started to be allowed to attend live drawing classes later in the nineteenth century and is suggested by a drawing of a draped male figure that reflects Kauffman's drawing practice.[1] Kauffman was mocked by many male artists because her male characters looked feminine.

NOTES

- The male nude was a common subject and more life drawing classes at the Royal Academy were devoted to the male nude than the female nude. However, society was run by men and women were regarded as passive and governed by emotion. They were excluded from the RA even though Mary Moser and Angelica Kauffman were two founding members. It was not until 1860 that Laura Herford was admitted and that was by mistake as she had submitted her drawings using only the initials 'L.H.' Her admittance was followed by 34 other women being admitted to the RA School but there were not allowed to attend life drawing classes. Women could not attend life classes to draw the partially draped male nude until 1893, twenty years after the first petition. By this time, life classes for women were widely available across the country and the RA was perceived as old-fashioned.
- Women were not used as life drawing models in the rest of Europe until the nineteenth century but the RA was an exception and female nude models were introduced in 1769, a year after its foundation. Four male and one female model was employed three times a week. Men under 20 who were unmarried were not allowed to draw the female nude. Male models were chosen for their physique and were often porters at the RA or soldiers.


Female models were more difficult to find and were often prostitutes, and they were paid much more than the male models, sometimes two or three times more.

MARY MOSER'S NON-FLOWER PAINTINGS

1. Hebe, 1772
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16. A Landscape, 1792
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18. The Priest of Bacchus stabs himself

REFERENCES

[1] Footnote 32, page 60 of 'Anatomy is Destiny: Regarding the Body in the Art of Angelica Kauffman' by Wendy Wassyng Roworth in *Femininity and Masculinity in Eighteenth-century Art and Culture*, ed. Gillian Perry, Micheal Rossington



Mary Moser (1744-1819),
Joseph Nollekens, 1770-71,
63.5 × 48.3cm, Yale Center for
British Art

Mary Moser (1744-1819), *Joseph Nollekens*, 1770-71, 63.5 × 48.3cm, Yale Center for British Art

- This is **one of the few Mary Moser non-flower paintings that remains**. **Joseph Nollekens** (1737-1823) was considered to be the **finest British sculptor of the late 18th century**.
- He is shown here scrutinising a modello and Moser is showing her skill at representing the clothed male body and the nude modello. There was much discussion about whether painting or sculpture is the greater art and here Moser captures both the sculptor and the sculpture staking a claim for painting as the greater art.

NOTES

- **Joseph Nollekens** (1737-1823) was born in Soho, London, the son of a Flemish painter. He studied first in London and then in Rome. When he returned in 1770 he set up as a maker of busts in Mortimer Street where he built up a large practice. He produced busts of George III, William Pitt the Younger, Charles James Fox and many other famous figures. He became an Associate Academician in 1771 and a full Academician the following year. **He made a fortune and**

left around £200,000 in his will. His biography describes him as a 'grotesque miser'.

REFERENCES

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Nollekens



Paul Sandby RA (1731–1809), *Lady Francis Scott and Lady Elliot*, c. 1770, watercolor and graphite on medium, cream, moderately textured laid paper, 12.7 x 13 cm, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

Paul Sandby RA (1731–1809), *Lady Francis Scott and Lady Elliot*, c. 1770, watercolor and graphite on medium, cream, moderately textured laid paper, 12.7 x 13 cm, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

Inscribed in graphite, bottom center: "Lady Scott, Lady Elliott"; inscribed in graphite, verso, lower left: "Lady Elliott"; in graphite, verso, lower right: "L[...] Francis Doylan"

- **It is always assumed that prior to the late eighteenth century women did not engage in art unless their father was an artist and they were unusually accomplished.** However, this is defining art as professional public art and it **ignores private art**.
- **Wealthy women were typically taught by men to draw and paint**, for example, **George Stubbs** painted the Wedgwood family portrait in 1779 and **taught their seven children** including four daughters. **Paul Sandby** (1725/31–1809) who drew this watercolour was a popular drawing master who specialised in landscapes and topography and he **probably tutored Lady Frances Scott**, and in about 1780 he depicted her in riding costume, sketching a scene outdoors with the help of a **camera obscura**.

- **If a woman did acquire artistic skill** good enough to enable her to sell her work then **once she married she would have to stop selling her work** as it was regarded as an **insult to her husband**. (One exception was the artist Mary Beale whose husband acted as her assistant but this was accepted by society as a freak occurrence.) From the 1670s (the Restoration period) to the 1820s elite women and even some women of the middling-sort were **expected to be able to sketch, draw and paint** to the extent that they would feel deprived if prevented.
- **Almost every document on women's lives between 1670 and 1820 describes the pride educated women felt in their ability to draw and in particular to paint well.** What they painted was often portraits, sometimes copied and sometimes from life.
- We might regard amateur art as a **lesser form of art but this is a mistake** if the artist is prevented from painting. A significant proportion of such women artists would have been **highly skilled yet their work was not treated as such** except in private correspondence and most of their work is now lost.

NOTES

- The sphere of professional art was defined by and dominated by men, in fact dominate is too weak a word, **men totally owned professional art**. Women could not attend the few art schools that existed and that meant they could not develop their skill in life drawing, the basis of what was regarded as the 'higher' forms of art. Women were not expected to work at all but to look after the home and life drawing, which involved intensively observing the nude, typically male, figure which was completely forbidden by the rules of social decorum. Angelica Kauffman was an exception and amazingly she became one of the most famous artists in Europe for history painting, the highest genre. History painting required a classical education which women were

thought to be unable to master and such studies were not included in their education. 'High' art was seen as an intellectual activity that was beyond the capability of a woman and so such education was seen as pointless.

- Mary Fox-Strangeways Talbot ([1], p. 329) was given a complete watercolour and body colour painting set as a wedding present and she would later grind pigments and make paint with her children.

WOMEN ARTIST WHO WORKED IN ENGLAND PRIOR TO THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Susannah Hornebolt (1503-1554), taught by Flemish father, first known woman artist in England

Levina Teerlinc (née Bening, Flemish, 1510s-1576), father taught her, miniaturist to Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary I and Elizabeth I

Joan Carlisle (née Palmer, English, 1606-79), self-taught, first British-born woman professional portrait painter

Mary Beale (née Cradock, English, 1633-1699), father was an amateur painter and may have taught her

Susan Penelope Rosse (née Gibson, English, 1652-1700), learnt from father, portrait miniatures

Anne Killigrew (English, 1660-1685), "A Grace for beauty, and a Muse for wit.", died smallpox aged 25

Angelica Kauffman (1741-1807), worked in England for 14 years

Mary Moser (English, 1744-1819), taught by father George Moser

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Rosemary O'Day, 'Family Galleries: Women and Art in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 71, No. 2 (June 2008), pp. 323-349 Published by: University of Pennsylvania Press, Stable URL:

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Mary Moser, aged 14, Decorative flower painting, 1759

Mary Moser, aged 14, Decorative flower painting, 1759

- I have been emphasising a little known aspect of Mary Moser's talent, her portraits and history painting. However, **she is best known now and then as a flower painter.**
- She **painted this flower study** 11 years before the Royal Academy was founded **when she was 14**. It shows her skill but I first want to explain **why flower painting was so popular.**
- **Flower painting originated as a branch of still-life in the Netherlands** during the early seventeenth century. The advantage for women artists was that it was generally **small size and it required no knowledge of anatomy**. Flowers were also considered more appropriate for women to paint rather than half-naked gods.
- Flower painting as carried out by Mary Moser arose out of the **symbolic associations of flowers, such as a lily to represent the Virgin Mary or in a vanitas painting to refer to the brevity of life.** Flower paintings were **painted for a cultivated audience initially in the Northern and Spanish Netherlands** reflecting an aspect of the home and everyday life. Flowers from different countries were

combined as a reference to the spread of Dutch trade around the globe. For wealthy clients the flowers were a reference to their private gardens and their rare specimens from around the world. Flower specimens that often cost more than the paintings.

- But flower painting has a long history before that...

NOTES

- Flower paintings were particularly **popular in Antwerp** and Jan Brueghel the Elder and younger were leading artists in the genre.
- Painters such as Ambrosius Bosschaert the Elder, Balthasar van der Ast, Roelandt Savery, and Jacob Vosmaer often referred to herbals and other botanical texts when composing "bouquets".
- The so-called '**tulip mania**' took place in the mid-1630s and prices collapsed in 1637. A single bulb could **cost five times the cost of an average house** at the height of the mania.
- In the 1650s and 60s still-lives of fruit and vegetables became popular in Amsterdam by such artists as Van Beyeren and Willem Kalf and they often included expensive Chinese porcelain and Venetian glassware.
- "In these works and later flower pictures by De Heem, Willem van Aelst, Rachel Ruysch, and the highly influential Jan van Huysum, the emphasis upon aesthetic appeal and decorative function evident in almost all still-life painting is more conspicuous than ever before."
- By 1700 it is hard to distinguish Dutch, Flemish, German and French still-lives.
- Between 1780 and 1810 many French women artists achieved considerable commercial success even though they were barred from life drawing classes. "Three of the Académie's four female members—Adélaïde Labille-Guiard (1749–1803), Anne Vallayer-

Coster (1744–1818), and Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun (1755–1842)—regularly exhibited at the biennial Salons." Their patrons were often royal women, in particular Queen Marie Antoinette and Mesdames Adélaïde and Victoire, the powerful daughters of King Louis XV. Vallayer-Coster painted portraits and scenes from everyday life but was chiefly admired for her flower paintings.

- "Although many critics applauded their new prominence, others lamented the immodesty of women who would display their skills so publicly. Indeed, pamphleteers frequently conflated the exhibition of these women's paintings with the display of their bodies, and they were hounded by salacious rumours."
- During the French Revolution Vigée Le Brun and Vallayer-Coster fled the country and joined royal courts in England and Russia.
- One of the most successful flower painters was Rachel Ruysch. Her paintings commanded high prices—considerably higher than Rembrandt's and she became an international celebrity.
- **"In England the genre's principal exponent was Mary Moser,** the only woman apart from Angelica Kauffman to be elected as a founder member of the Royal Academy. Although she became one of the century's most celebrated British women artists, she is virtually unknown today. Ambitious and clever, she was 'so nearsighted, that her nose when she was painting was within an inch of the canvas'. Ignoring exotic imported species, she painted the sort of flowers that would be found in an English garden. Her most important work was a complex floral scheme for Frogmore House, Windsor, commissioned by Queen Charlotte, for which she was paid the princely sum of £900 (equivalent to about £55,000 today)." (Chapman, Caroline. *Eighteenth-Century Women Artists*, Unicorn Publishing Group. Kindle Edition)
- Frieze "Bow Down!", episode 6 Angelica Kauffman, Mary Moser.

By Shahidha Bari and Jennifer Higgie editor of *frieze*. No access to male models. Kauffman paints herself, see NPG self-portrait wearing Grecian dress to show she, like them, is a master. Holding a portfolio. Hazel, lucid eyes. She also calls herself an allegory see *Design* painting a naked male torso, one of four ceiling paintings in the ceiling of the RA building. Sleeves rolled up to upper arm.



Fragment of a Tomb Painting with Seated Woman Holding a Lotus, Unknown, ca. 1539-1425 B.C.E., From the collection of: Brooklyn Museum

Fragment of a Tomb Painting with Seated Woman Holding a Lotus, Unknown, ca. 1539-1425 B.C.E., From the collection of: Brooklyn Museum

- Three and a half thousand years ago the ancient Egyptians were painting flowers. **The earliest flower painting was of the lotus.** The lotus was an important flower as the Egyptians believed that at the **beginning the world was covered in water and from the water a single lotus flower rose and opened to reveal the sun god Atum.** It was associated with creation, healing and spiritual rebirth as it rises each day and opens and in the evening closes and sinks beneath the water. It was also associated with the Nile and its annual flooding. In religion it was associated with the goddess Isis and the god Horus and it was also a symbol of Upper and Lower Egypt.
- **In the wall painting a woman is holding the lotus flower** as it was believed that the **strong scent of the lotus would restore the senses of the deceased once they reached the after-life.** The table in front of her contains wine and food to sustain her in the

after-life and to be used as offerings to any gods she encountered.

NOTES

- The New Kingdom was 1550-1069 BC (Shaw, 2000) and included the 18th to 20th dynasties. With the end of the New Kingdom, Egypt lost much of the power, prestige and domination that she had enjoyed earlier.
- Isis was an important goddess who was believed to have resurrected her slain brother and husband Osiris and produced his heir Horus. She was also considered the mother of the pharaohs and could be invoked by sacred rituals to heal. Isis was absorbed into Greek religion and later the Romans.

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Frescoed Wall from the House of Livia, c. 1st century BCE, mural painting, National Museum, Rome

Frescoed Wall from the House of Livia, c. 1st century BCE, mural painting, National Museum, Rome

- **In ancient Rome around 50BC to 50AD the representation of the natural world was used to decorate the walls of their dining rooms.** The flora and fauna were depicted in such detail **that species can still be identified.** These are the frescoes from the dining room of the house of Livia Drusilla wife of the Emperor Augustus in Prima Porta, a suburb 12km north of Rome.

NOTES

- "An 1863 excavation of the house of Livia Drusilla (58 BCE–29 CE), wife of the Emperor Augustus, in the Roman suburb of Prima Porta uncovered a series of four magnificent frescoes decorating the walls of an underground triclinium, or dining room. These illusionistic wall paintings are filled with images of exotic birds and a variety of flowers, plants, and trees. The flora and fauna were, in fact, depicted in such great detail that scholars have been able to identify many of the species represented. " (<https://www.learner.org/series/art-through-time-a-global-view/the-natural-world/frescoed-wall-from->

[the-house-of-livia/](#))



South Netherlandish, 'The Falcon's Bath', c. 1400–1415, 349.3 × 369.6 cm, Met Museum

South Netherlandish, 'The Falcon's Bath', c. 1400–1415, 349.3 × 369.6 cm, Met Museum

- Flowers were also found in medieval art including illuminated manuscripts and tapestries such as this one. These millefleurs (French, 'mill-a-fler', literally 'a thousand flowers') tapestries refer to the background of different small flowers and plants usually on a green background as if growing in grass.
- **Millefleur tapestries** are restricted to the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance, from about 1400 to 1550, but mainly about 1480–1520. The style had a **notable revival by William Morris in 19th century England**, being used on original tapestry designs, as well as illustrations from his Kelmscott Press publications.

NOTES

- "This recently discovered tapestry depicting courtly figures training a falcon is in remarkably good condition. At the center of the tapestry, four luxuriously dressed figures are gathered in front of a rose trellis and flowering turf bench. The lady and the gentleman in the foreground, attended by courtiers behind them, are

encouraging the falcon to bathe in the basin of water between them. Four additional figures at the corners, set against a flowering, or millefleurs ground, are also busy training falcons." (Met)

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Sandro Botticelli (1445–1510), *La Primavera (Spring)*, 1482, tempera on panel, 203 × 314 cm, Uffizi

- This is *La Primavera* by Botticelli, "**one of the most written about, and most controversial paintings in the world**", and also "**one of the most popular paintings in Western art**".
- This pastoral scenery is an elaborate celebration of Spring.
 - (CLICK) On the far right is **Zeyphrus, the biting wind of March**, who **transformed the nymph Chloris into Flora**, the **goddess of Spring**, who we see next to her.
 - (CLICK) In the middle is **Venus with Cupid** above her. Cupid 's arrow is aimed at the central Grace Chastity. NeoPlatonic philosophers at the time saw Venus as the classical equivalent of the Virgin Mary.
 - (CLICK) left of her the **Three Graces dancing** which we can identify as Pleasure, Chastity and Beauty (left to right).
 - (CLICK) On the far left is **Mercury raising his messenger's staff**, the caduceus, towards some misty clouds. His staff became associated with magic and alchemy and here it is

assumed he is keeping bad weather and by extension bad things away from the happy group.

- There are **500 identified plant species** depicted in the painting, with about **190 different flowers**, of which at least 130 can be specifically identified. The overall appearance, and size, of the painting is similar to that of the millefleur ("thousand flower") Flemish tapestries that were popular decorations for palaces at the time.

NOTES

- The controversy surrounds both its origin, its patron, its purpose and in particular its meaning. Some say it is an allegory of fertility and other a celebration of love and was commissioned by Lorenzo de' Medici as a wedding gift for Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de' Medici. The wedding was originally to be in May but was delayed to July because of the death of Lorenzo de' Medici's mother.
- The **three Graces** were the sisters Aglaia (Brightness), Euphrosyne (Joyfulness), and Thalia (Bloom) although the number varied. In some accounts they are said to be daughters of Zeus and Hera. In classical art they were portrayed naked and accompanied Venus. Some writers identify them with Pleasure, Chastity and Beauty (left to right).
- It could represent the progress of spring as Venus was the goddess of April and Mercury the god of May.

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Mary Moser, *Botanical studies of Variegated Tulips*, 1764-1800, watercolour, V&A

'The Language of Flowers', printed by Alfred Stiebel & Co around 1910

Vincent Van Gogh (1853-1890), *Sunflowers*, 1888, 92.1 x 73 cm, National Gallery

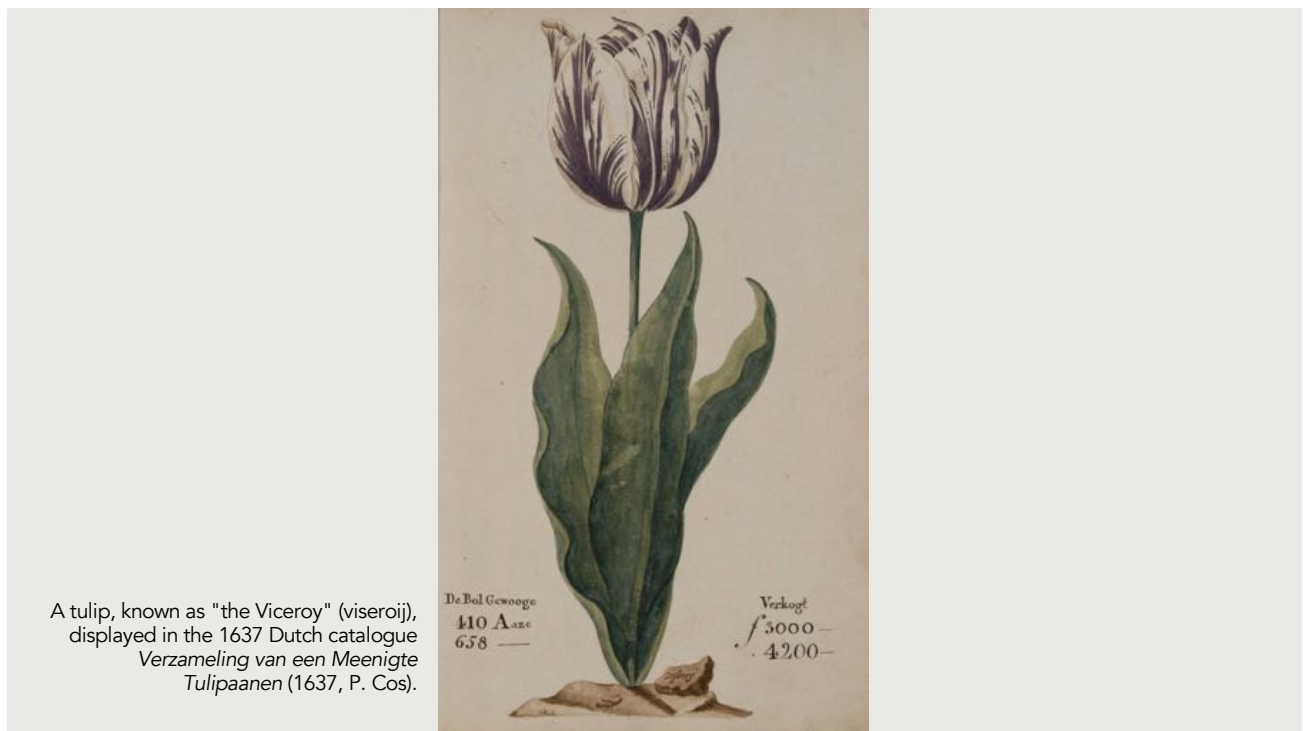
Claude Monet (1840-1926), *Le Jardin de l'artiste à Giverny* (The artist's garden at Giverny), 1900, 81.3 x 92.6 cm, Musée d'Orsay

Georgia O'Keeffe, *Oriental Poppies*, 1927, 101.6 x 76.2 cm, Weisman Art Museum

- **I have skipped over Dutch flower painting which I will return to next** but I first wanted to point out that flower painting has continued until the present day.
- There were also **botanical illustrations and these are two botanical studies by Mary Moser** of variegated tulips. She became a skilled and recognised botanist and illustrator of botanical specimens.
- **This embossed postcard titled 'The Language of Flowers' shows 18 different flowers and their symbolic meaning.** The postcard

decodes 'The Language of Flowers', a Victorian idea where each variety of flower on a card conveyed a particular sentiment. It was printed by Alfred Stiebel & Co around 1910. **Complex messages could be sent in the Victorian period based on the symbolic meanings found in books of flowers.** Having looked at a number of Victorian books that gave the meaning of flowers I found there are two problems—each flower had multiple meanings and each book gave slightly different meanings so if you were not careful you could be sending completely the wrong message.

- **Possibly the most famous flower paintings Van Gogh's *Sunflowers*,** the Impressionists and flower gardens including this work by Claude Monet and into the twentieth century with this work by Georgia O'Keefe.
- But the flower paintings of **Mary Moser follow on from the tradition of Dutch flower painting. So let us have a closer look at that...**



A tulip, known as "the Viceroy" (viseroij), displayed in the 1637 Dutch catalogue *Verzameling van een Meenigte Tulipaenen* ('Tulip Catalogue', 1637, P. Cos).

- **A single Viceroy tulip bulb** was worth upwards of **five times the cost of an average house** at the time ([1] Thompson, 2007, p. 100). This was the period of '**tulip mania**'.
- This illustration of the Viceroy is from a **bulb catalogue** and you can see the price ('Verkocht', pronounced 'fair-koght') is between **3,000 and 4,200 guilders** (florins) depending on the weight ('gewoge', pronounced 'gher-vogha'). A skilled craftsman at the time earned about 300 guilders a year.
- **The Dutch tulip bulb market bubble was one of the most famous market bubbles and crashes of all time.** It occurred in Holland during the early to mid-1600s when speculation drove the value of tulip bulbs to extremes. At the height of the bubble, tulips sold for approximately 10,000 guilders, equal to the value of a **mansion on the Amsterdam Grand Canal**.
- **People did not think tulip bulbs were worth that much** but they **saw people making a fortune** buying and then selling bulbs a week

later as prices shot up. You didn't even need to have the cash as you could buy 'futures' for a fraction of the price, that is a promise to buy at an agreed price a future date. You bet on when that date arrived you could sell the bulb the same day and use the money to pay for the bulb.

- Recent scholarship has questioned the extent of the tulip mania, suggesting it may have been exaggerated as a parable of greed and excess.[2][3]

NOTES

- Tulips were introduced to Holland in 1593 with the bubble occurring primarily from 1634 to 1637.

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Jan Brueghel the Elder (1568–1625),
Flowers in a Wooden Vessel, 1606 -
1607, oil on wood, 980 × 730 cm,
Kunsthistorisches Museum



Jan Brueghel the Elder (1568–1625), *Flowers in a Wooden Vessel*,
1606 - 1607, oil on wood, 980 × 730 cm,
Kunsthistorisches Museum

- **Dutch flower painting were bought as an enduring substitutes for the real thing.** They were renowned for their **accuracy and life-like appearance** and as **a reminder of the wealth and global reach of the Dutch Empire**. They also had a religious significance as they **glorified God's natural world** and **flowers reminded the viewer of the transience of earthly existence**, in other words they were a form of memento mori, Latin for 'remember that you [have to] die'.
- (CLICK) Many flower paintings are full of insects—flies, beetles, ladybirds, caterpillars, moths and butterflies and even lizards and mice. Sometimes the blossoms are damaged by the creatures. **They signified the transience of life and scientific wonder, a curiosity about the natural world which was seen as God's glorious creation.** In Holland, **Anthonie van Leeuwenhoek's** ('Anthony van LAY-ven-hook') experiments with lenses and microscopes opened

up a new world for scientific study and the representation of this tiny world expanded the view of God's work on Earth.

• **In summary, there are seven aspects to a flower painting:**

1. It is a **substitute** for the real thing, the record of a luxury object
2. Celebration of the **Dutch Empire and trade**
3. **A scientific wonder** as seen through Anthonie van Leeuwenhoek's ('Anthony van LAY-ven-hook') experiments with lenses and microscopes which opened up a new world
4. **Masterpieces of illusion**, a demonstration of the skill of the artist through accurate, almost photographic representation
5. **Demonstration of taste and wealth** of the owner
6. Glorification of God's natural world and many religious writers spoke of flowers as a '**moral signpost from God**'
7. **Memento mori**, that is a reminder that we will all die

NOTES

- Dutch Flower Painting 1600-1720 "At the time of the great tulip speculation of the 1630s in Holland, the **most desirable tulip bulbs were auctioned for more money than the most expensive houses in Amsterdam**. At the same time flower paintings which were remarkable for their apparent realism were produced all over Holland and purchased by Dutch families as enduring substitutes for the real thing. ... Paul Taylor begins by discussing Holland's 'tulipomania' and its effect on the way people thought about floral still lifes. He then considers the religious messages associated with the flower paintings, exploring how **religious writers spoke of flowers as moral signposts from God** and how some flower paintings were meant

to remind viewers of the transience of earthly existence. Flower paintings were not bought only as records of luxury objects or for moral edification, however. They were also enjoyed as works of art, as masterpieces of illusion, composition and colour harmony, so Taylor analyses the art-theoretical writings of the time in order to understand how artists and connoisseurs responded to flower pieces. He concludes by analysing the paintings themselves, tracing the development and refinement of the actual practice of flower painting." [1]

REFERENCES

1. Paul Taylor, *Dutch Flower Painting 1600-1720*



Mary Moser (1744-1819), *Vase of Flowers*, n.d., 72.1 × 53.6cm, The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge


Mary Moser (1744-1819), *Vase of Flowers*, n.d., 72.1 × 53.6cm, The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

- This is by Mary Moser. Her flower paintings are remarkable for their accuracy and she became recognised as a skilled botanist and a specialist in the tradition of botanical painting.
- "Flowers were a favourite subject as far as **consumers** were concerned. **London printsellers sold countless decorative flower prints**, depicting them in baskets, vases, or tied in bouquets. Flower art was also used in **pattern books providing templates for ladies to copy** for embroidery or for glass painting. Drawings of flowers were also used for **Japan work and were copied onto undecorated white china**.
- By the latter part of the eighteenth century, **drawing masters specialising in teaching this type of art were much in demand**, and many women who had **given up flower painting on their marriage** found it a **useful means of financial support**, but it was always **uncredited**." (<https://juliaherdman.com/2017/05/10/history-of-women-in-art-mary-moser-founding-member-of-londons-royal->

[academy/](#))

NOTES

- Some insects were included for their symbolic value, such as the butterfly to represent the resurrection of the body at the Last Judgement and ants to symbolise industry and diligence. However, such associations can be over stated.
- Porcelain was also much included by Dutch painters as it was expensive and highly fashionable. From about 1620 Dutch merchants were importing over 100,000 pieces a year. From about 1640 trade from China was disrupted and manufacturers in Delft began to produce their own blue and white 'Chinese' designs.
- Another common item in **Dutch painting were exotic shells**. The collecting of shells reached a similar pitch to that of tulips and 'shell lunatics' were mocked along with 'tulip manics'. There were a sign of the beauty of God's creation as well as signifying wealth.



Mary Moser RA (1744 - 1819), *Summer*, c. 1780, 63.5 x 53.3 cm, Royal Academy of Arts

Mary Moser RA (1744 - 1819), *Summer*, c. 1780, 63.5 x 53.3 cm, Royal Academy of Arts, donated by Mary Moser RA c. 1780

- This is *Summer*. The summer flowers are **roses**, at the heart of the composition, a **poppy**, slightly shaded to the right of centre, and a **carnation**, more shaded, at the top right.
- **Dutch artists hide their brushstrokes to appear more realistic.** This was known as **fijnschilder** ('fine-scilder') or fine painting and it was expected at the time.
- (CLICK) **Moser allows her brushstrokes to remain visible** and we can see how she developed a technique for creating the **illusion of for example a petal with a single or a few brushstrokes** over the base or ground colour.



Mary Moser RA (1744 - 1819), *Spring*, c. 1780, 63.5 x 53.3 cm, Royal Academy of Arts

Mary Moser RA (1744 - 1819), *Spring*, c. 1780, 63.5 x 53.3 cm, Royal Academy of Arts, donated by Mary Moser RA c. 1780

- Here is another example in the **highlights on the vase**. It consists of a **few lines of light colour** with no attempt to blend them together. However, we do not notice, as the brain constructs a reflection. Moser was creating the impression of a vase of flowers and the mind does the rest.
- Moser's vase is all full of **British plants that flower in the spring**. This is another difference, 17th-century Dutch artists created **vases of impossible luxury** by gathering species from multiple continents and of various blooming seasons in one painting, but Moser chose to faithfully reflect a British springtime in a careful observation of nature.
- Enlargements of (CLICK) **Tulips**, (CLICK) **Narcissi** and (CLICK) **Auricula** (related to the primula, pronounced 'aw-RI-kyuh-luh')
- "The academic Shahidha Bari wrote of Moser's flower paintings: **"There is a melancholy to cut flowers... They bloom quickly and die continually, their exuberant illusion of life rudely dispelled**

over the course of a week... That moment of overripeness, the fulsome, florid, blowsy display that comes just before the decay... Mary Moser certainly knew it." In this painting, the wilting flowers in the background quietly hint at the decay soon to come."

NOTES

- "Moser got her early artistic training from her father, the artist George Michael Moser. Opportunities for girls to attend art school were limited, so aspiring female artists were often taught at home by family members. Since women weren't allowed to study the human form by taking life drawing classes, it was difficult for them to make more highly regarded paintings that featured people. As a result, many women became highly skilled flower painters. That said, Moser could also dash off an impressive portrait or mythological scene – but it was flowers she always returned to."



Frogmore House, Home Park, Windsor Castle

- **Frogmore House was bought for Queen Charlotte by George III in 1792.** It is in 33 acres in Home Park adjoining Windsor Castle. It was a **favourite escape for Queen Victoria** and was chosen by **Prince Harry and Meghan Markle for their wedding reception.** It was named because of the many frogs found on the marshy property.
- Her father's royal connections enabled Mary to receive several commissions from King George III, and **Queen Charlotte and Princess Elizabeth were clearly fond of Mary Moser,** and she was commissioned to **decorate an entire room** at Frogmore with flowers in the 1790s. It was afterwards called '**Miss Moser's Room**'.

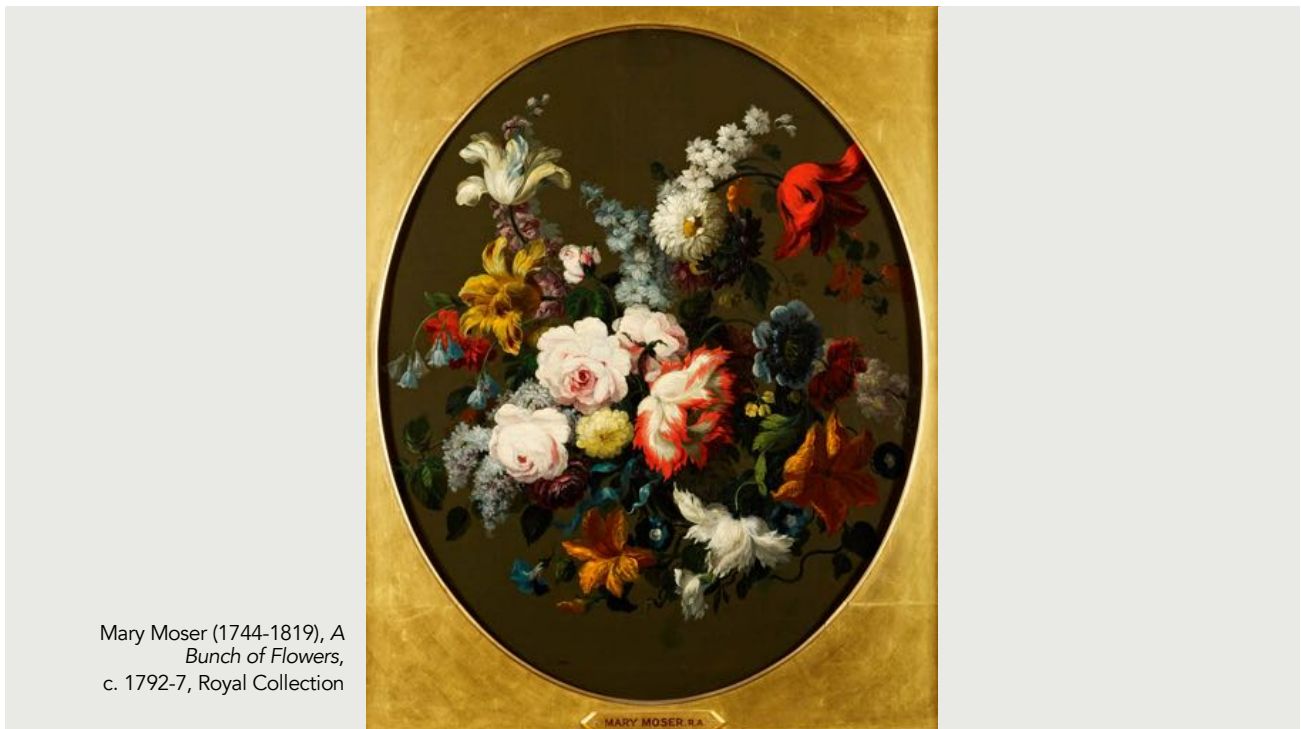


- This was her most prestigious and famous commission. The "**prestigious and lucrative commission**"—for which Moser was paid the considerable sum of **£900** which made Moser "**the envy of her male colleagues.**" It was also one of her last professional works, as she retired upon her marriage in 1793.
- The commission was to create the illusion of an '**arbour open to the skies**'. The room survives today and it is possible to book groups for a guided tour.

NOTES

- "[Moser] was appointed drawing mistress to the Royal Princess Elizabeth. She was also awarded several royal commissions. Notable among these was the decoration of a room in Frogmore House, the country retreat of King George III's wife, Queen Charlotte. Moser's room—which is included in guided tours of the estate today—depicts English flower arrangements, both on large canvases and painted walls." <https://artherstory.net/angelica-kauffman-and-mary-moser/>
- "In 1792 Queen Charlotte acquired Frogmore House in the immediate vicinity of Windsor Castle and commissioned James

Wyatt to extend it. One room added as part of this scheme – the South Pavilion – was entirely decorated with flower paintings by Mary Moser (some on canvas and some painted directly upon the wall) at a cost of over £900. This canvas formed part of the 'Mary Moser Room' at Frogmore where it remains to this day. In addition to her other duties, Mary Moser taught the daughters of George III and Queen Charlotte to draw, probably also at Frogmore House." (Royal Collection, website)



Mary Moser (1744-1819), *A Bunch of Flowers*,
c. 1792-7, Royal Collection

Mary Moser (1744-1819), *A Bunch of Flowers*, c. 1792-7, 85.5 × 78 cm, Royal Collection (RCIN 402460)

Painted for Queen Charlotte

- This canvas formed **part of the 'Mary Moser Room' at Frogmore where it remains to this day**. In addition to her other duties, Mary Moser taught the daughters of George III and Queen Charlotte to draw, probably also at Frogmore House.
- **Not long after the completion of the Frogmore House commission, at the age of almost 50, Moser married.** Like Angelica Kauffman, she carried on painting after her marriage. But unlike Kauffman, she **ceased to work professionally**. She did continue to exhibit as an honorary painter under her married name, **Mary Lloyd**.
- **The year of her marriage there was a surprising, some might say shocking, personal episode that I referred to at the start.**

Henry Fuseli (1741-1825, aged 84), *The Nightmare*, 1781, Detroit Institute of Arts



Henry Fuseli (1741-1825, aged 84), *The Nightmare*, 1781, Detroit Institute of Arts

- Let me backtrack. **Early on Moser "set her cap" at the artist Henry Fuseli, whose work we see here,** and convinced herself the feelings were mutual but, it is recorded that **"his heart, unfortunately, had already been deeply pierced by Angelica Kaufman."**
- Fuseli was Swiss and first visited England in 1765 when he was 24 and on the advice of Joshua Reynolds he decided to become an artist. Five years later he made an art pilgrimage to Italy and returned to England eight years later. On the way he stopped in Switzerland and fell madly in love with Anna Landolt who many believe is the woman in this painting. She was engaged to a gentleman with better prospects and rejected his advances.
- **Moser** did not compare with the **"dreamy, half-angelic, adored Kauffman"** as she was described at the time. Moser was described as a jolly and agreeable woman but she also had strong opinions and she had no objection to arguing if she did not agree with

someone.

- When Fuseli returned to England he rejected Mary Moser and Angelica Kauffman had rejected him. That year (1788), **Fuseli married Sophia Rawlins**, his ex-model and soon after became an Associate of the Royal Academy and in 1790 a full Academician.[1, p. 299]. He was **pursued by the early feminist Mary Wollstonecraft** who invited him to Paris with her but Rawlins put a stop to that.
- Fuseli became a very successful and admired artist. He was fluent in French, Italian, English and German and wrote essays and reviews. His pupils included John Constable, Benjamin Haydon, William Etty, and Edwin Landseer and he died comparatively wealthy aged 84 after a life of uninterrupted good health.

NOTES

- Fuseli was born in Zürich, Switzerland and his father was a portrait and landscape painter. However, Fuseli was intended for the Church and had an excellent classical education. In 1766 he became a travelling tutor and returned to England in 1767 aged 26. He heard rumour of a new society that would be endorsed by royalty and this inclined him to become an artist. He took his amateur drawings to Reynolds who was so full of praise that Fuseli started practicing drawing at every opportunity and soon with Reynolds further encouragement took up oil painting. His first oil painting was a history painting that was purchased by the Countess of Guilford.[3]
- He produced no landscapes—"Damn Nature! she always puts me out" was his characteristic exclamation—and painted only two portraits.

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



Maria Cosway, *Self-portrait, 1787*

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

George Romney (1734-1802), *Mary Moser, 1770-71*, National Portrait Gallery

Angelica Kauffman (1741-1807), *self-portrait, 1770-1775*, National Portrait gallery. One of 25 self-portraits as a mentally alert creative artist with pencil, paintbrush or harp. She gazes out forthrightly.

See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johann_Zoffany

- I am showing you this painting again **to point out the artist Richard Cosway** (1742-1821, RA 1770) bottom right. He is **skewering the only female body** in the room, a cast of a female torso. **Cosway was once a more famous artist than Gainsborough** and he knew it, his **portraits were all the rage in Regency London** and he became Principal Painter to the Prince of Wales.
- (CLICK) Richard Cosway **was married to Maria** ('ma-RYE-ah') **Cosway**, also a gifted and successful artist.

NOTES

- Richard Cosway was one of the first associate members of the Royal

Academy and was added by Zoffany to the right hand side of the group portrait on an extra strip of canvas.

- The RA excluded women until 1860 even though two of the founding members were women.
- The Slade School of Art took women from its founding in 1871. For the first time in Europe, a public Fine Art School welcomed male and female students on the same terms.
- Laura Herford's (1831-1870) in 1860 was accepted for the RA School based on a painting using her initial 'L. Herford'. This was at the suggestion of the President Sir Charles Eastlake. Thirteen other women were accepted over the next few years. Women were only allowed to draw from casts and the draped model. Women were excluded from the life class although there was some provision made in 1893. In 1863 the Council decided its constitution did not allow women painters (in the Instrument of Foundation, Academicians ... shall all of them be ... Men of fair moral Characters'). In 1903 women were allowed to study living nudes in separate classes.
- The Society of Female Artists was founded in 1856, it became the Society of Lady Artists in 1872 and the Society of Women Artists in 1899.
- 1870s and 80s women petitioned RA in vain to attend life classes.
- There were private art schools 1880s and 90s like French atelier
- Rich women attended classes in Paris, Munich, Dusseldorf and Antwerp
- Lady Butler was nominated three times to the RA 1879-81 and turned down.
- Annie Laura Swynnerton and Laura Knight (1877-1970, née Johnson, attended Nottingham School of Art 1890-4, aged 13) were made ARA in the 1920s and Laura Knight a RA in 1936.

- Angelica Kauffman was Swiss born Austrian who was taught by her father. She acquired several languages and was a skilled musician. It is not known how she learnt to paint the male nude as her speciality was history painting. Her first marriage was a disaster but in 1781 he died (she had been separated) and she married Antonio Zucchi a Venetian artist and retired to Rome where she met Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Zucchi died in 1795 and she continued to contribute to the RA her last exhibit was 1797 and she died in 1807. She was honoured at her funeral in the same way Raphael had been honoured.



Richard Cosway (1742-1821),
Portrait of Mrs. Cosway, before
1821, hand-coloured lithograph,
19 × 14 cm, Museo Nacional de
San Carlos



Maria Cosway, *Georgiana as
Cynthia from Spenser's Faerie
Queene*, 1781-1782

Richard Cosway (1742-1821), *Portrait of Mrs. Cosway*, before 1821, hand-colored lithograph, 19 × 14 cm, Museo Nacional de San Carlos
Maria Cosway, *Georgiana as Cynthia from Spenser's Faerie Queene*, 1781-1782, Chatsworth House

- Maria Cosway ('ma-RYE-ah', 1760-1838, born Hadfield) **gave up her career** on the command of her husband. He did this possibly to protect her reputation but in time **she started to paint again**. She was an Italian-English artist who famously **had an affair with Thomas Jefferson** (American Founding Father, principal author of the Declaration of Independence 1776 and third President of the US) **despite being a devout Catholic all her life**. They corresponded for the rest of their lives.
- As well as an artist she was a composer, musician and authority on female education. The marriage was arranged and later it became a **marriage of convenience** as she was 20 years younger and it was **eventually annulled**.

NOTES

- Georgiana Cavendish, Duchess of Devonshire (née Spencer, 1757–

1806), was an English socialite, political organiser, style icon, author, and activist. Beauty and leader of Whig society; first wife of 5th Duke of Devonshire.

- "In 1781 Italian-English artist Maria Cosway was commissioned by Georgiana Cavendish, Duchess of Devonshire to produce a portrait of the Duchess but depicted as Cynthia from the epic English poem 'The Faerie Queen' written by Edmund Spenser. The poem was dedicated to Queen Elizabeth I and follows the knights and ladies of the Queen's court in a mythical faerie land to explore the meaning of virtue. Cynthia was the goddess of the moon and one of the heroes in the story." [1]

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Richard Cosway (1742–1821), *Self-portrait*, c. 1770–1775, miniature on ivory, 5 × 4.2 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art

Richard Cosway (1742–1821), *Self-portrait*, c. 1770–1775, miniature on ivory, 5 × 4.2 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art

Richard Cosway (1742–1821), *Self-portrait*, date unknown, National Portrait Gallery

- Richard Cosway (1742–1821) was particularly noted for his miniatures which may be why he is little known today.
- He was born in Tiverton, Devon, and travelled to London when he was 12 and won a **prize from the Society of Artists** the same year. He exhibited his first work when he was 20 and was soon in demand. He painted the future King George IV in 1780 and **was appointed Painter to the Prince of Wales in 1785**—the only time this title was ever awarded.
- However, he was '**well known as a libertine and commonly described as resembling a monkey**'. In later life he suffered from mental disorders and had to be institutionalised
- Having set the background to these complex relationships **I can now return to the main theme of my talk, Mary Moser.**
- In October 1793, **Mary Moser married Captain Hugh Lloyd, a**

widower. She retired but continued to exhibit as an **amateur painter as Mary Lloyd.** **Later that same year she had an open affair with Richard Cosway who had by then separated from his wife** Maria Cosway. Mary Lloyd and Richard Cosway then **took a six-month sketching tour across Europe.**

- In his notebook **Cosway made "lascivious statements"** about his **sexual activities with Moser**, directly comparing Moser's **skills in bed to those of his wife.** Apparently, Moser was **"more sexually responsive,"** even though **she was 50 and Maria was only 33.**
- This scandal does not seem to have affected her status in society and Queen Charlotte and Princess Elizabeth continued to visit her. I assume Cosway's notebook was not common knowledge and perhaps it was assumed that as a married woman she was simply on a drawing holiday with a friend although men and women did not consort that way.

NOTES

- Maria Luisa Caterina Cecilia Cosway (ma-RYE-ah; née Hadfield; 11 June 1760 – 5 January 1838) was an Italian-English painter, musician, and educator. She worked in England, in France, and later in Italy, cultivating a large circle of friends and clients, mainly as an initiate of Swedish and French Illuminism, and an enthusiastic revivalist of the Masonic Knights Templar

REFERENCES

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Cosway

<https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/16198/lot/103/> (Richard and Maria Cosway biography)



Mary Moser (1744-1819), *A Vase of Flowers (1)*, 1792-97, 65.0 x 66.5 cm, Royal Collection



Mary Moser (1744-1819), *A Vase of Flowers*, 1792-97, 66.3 x 65.6 cm, Royal Collection

Mary Moser (1744-1819), *A Vase of Flowers (1)*, 1792-97, 65.0 x 66.5 cm, Royal Collection (RCIN 402467)

Mary Moser (1744-1819), *A Vase of Flowers (2)*, 1792-97, 66.3 x 65.6 cm, Royal Collection (RCIN 402468)

In the Mary Moser Room, Frogmore House

- **Her father George Moser had died at Somerset House in 1783** aged 78. He is buried in the churchyard of St. Paul's, Covent Garden. He was **deeply mourned as he was a much loved figure**. Reynolds called him the "**father of the present race of artists**". He described him as **amiable, industrious and with a diligent attention to detail** regarding everything that might advance art. When George Moser died Fuseli became Keeper.
- In the 1790s after her marriage she was **known as Mary Lloyd** and she retired but continued exhibiting as an amateur until 1802. Despite the six month affair they remained happily married and surprisingly Mary Moser remained good friends with Richard Cosway and his ex-wife Maria and she left her **twenty guineas in her will**.



Mary Moser (1744-1819), *A Vase of Flowers*, 1792-97, 65.8 x 65.8 cm, Royal Collection



Mary Moser (1744-1819), *A Vase of Flowers*, 1792-97, 64.7 x 64.1 cm, Royal Collection

Mary Moser (1744-1819), *A Vase of Flowers* (3), 1792-97, 65.8 x 65.8 cm, Royal Collection (RCIN 402469)

Mary Moser (1744-1819), *A Vase of Flowers* (3), 1792-97, 64.7 x 64.1 cm, Royal Collection (RCIN 402470)

In the Mary Moser Room, Frogmore House

- Mary Moser, aged 75, died at 10:00 Sunday morning May 2, 1819 in the front second-floor room of No. 21, Upper Thornhaugh Street, Tottenham Court Road, London. She was buried in Kensington Cemetery alongside her husband. **After her death no further women were elected full members of the Academy until Laura Knight in 1936, 117 years later.** She is now more famous than her father.
- Flower painting continued in England in the nineteenth-century and botanical illustrations were an important way of recording plants. Other forms of still-life became popular such as the **detailed rendition of birds' nests**. Later, as we have seen, we think of **Claude Monet** and **Vincent van Gogh** and in the twentieth century **Georgia O'Keefe**.



MARY MOSER
(1744-1819)

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- As I have made clear Mary Moser was a leading artist and the youngest founder of the Royal Academician. In 1805 she was even proposed as a candidate for the presidency.
- **How many have heard of here before today? Not many but I hope I have corrected that.**
- Thank you for your time and attention.

NOTES

BIOGRAPHY MARY MOSER

A HISTORY OF BRITISH ART SOCIETIES

WOMEN PAINTERS BEFORE 1800

BRITISH WOMEN PAINTERS BEFORE 1800

ROYAL ACADEMY WOMEN PAINTERS

BIO:MOSER

- 1744: born in England to George Michael Moser (1706-1783) who moved to England around 1726. He was a gold chaser and enameller, George III's drawing master and he designed the Great Seal of England. He later became First Keeper of the Royal Academy and was liked and trusted by everyone. He was Swiss and born at Schaffhausen.
- 1758, aged 14: Won her first Society of Arts medal and prize of five guineas and regularly exhibited flower paintings at the Society of Artists of Great Britain (founded 1754). The Society of Arts bestowed annual premiums on boys and girls under 16 for drawing. She was unusually short-sighted and painted with her eyes an inch from the canvas. Established reputation as a botanist. She regularly exhibited flower paintings and occasionally history paintings. She became frustrated by her lack of recognition and joined with 35 other artists in founding the Royal Academy and she took an active role. Women were not allowed into life drawing classes with a male or female nude and so it was difficult for them to learn the skills needed to paint history paintings.

- 1768, aged 24: founded the Royal Academy with 35 other artists including her father and one other woman, Angelica Kauffman. Twenty-two of the founders were signatories of a petition to George III urging him to authorise the new royal guild and school of artists. It is likely that Kauffman and Moser were a major influence on George III's decision as he knew them well. Moser was described as somewhat precise but at times a most cheerful companion. She was also not averse to "kicking up a row" if she disagreed with someone, very different from the 'angelic' Kauffman. She "set her cap" at Fuseli "but his heart, unfortunately, had already been deeply pierced by Angelica Kaufman." Fuseli married another woman in 1788. George Moser was elected Keeper on 100 guineas a year and apartments in Somerset House, a post he retained until his death when Miss Moser had to leave for 21 Denmark Street, Soho. Her father was a good teacher and taught the students drawing and anatomy. The only other flower painter in the Academy when it was founded was John Baker (?).
- 1769 Moser exhibited A Flower Piece at the first exhibition.
- 1770, aged 26: portrait by George Romney of Moser painting a still-life
- 1771-2: She exhibited her first figure subject Hebe in 1771. She was included in group portrait of Academicians as a portrait on the wall. Until 1779 she never failed to send at least one painting to the exhibition.
- 1790s She was commissioned by Queen Charlotte in the 1790s to complete a floral decoration for Frogmore House in Windsor for which she was paid £900. One room, the South Pavilion, was entirely decorated with flower paintings some on canvas, some painted directly on the wall. This canvas formed part of the 'Mary Moser Room' where it remains today. Among her other duties Moser taught the daughters of George III and Queen Charlotte

to draw, probably at Frogmore House.

- 1793, aged 49 she married Captain Hugh Lloyd, a widower, and almost immediately had an open affair with the miniaturist Richard Cosway. He left his wife and daughter and went on a six-month sketching tour of Europe. His wife, the well-known artist Maria Cosway, an Anglo-Italian artist was 20 years younger than Moser. Richard Cosway was elected a full member of the Academy in 1770 and was a late addition to the composition, he was painted onto an extra strip of canvas attached to the right-hand side of the painting.
- "Cosway was described as "well known as a libertine and commonly described as resembling a monkey." He was once more famous than Thomas Gainsborough and his portraits were all the fashion in Regency London. From 1785 he became First painter to the Prince of Wales. The film Jefferson in Paris, which dramatises Maria Cosway's own romance with the future American President Thomas Jefferson portrays Richard Cosway as effeminate, but it seems he was anything but in bed. His diary entries for the time he spent with Mary Moser describe a hot and steamy affair" (<https://juliaherdman.com/2017/05/10/history-of-women-in-art-mary-moser-founding-member-of-londons-royal-academy/>). In his later life spent time in various mental institutions
- 1790s after her marriage she was known as Mary Lloyd and she retired but continued exhibiting as an amateur until 1802. Maria devoted her time to her daughter who tragically died when she was six leaving Maria deeply depressed but she seems to have accepted the affair and had no recriminations. She remained good friends with Richard Cosway and his wife Maria and left her twenty guineas in her will.
- 1819, aged 75, died at 10:00 Sunday morning May 2, 1819 in the front second-floor room of No. 21, Upper Thornhaugh Street,

Tottenham Court Road. She was buried in Kensington Cemetery alongside her husband. After her death no further women were elected full members of the Academy until Laura Knight in 1936, 117 years later. She is more famous than her father now.

A HISTORY OF BRITISH ART SOCIETIES

- 1711: Kneller Academy of Painting and Drawing was the first British academy of art. It was founded in 1711 by Sir Godfrey Kneller in Queen Street. His influence on British art is shown in the work of Ramsay, Joseph Wright of Derby, Gainsborough, Reynolds and Hogarth, each of whom absorbed elements of his style. His range and industry is unparalleled, painting every monarch from Charles II to George I. His teaching at the Kneller Academy had a powerful impact on succeeding generations and he is Britain's most prolific portraitist. Sir James Thornhill succeeded him as governor in 1716 and set up his own school at his house in Covent Garden.
- 1732: The Dilettante Society was a society of noblemen and scholars who sponsored the study of ancient Greek and Roman art. Established about 1732. Walpole said the nominal qualification was having been to Italy and the real one was being drunk.
- 1734: St Martin's Lane Academy was set up in 1734 by William Hogarth (1697-1764) son-in-law and student of Sir James Thornhill. It provided life models for use of its members.
- 1741: The Foundling Hospital became the first public display of art. It was founded 1741 by Captain Thomas Coram. It held exhibitions organised by the Dilettante Society.
- 1754: Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures & Commerce was founded in 1754 by William Shipley who hoped it would make Great Britain a centre for intellectual advancements in the arts and sciences. It is now The Royal

Society of Arts or RSA.

- 1761: Society of Artists of Great Britain was founded by Joshua Reynolds and provided a venue for the public exhibition of recent works. Their first exhibition was in April 1760 and over one thousand visitors per day attended. When the Royal Academy was founded it became the 'Free Society of Artists' (1761–1783) and it was dissolved in 1791.
- 1768: The Royal Academy was founded by William Chambers following an unseemly leadership dispute between two leading architects, Sir William Chambers and James Paine which split the Society. The Royal Academy was supported by Richard Wilson, Benjamin West and Paul Sandby and, after some hesitation, Joshua Reynolds agreed to join and he became the first President. It taught art, it held a Summer Exhibition and it appointed 40 Academicians.
- 1804: The Society of Painters in Water-Colours consisted of a group of watercolour artists who formed their own exhibiting society. They added 'in Oil' in 1812 and dropped it in 1820 and obtained a Royal charter in 1881.
- 1805: British Institution for Promoting the Fine Arts in the United Kingdom (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.
- 1823: Royal Society of British Artists founded as the Society of British Artists. James Whistler became its President briefly in 1886.
- 1831: The New Society of Painters in Water Colours competed with the Royal Watercolour Society (RWS), which had been

founded in 1804. 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.

- There were many private schools of art in the nineteenth century, perhaps the most famous being the one set up by the artist Henry Sass (1788-1844) and known as Sass's Academy (later Cary's Academy). It taught many artists, such as Millais, Frith and Lawrence. Although Sass was not a leading artist himself Wilkie said he could have taught a 'stone to draw'. Sass's Academy is notable for admitting women artists from 1832. The building is now 10 Bloomsbury Street.
- Colleges of art and technology, in fact all institutions of adult education except for universities, have their origin in local Institutions and Mechanics' Institutes of the early nineteenth century. As early as 1797 the Brotherly Society in Birmingham was providing free classes in drawing, geography and science for artisans. George Birkbeck, a professor in Glasgow was the first to organise lectures for industrial workers and when he moved to London he founded the Mechanics' Institute there in 1823. The drawing instruction was poor or non-existent but it was the only chance an artisan had to learn to draw before the Schools of Design were established. The first was established in 1837 in Somerset House following a Government Select Committee enquiry which started in 1835. From the beginning there was a conflict between the aims of the Royal Academy and the aims of the Schools of Design. Unlike France, where everyone was taught to draw the human body in England this was reserved for gentlemen artists and members of the Schools of Design were relegated to designing ornamentation, a major

loss to the overall quality of British art during the early nineteenth century.

WOMEN PAINTERS BEFORE 1800

The Dictionary of Women Artists lists 600 women artists born before 1945

Sibylla von Bondorf (c.1440 to c.1525),

Susannah Hornebolt (1503-1554), taught by Flemish father, first known woman artist in England

Levina Teerlinc (née Bening, Flemish, 1510s-1576), father taught her, miniaturist to Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary I and Elizabeth I

Plautilla Nelli (Italian, 1524–1588)

Catharina van Hemessen (1528-1588)

Sofonisba Anguissola (Italian, 1535-1625)

Lavinia Fontana (Italian, 1552-1614)

Barbara Longhi (Italian, 1552–1638)

Artemisia Gentileschi (Italian, 1593-1653)

Joan Carlile (née Palmer, English, 1606-79), self-taught, first British-born woman professional portrait painter

Clara Peeters (Flemish, 1607-1621), still-life

Judith Leyster (Dutch, 1609-1660)

Mary Beale (née Cradock, English, 1633-1699), father was an amateur painter and may have taught her

Elisabetta Sirani (1638-1665)

Susan Penelope Rosse (née Gibson, English, 1652-1700), learnt from father, portrait miniatures

Luisa Roldán (Spanish, 1652–1706)

Anne Killigrew (English, 1660-1685), "A Grace for beauty, and a Muse for wit.", died smallpox aged 25

Rachel Ruysch (Dutch, 1664-1750)

Rosalba Carriera (1673-1757)

Angelica Kauffman (1741-1807), worked in England for 14 years

Mary Moser (English, 1744-1819), taught by father George Moser

Adélaïde Labille-Guiard (1749-1803)

Élizabeth Vigée Le Brun (1755-1842)

Marie-Denise Villers (1774-1821)

BRITISH WOMEN PAINTERS BEFORE 1800

Levina Teerlinc (1510/20-1576), daughter of Simon Bening, a renowned illuminator, was a Flemish Renaissance miniaturist who served as a painter to the English court of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary I and Elizabeth I. In Henry VIII's court she was paid £40 a year, more than Hans Holbein had been paid. It is likely that she helped introduce the portrait miniature to England.

Joan Carlile (c. 1606-79, née Palmer) was one of the first women to practise painting professionally.

Mary Beale (1633-1699)

Susan Penelope Rosse (1652-1700), an English miniaturist who painted for the court of Charles II.

Anne Killigrew (1660-1685), a poet and portrait painter at the court of James II

Angelica Kauffman (1741-1807)

Mary Moser (1744-1819)

ROYAL ACADEMY WOMEN PAINTERS

Angelica Kauffman (1741-1807), founder member 1768

Mary Moser (1744-1819), founder member 1768

Laura Herford (1831-1870), admitted to the School by mistake in 1860, by 1870 another 34 women had been admitted

1878 petition submitted to RA signed by 35 women asking for study from the figure (semi draped)

1893 after many petitions women were allowed to study the partially draped model, which by then was common across the country

Annie Swynnerton (1844-1933), in 1922 she was elected an Associate Academician

Laura Knight (1877-1970), in 1927 she was elected an Associate and in 1936 an Academician

In 1967 women Academician (four) were allowed to join the annual dinner