



The Founding of the Royal Academy



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

- The first British academy of art was the **Academy of Painting** founded in **1711** by **Sir Godfrey Kneller** in Queen Street. Sir James Thornhill succeeded him as governor in 1716 and set up his own school at his house in Covent Garden. On his death in **1734** his student and son-in-law set up the **St Martin's Lane Academy** that provided life models for use of its members.
- 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**.

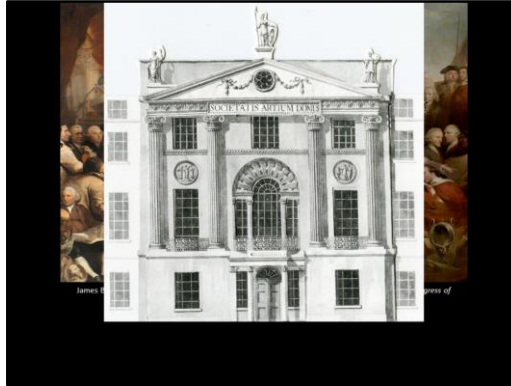


- There were no opportunities for the public to see works of art.
- The first public display of art was at the **Foundling Hospital**, founded **1741** by Captain Thomas Coram. It held exhibitions organised by the Dilettante Society.
- St Martin's Lane and the Dilettanti Society had plans for a royal society but disagreement between the professional artists and the wealthy amateur artists ruled out co-operation.
- In **1761** Joshua Reynolds was a leader in founding the **Society of Artists of Great Britain**, where the artists had more control. Following an unseemly leadership dispute between two leading architects, Sir William Chambers and James Paine the Society split. Paine won control, but Chambers used his strong connections with George III to create a new society – the **Royal Academy of Arts** in December **1768**. The Society of Artists of Great Britain continued its schedule of exhibitions until 1791, while those who remained with the older "Society of Arts" now called themselves the "Free Society of Artists" (1761–1783). It was dissolved in 1791.

Notes

- **Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures & Commerce** was founded in **1754**, principally to provide a location for exhibitions. It is now **The Royal Society of Arts**.
- In **1804** a group of watercolour artists formed their own exhibiting society, the **Society of Painters in Water-Colours**. Added 'in Oil' in 1812 and dropped it in 1820. Obtained a Royal charter in 1881.
- **British Institution for Promoting the Fine Arts** in the United Kingdom (founded **1805**, disbanded 1867) was a private 19th-century society in London formed to exhibit the works of living and dead artists; it was also known as the Pall Mall Picture Galleries or the British Gallery. Unlike the Royal Academy it admitted only connoisseurs, dominated by the nobility, rather than practicing artists to its membership.

- Royal Society of British Artists founded in **1823** as the Society of British Artists. James Whistler became its President briefly in 1886.
- In **1831** the society was founded as the **New Society of Painters in Water Colours**, competing 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.



James Barry, *The Distribution of Premiums in the Society of Arts* (painting 5 of 6 in the series '*The Progress of Human Knowledge and Culture*'), 1777–1801, 360 x 462 cm, Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce

- The Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufacture and Commerce was founded in 1754 and granted a royal charter in 1847. It is today referred to as The Royal Society of Arts or RSA. William Hogarth, Adam Smith, Charles Dickens, Benjamin Franklin, Karl Marx, Stephen Hawking and Tim Berners-Lee have been or are fellows.
- William Shipley (1715-1803, drawing master, social reformer and inventor) founded the Society and the first meeting was held at Rawthmell's Coffee House in Covent Garden.
- The aim was *"to embolden enterprise, enlarge science, refine arts, improve our manufactures and extend our commerce"*.
- The present building is in John Adam Street near the Strand and was designed by the Adam Brothers James and Robert in 1774.
- Between 1777 and 1784, the Irish artist James Barry executed six murals for the Great Room of the [Royal] Society of Arts in London.
- The Society hosted the first exhibition of contemporary art in 1760.
- Thomas Gainsborough and Sir Joshua Reynolds, who had exhibited at this first exhibition were subsequently founder members of The Royal Academy of Arts in 1768.

Society Building

- Various changes have been made to the original façade, the medallions have changed and the sign above the building now says 'Arts and Commerce promoted'.

The Distribution of Premiums

- The last of 'The Progress of Human Knowledge and Culture' sequence's smaller

canvases illustrates the work of the Society in this period. In the background can be seen **St Paul's Cathedral**, where Barry was buried following his death in 1806, and the **waterfront of Somerset House**.

- Seated in the **bottom left** of the picture is the Society's founder, **William Shipley**, holding its **first Charter**, and around him are examples of some of the diverse endeavours the Society supported. The society's **first president, Lord Romney**, is being presented with **specimens of corn** by two farmers, while to the **right is a group of women, who were never barred from becoming Members of the Society**, including Elizabeth Montagu (1718-1800, social reformer, patron of the arts, literary critic and writer), shown recommending work by another woman. She in turn is being pointed out by **Dr Samuel Johnson to the Duchesses of Rutland and Devonshire**. In the corners of the painting are other examples of industries supported by the Society through its premiums. Barry also sought to represent the premiums the Society gave out for painting, sculpture and other polite arts; skills which were just as important to the vision William Shipley, a drawing master, had of a capable modern nation.

Elizabeth Montagu

- In 1738, Montagu wrote to Harley explaining that she had no desire for men or marriage. She saw marriage as a rational and expedient convention and did not suppose it possible to love a man. In 1742 she married Edward Montagu, grandson of the 2nd Earl of Sandwich, who owned numerous coal mines and had several rents and estates in Northumberland. She was twenty-two and he was fifty years old. He was a wealthy man with extensive holdings and she became one of the wealthiest women of her era. She devoted this wealth to fostering English and Scottish literature and to the relief of the poor.
- The marriage was advantageous, but it was apparently not very passionate. All the same, she bore a son, John, the next year, and she loved her child immensely. When he died unexpectedly in 1744, she was devastated.
- She was a shrewd businesswoman, despite affecting to patronise Northumbrian society for its practical conversation. Though acting as Lady Bountiful to her miners and their families, she was pleased at how cheap this could be.

Duchess of Rutland

- Mary Isabella Somerset (1756-1831) married Charles Manners, 4th Duke of Rutland in 1775 and had six children. She was a celebrated beauty.

Duchess of Devonshire

- Georgiana Cavendish Duchess of Devonshire (1757-1806) was the first wife of William Cavendish, 5th Duke of Devonshire. Her father, John Spencer, 1st Earl Spencer, was a great-grandson of John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough. Her niece was Lady Caroline Lamb. She was the great-great-great-great-aunt of Diana,

Princess of Wales.

- She attained a large amount of fame in her lifetime. She became notorious for her marital arrangements, her catastrophic love affairs, and her love of gambling; she was famous for her beauty and her political campaigning; and she was a leader of fashionable style.



Engraving of the first Royal Academy premises in Pall Mall
 Giovanni Antonio Canal (Canaletto), Old Somerset House from the River, c. 1746-50
 New Somerset House, designed by Sir William Chambers, Waterloo Bridge was
 opened in 1817 (the current bridge was completed in 1945)
 Edmund Walker (1813-1814), lithographer Thomas Picken (active 1838, died 1870),
Trafalgar Square, with the National Gallery, and St. Martin's Church, published 1 May
 1852, colour lithograph
 Burlington House, prior to Royal Academy moving in and after

- The Royal Academy was founded by William Chambers 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**
- The Royal Academy has **moved** over the years. It started in Pall Mall and moved to Old then New Somerset House, then National Gallery, then Burlington House
- The first president was Sir Joshua **Reynolds** who gave 15 lectures called *Discourses* over the first 21 years. Reynolds annual lectures have become famous as the first public lectures on the nature of art given in Britain. Reynolds made many famous remarks including his belief that painting 'is not the industry of the hands, but of the mind' and that a painter 'stands in need of more knowledge than is to be picked off his palette'. This goes back to the Italian Renaissance belief that painting is not just a craft but is a humanist endeavour that requires inspiration, creativity and knowledge, particularly of the classics.
- Once set up, the Royal Academy controlled fine art in England from training to exhibiting.

Royal Academy

- Founders: **Sir William Chambers**, architect, and friend of George III, Joshua **Reynolds**, Thomas **Gainsborough**, Angelica **Kaufmann**, Mary **Moser**, George

Michael Moser (father Mary Moser and goldsmith to George III), Thomas and Paul **Sandy** (brothers), **Benjamin West** and **Richard Wilson**. **Johann Zoffany** was added later. The open Annual Exhibition started in 1769 and 136 works were shown.

- It was originally housed in **Pall Mall** (1768-1771, **4 years**), the **Old Somerset House** (1771-1780, **9 years**), then **New Somerset House** (1780-1837, **57 years**, designed by **William Chambers**), east wing **National Gallery**, Trafalgar Square (1837-1868, **31 years**, designed by another RA **William Wilkins**) then Burlington House, Piccadilly (1868-today, **146 years**).
- In May, 1770 Horace Walpole reported that '***The rage to see these exhibitions is so great, that sometimes one cannot pass through the streets were they are***'. 60,000 visitors attended the rebuilt Somerset House in 1780.
- By the 1870s the 'Exhibition of the Works of Living Artists' came to be known as the Summer Exhibition. The RA charged a shilling to keep out '***the noxious effluvia of the vulgar herd***' (newspaper report mentioned by BBC). I have not been able to find this quote but Chambers's Edinburgh Journal in **1853** lists many events that **cost a shilling** - exhibitions, lectures, the Zoological gardens, Cremorne Gardens, a single French, German or Italian lesson, singing, violin or flute lesson, a guide through the ruins of a castle or country house, charged by a fortune teller and paid by a 'simple servant girl', popular books for the railway, journals, music sheets, opera librettos, box of paints, notepaper. It is a morally respectable amount, we wait for change from a shilling but not for sixpence, and a half crown is a major transaction.
- From 1869 to 1878 average attendance was c. **300,000** (£15,000 at 1s entrance). From 1879, the first year of Leighton's Presidency, until 1899 average attendance was 355,000. There was a huge increase in **numbers of works** submitted from **136 in 1769**, 6,415 in 1879 to **12,408 in 1896** (and **13,000 today**).
- The instrument of foundation, signed by George III on 10 December 1768, named 34 founder members and allowed for a total membership of 40. The Royal Academy was founded in 1768 by **Joshua Reynolds**, John Baker, George Barret, Francesco Bartolozzi, Giovanni Battista Cipriani, Augustino Carlini, Charles Catton, Mason Chamberlin, **William Chambers**, Francis Cotes, George Dance, Nathaniel Dance, **Thomas Gainsborough**, John Gwynn, Francis Hayman, Nathaniel Hone the Elder, **Angelica Kauffman**, Jeremiah Meyer, George Michael Moser, Francis Milner Newton, **Mary Moser**, Edward Penny, John Inigo Richards, Thomas Sandby, **Paul Sandby**, Dominic Serres, Peter Toms, William Tyler, Samuel Wale, **Benjamin West**, **Richard Wilson**, Joseph Wilton, Richard Yeo, Francesco Zuccarelli. William Hoare and **Johann Zoffany** were added to this list later by the King and are known as nominated members. Among the founder members were two women, a father and daughter, and two sets of brothers.
- The Royal Academy was initially housed in cramped quarters in Pall Mall, although

in 1771 it was given temporary accommodation for its library and schools in Old Somerset House, then a royal palace. In 1780 it was installed in purpose-built apartments in the first completed wing of New Somerset House, located in the Strand and designed by Chambers, the Academy's first treasurer. The Academy moved in 1837 to Trafalgar Square, where it occupied the east wing of the recently completed National Gallery (designed by another Academician, William Wilkins). These premises soon proved too small to house both institutions. In 1868, 100 years after the Academy's foundation, it moved to Burlington House, Piccadilly, where it remains. Burlington House is owned by the British Government, and used rent-free by the Royal Academy.

- In England, it took much longer for an art academy supported by Royalty to be created. It was not until 1768 that George III was convinced that a Royal Academy should be created and this was only because it was self-financing from the entrance fee to the annual exhibition. It was at first housed in a building in Pall Mall on the south-side facing Market Lane (now the Royal Opera Arcade); the site is now occupied by the Institute of Directors. In 1771 it move to Old Somerset House in the Strand and when the site was redeveloped in 1780 it occupied the new building designed by **William Chambers**. In **1837** it moved to the east wing of the newly completed **National Gallery** in Trafalgar Square designed by **William Wilkins** (1778-1839, architect, classical scholar and archaeologist). In **1868** it moved to **Burlington House** in Piccadilly where it is remains today.
- The original aim was to establish 40 artists known as Royal Academicians (RA) and the following year the category of Associate Royal Academician (ARA) was introduced as a stepping stone. It was also agreed to hold an annual exhibition known as the Summer Exhibition and to open a School for artists who would be taught by the RAs. Its most important founding members were Thomas Gainsborough, Joshua Reynolds, Angelica Kaufmann, Mary Moser, Paul Sandby, Benjamin West, Richard Wilson and Johann Zoffany.
- In his **fifteen Discourses** given between **1769 and 1790 (21 years)** Joshua Reynolds laid down the attributes of fine art. He stressed the importance of copying the Old Masters, and of drawing from casts after the Antique and from the life model. He argued that such a training would form artists capable of creating works of high moral and artistic worth and he endorsed the categories, or genres, of painting established by the French Academy.

Somerset House

- Old Somerset House was partly designed by Inigo Jones and later Christopher Wren.
- Edward Seymour, Protector of Edward VI built a residence on the site in 1547. This required churches and chapels to be demolished which led to his imprisonment in the Tower although he was quickly released. It was finished in 1551 and cost

£10,000. It had a courtyard and a Strand façade. The architect is not known but may have been John Thynne. He was arrested that year for treason and executed in 1552.

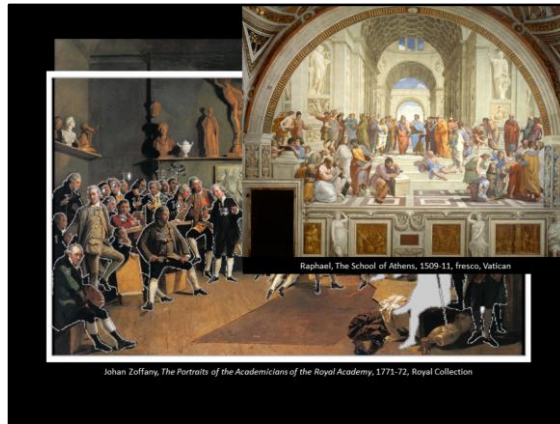
- It was then occupied by Princess Elizabeth until her accession in 1558 when she moved to Whitehall and St. James and used it for council meetings and to house foreign diplomats.
- It became the residence of the queen consort which is why it was called Denmark House after Anne of Denmark, wife of James I. It became the centre of English social and artistic life. Anne rebuilt it in 1609 to Inigo Jones's design with nine arches to the Strand. The cost was £34,500 the most ruinously expensive exercise of James I's reign.
- Charles 1 came to the throne in 1625 and his wife Henrietta Maria of France, a Roman Catholic, extended the house using Inigo Jones, John Webb and Nicholas Stone. Jones built the queen's Catholic chapel. Jones died at Somerset House in 1652.
- It was used as General Fairfax's headquarters. The royal collection was gathered at Denmark House in 1649 and sold in lots; some 1,760 pictures, including works by Leonardo, Raphael, Michelangelo, Correggio, Titian, Tintoretto, Holbein and Van Dyck, amongst others.
- Cromwell died in 1668 and was laid in state at Somerset House. John Evelyn records in his diary, "It was the joyfulest funeral I ever saw; for there were none that cried but dogs..." because it meant the end of the strict puritan rule.
- Pepys records Charles II climbed the wall of Somerset House to visit Frances Teresa Stewart the Lady of the Bedchamber to Catherine of Braganza. She took up permanent residence in 1685 as Queen Dowager following Charles II's death and ordered major renovations. William and Mary restricted her Catholic servants and in 1693 she became Regent of Portugal and left England, the last queen to reside in the building.
- In the 18th century it was used as grace and favour apartments and for masked balls or masquerades, both private and public by subscription. The Guardian wrote, "The being in disguise takes away the usual checks and restraints of modesty..." and one notorious society lady "appeared as Iphigeneia for the sacrifice, but so naked the high priest might easily inspect the entrails of the victim"!
- From 1722 the Horse and the Foot Guards used it and it fell into disrepair, Vanbrugh said it was the 'most out of repair' of all the royal palaces. George III agreed to pull the palace down and Buckingham Palace took its place as the official house for the queen. Demolition began in 1775. The Royal Academy was one of the last residents of the old and became one of the first of the new.
- Buckingham House was a large town house built for the Duke of Buckingham in 1703. It was acquired by George III in 1761 (for £21,000) for Queen Charlotte and was known as the 'Queen's House'. It was enlarged in the 19th century by John

Nash. It became the official palace of the British Monarch on the accession of Queen Victoria.

- James Pennethorne built the West wing extension facing the entrance to Waterloo bridge 1849-56.
- Joseph Bazalgette built the embankment in 1864-70.

Burlington House

- Five learned societies
- Piccadilly was a country lane and some large country houses were built on the north side in the 17th century including Sir John Denham in 1664, red brick hipped roof. Sold to the 1st Earl of Burlington in 1667. In 1704 the 3rd Earl built colonnades and a Baroque interior. In 1717-8 it was restarted in the new strict Palladian style with the interior the first by William Kent. Lord Burlington switched his energies to Chiswick House and it was sold in 1815 for £70,000 and changes made. Burlington Arcade was built in 1819.
- In 1854 it was sold to the Government for £140,000 to be demolished as a site for the University of London but the opposition meant that in 1857 learned societies moved in including the Royal Academy in 1867. It employed Sidney Smirke (Carlton Club, Pall Mall and reading room at British Museum) to build galleries on the gardens to the north and he added a third storey. The Piccadilly frontage was added in 1873 by Charles Barry.



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

- Students started by drawing casts and only after this had been perfected were they allowed to draw in the life class. The 'Life' was considered the most important part of training in the Academy.
- This painting is by Johan Zoffany, perhaps best known today as the only academician, as far as we know, that was also a cannibal.
- The mechanical and practical craft of drawing has here been presented as a dialogue between thoughtful members of a club who are discussing the subject rather than drawing. The only person with an implement of drawing or painting is the figure in the left foreground. This is Zoffany who shows himself holding a palette.
- The members are shown as a mock **School of Athens** with Reynolds as Plato and William Hunter as Aristotle.
- There were two female founder academicians, **Angelica Kauffman** (1741-1807) and **Mary Moser** (1744-1819) but they are not in the room. Why do you think they are only shown as portraits on the wall on the right?

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 'designo' as first defined by Renaissance artists in Florence. The model in the foreground adopts the pose of **Spinario**, a famous classical statue. The flames of the candles show Newton's **spectrum of colours** emphasising the scientific and technical in art and the pre-eminence of British intellect. The students sit at the semi-circular bench and each has an individual candle and there is one central light. There are two male models and various casts of bodies and body parts including a **female torso** bottom **right** into which an Academician **thrusts his cane**.

- There are two **oddities**, the **Chinaman**, fifth from the left (can you find him?), **Tanchequa** 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 organization and from assuming lectureships or **attending life classes**. After Kauffman and Moser died, the Royal Academy discouraged women from studying art in its school and failed to invite another woman painter to join until 1922, when Annie Louisa Swynnerton (1844-1933) achieved associate Royal Academy membership. The first full member was **Laura Knight** (1877-190, *née Johnson*) in 1936 170 years later. In 1843 a **Female School of Art and Design** was set up and part funded by the Academy and this discouraged women from joining the academy. In **1860**, **Laura Anne Herford** was admitted to the **Antique School** by judges who did not know she was a woman as she used her initials. Soon after, a few more women artists were admitted including **Louisa Starr** who won medals in 1865 and 1867.
- **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



Engraving of 'The Exhibition of the Royal Academy 1787'

- At 'the Exhibition' paintings were hung frame-to-frame, floor to ceiling
- They could be **skied** or, the best position, '**on the line**'
- Most were portraits, **swagger portraits**
- Constable's six-footers were painted to be hung on the line
- Gainsborough, a founder, had his (unreasonable) request have a painting hung at 5.5" refused and exhibited at Schomberg House, Pall Mall (where he lived at No. 80 from 1774 to his death in 1788). Next door (No. 81) was the Temple of Health and Hymen with its 'celestial bed' and electrical bed that allegedly cured infertility hired out at £50 a night. No. 81 also housed a high-class brothel and gambling den.

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

Summer Exhibition

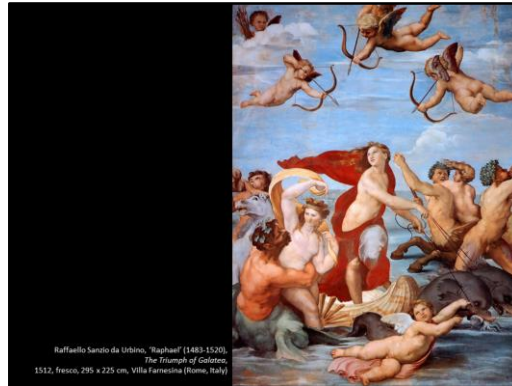
The summer exhibition was held in the great room at Somerset House and noble society gathered in a room whose walls were covered with paintings from floor to ceiling. In the centre of the room is the Prince of Wales, wearing a red jacket and standing next to Joshua Reynolds.

The number of pictures increased each year from 547 in 1781 to 1,165 in 1821 so they had to be **hung frame to frame**. The position was determined by the Hanging Committee and the position of a painting was critical to it being seen. If it was too high, known as being 'skied' it could not be appreciated and the ideal position was '**on the line**' with the **bottom edge eight foot from the floor**. This position was occupied by '**swagger**' portraits and history paintings. Small pieces and pieces by lesser known artists were skied and we shall see later that Constable created his 'six footers' to be large enough to be placed on the line. Although Thomas Gainsborough was a founding member he broke with the Academy in 1784 when his portraits of the

royal family were skied.



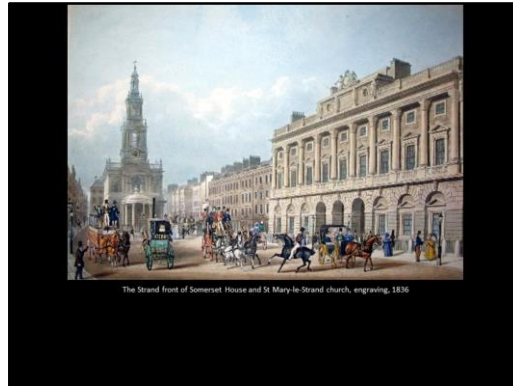
- Joshua Reynolds, the first President.
- National Galleries of Scotland: 'Reynolds was particularly skilled at choosing poses and actions which suggested a sitter's character and which also created a strong composition. Here, three sisters, the daughters of the 2nd Earl Waldegrave, are shown collaboratively working on a piece of needlework. The joint activity links the girls together. On the left, the eldest, Lady Charlotte, holds a skein of silk, which the middle sister, Lady Elizabeth, winds onto a card. On the right, the youngest, Lady Anna, works a tambour frame, using a hook to make lace on a taut net.'
- The three girls were unmarried at the time of the painting, which was commissioned by their great uncle, **Horace Walpole** for his house **Strawberry Hill**. It may have been the families aim to advertise their beauty and so find suitors when it went on public display at the Royal Academy. All three were married within a few years.



Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino, 'Raphael' (1483-1520), *The Triumph of Galatea*, 1512, fresco, 295 x 225 cm, Villa Farnesina (Rome, Italy)

- Reynolds *Discourses* were contrary to the Romantic movement. In the first lecture he said, 'I would chiefly recommend that an implicit obedience to the *Rules of Art*, as established by the practice of the great masters, should be exacted from the *young* students ... as subjects for their imitation not their criticism.'
- This has been taken to mean blindly copying the old masters but he goes on to point out that 'when their genius has received its utmost improvement, that rules may possibly be dispensed with'.
- Who did he mean by the great masters? Raphael, Michelangelo, Correggio, Guido, Titian, Veronese, Tintoretto, Claude, . In 'The French School, Poussin, Le Sueur, and Le Brun ... may be said, though Frenchmen, to be a colony from the Roman school'. He also includes the Flemish and the Dutch schools, particularly Rubens and Rembrandt although he does criticise the blackness of Rembrandt's paintings. However, he writes, 'The Roman and Bolognian schools are reasonably preferred to the Venetian, Flemish, or Dutch schools, as they address themselves to our best and noblest faculties.'
- He regards Raphael as the greatest of all artists and as one might expect he mentions him more often than other artists.
- Raphael completed this work for the Villa Farnesina, a suburban Renaissance villa in Rome in 1512. The Farnesina was built by one of the richest men of the early Renaissance, Agostini Chigi, who was a banker. This was the only painting of Greek mythology that Raphael painted, the story of the Nereid Galatea, who had fallen in love with a peasant shepherd, Acis. Galatea's consort, after finding the two lovers in an embrace, killed Acis by throwing a giant pillar at him. Although Raphael's painting is based off of the story, it does not illustrate any of the actual events of

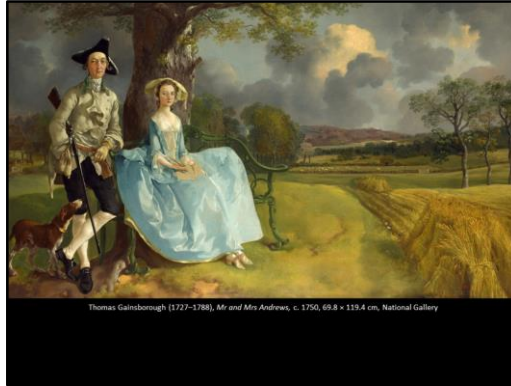
the story.



The Strand front of Somerset House and St Mary-le-Strand church. Print published by Ackermann & Co in 1836. Artist unknown.

William Chambers (1723-1796), Scottish-Swedish architect, based in London.

- His best known works are Somerset House and the pagoda at Kew.
- On 10 December 1768 the Royal Academy was founded. Chambers played an important role in the events that led to the Academy's foundation, the Minutes of the General Assembly of the Royal Academy of 14 December 1768 record 'That some time towards the latter end of November 1768, Mr Chambers waited upon the King and informed him that many artists of reputation together with himself are very desirous of establishing a Society that should more effectively promote the Arts of Design'. He was appointed the Academy's first Treasurer.



Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788), *Mr and Mrs Andrews*, c. 1750, 69.8 × 119.4 cm, National Gallery

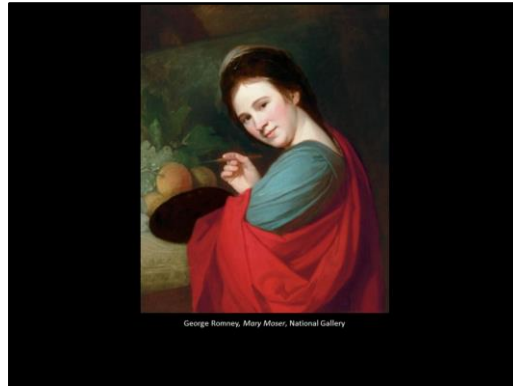
- Robert Andrews of the Auberies and Frances Carter of Ballingdon House after the marriage



Angelica Kauffman (1741–1807), *Self-portrait*, 1770-1775, 73.7 × 61 cm, National Portrait Gallery

Angelica Kaufman (1741-1807), Swiss-born Austrian Neoclassical painter, her family name is 'Kaufmann'.

She painted this self-portrait when she was about 30 and shortly after the Royal Academy had been founded.



George Romney, *Mary Moser*, National Gallery

- Mary Moser (1744-1819), English painter and one of the most celebrated women artists of the 18th century. Her father was also a founding member of the Academy.
- Mary Moser was the daughter of a Swiss-born artist and enameller and won her **first medal for flower painting** when **she was 14**. She was also a dedicated professional and in 1768 was one of only two female founders of the Royal Academy, at the age of 24. Two years later, she sat for her portrait by Romney. She is painting a still life of fruit and foliage and she has half turned, with a slightly bent head, to look at the viewer. She is in a vermillion draped garment, over grey blue, in a form of classical dress, and her dark hair is casually bundled. She wears no jewellery and no cosmetics and although her expression isn't solemn, it isn't smiling either. She looks like someone who has agreed to be painted by a master of the day because it will serve to advertise this new academy, but actually, being interrupted in her work is an inconvenience — "I will do this," she seems to be saying, "because it will help the Academy." After Moser died, in 1819, there were no further full female members of the Royal Academy until Dame Laura Knight in 1936.
- 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.



Paul Sandby (1731-1809), *Roslin Castle, Midlothian*, c. 1780, 45.8 x 63.5 cm, Yale Centre for British Art

- Paul Sandby (1731-1809), English map maker turned landscape artist in watercolours. Was a founding member of the Royal Academy with his older brother Thomas Sandby.
- Amateur artists appeared first in the eighteenth century and they were most often female watercolourists painting landscapes. This painting shows **Lady Frances Scott, an amateur artist of some repute** (she was known to Horace Walpole) with a **camera obscura** making her own mechanically assisted version of the scene. Many artists including Paul Sandby used a camera obscura to keep a visual journal of their travels. Her friend Lady Elliot is seated beside her adding a picturesque element to the scene.
- The design of the camera obscura was simple, light coming through a small opening in front of the box would hit a mirror placed at an angle and this projected the image onto a glass surface on which was laid a sheet, allowing its user to draw the outlines. The camera obscura was extremely popular with amateur artists and travellers who wished to keep a visual record of their search for the picturesque.

Notes

- Roslin Castle is about eight miles southwest of Edinburgh and was built in the fourteenth century. The ruins overlook the River Esk and the scene was often the subject of poetry and paintings. The wild and sublime view also attracted visitors and this painting reflects the growing trend for picturesque touring.
- 'Picturesque' beauty was created and promoted by the Reverend William Gilpin whose 'Observations on the River Wye' appeared in print in 1782. He was a pioneer of the 'Picturesque' and he saw the landscape as 'expressive of that peculiar beauty which is agreeable in a picture.' His writings influenced the remarkable popularity of English landscape painting during the last decade of the

18th Century, and inspired the Romantic poets. Gilpin's book was arguably the first tour guide to be published in Britain, it was one of a series of illustrated guidebooks to help travellers locate and enjoy the most 'Picturesque' aspects of the countryside.

References

- Yale Center for British Art



Benjamin West (1738-1820), *Harvesting at Windsor*, 1795, 50.8 x 69 cm, Berger Collection, Denver Art Museum

- The figures on the right were modelled on friends of the artist and they are looking at a pastoral scene of idyllic beauty. This recalls the Georgic tradition (The Georgics is a poem in four books published in 29 BCE by Virgil) of agricultural work which ennobles man's labour and its relation to the Golden Age. The bountiful harvest held by the man, woman and child is combined with the bounty of love represented by the two young lovers in the foreground.

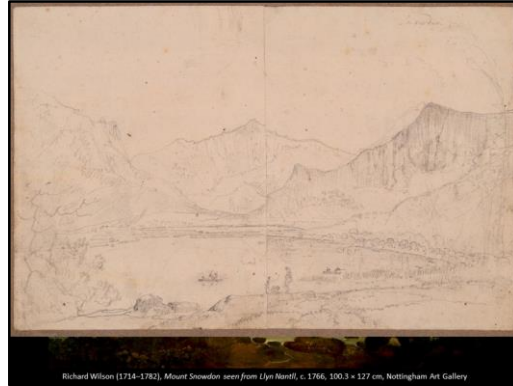
Notes

- Berger Collection website, 'Benjamin West painted this picture from a series of sketches he made near Windsor Castle in 1795. The principal residence of the British monarch, the castle is visible on the distant horizon. The true subject of the painting, however, is the lively group engaged in harvesting wheat, the amorous couple in the foreground, and the elegant onlookers in the right middle ground. West's depiction recalls two venerable traditions: the Labours of the Months from medieval Books of 'Hours and the Arcadian', pastoral landscapes of sixteenth-century Venice. The painting remained in West's studio until his death and was sold by his sons in a major studio sale of their father's paintings in 1829. In the catalogue of the sale it was revealed that the group in the right middle ground are friends of the artist and may include a self-portrait in the figure at the extreme right.'
- **Benjamin West** (1738–1820) was an Anglo-American painter of historical scenes around and after the time of the American War of Independence. He was born in Springfield, Pennsylvania, and his talent resulted in him being sponsored to travel to Italy to learn to paint. In August 1763, he arrived in England on route back to America but he never returned. In London he was introduced to Richard Wilson

and his student Joshua Reynolds. He obtained many commissions and was known as the "American Raphael". In 1772, King George appointed him historical painter to the court at an annual fee of £1,000. He became the second president of the Royal Academy in London, serving from 1792 to 1805 and 1806 to 1820. He was offered a knighthood by the British Crown, but declined it, believing that he should instead be made a peer.

References

- The Berger Collection, Denver.



Richard Wilson (1713/4–1782), *Mount Snowdon seen from Llyn Nantlle*, c. 1766, 100.3 × 127 cm, Nottingham Art Gallery

- Richard Wilson (1714-1782), a Welsh painter and pioneer in British landscape painting for its own sake. He visited Italy from 1750-57. John **Ruskin wrote** that Wilson "**paints in a manly way, and occasionally reaches exquisite tones of colour**".
- Wilson spend a long time studying in Rome and on his return he painted several Welsh views of which this is the finest. He altered the scale and position of the lake and hills in order to achieve a balanced composition. It is not a topographic recording of the actual scene but a harmonious construction of the artist. The painting is noted for its balance and the mountains in the distance do not overpower in order to create a feeling of the sublime. The feeling of the painting is timeless tranquillity resulting from the balance of opposing forces.
- Despite his talent his career began to fail possibly because his classical approach became unfashionable and he became sick and turned to alcohol.
- BBC website, 'British painter, born in rural north Wales, the son of a well-connected clergyman who encouraged his interest in art as well as giving him a good classical education. Wilson became **the leading British landscape painter of his generation**, but initially he seems to have worked mainly as a portraitist. He began his training in London in 1729 and was working independently by 1735, but the decisive change in his career did not come until his visit to Italy in 1750–7, when he decided to devote himself exclusively to landscape. He is said to have done this at the urging of Francesco Zuccarelli, whom he met in Venice and whose portrait he painted (1751, Tate, London), but he was more obviously influenced by the painting of Claude and by the natural surroundings of Rome where Claude had worked. Back in London Wilson became successful with his Italian landscapes and applied the same classical compositional principles to English and Welsh views, as

in his celebrated Snowdon from Llyn Nantlle (c.1765, versions in Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, and Castle Museum, Nottingham).'

- There is a version in the National Museums, Liverpool and a pencil sketch of this scene in the Huntington Library.



Johann Zoffany (1733–1810), *Tribuna of the Uffizi*, 1772-1777, Royal Collection

- Johann Zoffany was a German born painter who had become successful in London. One of his principal patrons was the Royal family. Queen Charlotte had sent Zoffany to Florence where he had agreed to paint the Tribuna of the Uffizi. The agreed price was high and he was paid £300.
- Queen Charlotte was reluctant to buy the painting as it depicted the notorious homosexual Thomas Patch, who has his hand on the *Venus of Urbino* but seems to be pointing at the *Wrestlers*.
- Zoffany liked young girls and before he left for this trip to Italy had made a 14 year-old girl, called Mary Thomas, pregnant. She was from a poor family who threw her out so she hid on his ship and when she appeared he agreed to look after her and pay for her education. His wife returned to Germany where she died and Zoffany, who was 40, married the young girl. She gave birth to a boy in Italy but he died aged one after falling down stairs. Zoffany never recovered from the sorrow and returned to England a changed man.
- When young Zoffany lived in Lucknow for a time; during his return to England, he was shipwrecked off the Andaman Islands. The survivors held a lottery in which the loser (a sailor) was eaten. William Dalrymple thus describes Zoffany as having been "the first and last Royal Academician to have become a cannibal".
- Both Zoffany and his second wife, Mary Thomas, are buried in St. Anne's Church, Kew, the church in which Gainsborough is buried.

Notes

Wikipedia

Paintings by wall, from top row, left to right

Left wall

Annibale Carracci (1560-1609), *Venus with a Satyr and Cupids* (c. 1588, Uffizi, Florence), was for moral reasons covered over with another canvas of a more chaste

allegorical subject through most of the 18th century.

Guido Reni (1575-1642), *Charity* (1604, Palatine Gallery, Pitti Palace, Florence),
formed school of Bolognese painters who followed Annibale Carracci to Rome.

Raphael (1483-1520), *Madonna della seggiola* (*Madonna of the chair*, c. 1513-4,
Palatine Gallery, Pitti Palace, Florence)

Antonio da Correggio (1489-1534), *Madonna and Child* (sometimes called *Adoration
of the Child*, 1526, Uffizi, Florence)

Justus Sustermans (1597-1681), *Portrait of Galileo Galilei* (Uffizi, Florence), Flemish
painter born in Antwerp and died in Florence. Court painter to the Medici family. In
his time he was regarded as the finest portrait painter in Italy.

Unreadable painting (left of the Cupid and Psyche statue)

Central wall

Titian's workshop, *Madonna and Child with Saint Catherine* (Uffizi, Florence)

Raphael (1483-1520) and workshop, *St John the Baptist* (Uffizi, Florence)

Guido Reni (1575-1642), *Madonna* (private collection?)

Raphael (1483-1520), *Madonna del cardellino* (*Madonna of the Goldfinch*, c. 1505-6,
Uffizi, Florence)

Rubens (1577-1640), *The Consequences of War* (1638-9, Palatine Gallery, Pitti Palace,
Florence), commissioned by Ferdinando II de' Medici to show the horrors of the
Thirty Years' War. It is full of symbols of destruction, chaos and violence.

Franciabigio (1482-1525, formerly attributed to Raphael), *Madonna del Pozzo*
(*Madonna of the Well*, 1517/8, Uffizi, Florence)

Unrecognizable painting (between the legs of the Satyr)

Hans Holbein (c. 1497-1543), *Portrait of Sir Richard Southwell* (1536-7, Uffizi,
Florence)

Raphael (1483-1520), *Portrait of Perugino* (Uffizi, Florence)

Perugino's workshop (Niccolò Soggi?), *Madonna with Child, Saint Elizabeth and Saint
John* (Uffizi, Florence, still in the Tribuna)

Right wall

Guido Reni (1575-1642), *Cleopatra* (1635-40, Palatine Gallery, Pitti Palace, Florence),
there are many versions including one in the Royal Collection.

Rubens (1577-1640), *Four Philosophers* (1611-12, Palatine Gallery, Pitti Palace,
Florence), shows Rubens with three humanists gathered as a tribute to Seneca
represented by his bust.

Raphael (1483-1520), *Pope Leo X with Cardinals Giulio de' Medici and Luigi de' Rossi*
(Uffizi, Florence)

Pietro da Cortona (1596/7-1669), *Abraham and Hagar* (1637, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna), Cortona was the leading Italian Baroque painter of his time and rival to the architects Bernini and Borromini. The painting shows Hagar, pushed by the angel, returning to Abraham and Sarah; Abraham greets her while Sarah remains sitting on the right. Hagar, the maidservant had sexual relations with Abraham and may have become pregnant. She was thrown out by Abraham's wife Sarah and the painting shows her return encouraged by an angel.

Bartolomeo Manfredi, *Tribute to Caesar* (Uffizi, Florence)

Cristofano Allori, *Hospitality of Saint Julian* (Palatine Gallery, Pitti Palace, Florence)

Unrecognizable painting (right of the Wrestlers)

Unrecognizable painting (Charity?)

Unrecognizable painting (behind the Venus)

Unrecognizable painting (you can only see a golden frame behind the man in red at the very right)

Lower part

Raphael (1483-1520), *Niccolini-Cowper Madonna* (National Gallery of Art, Washington). This painting was owned by Zoffany at the moment: this explains its prominence.

Guercino's workshop, *Samian Sibyl* (Uffizi, Florence)

Titian (1488/9-1576), *Venus of Urbino* (1538, Uffizi, Florence), the woman is Venus, goddess of love, the dog symbolises fidelity and the women in the background with the chest motherhood.

Sculptures and other

Today Medici's Ancient Roman statues are mostly in the main corridors of the Uffizi Gallery, except those which are still in the Tribuna, and except the smaller busts and statuettes (some antique, some pseudo-antique), owned by the National Archaeological Museum and permanently displayed at Villa Corsini a Castello, near Florence. Many of those painted by Zoffany are still to be identified. Other antiquities (Etruscan, Egyptian, Greek) are mostly in the National Archaeological Museum. Some very few Renaissance pieces from the Tribuna are now in the Bargello Museum. The busts and figures on the shelf are mostly unknown.

Center

Ancient Roman art, *Cupid and Psyche* (Uffizi, Florence)

Ancient Roman art, *Dancing Faun* (Uffizi, Florence, still in the Tribuna)

Jacopo Antelli (Monicca) and Jacopo Ligozzi, *Octagonal table with Pietre Dure mosaics* (Uffizi, Florence, still in the Tribuna)

Ancient Roman art, *Baby Hercules strangling two serpents* (Uffizi, Florence, still in the

Tribuna)

Ancient Roman art, *The Two Wrestlers* (Uffizi, Florence, still in the Tribuna)

Cleomenes, *Medici Venus* (Uffizi, Florence, still in the Tribuna), 1st-century BCE marble copy of a bronze Greek original following the type of Aphrodite of Cnidos. The Greek inscription including the name 'Cleomenes' is not original and was forged in the 18th-century to enhance its value. The arms are by Enrico Ferrata (1610-1686) and have long, tapering Mannerist fingers. Its reputation grew gradually and it became a high-point of the Grand Tour.

Lower

Baltimore Painter, *Apulian krater with Amazonomachy* (National Archaeological Museum, Florence)

Etruscan bronze elm with "button" on top, from Cannae (National Archaeological Museum, Florence)

Ancient Roman art, *Arrotino* (Uffizi, Florence, still in the Tribuna)

Etruscan (with 17th-century implements), *Chimera of Arezzo* (National Archaeological Museum, Florence)

Saverio Calzetta da Ravenna, *Lucerna in the shape of a Twisting Man* (Bargello, Florence?)

Late antique, *Ardaburio's Plate* (National Archaeological Museum, Florence)

Bust of a man (?)

Florentine pseudo-antique art, seconda half of 16th century, Bronze head of Antinous (National Archaeological Museum, Florence)

Bronze lucerna (?)

Etruscan amphora in bucchero (National Archaeological Museum, Florence?)

Etruscan oinochoe in bucchero (National Archaeological Museum, Florence?)

Etruscan situla in bucchero (National Archaeological Museum, Florence?)

Ancient Greek art, *Livorno Torso* (National Archaeological Museum, Florence)

Ancient Egyptian art, *Cube statue of Ptahmose* (National Archaeological Museum, Florence)

Etruscan funerary urn probably Volterra production (?) (under the Venus of Urbino)

All the connoisseurs, diplomats and visitors to Florence portrayed are identifiable, making the painting a combination of the British 18th-century conversation piece or informal group portrait genre, with that of the predominantly Flemish 17th-century tradition of gallery views and wunderkammers. However, this inclusion of so many recognisable portraits led to criticism at the time by Zoffany's royal patrons, and by Horace Walpole, who called it "a flock of travelling boys, and one does not know nor care whom."