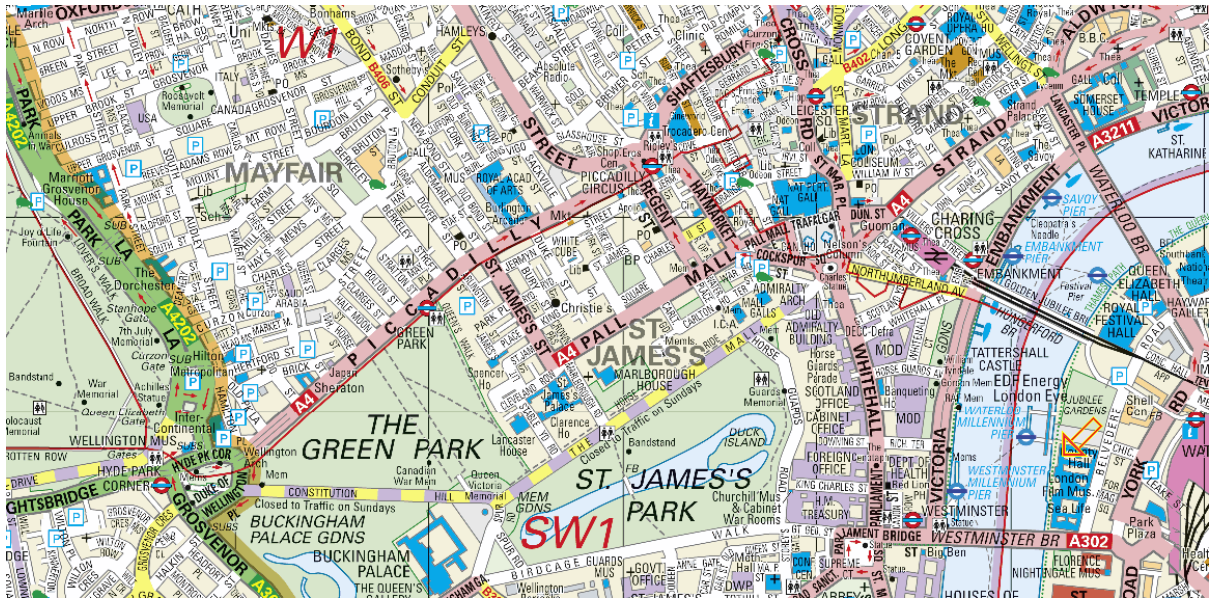




City of Westminster

# Burlington House



<http://www.royalacademy.org.uk/about/burlington-house,412,AR.html>

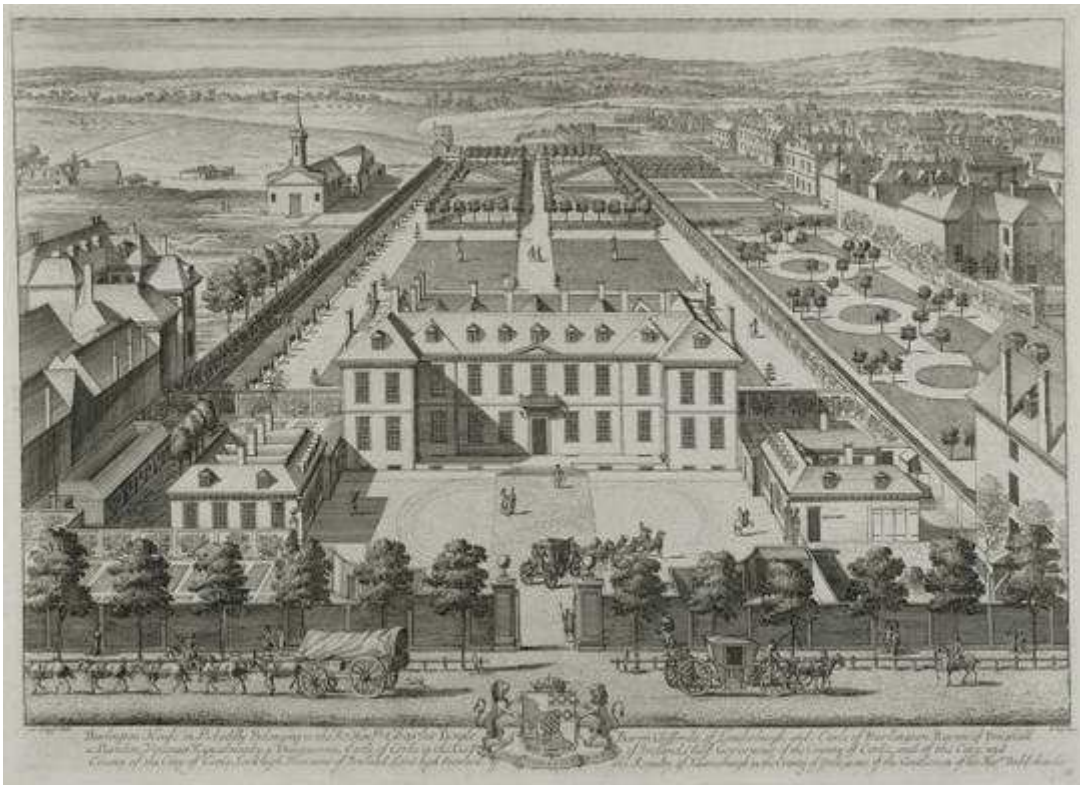
The Royal Academy's home since 1867 is Burlington House, a magnificent listed building at the heart of London's West End.





### A brief history of the building

In c. 1664 Sir John Denham, Charles II's Surveyor of the Office of Works, began construction of an eleven-bay mansion of two and a half storeys in brick with stone quoins to a design by Hugh May. Set back from the busy east-west thoroughfare then known as Portugal Street and commanding extensive views over open ground to the north, the house was completed in 1668 by its new owners, the 1st Earl and Countess of Burlington.



Johannes Kip after Leonard Knyff, Burlington House from *Britannia Illustrata*, 1707. Etching.  
Photo: Prudence Cuming Associates

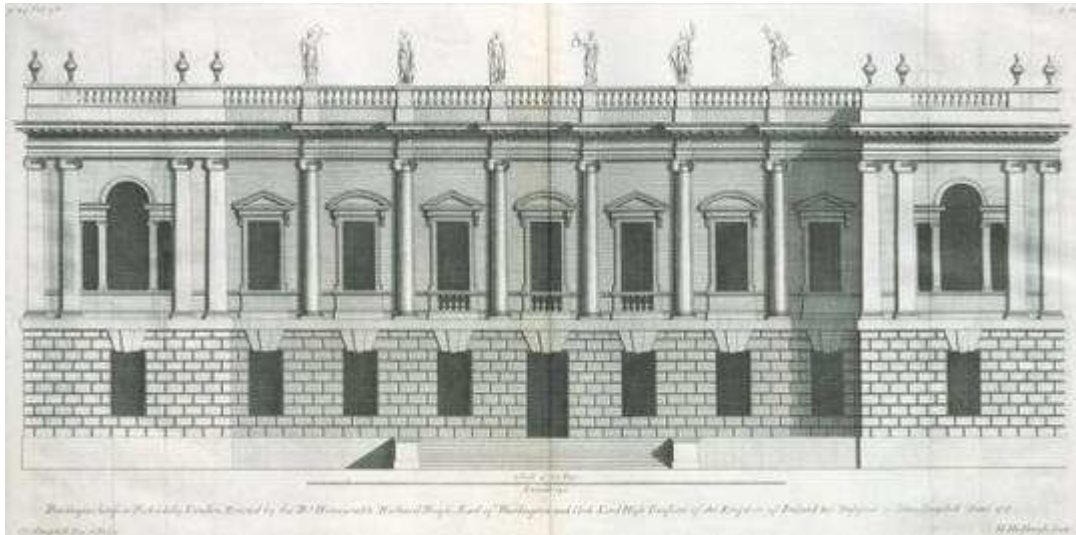
In c. 1709 the 2nd Countess, Lady Juliana, commissioned James Gibbs to improve the entrance court to the south by providing a semicircular colonnade, and to reconfigure the main staircase. The staircase and entrance hall were embellished with large-scale decorative schemes by Sebastiano Ricci and Giovanni Antonio Pellegrini respectively, providing the house with some of the most sumptuous interiors in London. Pellegrini's decorations (now at Narford Hall, Norfolk) had been removed by 1727, but canvases from the Ricci scheme, although no longer installed as a whole, remain at Burlington House.



Sebastiano Ricci, *Diana and her Nymphs Bathing* (from the side wall of the Main Staircase), detail, 1713-15. Oil on canvas. Photo: John Hammond

Lady Burlington's son, Richard Boyle, 3rd Earl of Burlington, undertook two Grand Tours of Italy between 1714 and 1719. On his travels, he studied Roman architecture and buildings inspired by Italy's classical inheritance, notably the works of the sixteenth-century Vicentine architect, Andrea Palladio. Burlington also acquired a number of Palladio's drawings. He returned to England determined to use Palladio's designs as his model to reform contemporary British architecture. His work at Burlington House, both externally and internally, was to become a manifesto for this new style.

With his architect, Colen Campbell, Burlington refaced the house's southern façade, using the Ionic order to articulate the first floor, the piano nobile, above a rusticated base. In his design he drew on the buildings of Inigo Jones and on Palladio's Palazzo Porto in Vicenza. Inside, he remodelled the first floor to create a suite of grand rooms and summoned the painter William Kent from Rome to embellish them. Kent introduced the *gusto italiano* ('Italian style') into England by providing two ceiling paintings, a cove decoration in the Saloon and much heavily gilded carved-wood and plaster ornament.



Colen Campbell, Elevation of Burlington House from Vitruvius Britannicus III, 1725. Line-engraving. Photo: Prudence Cuming Associates

After 1722 Burlington lost interest in the house, transferring his energies, and those of Kent, to Chiswick House. In 1770 Burlington's grandson, later the 5th Duke of Devonshire, leased the house to the Duke of Portland, who, in keeping with the new taste for a more austere form of neoclassicism, employed John Carr of York to reconfigure the eastern end of the building and to cover Kent's baroque decorative scheme in the Saloon.

The house was purchased by Lord George Cavendish in *c.* 1812. His astounding wealth permitted a series of radical alterations by Samuel Ware. A profound admirer of Kent, Ware retained and copied Kent's detailing to create what is generally recognised as an early example of the style known as the Kent Revival. He rationalised the first floor into a sequence of interiors suitable for grand social occasions, using 24-carat gold leaf throughout and lining the walls with silk damask. The staircase was moved to the centre of the house, on the north-south axis, and flanked by two of the Ricci wall decorations from the 2nd Countess's staircase compartment. A ballroom with a coved, compartmented ceiling was created on the eastern side, and balanced by a coved-ceilinged state dining room on the west. The two were linked by the enfilade running through the sequence of five, south-facing rooms, which are now known as the "John Madejski Fine Rooms". Ware faced the north, garden front in render, a cheaper alternative to stone.



Sydney Smirke RA, Proposed Design for Gallery III, 1866-67. Pencil, pen with black ink, coloured washes and gouache. Photo: Prudence Cuming Associates

Burlington House was purchased by the government in 1854. Prior to the Royal Academy being granted a 999-year lease in 1867, the building served as the headquarters of various learned societies, almost all of which are still housed within the courtyard. The Royal Academy was required to erect its top-lit Main Galleries and its art school at its own expense. Both were designed by Sidney Smirke RA and built on half of the garden to the north of the house. Smirke also added a third floor to accommodate a suite of Diploma Galleries to unify Burlington House with the three-storey ranges being raised around the courtyard by the firm of Banks and Barry, the latter the son of Sir Charles Barry RA, architect of the Houses of Parliament. Further interventions have included a remodelling of the state dining room and the construction of a secondary staircase by Richard Norman Shaw RA (1885), the construction of a new Library (1986) and Print Room (1993) by HT Cadbury-Brown RA, and the remodelling of the top-floor galleries (now the Sackler Wing of Galleries) and a reorganisation of the vertical circulation by Lord Foster of Thames Bank RA in 1991.

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## Plan your visit

### Opening times and visitor information:

Royal Academy of Arts

Burlington House

Piccadilly

London W1J 0BD

Registered Charity No. 1125383

- **We regret that we cannot accept suitcases, hold-alls or backpacks.**  
Click here for cloakroom information



[Click here to view a Google Map](#)

General enquiries: 020 7300 8000

[Ticket information](#)

## Visitor information

### Royal Academy of Arts opening times

10am-6pm Saturday-Thursday (last admission to galleries 5.30pm)

10am-10pm Friday (last admission to galleries 9.30pm)

## The John Madejski Fine Rooms

[Click here](#) for details of current displays and opening times. The John Madejski Fine Rooms may also be visited on free guided tours. Tours last for an hour and focus on selected works from the RA Collection and also give an insight into the history of the Royal Academy and Burlington House.

[Find out more about the tour here](#)

## Royal Academy Restaurant opening times

The Restaurant at the Royal Academy is open daily from 10am till 6pm, with dinner served on Fridays and Saturdays until 11pm.

The Restaurant will close at 6pm on the following Saturdays: 25 August, 1, 8 September.

[Read more about the Restaurant](#)

## Courtyard Café

The Courtyard Café is open during the summer months, serving light snacks and soft drinks from 9am-5.30pm each day. On Fridays and Saturdays the café will be open until 10pm for drinks. Table service will be provided. No booking necessary.

## Gallery Café

Designed by Foster Associates, and situated on the ground floor next to the lift, the café has a light contemporary feel. Serving a range of freshly prepared sandwiches, cakes and pastries this is an ideal place to visit for a light snack and drink. **Open 10am–2.30pm daily.**

The Courtyard Café and Gallery Café will close at 6pm on the following Saturdays: 25 August, 1, 8 September.

## Royal Academy Shop

The Royal Academy shop is open daily, closing 15 minutes prior to the closure of the galleries.

## Disability Access

Disabled parking should be booked as far in advance as possible, especially for popular exhibitions. Time slots available are 10am to 2pm, 2pm to 6pm and 6pm to 10pm. When requesting a booking please give your name, vehicle registration number and a contact telephone number. For disabled parking and wheelchair bookings please telephone **020 7300 8028**.

If you experience trouble queuing for a long time due to ill health or a disability, please make yourself known to one of our visitor services team when you arrive.

Visit the [DisabledGo website](#) for a detailed and independent review of the RA's facilities for disabled users.

[Access guide](#)

## Families

The RA offers exciting family activities, including **practical workshops**, drop-in family studios, exhibition talks and galleries full of colourful paintings and sculpture to explore. Why not try our **Art Detective** family trails, a great way to engage children with the artworks. **Education guides** are also available from the RA shop for older visitors or free to download from our website. We also have our **Be Creative at Home** worksheets with inspiration for activities to try at home.

## Cloakroom

The cloakroom is for coats, umbrellas and small bags and has very limited capacity. Items may be subject to search. Handbags must be no larger than 280mm width by 380mm height and 400mm depth. **We regret that we cannot accept suitcases, hold-alls or large backpacks** in the cloakroom or in the galleries.

## Transport

### Cycling to the Royal Academy

There is a bicycle rack in the courtyard. We regret that we cannot accept folding bicycles in the cloakroom or in the galleries.

### Getting to the Royal Academy by Tube

#### Journey Planner

From	
Station or stop	Royal Academy of Arts
Place of interest	
Leave now	

[Advanced options](#)

The closest tube stations are Piccadilly Circus (on the Piccadilly and Bakerloo lines) and Green Park (on the Jubilee, Piccadilly and Victoria lines). Oxford Circus and Bond Street are the nearest tube stations on the Central Line. Both are approximately 5-10 minutes walk away.

### Getting to the Royal Academy by bus

There are five bus routes, listed below, which stop on Piccadilly.

The number 14 bus service

Route: Putney Heath (Green Man), Putney, Fulham Broadway, South Kensington, Knightsbridge, Hyde Park Corner, Piccadilly Circus, Tottenham Court Road Station. On schooldays two afternoon journeys start from Putney (Elliott School).

The number 19 bus service

Route: Finsbury Park, Highbury, Islington, Bloomsbury, Tottenham Court Road Station, Piccadilly Circus, Hyde Park Corner, Knightsbridge, Sloane Square, Chelsea, Battersea Bridge (Southside).

The number 22 bus service

Route: Putney Common, Putney Bridge, Parsons Green, Chelsea, Sloane Square, Knightsbridge, Hyde Park Corner, Piccadilly Circus.



The number 38 bus service

Route: Victoria, Hyde Park Corner, Piccadilly Circus, Tottenham Court Road Station, Bloomsbury, Islington, Dalston, Hackney, Clapton Pond.

### **Useful telephone numbers**

Transport for London

020 7222 1234 (24 hours)

Transport for London textphone

020 7918 3015

National Rail Enquiries

08457 484950