



World-class art
in exceptional spaces
for everyone



Image: RWA façade from traffic island © Evan Dawson 2022

RWA Chair of Board of Trustees Recruitment Information 2023

"One of the most beautiful places in which to look at art in this country"

Sir Nicolas Serota, Chair, Arts Council England

Welcome

From John Vasey, Interim Chair, and Fiona Robinson, Academicians President

Thank you for your interest in becoming the next Chair of the RWA (Royal West of England Academy).

Purpose-built in 1858, the RWA has been described as one of Britain's most beautiful art galleries. An independent charity, our purpose is "to advance the education, appreciation and practice of the visual arts, and to encourage and develop talent".

We work with external curators to present stimulating, accessible exhibitions that showcase emerging talent alongside historic masterpieces, and each year we stage an Open Exhibition, now in its 170th year, giving opportunities to artists of all ages, backgrounds and levels of experience to submit, show and sell their work.

Our mission is to ensure the RWA is somewhere everyone feels welcomed, valued and nourished, and that art is accessible to all, working within and beyond our building to inspire people of all backgrounds, using creativity to develop skills, enhance lives and boost wellbeing.

Following a transformational, £5M NLHF-funded project completed in 2022, the RWA is now seeking an exceptional individual to take on the role of Chair for the next phase of our growth. This represents a fantastic and unique opportunity to join a dedicated and passionate team, all of whom are incredibly proud of being part of and celebrating the RWA.

To realise our vision, the charity relies on the support and guidance of a dedicated and skilled Chair and Board of Trustees, who are actively involved in the organisation's strategic direction, governance and decision-making, and who will be fundamental in driving the plan from ideation to completion.

Our new chair is expected to share our passion for using the power of creativity to transform lives. Working collaboratively with the Academicians, Trustees and our Director, they will help shape the long-term sustainable future of the RWA. Acting as an ambassador and a public face for the organisation, they will support the Director and ensure the board functions as a strong unit and works with the entire RWA team to achieve our strategic objectives.



RWA structure and governance

RWA VISION

To be a place that welcomes, inspires and enriches the lives of all people from all communities and all backgrounds through Art and Creativity.

RWA MISSION

To welcome, inspire and encourage people from all communities by showcasing world class art of the past and present; celebrating excellence, and giving opportunities to aspiring and emerging artists and curators. To nurture creativity for all, through our learning programme, community partnerships and Drawing School, and embed the wellbeing of people, place and planet in every aspect of everything we do, establishing the RWA as an accessible and dynamic flagship for the transformative power of creativity.

CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

To use RWA's exceptional historic galleries to display world-class art of the past and present, including internationally renowned artists and emerging talents alongside the work of our Academicians, in exhibitions that are accessible and relevant to the lives and interests of communities across Bristol and the West of England. Alongside this is a programme of learning and outreach, both within and beyond our building, aimed at enhancing wellbeing through creativity, especially for those facing significant challenges.

LEGAL STATUS

Founded in 1844 and operating from its own, Grade II* listed landmark Gallery since 1858, the RWA (Royal West of England Academy) was incorporated as a Registered Charity (No 1070163) and Company Limited by Guarantee (No 3567088) in 1998.

Following a Governance Review and Academicians' AGM resolution in 2009, it is governed by a Board of Trustees, made up of people elected from open recruitment and a minimum of three representatives of the Academicians' Council.

The RWA is also an Accredited Museum (2145).

FUNDING

The RWA is wholly independent, currently receiving just £9,600 a year in core public funding (an Openness grant from Bristol City Council), and reliant on earned, donated and grant income to cover its costs.

Main sources of earned income include ticket revenue; adult art classes (the RWA Drawing School); venue hire; retail and art sales; Open exhibition submissions, and memberships, including Academicians, Patrons and Friends, as well as rental income from our tenants, South Gloucestershire and Stroud College, who operate Bristol School of Art within our building.

Fundraising activities include an annual Secret Postcard Auction, where small donated works of art by a wide range of artists are auctioned online, anonymous at the point of purchase.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Board comprises a maximum of 15 individuals, of whom three are Academicians, including the Academicians' President (currently Fiona Robinson). Board meetings are held six times a year, attended by the Director, with input from other senior staff as required.

Key roles include Interim Chair, John Vasey, and Honorary Treasurer, Michael Perry FCA.

Reporting to the Board are Committees covering core areas of the RWA's operation, each of which includes Trustee representation. These are currently: Development; Exhibitions; Outreach; Programme; Relationships, and Sustainability, plus a Nominations Committee, meeting as required to oversee recruitment and succession of Trustees, and Audit Committee, meeting annually.

STAFFING

Currently, the RWA has 27 paid staff roles (17 FTE) led by Director/CEO, Alison Bevan, and a senior management team comprising Head of Development; Head of Exhibitions; Head of Learning & Engagement, and Head of Operations/Finance.

ACADEMICIANS

What marks the RWA out from other Art Galleries is its status as Britain's only regional Royal Academy of Art, echoing national institutions in London, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.

There are a maximum of 150 RWA Academicians at any one time who are practicing artists and architects at the forefront of their profession. They are elected by their peers. Academicians act as ambassadors for the RWA in the wider creative world. With their unparalleled knowledge of contemporary art and the art scene, they contribute to the RWA's unique position within the world of art galleries and Museums.

The Academicians' Council chaired by the President manages academicians' affairs and is responsible for guiding and advising on the artistic programme of the RWA. Academicians serve on the Trust Board, the Exhibitions Committee and other committees. They participate in and curate RWA exhibitions and the Kenny Gallery, the Academicians' Gallery, is programmed by the Academician Curators. The Annual Open Exhibition is curated by the President with a team of Academicians working together with the RWA staff.

OUTREACH AND IMPACT

Since 2013, learning and outreach work has been embraced into the core of the organisation, as part of our mission to inspire, nurture and showcase artistic talent. All the work we undertake has wellbeing at its heart, ensuring that the outcomes have a positive impact on the wellbeing of people, place (communities) and planet (the environment).

Our National Lottery Heritage Fund supported Light & Inspiration project, completed in 2022, not only transformed our physical building, making it accessible to people who had never felt able to visit an art gallery before, it also opened new doors to creativity across some of Bristol's most underserved communities, from refugees and Roma young people to those with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD), and including 'Art on Referral' GP-prescribed activities for those with mental health challenges.

Lottery funding has enabled us to build meaningful relationships with communities and organisations across Bristol, who we work with to deliver creative engagement they truly want and need, working with (and thereby providing employment for) a host of professional artist-facilitators, and with specialist organisations supporting those with significant additional needs, such as SEN+D (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities).

170+ years of trailblazing

With unparalleled gender equality and opportunities for women artists throughout our history; a leading abolitionist as founding President, and several lifetimes spent supporting disadvantaged artists, the RWA has always had equality at its heart.

Though our 2021-22 Light & Inspiration project, our landmark, Grade II* listed building has been dramatically updated from simply beautiful to a truly welcoming, inclusive space for our whole community, not a select few.

We've really listened to the people we want to reach, and now offer outstanding accessibility, including a huge new lift and a fully-equipped Changing Places toilet facility. We've improved the space for our visitors and our art, while massively reducing our environmental impact. We've opened new doorways, expanded our cafe and landscaped our forecourt to welcome visitors from the first glimpse of our building.

Our transformation hasn't just been physical; our accessible Tours include British Sign Language, Described, Dementia-friendly and Bring Your Baby Buggy Tours, plus a co-created programme for children and young people with additional needs and disabilities.

We have achieved this with less than 1% of our costs covered from public subsidy, and need to combine an entrepreneurial business plan with an effective and compelling fundraising strategy in order to continue to showcase exceptional talent; bring great art to Bristol, and provide life-enhancing creative workshops to under-served communities across our city.



Exceptional spaces made fit for all

Thanks to so many generous supporters, our Light & Inspiration capital project delivered exactly the impact we hoped. Visitor numbers have tripled to over 150,000 in the year since reopening, including many who've never felt able to visit an Art Gallery before and now feel they belong.

The stars of our extraordinary building are our 19th century galleries, with beautifully constructed interiors, filled with natural light. In recent years these stunning spaces have exhibited some of the foremost historical and contemporary artists from Matisse, Chagall, Turner and Constable to Jackson Pollock, Elisabeth Frink, and Angelica Kaufmann, to Sonia Boyce, Cornelia Parker, Antony Gormley, Richard Long, Frank Bowling, Yinka Shonibare and Grayson Perry.

We have exhibited well over 500 artists' work in the past 12 months, providing all kinds of artists – whether well-known names or first-time exhibitors – an opportunity to display their work in a professional gallery setting. This includes commissioning work by both established and emerging talents, and giving those newly exploring their creativity the chance to be shown alongside their artistic heroes.



For everyone

Most of our building is free-to-enter. Our Family Activity space has creative activities for all children, including those with additional needs. It includes giant interactive artworks, drawing materials, dressing up costumes, a puppet theatre and a reading corner.

Out of hours, we host Happy Mondays sessions for young people with autism or profound and multiple disabilities, both through SEN+D schools and for families.



"We've been to so many places that say they are for SEN+D Children. This is actually the best I've been to, you're really open minded. He can just be himself." Happy Mondays family

In 2022, we ran a Work Experience week for ten young people with additional needs, and repeated this with twelve students in 2023. All achieved a Bronze Arts Award, which for some may end up being their only qualification.

"Thank you for opening the door to belief and opportunity" - Work experience parent

We have built a strong partnership with Bristol Community Links (BCL) for adults with multiple, complex needs, supporting their creativity and exhibiting their work at the RWA.

"Sincere thanks for everything you are doing to raise the status and visibility of disabled people, it is trailblazing." – BCL Manager



Our Youngwood Room provides quiet space, and enables people living with dementia and their carers to end a gallery tour with vital socialising over tea and cake.



“What a triumph that people living with dementia are now welcome where they once saw a barrier – really beautiful to hear the difference the session made for them” Bristol Group Coordinator, Alzheimer’s Society



New doors to art

Taking the transformative power of art across the city

We believe everyone should have the opportunity enhance their wellbeing through creativity. Making this happen includes co-creating creative activities with some of Bristol’s most under-served communities, and delivering it on their doorstep.

During 2022-23, this included:

Scribble and Sketch free intergenerational drop-in workshops took place every month at Easton, Redcliffe, Hartcliffe and Southmead. 49 workshops were run – with a total of 680 participants.

“I can’t believe you’ve come down here. Nobody comes here.” Community Partner

Artist-led workshops with new families to design and paint a mural at the Horizons Mother and Baby Unit at Southmead Hospital.

“Thank you again for the amazing mural and for your continuing offer of support to our Mums and babies.” Nurse, Southmead Hospital

Partnership with Bristol Refugee Artists Collective (BRAC), presenting an exhibition of their work at the RWA; offering free submission to our Annual Open, and facilitating ongoing free formal art training for some.

“You make me happy for this project. And, I remember for everything for painting, because always I’m at home”. BRAC Participant.

Ongoing work with Roma young people, who attended a pewter-casting workshop in September, which totally absorbed them.

“I’ve worked with them for 3 years and I’ve never seen them stay that focused. 1 + 1/2 hours is unheard of for them to be engaged. Thank you so much, it was so good to see.”
– Youth Worker

The Role

Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Royal West of England Academy ('the RWA')

The role of Chair is about strategic oversight, exercising soft power, persuasion and diplomacy, with occasional decision making when required.

The role is offered on a voluntary basis, however expenses may be payable where this would otherwise be a barrier.

Time requirement:

Approx 2 days per month

- Board meetings – 6 times a year (maximum of 2 hours each), Thursdays, 4-6pm
- Attendance at selected meetings of sub-committees (guide: c. 10 meetings pa of 1.5 hours)
- Occasional daytime meetings with key stakeholders, partner organisations, funders, etc
- Regular contact with the Director (c.2-4 hours per month)
- Preparation, networking and attendance at RWA Private Views and other events

Term of office – 3 years, extendable for up to one further term with Trustees' approval

Remuneration – the role of Chair is not accompanied by any financial remuneration, but expenses may be payable where this may otherwise be a barrier

Location – central Bristol

Closing date – 31 October 2023

Job Description

Principal responsibilities:

Strategic leadership

- Provide vision and leadership to the RWA and its Board
- Ensure Trustees fulfil their duties and responsibilities for the effective governance of the Charity
- Ensure the Board operates within its charitable objectives, and provides a clear strategic direction for the Charity
- Ensure the Board regularly reviews major risks and associated opportunities, and satisfies itself that systems are in place to take advantage of opportunities and manage and mitigate the risks
- Ensure the Board fulfils its duties to ensure the sound financial health of the RWA, with systems in place to ensure financial accountability
- Liaise with the Academicians' President to ensure the RWA's artistic vision is delivered

Governance

- Ensure the governance arrangements are working in the most effective way for the RWA
- Develop the knowledge and capability of the Board of Trustees
- Encourage positive change where appropriate, and address and resolve any conflicts within the Board
- Appraise the performance of the Trustees and the Board on an annual basis
- Implement effective procedures for the recruitment, induction, development, training, appraisal and succession planning of fellow Trustees
- Work within any agreed policies adopted by the Charity, and ensure compliance with the legal and ethical frameworks for the governance of Charities, the Museums sector and public service industries

Efficiency and effectiveness

- Chair meetings of the Board of Trustees effectively and efficiently, bringing impartiality and objectivity to the decision making process
- Ensure Trustees are fully engaged and that decisions are taken in the best, long-term interests of the RWA and that the Board takes collective ownership
- Work closely with the Director of the RWA ('the Director') to give direction to Board policy-making and to ensure that meetings are well planned, meaningful and reflect the responsibilities of Trustees
- Monitor to ensure decisions taken at meetings are implemented

Relationship with the Director and the wider management team

- Establish and maintain a strong, effective and constructive working relationship with the Director, ensuring they are held to account for achieving agreed strategic objectives
- Support the Director, whilst respecting the boundaries which exist between the two roles
- Ensure regular contact with the Director and develop and maintain an open and supportive relationship within which each can speak openly about concerns, worries and challenges
- Liaise with the Director to maintain an overview of the RWA's affairs, providing support as necessary
- Conduct an annual appraisal and remuneration review for the Director in consultation with other Trustees
- Ensure the Director has the opportunity for professional development and any appropriate external professional support

External Relations

- Act as an ambassador for the RWA and represent the views of the Board to the public and to other organisations
- Represent the charity at external functions, meetings and events
- Facilitate change and address any potential conflict with external stakeholders

Person Specification

In addition to the qualities and experience required of a Trustee of the RWA, the Chair should meet the following requirements:

Personal Qualities

- Demonstrate a strong and visible passion and commitment to the RWA, its mission and strategic objectives
- Has the personal gravitas to lead the RWA
- Exhibits strong inter-personal and relationship building skills and be comfortable in an ambassadorial role
- Demonstrates tact and diplomacy, with the ability to listen and engage effectively
- Possesses strong networking capabilities that can be utilised for the benefit of the RWA
- Able to foster and promote a collaborative team environment
- Willing to commit time to conduct the role well, including attendance at events

Experience and expertise

- Experience of operating at a senior strategic leadership level within an organisation
- Successful track record of achievement through his or her career
- Experience of working with, or as part of, a Board of Trustees or directors
- Experience of chairing meetings and public speaking
- Broad knowledge and understanding of the Arts sector and current issues
- Strong leadership skills, an ability to motivate staff and volunteers, and bring people together
- Good understanding of charity governance and finance issues

How to apply

To apply for this role, please email John Vasey, Interim Chair of Trustees, at chair@rwa.org.uk, including information about yourself and why you feel the role is right for you, together with a current CV.

For further information about the RWA, please contact Alison Bevan, RWA Director, at alison.bevan@rwa.org.uk

We invite expressions of interest by 31 October 2023

Positive recruitment for diversity

RWA recognises that each of us bring our experiences, our backgrounds and our own unique perspective to what we do. We believe our work will be stronger with greater diversity and for all our roles we welcome applications from those who bring balance to our organisation, and particularly from people with characteristics currently under-represented in our team. As a policy, we will offer an interview to those who meet our minimum requirements and wish to make us aware that they are global majority or mixed heritage; identify as non-binary, trans and/or LGBTQ+; have a recognised disability, or are neurodivergent.