

RA Collection Online: Editing Text for Art and Artists

About the Royal Academy of Arts and the Collection

The Royal Academy of Arts (RA) is one of the UK's foremost arts institution, famous for its world class exhibitions including Monet, Matisse and Ai Weiwei. Its purpose is to be a clear, strong voice for art and artists. Its public programme promotes the creation, study and enjoyment of art and architecture to a wide range of audiences through exhibitions, education and debate.

The RA has been awarded a Heritage Lottery Grant to transform Burlington Gardens and Burlington House into a 21st century campus for the future RA. The unification of the Grade II* listed 17th Century Burlington House with the Grade II* listed 19th Century 6 Burlington Gardens, by means of a new public link, will provide a single site capable of supporting new learning, access and events programming and activities that are centred on the unique heritage that lies at the heart of the Royal Academy.

When the new buildings open in 2018, for the first time the RA will make significant parts of its Collections accessible which until now have been largely hidden from public view. The buildings and their architecture, the Collections and digitised material will form the foundation and inspiration for a variety of projects, activities and wide ranging events to explore and reveal the RA architectural and cultural significance, history and its place as a landmark in the local area.

A new online platform for RA Collections

The RA Collection is comprised of works of art, books and archival material which together form one of the world's most significant resources for the study of British art. Alongside the opening of our expanded campus, the RA will be presenting its rich collection online as an integrated part of our award-winning website. With the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund, over 10,000 new items from the Collection have been digitised and this enhanced digital resource is now being prepared for a new online offer that will showcase the vast and varied resources of the RA to a worldwide audience.

Currently, our online catalogue for the RA Collection is a separate and distinct website (www.racollections.org.uk) which has successfully served a specialist audience for over a decade. The current website has powerful search functions which allow users to search across the collection and access complete data on our Royal Academicians. In addition to standard catalogue information, many works of art also include extended interpretive text to add context to a particular object.

We are hard at work on a project to integrate the entire RA Collections website into our main RA website (www.royalacademy.org.uk). This new platform for collections content will maintain all existing information and functionality, while also allowing us to seamlessly integrate material

from our collection across the website, including into our mobile experience for on-site visitors and enhanced curated tours. It will also help us tell the story of the RA's heritage to new audiences. Specifically, we aim to engage younger audiences, families and current arts enthusiasts who are new to the RA.

Refreshing Collections' interpretive text

To enhance our offer, especially for new and non-specialist audiences, we are seeking freelance copyeditors to rework some of our existing interpretative text to suit our new platform. Specifically, we aim to produce new short texts for around 400 objects by early 2018, and a further 500 by the end of 2018.

Our existing interpretive texts for works of art are a rich resource but are varied in tone, length and content. Working with us on this project, you will have access to any existing text (either public-facing or for internal use) and will be able to edit this to create interpretative text that matches both the design and content requirements of our new Collection platform.

These refreshed texts should provide readers with an immediate hook into the story of the object, then present our more detailed information clearly to deepen understanding, in the following format:

- **A standfirst - max 30 words**

A pithy, magazine-style summary of the description text that pulls out one or two key details to engage the reader and encourage them to read on. It should have a smart, self-aware, editorial tone that guides the reader into the text.

- **A description text: 150-500 words**

An accessible and intelligent introduction to the object and its story, offering relevant context and encouraging the reader to look again at the work. The tone of the text should be engaging and non-academic yet delivering the rigour our core audiences expect from us. Where possible, the text should have a narrative feel, and where they're available, anecdotes or quotes may be included to bring the story alive. Art terms should be explained; the text should be engaging for a reader with little art historical knowledge. The length will depend on how much material there is available, and where material is available should continue to include existing information, so that no key facts are lost to researchers.

Some items may not have enough existing text to transform into the format above. For those items, we will ask you to produce a **short label text (50-150 words)**. This should be as accessible and intelligent as the **description text** referenced above. Even though this text will be brief, it should stand for itself. These shorter texts will not require a standfirst.

New artist biographies

We have a selection of artist biographies of contemporary Royal Academicians published on our main website currently (<https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/royal-academicians>). We are now looking to expand the number of these biographies available by creating new content for around 100 artists. These will focus on our Foundation Members and past Academicians. These biographies can be written using existing authoritative texts but should be written in a tone that engages our new audiences who are less familiar with art history.

For each artist, we would require:

- **A biography text: 150-300 words**

An engaging introduction to the artist and their story. Introduce their work, any relevant milestones and their relationship to the Academy – as much or as little as is necessary to provide an interesting and representative picture of the artist and their work. If quotes from the artist are available and feel relevant to their story, prioritise their inclusion; sharing the many voice of our artists is one of the RA's core values. Personal information can be included where it's relevant and available, weaving in any relevant anecdotes bring their story alive. Again, the tone should be accessible and intelligent, language should be non-academic and any less familiar terms should be explained.

Timeline

This project needs to balance both quality and quantity of refreshed texts, so you'll need to work swiftly to help us meet targets and deadlines. Our new collections platform will be launching at the end of 2017 and we aim to have most of the refreshed object texts and additional artist biographies online in early 2018. There will be ongoing work on this project through the end of 2018 (for additional objects and artists).

Contact

If you're interested in working with us to improve our web content, please send a CV to liz.dewar@royalacademy.co.uk. It is our aim to take on several copyeditors who can undertake this work over the next few months to meet our deadlines. We may ask you to do a sample piece of work specific to this project. We will supply examples of refreshed text in both formats and more information on our target audiences to the successful candidates.