

RWA

Impact Report

2023/24



Two years on

Two years on from our 'Light & Inspiration' project, our building is buzzing with life, We've welcomed over 300,000 visitors since May 2022, many of whom are not just visiting the RWA for the first time but are taking their first steps into any art gallery.

In the past year, 857 artists exhibited their art, including professionals and amateurs, from teenagers to centenarians, all given the chance to show – and often sell – their work.

Artists included Dame Phyllida Barlow DBE RA, Olivia Bax, Sir Frank Bowling OBE RA RWA, Dame Sonia Boyce DBE RA Sophie Calle, Helen Cammock, Beth Carter RWA, John Hoyland RA, Valda Jackson MBE RWA, Hew Locke OBE RA, Cornelia Parker CBE RA, Susan Pui San Lok, Hannah Starkey and Jem Southam.



The Transformative Power of Art

We believe that everyone should have the opportunity to enhance their wellbeing through creativity. The stories speak for themselves, showing what a difference being creative makes to people in the most challenging of circumstances.



Supporting families

Disabled and autistic young people and their families are welcomed in for Happy Mondays and Happy Families sessions. In 2023/4, 209 people attended these activities, supported by the Nisbet Trust.



"Happy Families has been an absolute godsend for our family! I feel so privileged to be able to bring my children to these enriching sessions in an inspiring environment where both of my children feel supported and allowed to be themselves! B. feels more confident to engage in sensory art activities and W. has found more confidence to express his creative mind and skills. [It] is invaluable to me!"
Sian Smith, mother to W. (6) and B. (2 ½, who has downs syndrome)

Every month, we run Scribble & Sketch creative workshops in Easton, Redcliffe, Southmead and Hartcliffe. 799 young people, parents and neighbours made art alongside each other in these underserved communities, where there is little other free provision, supported by the Joan Hawkins (Grassroots) Fund, Quartet Community Foundation and the Nisbet Trust.

"This is our first time coming to Scribble & Sketch. We don't live that near, we live in Hengrove but we had to come to Hartcliffe to find something for us to do for free as a family". Mother, grandmother and young boy, aged 2.

Our Work Placement programme focusses on young people dealing with additional learning needs such as autism and ADHD. In 2023, 12 young people worked with us, culminating in an exhibition, 'Worlds of the Mind', curated from the RWA Collection. All achieved a Bronze Arts Award, for some their first and only qualification. This week was supported by the Lark Trust.

"Thank you for opening the doors to hope and opportunity", parent of a young person participating in the Work Placement week.



Supporting older people

Every month, we run Tuesday Teatime Tours for people living with dementia and their carers, supported by the Grateful Society. Last year, 208 people enjoyed an exhibition tour, a creative activity and a shared tea, often with cake home-made by the RWA team.

"Teatime Tuesdays are so special. The building accessibility changes are incredible, but it's the inclusion of groups with higher access needs that the gallery should be most proud of. The RWA not only opens its doors for diverse communities, but all the staff involved make people living with dementia feel welcomed, safe, and valued, which is something that has yet to be replicated anywhere else in the city"

Bristol Group Coordinator,
Alzheimer's Society

We were proud to win Bristol Dementia Action Alliance's Gold Award for the second year running for Tuesday Teatime Tours.



For everyone

Community group partners were represented in seven very well-received exhibitions, showing work from 203 artists, including: 'Making the City Home', a textile exhibition created by Refugee Women of Bristol, Dhek Bhal and Sadaga group.

'Playful Gestures', incredible sculptures and paintings were made by disabled adults from Bristol Community Links day centres in response to 'These Mad Hybrids: John Hoyland and Contemporary Sculpture'.

"I thought I would investigate this downstairs gallery and it was well worth it. Really inspiring and great that you're able to do this."

Visitor comment

Exhibitions are accompanied by specialist British Sign Language tours for Deaf people, and Described and Touch Gallery Tours for blind and partially sighted people. RWA staff have also been trained to describe artworks which are recorded so that visually impaired visitors can hear the descriptions of works on self-led visits.

"Why is audio description important for visually impaired people? It gives the best experience you can give us; it adds colour and description to what would otherwise be a dull experience. Without it, life would be dull."

Visually impaired person during a training session

Activities for children and young people included Art on the Forecourt, when 288 young people took part in the Wild Escape project, made possible by lead support from Arts Council England Project Grants, with additional support from Art Fund.

1,416 school pupils and 4,048 students enjoyed free entry to the RWA's exhibitions. 63 Free Passes were also given to people from underserved communities to enable them to experience a year's free access to art exhibitions at the RWA.

The RWA Drawing School saw 1,038 adults given tuition in courses and workshops including Art for the Afraid and Beginners Life Drawing.



Photos by: Lisa Whiting, Evan Dawson, Alice Hendy and the RWA Team.

Thank you to those who have supported us



We're extremely grateful to all those who support our work, including Friends, Patrons, sponsors, donors, and Trusts and Foundations, plus our wonderful volunteers, who gave 5,359 hours of their time over the year.

We need your help now more than ever

Today, we're in the unenviable position of having no regular public funding at all. Amidst a cost-of-living crisis, every £1 of support is going to be even more important. If you are able to consider making a donation, however small, please visit the Support Us page on the RWA website, or contact kate.foster@rwa.org.uk

About the RWA

Through our programme of exhibitions, events and activities, the RWA is committed to providing inspiring art for everyone, including in underserved communities across Bristol.

Following our recent capital project, the RWA building is fit for the future, providing better access for all, including a full Changing Places toilet facility; two further accessible toilets; large-scale lift; quiet room, and free family space.

Exhibitions at the RWA feature work by leading contemporary artists alongside great works from the past, often brought to the city and region for the first time.

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