

Press Release

RWS Gallery

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Royal Watercolour Society Gallery Establishes Itself as London's Destination for Water-Based Media

RWS Gallery London, UK
10th April 2026

This April, RWS Gallery positions itself at the heart of London's cultural landscape as a year-round destination dedicated to water-based media — a rare and focused offering in a city renowned for its major oil painting collections.

With the launch of a new permanent yet evolving exhibition of paintings by its contemporary Member artists, the Royal Watercolour Society (RWS) creates a space where visitors can experience the full breadth and vitality of contemporary water-based media. The rotating display showcases works by the Society's elected artist Members, whose practices span a wide range of approaches, including gouache, acrylic, pen & ink, pigment, collage, mixed media as well as traditional watercolour. Importantly, the exhibition also offers visitors the opportunity to acquire original works, with paintings available for sale directly from the gallery — fostering a closer connection between artists and collectors.

Founded in 1804, the Royal Watercolour Society is the oldest watercolour society in the world and has been instrumental in establishing the medium as a serious and respected art form. More than two centuries on, it continues to champion innovation and excellence in water-based painting.

The gallery's emergence as a permanent water-media destination is also a return to its roots. In 1823, the Society established its headquarters at 6 Pall Mall East, remaining there for over a century. After several relocations — including its current base at Bankside Gallery — the Society was able to reclaim its historic address in 2020 through a 250-year lease, creating an additional home for its Member artists.

Alongside this permanent display, RWS Gallery will host an evolving programme of exhibitions, talks and events, offering artists, collectors, students and the public an ongoing opportunity to engage with the medium — whether through viewing, learning, or collecting.

Editor's Notes

PR representative: Molly Puckering 020 8050 9425 mp@rwsgallery.co.uk

RWS Gallery Listing info:

Title: Royal Watercolour Society Permanent Exhibition

Dates: Friday 10th April 2026 onwards

Venue: RWS Gallery, 3-5 Whitcomb Street, London WC2H 7HA

Visiting Information [LINK](#)

Opening times: Tuesday – Saturday, 11am - 5pm

Admission: Free entry

Contact: 020 8050 9425 info@royalwatercoloursociety.com

Website: <https://www.royalwatercoloursociety.co.uk>

About The Royal Watercolour Society

The Royal Watercolour Society (RWS) is the oldest watercolour society in the world. Past Members include Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, E.R. Hughes, William Hunt, and John Singer Sargent. The origins of the Royal Watercolour Society can be traced back to the formation of the Society of Painters in Water Colours in 1804. Born out of a sense of grievance by several such artists who practised in watercolour and felt that they were discriminated against by the Royal Academy, the only professional artistic body of the day. On Friday 30 November 1804 the first meeting of 'The Society Associated for the purpose of Establishing an Annual Exhibition of Paintings in Water Colours' was held at The Stratford Coffee House on Oxford Street, London. Founder Members include Samuel Shelley, William Frederick Wells, William Sawrey Gilpin and brothers, John and Cornelius Varley. In 1881 Queen

Victoria granted the Society a Royal Charter and agreed to sign the certificates that each RWS Member receives on election to the Society. This tradition continues to the present day. King Charles III became Patron of the Royal Watercolour Society on 3rd May 2024.

Today, the RWS is an artist-led Society made up of an elected Membership who are amongst the finest practitioners in contemporary water-based painting. Artists work in a variety of water media including gouache, acrylic, pen & ink, pigment, collage, mixed media as well as traditional watercolour. The aim of the Society is to promote, by example and education, the understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of these exciting media. The Royal Society of Painters in Water Colours is a registered charity in England and Wales No. 258348.

About RWS Gallery

RWS Gallery is a new exhibition and event space in Central London, moments from The National Gallery. The space, designed by the late Chris Wilkinson RA and his award-winning firm, WilkinsonEyre, epitomises the perfect balance between old and new, with the Grade-II Listed frontage in stark contrast to the clean and airy finish of the internal gallery spaces. Since its founding in the early 19th Century, the RWS has been based in several London locations including Conduit Street in the West End, Pall Mall East, and since 1980 at Bankside Gallery next to Tate Modern. <https://www.royalwatercoloursociety.co.uk/exhibitions/>