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978-1-108-07454-4 - Recollections of the British Institution for Promoting the Fine Arts in the United Kingdom: With some Account of the Means Employed for that Purpose; and Biographical Notices of Artists Who have Received Premiums, 1805–1859

Thomas Smith

Excerpt

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## British Institution

FOR PROMOTING

### THE FINE ARTS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM,

Under the Patronage of His Majesty George III.

1805.



WITH a view to the foundation of an Institution bearing the above title, a few preliminary Private Meetings were held, the scheme duly discussed and approved, and the following Noblemen and Gentlemen put down their Names as the

#### FIRST SUBSCRIBERS.

The Archbishop of Dublin.	The Rt. Hon. Isaac Corry.
The Duke of Bedford.	The Rt. Hon. Charles Long.
The Marquis of Stafford.	The Rt. Hon. Nich. Vansittart.
The Marquis of Abercorn.	The Hon. Charles Grey.
The Marquis of Sligo.	Sir George Beaumont, Bart.
The Earl of Dartmouth.	Sir John Fleming Leicester, Bt.
The Earl of Essex.	Sir Abraham Hume, Bart.
The Earl Spencer.	Sir Richard Colt Hoare, Bart.
The Earl Camden.	Sir Francis Baring, Bart.
The Earl of Kingston.	John J. Angerstein, Esq.
The Earl of Limerick.	William Smith, Esq.
The Viscount Lowther.	Henry Hope, Esq.
The Bishop of Durham.	Richard Payne Knight, Esq.
The Bishop of Exeter.	Thomas Bonar, Esq.
The Lord Mulgrave.	Thomas Hope, Esq.
The Lord Dundas.	Arthur Champenowne, Esq.
The Lord Northwick.	Thomas Bernard, Esq.

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The above gentlemen commenced operations by holding a Meeting on the 30th of May, 1805, the Earl of Dartmouth in the Chair, when his Lordship announced that HIS MAJESTY had graciously condescended to accept the Patronage of the Institution.

It was Resolved,—That a Meeting should be held at the Thatched House Tavern on His Majesty's Birthday, the 4th of June, 1805, at 10 o'clock A.M. That it be proposed on that day to establish on a great and extended basis the British Institution, and to appoint a Committee to prepare a draft of Regulations, to enquire after a local situation, and to make a Report to an adjourned Meeting of Subscribers of Fifty Guineas and upwards.

At the Meeting of Subscribers held accordingly on the 4th of June, 1805,

## PRESENT :—

The Earl of Dartmouth, *in the Chair*.

The Duke of Bedford.	James Christie, Esq.
The Bishop of Durham.	Charles Duncombe, Esq. M.P.
The Earl of Aylesford.	Henry Hope, Esq.
The Lord de Dunstanville.	Thomas Hope, Esq.
The Lord Viscount Lowther.	Edward Loveden Loveden, Esq.
The Lord Northwick.	Samuel Lysons, Esq.
Sir Abraham Hume, Bart.	Philip Metcalfe, Esq. M.P.
Sir William Elford, Bart. M.P.	William Morland, Esq. M.P.
Sir George Beaumont, Bart.	Lord Henry Petty, M.P.
Rt. Hon. James Corry, M.P.	William Smith, Esq.
John J. Angerstein, Esq.	Richard Froward, Esq.
Thomas Bernard, Esq.	Samuel Whitbread, Esq. M.P.
The Rev. W. Holwell Carr.	Caleb Whitefoord, Esq.

It was moved by Lord Viscount Lowther, and seconded by the Duke of Bedford, and unanimously Resolved :—

“ That the British Institution for Promoting the Fine Arts in the United Kingdom, under His Majesty's most gracious patronage, do commence and take place this day, being His Majesty's Birthday.”

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It was moved by the Right Hon. Isaac Corry, and seconded by John Julius Angerstein, Esq. and Resolved:—

“That the Earl of Dartmouth, Lord Viscount Lowther, the Rt. Hon. Charles Long, Sir George Beaumont, Bart. Sir Francis Baring, Bart. Thomas Hope, Esq. William Smith, Esq. and Thomas Bernard, Esq. be a Select Committee, to prepare a Draft of Regulations for the Institution, to enquire after a local situation for it, and to Report to an adjourned Meeting to be held at the same place on Tuesday the 11th of June.”

At a Meeting of the Select Committee on the 8th of June, a Draft of the proposed By-Laws was read and approved, and ordered to be laid before the adjourned Meeting of the Governors. Resolved that it be also reported that several local situations have been proposed for the Institution, viz. two in Pall Mall, one in St. James's Square, two in Piccadilly, and one in Bond Street, but that the Committee is not prepared to make a specific report of preference as to any one of them.

The Committee recommended that the following Bankers be requested to receive Subscriptions on account of the Institution, viz. Messrs. Coutts and Co.; Down, Thornton and Co.; Gosling, Sharp and Co.; Hammersley's and Co.; Hoare's; Praed's, Digby and Co.; and Ransom, Morland and Co.

At a Meeting of Subscribers, held 11th June, 1805:—The Minutes of the Select Committee were read and confirmed, and the Regulations proposed by the Committee were read by the Chairman, and approved and ordered to stand as the By-Laws of the Institution.

It was Resolved:—That the Select Committee before-named, be requested to manage the concerns of the Institution until a Committee of Directors shall be elected by the Governors at a Meeting to be summoned for that purpose: and, That they be authorised to purchase, hire, or engage a proper place for the Exhibition, in case they shall be able to obtain one which they may think compatible with the funds and means of the Institution.

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The following are the By-Laws, as they now exist, the originals having been modified from time to time, as circumstances required :—

#### BY-LAWS.

##### I.—THE OBJECT OF THE INSTITUTION.

The object of the British Institution, under HER PRESENT MAJESTY'S PATRONAGE, is to encourage the talents of the Artists of the United Kingdom ; so as to improve and extend our manufactures, by that degree of taste and elegance of design which are to be exclusively derived from the cultivation of the Fine Arts ; and thereby to increase the general prosperity and resources of the Empire. With this view, the British Gallery is appropriated to the Exhibition and Sale of the productions of British Artists ; and also to the Exhibition of Pictures by the Old Masters.

##### II.—THE GOVERNORS.

The Government of the Institution shall be vested in the present Subscribers and Contributors of Fifty Guineas, or upwards, to the funds of the Institution, together with such other persons as shall be elected Governors as after-mentioned.

All the Property of the Institution shall be vested in Trustees appointed by the Governors.

Every Governor shall have the right of personal admission to the Institution, and of introducing two friends each day to the Gallery during the Exhibitions. Those Governors who have subscribed One Hundred Guineas shall be entitled to four tickets for each of the Evening Exhibitions, and those who have subscribed Fifty Guineas, to two.

Hereditary Shares may be transferable, with the consent of the Board of Directors.

In case of the death of an Hereditary Governor, his Executors or Administrators may propose to the Board of Directors a successor to his share and interest in the Institution : and in case such person so proposed shall be a legitimate child of the deceased, such child shall be admitted immediately ; but if any other person than a legitimate child shall be proposed, it shall be optional in

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the Board of Directors to elect him or her, or not; and if they do not elect him or her, then they shall pay out of the funds of the Institution to such person so proposed, such sum, not less than One Hundred Guineas, as for the time being shall be the qualification of an Hereditary Governor of the Institution.

The representatives of those Hereditary Governors who have renounced their rights in the Institution may resume them upon payment of Twenty Guineas.

Each Governor shall have one vote for every Fifty Guineas subscribed.

Ladies, who shall be Governors, may vote by proxy.

### III.—THE COMMITTEE OF DIRECTORS.

All the affairs and concerns of the Institution shall be managed by a Committee of Directors, to be elected by and from the Governors; and to consist of the President, Vice-President, and eighteen other Members; and three Directors shall be competent to business.

The President and Vice-President shall be elected annually.

Three of the Directors shall go out annually by rotation; but they may be re-elected, if so proposed at the General Meeting.

They shall have power, from time to time, to make such Regulations respecting their own Meetings, and the conduct of business therein, as they shall think fit; so as such Regulations be not contradictory to the By-Laws of the Institution.

The Directors shall have the power of proposing By-Laws for the approbation of the Governors.

The Directors shall have the power of making such Regulations as they may think fit respecting any Exhibition of Works of Art at the Gallery of the British Institution.

The Directors shall have the power of disposing of any Works of British Artists which may have been purchased, either by placing them in a public Gallery, or public Hall or Church, in the manner which shall appear to them most conducive to the benefit of the Artists, and best answering the purposes of the Institution, and they shall report any such disposition to the next Annual Meeting of the Governors.

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## IV.—THE ELECTION OF GOVERNORS.

The qualification of a Governor shall not be less than Fifty Guineas.

Every candidate for election as a Governor, must be proposed by a Director at one meeting of Directors, and at the next meeting of the Directors the election may take place.

In case any person, who has paid in his qualification as a Governor, be not elected, he shall have his qualification repaid him, if he require it, any time within two calendar months after he shall have had notice that he is not elected.

## V.—THE ANNUAL AND OTHER MEETINGS.

The Annual Meeting for election of the President, Vice-President, and Directors, and for receiving the Annual Report, shall be held in the month of July.

Any of these offices becoming vacant in the course of the year, may be filled up for the remainder of the year by the Directors.

When, at any election, the votes shall be equal, the Chairman shall have a double or casting vote.

Special Meetings may be called by the President, or in his absence by the Vice-President, at the request of the Committee of Directors, or upon the requisition in writing of thirteen Governors.

The President, or in his absence the Vice-President, or in their absence, one of the Governors present, shall preside at the Annual and other Meetings.

## VI.—THE HONORARY MEMBERS.

Honorary Members may be elected by the Directors, and shall have the privilege of personal admission to the Gallery during the Exhibitions.

The President and Members of the Royal Academy, for the time being, shall have the privilege of personal admission to the Exhibitions.

## VII.—THE ANNUAL AND LIFE SUBSCRIBERS.

Subscribers of Five Guineas a year or upwards, or of Fifty

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Guineas or upwards in one sum, shall have personal admission, and the right of introducing two friends each day to the Exhibitions.

Subscribers of Three Guineas a year, or of Twenty-five Guineas in one sum, shall have personal admission, and the right of introducing one friend each day to the Exhibitions.

VIII.—THE OFFICERS OF THE INSTITUTION.

The Superintendent, Secretary, and Keeper, with the necessary attendants, shall from time to time be appointed, and their duties and salaries fixed by the Directors.

IX.—THE RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURE.

The moneys belonging to the Institution shall be kept in the hands of a Banker appointed by the Directors.

The Accounts of the Institution shall be kept by the Secretary and annually audited by two or more of the Directors. The statement of the receipts and expenditure shall be printed and distributed to the Governors and Subscribers.

All Receipts shall be applicable to the payment of the current Expenses of the Institution in the first instance, and the surplus shall be applied either in Premiums, or in the purchase of Works of Art, or added to the permanent Stock of the Institution, in such proportions as the Directors shall think fit, and they shall annually report what they have done herein to the General Court.

No sale, mortgage, incumbrance, or disposition of any freehold or leasehold property of the Institution, or of any of its permanent stock shall be made, except with the approbation and concurrence of a General Court, summoned with eight days' previous notice, unless it be the sale of a part of their property in the public funds, which sale may be made under the orders of the Directors, whenever it may be necessary for the carrying on the general purposes of the Institution.

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At a Meeting of the Select Committee on the 18th of June, 1805, Lord Viscount Lowther in the Chair, it was Resolved, —That the following address, as a Circular letter, with an enclosure of the By-Laws and List of Subscribers who had entered on

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or before the last meeting (67 in number), shall be sent round with the signatures of the Committee, to such persons as any member of the Select Committee may think proper.

BRITISH INSTITUTION FOR PROMOTING THE FINE ARTS  
IN THE UNITED KINGDOM.

The inclosed is submitted to your consideration by the undersigned, who have been appointed a Select Committee to manage the concerns of the Institution, until a Committee of Directors are elected. Convinced that the pre-eminence which the imitative arts attained in certain distinguished periods of ancient Greece and modern Italy, was produced not by fortuitous circumstances, but by great and splendid patronage, and persuaded that our own countrymen are capable of the same excellence in the Arts, as they have attained in every branch of science and literature, we solicit that they may be encouraged to consider those excellent and immortal examples of the Grecian and Italian Schools, as the objects not merely of imitation but of competition. In a country where native energy is most abundant, we ask that professional taste and talent, and national patronage, be no longer confined to inferior objects; but that our artists may be encouraged to direct their attention to higher and nobler attainments; to paint the mind and passions of man, to depicture his sympathies and affections, and to illustrate the great events which have been recorded in the history of the world.

The Fine Arts are entitled to respect and reward, not simply on account of the innocent and intellectual gratification which they afford, not merely because they cultivate and civilise the human mind. In a country like our own, they essentially and abundantly contribute to the national prosperity and resources. It must be obvious that the present flourishing state of our manufactures and export trade, is greatly owing to the progress of the Fine Arts under HIS MAJESTY'S JUDICIOUS PATRONAGE; and that in hardware, cotton, and porcelain, and in every other article to which the industry and attention of the British artisan has been applied, superior beauty of form, and refined elegance of ornament, have contributed to make our manufactures coveted



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throughout the world, and to introduce them into every country in despite of political warfare and penal prohibition.

This pre-eminence, however, cannot be retained but by the *assiduous cultivation of the Fine Arts*. From those original sources the taste of the country must be cherished and renewed; so as at the same time to produce inexhausted variety, and to preserve classical beauty and chasteness of design. And it is, in this respect, worthy of observation, that if we do not advance, we must recede; and that when we cease to improve, we shall begin to degenerate. These considerations are of increased importance at the present moment, when it appears to be the object of other powers to form great establishments for painting and sculpture, and to extend, by the arts of peace, the influence which they have acquired in war. We feel, however, no apprehension, but that the spirit of the British Artist will be awakened and invigorated, whenever a free and fair scope shall be given to his talents;—whenever he shall be stimulated by the same patronage, as that which raised and rewarded the Italian and Grecian masters;—a patronage, without which, if we refer to historical evidence, we shall find that no high excellence in art has ever been attained in any age or in any country.

Under these impressions we beg leave to address you, and the other protectors of the Fine Arts, on the establishment of the *British Institution*; the principal object whereof is to encourage and reward the talents of the Artists of the United Kingdom, and to open an Exhibition for the sale of their productions. For the attainment of this object we earnestly solicit your assistance and patronage; requesting to be favoured with your directions, in which of the classes of Subscription you will permit your name to be enrolled.

(Signed)      *LOWTHER, Chairman.*  
 ABERCORN.  
 ISAAC CORRY.  
 CHARLES LONG.  
 SIR ABRAHAM HUME.  
 THOMAS HOPE.  
 THOMAS BERNARD.

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Several Subscribers of One Hundred Guineas each were elected Hereditary Governors at a Meeting on the 27th of June, 1805.

At a General Meeting of the Governors, on the 15th July, 1805,

PRESENT:—

The Right Honourable Lord Mulgrave, *in the Chair*.

The Rt. Hon. Charles Long.	John Meheux, Esq.
Thomas Bernard, Esq.	William Morland, Esq.
The Rev. W. H. Carr.	William Smith, Esq.
John Egerton, Esq.	John Symmons, Esq.
R. P. Knight, Esq.	D. P. Watts, Esq.
Samuel Lysons, Esq.	Caleb Whitefoord, Esq.

The Select Committee reported that in pursuance of the authority given them by the General Meeting of the 11th of June, they had agreed to purchase for £.4,500 the Shakspeare Gallery in Pall Mall, held for a term of 62 years from Lady-day 1805, under a rent of £.125 a year, and that in consequence thereof, and of the Resolution of the said General Meeting, the Earl of Dartmouth had, at their request, called this Meeting, in order to receive the Report of the said purchase, and to consider of electing the Committees of Directors and Visitors.

Resolved,—That the said Report be approved.

The Meeting then proceeded to the election of the governing body, viz. the Committee of Directors, selected from among the Governors.

It was Resolved,—That the first Committee of Directors do consist of the following Governors:—

The Earl of Dartmouth, *President*.

*For One Year.*

The Marquis of Abercorn, *Vice-President*.

Lord Northwick. Sir George Beaumont, Bart.

Thomas Bernard, Esq.

*For Two Years.*

The Marquis of Stafford, *Vice-President*.

The Rt. Hon. Isaac Corry, M.P. Sir Abraham Hume, Bart.

Thomas Hope, Esq.