

RA

Royal Academy of Arts

Candidate Pack for
Commercial Director



Burlington House

Welcome

Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in joining the Royal Academy of Arts as our Commercial Director. This is a newly shaped role on our senior leadership team, and a pivotal moment for the Academy as we seek to drive significant, sustainable growth, delivered in innovative ways to secure the next chapter of our history.

Having recently joined the RA myself, I am energised and inspired by the opportunity to lead this remarkable and much-loved institution alongside a brand new talented and entrepreneurial senior leadership team. The RA is unique: artist-led, independent, and steeped in a 250-year tradition of excellence in the creation, display, and understanding of art and architecture. Yet we are also forward-looking, seeking to forge new strategic partnerships, expand our audience reach, deepen engagement with diverse new visitors, and maximise the impact of our extraordinary programmes, exhibitions, collections and world class estate.

We have close relationships with some of the most important artists, philanthropists, art collectors, business people and influencers in the world. I will be building a team who will be superb delivery partners working the wealth of talent and resources we have at our disposal. This is a rare opportunity to be part of leading our transformation to further our world-class reputation artistically and commercially.

We will make the RA a compelling and inspiring social hub in the heart of Mayfair that uses the entirety of our superb estate in inventive artistic and commercially successful ways. I will be creating a team of people who thrive on close and effective collaboration, a shared vision, and have the commercial acumen, drive and ambition to make a significant and positive impact in their work.

The Commercial Director will play a central role in this mission. You will be responsible for shaping and delivering a comprehensive commercial strategy that delivers sustainable profit, ensuring that all revenue-generating activities align with and strengthen the RA's brand positioning. This role will oversee all income generating streams across retail, art sales, image licensing, partnerships, publishing, events, and philanthropy.

We are looking for a proven leader with strategic vision, commercial acumen and creativity, someone who can translate complex organisational goals into inspiring and clearly measurable initiatives. The ideal candidate will combine a deep understanding of consumer-facing brands with the ability to innovate in complex environments, will be comfortable making commercial decisions, but equally attuned to the subtleties of culture, brand, and mission. Above all, regardless of what sector you are in now, you will be a passionate advocate for the arts who can amplify the RA's presence, relevance, and reputation globally.

This is an extraordinary opportunity to help shape the Academy's future and to transform commercial strategy at a world-class cultural institution. As the new Chief Executive, I am excited to build a leadership team that will define the RA's identity for the coming decades, and I very much look forward to welcoming the successful candidate onto this unique journey.

Best wishes,

Simon Wallis, Secretary & Chief Executive OBE

About us

The Royal Academy of Arts (RA) is one of the UK's most significant and distinctive cultural institutions. Founded in 1768 by a group of artists and architects with the support of King George III, it was established to promote the creation, enjoyment, and appreciation of the visual arts through exhibitions, education, and debate. For over 250 years, the RA has remained true to that purpose, while continually evolving to meet the needs of artists, students, and the public.

At the heart of the RA is its unique artist-led model. The organisation is governed by the Royal Academicians, painters, sculptors, architects, printmakers, and other artists who are elected by their peers. This ensures that practicing artists shape the RA's direction, exhibitions, and education programmes.

This model makes the Academy different from most museums or galleries: it is not only a place for displaying art, but a living institution where art is created, debated, and advanced.

Throughout its history, the RA has stood for the principle that art and architecture matter to society. It believes that artists' voices are vital in shaping cultural and civic life, and that art should be accessible to all.

The RA's values are expressed through:

- Artistic excellence: maintaining world-class standards across exhibitions, collections, and teaching.
- Equity, diversity, and inclusion: removing barriers to access, whether financial, cultural, or physical.
- Environmental responsibility: adapting operations to contribute to a sustainable future.
- Public engagement: fostering dialogue and participation, ensuring that art enriches lives across communities



Grayson Perry

What we do

Exhibitions and Public Engagement

The RA is renowned for its ambitious and wide-ranging exhibitions programme. These span classical and historic art through to contemporary practice, architecture, photography, and new media. Each year the RA attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors to exhibitions that are often landmark cultural events.

The best-known of these is the Summer Exhibition, the world's largest open-submission art show, which has taken place every year since 1769. Bringing together works by leading artists, emerging practitioners, and enthusiastic amateurs alike, the Summer Exhibition remains a defining feature of the RA's public identity and a celebration of artistic diversity.

Beyond exhibitions, the RA offers an extensive public programme of lectures, debates, family activities, and learning opportunities. These are designed to open up the world of art and architecture to the broadest possible audience, fostering dialogue and understanding, and encouraging cross-generational creativity.

RA Schools

Education is at the core of the RA's mission, exemplified by the internationally acclaimed Royal Academy Schools, the UK's longest-established art school. The RA Schools offers a full-time, three-year postgraduate programme in fine art that is unique in being free of tuition fees. Each year between 10 and 17 students are admitted, benefiting from dedicated studio space, access to specialist facilities, a high tutor-to-student ratio, and bursary support to help cover living and material costs.

The Schools attract applicants from across the UK and around the world, and their alumni have included some of the most influential artists of the past two centuries. By removing financial barriers, the RA Schools ensures that talent, not means, determines access to one of the most rigorous and supportive postgraduate art programmes available anywhere.

Collections, Heritage and Spaces

The RA's collection has grown since its foundation, with each newly elected Royal Academician donating a work to the Academy. Today this collection includes over 46,000 works, from historic masterpieces to contemporary pieces, and serves as a vital cultural resource.

The RA's home at Burlington House and 6 Burlington Gardens has recently undergone major redevelopment, including the creation of new galleries, lecture theatres, and public spaces, all linked by the Weston Bridge. These improvements have enabled the RA to display more of its collection, improve accessibility, and provide enhanced spaces for learning and debate.

Independence and Funding

Unlike many national cultural institutions, the RA is an independent charity. It receives no regular government funding and relies instead on a mixed economy of income streams: ticket sales, commercial activities, membership schemes such as the Friends and Patrons of the RA, donations, sponsorship, and investment income. This independence is a strength, preserving the RA's artistic freedom, but it also brings financial challenges.

The RA has faced significant challenges in recent years, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic. Visitor numbers have recovered slowly, with around 607,000 in 2023/24 compared to 846,000 in 2018/19. Rising costs, including energy and staffing, have added pressure, with income at £38m and expenditure at £46m in 2023/24.

However, early results for 2024/25 are encouraging: exhibition attendance was 1% above budget, (driven by a strong Summer Exhibition) overall revenue exceeded targets and, as a result of strong cost management, costs came in under budget.

To learn more about our current finances, please [click here](#).

And to view our ongoing strategy, please [click here](#).

Role description

Job title: Commercial Director

Reports to: Secretary & Chief Executive

Role purpose:

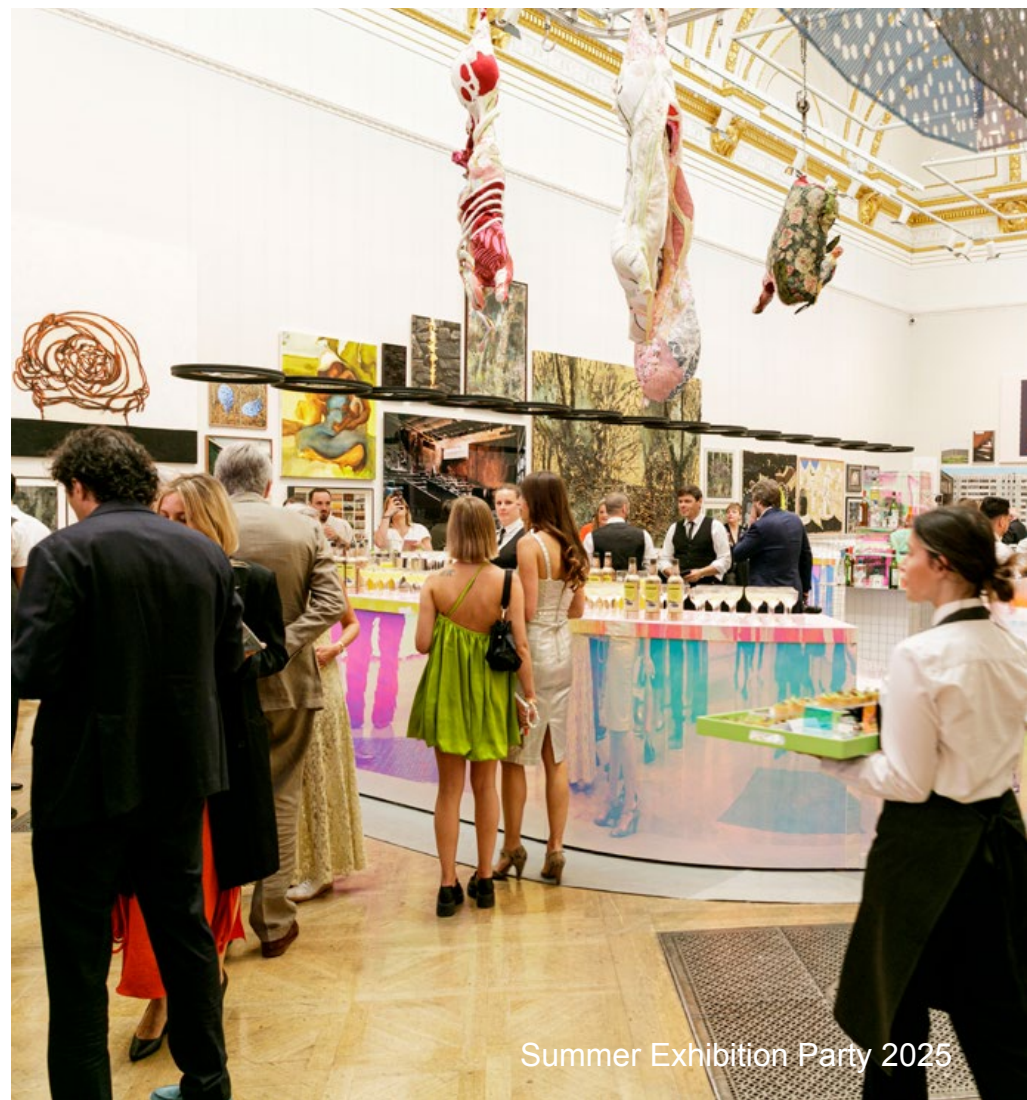
The Royal Academy of Arts stands at a pivotal moment in its history. This is a time of renewal, ambition, and huge possibility. We are seeking an outstanding Commercial Director to join us at this exciting turnaround point, where bold ideas and visionary leadership will shape the Academy's future.

This is a rare opportunity for an ambitious leader to drive meaningful change, unlock new potential, and leave a lasting legacy within one of the world's most celebrated cultural institutions. As a high-impact member of our leadership team, you will spearhead innovative commercial growth, create and deliver significant profitable growth, forge and manage strategic partnerships, and ensure the RA's long-term financial sustainability.

This role oversees a diverse commercial portfolio-including: retail; artist collaborations; art sales; collection and RA image licensing; publishing; events and venue hire; philanthropy; catering and corporate partnerships. You will lead on commercially optimising our superb Mayfair site to significantly grow income while maintaining brand authenticity and alignment with the RA's charitable mission.

As a member of the Senior Leadership Team, reporting to the Secretary & Chief Executive, you will work within the agreed strategic and brand framework focusing on exceptional and innovative execution and commercial optimisation. You will lead 60 staff and a team of highly skilled Department Heads to consistently deliver ambitious, but realistic annual targets through proven commercial acumen and embracing the opportunities presented by new technology.

Working in close creative partnership with the Secretary and Chief Executive, and senior management colleagues comprising the Chief Operating Officer, the Artistic Director, and Director of Brand & Audiences to deliver an ambitious growth plan whilst maintaining the integrity of the institution and elevating the stature and presence of the RA internationally.



Summer Exhibition Party 2025

Main responsibilities

Leading Commercial Transformation

- Devise, develop and deliver a comprehensive commercial strategy that delivers sustainable profit, ensuring that all revenue-generating activities align with and strengthen the RA's brand positioning
- Develop and implement new income generating streams across membership, retail, art sales, image licensing, partnerships, publishing, events, and philanthropy
- Encourage the innovative use of new technologies to leverage data, drive profitability and enhance the RA brand
- Significantly expand the RA's venue hire business by forging new partnerships and capitalising on the unique appeal of the RA's superb Grade II* listed estate
- Manage direct-to-consumer retail and e-commerce offerings and evolve the artist-led product strategy (art sales, publishing, licensing etc.) into a broader and creatively commercial initiative
- Explore opportunities for transforming and improving our E-commerce offer
- Support and work with the Head of Exhibitions Management and Summer Exhibitions Team on the Summer Exhibition commercial strategy and art sales plan.
- Maximise opportunities throughout the visitor experience including retail, publishing, hospitality and membership to enhance both profitability and customer experience

Inspiring Excellence in People and Performance

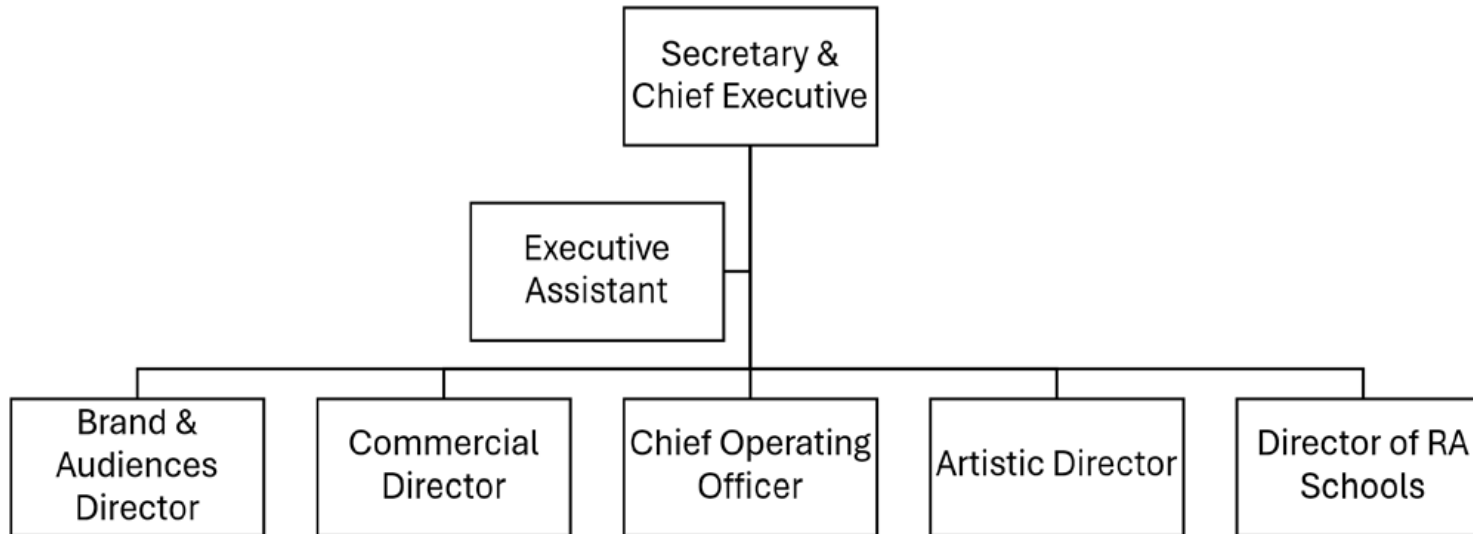
- Support the COO in developing and managing budgeting processes, forecasting, and financial planning for all commercial and fundraising activities
- Identify and mitigate commercial risks, ensuring compliance with all legal, regulatory, and ethical standards
- Provide inspiring leadership and clear direction, ensuring clarity of roles and full accountability.
- Encourage results-driven, positive and energised people leadership, able to affect change and buy-in
- Oversee planning and execution of commercial activities, ensuring alignment with brand and organisational priorities
- Develop a set of clear KPI's to monitor commercial activity and drive and embed them through the organisation
- Foster a high-performance, innovative cross-team culture aligned with our brand
- Guide the team in the use of new technologies to improve team performance and efficiency, and encourage team development in this area

Championing Collaboration and Influence

- Collaborate with senior leadership to align commercial strategy with brand and audience strategy, artistic programming and institutional charitable objectives and opportunities
- Work with senior management and governance bodies to support the RA's mission and sustainability
- Build and maintain strong relationships with both commercial partners and internal stakeholders. Model cross-department collaboration, working with Commercial colleagues and the RA more widely to connect opportunities across touchpoints
- Represent the RA at events and forums to enhance reputation, build effective networks, and secure support and investment for commercial and fundraising objectives

Organisation structure

Senior Leadership Team



Person specification

Knowledge and Experience

- Impressive track record of leading commercial strategy at a senior level within highly brand-conscious and consumer-facing organisations.
- Proven track record of delivering profitable growth in complex environments with multiple stakeholder requirements.
- Demonstrable success in improving margins and boosting engagement in challenging market environments.
- Experience navigating commercial objectives and market positioning while maintaining brand authenticity and organisational mission.
- Strong financial acumen, with proficiency in analysing financial data to make informed, data-driven commercial decisions.
- Experienced leader, skilled at managing high-performing teams and driving organisational change.
- Understanding of subscription-based businesses.

Skills and Abilities

- Strong commercial and entrepreneurial drive:
- the vision and flair to develop an established and prestigious proposition into a competitive and profitable omnichannel sector leader.
- Outstanding stakeholder engagement and communication skills, with the ability to influence and inspire senior managers, boards, artists, sponsors, and diverse audiences.
- Excellent written and verbal communication and presentation skills.
- Strong digital skills, with an openness to commercial opportunities presented by new technology and AI.
- Highly developed negotiation and influencing skills, with the ability to secure advantageous outcomes for the organisation.
- Capacity to respond to changing market conditions and drive innovation in commercial strategies and business models.
- Proven track record in risk management to safeguard brand reputation.
- Skilled in leading organisational transformation, embedding positive change in complex environments.

Personal Qualities

- Passion for the arts and culture, with sensitivity to the Academy's charitable mission as an artist-led institution.
- Entrepreneurial mindset with creativity, innovation, and resilience.
- Future-focused, with curiosity about emerging cultural, digital, and commercial trends.
- Collegiate, values-driven with high EQ.
- Committed to equality, diversity, and inclusion
- Integrity, discretion, and a natural ability to build trust across diverse internal and external stakeholders.

Terms of appointment

Salary

Up to £120,000

Location

Burlington House, London

Pension

Enhanced Pension Scheme - Employee pays 3%, 4%, 5% or 6% and receives employer contribution of 5%, 6%, 7% or 10% accordingly

Annual leave

25 days annual leave, plus bank holidays and 3 additional days leave at Christmas



Lecture Theatre

Additional benefits

Financial

- Season Ticket Loans
- Give as You Earn Scheme
- Staff Discounts in Café and Shop on site at the RA
- Reciprocal Agreements with other galleries
- Enhanced Maternity, Paternity and Shared Parental Leave benefit
- Professional Qualification Renewal Costs Covered
- Benefits Hub – online discounts on a range of travel, retailers & experiences

Family

- Life Insurance 3x salary
- Special Leave for last minute emergencies
- Agile Working Policy
- Enhanced Maternity, Paternity and Shared Parental Leave benefit
- Enhanced shared parental leave benefit
- Compassionate Leave
- Free entry for friends and family into RA exhibitions

Health & Wellbeing

- Virtual Private GP and Second Medical Opinion
- Service
- Taxis home for anyone finishing after 11pm
- £50 voucher towards glasses for VDU users
- Enhanced Holiday – 25 days
- 3 additional days leave at Christmas for all staff
- Cycle to Work Scheme
- EAP – 24/7 advice line, online portal and face to face counselling sessions
- Volunteering opportunities
- Agile Working Policy
- Mental Health First Aiders
- Meditation Drop in Sessions

Cultural, Social & Developmental

- Free access into all RA exhibitions
- Curator led talks
- Other talks & events for staff
- RA Choir
- RA Netball Club
- LGBTQ+ staff network
- RA Staff Council
- Thirsty Thursday Social
- RA Breakfasts
- Annual RA Party – the phenomenal social event of the year!
- Leadership Training
- Basic Skills Courses
- Race Equity & Inclusion Training
- Access to the Apprentice Levy and other funding for development courses

How to apply

We hope you will consider making an application. To make an application, please go to <https://starfishsearch.com/jobs/raa-com-dir> and click on the apply now button, with the following prepared:

- Your CV (no more than three sides).
- A supporting statement (no more than two sides) that sets out why you think this role is the right move for you and how you meet the knowledge and experience criteria.

We would also be grateful if you would complete the Equality and Diversity monitoring form on the online application process. This form is for monitoring purposes only and is not treated as part of your application.

Closing date: Monday 24th November 10am

Preliminary interviews: w/c 1st and w/c 8th December 2025

Final Panel interviews: Mid December/Early January

