



Royal Academy of Arts
Press Release

**SIMON WALLIS APPOINTED AS NEW SECRETARY AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF THE
ROYAL ACADEMY OF ARTS**

The Royal Academy of Arts announced today that Simon Wallis has been appointed as the new Secretary and Chief Executive of the Royal Academy of Arts. He replaces Axel Rüger, who stepped down from the role in October 2024. Simon Wallis is currently the Director of The Hepworth Wakefield.

Wallis has over 30 years' experience in the art world. In his earlier career, he held curatorial positions at Kettle's Yard, Cambridge and Tate Liverpool. He was the Director of Chisenhale Gallery, London before being appointed as founding Director of The Hepworth Wakefield in 2008.

The appointment has been approved by the Royal Academy's Council, General Assembly and His Majesty The King.

He will start his new role at the Royal Academy in September 2025.

Simon Wallis said: "The Royal Academy of Arts is at a pivotal moment of development and positive change. I am excited by the opportunity to foster further inspirational creativity, entrepreneurial spirit and reach new audiences for what is a unique and deeply valued institution. The RA is the central London home for artists, art and art lovers, generating powerful experiences and innovative teaching about art in a rapidly changing society. As the UK's oldest and foremost artist-led organisation, the extraordinary talent and vision of the Royal Academicians, and their team, leads the creative conversation on a national and international stage. A vital part of this are the exceptional students at the RA Schools who bring their creative energy and enquiring ambition to the organisation. I am looking forward to working closely with the Royal Academicians and staff and I am delighted to be able to contribute to furthering the RA's essential charitable work where all our imaginations are nurtured, developed and expanded at a time when we need it most."

Rebecca Salter, President of the Royal Academy of Arts, said: "I am delighted that Simon will be joining us as the Royal Academy's Secretary and Chief Executive. As Director of The Hepworth Wakefield for the past 17 years, he brings a wealth of experience together with vision and energy. I am looking forward to working with him as we continue to shape the Royal Academy for the twenty-first century."

Notes to Editors:

Simon Wallis OBE Biography

Simon Wallis was appointed in 2008 as the founding Director of The Hepworth Wakefield, one of the UK's most acclaimed public art galleries. Arriving at a brownfield site as the first employee he

oversaw the delivery and opening of the £35 million pound David Chipperfield designed building in 2011. He created and built the team, initiated and devised an independent charitable trust and programme, and was awarded an OBE for services to the visual arts in 2015.

At The Hepworth he led a team who won the Art Fund Museum of the Year; grew the art collection by over £30 million through philanthropy; devised a consistently critically acclaimed exhibitions and learning programme; delivered a beautiful Tom Stuart-Smith designed garden and instigated the culture-led regeneration of Wakefield waterfront through popular fairs, markets and events for creatives.

He was previously Director of Chisenhale Gallery, London; Senior Exhibitions Organiser at the ICA, London; Curator at Tate Liverpool; and Curator at Kettle's Yard, University of Cambridge.

Wallis studied Fine Art at Chelsea School of Art, and subsequently at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, USA and gained an MA in Art Gallery and Museum Studies at the University of Manchester.

Notes to Editors:

Images

For images, please contact the RA Press Office: press.office@royalacademy.org.uk

About the Royal Academy of Arts

The Royal Academy of Arts was founded by King George III in 1768. It has a unique position in being an independent, privately funded institution led by eminent artists and architects whose purpose is to be a clear, strong voice for art and artists. Its public programme promotes the creation, enjoyment and appreciation of the visual arts through exhibitions, education and debate.

The Royal Academy is an independent charity. It does not receive revenue funding from the government so is reliant upon the support of its visitors, donors, sponsors, patrons and loyal Friends.

For public information, please print: 020 7300 8090 or www.royalacademy.org.uk

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