



04

CULTURE &
COMMERCE:
THE ROYAL ACADEMY
& MAYFAIR

BY CHARLES LANDRY



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COMEDIA

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Amusing graffiti at an entrance to Mayfair.

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Art spills into the Royal Academy's courtyard.

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PREFACE

... at their best
and working with
integrity culture
and commerce
can be creative
partners.

Culture and commerce co-exist in creative tension. Their values and aims can be sharply opposed. There is a need to find the fragile balance. This is true for culture in both the big sense, such as our wish to remain true to ourselves, and the narrower sense of expression through the arts. The desire for artistic integrity can conflict with the exigencies of the market. Artists are driven, mostly, to express their voice unimpeded by calculation or motives of gain. Being heard and recognition instead are key. Yet they know they need to survive. So inevitably they are in touch with audiences, agents and markets. Commerce, by contrast, is fascinated by the arts world and the associated creative industries, alluringly capable of adding value to the experience of products and services. At its best this synergy works well in helping make great fashion, design, crafted products, music, and so on, as well as in giving our surroundings an imaginative twist. Crucially, too art can be bought and sold, so it has both aesthetic and commercial value.

Yet the arts have further powerful impact: they help create urban buzz and vitality. They give distinctiveness and identity to place, as space becomes a place when it is imbued with meaning and significance. They help make areas more interesting and desirable, perhaps uplifting downtrodden neighbourhoods or giving wealthier places a more compelling attractiveness. These processes can create tension as areas gentrify and become more expensive often pushing out those very creative forces that gave the place its powerful resonance. The art community often has to move away, gaining little for what it has achieved and usually the real estate industry benefitting most.

This is very visible in urban hotspots, which are generally places in transformation and change. Think here of Tribeca or SoHo and more recently the Meatpacking District in New York, Paris and the Marais, and Berlin Mitte. It is happening everywhere, affecting cities of the first league and smaller places too. Think here of Barcelona and the Raval area; Zurich West and the zone



High quality public realm, in front of the Connaught Hotel.

... art is
changing the
urban landscape
- at times
dramatically.

around the Löwenbrau complex; Hamburg's Hafenstadt; Miami's Wynwood district or Melbourne's Fitzroy quarter; as well as places like Palermo in Buenos Aires; Samcheong-dong and Garosu-gil in Seoul or even Georgetown in Penang. It is a global phenomenon and perhaps the key dilemma of urban development. This poses questions for the artistic communities: should they stand apart or become engaged.

This book 'Culture & Commerce', has relevance to cities world-wide but explores these dynamics in a specific place, Mayfair in London, and examines its relationship to an important cultural institution, the Royal Academy. This extended study looks at ambiguities and paradoxes when culture and commerce meet and seeks to show how one can navigate its challenges and opportunities.

PRÉCIS

London like all
major cities needs
to be alert and
stay on the move
to maintain its
global reputation.

London cannot rest on its laurels. Like all cities it is facing intensified competition to maintain its magnetism and to stay on the global radar screen. The heart of London and its engine room is the West End and Mayfair. This is why Westminster Council set up a Commission to provide a new vision for these important districts.

Mayfair is in transformation. Much of it is positive, but threats lurk on the horizon. Mayfair's reputation was built on its subtle creative ecology based around residential diversity and its retail offering in the arts and traditional crafts. This is in jeopardy and in danger of being supplanted by a predominance of luxury fashion brands and high-end apartments for the rootless wealthiest, so threatening Mayfair's sense of place and civic fabric. The last thing Mayfair needs is to become like an airport terminal with its streets full of well-known brands.

The debate on the future of Cork Street is helpful. It was triggered by redevelopment proposals, which could mean some art dealers need to move, although the developer's plans state that art galleries should remain the major ground floor tenants rather than fashion stores. The discussion mirrors the tricky issues that globalization poses to these desirable urban quarters the world over and what happens to them when big money moves in. It can squeeze out the longer-term occupants who made Mayfair what it is. In time the area may risk being only for the ultra-rich and ritzy. We are at a significant moment. In becoming London's luxury quarter for the global rich and global brands, much of Mayfair's Britishness has already eroded and some people fear that its distinctiveness is suffering. They fear a predominance of shopping and the ostentatious display of wealth. They worry that as Mayfair develops and prices rise the tender and fragile globally significant ecosystem of art galleries, arts expertise and supply industries like framers and tailors, may tip into a downward spiral. The current Cork Street crisis may be an opportunity in disguise. It highlights the possible conflict between the power of global fashion brands and the relative weakness of art galleries. It raises important issues and requires decisions to be made. Can

and should Westminster help protect commercial galleries and the cluster of high level expertise? Can this part of Mayfair be designated as an arts district through Special Policy Area (SPA) status like Savile Row or Harley Street? Or should everything just be left to the market?

Cork Street is a hop and a skip away from the Royal Academy and its plans can act as a catalyst to rethink this part of Mayfair. Burlington Gardens could become pedestrianized along with Cork Street, in order to reinforce its character as an art district. There are ways too for the Academy to spread its tentacles along adjacent streets, for example using arts events along Cork Street or exhibiting in public spaces (such as the annual PAD exhibition in Berkeley Square).

Equally the Academy's ambitious plans have led to fruitful internal discussions, such as how it can link to this evolving globalized Mayfair that some say is 'ripping the soul from the original', while others say it is creating a stimulating cosmopolitanism. Interesting dilemmas are exposed, such as how the Academy can become less insular and more attractive to young people but at the same time involve itself with the rootless and restless global superrich.

Clearly the Royal Academy can play a significant role in how Mayfair unfolds. The fortunes of the Academy and Mayfair have been intertwined since it arrived there nearly 150 years ago. The wealth of its residents and its centrality in the city attracted both the worlds of the arts and of luxury goods. The triangle between art, luxury and fashion has always been intense, with artists often seen as the vanguard from which later more commercial trends evolve, a nexus currently reaching new heights. The link between artist Yayoi Kusama in helping to create Louis Vuitton's 2012 collection is its recent incarnation displayed in its shops across the globe.

The Academy now has a rare opportunity to change the face and feeling of Mayfair as its plans to incorporate and link 6 Burlington Gardens to its Piccadilly site unfold and come to fruition by 2018. By then it will have a multi-faceted cultural campus of unusual proportions and space for varied artistic experiences. It can exert a civilizing influence on Mayfair by showing how a focus on non-commoditized aesthetics, art and creativity enriches the overall experience - we might (a bit clumsily perhaps) define this as 'RA-ness'.

The fortunes of
the Academy
and Mayfair are
intertwined.



*Two major facets of
Mayfair's reputation -
art and tailoring.*

The Academy understands that the values and attributes that dominate in corporate life are almost diametrically opposed to the values promoted by artistic creativity. The Academy arguably could bridge these two worlds. This bold claim however will only have credibility if the Academy connects positively and critically to the different Mayfair worlds - not only the arts, but also the hedge funds, the global brands represented in retailing and the itinerant rich. This requires collaboration and inventiveness and the results may be helpfully unexpected. The Academy can be the destination and the gathering place for these and even bigger discussions; it can be the place of respite and of much more.

In conclusion, the Royal Academy is important for Mayfair's ecology, but it needs to maintain its artistic integrity and separateness whilst being open to partnership. If its current plans are imaginatively conceived and implemented, this will be hugely beneficial both for London and its role as a global city and for the Academy itself. These developments will help to make the case to designate the immediate neighbourhood as a Special Policy Area and to semi-pedestrianize Burlington Gardens and Cork Street.



LONDON IN ITS GLOBAL SETTING

London is changing and with it the prospects for the West End and Mayfair. All cities are facing intensified competition to maintain their magnetism and to stay on the global radar screen - none more so than global hubs of the first league like London.

These hubs are strategic places and communications nodal points which have a direct effect and influence on world affairs economically, culturally and politically, where global agendas are created, facilitated and enacted. London is one of a very few. These places are cosmopolitan, diverse yet distinctive, richly layered, intense. Each of these nerve centres and hotbeds has a series of sub-centres that give the city its varied character - Mayfair plays a vital part in the pattern of London.

London's resonance and allure has strengthened even as Britain's overall economic and political power and importance has weakened. Its position in the time zones, its powerful past, its multi-layered cultural offer and the resulting dominance of English as a global language are significant reasons, as are its openness, transparency, business friendliness, and relative safety. These help anchor its cultural position and its status as a worldwide transaction point, reinforcing its urbane, sophisticated, yet also edgy atmosphere, which in a virtuous cycle brings new blood, ideas and resources to the city.

Yet it cannot rest on its cultural laurels; others are snapping at its heels, including established world cities like New York and Paris. There are the re-emerging ambitious old hands like Berlin and Madrid or further afield upstarts like Hong Kong, Shanghai and Beijing - these latter in particular since cultural power follows economic power. Some smaller but nonetheless important locations like Copenhagen, Amsterdam and Toronto are increasing their impact, and collectively can affect London's position especially in niches such as art, music or design. Places like Milan or Miami already have a position in some of these.

Urban managers of places like Westminster, a local council at the core of a global city, have a thankless task, pushed and pulled

*Regent Street
celebrating the
2012 Olympics.
This reinforced
London's global
position.*

by the exigencies of needing to operate on different scales – the global, the national, the regional and local. To be globally competitive, London needs to perform as a city-region stretching across Oxford and Cambridge, Brighton, and even towards Bristol. Yet it needs also at a Westminster level to provide and balance services between global and local needs (for example, residents wanting less noise and to keep the fine grained qualities of place, with global brand stores, like Prada or Louis Vuitton, seeking to provide an exceptional experience that might stretch planning regulations).

The West End, with Mayfair at its core as the luxury quarter, is one of the world's most significant urban destinations. Here the arts, entertainment (especially theatre) and finance worlds meet within an exceptional retail environment offering great gastronomy, renowned hotels, as well as top cultural and learning institutions. What's more, royalty and political power are nearby. It is this overall mix, variety and choice that is so powerful and compelling – especially the high levels of proximity and exchange within and between clusters of activity, feeding off and supporting each other.

These dynamics and expectations put traditional local governance under pressure. There are insufficient resources and even capacity at a local level – or, given this period of austerity, at the national level – to meet globally competitive aspirations. What others are doing in raising the bar on infrastructure and urban design is telling: New York's new High Line, Hong Kong's West Kowloon Development, Sydney's rethink of Darling Harbour and Madrid's Calle 30, which is undergrounding vast stretches of road to create new urban parks and public spaces.

Therefore in 2012 the West End Commission was set up by Westminster Council. Previously the Council had welcomed the setting up of two business improvement districts (BIDs) to help draw resources together and provide urban services. The New West End Company covers Bond Street, Oxford Street and Regent Street and 12 neighbouring streets, and The Heart of London Business Alliance represents 500 businesses in the Piccadilly, St James's, Leicester Square and Piccadilly Circus areas. Mayfair is partly covered by these BIDs.

The West End,
with Mayfair
at its core,
is one of the
world's most
significant urban
destinations.



*Paris: The Kulturzentrum
a refurbished old concrete
structure now housing a
major fashion school.*

The lead up to the 2012 Olympic Games showed what single minded focus and co-operation can achieve, exemplified by the redevelopment of Leicester Square, enhancements to Trafalgar Square, and the Piccadilly two-way traffic improvements. Businesses are enjoying a more active role in West End management through the successful BIDs. This overall context partly explains the sense of urgency felt about the Mayfair offer and how it is experienced. Simply put, the connections between a vibrant culture, interesting commerce and retailing and urban success are significant and deep.

Decision-makers need to appreciate more fully how urban dynamics work. It is essential to consider how the software of the city (its activity base and operating system), mesh, interconnect and reinforce the relevance and power of its hardware – the physical fabric.

... having a
goal like the
Olympics 2012
shows what
London can do.



MAYFAIR: INSIDE & OUT

Setting the scene

The challenges posed to the galleries of Cork Street from two new high-end residential and retail developments encapsulate crisply the dilemmas facing Mayfair. Will Mayfair's delicate creative balance, woven around residential diversity, together with the arts, and traditional craft-based retailing be maintained? The debate on the future of Cork Street mirrors the tricky issues globalization poses to desirable urban quarters like Mayfair, with original occupants supplanted by luxury fashion brands or by the few wealthiest, globalized galleries from New York who can pay the highest rents, with the risk of becoming too consistently oligarchic, rich and ritzy. What then would be left of interest? That which makes places stimulating, of value and worth are not necessarily those where the logic of profit maximizing takes hold, indeed they are rarely the most exciting (most usually bland in an expensive or ostentatious way and focused on shopping). Places that engross and grip you provide a multi-layered experience; they balance the edgy with the safe; the tranquil and calm with the noisy and brash; the affordable with the out of reach. If the variety of Mayfair declines, its reputation goes with it.

But, perhaps there is an opportunity in the threat. It sharply focuses the question to Westminster Council, which it would have to answer in any case: what is the role and future of Mayfair in relation to the West End and to London as a whole, and indeed in terms of London's role in the world? Mayfair needs to maintain diversity with art at its heart if it is to remain a global arts hub and thereby reinforce its seductiveness. A danger is that art - especially less commercial more edgy art - will move elsewhere, to Berlin or back to Shoreditch.

Westminster has the policy tools and has already used them elsewhere. It could designate the area around Cork Street as a Special Policy Area (SPA) as it has done for: Harley Street, to protect its medical clinics; Savile Row, to protect bespoke tailoring; Paddington Waterside, to protect its character and activities; and the Creative Industries Special Policy regime. These provide a

Can Mayfair's delicate balance be maintained or will original occupants be supplanted by luxury brands or the few wealthiest?

Mayfair at its most traditional: James Purdey the gun and rifle makers.

useful framework for development, offer more specific safeguards than the general plan, and are often welcomed, even by developers.

Mayfair & its urbanity

Mayfair has become synonymous with wealth. That is why it is the most expensive square on the Monopoly board. Mayfair has been the location of choice for the influential and affluent since its origins 300 years ago. Nonetheless its social composition, human ecology and the sources of its wealth have changed over time and created a real sense of style, verve and urbanity. But, with the exception of some streets, the Mayfair images in our mind of the outward display of opulence do not chime with reality. Generally, Mayfair feels restrained and contained, a touch subdued, solid and ordered. Less flight of fancy and more held back and self-controlled, if not secretive. Outward appearances obscure the insides, where often no expense has been spared for good taste and art (or even the garish), or to celebrate the high life, or to bear the harsh loneliness that commonly accompanies great wealth.

Yet changes are afoot as Mayfair anchors its position as London's global luxury quarter. The evidence is especially in its main shopping streets, where extravagant displays and spectacles spill out through storefronts and façades. Nearly 70% of the world's top luxury brands are now present in Mayfair and the rest are looking for premises, increasingly in short supply. The key ones missing, like Valentino, Chloe or Cavalli, can be counted on one hand, but they are already in London and currently clustered in Sloane Street.

Inevitably this is squeezing out some very interesting older British enterprises. This is not a question of nostalgia but distinctiveness. Think how Bond Street, now the most expensive street in Europe, has changed with new flagship stores such as Chanel and Oscar De la Renta on the way. It is hard to conceive that barely 25 years ago Bond Street was in crisis. Think of Mount Street, an area traditionally full of antique shops and galleries, now transforming into a destination for luxury brands like Loewe or Christian Louboutin. Here, recently a four-bedroom apartment sold for £13 million, the most expensive in Britain. Some roads like Duke Street or North Audley Street have maintained their more homely, domestic feel, and certain smaller streets remain enticingly pleasurable, like Albemarle, Dover and Burlington Gardens, or the more intimate side streets such as South Molton Street or Savile Row. The newer urban oases like Avery Row or Heddon Street can be delightful, as are the older arcades. Shepherd's Market's village feel has improved of late. Overall there is a vibrancy trying to burst out.

Mayfair's squares, though grand, look somewhat lifeless for differing reasons. Coming in from Regent Street, Hanover Square opens out and then falls away sharply into St Georges Street, and there is an overweening sense of cars and traffic. Grosvenor Square stands there magisterially without exuding a sense that you can be part of it. The gated and guarded American Embassy does not help, but significantly it is moving out to Nine



Mount Street Square: A hidden gem of Mayfair.

Elms in 2017 and so is an opportunity for Westminster to consider how the square and its side streets can develop. Finally there is Berkeley Square. It has some rough edges and is architecturally messed up and needs some clever urban design to recreate coherence as it falls away on its lower corners at Charles Street on the west and Bruton Lane and Berkeley Street on the east. Yet importantly it is animated through temporary art works and fairs such as LAPADA's Art & Antiques Fair and the Pavilion of Art & Design (PAD).

It is difficult to feel the soul in the residential areas of Mayfair. Too much is hidden behind shuttered doors and windows, where immense wealth is gathered. There is little if no street life and practically nowhere to shop for daily essentials. All of Mayfair's boundaries are interestingly different, with each side flanked by British icons: Selfridges, Fortnum & Mason, Liberty, and Hyde Park. Yet, Park Lane has lost its allure, a busy thoroughfare with a mix of the distinguished and the ugly. Oxford Street is overwhelmed by people and red buses, with a messy mix of the cheap and the good, amongst interesting department stores. Piccadilly, though grand, does not feel like the boulevard it should be. Perhaps it is the lack of trees or because so much that is good is inverted into courtyards, arcades and setbacks. Only Regent Street is truly a gem, one of the world's best streets, dramatically improved through careful planning by Crown Estates, one of the major landowners. Even this is changing as flagship stores like Superdry, Hollister, Nespresso and Apple have altered the spirit of the street, appealing more to a younger audience. Of course, the newly refurbished Burberry store reminds us how tradition can be reinvented. There is a real focus of energy too coming in from Regent Street as Vigo Street squeezes out into Burlington Gardens and the Royal Academy.



MAYFAIR: PAST & FUTURE

Initially, 300 years ago, Mayfair and neighbouring St. James's both enticed the aristocrats, helped by their proximity to the palace and political power. These in turn stimulated the high quality services, which became renowned for luxury and craft-based products including jewellery, clothing, shoes, hunting equipment, home decoration and furnishings, accessories and luggage.

A few of the original names remain like Asprey, Henry Poole, Gieves and Hawkes, and Penhaligon's, but now they are mostly owned by foreign interests.

The physical structure of Mayfair still betrays its origins. Behind the distinguished buildings on the main streets and squares are the alleyways and courtyards for tradespeople and supply services, along with small shops and a declining number of pubs (these are being taken over by boutique financial services companies or galleries).

Over time the aristocratic fabric waned, its presence diminished as new wealth moved in. An entrepreneurial class of traders, merchants and successful business people supplanted them. Yet these newcomers happily cross-fertilized with the aristocrats who were glad to see their offspring marry the nouveau-riche who in turn wished to emulate some aristocratic tastes and attributes. The first noticeable influx of foreigners was the Americans near to their Embassy, and then from the 1970s onwards came oil rich Arabs, new Russians oligarchs, the new Indian or Chinese rich and others. Many have acquired the new Tier 1 visas for investors of over £1 million which make settlement in the UK far easier. Apart from the rich who live or work in Mayfair there are also the rock and film stars, footballers, media people, major and minor celebrities, attention seekers, chancers, wannabes and hangers-on who attend the restaurants, bars, and clubs. To be seen with the rich and influential remains compelling for some.

The influx of global wealth in Mayfair could threaten its creative ecology.

Hedge fund world

In the last decade they have been joined by the hedge fund world whose global market is estimated at US\$ 2.13 trillion (spring 2012). New York is the global centre managing around 40% of total assets, down from half a decade earlier. Eighty percent of European hedge funds are based in London, which represents 19% of the global total and most of these are based in Mayfair. Several hundred financial services companies related to hedge fund activities and advisory services are based in the neighbourhood. Yet you could wander through Mayfair and not realize they are there, hidden behind discreet and bland sounding nameplates like 'Global Investment Services', revealing little. A Mayfair address is important to indicate financial muscle.

The hedge fund community is a special breed: they largely feel that the City is fusty and old-fashioned



The European hedge fund capital is in Mayfair.

while they are creatively contrarian. They are, it is often said, "somewhat insecure over-achievers". They employ relatively few people so do not need large office buildings in the City. So behind the conservative looking facades of Mayfair and in the so-called "hedge fund alley" of Curzon Street and Berkeley Square, there are sophisticated high-tech offices, usually with the back-up power systems and air cooling capacity to deal with the powerful trading systems. Importantly, some of London's most expensive shops, restaurants and clubs are nearby and it is merely a short walk home across Hyde Park to upmarket residential places like Knightsbridge or Chelsea.

Their social life and leisure can be expensive. Dining clubs can cost up to £1,000 in membership and one gym has a £6,000 membership providing you with a personal trainer. Members are usually the kind of people who try to make things happen. They range from CEOs of listed companies, to diamond dealers, real estate developers, major entrepreneurs as well as rich people

... behind the veneer of stolid looking buildings are sophisticated high tech systems to enable global trading.



Behind anonymous doors immense wealth is created.



... each brand
tries to outdo
the other in
pumping up
desire and in
spectacularizing
shopping.

from whom you might not want to know where they made their money. They have their special 'must be there' occasions like The Ark Ball, founded by hedge funder Arpad Busson, which raises in excess of £10 million. Clearly they also have the resources to buy art and antiques.

Yet gruelling market conditions, a tough new regulatory regime after the 2008 financial crisis and higher taxation has meant even hedge fund managers are feeling the pinch. The sector is under pressure after a disappointing 2011 in which the average fund lost 5.2%² A growing number are moving out of the hedge fund heartland. In 2007, 69% were located in Mayfair and St James's and it is now just over 50%.³ Growing numbers are setting up in Fitzrovia and Victoria. Rents there for the best properties are £65 per square foot, against £100 in Mayfair and St James's, the second most expensive office location in the world after Hong Kong.

Globalized brands

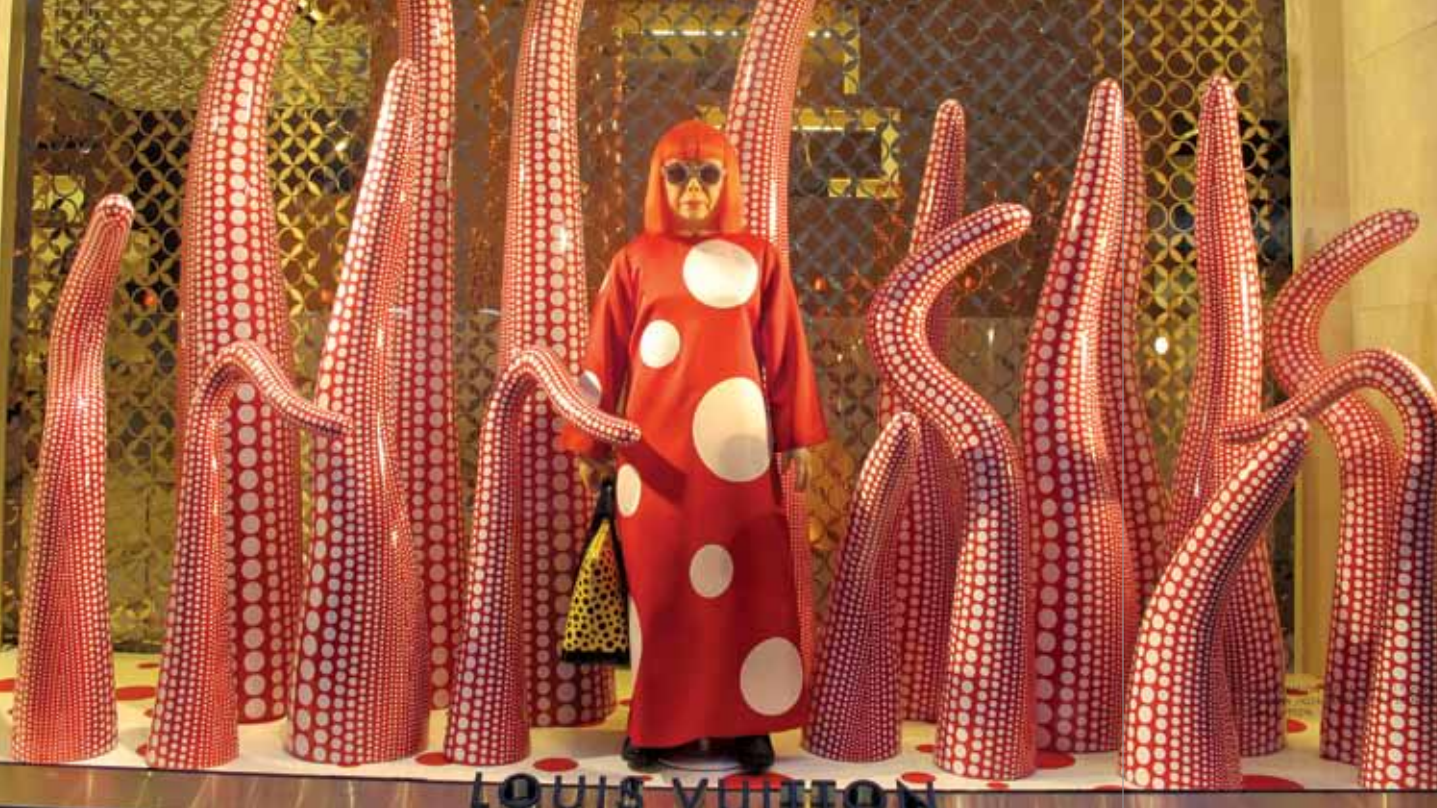
'Traditional elegance and modern luxury' is Mayfair's maxim and for centuries it has been a playground for the wealthy to spend their money in its elegant luxury stores and on art and antiques. Still 'London's luxury quarter' but now for the globally mobile and domestic rich, the global brand powerhouses led by LVMH, the Prada Group, PPR (the Gucci Group) and Richemont have arrived en mass. This has changed the face of Mayfair's shopping, even in its arcades. Here are Prada, Gucci, Armani, Bulgari, Chopard, Hermes, Cartier, Louis Vuitton, Ralph Lauren, and Tiffany, ubiquitous and found in any major global city. Yet this alone represents a £3 billion business just for Mayfair.

So it is not surprising that each brand is trying to outdo the other in pumping up desire and in spectacularizing shopping. This happens before you even reach the shop. Vast oversized billboards are proliferating, from Moscow to Mumbai to Qatar or Shanghai and lavishly illustrated lifestyle magazines reinforce the message, as do events that link art to fashion and glamour. So, arriving in the flagship stores is like coming at last to the holy shrine, where

The major high-end global brands have a presence, especially in Bond Street.

²Hedge Fund Research Inc. www.hedgefundresearch.com/

³Cushman & Wakefield Research www.cushwake.com



Art and fashion are increasingly coming together: Yayoi Kusama and Louis Vuitton.

Independent shops are struggling to survive with the influx of global brands.

to make you feel special requires a new level of service and in-store experience. Shop personnel need to become entertainers, comperes, theatre producers, masters of ceremonies, butlers, concierges, pamperers, flatterers, psychologists, social workers and much more.⁴ In addition, designers increasingly work with artists to create alluring and compelling settings to give shopping a sense of greater significance than it really has.

There are roughly 1,000 shopping units in Mayfair. Among these there do remain some solid - even comforting - British names like Fenwick. As one spills out into the side streets from Bond Street where rents are lower, lesser known but often interesting specialist shops proliferate. Even among these, it is increasingly fashion labels that are dominating. South Molton Street is an example where French boutique chains Maje and Aubade have just moved in. Boutiques like Orlebar Brown are creeping up Vigo Street

where proximity to Savile Row is a plus. There are other emerging streets such as Hay Hill, Grafton Street and particularly Bruton Street, a snip away from Bond Street, which sees younger fashion names like Stella McCartney, Alice Temperley and Matthew Williamson. Then there is the unusual vertical 'street' that is Dover Street Market spread out over six floors. It is the brainchild of Commes des Garçons's Rei Kawakubo, where 50, often up and coming, designers are based.

The sense of traditional Britishness is declining in this process, but the physical setting of Mayfair and its context of arts world, interspersed with shopping, still creates a special British flavour. Crucially, however, the traditional family-owned shops of Burlington Arcade and Savile Row are struggling as independent shops. Their main asset increasingly is their name and reputation garnered over time. To survive they now have to



⁴The Rise and Rise of London's Luxury Quarter, by Jones Lang Lassale on behalf of New West End Company and Heart of London Business Alliance, 2012

become part of the brand-based business model, which involves globalizing and usually selling out to larger conglomerates. The challenge facing most craft-based enterprises is economic sustainability. A bespoke, hand-made Savile Row suit can cost from £3,000 to £10,000 and its making requires high levels of expertise which is becoming harder to find. So there is a push to industrialize production and to sell 20 times as many suits for up to £1,000. The artisanal quality of the Mayfair offer is declining. The foreign acquisition of famous British brands - such as Church's to Prada, Gieves & Hawkes to Hong Kong conglomerate Trinity, and Penhaligon's to Cradle Holdings - is changing the nature and atmosphere of Mayfair, especially as they can also be found in other locations across the globe. But Mayfair through its British brands is exporting itself throughout the world.



Sketch in Conduit Street: An immersive combination of art, food and music.

Restaurants & bars

The same process of branding is happening with traditional Mayfair bars and restaurants. Many of these are now owned by Richard Caring, including those in the Birley Group, like Annabel's, Harry's Bar and Le Caprice. As Caring noted: "I spotted an international gap in the market. In the restaurant business, there are single brands, but not a group of brands - which is what we do. There is only one Ivy, one Annabel's - there is nothing like them. A group of top-notch brands like them - that is what we're trying to achieve. There is a grand plan and it starts with building strength in London." The aim is to create a global food conglomerate by condensing historic reputations into replicable brands and formulas. This reduces their uniqueness, but spreads their reach.

This represents a shift and as someone noted about Annabel's: "his customers aren't old friends ... or lovable eccentrics. Rather, they represent 60,000 quality names and addresses". Or another: "Mark Birley's clubs - the former owner of Annabel's - were commercially successful by being overtly, totally non-commercial ... so we are now in a different era with different values". In general, there is a decline in the bespoke, the artisanal, the genteel, the personal service focused approach. It is becoming a more bottom line and profit-maximizing, corporate mindset. It is a franchising process, and so risks ripping the soul out of the original.



Heddon Street: An urban oasis and increasingly a culinary hub.

A new face of the Royal Academy: The pop-up restaurant Pret A Diner transformed the Senate Rooms.



... the developments can democratize dining or clothing by making a 'name' more accessible.

These developments have pluses and minuses and there is a fine balance. They can democratize dining or clothing by making a 'name' or product more accessible and sometimes cheaper. They can diminish a product or service by making it less place specific, distinctive and more corporate. Subtle qualities etched into the local culture might be lost. To be the only one in the world, whether a club or a restaurant, and where it is difficult if not impossible to get in, carries a caché and an allure. Indeed, the Royal Academy itself has created a new exclusive and artistic food experience in its Pret A Diner pop-up restaurant.

To brand the uniquely distinctive, goes against the Mayfair tradition of exclusivity. Yet Henry Wyndham, chairman of Sotheby's Europe, believes that Caring has tapped into a positive social development: "London has become this extraordinary cosmopolitan place, where we were very insular probably 25 years ago, and now London is absolutely brimming and booming with ... people from other countries living and enjoying London life. There's less of a class system. There's a much better atmosphere."

Although Mayfair's physical fabric remains quintessentially London, it is far less British than it used to be and it needs to be alert to becoming merely a globalized, branded experience.

... yet this goes against the Mayfair tradition of exclusivity

Lorem ipsum: dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed..



LONDON & THE SUPERRICH

London is the favoured place for the superrich and is projected to remain so for the next decade according to the Wealth Report 20125 by Knight Frank and Citi Private Bank.

Their results are based on an annual sentiment survey drawing on the expertise of Citi Private Bank's wealth advisors around the world, and the luxury property specialists from Knight Frank's global network. The aim of the survey is to evaluate the importance of key cities to high net worth individuals (HNWIs) - 95% of prime property in Paris and 85% in London is bought by rich foreigners.

In assessing the attributes a city needs to be considered truly global and thus attractive to the HNWIs, the top-scoring indicators were: personal safety and security (mentioned by 63% and unsurprising given the global turmoil), economic openness (60%) and social stability (51%). Somewhat less important were the availability of luxury housing (27%), excellent educational opportunities (21%), the presence of other HNWIs (25%) and political influence (17%). The most important factors in choosing a second home were lifestyle opportunities (listed by 67%), the investment climate (55%) and a safe haven for capital (40%). There are variations in the responses. For Middle Easterners the availability of luxury housing is especially important, for the North American mega rich it is being near other HNWIs and for Latin Americans social stability is the prime concern.

London's performance in the survey is impressive taking the pole position in almost every category. Even respondents in Asia Pacific rank London and New York ahead of Hong Kong, Singapore, Shanghai and Beijing. Only respondents in Latin America disagreed, putting London in third place after New York and Miami. London and New York are also projected to remain in first and second place of leading cities in 10 years' time. Surprisingly even in terms of cities now growing in importance, it is ranked as high as third, after Beijing and Shanghai. This suggests that London's influence will remain strong for some time.

Banksy's frivolous transformation of a classic Grecian figure at his innovative exhibition at the Bristol City Museum in 2009.

THE MOST IMPORTANT
GLOBAL CITIES IN 2012

1	London
2	New York
3	Hong Kong
4	Paris
5	Singapore
6	Miami
7	Geneva
8	Shanghai
9	Beijing
10	Berlin

THE LEADING GLOBAL CITIES
IN 10 YEARS TIME

1	London
2	New York
3	Beijing
4	Shanghai
5	Singapore
6	Hong Kong
7	Paris
8	Sao Paulo
9	Geneva
10	Berlin

⁵The Wealth Report 2012: A global perspective on prime property and wealth, Knight Frank Research & Citi Private Bank.

Within London there are a few areas that attract wealthy buyers of property, specifically Mayfair, Belgravia, Kensington Palace Gardens, Knightsbridge, South Kensington and Notting Hill. Mayfair offers the most activities and possibilities and is often referred to as, 'the cultural and lifestyle epicentre of London'. This gives it a special power and resonance where the largely foreign wealthy congregate.

However, this global superclass has little loyalty and commitment to place. They live and work in several places, on average five, maybe combining the Middle East, Russia or China, with a place in Mayfair or the New York equivalent, plus then the surrounds of Nice, a home in the countryside or perhaps in the Alps. They hop from one residence or five-star hotel to the next. This is the new global tribe of the rootless and restless, the footloose and stateless. With their money and hypermobility the world is a smaller place. It is a social 'must' to be in perpetual motion. There is an inverted pride and snobbery in being part of the 'here and there' and 'anytime anywhere' phenomenon. In that space you live in a floating, blurry world. As Jeremy Davidson, a London property consultant noted: "The more money you have the more rootless you become because everything is possible."⁶

⁶Stateless and Super-rich, by Tanya Powley & Lucy Warwick- Ching, *Financial Times* 28th April 2012



Conspicuous
consumption is possible
anywhere in Mayfair.

In these London areas, real estate continues to move while the ordinary global housing market suffers from the effects of the economic downturn. Mayfair is part of a new 'super-prime' property category that has not been affected. These are the top 5% of properties in global urban hotspots that the richest visit and live in, such as Manhattan, Monaco and Mayfair. They are seen as safe havens to park their wealth, with a relaxed legal and tax regime. The falling value of the Euro has seen a surge in wealthy Europeans investing in London property with a rise in Greek, Italian, Spanish and French buyers. One agent noted: "there are now three safe havens for financial investment - gold, the Swiss franc and London property" (to which one can now add art). The vast global mining and commodity sectors will further propel demand from places like Uzbekistan, Australia, Nigeria and Russia.

Price is no object to these buyers and so areas like Mayfair have detached themselves from the economic dynamic surrounding

London attracts
the hypermobile
super rich, it
feels safe and
stable.

them. This can cause havoc in the cities concerned. Sam Pizzigatti, of Too Much notes: "Their gathering is a veritable gentrification on steroids, it tends to supersize prices for all sorts of local products and services – and price out local residents."⁷ The biggest danger is to the civic fabric and to the identity of a place. The empty houses and apartments lie idle for most of the year; this drains the vitality and vibrancy emerging from normal everyday transactions. The sense of conviviality and neighbourliness disappears and it is this that creates community from which a sense of place evolves. Urbanity dies in the most urban of areas.

This world of the rich, superrich and ultra-rich is small but growing. Singapore based Wealth-X estimates that in 2011 there were 185,000 people with more than US\$30 million of assets holding US\$25 trillion in combined wealth. There are around 63,000 with more than US\$100 million and 4,650 individuals with more than US\$500 million who together hold about US\$6.25 trillion.⁸ The number of centa-millionaires (those with more than US\$100 million) has increased by 29% since 2006 and it is forecast to rise even further.⁹ This dissatisfaction with income inequality will inevitably gain momentum as witnessed by movements such as Occupy Wall Street.

There is another scary aspect lurking behind the gloss and glamour of a place like Mayfair and its seemingly tranquil respectability. This is the dark side of some of the money of the rich and superrich. Where and how did they make it and what did they need to do to get where they are? Not all of them have made their money through legal means. In some cases too they seem to have the ability to stand above the law or to be able to influence government policies. Ajay Kapur of Citigroup coined the term plutonomy to describe this process, which is a form of capitalism designed to make the rich even richer, whose main goals include reducing taxation and regulation.

⁷<http://inequality.org/wealthy-world-unite-party/>

⁸www.wealthx.com/.../wealth-x-launches-the-first-world-ultra-wealth

⁹www.ledburyresearch.com/news/the-rise-and-fears-of-the-new-elite

*The rootless and
restless wealthy
are continually on
the move.*





TACKY MAYFAIR

There is a downside to Mayfair¹⁰, and indeed most areas that attract the affluent, and that is tackiness. The posh and the seedy often go together. Mesmerized people try to get onto the scene where the influential gather.

Young women may use their bodies, stylish dress and looks. Others pretend they have more status, glamour or money. Rachel Johnson amusingly remarked: "The Russians are coming ... they're moving up the food chain; not just derivatives traders or property slugs; Russia's leggy missiles are locking onto the superrich." Mayfair drugs and sex industry has been extensively written up especially in Shepherd's Market. Now more discreet it is aimed at princes, their offspring or prosperous clientele. You see it working in gaming and private members clubs.

Once in the charmed circle Mayfair's bars and nightclubs can exude excitement, buzz and style, but are also places where the dynamics of exclusion operate. Getting past the velvet rope is everything. Are you on the guest list or look the part, are you famous or physically attractive enough, how much money do you have? Inside amongst the perfectly attired and charming you might encounter odd gatherings of hyperactive capitalists, sleaze-bags whose money does not look clean, tired-of-life aristos, minor celebrities, long-legged wannabes, sycophants, paparazzi and gossip columnists. Here, paying the highest drinks bill, which can go into the thousands, marks you out as a player, you are a nouveau vulgarian. The jury is out on whether Abercrombie and Fitch, or Hollister, where youthful sexual attractiveness is worshipped, marks them out as stylish or vulgar. They certainly attract the young crowd standing in interesting juxtaposition to the Royal Academy just metres away.

Mayfair is a place for excessive consumption and no longer production. Critics find this distasteful, with 'fully staffed properties filled with fresh flowers in case the owner returns'. Another points out, "the number of 'kept women' was largely responsible for the density of boutiques and salons on Bond Street". Critics decry too the hypocrisy of some Arabs who drink champagne here and demand Sharia law at home.

*Sexualizing shopping:
Abercrombie & Fitch
in Burlington Gardens.*

¹⁰Mayfair @www.ravishlondon.com. This is a very interesting site.



THE BRITISH & MAYFAIR

London is one of the most cosmopolitan and diverse cities in the world where 40% of the working population is foreign-born (66% for the lower skilled). This diversity is a strength. This is equally reflected in Mayfair where the resident population is expanding with the encouragement of Westminster Council.

Estimates suggest that nearly 50% of residents are foreign. Although many British people live in Mayfair, or own shops and provide services, as already stated, a large proportion of residential property coming onto the market is being bought by foreigners, especially the most expensive (in Mayfair up to 90%). Importantly too, many of the recent major property deals have been launched with foreign capital and are aimed at that global market. Shopping infrastructure too is moving towards those global brands at the expense of traditional British enterprises.

Collectively this changes the tone of Mayfair - in some ways for the better. It now feels very global and part of a happening pulse. Yet at what point might Mayfair lose that wonderful distinctiveness provided by those positive qualities of conventional Britishness? This is not a matter of nostalgia and reinventing the past, but fostering identity and working with it to move forward.

The commentator Peter York notes that, "the Brits are now the high-class servants in advisory roles supporting the superrich". The roles have been inverted. They help manage their financial portfolios, provide legal advice, buy their property, help them acquire their art, and ensure they are entertained. In the menial jobs there is then a bevy of - usually foreign - workers pandering to their every need. To the traditionalist who saw, 'Mayfair as less of a district, but a way of being, a way of looking at life', this is of course painful.

There is beginning to be a tension between the desires of Mayfair residents and Mayfair's global role as a hub. Various lobby groups bemoan the expansion of retail shopping and the growth in late night entertainment or even the arrival of Crossrail.

*Hardy Amies:
An emblem of
quintessential
Britishness.*



MAYFAIR & THE GLOBAL ART MARKET

The international art market is enormous, with London generally and Mayfair specifically, playing a central role. The art market will remain significant as other asset classes like property or shares become more problematic. Art is an investment and increasingly a currency in its own right.

Valued at £46 billion there were nearly 40 million transactions in 2011, with the largest ones making up most of the figure. Roughly half comes from auctions, with Christie's and Sotheby's accounting for 35%, and the other half through gallery sales. Contemporary and modern art, defined as art made since 1875, accounts for nearly 70% of sale values. The global market comprises 380,000 art galleries and art dealers, with the top five percent accounting for nearly 70% of sales. Thirty-one percent of their sales happen at art fairs, while 43% take place through galleries (10% online).¹¹

The figures are huge and London is one of the global nerve centres accounting for around 20% of all transactions and sales value. Mayfair accounts perhaps for 80% of Britain's total. Of late the market has been volatile and has been hit by the global financial crisis. Yet never have there been so many buyers of art with new audiences emerging in the Arab world, Russia, China and other parts of Asia, apart from the Europeans and Americans who traditionally dominated the scene.

In the 20th century initially Paris and later Berlin were the main focus and then post-war London became the international entrepôt. It then weakened, to be overtaken by New York in the 1980s, but has now come back with a vengeance, even though China is now moving forward rapidly. There are reasons why London is in this strategic market position apart from its helpful geographic location, nearer and more convenient to the new buyers than New York. It is underpinned by in-depth expertise built-up over centuries. Becoming a knowledge hub requires a vast supportive infrastructure of museums, collections and galleries, fairs, curators, dealers, market makers, auction houses, other

Sotheby's: A global leader in art auctioneering, based in Bond Street for nearly a 100 years.

¹¹Clare McAndrew, *The International Art Market in 2011, Observations on the Art Trade over 25 Years*, TEFAF





London's
sophisticated
arts trading
eco-system is
clustered in
Mayfair.

intermediaries, art advisors, restorers, academics, university research, spectacular events, specialist publications and other media outlets as well as ancillary activities from insurance services to logistics – London has all of these. For instance, London has dozens of major Old Masters dealers clustered in Mayfair and St. James's, whereas New York has only a handful. It is getting stronger too in the Impressionist field, more recently New York's strength, whilst Paris remains the centre for the decorative arts. Yet London's perceived glamour here is mostly linked to its role in the contemporary where it has gained ground over New York and now represents 40% of British trade.¹² This was inspired and revived by the 90s Britart movement as well as by successful fairs like Frieze.

¹²The British Art Market: A Winning global entrepôt. Prepared for: British Art Market Federation by Arts Economics. www.lapada.org/public/The_British_art_Market.pdf

The shakers and movers of the Britart scene (Damien Hirst, Michael Landy, Gillian Wearing and Tracey Emin) instigated a series of artist-led exhibitions held in warehouses and factories. From 1988 these shows helped lead to the revival of Hoxton in Shoreditch to which much of the contemporary art scene moved in search of cheap, interesting, flexible space in which to do inventive shows. This buzz helped put London back on the fashionable global arts map. Yet East London was too far to go for the rich buyers and so the arts market is shifting back to the centre, snaking its way across the West End from Mayfair and St. James's in the South, to Fitzrovia in the North with Frieze Art Fair itself having moved to Regents Park.

It is astonishing how the scope and scale of the art market, especially for contemporary art, has grown over 25 years. This is due to a several factors: the increasing number of wealthy

The Britart
movement
helped make
London
a hub for
contemporary
art.

individuals; the fashion for private museums; the overlap between fashion and art and its associated and social cachet. The increasing popularity for collecting, which now embraces celebrities including Madonna and the Beckhams, creates a supply problem for Old Masters or Impressionists, whereas contemporary art can continually be made afresh. But to keep interest and prices up it is important to engender excitement and thus the crucial drive for celebrity status and fashion, harnessed through media attention.

Mayfair has reinforced its position because of its convenience for rich art buyers combined with its critical mass - the arts infrastructure from dealers to auction houses is all within walking distance alongside all the other prerequisites. Art is both an object of desire and an investment commodity. The worldwide frenzy of fairs is intensifying as the art circus moves from place to place. One week London, then New York, then Hong Kong, Basel, Miami - the list is endless. These events create a social circuit in which the buyers and artists are the stars.

Art is fashionable and this is a double-edged sword when wealth and the search for social esteem come together. At times its popularity is simply concerned with investment as other asset classes become less profitable or higher risk. There are also the superficial reasons for wanting to be linked to art and the art world. Art can be a plaything, something to show off with, a status symbol. Being involved with art can be about social climbing, wanting to be part of the in-crowd and connected to the social buzz associated especially with contemporary, cutting-edge art as well as appearing to be cultured. In this process the content and grander purpose of art can be forgotten. The focus can shift to simply pumping up desire to keep the market going and this requires continuous attention to the media - so that image takes over from substance.

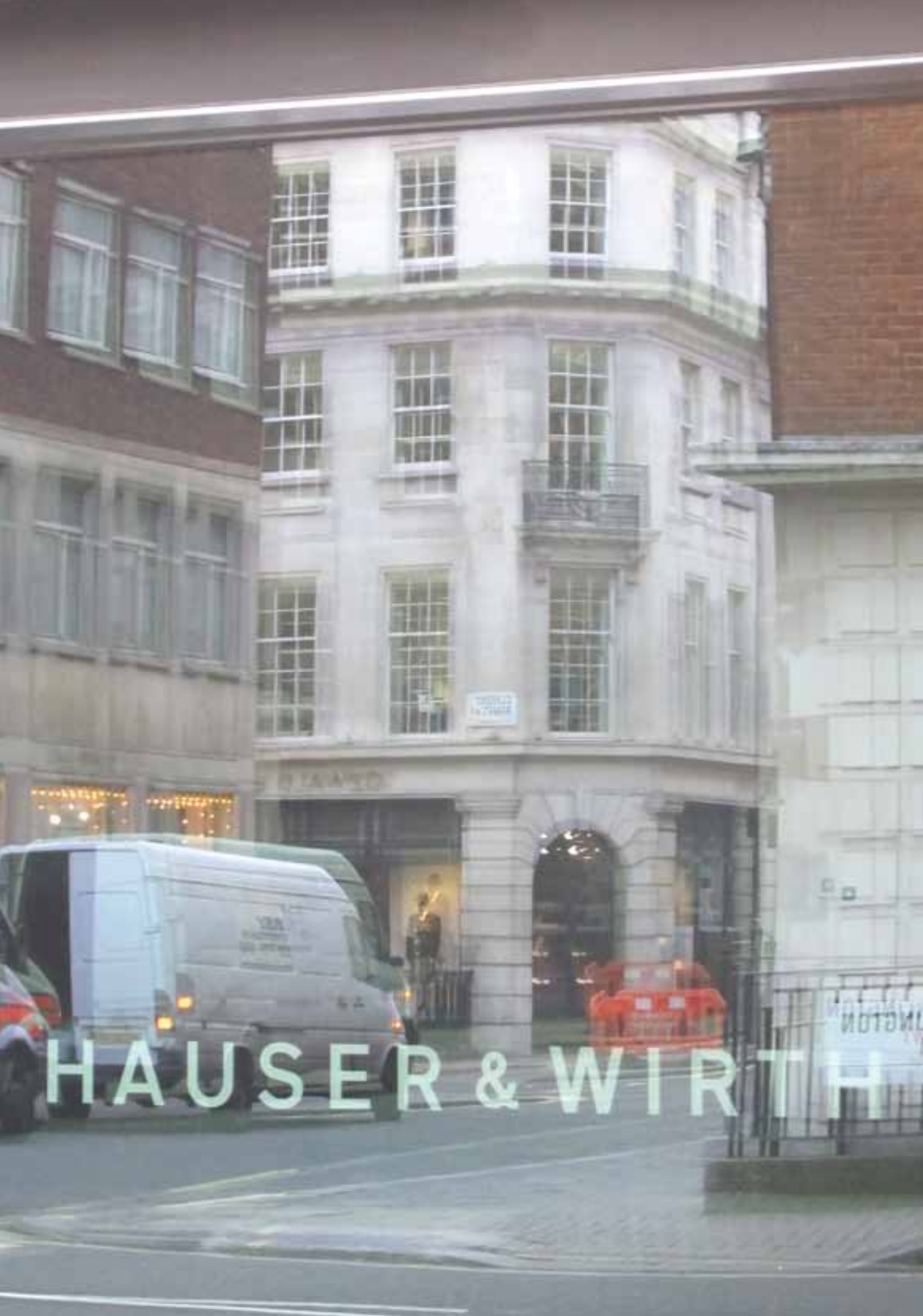
This game is often self-consciously played and subverted by the artists themselves in a continual interplay and sense of tension between their wish to communicate an artistic message and the aspirations of the market. This is the culture and commerce clash.

Many feel disquiet that the art world is being pushed too much into the ambit of celebrity, status and finance. There remains a core of those people with genuine interest and understanding of the bigger experiences and messages that the arts can provide.

Graffiti strikes again with an ironic mix of messages.

... art can trigger higher motives and also be an object of desire, a plaything, a status symbol and investment commodity.





THE SHIFTING DYNAMICS OF ART

Keeping close to the money is key, which is why Mayfair is at the top as far as selling high end expensive art is concerned. Everything agglomerates in or near Mayfair: the galleries, the dealers, the expertise, the auction houses like Sotheby's and Christie's, the Royal Academy, and most importantly those with or making money.

The top global commercial galleries such as Pace and Zwirner from New York and Hauser and Wirth from Zurich have moved in to be nearer to the ultra-rich from the Middle East, Russia and China who prefer London to New York. Mayfair and St. James's are, after Hong Kong, the second most expensive locations in the world.

Increasingly galleries are beginning to move to the cheaper first floors as rents escalate in price. Shop fronts are being taken up by the global fashion brands, who may pay several million pounds to fit out a shop. Yet as you walk the streets of Mayfair navigating your way from the Royal Academy in Burlington Gardens down Cork Street and towards Sotheby's in Bond Street and back, you still pass many of the 90 or so Mayfair galleries. In the past buyers ambled down these streets and bought art as part of their London trip. Today they are more likely to have a string of advisors helping them to do so.

Cork Street, was the epicentre of London's contemporary art scene, though less so now. Regarding the current threat from a luxury residential property deal involving big Gulf and Asian players, one gallerist noted: "It's all about short-term gain. Who will these flats be for? They won't be for residents or nationals ... they will be empty for most of the time. We're losing all individuality as a city."

Seven of the 22 Cork Street galleries may have to relocate as early as next year. They include the Mayor and Alpha Adam galleries, Stoppenbach & Delestre, Waterhouse & Dodd, Beaux Arts and Gallery 27. The Mayor Gallery set up in 1925 and gave Paul Klee, Max Ernst, Joan Miró and Francis Bacon their first London shows. The developers say they will provide space for new galleries, but gallerists still fear an incursion of upmarket retailers who can

Hauser & Wirth an upcoming global art market player from Zurich who have opened several galleries in London.



... the spatial
geography of
the arts world
is moving.

afford far higher rents, so pricing them out of the Street. Related businesses, like framers, could suffer too, again changing the area's ecology.

So a further shift northwards to Fitzrovia is possible, where currently the more daring, riskier art with a less assured market finds cheaper space. Fitzrovia is an area historically known for its artist communities and has fast grown to become one of London's newest hubs for contemporary art galleries. Stuart Shave/Modern Art, among others, started the trend and the area now includes second branches of Mayfair galleries (such as Haunch of Venison) where relatively cheaper work is shown. In the last four years more

than 35 galleries have opened there and the area is anchoring its reputation with the launch of events such as Fitzrovia Lates in which galleries open until 9pm on the last Thursday of every month, to offer a programme of tours, talks and performances. Mayfair has as yet not done anything equivalent and this is where the Royal Academy could have a strong role.

The proposal to Westminster Council to create a protected area for art galleries in Mayfair brings proposed developments at the Royal Academy into sharp relief, especially given they have leased the west wing of 6 Burlington Gardens to Pace, a major New York gallery.

*Frieze Art Fair
- an important
part of London's
artistic ecology.*

... creating
a specially
designated
arts district
may help.



Leslie Waddington has been one of the foremost contemporary art gallerists in London.

The art-fashion-luxury triangle

Artists often trail blaze ideas that become incorporated into fashion or shopping. Art and design schools can act as the R&D departments for major fashion houses. Done with integrity artists too can give a brand cachet. The luxury shop has always acted as a place to explore quality or new daring design that is then taken up by the mainstream. Art galleries, museums and artists often provide inspiration. In the 1920s, for instance Elsa Schiaparelli began working with Salvador Dali, and Yves Saint Laurent became inspired by Picasso and Mondrian. Marc Jacobs the creative director of Louis Vuitton took things to a new level.

The Louis Vuitton store in Bond Street is exemplary with a changing cast of artists intrinsic to how it sells its merchandise. Indeed it is not a store but a maison and conceived as if it were the home of a collector. It gives visitors opportunities to discover new and exciting experiences. A huge portrait by Gilbert and George reminds you that this is not an ordinary store. In a deal worth several million pounds Yayoi Kusama is the latest in a long line. Vuitton's 2012 collection is inspired by her polka dots and the window displays both in Bond Street and in Selfridges are invigorating. Previously, Damien Hirst

was responsible for a bespoke medicine chest for the brand while Grayson Perry and Tracy Emin have both curated the bookshelf at its Bond Street flagship store. Many, including Vanessa Beecroft, Marc Quinn, Jake and Dinos Chapman and Antony Gormley, have spoken to selected guests at their Art Talk programme.

The production of luxury items used to be obviously linked to craftsmanship, often being produced and sold from the same premises. Given rental costs in Mayfair it is no longer possible and this disconnection from the process of making changes the overall ambience. Indeed the range of people visible is more limited.

The art-fashion-luxury triangle has now reached a new level through enhanced media exposure and global resonance. In their search for relevance, purpose and meaning, the big fashion conglomerates are deepening their connections to these worlds in a co-dependent and mutually beneficial relationship. Here the stars, starlets and also-rans seek to bolster each other in a celebrity circus. There is LVHM's Frank Gehry- designed museum in Paris which will house 'The Louis Vuitton Foundation for Creation'. Gucci owner PPR's boss, François Pinault, has set up his Contemporary Art Centre at the Punta della Dogana as well as Palazzo Grassi in Venice. The Prada Foundation is building a massive centre in Milan - designed by OMA's Rem Koolhaas. In these ways what is essentially ordinary - a dress, shoes, a chair - feels different and unique. Then wrapped into the multi-layered Mayfair experience these objects feel even more special.

Connecting Mayfair & the Royal Academy

There we have it. Mayfair is rich and ostentatious, modest and discreet as well as flaunting its wealth. It is full of delights as well as a degree of sleaziness. It is full of incredible expertise and has a rich texture that makes it a global arts hub. The interests of the Royal Academy and the arts and luxury goods industry in Mayfair have been entwined since the Academy arrived in Mayfair 150 years ago. There is now the opportunity for this relationship to be more explicitly re-explored, especially as the movement to aestheticize daily life moves apace. It seeps into every transaction of buying and selling or any experience, from buying an airline ticket, clothes or furniture to having a drink and eating or going to the hairdresser. Connecting with artists is vital.

Artists often trail blaze ideas that become incorporated into design and fashion. Done with integrity it can be powerful.



THE ROYAL ACADEMY: ITS PROMISE & PROSPECTS

Mayfair is changing and so is the Royal Academy and with it possibly the face and feeling of the whole area. They are in the same physical universe yet socially and culturally their worlds remain distinct.

Their synergies could be enticing. The plans to link Burlington House and 6 Burlington Gardens will create a richly layered cultural campus full of changing artistic experiences. Together these connected buildings will be nearly the same size as the British Museum, yet right in the centre of London. Excluding the courtyard at the front, the combined footprint is over two acres – providing five football fields of cultural space over the various floors.

This promise is alluring. At present, the old Museum of Mankind building appears somewhat forbidding with its looming Victorian façade blackened by decades of London grime and pollution. It is uninviting. Soon there will be a sense of lightness, welcome and openness. You will be able to seamlessly connect through this cultural arena from spaces of calm, tranquillity and intimacy, to energetic hotspots. You will see art, observe the making of art, discuss the meaning of art, be able to buy art, as well as eat, drink and relax. It will be a gathering place at all times of the day and evening.

Inevitably the proposed doubling in size has triggered a profitable debate inside the Academy forcing it to reassess its purposes afresh and how it can communicate its relevance for the coming age. There is now the chance to shed the fuddy-duddy image and dispel the belief that only the Summer Exhibition happens here, making more out of breakthrough exhibitions – like Sensation or the Armani show in the recent past. It will also have to relate better to Mayfair and its art world, which in fact clustered there in the first place because of the RA.

A lot of questions are raised. Can the Academy deepen its existing links with the private galleries, small and large, and become the

Few people know there is a thriving post-graduate art school in the Royal Academy.

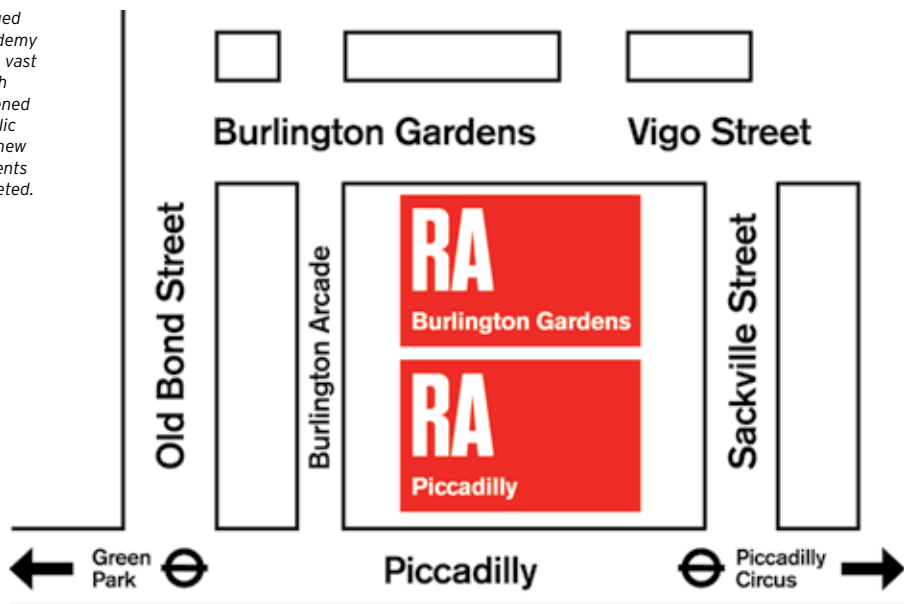
advocate for the visual arts world? What artistic forms should fall into its remit as convergence moves apace and borders blur? Can it be strict about its boundaries of drawing, painting, and architecture? What about moving images, performance art, or design? How can it relate to younger audiences or those with a fear of crossing the threshold of seemingly grand cultural institutions? It cannot get away from its imposing building, but its ethos can make it feel unpretentious in its grandness, as well as combining being Bohemian and gracious. It can provide a relaxed atmosphere and could become a spiritual home for artists and their supporters.

The Academy needs to be alert, face outwards and forwards and not inwards - always a danger with institutions based on meritorious membership where status arrives usually with old age. It needs to connect with the young and where the young are, where they want to be or what they want to do. And that perhaps



The RA's Chief Executive Charles Saumarez Smith, pondering the future.

The enlarged Royal Academy occupies a vast area, which will be opened to the public when the new developments are completed.



may not be to browse a quiet gallery space. The Academy's new digital programme should help make connections. Of course, if the Academy were invented afresh today its core principles of independence and being run by artists would remain strong, but it would naturally find ways to engage better with younger artists and younger audiences.

It has already woken up to its potential to become a more visible cultural leader and a pioneering hub for debate and learning about art and culture, as well as important wider issues for the world generally. Helpful new factors will be the new lecture theatre and that its art school, in the new configuration, will become visible to all. It could reflect a creativity that is alive and highlight our emotional connections to the artistic experience and aesthetics in general.

The central challenge is ambition and perspective. Is the Academy up for being ambitious and to welcome Mayfair in with its double-edged potential, and is Mayfair ready to welcome, be influenced by and support an active Academy?

What can the Royal Academy give to the Mayfair that is a crucial global arts market hub and in reverse what can Mayfair give to the Academy? Independent and not driven by commercial concerns the Academy can give unusual cultural depth and enrich its overall

presence, compensating the sometimes off-putting or even crass ostentatious wealth. Its vision to be a strong voice for art and artists in a world dominated by the narrow concerns of profit is clear and important. Its aim to reflect the plurality of voices and an independent point of view is right for its time. The Academy's values, its physical position, its personality and qualities, offer an expectation: the promise of art to challenge, to explore, to explain, to seduce and to remind us that there can be a higher calling. In sum, the Academy can make a civilizing contribution to Mayfair.

A unique opportunity

Imagine approaching the Academy in 2016, not from Piccadilly with its welcoming courtyard, its colourful banners and playful artworks cradled by its five serious looking learned societies. Consider instead, that you arrive (in what now seems an unusual way) from Cork Street or Savile Row or even coming in sideways along Burlington Gardens from Bond Street or from Oxford and Vigo Street. What do you see?

First impressions really count. There is Burlington Gardens pedestrianized. This softens the setting and allows the building to breathe outwards. A gleaming cleaned up façade, yet mellow in its impact, its light Portland stone invites you in. The steps to the entrance give you a first clue. Look left and right, you can sit, contemplate or drink and eat outside or in. You are already inside the new spirit of the Academy as it wants to be – accessible and embracing: a changing exhibition in the hallway, to the left a meeting place and to the right a Pace Gallery show. Up the stairs and the first landing a lecture hall, a restaurant, a spot on the balcony to look out over the streets, learning facilities, the architecture exhibits. Cutting through the building to Burlington House and along an open cultural avenue you pass the art school and see it in action before getting to the Academy's traditional home that is now more spaciously laid out.

These large scale investment plans provide rare opportunity to renew the physical infrastructure and to maximize programming potential. This cannot be grasped by a business-as-usual approach and will take time to unfold in its fullness, and difficult choices will need to be made along the way. One of the most important is whether the Academy sees itself primarily as an internally focused, membership-based club, whose activities, more by chance and coincidence rather than intention, attract wider audiences and recognition. Or, whether it has a wider public function to promote the significance of the artistic, the creative, the imaginative and its value in society – I believe the latter provides a powerful mission.

Such a scale of development will invite comparison to other cultural spaces. Does the Academy think of itself more like the Palais de Tokyo in Paris and its interdisciplinary programming of art, design, fashion, video, cinema, literature and dance? Or is its resonance more like the Caixa Forum in Madrid with its purely contemporary arts focus? Perhaps it is like the Sydney Museum of Contemporary Art, with its pop-up programmes, or initiatives such as ARTBAR where artists curate the evening experiences. Or is the



The classic view of the Royal Academy, along Piccadilly.

Academy's cultural campus more to be conceived like the Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich's newly defined cultural quarter?

Perhaps it will be most like Zurich's new extended Kunsthalle in the Lowenbrau building, a small city of art. Here, a collection of different cultural enterprises co-exist and they blur the line between the not-for-profit cultural and the commercial, the public and the private and the old and the new. The complex includes Kunsthalle itself, the global headquarters of super art dealer Hauser & Wirth, a variety of other galleries large and small, the Migros Museum funded by the supermarket chain, together with bookshops, a record store, a café, office space for cultural organizations, and meeting rooms.

New resources will inevitably invite a reassessment of how the Academy organizes, programmes and projects itself, and it will need to assess whether it will feel at ease with the new commercial and non-commercial blend.

A challenging purpose

The civic quality of Mayfair is under threat and in danger of dilution. The shifting, often absent, resident population and its commercial focus could reduce Mayfair's sense of



A piece from Anish Kapoor's highly successful RA exhibition in 2009, provided new perspectives in looking at art.

'place': somewhere to anchor in rather than somewhere to pass through or even exploit simply as a good location. By contrast the Academy's not-for-profit public-interest objectives can allow it to have lofty aspirations. This can influence not only art, but also suggest an artistic way of looking at the world, its problems and potentials. It can position itself as a thought leader for the imaginative, so shaping public discourse and culture.

The culture and commerce dilemma is an interesting theme here. This agenda suggests a broader role for the Academy: cultural depth in a sea of luxury consumption. Even the associated learning institutions in its courtyard and the Royal Institution nearby can play a part. Indeed these need the playful visibility we associate with the Academy. This raises questions such as: what is being civilized and cultured. Not in a sense of posing and cheap one-upmanship or artifice, or being over-intellectual and being up with the fashion, but nurtured through clarity of thought and the ability to distinguish the significant from the passing fad. It suggests a higher purpose. The Royal Academy can exude authority, and rightly so as an Academy, but not in a pompous sense. It can do this by being relaxed in its approach and by feeling at ease with diversity of opinions, worldviews and people.

This is what we mean by saying the Royal Academy has a civilizing aim in the best sense of the word. Just as Tate Modern connected with its working class hinterland and fostered aspirations and engagement to good effect, so the Academy can encourage

Mayfair to be more than just obvious manifestations of wealth. The Academy through its links to Mayfair institutions can help these see beyond mere profit making, beyond the adornments of luxury and beyond the shallow obsessions of celebrity, whilst celebrating real achievement; it can focus on the distinctively unique in a brand driven world. It can go with the flow of where Mayfair is going, increasingly a hub of fashion as well as its art world, finance and luxury and refinement. It can give things a special Academy twist. By reaching out it can cement the area's wider reputation.

An embodiment of the artistic imagination

Fostering and recognizing the achievements of the artistic imagination is central to what the Academy does; it communicates this largely by displaying drawings, paintings, sculpture and architecture in exhibitions or through talks and hands-on workshops, although hidden in its bowels is an art school and in time this will become visible when walking between the galleries. We tend to think of pictures hanging on the wall or models on the floor, even though the RA has been responsible for the many exceptions to this, like Anish Kapoor's slow moving train or its ritualistic cannon shooting a lump of deep-red pigment against a corner of the wall (unsurprisingly many found the wait leading up to the cannon shot and its execution spellbinding).

Practically all galleries, public or commercial, display art in conventional variations of a 'white cube'. There is often absence of imagination and inventiveness in projecting the artistic experience. Looking ahead the Academy should spur itself to be innovative and exemplary in achieving the heightened awareness and sensuality that can verge on the spiritual and the deep. The new buildings, facilities and opportunities will challenge it to think afresh about its overall experience and how it can appeal to all the senses. And not only in the obvious sense of having spacious areas of welcome that make arriving a seamless encounter, or well serviced café and restaurants that gratify its visitors, or places of calm and liveliness with good exhibitions and events to match.

There should be much more. The artistic imagination appeals to and triggers the senses, hitting us as one compounded and blended emotional experience. The Enlightenment process helped separate these into specialist fields: the written, the visual, the sound, the patterning or movement. Increasingly though we recognize that they should be brought together, whilst equally acknowledging their essential individual merit. On occasion, though, as with opera, attempts were made to create a Gesamtkunstwerk - translated in varied ways: universal artwork, synthesis of the arts, total work of art, all-embracing art form, comprehensive artwork.

The challenge to the Royal Academy, that will give it power and resonance, is to be seen as a total experience, as a Gesamtkunstwerk, an embodiment of a living work of art. How this ethos embeds itself into the Academy's programming and activities, how the journey through the Academy unfolds, how spaces look and feel, how it communicates and projects, these are all central towards that achievement.

Undoubtedly the surroundings and context for display and presentation can be intensified. The rich registers of experience that art can provide happen when attention is sharp and focused, when it is immediate and unmediated, immersive and visceral. At its best we are plunged into someone else's reality and their explanation of what is, or could be.

Exploring new approaches to the display of art wholeheartedly requires wide skills and insights - it presents a positive challenge to curatorship to bring cross-disciplinary teams together. Some artists already create immersive environments as an intrinsic aspect of their art, but here something different is required: to make an ordinary picture extraordinary through how it is presented.

The attraction is to think afresh how to communicate an immersive experience of the artistic and aesthetic and to entice the audience to open the senses and to participate not only as the external, separate, detached viewer, but as someone captivated by art. The aim throughout is to see how the artistic can be experienced in a visceral, 360° sense, rather than purely conceptually and intellectually. This might involve greater use of media that takes us away from painting and drawing but that ironically helps us get closer to it.

Some examples of this immersive approach may help. In Kassel's Documenta 13 (2012) the use of two traditional buildings there, the Fridericianum and Neue Galerie, meant the art had to fit some difficult spaces. The curved top floor area in the Fridericianum invites a 360° panoramic perspective and you walk into Goshka Macuga's image. This shows the participants of a banquet in Bagh-e Babur in Kabul digital imposed onto a carpet. Kader Attia's harrowing installation *Repair From Occident to Extra-Occidental Cultures*, fills a room combining carvings, a slide show, and chained books. It surrounds you and reflects on art, colonialism, body incisions and lacerations in Africa, and horrific face wounds suffered by European soldiers in World War I. Artist Geoffrey Farmer collapses half a century's history from thousands of pictures cut out from five decades of *Life* magazine. This lengthy narrow space feels all embracing and comes alive as you walk along its two 25 metres sides.

In the recent Yves Klein 'Judo e Teatro - Corpo e Visioni' (2012) exhibition at the Palazzo Ducale in Genova, the famous rich blue is carpeted into the baroque chapel's floor. The intensity of its dense blueness submerges you within it while the ornate Godly headiness of the baroque gives you two senses of spirituality. The contrast is powerful and beguiling especially blue on the floor rather than in the sky. It is topsy-turvy. This was a simple curatorial idea.

Another was 'Metamorphosis: Titian 2012' at the National Gallery with its juxtapositions of choreographers, composers and dancers who collaborated with contemporary artists to respond to three of Titian's paintings.

Tobias Rehberger's Golden Lion winning cafeteria for the 2009 Venice Biennale called



Yves Klein's blue set against the baroque chapel in Genova's Palazzo Ducale is evocative.

'Whatever you love, will bring you to cry' was his attempt to immerse the visitor. You enter into this retro-inspired space which throws a chaos of colour and jumble of forms onto you. Here the collaboration with Finnish design house Artek was crucial. This interestingly links the commercial and non-commercial in ways that might inspire the Academy. So does Piotr Uklanski's *Dance Floor* shown at Palazzo Grassi in Venice. He subverts and undermines distinctions between art and the communication means used by consumer society - sound, moving images, photography and advanced technology. These you are more likely to see in Louis Vuitton. He gives them a new context where the party-like atmosphere is blended with serious images concerned with evil. At a more socially responsible level, by contrast, there is the collaboration between WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature) and fashion designers to create ecological clothing.

Valuing the power of the artistic imagination lies at the core of the Royal Academy's mission. It shapes its ethos and how it goes about its business. From here, several opportunities or challenges are posed:

It would shape the way learning programmes are framed and how much the physical spaces in the Academy encourage learning, and even what learning environments might involve in the 21st century.



Barry Flanagan's famous hares,
at the entrance to the Academy.

It highlights what art forms legitimately form part of the Academy's remit, not as something that is addressed only occasionally but as a matter of course. Does all design fall out of its remit when much of design is closer to sculpting and drawing than architecture? Do slow moving images like those of Bill Viola's *The Passion* count as sculptural or even painterly, when even David Hockney paints on an iPad?

It brings out boundary crossing, which can help grasp the artistic more profoundly. For instance, at the beginning of the 21st century, a rapprochement began between the two great ways of perceiving, exploring, understanding and knowing: science and art.

The process of 'boundary blurring' has now generated considerable momentum in bringing the insights of science and art much closer together. This collaborative activity can provide fresh ideas to which the distinct working methods of science and art can be applied. Partnerships between scientists and artists, in reaching out for new areas of shared understanding and creativity, have succeeded in enriching and maximising each other's potential. The continuing Academy programme of joint public lectures and events with the Society of Antiquaries, the Linnean Society, the Geological Society, the Royal Astronomical Society and the Royal Society of Chemistry, is important. They are exploring and exploiting their close proximity by working together to break down the barriers between the arts and sciences and by fostering cross-fertilisation and communication between disciplines. This allows everyone to access their exciting scientific output. Together all contribute to the cultural and scientific campus.

A making milieu

Mayfair reminds us of the power of commerce, trading and consuming. It is based on services. It is not a place where things are made; they are only bought and sold. And commerce too has recognized that consuming on its own increasingly provides insufficient meaning and satisfaction. Stroll along Bond Street and window shop. The stores are seeking to wrap buying and selling into a broader experience to give it greater purpose, impact and even meaning. This is a tricky game and art is central to it. Art and fashion were always close; it is getting closer. The artistic imagination is central to fashion. The Academy was brave when it showed Giorgio Armani, but perhaps there is more to explore, especially the making of materials and textiles and the process itself - cutting and patterning. Think of Alexander McQueen; was he a fashion designer or an artist? In addition, art challenges and subverts and equally gets used. Here the Academy could push the agenda. It can help redefine what The Experience Economy¹³ could be, that union of everyday consumption and spectacle. The process has turned retailing into part of the entertainment industry often blurring the boundaries between shopping, learning and the experience of culture.

Crucially too, the Academy can reaffirm that its concerns are not only with display and exhibition but also with making and debating. The desire to understand making is coming back with the so-called handmade revival as we increasingly become detached from the well-crafted. We have even lost the vocabulary of making and the skills and crafts of sketching, shaping, patterning, molding, casting, kneading, cutting, chiseling, carving, sculpting, notching, hewing, stamping, trimming, bending, stretching, dividing, welding, gouging, binding, darning, facing, knotting, buffering, pounding, forming. The craving to be grounded has returned with a vengeance as the allure of the virtual somewhat fades amidst the excitement. The internet may be nearly instant and explode possibilities, but there is too little time to absorb and pull things together. The nearly 250-year-old mission of the Academy 'to make, to exhibit and debate' feels suddenly intensely contemporary, in spite of its conservative veneer.

An advocate for the artistic view

There are many aspects to being an arts advocate. At its most general it is to remind us that involvement with the artistic can jolt the corporate world with its almost diametrically opposed values and attributes. Its worldview is summed up by words such as: goal, objective, focus, strategy, profit making, maximizing, outcome, calculation, measurable, quantifiable, logical, solution, efficient, effective, economic sense, rational, linear. At its best, artistic creativity involves a journey not knowing where it will lead or if they will arrive; it involves truth-searching and embodies a quest for the profound and truth; it has no calculated purpose, it is not goal-oriented, nor measurable in easy ways, nor fully explicable rationally, it denies instant gratification; it accepts ambiguity, uncertainty and paradox. The business world by contrast prefers certainty and predictability.



Good art aims to create work which enters the common space of humanity; it champions originality and authenticity and opposes vanity; it generates openness to new ideas and new ways of doing; it is transgressive and disruptive of the existing order, often uncomfortable. The challenge for the Academy is to get these two perspectives on life communicating with each other.

Mayfair and the Royal Academy are the two sides of this coin. This is what we mean by exerting a civilizing influence on Mayfair, by showing how a focus on aesthetics and art enriches experience. The clumsy term 'RA-ness' tries to encapsulate its essence. RA-ness reflects an ethos and an attitude to life.

In dealing with the practical and immediate threat to the Mayfair art world, the Academy can focus on its public purpose role, by being a leader in debates, with the range of stakeholders from Westminster Council to business.

A gathering place

The Academy is already a meeting place, but there are broader audiences out there to entice and to spin into its orbit. It can escalate this role and become a place of choice. It has the ingredients, as a good gathering place has a location, a setting, facilities,

choices and an atmosphere that lures. The Academy's new additions will provide a richer range.

To provide the compelling extra lies in how all the ideas and plans are coalesced, curated and orchestrated into one seamless whole and where ordinary things happen like having coffee and occasionally the unexpected or extraordinary. Here lies the organizational challenge since the varied experiences can only be put together through varied partnerships, being active in networks or delegating tasks to trusted outsiders. This new ethos might require a different mindset and change the skill sets and capacities needed to run a revitalized Royal Academy.

This fits the idea of the Academy as thought leader. It exports the idea of what the Academy stands for. Again this may be force fed by collaborations. It could even give an imprimatur to initiatives it approves of and wants to encourage.

Waiting to enter the Hockney exhibition 'A Bigger Picture', one of the Academy's most successful shows, with over 600,000 visitors.



Overflow in the Hockney exhibition.



SPILLING INTO MAYFAIR

The Royal Academy can go beyond both its physical and virtual limits. It can spread its philosophy of art in innumerable ways through all the media and this it does to some extent already. But, it could perhaps more forcefully and self-consciously project an Academy way of thinking about art and debating art. This fits the idea of the Academy as thought leader.

It exports the idea of what the Academy stands for. Again, this may be force-fed by collaborations. It could even give an imprimatur to initiatives it approves of and wants to encourage and these could range from joint debates, to learning programmes or to shared exhibitions. These can be in London, Britain and even further afield, so spreading the Academy ethos, relevance and influence.

Equally, the Royal Academy can spread itself physically. Clearly it will have much to do in animating its new enlarged spaces. Yet there remains an opportunity to do more especially through collaboration. One could imagine versions of the Summer Exhibition or new projects to be invented being in Berkeley Square, like PAD.

One could imagine installations, perhaps linked to exhibitions taking place in the Academy itself, threading down a semi-pedestrianized Cork Street and Savile Row and across Burlington Gardens. This could enhance our sensibilities and help us reimagine what streets and urban design can be like. This would bring together the Academy's art and architecture specialisms with design, in an integrated way.

By spreading its tentacles throughout Mayfair and blending itself into the surrounding streets, the Royal Academy could contribute to Mayfair itself helping it feel as if it were a living work of art. It helps bring the aesthetic imagination into the city. It could become an open air arts district and by so doing open itself out to new audiences, who may experience and engage with art as a normal part of everyday life. That idea fits well with what the Academy, in my imagination, could be: awake, alert and alive.

*BT ArtBox called
'Press For Help'
in Berkeley
Square Gardens
by artist Michael
Waller-Bridge.*



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CHARLES LANDRY

Charles Landry helps cities around the world assess their assets and prepare for the future. Working with them as a 'critical friend' he advises urban decision makers on how they can make the most of their potential so their cities get more firmly on the global radar screen, whilst maintaining their special distinctiveness. Charles facilitates complex meetings, makes customized presentations, undertakes dedicated research and writes books. He developed the original 'creative city' concept, and with Jonathan Hyams has invented a toolkit to measure the imaginative pulse of a city, called the Creative City Index. For further information see: www.charleslandry.com

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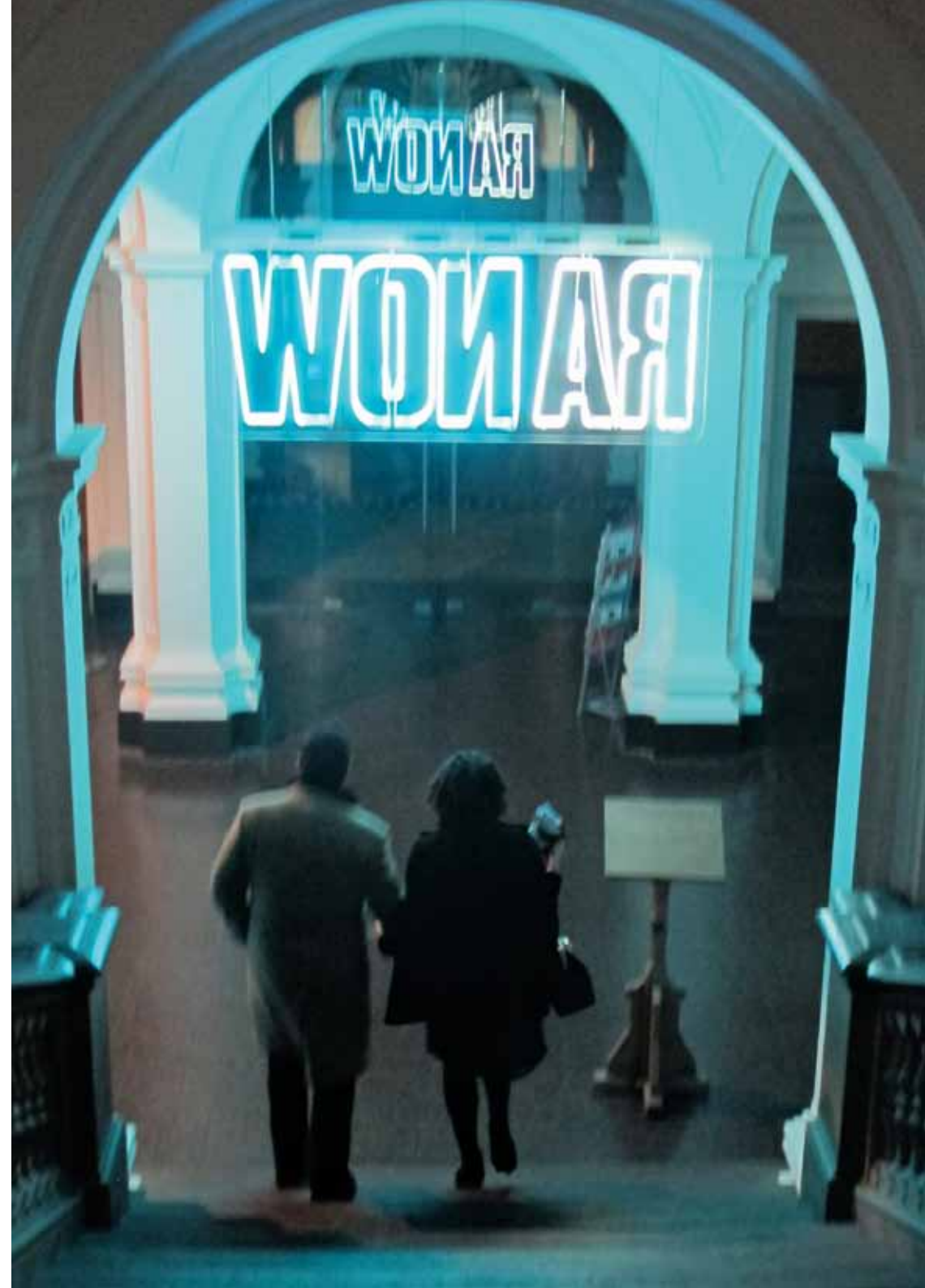
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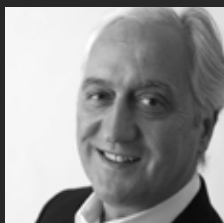
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*The 6 Burlington Gardens entrance
to the Royal Academy - soon it will
have a gleaming frontage.*

'I am enormously grateful to Charles Landry for opening up the topic of the relationship of the Royal Academy, and in particular the former Museum of Mankind building, to its surrounding neighbourhood in Mayfair - not just Cork Street, but Abercrombie & Fitch, Bond Street and Savile Row as well.'

Charles Saumarez Smith
Secretary and Chief Executive
The Royal Academy





Charles Landry works with cities around the world in assessing their assets so they can prepare for the future by making the most of their potential.

This is the fourth in a series of short publications which seek to highlight key dilemmas in shaping cities today. Their aim is to engender debate and critical comment and feedback is welcome.

Culture and commerce co-exist in creative tension. Their values and aims can be sharply opposed. There is a need to find the fragile balance. This is true for culture in both the big sense and narrower one of expression through the arts. Artists are driven, mostly, to express their voice unimpeded by calculation or motives of gain. Commerce, by contrast, is fascinated by the arts world and the associated creative industries, alluringly capable of adding value to the experience of products and services. Arts and culture help create urban vitality and often regenerate areas. This is a world-wide phenomenon and it has its up and downsides which are explored using Mayfair and the Royal Academy as examples.

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