

Subject



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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

19 June 1984

ROYAL ACADEMY APPEAL

The Prime Minister, with Lord Gowrie and Mr Wilding, met Sir Hugh Casson this morning to discuss the Royal Academy's Appeal. Sir Hugh was accompanied by Mr Raisman, Mr Rodgers and Miss Hamilton-Baillie.

Sir Hugh said that he and his colleagues were grateful to the Prime Minister for sparing the time to see them. The Royal Academy was proud of its independence, but it was also grateful to the Government for three things. First it was grateful to the Prime Minister personally for the fund-raising dinner which she herself had given. This has been a great success. Secondly it was grateful for the £250,000 contribution to the appeal which the Government had made in 1982/83. Thirdly it was grateful for the continuing assistance of the Indemnity Department of the Office of Arts and Libraries - this was invaluable in arranging exhibitions.

Sir Hugh continued that the Royal Academy now received more than one million visitors each year, and 40 per cent of them were under the age of 35. Its service to the nation was therefore good. So was its service to artists - over 13,000 pictures were submitted for the Summer Exhibition, and artists who were successful in selling their works paid less commission than through private dealers. The Academy's exhibitions, which numbered between 8 and 12 a year, were of the highest international quality.

However, the Academy had a problem. Overseas collections which lent works for exhibitions at Burlington House were demanding increasingly high standards, in terms of ventilation, lighting and temperature control. To provide the right physical conditions was expensive, but the fact was that the Academy's facilities were by international standards out of date. This was the major reason for the £6 million appeal (in addition to which a

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further £½ million would probably be required). The Academy still found itself about £3 million short of the required sum, and their plea was that the Government should contribute a further sum as a gesture to encourage others to give more. If the appeal funds could not be raised, both the number and the quality of the exhibitions held at the Royal Academy would inevitably decline.

Responding, the Prime Minister expressed admiration for the continuing work of the Academy. She enquired about the various non-Governmental sources of funds available, including property income (which was negligible, since the Academy held even its own building on a lease), business sponsorship, and letting of the premises (eg for soirees). Those representing the Academy agreed that every effort had to be made to tap these private sources to the greatest possible extent.

Summing up, the Prime Minister said that she did not believe that the public necessarily judged the worth of an appeal by the size of the Government's contribution. The finances of Glyndebourne were a case in point. Nevertheless, she had listened carefully to what Sir Hugh and his colleagues had said, and she would give their case further consideration.

I am sending copies of this letter to Alan Davis (Department of the Environment) and John Gieve (Chief Secretary's Office).

David Barclay

Mrs Mary Brown,  
Office of Arts and Libraries.