

An Artist in Residence for the Royal Society

A guide for expressions of interest

Background to the Royal Society

The Royal Society's fundamental purpose, reflected in its founding Charters of the 1660s, is to recognise, promote and support excellence in science and to encourage the development and use of science for the benefit of humanity. The Society is a self-governing Fellowship of distinguished scientists drawn from all areas of science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and medicine. The Society has played a part in some of the most fundamental, significant, and life-changing discoveries in history and Royal Society scientists – our Fellows and those people we fund – continue to make outstanding contributions to science and help to shape the world we live in.

As a registered charity, fellowship and National Academy, the Society undertakes a range of activities that provide public benefit either directly or indirectly. These include providing financial support and funding programmes for scientists at various stages of their careers, organising scientific conferences to foster discussion, publishing scientific journals, electing outstanding scientists from around the world as Fellows and Foreign Members, and representing the UK to advocate for science and its benefits, including informing public policy.

The Royal Society recognises the importance of diversity and inclusion in driving scientific excellence, innovation and societal impact. As a leading scientific institution, our role in promoting and upholding equality, diversity and inclusion is multifaceted and essential to our mission. Our EDI strategy and programmes are designed to ensure that all individuals regardless of their background, identity or circumstances have equitable opportunities to thrive.

Background to the project

The Society has a history of undertaking arts-related activities from time to time. This has taken various forms: notably, curated one-off exhibitions of art (the Royal Society hosts an annual Summer Science Exhibition); speaking events with the Royal Academy, exploring such links; social media work; and in building and developing the organisation's own art holdings. The Royal Society owns a large collection of portraiture of Fellows of the Royal Society, from the 17th to the 21st centuries, and occasionally commissions new works to join the primary collections.

In engaging in such work, the Society seeks to explain to a wider public the importance of science within the wider culture of the nation. Scientific ideas and discoveries have long inspired writers and artists and there are many overlapping areas of interest – in light, colour, in natural history and landscape, and in notions of time and space, to name just a few. The Society has a contemporary concern with diversity, to ensure that science and scientists provide a welcoming environment and career structure for all citizens. And of course, the organisation has reported upon, and maintains an active interest in, contemporary scientific topics with societal impact. These include, but are not limited to, issues of biodiversity, climate change, the role of AI, developments in genetic technologies, and human health. This project will be in collaboration with the Library and Diversity and Inclusion teams.

On matters of diversity and inclusion the Society engages internally, in its relationship with the public, and within the scientific community; it is expected that whatever the eventual subject focus of the project, the successful candidate's work will allow the Society to widen its engagement with communities outside of its traditional sphere of influence.

An Artist in Residence

The Royal Society is seeking expressions of interest, with a view to collaborating with an artist in residence, for a short period. This 3- to 6-month residency at 6-9 Carlton House Terrace, the Royal Society's headquarters, is intended as an experiment. The object will be to produce artworks, performances, literature, or other humanities-based outputs, which would be capable of eventual exhibition, potentially at the Royal Society's Summer Science Exhibition (July 2025). The budget for the project is up to £30,000.

It is expected that the artist will use this opportunity to reflect upon the idea of an inclusive and diverse scientific workforce. Part of the Society's mission is to aid in producing systemic change across the sector, working with other stakeholders, and this project aims to encourage such change. The residency will coincide with the anniversary (in March 2025) of the first women scientists being elected as Fellows of the Royal Society; and therefore, women in STEM, and particularly in areas of under-representation (in fields such as AI, physical sciences and engineering) will receive the most attention from the Society's selection panel.

We are looking for an imaginative individual, who can demonstrate interests which coincide with the Society's own, and who can articulate a clear, reasoned, line of enquiry to pursue during the residency. We understand that this will be a process of exploration and discovery for the artist concerned, and their ideas may not yet be fully formed. However, a scheme which begins to articulate how a partnership with the Royal Society will further the artist's thinking and career will be essential.

The successful resident will be based at Carlton House Terrace, but once embedded within the organisation, and upon making contacts with the Fellowship, may wish to travel elsewhere (for example to laboratories, or to sites of fieldwork) to further their project.

The artist will nominate their own outputs during the project, in consultation with the Royal Society's contact member of staff. There is potential for exhibiting work (in the case of visual artists), or showcasing music, dance or other material (in the case of performance artists) during or at the end of the project, notably at the Royal Society's premier annual event, the July Summer Science Exhibition. At the end of the project, the Society might also wish to purchase a works, or works, to add to its permanent art collections.

In addition to the artworks produced, the successful artist in residence will be asked to write a brief 4-page report at the end of the project, outlining the activity undertaken, and commenting on the utility of the residency.

Eligibility

The Society expects to appoint an early career artist who has not previously taken part in a residency scheme of this type. Candidates should be eligible to work in the U.K. and should not be in full-time higher education.

Chronology and selection

Candidates should submit the attached expression of interest form, outlining their career to date, their areas of interest in science, and a project proposal. The closing date for this is **Thursday 12 December**, at 6:00pm.

Expression of interest will be reviewed by the Library and Diversity and Inclusion teams at the Society. A long list of applicants will be asked to provide more information including a budget. All provided details will be utilised in the following stages.

A Royal Society panel will meet, to select a shortlist of candidates for interview, based upon submitted documents. A selection of potential artist-residents will be invited for interview, to explain and expand upon their ideas.

The eventual residency would not constitute an offer of employment. The residency would be in the form of a contract for services, with specified terms and conditions.