Royal Academy of Arts major redevelopment gets go-ahead

08/11/2013

Reveal, Celebrate and Explore is a core component of the Burlington Project, the RA's wider masterplan by the award-winning architect Sir David Chipperfield RA CBE, to provide world-class learning and visitor facilities across the RA's two main buildings: Burlington House and Burlington Gardens. The transformation provided by the masterplan is the most significant in the academy's history since it moved to Piccadilly in 1869, and will be completed in time for the academy's 250th anniversary in 2018.

Carole Souter, Chief Executive of Heritage Lottery Fund, said: "The Royal Academy of Arts is steeped in history and tradition as well as being one of the capital's most highly respected centres of artistic excellence. These major plans bring together the best of old and new in one coherent, streamlined whole. We recognise the need for urgent restoration work and are delighted that this will be achieved alongside the creation of a state-of-the art learning spaces and the implementation of conservation apprenticeships and student placements."

The redevelopment will unite the sites of Burlington House and Burlington Gardens with a public central link, creating an arts campus of just over two acres in the heart of central London. The link will increase visibility of the RA schools, which are currently hidden from view. The integration of the schools into the experience of the visitor will reveal the academy's important role in education and engage audiences with our long tradition of training artists.

In Burlington Gardens, internal historic features along with the grand north façade and statuary will be carefully restored, generating conservation apprenticeships, new jobs, and opportunities for heritage trainees. Together, a purpose-built learning centre and 300-seat, day-lit, auditorium will give the RA dedicated learning spaces, creating a new home for learning and debate, where visitors can take part in a vibrant and enhanced programme of activities throughout the year.

For the first time, the public will have the opportunity to freely experience innovative displays featuring items from the RA's collections in Burlington Gardens and the link. The project will also enhance the digital interpretation and wider online accessibility of the collections.

Christopher Le Brun, President of the Royal Academy of Arts, said: "We are extremely grateful to HLF for their lead support, and our other valued supporters for their generosity towards this ambitious project. With their backing, and planning permission in place, we are on course to engage the public as never before with the essential features that distinguish us as an Academy – the Royal Academy Schools, the membership of Royal Academicians, and of course our unique collections and heritage."

The Burlington Project has received significant grants of £1million from the Wolfson Foundation and £500,000 from the Foyle Foundation, along with support from other trusts, foundations and individuals, towards the total project cost for the redevelopment of Burlington Gardens of £36million. Construction works are due to take place between 2015 and 2017, in time for the public re-opening of the building at the start of 2018.

The RA Collection, Burlington House and Burlington Gardens are of great importance to the history of British art and architecture. In 2018, Reveal, Celebrate and Explore will culminate with a wide range of events celebrating the RA's rich 250 year history and heritage, drawing together our architecture, the collections and the stories of people and occupants past, and reaching a broader public than ever before.

Notes to editors

The Royal Academy of Arts was founded by King George III in 1768. It has a unique position in being an independent, privately funded institution led by eminent artists and architects whose purpose is to be a clear, strong voice for art and artists. Its public programme promotes the creation, enjoyment and appreciation of the visual arts through exhibitions, education and debate. The RA moved to its permanent home at Burlington House, a Grade II listed 17th century building in 1869. 6 Burlington Gardens was designed by Sir James Pennethorne (1801-1871) and opened by Queen Victoria in 1870 as the Senate House of the University of London. The RA acquired Burlington Gardens in 2001, re-launching it in 2012 as its new space for contemporary art and architecture.

HLF's £12.7million grant includes the development grant of £458,700 that was given to the RA towards developing the scheme at the first-round pass in 2012.

Further information

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