

STEPHEN FRIEDMAN GALLERY

The Guardian

Royal Academy's Summer Exhibition showcases the world

8 June 2017

Hannah Ellis-Petersen

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Royal Academy of
Arts

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Full House by Sean Scully, and Black Path (Bunhill Fields) by Cornelia Parker, at the Royal Academy's Summer Exhibition in London. Photograph: Smiejkowska/Rex/Shutterstock

This year's Summer Exhibition at the Royal Academy will centre on diversity, moving the focus away from familiar European artists and instead "open our doors to the world".

The 2017 edition of the [Summer Exhibition](#), which next year celebrates its 250th anniversary and is still the world's largest open-submission art exhibition, was curated by painter and printmaker Eileen Cooper.

Cooper, known best for her colourful, stylised paintings of women, had her first work selected for the Summer Exhibition as a student in the 1970s. She said she wanted to display artists who have never come close to the Royal Academy in the past.

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“We couldn’t think of one slogan to sum it up, which is a real drawback,” Cooper recently told the Financial Times. “Our aim is to bring something fresh to the show by finding emerging talent and recruiting more artists from countries as disparate as [the Democratic Republic of the] Congo, Peru, Spain and [India](#), as well as Turkey and Kurdistan.”

She added: “I don’t want to focus on personal politics but we have deliberately looked further afield from the home nations. This year we have an exhibition that’s very rich in terms of geography - we’ve tried to open our doors to the world.”

Entering the Royal Academy’s imposing courtyard, visitors are greeted by Windsculpture VI, a colourful fibreglass sculpture by the Nigerian-British artist [Yinka Shonibare](#), who was also on the selection panel. Cooper described it as a wonderful work, “exploring the notion of harnessing motion and freezing it in a moment of time”.