

Press Release

Thursday 4 May 2023

## BRIDGET RILEY UNVEILS HER FIRST CEILING PAINTING AT THE BRITISH SCHOOL AT ROME

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The latest work by one of the world's most celebrated artists, Bridget Riley, a painted ceiling for the British School at Rome (BSR), will be unveiled on **Thursday 4 May 2023**.

Bridget Riley has created many murals and wall paintings but this is her first ceiling painting. Entitled *Verve*, the large-scale work has been installed in the foyer of the BSR, covering the barrel vaults of the ceiling and using her 'Egyptian palette'.

Bridget Riley has strong ties with the BSR, including an exhibition of her work which was presented at the BSR in 1996. More recently, since 2016 she has endowed The Bridget Riley Fellowship, which provides an opportunity for a young painter to spend six months at the BSR to develop their work.

For 100 years, world-class researchers and contemporary artists have been nurtured at the BSR, Britain's leading fine arts and humanities research institute abroad. Founded in 1901, it is based in the Edwin Lutyens-designed British Pavilion created for the International Exhibition of 1911, and is located immediately adjacent to the Villa Borghese gardens and Italy's Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna.

Since its foundation in 1901, the BSR has brought together established leaders and rising stars of the academic and fine arts worlds to research and develop their work in its exceptional, multidisciplinary community. Its alumni are an impressive list of critically acclaimed artists, architects and scholars including Barbara Walker, Denzil Forrester, Gillian Ayres, Cornelia Parker, Chantal Joffe, Julian Opie, Laure Prouvost, Bob & Roberta Smith, Mark Wallinger, Alison Wilding, Cerith Wyn Evans, David Abulafia, Mary Beard, Nicholas Cullinan, Penelope Curtis, Nicholas Purcell, Bob Allies and Will Alsop.

The unveiling of her new work *Verve* in Rome coincides with the opening of the retrospective exhibition, *Bridget Riley: Wall Works 1983 – 2023* at the Galerie Max Hetzler, Potsdamer Straße 77-87, Berlin on 9 June 2023. From her first wall decoration for the Royal Liverpool University Hospital in 1983, inspired by a visit to Egypt in 1979-80 where she saw the Tombs of the Nobles at Luxor, wall painting has been an important strand in the artist's practice over 40 years. Highlights of the exhibition include *St Mary's Hospital Decorations* 1987 & 2014; *Composition with Circles* series 1997-2012; *Arcadia* series 2007-2009; *Quiver* series 2013-2014; *Measure for Measure* series 2016-2019; and *Cosmos* group 2017. Other important works include *Messengers*, National Gallery, London

2019; *A Bolt of Colour*, Chinati Foundation, Marfa 2017; and the artist's recent wall paintings 2020-2022.

**Bridget Riley, Artist**, said: "I would like to thank the British School at Rome for its invitation to paint the vaulting barrels of Edwin Lutyens' beautiful ceiling. It was the beginning of an exhilarating visual chase. Exhilarating but not without hazard. Through many pleasurable challenges, encouraged by Mark Getty's enthusiasm, I pursued this perceptual adventure and played my 'colour acoustics' with great delight. Looking up, the colour of the skies offers a glimpse of nature in her most promising and serene mood."

**Mark Getty, Chair of the BSR Council**, said: "We are thrilled that Bridget Riley has developed, executed, and given this wall painting to the BSR. It will adorn our entrance for decades to come, and pronounce clearly the strong relationship which exists between British and Commonwealth artists and thinkers, and the Roman and Italian world."

The BSR will open once a month by appointment to provide public access to *Verve*, starting on 25 May. Visits will include a guided tour and can be booked online at: [bsr.ac.uk/?p=41696](https://bsr.ac.uk/?p=41696). The BSR also runs a regular Wednesday evening events programme which is free and open to the public, enabling visitors to enjoy Bridget Riley's ceiling painting regularly through the year.

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**Notes to Editors:**

**The British School at Rome**

The British School at Rome is the largest British centre of interdisciplinary research excellence based in Europe, supporting the full range of arts, humanities and social sciences.

The BSR awards full-board residential scholarships and fellowships in Rome to artists and scholars from across the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth for periods from 3 to 12 months. BSR awards are considered to enjoy substantial prestige within their respective fields. All scholars, artists and award holders share the same accommodation in the BSR's premises near Villa Borghese. As well as access to one of Rome's leading English-language art and archaeology libraries, awardees are lodged in the BSR's on-site accommodation and are catered for in the communal dining room. The

fine art awards provide artists with purpose-built, fully equipped, live-in studios and workshop facilities.

Awards, based on an international, open access application system, are made in the following fields: Archaeology of Italy and the Mediterranean; Late Antique and Medieval History; Renaissance and Enlightenment studies; Modern Italian Studies; Architectural History; Architecture including Landscape Architecture; contemporary visual arts practice.