

# Government Art Collection: Commissions: Now and Then

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The Government Art Collection plays an important role in commissioning British artists to make new works of art. This display looks at 60 years of commissioning and unveils a brand new work of art by **Mel Brimfield**, inspired by the history of performance art and the London 2012 Olympics and Paralympic Games.

Highlights include a rare series of city scenes created for the British Embassy in Rio de Janeiro by **John Piper** (1949); **L.S. Lowry**'s painting recording Queen Elizabeth II's coronation procession in 1953; and a series of colour transparencies of the British Embassy in Paris in the day and evening light by **Catherine Yass** (1999).

On show for the first time is the Collection's latest commission **Mel Brimfield**'s interactive sculpture *4'33" (Prepared Pianola for Roger Bannister)* (2012). It is inspired by the Olympic Games – in particular Roger Bannister's dramatic participation in the 1500m race in 1952 – as well as John Cage's seminal piece of minimalist music, *4'33"* (1952) and the playful movement of Kinetic Art. It aims to investigate the relationship between performance and chance – press the button you might see it in action.

The Government Art Collection is one of the most important collections of British art, with 13,500 works dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the present day displayed in 420 government buildings worldwide. The display is part of the Whitechapel Gallery's programme of opening up collections for everyone and is part of the London 2012 Festival.



This display is a collaboration between the Government Art Collection and the Whitechapel Gallery. The exhibition is touring to Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery and Ulster Museum, Belfast in 2012–3.

The Whitechapel Gallery's Collections Programme is supported by:

