



The RGS Gazette

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RGS - A School in Transition



By Oscar Panayi - Year 8

Interview by Tom Sullivan Year 12 & Oscar Panayi Year 8

This year, we have seen a ridiculous amount of bad luck that almost seems to defy probability: increased rates of homelessness, bushfires in California and that whole pandemic thing didn't do us a lot of favours either... But even in the idyllic grounds of the RGS, COVID-19 has caused struggles and unprecedented chaos, with exam cancellations, home learning, and now our new return to school has given staff and students more important things to worry about. A few weeks ago, we spoke to the Headmaster, who has had to adapt quickly and allow RGS to evolve into this notorious 'new normal'.

One of the biggest hurdles to overcome was the challenge of converting all students to online learning. We'll all remember the partially disappearing Teams

backgrounds and endless emoji registers... The Headmaster did, in fact, admit that "turning the school into a virtual environment was quite a challenge." One of the best strategies, he found, was encouraging the staff to share their strengths across the team; many of the more tech-savvy teachers called upon to help those with less experience. The staff inevitably had to adapt to help each other through this unorthodox way of life, which in turn made all the difference to the vast majority of students.

But not all work took place online, as RGS also became responsible for many key-workers' children, providing them with lessons in person and supplying pastoral support in a time of deep uncertainty. The HM was "hugely proud" of the way staff and students

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adapted, whatever their home situation, and continued to conduct themselves with diligence and respect. Welcoming the Sixth Form and lower years back for staggered in-school sessions towards the end of term was hugely rewarding, and many students have described what a joy it was to return to school in a non-virtual format!

There are also ongoing financial challenges for the school and, as with every organisation, RGS has been hit hard by the pandemic. The Headmaster described how the school takes 8 million pounds to run each year, and the pandemic has inevitably made changes to how the school and governors will approach its economic decisions and in the coming months. "The school has been left with a significant financial hole, that at some point we've got to try and sort out" Hopefully, with a vaccine on the way, we will soon see our national economy and school finances begin to rejuvenate.

The final, constant challenge that I'm sure we can all relate to is the fluctuating and unpredictable nature of government guidance, making it hard for schools to plan ahead of time and anticipate what learning will look like, even over the next few weeks. Masks, for example, presented a particular controversy,

in that, as the Head pointed out: "One day everyone has to wear masks, the next it's up to the Heads!" And with masks being such a personal precaution, it's certainly one to get right.

However, the Headmaster remains optimistic, even having faced all of

this year's challenges. "There are no two days the same and, in a way, that's what I love about my job!"

We would like to thank the Headmaster for his time and for giving us such a thought-provoking and detailed interview.

Joe Biden: Change you can believe in?

By Zach Wilson - Year 12

On November 7, history was made as major news outlets declared Joe Biden the winner of the 2020 presidential election. Whilst, at the time of writing, President Trump hasn't yet conceded defeat, Biden has already won 306 electoral votes: thirty-six more than the 270-threshold for victory. Among his pledges for the next four years are a national test and trace programme, criminal justice reform, and a 2 trillion-dollar investment in green energy. But he is not home-safe. Numerous social, cultural, and political obstructions lie between Biden and achieving his presidential ambitions, and with the country more divided than ever, it is time to ask: what challenges will Biden face as president?

First, he will have to contend with President Trump alleging 'widespread voter fraud'. This is in spite of now-ex-electoral-security-official Christopher Krebs declaring the election the 'most secure in US history', and world governments sending their congratulations to Biden. Fortunately, according to politics professor Joshua Sandman, intense congressional and political pressure would force Trump out of office quickly if he attempted to stay beyond Biden's inauguration on January 20.

Perhaps then, Trump himself is not the biggest issue, but Trumpism. While it is true that 'Sleepy Joe' - as the President often refers to him - has won overall, it will be hard for him to ignore the 73.6 million Americans who voted for the incumbent, many of whom concur with Trump in doubting the

election's legitimacy. In his first speech as president-elect, Biden pledged to be a president 'who doesn't see red states and blue states, only the United States'. Indeed, national unity is a platform on which Biden can achieve a broad consensus not only within his own party, but within factions of the Republican party as well. However, this will be difficult to achieve when half of the electorate disagree with him on countless other fundamental issues, including his right to the presidency.

Significant opposition exists not only nationwide, but also in Congress, where support for the president is paramount if he is to deliver on any major policies. While the Democrats have secured control of the House of Representatives with a slim majority, it is not yet clear which party will have control of the Senate. What is clear is that dissent within the party's conservative faction may be enough to swing any potential congressional vote in favour of the Republicans, even if Biden's party ends up in control of both chambers.

Not only will Biden - who has been widely described by the media and fellow politicians as a 'moderate' - have to deal with the more conservative members of his party, but also the increasingly vocal progressive faction. Chief among them is Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and her 'Squad' of young, diverse, and progressive, congresswomen. Despite pledging support to the president-elect for most of his campaign, they have recently urged him to go beyond his current \$2



Photo from NYTIMES

trillion climate change plan and adopt a more ambitious 'Green New Deal' costing at least \$10 trillion.

Biden has a herculean task ahead of him. He faces a lukewarm reception at every level of government, across the country and, indeed, the world. Nonetheless, he and his running-mate Kamala Harris seem confident. Preceding Biden's victory speech, vice-president-elect Harris admitted that 'the road ahead will not be easy'. But she went on to say, 'America is ready, and so are Joe and I'. With questions already mounting about the president-elect's legitimacy, and his ability to lead, one can only hope that Harris is right; if not for Biden's sake, than for the sake of America and, indeed, the world.

Climate Change: A Hot Topic

By Jai Singh - Year 7

Climate change is essentially the process of our planet's temperature varying. Since the Industrial Revolution in the 1900s, scientists have concluded that the Earth is 1°C warmer. This may not seem like much, but it's having a huge impact on our planet. But why?

Greenpeace, an organisation that attempts to raise awareness for climate change, states that the warming of the Earth is mainly down to the burning of fossil fuels – coal, oil and gas. The effects of global warming are so disastrous that the Arctic and Antarctic ice caps are melting, resulting in the near extinction of certain species, a further rise in global temperatures, and more frequent tsunamis. Global warming is also causing more bushfires throughout the world in areas such as in Europe, Russia and Australia, leading to problems with farming and agriculture. It is also altering rainfall patterns, hence the increased risk of droughts and catastrophic floods.

Climate change has therefore become a top priority of the political agenda in many countries' governments. 189 countries have united to take action against these possibly devastating effects, signing a treaty called the Paris Agreement. The long-term goal of the agreement is to keep the increase of global temperature to under 2°C above pre-industrial temperatures (those from before the Industrial Revolution). Although, some of the countries that emit the most gases are doing the least about climate change, such as the United States. Luckily though, the UK is actually one of the top 10 countries making the most progress against climate change (according to the Climate Change Performance Index 2020: a tool that compares countries' efforts to combat climate change). In addition, Boris Johnson has promised to spend £12 billion to neutralise carbon emissions by 2050. He will also ban the sale of diesel cars by 2030, a move that has been lauded by Greenpeace. Cars account for one-fifth of all carbon emissions in the UK so this move is indeed a huge milestone for action against global warming.

Scientists predict that if we do not adapt our current behaviour then by 2030 we will be at the point of no return. This means we will have caused irreversible damage to ecosystems and quality of life. So the time to act is now. But how can we reduce the damage that has already been done? First, businesses could replace fossil fuels with renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind power. Secondly, as the meat and dairy industry is one of the most important contributors to climate change, it is possible that everyone could eat less meat. Another effective way of reducing carbon emissions is to "go green" when travelling: walk and cycle more and make fewer journeys by car and plane.

Extinction Rebellion is a well-known organisation that creates awareness to promote the cause, by conducting non-violent protests. Unlike other groups, the members of this organisation hold up traffic by handcuffing themselves to the gates of factories and lying down in the middle of the road.

However, it's not just nations and organisations that can change the world – it's individuals too. Greta Thunberg is a prime example. She is a 17-year-old Swedish activist who has been championing the case of global warming for years. She has been so successful in her endeavours that she has even been invited to talk with world leaders about climate change on multiple occasions. At the 2019 US Climate Action Summit, she said, "This is all wrong. I shouldn't be up here. I should be back in school on the other side of the ocean. Yet you all come to us young people for hope..." Thunberg has made a fair point, but there is opposition, criticising her for intervening with governments' plans. This is also a valid suggestion.

Despite the opposition, it is clear that the human race has less than 10 years to change the world entirely. Can we beat the tick of the clock?

A surprising fact about RGS

By Eli King - Year 8

RGS has been a proud Grammar School for 450 years. But its interesting past remains a mystery to most students. Let's dive in...

During the 1530s, the king, Henry VIII was seizing multiple religious sites around the country. In the town centre of High Wycombe, The Hospital of St John the Baptist was a brotherhood 'care home' for the elderly.

The king's confiscations reached our small market town, and the ownership of the site was up for grabs. During April 1549, Sir Edward Peckham took ownership of the land on the condition that a grammar school be set up in the next two years.



Elizabeth I granted the school a royal charter in 1562

RGS remained here for 366 years, and primarily taught Greek and Latin (which influenced the school's emphasis on language). The site at Easton Street saw many changes, until 1915, when more land was bought on Amersham Hill. The school was moved to its current place, where we currently see 200 new students every year.

Features

How much will technology change by the time Year 7s are in Year 13?

By Oscar Panayi - Year 8



Photo by Jessica Lewis on Unsplash

Technology has been used in education before, but this year it has quite predictably exploded after billions of children were stuck at home for half the school year. We decided to find out how far this would go, and what a school day may look like in a few years' time. So, how much will learning technologies have advanced by the time current year 7s reach year 13?

To answer this question, we must first look to the past, and in interviewing a current year 13, we were surprised at how much technology had changed. A 6th former told us, "In Year 7, there was little to no technology use compared to the present. A few years ago, digital work was printed and handed in in person due to the unavailability of cloud-based platforms such as OneNote or Teams. iPads were not in use and online work was done either in the library, in the computer centre or at home on a parent's computer."

Technology has clearly rocketed since then. Looking to the future, technology will likely increase at the same rate, if not faster. The interview also illuminated the fact

that large scale use of technology in school is still a very recent phenomenon with its use spanning only a few years. There is still a lot more to come.

Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality are technologies that have caused a rush of excitement in recent years.

Imagine sitting in a history class and seeing the Coliseum up close or sitting in the Globe Theatre watching Macbeth during English. The prospect of having school trips to these places while sat in the back of a classroom is a massive jump forward for technology. Flexible displays are also an exciting new technology that current y7s may benefit from. A flexible, rollable, paper thin LED that could be stuck to any wall or desk, eliminating the need for iPads. It is still worth saying however that both these technologies are very much in their infancy and require further development before large scale use in schools. The question of whether government funding would allow for this is also problematic.

While it is obviously important to stay realistic about this, technology still has a lot more to do in our education system. A current y7s school day in a few years time will likely be very different.

To quote Sir Ken Robinson:
"education doesn't need to be reformed — it needs to be transformed"

Are you my teacher?

By Bilal Raja - Year 8

Mr Balaam:

What made you choose a career in teaching?

I knew early on that teaching was what I wanted to do. It was when I took German, that a passion for languages began to surface. My teachers at school tried hard to put me off teaching but I'm glad I didn't take their advice.

What is your best teaching moment?

It would be when I invited two boys to give a presentation about their career in the lighting business, for TAA. They've both carved successful careers in the industry and it was exciting to see them sharing their passion and to see current boys being inspired.

What is your worst teaching moment?

I was doing a French oral exam. 3 minutes in, I glanced at the tape recorder and realised that I'd pressed play, not record! The sudden panic wasn't pleasant. I had to interrupt the student and restart the exam. Luckily, the boy was good about it.

What about you would surprise students?

In the last 5 years, I've become a coaster fiend. I started out in Disney World, then bought an annual pass to Thorpe Park. It took a while, but now I will take on anything! My favourite roller coaster is the Smiler at Alton Towers and my 11-year-old daughter enjoys Colossus at Thorpe Park.

If you won the lottery and decided to give up teaching, what would you do instead?

If I won the lottery, it would be a miracle! Though, if it happened, I would spend time developing resources for my website projects and perhaps drive a bus, but I'd have to do something: sitting around is never an option for me.

The Arts.

“We all need the thrill of watching a live Performing Arts production!”

By Chris Wilson - Year 12



In these uncertain times, one hope of consistency is the biennial school musical. Auditions have taken place and the cast have been selected, ready for rehearsals to start. The musical is scheduled to run from Wednesday 24 to Saturday 27 March 2021 - subject to change. To get a better idea of what this musical is and what it's like running something as monumental as the school musical during a pandemic, I talked to Mr Mullaly, the newly appointed Director of Music.

In previous years, RGS have performed iconic musicals such as 'Carousel' (2015), 'My Fair Lady' (2017), and of course the hit success 'Les Misérables' back in 2013 (viewed just under 2 million times on YouTube). These are all 'middle-period' musicals, set in the 19th to early 20th centuries. In contrast, 'In the Heights' was written by the award-winning Lin Manuel Miranda in 2006, and people have picked up on this, with many mentioning how 'different' and 'revolutionary' it is

from previous RGS productions. Whilst it does have a modern twist, it may not be as unconventional as one may think. As Mr Mullaly says, our last musical, 'West Side Story' in 2019, was set in the 50s, and "you could say that the themes mentioned for 'In the Heights' are exactly the same as in 'West Side Story'".

'In the Heights' takes place in the Latino neighbourhood of Washington Heights over a three-day period. During this short time, the audience meets a wide range of colourful characters. The show's main focus is on the romances between two couples in Washington Heights. Usnavi (played by Jaeyan Lian & Rory Clark) is the owner of a small grocery store and dreams of moving to the Dominican Republic. He falls in love with the tough Vanessa (Tabby Douglas & Grace Short): a salon worker who hopes of escaping downtown and getting her own apartment. Benny (Varun Dinesh & Adam Buswell) is Usnavi's

best friend who is captivated by Nina (Molly O'Mahony & Sienna Rebello) - his boss's daughter. In each character, we are introduced to a refreshingly lively but honest story which communicates the issues of social justice, demographics, and the dynamics of romance as well as conflict. Mr Mullaly emphasises how 'In the Heights' also explores the "further theme of home and never forgetting your roots". This sense of community that the show celebrates seems particularly topical currently, where our world is having to learn to come together.

So, what is the inspiration behind choosing this musical? Although rarely listening to hip-hop, Mr Mullaly says he has "huge admiration for the worldwide phenomenon that is Hamilton". Its combination of rap with traditional music has created a "lyrical and poetic rendition of storytelling" and he hopes this method of narrative will be one of the main attractions to audiences. It's also a chance for Mr Mullaly to put his own stamp on this RGS tradition. "It made sense for my first show as Director of Music to take the department in a slightly new direction," he says. 'In the Heights' was therefore an ideal choice, providing catchy, upbeat songs packed full of emotion "whilst maintaining that sense of nostalgia and tradition that suits our school". With a film adaptation scheduled for release in the summer of 2021, 'In the Heights' couldn't be a more topical show for RGS right now.

The main difference to the normal running of the show is the rehearsals. With no large gatherings, Mr Mullaly and his team are having to come up with creative solutions. Some may have noticed the two names given for each character. This is because, for the

first time, all main roles have been double cast. "It is simply too unpredictable to know what might or might not happen in the next few weeks," says Mr Mullaly, and this method will give reassurance to both the team and cast that the show will go on. Mr Mullaly tells me too that "a huge amount of work has been going on behind the scenes regarding risk assessments to make this a viable project". Everyone involved has signed a Cast Agreement that sets out social distancing measures and the same will apply to band rehearsals, when

they start. From a musician's point of view, the score is "incredibly exciting to play", and Mr Mullaly is certain that our students will rise to the challenge. After hearing some of the music whilst listening to a few percussionists practise, I can promise that 'In the Heights' has some incredible music that will have you humming and toe tapping its tunes long after the curtain falls. Despite the restrictions for cast, crew and orchestra, the show will go on. Mr Mullaly sums up how important this musical is to the school: "After a difficult period of

time for the Arts as a whole in a COVID-19 pandemic, I think we all need the thrill of going back to watch live Performing Art productions, and I can assure everyone that 'In the Heights' is packed with energy and a real 'feel-good' message". This musical offers hope in these peculiar times.

If you or your parents have an interest or experience in set design, costumes, publicity, graphic design, or photography / videography, please email Mr Mullaly (fxm@rgshw.com).

The Big Short: A film that makes a fine drama out of a crisis

By Deven Pangrekar - Year 12

At the tail-end of 2015, Regency and Paramount Pictures released 'The Big Short', adapted from the book of the same name by Michael Lewis, which quickly received high praise from critics and became an awards favourite, garnering over thirty-seven accolades and eighty nominations. This dark but often comic drama based on true events, centres around a handful of finance experts that predicted the subprime mortgage crisis of 2008 and narrates the story of one of the darkest chapters in recent economic history. Tasked with handling such a significant and sensitive subject matter, co-writer and director Adam McKay delivers a film that impressively manages to be as enjoyable as it is educational.

As with any high-calibre film, the script and story are only part of what makes the movie click. With an all-star cast, including Academy Award winners Christian Bale and Brad Pitt, as well as Academy Award nominees Steve Carell and Ryan Gosling, giving the audience some stellar performances. Most notably, Bale's acting comes as a true standout, whose dramatic portrayal of Michael Burry, a social outcast, is exceptional. Moreover, Carell, who plays Mark Baum, is particularly impressive, as he once again proves that his talent ranges far beyond playing the comic

Michael from 'The Office'. Gosling's Jared Vennett is also an exceptionally entertaining character whose interactions with his co-workers has to be one of the highlights of the film.



Adam McKay is definitely more than deserving of his Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay, along with Charles Randolph, as the script is exquisitely crafted. It allows for anyone who isn't too familiar with the world of Wall Street to still follow the plot, the script successfully breaking down complex aspects and unscrambling confusing terminology for the masses. McKay's stylistic choices also further reels in the audience;

with a mix of documentary style shaky cam shots which emphasise the reality of the story, entertaining and informative fourth wall breaking, and celebrity cameos from Margot Robbie, Selena Gomez and Anthony Bourdain to explain fancy terms like 'subprime' and 'CDOs', this film leaves little room to complain. However, the perhaps excessive explaining throughout might irritate viewers that are more knowledgeable in the economic field and don't want the flow of the film to be interrupted so often. Moreover, the film also utilises humour at a few points where it can undercut some of the dramatic effect of hard-hitting scenes. Be that as it may, a few nit-pick issues do little to halt this otherwise phenomenal film.

Overall, 'The Big Short' impresses with its finely crafted comic take on the financial crisis and the discovery of the corruption within the system. It is an extremely informative and useful watch for students of Economics or Business and even for people remotely curious about world affairs. Brilliant humour, strong acting, and an applaudable script means that this near masterpiece has the ingredients required to make it worth your time.

How I stopped worrying about lockdown and learnt to love reading again

By William McLaughlin - Year 12

A couple of years ago I came to a slightly worrying realisation, I didn't know how to read. Not that I had lost my grasp of phonics, or forgotten the rules of grammar, but that I was simply unable to sit with a book and just read it.

When I was younger, I found it easy to get lost in stories, speeding through whatever novel came my way, and truly enjoying it. As I got older though, and time spent on my phone took up a larger and larger part of my day, my willingness to pick up a book started to fade. The ones I did receive sat on my bookshelf, and though I'd intend to read them at some point, they remained unopened. Whilst I always wanted to start reading again, I knew the benefits, whenever it came to the choice between picking up a book or going back to brutally murdering my enemies on Call of Duty, I could never bring myself to choose the former. One day however, possibly inspired by a rousing assembly from a teacher from the English department or a strange wish for self-improvement, I made the brave decision that I wanted to read again.

Unfortunately, this decision was the easy part, and for me at least, starting to read was considerably more difficult than just picking up a book. Although I was terrible at reading, I was brilliant at developing excuses for why I couldn't read at that particular moment: "I could read now, but it's dinner in 30 minutes, that would definitely interrupt my reading flow, I suppose it's another episode of Breaking Bad then, what an absolute shame", or, I would replace possible reading time diving down a YouTube rabbit hole, going from last night's football highlights to a video describing the ingenious design of the aluminium beverage can, every time a video ended thinking that I'd just watch one



Photo by Alice Hampson on Unsplash

more and then stop. Through my procrastination I completely failed at my goal, and reverted back to my comfortable rotation of YouTube, Netflix, Snapchat and Xbox.

The perceptive readers among you, however, may be confused, as the title of the article implies that I have managed to start reading again, and that's because I have. Since the start of lockdown, I have changed my ways and have read a considerable amount, 'The Catcher in the Rye', 'Jane Eyre' and 'One flew over the Cuckoo's Nest' being some of the more famous examples and, surprisingly enough, I thoroughly enjoyed them. So, this begs the question, 'how did I go from chronic procrastinator to reading god?' well, I didn't, and I am probably still just as addicted to my phone as before, especially YouTube. The way I began reading again was far different to my original strategy, because my new approach was to read just ten minutes a day. This seemingly strange decision was itself ironically inspired by a YouTube video, which was about building habits. It suggested that by setting yourself a very small goal, one that is impossible to justify skipping, and building a habit of it,

you can achieve much more than you would have otherwise. It worked surprisingly well, most of the time I would keep going after having started, and on the days when I really couldn't be bothered, it was fine to stop after those ten minutes were up. The most difficult barrier, picking up the book, had become a tiny commitment, and once I had cleared that obstacle it was easy to read. It almost felt like cheating, and I've read more in the last few months than I've done in years.

Admittedly, while in some ways I did write this article merely to show off about my new reading accomplishments, I think my story can prove to be edifying. With whatever change you wish to make to your life, I would recommend that you start small, with the important thing being consistency. You could start running or going to the gym, but as I'm sure you would agree these habits seem pathetic in comparison to the monumental benefits reading could have on your life. If you keep it up, you could even start using words like edifying to pretend to be clever, just like I do.

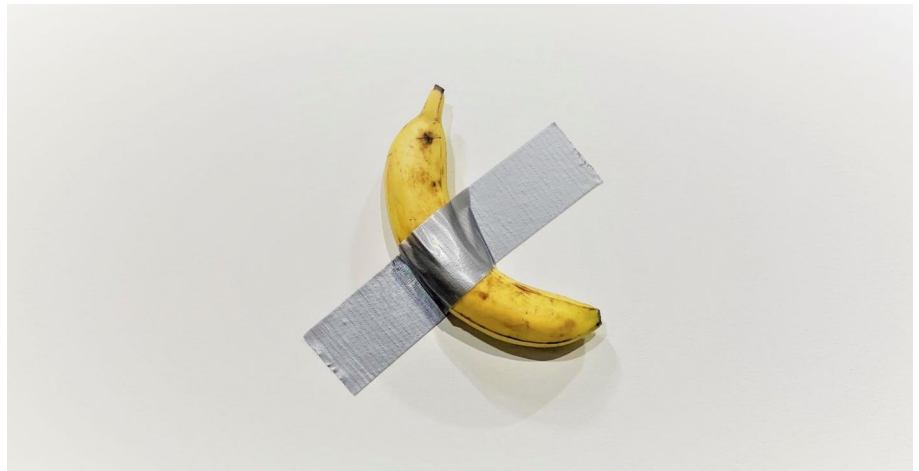
Top banana or a \$150,000 art con? - What is modern art and why are people buying it?

By Keshav Anand - Year 12

You walk into a prestigious art gallery. You look around, admire the beautiful art compiled by critics and curators alike. The next room you walk into is seemingly empty. But then, your eyes are drawn towards a tiny form taking centre stage. There, pitched in the centre, is an empty Texas BBQ Pringles tube. Before it lies a plaque entitled "Society". Now, this may all sound rather ridiculous but in 2019 at an art fair in Miami an artist collected a clean \$150k for taping a banana to a wall. The story goes a bit deeper than that and poses a wider question that we must ask ourselves: What is art?

The artwork in question was made by Maurizio Cattelan and titled "Comedian". It was displayed at the Art Basel Miami Beach, in which galleries around the world present their work. Three editions of the work were offered up to buyers at \$120,000. The first two sold surprisingly fast. As a result, the third's price was raised. It sold at \$150,000. The buyers didn't even get the original banana or duct tape. Instead, they were given a list of instructions on how to make their own and a certificate of authenticity. So, in theory, anyone could have their own "Comedian". Unfortunately, only people with the certificate are legally owners of the piece, which they can replicate as often as needed with a fresh banana and duct tape. Where some artists spend hundreds for their materials, Cattelan took a trip down to the local supermarket and dived into the fruit aisle, and with this created 'art'. This is because "Comedian" is a conceptual artwork – the banana isn't what matters, it's the idea.

Are you enraged that this man managed to secure the yearly wage of the top 5% five times over? Or astonished at how he scammed the buyers? For a bit more context, Cattelan is known to be quite the clown within the community – look no further than his golden toilet



simply titled "America". So, in fact, "Comedian" was more of an ironic metacommentary, pointing out art's own superficiality, albeit in a rather superficial way. This highlights how important notoriety is within the art world. Everyone can make art. Everyone can tape a banana to a wall. Unfortunately, not everyone is an established artist who can charge thousands for the idea.

"Comedian" is not the only piece of modern art that is scrutinized in this way. Oftentimes, people will look at random splashes of paint in galleries and ask themselves: "What makes this art?". Robert Flórczak, a professor at Prager University, states that art has "gone from the transcendent to the trashy". He goes on to comment how modern art is more about sending a message than applying an artist's talents into making something beautiful. Art has become increasingly liberal in its definition and so artists like Jackson Pollock, who stand at the forefront of abstract expressionism, have found critical success. This results in critics slandering the movement, calling it pompous, meaningless or, as Flórczak put it, "trashy". However, art, by nature, is a tool often used for self-expression. One could argue that placing objective standards upon art would perhaps be detracting from the medium itself. Whatever stance you take, art is a movement and controversy will continue to rise from it.

At the other end of the spectrum, plain white canvases are also criticized – with works such as Ryman's "Bridge" selling for \$20.6 million. Such pieces are a part of the minimalist movement that pulls away from the idea that art needs to mean anything or look "good", instead allowing the beholder to see what they want to see. This comes off as pretentious to anyone who wants to look at professional artwork produced by painters. It also begs the question whether one even needs skill to be an artist.

To a large extent, then, modern art is extremely dependent on notoriety. This is not to say that modern art is bad but if Ryman didn't make "Bridge", would someone be willing to pay over \$20 million for it? At the same time, there are many genuinely talented people being overshadowed due to the rising popularity of 'modern art'. The sheer number of gifted realist painters who are complete unknowns in the art world is disheartening. In fact, one could say it calls into question the legitimacy of the art community as a whole, where success is not simply about how good you are, it's about who you know and who you're known by. Considering how superficial our society is, though, perhaps it's not the art we want that we're getting, but the art that we deserve.

Sports

Rowing at RGS - Don't wait to sign up!

By Ryan Massey - Year 12

Rowing is a sport that, when I was younger, I didn't really think much of. I had never watched rowing on TV – I didn't even think it was televised at all - and I had no idea how to row, but for some reason, I had an itch to try it. Luckily, when I joined RGS, and when I looked at the "Clubs and Societies" booklet as an apprehensive yet excited Year 7, I found rowing was an option. The one-year wait until Year 8 to try it was a long one for me, and it was the same for my friends, as we had all been desperate to get on the water. When our time came to start the Easter Course and begin our training, I finally felt like I was going to fit in at a sports club, which I had never felt before. If I have persuaded prospective rowers to join the club by the end of this, I have faith in the club that they will accommodate you in every way possible.

New beginnings bookend the experience at RGS Rowing. If you haven't really committed to a sport at all in the past, it is still plausible that you could do exceptionally well at the club. This is increasingly more so due to the support that the coaches and fellow year groups provide. This was actually the case with me when I first joined. When I was younger, I never used to think of myself as a sporty person, as I always used to associate exercise with pain. However, joining the club has made me realise that pain can actually be satisfying, and because of this, it has made rowing a whole lot easier to get through. It is a journey that I believe everybody should experience in order to start your sporting lives off well. Rowing also presents the challenge of keeping to an appropriate training schedule every week. It is a known fact that being organised, whether



in a club or academically, is a critical life skill that will definitely stand you in good stead when going to university or college. As an A-Level student, I can confirm that this is certainly the case!

During my 4 years at the club, I can safely say that the most important part of a sport is the people you experience it with, namely coaches and friends. The coaches are primarily there to teach you the sport and to motivate you, but it is also emphatically important to have a great relationship with your coaches, as it can heighten your enjoyment tenfold. Without a doubt, the coaches at the club work tirelessly to enhance our skills in cardio, muscular endurance, and stamina, as well as establishing a fair but firm amount of discipline that is involved in pretty much every sport. Even over lockdown, when it was risky going anywhere outside, the coaches still worked at school several times to set up an indoor-rower training programme and gave out ergs (rowing

machines) for us to take home and exercise on. That shows commitment. Also, having like-minded friends at the club with you along the way is so motivating. Sometimes they have truly saved me from the depths of tiredness, always encouraging me to keep going.

So, if you are reading this article, and desperately want a challenging but highly enjoyable sport, a welcoming exercise environment, great coaches who know all there is to know about the sport, loads of opportunities to race at some of the most prestigious venues in the world, and an opportunity to self-improve and to take some stress off work, then RGS Rowing is without a doubt the sport for you!

If you are interested, please email rgshwrowing@gmail.com for more details.