

## BUST OF GEORGE III



This bust of George III is one of four of the King by the sculptor John Bacon (1740 – 1799).

It was thanks to the patronage of King George III that the Society was afforded the opportunity to move into apartments at Somerset House in 1781, which they occupied for the next 95 years. In 1780 the issue of how best to express the Society's gratitude was discussed – royal favour had given the Society its first opportunity to occupy an elegant building in the heart of London, alongside the Royal Academy of Arts and the Royal Society (a far cry from the taverns and back-rooms we had previously frequented!) It was decided with unanimous support that a portrait bust of the king should be displayed

in the Society's new meeting room at Somerset House, which was purchased at a cost of 100 guineas. The choice of a portrait by Bacon was also a sign of the Society's gratitude – Bacon's likeness was a favourite of the King himself, who seems to have both liked and admired the sculptor.

*“Bacon dressed himself plainly and neatly, took the purest clay, his best modelling tools, a silver syringe for spurting water on the model, instead of spouting it discourteously from his mouth, and was conducted into the royal chamber by Dr. Markham. No man of his day excelled Bacon in that nice tact, which, discriminating between the overstrained and the polite, gives to each person what his rank or sense of his own importance induces him to expect. The king, always a lover of simplicity was pleased with the looks and still more so with the address of the artist... The skill which Bacon showed in this royal bust, and the modest and unaffected bearing of the man, gained much upon the king, who desired him to prepare a copy of it as a present to the University of Gottingen; a third was subsequently carved for his present majesty, and a fourth for the Society of Antiquaries...”*

*The Mirror of Literature, Amusement and Instruction (Volume XV, 1830).*