

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

SIXTH STREET AT CONSTITUTION AVENUE NW WASHINGTON 25 DC • REpublic 7-4215 extension 248

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WASHINGTON, D.C., September 9, 1963. John Walker, Director of the National Gallery of Art, announced today that an exhibition of water colors by J. M. W. Turner (1775-1851) from the collection of the British Museum will open to the public on Sunday, September 15, at 2:00 p.m. in the central gallery on the ground floor. The exhibition comprises 80 works by England's greatest romantic painter, illustrating every phase of the artist's career. It will run through October 13.

The exhibition will afford a rare opportunity to see some of the experimental, personal work of one of the most daring innovators in the history of art. Hailed by modern critics as a precursor of impressionism and even more modern styles, Turner was popular in his own day as a watercolorist primarily for the more finished works of his middle period. Thus many of his more intimate studies remained in his studio until his death, after which over 18,000 drawings and water colors came to the British Museum as the "Turner Bequest". All but one of the pictures in the exhibition come from this group.

The Turner water colors in the British Museum are rarely lent outside Great Britain. Four of the water colors in this exhibition have never left England before.

The selection has been made by Mr. Edward Croft-Murray, Keeper of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum. Mr. Croft-Murray has also prepared the annotated catalogue and written its introduction. The exhibition has been organized by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, by whom it will subsequently be circulated to five other American museums (see attachment).

The earliest water color in the exhibition, Radley Hall, dates from about 1789, when the artist was 14 years old. A precocious painter, Turner had begun exhibiting his drawings in his father's barbershop window at the age of 12, and at 15 had exhibited in the Royal Academy. The Academy elected him an Associate at 24, and in 1802, at 27, he was a full Academician.

(more)

The exhibition includes many examples of his early period, when Turner worked exclusively in water color, in a style close to major watercolorists of his time such as John Robert Cozens.

Taking advantage of the break in the war with France in 1802, he went abroad for the first time, returning with studies of Alpine scenes showing remarkable innovations in technique. The public was shocked by what are now acknowledged masterpieces. "Nothing but incongruity and confusion", one criticism went. "The sea looks like soap and chalk and smoke. The sky is a heap of marble and mountains."

In 1819 Turner visited Venice for the first time. He was to return several times later, and the impressions of Venice that he recorded in the 1830's and 1840's are among the most highly prized of all his work.

Mr. Croft-Murray has accompanied the exhibition to the United States. He will lecture in the Gallery auditorium on "Italian Decorative Painting in England" at 4:00 p.m. on Sunday, September 15. He will also record a guided tour of the exhibition for the Gallery's electronic LecTour guide service.

End

TURNER WATER COLORS  
from the British Museum

ITINERARY

<u>1963</u>	September 15 - October 13	National Gallery of Art Washington, D. C.
	November 1 - 30	The Museum of Fine Arts of Houston Houston, Texas
	December 14, 1963-January 15, 1964	M. H. de Young Memorial Museum San Francisco, California
<u>1964</u>	January 28 - March 1	The Cleveland Museum of Art Cleveland, Ohio
	March 15 - April 15	William Rockhill Nelson Gallery- Atkins Museum Kansas City, Missouri
	May 1 - 31	The Brooklyn Museum Brooklyn 38, New York

(After October 13, 1963, inquiries should be directed to  
Mrs. John A. Pope, Chief, Smithsonian Institution Traveling  
Exhibition Service, Washington 25, D.C. National 8-1810, ext. 5391)