

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

SIXTH STREET AT CONSTITUTION AVENUE NW WASHINGTON DC 20565 • 737-4215 extension 224

Washington, D. C. October 25, 1968. Selected paintings from the vast British art collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon will be shown in a succession of small, intimate views at the National Gallery of Art, it was announced by John Walker, Director.

The series begins (Thursday) October 31 with a showing of 16 paintings by J. M. W. Turner (1775-1851), Britain's foremost artist of landscape and water scenes. In May there will open an exhibition devoted to work by Turner's contemporary, John Constable (1776-1837).

Mr. and Mrs. Mellon's collection of British paintings, water colors, drawings, and illustrated books is widely representative of the past three centuries of English art. The painting section numbers more than a thousand pictures by some 200 artists, with important groups by Gainsborough, Stubbs, Devis, Wright of Derby, Rowlandson, Bonington, Blake, and Palmer--as well as Turner and Constable.

The opening exhibition will show approximately half the oil paintings by Turner from the collection. Of these, five are

recent additions, including an impressive river scene, Dort or Dordrecht: the Dort Packet-Boat from Rotterdam Becalmed, which was last seen in a 1953 Turner exhibition at Whitechapel Art Gallery, London. Constable is believed to have referred to this large (62" x 92") evocation of aerial perspective when he described one of Turner's pictures as "the most complete work of genius I ever saw."

Of the many English painters, Joseph Mallord William Turner is one of the few whose originality and genius are generally recognized even outside the English-speaking world. Perhaps the finest water-colorist the world has produced, he explored the possibilities of the medium with daring and inventiveness. In the field of oil painting he was equally bold; in pursuit of light and color he reached limits only exceeded in our own day.

Turner's output was prodigious. He produced thousands of oils and water colors in a working lifetime of 60 years. Notable among his achievements in this exhibition are, in chronological order, Harlech Castle (1799), The Victory Returning from Trafalgar (c.1806), Port Ruysdael (1827), the Burning of the Houses of Parliament (1834), and Heidelberg (c.1840/42).

An illustrated catalogue of the exhibition, with notes by Ross Watson, a Fellow at the National Gallery of Art, is available at \$2.75 postpaid. Exhibition closing date is April 21, 1969.

Catalogues, black-and-white photographs and color transparencies on loan for purposes of publication are available from William W. Morrison, Assistant to the Director, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C. 20565, Area Code 202, 737-4215, ext. 225.