



Online Press Kit

Press Release

[Order Press Images](#)

[Checklist](#)

[Access](#)

[Sponsor Statement](#)

(PDF 1.22 kb)

[Bank of America](#)

[Sponsor Statement](#)

(PDF 61 kb)

Audio:

J.M.W. Turner Press Event

Opening Remarks

[Listen](#): (20:27 min,

9.6 MB)

[Turner Documentary](#)

[Turner and Shakespeare](#)

[Related Activities](#)

[Chronology](#)

New York Press

Tea Remarks,

March 26, 2007:

Earl A. Powell III,

Franklin Kelly,

Richard Hamilton

[Listen](#) (14:34 min., 8.4

Updated: September 11, 2007

"J.M.W. TURNER" PREMIERES AT NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, IN THE LARGEST TURNER RETROSPECTIVE EVER IN THE UNITED STATES, OCTOBER 1, 2007 THROUGH JANUARY 6, 2008

Travels to Dallas Museum of Art and The Metropolitan Museum of Art



Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775 - 1851)

Snow Storm: Hannibal and his Army crossing the Alps, 1812

oil on canvas

Tate Britain, London, Turner Bequest

Washington, DC – The largest retrospective ever presented in the United States of the career of J.M.W. Turner (1775–1851), one of the greatest landscape painters in the history of art, will premiere at the National Gallery of Art in Washington. The exhibition of some 146 works, divided almost evenly between oils and works on paper, will include many masterworks that have never been shown in the United States. Turner's extensive range of subjects—including seascapes, topographical views, historical events, mythology, modern life, and

MB)

[Turner at Tate Britain](#)

[British Picturesque
Landscapes](#)

[Online Resources](#)

Press Contact:

Anabeth Guthrie
(202) 842-6804
a-guthrie@nga.gov

Chief Press Officer
Deborah Ziska
ds-ziska@nga.gov
(202) 842-6353

scenes drawn from his own fertile imagination—will be represented.

J.M.W. Turner is organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington (October 1, 2007–January 6, 2008), the Dallas Museum of Art (February 10–May 18, 2008), and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (June 24–September 21, 2008), in association with Tate Britain, London, which is lending 85 works from its vast and impressive Turner holdings.

"Turner, who is celebrated widely for his talent and technical innovations, had a profound influence on the romantic movement and impressionism," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "We are indebted to Tate Britain for making this exhibition possible and thank lenders throughout Europe and the United States for their generous loans. We are also grateful to Bank of America and Access Industries for their first-time support."

Exhibition Sponsorship

The exhibition is sponsored by The Exhibition Circle of the National Gallery of Art.

Bank of America is proud to be the national sponsor.

The exhibition is made possible in part through the generous support of Access Industries.

It is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

The Artist

Joseph Mallord William Turner dominated the British art world for six decades. Born the son of a barber in 1775 in Covent Garden, London, Turner transformed the genre of landscape painting through works that heralded a new and visionary direction in 19th-century art. At the age of 14, Turner enrolled in the school of the Royal Academy of Arts and soon began submitting works to its annual exhibition. In 1802 Turner was elected a full Royal Academician—the youngest member, at the age of 26, ever admitted—and five years later he became professor of perspective.

Turner was extremely prolific, producing more than 500 paintings and some 1,500 watercolors. He left approximately 100 of his finest and most important finished oils to the British nation. These works, known as the Turner Bequest, are housed primarily at Tate Britain, which also maintains an extensive collection of the artist's works on paper and unfinished paintings.

The Exhibition

J.M.W. Turner is divided into ten chronological and thematic sections that span Turner's career:

Foundations Turner's early work consisted of drawings and watercolors, which were critically acclaimed. However, in order to be considered a serious artist, Turner studied the oils of old masters, as advised by Royal Academy president Sir Joshua Reynolds. Among his highly praised early efforts was *Fishermen at Sea* (1796), the first painting he exhibited at the Royal Academy.

Confronting the Sublime The Sublime became a key aspect of Turner's efforts to heighten the significance of his work. Throughout his career he sought to evoke awe and terror in his viewers by depicting cataclysmic events in paintings such as *Snow Storm: Hannibal and His Army Crossing the Alps* (1812), on view in the United States for the first time.

Making of a Modern Master In 1804 Turner opened a private gallery as an alternative exhibition space. Between 1807 and 1819, Turner issued the *Liber Studiorum* (Book of Studies), a series of engraved views that surveyed his mastery of a vast array of landscape subjects.

Britain at War and Peace During the first two decades of the 19th century, Britain was almost constantly at war with France, which under Napoleon, was ultimately defeated in 1815. Commissioned by King George IV some 18 years after the event, *The Battle of Trafalgar, 21 October 1805* (1823–1824) is Turner's largest painting (102 by 144 inches) and his only royal commission. More interested in depicting universal truths such as the human cost of war, than in slandering the enemy, Turner painted the suffering experienced by both sides during this renowned battle.

Master of Watercolor The medium of watercolor remained an essential part of Turner's artistic practice throughout his career. He perfected such innovative techniques as scratching-out, sponging, blotting-out, and wet-into-wet painting. His watercolors served as the basis for engravings illustrating volumes of poetry by Sir Walter Scott and Lord Byron. Turner also made highly crafted, finished watercolors, such as *Temple of Poseidon at Sunion, Cape Colonna* (c. 1834) for exhibition or on commission.

Touring the Continent With the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, the British could once again explore the European continent. Turner visited on established routes as well as off the beaten path in France, Germany, Luxembourg, Bohemia, Switzerland, and Italy. Simultaneously, Turner's palette shifted from naturalistic hues toward a brighter range of pure colors made possible by new pigments, such as the novel yellows used for the sun in *Ulysses Deriding Polyphemus—Homer's Odyssey* (1829).

Histories Ancient and Modern Although the classical world continued to provide material for his paintings, Turner was fascinated by modernity and several of his works in the 1820s and 1830s chronicle Britain's transition from an agrarian to an industrial society. From the National Gallery of Art's own collection of 114 works by Turner, *Keelmen Heaving in Coals by Moonlight* (1835) depicts coal workers in the thriving modern port of Newcastle.

The Burning of the Houses of Parliament On the evening of October 16, 1834, Turner witnessed with thousands of others the fire that devastated the Houses of Parliament—a complex of buildings that stood as a symbol of Britain's historical and political legacy. Turner pursued the theme of man's vulnerability to the forces of nature in dozens of sketches and watercolors depicting the disaster. The studies resulted in two oil paintings of the same name, *The Burning of the Houses of Lords and Commons* (1835), which presented the scene from different vantage points along the banks of the Thames.

Visionary Late Works Turner's late works are characterized by expressive brushwork and one of his most inventive compositional devices—a vortex of clouds, mist, water, and air that swirls furiously around the central subject. The vortex is the focal point of *Snow*

Storm—Steam Boat off a Harbor's Mouth Making Signals in Shallow Water, and Going by the Lead. The Author was in This Storm on the Night the Ariel Left Harwich (1842), one of Turner's most evocative renderings of the forces of nature.

Into the Light In the last works of Turner's life, atmosphere and light predominate. His contemporaries described his work as being "without form and void, like chaos before the creation." Renowned British art historian and critic John Ruskin perceived Turner's paintings to be unique in the degree to which they wedded detailed observations of nature to grand general effects. When Turner died in 1851, he left behind hundreds of canvases in his studio, many of them unfinished and unexhibited. In *Norham Castle* (c. 1845) Turner's use of thin veils of glowing color resulted in misty and vaporous depictions of the natural world that almost seem to approach pure abstraction. Later generations were struck by the luminosity of Turner's paintings, which had a lasting impact on a variety of artists, including the French impressionists.

The Curators and Catalogue

The exhibition has been selected by Ian Warrell, curator of 18th- and 19th-century art, Tate Britain, and a team of American curators—Franklin Kelly, senior curator of American and British paintings, National Gallery of Art; Dorothy Kosinski, senior curator of painting and sculpture and The Barbara Thomas Lemmon Curator of European Art, Dallas Museum of Art; and Gary Tinterow, Engelhard Curator in Charge of the Department of 19th-Century, Modern, and Contemporary Art at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

The 320-page exhibition catalogue, fully illustrated with 210 color and 50 black-and-white images, includes an overview of the artist's life and career by Warrell and an essay by Kelly entitled "Turner and America." Published by Tate Enterprises Ltd, the catalogue will be available in September 2007 from the National Gallery of Art Shops. To order, call (800) 697-9350 or (202) 842-6002; fax (202) 789-3047; or e-mail mailorder@nga.gov (\$55.00 hardcover, \$45.00 softcover).

Turner and America

Franklin Kelly writes in his exhibition catalogue essay "Turner and

America" that although Turner never visited the New World, he was well aware that Americans were interested in his art. Turner did not make any particularly strenuous efforts to promote that interest, and relatively few Americans before the 20th century actually knew his creations firsthand. However the artist and his work, both during his life and after, played an important role in America's artistic culture. Although the majority of Turner's paintings remain in Britain today, by far the largest number outside the country is in the United States.

General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden, located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets and Constitution Avenue NW are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of the works of art and visitors, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 x 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:

Press Office
National Gallery of Art
2000B South Club Drive
Landover, MD 20785
phone: (202) 842-6353 e-mail: pressinfo@nga.gov

Deborah Ziska

Chief of Press and Public Information

(202) 842-6353

ds-ziska@nga.gov

If you are a member of the press and would like to be added to our press list, [click here](#).

Web Site Newsletter

To subscribe to the National Gallery of Art's monthly Web site e-mail newsletter, please fill out the [newsletter subscription form](#). Every month you will receive a list of several items that are new on our site. To edit your subscriber information, please go to the [subscription management page](#). View this month's [Web newsletter](#).

National Gallery of Art, Press Office

[home](#) | [general information](#) | [exhibitions](#) | [image lists](#) | [recent announcements](#)

[press archives](#) | [contact us](#) | [national gallery of art](#)

[Copyright ©2007 National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC](#)