

TATE

Press Release
10 June 2014

The EY Exhibition Late Turner: Painting Set Free

10 September 2014 – 25 January 2015 (Press view 8 September)

Admission £15 (£13.10 concessions) or £16.50 (£14.50 concessions) with Gift Aid donation

Tate Britain, Linbury Galleries

For public information call +44 (0)20 7887 8888, visit tate.org.uk, follow @tate #LateTurner

The EY Exhibition: Late Turner – Painting Set Free will be the first major exhibition to survey the achievements of JMW Turner (1775–1851) during his final period (1835–50). The exhibition will reassess Turner's extraordinary body of work during this period, when some of his most celebrated works were created, and opens at Tate Britain on 10 September.

The exhibition will begin in 1835, the year that Turner reached 60, and will close with his last exhibits at the Royal Academy in 1850. It will demonstrate how his closing years were a time of exceptional energy and vigour, initiated by one of his most extensive tours of Europe. Bringing together 150 works from the UK and abroad, it will seek to challenge assumptions around the idea of the 'elderly' artist, as well as his radical techniques, processes and materials during this productive time.

The show will include such iconic works as *Ancient Rome; Agrippina Landing with the Ashes of Germanicus* exh. 1839 (Tate), *The Wreck Buoy* 1849 (National Museums Liverpool) and *Heidelberg: Sunset* c.1840 (Manchester City Galleries). Rather than focusing on any assumptions about the pessimism of old age, Turner maintained his commitment to the observation of nature. He brought renewed energy to the exploration of the social, technological and scientific developments of modern life, in works such as *Rain, Steam, and Speed - The Great Western Railway* 1844 (National Gallery). He also continued to engage with the religious and historical themes that linked him to the cultural traditions of his era.

Featuring many large-scale oil paintings alongside drawings, prints and watercolour, the exhibition will address the sheer range of materials and techniques he embraced. It will also demonstrate his radicalism during this period - while his Victorian contemporaries were exploring other priorities, he continued to champion an unfettered creativity in which material

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practice was not just medium but meaning and message too. He consciously developed his style and technique with each subsequent painting he produced. These works were often poised equivocally between finished and unfinished, for example in a series of reworkings in oil of subjects originally published as prints in his *Liber Studiorum*.

Turner's controversial square canvases to be brought together for the first time

The radical square oil paintings exhibited by JMW Turner (1775 – 1851) will be displayed together for the first time ever in ***The EY Exhibition: Late Turner – Painting Set Free***. The nine finished paintings are being shown in a dedicated room of the exhibition, which brings new perspectives on Turner's work during the final period of his life. At the time of their creation Turner's square canvases were his most controversial and they were famously subjected to a hail of abuse in the press. Even Ruskin, a devoted fan, described Turner's work by 1846 as 'indicative of mental disease.'

When Turner began painting on square canvases in the later years of his life between 1840 and 1846 they were a new format for the artist to be working in. In works known as *Shade and Darkness* and *Light and Colour*, both exhibited 1843, it can be seen how Turner developed his dramatic use of the vortex, a technique characteristic in his later work.

The display of the square canvases, along with one unfinished square composition, has been made possible by the important loans of *Glaucus and Scylla* 1841 (Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, USA), and *Dawn of Christianity* 1841 (Ulster Museum, Belfast, UK). The group of works includes some of Turner's most iconic pairings such as *Peace and War*, both exhibited 1842 (Tate). The exhibition as a whole will also include a number of pairings from throughout this period of his life, showing Turner's fondness for working in sets or sequences in his old age.

Sam Smiles, Professor of Art History and Visual Culture, Exeter University, and co-curator of ***The EY Exhibition: Late Turner – Painting Set Free***, said:

'We are delighted to be able to bring JMW Turner's finished square canvases together in a single room for the very first time, almost like a show within a show. What Turner does in these paintings is unique, exploiting shape and format to a particular end. Exhibiting shaped canvases was a new departure for the artist, and they show us that he continued to innovate even in his final years. The world around Turner was changing and he was changing with it.'

Biographical elements

During his final period Turner continued to widen his exposure in the marketplace. From pictures of the whaling industry in the 1840s to 'sample studies' and finished watercolours such as *The Blue Rigi, Sunrise* 1842 (Tate), he constantly sought to demonstrate his appeal to new admirers, led by John Ruskin who famously described Turner as 'the greatest of the age.'

Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775–1851) was born in London, the son of a barber. He entered the Royal Academy Schools in 1789 at the age of 14 before becoming a member of the RA in 1802 and Professor of Perspective in 1807. His work was prolific and varied including drawings, prints, watercolours and oils. Throughout his later years he continued to tour Europe, his last trip taking place in 1845. He exhibited his last four pictures at the Royal Academy in 1850 and died in 1851, his body being laid to rest in the crypt of St Paul's Cathedral.

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The EY Exhibition: Late Turner – Painting Set Free is curated by Sam Smiles, Professor of Art History and Visual Culture, Exeter University, and David Blayney Brown, Manton Curator of British Art 1790–1850, Tate Britain with Amy Concannon, Assistant Curator 1790–1850, Tate Britain, the exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue from Tate Publishing and a programme of talks and events in the gallery. *JMW Turner: Painting Set Free* will show at the J. Paul Getty Museum Los Angeles, USA (24 February – 24 May 2015) and to the de Young Museum, San Francisco, USA in 2015 (20 June – 20 September 2015).

The EY Exhibition: Late Turner – Painting Set Free is the second EY Exhibition in a three-year arts partnership between EY and Tate. The first exhibition was Klee, which ran at Tate Modern from 14 October 2013 to 9 March 2014. The partnership helps Tate to realise its ambitious arts programme across Tate Modern and Tate Britain, with EY's support being extended through corporate memberships at Tate Liverpool, Tate St Ives and at many of the Plus Tate partners around the country. The partnership, announced in July 2013 makes EY one of the largest corporate supporters of Tate.

Martin Cook, Managing Partner Commercial, UK & Ireland at EY, said: 'Turner was not only a compulsive artist, who had to draw and paint all the time, but he was also complex, with some of his iconic work considered controversial and radical for his time. We are delighted that Late Turner is the second EY exhibition as part of the arts partnership between EY and Tate. This unique relationship is an example of how EY teams with other organisations that share our purpose and builds on our previous support of Turner exhibitions in 2003 and 2005.'

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