

Joseph Turner 1775 -1851

Paris Art
Studies

Joseph Mallord
William Turner
1775 - 1851

1775 - Turner was born in Maiden Lane, Covent Garden, London, England. His father, William Gay Turner (1738 –1829), was a barber and wig maker. His mother, Mary Marshall, became mentally unstable, possibly due in part to the early death of Turner's younger sister, Helen, in 1786. She died in 1804, after having been committed in 1799 to the Bethlem Royal Hospital, the celebrated 'Bedlam'.

1785 – 10 year old Turner was sent to stay with his maternal uncle in Brentford, west of London on the Thames. It was here that he first expressed an interest in art by taking long walks in the countryside with his sketchbook, sketching landscapes and old buildings. A year later he attended a school in Margate on the Kentish coast. His first drawings, were exhibited by his father in his shop window.

1789 – Enters the Royal Academy of Art school at 14. Sir Joshua Reynolds, president of the Royal Academy, chaired the panel that admitted him.

1791 – Turner made the first of his great many sketching tours; during the 1790's alone he ranged over the south of England,

the Midlands, the north of England and the Lake District, as well as making five tours of Wales in search of the kind of scenery that

had been painted by Richard Wilson. On each tour he would fill a number of sketchbooks with dry topographical studies and

the occasional watercolor, from which he would work up elaborate paintings and watercolors when back in London.

1793 – The 17-year-old painter was awarded the 'Great Silver Pallet' for landscape drawing by the Royal Society of Arts.

1794-97 – Colors sketches and prints made by others, notably the celebrated watercolorist Thomas Girtin.

1796 – Exhibits his first oil painting, Fishermen at Sea. He will exhibit thereafter at the academy nearly every year for the rest

of his life.

1797 – Important support for his work also came from Walter Ramsden Fawkes, of Farnley Hall, in Yorkshire, who became

a close friend of the artist.

1799
- Elected an Associate of the Royal Academy of Art, at the age of 24. Moves with his father to Harley St. Meets Sarah Danby,

widow of song composer, with whom he will have two children, though he will never marry.

1801 – His marine painting “Dutch Boats in a Gale…” is a great sensation at the RA exhibition. Sketching tour of Scotland.

1802 – He is admitted as full member of Royal Academy. The Peace of Amiens allows Turner to travel abroad for the first time.

In Paris he visits the Louvre where he copies Claude Lorraine and the Salon. He also visits Switzerland.

1804 – Completes gallery in his house to show his own paintings.

1806 – Moves to Hammersmith on the Thames west of London.

1807 - Accepts the position of Royal Academy Professor of Perspective. Between 1807 and 1811 (when he delivered his first lecture) the painter embarked upon a rigorous study programme, reading or re-reading over 70 books on art and aesthetics.

Turner went on delivering the lectures spasmodically until 1828 (although he did not resign the position until 1838).

1808 – First visit to one of his great collectors Walter Fawkes at Farnley Hall, near Leeds.

1811 – Builds house in Twickenham (Sandycombe Lodge).

1812– Exhibits his most celebrated picture to date 'Snowstorm, Hannibal and his Army crossing the Alps', accompanied by his own verses.

1815 –Turner exhibits two more celebrated paintings, 'Crossing the Brook' and 'Dido building Carthage; or the Rise of the

Carthaginian Empire'.

1817 – Turner revisits the Continent, stopping off at the scene of the recent battle of Waterloo before touring the Rhineland and

visiting Amsterdam. Impressive paintings of Waterloo and of the river Maas at Dordrecht were exhibited at the Royal Academy the following year.

1819 –Fawkes puts on display in his London house a set of 51 watercolors that Turner had made earlier of Rhenish scenery in

1817. The exhibition was opened to the public. Turner at long last visited Italy. He visited Milan, Venice, Rome, Naples,

Sorrento and Paestum, before turning northwards. He probably spent the Christmas in Florence and began his return journey in late January 1820. Once more crossing the Mont Cenis pass where his coach overturned during a snowstorm. He arrived back in London loaded down with some 2000 sketches and studies, and immediately started one of his largest paintings for display at the 1820 RA exhibition, a view from the loggia of the Vatican, with Raphael in the foreground, a work celebrating the 300th anniversary of the great Renaissance artist's death.

1825 – Much affected by death of his greatest patron, Fawkes.

1826 – Turner finds a new 'home from home' at namely Petworth House in Sussex, the country seat of George Wyndham, the third Earl of Egremont. The early was a collector of enormous taste and vigour, and he bought his first painting from Turner early in the century; by the time of his death he owned 19 oils by Turner. At Petworth Turner was free to come and go at his leisure, although the age difference between the artist and his patron (the earl was 75 when the 51 year old painter began regularly revisiting the house) meant that the two

men were never as close as Turner and Walter Fawkes had been. After Lord Egremont died in 1837 Turner shunned Petworth, just as he had shunned Farnley Hall, and for the same reasons.

1828 – Visits Rome

where he holds an exhibition of his works.

1829 – Much affected by death of his father with whom he'd lived all his life and who eventually worked for him as studio

assistant.

1832 – Turner re-touches his

"Helvoetsluys: the City of Utrecht going to Sea" at the RA exhibition so as to overwhelm Constable's

"Opening

of Waterloo Bridge" hanging next to his own painting.

1834 – Beginning of his relationship with Margate widow, Sophia Caroline Booth.

1835 – Turner

presents at RA 'The Burning of the Houses of Lords and Commons' a rough painting executed almost in one day,

a true tour de force.

1851 – He died in the house of his mistress Sophia Caroline Booth in Cheyne

Walk, Chelsea

on 19 December. He is said to

have uttered the last words "The sun is God" before expiring.

Turner left a

small fortune which he hoped would be used to support what he called "decayed artists". His will was contested and in 1856, after a court battle, part of his fortune was awarded to his first cousins including Thomas Price Turner. Another portion of the money went to the Royal Academy of Arts, which does not now use it for this purpose, though occasionally it awards students the Turner

Medal. His collection of finished paintings was bequeathed to the British nation, and he intended that a special gallery would be built to house them. This did not come to pass owing to a failure to agree on a site, and then to the parsimony of British governments. Twenty-two years after his death, the British Parliament passed an Act allowing his paintings to be lent to museums outside London, and so began the process of scattering the pictures which Turner had wanted to be kept together. In 1910 the main part of the Turner Bequest, which includes unfinished paintings and drawings, was re-housed in the Duveen Turner Wing at the Tate Gallery. In 1987 a new wing of the Tate, the Clore Gallery, was opened specifically to house the Turner bequest, though some of the most important

paintings in it remain in the National Gallery in contravention of Turner's condition that the finished pictures be kept and shown together.

Turner and the
Masters:

Contemporaries:

Richard Parkes Bonington, English (1802-1828)

Augustus Wall Calcott, English (1779-1844)

Francis Danby, English (1793-1861)

John Constable, French (1775-1837)

Thomas Girtin, English (1775-1802)

George Jones, English (1786-1869)

Philip James de Lotharbourg, Swiss (1740-1812)

Clarkson Stanfield, English (1793-1867)

Thomas Stothard, English (1755-1834)

Gilbert Stuart Newton, English (1794-1835)

Richard Wilson, Welsh (1713-1782)

Old Masters:

Giovanni Antonio
Canal (Canaletto), Italian
(1697-1768)

Jan van de Capelle, Dutch (1624/26-1679)

Albert Cuyp, Dutch (1620-1691)

Gaspard Dughet, French (1615-1675)

Claude Gelée (Claude Lorrain), French (c.1604-1682)

Giovanni Battista
Piranesi, Italian (1770-1778)

Nicolas Poussin, French (1594-1665)

Rembrandt Harmensz van Rijn, Dutch (1606-1669)

Jacob van Ruisdael, Dutch (1628/9-1682)

Titian, Italian (c; 1490-1576)

Willem van de Velde the Younger , Dutch
(1633-1707)

Paolo Veronese, Italian (1528-1588)

Antoine Watteau, French (1684-1720)