

Turner exhibition opens today



Something for you to look forward to this month. There will be a new Turner exhibition opening today.

In keeping with the tradition of over one-hundred years, New Year's Day at the Scottish National Gallery will be marked by the opening of the annual exhibition of watercolours by J M W Turner (1775–1851). The celebrated group of 38 superb works was bequeathed to the Gallery in 1900 by Henry Vaughan, a London art collector who amassed an outstanding collection of watercolours by the British painter. Vaughan stipulated in his bequest that these delicate works should be 'exhibited to the public all at one time, free of charge, during the month of January'. As a result, the annual *Turner in January* exhibition has become a treasured highlight of the Scottish National Gallery calendar. The display runs throughout the month, providing a thoughtful counterpoint to the more energetic celebrations of Hogmanay, and a welcome injection of light and colour during the darkest month of the year.

Kate Pearson, Trusts Manager at People's Postcode Lottery, said:- "We are delighted that our players are continuing to support National Galleries of Scotland. By supporting fantastic organisations like the Galleries players of the charity lottery are ensuring the works of such renowned artists, including Turner, are accessible to all."



Arguably the greatest of all British watercolour artists,

Turner exploited every possibility of the medium to create stunning landscapes, seascapes and designs for book illustrations. Vaughan acquired examples from throughout the artist's career, and chose each with a connoisseur's eye for quality. The exquisite works in his bequest range from early wash drawings of the 1790s, to colourful and atmospheric watercolour sketches executed on his many tours of Europe during the 1830s and 1840s.

For many artists and writers at the end of the eighteenth century, the grandeur and violence of nature, described as the 'Sublime' inspired a sense of fascination and awe. It was the quest for the sublime that in part attracted Turner repeatedly to the mountains of Britain and Europe, and to paint the savage elemental forces seen in avalanches, storms and mountainous seas. Works such as *Loch Coruisk, Skye* which was painted after one of the artist's trips to the Scottish Highlands, in 1831, and *The St Gothard Pass at the Devil's Bridge*, which was created following one of his many journeys to the Swiss Alps, express Turner's life-long fascination with the drama of nature.

Turner also visited Venice on three occasions, in 1819, 1833 and 1840, and the Vaughan Bequest features six of the artist's stunning views of the city. In *The Piazzetta, Venice*, one of Turner's most spectacular Venetian studies, a bolt of lightning dramatically illuminates the Doge's Palace and St. Mark's Basilica. Turner created such effects by scratching away to reveal the paper once he had painted on it: he sometimes used his thumbnail, which he is reputed to have grown like an 'eagle-claw', for such a purpose.

Other works, such as *The Grand Canal by the Salute, Venice*, and *The Sun of Venice*, which were made in the city in 1840, demonstrate Turner's consummate mastery of atmospheric lighting effects.

Alongside the watercolours of the Vaughan Bequest this year *Turner in January* will include a selection of additional works by Turner from the national collection. For much of his career, Turner was engaged in commissions to provide illustrations to be reproduced as engravings, and many of his trips were undertaken with a specific publishing project in mind. The artist's prolific activities as an illustrator are represented here with a selection of his glorious watercolour designs for the collected works of the Scottish poet Thomas Campbell (1777-1844), made in 1835-6. Also on view will be two radiant views of Edinburgh, *Edinburgh from Calton Hill* and *Heriot's Hospital, Edinburgh*, produced as illustrations for Sir Walter Scott's *The Provincial Antiquities and Picturesque Scenery of Scotland*.

**TURNER IN JANUARY:
THE VAUGHAN BEQUEST**

1 – 31 January 2014

Scottish National Gallery, The Mound, Edinburgh EH2 2EL

Telephone. 0131 624 6200 | Admission FREE