

Turner and the Sublime

The English master's grandiose landscapes to be presented at a Canadian exclusive in Québec City

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Québec City, Wednesday, November 13, 2019 ✕ The Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (MNBAQ) is proud to announce *Turner and the Sublime*, a new international exhibition to be presented at a **Canadian exclusive** in Québec City. From **June 20 to September 27, 2020**, visitors can view the works of English painter, watercolourist and engraver **Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851)**, one of the foremost artists of the 19th century. His works display innovative research and ranked him as a master of the romantic movement. He is also regarded as one of the precursors of impressionism.

This major exhibition, organized in collaboration with Tate (London) from the Turner Bequest, affords a unique opportunity to see outstanding works that are rarely exhibited outside England.

The presentation of the exhibition, which will put the MNBAQ in the spotlight in the summer of 2020, is being made possible through a cultural development agreement between the Québec government and Québec City. The \$500 000 contribution comes from the *Mesure d'aide financière à l'intention des musées d'État pour des expositions internationales majeures*.

“Hosting international exhibitions is part of the MNBAQ’s mission and enables it to participate in prestigious international circuits. Through this major contribution, the MNBAQ will present the *Turner and the Sublime* exhibition and, above all, celebrate in Québec City the work of a visionary who was known as “the painter of light.” The artist will win the hearts of all generations with his unique, modern way of embracing landscapes,” Jean-Luc Murray, Director General of the MNBAQ, noted enthusiastically. “I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to Québec City and the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications for their unfailing support over the years. Many Quebecers will be able to enjoy a major new international exhibition in the Capitale-Nationale through the cultural development agreement,” Mr. Murray concluded.

An outstanding selection

The exhibition comprises several of the artist’s masterpieces, including *Snow Storm* (1842), *Peace – Burial at Sea* (1842) and *Light and Colour (Goethe’s Theory)* (1843), as well as a selection of exquisite gouache and watercolour works. This outstanding collection of 75 paintings and works on paper covers the biggest portion of Turner’s career, from the outset in the 1790s until its peak around 1840.

The exhibition will feature a Turner painting from the collection of the MNBAQ

The exhibition will enable the MNBAQ to highlight a work by Turner from its collection. *Scene in Derbyshire* (1827) was a gift from the estate of Maurice Duplessis in the late 1950s. This is a rare opportunity to see a seminal work from the MNBAQ’s European art collection.



The art of the sublime

The exhibition focuses on the theme of the sublime, a core concept of late 18th century aesthetics and art criticism in Germany and England, which spread throughout Europe in the 19th century. Irish writer Edmund Burke's seminal work *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) influenced an entire generation of artists by proposing a new conception of beauty, centred on the emotion that the force of nature arouses. This notion of the sublime expressed itself in Turner's work in dramatic landscapes describing spectacular storms, tumultuous seas and grandiose natural spaces.

Turner, a master of landscapes



Turner developed an eminently sensitive conception of landscapes. He sought to render atmospheric effects through the suggestive power of colour. He is recognized for his great mastery of the rendering of light on the sea or mountainous landscapes glimpsed through clouds or rain. Throughout his life, the artist constantly travelled around England and in Europe. He is regarded as a master watercolourist and developed an especially bold technique. His landscapes have a resolutely modern dimension. With Turner, landscape painting became a major art form.

The first section of the exhibition is devoted to Turner's early works. The second section proposes a fine series of mountain landscapes, whose striking majesty is especially suited to rendering the notion of the sublime. A spectacular series of historic and mythological scenes is followed by magnificent lakeside landscapes in Switzerland and Italy, including a superb series of views of Venice, in which the water motif is used to develop a lyrical interpretation of nature. The seascapes and studies of the sky propose fantastic, deeply suggestive images that evoke the infinite. Lastly, the theme of machines, which the artist uses extensively, makes it possible to place Turner at the root of modernity and establish links between the first Industrial Revolution and the advent of environmental awareness. His avant-garde stance is still striking today.

Tate (London), in a nutshell

Tate (London) was founded in 1897 and is one of the world's foremost museums. It houses the national collection of British art from 1500 to the present on four sites: Tate Britain, Tate Modern, Tate Liverpool and Tate St Ives. Tate Britain houses the Turner Bequest, from which a selection of works is permanently exhibited in the Clore Gallery.

The Turner and the Sublime exhibition is organized in collaboration with Tate (London). It has been made possible through a cultural development agreement between the Québec government and Québec City. The contribution comes from the Mesure d'aide financière à l'intention des musées d'État pour des expositions internationales majeures. The Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec is a government corporation subsidized by the Québec government.

Québec 

Turner and the Sublime

Pierre Lassonde Pavilion of the MNBAQ

June 20 to September 27, 2020

INFORMATION: 418 643-2150 or 1 866 220-2150

Page 1 - Photo: Joseph Mallord William Turner, *Tivoli: Tobias and the Angel*, c. 1835. Oil paint on canvas. 90.5 x 121 cm © Tate, London 2017

Page 2 - Photos: Top to bottom: Joseph Mallord William Turner, *Peace - Burial at Sea*, Exhibited 1842. Oil paint on canvas. 87 x 86.7 cm © Tate, London 2017 // Joseph Mallord William Turner, *Scene in Derbyshire*, 1827. Oil paint on canvas, 45 x 61 cm. MNBAQ Donated by the heirs of the Honourable Maurice Duplessis (1959.579)

Page 3 - Top to bottom: Joseph Mallord William Turner, *Landscape Composition with a Ruined Castle on a Cliff*, 1792-1793. Graphite and watercolour on paper. 21.4 x 27.3 cm © Tate, London 2017 // Joseph Mallord William Turner, *Küssnacht, Lake of Lucerne: Sample Study*, c. 1842-1843. Graphite, watercolour and pen on paper. 22.8 x 29.2 cm © Tate, London 2017 // Joseph Mallord William Turner, *Venice, the Bridge of Sighs*, Exhibited 1840. Oil paint on canvas. 68.6 x 91.4 cm © Tate, London 2017