

# SCOTTISH NATIONAL GALLERY



J.M.W. Turner, *Rome from Monte Mario*, 1820,  
Accepted by H.M. Government in Lieu of Inheritance Tax and allocated to the National Galleries of Scotland, 2011

## **TURNER IN JANUARY: THE VAUGHAN BEQUEST**

**1 – 31 January 2012**

**SCOTTISH NATIONAL GALLERY, The Mound, Edinburgh, EH2 2EL**

**Telephone 0131 624 6200**

[www.nationalgalleries.org](http://www.nationalgalleries.org)

*Admission free*

The National Galleries of Scotland is delighted to announce a major new acquisition, *Rome from Monte Mario* (1820) by J.M.W. Turner (1775-1851). This stunning watercolour has recently been allocated to the Scottish National Gallery through the Acceptance in Lieu of Tax scheme and will take pride of place in the Gallery's much-loved *Turner in January* exhibition. *Rome from Monte Mario* will strengthen this outstanding, annual display, illustrating an aspect of the artist's work not previously represented. The show is renowned for providing a thoughtful counterpoint to the more energetic celebrations of Edinburgh's Hogmanay, and offering a welcome injection of light and colour during the darkest month of the year.

Turner was perhaps the most prolific and innovative of all British artists and his skills have been much admired ever since his lifetime. *Rome from Monte Mario* is one of his finest watercolours and was made after his first visit to Rome, between August 1819 and February 1820. Turner was delighted and overwhelmed by the trip: the ancient remains, profusion of Renaissance and Baroque buildings, and splendour of the city's setting fired his imagination. This delicate and sophisticated work was created as part of a set of Italian scenes for his friend and patron Walter Fawkes (1769-1825).

The view Turner chose for the watercolour is unusual and highly ambitious. He depicted the city at sunset, looking in a south-easterly direction from just below the top of Monte Mario. On the right is the dome of St Peter's; just to the right of the centre of the composition is the Castel Sant' Angelo, and further to the left the Campidoglio. The Via Angelico is the road that cuts across the fields in the foreground and is flanked by smoke from bonfires, curling up into the golden evening light. An idyllic image of a boy playing pipes to a demure girl in the forefront completes the scene.

*Rome from Monte Mario* formed part of the very distinguished Turner collection created by the Scottish shipping magnate and educational benefactor Sir Donald Currie (1825-1909), who founded the Castle (later, Union Castle) Steamship Company.

This work will join the Scottish National Gallery's superb collection of 38 Turner watercolours which were bequeathed in 1899 by English collector Henry Vaughan (1809-1899). Vaughan's bequest is renowned for providing the perfect introduction to Turner's career and features a number of beautiful watercolours of Venice. This depiction of Rome is a wonderful addition to the existing collection.

Turner was born in London, the son of a barber and wig-maker, and soon proved himself as an accomplished topographical draughtsman. He first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1790, and was elected an Academician by the age of 26. From the 1790s he undertook sketching tours in England, Wales and Scotland, gathering material for watercolours and oil paintings, and gradually discovering the attractions of awe-inspiring mountainous landscapes, which became a major pre-occupation in his work. In 1802 he made his first journey to Europe. He was to return in 1817, after the end of the Napoleonic wars, and from then on made annual visits across the Channel for much of the rest of his life. These journeys were usually undertaken in the summer and included explorations of the great rivers of northern Europe, as well as excursions into Italy.

Vaughan probably met Turner in the 1840s and built a remarkable collection of his drawings and watercolours, which spanned much of the artist's career, and only included works in fine condition. He was inspired to bequeath his Turners to public collections by the great critic John Ruskin (1809-1899), who had donated works by the artist to museums. Vaughan was aware of the importance of conserving watercolours, which can easily fade if over-exposed, and so he specified that his Turners should only be displayed during January. His wishes have always been respected and this inspired tradition has now continued for over 110 years.

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For further information and images, please call the Press Office on 0131 624 6325/ 332/  
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**Notes to Editors:**

*Turner in January* is sponsored by People's Postcode Lottery.

Acceptance in Lieu of Tax (AIL) scheme enables UK taxpayers to transfer important works of art into public ownership. In this instance this was achieved with no cost to the NGS.

The Scottish National Gallery is open on 1 January from 12 noon until 5 pm; from 2 January opening hours revert to normal: Monday to Sunday 10 am – 5 pm, Thursday 10 am – 7 pm.

National Galleries of Scotland publications available on the subject include:

J. M.W. Turner, the Vaughan Bequest (£9.95)

Turner's Italy (£4.95)

English Drawings and Watercolours 1600-1900 (£125)