

Released: November 2008

Press View:

**Tuesday 24 March at 11.30am to 1pm.,
National Gallery Complex, The Mound, Edinburgh**



J. M. W. Turner, *Modern Rome – Campo Vaccino*, 1839
Private Collection, on loan to the National Gallery of Scotland

TURNER AND ITALY

27 March – 7 June 2009

NATIONAL GALLERY COMPLEX, The Mound, Edinburgh, EH2 2EL

Admission £8 (£6 concessions)

The major exhibition next spring at the National Gallery of Scotland will celebrate the love affair between the artist J. M.W. Turner (1775-1851) and Italy. *Turner and Italy* sets out to explore this complex and enduring relationship, and show how Turner became enchanted by the country's climate, landscapes and architecture; drawing inspiration from them he created some of the greatest images of Romantic art.

The exhibition will include over 100 works, including oil paintings, watercolours, sketchbooks, and books from Turner's library which illustrate his fascination with Italy. Spectacular loans from collections in Washington, Philadelphia, Melbourne, Paris and London will feature in the exhibition. It has been created by the National Gallery of Scotland and will travel on an international tour to Italy and Hungary; Edinburgh will, however, be the only UK venue.

Michael Clarke, Director of the National Gallery of Scotland said: “Turner was probably the greatest and most inventive of all landscape painters. His unique sensitivity to nature’s variety, allied to his astonishing technical facility, mark him out as a truly extraordinary talent who never ceases to amaze us. This will be the most important Turner show ever mounted by the Galleries and we are looking forward to it enormously.’

Turner travelled to Italy seven times, and past exhibitions have considered particular aspects of his Italian work, such as his love of Venice, but this is the first to provide a comprehensive overview and consider the impact it had on his British art. *Turner and Italy* will also be the most ambitious Turner exhibition ever shown in Scotland, and will provide an inspiring introduction to his achievement, through what are arguably the artist’s most admired works.

Highlights will include the artist’s great *Rome from the Vatican* (Tate Britain) of 1819, a glowing panorama of the city, which shows Raphael painting in the foreground, and late masterpieces, such as his 1844 *Approach to Venice* (National Gallery of Art, Washington), which the critic John Ruskin considered ‘...the most perfectly beautiful piece of colour of all that I have seen produced by human hands, by any means, or at any period.’

Turner’s journeys to Italy were made at a time when such travels could take many weeks. The onslaught of mass tourism had not yet begun, and he not only delighted in, but also exploited all he experienced. As an astute businessman as well as ingenious artist, Turner used Italy to inspire the two most successful aspects of his career in Britain: the creation of ambitious oil paintings which were exhibited annually to a startled public, and the production of watercolours that were engraved for publication, so spreading his vision far beyond his immediate audience.

Because Turner’s enthusiasm for Italy was sustained throughout his career it illustrates all the distinct stages in the stylistic evolution of his work, and the transition he made from early, conventional topographical studies, to the highly charged, emotive, and visionary pictures of his later years. Together they have created a deeply romantic, potent view of Italy which has remained popular ever since.

The National Galleries of Scotland will publish the catalogue to accompany the exhibition, featuring essays by James Hamilton (Guest Curator), Christopher Baker (Deputy Director, National Gallery of Scotland, and organiser of the exhibition), Nicola Moorby (Curator, Tate Britain) and Jacqueline Ridge (Keeper of Conservation, National Galleries of Scotland).

For further information and images please contact the National Galleries of Scotland's press office on 0131 624 6325/6247/6314/6332 or pressinfo@nationalgalleries.org.

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Notes to Editors:

International Tour:

Palazzo dei Diamanti, Ferrara, Italy
16 November 2008 - 22 February 2009

National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh
27 March 2009 - 7 June 2009

The Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest, Hungary
15 July - 25 October 2009

Education:

The Education Department of the National Galleries of Scotland is organising a lecture series and events for schools and community groups to complement the exhibition.