

## William Turner in Munich

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The Lenbachhaus art museum in Munich is known for the world's largest collection of art by the "Blauer Reiter" group, which it received as a donation from Gabriele Münter (1877-1962) in 1957. Similarly, in London, Tate Britain took over the care for the large bequest from William Turner (1775-1851) to the British public.

The two houses entered into a partnership to lend each other parts of their treasures for a limited period of time: Blue Rider versus William Turner.

Around 40 paintings and 40 watercolors and sketches from various phases of Turner's work came to Munich. 150,000 visitors have visited since October 2023 this special presentation in the Kunstbau, a department of the Lenbachhaus. It ends on March 10, 2024. One month later the Tate Modern in London will be exhibiting the "Expressionists: Kandinsky, Münter and The Blue Rider" from April 25 to October 20, 2024.



*Morning amongst the Coniston Fells, Cumberland, 1789, 123×90 cm*



*Margate, Great Beach with Pier, Lighthouse and Landing Place, 13.7×19 cm*

### Early practice in drawing

Turner grew up in the London district of Covent Garden. His father was a barber. His mother fell ill at an early age and the teenager therefore lived a long time with relatives in the country. There he learned to color and copy copperplate engravings and to draw after nature. The father appreciated his son's talent and displayed the drawings in his store. It was there that supporters became aware of him and enabled the 14-year-old to gain a scholarship to the Royal Academy in 1789.

In addition, he contributed to his own livelihood with drawings for architects, designs and commissions for engravers, collectors and art dealers. He developed his own watercolor style and from 1795 learned oil painting at the Royal Academy under Philip James de Loutherbourg the Younger (1740-1812), which from then on played an increasingly important role in his work. Loutherbourg, an excellent engraver and painter, had come to London from France as a stage painter, quickly gained great recognition and became a member of the Royal Academy in 1781. He was known for his magnificent naval works and atmospheric landscapes, which inspired Turner.

Already in his early watercolors, Turner succeeded in capturing the translucent and airy

quality of clouds and rising mist. The young Turner then exhibited an comparable motif in oil at the Royal Academy in 1798: the painting "Morning among the Coniston Fells, Cumberland". It shows a misty mountain landscape in the morning.

### Member of the Royal Academy at the age of 26

In 1802, Turner was elected the youngest full member of the Royal Academy to date. He more or less ignored traditional academic history painting, which was at that time highly respected at the Academy. He concentrated on his own strength, landscape painting, although he did refer to artistic role models, which was well received: Claude Lorrain, Nicolas Poussin, for



*Harbour of Brest, Quayside and Château, 1826-28, 172,7x223,5 cm*



*The Sacrifice of the Fiesta, 1910, 284×344 cm*

example, sea views by Willem de Velde the Younger, vedute by the Venetian Canaletto or battle paintings and romantic scenes by his teacher Louthembourg.

The Academy's exhibitions were an important instrument for Turner's public relations work. They were noticed by a wide audience, discussed in the press and allowed personal relationships



*Turner - Three Horizons : exhibition in the Lenbachhaus in Munich*



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with customers and patrons. From 1807 to 1837, Turner was Professor of Perspective at the Royal Academy, one of the compulsory subjects for students. Thanks to his experience as a young man, when he drew for architects and topographers, he was well prepared for this task. He deepened his knowledge through intensive study before giving his first lecture.

### Study travels through Europe

The study of nature was influential and a prerequisite for Turner's work: as a young boy with relatives in the countryside and by the sea, and later on extensive travels through England, Wales and Scotland, during which he continually sketched, painted in watercolors and produced oil sketches. He later worked on these studies in his atelier. From 1805, he undertook boat trips on the Thames, sketching and painting from the boat.

As early as 1802, he visited Paris, the Louvre and the Alps. Further journeys after the end of the Napoleonic Wars took him to France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and German-speaking countries from 1817 onwards. He always returned with numerous sketches, watercolors and a few oil paintings.

### Highly valued by posterity

Turner's widespread success and his recognition outside of Great Britain was initially achieved by the reproduction of his work through printmaking. In addition to study books, he created numerous illustrations for works by well-known writers, which were widely distributed via books.

Turner's painting seems modern to us today. He gave new impulses to landscape painting and his seascapes were revolutionary. He was particularly interested in light and atmosphere. Because his painting style moved away from the depiction of the object and made light, air, water and atmosphere the essential aim of his pictures in a new way, he is today regarded as a forerunner of both Impressionism and Abstraction.

However, the visit to the exhibition in Munich was a rather limited introduction to William Turner's work. It is understandable that Tate Britain does not give away its most famous pieces. Real art enthusiasts will have to travel to London or search the web to get a more comprehensive view of Turner.