

the Whitworth

Press release

Date: 24 January 2025

Turner: In Light and Shade A revelatory exhibition marking the 250th anniversary of the artist's birth

- The Whitworth's first exhibition of J.M.W. Turner's celebrated *Liber Studiorum* engravings in over 100 years
- Explore over 70 rarely seen works from the Whitworth collection alongside key works from public and private collections



Storm in the Pass of St. Gotthard, Switzerland, 1845 J.M.W Turner © the Whitworth, The University of Manchester.

This February, the Whitworth presents a special exhibition that looks afresh at the work of Britain's greatest landscape artist J.M.W. Turner. The exhibition is presented as part of a national celebration of the artist on the 250th anniversary of his birth.

For the first time in over 100 years the entire set of Turner's celebrated *Liber Studiorum* series, the Latin title can be translated to 'Book of Studies', has been specially conserved and will be exhibited at the Whitworth.

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Turner: In Light and Shade unveils 71 of Turner's published prints, displayed alongside major paintings loaned from private and public collections across Europe, as well as the artists' most celebrated watercolours from the Whitworth collection.

The exhibition rethinks Turner's legacy by exploring his genius as both painter and a master of printmaking - which was vital to the development of his reputation as an artist. At a time when printmaking was regarded as secondary to painting, this collection display reveals how Turner approached the print medium with the same innovation and expressive freedom that marked his oil and watercolour paintings.

Turner exploited the tonal possibilities of etching and mezzotint in the *Liber Studiorum* series creating works with depth and luminosity. These prints were made in collaboration with a new generation of mezzotint engravers, helping to elevate and transform the medium. In their creation, Turner used topographical studies gathered on his sketching tours across the United Kingdom and Europe.

In Light and Shade offers an unprecedented opportunity to view this extraordinary series and understand Turner's impact on the evolution of printmaking.



Peat Bog, Scotland, plate 45 from *Liber Studiorum* J.M.W Turner (1775-1851) Engraved by G. Clint (1770-1854) © the Whitworth, The University of Manchester.

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Darren Pih, Head of Exhibitions and Collections at the Whitworth says: "The Whitworth is home to a significant and extraordinary collection of works by J.M.W. Turner. On the 250th anniversary of his birth, we are delighted to have the opportunity to present these works to our audiences. *In Light and Shade* provides new ways to engage with and appreciate Turner's innovative artistic processes. We look forward to welcoming audiences to the Whitworth over the coming months."

Imogen Holmes-Roe, exhibition curator of Historic Art at the Whitworth, says: "Turner's prints are not just technical feats; they are emotional experiences, with each engraving, Turner reimagined landscape—not just as a subject but as a language, using the print medium to evoke mood, atmosphere, and scale. This exhibition is a celebration of that vision, offering a fresh, immersive look at a body of work that has too often been overshadowed by Turner's oils and watercolours."

The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with texts by exhibition curator Imogen Holmes-Roe and historian Gillian Forrester. It aims to bring renewed scholarly attention to *Liber Studiorum* and its place within Turner's larger artistic evolution. This catalogue will also be the first comprehensive guide to the Whitworth's Turner watercolours, serving as an invaluable reference for anyone interested in Turner's work. Available to purchase from the Whitworth Shop – online and in-store in April.

Turner: In Light and Shade represents the culmination of years of conservation work and scholarly research, offering an unparalleled chance to experience Turner's engravings as they were meant to be seen. Visitors will encounter these masterpieces in a way that highlights their innovation, beauty, and emotional resonance. Whether you are a long-time admirer of Turner or new to his work, the exhibition promises to be a transformative journey into the heart of one Britain's greatest artists.

Turner: In Light and Shade is on view at the Whitworth until Sunday 2 November 2025.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

For all press information, images and interview requests please contact, Melissa McFarlane, Communications Manager at whitworthpress@manchester.ac.uk

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Image credit

Image 1 – *Storm in the Pass of St. Gotthard, Switzerland*, 1845 JMW Turner

© the Whitworth, The University of Manchester.

Image 2 - *Peat Bog, Scotland*, plate 45 from Liber Studiorum JMW Turner (1775-1851)

Engraved by G. Clint (1770-1854) © the Whitworth, The University of Manchester.

Listings information

7 February - 2 November 2025

The Whitworth, The University of Manchester

Free entry

Find out more: <https://www.whitworth.manchester.ac.uk/whats-on/exhibitions/turnerinlightandshade/>

Exhibition credits

The exhibition is curated by Imogen Holmes-Roe (Historic Art Curator, the Whitworth)

This exhibition is supported by the Manchester Accommodation BID. The Manchester Accommodation BID has provided crucial support for the J.M.W. Turner: In Light and Shade exhibition at the Whitworth in Manchester. The Accommodation BID receives and manages funds derived from the £1 charge levied on guests visiting Manchester overnight, using the funds to promote and amplify events and activities that bring more people to visit and stay.

The exhibition catalogue is generously supported by the Friends of the Whitworth.

With thanks to our official paint sponsor Little Greene.

About the Whitworth

The Whitworth is proudly part of The University of Manchester, operating as a convening space between the University and the people of the city. Founded in 1889 for "the perpetual gratification of the people of Manchester" it continues this mission today in new contexts. The gallery, its park and gardens are home to the collection of over 60,000 works of art, textiles, sculptures and wallpapers and provides a platform for artists from around the world. The Whitworth is driven by a vision to actively seek and manifest connections between art, creativity, and their role in developing a more resilient and caring society through its exhibitions and award-winning civic engagement programme.

Gallery opening times: Tuesday to Sunday 10am-5pm, Thursday late opening until 9pm
www.manchester.ac.uk/whitworth