

Turner's paintings once again grace the walls at Brantwood

Friday 12 April, 2019

Incandescence: Turner in Venice - Brantwood's showcase exhibition in John Ruskin's bicentennial year, featuring JMW Turner's oil painting 'Venice, the Piazzetta with the Ceremony of the Doge Marrying the Sea' along with a suite of watercolours on loan from the Tate.

This exhibition marks the **first ever public exhibition at Brantwood devoted to Turner**. The paintings are from Turner's visit in 1840, the year in which Ruskin and Turner first met. They chart the passage of light across the hours of a single day. In Venice Turner expressed the many elements of his artistic inspiration in the all-consuming energy of light. History, society, architecture, boats, sea and sky – all melt together in a timeless luminescence. **Turner's Venice became Ruskin's Venice and Turner became one of the great shaping forces of Ruskin's life.**

Ruskin's engagement with Turner began in 1836, when Blackwood's Magazine ran an article ridiculing three recent pictures by Turner. 'The review raised me to the height of "black anger" in which I have remained pretty nearly ever since...' By leaping to the defence of Turner's reputation Ruskin established his own. Modern Painters, the huge work of art criticism, theory and polemic in five volumes on which Ruskin laboured between 1843 and 1860, was originally conceived as an attempt to explain to the British that they had among them a painter as great as any of the ancients.

In Modern Painters Ruskin writes "At Venice he found freedom of space, brilliancy of light, variety of colour, massive simplicity of general form; and **to Venice we owe many of the motives in which his highest powers of colour have been displayed**"

On Turner's death in 1851, Ruskin was appointed one of his executors and set to work on the gargantuan task of cataloguing the 20,000 watercolours and drawings Turner bequeathed to the National Gallery. The bulk of Turner's gift to the nation are today housed in the Clare Galleries of Tate Britain.

The exhibition runs from 11 April to 4 August in the Blue Gallery at Brantwood.

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