

# L'ÂGE D'OR DE LA PEINTURE ANGLAISE DE REYNOLDS À TURNER

MUSÉE DU LUXEMBOURG

FROM 11 SEPTEMBER 2019 TO 16 FEBRUARY 2020

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The long reign of George III from 1760 to 1820, stands out in the history of Great Britain as a decisive period of transformation, in society, in the nation's global status, and within artistic and cultural life. It is in the light of such developments that this exhibition presents the English painting of this period. While referring to the masters of the past and the great schools of painting that had made their mark on the Continent, the painters of this generation were searching for a distinctive British identity. With the creation of artists' societies and the emergence and development of exhibitions, art came out of the private sphere and into the public domain. On the French model, Britain was endowed in 1768 with an institutional framework: the Royal Academy of Arts. The foundation of this major institution reflects a new aesthetic ambition and a desire among artists to form a "school". While some artists could count on the few royal commissions, most had to deal with a clientele formed not only of an elite aristocracy, but also new players in commerce and industry. In the emerging consumer society, artists were confronted with new demands and brought new life to portraiture and landscape painting. We can see the emergence of strong personalities who expressed themselves in an astonishing diversity of styles, who adapted their productions to the evolution of the market and elevated it through theoretical reflection. It is a time of grandeur, the picturesque and the sublime. Through Tate's masterpieces, this exhibition aims to highlight a key moment in English painting, one which is little represented in French public collections. It opens with the face to face encounter between Reynolds and Gainsborough that inaugurates this golden age.

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# 1. REYNOLDS AND GAINSBOROUGH FACE TO FACE

From the 1760s, Joshua Reynolds and Thomas Gainsborough established themselves in England in the field of portraiture. Both received royal commissions and were “painters to the king”. Critics of the time regularly set them in opposition. They certainly played on this by producing works with the deliberate intention of inviting comparison. As a result, between the 1760s and 1780s, the rivalry of the two painters became a public spectacle.

Although driven by the same ambition, Reynolds and Gainsborough pursued professional trajectories and artistic goals that were very different from each other. Reynolds established his elite reputation in London early on, while Gainsborough began his career with a smaller clientele in the counties of Suffolk and Essex. In portraiture, Reynolds sought to flatter with playful and scholarly references, while Gainsborough breathed life brilliantly into his portraits.

In 1768, both painters were founding members of the Royal Academy. But their relations with the institution put them in opposition. Reynolds, recognised as a leader, became the first president and expressed his theories in carefully constructed lectures. Gainsborough, meanwhile, kept his distance, displaying a certain disdain for intellectual pretensions, and expressing his points of view on art only informally in his correspondence with certain friends.

Both, however, shared the same admiration for Anthony Van Dyck, who made his career in England in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. They also shared a taste for technical experimentation, manipulating the painted surface to achieve expressive texture effects, granular in the case of Reynolds, fluid in the case of Gainsborough.

## 2. PORTRAITS, IMAGES OF A PROSPEROUS SOCIETY

The speed of economic and urban development created a thriving market for portrait painters, especially in London and Bath, a fashionable

spa town, but also in fast-growing cities like Liverpool. In the 1760s, the multiplication of public exhibitions and the growth of the print market enabled portrait artists to become better known to the public.

Francis Cotes, a painter much-loved by George III, could have become Reynolds' and Gainsborough's most serious competitor if death had not brutally removed him from the scene. Johan Zoffany, of German origin, very much in favour with Queen Charlotte, also made his mark during these years. But it was George Romney in particular who became a portraitist in vogue in London, especially with a new clientele of entrepreneurs and merchants. Unlike most of the great portraitists who wooed the royal family and attended the Royal Academy, Romney built his reputation on his independence. During the 1760s and 1770s, all of these painters created portraits full of vigour that were also distinguished by their incredible variety.

The death of Gainsborough in 1788 and Reynolds in 1792 left the field open to a new generation. John Hoppner and William Beechey were rising figures and made themselves known with works that exude romanticism. However, they rapidly found competition from a young prodigy who seduced London society: Thomas Lawrence. With his keen sense of theatre and dazzling colour, he became the figurehead of the new romantic movement. He would be named president of the Royal Academy in 1820.

## 3. DYNASTIES AND FAMILIES, IMAGES OF PRIVACY

A more individualistic, consumer society was emerging in Britain in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In portraiture, the pictorial formats inherited from the previous century offered neither the variety nor the degree of personalisation expected by this new society.

The 1730s and 1740s saw the appearance of conversation pieces, group portraits close to the genre painting, generally small, and inspired by Dutch and Flemish art as well as by Watteau's paintings. The figures, most often portrayed as a family, are staged in an informal fashion. Instead of staring at the viewer or gazing absently into the distance, they converse spontaneously.

With painters like Johan Zoffany and Francis Wheatley, the conversation piece evolved in the 1760s and 1770s towards a greater degree of naturalness and freedom. Although these images look like snapshots of family life, they remain carefully composed around the figure of the head of the family. With George Romney and Joseph Wright of Derby, the range of formats expanded further.

In general, the evolution of the portrait reflects the increased importance given to private space, to the inner life, to the intimate bond between man and woman, to children and the comforts of domestic life. Feelings and personal relationships take primacy over social status. The portrait in costume, which blurs the true social identity of the models, was also a great success at the time. Reynolds was especially playful in his portraits of children.

## 4. THE SPECTACLE OF NATURE

Landscape played a central role in the emergence of an English school of painting. It allowed many painters to express themselves more freely than in the portrait, where the requirements of the patron were more restrictive. With the exception of the great classical landscape tradition marked by abstract ideals and historical ambition, ordinary landscape painting was little regarded and relegated to the bottom of the academic hierarchy of genres. In Great Britain at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, however, this traditionally subordinate position was radically called into question.

The period coincides with the wars against revolutionary France, then Napoleon, which limited opportunities for travel on the continent. Access to the treasures of classical art was limited. This proved to be an opportunity to profoundly reconsider national identity. Rural views and scenes of rural life, inspired by the national landscape, took on unprecedented importance and had a key role in the definition of British identity.

This appreciation of the landscape is accompanied by a new understanding of nature. Sketching nature, like Paul Sandby at his window in the portrait by Francis Cotes, became an essential practice for a whole

generation of painters who began to criss-cross the landscape in search of subjects. There were also new aesthetic ambitions, including the theory of the picturesque, which is based on the idea that variety, movement and irregularity can give the landscape an extra dignity.

The success of the genre was also based on its commercial dimension. In England there was an established market for landscape painting, long dominated by Dutch and Flemish artists. The consumer society emerging at this time only reinforced this demand. In these smaller paintings, this new audience found works that lived up to its expectations, representing, with naturalism, simple subjects designed primarily to please the eye.

## 5. WATERCOLOUR PAINTING

In the 1760s and 1770s, watercolour was still being used in a traditional way, that is to say above all to bring colour to drawings.

Francis Towne, Alexander and John Robert Cozens, and Joseph Mallord William Turner, discovered new ways to exploit this medium, working with washes, flat tints and staining. In this way, the colour acquires a figurative power of its own, independently of line. Watercolour thus played an important role in the growing vitality of landscape painting in England.

Unhappy with the way their works were hung, especially at the Royal Academy, the watercolour artists assembled as the Society of Painters in Water Colours and organised their own exhibitions from 1805. Small in size, relatively inexpensive and generally easy to acquire, watercolours now catered to a thriving bourgeois art market. The freedom expressed in this medium seemed to correspond to the new aspirations of a market society.

## 6. AT THE BORDERS OF EMPIRE

In 1763, with the Treaty of Paris, Britain emerged more powerful from the Seven Years' War and established itself as the main colonial power in America, Canada and India, as well as in the Caribbean.

The political crisis in America, the Declaration of Independence in 1776 and the ensuing war, constituted an enormous historical trauma. The hope of maintaining an English-speaking global empire was unravelling. Historians speak of a transition from a “first” British empire, centred on America, to a “second”, facing east, especially towards India.

The colonial ambitions of Great Britain had serious consequences for people around the world, most importantly with the institution of slavery. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the British became the main actors in the transatlantic slave trade. Although the slave trade was banned in 1807, it was not until 1834 that slavery itself was formally abolished.

The visual arts helped to conceal the harsh realities of the British Empire. The portraits of well-known slave traders and plantation owners seldom allude to the origin of their wealth. Few images evoke the resistance of slaves or portray the violence of human exploitation. Thus, in his portrayal of Anglo-Indian life, Zoffany takes up the principles of the conversation piece, enhancing them with just a touch of exoticism. Similarly, views of India, like those of William Hodges or Thomas Daniell, based on the conventions of European landscape painting, are serene and timeless.

## 7. HISTORY PAINTING, CONTRADICTIONS AND COMPROMISES

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, history painting, at the top of the academic hierarchy of genres, failed to correspond to the needs of the British market society. It does not occupy the same position as in France, for example. Indeed, neither royalty nor religious institutions were willing to finance large narrative paintings. A gap emerged between the ideal supported by the Royal Academy and the reality of the market. This situation created frustration among ambitious artists. Many struggled to make a livelihood and sank into depression or even alcoholism. This is particularly the case for Daniel Stringer, who represents himself in the dismal interior of his studio in front of a blank canvas.

In the 1780s, however, the situation changed. At a time when crowds were jostling in the

theatres of London, themes inspired by the theatre were the starting point for a new, more popular, form of history painting.

A wave of artists suddenly turned towards dramatic and fantastic subjects. The Swiss painter Henry Fuseli, a lover of Shakespeare and Milton with a fertile imagination, was certainly the most original. Other artists understood as he did that to be noticed in an exhibition full of diverse works, they had to focus on the immediate visual impact of a picture, not the moral or intellectual lesson that can be drawn from a given scene. Formerly the prerogative of princes and intellectuals, history painting was reinvented for a wider audience.

It is in this context that Turner’s success must be seen, partly based on the brilliant compromise that he was able to find between ambitious painting, resolutely built on the model of the great masters of the 17<sup>th</sup> century like Claude Lorrain, and frankly spectacular views for the general public. His example remains singular, but finds an echo in the sensational work of John Martin.

### Curators:

**Martin Myrone**, Senior Curator,  
British Art to 1800, Tate

**Cécile Maisonneuve**, Scientific Advisor,  
Rmn - Grand Palais

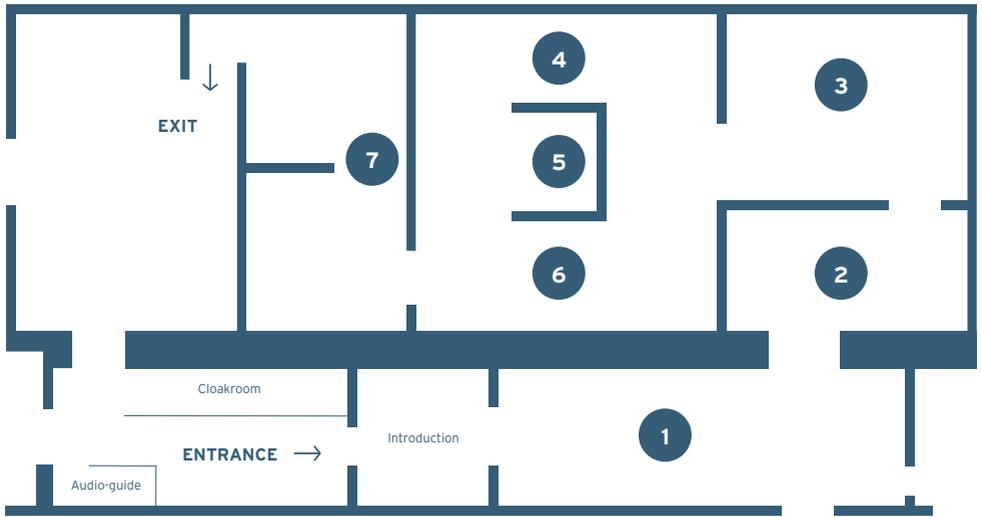
**Scenography - Graphic design:**  
Jean-Paul Camargo - SALUCES

**Lighting:**  
Miguel Ramos - LUMINŒUVRES

This exhibition is organised by the Réunion des Musées Nationaux - Grand Palais in cooperation with Tate, London.



# EXHIBITION MAP



# AROUND THE EXHIBITION

## PROGRAMMATION CULTURELLE

BOOKINGS AT MUSEEDULUXEMBOURG.FR

### MUSEUM LECTURES

#### FILM SCREENINGS LES 3 LUXEMBOURG

67, rue Monsieur Le Prince 75006 Paris

*free entry (booking required)*

#### PRESENTATION LECTURE

Thursday 19 September, 6.30 pm

*Cécile Maisonneuve, associate curator, Réunion des musées nationaux - Grand Palais*

"The golden age of English painting" takes a new look at the fertile period that saw English painters profoundly transform the genres of portraiture, landscape and history painting. Cécile Maisonneuve reveals the genesis and development of this selection of masterpieces from Tate.

#### TURNER SECRET TRAVELLER

Thursday 10 October, 6.30 pm

*Alain Jaubert, director, novelist and curator*

The first of the travelling painters, Turner was interested in the quirks of nature: glaciers, caves, waterfalls... His notebooks discovered after his death reveal, along with his field studies, his explorations of sexuality in many erotic drawings. These notebooks illuminate the subterranean relationships between the demonstrable and secret works of this romantic visionary.

#### THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE ENGLISH DANCE

Thursday 14 November at 6.30 pm

*Arnaud de Giovanni, president of the Carnet de Bals association, Vice President of the French Dance Federation*

Dances are an important aspect of the social life of British aristocracy and society. This lecture looks back at the place of dance in George III's England, the evolution of fashion and morals in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, but also at the particularities of English dances compared to those on the continent.

#### PORTRAITS AND CARICATURES OF WOMEN

Thursday 9 January, 6.30 pm

*Sophie Loussouarn, Lecturer at Picardie - Jules Verne University*

With the unprecedented development of the portrait genre under the reign of George III, the most prominent women in England were magnified not only in their role as wife and mother, but also for their intellectual and social qualities. These early images of celebrities are the subject of many caricatures that offer a critical counterpoint.

### EVENTS AND EVENINGS

#### NUIT BLANCHE

Saturday 5 October, from 7.30 pm to 1 am, last entry 12.30 am

*free entry, no reservations*

Visit the exhibition and enjoy the musical programme offered by the *Orchestra and Choir of ESSEC* around the work of Joseph Haydn, who went to London several times between 1791 and 1795 and composed some of his most famous symphonies there.

#### SKETCHBOOK EVENING

Tuesday 15 October, 7 pm - 9 pm

*booking compulsory*

An exclusive encounter with the exhibition's masterpieces: come with your materials and draw in front of the works in a favourable atmosphere.

#### BALL: COSTUMES AND CONTREDANCES

Saturdays 7 December and 1 February, 7.30-11 pm

*booking compulsory*

Have the ballroom scenes from Jane Austen's novels always made you dream? Take to the floor during these dances led by the *Carnet de Bals* association and let yourself be drawn into a wild contredance or the *Duke of Kent's Waltz*, a dance created for the father of the future Queen Victoria who had difficulty with the waltz.

#### AT THE BIBLIOTHÈQUE ANDRÉ MALRAUX

112, rue de Rennes, Paris 6<sup>ème</sup>

#### NIGHT OF READING

Saturday 18 January 2019 from 6.30 pm to 8 pm

*free entry, no reservations*

In parallel with the unprecedented artistic development of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century, a very rich vein of literature emerged from the British Isles. Discover some major texts of English Romanticism and other writings related to this period through shared readings.



### MULTIMEDIA

#### THE EXHIBITION APP

on Google Play and the App Store: €3.49

NEW VIDEOS AND INTERVIEWS  
ON THE GRAND PALAIS YOUTUBE CHANNEL



### THE EXHIBITION PLAYLIST

The *Tsuku Boshí* label has invited a range of artists to create a musical interpretation of the various parts of the exhibition.

Download this musical tour programme for free

## AUDIOGUIDES

Enjoy commentary on some twenty major works from the exhibition as well as a musical tour based on original compositions from the *Tsuku Boshi* label.

*French, English, Spanish, German and children's version in French*  
price: €5, *Sésame* price + : €4

## GUIDED TOURS AND WORKSHOPS

### "MASTERPIECES FROM TATE" GENERAL GUIDED TOUR

**from 13 years; duration: 75 minutes**

*for French speakers: every day at 12.15 pm, school holidays at 4.45 pm and Mondays at 7 pm*

*for English speakers: the first Saturday of the month at 2.30 pm*

At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, English painting developed and asserted itself in all its originality, while remaining sensitive to European influences. From the portraits of Reynolds and Gainsborough to Turner's landscapes, a Museum guide will introduce you to the riches and diversity of a major period in English art.

### FAMILY VISIT "THE THOUSAND AND ONE FACES OF ENGLISH PAINTING"

**from 6 years; duration: 1 hour**

*every Sunday at 2 pm, except the last Sunday of the month*

Portraits of families and children caught in the middle of a game, a fairy dance or a Caribbean celebration: English painting of the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century is full of surprising and joyous images, capable of resonating in the childlike imagination. The tour is aimed primarily at children so you can get to know the works as a family.

### INTERACTIVE AND SENSORY TOUR "JEUX D'INTERPRÊTES"

**from 13 years; duration: 1 hour**

*Tuesday 3 and 10 December at 7 pm*

The *Jeux d'interprètes* duo draws on your perceptions to unveil the multiple dimensions of major works in the exhibition. Delphine Grivel, a specialist in the relationship between music and the visual arts, interprets the impressions of the participants while Jean-Marc Leone, cellist, translates them into music from works by Bach, Dvořák, Gluck, Lalo...

### CHILDREN'S WORKSHOP TOUR "ATMOSPHERES: A JOURNEY THROUGH ENGLISH PAINTING"

**from 6 years; duration: 2 hours**

*last Sunday of the month at 2.15 pm*

During the exhibition, children explore their emotions by identifying themselves with painted figures. In the studio, they then become models and paint a portrait in the "English style" particularly attentive to atmospheres, materials and shades of tones.

### "LITTLE LORDS" STORYTELLING TOUR

**for 3-5 years, duration: 30 minutes with a tour guide**

*Saturday 12 October, 9 November, 14 December, 11 January and 8 February at 9.45 am*

For the youngest visitors, a mini-guided tour that leaves great memories: an opportunity to discover English painting by unfolding the thread of a tale, in a special occasion for parents and children.

### SCHOOL VISIT "ENGLISH PAINTING FROM THE SHADOWS TO ENLIGHTENMENT"

**from kindergarten to higher, duration: 45 minutes to 1h15 depending on levels**

*every day from Monday to Saturday at 10.30 am or 2.30 pm, visit slots are available in English*

Under the reign of George III, English painting profoundly re-established its approach to different genres: the portrait leaves more room for the expression of the individual and the landscape becomes picturesque and reflects the moods of the artist.

## PUBLICATIONS

### EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

With an introduction by Martin Myrone, Senior Curator, British Art to 1800 at Tate, this catalogue explores the unique visual and intellectual innovations of British art in the 18th century. The iconographic richness highlights the recurring themes of English painting such as lineage, family and home in portraits, the painting of genre and history, the landscape and the sublime.

*Editions Rmn - Grand Palais, paperback with dust jacket, 224 pages, 150 illustrations, €39*

### JOURNAL OF THE EXHIBITION

Written by Professor of British Civilisation and Visual Arts Hélène Ibatá (University of Strasbourg), this journal focuses on the intellectual context that allowed the rise of English painting. A richly illustrated summary text sheds light on the assertion of taste and specifically British styles.

*Editions Rmn - Grand Palais, 24 pages, 30 illustrations, €6*

### EXPO GUIDE - GALLIMARD DISCOVERIES

Written by art historian Amandine Rabier, a teacher at the École du Louvre, this exhibition guide offers an introduction to English art of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The generous iconography, deployed throughout the book, is also featured in seven fold-outs.

*Editions Gallimard and Rmn - Grand Palais, paperback with flaps, 48 pages, 40 illustrations, €9.20*

# AUTUMN 2019 SEASON

## GRAND PALAIS

### TOULOUSE - LAUTREC

RESOLUTELY MODERN

9 October 2019 > 27 January 2020

Although often reduced to the culture of Montmartre, the work of Toulouse-Lautrec transcends such clichés. While the artist wonderfully represented the electricity of the Parisian night and its pleasures, Toulouse-Lautrec was motivated above all by an aesthetic ambition, that of conveying the reality of modern society and its many faces.

### GRECO

16 October 2019 > 10 February 2020

This retrospective is the first major French monographic exhibition dedicated to the genius that was El Greco. Rediscovered by the European avant-garde at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, his work is both spirited and electric, combining tradition and innovation in a humanist spirit, at the dawn of the Golden Age.

L'ÂGE D'OR DE LA

## PEINTURE ANGLAISE

DE REYNOLDS À TURNER

FROM 11 SEPTEMBER 2019 TO 16 FEBRUARY 2020

AT THE MUSÉE DU LUXEMBOURG, 19 RUE DE VAUGIRARD 75006 Paris

OPEN EVERY DAY FROM 10:30 AM TO 7 PM

OPEN LATE EVERY MONDAY UNTIL 10 PM

open from 10.30 am to 6 pm on 24 and 31 December

open for all public holidays except 25 December

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