NEWS

At The British Art Center: Turner & Shakespeare

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The following is a press release from Yale University: "Turner and the Sublime," a major loan exhibition exploring the relationship of J. M. W. Turner (1775-1851) to theories of the sublime, will open at the Yale Center for British Art on Thursday, 11 February 1981.

The sublime as an aesthetic concept has been discussed by numerous writers, and Turner's own interest in the theory, as propounded in the eighteenth century by Edmund Burke and others, has often been noted. But Turner, far from being bound by any theoretical conceptions, used these as the starting point for a whole series of technical and artistic innovations. In pursuit of the sublime, Turner made many very large watercolors which emulated the grandeur and importance of oil paintings. Several of these, together with their no less impressive full-scale preparatory studies, will be included in this exhibition, some being shown for the first time. The most significant of Turner's paintings in the genre of the sublime will be represented by fine impressions of prints, often engraved under the close supervision of Turner himself.

This exhibition, the first to examine a specific aspect of Turner's art, will include 123 watercolors, prints and drawings executed between 1793 and 1845. Of these works, sixty constitute an unprecedented loan from the resources of the Turner Bequest, deposited in the British Museum in London; in addition, a sizable number of works come from the Center's own holdings, and others from private collections.

Turner and the Sublime has already received considerable attention at the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto where it opened on 1 November 1980. After closing in New Haven on 19 April 1981, it will travel to the British Museum in London where it will be on view from 15 May through 20 September 1981.

The 192-page catalogue accompanying the exhibition, published by British Museum Publications and available at the Center's Sales Desk, includes 32 color plates and 108 black and white reproductions. Written by Andrew Wilton, a leading authority on Turner watercolors and Curator of Prints and Drawings through December 1980, the catalogue discusses Turner's training and early career in the light of traditional attitudes to the sublime and considers the mature Turner's use of them for his own needs.

Shakespeare and British Art, an exhibition bringing together for the first time the University's extensive holdings of Shakespearean art, will open at the Yale Center for British Art on Thursday, 23 April and remain on view through Sunday, 5 July 1981.

William Shakespeare was one of the most important literary inspirations for British artists in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Nearly 1400 works based upon scenes or characters in his plays were shown at the Royal Academy exhibitions between 1769 and 1900. One of the most significant events in the development of an English School of history painting was Josiah Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery, a group of paintings, illustrating the plays of Shakespeare, which were commissioned in the last quarter of the eighteenth century and engraved for subscription. Illustrated editions of Shakespeare's works proliferated, especially during the nineteenth century when over three hundred were in print.

This exhibition surveys the literary and visual sources of Shakespearean illustration, from the first illustrated edition of 1709 to Victorian interpretations of this theme. It draws on the large collection of Shakespearean material in the British Art Center, including a number of paintings from the Boydell Shakespeare Gallery and others of important eighteenth century actors in major roles, such as Benjamin Wilson's David Garrick and George Anne Bellamy as Romeo and Juliet and Pieter Van Bleck's Mrs. Cibber as Cordelia. Nearly thirty paintings and over 120 drawings and prints from the Center's collection will be on view. Among the artists represented by important drawings and watercolors are Francis Hayman, George Romney, Henry Fuseli, Richard Parkes Bonington, Francis Danby and Frederic Lord Leighton. The Lewis Walpole Library in Farmington, Connecticut will be lending five watercolor drawings by H. W. Bunbury as well as fifteen engravings. Finally, a number of prints and rare, illustrated editions of Shakespeare from the collections of Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library and Sterling Memorial Library will be on display.

The exhibition has been organized by Geoffrey Ashton, Librarian of the Garrick Club and former resident fellow of the British Art Center, who is a specialist in theatrical and Shakespearean art. It will be accompanied by a catalogue with 110 illustrations and detailed entries on all 190 objects in the exhibition.

In conjunction with Shakespeare and British Art, the Center will offer a range of special programs. On Friday, 24 April at 4 p.m., The Lord Annan, Vice-Chancellor of the University of London, will deliver a lecture, sponsored by the British Studies Program, entitled "How Should We Produce Shakespeare?" On Saturday, 25 April from 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., there will be a symposium, Shakespeare in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries. Topics under discussion will include: the relationship of Shakespeare's plays to visual depictions of them, the importance of Shakespearean drama as a subject for art, and performances of the bard's works during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The program will feature the following talks:

10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

The Coral Reef: Some Morning Thoughts on Shakespeare
--Maynard Mack, Sterling Professor Emeritus of English, Yale University.
Confrontation and Complexity in Shakespeare's Scenes
--George Hunter, Professor of English, Yale University University.

Acting Shakespeare--Eugene Waith, Douglas Tracy Smith
Professor of English Literature, Yale University.

Boyce's Shakespeare--G. E. Bentley, Professor of
English, University of Toronto.

2:30-4:30 p.m.

Shakespeare and the Artist in the Nineteenth Century

Turner's "Juliet and her Nurse"--Ronald Paulson, Thomas E. Donnelly Professor of English, Yale University.

Shakespearean Paintings and Nineteenth-Century Art
Criticism--Richard D. Altick, Professor of English, The Ohio State University, Columbus.

Honor and Jealousy: Holman Hunt's Problem with a
Problem Play--Mark Roskill, Professor of Art History, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

On Sunday, 26 April at 3 p.m., Ann Carter-Cox, a soprano who has given solo recitals at Carnegie Hall, Town Hall and Abraham Goodman House in New York and appeared regularly at the Medieval Faires held at the Cloisters each summer, will perform at the Center. Accompanying herself on the lute and dulcimer, she will sing songs of medieval and Renaissance England, including lyrics from Shakespeare's plays. The following Sunday (3 May), also at 3 p.m., students in the Yale School of Drama will present scenes from Shakespeare as performed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

As part of the Center's "Art in Context" series

A summer film series, featuring Shakespearean films made in the United States, Great Britain, and Germany displaying a variety of cinematic techniques and concepts, is scheduled for the following Saturdays at 2:30 p.m.: 13 June--Macbeth; 27 June--A Midsummer Night's Dream; 18 July--Othello; 1 August--Romeo and Juliet; 15 August--Hamlet. All programs are open to the public without charge.

That the 1980 MLA Special Session on "Blake and the Eighteenth Century" was probably the longest such meeting of the convention does not alone explain the fact that the audience seemed to increase rather than diminish in numbers during the presentation of the four papers and a response. This was an eternity in love indeed with its temporal productions. Leo Damrosch, Jr. spoke first on "Blake and the Recovery of the Lyric," arguing that Blake "recovers" the lyric through poems "totally committed to meaning in its deepest sense" and that the fullness of this commitment is what separates Blake most decisively from the tentative lyric poetry of the eighteenth century. But at the same time, it is this "total moral commitment to works of art that point beyond themselves" that leads to Blake's later work and its concern with "the gap between what art claims and what it can perform." Jim Borck offered an illuminated discussion of "Blake and the Topography of the Human Imagination," and suggested that "Blake's interest in London corresponds to other contemporary interests in anatomical and cartographic developments during his life." Blake must transform the landscape from which his map has been drawn, an external re-mapping which will cause distinctly new interior maps to spring forth"--in particular, the London that Blake "wishes to re-construct is an artistically remapped London based upon anatomical details." Jim's illustrations pointed to Vesalius' Fabrica, an important anatomical text, as a source for the poses of some Blake figures. In "Unlocking Blake's Crystal CabNet," Tom Vogler related some of the significant details and the poetic argument of that poem to Blake's understanding and detestation of Lockean epistemology and metaphysics. Referring to Barker's famous Panorama of 1787 and to Bentham's proposed Panopticon, Tom characterized the speaker of the poem as one who has entered "the tower of observation, or the Lockean stage of self-reflection, in which he can see himself seeing, while we see him seeing himself and describing what he sees." Here, however, "the power of observation does not unlock the epistemological prison but rather constitutes it and expands it." The speaker's attempt to "'seize the inmost Form' reveals that there is nothing there that can be seized, perceived, or comprehended by natural vision." In his remarks on "Classical Line and Romantic Identity," Morris Eaves argued against the recent tendency to use Blake's favorite aesthetic opposition--line vs. color--to align him with artistic neoclassicism and eighteenth-century attitudes toward art. For Morris, "Blake--characteristically--reestab-
lishes Enlightenment principles on romantic grounds. In the case of artistic line, he shears off certain conventional associations (of line with reason and nature, for instance), retains others (of line with intellect), and adds still others (of line with imagination). The result is a thoroughly romantic cluster of metaphors." The Session closed with a response in the path of true friendship from Stephen Carr; addressing each of the preceding papers, Steve's meta-critical effort attended to some characteristic problems of placing Blake within standard categories and sequences of literary history. "Reading Blake forces us to explore, to question, and in