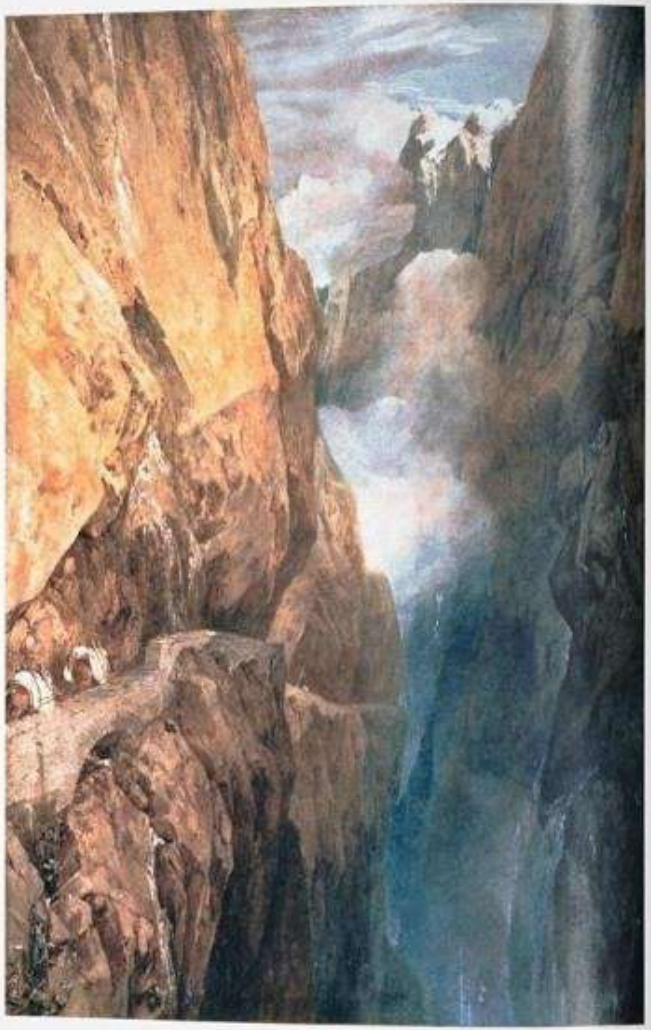
TURNER



TURNER

THE PAGE





Early days – expertise becomes evident

Turner's extraordinary talent was discovered while he was still young; his parents, unlike those of many other artists, were proud of the fact. Mary, his mother, who was later to die in an emotionally disturbed state in a nursing home, was the granddaughter of a butcher. His father, who in the latter part of his life would take on the manservant's role in the painter's bachelor household, not only preparing the paints but also mounting and grounding the canvases, was a barber and wig-maker; he displayed the twelve-year-old's drawings in his shop window and also sold them. Some of these have survived, including a number in imitation of the landscape engravings common at the time. At the age of fourteen, young William was able to escape in summer from the lanes of Covent Garden, narrow enough at that time, and visit his uncle in the country near Oxford. It was at this early stage in his life that he began something which was to be his habit for the rest of his life, roaming through the countryside and making sketches. The result was his first sketchbook.

Various architects, their attention caught by his skill, commissioned drawings from him. He was required to produce sketches of buildings in perspective, surrounding them with the appropriate scenery and colouring them. As a result, Thomas Malton, one of the better-known topographical draughtsmen of the day, took him on as his apprentice, and he was admitted to the art school of the Royal Academy on a probationary basis. All this occurred within the space of one and the same year.

It was only a year later that the Royal Academy first displayed a Turner picture, a watercolour, in its annual exhibition, an event as important for the British art world as the Paris Salon for its French counterpart. Two pictures were displayed in 1790, and he was to contribute to almost every Academy exhibition that was organized in the course of the following sixty years. At the age of seventeen, he attended the art school's "Life Academy", where he drew from the nude model; the following year, he was awarded the "Greater Silver Palette" for landscape drawings. At the age of twenty-one, he was able to present not only watercolours but also his first oil painting in the Royal Academy (p. 24). He was elected Academy Associate in 1799; in 1802, he attained full membership, something he had long sought; voted onto the Council soon after, he was appointed Professor of Perspective to the Academy five years later in recognition of his achievements.



Self-portrait, 1799
Oil on canvas, 74.3 x 58.3 cm (29¼ x 23 in.)
London, Tate

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The Passage of the St. Gothard, 1804
Watercolour with scraping-out,
98.5 x 68.5 cm (38¾ x 27 in.)
Kendal, Cumbria, Abbot Hall Art Gallery



Joseph Mallord William Turner
1775 – 1851







TURNER



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1.4°

THANKS!



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