

<p>Institution: The Courtauld Institute of Art</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: 34</p>
<p>Title of case study: Exhibition project, <i>Turner and the Masters</i> (2009-10), curated by Professor David Solkin</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact <i>Turner and the Masters</i>, organised in collaboration with Tate Britain, shown at Tate, the Grand Palais, Paris, and the Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid, in 2009-10, had extensive impact, as measured by audience figures, catalogue sales, press coverage, online survey participation, and attendance at public events and education programmes. Exhibition visitors, schoolchildren on tours, readers and viewers of media items gained insight into Turner's achievements; mechanisms of cultural transmission and the European context of British art. Immediate impact on curatorial and scholarly engagement with Turner shows in a 'spin-off' exhibition (<i>Turner in the Light of Claude</i>) at the National Gallery, and a new book on Turner and history.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) <i>Turner and the Masters</i> was the first exhibition ever devoted to one of the central defining features of JMW Turner's practice: his lifelong habit of assimilating and competing with a range of major artists both past and present. This is a phenomenon that has long been recognised by scholars, but it has never been fully explored, and a comprehensive understanding has hitherto been precluded by the lack of opportunities to present Turner's pictures side by side with 'matching' works by other masters whom he took as the objects of his emulation. From the outset a main aim of the research was to identify and locate Turner's specific models and his painted responses to them. The pictures had to be selected with scrupulous care not only to ensure the exhibition's historical accuracy, but also to enable that its underpinning research could be communicated <i>visually</i> to a large general audience, by the asking them to compare paired images, with minimal textual mediation.</p> <p>Solkin's extensive, searching investigations into the art market (<i>Painting for Money</i>, 1993) and exhibition culture (<i>Art On The Line</i>, 2001-2) laid the ground for his research on <i>Turner and The Masters</i>. Research began in earnest in early 2007, when Solkin was in the last months of a two-year Leverhulme Fellowship; he framed the overall concept and commissioned an international team of scholars and curators to investigate a range of aspects, with a view to informing the selection of works and other elements crucial to the show, and the essay components of the catalogue. A key member of the team was Philippa Simpson, who in 2006 was awarded a three-year doctoral fellowship at The Courtauld, with a brief to explore the rise of an Old Master exhibition culture in London from 1793-1815. Supervised by Solkin and sponsored by Tate, Simpson not only filled important gaps in our knowledge (e.g. by identifying specific old master pictures that Turner would have seen, and which were then borrowed for the show) but also – by virtue of her working part-time at Tate while carrying out her studies at The Courtauld – helped co-ordinate the different strands of the project and the efforts of all of its key players to channel our research to the exhibition's audiences.</p> <p>During his sabbatical leave in autumn 2008, Solkin researched and produced an introductory catalogue essay which for the first time sought to explain the cultural and historical circumstances that enabled and inspired Turner's distinctive mode of engaging with the works of other painters. Both Solkin and Simpson benefited from the opportunity to present their ideas to seminars at The Courtauld, while Solkin's efforts were supported by the annual individual research budget allocated to all permanent members of The Courtauld's teaching staff. The result of their investigations, and those of other members of the team, was an exhibition and a catalogue that have significantly advanced our understanding of Turner and of British Romantic art.</p>
<p>3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)</p> <p>Output 1: David Solkin, <i>Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in</i></p>

Impact case study (REF3b)

Eighteenth-Century England (New Haven & London, Yale University Press 1993)

Output 2: David Solkin, Guest Curator

Art on The Line: The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House 1780-1836, exhibition, The Courtauld Institute Gallery, 2001-2002.

Output 3: David Solkin, editor

Art on The Line: The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House 1780-1836, exhibition catalogue (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2001)

Output 4: David Solkin, Guest Curator

Turner and the Masters

Exhibition held at Tate Britain (23 September 2009 – 31 January 2010), Galeries nationales (Grand Palais, Champs-Élysées) Paris (22 February – 24 May 2010), Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid (22 June – 19 September 2010)

Output 5: David Solkin, editor

Turner and the Masters

Exhibition catalogue, 240pp. (French edition, *Turner et ses Peintres*; Spanish edition, *Turner y los Maestros*)

London 2009 (Paris & Madrid, 2010)

Contents of English edition:

Introductory Essays:

- David Solkin: 'Turner and the Masters: Gleaning to Excel'
- Philippa Simpson: 'Facing up to the Past: The Old Masters and the British School in Turner's London'
- Ian Warrell: '“*Stolen Hints from Celebrated Pictures*”: Turner as Copyist, Collector and Consumer of Old Master Paintings'
- Kathleen Nicholson: 'Turner, Claude and the Essence of Landscape'
- Sarah Monks, 'Turner Goes Dutch'
- Guillaume Faroult and David Solkin: '“*He said he held it very low*”: Turner and Contemporary French Landscape Painting in 1802'

Catalogue (section introductions and entries):

- David Solkin: 'Education and Emulation'
- Philippa Simpson and Martin Myrone: 'The Academy and the Grand Style'
- David Solkin and Philippa Simpson: 'Turner and the North'
- Ian Warrell: 'Painters Painted: The Cult of the Artist'
- David Solkin: 'Competing with Contemporaries'
- Ian Warrell: 'Turner Paints Himself into History'

The catalogue of *Turner and the Masters* was shortlisted for the William MB Berger Prize (for 2009) for excellence in British art history.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The research carried out by David Solkin and his curatorial team (Simpson and Warrell principally) directly informed the selection of specific works for the *Turner and the Masters* exhibition and the nature of their display. Solkin devised the concept and played the lead

role throughout - as guest curator of the show, as editor and co-author of the catalogue, and as supervisor of Simpson's PhD – while Simpson did much of the archival work (into early nineteenth-century British collections and exhibitions), and Warrell lent his expertise as a Turner specialist of many years' standing. This was a collaborative scholarly project, combining the fruits of original and secondary research, which was given concrete form through the public presentation of more than fifty pictures by Turner shown in pairs or larger groupings alongside a similar number of works by other masters whom he strove to rival, emulate, or on occasion outdo.

Following a methodology first developed by Solkin for his pioneering exhibition *Art on The Line: The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House 1780-1836* (Courtauld Institute Gallery, 2001-2), *Turner and the Masters* made most of its scholarly points visually: to encourage visitors to draw their own conclusions, the Tate show reduced the standard length of its wall texts (introductory panels and labels) to an absolute minimum, whilst offering those who wished for more guidance the option of renting an audio-guide featuring the voices of Solkin and his co-curators: 41,302 viewers each paid £3 for this opportunity. Mid-way through the run, the first edition of the catalogue sold out, prompting a second printing; all 20,000 copies of both editions have now been sold. But the dissemination of the research, via the exhibition itself and online, was on a far larger scale: the show attracted more than 850,000 visitors to its three venues (221,146 in London; 455,322 in Paris; and 170,847 in Madrid). The economic effects of this success were far-reaching, not just as a stimulus to tourism: in addition to the more than £500,000 realised from catalogue sales, visitors to Tate Britain spent £85,115 on exhibition-related merchandise. The average daily attendance of 5,303 at the Grand Palais was the largest for any springtime show in its history; during the same period, its auditorium welcomed 14,615 visitors to accompanying films, conferences, and lectures, while 3,685 schoolchildren attended on 173 organised tours. In the UK, Google analytics reports indicate a total of 280,000 'views' of the *Turner and the Masters* pages between September 2009 and January 2010, while during the same period the videos produced to accompany the exhibition were seen by more than 22,000 viewers on YouTube alone. Over 30,000 people participated in an online survey, hosted on Tate Britain's website, in which they were asked to score Turner's achievements against those of his 'rivals' – thus engaging the active engagement of the general public in scholarly and critical debate to an exceptional degree.

In Britain the issues raised by the exhibition were further debated and disseminated by an extensive and enthusiastic press coverage, in the form of photographic features, illustrated reviews and extended articles which appeared in the *Times*, *Sunday Times*, *Independent*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Sunday Telegraph*, *Guardian*, *Financial Times*, *Metro*, *Daily Mirror*, *Express*, *Sunday Express*, *Time Out* and elsewhere. Television coverage included a feature on *Newsnight Review* (BBC1), on BBC Wales, and a half-hour programme on Sky Arts, while there were radio reports on *The Today Programme*, *Front Row* (both Radio 4), and *The Strand* (BBC World Service). But the single largest audience consisted of the 3.24 million who watched the final of *University Challenge* on BBC2 on 4 April 2011, where a 'starter for ten' and three follow-up questions presented the contestants with pairs of works from *Turner and the Masters*, and asked them to identify the 'masters'. This attested and contributed to the exhibition's success in enhancing the understanding of a huge popular audience of: Turner's achievements; the history of British art in its European context; how cultural transmission works; and how the culture of the past can be given new life through the actions

of any modern artist. Arguably, too, the many hundreds of thousands who experienced *Turner and the Masters* either directly or indirectly came away with a stronger sense of connection to, and therefore a greater enjoyment of, the art that they encountered.

Turner and the Masters has also had an impact on the research on and teaching of British art history. On 11-12 January 2010 the Tate hosted a workshop for an invited international group of twenty-four art-historians, curators, and doctoral students, who participated in a series of discussions in front of the pictures themselves, with a view to articulating the lessons to be learned from the unique opportunities offered by the exhibition. The event not only provided a framework for networks to be built in future, but also was significant in moving high-level art-historical debate out of the classroom into the exhibition space, helping to ensure the longer-term impact of the project in the field of Turner studies and nineteenth-century art history. Early indications of that impact can be found in the recent National Gallery exhibition, *Turner Inspired: In the Light of Claude* (14 March- 5 June 2012), curated by Ian Warrell (one of Solkin's team), which expanded on one of the key relationships presented in *Turner and the Masters*. The catalogue and the January workshop also fed directly into an important book-length study, *JMW Turner and the Subject of History* (Ashgate, 2012) by one of the workshop participants, Dr Leo Costello.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

Persons who can be contacted to corroborate the impact of *Turner and the Masters* at Tate Britain:

1. Keeper of 18th- and 19th-century British art, Tate Britain
2. Former Director, Tate Britain

Person who can be contacted to corroborate the impact of *Turner et ses Peintres* at Grand Palais, Paris:

3. Press Officer, Réunion des musées nationaux (a copy of a statement can be provided upon request)

Person who can be contacted to corroborate the impact of *Turner y los Maestros* at Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid:

4. Deputy Director, Museo Nacional del Prado

A dossier of press reviews can be provided by David Solkin upon request. But see also:

5. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/jonathanjonesblog/2009/nov/12/turner-and-the-masters-tate-britain>
6. Gustav Percevall, 'Reflections on 'Turner and the Masters'', *The British Art Journal*, XI, no.1 (Spring 2010), 108-9

Further material can be found here:

- <http://kids1.tate.org.uk/blog/?p=166>
- <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/exhibition/turner-and-masters>
- Audience figures for *University Challenge* provided by BARB (Broadcasters Audience Research Board)
- Exhibition catalogue: Ian Warrell, *Turner Inspired: In the Light of Claude*, London, National Gallery (2012)
- Scholarly monograph: Leo Costello, *JMW Turner and the Subject of History*, Farnham & Burlington, VT, Ashgate Publishing Limited (2012)