TURNER TO MONET
the triumph of landscape painting
	national gallery of australia
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Director’s foreword

The nineteenth century was the most splendid period in the history of Western landscape painting. This exhibition, *Turner to Monet: the triumph of landscape*, therefore stands for more than an analysis of nineteenth-century landscape painting; it demonstrates the triumph of landscape over other forms of art.

There are few countries in which landscape painting has been so important to the national culture as it has in this country. Since the mid nineteenth century Australia has been obsessed with its own landscape art; it is a part of our culture that has become a major force. Australia’s first art museums were founded in the second half of the nineteenth century in the various British colonies that became our present-day states. From the beginning they collected major local landscapes, as well as the more conservative British landscapes of the period. From the early twentieth century the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne began collecting early Romantic British landscapes, and Barbizon and Impressionist French landscapes. Other state galleries did so, although less prolifically, and only after the mid twentieth century. At the mid-century, Adelaide and Melbourne also started to put together substantial collections of Italian and Dutch seventeenth-century landscapes; in the later twentieth century Sydney followed. And in the last two and a half decades, the newly established National Gallery of Australia in Canberra began to acquire Impressionist and Post-Impressionist works.

Australians have not only been great admirers and painters of their own landscape but also significant collectors of international landscape painting. Therefore, *Turner to Monet: the triumph of landscape* deliberately includes a substantial number – more than one third of the European works – from Australian public collections. The exhibition embraces the artists and the themes explored in the earlier landscape exhibitions produced by the National Gallery of Australia, but it adds other strains to show the full impact of the rise of landscape painting in Europe and the New World in the nineteenth century. It includes the early English watercolour tradition as well as oil paintings; German and Northern European Romantic landscape, not seen in Australia before; and Post-Impressionist landscape painting, which is not well represented in Australian collections. In addition to the principal European countries, America and Australia, there are landscape images of Russia, South America, Tahiti and New Zealand. Indeed, no single exhibition anywhere has hitherto attempted to explore the complex development of nineteenth-century landscape painting. We make no apology for generous inclusions of Australia’s own exemplary landscapes and for placing them for the first time in the full context of international art.

For the past decade or so the National Gallery of Australia – which opened to the public as recently as 1982 – has explored important aspects of nineteenth-century landscape painting in a series of major exhibitions. The first was the great *Turner* exhibition of 1996, followed in 1998 by *New worlds from old: 19th century Australian and American landscapes*. In 2001 the National Gallery of Australia staged the ground-breaking *Monet and Japan* and in 2006 we assembled the substantial exhibition *Constable: impressions of land, sea and sky*. In 2007 *Ocean to Outback: Australian landscape painting 1850–1950* explored the dominant one hundred years of landscape art. A large national survey, including many Australian masterpieces, *Ocean to Outback*
was designed for an extensive tour of smaller and regional galleries throughout Australia as part of the National Gallery of Australia’s 25th Anniversary celebrations. At the time of the present exhibition, Ocean to Outback is still touring.

I would like to thank my co-curators of the exhibition, Christine Dixon, Senior Curator of International Painting and Sculpture and Lucina Ward, Curator of International Painting and Sculpture. Exhibition Assistants Niki van den Heuvel and Simeran Maxwell have also ably contributed to our project.

I would like to thank all the British, European and American art museums, who have kindly agreed to part with their works. Likewise I thank our generous Australian institutional lenders, particularly the National Gallery of Victoria, the Art Gallery of South Australia and the Art Gallery of New South Wales. We are also grateful for loans from eight private collections around the world. All lenders to the exhibition are acknowledged more specifically on the following page.

Exhibitions such as these are costly to mount, with so many international and local loans: they cannot be put on without sponsorship and government support. I would especially like to express our appreciation to Harold Mitchell, AO, and the exhibition’s major sponsor, Nine Network, in particular its Chief Executive Officer David Gyngell, for their generous support of this exhibition. Qantas, for many years, has been generous with financial subsidies and continues to be a much-valued supporter of the Gallery’s exhibitions. We are grateful also to Adshel for their support of the exhibition.

This extraordinarily valuable exhibition could not have taken place without the assistance of Art Indemnity Australia, the Australian Government’s art indemnity scheme through which loans to the exhibition have been indemnified. We are pleased Turner to Monet will commemorate the one hundredth exhibition Art Indemnity Australia has supported.

Turner to Monet: the triumph of landscape is the first attempt to show the full scope of nineteenth-century landscape art in Europe and the New World throughout the full chronological range of that century, and the exhibition and its supporting catalogue should therefore be of great art-historical interest. More importantly, we hope the exhibition will bring enormous pleasure and joy to our visitors by the sheer beauty of more than one hundred landscapes.

Ron Radford, AM
Director, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Pastoral and picturesque
19. John Glover

Great Britain 1767 – Australia 1849

*A view of the artist’s house and garden, in Mills Plains, Van Diemen’s Land* 1835

oil on canvas 76.4 x 114.4 cm

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide
Morgan Thomas Bequest Fund, 1951

The painting of Glover’s house and garden in Tasmania expresses not only the artist’s joy in a fresh arcadian paradise, but also a firm sense of possession for his newly built house on his own land in a new country. But although the depiction of the sun and the general idyllic mood hints at Claude Lorrain’s paintings, its style is not an idealised landscape; it is realistic. The painting depicts in loving detail the artist’s stone farmhouse, wooden studio–gallery and flourishing garden as they appeared at Christmas in the summer of 1834–35.1 Glover was a farmer’s son and never outgrew a passion for pastoral landscapes. *A view of the artist’s house and garden, in Mills Plains, Van Diemen’s Land* records the fulfilment of a childhood dream.

An extension of the Romantic view of a golden age in an innocent distant past, was the admiration of simple peasant existence in the natural countryside of one’s own time and place. This owed much to the influence of the Dutch seventeenth-century masters, Claude’s more naturalistic contemporaries. So it became fashionable to romanticise not only ancient ruins or Neo-Classical country houses but also rustic peasant cottages and their informal gardens. Glover’s house and garden picture is, to some extent, derived from this early nineteenth-century cult of Nature and its cottage aesthetic.

As well as an observant rendering of his own planted garden, Glover accurately represents the Australian bush on the small conical hill in the painting’s background. The afternoon sun, which back-lights the scene, rings the distant native trees with golden haloes. The artist, who originally portrayed English and Italian scenes according to the formulae and mannerisms of seventeenth-century landscape painting, painted Tasmania more naturalistically. In his depiction of the local bush, as seen on this hill covered with gums, there is no stylisation or generalisation of the indigenous vegetation as is the case with many colonial artists.

Australian landscape’s resemblance to English park scenery had been constantly remarked upon since the 1790s. Whether or not Glover saw the hills surrounding his farm as a gentleman’s park, he certainly distinguished them from his highly cultivated plain. Here the artist has exaggerated the sharpness of the pyramidal hill and the flatness of the plain, thereby making a slightly artificial stage to display his garden in bloom.

This summer garden painting is an assertive statement of a successful cultural transplant. *A view of the artist’s house and garden, in Mills Plains, Van Diemen’s Land* was the final painting to be completed for Glover’s first London exhibition to be held since his departure from England in 1830. The first significant visual cultural exchange to occur between Australian and English art worlds, the Bond Street Exhibition of 1835 provided the artist with the opportunity to assert his new realist style to an art world that had hitherto never fully accepted him. In this painting Glover’s critics, peers, and even the wider public would have read the artist’s expression of his new Antipodean Arcadia and the proclamation of his joy in it.

Ron Radford

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The Romantic Sublime
36. Caspar David Friedrich

Germany 1774–1840

_Easter morning_ [Östermorgen] 1833

oil on canvas 43.7 x 34.4 cm

Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid

‘Three women walk stiffly towards the cemetery very early in the morning.’1 Wegener’s description exactly captures the undertone of Friedrich’s _Easter morning_; the words summarised a long acquaintance with the work, which was in Wegener’s own collection.

The artist selected empirical facts according to the meanings they held out. His works reveal a sensibility that is contemplative even when excited, tuned to realising the grandeur of humanity through communing with nature (cat. 37). In those respects Friedrich’s Romanticism resembled English Romanticism – that of the painter J.M.W. Turner and the poet William Wordsworth, for example. However, his perception was directed to a specific symbolism, a sensuous iconography of the soul, by which the cultural tradition of the north had long distinguished itself from the rest of Europe.

Typically, Friedrich’s paintings include figures. Without them _Easter morning_ would be a moonlit landscape, symmetrically organised and expressive of natural order; whereas the appearance of three women on the road imbues the scene with human and religious meaning. The three women have their backs turned to the viewer, walking away. One is clothed in black mourning. Her younger companions are the mirror image of one another – a repetition that has the effect of a rite. Similarly, the symmetry of the road with its flanking trees and the horizontal layering of hills between the bare foreground and tall sky define a composition that is fixed and ritualistic. Within that portentous composition the travellers on the ridge of the road are wedged under the horizon line: in fact it almost clips their heads, therefore encouraging their passage down the hill to the cemetery. The fog acts as a veil, hence one cannot say definitively that the objects in the distance are graves and graveyard poplar trees, although the title of the painting, _Easter morning_, suggests they would be.

The composition, even without the aid of the title, enforces a theme of between-ness, prelude, death, and anticipation: the road leads to the graveyard; the slope goes down to it; the older woman has younger companions; the light is between dusk and dawn; and the bare trees are in bud, indicating the transition from winter to spring. One notices, too, that an extensive craquelure of lines in the foggy penumbra of light around the moon mysteriously echoes the lacy pattern of tree branches.

The title _Easter morning_ confirms what the picture’s ‘natural’ organisation seems already to imply. The forces so quietly suggested are of death and regeneration. Three women of the 1830s (they could be of any time) are going to the graves of their loved ones. Their journey repeats that of the three Marys who visited Christ’s grave early on the first Easter morning. In the context of this ritual, some upturned blocks of dressed stone beside the road in the left foreground may symbolise Christ risen from the grave. The women walk ‘stiffly’ and with trepidation towards death. Nature ushers them forward, and also pushes on with the cycle of life: rebirth after death and light after darkness.

Mary Eagle

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New terrains
59. Martin Johnson Heade

United States of America 1819–1904

Sunlight and shadow, the Newbury Marshes  c.1871–75
oil on canvas  30.5 x 67.3 cm
National Gallery of Art, Washington
John Wilmerding Collection
Image courtesy of the Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington

Three bands make up the painting: a blue sky, pink and grey clouds, the green meadow. A tree at left frames the composition, the central haystack provides a point of focus, a few animals add extra interest, and some exquisite reflections persuade us of the artist’s painterly skills. If we were to follow the thin, flat bayou meandering through the marshland, where would it take us? The distant hills have none of the grandeur or drama expected of landscapes at this period. Even the hand of the artist seems peculiarly absent. We are left with a haystack at the centre of the painting which, on closer examination, is a rather strangely shaped mound. Where, exactly, are we?

Marshlands – at the mouth of the Parker River in Ipswich, Massachusetts, or Hoboken in New Jersey, or Southport, Connecticut – held a great fascination for Heade; he produced more than a hundred paintings of the subject. These canvases have various descriptive titles: passing or approaching storms, sudden shower, after the rain, sunrise, sun breaking through, after the rain. Our attention is drawn to the natural forces and meteorological phenomena that shape these environments. Clearly, it was the changing atmospheric conditions and variations in light that attracted the artist. Is this what fascinates us still?

Heade began painting salt marshes in about 1858 and continued to paint them for more than four decades, in pairs, thematic groups, or as long series. He worked on marshland subjects intermittently, alternating them with Romantic mountain, tropical, southern or northern landscapes.1 At times, for variety, Heade included duck hunters or their hutch, hayricks or covered hayricks in his marsh scenes – he even created still-life paintings of marsh canvases propped up on trestles.2 Despite all these variants, even with staffage, the best of Heade’s paintings are characterised by a mysterious emptiness.

Just as a marsh is a transitional zone between land and water, Heade’s Luminist paintings sit slightly apart from those of the Hudson River School. Like many of his contemporaries, Heade travelled widely: in his early twenties he spent two years in Rome, travelled in Brazil from 1863 to 1864 and his life in the United States was peripatetic. Sunlight and shadow, the Newbury Marshes encapsulates both major European aesthetic traditions: idyllic, light-filled scenes or intense, northern specificity. Looking at Heade’s marsh paintings, those who value stillness may be think of Friedrich’s The Great Preserve c. 1832 (fig. 15, p. 25). Conditions of light in both paintings – twilight in Friedrich’s, the combination of sunlight and shadow in Heade’s – liberate colour from naturalism, contributing an intriguing violet tinge to each scene. Both artists use unnatural colour palettes, and only a few motifs. But like composers, they obtain seemingly endless variations from these notes. In Sunlight and shadow, the Newbury Marshes, Heade makes the ordinary exotic. Lurid colours give the painting a hallucinatory quality, the solitary haystack takes on mystical power, and the deceptive simplicity of the scene makes it seem hyper-real. Here the Sublime verges on the transcendental.

Lucina Ward

1. Heade and Church were close friends – Church passed his studio, in a 10th St New York, to Heade – and Church also encouraged his interest in South America (see cat. 55).
Nature observed
66. Camille Corot

France 1796–1875

Lake Geneva 1839?
also known as Geneva: view of part of the town  (Genève. Vue d’une partie de la ville)

oil on canvas 26.0 x 35.2 cm
Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia
John G. Johnson Collection 1917 cat. 925

He is a rare and exceptional genius and the father of modern landscape painting. Whether they know it or not, there is not one landscape painter who does not proceed from him.

Delacroix 1861

For so modest a man, Corot’s reputation and influence were extraordinary. His work is little-known today outside France, but throughout the nineteenth century such severe critics as Baudelaire declared, of his contribution to the 1845 Salon: ‘At the head of the modern school of landscape stands M. Corot’. In 1897 Monet said: ‘There is only one master here – Corot. Compared to him, the rest of us are nothing, absolutely nothing!’

After his first journey to Italy in 1825, where he remained until 1828, it seems inevitable that Corot would return to that source of light and Classical inspiration. He travelled from Italy to Paris via Geneva in 1834, revisiting the city in 1842, and then six times more in the 1850s. Lake Geneva is made of the smoothest possible brushstrokes, in the most subtle tonal cadences. It is painted in a very high key, with a simple palette. Corot uses subdued but glowing hues of light blue for the sky, the water and the mountain; the stone pale yellow and the leaves are very green. The sky reflects its blue into the limpid waters of the lake, while faint ripples disturb its glassy surface. There are two darker notes: a black boat in the centre of the composition, and black–brown tree-trunks on the right.

Most of nature is contained inside the limits of human construction. Expanses of air, water and vegetation contrast with the severe blonde geometries of a stone embankment and the town, composed of square houses with their triangular roofs. Even the gently rocking boat at the centre of the composition implies humans’ use of nature for their purposes, transport, fishing for food or pleasure. Only the darker mountains behind Geneva, and the sky above, hint at nature unconfined.

When did Corot paint Lake Geneva? Originally regarded as a sketch from the artist’s first encounter with Lake Geneva in 1834, its execution was then attached to his second visit in 1842. Now the painting has been dated to 1839, created between visits and presumed to be a souvenir, a reworking from memory after his plein-air oil drawing on the spot. The artist’s first biographer, Alfred Robaut, notes off-handedly that the boat was ‘added later’. That is, Corot rethought the composition and decided it needed a visually dramatic focal point. Formally and tonally, the black boat radically changes the painting, concentrating our attention onto the centre of this placid scene.

Christine Dixon

4. Pantazzi et al., p. 136, note 7, p. 137.
Fracturing the landscape
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92. Paul Gauguin

France 1848 – Marquesas Islands 1903

_Haystacks in Brittany [Meules de foin en Bretagne]_ 1890

also known as _The hayricks_ and _The potato field_

oil on canvas 74.3 x 93.6 cm

National Gallery of Art, Washington

Gift of the W. Averell Harriman Foundation

in memory of Marie N. Harriman 1972.9.11

_Haystacks in Brittany_ is among a small number of works painted by Gauguin in 1890 at Le Pouldu, on the Breton coast. From July 1886 until his departure for Tahiti in March 1891, Gauguin travelled regularly between Paris and towns in Brittany and Provence – the latter the site of his notorious collaboration with Van Gogh – searching for a way to consolidate his style, as well as a place to live cheaply. He stayed at Le Pouldu, some twenty kilometres south-west of Pont-Aven, late in 1889 and during 1890. The works he painted there, images of peasant life, the landscape and harvest scenes, are some of the most radically simplified of his career. Gauguin described how he ‘scrutinised the horizons, seeking that harmony of human life with animal and vegetable life through compositions in which I allowed the great voice of the earth to play an important part’.1

Like many of his generation Gauguin recognised the strength of landscape painting at this time. His early works show the impact of Corot and other Barbizon painters; he painted in an Impressionist mode until the late 1880s and, introduced by Pissarro, was included in several Impressionist exhibitions. By 1885 Gauguin had started painting full-time and, from his first campaign in Brittany, reduced traditional modelling to a strict minimum: in his Pont-Aven and Le Pouldu works it is his combination of colour and form, rather than narrative or sentiment, which appeals to the viewer. Gauguin’s absorption of the peasant traditions of the region, music and especially woodcarving, as well as the influences of ‘primitive art’ and Japanese prints, is apparent.2 Having abandoned Pont-Aven – he complained that it was now too spoilt by crowds – Gauguin set off for the remote hamlet of Le Pouldu. The isolated region, with its dramatic rocky peninsula, windswept dunes, sandy beaches and scattered farms, suited Gauguin. At the _Buvette de la Plage_ – an inn owned by a young local woman, Marie Henry – he was joined by Sérusier (cat. 93) and the Dutch painter Jacob Mayer de Haan (1852–1895).

_Haystacks in Brittany_ has the structure of a traditional landscape. The painting is composed of a series of bands: the distant sky, fields in the mid-ground and crops of the foreground, with a frieze of cows and their female attendant in front. Despite its variant titles, it is not the agricultural land that is of interest here, but the rich patterns that Gauguin develops from various elements. The disjunction between the landscape’s recession and the frieze-like procession of cows and cowherd emphasises the stained-glass qualities of _Haystacks in Brittany_. The previous year Gauguin had experimented with a technique he learnt from a restorer. The technique, using paste, newspaper and horn irons, produced a matt surface.3 His _synthétiste_ paintings and subsequent work in Tahiti appear to have benefited from this new process.

Lucina Ward

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3. Gauguin also made sculpture, ceramics and prints as well as carving in wood.
