

DRAWING IN BRITAIN, 1700–1900

NEW ADDITIONS TO THE COLLECTION

The National Gallery of Art acquired its first British drawing even before it opened its doors to the public in 1941. For decades afterward, collecting efforts focused on the landscape watercolors traditionally associated with British art. Recently, however, the National Gallery has worked to acquire a broader assortment of figure studies, history scenes, preparatory sketches, and portraits, providing a richer view of the crucial role drawing has played in British art. Works by British women, who were active both as amateur and professional artists during the two hundred years covered in this exhibition, have been a special focus.

Although the selection shown here consists mostly of drawings purchased by the National Gallery or given by generous donors within the last ten years, it is supplemented with relevant prints, drawings, and paintings from the permanent collection. The current renovation of the museum's British galleries provides a perfect opportunity to display together paintings and drawings by the same artists and their contemporaries, enhancing our understanding of their work.

The Search for a National Style

After long years of political upheaval and war in the 1600s, Britain emerged in the early 1700s as a major world power and a center of new wealth — much of it derived from brutal colonial expansion and built on the backs of enslaved laborers. A burgeoning middle class and a newly powerful aristocracy began to purchase paintings, drawings, and prints on an unprecedented scale.

While British artists worked to establish themselves on an international stage and to compete with French and Italian artists, they still turned to European art for inspiration. Some studied art newly available on the British art market. Wealthy families sent their sons to France and Italy for the Grand Tour, an extended cultural trip intended to educate and inspire by exposing them to the art of classical antiquity. Many of these travelers returned home eager to decorate their grand houses with history-painting cycles like the ones they saw in Europe.

The Early Years of British Watercolor

Watercolor painting became all the rage in the late 1700s. Although watercolor had been in use for hundreds of years, British artists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries explored a wide variety of creative approaches to the medium. Most watercolors during the early part of this period took the form of “tinted drawings,” embodied by the works of artists such as Paul Sandby or William Marlow. Beginning with a precise drawing, the painter applied monochromatic washes to create shadows and then applied layers of pale, translucent color.

The Picturesque and Romantic Landscape

Beginning late in the eighteenth century, ideas about the picturesque informed British art and culture for decades. Described by one early proponent as “that kind of beauty which would look well in a picture,” this somewhat vague aesthetic category favored scenes of nature’s irregularity shaped by the effects of time and tamed by pleasing composition. Harmoniously arranged masses of foliage and rocks, meandering streams, dilapidated cottages, and especially ruins exemplified the picturesque. These scenes often featured idealized depictions of rural laborers.

The picturesque was closely tied to Romanticism, an artistic and cultural movement that prioritized emotion over intellect and placed special value on the genius and personal vision of the individual. In landscape painting, as in poetry, artists explored nature’s ability to mirror or inspire human emotion. British manufacturers began to produce watercolor in hard, portable cakes in the 1780s, encouraging artists to work in the open air. There, they demonstrated a new sensitivity to atmosphere, weather, and effects of light.

Fuseli and His Circle

Born in Switzerland, the history painter Henry Fuseli studied in Rome and spent most of his career in London. There, his powerful figure types and psychologically complex compositions captured the imagination of a circle of artists. While history painters in Catholic countries could build a career on religious subjects, British artists often turned to literature and history for inspiration. Fuseli, for instance, favored the works of Shakespeare and Milton. In keeping with the Romantic fascination for extremes of human emotion, Fuseli and his followers often chose to illustrate dramatic scenes of turmoil and darkness.

Drawing in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century

The works in this room reflect the wide variety of approaches toward drawing in the early nineteenth century. As watercolors continued to grow in popularity, Joseph Mallord William Turner's revolutionary work changed the way his contemporaries saw the medium. While artists created drawings and watercolors for sale to a growing number of collectors, most also made working sketches. Landscape artists such as John Linnell and Frederick William Watts constantly studied the world around them, amassing stores of sketches for possible later use in paintings. Sir Edwin Landseer spent hours drawing animals in London's menageries, building the skills that would mark his extraordinary career. Artists also drew for their own enjoyment, exercising both hand and imagination in evening sketching clubs or, like George Richmond, relaxing with their watercolors on a trip to the countryside.

The Rise of the British Watercolor

Watercolor continued to evolve as an art form and to increase in importance through the nineteenth century in Britain. Watercolorists produced impressive “exhibition pieces” to compete directly with oil paintings in both scale and richness of color. At the same time, artists formed societies to promote the medium and to hold their own exhibitions. Watercolor was also enormously popular with amateur artists, who provided an eager and informed audience for these exhibitions.

British art supply companies responded to the growing market. They developed new technology, packaging paints in portable tubes and grinding exceptionally fine pigments. Manufacturers catered to the booming amateur market, offering equipment and instruction manuals developed specifically for hobbyists. Some of the foremost watercolor artists taught amateur pupils. In turn, their wealthy pupils offered the artists access to their social circles and often to their own art collections. As innovation in both materials and finished product attracted international attention, the British began to view watercolor with patriotic pride.

The Late Nineteenth Century

Drawing continued to thrive amid the latest artistic currents of the Victorian era. The artists of the Aesthetic Movement preached “art for art’s sake,” while the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood urged artists to turn to nature with a fresh intensity. Some artists focused new attention on the hardships faced by the rural working class. Watercolor, meanwhile, retained its status as a particularly British art form. Watercolorists explored a wide range of approaches, from the minute detail of John Sowerby’s landscape to the bravura brushwork of George Richmond’s society portrait.

Changes in late-nineteenth-century society enabled more women to pursue careers as artists. The Royal Academy, Britain’s most prestigious art school, accepted its first woman student in 1860. However, women were excluded from the Royal Academy’s life class — where students drew nude models — for decades to come, cutting them off from a critical phase of artistic education. Although no formal rules determined what types of art women could exhibit, many limited their subject matter to landscape, nature studies, and domestic scenes. Most also specialized in watercolor or miniature painting rather than oil painting or sculpture.

Francis Place

Durham 1647–1728 York

A Grotto (The Stables of the Villa Maecenas, Tivoli?), c. 1700

pen and brown ink with brown wash
over graphite

National Gallery of Art, William B. O'Neal Fund, 2018

Trained as an attorney, Francis Place worked professionally as a printmaker before he married into a wealthy family and became free to create art for his own pleasure. Best known for his topographic drawings, Place also counted porcelain manufacture and nature studies among his artistic interests. The location of this grotto is unknown, though some scholars have noted its similarities to a site in Tivoli outside Rome. Place is not known to have traveled to Italy and may have based this scene on similar wash drawings by Dutch artists active in Rome.

Sir James Thornhill

Woolland 1675 – 1734 Stalbridge

The Discovery of Achilles among the Daughters of Lycomedes, c. 1710

pen and brown ink with brush and brown wash, heightened with white gouache, over red chalk

National Gallery of Art, William B. O'Neal Fund, 2018

This preparatory study depicts a moment from the life of the classical hero Achilles. As a young man, he lived disguised as a daughter of King Lycomedes to avoid fighting in the Trojan War. He revealed his identity when visitors offered gifts: he seized a shield and spear rather than the jewels and finery selected by the women of the family. Thornhill's use of red chalk, his figure types, and his extensive use of preparatory studies all demonstrate his familiarity with Italian art. The finished painting is part of a decorative cycle Thornhill made for Hanbury Hall, Worcestershire.



Sir James Thornhill,
*The Ceiling Painting
and Top of the Painted
Staircase, Hanbury Hall,
Worcestershire:*
The Life of Achilles, 1710,
oil painting on plaster
and wooden laths,
© National Trust
Images/Dennis Gilbert

Louis Chéron

Paris 1660 – 1725 London

Imaginary Classical Landscape, c. 1700

pen and brown ink with brown wash and white gouache on blue paper

National Gallery of Art, Purchased as the Gift of Dian Woodner, 2017

Chéron often worked, as here, in pen and ink with wash on a colored background, adding touches of white gouache for highlights. A French Protestant, he moved permanently to London in the 1690s, probably to escape religious persecution. Like Thornhill, whose work is adjacent, Chéron spent much of his career decorating grand houses. As one of England's foremost drawing teachers, he also served an important role in introducing European practices, such as drawing from the live model, to the next generation of British artists.

LEFT

Francis Le Piper

British, 1640 – 1698

Head Study of a Preacher, c. 1670

pen and brown ink and gray wash

National Gallery of Art, Gift of Lowell Libson & Jonny Yarker, Ltd., in honor of Professor Donald Stone, 2018

Le Piper worked mostly as an amateur artist, and very few examples of his drawings have survived. Most of them are rough character studies like this one, demonstrating Le Piper's admiration for Dutch and Flemish artists who made similar sketches.

FAR LEFT

Thomas Forster

1677–1712 London

Portrait of a Gentleman, 1704

graphite on parchment (plumbago)

National Gallery of Art, William B. O’Neal Fund, 2018

Forster was a master of plumbagos, meticulous graphite portraits made on smooth parchment. This type of miniature had its roots in the tiny portrait drawings made in the sixteenth century in the Netherlands. It became a British specialty the following century, especially after the discovery of extensive deposits of graphite in England’s Lake District. Graphite could be stumped—smudged with a piece of rolled leather or paper—to create the smooth tones seen throughout this drawing.

Alexander Cozens

Russia c. 1717 – 1786 London

An Extensive River Landscape, c. 1759

pen and black ink with gray and black wash, varnished

National Gallery of Art, Gift of Donald Stone, 2022

Cozens spent two years in Italy and for the rest of his life was inspired by both the art and landscape he saw there. An active and beloved drawing instructor, he devised and published a variety of systems to organize and communicate the art of landscape composition to his pupils. Here, he employs techniques he developed to convey specific times of day and weather conditions: the billowing clouds are lit from below by a rising or setting sun.

William Marlow

London 1740 – 1813 Twickenham

**The Tiber with Saint Peter's and the
Castel S. Angelo, 1765/1768**

pen and ink with graphite

National Gallery of Art, Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund, 2014

William Marlow

London 1740 – 1813 Twickenham

Ludlow Castle, Shropshire, 1770s

watercolor over traces of graphite

National Gallery of Art, Gift of Donald Stone, 2022

John Robert Cozens

London 1752 – 1799 London

Saint Peter's from the Tiber, 1780

watercolor over graphite

National Gallery of Art, Gift of Donald Stone, 2022

Richard Wilson

Penegoes 1713/1714 – 1782 Colomendy

A View in Italy with Mountains in the Distance, c. 1754

chalk with stumping, heightened with white gouache on buff paper

National Gallery of Art, Gift of Donald Stone
in honor of Guy Peppiatt, 2022

Wilson often worked in monochrome, as seen here. This allowed him to study effects of light, he claimed, “without being dazzled and misled by the flutter of colors.” One of the first British landscape artists to travel to Italy, Wilson built up a storehouse of studies of Italian scenery that he used in his art for decades afterward.

Paul Sandby

Nottingham 1731–1809 London

Derwentwater, late 18th century
watercolor with traces of graphite

National Gallery of Art, Gift of Donald Stone, 2022

The nuance and precision in Sandby's drawing can be traced to his career as a draftsman in the military, where he served as a mapmaker and topographical artist. Derwentwater became a popular vacation destination in the late eighteenth century. War with France limited foreign travel, and British tourists instead flocked to enjoy domestic scenery described by Romantic poets such as William Wordsworth.

Francis Towne

Isleworth 1739 – 1816 London

Hampstead Heath, Evening Light, 1800

pen and black ink with gray and blue-gray wash over graphite

National Gallery of Art, Gift of Donald Stone, 2022

Francis Towne

Isleworth 1739 – 1816 London

The Wrekin, Shropshire, c. 1777/1783

gray wash over traces of graphite with
pen and brown and gray ink

National Gallery of Art, Gift of Donald Stone, 2022

John White Abbott

Exeter 1763 – 1851 Exeter

Trees at Fordland, Devon, 1841

pen and gray ink with gray wash

National Gallery of Art, Joseph F. McCrindle Endowment Fund, 2019

The flat, pale washes that dominate this scene reflect John White Abbott's time as a devoted student of Francis Towne, whose work also hangs in this room. A talented amateur, Abbott carried his teacher's style well into the nineteenth century.

Thomas Girtin

London 1775 – 1802 London

The Edge of a Wood, 1800/1801

watercolor over graphite

National Gallery of Art, Gift of Donald Stone, 2022

One of the most innovative British watercolorists, Girtin turned away from the precise drawings and pale washes popular at the time. This modest sketch, made near the end of his short life, demonstrates his more spontaneous approach and his typical palette of deeper, more somber colors. Despite its informal appearance, it was likely produced in the studio rather than on the spot. By this point in Girtin's career, he frequently made small studies for informed collectors who appreciated the personal touch evident in sketches like this.

George Chinnery

London 1774–1852 Macao

Head of a Man, c. 1810/1825

graphite and watercolor

National Gallery of Art, William B. O'Neal Fund, 2019

Ezekiel Barton

British, 1781–1855

A Cliff Overhung with Trees, early 19th century watercolor over graphite

National Gallery of Art, Purchased as the
Gift of Alexander M. and Judith W. Laughlin, 2022

Like Sandby, whose work also appears in this room, Barton made maps and plans as part of his military service. He also painted delicate watercolor landscapes like this one for his own enjoyment. They present a stark contrast to his career: as part of the forces of the East India Company, he participated in the Maratha Wars, which brutally suppressed an alliance of Indian rulers and left the British in control of most of India.

William Alexander

Maidstone 1767 – 1816 Maidstone

**A Scene in an Historical Play Exhibited
on the Chinese Stage, 1795**

watercolor over graphite

National Gallery of Art, Gift of Donald Stone, 2022

As a young man, Alexander traveled to China as a draftsman in Lord Macartney's embassy, a diplomatic mission intended to open trade with the Chinese. Although the mission failed, Alexander's watercolors documenting the journey were published in both the official record and a more popular version intended for a public curious about China. Alexander's diary records that he witnessed the performance shown here, but he probably made this finished watercolor later, working from individual figure studies and rough sketches made on the spot.

Thomas Hearne

Brinkworth 1744–1817 London

**Durham Castle and Framwellgate Bridge
from the Banks of the River Wear,**
after 1778

watercolor over graphite

National Gallery of Art, Gift of Donald Stone
in honor of Gabriel Naughton, 2022

Miss Selby

British, active mid-19th century

Netley Abbey, Hampshire,

mid-19th century

pen and brown ink and wash over traces
of graphite

National Gallery of Art, William B. O'Neal Fund, 2020

As British travelers explored their own landscape in search of the picturesque, many brought their sketchbooks. Netley Abbey was such a popular destination that the author of a contemporary guidebook complained that his visit was marred by the constant popping of corks as tourists enjoyed their picnics. This drawing by Miss Selby was part of a friendship album, a scrapbook of drawings and watercolors contributed by friends and family of the owner. Although the artist's full name is unknown, this sketch bears witness to the high level of skill achieved by some women amateurs in the nineteenth century.

Cornelius Varley

London 1781–1873 London

**A House, West Humble Lane, Norbury,
Surrey, 1806**

watercolor and graphite

National Gallery of Art, Gift of Donald Stone, 2022

William Payne

Plymouth c. 1760 – 1830 London

TOP

A Ruined Abbey by a Waterfall, c. 1800

watercolor and gouache with graphite

National Gallery of Art, Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund, 2016

BOTTOM

Travellers in a Woodland Glade, c. 1800

watercolor with graphite

National Gallery of Art, Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund, 2016

Thomas Barker

Pontypool 1769–1847 Bath

**Shepherd Boys and Dog Sheltering
from a Storm**, c. 1789/1790

oil on paper on canvas

National Gallery of Art, Gift of Howard Sturges, 1956

John Hoppner

London 1758 – 1810 London

The Frankland Sisters, 1795

oil on canvas

National Gallery of Art, Andrew W. Mellon Collection, 1937

Hoppner's portrait of Amelia and Marianne Frankland was painted for their father, Sir T. Frankland, whose wealth afforded the sisters the leisure and opportunity to pursue drawing as a pastime. Amelia holds a portfolio stuffed with drawings in her right hand and a porte-crayon — a metal tube split on one end to hold a piece of chalk — in her left. The porte-crayon and portfolio frequently appear in portraits of both amateur and professional artists up to the mid-nineteenth century. Nothing is known of Amelia's artistic work, but her father and brother were also keen amateur artists.

John Hoppner

London 1758 – 1810 London

A Young Boy Seated Beneath a Tree,

late 18th century

red and black chalk with brush and gray
and black ink

National Gallery of Art, Gift of Funds from the
Krugman Family Foundation, 2022

This rapid sketch of a young boy in the countryside, with its deft handling of wash and warm accents of red chalk, was apparently made for the artist's own pleasure. One of England's foremost society portraitists, Hoppner earned a living with oil paintings like the one hanging beside this drawing. He rarely made preparatory studies for these paintings, preferring to work directly on the canvas.

Thomas Gainsborough
Sudbury 1727 – 1788 London

**A Rocky Wooded Landscape with
a Figure by a Stream, 1781**

black and gray wash with pen and black
ink and white gouache on tan paper

National Gallery of Art, Gift of Donald Stone, 2022

Gainsborough made landscape drawings for his own enjoyment. Not intended as accurate records of any particular place, they are instead dreamlike evocations of an idealized countryside. As he planned the compositions, the artist set up model landscapes with mirrors standing in for water, broccoli for trees, and rocks or lumps of coal for boulders. He then drew from the models, recording masses of light and dark rather than details. The rapidly drawn foliage and thickly applied white highlights convey an impression of breeze and flickering sunlight.

Thomas Gainsborough
Sudbury 1727 – 1788 London

Mountain Landscape with Bridge,
c. 1783/1784
oil on canvas

National Gallery of Art, Andrew W. Mellon Collection, 1937

Amelia Noel

British, 1759–1818

**Wooded Landscape with Figures
outside a Cottage, 1795**

watercolor over graphite with scratching out

National Gallery of Art, Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund, 2020

The figures in this composition play a secondary role to the rustic building, the dilapidated bridge, and especially the broken and jagged tree trunks—all typical elements of the picturesque landscape. The enterprising Amelia Noel counted watercolor, etching, pastel, and painting on velvet among her areas of expertise. These skills were considered suitable accomplishments for young eighteenth-century women, and Noel supported herself not only as an artist but also as a teacher. Her pupils likely included the daughters of King George III.

Henry Fuseli

Zurich 1741–1825 Putney Hill

Satan Defying the Powers of Heaven, late 1790s

graphite, black chalk, and brown and gray wash

National Gallery of Art, Purchased as the Gift of Andrea Woodner, 2015

This sketch probably depicts the scene in John Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost* where Satan rises from a lake of fire to summon armies of fallen angels. The low viewpoint and dynamic pose convey his terrifying power. After finishing his sketch, the artist turned over the paper and traced the figure on the back of the sheet, creating a second version of the scene in reverse.

Henry Fuseli

Zurich 1741–1825 Putney Hill

Satan Defying the Powers of Heaven,

late 1790s

graphite, black chalk, and gray wash

National Gallery of Art, Purchased as the
Gift of Andrea Woodner, 2015

LEFT

Henry Fuseli

Zurich 1741–1825 Putney Hill

An Intimate Concert, 1814
graphite

National Gallery of Art, William B. O'Neal Fund, 2015

FAR LEFT

George Romney

Dalton-on-Furness 1734–1802 Kendal

Troilus and Cressida, Act IV, Scene V: The Fight Between Hector and Ajax II,

late 1780s/early 1790s

pen and gray ink with gray wash over graphite

National Gallery of Art, Gift of Donald Stone, 2022

Although he earned his living mainly as a society portraitist, Romney harbored ambitions to become a history painter. He was involved with the Shakespeare Gallery, a grand project to illustrate Shakespeare's plays with prints made after paintings by leading contemporary artists. This tumultuous scene may have been associated with that endeavor. In its intense emotion, broad washes, and figure types, it testifies to Romney's admiration for Fuseli, whose work also hangs on this wall.

John Hamilton Mortimer
Eastbourne 1740 – 1779 London

FAR LEFT

Beatrice, 1775/1776
pen and black ink

National Gallery of Art, Gift of Thomas Vogler in
memory of his brother Donald J. Vogler, 2017

Mortimer exhibited this highly finished drawing as one of a set of twelve Shakespearean heads and reproduced it as an etching shortly afterward. The linear delicacy of both drawing and etching form an amusing contrast with the sharp wit of the character, who is depicted with her mouth open as she delivers the scornful line inscribed on the etching hanging beside this drawing.

LEFT

Beatrice, 1776
from the series *Twelve Characters from Shakespeare*
etching

National Gallery of Art, Gift of Thomas Vogler in
memory of his brother Donald J. Vogler, 2017

Daniel Gardner

Kendal 1750 – 1805 London

The Yorke Family, c. 1775

gouache, pastel paste, and pastel with graphite and possibly black chalk on prepared paper mounted to canvas

National Gallery of Art, Patrons' Permanent Fund, 2019

One of Britain's foremost pastellists, the endlessly experimental Daniel Gardner often combined pastel with gouache, or opaque watercolor, as seen here. He supplemented the gouache with strokes of a paste made of ground pastel mixed with water or gum. Finally, he filled in the faces with dry pastel and emphasized the features with graphite or chalk. He kept his exact methods a closely guarded secret, though one contemporary reported that he mixed his pastel paste with brandy.

Agneta Yorke, the woman at the center of this family portrait, was herself an amateur artist. She probably took a keen interest in Gardner's innovative techniques because she exhibited several of her own pastels at about the time this portrait was made. She was also a printmaker and an important architectural patroness. Widowed in 1770, she is shown here with her three children and an older stepson.

Richard Cosway

Tiverton 1740/1742 – 1821 London

**A Man Trapped between a Lion
and a Serpent, 1790s**

pen and brown ink with gray wash

National Gallery of Art, Joseph F. McCrindle Endowment
Fund, 2018

John Frederick Lewis

London 1805 – 1876 Walton-on-Thames

Head of a Spanish Monk, 1832/1834

watercolor and chalk over graphite,
heightened with gouache, on buff paper

National Gallery of Art, Joseph F. McCrindle Endowment
Fund, 2020

George Richmond

Brompton 1809 – 1896 London

A Farm near the Sea at Margate, Kent, 1850 watercolor over graphite with gum arabic

National Gallery of Art, Gift of Connie Simmons
and James D. Krugman, 2020

Richmond made his living as a successful society portraitist, but he loved painting landscapes as a form of relaxation. This confident study of a cottage, with its broad washes of color, dates from a stay at the seaside intended to help Richmond's wife recover from the birth of a baby girl; unfortunately, the infant died just a few days after this sketch was made.

George Richmond

Brompton 1809 – 1896 London

Study of a Seated Man Wearing a Helmet, 1824/1830

pen and brown ink with graphite

National Gallery of Art, William B. O'Neal Fund, 2018

Richmond's long and multifaceted career spanned much of the nineteenth century and encompassed some of its most important artistic trends. The young Richmond belonged to a visionary artistic brotherhood known as The Ancients, who admired the work of William Blake, an intensely spiritual early Romantic poet and artist. The heroic musculature of this figure recalls Blake's work.

George Richmond

Brompton 1809 – 1896 London

Tom — Florence, 1838

graphite, white gouache, and pen
and brown ink on tan paper

National Gallery of Art, Joseph F. McCrindle Endowment
Fund, 2020

Like many British artists, Richmond traveled to Italy to study the works of Renaissance masters such as Michelangelo. He also focused on life drawing during his time abroad. This sketch of his son reflects the artist's familiarity with Renaissance drawings in its use of pen and white highlights on middle-toned paper.

Sir Edwin Landseer

London 1802 – 1873 London

Contending Group after Nature [A Lion Fighting a Tiger and a Leopard], 1822

pen and black and brown ink with gray and brown wash over graphite

National Gallery of Art, Gift of Connie Simmons and James D. Krugman, 2021

Made when the artist was only twenty, this drawing displays the skills that would make Landseer one of the most popular artists of his time. The implausible but dramatic subject provided an opportunity to demonstrate his understanding of animal anatomy and expression in details that range from the glassy stare of the fawn to the expert placement of the stripes on the tiger's foreshortened haunch. This drawing served as a model for an etching by Landseer's brother, Thomas, who frequently made prints based on Edwin's work.

Sir Edwin Landseer

London 1802 – 1873 London

Lion Defending its Prey, c. 1820

oil on paper on canvas

National Gallery of Art, Gift of Frank Anderson Trapp, 2004

Landseer frequently made oil sketches as part of his preparatory process for paintings. This study matches descriptions of one of his first major paintings, *A Lion Disturbed at His Repast*, which is now lost.

Samuel Jackson

Bristol 1794–1869 Clifton

The Dawn of Creation, 1830s

brush and black ink with scratching out

National Gallery of Art, Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund, 2009

Thomas Leeson Rowbotham

Bath 1782 – 1853 London

American Scene, c. 1832/1835

gray wash with stopping out and scratching out

National Gallery of Art, William B. O'Neal Fund, 2018

This scene pictures two Native Americans taking in a moonlit landscape featuring soaring mountains, rocky outcroppings, and a distant waterfall. With no firsthand knowledge about North America or its inhabitants, the artist based his idealized view on stereotypes rooted in popular culture. This drawing and the adjacent landscape by Samuel Jackson were both products of the Bristol Sketching Club. Sketching clubs were popular with both amateur and professional artists. At Bristol's club, members would dine together and then draw compositions inspired by a single word chosen as the night's theme.

James Duffield Harding
Deptford 1797 – 1863 London

Oberlahnstein on the Rhine, c. 1839
watercolor with gouache over graphite

National Gallery of Art, Purchased as the Gift of
Alexander M. and Judith W. Laughlin, 2018

Joseph Mallord William Turner

London 1775 – 1851 Chelsea

**Ingleborough from the Terrace of
Hornby Castle (from “Whitaker’s History
of Yorkshire”), c. 1818**

watercolor and gouache over graphite
with scratching out

Private collection

Turner’s contemporaries marveled at the complexity of his watercolor techniques, and many emulated his work. In this small landscape, he blotted the damp watercolor to create subtle modulations of tone, scraped away paint to expose the dry paper, and applied watercolor with a dry brush to create scratchy lines. He also filled in details in the foreground with fine, dark accents. The variety of tones and textures conveys a sense of misty atmosphere and shifting light.

This landscape was made as an illustration for a volume by the Reverend Thomas Dunham Whitaker. Although artist and author collaborated on several similar books, Whitaker died before this project was completed.

Anthony Vandyke Copley Fielding
Sowerby Bridge 1787–1855 Worthing

**The Coming Storm: A Fishing Boat Making
for Home off Whitby, 1840**
watercolor

National Gallery of Art, Gift of James Mackinnon, 2022

John Linnell

London 1792 – Redhill 1882

Paddington Fields, London, 1811

black and white chalk on blue paper

National Gallery of Art, Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund, 2018

Frederick William Watts

British, 1800–1862

Trees by the River at Castle Bromwich, 1826
graphite

National Gallery of Art, Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund, 2014

Peter De Wint

Stone 1784–1849 London

**Seaweed Gatherers on the Shore at Redcar,
Yorkshire, c. 1838**

watercolor over traces of graphite with touches
of gouache and scratching out

National Gallery of Art, Gift of Donald Stone in honor of
Margaret Morgan Grasselli, 2022

De Wint was among the many watercolorists to depict people gathering seaweed. These workers are likely collecting Irish moss, an edible seaweed that could be processed into a gelatin-like product. De Wint favored warm, muted colors and horizontal compositions like this one. Here he used the composition to emphasize the backbreaking labor of the harvesters. The women in the foreground are bent below the horizon as though held down by the heavy sky, their faces hidden by their bonnets.

Peter De Wint

Stone 1784–1849 London

Harrowing — View near the Cross Fells,

c. 1840

watercolor and gouache with scratching out

National Gallery of Art, Gift of Donald Stone, 2022

Peter De Wint

Stone 1784–1849 London

Saint John's Hospital, Canterbury, 1845
watercolor

National Gallery of Art, Gift of Donald Stone in
honor of Andrew Wyld, 2022

Thomas Shotter Boys

London 1803 – 1874 London

A Street in Chartres, 1836

watercolor with gouache with scraping over
touches of graphite

National Gallery of Art, Gift (Partial and Promised) of
Donald Stone, 1999

Peter De Wint

Stone 1784 – London 1849

Dieppe Cathedral, 1828

watercolor with touches of gouache
over traces of graphite

National Gallery of Art, Gift of Donald Stone, 2022

Most of De Wint's work focuses exclusively on the English countryside, but in 1828 he visited France and depicted the area in and around Dieppe, in Normandy. The broad, saturated washes of muted color in this scene recall De Wint's advice to a fellow artist: "Never mind your drawing but take plenty of color on your brush and lay it on thick."

David Cox

Heath Mill Lane 1783 – 1859 Harborne

The Heather or Broom Gatherers, 1851

watercolor with touches of gouache

National Gallery of Art, Purchased as the Gift of Alexander M. and Judith W. Laughlin, 2020

Cox's late style, as seen here, was loose and sketchy, evoking the shifting winds of his atmospheric landscapes. He often worked on rough paper, relishing the textural effects he achieved by dragging his brush across the irregular surface. The dark flecks scattered throughout this coarse paper presented no obstacle for Cox: an early biographer claimed that a visitor once asked the artist how he would cope with some especially obvious specks in the sky, and he replied, "Oh, I just put wings to them, and then they fly away as birds!"

William James Müller

Bristol 1812 – 1845 Bristol

Eel Bucks at Goring, c. 1843

watercolor

National Gallery of Art, Purchased as the Gift of
Alexander M. and Judith W. Laughlin, 2018

Müller made several versions of this scene depicting a row of eel bucks, or basket traps, on the Thames. The freshness of this rapid study confirms an early biographer's claim that Müller resisted retouching his sketches, fearing that later adjustments would destroy the "enthusiasm and inspiration of a successful sketch" from nature.

David Cox

Heath Mill Lane 1783 – 1859 Harborne

Grotto Interior, c. 1850

watercolor over graphite

National Gallery of Art, Gift of Donald Stone, 2015

William Callow

Greenwich 1812 – 1908 Great Missenden

A Gondola on the Grand Canal, Venice, 1866

watercolor over graphite with gouache

National Gallery of Art, Purchased as the Gift of
Dian Woodner, 2017

Callow counted Queen Victoria, herself an avid amateur watercolorist, among his many enthusiastic patrons. A prolific artist, Callow specialized in European cityscapes. He visited Europe frequently to make sketches, which he consulted after he returned home to compose highly finished, brilliantly colored watercolors like the ones shown here. His sensitivity to effects of sunlight on water made his scenes of Venice popular with art critics and the public alike.

William Wyld

London 1806–1889 Paris

The Duomo in Milan from a Side Street,

c. 1834

watercolor and gouache over black chalk

National Gallery of Art, Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund, 2015

William Callow

Greenwich 1812 – 1908 Great Missenden

Corso Sant'Anastasia with the Palazzo Maffei in Verona, 1855

watercolor, gouache, and gum arabic over graphite with pen and brown and gray ink

National Gallery of Art, Purchased as the Gift of Alexander M. and Judith W. Laughlin, 2013

After Britain's wars with France ended in 1815, British tourists returned to Europe. Over the next decades, new train lines made travel more accessible than ever before. Italy was among the most popular destinations, as suggested by Callow's depiction of Verona. But alongside this view, Callow exhibited his renderings of Wurzburg, Caen, and Ghent—an indication of the public's almost insatiable demand for watercolors that reminded them of their vacations abroad.

William James Müller
Bristol 1812 – 1845 Bristol

The Rialto Bridge, Venice, 1835
watercolor and gouache over graphite
and scratching out

National Gallery of Art, Gift of Donald Stone in honor
of James and Elizabeth Mackinnon, 2022

Samuel Prout

Plymouth 1783–1852 Camberwell

San Giorgio dei Greci, Seen from an Arcade,
1824/1829

pen and brown ink and pen and gray ink
over graphite, with watercolor and gouache,
touched with gum arabic

National Gallery of Art, William B. O'Neal Fund, 2013

Edward William Cooke

London 1811–1880 Groombridge

The Rocky Beach and Cliffs at Fécamp,

mid-1830s

watercolor

National Gallery of Art, Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund, 2013

William Turner of Oxford

Black Burton 1789 – 1862 Woodstock

Dawn in the Valley, 1832

watercolor with scratching out and gum arabic

National Gallery of Art, Florian Carr Fund, 2014

In its size, rich colors, and multitude of details, this landscape exemplifies the exhibition watercolor, an art form intended to compete with oil painting. Turner used gum arabic, a type of resin, to lend gloss and depth to the darker colors. He enlivened the surface by scratching highlights and details — such as the plants in the foreground and the sparkling water in the left background — into the paper.

William Turner of Oxford

Black Burton 1789 – 1862 Woodstock

View of Oxford from Headington Hill, 1830 watercolor and gouache over graphite

National Gallery of Art, Purchased as the Gift of the
Krugman Family Foundation, 2019

William Turner is known as “Turner of Oxford” to distinguish him from the more famous artist J. M. W. Turner, whose work hangs in the preceding room. Many of his landscapes focus on the countryside in the Oxford area, where he spent much of his life.

William Mulready

Ennis 1786 – 1863 London

Study of a Male Nude, c. 1852

pen and black ink and watercolor with white gouache over graphite

National Gallery of Art, Purchased as the Gift of Dian Woodner, 2019

Mulready was a popular genre painter and a beloved teacher at the Royal Academy, Britain's foremost art school. He was devoted to the discipline of life drawing and believed that it held the key to improving future generations of British artists. He continued to practice life drawing himself throughout his career, and he often worked beside his students during their classes. Most of his life drawings are highly finished chalk studies. The choice here of ink touched with watercolor and the dramatically foreshortened pose make this one of his most unusual and dynamic life studies.

Alfred William Hunt

Liverpool 1830 – 1896 London

The Ramparts, Mont-Saint-Michel, France,

c. 1876

watercolor over graphite with scratching out

National Gallery of Art, Gift of Donald Stone, 2022

William Fraser Garden

Chatham 1856–1921 Huntingdon

**River Landscape near Saint Ives,
Huntingdonshire, 1897**

watercolor with gouache

National Gallery of Art, Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund, 2017

William Linnell

Hampstead 1826 – 1906 London(?)

Seated Male Nude, c. 1845/1850
graphite with black and white chalk

National Gallery of Art, Gift of David Alan Brown, 2022

This accomplished nude study dates from early in Linnell's career and marks an important stage in his education at the Royal Academy. Students were only permitted to draw the live model after spending approximately three years copying the work of other artists. The detailed drawings made in life class, like this one, took hours: the model could only hold a pose for about two hours, meaning that model and students had to return for three or four sessions. The man's right hand rests in a sling designed to help him hold the pose for as long as possible. Linnell likely studied for a time with William Mulready, a close family friend, whose very different life study also appears in this room.

Violet Manners, Duchess of Rutland

London 1856 – 1937 London

James Jebusa Shannon Painting a Portrait of the Young John Manners, 1897

graphite with touches of pen and brown ink on paper washed pale gray

National Gallery of Art, Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund, 2018

As a member of the nobility, Manners enjoyed wealth and connections that presented opportunities open to few professional women artists. Unusually for a woman, she was an accomplished sculptor. She was best known, however, for her sketches of her aristocratic social circle. This drawing embodies the delicacy and verve that made her sketches popular with her friends and with a wider public curious about their glamorous lives.

Sir Edward John Poynter

Paris 1836 – 1919 London

Narcissus in a Blue and White Vase, 1864

watercolor and gouache

National Gallery of Art, Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund, 2017

Many British artists of the second half of the nineteenth century turned for inspiration to art and design from other cultures, particularly Asian and Islamic art. The intricately patterned vessel depicted here bears similarities to ceramics from North Africa or the western Mediterranean. Poynter's friend, the painter Frederic Leighton, visited both areas and collected pottery on his travels.

Beatrice Godwin Whistler

London 1857–1896 Hampstead

Peach Blossom, c. 1890–1894

oil on wood

National Gallery of Art, Rosenwald Collection, 1943

This subtle color study is characteristic of the Aesthetic Movement. Its artists espoused “art for art’s sake” — that is, they embraced beauty as a guiding principle of their work over narrative or moral content. Beatrice Whistler’s paintings are relatively rare. She also made etchings and jewelry designs. This oil sketch was mistakenly identified as the work of her second husband, James McNeill Whistler, when it entered the National Gallery’s collection in 1943.

John William North

London 1842 – 1924 Stamborough

The Hayloft, 1867

watercolor with gouache and scratching out

National Gallery of Art, William B. O'Neal Fund, 2016

North enlivens this almost monochromatic composition with countless details executed in a variety of techniques, including scraping, blotting, and minute hatching. North was a member of a group of artists known as the Idyllists. As their name implies, their work sometimes presented an idealized picture of the English countryside, but it also addressed rural poverty and other social ills.

Edith Martineau

Liverpool 1842 – 1909 London

Myrrhine, 1873

watercolor with gouache and scratching out

National Gallery of Art, Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund, 2018

Martineau would eventually specialize in landscapes, but as a young artist she exhibited mainly figure studies, including several depictions of fictional heroines like this one. Myrrhine was one of the more outspoken characters in Aristophanes's *Lysistrata*, a Greek comic play in which the women bring about peace by maintaining celibacy until the men agree to end a war. Martineau was one of the first women students admitted to the Royal Academy and later attended the progressive Slade School, where women were allowed to draw from the live model.

Walter Langley

Birmingham 1852 – 1922 Penzance

**The Steps of a House at Mousehole,
Cornwall, 1880**

watercolor

National Gallery of Art, Joseph F. McCrindle Endowment
Fund, 2020

This watercolor dates from about the time Langley first visited the Cornish coast and began to paint the region's fishermen and their families. He sometimes studied figures and setting separately, and this study of the front steps of a house in the small Cornish town of Mousehole was probably intended for use in a later painting. The scene may appear picturesque, but people living in fishing villages faced grueling and squalid conditions. Langley's sympathy for these workers amid their hardships informed his work for the rest of his career.

Emily Farmer

London 1826 – 1905 Portchester

Gentle Critics (The Portfolio), 1872

watercolor over traces of graphite with gum arabic and white gouache

National Gallery of Art, William B. O'Neal Fund, 2020

Farmer specialized in depictions of children. Like many mid- to late-nineteenth century British artists, she turned to the art of the Italian Renaissance for inspiration. Here, she demonstrated her familiarity with Leonardo da Vinci's *Virgin of the Rocks*, which was exhibited in London not long before she made this watercolor: she based the figures of the two sisters on those of the Virgin and John the Baptist.



Leonardo da Vinci, (1452 – 1519), *The Virgin with the Infant Saint John the Baptist Adoring the Christ Child Accompanied by an Angel* (“*The Virgin of the Rocks*”), oil on poplar, about 1491/1492 – 1499 and 1506 – 1508, National Gallery, London

James Jackson Curnock
Bristol 1839 – 1891 Bristol

Trees over the River Frome at Stapleton,
1862

watercolor and gouache over traces of graphite

National Gallery of Art, Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund, 2014

Henry Ryland

Biggleswade 1856 – 1924 London

Study of Bay Leaves, before 1898

graphite on dark green paper

National Gallery of Art, William B. O'Neal Fund, 2020

William Henry Millais

Southampton 1828 – Farnham 1899

On the East Lyn, North Devon, c. 1865

watercolor with gouache and gum arabic

National Gallery of Art, Purchased as the Gift of Alexander M. and Judith W. Laughlin, 2017

Millais made this work outdoors before the subject, building up the foliage and the water in the center of the composition with painstaking dots and strokes. The work's intense colors and its emphasis on truth to nature are typical of the works of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Older brother of the famous Pre-Raphaelite painter John Everett Millais, William Henry applied the movement's principles to landscape.

John George Sowerby
Gateshead 1850–1914 Herefordshire

The Kingfisher's Haunt, c. 1890s
watercolor and gouache

National Gallery of Art, William B. O'Neal Fund, 2020

Robert Hills

Islington 1769 – 1844 London

Stags in Knole Park, Kent, 1839

watercolor and gouache over graphite

National Gallery of Art, Purchased as the Gift of
Alexander M. and Judith W. Laughlin, 2019

George Richmond

Brompton 1809–1896 London

Mrs. Anne Walbanke-Childers, 1843–1864

watercolor over graphite with gouache and
gum arabic

National Gallery of Art, William B. O'Neal Fund, 2018

We have lived to behold
such wonders in water-colour
painting, that of late, nothing
short of a miracle in this art
could excite surprise.

— William Henry Pyne,
writer, artist, and cofounder of the
Royal Watercolour Society, 1824

The picturesque eye...
finds its chief objects
in nature, but it delights
also in images of art.

— William Gilpin,
clergyman, travel writer, and
theorist of the picturesque, 1792