

## ART HISTORIAN COMES TO WILTSHIRE TO CHALLENGE THE ALLEGED RIVALRY BETWEEN TURNER & CONSTABLE

*Latest news from The Athelstan Museum*

Art historian, Nicola Moorby, will be a keynote speaker as part of the Athelstan Museum's events in Malmesbury to mark 250 years since the birth of painter JMW Turner.

Nicola, who is curator of British Art 1790 to 1850 at the Tate, will be hosting "Turner vs Constable: The Great British Paint Off", at the Rausing Building in Malmesbury on Friday May 9 at 7:30pm. She will talk about the alleged rivalry and animosity between two of the most famous artists of the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

"I'm thrilled to be able to talk to anyone in Wiltshire and beyond interested in this period of art, especially in a town which is home to one of Turner's works.

"There has long been talk of a rivalry between Turner and Constable – contemporary landscape specialists with very different personalities. However, was it real? Turner was more famous in his lifetime than Constable – but was this fabled rivalry proven or even accurate?"

Nicola, who lives in London has recently published her first solo book exploring this relationship ***Turner and Constable: Art, Life, Landscape*** (Yale University Press, 2025). She is also the curator of ***Turner's Kingdom: Beauty, Birds & Beasts***, an exhibition at Turner's house in Twickenham.

She's reluctant to declare a winner of the alleged contest between Turner & Constable. However she admits:

"For me, Turner is the greatest water colour painter. Water colour paints shift and change when applied to paper and nobody worked with them with the genius and facility of Turner."

The Athelstan Museum is home to a watercolour of Malmesbury Abbey by Turner thought to have been painted in about 1827. It was acquired by the museum thanks to funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Art Fund and some public donation and was put on public display a year later.

Carolyn Brothwood, who manages the museum's events, said: "We are so delighted that Nicola will be talking to us about Turner, Constable and demonstrate her passion for this period of art. As one of the leading art historians on artists of the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries, we know she will share her passion and knowledge with us

Turner was born in London in April 1775, the son of a barber who went on to become the most famous artist of his era. In addition to becoming a Royal Academician at the youngest age ever, he was also well known as an illustrator of poetry books for famous names including Lord Byron, Sir Walter Scott and Samuel Rogers. He was

one of the first artists to use watercolour as a primary medium for his work and he later became known as ‘the painter of light.’

Nicola said: “If I were to meet Turner today, I probably wouldn’t ask him about particular works, I’d be more likely to ask about his life and what his experiences were. He was a very private man and we know so little about him compared to Constable who left so many letters and writings detailing his thoughts and feelings.”

To attend Nicola’s talk in Malmesbury, tickets are available here: <https://www.athelstanmuseum.org.uk/event/turner-vs-constable-the-great-british-paint-off/>

**ENDS**

**EDITOR’S NOTES:**

*Attached is an image of art historian Nicola Moorby, who is giving a talk about Turner and Constable in Malmesbury on May 9.*

For The Tate’s 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary exhibition, including the Tate’s forthcoming exhibition, Turner & Constable, visit: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/turner-250>

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