

Jan 24 2017 : Mirror (Mumbai)

WALK THE TALK ART - FOR THE LOVE OF THE SEA by Anuka Roy

A top curator from Tate Britain is in the city to talk about the work of legendary painter J M W Turner

The famous painter J.M.W Turner once said, 'My job is to paint what I see and not what I know'. And that's exactly what he did. He painted what was around him. Joseph Mallord William Turner was an English romantic landscape painter. Renowned for his oil paintings, Turner is also one of the greatest masters of the British watercolour landscape tradition. Commonly known as 'the painter of light', his works are housed in Tate Britain. And throwing further light on the genius is a top curator from London, who will talk about this fascinating artist.

David Blayney Brown, the Manton Curator of British Art (1790-1850) at Tate Britain, London, with particular responsibility for the J.M.W. Turner collection, will speak at the 19th Vasant J. Sheth Memorial Lecture, looking at Turner's life-long love of the sea and practice as a marine artist. "I am not just going to talk about the Turner collection but about the artist's work as a marine painter. The Turner collection we have in London is the largest. I think it is probably just about the largest of any single artist's work in one place," he says, Brown's lecture will look at Turner's love of the sea and practice as a marine artist. Turner's first exhibited oil painting, in 1796, was a marine subject. His marine paintings bore witness to sea battles, invasion threats and coastal defenses of the Napoleonic War, the rise of Empire, the growth of the Royal Navy and the merchant fleet, storms and shipwreck, the horrors of the slave trade and deportation to the colonies. Above all, they marked the passing of the age of sail and the arrival of steam power, and with it, a recognisably modern world.

"What makes his work exciting for me is that it is never static, it is dynamic. I think a lot of nonsense gets talked about Turner being the first abstract artist. He never really painted things without a subject or a theme. And, abstraction doesn't do that, it takes the subject in the theme away. I do not think you ever get that with Turner", he explains. According to Brown, Turner's work has abstract aspects but you cannot really call it abstract.

A special gallery was made the Tate for the Turner collection in 1980s called the Clore Gallery. "We may only show 30 or 40 paintings at a time, but people can see the rest in a print room by appointment. It's not ideal because not everything is on the wall but, however, you could possibly ever show that quantity all at once," says the Manton Curator.

Brown feels that people think that Turner never came to India, so how would his work have a connection with an Indian audience. "It is not necessary that he depicted Indian subjects but it's about the kind of works he was doing. There's no reason that other countries and other cultures cannot respond to them. His works are universal." The curator's favourite Turner painting changes every week. "My current favourite is at the National Gallery. It is The Fighting Temeraire -which is a sailing ship going to the breaker's yard. I think anybody can understand that painting", he signs off.

The 19th Vasant J Sheth Memorial Lecture by David Blayney Brown will be held tonight, 7 pm at CSMVS, Fort. Entry: Free. Call: 22844484

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David Blayney Brown