

**EXHIBITION ILLUSTRATIVE  
OF TURNER'S  
LIBER STUDIORUM**

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Exhibition Illustrative of Turner's Liber Studiorum by Various

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**VARIOUS**

**EXHIBITION ILLUSTRATIVE  
OF TURNER'S  
LIBER STUDIORUM**



Burlington Fine Arts Club

1872.

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EXHIBITION

ILLUSTRATIVE OF

TURNER'S LIBER STUDIORUM

CONTAINING

CHOICE IMPRESSIONS OF THE  
FIRST STATES, ETCHINGS, TOUCHED PROOFS,  
AND ENGRAVER'S PROOFS; TOGETHER WITH THE  
UNPUBLISHED PLATES, AND A FEW ORIGINAL  
DRAWINGS FOR THE WORK.



LONDON:

SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., PRINTERS, NEW-STREET SQUARE.

1872.

*LIST of CONTRIBUTORS to the EXHIBITION.*

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## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

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**I**N this Exhibition an effort is made, for the first time, to display in its full strength the greatest serial work of our great English landscape painter; the book of his studies which perhaps reveals most clearly his power, and not less betrays his weaknesses—a work by which perhaps, hereafter, when time has ruined too many of his coloured works, the art student of the future may chiefly be able to study his genius. It is only by gathering together, for a short time, from different collections, the choice impressions and the unique proofs of each plate, which even the most diligent collectors have never been able to monopolise, that this work can be adequately displayed. It is indeed remarkable, that not until many years had elapsed after the publication of the original work could anything like what we now consider a fine copy—that is, a copy in which each plate is represented by a well selected first state—be got together. For, unlike other publications of the kind, no copy of *Liber Studiorum* was issued containing only early impressions, and to obtain such an one it was necessary to ransack many sets. To complete such a set was, of course, a work of time and patience; to it the late Mr. Stokes was the first to devote his energy and thought during many years. The admirable collection which he succeeded in accumulating was unrivalled, and we may be sure will



remain so, since now the difficulties of collecting have increased tenfold. Probably a large majority of the best specimens to be found in our Exhibition were originally in his possession.

The full title which Turner chose for his work was 'Liber Studiorum : illustrative of Landscape compositions, viz. Historical, Mountainous, Pastoral, Marine, and Architectural.' It has been sometimes supposed that we owe its appearance to Turner's emulation of Claude, and especially to his desire to surpass the *Liber Veritatis* of that artist. If such were his motives, one must at once avow that the contest was unequal; for the studies after Claude which he aimed to excel were not selected and arranged to display the range of that painter's genius, and they were executed long after his death, whilst *Liber Studiorum* owes its greatest force to the careful preparation of the plates by the artist himself, and the constant supervision which the painter maintained over the engraver's work.

The issue of *Liber Studiorum* began in the year 1807. Its publication was fitful, irregular, and unbusiness-like. Turner employed no professional publisher to put forth the work for him. There is, indeed, so far as we have been able to ascertain, no trace of any prospectus or advertisement intended to recommend the work to the public. Five plates were issued together in a part, and it is supposed that the work, according to the original plan, should have extended to twenty such parts, that is, one hundred plates.

The first four parts were issued under an arrangement with Charles Turner, the engraver, according to which he was to engrave all the plates. On all but a few of the earliest of these his name appears as publisher, as well as engraver, and it has been suggested that the original design of the work was partly due to him. Rather a hard bargain is said to have been struck by

the painter with his namesake for the performance of these twofold duties. However that may be, the engagement between them terminated not very amicably after the appearance of twenty plates, and thenceforward Turner, the painter, became his own publisher, arranged the work himself, and sold the copies at his own house.

Whether the rupture arose entirely out of pecuniary differences may be questioned, since certain remarks of the painter to be found on a touched proof of No. 14, noticed in the Catalogue, indicate dissatisfaction and irritation against the engraver on account of the manner in which his work had been done. After the dispute the publication of the series, which had before been irregular, became much more so, and intervals of even three and four years elapsed without the issue of a single part. Turner thenceforward employed different engravers, and we find no less than twelve names appended to the remaining plates. The following are the names of these gentlemen, with the number of plates confided to their hands:—W. Say, 11; T. Lupton, 4; H. Dawe, 4; R. Dunkarton, 5; T. Hodgetts, 3; S. W. Reynolds, 2; G. Clint, 2; F. C. Lewis, 1; W. Annis, 1; J. C. Easling, 3; and Charles Turner, 3. Another plate, the *Mildmay Marine*, was the joint work of Annis and Easling; and ten were reserved by the painter to himself. The *Frontispiece* records the names of all these engravers except Mr. Lupton and Mr. Lewis, the former of whom—as he had so large a share in the production of the latter portion of the work and of the plates which were never published—it may be supposed was not called in to assist until after the issue of the *Frontispiece* in 1812. It will be observed that Charles Turner's name was attached to four plates after the breach of the engagement already mentioned; so that we may well believe that no quarrel took place such as has been described by a biographer of Turner, who asserts that the two men did not speak for nineteen years. It is impossible for

us to regret this rupture, which no doubt led to Turner's taking so many plates into his own hands, and gave us the rarest ornaments of the series.

Liber Studiorum was originally issued in parts, each containing five plates. They were stitched together in a blue-grey cover, with a badly printed title, and with no accessory to recommend them, or to suggest that their author wished the public to believe that within those slovenly wrappers lay some of the finest work of his genius. The price asked for the first numbers was, Prints, 15s.; Proofs, £1. 5s.; 'to be paid for on delivery;' but it was afterwards raised to, Prints, £1. 1s.; Proofs, £2. 2s. It is to be feared that the difference between these two classes of impressions consisted wholly in the price.

There is reason to suppose that the work never proved remunerative, and it is said that its abandonment was thought of more than once. When the publication did cease—after the issue of the fourteenth part—we may doubt whether its cessation was premeditated, or whether the publication simply fell off because the painter had occupied himself with other work and found little leisure for the direction of this. Before the cessation of Liber Studiorum, other serial works in which he was largely concerned, including *The Southern Coast*, began to appear; and before that time such pictures as *Mercury and Herse*, *Dido and Æneas*, *The Building of Carthage*, *Crossing the Brook*, and *The Fall of Carthage*, had been shown at the Academy. Seventy plates, as we have said, besides the *Frontispiece*, were published; and of the thirty required to complete the full measure of the work, twenty are known to us to have been left more or less finished. These form the unpublished plates, so highly prized by connoisseurs, many of them for their exceeding rarity, but many also for their high intrinsic merits. In addition to these, several drawings exist, in the British Museum and