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Exhibition Recasts Wilson on International Stage

RICHARD WILSON AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE PAINTING

Yale Center for British Art: March 6–June 1, 2014

National Museum Cardiff: July 5–October 26, 2014

NEW HAVEN – This spring, the Yale Center for British Art presents the first major exhibition in more than thirty years devoted to Welsh painter **Richard Wilson** (1714–1782), considered by many to be the father of British landscape painting. *Richard Wilson and the Transformation of European Landscape Painting*, opening on March 6, 2014, will demonstrate the extent of Wilson’s influence throughout Europe and explore his work in its international context. The exhibition will focus on the nearly seven years he spent working in Rome in the 1750s, a transformational period for Wilson and for European landscape art.



The exhibition will feature many of Wilson’s greatest paintings and drawings alongside works by European masters who preceded Wilson, contemporaries whose practice directly influenced his, and artists who were in turn taught or influenced by him. Other artists in the exhibition will include the old masters **Claude Lorrain** and **Gaspard Dughet**, as well as many of Wilson’s contemporaries such as **Claude-Joseph Vernet**, **Pompeo Batoni** and **Anton Raphael Mengs**. Also presented will be works by many of Wilson’s pupils and followers, including the little-known artists **Robert Crone** and **Adolf Friedrich Harper**—both of whom studied with Wilson in Italy, as well as major figures such as **John Constable** and **J. M. W. Turner**.



As part of a cosmopolitan group of artists in Rome, Wilson pioneered a serious and powerfully original approach to landscape that reflected the nascent neoclassicism being advanced by his friends Anton Raphael Mengs and Johann Winckelmann. Wilson’s pupils in Rome transmitted his style across northern Europe. Setting up in London after his Italian sojourn, he established a large and successful studio and gained a European reputation with grand historical landscapes—such as *The Destruction of the Children of Niobe* (1760)—which were featured at the new public art exhibitions in London and



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widely disseminated through popular engravings. His treatment of British landscapes, particularly of his native Wales, borrowed their conceptual framework from the paintings of the seventeenth-century masters Claude Lorrain and Gaspard Dughet, but with a specificity of lighting conditions and weather that was an enduring legacy to the British landscape school.

Wilson's great success during the 1760s slipped away in the following decade, as there was less demand for his work and his health deteriorated. By the time of his death he was largely forgotten. However, within a few years his critical reputation began to revive, and by the early nineteenth century he was celebrated as a pioneering figure of the British school. His innovations in landscape painting were crucial to the development of the genre during the romantic period, which saw its greatest expression in the work of J. M. W. Turner and John Constable, both profound admirers of Wilson.



CREDITS

This is the first exhibition the Center has co-organized with Amgueddfa Cymru—National Museum Wales. The exhibition has been co-curated by Robin Simon, Honorary Professor of English, University College London, and Editor, *The British Art Journal*, and Martin Postle, Deputy Director of Studies, The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, London. The organizing curator at the Center is Scott Wilcox, Chief Curator of Art Collections and Senior Curator of Prints and Drawings; and, at Amgueddfa Cymru—National Museum Wales, Oliver Fairclough, Keeper of Art.



PUBLICATION

Richard Wilson and the Transformation of European Landscape Painting will be accompanied by a book of the same title, published by the Center and Amgueddfa Cymru—National Museum Wales in association with Yale University Press.

YALE CENTER FOR BRITISH ART

The Yale Center for British Art houses the largest and most comprehensive collection of British art outside the United Kingdom. Presented to the University by Paul Mellon (Yale College Class of 1929), the collection of paintings, sculpture, drawings, prints, rare books, and manuscripts reflects the development of British art and culture from the Elizabethan period onward. Visit us online at britishart.yale.edu.



NATIONAL MUSEUM CARDIFF

Located in the heart of the capital city of Wales, National Museum Cardiff is unique among the UK's national museums in its sheer range of arts and science displays. Visitors can enjoy established favorites like the renowned impressionist collections –

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often referred to as among the best in Europe – alongside cutting-edge contemporary art, and all for free thanks to the Welsh government. Displays explore the distinctive story of Welsh art as well its relationship with art elsewhere in the world. For more information, visit www.museumwales.ac.uk.

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