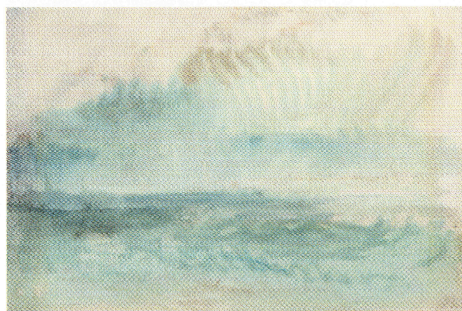


WEIRD & WONDERFUL

IT'S quite the summer for Turner. On the 250th anniversary of his birth, pictures that had not been seen in public for a long time have resurfaced, including his very first oil painting (*Town & Country, June 18*), sold at Sotheby's on July 2 for £1.9 million, and two watercolours from different stages of his career, *Tent Lodge, Coniston Water, Lake District*, with Guy Peppiatt (www.peppiattfineart.co.uk), and *The Approach to Venice*, with Stephen Ongpin Fine Art (www.stephenongpin.com). The former is a view across Coniston Water to the lodge commemorating linguist Elizabeth Smith, built on the spot where she had retreated to enjoy the scenery as she lay dying of tuberculosis. She breathed

***The Approach to Venice (left)*, was painted in about 1840, but the identity of its creator was forgotten until this year. Now, it joins *Tent Lodge, Coniston Water, Lake District (right)*, 1809, as a Turner; both are now for sale**



her last on August 7, 1806, so Turner may have painted the picture when he visited the area in 1809. The painting was commissioned by his friend and patron Walter Fawkes—who owned the largest private collection of the artist's works—and it remained with Fawkes's descendants until at least 1912. In the 1960s, it was bought by the present owner's family, with whom it stayed until now. The Venice watercolour—a view of the lagoon in which water and sky seem to merge

—is thought to date from 1840. Turner had only been to the city three times, but it was enough to sustain years of work. On his last trip, he brought two identical sketchbooks: one is part of the Turner Bequest, but the other was dispersed and it's from the latter that this watercolour is believed to come. It eventually entered the collection of bridge engineer Haddon Clifford Adams, but the name of its painter was forgotten—until its attribution was re-established this year.

Take five: people and one sculpture

THREE busts, garlanded in flowers, grace the Blickling estate in Norfolk. They represent three pioneering women who changed the course of art and science, but the installation, *Mary, Maria, Marianne*, which will be on show at the National Trust property from July 19–October 22, really tells the story of five people:

1. Maria Sibylla Merian (1647–1717): Merian showed an interest in zoology when, as an adolescent, she raised silkworms. She initially made a living painting and giving art lessons (including to Rachel Ruysch). Then, seven years after her divorce, aged 52, she sold most of her possessions and took herself and her younger daughter, Dorothea, to Suriname in South America. There, she studied plants and invertebrates, writing a seminal book, *Metamorphosis Insectorum Surinamensium*; a copy is on display at Blickling

2. Sir Richard Ellys (about 1688–1742): Sir Richard was MP for Grantham, Lincolnshire, and a bibliophile, amassing a vast collection of important books. He had no heirs and, when he died, 'What numbers courted, who with eager eyes/Beheld and wish'd to gain the golden prize' of his estate, Sir Charles Hanbury Williams wrote at the time. Horace Walpole was one of the contenders, but Sir Richard's library eventually went to Sir John Hobart, who owned the Blickling estate. It survives there, almost intact

3. Mary Delany (1700–88; right): Pressured by her family, Mary had to marry elderly, wealthy Alexander Pendarves—in vain, because she inherited nothing from him. Her second marriage, to Irish clergyman Patrick Delany, was happier, but it was after he died that she truly flourished. Aged 72, she applied her artistic

skills to her passion for plants, making accurate depictions of flowers from pieces of paper. They so impressed naturalist Joseph Banks that, reported *The Strand*, he called them 'the only imitations of Nature he had ever seen from which he could venture to describe botanically any plant without the least fear of committing an error'. Her *Flora Delanica* was later bequeathed to the British Museum

4. Marianne North (1830–90): At 39, the unconventional North left Britain to tour and paint. From the protea of South Africa to the giant pitcher plants of Borneo, no place was too remote, no flower too difficult to portray—and so accurate

was her work that her pictures are still used today to identify specimens. Back home, she agreed with Joseph Hooker, head of Kew Gardens, that she could fund and devise a gallery there in which to hang her 838 botanical works—in perpetuity

5. Rebecca Stevenson (b. 1971): Renaissance and Baroque art, Rococo porcelain and even anatomical illustrations inspire the sculptor who created *Mary, Maria, Marianne*, originally for Beningbrough Hall in North Yorkshire. She is fascinated by processes of transformation: 'Sculpture confers permanence; that is its job. The most heroic of the Arts, it bestows immortality on its makers, patrons, subjects. But here I offer you another view: what changes' 🐘

