**Romantic Period Art**

[John Constable](http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/famous-artists/john-constable.htm) (1776-1837) belonged to an English tradition of Romanticism that rejected compositions marked by a heightened idealisation of nature, such as those of Caspar David Friedrich, in favour of the [naturalism](http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/history-of-art/naturalism.htm) of 17th century [Dutch Baroque art](http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/history-of-art/dutch-baroque.htm), and also that of Claude Lorrain (1604-82). This tradition sought a balance between (on the one hand) a deep sensitivity to nature and (on the other) advances in the science of painting and drawing. The latter were exemplified by the systematic sky and cloud studies of the 1820s which characterized the work of Constable. Precise observation of nature led him to disregard the conventional importance of line, and construct his works from free patches of colour.

This emancipation of colour is particularly characteristic of the painting of [William Turner](http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/famous-artists/turner.htm) (1775-1851). For Turner, arguably the greatest of all English painters of Romanticism, observation of nature is merely one element in the realisation of his own pictorial ambitions. The mood of his paintings is created less by what he painted than by how he painted, especially how he employed colour and his paint-brush. Many of his canvases are painted with rapid slashes. Thick [impasto](http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/painting/impasto-technique.htm) alternates with delicate *alla prima* painting, tonal painting with strong contrasts of light and dark. It often takes a while for the depicted object to emerge from this whirling impression of colour and material. Thus for instance in his painting *Snowstorm: Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth* (1842, Tate, London), Turner did not try to depict the driving snow and lashing wind, but rather translated them into the language of painting. In this, Turner is an important precursor of modern abstract painting. More immediately, his art had a huge impact on the Impressionists, who, unlike Romantic painters, were realists - they were not interested in visions of light that heightened expressiveness but in real light effects in nature. This movement towards realism appeared around 1850.

At this point, a widening gulf opened up between emotion and reality. The Romantics, including groups like the [Pre-Raphaelites](http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/history-of-art/pre-raphaelite-brotherhood.htm), focused on emotion, fantasy and artistically created worlds; the realists adhered to a more naturalistic idiom, encompassing such diverse styles as Realism and Impressionism.

Other English Romantic painters include [William Blake](http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/old-masters/william-blake.htm) (1757-1827) and [John Martin](http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/famous-artists/john-martin.htm) (1789-1854). E

motion, imagination, freedom from classical art forms, and rebellion against social conventions. R

**Impact of Romanticism**

The Romantic style of painting stimulated the emergence of numerous schools, such as: the Barbizon school of plein-air landscapes, the Norwich school of landscape painters; the Nazarenes, a group of Catholic German and Austrian painters; Symbolism (eg. Arnold Bocklin 1827-1901) and the Aestheticism movement.

The most influential exponents of English figurative romanticism during the Victorian Age were the members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, co-founded by William Holman Hunt (1827-1910) and by Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-82), noted for The Annunciation and other works. Other artists associated with the movement included: John Everett Millais (1829-96) best-known for his romantic painting Ophelia, Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898) the eminent painter, stained glass and tapestry designer for William Morris & Co, and John William Waterhouse (1849-1917) who created the famous painting of The Lady of Shalott.

Another important group of Romantic painters was The Hudson River School of landscape painting, active during the period 1825-1875. Begun by Thomas Doughty whose peaceful compositions greatly influenced later artists of the school, other members included Thomas Cole (dramatic and vivid landscapes) Asher B Durand, Frederick Edwin Church, JF Kensett, SFB Morse, Henry Inman, and Jasper Cropsey. A sub-group of Hudson River artists introduced the style of Luminism, active 1850-75. Luminist landscapes - exemplified by those of Frederic E Church, Albert Bierstadt, and the Missouri frontier painter George Caleb Bingham (1811-79) - were characterized by intense, often dramatic light effects, a style visible also in the hauntingly beautiful works of Whistler, such as Crepuscule in Flesh Colour and Green, Valparaiso (1866) and Nocturne: Blue and Silver - Chelsea (1871).



[J.M.W. Turner](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J.M.W._Turner)

[*The Fighting Téméraire tugged to her last Berth to be broken up*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Fighting_Temeraire),

1839



Wanderer above the Sea of Fog, 1818

Casper David Friedrich, 1774-1840

http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/history-of-art/romanticism.htm