

The Lure of the East: British Orientalist Painting

>ITM-London

The Lure of the East: British Orientalist Painting, opened last month at Tate Britain. It is the first exhibition to survey the history of British painters' representations of the Middle East from the seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries. It explores the great range of artistic responses to the peoples, cities and landscapes of the region.

The British have a long history of interest and contacts with the East, particularly the Middle East. However, the 19th century witnessed a huge increase in the number of travellers to the area, by diplomats and adventurers, but also by artists of all inclinations. The focus of these travels is the famous capitals, such as Istanbul and Cairo but also the holy land and Jerusalem in particular. This is a slightly different interest from those of Dutch and French Orientalists. The French of course were already in north Africa (Algeria, and Egypt for a short period) and had a direct acquaintance with Arab and Islamic life.

Although the exhibition was intended to be exclusively for British artists, there was the exception of the French Jerome, whose inclusion may be intended to highlight some trends in the Orientalist's work. Fantasy rather than literary (or historical) truth has been presented. His female's and children's naked figures are definitely a figment of his imagination. The rare presence of such themes in the British Orientalists work combined with a complaint by some of the British Orientalists that they can't find women to model for them, are a testimony to the false images projected by Jerome and others. The exhibition brings together over 110 pictures and watercolours from collections around the world. It includes major works by celebrated British painters such as Pre-Raphaelite William Holman Hunt, Richard Dadd, Lord Leighton and John Frederick Lewis. ■



HUNT, William Holman (1827-1910): A Street Scene in Cairo (1860-61)

ويليام هولمن هانت: منظر في شارع بالقاهرة.

The exhibition is at Tate Britain, Linbury Galleries, Level 1, from the 4th of June to the 31st of August 2008. Admission £10 (£8 concessions; £9 seniors). Open daily 10.00-18.00 last admission 17.00.



Edward Lear (1812-1888): Constantinople from Egypt, 1858

إدوارد لير: القسطنطينية.



Gustav Bauernfeind: Jerusalem, 1886

غوستاف بورتفيند: القدس.