

# John Ruskin

## *The Power of Seeing*

*Exhibition Dates:* Saturday 26 January - Monday 22 April 2019

*Two Temple Place, London WC2R 3BD [www.twotempleplace.org](http://www.twotempleplace.org)*

*#JohnRuskin #PowerofSeeing #Ruskin200*

Artist, art critic, educator, social thinker and true polymath, John Ruskin (1819-1900) devoted his life to the pursuit of knowledge. To mark the bicentenary of his birth, a new exhibition produced by Two Temple Place, Museums Sheffield and the Guild of St George, will celebrate the legacy and enduring relevance of Ruskin's ideas and vision. ***John Ruskin: The Power of Seeing*** will bring together over 190 paintings, drawings, daguerreotypes, metal work, and plaster casts to illustrate how Ruskin's attitude to aesthetic beauty shaped his radical views on culture and society.

Opening at Two Temple Place on 26 January 2019; ***John Ruskin: The Power of Seeing***, will reveal how his influence is still felt today in current debates on arts, education, the economy and the environment. Fundamentally, Ruskin wanted to make Britain a better place to live. Ruskin's work in social and cultural politics went on to influence many leading figures, including Mahatma Gandhi, William Morris, Ebenezer Howard, architect of the Garden City movement, and many founder members of the Labour Party. His name is also cited in the foundation of the National Trust and in the origins of the Welfare State.

A staunch advocate of life-long-learning and the importance of observation and close-looking, Ruskin believed progress could be made by making art, books and cultural treasures available to all. With the help of the Guild of St George; the educational organisation which he founded in 1871, Ruskin created an eclectic collection of watercolours, drawings, prints, plaster casts, minerals, illustrated books, and manuscripts, and established a museum to display them in Sheffield.

Whilst holding a deep admiration for the skill of Sheffield's metalworkers and artisans, Ruskin felt Sheffield's workforce was confined by modern industry. He therefore founded St George's Museum as an educational resource to engage local workers. The museum was built on a hilltop to entice people out of the smoky city, offering views over the Derbyshire landscape and a space to inspire creative thought.

***John Ruskin: The Power of Seeing*** will mark the first time Ruskin's remarkable collection will be shown en masse outside Sheffield, featuring examples of his own work alongside paintings, drawings and photographs by Ruskin's contemporaries including J.M.W. Turner, George Frederic Watts and John Wharltton Bunney.

The exhibition will showcase significant objects from The Ruskin Collection including Ruskin's *St George and the Dragon*, after Carpaccio (1872), and the 'De Croy' Book of Hours, an exquisitely illustrated religious manuscript dating from the 15th century. Bunney's striking 7'5ft oil painting *Western Façade of San Marco* (1882) will demonstrate Ruskin's fascination for the architecture of Venice, while his deep passion for the natural world will be represented by carefully-observed studies of botany, geology, ornithology and landscape including John James Audubon's *White Pelican* (1836) and an array of dazzling minerals and geological specimens. The exhibition will also feature examples of hand-crafted furniture from the original St George's Museum.

In addition to Sheffield's Guild of St George Ruskin Collection, ***John Ruskin: The Power of Seeing*** will draw on the rich collections of both regional and national public museums and galleries, including, The Ashmolean; Calderdale Museums; The Fitzwilliam; Gallery Oldham; The Ruskin Library, Lancaster; Leeds Museums and Art Gallery; Tate; Watts Gallery – Artists' Village and the William Morris Gallery. Key loans include Ruskin's *Kapellbrücke, Lucerne* (1861), on loan from The Ashmolean, and J.M.W. Turner's *Pass of St Gotthard, near Faido* (c.1842-3) and *Venetian Festival* (c.1845), from Tate.

The exhibition will also feature newly commissioned works including site-specific installations from Timorous Beasties and Grizedale Arts, a new moving image piece by Dan Holdsworth and contributions from artists Hannah Downing and Emilie Taylor which will explore Ruskin's contemporary legacy.

***John Ruskin: The Power of Seeing*** will be complemented by a further exhibition continuing the bicentenary celebrations at the Millennium Gallery, Sheffield from 29 May – 15 September 2019.

The Ruskin exhibitions in London and Sheffield are made possible thanks to generous support from **Garfield Weston Foundation, Foyle Foundation, Sheffield Town Trust, and James Neill Trust Fund.**

*“Ruskin amassed this collection with a singular purpose – to captivate and inspire its audience, and compel them to action. This exhibition is a visual exploration of the radical, prescient notion at the heart of his philosophy: that in opening ourselves to beauty we can find a more enjoyable and enriching path through our fast-paced and rapidly changing world. Ruskin spoke of ‘a power of the eye and a power of the mind’ that would help us to see, rather than simply look. This exhibition will show exactly how he thought that could be done.”*

Louise Pullen, Curator of the Ruskin Collection, Museums Sheffield

*“We are excited and proud of the opportunity to display in London a wide range of treasures from the unique collections Ruskin gave to the Guild for the people of Sheffield, and cannot imagine a better showcase for them than Two Temple Place. In his bicentenary year, alongside our events in Sheffield and the Wyre Forest, we anticipate that the exhibition, brought together with such care by our partners at Museums Sheffield and The Bulldog Trust, will contribute significantly to deepening a wider public’s awareness of this extraordinary figure and his continuing relevance in the world today.”*

Clive Wilmer, Master, Guild of St George

*“In establishing his collection in Sheffield, John Ruskin recognised the skill of the city’s craftspeople and sought to inspire them to new greatness; the collection in turn became one of the city’s greatest treasures. We’re delighted to collaborate with the Guild of St George and the Bulldog Trust to celebrate Ruskin’s remarkable legacy with this exhibition at Two Temple Place and the subsequent exhibition at The Millennium Gallery later in the year.”*

Kirstie Hamilton, Director of Programmes at Museums Sheffield

#### EDITORS’ NOTES:

***John Ruskin: The Power of Seeing*** is curated by Louise Pullen, Ruskin Curator at Museums Sheffield, with the support of Alison Morton, Exhibition & Displays Curator, Museums Sheffield. Author and journalist, Michael Glover has provided further interpretation and insight.

***John Ruskin: The Power of Seeing*** will be accompanied by a varied programme of cultural events for children and adults including talks, lectures, workshops and our usual Wednesday Late openings until 9pm.

Two Temple Place also continues to offer its popular free literacy workshops for KS2 pupils from state London Primary Schools. More information and Teacher Resources can be found on our website: <https://twotempleplace.org/learning/>

***John Ruskin: The Power of Seeing is an un-ticketed exhibition and free of charge.***

Exhibition Opening Times: Monday, Thursday - Saturday: 10am - 4:30pm

Wednesday Late: 10am - 9pm, Sunday: 11am - 4:30pm

Closed on Tuesday, Closed Easter Sunday

### **About Two Temple Place**

Two Temple Place, a magnificent neo-Gothic mansion on London's Victoria Embankment, is owned and run by the charity the Bulldog Trust. This will be the 8th show in its Winter Exhibition Programme, supporting regional museums across the UK, highlighting great collections through annual free exhibitions. <https://twotempleplace.org/exhibitions/>

A summary of the programme's impact and success can be seen here: <https://bit.ly/2Oc8WDw>

### **About Museums Sheffield**

Museums Sheffield is the independent charity that runs three of the city's leading museums and galleries, The Millennium Gallery, Graves Gallery and Weston Park Museum. Established in 1998, the charity cares for and celebrates Sheffield's collection of art, human history and natural science, alongside the Guild of St George's Ruskin Collection. [museums-sheffield.org.uk](http://museums-sheffield.org.uk)

### **About The Guild of St George**

The Guild is an educational charity for arts, crafts and the rural economy, founded by John Ruskin in 1871. Today, with more than 270 Companions, it continues to promote Ruskin's values in the modern world. As well as its Ruskin Collection, cared for by Museums Sheffield, the Guild owns land in the Wyre Forest and elsewhere, and funds public engagement projects here and in Sheffield, together with conferences, publications, lectures and symposiums, all designed to encourage the use of Ruskin's ideas to make the world a better place to live in. [www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk](http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk)

Ruskin To-Day is a gathering of the many people, places and enterprises devoted to Ruskin and his work. For more on all the activity planned around the world for 2019, go to [www.ruskin200.com](http://www.ruskin200.com).

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