

SCOTS ABROAD
2nd July 2002 - 7th September 2002
Tues - Sat 10am to 5.30pm
The Fleming Collection, London

Toughened by their own terrain, Scots have always made excellent travellers. This exhibition displays paintings and drawings by nearly forty Scottish artists who made journeys abroad during the period 1800-2000 when the nature of both art and travel underwent radical change.

The upper gallery shows work inspired by lands long visited by British artists for study and recreation: France (with whom Scotland has enjoyed a special relationship for centuries) and two others whose art underpins much of British culture but was less influential in this period, Holland and Italy.

From the 1870s onwards Scottish painters gravitated towards the studios of Paris, especially those of the famous Académie Julian (which opened in 1873), for the city was now the art school of the world, attracting students of many nationalities. They painted out of doors near Fontainebleau, came under the influence of Whistler, discovered Japanese prints, shared new ideas with many of the leading Post-Impressionists, and were present at the birth of Modernism with the arrival of Fauvism in 1905 and Cubism a couple of years later. Three coastal areas that stimulated revolutions in painting - southern Brittany, Normandy and the Riviera - were also favourite destinations and have been of lasting significance to Scottish painters.

In the lower gallery the painters travel further afield: to Spain and Portugal, Africa, America, Asia and Australia. And while their horizons expand to embrace different territories and climes, so too there is increasing diversity among the artistic influences that shape them.

As our own century reveals all too clearly, not every journey abroad is undertaken voluntarily. Several painters represented here served as official or semi-official War Artists, while others had to accompany their families overseas and paint wherever they could. Three notable works in this show focus on exploration and emigration. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Scots played major roles in exploring the globe and discovering far-flung places. The same era saw hundreds of thousands of Highlanders

forced far from their homes in the remotest parts of Scotland by poverty or politics.

However, most of the works in this room reflect the joys of going abroad and reveal the stimulation and inspiration that result. The light and colour, landscape, art and artefacts of distant cultures have all played a major part in the ongoing story of Scottish painting.

Cecilia Powell