

**DISTRACTIONS**

DESIGN

**Green machine**

While Texans are focused on the tricked-out, all-electric pickup trucks coming to market (Ford's new electric hauler will soon be fending off upstarts Rivian and Lucid), the Swedes are greening up the inside, too. Volvo showed off its **Concept Recharge** electric crossover this week, which swaddles passengers in natural Swedish wool (backrests, carpets, headliner, dashtop); seat cushions made from cellulose fibers; footrests built from flax composites; and other trim pieces made from recycled bits and bio-based materials sourced from sustainable forests in Sweden and Finland. (Where else?) The minimalist design promises to be a maximalist hug for Mother Earth. *Details: [volvocars.com](http://volvocars.com)*



*Christopher Wynn*

THEATERS

**A new art house movie theater? Yes, please**

When movie theaters opened up again in Dallas earlier this year, one stayed closed. That bothered James Faust, artistic director of the Dallas International Film Festival. "I hated that that space was empty," he says of the Magnolia Theatre in West Village. The theater, opened two decades ago, had sat vacant throughout the pandemic, sparking worries its five screens might stay dark forever, or worse, give way to something else entirely. "Yeah, you can turn it into a bowling alley," Faust says grudgingly. It's happened before.



The Magnolia won't be a bowling alley. Earlier this month, a small theater chain called **Violet Crown Cinema** announced plans to renovate and reopen it, showing a mix of mainstream and art films. Work hasn't started yet, but Violet Crown owner Bill Banowsky says it will be extensive and include changes to make kitchen and bar service possible for patrons. For Banowsky, the Magnolia's original owner, the new location marks a homecoming. "It all kind of circles around this one theater," he says.

*Dan Singer*



Carolyn Brown

VISUAL ART

**Witness a lost city through the eye of Carolyn Brown**

To see a city as it will never be seen again is the draw behind Dallas photographer Carolyn Brown's current exhibition at the Crow Museum of Asian Art. Titled "**Carolyn Brown and Palmyra: An Ancient City Through the Lens**," the show features large-scale prints the artist took of Palmyra, Syria, in 1989. The beloved arches and Roman architecture of the UNESCO World Heritage Site were later destroyed by the Islamic State group in 2015. Just this week, Russian archaeologists began working to rebuild from the ruins of Palmyra, but Brown's photographs capture the city's previous

essence. The deep blue skies and detailed edits by Brown give the work a hyperrealism, making Palmyra seem more unreachable than ever. While an ancient amphitheater depicted in Brown's photography speaks to a rich and labored-over cultural past, the site would later be designated for mass executions under ISIS. A chilling bookend of photographs by *New York Times* photographer Bryan Denton shows Palmyra further scarred and reduced in the wake of the terrorist occupation. *Details: Through Jan. 2, 2010 Flora St., Dallas, [crowcollection.org](http://crowcollection.org)*



*Christopher Mosley*

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Tate, London, 2020

“Turner’s Modern World” sees the 19th-century English painter Joseph Mallord William Turner as a dramatist of a changing world. The exhibition, which includes his oil-on-canvas painting *England: Richmond Hill, on the Prince Regent’s Birthday* (above), is on view at the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth.

## ART

# STORMY GLORY

J.M.W. Turner show is a spectacle of steam, meteorological drama and sociopolitical change

**F**ORT WORTH — As evidence that life imitates art, Oscar Wilde credited French impressionist painters for “those wonderful brown fogs that come creeping down our streets, blurring the gaslamps and changing the houses into monstrous shapes ... the lovely silver mists that brood over our river, and turn to faint forms of fading grace curved bridge and swaying barge. ...

“People see fogs, not because there are fogs, but because poets and painters have taught them the mysterious loveliness of such effects.”

Although Wilde, writing in 1889, pooh-pooed Joseph Mallord William Turner as passé, the honor for transforming atmospheric perceptions in 19th-century London surely belonged to the earlier English painter. While his contemporary, John Constable, celebrated England’s green and pleasant land — mostly rural, or at most small-town — Turner portrayed urban scenes garishly lit through coal-fired smogs. Bringing new dynamism to art, he also dramatized conflagrations and wartime destruction.

That fondness for visual drama has stuck Turner with the “romantic” label. But “Turner’s Modern World,” a spectacular exhibition of paintings, watercolors and sketches at the Kimbell Art Museum, portrays Turner as a pioneering observer of social and political, as well as environmental, transformations. Based on rich holdings of Tate Britain, where it was first displayed, it includes loans from other British and American museums unavailable in London due to COVID shipping restrictions. From Fort Worth it will go to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Turner (1775-1851) lived through turbulent times. The American and French revolutions and the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars destabilized two continents. The coal-fired Industrial Revolution brought new factories, steamships and locomotives, spewing toxic fumes and poisoning rivers. Although slavery was outlawed in 1833 — 30 years before the U.S. took the same step — nouveaux riches of industry exploited the have-nots in squalid servitude. To varying degrees, all these forces surface in Turner’s art.

Obviously gifted from an early age, Turner had traditional training at the Royal Academy of Arts, alongside work as a draftsman for several architects. With an early eye for attracting sales and patronage, he could produce genre paintings and watercolors — landscapes and seascapes.

The aristocratic parties in *England: Richmond Hill, on the Prince Regent’s Birthday* look barely updated from Claude Lorraine and Watteau. The exquisitely atmospheric *Chichester Canal* silhouettes an upstream schooner against a yellow sunset that tints grassy shores in the foreground. (As

Dallasites know, airborne pollution can produce spectacular sunsets.) Defying romantic clichés, though, Turner also portrayed laborers in claustrophobic versions of Blake’s dark satanic mills.

He had a fondness for turbulent sea scenes, with vessels tossed on roiling waters, sometimes lashed by swirling rains and snows. There’s scarcely room for nature, though, in *The Battle of Trafalgar, as Seen from the Mizzen Starboard Shrouds of the Victory*. French and English ships, borne upon a penumbra of cannon smoke, with sails billowing every which way, are crowded impossibly forward. Conflating scenes of battle and aftermath, Turner portrays the mortally wounded Admiral Nelson at the center, even as the French commanders surrender on the left.

Turner repeatedly returned to scenes of ships in distress, sometimes in densely abstract realizations, with oils thickly laid on. *Rockets and Blue Lights (Close at Hand) to Warn Steamboats of Shoal Water* is a seasick swirl of clouds, smoke, seafoam and warning flares.

We get all of the Four Elements — earth (barely), water, air and fire — in *The Burning of the Houses of Lords and Commons, October 16, 1834*. In a concatenation of thickly stroked yellow, orange, red, purple and gray, the flames are windswept diagonally across the distant scene. Shadowy onlookers cluster at water’s edge and on boats immobilized at low tide. To early viewers, with so much changing in British life, this scene must have seemed symbolic — or portentous.

In 1870, with the Franco-Prussian War ravaging Paris, French painters of the inchoate impressionist movement fled to London. There they were struck by Turner’s atmospheres, energized by tight juxtapositions of contrasting colors. They would develop the concept in very different ways, but in the meantime Monet was captivated by, and illustrated, London scenes viewed through those “new” fogs.

If Turner wasn’t exactly a precursor of impressionism, he was, like the French painters to come, a virtuoso of atmospheric effects. Later paintings less about concrete things and more about forces and gestures and paint itself can seem precedents for abstract expressionism more than a century later.

The painterly flair, the dramatic engagement with sometimes violent natural forces, industrial change and political upheaval: all this is extensively, and spectacularly, displayed at the Kimbell. A worthy successor to the great 2008 Turner show at the Dallas Museum of Art, this is a must-see.

*Classical music critic for The News from 1999 to 2015, sometimes also writing about art and architecture, Scott Cantrell continues contributing as a freelance writer.*



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### Details

“Turner’s Modern World” is on view through Feb. 6, 2022 at the Kimbell Art Museum, 3333 Camp Bowie Blvd., Fort Worth. Special exhibition fee \$18; discounts for children, students and seniors. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday; noon to 8 p.m. Friday; noon to 5 p.m. Sunday. [kimbellart.org](http://kimbellart.org).



*Sheerness as Seen from the Nore*, 1808; oil on canvas

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston



*Chichester Canal*, circa 1828; oil on canvas

Tate, London, 2020



*The Battle of Trafalgar, as Seen from the Mizzen Starboard Shrouds of the Victory*, 1806-8; oil on canvas

Tate, London, 2020