

## The Sublime Object: Nature, Art and Language

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Landscape & Environment



To call something 'sublime' today is a perfectly normal means of praise. Yet the Sublime is a complex idea which takes on different meanings in different times and places. For those who have never considered the idea in theoretical terms, the existence of the Sublime is confirmed by their experience of the natural world, and the way it is interpreted by artists and writers. Tate, the Universities of Cambridge, London, East Anglia and the arts and environment organisation Cape Farewell, have joined forces to find out what the history and present ideas of the Sublime mean today.

Images of landscape form a major part of Tate's Collection. Over the years Tate has promoted landscape through its exhibitions and displays, a number of which have given a prominent place to the sublime: JMW Turner who is always on display in the Clore Gallery; the recent exhibitions, 'American Sublime', and 'The Pre-Raphaelite Vision'; when it opened in 2000, Tate Modern's vast new Turbine Hall was hailed as an example of the Architectural Sublime - acknowledged since then in a series of installations, including Olafur Eliasson's 'Weather Project' and Rachel Whiteread's 'Embankment', inspired by her experiences as an artist in the arctic wilderness with 'Cape Farewell'.

One aim of this project is to draw together a range of individuals to discuss, debate and collaborate on a series of events focused upon the role of the Sublime in our perception of the natural world. They will include scholars from many disciplines, curators, artists and post-graduate students. We also want to engage Tate's public closely in our exploration of the Sublime, through our displays, our 'Tate Sublime' website, and educational activities directed at school children, students and the adult community.

We want to gain a greater understanding of the ways in which perceptions of the sublime in the landscape - rural and urban, historic and contemporary, real and imagined - are shaped by cultural experiences: the art that we look at, the books that we read, and the ideas that are communicated to us through history, philosophy, poetry, politics, and religion. Is the Sublime still a powerful idea in the contemporary world with its concerns about climate change and man's relation to nature? Scholars, artists and members of the public from across Britain will work together to provide some answers to this question.