

ec Feb 12/14



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

14 December 1983

Dear Mr Vice-President:

Thank you for your letter of 28 November in which you asked whether we could make available paintings by Constable and Turner for a special exhibition at the National Gallery of Modern Art in New Delhi.

I share your hope that such an exhibition can be arranged. It would be a fitting counterpart to the splendid collections which your Government so generously sent to the United Kingdom for exhibition in the Festival of India.

You mentioned the exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum in New York. Most of the pictures for this came from American collections, with the addition of a number of oil sketches from the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. I understand that the exhibition finished in September and has now been dispersed. I know that this will be disappointing news. But I am told that it was in any case arranged on the basis that it would not travel after the New York showing.

Earlier this year the British Council, who act as the Government's agents in sponsoring exhibitions of British art overseas, discussed with the Director of your National Gallery of Modern Art, Dr. Sihare, the possibility of a large scale exhibition there of the works of Constable and Turner. Subsequently, the British Council approached the Tate Gallery, the Victoria and Albert Museum and others. But their holdings of Constable and Turner paintings were

/already

Li

already committed to exhibition programmes for some time ahead. Plans for a large scale exhibition in India of works from several of our collections have therefore had to be postponed. But the British Council still have the possibility very much in mind and will take up the matter again with the National Gallery of Modern Art at the earliest opportunity.

If in the meantime your National Gallery are able to accept the offer made earlier this year to loan 47 important paintings by Turner and Constable from the Victoria and Albert Museum's collection, the British Council will offer every possible assistance with the arrangements for an exhibition.

In conclusion, may I say how very glad I was to learn that arrangements are well in hand for the important exhibition of Modern Figurative Painting due to open at the Lalit Kala Academy in New Delhi in November.

Yours sincerely  
Margaret Thatcher

His Excellency Mr. M. Hidayatullah



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

12 December, 1983

*Type letter pl.*

*A.S.C. 12/12*

*Dear John,*

Indian Request for Exhibition of Constable and Turner Paintings

Thank you for your letter of 28 November enclosing a copy of a letter of the same date from the Vice-President of India seeking the Prime Minister's help in arranging for an exhibition of paintings by Constable and Turner at the National Gallery of Modern art in Delhi. I attach a draft reply.

We support this request in principle but both we and the British Council, who take the lead in sponsoring exhibitions of British works overseas, are dependent on the co-operation of museums and galleries in lending their works. We have to be guided by their expert advice.

The exhibition of paintings by Constable referred to by Mr Hidayatullah was held at the Metropolitan Museum in New York from April to September. The British Council tell us that all the works have now been returned to their owners. More than half of the exhibits were from American collections; the others came from Britain and included seven oil sketches from the Victoria and Albert Museum. Since the Director of the Metropolitan Museum had stipulated that the exhibition should not travel, it would not in any case have been possible to arrange for a showing in India.

The British Council are already aware of the wish of Dr Sihare, Director of India's National Gallery of Modern Art to have an exhibition of Turner and Constable paintings and have discussed the possibilities with the Tate Gallery, Victoria and Albert Museum and others. An exhibition of works by Henry Moore is also under consideration for the National Gallery of Modern Art.

The Idea of a more general exhibition of 19th Century paintings for India was dropped in 1982 following discussions in London between Dr Sihare and the British Council. Earlier this year the Council were, however, able to offer a collection of 10 oil 'sketches' and 20 watercolours by Constable, together with 2 oil paintings and 15 watercolours by Turner, which the Victoria and Albert Museum agreed to make available for India.

/In



In making this offer the Victoria and Albert Museum acknowledged their debt of gratitude to the Indian Government for the highly successful exhibition which had been sent to them for the Festival of India. The British Council considered the Victoria and Albert's offer a generous one, but unfortunately it did not at the time interest Dr Sihare. The offer remains open and is worth renewing. Incidentally Constable applied the term 'sketches' to series of oil paintings leading to the final version of a picture: his 'sketches' are in fact full oil paintings of the highest quality.

For reasons of conservation, galleries and museums must take particular account of the climate and conditions in countries to which their works are lent. The loan of major paintings to India would have to be restricted to the cool weather between November and March; there would also have to be special packing and transportation arrangements. The difficulties in arranging a major exhibition for India are therefore considerable. The British Council also have to take account of other major exhibitions already planned for the coming winters, including the re-opening of the Turner Gallery in 1985, when all the Turner paintings belonging to the Tate Gallery are expected to be on view there.

Although it has not yet been possible to arrange the kind of large scale Turner and Constable exhibition for which the Indians are pressing, the Council intend to take up the project again with the National Gallery of Modern Art at a later date. Meanwhile, in addition to the Victoria and Albert's offer mentioned above, the Council are arranging an exhibition of Modern Figurative Painting, due to open at the Lalit Kala Academy in New Delhi in November 1984.

*Yours ever,*

*Peter Ricketts*

(P F Ricketts)  
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq  
10 Downing Street

**DRAFT:** minute/letter/teleletter/despatch/note

**TYPE:** Draft/Final 1+

**FROM:** The Prime Minister

Reference

**DEPARTMENT:**

**TEL. NO:**

41621

**SECURITY CLASSIFICATION**

- Top Secret
- Secret
- Confidential
- Restricted
- Unclassified

**TO:** His Excellency Shri M Hidayatullah  
 Vice President of India  
 Vice President's Residence  
 New Delhi  
 11011

Your Reference

Copies to:

1 Vice Jr.

**PRIVACY MARKING**

.....In Confidence

**CAVEAT**.....

**SUBJECT:**

Thank you for your letter of 28 November in which you asked whether we could make available paintings by Constable and Turner for a special exhibition at the National Gallery of Modern Art in New Delhi.

I share your hope that such an exhibition <sup>can</sup> ~~would~~ be arranged. It would be a fitting counterpart to the splendid collections which your Government so generously sent to the United Kingdom for exhibition in the Festival of India.

You mentioned the exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum in New York. Most of the pictures for this came from American collections, with the addition of a number of oil sketches from the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. I understand that the exhibition finished in September and has now been dispersed. I know that this will be disappointing news. But I am told that it was in any case arranged on the basis that it would not travel after the New York showing.

Enclosures—flag(s).....

/Earlier

India  
Relations  
A/3

Earlier this year the British Council, who act as the Government's agents in sponsoring exhibitions of British art overseas, discussed with the Director of your National Gallery of Modern Art, Dr Sihare, the possibility of a large scale exhibition there of the works of Constable and Turner. Subsequently, the British Council approached the Tate Gallery, the Victoria and Albert Museum and others. But their holdings of Constable and Turner paintings were already committed to exhibition programmes for some time ahead. Plans for a large scale exhibition of works from several of our collections <sup>in India</sup> ~~India~~ have therefore had to be postponed. But the British Council still have the possibility very much in mind and will take up the matter again with the National Gallery of Modern Art at the earliest opportunity.

If in the meantime your National Gallery are able to accept the offer made earlier this year to <sup>loan</sup> 47 important paintings by Turner and Constable from the Victoria and Albert Museum's collection, the British Council will offer every possible assistance with the arrangements for an exhibition.

In conclusion, may I say how very glad I was to learn that arrangements are well in hand for the important exhibition of Modern Figurative Painting due to open at the Lalit Kala Academy in New Delhi in November.

13.  
12

NOTE FOR THE FILE

The India desk at the FCO assure me that the Vice President should be addressed as 'His Excellency Mr. M. Hidayatullah' - there seem to be a couple of variations!

RM

13/12



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

29 November, 1983

file SH  
cc: High Commissioner

Dear Mr. Vice-President,

Thank you for your letter of 28 November in which you asked me to consider the possibility of arranging for Constable and Turner paintings to be exhibited at the National Gallery of Modern Art in Delhi. I shall look into this on my return to London and let you have a reply as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, I send you my very best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Raymond Stalter

Shri M. Hidayatullah





10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

28 November, 1983

Constable and Turner Paintings for Exhibition  
in Delhi

I enclose a copy of a letter which the Prime Minister has received from the Vice-President of India. Mr. Hidayatullah asks whether the Prime Minister can help to arrange for paintings from a Constable Exhibition which are apparently already on view in the United States, together with some paintings by Turner, to be sent to India for special exhibition at the National Gallery of Modern Art in Delhi.

*BR*  
I should be grateful if you would consult all concerned and let me have advice and a draft reply for signature by the Prime Minister as soon as possible.

I am leaving in Delhi a copy of this letter, together with its enclosure, for the High Commissioner.

P. F. Ricketts, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

FILE 84  
cc: High Commissioner

ACC



VICE PRESIDENT'S RESIDENCE  
NEW DELHI-110011

November 28, 1983.

Dear Prime Minister,

We have in Delhi a very well appointed "National Gallery of Modern Art", located in the former Jaipur House. Important exhibitions are held and usually evoke tremendous interest in the people not only of Delhi but also of other towns and cities in India. They make it a point to come to Delhi to visit these exhibitions. One of the important ones was the masterpieces of Rodin, which had the blessings of the President of France.

The exhibitions of the masterpieces of Indian art and craft, which were sent to the United Kingdom during the Festival of India, last year, received overwhelming response from the public there. I understand that United Kingdom is proposing to send a retrospective exhibition of the 19th century British Paintings. I feel that this exhibit will only be of interest to a few academically oriented individuals and not to the common public in India. On the other hand I do know that a large number of people here have heard of Constable and Turner.

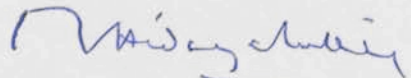
.....2..

I understand that an important exhibition of paintings by Constable are already on view in the U.S. I wonder whether with your help we can receive this exhibition, perhaps, enriched with paintings by Turner for special exhibition at "National Gallery of Modern Art" in Delhi. I have promised the Director of the Gallery that, if this exhibition does come to India, I shall not only inaugurate it but deliver a lecture on the "Comparative Styles of Constable and Turner".

May I, on behalf of the people of India, appeal to you for arranging that the paintings of these celebrated painters be exhibited in India also.

With warm regards,

Yours sincerely,



( M. Hidayatullah )

The Hon'ble Mrs. Margaret Thatcher,  
Prime Minister of Britain.