

The Unlikely Road to Success:
The Life and Career of Watercolorist William Leighton Leitch

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This thesis titled
The Unlikely Road to Success:
The Life and Career of Watercolorist William Leighton Leitch

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ABSTRACT

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William Leighton Leitch was a watercolorist and tutor in nineteenth-century Britain. He is most famously known as being a drawing instructor to Queen Victoria. However, his prolific career is widely unacknowledged today. Through extensive research I have been able to reestablish his biography as well as analyze his body of work. His paintings can be divided roughly into two periods: early work (pre-1840) and mature work (post-1840). His early work demonstrates how the Picturesque movement in Britain affected his work and his technical proficiency in watercolor painting. In contrast, Leitch's work after 1840 distinguishes his personal style as Naturalistic. The influence Queen Victoria had on Leitch as a patron is also evident in this later period. Leitch's painting shows idealization of the landscape with the distinct character of a place. He created a harmonious balance within his paintings between the human elements and the natural. There is a sophistication to his work that distinguishes him from other professional watercolor artists and landscape artists of the period.

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INTRODUCTION

I first discovered William Leighton Leitch when perusing survey texts on Scottish and English watercolorists from the nineteenth century. Very little was mentioned about him beyond his role as tutor to Queen Victoria. My curiosity got the better of me and I began researching him, only to discover that just one book was dedicated solely to him. It was a memoir written a year after his death by Andrew MacGeorge in 1884. After reading this text it was clear that Leitch lived a rather unique professional life. What was striking was that separately his life experiences seem normal for a nineteenth-century artist, but his experience of them all makes his life eclectic and distinct.

I also discovered that I really liked his paintings. But, it took me quite some time to figure out why I liked them. For me what makes Leitch's work unique is that his style from the second half of his career, post-1840, represents a pastiche of nineteenth-century styles. He never quite fits into any given group. His work seems familiar and often recalls other artists, but still retains its individuality. The coupling of Leitch's captivating life and compelling artwork is what compelled me to do further research and make him the subject of my thesis.

Since previous research on Leitch is virtually non-existent I had to conduct my own primary research. This allowed me to discover new aspects of his life and draw my own conclusions unhindered by the assertion of others. Most of his work and archival material is isolated to the United Kingdom. I was fortunate enough to go to London and the discoveries I made there were pivotal to my study. Letters by Leitch and others written about him are available in select archives like the National Art Library at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and the Royal Watercolor Society, also in

London. At the Royal Watercolor Society a letter to Joseph John Jenkins proved to be the key to understanding Leitch's involvement with the watercolor societies.

A Christie's catalog from the sale after his death allowed me to realize the scope to which Leitch was active, it contains over 700 works and sketches. Only a portion of these can be found in public collections. The largest holding of his work is at the Royal Collection Trust, which has just over 200 watercolors by him. Much of their collection is the result of his time with Queen Victoria. It was here that I was able to gain insight into his teaching methods. Within their collection are examples of painting lessons that feature step by step paintings and written instructions for the queen. Other museums that have his works include the Victoria and Albert Museum and the British Museum. There are museums in the United States that contain a few of his works, some of which are the following: Metropolitan Museum of Art, National Gallery of Art in D.C., Indianapolis Museum of Art, and The Huntington Library.

In addition to museums, the Witt Library at the Courtauld Institute, London is invaluable when trying to find examples of his work. It contains two full boxes of image on file for Leitch. Newspaper articles have also been helpful. In 1969, the *Connoisseur* featured an article on Leitch during his time as a snuffbox painter. This allowed me to see drawings made for this industry that were otherwise unavailable. Overall it is a difficult task collecting information on Leitch and requires one to be resourceful and draw conclusions to help fill in the gaps.

My intention with this thesis is to reestablish his biography, initiate a discussion of his style and unpack his position in the art world. In order to do this I will break his work into two time periods: early work (pre-1840) and mature work (post-1840). These

parameters are loosely based on the time when Leitch returned to London from Italy.

His early work includes what he made when living in Scotland (1804-1826), London (1826-1833) and Italy (1833-1837). Very few early works are available, which proved challenging when establishing how he developed his style and learned the art of watercolor. I therefore utilized his biography as a means of discovering who might have influenced him. The stylistic differences between the years after he returned from Italy and the 1840 cut off date are based on when Leitch began working with Queen Victoria. It was 1842 when he first met her and much of the work available from the later half of his career initially dates from that decade. This second half of his career shows a more mature style that displays the qualities of nineteenth century Naturalism.

CHAPTER 1: BIOGRAPHY

The opening statement to Leitch's biography states that, "William Leighton Leitch was one of our greatest painters in water-colors."¹ The biography was published a year after his death, in 1884, highlighting his perceived importance in his time. Today only a handful of art historians recognize the name William Leighton Leitch (1804-1883). Those few tend to be specialists in the field of British watercolors; even in that area he is largely ignored.

The main biographical source on Leitch is a memoir written by Andrew MacGeorge (1810-1891).² There is also a section devoted to him in *Lives, Great, and Simple*, written by Sarah A. Tooley.³ However, Tooley's biography mirrors MacGeorge's, closely indicating she may have used his account as the main source. Both were published in 1884, a year after his death. Leitch is included as an entry in reference books such as the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, *Dictionary of British Art* and the *Dictionary of Scottish Art and Architecture*.⁴ The inclusion of Leitch in these fundamental publications demonstrates that he is considered an important historical

¹ Sarah A. Tooley, *Lives, Great and Simple* (London: Kent & Co., 1884), 237.

² T.W. Bayne, rev. Catherine Pease-Watkin, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* Vol. 35, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004)

Andrew MacGeorge was born, educated, and worked in Glasgow, Scotland. He had a successful career as an ecclesiastical lawyer. Additionally, he published books, several of which are on the Church of Scotland. He met William Leighton Leitch circa the 1840s. They both hold an interest in heraldry so while it is unclear how they met one can imagine they shared that connection. Leitch is the only person MacGeorge wrote a memoir on, clearly a result of their forty years of friendship. MacGeorge was an amateur watercolorist and he also created caricatures.

³ This text is a collection of biographies, however it is unclear if Tooley was the author for all of the entries or if each biography was written by a different author and Tooley compiled it. I cannot find information on Tooley other than publications attributed to her. Some of these titles include: *The Personal Life of Queen Victoria, Royal Palaces (in England) and their Memories, The Life of Queen Alexandra, The Life of Florence Nightingale, and Sir Arthur and Lady Conan Doyle at Home*.

⁴ The *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* is known to have only included people who were considered important members of society. Leitch's inclusion in this publication alone demonstrates the respect he was given by his contemporaries.

figure. While he has been mentioned briefly in other texts, there has not been any scholarship devoted solely to Leitch since 1884. Hence, I have had to rely heavily on these sources for Leitch's biographical information.

Scotland (1804 – 1826)

Leitch was born on November 22, 1804 in Glasgow, Scotland (see fig. 1). He was raised in an area of the city known as Townhead and lived there until he was nineteen. His father, Richard Leitch was a sailor in the navy and a soldier in the army before he retired in 1815. Leitch was known to speak fondly of his mother, Elisabeth Hardien, who would entertain her son by singing Scottish songs. Leitch showed an aptitude for drawing at a young age. He was known to have copied the pictures that were available to him and he also sketched outdoors. His greatest supporters at this time in his life were his grandmother and a close friend of hers referred to as Aunty Bell.⁵

His parents provided him with a general education and the plan was for Leitch to pursue a career in law.⁶ After school, around the age of fifteen he was sent to a small law office to work. Leitch did not have a lot to do there and spent his free time sketching. He did not care for the legal profession and with his father's permission he left after only a

⁵ "From a suggestion of Aunty Bell," he says, "I was encouraged to make a beginning of drawing from nature. I can never forget the difficulty of making a commencement, as I had no idea of perspective, or of keeping the subject within the bounds of my paper. I began by putting in the centre, that is, the great window of the unfinished transept. I then went to the left, but soon found that I could not get into my paper the long range of windows in the upper part of the building – not to speak of the Consistory House, and the top of the western tower. I felt much annoyed at this, and still more so when I found that I could not get in either the top of the spire or the ground line of the building...I was much disappointed at my failure, and so was Aunty Bell, who could not make it out at all, especially when she showed me, in a History of Glasgow, which we had, the whole of the Cathedral depicted within the limits of a very small page, while on my large sheet I had got neither the top nor the bottom of the building, nor the east end of it, nor the west. Such was my first attempt at drawing from objects out of doors, and some time elapsed before I made another." [Andrew MacGeorge, *Wm. Leighton Leitch, Landscape Painter: A Memoir* (London: Blackie & Son, 1884), 18.]

⁶ "He was first sent to a school kept by Mr. John Miller, in a locality near the Cathedral (Glasgow) called the Limmerfield, and afterwards he was transferred to the school of a Mr. Sawers in Blackfriars Wynd." [Ibid., 20.]

matter of weeks. He was then set up to learn weaving and got a job in the manufacturing business. Leitch occupied his evenings by visiting friends who shared his interest in drawing. He would spend his free time sketching and copying simple studies.

Two of his companions were Daniel Macnee (1806-1882)⁷ and Horatio McCulloch (1805-1867)⁸. Both would enjoy successful careers as painters. McCulloch would become known for his landscapes and Macnee for his portraits. Macnee would also eventually become the President of the Royal Scottish Academy. Of the two friends Leitch was closer to Macnee.

Leitch would go to Macnee's mother's home and look at copies Macnee made of paintings and even tried copying them. Sometimes, he would borrow the pictures and work on his copy at Auntie Bell's. His parents were unaware of these pursuits. Later he reflected on this time stating: "You may imagine something of the wandering, stumbling, and blundering of a poor boy with a keen sense of the beautiful, and no one to encourage or assist him in any way, with all the unhappiness of continued defeat, and the mystery of ignorance hanging about him."⁹ Macnee believed in Leitch's efforts and sold a few of Leitch's copies of paintings locally. With the money from these sales Leitch bought

⁷ Christopher Wood, *Dictionary of British Art: Victorian Painters* Vol. 4 (Woodbridge, Suffolk, England: Antique Collectors' Club, 1995), 335.

Sir Daniel Macnee was a Scottish portrait painter. He studied under John Knox with his friend Horatio McCulloch. He was educated at the Trustees' Academy in Edinburgh and worked for an engraver. Macnee exhibited at the Royal Academy and the Royal Scottish Academy. He was the president of the Royal Academy in 1876.

⁸ H.L. Mallalieu, *The Dictionary of British Watercolour Artists up to 1920* Vol. 2, (Woodbridge, Suffolk, England: Antique Collectors' Club, 2002), 35.

Horatio McCulloch was born in 1805 in Glasgow. Like Leitch, he apprenticed a housepainter, however he had the additional education of studying under John Knox, with Daniel Macnee. After painting snuff boxes in Cumnock, with Leitch and Macnee, McCulloch moved to Edinburgh and worked for an engraver. Beginning in 1829 he exhibited at the Royal Scottish Academy and became a member in 1838. He was predominately a landscape painter and spent much of his time sketching the Highlands. In 1867, he died at Edinburgh.

⁹ Andrew MacGeorge, *Wm. Leighton Leitch, Landscape Painter: A Memoir* (London: Blackie & Son, 1884), 23. Leitch, quoted by MacGeorge.

tickets for himself and his friend to go to the theatre. The decision to go see a performance would prove to be a key turning point in Leitch's life.

The play they saw was *Mandeveille the False Friend, or the Assassin of the Rocks*, which did not impress Leitch. However, what did catch his eye was the scenery, painted by David Roberts (1796-1864)¹⁰. This experience awakened in Leitch a longing to become a scene-painter.

But amid all my excitement at the dramatic performances, there was something which, above and beyond these, took a great hold of my mind. This was the scenery – more especially a fine street scene, and the drop-scene used between the acts. Macnee told me they were painted by David Roberts, and that they were among the first things he had done for the theatre. These had a peculiar fascination for me, and made an impression on me, which I have never lost. From that time I formed a strong desire to become a scene-painter.¹¹

It is unclear when Leitch left his job as a weaver to pursue painting, but it would have occurred between 1819 and 1824. During this five-year period he abandoned weaving and was apprenticed to a house painter, a Mr. Harbut. His time with Mr. Harbut ended in 1824. That same year, on June 20, 1824 Leitch married his wife, Susannah Smellie. They had five sons and two daughters. Susannah died in 1868. Shortly after he was married, Leitch found employment at the Theatre Royal, Queens Street, in Glasgow. For the first six months he was engaged for twenty-shillings a week and twenty-five-

¹⁰ H.L. Mallalieu, *The Dictionary of British Watercolour Artists up to 1920* Vol. 2, (Woodbridge, Suffolk, England: Antique Collectors' Club, 2002), 134.

David Roberts was born in Edinburgh in 1796. He apprenticed a decorator and became a scene painter around 1817. He worked for several different theatre companies in both Scotland and England. In 1822, he worked at Drury Lane with fellow scene painter and friend, Clarkson Stanfield. He continued being a scene painter until 1830. He was the first vice president of the Society of British Artists in 1823 and was president seven years later. He was also a member of the Association of the Royal Academy and the Royal Academy. He is predominately known for his architectural subjects. He died in London, in 1864.

¹¹ Andrew MacGeorge, *Wm. Leighton Leitch, Landscape Painter: A Memoir* (London: Blackie & Son, 1884), 26. Leitch, quoted by MacGeorge.

shillings a week for the second half of the year.¹² But, the theatre may not have paid him this due to the financial restraints it was under. In Leitch's memoir by MacGeorge, he describes a time in which Leitch traveled to Ayr with a fellow theatre worker. They left with no money in their pockets and the company only paid for their board. With no money to purchase food, they resorted to selling some empty beer bottles discovered under the stage in exchange for potatoes and salted herring. They further pooled their resources and cooked meals in an old theatrical helmet.¹³ Clearly the theatre was failing economically and Leitch's income was affected. The Theatre Royal nonetheless had a strong history and retained several scenes painted by previous artists including Roberts and Alexander Nasmyth (1758-1840).¹⁴

After almost a year working for Theatre Royal, it collapsed financially and Leitch found himself unemployed. He took various side jobs, which included painting portraits, coats of arms, a few landscapes and commissioned theater jobs. Around 1826, he reunited with his childhood friends, Macnee and McCulloch, and moved to Comnock and Mauchline in Ayrshire, Scotland.¹⁵ There the men painted snuff boxes.¹⁶ The salary for a

¹² Twenty-shillings today would be about ninety-three pounds today or one hundred and fourteen U.S. dollars. Twenty-five shillings would be one hundred and thirty-nine pounds or two hundred and sixteen U.S. dollars.

¹³ Andrew MacGeorge, *Wm. Leighton Leitch, Landscape Painter: A Memoir* (London: Blackie & Son, 1884), 29.

¹⁴ H.L. Mallalieu, *The Dictionary of British Watercolour Artists up to 1920* Vol. 2, (Woodbridge, Suffolk, England: Antique Collectors' Club, 2002), 69.

Alexander Nasmyth was born in Edinburgh in 1758 and died there in 1840. He is known for both his landscape paintings and portraits. Additionally he was a scene painter. He was formally trained at the Trustees' Academy. However, he also studied under Alan Ramsay in London, returning to Edinburgh in 1778. Besides painting he was also an architect and landscape consultant. Nasmyth was also a successful teacher and conducted art classes in his home. He had seven daughters and all of them were professional artists. His two sons were also successful artists.

¹⁵ "He (Leitch) resolved to join them, but by the time of his arrival in Cumnock (late in 1826 or early in 1827) they had probably departed to Edinburgh to work for Lizars." [Martin Kemp, "William Leighton Leitch and the Mauchline snuff-box trade in Burns souvenirs," *The Connoisseur* 170, no. 685 (March 1969), 149.]

good box painter was two-guineas a week.¹⁷ Such a salary would have been attractive to Leitch since prior to his move he had no regular employment and needed to provide for his wife and baby daughter.¹⁸ He struggled for the first year until John Smith appointed him as superintendent of his large box-making firm. After working about two years with Smith, Leitch's work attracted the attention of his employer's patrons, the Marquis of Hastings and Dr. Young of Irvine, who encouraged Leitch to go live in London.

London (1826 – 1833)

Around 1830 Leitch moved to London, his primary residence until his death in 1883. It is my belief that Leitch moved there with the intention of finding work as a scene painter. For Leitch going to London would offer him a more secure position as a painter since its theatrical scene was thriving in comparison to the smaller theaters in Glasgow. His decision to relocate to London allowed Leitch to make connections with people who would help guide him in his career. When he arrived, he received an introduction to David Roberts. Though Leitch was familiar with Roberts' work prior to coming to London there is no indication that they knew each other before his move. It also appears their relationship was mostly social. Roberts was more of a mentor to Leitch, rather than a painting teacher. When Leitch had the opportunity to meet Clarkson

¹⁶ Ibid.

The snuffbox industry was thriving during the nineteenth-century with Cumnock and Mauchline being the main centers of production. Mauchline was known for their hinge and capitalized on its association with Robert Burns producing images related to his literary work and life.

¹⁷ Two-guineas would be one hundred and six pounds today or four hundred and sixty-three U.S. dollars.

¹⁸ "At this time Robert Armour, brother of Jean Armour, the wife of Robert Burns, lived in Mauchline, and Mr. Leitch and his wife were intimate with the family. Another of his acquaintances was Willie Fisher, the son of Burns's 'Holy Willie.'" [Andrew MacGeorge, *Wm. Leighton Leitch, Landscape Painter: A Memoir* (London: Blackie & Son, 1884), 40.]

Stanfield (1793-1867), a connection made through Roberts, Stanfield asked Leitch if he studied under the scene painter.¹⁹ The following is how Leitch recalled the conversation:

I replied that I had never studied under any master, and had never seen Mr. Roberts draw anything, except a few lines on the step of a stair. He seemed surprised, and asked where I had learned the art, and I told him chiefly in Glasgow from looking at scenery painted by David Roberts and Alexander Nasmyth.²⁰

Through Roberts' recommendation Leitch obtained a job at the Queen's Theatre. It was hard work considering the high demand for quickly painted scenery and low pay.²¹

In 1832 Leitch began work at the Pavilion Theatre for better wages which he received regularly, three-guineas a week for six months and three and half for the rest of the year.²² During this time Leitch began exhibiting his work in London galleries. These works were mainly oil paintings. According to MacGeorge's text one of the first pieces shown was an oil composition sent to the Society of British Artists in 1832.²³ It is not surprising that his first exhibited works were in oil. Watercolor drawings were not as lucrative as oil painting in the consumer market. Leitch's decision to work in oils in his early career reflects this trend.

¹⁹ Christopher Wood, *Dictionary of British Art: Victorian Painters* Vol. 4 (Woodbridge, Suffolk, England: Antique Collectors' Club, 1995), 495.

Stanfield began his career as a scene painter in London and Edinburgh. He was a close friend of fellow artist David Roberts as well as Charles Dickens. He is well known for his marine landscapes.

²⁰ Andrew MacGeorge, *Wm. Leighton Leitch, Landscape Painter: A Memoir* (London: Blackie & Son, 1884), 45. Leitch, quoted by MacGeorge.

²¹ While I can not state what the wages he received were, based on comments in MacGeorge's text it can be assumed it was not much, especially considering Leitch had three kids at this time.

²² *Ibid.*, 46. Three-guineas today would be two hundred and ninety-nine pounds or four hundred and sixty-three U.S. dollars. Three and one half guineas would be three hundred forty-eight pounds today or five hundred and forty U.S. dollars.

²³ *Ibid.*, 47.

Leitch's work gained the notice of a Mr. Anderden. Although little is known about Anderden outside of the information provided by MacGeorge, we do know that Anderden was a stockbroker in London who commissioned Leitch to make illustrations for a work he was writing. What he was writing is unknown. He also recommended Leitch meet with Anthony Vandyke Copley Fielding (1787-1855) for lessons. If this were the end of their interactions, Anderden would be of little consequence. However, his patronage is what enabled Leitch to travel to Italy in 1833.

Italy (1833 – 1837)

Noticing Leitch was not in good health, Anderden advised him to go to the continent for both health and study.²⁴ The particulars surrounding his trip are a bit odd. Anderden has been credited with funding this trip, but this patronage has been referenced in different ways, which leaves one to wonder the extent to which he truly was involved. What seems the most likely case to me comes from the oldest references to his funding which put forth that Anderden provided funds to initiate the journey.²⁵

Leitch started his journey in Rotterdam, traveling up the Rhine and through Switzerland to arrive in Italy.²⁶ At this point he had been traveling for three months and his funds were low. Unable to find employment there to secure further travel funds, Leitch went to the British Consul with his reference from Anderden. One official was an acquaintance of Anderden's, and as a favor to Leitch provided him with an advance and

²⁴ Leitch was plagued by chronic migraines his entire life. Around 1860 they became so severe he had to limit his teaching and eventually stop altogether. In the autumn of 1854 he took a short trip to Italy hoping for some relief and stayed until February 1855. While he was there he fulfilled a commission for a series of drawings depicting Rome and its surround countryside.

²⁵ The two texts under consideration here are MacGeorge's memoir and the biography in Tooley's book.

²⁶ See appendix a, for a map of his journey.

introduced him to several genteel and aristocratic families in need of art instruction.

This provided Leitch the independence he needed and the funds to continue the rest of his tour.

Since Leitch had depleted his previous funding by the time he reached Venice and was required to rely on help from the British consul indicates to me that funds from home had stopped. Granted in this situation Leitch relies on Anderden's name to recommend him. After this incidence no other mention of Anderden is made. To further support that Anderden's funding was limited to the initial cost of the trip is the mention of Leitch's ability to send money home after becoming a tutor. MacGeorge's text states that Anderden looked after the family while Leitch was away. Perhaps this stopped when Leitch became financially stable or it possibly could have continued with the additional aid of Leitch's funds. In either case, it makes one question the benefits Anderden received from Leitch's travels.

It would be nice to believe it was just out of kindness to a friend that Anderden supplemented Leitch's resources. However, this seems unlikely considering the amount that would be needed to support Leitch and his family. Keeping in mind that Leitch had worked on previous commissions for Anderden, it is likely that Anderden agreed to pay the initial costs in exchange for illustrations. It was common during this time for artists to travel in exchange for fulfilling a commissioned project. While there is not any documentation to support this claim, what little we know of their relationship and what was common during this time leads me to believe this was the case between Leitch and Anderden.

This journey proved a crucial turning point for Leitch, shifting his career away from scene painting and towards that of professional watercolorist. With an established network of aristocratic families to tutor as a result of his time in Venice, Leitch could now pursue his studies in relative comfort (see fig. 2).²⁷ After leaving Venice, and visiting Ferrara, Bologna, and Florence, Leitch settled in Rome from the winter of 1834 to the spring of 1835. He had by then gained introductions to several individuals and families of distinction, such as Lord Richard Cavendish and Archdeacon Pakenham, which provided him with teaching positions in the city. He kept company with other artists like Bertel Thorwaldsen (1770-1844), Vincenzo Camuccini (1771-1844) and Horace Vernet (1789-1863).²⁸ During the summer of 1835 he lived in Naples and Sicily. Leitch then visited several places in southern Italy before returning to Rome in 1837.²⁹ In June of that same year he returned to England via Genoa, Marseilles and Paris.

Leitch's life was transformed by his experience teaching. Tutoring became his primary identity and would play an essential role for the remainder of his career. During his time in Italy, especially Rome, Leitch began to develop a reputation among his students, thus gaining him patronage. His patrons on the Grand Tour wrote home about the quality of his work, gaining him a reputation upon his return to London. During his

²⁷ "In Venice he studied the works of the great Venetians in the Accademia della Bella Arti and in the churches. He also made various out-of-door studies of the buildings and scenery of Venice and its neighborhood. One of the greatest attractions to him was Titian's great picture, the Death of Peter Martyr." [Andrew MacGeorge, *Wm. Leighton Leitch, Landscape Painter: A Memoir* (London: Blackie & Son, 1884), 49.]

²⁸ "At the house of a Mrs. Finch, an amiable elderly lady who had resided many years in Rome, he met every week a select party of artists. He was also introduced to other distinguished residents, including many of our own nobility, from whom he received much kindness, and through some of whom he obtained employment in teaching." [Ibid., 54.]

²⁹ "When traveling south Leitch fulfilled a commission for Lord Douglas, which baffled MacGeorge. "I have not been able to ascertain anything as to how he had, at this early period of his artistic life, obtained from Lord Douglas the commission." [Ibid., 55.]

journey he made a large collection of studies from nature and finished drawings along with studies of ‘old master’ paintings.³⁰ This included a study of the *Death of Peter Martyr* by Titian (c. 1488/1490 – 1576), a painting Leitch spoke highly of.³¹

When Leitch returned from Italy he was offered a position as a scene painter, but he declined the job and continued teaching drawing and watercolor painting for the noble and distinguished families of London.³² This decision marks the moment in Leitch’s career where he abandoned scene painting for good and focused on being a professional painter. It was also around this time that Leitch began to create drawings for publications. The first publication was *Constantinople and the Turkish Empire*, 1838, and it included ten images by him. He continued to be published until 1880, though the number of images included in any given publication varies (see fig. 3).³³ Over these forty-two years Leitch’s work was printed in eighteen books.³⁴

Tutor to Queen Victoria (1842 – 1864)

The most important patron Leitch tutored was Queen Victoria. This relationship became a key component to his continued success as a tutor to London’s high society members. The following states the manner through which his network of amateur students first enabled Leitch to meet the queen:

Mr. Richard Cavendish had on one occasion taken with him to Stafford House a portfolio of Mr. Leitch’s studies, which were greatly admired there – especially by the Earl of Carlisle, the father of the Duchess of Sutherland, who suggested to

³⁰ Artists he studied include but are not limited to Titian (c. 1488/1490-1576), Domenicho (1581-1641), Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640), and Carlo Maratti (1625-1713).

³¹ Today Titian’s work no longer exists as it was lost in a fire.

³² See appendix b, for a list of students Leitch tutored throughout his career.

³³ His final illustration was the title image for MacGeorge’s book, *Old Glasgow: The Place and the People* (1880).

³⁴ A list of these eighteen publications can be found in the memoir written by MacGeorge and includes the titles of the featured illustrations.

the Duchess that she should take them to the Palace and show them to her Majesty and the Prince Consort. This must have been about the year 1842.³⁵

The Duchess communicated to Leitch that the queen and the prince were fond of his drawings. They singled out two Italian scenes that the queen then requested Leitch to make copies of for her. At around the same time Lady Canning showed the queen drawings she made under the tutelage of Leitch. Pleased with her companion's work the queen inquired as to whom Lady Canning received lessons from. She declared that Leitch was the artist responsible for her new watercolor scenes. A note was then sent via Lady Canning requesting Leitch go to Windsor and conduct lessons with the queen. His teaching relationship with the queen would last twenty-two years. Leitch would also eventually teach several of her children.³⁶ It was Leitch's position as both an artist and tutor to the queen that defined the remainder of his career and is the subject of chapter three.

Relationship with Professional Art Organizations

In 1841 Leitch exhibited at the Royal Academy of Arts in London for the first time. The Royal Academy was formed in 1768 to promote British art in an international context.³⁷ The Royal Academy's goal was to professionalize art and architecture, which included the formation of a school. It also held public exhibitions.³⁸ Leitch showed there

³⁵ Andrew MacGeorge, *Wm. Leighton Leitch, Landscape Painter: A Memoir* (London: Blackie & Son, 1884), 58.

³⁶ Leitch taught: Prince Arthur, Princess Helena, Prince Leopold, and Princess Louise. See appendix b.

³⁷ The Royal Irish Academy emerged in 1785, followed by the Royal Scottish Academy in 1826. Both of which were formed to promote their region's cultural practices and distinguish them from the Royal Academy. This is significant since both countries were held under the British Empire.

³⁸ In a wider context, art historians Andrew Wilton and Anne Lyles assert that the professionalization of artists through the formation of art societies was a way to exert national identity and credibility internationally. "The decisive factor in the evolution of the Romantic watercolour in Britain was precisely the same as the motive behind the development of the national school of oil painters. Since the early successes of William Hogarth in the 1730s, there had been a heightened sense of national purpose in the

ten times, until 1861, when he became a member of the Institute of Painters in Water Colors. Nearly half of the paintings Leitch exhibited at the Royal Academy were in oil, but he was unsatisfied with how they were hung. Perhaps it was the politics of the academy, known for its favoritism towards oil painting along with Leitch's dissatisfaction when exhibiting there that prompted him to focus on watercolors and cease exhibiting at the Royal Academy.

It was not until the eighteenth century that watercolor painting became the medium of choice for artists, particularly in Britain. Until then it was utilized mainly as a drawing aid or to create studies. The acceptance of the medium may have influenced Leitch's choice of paint. He was certainly fortunate to be working when watercolor was at its prime. As it increasingly gained popularity, members of the British gentry sought tutoring in the medium. This resulted in a strong presence of both amateur and professional watercolorists in society. This demand for watercolor tutors is one reason why Leitch was able to make a living through teaching. In an effort to counteract the field's "newness" and status as a trend, professional organizations were created to distinguish and legitimize the craft and artistic merits of watercolorists.

The Society of Painters in Water Colors was formed in 1804 with the intention of gaining more recognition from the broader public through exhibitions that were

visual arts, a chauvinism that impelled artists to incorporate themselves as a fully recognized establishment, setting standards at home and winning admiration abroad. The movement coincided with the first great expansion of Britain's imperial interests worldwide, with the Seven Years War and the confident heyday of the East India Company. The instinct for national advancement in the international context was becoming explicit, and when, in 1768, the Royal Academy of Arts was founded in London, supporters of the visual arts could argue for the first time that their activities, too, were taking a rightful place in the expanding scheme of things. The watercolorists were a part of this patriotic progress, caught up like everyone else in the pushy spirit of the times." [Andrew Wilton and Anne Lyles, *British Watercolors: 1750-1880* (New York: Prestel, 1993), 12.]

exclusively devoted to watercolors.³⁹ They felt the Royal Academy exhibits allowed watercolors to be overshadowed by oil paintings. The Society of Painters in Water Colors allowed only its members to exhibit.⁴⁰ Over the years the society changed its name and evolved as the times changed. At one point they went against their original intentions and allowed oil paintings to be displayed hoping it would help generate more revenue, but that only lasted eight years after which it returned to its strictly watercolor reputation. In 1881 it received its royal charter and became known as the Royal Society of Painters in Water Colors. Today it is known as the Royal Water Color Society.⁴¹

The Royal Watercolor Society was not the only watercolor society to shun the conventions of the Royal Academy. In 1831 the New Society of Painters in Water Colors was formed. Like the Royal Water Color Society, this group wanted to elevate the reputation of watercolor painting; it was opposed to the Royal Water Color Society's exclusivity. The New Society of Painters in Water Colors opened up their exhibitions and allowed both members and non-members to display work like the Royal Academy did. In 1863 the society changed its name to the Institute of Painters in Water Color and in 1885 by Queen Victoria's command it received the honorific title of 'Royal'.

Leitch tried later in his career to gain membership to the Royal Water Color Society, but was unsuccessful. In a letter from Arthur Glennie to Joseph John Jenkins (1811-1885) on July 2, 1860 the circumstances surrounding Leitch's rejection are revealed. Apparently the society acknowledged his talent, but objected to his age and to

³⁹ The Society of Painters in Water Colors is sometimes referred to as the Old Water Color Society.

⁴⁰ The Antique Collectors' Club, *The Royal Watercolour Society: The First Fifty Years 1805-1855* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Antique Collectors' Club, 1992), 7.

Members had to fit three descriptive measures; they must be of 'moral character', 'professional reputation' and 'resident in the United Kingdom'.

⁴¹ This name change occurred in 1988.

the fact that he had previously deferred candidacy. Leitch was fifty-seven years old when the letter was written and the objection to his candidacy raises an interesting point. Why did Leitch want to become involved in the ‘official’ watercolor art world so late in his career? Glennie’s letter offers us an answer.

As to the first objection I know not what his age may be, but judging from his present activity I trust his labors would prove invaluable to the society for several years to come. For the second – his not having presented himself earlier as a candidate I can safely state that this has been caused by the difficulties he has met with in bringing up his own numerous family and supporting his aged parents... These circumstances have obliged him to give up his time almost entirely to teaching and his fear of not having the necessary time to prepare drawings for the gallery in the event of his election have hitherto been the reasons he has frequently explained to me for not offering himself. I believe you yourself are aware that his sons are now in a manner provided for by their own exertions and that his intentions are to devote more of his time to painting at home.⁴²

Alternatively, Sir Coutts Lindsay (1824 – 1913) attributes the attention Leitch’s students demanded as the cause for his inability to give attention to the “more ardent pursuits of his art.”^{43 44} Glennie ends his correspondence with a heart-felt plea in Leitch’s favor. He maintains Leitch’s work would be a great addition to the society’s exhibitions. Interestingly, it is his view of Leitch’s social status, which he believes most strongly, recommends him. Glennie believes Leitch is so well liked by the “patrons of the arts” and the public that not electing him could prove detrimental to the society members. In the end Leitch was not elected.

After this rejection, Henry Warren (1794-1879), Louis Haghe (1806-1885) and Edward Henry Corbould (1815-1905) approached Leitch about becoming a member of

⁴² Arthur Glennie to Joseph John Jenkins. (July 2, 1860): Royal Watercolor Society (2012)

⁴³ Marina Warner, *Queen Victoria’s Sketchbook* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1979), 172.

⁴⁴ Sir Coutts Lindsay was the founder of Grosvenor Gallery, London, which played an instrumental role in promoting the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

the Royal Institute of Painters in Water Color.⁴⁵ He accepted their invitation and was a member from 1861 until his death in 1883. From then on he only exhibited his work with this society, and also served as Vice President for the society from 1873 until his death.

Glennie's statement on Leitch's circumstances reveals part of the reason why he had been less active as a public artist and focused more on tutoring. But, a more obvious reason stands out as well. Leitch regularly interacted with members of high society and other successful artists. He was known to have dined with Lord James Stuart, uncle of the Marquis of Bute, for example.⁴⁶ Both Leitch's high society friends and pupils would provide him with many commissions. Therefore he dealt privately with his patrons and had no need for a dealer. Financially this direct contact with his patrons would have been beneficial as it eliminated a dealer's commission; this would have also kept his reputation somewhat limited.

Leitch's work was only occasionally on view prior to his membership with the Royal Institute of Painters in Water Color. Although he had exhibited at the Royal Academy prior to 1861 it was infrequent and usually only one work was on display. In contrast, over the twenty-two years as a member of the Royal Institute of Painters in Water Color he displayed work annually,⁴⁷ often showing more than one drawing at a time. The most he ever showed was sixteen works in the 1879 winter exhibition. Perhaps his enthusiasm for exhibiting later in his career was his attempt to claim a wider audience. Whatever his motives were for joining the Royal Institute of Painters in Water

⁴⁵ Henry Warren was president of the Royal Institute of Painters in Watercolor from 1839-1873. Louis Haghe followed him serving from 1873-1884.

⁴⁶ Andrew MacGeorge, *Wm. Leighton Leitch, Landscape Painter: A Memoir* (London: Blackie & Son, 1884), 77.

⁴⁷ Starting in 1867, Leitch participated in both the regular exhibition and the winter exhibition.

Color, one can positively say he achieved a certain degree of success in two aspects of the art world: tutoring aristocracy and actively participating in the art market.

CHAPTER 2: A PATH TOWARDS NATURALISM

When considering the trajectory of William Leighton Leitch's career, one can see some slight shifts that result in an eclectic style, which coincides with the spirit of nineteenth-century landscape painting. Though examples of his early work, pre-1840, are not readily available, it can be concluded that his style reflects the Picturesque and post-Picturesque work from the first half of the nineteenth century, especially the work of Alexander Nasmyth and J.M.W. Turner (1775-1851).⁴⁸ After 1833, Leitch spent four years in Italy. His watercolors from this period demonstrate increasing knowledge of seventeenth-century landscape painting. Just a few years after returning to London his own personal style emerges. His work over the following forty years maintains the visual language of Naturalism and the visual effects of light.

The Early Influence of British Art

Leitch would have been aware of the trends present in landscape painting during the early half of the nineteenth century. Perhaps the most widespread and popular theory in Britain was the Picturesque.⁴⁹ Some of the earliest characteristics of the Picturesque include roughness of texture and irregularity in form.⁵⁰ It seems to reside somewhere

⁴⁸ "The term 'Picturesque' was coming into vogue in the early eighteenth century as an Anglicization of the French *pittoresque* or Italian *pittoresco*. Initially it carried no particular reference to landscape but meant the kind of scenery or human activity proper for a painting." [Malcolm Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760 – 1800* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989), vii, viii.]

⁴⁹ Reverend William Gilpin (1724 – 1804) was one of the first to theorize the Picturesque. He began touring the British countryside and creating Picturesque landscapes in 1769 and began publishing on the subject in 1782. Central to Gilpin's idea is that through compositional choices one could improve nature in the image. Gilpin was not the only person to define Picturesque aesthetic theory. Sir Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight also published on aesthetic categorization of the Picturesque. The ideas held by Price and Knight do not contradict Gilpin, but both men went beyond painting and applied the principles of the Picturesque to landscape design, gardening and architecture.

⁵⁰ While the compositional choices (asymmetrical design, texture, roughness and contrast between light and shadow) are what distinguished the aesthetic of the Picturesque, the theory goes beyond mere characteristics; it was an aesthetic view achieved through active engagement with nature. "The Picturesque

between the Sublime and the Beautiful. There is a sensuality and uncertain rawness to the Sublime not present in the Picturesque. However, the common tropes of ruins and gnarled trees prevent it from reaching the exact idealism and attractive gentleness of the Beautiful. The Picturesque sits between these two theories as a way of composing nature for an ideal view, but reveling in variety, detail and the qualities of light and shadow.

In the early stages of his career Leitch spent a considerable amount of time with Daniel Macnee, who was taking classes with John Knox (1778-1845).⁵¹ Knox's own work can be classified as Picturesque. It is believed he studied under Alexander Nasmyth who was the leading Picturesque artist in Scotland.⁵² However, Knox's work is unique in that it also carries the flavor of the Sublime. This can be seen in his oil painting of Loch Lomond (see fig. 4). This landscape utilizes a high vantage point and the subject matter focuses on the grandeur of the Scottish Highlands, both of which are common trends in his work. Because Leitch's formative years as an artist were based on what he could observe from his friend's lessons, Knox can be considered a direct but fleeting influence on him. Yet, it was not simply through Leitch's copying of his friend's work that he was exposed to the Picturesque.

When Leitch was employed as a scene painter he studied the backdrops from other artists. In Glasgow he saw scenes painted by Nasmyth and David Roberts. These would serve as a model for Leitch's own drawings. He states:

is a frame of mind, an aesthetic attitude involving man in a direct and active relationship with the natural scenery through which he travels." [Carol Paul Barbier, *William Gilpin: His Drawings, Teaching, and Theory of the Picturesque* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 99.] Gilpin, quoted by Barbier.

⁵¹ Christopher Wood, *Dictionary of British Art: Victorian Painters* Vol. 4 (Woodbridge, Suffolk, England: Antique Collectors' Club, 1995), 300.

John Knox was a Scottish landscape painter and was the pupil of Alexander Nasmyth. Both Daniel Macnee and Horatio McCulloch studied under him.

⁵² At the time of Leitch's death he owned two pieces by Nasmyth. See appendix c, for a complete list of artists that were part of his final collection.

The exquisite drawing of Roberts' architecture charmed me beyond measure, and the masses of shadows gave his work great grandeur and breadth. His painting encouraged me by its simplicity, and I imitated some of his work with considerable success. Nasmyth's art was different. The perfection of the execution was wonderful. You felt as if you could pull aside the branch of a tree and find another beneath it. I never saw a painting so like nature, and this was its charm. I was continually studying these works, and the lessons I got from their teaching I have never forgotten.⁵³

Working at the theatre allowed Leitch to study the Picturesque directly from Nasmyth's own work. Nasmyth was termed 'the father of Scottish landscape painting' by David Wilkie (1785-1841).⁵⁴ His Picturesque style reflects eighteenth-century topographical landscapes and foreshadows romanticism. In 1792 he opened a drawing school and the influence he had on his pupils permeated the Scottish landscape painting of the nineteenth century.⁵⁵ His work is characterized by the vivid depiction of a place, thus providing an accurate image for the viewer. Additionally, many of his works contain architecture as the central element. His reputation made the sets painted in Glasgow noteworthy and they remained in use for many years.

Two works known to be from Leitch's early career are a pair of preliminary drawings for snuffboxes (see figs. 5, 6). Both images reflect Nasmyth's Picturesque style. When comparing a classical landscape watercolor sketch and an architectural etching by Leitch one can see how he used Nasmyth's technique (see figs. 7, 8).

Nasmyth's watercolor utilizes the layering of foliage, which was a recognized skill of his.

⁵³ Andrew MacGeorge, *Wm. Leighton Leitch, Landscape Painter: A Memoir* (London: Blackie & Son, 1884), 30. Leitch, quoted by MacGeorge.

⁵⁴ Christopher Wood, *Dictionary of British Art: Victorian Painters* Vol. 4 (Woodbridge, Suffolk, England: Antique Collectors' Club, 1995), 572.

David Wilkie is famous for his Scottish genre scenes. He attended the Royal Academy Schools. His work *Chelsea Pensioners Reading the Waterloo Dispatch*, was such a hit at the Royal Academy that for the first time a rail had to be placed in front of the image to protect it.

⁵⁵ Pupils of Nasmyth's include: William Allen, Andrew Geddes, John Knox, David Roberts, Andrew Robertson, John Thompson, David Wilkie, Andrew Williams and Hugh Williams Williams.

On the left, the various shrubs create deep shadows and a sense of space is created on the right by the visual stacking of trees containing multiple shades of green. This technique is evident in Leitch's drawings, especially in *Howford Bridge*. In this image the layering of foliage on the left helps situate the bridge into a three dimensional environment. In both Nasmyth's print and watercolor there is a sense of precision in the lines that is echoed in Leitch's work. Both artists carefully placed their respective architectural element within the natural landscape. The images as a whole appear stable and harmonious. Nature remains untamed, but does not overpower the man made structures and in turn the precise buildings do not overwhelm the natural.

Leitch admired both Nasmyth and Roberts.⁵⁶ At the time of his death Leitch's collection contained works by both artists (see appendix c). Unlike Nasmyth, Roberts was friends with Leitch and influenced his career outside stylistic similarities.⁵⁷ Leitch first befriended Roberts when he moved to London, which lead to his employment at the Queen's Theatre. As mentioned in the first chapter, Leitch never took drawing lessons from Roberts.

Overall there are very few stylistic similarities between Leitch and Roberts' work. Any crossover between the two artists can be observed in their depictions of interior

⁵⁶ Helen Guiterman and Briony Llewellyn, *David Roberts* (Oxford: Phaidon Press Limited, 1986) Robert's career began much like Leitch's. He had a short run as a house painter that led into working as a scene painter. He was well received in this role and he bounced between Edinburgh and London producing work from 1816 to 1830. Around 1822, Roberts began showing and selling his paintings and successfully exhibited his work until his death in 1864. Additionally, he traveled and the images he produced of the near east and northern Africa was sold as prints.

⁵⁷ Roberts arranged for Leitch to go to the Drury Lane Theater in London and look at Clarkson Steinfield's scenes. "What first struck me was the absence of that offensive strong yellow which is so common in the work of scene-painters. Another thing arrested my attention. At the bottom of the wing, on the left-hand side, a small portion of the priming of the canvas was bare, and I saw how carefully the drawing of all the objects had been made out upon it...I was greatly excited by what I saw, and felt as if I had hitherto been working in some confined dark place, and that I was now coming into the light." [Andrew MacGeorge, *Wm. Leighton Leitch, Landscape Painter: A Memoir* (London: Blackie & Son, 1884), 44.]

scenes, as shown in prints by the two artists. In *The Rhine, Italy and Greece*, 1840 there is an engraving titled: *The Church of Santa Maria del Carmine*, based off of a drawing by Leitch (see fig. 3). The interior depicted can be compared with Roberts' *Chancel of the Church of St. Helena*, printed as a lithograph in *The Holy Land: Syria, Idumea, Arabia, Egypt & Nubia*, 1842 (see fig. 9). Both artists show the interiors with shallow foregrounds and utilize the placement of figural groups to help lead the viewer's eye back into the recessed areas of the architecture. Furthermore, both prints show a strong use of light. Each contains a large beam of sunlight filtering into the interior space and strikingly illuminating the central portion. Roberts, however, diffuses the light in his and while its strongest point is on the alter it otherwise lacks any overt symbolism. Leitch's print illuminates the alter but, in contrast to Roberts', it is contained more, forcing the focus of the image towards the kneeling figure. His use of light becomes a religious metaphor for the lone figure. Overall both artists portray their interiors with incredible detail and dynamic compositions.

Because Leitch developed his early technique by studying and making copies of works by other artists, he can be considered self-taught. However, during this early period of his career, Leitch did receive formal instruction from Anthony Vandyke Copley Fielding sometime around 1832 or 1833.

Fielding on one occasion lent him a drawing, and told him to try his hand at copying it. It appeared wonderfully simple in execution, and he thought he would have little difficulty with it. The sky looked to him as if it had been all done by one wash. But when he came to try he was much disappointed. He brought his copy to Mr. Fielding, and told him how hard he had tried and yet had made so little of it. 'Yet,' he said, 'I went over that sky six times.' 'Ah! There it is,' said Fielding; 'you think it looks very simple because it does not show any labor in it.'

You say you went over the sky six times. I believe I am within the mark when I say that I went over mine twenty times.⁵⁸

Fielding is predominately recognized today for his landscapes, especially stormy marine scenes. It is my belief that Leitch learned to master the art of watercolor from Fielding. Since they only worked together for a short period of time I think Leitch came to Fielding with better than mediocre skills. Fielding then guided him and Leitch was able to improve his technique to the level of sophistication seen in his later works. Most noticeably is the attention to light and its ability to create motion and mood in the sky. Both artists play with color as a way of emphasizing the type of light they are creating in the clouds. This can be seen in Leitch's *Queen Victoria Landing at Granton Pier* and Fielding's *A Sea Piece* (see figs. 10, 11).

Since Leitch's painting style over the years reflects Fielding's influence, I believe Leitch continued to be aware of Fielding's work. This is supported by the fact that Fielding's work was part of Leitch's personal collection (see appendix c). Prior to leaving for Italy, it is apparent that Leitch was working on his wash technique. An undated piece *Island of Jura, Western Isles* is an excellent example of this skill (see fig. 12). When compared with Fielding's 1823 painting, *The Head of Glencoe*, there are striking similarities in the wash of the sky (see fig. 13). Both create a seamless depiction of the transition that occurs between rain clouds and the breaking sunlight. Through the use of multiple washes they create rich colors that blend easily into each other. Leitch's shoreline is more imposing with crashing waves verses the shallow shore in Fielding's. While it can not be said for certain how much knowledge the two had of each other

⁵⁸ Ibid., 47.

following Leitch's lessons, it is evident from their work that they are stylistically alike.

Perhaps this is just a simple reflection of British taste at the time for Naturalism.

Italy and the Influence of Claude Lorrain

In looking at Leitch's work from the four years he spent in Italy, 1833 – 1837, one can see that he arrived in that country with an established skill-set. His mastery of watercolor can be attributed to his dedication to studying the artists he admired and the improvements he made while working with Fielding. By this stage in his career any changes in his painting can be considered a reflection of Leitch in the process of forming his own style. In his early career prior to Italy, Leitch drew inspiration directly from his contemporaries. But, during his years in Italy his style demonstrates traits of seventeenth century landscape painting. This, too, shows Leitch's alignment with other British landscape artists as many of them traveled to Italy to study the works of Claude.⁵⁹

An affinity for Italy was well established in eighteenth-century Britain. Due to the Napoleonic Wars most of continental Europe was in a state of unrest. Italy, however, with its city-state system, was a more stable political body. Therefore, when Britons in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century chose to travel they tended to set their sites on Italy. A major reason for traveling, or going on a Grand Tour, was to expose oneself to the cultural benefits of the arts; Italy was especially appealing with its rich history of antiquities and Renaissance art. There was also a high demand for artists. Artists would be hired to give lessons to wealthy visitors and they also received patronage from publishers wanting prints of tourist destinations. Works created of Italy

⁵⁹ Nicolas Poussin (1594 – 1665) was also a significant influence on British artists traveling to Italy.

were readily sold to the rising British middle-classes who looked towards Italy as a leading source of culture.

Over time there had been an increase in art imported from Italy to Britain, which resulted in artists like Claude and Poussin increasing in their popularity. The style and content of landscape artists like Alexander Cozen (1717 – 1786), Richard Wilson (1714 – 1782), and John Skelton (1714 – 1759) reflects their awareness of Claude. These artists traveled to Italy and sketched in the same Roman countryside that Claude visited. These sketches were treated the same way Claude treated his own. They were used as references for the natural when composing other imagined landscapes.

It was in this tradition that Leitch traveled to Italy.⁶⁰ His role as a tutor for British gentry visiting and residing in Italy allowed him to pursue his work in relative comfort. Traveling also provided Leitch with the opportunity to focus his artistic energies away from scene painting and onto landscapes. During these four years, his work consisted of drawings and small watercolors. Working in this scale allowed for Leitch's artwork to be portable. Portability was important considering he traveled to approximately ten places in Italy and made several sketching trips outside the country (see appendix a). It appears Leitch focused his efforts on his use of color and the effects of light, which reflects his exposure to Claude.

Claude's work is characterized by the naturalness of his pastoral scenes and his use of allegorical light and atmosphere to create mood in his paintings (see fig. 14).⁶¹ He achieved this by creating a yellowing affect in the atmosphere, which operated as a

⁶⁰ See appendix c, for a map of Leitch's journey.

⁶¹ His working method included taking sketching trips into the Roman countryside. His hope was to gain an intimate knowledge of the natural environment to better inform his composed landscapes. This method was the basis from which Picturesque theory was based.

metaphorical symbol for the subject matter. Claude's use of light was influential for British artists, like Turner, seeking to create an idealized landscape. Leitch's 1838 untitled landscape painting depicting a palace with column fragments and figures in the foreground shows how Claude's yellow skies influenced him (see fig. 15). The use of light carries a sense of peace in both Claude and Leitch's work.

By the time Leitch returns to London in 1837, he possessed a well-rounded understanding of watercolor painting and Claude had had a profound impact on his landscape style. By the 1840's Leitch began to show traits of an established personal style that reflects the ideas of Naturalism. For me it is the wide range of color and his command of the medium that sets him apart. In a time when body-color was popular, Leitch used it sparingly and utilized transparent washes to build up his rich color palette.⁶²

Naturalism

Naturalism in its most basic understanding is an approach that depicts the observed without the use of conceptual stylization. This definition can be safely attached to what can be called a "naturalistic approach" to art making. It is a term that can be applied to art throughout the centuries and is used as a tool to help visually describe an object. Yet, the term becomes complicated due to its use by historians as a genre description for art in the nineteenth century. The lines for what can be categorized as Naturalistic are blurred making it a genre that is not easily defined.

⁶² Body-color is watercolor paint with the addition of Chinese white to render the material opaque. With this method the whiteness of the paper does not matter as the transparency of the paint disappears and dark paper (i.e. browns and grays) can be used as easily as white paper. In a similar sense "lighter" colors can be painted on top of "darker" paints, as in oil painting. When painting without body-color this layering of paint to obliterate darkness is not possible. Instead it would have to be washed down or diluted so the light paper can reflect through. The term gouache is interchangeable with the term body-color.

Naturalism gets attached to other nineteenth-century canonical classifications like Romanticism and Realism. In Romanticism there is a love of the natural world, which emerged out of the rejection of Enlightenment traditions. Nature itself became a symbol of purity and attached to the ideas of the Sublime. In this way it rejects the previous notion of universal order and embraces the shifting forces of nature. The Romantic attachment to nature parallels Realism's sentiment for peasant life as an example of something inherently honest.

The lines between Realism and Naturalism are hazy, to the point that they are often confused and used interchangeably. Depending on the use, their substitution is of little consequence. Realism utilizes the naturalistic approach as an aesthetic to reinforce its ideals. The objective look at everyday life through the peasant experience became a political stance for Realism. It was a way to critique industrialization and at the same time search for something that may appear more virtuous. As a term Realism tends to be applied by historians to art created in France and specifically Paris, but when it is interchanged with Naturalism the term is often tied to England and London.⁶³

There is still another side to Naturalism outside of its association with Romanticism and Realism. One could call this view of Naturalism "formal Naturalism." Formal Naturalism takes the aesthetic naturalistic approach further and gives it meaning. The observation based aesthetic stands as a symbol for the simple truth of vision. To further emphasize this idea importance is given to the specificity of place and time. Light and its effects also become a common theme for the movement. They are considered key aspects of reality that evoke a sense of truth in the creation of time and place. Working

⁶³ Political Naturalism in England critiques industrialization but also addresses the idea of a national character.

en plein air becomes an important practice in Naturalism.⁶⁴ For centuries sketches were made out of doors, but for the first time there was a real movement towards *pleinairism* in the creation of finished works. When considering Naturalism in an international context it is typically from the view of formal Naturalism. It is through the lens of formal Naturalism that Leitch's work can be considered.

Leitch advocated the careful study of nature and hard work, which he expressed in a letter to a student:

Come back again to nature, again and again, and you will have the greatest comfort. Work, work, work is the word, both with head and hand. We cannot get anything good, and true, and beautiful, without going through suffering for it; and work is the price we must pay for all enjoyment we may have from the divine art of painting.⁶⁵

While nature was in his opinion the best tutor, his work reflects self-editing in selecting a view. Many of his landscapes are composed of vast open vistas ending in atmospheric backgrounds and typically feature mountains. The mountain motif, I believe, results from his relationship with Scotland as both Leitch's homeland and from his time traveling with Queen Victoria. The queen's connection to Scotland will be discussed further in chapter three.

Scotland during the early half of the nineteenth century was creating its own national identity through cultural outlets like painting and literature. In 1707, the country was officially incorporated with England to form Great Britain. Throughout the eighteenth century, the Scots struggled between their Scottish identity and their new unionist-nationalism as a British state. However, by the nineteenth century Scotland

⁶⁴ *en plein air* translates into 'in the open air'.

⁶⁵ Andrew MacGeorge, *Wm. Leighton Leitch, Landscape Painter: A Memoir* (London: Blackie & Son, 1884), 90. Leitch, quoted by MacGeorge.

grew more comfortable with its dual identity and started to revive its own national spirit. Paintings of the Highlands emphasized a uniquely Scottish landscape. Certain geographical traits, like mountains, become an integral part of a national identity. In the case of the Highlands, ethnicity and history are attached to the geography.⁶⁶ Much of England's geographical identity is set in the countryside or the coast, which contrasts with the mountains of the Scottish Highlands.⁶⁷

By the time Leitch was working with Queen Victoria, the Scottish had successfully asserted their identity within Great Britain. Scotland was viewed in a romantic light by the English as a result of pure Highland landscapes like Hugh William Williams' *Glencoe Highlands* and Sir Walter Scotts literature (see fig. 16).⁶⁸ To a romantic the Scottish Highlands represented an unattainable freedom of nature. In paintings by Leitch, the mountains act as a stabilizing background for the images. However, these paintings lack the striking monumentality that other Scottish artists gave them. Looking at *Blair Castle*, 1844 we can see how he rolls the mountainside into the peaceful valley (see fig. 17). The sky imposes on the land, and the shifting color and line of the clouds create a sense of motion absent from the terrain.

This juxtaposition of a transformative sky against the immobile earth allows the viewer to feel like the land and its inhabitants are frozen in time. This capturing of a moment pulls Leitch's style away from his Scottish background and presents his work in an English context. A landscape can be characterized as Scottish through the Sublime

⁶⁶ David Lowenthal, *Geography and National Identity* (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1980), 17.

Landscapes have much in common, but each nation treasures certain geographical features and elements of its own.

⁶⁷ "Explicit or implicit in every people's favored heritage are geographical traits felt integral to national identity. European talismans of space and place are age-old; nationalism intensifies landscape feeling." [Ibid.]

⁶⁸ Hugh William Williams' work was part of Leitch's personal collection (see appendix c).

representation of the land as a way of emphasizing its national and historic significance. The combination of stillness and motion that provides a sense of a solitary moment, I believe, is what characterizes a landscape as more uniquely English. This English tradition can be seen in the work of artists like John Constable (1776-1837) and members of the Norwich Society of Artists (see figs. 18, 19, 20, 21).⁶⁹ Both John Sell Cotman and John Crome's work were part of Leitch's personal collection (see appendix c). Leitch's alignment with English landscapes rather than the Scottish reflects the tastes of his English and more specifically London based patrons.

Leitch's mature style can also be characterized by his obsession with transcribing every detail. This is particularly noticeable in his architectural paintings. In his work, elements appear in crisp focus. His attention to detail and idealized composition does not oppose the philosophy of Naturalism. Rather, it demonstrates the sentiment of wanting to observe and record the natural world. This inherently carries a sense of nostalgia and reverence for the subject.

Leitch's attention to detail can be considered a subconscious alignment with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Leitch clearly differed from them in subject matter and he outspokenly opposed their teaching methods. He believed in learning from the "masters" and understanding their techniques so one could utilize them when painting. In a letter he stated:

In art, whatever talent the student may possess, he must have knowledge to express it... Your compositions must be designed, and drawn, and draped, and lighted, and shaded, and colored with all their special truths and general

⁶⁹ These artists were influenced by seventeenth-century Dutch landscapes.

harmonies, by your own hand. Therefore get knowledge; get every available help to enable you to see what nature is, and how to set practically about it.⁷⁰

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood on the other hand advocated pure observation in the study of nature, which conflicted with Leitch's idea. According to MacGeorge, a memorandum can be found in Leitch's papers where he criticizes them for championing nature and individual genius. He goes as far as accusing them of "putting aside" Rafael.⁷¹ Though he doesn't comment on it, their use of body-color to create texture and detail, conflicts with his method of transparent washes. The use of body-color in landscapes is probably best displayed by Alfred William Hunt (see fig. 22). He utilized it in his paintings creating texture in grass and leaves. He also reversed the brush to scratch into the paint. Leitch did not use these methods and maintained the practice of washes and layering to create lights and darks.⁷² The exception would be in areas of extreme highlight where the pure white body-color is used. Despite the fact that their pedagogic principles and technical practices differ, some of Leitch's work visually resembles Pre-Raphaelites Brotherhood. Leitch's personal collection reflects his interest in artists like Hunt (see appendix c).

As photography developed in the nineteenth century, artists contemplated the action of seeing. In France the Impressionists focused on the effects of light and eye

⁷⁰ Andrew MacGeorge, *Wm. Leighton Leitch, Landscape Painter: A Memoir* (London: Blackie & Son, 1884), 97, 99. Leitch, quoted by MacGeorge.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 99.

⁷² "In coloring he insisted on what he called scale practice—that is, the laying on of various tints in full flat washes, and, when they were quite dry, putting on other tints over them, but still retaining the full force of both. The next stage was drawing with liquid full color any forms which were to be in the work, such as trees, mountains, &c., into which forms, while wet, he would strike deeper and varied tints so as to produce the 'palpitation' of the color as in nature. . . . Body-color he used very sparingly, and only in the highest lights, in figures or boats or other points in the foreground, and he was frequently told me that he much preferred drawing where body-color was entirely discarded. . . . He often insisted, also, on the necessity of the picture being painted throughout under one light and atmosphere, so that each portion of it should represent a distinct kind of day, and a particular time of day." [*Ibid.*, 69, 70.]

movement. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in part responded to photography's ability to transcribe detail.⁷³ Their work is characterized by the depiction of detail in focus across the entire image and by disregarding the 'blurred lines' of vision. Leitch's work also presents an extreme focus. His sky, land and architecture receive equal detail and focus.

Leitch's Naturalism also brings to mind other British artists such as Edward Lear (1812 – 1888) and John Sell Cotman (1782 – 1842).⁷⁴ There are striking similarities in both Leitch and Lear's tree studies (see figs. 23, 24). Though their vantage points are often different, the two artists create a recognizable location through detail in their landscapes. Cotman and Leitch share similar compositional layouts in their watercolors. Both place architecture carefully in the scene to show it off at its best advantage. At times it is isolated from the surrounding landscape and at other points it is placed in the distance showing the structure as integrated with the environment. This careful construction of place is seen in Leitch's *The White Lodge*, 1861 and Cotman's *Gate-way*, 1818 (see figs. 25, 26). Both artists have given two sides of the building showcasing the architecture and only giving a glimpse of the lawn.

A Blend of International Style

Naturalism seems to have been "in the air" in many locations through out the western world. Yet each group of artists seems to have their own characteristics that distinguish one group from another. For instance in North America the Hudson River School landscapes come across as patriotic and their use of light has a spiritual tone,

⁷³ Not all of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, for example Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), took Naturalism to this extreme when composing a detailed image.

⁷⁴ As mentioned before, Cotman's work was part of Leitch's personal collection (see appendix c).

while the French Barbizon landscapes appear remote and their light focuses predominately on illuminating the sky. The qualities of Leitch's art do not identify him with one convention. He can be regarded as more eclectic because his paintings bring to mind several different artists from various traditions. In this way his work can be considered a pastiche of nineteenth-century style.

During 1844 Leitch painted several scenes utilizing an earthy pallet of tan, grey and brown which is reminiscent Barbizon artist Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot (1796 – 1875). Leitch's light effects and build up of clouds evoke paintings from the Hudson River School and the work of Biedermeier artist Christen Købke (1810 – 1848).⁷⁵ *Stirling Castle*, 1842 by Leitch reminds one of the sky developed in Købke's *View from the Citadel Wall, with the Towers of the Church of Our Lady and St. Petri Church in the Background*, 1833 (see figs. 27, 28). Both paintings create atmospheric effects on the horizon, which rises into a build up of clouds. The sky becomes dimensional through tonal changes and highlights and creates a sense of motion.

As can be seen from Leitch's work, his take on Naturalism cannot be tied to any one group's expression. Leitch's wide range of color and his sophisticated command of the medium sets him apart from other artists. His work is idealistic, but doesn't lose the sense of a place. He captures a single moment in his paintings through his active skies and calm ground. In both his landscapes and domestic scenes, figures and architecture remain harmonious with the setting, wherein neither overwhelms the other. It is the combination of these aspects that make Leitch's work unique.

⁷⁵ The Biedermeier movement occurred mainly in Austria, Denmark and Germany.

Leitch and Turner

It was during this later part of his career that Leitch expressed his opinion of Turner. According to MacGeorge, Leitch greatly admired Turner's work, but discriminated against his later paintings. He felt that Turner steered too far away from nature in his later works. Leitch's prejudice makes sense given his own naturalistic style and the resemblance his work has to Turner's early watercolors. One can conceivably conclude that Leitch had an awareness of Turner's early work during his first years in London. In June 1829, Turner exhibited his watercolors at the Egyptian Hall in London. *Buckfastleigh Abbey, Devonshire*, c.1825-7 and *Ludlow Castle, Shropshire*, c.1830, were two of the paintings exhibited (see fig. 29, 30). One can imagine Leitch seeing these and considering their compositional arrangement in regards to his own work. He likely paid attention to how the river leads the eye back without overwhelming the picture frame or the quality of atmosphere in depicting mountains in the background.⁷⁶

Leitch's later career also demonstrates the effect Turner had on him. Take, for instance, *Taymouth Castle*, 1842 whose composition corresponds with *Bolton Abbey, Yorkshire* created by Turner in 1809 (see figs. 31, 32). Turner was known for using trees as framing mechanisms within an image, which Leitch also utilizes in his painting. Both artists have placed their buildings in the distant middle ground and they are further isolated by the encroaching tree lines. The skies are relatively calm with only a few billowing clouds.

⁷⁶ Many of the similarities between Leitch and Turner reflect the influence Claude Lorrain (c.1600 – 1623) had on both artists.

It can be no coincidence that during this same year, 1842, Leitch spent an evening with Turner.⁷⁷ Such an experience would be significant for Leitch as Turner's opinion was greatly valued by many successful artists of the day. Leitch met Turner at Henry Pickersgill's dinner party. In his recollection of the event, Leitch expresses that the evening made an impression on him and he has a clear memory of it.⁷⁸ After the dinner party his portfolio was taken out and passed around the table to each gentlemen. For the most part Turner did not make any significant comments except in regards to a painting Leitch had made from memory of the Abruzzo Mountains to which Turner made the curious statement that he did not believe Leitch created it from memory. After Turner left, Sir Martin Shee informed Leitch that he should take the remark as a compliment. "Mr. Turner is an extraordinary man, and I cannot tell you what he meant; but this I am sure of, that if he had not thought your drawing more than ordinarily good and true and beautiful, he would not have said a word about it."⁷⁹ Perhaps his opinion was accurate because two years later Roberts informed Leitch that he overheard Turner more or less defending his painting that exhibited at the Royal Academy.⁸⁰ According to Roberts, a group of academicians were arguing as to the likeness of the scene with other artworks. Apparently Turner interrupted the group stating, "We all look at somebody when we begin, but when a poor fellow has done anything a little better than his neighbors, his friends are sure to find out that he has stolen it."⁸¹ From this comment it can be concluded that Turner felt that there was merit to Leitch's work and that others were not

⁷⁷ Leitch also had the opportunity to visit Turner's gallery, in 1842.

⁷⁸ Andrew MacGeorge, *Wm. Leighton Leitch, Landscape Painter: A Memoir* (London: Blackie & Son, 1884), 79. Sir Martin Shee, quoted by Leitch, quoted by MacGeorge.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 80, 81.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 86, 87.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 88.

giving him a fair critique. Turner's statement also confirms that Leitch's work was departing from what had previously influenced him and was developing into its own style. This change clearly left some of his viewers baffled as to where to place him in context.

It is evident that Leitch especially admired Turner for his work ethic. MacGeorge gives an account of Leitch's thoughts on this in a letter he wrote to a friend: "Turner acquired his wonderful powers as a painter by persevering industry. His, I might say, was the most marvelous manifestation of industry ever applied to individual work."⁸² There is a strong difference when it comes to comparing Leitch and Turner's work. With Leitch there is an active dedication to trying to depict the landscape as true as possible. There is an idealization to the image, which reflects his background in the Picturesque, but the images remain identifiable. His sketching process was describe by MacGeorge:

He sketched with marvelous rapidity, and yet always with great correctness. As a rule he made careful studies from nature in colors but when time did not allow of this he would make drawings in pencil, and, taking careful notes of local color and atmospheric effects, he would paint his recollections at the earliest possible points. Hence the beautiful harmony observed in all his works.⁸³

Turner on the other hand has always focused on the imagined landscape. His Picturesque works manifest themselves as composed places. Turner studied the landscape and worked directly from nature, but it was never to produce a finished work. His relationship with nature acted as a tool to allow him to create an image with believable natural elements. As Turner's career moved forward he attached himself to the atmospheric effects that he originally learned from studying Claude. By the end of his

⁸² Ibid., 90

⁸³ Ibid., 96.

Both the Royal Collection Trust and the British Museum contain works that have notes written on them by Leitch.

career any sense of an identifiable place is lost and the canvas is engulfed by atmosphere. Turner makes landscapes of mood rather than with mood. It is a full immersion into the emotional qualities of atmosphere as a way of depicting bold vigorous coasts or tranquil sunlight.

The comparison between Leitch and Turner may be one reason little interest has been given to Leitch. Turner's entire career has become a cornerstone in the discussion of nineteenth-century British watercolors and so he often overshadows artist with similar styles. But, when regarding both Leitch and Turners mature styles the comparison is lost. Turner took steps away from Naturalism and embraced the abstract and material driven modernism. Leitch's work on the other hand creates a blend of Naturalism that epitomizes nineteenth-century landscapes.

While Leitch's work recalls various aspects of an international Naturalism it still maintains its individuality. Its strength lies in the attention paid to the visual effects of light. Atmosphere is created to distinguish the mood of a place, as evident in the blue grey skies of his Scottish scenes. His sophisticated understanding of color and his command of the medium allow him to create a sense of a place. Leitch's ability to visually capture a place outweighs the negative effects of subject matter. At times his work can fall flat due to the focus placed on architecture. At these times it is clear that his passion is for the natural surroundings rather than the man made structure. He has the ability to capture detail without sacrificing atmospheric effect thus creating an illusion of time standing still. His strive for balance between the natural and the man-made are what bring harmony to his most successful works.

CHAPTER 3: ARISTOCRATIC SOCIETY & PROFESSIONALISM

When considering an artist's signature style consistency between works is key. For Leitch the bulk of his work available for study dates from 1834 until his death. Of these works a majority of them date after 1842 when he started tutoring Queen Victoria. There is no doubt that his position as her tutor played a heavy role in Leitch's career. One apparent effect of their relationship was the subjects he painted. It also impacted the type of students he taught, which were mainly amateur aristocrats. This defined his social identity and the success of his career depended on it.

Tutoring the Aristocrats

Tutoring was not an uncommon career choice for watercolor artists. The British gentry started seeking professional tutoring in the eighteenth century and by the nineteenth the demand for tutors was quite strong. The art of watercolor drawing was considered a respectable activity for everyone of high society. Economically, being a tutor offered financial security so many artists at some stage in their career taught. While there were many teachers of noble character there were also those who took advantage of the market pawning themselves off as having the cheapest and surest methods.⁸⁴ Thus the charlatan aided in promoting the stigma that tutors were unable to be artists themselves and consequently resorted to tutoring. This point of view often overshadows

⁸⁴ "One visiting master in Norwich stated that he could teach painting in watercolors by a new method at a price a quarter less than usual, with 'flower and landscape painting at 1s a time, drawing at 6d a time.'" [George Smith, *The Emergence of the Professional Watercolourist: Contentions and Alliances in the Artistic Domain, 1760-1824*, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2002), 109.]

that many successful artists like Paul Sandby (1731-1809), John Sell Cotman (1782-1842) and Thomas Girtin (1775-1802), did act as tutors.⁸⁵

Leitch's tutoring, therefore, fell in line with British watercolor tradition. His success as a teacher and the financial stability it provided made his career choice an acceptable avenue. Leitch was known for not withholding information from his students. He taught them what he knew in as detailed a manner as possible. This is perhaps one reason he succeeded early on as a tutor. The students he taught were by and large not studying to become professional artists. They were mainly amateurs pleased to achieve their own best at the moment. His open and detailed manner of teaching was beneficial to this type of student.

Some of his aristocratic students included the Earl and Countess of Buccleuch, who owned some of the largest and wealthiest estates in Britain, Louise Frederica Augusta also known as the Duchess of Manchester, Lord Richard Cavendish and Lady Canning (see appendix b). As previously mentioned Leitch started tutoring aristocrats like Lord Richard Cavendish in Italy and it was through their recommendations that he continued to tutor high society members when he returned to London. Of these students Lady Canning was one of the more prolific. She started taking lessons prior to arranging his instruction with the queen and they continued after.

On occasion she was part of Queen Victoria's sketching expeditions. Lady Canning made a painting of Ardverikie for the queen in 1849 and it recalls Leitch's 1842 painting of Taymouth Castle (see figs. 31, 33). Both works place the buildings in the middle ground, embraced by the mountains in the background and the sloping valley's

⁸⁵ The popular pursuit of watercolor painting resulted in regional schools resulting from students imitating their drawing masters. This is seen in such places as Exeter, Norwich, and Bristol.

trees in the foreground. Lady Canning worked in layers of washes like Leitch, however, her brushstrokes tend to be more agitated.

Leitch also had several students who were more directly engaged in the professional art world. Louisa Caroline Baring or Lady Ashburton was an avid art collector and James Orrock was an aspiring professional painter when he took lessons in 1870. However, it is Sir Coutts Lindsay who had a more lasting impression on the London art scene when he founded the Grosvenor Gallery in 1877. His gallery supported James McNeil Whistler (1834-1903), George Frederic Watts (1817-1904) and artists from the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

Leitch's position as a tutor placed him among the most influential players in high society. His social life and professional life were intertwined in such a way that one fed off of the other. His students proved to be an excellent group of patrons. In 1844, the Duke of Buccleuch commissioned Leitch to create a series of scenes depicting the queen's initial visit to Scotland two years prior. Leitch's role as a tutor to the aristocrats also opened doors for him to meet some of London's leading artists. His career can be deemed a success considering he started out as a struggling self taught painter and ended his life as a well-respected member of the professional art community.

Leitch and Queen Victoria

Queen Victoria was first introduced to Leitch through his artwork. As previously mentioned in chapter one, the Duchess of Sutherland brought his portfolio to the queen in 1842. Of this portfolio Queen Victoria requested copies of two Italian scenes, which Leitch provided. The queen therefore was an admirer of his artistic endeavors prior to being aware of him as a tutor. Lady Canning was a lady in waiting during this time and

as such shared her sketches with her. The queen admired her skill and when she heard Leitch taught Lady Canning, she requested that he come to Windsor and give her lessons. Queen Victoria and Prince Albert were great connoisseurs of art and her interest in making art could reflect her desire to understand what she collected.

During their first lesson Leitch explained the elements of composition, light, shade and color. He went into great detail providing several examples and demonstrating how the use of color can affect light and shade. After his discussion of color the queen and Lady Canning expressed their excitement over his teaching method.

The queen stated: 'This is very wonderful, and I am delighted; but I am surprised that I have never had this explained before.' Her lady ship replied, 'I was sure your Majesty would be pleased with the lesson. I also was surprised at the explanation of the principle of color, as I had had several masters, none of them had ever said a word about the matter.' 'Wonderful!' said her Majesty; and then she said to Leitch, 'Can you come again on Thursday next?'⁸⁶

The drawing lessons he had with Queen Victoria remain in the Royal Collection Trust and display how he taught her to use washes (see figs. 34, 35, 36). The notes that accompany the lessons explain which layers to apply first to achieve the desired image. The queen wrote to Lady Canning praising Leitch and expressed her recommendation of him in 1846 after she was pleased with a drawing she had done under his instruction. Leitch went to Windsor, Osborne, Balmoral and Buckingham Palace for various lengths of time to conduct lessons. Even as he aged and his health declined, Leitch continued teaching the queen and her children: Prince Arthur, Princess Helena, Prince Leopold and Princess Louise. By 1863 they were his only pupils and in 1864 he was granted annuity

⁸⁶ Andrew MacGeorge, *Wm. Leighton Leitch, Landscape Painter: A Memoir* (London: Blackie & Son, 1884), 79. Queen Victoria and Lady Canning, quoted by Leitch, quoted by MacGeorge.

from her. After his death in 1883 the queen acquired many works by him at his studio sale, which remain in the Royal Collection today.

Queen Victoria had several drawing masters throughout her life; however, Leitch stands out from the rest. Leitch has the distinction of being one of two teachers that consistently taught the queen for a long period of time. Prior to working with Leitch the queen received regular lessons from Richard Westall (1765-1836).⁸⁷ She began learning from Westall when she was eight years old and he worked with her twice a week for nine years. During this time her work consists of genre subjects, portraits and theatre scenes. It was through her time with Leitch that the queen began earnestly painting landscapes. This change can be attributed to his interest in the subject as well as her desire to utilize her new understanding of color and shade. In addition to Leitch and Westall, Queen Victoria received lessons from commissioned artists like Sir Edwin Landseer (1802-1873), Edward Lear (1812-1888) and Carl Haag (1820-1915).

Queen Victoria's consistent admiration for Leitch's teaching methods reflects the impact he made on her. Visually there is a strong improvement in her work over the twenty-two years Leitch spent with her, most noticeably in her attention to light and shadow. Prior to working with him she painted mainly figures in heavy contour. But, then she starts to place her figures within a background and they are given form through a gentle use of shadow (see fig. 37). This improvement and Leitch's ability to explain artistic methods to her are probably why Queen Victoria had Leitch teach her for so long.

One of the most distinctive traits of Leitch's later work is that many of his scenes depict peaceful domesticity. The royal family is predominately his subject for these

⁸⁷ Queen Victoria is the only student Westall ever taught.

images given that they were created for Queen Victoria. They are shown during their leisure time rather than them engaging in regal duties and ceremonies. Leitch spent most of his time instructing the royal family at Osborne House. This residence was built as a seaside retreat in southern England and provided the family a place where the children could be brought up in quiet domesticity away from London. Several of his paintings show the family strolling through grounds of the estate. In *Barton Farm*, c.1850, he depicts a woman, presumably the queen, sitting outside with her painting material discarded on the lawn (see fig. 38). The scene behind her shows the grand farm house within the pleasant fields of the rural countryside. There is nothing threatening about the scene. It is simply a peaceful moment in time.

Other artists were invited to Osborne to photograph and paint the family as a form of visual propaganda depicting the devoted family. Alternatively, Leitch's work was intended to be of personal use to the family. They were produced to be additions to the family's albums chronicling their lives or were made for their drawing lessons. The queen's favor for domestic scenes is reflected in her own work. In a scene painted at Osborne she paints her children pleasantly strolling the grounds (see fig. 37). They are shown with arms around each other and holding hands creating an affectionate scene. The layering of transparent washes and bright colors shows the influence Leitch had on her painting.

Leitch's Scottish background would have been very appealing to Queen Victoria. She was known to be very fond of Scotland and regarded it in a romantic light. Some of her earliest encounters with the nation's cultural heritage would have been through the novels of Sir Walter Scott. Scott was known for his assertion of the Scottish identity

through the exploitation of the highlands. He romanticized the highland warrior in books, like *Rob Roy* and promoted highland tradition when King George visited in 1822. Scott took some liberties in his depiction of Scotland and produced a national identity that appealed to the English romantics.⁸⁸ Scotland was attractive to Queen Victoria because of its Celtic background, which offered an exotic contrast to the classicism she knew.

Queen Victoria visited Scotland for the first time in 1842. Both the queen and Prince Albert were instantly enchanted with the country. For Prince Albert the mountain terrain called to mind Thuringia, Germany. By 1852 they had bought their very own Scottish castle, Balmoral, which they expanded to accommodate their large entourages. Balmoral became a retreat for the royal family, away from their hectic lives in London and Windsor.

The queen became consumed with Scotland and strived to make her time there as ‘authentic’ as possible. Every detail was attended to in hopes of fulfilling her idealized conception of the highlands. Balmoral was given its own tartan and clothing was made in the traditional kilt and sashes for her family. Haggis was sampled at meal times and bagpipes accompanied them on excursions. Deer hunting was a popular past time, as was hiking and picnics. The queen was even known to have attended the Highland Games.

The queen traveled frequently and became known for the souvenir albums she had made to document her journeys.⁸⁹ Leitch traveled with the queen to Scotland with the

⁸⁸ One of the key features of King George’s visit was the requirement for all clan leaders to wear tartans and kilts, essentially taking the image of the Highlander and applying it to all of Scotland. The tartan prior to this was used as a military garb and distinguished different regiments. The requirement of its use for clans was an appropriation of the garment.

⁸⁹ Queen Victoria was also known for her collection of photographs.

purpose of making paintings for these books. According to art historian Marina Warner, “Leitch became a favorite instructor in aristocratic circles; he was a good raconteur and an entertaining mimic, and he soon found that he had a ‘great relish for society’.”⁹⁰ This remark leaves one to wonder to what extent Leitch may have exploited his Scottish background to please the queen.

Leitch’s first sketching trip was in September 1844 and was arranged by the Duke of Buccleuch who wanted to recapture the queen’s trip two years prior and give the images to her as a present.⁹¹ However, the set was not presented to her until forty-six years later when they were discovered by the Duke’s daughter-in-law. The queen did not have a souvenir album from this trip, as it was on her second visit that she started them. Hence, she was very pleased to receive the scenes despite the time that had past stating they were, ““so intimately associated with the happy memories of the past, connected with the bright and cloudless period’ of her life.”⁹² The set included images from Blair Castle, Loch Tay, Taymouth Castle and Dupplin (see fig. 17).

The next time Leitch traveled to Scotland was in 1847. He had been tutoring the queen at Osborne House when the royal family departed and headed north. Leitch followed the party a few days later. This allowed him to track their route and sketch the places where they had gone. His final trip to Scotland under the queen’s commission was in the fall of 1861 as part of her ‘Great Expeditions,’ which was a series of long trips she

⁹⁰ Marina Warner, *Queen Victoria’s Sketchbook* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1979), 172.

⁹¹ The Duke of Buccleuch had played host to the Queen and Prince during part of their original visit to Scotland.

⁹² Delia Millar, *Queen Victoria’s Life in the Scottish Highlands* (London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 1985), 23.

made as a way of taking in the open air and recovering after her mother's death.

Leitch's own health was deteriorating and so his son, Richard, accompanied him.⁹³

Work from this later half of his career reflects his naturalistic style, especially his attention to light and sky, but I believe much of the stillness found in his depiction of land results from his desire to please Queen Victoria. Given that his income was dependent on the queen's patronage and the patronage of other aristocrats, pleasing her would bear heavily on Leitch. This may explain why his later work appears more English than Scottish in style. He could fulfill her taste for Scottish subjects and maintain an allure for his other aristocratic pupils.

Leitch's greatest weakness seems to be his limited subject matter, though to a certain extent this was a flaw beyond his control. His work is pleasant and does not stray far from what the queen or others would like. But it was, after all, his job to teach and please Queen Victoria and he was good at it. The affection Queen Victoria displayed in her initial purchase of Leitch's watercolors in 1842 held true throughout their relationship. Clearly she admired his work since she regularly commissioned him to help illustrate her travel books. Her love for his art remained until the end of his life when she purchased a substantial number of works from his estate. Leitch relied on her patronage and the patronage of his other pupils.

⁹³ When Leitch could no longer travel, Richard completed the Queen's commission.

CONCLUSION

Critical Reception Since Death

Leitch's work has been received with mixed reviews. During his lifetime, Leitch's friends fondly regard him for his truthful impressions and ability to capture the color and atmosphere of a place. Art historians at times have been less kind. Martin Hardie has put forth perhaps the most negative comments.

Though he was a skilful draughtsman, with intimate knowledge of what pencil and brush could accomplish in capable hands, his outlook was neither original or emotional; he was insensitive to atmosphere; and was apt to clutter his work with a profusion of details and incidents rendered with painstaking accuracy. Everything is carried to extreme finish, everything is emphasized alike, the range of color is wide; but the colored transcript of a thousand things is not the same as a good picture.⁹⁴

This statement seems rather uncompromising. Yes, his focus on detail could be seen as overly finished, but could not the same thing be said about the Pre-Raphaelites Brotherhood? Additionally, I do not agree that Leitch was 'insensitive to atmosphere.' If one were to look at a landscape of an Italian scene and compare it to one of his Scottish paintings, the visual tone is clearly different. His 1834 painting *San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice* demonstrates his use of the 'yellowing' Italian light (see fig. 2). There is calmness in his sleek rendering of water. *Blair Castle*, 1844, painted ten years later in Scotland also has a serene quality about it, but it is approached differently (see fig. 17). The peacefulness of it is created through the rolling lines of the mountains. The bright Italian sky is left behind in favor of a blue grey mist, which brings the Scottish atmosphere into being.

⁹⁴ Martin Hardie, *Water-color Painting in Britain: The Victorian Period*, ed. Dudley Snelgrove with Jonathan Mayne and Basil Taylor, vol. 3 (London: B.T. Batsford, 1975), 186.

Art historian Julian Halsby agrees that Leitch captures variations in atmosphere. He admits that Leitch is not entirely original, but asserts his support of him in claiming that there is a level of individuality present in his work. His comments display affection for Leitch's paintings, stating, "His watercolors of the Italian lakes, painted in fresh blues, purples, and greens with sensitively drawn figures and buildings in ochre and reds in the foreground, can be exquisite. They are some times small, compelling the viewer to go close to examine the details and thereby entering the pictorial depth."⁹⁵

In his history of British watercolor painting Hardie asserts Leitch's position as a minor artist, worthy of note for "anticipating the crude ideals of the colored picture-postcard in his sentimentalized version of nature."⁹⁶ This insular attitude disregards the position Leitch held in society. He had a productive career and held a position of honor as Vice President for the Institute of Painters in Water Color while maintaining his role as a teacher. While I do not disagree that he should be considered a minor player in the large history of the medium, his value surpasses that of a glorified tourist painter. As art historian Scott Wilcox put it:

In several respects Leitch's career is the epitome of the popular Victorian artist. His progression from scene painter to highly regarded member of the artistic community followed the pattern of the other popular Victorian painters like David Roberts and Clarkson Stanfield. The combination of teaching and a productive career, which Leitch achieved rather more felicitously than most, was a necessity for any nineteenth century watercolorists.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Julian Halsby, *Scottish Watercolors: 1740 – 1940* (London, B. T. Batsford, 1989), 77.

⁹⁶ Martin Hardie, *Water-color Painting in Britain: The Romantic Period*, ed. Dudley Snelgrove with Jonathan Mayne and Basil Taylor, vol. 2 (London: B.T. Batsford, 1975), 230.

⁹⁷ Scott Wilcox, *British Watercolors: Drawing of the 18th and 19th Centuries from the Yale Center for British Art* (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1985), 54.

I agree and believe that Leitch's value is in both his career and his work. He was unique in his ability to successfully sustain a career predominately as a watercolor artist while also being a tutor. The strength of his watercolors can be found in his ability to create a sense of place through his sophisticated understanding of color and his command of the medium. The visual effects of light and atmosphere present in his work create a layer of authenticity that is balanced by his attention to detail. Through these strengths Leitch was able to create images that evoke a sense of calmness and harmony.

Leitch's life was filled with a variety of experiences that helped to mold him into the artist he became. The first painters to inspire him exposed Leitch to the Picturesque. The traits of this movement can be seen in the few drawings available from this period. Leitch worked hard at mastering the technical qualities of watercolors, which is evident in his use transparent washes to achieve a rich color palette. This skill-set was in place prior to his journey to Italy, a trip that became a turning point in his career. During his four-year tour Leitch's path shifted away from scene painting towards tutoring and becoming a professional watercolorist.

Leitch's art matured developing into a style that carried the traits of formal Naturalism. The atmospheric effects in his paintings bring forth the spirit of a place and he successfully captures the sense of a single moment in time. His skies are active with shifting characters of light, which contrast the calm stillness of the land. Leitch was able to create a balance between the scene he was depicting and the setting. These aspects are what make his work unique but still congruent with nineteenth-century Naturalism.

His role as a teacher became a key part of his identity and was integral to the success of his profession. His student body was composed mainly of genteel amateurs

that were satisfied in achieving their own personal best and had no aspirations towards becoming professional artists. These students became Leitch's patrons allowing him to deal with them directly eliminating the use of a dealer. Financially this was beneficial for Leitch but kept his reputation limited to this social circle.

In addition, his relationship with Queen Victoria was a stabilizing element to his career and influenced the subjects he painted. Towards the end of his career when he pursued a position in the art societies of London Leitch's social status within the elite became a recommending factor. He was a thriving member of the Royal Institute of Painters in Water Colors, serving as vice president for ten years. Leitch can be remembered as a well-respected member of the professional art community who's Naturalistic work can be deemed a success.



Figure 1. Elliott & Fry, *William Leighton Leitch*, 1860s, albumen carte-de-visite, 3 5/8 x 2 1/4 inches, author's collection.



Figure 2. William Leighton Leitch, *San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice*, 1834, watercolor, 4 1/4 x 9 1/2 inches, British Museum.



Figure 3. William Leighton Leitch, *The Church of Santa Maria del Carmine* from *The Rhine, Italy and Greece*, 1840, engraving.



Figure 4. John Knox, *View of Loch Lomond*, n.d., oil on canvas, 12 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 48 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches.



Figure 5. William Leighton Leitch, *Coilsfield House*, c.1830, sepia on paper, 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches, A. A. Tait Collection.



Figure 6. William Leighton Leitch, *Howford Bridge*, sepia on paper, 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches, Martin Kemp Collection.



Figure 7. Alexander Nasmyth, *A Classical Landscape*, n.d., pen, brown ink, and watercolor on paper, 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 9 inches, British Museum.



Figure 8. Alexander Nasmyth, *Untitled*, etching with grey wash, 4 x 5 inches, British Museum.

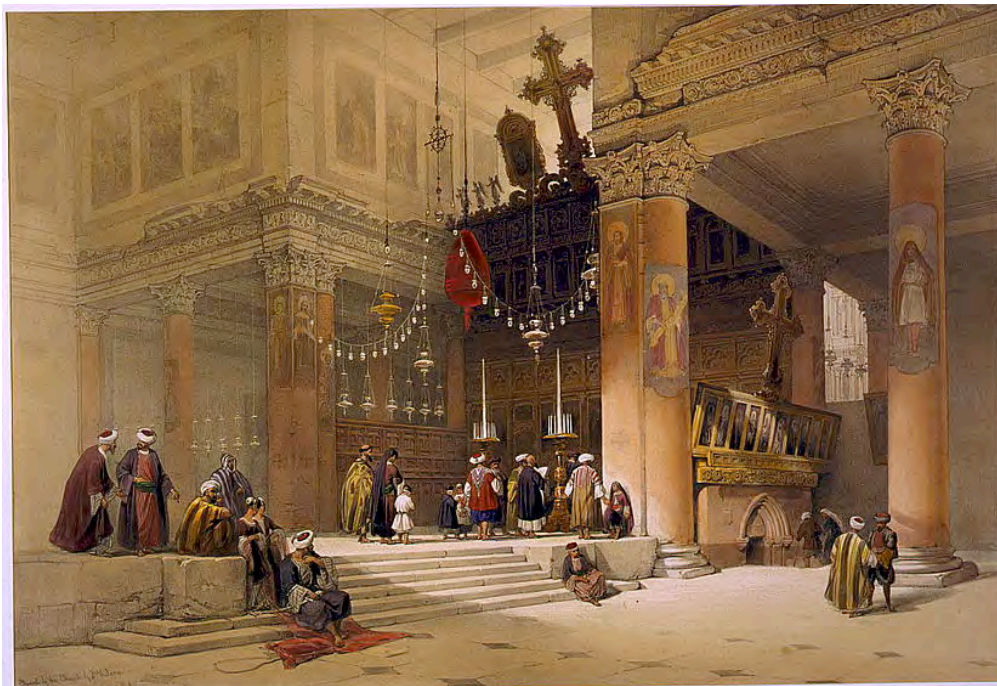


Figure 9. David Roberts, *Church of St. Helena from The Holy Land: Syria, Idumea, Arabia, Egypt & Nubia*, 1842, colored lithograph.



Figure 10. William Leighton Leitch, *Queen Victoria Landing at Granton Pier*, n.d., watercolor, 10 x 14 inches, The Royal Collection Trust.



Figure 11. Anthony Vandyke Copley Fielding, *A Sea Piece*, n.d., pencil and watercolor with scratching out, 16 x 22 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches.



Figure 12. William Leighton Leitch, *Island of Jura, Western Isles*, n.d., watercolor with touches of white body-color on card, 9 x 13 ½ inches, British Museum.



Figure 13. Anthony Vandyke Copley Fielding, *The Head of Glencoe*, 1823, pencil and watercolor with touches of white body-color, 12 x 16 inches, The Morgan Library and Museum.



Figure 14. Claude Lorrain, *Seaport with the Embarkation of the Queen of Sheba*, 1648, oil on canvas, 58 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 77 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches, National Gallery London.



Figure 15. William Leighton Leitch, *Untitled*, 1838, watercolor, 6 x 10 inches, British Museum.



Figure 16. Hugh William Williams, *Glencoe Highlands*, n.d., oil on canvas, 24 x 36 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches, Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums.



Figure 17. William Leighton Leitch, *Blair Castle*, 1844, watercolor, 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 14 inches, The Royal Collection Trust.



Figure 18. John Constable, *Branch Hill Pond, Hampstead Heath, with a Boy Sitting on a Bank*, c.1825, oil on canvas, 13 x 19 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches, Tate.



Figure 19. John Constable, *Hapstead Heath*, c.1820, oil on canvas, 21 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 30 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches, The Fitzwilliam Museum.



Figure 20. James Stark, *Cromer, Norfolk*, c.1837, oil on deal panel, 24 x 33 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches, Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service (Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery)



Figure 21. John Berney Crome, *Moonlight Scene*, 1823, 14 x 23 inches, Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service (Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery)



Figure 22. Alfred William Hunt, *Bamborough Castle*, 1871, pencil and watercolor with gum Arabic, touches of body-color and scratching out, 15 x 21 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches, The Fuller Collection.



Figure 23. William Leighton Leitch, *Study of Fir Trees*, n.d., watercolor, 19 x 14 inches, The Royal Collection Trust.



Figure 24. Edward Lear, *Corpo di Cava*, 1838, oil and gouache, 14 1/8 x 9 13/16 inches, Yale center for British Art.



Figure 25. William Leighton Leitch, *The White Lodge*, 1861, watercolor, 9 ¼ x 13 ½ inches, The Royal Collection Trust.



Figure 26. John Sell Cotman, *Gate-way*, 1818, watercolor, 7 3/8 x 10 inches, Yale Center for British Art.



Figure 27. William Leighton Leitch, *Stirling Castle*, 1842, watercolor, 10 x 14 ½ inches, The Royal Collection Trust.



Figure 28. Christen Købke, *View from the Citadel Wall, with the Towers of the Church of Our Lady and St. Petri Church in the Background*, 1833, oil on paper, mounted on canvas, 6 ¼ x 11 5/8 inches, Hirschsprungske Samling, Copenhagen.



Figure 29. J.M.W. Turner, *Buckfastleigh Abbey, Devonshire*, c.1825-7, watercolor, 11 x 15 1/2 inches, Tate Britain.



Figure 30. J.M.W. Turner, *Ludlow Castle, Shropshire*, c.1830, watercolor, 12 x 18 inches, Private Collection.



Figure 31. William Leighton Leitch, *Taymouth Castle*, 1842, watercolor, 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 14 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches, The Royal Collection Trust.



Figure 32. J.M.W. Turner, *Bolton Abbey, Yorkshire*, 1809, watercolor, 11 x 15 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches, The British Museum.



Figure 33. Viscountess Charlotte Canning, *Ardverikie, Loch Laggan*, watercolor, 9 ½ x 13 ½ inches, Royal Collection Trust.

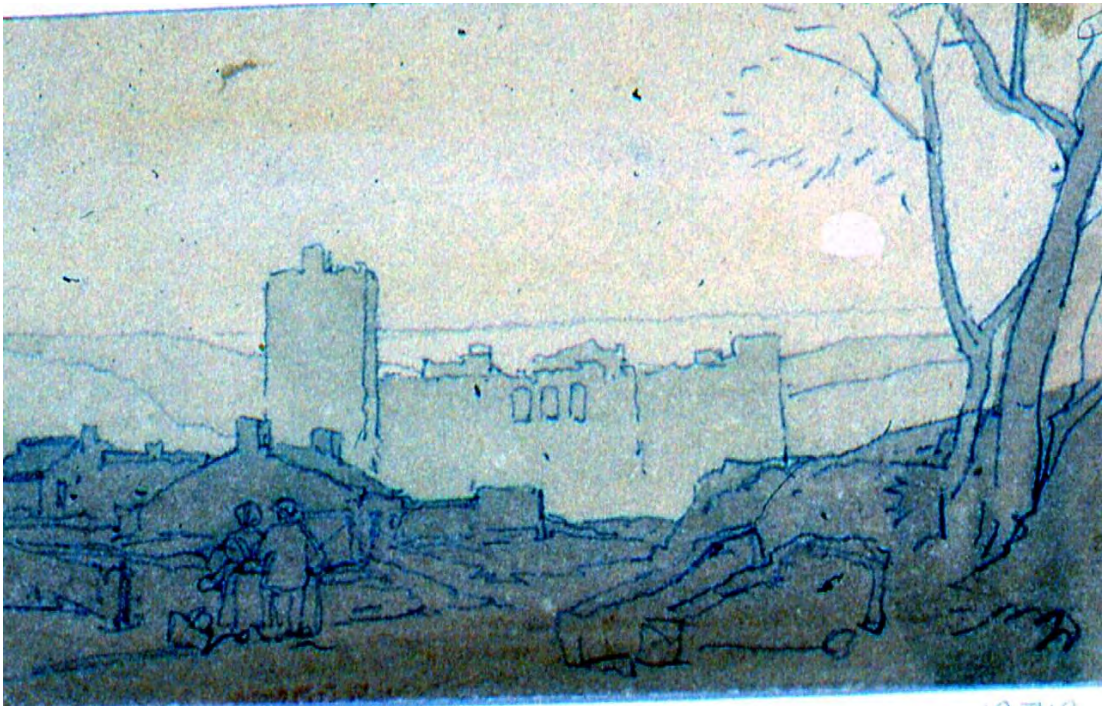


Figure 34. William Leighton Leitch, *Moonlight Study: three-stage drawing demonstration, part 1*, watercolor, 3 x 5 ½ inches, Royal Collection Trust.



Figure 35. William Leighton Leitch, *Moonlight Study: three-stage drawing demonstration, part 2*, watercolor, 3 x 5 1/2 inches, Royal Collection Trust



Figure 36. William Leighton Leitch, *Moonlight Study: three-stage drawing demonstration, part 3*, watercolor, 3 x 5 1/2 inches, Royal Collection Trust.



Figure 37. Queen Victoria, *Family Scene, Osborne House*, 1850, watercolor, The Royal Collection Trust.



Figure 38. William Leighton Leitch, *Barton Farm*, c.1850, watercolor, 12 x 18 inches, The Royal Collection Trust.

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APPENDIX A: MAP OF W.L. LEITCH'S TRIP THROUGH EUROPE TO ITALY
(1833-1837)



This map depicts the four-year Grand Tour Leitch took from 1833 to 1837. He went from London to Rotterdam then followed the Rhine down to Italy. In Italy he starts in Venice and travels south to Rome, followed by Palermo. Leitch then returns north to Rome making stops in the area around Naples and the Abruzzi Mountains. From Rome he returns to London via Genoa, Marseilles and Paris.

APPENDIX B: ALPHABETICAL LIST OF W.L. LEITCH'S STUDENTS

This list of students comes predominately from those names mentioned in Andrew MacGeorge's published memoir and additional names were added as they appeared in other texts. Their names appear as they were in the text and they are listed in alphabetical order based on last name.

Lady Ashburton
 Prince Arthur
 Lady Belmany
 Honorable Edward Bouverie
 Duchess of Buccleuch
 Earl and Countess of Buccleuch
 Lady Canning
 Lord Richard Cavendish
 Earl and Countess of Crawford
 Lady Elcho
 Princess Helena
 Lord Henry Lennox
 Prince Leopold
 Sir Coutts Lindsay
 Princess Louise
 Duchess of Manchester
 Lady Ogle
 James Orrock
 Archdeacon Pakenham
 Daughters of the Earl of Radnor
 Countess of Rosebery
 Lord Selkirk
 Lady Shaftesbury
 The ladies of the Sutherland family
 Queen Victoria
 Daughters of Mr. Sergeant Wrarigham in Witton Place

APPENDIX C: ALPHABETICAL LIST OF ARTISTS WHOSE WORK WAS PART
OF W.L. LEITCH'S COLLECTION AT THE TIME OF HIS DEATH IN 1883

This list was generated based on the Christie's catalog of the sale of Leitch's work at the time of his death. The works by artists other than Leitch were arranged based on type. (For example unframed drawings vs. framed drawings) Next to each name in the catalog was the number of works by the artist. I have compiled all the names of the artists from each section of the catalog and organized it in alphabetical order based on last name. All names are shown as they were in the catalog including the initials indicating professional organizations they were members of.

J. Absolon	Copley Fielding	D. Roberts, RA
Sir W. Allen	Flacheron	Rubens, After
Baptiste	G. A. Fripp	W. Simpson, RSA
G. Barrett	Gainsborough	R. Smirke, RA
Sir G. Beaumont	H. Gastineau	Solimeni
Bignani	Giekie	C. Stanfield, RA
Boehm	Gilfillan	P. Stephanoff
F. Lee Bridell	T. Girtin	T. Stothard, RA
Sir A.W. Callcott, RA	S. Gompertz	F. Tayler
Alonzo Cano	Greuze	Tiepolo
Carracci	Gruner	F. W. Topham
G. Cattermole	J.D. Harding	J. M. W. Turner, RA
G. Chambers	W. Havell	Turner (of Oxford)
Clive	W. Hunt	T. Uwins, RA
W. Collins, RA	E. Kidd	John Varley
R. Cook, RA	R. Lauder, RSA	Vianelli
Correggio	Sir T. Lawrence, PRA	Watteau
Cosway	J. Linnell, Sen.	R. Westall, RA
J. S. Cotman	H. Macculloch, RSA	Sir D. Wilkie, RA
D. Cox	D. Maclise, RA	Hugh William Williams
J. Cristall	Sir D. Macnee, PRSA	Penny Williams
John Crome	J. Martin	John Wilson
T. H. Cromek	J. Meyer	
P. J. De Loutherbourg,	J. H. Mole	
RA	G. Moreland	
P. De Wint	W. Mulready, RA	
G. Dodgson	A. Nasmyth	
Andrew Donaldson	A. Nicholson	
E. Duncan	E. Nicol, ARA	
Tom Duncan	S. Owen	
Dutch	S. Prout	
W. Etty, RA	H. P. Riviere	



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