The Venetian artist Canaletto (1697-1768) has been very influential in providing a legacy for the image of London. The contemporary commentator John Gwynn wrote in *London and Westminster Improved in 1766*, ‘The English are now what the Romans were of old, distinguished like them by power and opulence and excelling all other nations in commerce and navigation’. Predominant economic and military strength were the defining features of London in the mid eighteenth century and Canaletto was the artist to project this. During his relatively short stay in London between 1746 and 1755 he produced a series of strikingly beautiful views of the city which have provided a new pictorial definition of the capital, and influencing the direction of London landscape art for the future. The city through Canaletto’s eyes looked tidied up, clean and neat, pristine like a glass paperweight, and we see this in his paintings, *London, the Thames from the terrace of Somerset House towards the City, 1750-51* (Fig. 2) and *London, the Thames from the terrace of Somerset House looking towards Westminster, 1750-1* (Fig. 3) both Royal Collection.

When the two pictures are placed together they create a long panorama of the river, showcasing the main landmarks, St Paul’s Cathedral, surrounded by more than three dozen of Wren’s spires and churches, and Westminster Abbey shown under a brilliant blue sky. Canaletto painted from the terrace of Somerset House, the river stairs are visible in the left foreground located on the great bend of the Thames almost equidistant between St Paul’s Cathedral and Westminster Abbey, affording fine views of the City of London and the City of Westminster. In the view to Westminster can be seen the newly completed Westminster Bridge, the four towers of the Church of St John the Evangelist and Westminster Hall and further to the right Westminster Abbey and the Banqueting House, all of which survive today but further to the right is the wooden tower of the York Buildings waterworks, now destroyed.

Somerset House, absent from the panorama paintings, is shown in this drawing by Canaletto (Fig.4) *View of Old Somerset House from the Thames*, undated, held at Yale Center for British Art. Somerset House was, technically, still a royal palace but had fallen into disrepair to the extent that for instance in 1730 Anne of Denmark’s Bedchamber in Somerset House collapsed. Most of the rooms were given over as grace and favour lodgings by the owners, the Prince and Princess of Wales (later George II), given at royal whim as a reward for services or compensation for hard times. Somerset House had become marooned as a rundown property when the social gravity of London moved west to St James and the Strand deteriorated as a high class place of residence. Tenements had been developed into shops and new Georgian terraces built. In the drawing the wall looks slightly dilapidated and the garden overgrown.

Somerset House, then, to some extent, typified the evolution of Georgian society in which monarchical absolutism was replaced by a politically divided aristocracy committed to the production and display of wealth. It was a society governed by the categorical and unconditional elevation of property as a central tenet, based on Locke, Blackstone and Adam Smith’s ideas of celebrating the owner’s right to enjoyment of his property. Landed ownership meant the freedom to pursue favoured interests and one of the most favoured interests was that of government and government from Westminster. The ruling classes perpetuated the ideas of personal liberty, predominance of property, protection against foreign competition, minimal internal intervention and created the conditions for a massive economic surge. In harnessing this potential they also sought to express it by building lavish town houses and sponsoring civic projects not only to showcase their wealth but to facilitate its production.

There is little sign of ruin and decay in Canaletto’s paintings. Instead Canaletto made London look new and beautiful. Canaletto gave an unprecedented spaciousness to the visual landscape which was partly effected by his favoured device of using two viewpoints in a painting some 10 degrees apart conveying the appearance of a much more open vista than was attainable in practice- the equivalent of the wide angle view. He did manipulate the landscape and we can see this in his pen and ink drawing of the City from the terrace of Somerset House held at the Courtauld Gallery (Fig.5). The viewpoints in the drawing and the painting are slightly different and the terrace is shown from a slightly different angle. In both we are directed to St Paul’s Cathedral by the vertical of this long terrace wall, and by the clustering of boats and masts which point diagonally towards the dome by which are much more defined in the painting. The buildings are smaller in relation to the picture surface in the painting again accentuating the sweep and spaciousness of the view. The view was engraved for wider dissemination and this is an example published by Edward Rooker in 1750 which also has titles in French, indicating its popularity. (Fig.6).

In this talk, therefore, I would like to explore how Canaletto, in effect, reinvented the London landscape the legacy he left and the contribution of some other contemporary artists in shaping the city’s image. London was a city ripe for change, a city which expanded massively from the 1750s until the mid-nineteenth century and whose image was adapted accordingly. This image was one in which Canaletto played an important but as we
shall we see a far from solitary role in formulating.

Having looked at Canaletto’s take on the view of London from Somerset House let’s look at his artistic legacy. These views proved extremely popular and were produced by artists such as William James, demonstrated in his drawing *St Paul’s Cathedral and the River Thames from the Terrace of Old Somerset House, London c.1750* (Fig. 7) (V&A). Thought to be a studio assistant of Canaletto and renowned as a painter of Venice whose views were bought up by Grand Tour patrons James here shows a lightness of touch in depicting the city. The couple on the terrace seem to be dancing along this walkway admiring the view as they progress while St Paul’s rises gracefully above the surrounding decoratively delineated buildings.

Paul Sandby (1725-1809) celebrated as the father of British watercolour produced two panoramic drawings, now at the British Museum, of the same view looking to east and west, both clearly influenced by Canaletto’s view (Figs 8) but widening it out substantially. Born in Nottingham he came to London where he worked in the Ordinance Office at the Tower of London as a draughtsman. Like Canaletto, he wanted to capture the sweep of the Thames panorama. In both drawings the landmarks of London, St Paul’s, Middle Temple, Monument and Westminster Bridge are clearly visible and the depth of the terrace accentuates the idea of London as a parkland with the backdrop of the Thames, where Londoners can walk at leisure enjoying their surroundings under the shade of trees. The sense of clean air and spaciousness is predominant. Also an oil painted before 1775 (Fig. 9) with Westminster appearing much closer.

William Daniell in this handcoloured aquatint of 1805 *Westminster seen from the Embankment at Somerset House before the construction of Waterloo Bridge of 1805* (Fig. 10) (Museum of London). This view looks over the terrace of the recently built Adelphi Terrace beside Somerset House on the north bank looking down to Westminster. One of six views of London, a very flat work which introduces the black smoke emitted by the factories in Southwark. As late as the 1870s the artist John O’Connor produced two views of this section of the river comparing it before and after the construction of the Embankment (a major civic project, aiming to create a barrier between the Thames and the river banks in order to build Sir Joseph Bazalgette’s huge sewer, designed to clean up the Thames). The first painting by him shows *York Water Gate and the Adelphi from the River, 1872* (Fig. 11) and Somerset House is set back from the river with the focus instead on the York Water Gate and the Adelphi Terrace. It shows the position before the major engineering achievement of the Embankment. In contrast, the painting, *The Embankment, 1874* (Fig. 12) both Museum of London, looking towards St Paul’s Cathedral and Cannon Street imparts a spaciousness to the city, over 120 years after Canaletto’s similar view. It is a bright lively picture with sunlight catching the gleam of the regularly spaced new street gaslights, and the bayonets of the red-coated Grenadier Guards marching to their barracks at the Tower. The uncongested road stretches in a broad ribbon to a skyline that combines order and tradition in the form of the Gothic Hall of the Middle Temple, state and spiritual authority in the shape of St Paul’s and the technological present and future in the gasometers (whose rounded domes echo the dome of St Paul’s), the smoking factory chimneys, the steaming railway train and the shining new train shed at Cannon Street station, again whose rounded domes catch the eye and add symmetry to the composition. The work is animated by the fresh greenery of the young saplings, recently installed like the gasworks, and the glistening surface of the river. The figure of the nursemaid looking down upon the Embankment (and the soldiers) creates a vignette of domesticity and also mimics the position of the viewer looking down on this scene. The contradictions in the painting are carefully reconciled: the lowly and the grand, peace and military preparedness, leisure and employment, particular and general. It is a painting which is very much of the moment but which at the same time draws upon past artistic conventions and in particular the interest shown in views of the river from this key spot of the terrace of Somerset House.

So the idea of London introduced by Canaletto which has become embedded in our consciousness and which has been emulated by later artists, is stately, shimmering, sunny, and populated with figures which provide interest and colour. It was a new, unprecedented vision of mid-eighteenth-century London which was very influential. But this view was founded upon a solid topographical landscape, artistic tradition which was flourishing in London before Canaletto’s arrival and on which it could be argued that Canaletto used to develop his vision. We need therefore to take a look backwards as well as forwards when working out what was this London legacy and how was it formed.

London, as the preeminent city in Europe, was incessantly drawn and painted. Wenceslaus Hollar is a good example and this is his *The Prospect of London and Westminster taken from Lambeth* c. 1647, engraving (Fig. 13). Hollar was born in Prague, moved to Cologne and established himself as a print maker, met the Earl of Arundel who brought him back to London where he began to produce commercial prints of London. London also provided a refuge to Flemish artists arriving in London from the 1670s onwards following the French invasion of the Netherlands and they brought their distinctive techniques of flat print making and map making. Artists at this time chose to depict the city stretched out in a line from a bird’s eye view taken from the south bank. In these works, London was often visualised from an indeterminate point in mid air in a very linear format with the emphasis on accuracy of perspective. These landscapes complemented the plethora of maps and panoramas which were increasingly popular as Londoners sought to understand their own city. John Rocque produced the first new map of London in 1746 since 1682. He was a Huguenot surveyor who lived in Soho. The title of his map was *London and Westminster or even An exact Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster, the Boroughs of Southwark with the Country near ten miles round 1746* (Fig. 14). This section shows Charing Cross and Northumberland House. The survey took nine years to measure and it was 13ft wide and 6and a half ft deep, going through eight editions by 1769, indicative of the interest Londoners felt in their city. Rocque was...
determined that the map should be as accurate as possible employing detailed techniques for example obtaining
the true bearing of steeples from different positions using trigonometrically computed proportions.

There were also a significant number of British born artists working in London prior to Canaletto’s arrival. They
were often unknown as they had been trained through the City Guild system operating in London. From the
Middle Ages all painters working in the City of London had to join the Painters-Stainers Company which trained
heraldic, decorative, mural and coach painters, as well as fine artists before the establishment of the St Martin’s
Lane Academy in 1735. Such British artists included Samuel Scott (1701-72) and Joseph Nickolls (1692-1760)
who were later joined by William Marlow (1740-1813) and all painted the London landscape ensuring that London
was presented as the pre eminent capital in the eighteenth century.

But these artists had to work hard to present London in this light. Despite its size and prosperity Georgian
London was not a city to astonish the observer with its lavish modern architecture. The population by 1750 was
about 750,000 and growing rapidly. It was a very disorderly city, a rambling series of narrow streets, wood
buildings lining the river and functioning crowded wharfs, shot through with the muddy waters of the Thames,
poor drainage, the prevalence of slaughterhouses, unsafe alleys, congestion and a lack of central planning
meant streets and squares grew up in a haphazard fashion. None of the royal palaces such as Hampton Court,
engraving by Joseph Highmore c. 1744 (Fig.15) approached Continental standards of size or opulence. Number
10 Downing Street was distinctly and deliberately modest. The Crown and the Church both lacked the money
and the appetite for an extensive building programme. This meant that artists were constrained by what was
actually available to paint and, in the absence of grandiose public architecture and royal palaces, had to be
content with the few large town houses which were suitably magnificent or new civic projects like Westminster
Bridge. Impressive aristocratic mansions such as Northumberland House which occupied about four acres and
faced onto the Strand near Charing Cross with a frontage stretching 162 ft were exceptional. It stood on the site
between the corner of the present Trafalgar Square and Charing Cross Station and was therefore alighted upon
as suitable subjects for paintings. Here is a drawing of Northumberland House by Canaletto (Fig.16) and the
finished oil 1752 (Fig.17). Built for Henry Howard, 1st Duke of Northampton in 1605-9 it was, in the words of Sir
Nikolaus Pevsner, ‘the grandest Jacobean house in London’. After Canaletto’s arrival in London in 1746 he
immediately sought to attract wealthy patrons to acquire his paintings. He appealed to the taste of a leading
coterie of wealthy landowners by providing an architectural idealism, humanist ideals of order and design which
implied civic virtue noble values and a romantic rendition of London’s landscape, despite the lack of obvious
landmarks.

One of the artists I mentioned earlier who was working in London before Canaletto arrived was Joseph Nickolls
(the son of an agricultural labourer and apprenticed to a Painter- Stainer in 1713) who also painted
Northumberland House c. 1750 (Fig.18), Yale Center for British Art, interestingly called Charing Cross with a
statue of Charles I and Northumberland House which Canaletto must have seen. Canaletto, by contrast, in his
c.1752 painting (return to Fig. 16 and 17) introduced an element of theatricality by manipulating the
perspectives and subtly altering the angle of every receding line in order to give Northumberland House more
emphasis and thereby created a spaciousness absent in Nickolls’s work. This is the drawing of Northumberland
House, c. 1752 from the Minneapolis Institute which is very similar to the painting, the mother and child in the
lower right corner and the bench and baskets correspond the cart near the centre, arrangement of figure
groups. However, the main difference is in the shifting of the viewpoint which for the drawing is distinctly further
to the right so that four bays of an additional building are included on the far right and the angle of every
receding line is subtly altered. This points to the drawing being presented to the owner of Northumberland
House, Hugh Smithson, who requested that more emphasis be given to Northumberland House to make the
painting less of a London street scene and more of a view of his newly acquired London House. He also ensured
that the effect was reminiscent of an Italian summer by using a lighter ground in his works, a light grey with
which he covered the canvas. He also added rosy tints in the sky, rarely a hint of London’s infamous smog.

So here we have an example of Canaletto following an agenda, based on the patrons he knew and deviating from
a strict topographical accuracy relying on his theatrical training of creating set designs and creating a landscape
of beauty, elegance, light, compositional proportion and human interest, an image of London which was to have
lasting effect.

**Westminster Bridge**

The new civic building project of Westminster Bridge, started in 1739 and completed in 1750, the first bridge in
the middle of London to be built over the Thames for six hundred years was of immense interest to London
artists. Here is A View of Westminster 1740, by Joseph Nickolls held University of Greenwich collection
(Fig.19). It gives an indication of the type of picture which was being produced by London artists.

Westminster Bridge was one of the great engineering achievements of the time and greatly improved
communications in the City. It represented a new identity for London, the home of political power for an Imperial
city, a move from Tudor Whitehall and Somerset House and the medieval city. It is not surprising that Canaletto
drew and painted many views of the Bridge for one of the Commissioners of the Bridge was Hugh Smithson, 1st
Duke of Northumberland who had invited Canaletto to come to London and therefore an obvious recipient. Here,
however, Canaletto could not escape the backdrop of a constantly changing city, in flux, with building and demolition scarred by the debris of a building site. A city which was littered with half-constructed buildings covered in scaffolding, a wooden framework, albeit heralding the new Imperial city. The paintings and drawings of Westminster Bridge are arguably Canaletto’s most important contribution to London, of the six drawings in the Royal Collection acquired by George III in 1762, five are of Westminster Bridge. This is London: Westminster Bridge under Construction, c. 1750 (Fig.20) from the north (Westminster) side of the river and shows the fifth pier and the fourth and fifth arches of the bridge under repair. Men are depicted at work on the bridge. Several small boats are shown on the river, and figures with dogs are shown on the quayside. In Westminster Bridge with a distant view of Lambeth Palace, c.1750 (Fig.21) the wooded hills are compositional inventions. On the right bank of the river the church of St John’s, the House of Commons, Westminster Hall, Westminster Abbey, and the church of St Margaret’s can be seen. In the centre, on the other side of the river, is Lambeth Palace. The drawing shows Westminster bridge before all the turrets which surmounted the piers of the arches were completed. Its architect, Charles Labelye, wrote that the Bridge ‘was not only a very beautiful but a most lasting, useful and necessary communication between the neighbouring counties, a considerable Means towards the Increase of Trade, Manufacture and the Useful Arts and a very great ornament to the capital of the British Empire’ and the drawings do confirm this contemporary view.

Through colour, composition and a manipulation of scenery Canaletto refocused the London gaze on this bridge. His painting London: A View through an Arch of Westminster, 1746-7 (Fig.22) held by the Duke of Northumberland was described as, ‘A most beautiful view of the City of London taken through one of the Centers of the Arches of the New Bridge at Westminster.’ Canaletto presented Westminster Bridge as a heroic construction, a celebration of civic prowess appealing not least to the bridge’s sponsors and backers and he manipulated the view to create striking perspectives, shadows and detailing. The illusion of distance was created by depicting architecture at a slant running diagonally off the canvas to undetermined horizons. Canaletto rotated building elevations and added others which were invisible from the original viewpoint to perfect the composition. The Thames lent itself to this type of contrivance for its curves could be rearranged to make the background closer or further away while the rooflines on the waterfront houses could be changed to simplify the architecture creating a series of receding planes that lead the eye to the middle distance and then out again. Here is the drawing from the Royal Collection, The City seen through an arch of Westminster Bridge, c. 1750 (Fig.23) to contrast with the painting and again we see this as being more cluttered and less spacious.

The British born artist most closely associated with painting Westminster Bridge is Samuel Scott who produced eleven versions of companion pairs of old London Bridge and Westminster Bridge between 1747 and 1761 based on drawings produced from 1742. Samuel Scott was known in the 1730s as an ingenious ship painter and his marine art reputation has historically overshadowed his abilities as a painter of London landscapes. Often thought to be derivative, his The Building of Westminster Bridge, 1742 Yale Center of British Art (Fig.24) has been described as entirely lacking Canaletto’s feeling for architecture his luminosity and skill in composition. However, this analysis underplays the experience and ability of Scott as a painter of London landscape. One of the most memorable of Scott’s views of Westminster (and the one in which he has been most compared to Canaletto) is Arch of Westminster Bridge, c.1751, Tate (Fig.25). Scott presents his own vision of Westminster Bridge concentrating on the monumentality of the structure. He painted this view five times. The small size of this version suggests that this was the first. The view looks downstream towards the north bank and is likely to have been taken from a point on the river near the second arch of Westminster Bridge which he worked up from pencil studies he did on the spot. It fails to depict the underside of the right-hand arch, a failure corrected in the final version shown here also held at Tate (Fig.26). In this painting Scott also modified the too-prominent dome on the turret at the extreme left of the first one into a flat (or flatter) shape. Also in the earlier work a group of masons is shown about to celebrate the apparently imminent conclusion of their work which comprises three rather than two figures; one has perched a wicker basket (for tools) on the ledge of the parapet, a rather intrusive detail which Scott omitted in the final painting. He also increased the shadowing on the arch in the final version to emphasise its depth.

Scott’s view in this painting encompasses Fishmarket’s Wharf, Montagu House, Duke of Portland and Earl of Pembroke Houses, Somerset House and the Water Tower. But the focus is Westminster Bridge which in Scott’s work pushes forward from the canvas, its cavernous arch emphasising thickness, solidity and permanence, with the stonework predominate over the civic skyline of delicately composed buildings. The heavy vertical pillar contrasts with the frailties of the wooden struts of Canaletto’s, rather theatricaly draws the eye to the dome of St Paul’s rather than signifying the labour involved. Back to Fig. 26 there are fewer boats in Scott’s composition, all of which are carefully ordered shown as working boats lined up in a diagonal to the spire of the water tower, omitting the dome of St Pauls which features so prominently in Canaletto, thus foregrounding the commercial nature of the river. The figures of the swimmer and the two labourers silhouetted against the sky add everyday interest. The Scott painting has! a play of light and shade absent from the polished canvases of Canaletto and the closer viewpoint emphatically points to engineering prowess rather than detail of scaffolding. The lowering billowing cloud above the bridge which lightens as it moves towards the skyline smattered with grey smoke adds detail to the drama. By throwing a stronger light on the right side Scott provides a deeper recess to the central shadow emphasising the texture of the wood. The Scott painting shows a huge sensitivity for displaying physically, emphasising the difference between stones. Scott’s vision was grounded in the fact that he knew the river was a tidal river with all the plays
of light and shade which that involved, unlike the uniform Mediterranean light enjoyed by Canaletto Scott therefore used a perspective given by Canaletto but gave it a specifically London twist. Just before leaving Westminster Bridge I will show you a Daniel Turner painting, c.1801 of Westminster Bridge (Fig.27) to demonstrate the influence of this view through the arch of the bridge.

**William Marlow and the City**

The artist who may best be described as the heir of Canaletto’s legacy who expressed London subjects in an effortless evocation of compositional order and with a clarity of depiction redolent of Canaletto’s paintings was William Marlow (1740-1813). Marlow had been apprenticed to Samuel Scott, and probably studied at St Martin’s Lane Academy. He exhibited regularly at the Society of Artists from 1762, then at the Society of Free Artists and the Royal Academy before travelling to Italy and is recorded as visiting Rome in 1766. Marlow has been described as carrying on where Canaletto left off as the principal painter of the new building developments and engineering projects of London. While this downplays his own experiences and travels in Italy it is certainly the case that Marlow actively sought to promote the capital as a place for civic idealism.

But Marlow, while concentrating on the river, shows a progression from the preoccupations of the earlier artists in that he turned from Westminster and Westminster Bridge to focus on the City of London. These ovals of 1775-6 at the Government Art Collection reference the pre-eminence of the Somerset House view in capturing the length of the River looking up and downstream (Figs. 28 and 29). Marlow however did have a new bridge to paint, Blackfriars which opened in 1769. (Fig.30) painting it at least five times. The view is from the south bank opposite Temple Gardens with the north end of the bridge marked by a magnificent sweep of steps down to quay level and the buildings are viewed through the arch, a device used by Canaletto.

The landscape of London, commercial, historic, crowded, exotic, in flux is seen in Marlow's *Fresh Wharf*, 1762, (Fig. 31) Museum of London which was the most westerly of the legal quays. They derive their name from an Act of 1558 which restricted trade to quays located between the Tower and London Bridge, where matters could be overseen by officials of the Custom House. Marlow here is capturing life on the river. The proximity of this quayside to Covent Garden Market is signified by the figure of the Levant merchant and the olive oil jar. Barrels and bales of merchandise are being checked. The painting can be dated by reference to the structures in it, such as St Magnus the Martyr Church in Lower Thames Street. It suffered a fire in 1760 meaning the roof had to be replaced and it also was reconfigured in 1762 when new church vestries were built to the south and the aisles were shortened in order to allow a new pavement to pass under the church when the road from London Bridge was widened- work which was completed in June 1763. Scaffolding on the side of the tower can be seen in the painting indicating the work has started but not yet finished. London Bridge is depicted without any shops or buildings, all were removed by 1762 following concerns over congestion and overloading so we can place the dating to a quite specific period in middle 1762. *Fresh Wharf* caught the essence of London, a London powered by the engine of trade fuelled by imports delivered along the Thames, a constantly changing aspect attested by incessant building work and a historic site where civic notices were read out to Londoners informing them of important news.

Marlow, therefore, differed turned his gaze to the City rather than Westminster, thus differing from Canaletto. Canaletto produced only one major oil of St Paul's (1754 Yale Center) (Fig.32) whereas Marlow produced works like *View of Cheapside, Poultry Street* (Fig.33) and *View of Ludgate Hill* (Fig.34) and this fantasy *Capriccio: St Paul's and a Venetian Canal, c.1795* (Fig.35). Here the Grand Canal of Venice flows up Ludgate Hill which is lined with houses with open shutters, washing hanging out to dry and ornate open balconies- none of which would be likely in North Europe. The Church of St Martin 1677-84 does not obscure St Paul’s as it would have done in actuality and the figures appear to pay tribute to the spiritual authority of St Paul's. Blue and white flags line the route and much tonal contrast in the colours of the house and canal. Detailed viewing results in an increasingly claustrophobic atmosphere as the steps in the foreground lead nowhere, the boats prevent a clear passageway, the ropes act as a barrier and there is no obvious way around St Paul’s. The dark shadows of the still water suggest Venetian decay dirt and decline rather than the active life of London shown in *View of Ludgate Street* and the atmosphere is one of disjuncture and fragmentation. Marlow here has fused two cities, using the illusionistic painting techniques favoured by Canaletto and highlighting the very different characters of London and Venice.

Marlow’s masterpiece may however lie in his depiction of the *Adelphi Terrace on the River* (Fig.36) held at the Museum of London which has a definite reference to Canaletto. This was a popular view and it relates to the very first set of views from Somerset House described earlier. Canaletto had also focused on this section of the river. In *The Thames at Westminster*, c. 1750, National Trust (Fig.37) shows the old York Water Gate and the York Buildings Waterworks Company’s water tower in the foreground looking towards Westminster Bridge. It was before the building of the Adelphi Terrace. Canaletto may have been working from Scott's first version of it, painted c.1742-3. This is *A View of the Thames with the York Buildings Water Tower*, (Fig.38) after Samuel Scott, at Tate. By the 1770s the focus of interest was the new building, the Adelphi terrace of houses, shown in these prints, Benedetto Pastorini’s, *View of the South Front of the New Building called the Adelphi*, 1770 above (Fig.39) Benjamin Green’s *The Buildings called the Adelphi* 1772, below (Fig.39) and William Daniel’s version...
Marlow’s *London Riverfront from Westminster to the Adelphi, 1771-2 (Fig. 41)*, was drawn from the site of the current Waterloo Bridge looking southwards towards Westminster Bridge and Westminster Abbey, the Banqueting House, Horse Guards and the York Buildings Company’s Waterworks Tower. The Adelphi was a prestigious residential development built to be level with the Strand by the Adam Brothers who took a ninety nine year lease from the Duke of St Albans seeking to reclaim the shallow bay and erect a wharf and terrace. Conceived as a unified architectural mass with a natural splendour of size and symmetry, the Adelphi indeed attracted some celebrated figures to move into its houses but the venture proved to be a financial disaster. The level of the wharf was built too feet too low so it was not possible to rent out the vaults. Also fashionable society had moved out as the river became more cluttered, congested and dirty. Marlow’s painting captures the contrast between the airy structure of this classical building and the labour required to build it by the rubble is shown piled up on the jetty waiting for disposal. The commercial activity is also highlighted by the unloading of coal from the barges on the right.

So Canaletto’s arrival sparked a major reassessment of how London was perceived and how it perceived itself. Of his 48 English subjects 35 are of London. Artists working in London before his arrival were compelled to take note and to refine their existing techniques, viewpoints, compositions and styles. This was aligned to the increasing confidence in the achievements of urban development and how to portray them. As London grew it became for artists a topographical grammar, in which images of churches, aristocratic residences, government, civic and trade buildings and bridges were all produced for orientation, promotion, souvenir. London was viewed as expanding in concentric circles rather than linear horizons. After Canaletto left in 1756 a set of painters continued to innovate in their work. Turner’s first oil painting of Venice (Fig. 41) in 1833 was called *Ducal Palace and Bridge of Sighs, Canaletto painting*, held at Tate. Here we see an artist, Canaletto, in operatic costume standing on a plank in the water in front of a huge gilt framed canvas on an easel in front of what is an inaccurately drawn Molo. The *Athenaeum*, 11 May, 1833 thought that Turner had superceded Canaletto, describing Turner’s picture as ‘more his own that he seems aware of: he imagines he has painted it in the Canaletti style: the style is his, and worth Canaletti’s ten times over.’

The imprint of Canaletto was instrumental in ensuring that London was viewed as an Imperial capital, with links to European cities, carrying on a painterly tradition of the Italian Renaissance, celebrating, light, water, exceptional building and historic tradition and the patronage of an English elite broadening its horizons to embrace the continent. The London based artists took up the challenge of the Italian visitor and created their own grounded views which have endured and delighted us until today, colourful, innovative, affluent, conscious of London’s past but prepared to embrace its messy and disorderly present and determined to create an image of power and prestige for the future.

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