

## Aspects of Franconia

### Turner in Franconia



While doing some reading for my September talk on William Turner, I came across an oil painting of Rosenau Palace, which is situated close to Coburg, ancestral home of Queen Victoria's consort, Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha (the Franconian Society went there a few years ago and visited Rosenau!).

Turner (1775-1851) had been on a study tour down to Venice and decided to spend some four days in the autumn of 1840 making sketches of Rosenau and its surroundings for an oil painting – the one shown above – a possible gift for the young English queen and her beloved Albert. Turner finished his painting in 1841 and with the straightforward title **“Schloss Rosenau, Seat of HRH Prince Albert of Coburg, near Coburg, Germany”** it was exhibited at the Royal Academy in London.

Turner was at the time, to put it mildly, a controversial painter and Victoria, so it is reported, was less than enamoured by his rendering of her husband's home. One of her favourite painters was the Scottish romantic artist Sir Edwin Landseer, celebrated for majestic images of Scottish deer in the highlands, the most famous of these being his ca.1851 “The Monarch of the Glen”. The magnificent red deer stag became “the ultimate biscuit tin image of Scotland”.



Landseer's highly detailed rendering of the animal in its uplifting Highland setting could move Victoria, Turner's rendering of Albert's Franconian homeland, full of atmospheric daring, couldn't. It does seem that the artist is more interested in the rendering of the light from a wan sun and its reflection in the water of the local river than a topographically accurate painting. Putting it more harshly, this is what *The Times* wrote on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 1841: "Here is a picture that represents nothing in nature beyond eggs and spinach. The lake is a composition in which salad oil abounds, and the art of cookery is more predominant than the art of painting."

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