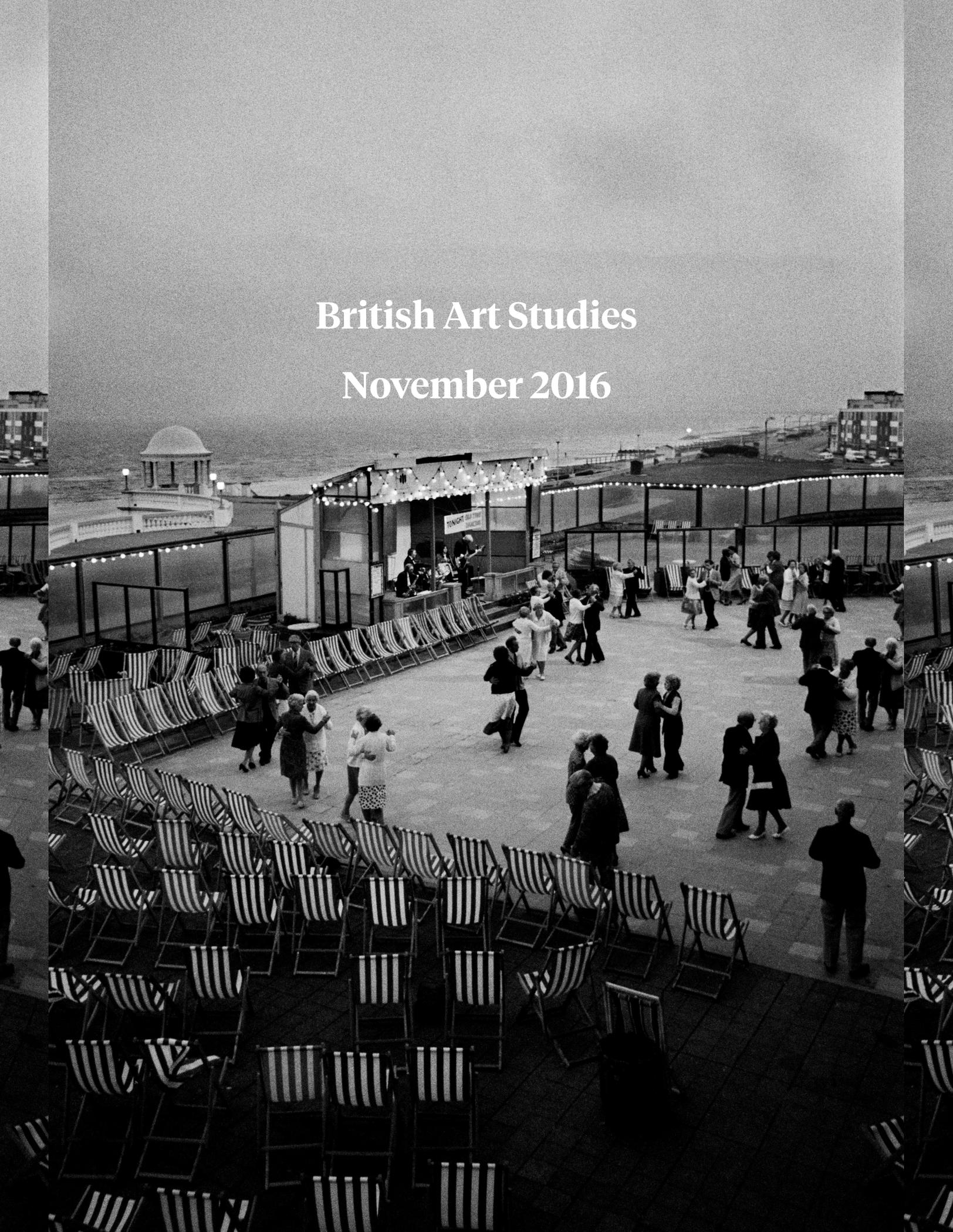


British Art Studies

November 2016



British Art Studies

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Cover image: Martin Parr, De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill on Sea, East Sussex, England, UK, 1978. Digital image courtesy of Martin Parr / © Martin Parr / Magnum Photos (LON28062)

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One Year On

British Art Studies is one year old. Since launching the journal on 30 November 2015, we have published three “open” issues (including this one) and one special issue. Over 24,000 unique users have visited the journal and accessed its contents. We have published the work of 118 contributors, in a variety of formats. All of this has been made possible through the support of our peer reviewers, Advisory Board, and the numerous institutions, collections, and artists who have made digital images available to us. Each issue is an experiment—in terms of technology, collaboration, image presentation, and content. In this way, the journal is building a community that is interested and engaged in experimenting, as we continue to develop the scope and interfaces of this digital publication. With each issue we are learning from experience, and taking on board feedback.

Over the past year we have added several new features. One of the most substantial of these is the downloadable PDF function, which creates files that mirror as much as possible the online versions of the articles. At first, the journal team was sceptical about introducing this function, arguing that the interactivity of our born-digital journal can only be experienced online. Is the PDF a step backwards, a nervous retention of the “printable” version? Our Advisory Board did not think so and together we conceived of scenarios where PDFs are useful: in situations where internet access is patchy or non-existent; for the use of copies as teaching resources; for hand annotation and preservation in personal and institutional libraries. These kinds of considerations are part of an ongoing dialogue about how the journal is used, what our authors and users want from it, and how it can continue to develop in ways that anticipate and contribute to the future of online scholarly publishing. This has been a creative and rewarding experience—we have learnt so much in just one year.

Developing Digitally

We don't often have a chance to acknowledge the efforts of those involved in the various forms of mental and practical work entailed in the production, circulation, and use of the digital resources that supplement each issue of *BAS*. The collaborative exchanges necessary to create such materials are considerable, as our contributors quickly learn once they are introduced to the small armies of designers and developers enlisted to create content to support their narrative.

Matthew Lincoln and Abram Fox's [article](#) has been supplemented by a series of interactive charts that were optimized for web-publishing by [Nikita Rokotyan](#) using the JavaScript library [D3.js](#). These responsive charts offer

readers a rich—and hopefully intuitive—visual interface with which to navigate through a large data set from the Getty Provenance Index that might otherwise appear unwieldy.

This issue sees a further incursion into the realm of the “digital humanities” with a three-dimensional model reconstructing a historic interior, which was commissioned for Catherine Roach’s [article](#). Challenged to explore the recreation process at first hand, Catherine has worked with the *BAS* team and [George Voicke](#) from *Duck Duck Zeus*, a London-based game design agency, to create a reconstruction of an exhibition that took place in London nearly two hundred years ago, using a PowerPoint presentation, a floor plan, and an unillustrated exhibition catalogue. The intriguing results raise many questions about how best to approach the reconstruction of lost spaces, which Catherine reflects on in her text.

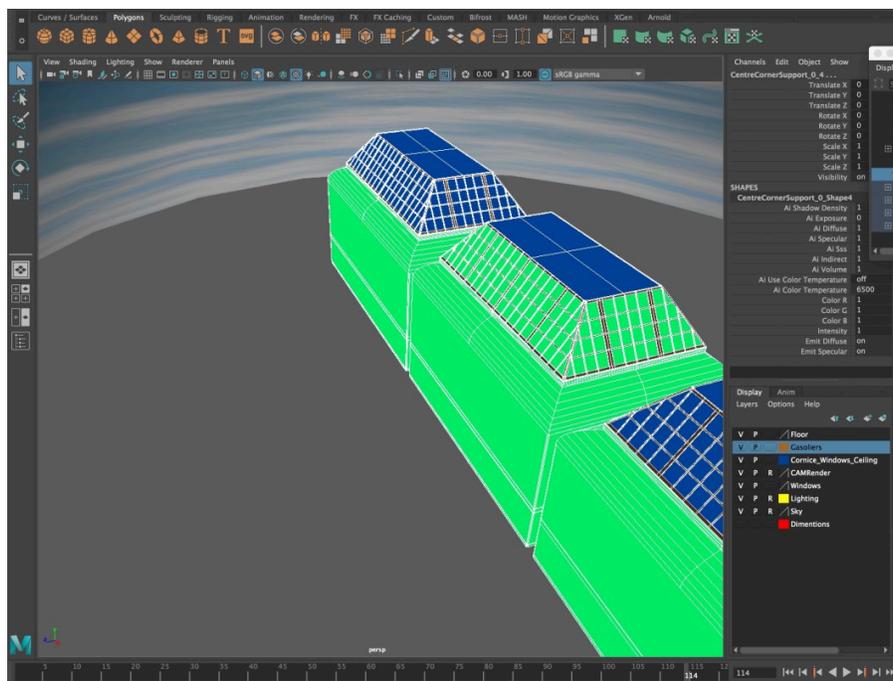


Figure 1.

George Voicke, In-progress 3D model of the British Institution, produced for Catherine Roach's article 'Rehanging Reynolds' in Issue 4 of *British Art Studies*

The close study of artworks has been supported by the integration of zoomable high-resolution images that are incorporated throughout this issue. The technical infrastructure required to generate and present this type of image had not previously been available to our team, but innovative work by the International Image Interoperability Framework (IIIF) consortium has meant that the creation, retrieval, and delivery of high-resolution images is no longer prohibitively expensive. We can now pull in the best quality, most authoritative images directly from participating repositories such as the

library and gallery collections at Yale. We hope that the number of participating institutions in the IIF consortium will continue to grow, so that our journals, and other digital publishers, can continue to benefit from such open-access content.

Creative Conversations

In this first year of publication, *BAS* and the journal's team have become active participants in the expanding conversation about open-access publishing. In October 2016, *BAS* Editors Martina Droth and Sarah Turner participated in a seminar on publishing art history digitally organized by the online journal *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* and funded by the Samuel H. Kress Foundation and the NYU Center for the Humanities. The event opened with a keynote by Greg Albers, Digital Publications Manager at the J. Paul Getty Trust, which had the purposefully provocative title "Breaking Almost Everything: The Current Practice and Future Potential of Digital Publishing". Greg argued that the entire history of publishing can be seen through the lens of technological disruption and that these early days of digital publishing are no different. He highlighted the culture of experimentation that is prompting the development of new digital tools—and called on art historians to embrace new digital languages, to collaborate, and to become equipped to publish and disseminate their work on digital platforms. As our fourth issue demonstrates, *BAS* is one such space of experimentation and collaboration. The digital projects we have been developing are challenging not only conventional presentations, but also the workflows associated with traditional print journals. Increasingly we find ourselves working with "unfinished" content—ideas that are looking for the right platform. Often we work with contributors from the outset to develop projects in tandem with digital possibilities.

What are the essential items art historians need in their digital toolbox? This was a common question at a recent Digital Art Histories symposium organized by the Early Career Researcher Network at the Paul Mellon Centre. Speakers described the need for experimental approaches—being open to failure, or adapting when something does not work – an essential part of working digitally. Participants shared an attitude of openness and boldness, as well as a sense of camaraderie developing in what keynote speaker Rafe Hallett described as a culture of "digital bricolage".

As we develop *BAS*, we are also developing new relationships between and amongst our authors, editors, technologists, and, we hope, our readers. In February 2017, Martina Droth and Sarah Turner will chair a session at the College Art Association conference in New York entitled "Editing Journals in a Digital Age" which will explore many of these issues with the editors of other journals—print, digital, and hybrid—to think through how the processes of

editing and producing journals is necessarily adapting to keep pace with changes in how we publish, and in how research is done, thought about, and presented. The session is sponsored by the [Association of Research Institutes in Art History](#), which has itself been exploring ways of supporting digital art history, with a prize for electronic publications. The ecosystem of open-access digital journals is inherently collaborative, rather than competitive. Together, journals such as those represented at the workshop in New York—*Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide*, *Journal18*, *Triple Canopy* and *BAS*—are redefining what a journal is and can be. It is not surprising that digital publishing is writ large across CAA's programme. Tom Scutt will contribute to "[Getting Started in Publishing Digital Art History](#)", a professional development workshop intended as a forum for interested researchers and authors to ask questions, get advice, and be put in contact with experts and collaborators. We look forward to all of these discussions and to learning from them.

Embedding Events

One of the aims of *BAS* is to create feedback loops between the research activities of the Paul Mellon Centre and the Yale Center for British Art, extending the conversation and opening it up to a larger audience. Issue 4 puts this into action by drawing upon our recent international conference "Photography and Britishness", which was held at the Yale Center for British Art on 4-5 November 2016. Traditionally, publishing conference proceedings and edited anthologies is a notoriously protracted process, often with years intervening between the event and its published form. Here, instead of awaiting polished texts worked up from conference papers, we have published the recordings of the event, and embedded it into an issue that is rich with debates about photography.

The collaborative process of developing the conference also led to other outcomes. The photography historian John Tagg, with whom we worked on the programme, instigated this issue's Conversation Piece, a provocation about photography between theory and the archive since the 1970s. Some of the respondents also spoke at the conference; others extend the conversations well beyond that event's focus on Britishness. Martin Parr, our keynote speaker, has created the covers for Issue 4, drawing upon the rich archive of photographs he has made over forty years of photographing places and people in Britain. While this issue is not exclusively focused on photography, the conference has given us the impetus to highlight work in this area—something our institutions are not traditionally associated with. What came through emphatically are the diverse ways in which scholars are not only approaching interpretations of "Britishness", but of the medium of photography itself.

Looking Ahead

In the coming year of *BAS* we will continue to develop best practices for our journal. The “behind-the-scenes” work is as crucial as the front-end, ensuring that *BAS*’s practices and policies are as robust and progressive as its design and technical infrastructure. Partly, this involves anticipating the needs and concerns of our authors. We recently updated our [Policy](#) page to reflect our investigation into the upcoming 2022 Research Excellence Framework (REF) guidelines, aware that authors based in UK universities must plan their research submissions years in advance. By virtue of our content being freely and digitally available upon publication under a non-commercial licence, we are happy to confirm that *BAS* is a “gold level” journal for the purposes of the REF (more information about which can be found [here](#)). We hope this brings a level of clarity to authors considering publishing with the journal. Our ethos is supported by Yale University’s Digital Collections Center Open Access policy, which states that the “preservation, transmission, and advancement of knowledge in the digital age are promoted by the creative use and reuse of digitized content for research, teaching, learning, and creative activities.”

We have also followed the practices of publications such as the *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art*, *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide*, and the *RIHA Journal*, by encouraging submissions in languages other than English. Although the journal only publishes research in English, we aim to support scholars researching British art in all languages, and will make every effort to have such submissions peer reviewed, and to continue to support translation of articles selected for publication.

In looking ahead, the editorial team depends upon diverse conversations that play out in conferences, publications, and networks in the arts and digital humanities. This autumn, the British Art Network and Contemporary Art Society hosted a [seminar](#) on aspects of displaying and preserving sound art, which introduced the team to principles of best practice in a subject area we have yet to tackle, but hope future authors will pursue. Digital publishing offers new opportunities for incorporating sound and moving images into articles in ways that we are only just beginning to explore.

BAS is a journal dedicated to publishing research on “British art”. But just as the borders of a digital publication are open and porous, so is the stated focus of our remit. Our first issue opened a discussion around the provocation “There’s no such thing as British Art”; with Issue 4, we continue the debate, not least through our conference *Photography and Britishness*, and the Conversation Piece “Exit Theory”. From the outset, we have sought to open our field to international scrutiny, and to ensure an international reach of authors and readers. Such conversations about art and culture are increasingly vital.



New Brutalist Image 1949–55: 'atlas to a new world' or, 'trying to look at things today'

Victoria Walsh and Claire Zimmerman

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The Photographic Image

In November 2014 the display *New Brutalist Image, 1949–55* opened at Tate Britain (figs. 1, 2).¹ Co-curated by the authors of this *Look First* feature, the display centred on a reconsideration of two key icons of the New Brutalism: Hunstanton School, completed in Norfolk in 1954; and the exhibition *Parallel of Life and Art* held at the ICA, London, in 1953. Even though the building and the exhibition shared creators, executors, and documentarians, subsequent criticism had obscured the historical relationship between them. In our display, we considered differences between these projects, yet we also revealed shared concerns around the question of communication through photographic images, identifying a communicative “language” that lies somewhere between syntax and lexicon.

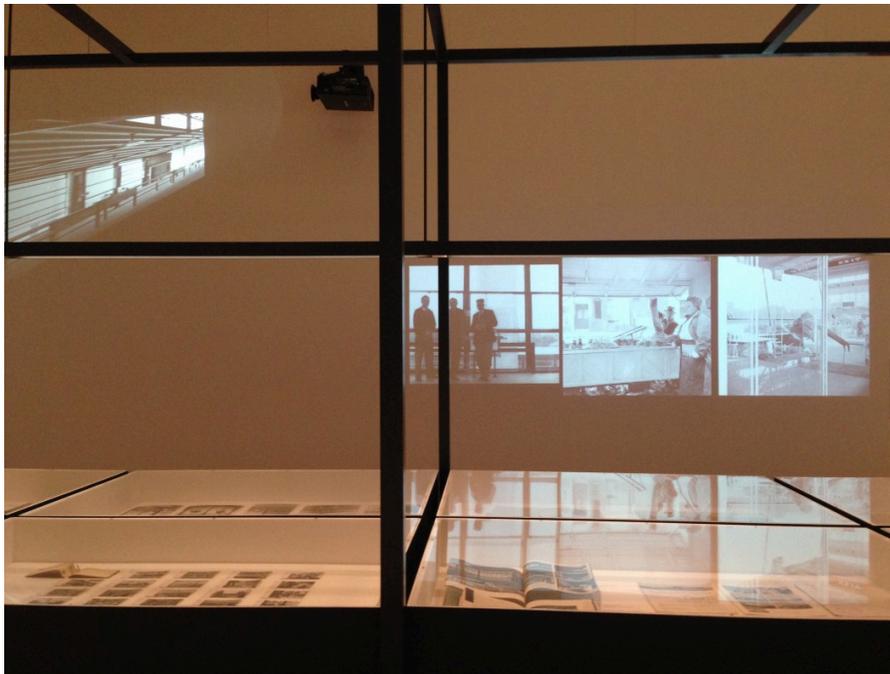


Figure 1.

New Brutalist Image, 1949–55, Tate Britain, 2015, installation shots Digital image courtesy of Claire Zimmerman



Figure 2.

New Brutalist Image, 1949-55, Tate Britain, 2015, installation shots Digital image courtesy of Claire Zimmerman

Architects Alison and Peter Smithson designed the school and collaborated with sculptor Eduardo Paolozzi and artist-photographer Nigel Henderson on the exhibition, and on photographic documentation of the school under construction (figs. 3, 4). Both projects benefited from the input of Ronald Jenkins, an engineer from Ove Arup and Partners (fig. 5). The results of multiple interactions around these events were both interdisciplinary and aimed to connect the media in which each collaborator worked. In a similar spirit of intermedial conjoining, architectural critic Reyner Banham situated the Hunstanton School in relation to heterogeneous works subsequently associated with New Brutalism in articles of the early 1950s. Hunstanton, visually anomalous to the more materially messy, a-formal, and visceral illustrations of other work cited by Banham, including images by Henderson, nonetheless sat side by side with a shot of *Parallel of Life and Art*.



Figure 3.

Nigel Henderson, Alison Smithson during installation of "Parallel of Life and Art", held at the *Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, 1953*. Nigel Henderson Collection, Tate Archive Digital image courtesy of Tate Archive / Nigel Henderson



Figure 4.

Nigel Henderson, Eduardo Paolozzi, Nigel Henderson Collection, Tate Archive Digital image courtesy of Tate Archive / Nigel Henderson



Figure 5.

Nigel Henderson, Peter Smithson with Ronald Jenkins in his office at Ove Arup & Consulting Engineers, *Fitzroy Street, London*, 1951. Nigel Henderson Collection, Tate Archive Digital image courtesy of Tate Archive / Nigel Henderson

The Tate Britain display examined the photographic image-making that underpinned and bound New Brutalism in its earliest development. The term we put forward in this exhibition and re-use again here—“New Brutalist Image”—positions photography as a primary medium of communication and the photographic image as a remediating tool intended to synthesize the rampant disjunctions of contemporary culture. As Banham noted in his review of *Parallel of Life and Art*:

We tend to forget that every photograph is an artifact . . . the photograph being an artifact applies its own laws of artefaction to the material it documents, and discovers similarities and parallels between the documentation, even where none exist between the objects and events recorded . . . ²

In order to test photography’s ability to filiate through non-textual means, almost independent of visual content, we have selected and curated three reels of images by Nigel Henderson (displayed at the top of this article), who Alison Smithson described as the original “image-finder” (fig. 6). ³



Figure 6.

Nigel Henderson, Self-portrait at Chisenhale Road, London, Nigel Henderson Collection, Tate Archive (TGA 9211/8/1/7/1) Digital image courtesy of Tate Archive / Nigel Henderson

For this brief moment, the remediating work of the photographic image sought to overcome disciplinary and practice boundaries across art, architecture, design, and everyday life, encoding a manner of communication that might compete with the printed word. By recreating part of the exhibition digitally, we are able to present the photograph as “image”, suspending it from its predominantly indexical status, acknowledging its potential as a primary tool of argument. We have organized the images according to predominant features such as patterning, framing, and choreography—so, in other words, in terms of form and narrative. They are shown in a “trilogy” in which the reader is invited to find relevant connections among images in the reel, and with those in adjacent reels. The presentation calls upon the reader to view these images as “trying to look at things”, which defines our concept and analysis of the New Brutalist image.

“A Kind of Rosetta Stone”

In his article “The New Brutalism”, Banham purposefully illustrated the concept through a gridded arrangement of images including a photograph of Hunstanton School, the Smithsons’ designs for a Soho House, the work of Paolozzi, and an image of the exhibition *Parallel of Life and Art* (fig. 7).⁴ Collectively, these illustrations reflected for Banham a new interest in the patterns and “overtones of human association”, introducing “images of human as well as formal value” which manifested in three key characteristics of the New Brutalist aesthetic: “memorability as an image”; “clear exhibition of structure”; and “valuation of materials ‘as found’”. Banham’s inclusion of *Parallel of Life and Art* as a “locus classicus” of New Brutalism engaged with the five collaborators’ own ambitions and their claims that the exhibition offered a new account of the impact of photography on cultural sensibility. The members of the group (who positioned themselves as “editors” of the material) reiterated these ambitions in notes and articles on the exhibition, from which we culled phrases such as “Indications of a new visual order” and “a new attitude” (figs. 8, 9).

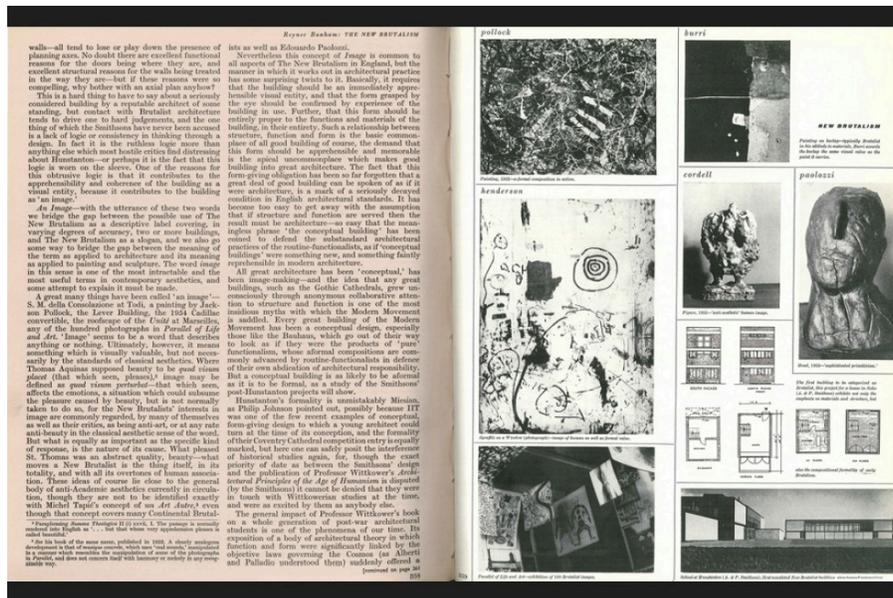


Figure 7. Reyner Banham, “The New Brutalism”, *The Architectural Review*, December 1955, image sheet, page 359 Digital image courtesy of EMAP Publishing Limited

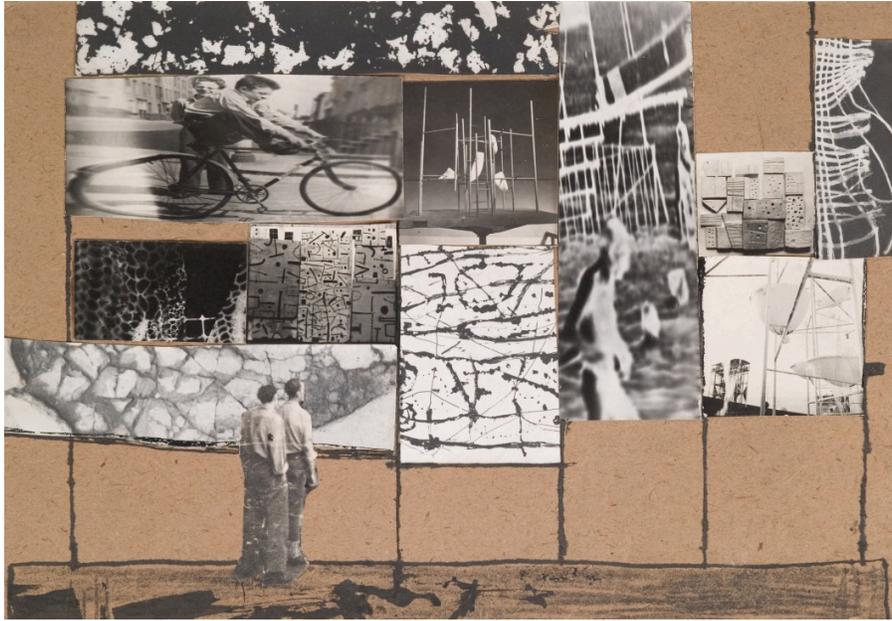


Figure 8.

Nigel Henderson and Eduardo Paolozzi, Study for Parallel of Life & Art, 1952, ink, pencil, and black and white photograph on paper. Whitworth Art Gallery Collection, UK. (D. 2008.7) Digital image courtesy of Nigel Henderson / Whitworth Art Gallery, The University of Manchester / Bridgeman Images



Figure 9.

Poster study, Parallel of Life and Art, 1953 Digital image courtesy of Smithsonian Family Collection

The inclusion of illustrations taken from the linguist and palaeographer David Diringer's ground-breaking work *The Alphabet: A Key to the History of Mankind* (1948) in *Parallel of Life and Art* highlighted the level of interest in understanding the photographic image as a new visual language, a new key to understanding the present. To be understood neither as indexical document nor as fetishized object, but rather relationally, the photograph communicates through visual cross-relationships produced by physical juxtaposition and visual layering, here created by the triptych of continually changing images. Nigel Henderson described the radical installation of *Parallel of Life and Art* as "a punchy visual matrix that triggered off a number of associational ideas", while the Smithsons wrote, "This exhibition will provide the first atlas to a new world . . . the method used will . . . present a dramatic yet rational picture of the times, a kind of Rosetta Stone."⁵ Framing the visual within a matrix while simultaneously calling on and calling out to an ever-expanding field of visual communication, these members of the "Independent Group" (the Smithsons, Henderson, and Paolozzi, with Jenkins and Banham as honorary members) presumed an active spectator making sense of a newly saturated image environment.

Frame – Field – Stage

The selection presented here interrogates relations between images in the set of Henderson photographs. How well they framed their subject, the degree to which pattern persisted across the field of the image, and how well they set up or "staged" events within the picture provided criteria of selection. Identifying strategies within the photographic archive amassed by Henderson in his collaborations with other members of the group, we found similarities among images included in *Parallel of Life and Art*, photographs of Hunstanton in various stages of completion, and in the design of the building itself. These strategies also resonated in the sculptural and graphic work of Paolozzi and in the larger corpus of work by others, and structured their interface with contemporary culture.

Firstly, frames, grids, and framing the image were a means to organize ideas visually through juxtaposition (the grid); an artistic device (photographic image); and an architectural device (the structural frame). Images exhibiting these strategies are those in which the primary visual impression comes either from the overall framing of the image or from the operations of frames within it. Often these two coincide. Here, the potentially limitless continuity of certain images is intentionally cut by a geometric device, one generally based on an orthogonal grid, but not always. Important, though, is the sense that the image has been made by a conscious intervention with a frame or a framing device. This is not the image "as found", but rather the beginnings of a staged or constructed image (fig. 10).

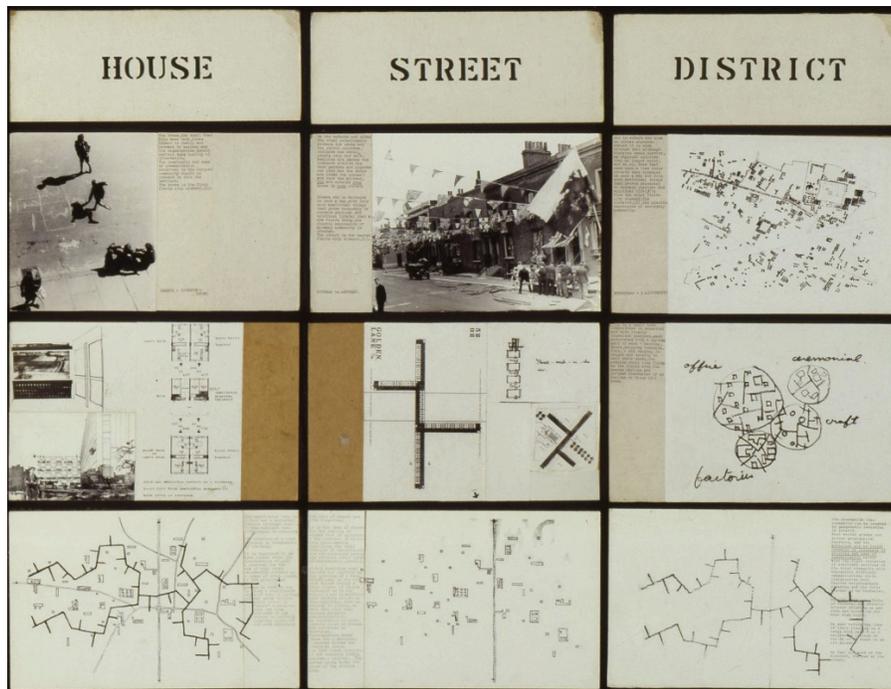


Figure 10.

Alison Smithson and Peter Smithson,, Grille pour le C.I.A.M. d'Aix en Provence, ink drawing, 83.5 × 275.5 cm. Collection of the Centre Pompidou Digital image courtesy of Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Georges Meguerditchian / Smithson Family Collection

The second strategy is visual patterning: images in which the primary visual impression comes from overall, repeating, or episodic graphic patterns. The selection emphasizes similarity between patterns, thereby constructing a comparative frame of reference. Mark-making predominates within the boundary of these image fields—but sometimes also implies continuation in the “off-stage” or out of frame as well. A “cut” from the potentially limitless expanse of a visual continuum is critical to the way these images function. It resonates with contemporary debates on “endlessness” in modern architecture, pursued at this time by British architects working from precedents set by interwar modernists. It also meets its parallel in the critical discourse of a-formalism and the multi-evocative image in the art criticism of the time. Notably, visual patterning characterizes the graphic rendition of the Smithsons’ urban schemes for housing clusters as much as it does Paolozzi’s sculptures and Henderson’s image-making.

The third, “staging”, is a visual strategy where the primary visual impression of framing or patterning is somehow disrupted by the active presence of animals, human figures, or objects within the image, so that the viewer perceives space, image, object, and/or event simultaneously, in the manner of a display. These are images in which a narrative element may add complexity to formal strategies such as patterning and framing. These

images often depict deep space (deeper than those in the first two categories), and are more likely to include bounded objects. They often include frames and patterns, but to these visual components they add another element based on active visual engagement, whereby the viewer's attention is summoned by composition and manner of presentation.

In highlighting these visual strategies through the curation and changing sequences of these selected images and within a grid of three, this presentation brings to the fore the visual lexicon of New Brutalism that Banham identified with his own set of terms: "memorability as an image"; "clear exhibition of structure"; and "valuation of materials 'as found'".

1952

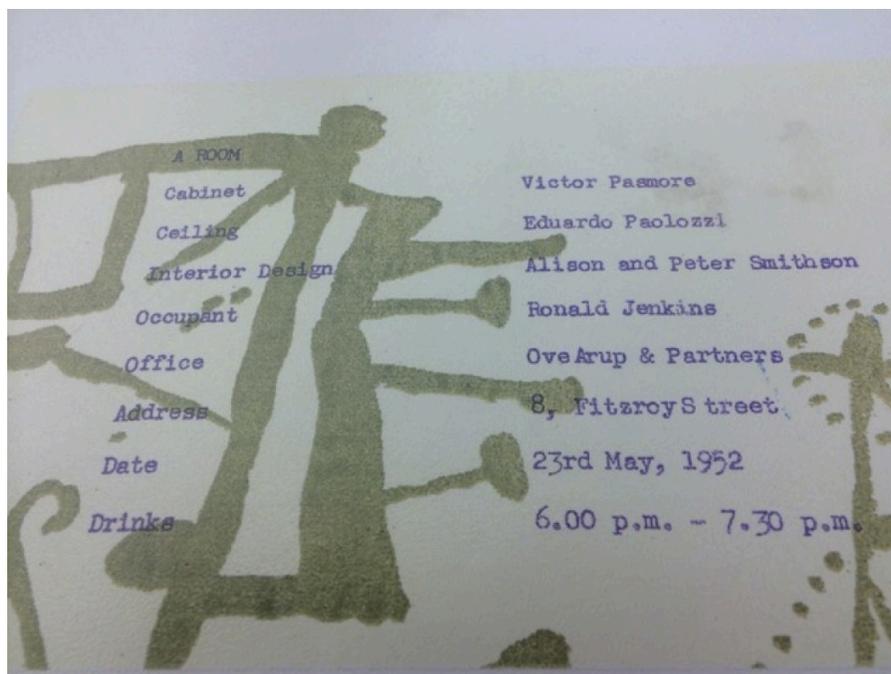


Figure 11.

Invitation to the opening of Ronald Jenkins's office, Collection of Adrienne Cross

In researching apparent disjunctions between Hunstanton School and *Parallel of Life and Art* (conceived and executed nearly simultaneously) the critical role of Arup engineer Ronald Jenkins emerged. In the post-war separation of art and architectural history, and the further separation of both from science, Jenkins's work with the Smithsons on Hunstanton, and his design of the matrix of wires on which *Parallel of Life and Art* depended, have gone unremarked until recently. An interview with Jack Zunz, starting draftsman on the Hunstanton project, revealed that Jenkins, an acknowledged technical innovator, catalyzed his young collaborators by commissioning a major

refurbishment of his Fitzroy Street office in 1951. As a future article in Tate Papers will detail, Jenkins's office is not only historically important for its commissioned elements—ceiling wallpaper by Paolozzi, furniture by the Smithsons (with Victor Pasmore) and photographs by Henderson—but also because it functioned as a pilot project for *Parallel of Life and Art*; allowing art, architecture, design, and science to converge within a single visual environment (figs. 11, 12). Zunz recalled Paolozzi's 1952 pitch to Ove Arup for an exhibition, presented through an epidiascope show of disparate photographic material that included images finally selected for *Parallel of Life and Art*, but that left Arup mystified (fig. 13). From this early moment, collaborative work rooted in photographic communication tied art, architecture, design, and engineering together. This approach to a period newly saturated in images anticipated the conversion of the post-war "scrapbook" phenomenon to the image-banks of digital archives. This provides an opportunity to reconnect historical visual relations, digital image-making, and contemporary interest in the convergence of disciplinary knowledge and cultural practices.



Figure 12.

Nigel Henderson, Photograph of Ronald Jenkins's office with ceiling paper by Eduardo Paolozzi, including photograph of *Parallel of Life and Art* poster. Nigel Henderson Collection, Tate Archive Digital image courtesy of Tate Archive / Nigel Henderson / Mike van der Vord



Figure 13.

Double-page spread, Alison Smithson's Scrapbook including photograph by Hans Namuth of Jackson Pollock, *included in Parallel of Life and Art*
Digital image courtesy of Smithson Family Collection / © 1991 Hans Namuth Estate

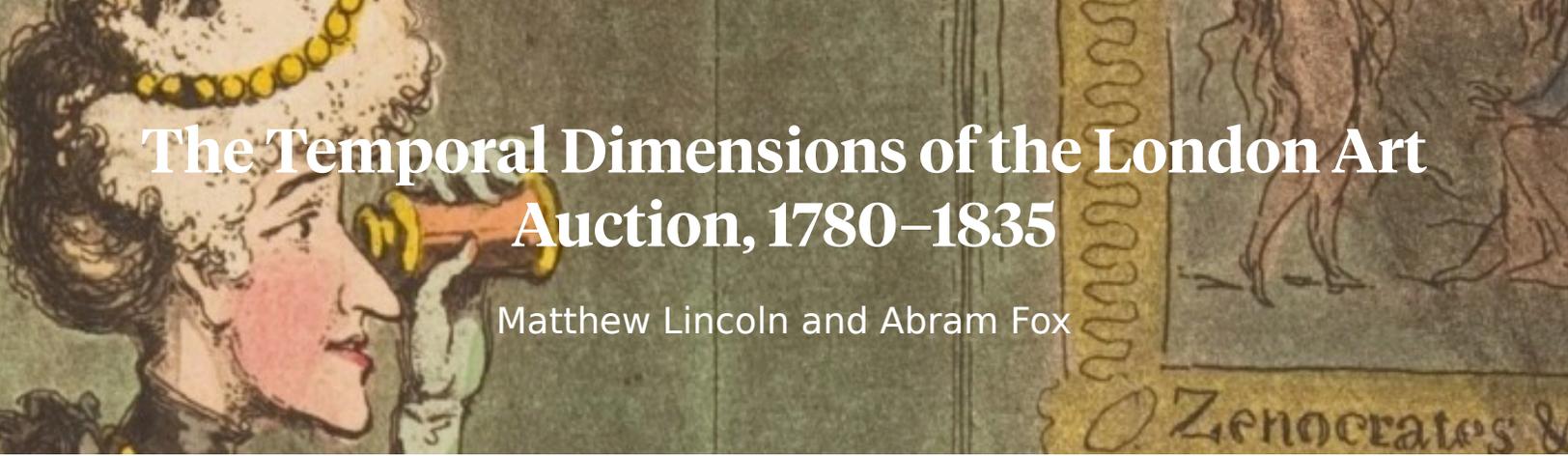
The aim of this research and article has been to refocus scholarly attention on the operations of photographic images in relation to the heterogeneous practices of seeing and viewing which underpinned the cultural sensibility and work of this group of collaborators, and the wider group of practitioners in which they moved as artists, architects, and designers. Starting with the noted disjuncture between *Parallel of Life and Art* and Hunstanton school, our research—both visual and archival—has reconstructed the inherent relation between these two manifestations of New Brutalism by the same group of actors (fig. 14). Like Banham, we must next assess the efficacy of the model they left behind.



Figure 14.
New Brutalist Image, 1949–55, Tate Britain, 2015, installation shots Digital
image courtesy of Claire Zimmerman

Footnotes

- 1 *New Brutalist Image, 1949–55*, Tate Britain, 24 Nov. 2014–20 Sept. 2015. For selected research towards this display, see V. Walsh, “Reordering and Redistributing the Visual”, *Journal of Visual Culture* 12, no. 2 (Aug. 2013): 222–44; C. Zimmerman, *Photographic Architecture in the Twentieth Century* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2014), Chapters 8 & 9.
- 2 Reyner Banham, “Photography: Parallel of Life and Art”, *Architectural Review*, 114 (Oct. 1953): 259–60.
- 3 The majority of images presented in the slideshow above are archival images from *The personal papers of Nigel Graeme Henderson (1917–1985)*, a collection acquired by the Tate Archive from Janet Henderson and the Henderson family in 1992. Black and white negatives in the papers were digitised as part of Tate Britain’s 2013–18 ‘Archives & Access’ project, supported through a £1.9 million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Other images are courtesy of Nigel Henderson Collection and Smithson Family Collection.
- 4 Reyner Banham, “The New Brutalism”, *Architectural Review* 118, no. 708 (Dec. 1955): 355–61.
- 5 Alison and Peter Smithson, “Sources” document for *Parallel of Life and Art* exhibition, Smithson Family Archive. This document is also the source for the phrase “trying to look at things today”.



The Temporal Dimensions of the London Art Auction, 1780–1835

Matthew Lincoln and Abram Fox

Abstract

The rush of activity among London's auction houses in the first few weeks of summer has long been a familiar occurrence that persists even today. However, this intense seasonal concentration of sales was not always so. This paper draws on quantitative methods to explore the gradual emergence of a tightly scheduled auction season in London at the turn of the nineteenth century, focusing on the sale of paintings. By analysing historical art auction catalogue data, the paper traces the ways in which this shift varied across different segments of the auction market, as well as between individual auction houses. As our study shows, the temporal clustering of painting auctions had specific business advantages, but it also played a key role in enhancing the social import of these auctions, demarcating an annual, weeks-long "event" looked to with anticipation and excitement by auctioneers and buyers alike.

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Recent literature has highlighted the importance of spatial structures to the evolution of the nineteenth-century London art market. The geography of commercial galleries and auction houses was tightly interwoven with that of exhibition society halls. The Royal Academy was a prime centre of artistic gravity, with galleries and auction halls opening near its first seat on Pall Mall in 1768, and many following its path to Somerset House in 1780 and to Burlington House in 1867.¹ Exhibiting institutions and commercial galleries established a mutually beneficial relationship cemented by spatial proximity to each other, as well as to the fashionable retail shops of the West End.²

Yet there was also a dynamic temporal dimension to the social world of nineteenth-century London. It has been argued that a prime period for art auctions in London in the nineteenth century fell between late May and early June, coinciding with the yearly influx of “Society” from their country houses.³ This was not always the case, however. While previously assumed to be a static influence, close study reveals that the seasonal structure of the art auction market had a history all its own.

Responding to Pamela Fletcher’s and Anne Helmreich’s call for the use of large data sets over case studies alone in characterizing the development of the London art market, this study draws on a database of painting auction records between 1780 and 1835 in order to tease out the temporal structures in the early flourishing of art auctions in London, and test their relationship to the schedule of the Royal Academy and the larger “Season” of London society.⁴ We demonstrate that highly concentrated auction activity in the early summer only developed in the early nineteenth century, and did not apply to all types of artworks, nor was it followed uniformly by all auction houses in London. Moreover, this move towards a more intense auction season should not be interpreted merely as a result of auctioneers’, exhibitors’, and buyers’ financial interests. This temporal concentration may have acted as a focusing lens that compounded the social import of the London art market in this period, setting apart fine art auctions not just in place, but also in time.

Data and Methodology

One of the most comprehensive stores of information about the London art market in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries can be found in the Getty Provenance Index Sales Catalog Database, a project of the Getty Research Institute (GRI). The Sales Catalog Database contains structured descriptions of sales catalogues listing works of art for public auction in major European countries from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries. A subset of this endeavour, the British Sales Catalogs project, was developed from an extensive search of hundreds of libraries and archives in

order to locate surviving catalogues of British sales, identifying almost 9,000 surviving catalogues dating between 1681 and 1850. The Getty has been gradually indexing these catalogues, entering details of the sales of individual artworks into a searchable database.⁵ While the project is still ongoing, the most completely described catalogues of this group span the years between 1780 and 1835, with almost 95 percent of known catalogues from this period having been indexed at the level of the individual artwork (fig. 1).⁶

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Figure 1.

Abram Fox and Matthew Lincoln, Indexing of British Sale Catalogues, Indexing progress on the 9,000 surviving British sales catalogues located by the Getty Research Institute and its partner institutions. The period with the most completely indexed catalogues falls between 1780 and 1835.

Like any archive, this database is not a perfect representation of all historical auctions as they actually occurred; we face that intractable historiographic problem in tandem with all historians. There are inevitably auctions that occurred during this period whose catalogues, by random accident, have not survived. That said, there are also sources of *systematic* bias: particular classes of sales whose records we can, with specific reasons, claim are disproportionately absent from the corpus of surviving auction catalogues. For example, analyses based on the Getty data cannot speak to the patterns of private sales that went unrecorded in published catalogues. Likewise, catalogues with a very small run, or from particularly minor houses, that have not survived into today's institutional collections may also be under-represented. The database also has only limited coverage of auctions of sculpture, works on paper, and decorative arts. With these biases in mind, readers should be aware that the claims in this paper will be restricted to the trends in scheduling of public auctions of paintings.

As of August 2015, the British Sales Catalogs database contains 361,112 entries for individual painting lots in auctions taking place in London. Of all these records, 316,633 (88 percent) have dates falling between 1780 and 1835.⁷ Of those records, 230,365 (64 percent of the original total) are listed with a transaction price.⁸ It is this last group of records that comprises the working data for our analysis.

Only about 60 percent of these priced objects were sold, with around 25 percent listed as "bought in" (fig. 2). The prices that were recorded for these unsold objects may be the unmet reserve price, or simply the price at which bidding stopped. Because we are interested in auctioneers' strategies in

scheduling major sales, we include both works that have been marked as “sold” as well as those “bought in” or “withdrawn” where the listed price is either a reserve or an estimate.⁹

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Figure 2.

Abram Fox and Matthew Lincoln, Indexed Transactions Grouped by Type, Proportions of records by auction house in the Getty Provenance Index Sales Catalog Database for paintings auctioned in London, 1780-1835.

Regarding prices: although we are not concerned with measuring art price fluctuations over the years as such, it is nonetheless important to distinguish between auction patterns of the mostly costly paintings versus those sales of less expensive ones, as different segments of the auction market may well have followed different seasonal patterns.¹⁰ Historical inflation and deflation make direct comparison of price values from one decade to the next difficult.¹¹ For example, a £6 painting in 1780 would belong to the top 20 percent of all works from the same year, while the same price in 1835 would barely break the median price of that year. Therefore, this analysis classifies records across the entire period of study into one of five bins, or quintiles, compared to other records within the same year of sale. If a work was particularly cheap in its own year of sale, then we group it alongside artworks that were also inexpensive in their own respective years of sale; likewise for works that were particularly expensive. For example, a sale that fell into the lowest 20 percent of prices (the first quintile) in 1780, and a sale that fell in the first quintile in 1830, can be considered together, as could the highest 20 percent of works in the fifth quintile. Sorting works into quintiles relative to their own year of sale allows us to generally divide “cheap” artworks from the most “expensive” artworks across the entire period of study, and thus ask how their respective seasonal patterns may have differed.

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Figure 3.

Abram Fox and Matthew Lincoln, Market Share (by Volume) Among Auction Houses, Proportion of total sales accounted for by each auction house, as recorded in the Getty Provenance Index Sales Catalog Database for paintings auctioned in London, 1780-1835.

Approximately 36 percent of these sales were by Christie’s, another 20 percent by Foster’s, 9 percent by Phillips, with the remaining 35 percent by smaller houses ([fig. 3](#)). A summary overview of the months in which paintings were sold between 1780 and 1835 ([fig. 4](#)) shows that, when viewed in aggregate, auctions do appear to be *generally* concentrated within the late spring and early summer, with light activity beginning as early as November. However, the story becomes more complicated once one begins

to unpack these averages and examine how this distribution changed over time. The London art auction market witnessed general growth (with periodic contraction) over this period, as shown in a plot of the number of painting lots auctioned per year in this period ([fig. 5](#)). How did this seasonal pattern shift and change as the market evolved?

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Figure 4.

Abram Fox and Matthew Lincoln, Painting Sales Grouped by Month, Number of London painting lots recorded as sold in the Getty Provenance Index by month, 1780-1835.

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Figure 5.

Abram Fox and Matthew Lincoln, Paintings Sold by Year, Number of London painting lots recorded as sold in the Getty Provenance Index by year, 1780-1835.

One measure of seasonality in the market can be found by considering how tightly or loosely the busiest auction days cluster in a given year. Are the days with the most auctions concentrated within the span of a few weeks? Or are they scattered throughout the entire year? For each year between 1780 and 1835, we identified the top seven days as measured by the number of lots being sold.¹² To characterize how this annual “spread” changed over time, we measured the coefficient of variation (CV) of the top seven days’ locations within the calendar year.¹³ A high CV would indicate that these peak days were relatively scattered throughout the year, while a low CV would indicate that these days were more tightly clustered together (see [fig. 6](#) for a visualization of this procedure). It then becomes possible to track year by year, quintile by quintile, and auction house by auction house, whether this CV remained the same, showing no indication of a concentrating season, or if it instead decreased, indicating that the top auction days in a given year were occurring closer and closer together.

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Figure 6.

Abram Fox and Matthew Lincoln, Spread of Top Seven Sale Days in Four Sample Years, In order to measure at what rate the London auction season coalesced over this period, we identified the top seven sale days for each year and measured their relative spread. This figure illustrates this process with four different example years, highlighting in red the top seven days as measured by number of sales. Each plot has been annotated with the coefficient of variation (CV) for each set of top days. When top days are spread farther apart, as in 1800, the CV is higher. When the top days are more concentrated, as in 1830, the CV is lower. (In the event of a tie, additional days are included; see the supplementary material for more information.)

Results

[Figure 7](#) illustrates the result of these calculations, split into rows based on the auction house (all sales, sales just by Christie's, and sales by others), and split into columns based on the price quintile of the artwork being sold. Each plot shows a line of best fit that helps to illustrate whether or not the yearly CV remained the same, increased, or decreased overall between 1780 and 1835. We find that the timing of the "peak auction season" for the cheapest artworks (those in the first to fourth quintiles) did not coalesce significantly over the course of this study period. However, the seasonal spread of the top sales days did tighten significantly for the most expensive paintings in the fifth quintile. Even more intriguing, Christie's appears to be the strongest driver of this trend towards a tighter schedule. Because Christie's accounts for 36 percent of the sales records, its auctioneering strategies have a disproportionate effect on measurements of all auctions combined. When disaggregated, Christie's sales show a much greater increase in seasonal concentration than do sales by other auction houses represented in the data. For example, the CV of Christie's top sales days decreased, on average, by 71 percent between 1780 and 1835, while the CV of houses *other* than Christie's only decreased by 10 percent.

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Figure 7.

Abram Fox and Matthew Lincoln, Change in the Coefficient of Variation, Change in the coefficient of variation the of top auction days between 1780 and 1835. Each plot in this grid measures the change in variation for a different facet of the data. Columns are split according to the price quintile, such that column 1 shows the changing variation for sales of the cheapest 20 percent of artworks, to column 5 representing those sales of the most expensive 20 percent of artworks. Rows show measurements taken from three different subsets of the data: the topmost row shows all sales records, followed by only those sales by Christie's, and then those sales by all other houses excluding Christie's. Each line has been shaded based on the size of the observed effect; the more dramatic the decrease, the redder the colouring.

Around which dates did different auction houses organize their busiest sale days? It is useful to focus on the scheduling strategies of the three most active auction houses in this data set: Christie's, Edward Foster, and Harry Phillips. [Figure 8](#) plots the top auction days for fifth quintile (most expensive) artworks from these houses, annotated with the start and end dates of the Royal Academy exhibition in each year.¹⁴ In 1780, Christie's scheduled its largest sales days as early as January and as late as July. While Christie's would continue to schedule a handful of large sales in the earliest months of the year, after 1800 the house began to concentrate the bulk of sales within the season defined by the dates of the Royal Academy exhibition. (It is also notable that the Royal Academy progressively lengthened its exhibition in this period, from just one month in 1780 to over three months in 1835.) The

second largest auctioneer of paintings in this data set, Harry Phillips, similarly distributed large sales between January and July during their earliest years of sales shortly before 1800. Like Christie's, Phillips increasingly scheduled the highest-volume sales days during or directly before the Royal Academy exhibition. A curious exception, however, was Edward Foster, a later entrant to the market, whose first public sales took place in 1812. While, like Christie's and Phillips, Foster did hold larger sales during the Royal Academy exhibition, he also frequently held top sales days during the late summer and fall months—a time of the year during which most other auction houses went dormant. Counting up the top sales days for each of these three houses, 23 percent of Foster's top days happen after 1 August, while only 4 percent of Christie's and Phillips's do so. Foster's expansion into the fall months presents an intriguing parallel with another abnormal pattern of this auction house: it scheduled most of its paintings auctions in the middle of the week ([fig. 9](#)), while Christie's and Phillips overwhelmingly favoured Friday and Saturday sales.

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Figure 8.

Abram Fox and Matthew Lincoln, *Distribution of Highest-Volume Sales Days*, The seven highest-volume sales days per year for three selected auction houses, 1780–1835. Christie's, Edward Foster, and Harry Phillips were the three most active houses, by volume, in the data set. The size of each dot represents the number of sales on that day. The black line annotations mark the starting and ending dates of the Royal Academy exhibition for each year.

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Figure 9.

Abram Fox and Matthew Lincoln, *Lots Auctioned by Day of the Week*, The ratio of lots auctioned per day of the week by Christie's, Harry Phillips, and Edward Foster, 1780–1835. The grey bars are calculated from the schedules of all auction houses, allowing one to compare the individual schedules of Christie's, Phillips, and Foster to the overall trend.

Discussion

This analysis sheds light upon three under-studied points about the London auction season: that a concentrated sales period emerged only gradually around the turn of the nineteenth century, that it applied far more to the upper echelon of painting auctions than to sales of middle- or low-end works, and that not all auctioneers devoted their sole attention to this season.

As much as the London art world overlapped with the geography of luxury retailers in the West End, so too was it attuned to the temporal structure of the London Season. ¹⁵ Commercial galleries and artists were keenly aware of the timing of Royal Academy exhibitions, and the seasonal concentration

compounded with the geographic concentration of the market to engender both competition as well as cooperative interaction. [Figure 8](#) shows how the Royal Academy acted as a temporal attractor for high-end art auctions, as Christie's and other auction houses increasingly scheduled their biggest sales days to take place during the Academy's summer exhibition. Established as a focal point, and in some regards the kickoff, of the London Season, the Royal Academy exhibitions and artists were seen by many institutions as a means to draw audiences already inclined towards the viewing of art. Alderman John Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery seized on this predisposition as a means to promote English artistic production and patronage as a patriotic act, as well as to drum up interest in the purchase of engravings after works in the gallery.¹⁶ The Shakespeare Gallery opened to great fanfare on 4 May 1789 in a Neoclassical structure at 52 Pall Mall, blocks away from the rooms at 125 Pall Mall which had been occupied by Christie's since 1770. Other thematic galleries later sought to capture a share of the public's desire for art: Thomas Macklin's Gallery of the Poets, which was open between 1788 and 1797, and Henry Fuseli's short-lived Gallery of the Miltonic Sublime, which welcomed visitors in 1799 and 1800.¹⁷ In a true example of the London art world cannibalizing itself, when the Shakespeare Gallery failed and its entire holdings were sold off by lottery in January 1805, 52 Pall Mall itself was leased to the newly created British Institution. Attempting to capitalize on public interest and excitement leading up to the Academy's annual exhibitions, the British Institution exhibition began in mid-January and its closing dates overlapped with the opening days of the Academy exhibition. While some Academicians were wary of decreased exhibition attendance and proceeds, others praised the British Institution in its efforts to encourage interest in contemporary English artists.¹⁸ Certainly the twenty-eight full Academicians who sent works to the British Institution welcomed the friendly competition.¹⁹ Other artists, most prominently John Singleton Copley, also took advantage of the popularity of the Royal Academy exhibition as a temporal cue for the display of individual or small groupings of history paintings.²⁰

By scheduling a battery of major sales within the few weeks surrounding the social season's major focal point, auction houses were able to maximize publicity for their sales and concentrate the attention of potential buyers, many of whom belonged to the landed gentry who spent the majority of the year in country estates away from London. However, for all its recognized influence on the schedules of other exhibiting organizations and individuals, we find the Royal Academy was not a consistent temporal attractor for painting auctions in the late eighteenth century. As [figure 8](#) illustrates, not until several decades after the founding of the Royal Academy did the major London auctioneers begin to schedule their highest-volume sales days during

the annual exhibition.²¹ William Roberts's 1897 history of Christie's firm corroborates the evidence that James Christie, in particular, maintained an unpredictable auction schedule in the late eighteenth century:

Mr. Christie's picture sales sometimes ran in fits and starts. Several would occur within a few weeks of one another, and then cease for months. After the Colebrooke dispersal, for example, no more noteworthy picture sales occurred until December 14th. From the catalogues it would appear that there was no such institution as a vacation invented, for auctions were held throughout August, September and October—whenever, in fact, they were wanted or could be made up.²²

Our analysis supports Roberts's characterization of Christie's scattered auction schedule in the 1780s and 1790s. Moreover, our results also suggest that the house began to follow a more regular and concentrated summer auction schedule after 1800. It may not be a coincidence that this change came after James Christie died in 1803 and the house passed to his eldest son, also named James. The younger Christie seems to have been a far more responsible and capable businessman than his father, who had a reputation for difficult business dealings and was notorious for overcharging clients for fees and for extremely late payment from auction proceeds.²³ While other London auction houses also gradually shifted their top auction days more closely together, it was Christie's that made the most striking shift.

The seasonal influence of the Royal Academy exhibition and other Society events on auction schedules was not necessarily a one-way relationship, however. Early exhibitions of English art, such as those at the Foundling Hospital beginning in the 1740s, and a number organized by the Society of Artists of Great Britain from 1760 onwards, were in turn responses to a growing interest in art stoked by access to art auction previews.²⁴ It is possible that the Royal Academy also responded to the growing volume of art auctions over this period by gradually lengthening its annual exhibition while shifting its opening day to late April, and then to early May. In turn, Christie's and Harry Phillips themselves also appear to have extended their own high-volume seasons to follow the lengthening Royal Academy exhibition. Both the Royal Academy and the auction houses may also have been gradually adapting to third-party factors as well. In the early nineteenth century, the majority of Parliament sessions ended after the start of July. This was consistently later in the year than session closing dates in the mid-eighteenth century, when as many ended in April or March as did in June or July.²⁵ The art market, along with the rest of high London society, may still have been gradually adjusting its schedule to Parliament's new pattern.

Another factor that may have incentivized auction houses to concentrate high-end sales within a shorter period of time was the increasing volume of paintings being auctioned. The overall growth in the number of recorded auctions per year (fig. 5) over the course of this period may well have been sparked by political events, as continental aristocracy displaced by revolution and war in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were often forced to part with their art collections. Frequently these émigrés found their way to England, as did their art. From 1789 onwards, sales of French collections ballooned, as did shipments from Spain and the Netherlands between 1798 and 1810.²⁶ This increasing volume may have been an additional incentive for auction houses to concentrate their largest sales within a shorter, and thus more efficient, schedule.



Figure 10.

James Gillray, *A Peep at Christie's;—or—Tally-ho, & his Nimeny-pimney taking the Morning Lounge*, published 24 Sept. 1796, etching and aquatint, hand coloured, 35 x 25.7 cm. Collection of the British Museum, London (1868,0808.6552) Digital image courtesy of Trustees of the British Museum.

Seasonal concentration may have had more than a simple economic motivation, however. The centrality of these art institutions to high-end social life in London is well understood. Auctioneers like Christie's and Sotheby's carefully constructed the rhetoric of their auction advertisements and catalogues in order to promote their sales as venues where both fine art, but also social cachet, could be obtained and displayed.²⁷ The concentrated geography of the London art market not only optimized physical foot traffic, but also lent a fashionable West End imprimatur to the art market, an association that mutually benefitted both public exhibitors and private galleries.²⁸ Private viewing days at auction houses could be highly exclusive indeed. Roberts writes:

A great feature of the sales at Christie's at the latter part of the last century was the private view day. This was a fashionable lounge where persons of distinction congregated in great numbers. During the season, when any remarkable collections were on view, occasional evening receptions took place: the great room was then lighted up, and persons of quality attended in such large numbers that an official from the Opera was stationed at the entrance to prevent the intrusion of those not belonging to the fashionable world.²⁹

James Gillray caricatured the high society audiences of auctions in *A Peep at Christie's;—or—Tally-ho, & his Nimeny-pimmeny, taking the Morning Lounge* (fig. 10), showing Edward Smith-Stanley, twelfth Earl of Derby, and the actress Elizabeth Farren viewing works during an auction preview day, while three other attendees in outfits of varying levels of absurdity dominate the background.³⁰ The caricaturist also lampooned the bombastic rhetoric of Christie's advertisements and catalogues (and the credulous buyers who succumbed to them) in *Mæcenas, in pursuit of the fine-arts* (fig. 11), in which Gillray satirically pictures George Granville Leveson-Garner, Marquess of Stafford, a notable patron of the arts, being drawn into a Christie's sale outlandishly advertised with a "Catalogue of 800 Capital Pictures to be Sold by Mr. Christie in Pall Mall, February 1st, 1808". That there was, in fact, no prominent sale on that date in 1808 points to this Maecenas' gullibility.³¹ Based on our analysis of auction dates, we might also note that he was less likely to find auctions of truly capital pictures in London while there was still snow on the ground.



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Figure 11.

James Gillray, *Mæcenas, in pursuit of the fine-arts*, published 9 May 1808. Hand-coloured etching, 25.8 x 19.8 cm. Collection of Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University, New Haven (808.05.09.01) Digital image courtesy of Lewis Walpole Library

Landscape painter Joseph Farington's daily diary, kept between 1793 and 1821, provides exceptional insight into the minutiae of life for members of English high society. A founding member of the Royal Academy and distant relative, by marriage, of politician and art historian Horace Walpole, fourth Earl of Orford, Farington was one of the more successful English artists of his day in terms of leveraging his artistic insight toward increased social status. In 1806 he recorded an experience of some of the art-viewing opportunities available around Pall Mall during the Season. On Friday, 25 April he spent the day in the company of famous collector Sir George Beaumont, seventh Baronet, during which the pair visited Christie's to view Dutch and Flemish paintings, followed by a visit to another gallery to look at works by Poussin

and Rubens, and ending at the inaugural British Institution exhibition, where they joined a discussion on the new institution's challenge to the Royal Academy, whose exhibition would open exactly a week later.³²

These sales showcased elite consumption in a very public way, to a wide range of ends, as Gillray's print of the Earl of Derby and Elizabeth Farren so vividly depicts. Many auction attendees were there to participate in the spectacle by demonstrating their refined taste through the purchase of art and the construction of new collections. Others viewed collecting as a patriotic venture, demonstrating conspicuous cultural patriotism through the purchase of works by contemporary English artists.³³ Like the Royal Academy exhibition itself, auctions of prestigious collections were events at which one could see and be seen by "Society".³⁴ These events became venues for the performance and construction of taste and refinement. In 1808, William Henry Pyne quipped that "those who might think it necessary to appear to have, what nature had denied them, taste and judgment", relied on the dealers and auction rooms of London to address their lack of discrimination, spotlighting the performative aspect of auction attendance.³⁵

An emergent seasonal structure may have helped to further demarcate exceptional auction periods from day-to-day commerce, elevating art auctions from a series of interchangeable incidents to an annual, weeks-long "event" looked to with anticipation and excitement by auctioneers and buyers alike. Arjun Appadurai's conception of auctions as "tournaments of value" is particularly apt here. Appadurai characterizes these tournaments as periodic events that are as much a way to signal social status as to exchange material goods, and, as such, are socially distinguished from everyday commercial activity.³⁶ Appadurai suggests that it is the sport-like rituals of the auction room that form this distinction, and our analysis demonstrates how the dimension of time is relevant to this interpretation. By fitting their most prestigious auction days into an ever-tighter schedule, houses like Christie's could concentrate wealth and social cachet within a tightly defined place and time. This was all the more true between 1780 and 1840, when auction rooms were largely filled by retail buyers, and had not yet been dominated by professional dealers buying and selling their own inventories.³⁷ Shortening and intensifying the season for the highest-end auctions not only served a business function, but also enhanced their social import.

For all the incentives for auction houses to tightly cluster almost all their high-end sales during the height of the London social season, it is also important to recognize a notable exception. We found that the third largest auction house represented in these data by sales volume, Edward Foster's, remarkably scheduled a significant number of its busiest sale days of high-

value artworks well into late summer, and even the fall months; by the 1810s, as we have shown, this stands out as an abnormal practice for London auctioneers. This behaviour may be understood as a localized instance of the niche-seeking practice that national markets engaged in on the continental scale. In his broader analysis of international auctions between 1801 and 1820, Christian Huemer has shown that major European art centres appear to have established their own regional auction seasons; England favouring the late spring, France peaking in November, and smaller markets in Belgium and the Netherlands focusing sales in the late summer, when the major markets in London and Paris were largely quiet. Huemer posits that this time-shifting was born of necessity, allowing agents to attend all the year's important sales without having to be in two places at once.³⁸ It is possible that Edward Foster found similar success in offering some significant sales in the London off-season as a supplement to its regular offerings at the height of the early summer auction season. These later sales could open a venue to those buyers and sellers who would otherwise have had to wait until the next year to offer their works at the biggest sales at Christie's.

Likewise, it should be noted that Foster was also the only firm we found that appears to have conducted a large portion of its sales midweek (particularly on Wednesday and Thursday—see [fig. 9](#)), perhaps taking advantage of the weekly vacuum left by other houses, Christie's in particular, that favoured Friday and Saturday. While scheduling sales in a short seasonal timeline may have been beneficial for many firms looking to bring together buyers and sellers in a socially charged environment, Foster clearly strove to carve out a unique position even in the midst of the unavoidable peak season, scheduling around behemoths like Christie's while still taking advantage of the rich field of potential buyers gathered in one season and place.

These results raise some new questions that deserve continued research. To what extent are these same changing scheduling strategies reflected in newspaper advertisements by auction houses? If advertisements had a better survival rate than auction catalogues, particularly for smaller or lower-end sales, then they may offer a fruitful source for checking the representativeness of the Getty's auction data at different periods in time. Future work might also investigate whether scheduling patterns were affected by particular genres of artwork, or the nationalities of the artists who painted them. Much like the spatial structure defined by physical viewing spaces, the temporal structures defined by auction houses, exhibiting institutions, and the larger social Season played an active role in reshaping the London art market in this period.

Footnotes

- 1 On the English art landscape in the late eighteenth century, see Rosie Dias, "'A World of Pictures': Pall Mall and the Topography of Display, 1780-99", in *Georgian Geographies: Essays on Space, Place and Landscape in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Miles Ogborn and Charles W. J. Withers (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 2004), 92-113; on the late nineteenth century, see Pamela M. Fletcher, "Shopping for Art: The Rise of the Commercial Art Gallery, 1850s-90s", in *The Rise of the Modern Art Market in London, 1850-1939*, ed. Pamela M. Fletcher and Anne Helmreich (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 2011); Pamela M. Fletcher and Anne Helmreich, "Local/Global: Mapping Nineteenth-Century London's Art Market", *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 11, no. 3 (2012), <http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/index.php/autumn12/fletcher-helmreich-mapping-the-london-art-market>. On the history of the Royal Academy, see Sidney Hutchison, *The History of the Royal Academy, 1768-1986* (1968; London: Royce, 1986), and James Fenton, *School of Genius: A History of the Royal Academy of Arts* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2006).
- 2 Such relationships frequently included the transfer of spaces from auction houses to exhibition spaces and vice versa. In the second half of the eighteenth century, one space in Pall Mall was home to: the auction rooms for Aaron Lambe; a warehouse for printseller Richard Dalton; James Christie's auction rooms in 1766 and 1767; the Royal Academy of Arts as a meeting space from 1768 through 1771, and exhibition space from 1768 through 1779; Thomas Macklin's Gallery of the Poets from 1788 to 1797, and Henry Fuseli's Gallery of the Miltonic Sublime in 1799 and 1800. Hutchison, *History of the Royal Academy*, 33; William Roberts, *Memorials of Christie's: A Record of Art Sales from 1766 to 1896*, 2 vols. (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1897), 1: 2-15; Cynthia Wall, "The English Auction: Narratives of Dismantlings", *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 31, no. 1 (Oct. 1997): 5, 23; <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30053642>.
- 3 See, for example, Guido Guerzoni, "The British Painting Market, 1789-1914", in *Economic History and the Arts*, ed. Michael North (Cologne: Böhlau, 1996), 100; Christian Huemer, "Provenance on Steroids: Or, the Promise of Big Data", in *New Projects in Digital Art History Symposium* (Washington, DC: Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, 2014), <http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/audio-video/video/digital-history-conference/dah-huemer-3.html>. While Huemer drew on a similar section of the data to that used in this study, he instead focused on international trends only between 1801 and 1820, and did not attempt to break down auction schedules by price or auction house.
- 4 Fletcher and Helmreich, "Local/Global", 3.
- 5 The GRI has collaborated with the Frick Collection; the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; the National Gallery, London; the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art; and the University of York to locate these catalogues. However, the collections searched span a massive range of both European and American archives: <http://www.getty.edu/research/tools/provenance/charts.html>.
- 6 All analyses were performed in the statistical programming language R. See R Development Core Team, *R: A Language and Environment for Statistical Computing* (Vienna: R Foundation for Statistical Computing, 2014), <http://www.R-project.org>. The visualizations were produced using the R package ggplot2; Hadley Wickham, *ggplot2: Elegant Graphics for Data Analysis* (New York: Springer, 2009), <http://had.co.nz/ggplot2/book>. The data used for this study were current as of 25 August 2015, and were provided with the kind assistance of Christian Huemer and Ruth Cuadra. These data, and the code necessary to reproduce this analysis and its visualizations are available in full here: <http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.165168>.
- 7 The robustness of auction catalogue records beginning in 1780 corresponds closely to the 1779 amendment to the Auction Duty Act of 1777. While the initial Act mandated the licensure of all auctioneers through the London Excise Office and the payment of duties on the sales of items, the amendment required all auctioneers to provide the Excise Office at least two days' notice of any sales, depending on location, and demanded the submission within twenty-four hours of "a written or printed catalogue, attested and signed by such auctioneer or his known clerk, in which catalogue shall be particularly enumerated every article, lot, parcel, and thing intended to be sold at auction" (19 Geo.III.c.56.s.9). Satomi Ohashi, "The Auction Duty Act of 1777: The Beginning of Institutionalisation of Auctions in Britain", in *Auctions, Agents and Dealers: The Mechanisms of the Art Market, 1660-1830*, ed. Jeremy Warren and Adriana Turpin (Oxford: The Beazley Archive and Archaeopress in association with The Wallace Collection, 2007), 25-26.
- 8 This figure excludes records that have one or more of the following characteristics: no transaction information at all (83,385); transaction information is marked as uncertain (1,678); more than one price is listed (212).
- 9 The [supplementary material](#) to this article demonstrates that similar effects were found when only "sold" records were considered, and even when only "bought in" records were considered.
- 10 On segmentation of the British art market in the early eighteenth century, see Neil De Marchi, "Auctioning Paintings in Late Seventeenth-Century London: Rules, Segmentation and Prices in an Emergent Market", in *Economics of Art and Culture: Invited Papers at the 12th International Conference of the Association of Cultural Economics International*, ed. Victor A. Ginsburgh (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2004), 99; Thomas M. Bayer and John R. Page, *The Development of the Art Market in England Money as Muse, 1730-1900* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011), 74.
- 11 For example, inflation rates swung radically from the late eighteenth century through the end of the Napoleonic era. See Robert D. Hume, "The Value of Money in Eighteenth-Century England: Incomes, Prices, Buying Power—and Some Problems in Cultural Economics", *Huntington Library Quarterly* 77, no. 4 (Dec. 2014), 375, doi:[10.1525/hlq.2014.77.4.373](https://doi.org/10.1525/hlq.2014.77.4.373).
- 12 Identifying seven top-ranking days per year, versus a higher or lower number, is a somewhat arbitrary decision. However, we found similar correlations when running the aggregation analysis using both a greater as well as a smaller number of days.
- 13 The coefficient of variation of a set of numbers is equal to the standard deviation of that set divided by the mean value of that set.

- 14 Royal Academy of Arts archivist Mark Pomeroy kindly shared his draft list of the exhibition opening and closing dates in this period. Note that, several decades after the time frame discussed in this article, the Royal Academy began hosting a wintertime exhibition of works by old masters and deceased Academicians, called the Winter Exhibition. The traditional annual exhibition, which by that point ran from late April to late July, soon became known as the Summer Exhibition, a name it still holds today, even though the Winter Exhibitions were discontinued in the twentieth century.
- 15 On the phenomenon of the London social season, see Leonore Davidoff, *The Best Circles: Society, Etiquette and the Season* (London: Croom Helm, 1973).
- 16 Sven H. A. Bruntjen, *John Boydell, 1719–1804: A Study of Art Patronage and Publishing in Georgian London* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1985), 69. Boydell called the venture his “Shakspere” Gallery, while Farington referred to it as the “Shakespere” Gallery. Modern scholarship generally uses the spelling “Shakespeare”. The idea for the Shakespeare Gallery was first proposed at a 1786 dinner hosted by Boydell’s nephew and business partner, Josiah; the guest list included at least one Academician, Benjamin West, with many accounts also placing Paul Sandby at the occasion.
- 17 Richard D. Altick, *The Shows of London* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1978), 108. Fuseli’s Miltonic gallery also followed a seasonal schedule, opening to the public between March and July in 1780, and May and July in 1799, mirroring the increasing seasonal concentration that we see in the painting auction market.
- 18 For all its emphasis on exhibiting the work of British artists, the British Institution also played a key role in constructing an image of the masterpieces by foreign artists belonging to private British owners as a kind of national property. See Ann Pullan, “Public Goods or Private Interests? The British Institution in the Early Nineteenth Century”, in *Art in Bourgeois Society, 1790–1850*, ed. Andrew Hemingway and William Vaughan (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998), 29.
- 19 See Thomas Smith, *Recollections of the British Institution, for Promoting the Fine Arts in the United Kingdom* (London: Simpkin & Marshall and Edward Stanford, 1860), 22–39, for a full list of artists and works submitted to the 1806 British Institution exhibition, including those by the President, Benjamin West, and the Keeper of the Royal Academy, Henry Fuseli. See Joseph Farington, *The Diary . . .*, ed. Kenneth Garlick, Angus D. Macintyre, and Kathryn Cave, 17 vols. (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1978–98), 7: 2734, for a discussion of some Academicians’ concerns about the overlap between the Royal Academy and British Institution exhibitions.
- 20 Copley exhibited his history painting *The Death of the Earl of Chatham* as a one-work show in 1781, and as the centrepiece of several other independent displays of a small number of works between 1783 and 1797. For extended discussion of the exhibition of *The Death of Chatham*, see Jules David Prown, *John Singleton Copley: In England, 1774–1815* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1966), 284; and Harold E. Dickson, “Artists as Showmen”, *American Art Journal* 5, no. 1 (May 1973): 4–5, doi:10.2307/1593939. Copley had completed *The Death of Chatham* without a commission, and hoped to recoup his costs with revenue from an independent exhibition. He reportedly realized approximately £5,000 profit from the display, while Royal Academy exhibition revenue dropped £1,000 from previous years. The painting was displayed in the Society of Arts space in Spring Gardens; Copley had initially planned on renting a room from James Christie in the Royal Academy’s old exhibition space in Pall Mall, but pressure on Christie from an Academy contingent led the auctioneer to refuse Copley’s request.
- 21 Multiple associations of artists immediately predated the 1768 founding of the Royal Academy. One such group, called the Society of Artists of Great Britain (later the Incorporated Society of Artists of Great Britain), had hosted spring exhibitions in London beginning in 1760, first at the Society of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce in the Adelphi building, and then from 1761 in Spring Gardens. A dispute over leadership led to a faction of members of the Society of Artists, including Sir William Chambers and Joshua Reynolds, to create the Royal Academy. Another organization, the Free Society of Artists, exhibited at multiple locations between 1761 and 1783, including for a time in Christie’s auction rooms. See Algernon Graves, *The Society of Artists of Great Britain, 1760–1791, the Free Society of Artists, 1761–1783: A Complete Dictionary of Contributors and Their Work from the Foundation of the Societies to 1791* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1907), 295–328.
- 22 Roberts, *Memorials of Christie’s*, 32–33.
- 23 Farington, *Diary*, 3: 979; Henry Richard Tedder, “Christie, James (1773–1831)”, *Dictionary of National Biography* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1885–1900), [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Christie,_James_\(1773-1831\)_DNB00](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Christie,_James_(1773-1831)_DNB00). From August 1795 through February 1796, Farington frequently recorded the frustrated efforts of Murrough O’Brien, fifth Earl of Inchiquin, and Mary Palmer, Countess of Inchiquin, the inheritors of Sir Joshua Reynolds’s estate, to receive payment from the auction of Reynolds’s painting collection in March 1795, and in 1797 Farington reported that a friend chastised Christie as “notorious for paying ill”. Farington, *Diary*, 2: 362, 375–76, 382, 432, 409; 7: 2734.
- 24 Dickson, “Artists as Showmen”, 4; Altick, *Shows of London*, 101.
- 25 For the closing dates of Parliament sessions between 1780 and 1835, see L. B. Namier and John Brooke, *The House of Commons, 1754–1790* (London: Published for the History of Parliament Trust by Secker & Warburg, 1985); R. G. Thorne, *The House of Commons, 1790–1820* (London: Published for the History of Parliament Trust by Secker & Warburg, 1986); D. R. Fisher, *The House of Commons, 1820–1832* (Cambridge: Published for the History of Parliament Trust by Cambridge Univ. Press, 2009).
- 26 Guerzoni, “British Painting Market”, 115–16. For a prolonged description of one such venture, ultimately unsuccessful, by American artist John Trumbull in the 1790s, see Irma B. Jaffe, *John Trumbull: Patriot-Artist of the American Revolution* (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1975), 172–75.
- 27 Wall, “English Auction”, 1–25.
- 28 Fletcher and Helmreich, “Local/Global”, 6.
- 29 Roberts, *Memorials of Christie’s*, 6.

- 30 The print was also a pointed barb at the Earl of Derby attending social events with his mistress Farren, while his wife, Elizabeth Smith-Stanley, Countess of Derby, was dying of tuberculosis. The Earl is shown examining a painting of a fox hunt titled *The Death*, referring to both his inclination for hunting and his interest in the impending death of his wife, while Farren views a Neoclassical work labelled *Zenocrates and Phryne*, depicting the courtesan Phryne unsuccessfully attempting to woo the Greek philosopher. See Richard T. Godfrey and Mark Hallett, *James Gillray: The Art of Caricature* (London: Tate Publishing, 2001), cat. no. 169.
- 31 Godfrey and Hallett, *James Gillray*, cat. no. 180B.
- 32 Farington, *Diary*, 7: 2734. At the time of its founding in 1769, the Royal Academy exhibition was unofficially anchored to St George's Day on 23 April, with an Annual Dinner held that evening followed by the public opening of the exhibition the following day, as long as neither occasion fell on a Sunday. For this reason, the first Annual Dinner was not actually held until 1770. The relationship between St George's Day and the exhibition opening was codified by the Academy in 1771; later, from 1780 onward, the dates for the Annual Dinner and exhibition opening began to shift later in the year, wavering between the end of April and beginning of May; Hutchison, *History of the Royal Academy*, 39.
- 33 Works by contemporary English artists were thought to be much poorer investments than works by old masters, giving their purchase and display by English patrons a strong nationalistic veneer; Holger Hoock, "'Struggling against a Vulgar Prejudice': Patriotism and the Collecting of British Art at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century", *Journal of British Studies* 49, no. 3 (July 2010): 572.
- 34 K. Dian Kriz has argued that the Royal Academy exhibitions were similarly a site of social performance in "'Stare Cases': Engendering the Public's Two Bodies at the Royal Academy of Arts", in *Art on the Line: The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House, 1780-1836*, ed. David H. Solkin (New Haven and London: Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art and the Courtauld Institute Gallery, 2001).
- 35 W. H. Pyne, *The Microcosm of London; or, London in Miniature*, 3 vols. (London: R. Ackermann, 1808-10; facsimile repr., London: Methuen & Co., 1904), 1: 33.
- 36 Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value", in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1986), 21. The exchange of material goods also served as a signal of social status through the collection and arrangements of objects. Rather than offering the possibility for middle-class buyers to assert higher status levels, however, these tournaments concentrated wealth and society. Changes in collecting practices reflected shifts in taste, not any real alteration in the demographics of those who could actually afford to purchase art. See Hoock, "Struggling Against a Vulgar Prejudice", 567-72.
- 37 Bayer and Page, *Development of the Art Market*, 84, figure 5.1. By comparison, Guerzoni finds that around 60 percent of auction buyers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were art dealers; Guerzoni, "British Painting Market", 113. "Retail buyers" should not be misunderstood, however, as a wide swath of the public. Paintings were still luxury goods attainable only by the rich. See Hume, "Value of Money", 406-7.
- 38 Huemer, "Provenance on Steroids".

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Rehanging Reynolds at the British Institution: Methods for Reconstructing Ephemeral Displays

Catherine Roach

Abstract

Reconstructions of historic exhibitions made with current technologies can present beguiling illusions, but they also put us in danger of recreating the past in our own image. This article and the accompanying reconstruction explore methods for representing lost displays, with an emphasis on visualizing uncertainty, illuminating process, and understanding the mediated nature of period images. These issues are highlighted in a partial recreation of a loan show held at the British Institution, London, in 1823, which featured the works of Sir Joshua Reynolds alongside continental old masters. This recreation demonstrates how speculative reconstructions can nonetheless shed light on ephemeral displays, revealing powerful visual and conceptual dialogues that took place on the crowded walls of nineteenth-century exhibitions.

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The study of exhibitions is of necessity the study of lost spaces. Even the best-preserved ensembles undergo change over time, and many more have left only scant material traces. Today, digital technologies offer a new avenue to a long-held desire, the reconstruction of ephemeral displays. Such reconstructions bring together images of works that are now scattered, but were once viewed and understood in concert. They thus raise the possibility of rediscovering not only the appearance of historic displays, but also some of their multiple, shifting, and contingent meanings. Beguiling as this prospect may be, it also presents methodological challenges. Today's digital reconstructions contain great potential, but they also contain great potential for distortion. We are now creating our own objects of study. Like a scientist designing an experiment, we must be careful that in building our research tools we do not simply confirm our own preconceptions.

The temptation to recreate the past in our own image was not born with digital technologies. Translating existing sources into a reconstruction of a lost display has always required conjecture, which is inevitably coloured by the translator's worldview.¹ But as new technologies make possible projects of greater complexity and ambition, they also exacerbate these concerns. After all, as Johanna Drucker has observed, "digitization is not representation but interpretation."² As a result, it is essential that authors of reconstructions identify the choices they have made in the process of creation. Particularly pressing is the issue of how best to represent uncertainty—moments when a gap in the historical record has been supplemented by informed conjecture or a sheer leap of faith.³ Without acknowledgment of such decisions, "a single, highly polished reconstruction of a building or site can, in fact, be too convincing. While such a reconstruction records one plausible interpretation of incomplete and usually contested data, it risks being received as wholly authoritative and above dispute."⁴ Visualizing uncertainty is thus a vital concern.

Equally important is the relationship between these new projects and traditional sources of knowledge about images and their production, including the catalogue raisonné. The printed catalogue raisonné is in many ways a utopian project. It imagines the possibility of certainty and completion, presupposing that an entire life's artistic production can be located, correctly attributed, and codified. In the process, it privileges the idea of the unique creator in ways that the discipline of art history still struggles to shrug off. Just as we have come to be sceptical of some aspects of the catalogue raisonné project, we should also have a healthy scepticism of utopian attitudes towards digital projects. All historical inquiries are shaped by the concerns of the present moment. But if in forging our new reconstructions we ignore the work of previous generations, including the carefully collated information of catalogues raisonnés, we risk distorting our understanding of past displays more than is necessary. So much is absent in

current reconstructions: the shifting presence of viewers; the smells of fabric, bodies, perfumes, and dirt; and, most of all, the conversations and perceptions of those visitors who left no written trace. But art-historical knowledge need not be absent. Indeed, if we are to create compelling and useful reconstructions, it must not be.

This essay offers some thoughts on best practices for exhibition reconstructions by considering recent attempts, undertaken by myself and others, to visualize a series of ground-breaking exhibitions of the works of Sir Joshua Reynolds, first President of the Royal Academy, staged by the British Institution, London, in the early nineteenth century. First, I will offer a critique of *What Jane Saw*, a recent project that reconstructs the founding event in this series, a monographic display of works by Reynolds mounted in 1813. Second, I will provide a step-by-step exploration of the process of exhibition recreation, taking as my subject a subsequent (and less studied) Reynolds exhibition held in the same space in 1823. The reconstruction that accompanies this article demonstrates techniques for visualizing uncertainty. Finally, I will analyse the contents of this reconstruction, illustrating the kinds of lessons we can hope to learn from an evocative, speculative reconstruction. In addition to illuminating the process of their creation, such reconstructions can also provide a valuable tool for studying the significance of historic displays. Nineteenth-century exhibitions often appear overcrowded or jumbled to today's viewers. But carefully crafted reconstructions can help us understand these richly patterned arrangements. By reviving some of the visual relationships among the objects displayed, reconstructions demonstrate that exhibitions, like the individual works of art contained within them, conveyed meanings to their audiences. These meanings were sometimes intended by their organizers and other times invented by their viewers.

In 1813 the British Institution for Promoting the Fine Arts in the United Kingdom, a collector-run philanthropic arts society, staged what has been called "the first true monographic exhibition" surveying the career of Sir Joshua Reynolds.⁵ Its popular and critical success convinced the Institution's administrators to make loan shows of historic art an annual event. In addition, the exhibition of 1813 has rightly been identified as a major landmark in the development of the British canon. It sparked debates over the nature of Reynolds's practice, his right to the title of founder of the British school of painting, and the physical conditions of his paintings.⁶ Scholars have been slower to recognize that this important event was in fact the first in a series of related exhibitions. The British Institution staged Reynolds retrospectives once a decade for forty years, making Reynolds a fixture of the cultural landscape of London. Although the first of these exhibitions concentrated on Reynolds alone, the subsequent displays presented his works alongside those of the continental old masters and more

recent British artists. These displays constituted a repeated visual argument for Reynolds's significance for the history of art, and as such represent an important moment in the formation of the discipline. The British Institution has often been characterized as a conservative organization, because it was run by a coalition of collectors who promoted the old masters as models for British art. But their efforts to advance this agenda were highly innovative, including experiments with different exhibition models, such as the retrospective and the thematic exhibition. Today, with the development of new digital technologies, we are in a similarly experimental moment, as we seek to find the best way to visualize these influential historic displays.

What Jane Saw? Rehanging Reynolds at the British Institution in 1813

Period images of the installation of the Reynolds exhibition in 1813 have yet to be discovered. But almost two centuries after the event, a leading figure in collection studies, Francis Haskell, noted that with the help of the catalogue, "it would be just possible to reconstruct the hanging in our minds with reasonable accuracy."⁷ In 2013, Haskell's suggestion was taken up; the result was not a mental image, but an impressive website providing a navigable scale recreation of the exhibition. Titled *What Jane Saw* by its creator, English literature scholar Janine Barchas, this important project takes its inspiration from the fact that Jane Austen attended this event. It invites users to "time travel" to the exhibition that Austen visited.⁸ As a pioneering example in the field, this project illustrates both the potentials and the pitfalls of digital exhibition reconstructions.⁹ There is much to admire in this site. It provides a three-dimensional, easily navigable model of the British Institution galleries that offers interested users additional information about each of the works exhibited: clicking on an image on a reconstructed wall brings up an entry on each work including dimension, current location, and information on the subject and its relationship to Austen. Barchas and her team sought, successfully, to reach a broader audience with this project. It has been widely and positively reviewed, not only in academic journals, but also in major newspapers.¹⁰ Interviews in these outlets, as well as the text of the website and accompanying scholarly articles, make bold claims for the project.¹¹ Barchas told the *New York Times*: "I feel pretty sure this is the way the exhibit was actually hung."¹² But does the site measure up to this claim?



[View this illustration online](#)

Figure 1.

John Scarlett Davis, *Interior of the British Institution*, 1829, oil on canvas, 113 x 142.2 cm. Collection of the Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection (B1981.25.212) Digital image courtesy of Yale Center for British Art

One area of concern regarding *What Jane Saw* is the way period images were used as sources of information. Barchas notes the risk of an “anachronistic wall aesthetic”, which she sought to combat by consulting “surviving contemporary images”.¹³ While no images survive of the Reynolds exhibition, other displays at the British Institution galleries were depicted in oil, watercolour, and engraving (fig. 1). Period images can provide a wealth of visual information, but should be consulted advisedly. As Christopher Whitehead has noted, the authors of these images “worked within pictorial conventions and agendas which may have conflicted with current ideas of accurate recording”.¹⁴ Like their close cousin, the exhibition catalogue, these images provide an idealized, synthesized version of a display, what Victor Stoichita has called “the dream of any collection”.¹⁵ Even diagrams that were intended to guide a viewer may have simplified or distorted the contents in order to facilitate use, conform to contemporary taste, or convey a more favourable impression of the installation depicted.¹⁶ And, as I have argued elsewhere, the conventions of the genre of gallery painting encourage artistic licence, as artists rearranged the contents of the actual display in order to create programmatic statements.¹⁷ As sources for exhibition reconstructions, historic images are best used in concert with one

another and with textual sources: features that appear in multiple images are less likely to be the fancy of an individual artist. For instance, the pink wall colour used in *What Jane Saw* was based on a hand-coloured aquatint published in *The Microcosm of London* in 1808. Yet most images of the Institution show red walls, a fact confirmed by textual sources, including a critic who complained in 1806 that the gallery was furnished with “a paper of the brightest and most vivid scarlet, which fatigues and distresses the eye”.¹⁸ By neglecting such evidence and instead relying on a single image, *What Jane Saw* creates a problematic representation of what Austen and her fellow visitors would have seen. Such inaccuracies have troubling consequences: in this case, the incorrect wall colour is also a stereotypical sign of femininity. The decision to use pink heightens the association with the famous female author. It also occludes the gender politics of this space: although this display could be entered and interpreted by women, it was an exhibition of paintings by men, designed and controlled by men.¹⁹

Similar issues arise concerning the arrangement of artworks on the virtual walls. Although the exhibition catalogue numbers provide some indication of the relative location of the pictures, considerable guesswork is still required in placing works, especially on the longer walls, which could contain as many as nineteen canvases. In an article about the development of the site, Barchas illustrated how she and her team considered various hanging orders, and noted that “we curated the virtual show by making educated guesses about relative placement, balance, and alignment.”²⁰ But these guesses do not always take advantage of the lessons of existing scholarship on period hanging practices, leading to a recreation that reflects present-day aesthetic preferences, rather than those of the early nineteenth century.²¹ Many nineteenth-century galleries, including that of the British Institution, were hung in what Giles Waterfield has termed the “decorative” style: “One major picture was arranged as the centre of a composition or, more usually, of a wall. It was flanked by one, two or more pairs of paintings, arranged symmetrically on either side, and the pattern might be repeated again left and right of the central group.”²² As Waterfield observes, this style was familiar to the patrons of the Institution, many of whom employed it in their personal collections.²³ As I will discuss in more detail below, these patrons played a central role in arranging the Institution’s exhibitions. The decorative style was also employed by the Hanging Committee of the Royal Academy, whose displays reflected a “commitment to lateral symmetry, or at least to a fairly close approximation thereof”.²⁴ This mode of display was widely used over a long period of time. Its currency can be judged by its appearance in two images of exhibitions, created over a century apart: a watercolour of the Royal Academy summer exhibition of 1784 (fig. 2) and a photograph of the

Victoria Gallery in Dundee in 1889 (fig. 3). As such images suggest, the desire for symmetry led to the creation of temporary pendants out of works of similar scale and orientation.



Figure 2.

Edward Francis Burney, West Wall, The Great Room, Royal Academy,, 784, pen, grey ink, grey wash, and watercolour, 33.5 x 42.9 cm. Collection of the British Museum, London (1904,0101.1) Digital image courtesy of Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 3.

Unknown photographer, Victoria Gallery, Dundee, 1889, photograph, dimensions unknown Digital image courtesy of Libraries, Leisure and Culture Dundee

The application of these principles would have led to very different arrangements than those seen on *What Jane Saw*. Consider, for example, the north wall of the North Room. At the Institution, this room was generally acknowledged to be the main gallery; its north wall, where the catalogue numbers started, was frequently the site of a major visual statement.²⁵ In 1813 this wall contained two full-length portraits depicting the monarch, George III, and the great tragic actress Sarah Siddons, as well as three “fancy” pictures, small-scale and expressive images of children.²⁶ The designers of *What Jane Saw* have chosen to place the portrait of George III in the centre, on the assumption that it should face a portrait of George’s wife, Queen Charlotte, which hung at the opposite end of the space.²⁷ In terms of relative social rank, this order makes sense: the monarch takes pride of place. But this arrangement ignores the strong preference for symmetry in this period; the cluster of three small fancy pictures at right does a poor job of balancing the image of Siddons at left. This reconstruction also ignores the prevailing custom of arranging previously unrelated pictures as pendants. In private collections, the desire for pendants was so great that works were often trimmed or expanded to create matching pairs.²⁸ To my mind, the prevalence of this practice suggests that the portraits of king and actress were most likely displayed side by side. The fancy pictures might then have been hung in a row above or, more likely, below, so that they could be

examined closely.²⁹ These decisions matter, because the placement of these objects conveys meaning: if the monarch was placed in the central position, it was a more conservative installation that visually affirmed social hierarchy. But if, as I have speculated, the images of George III and Mrs Siddons were presented as pendants, it was a more daring installation that juxtaposed actress and king. Parallel placement would have emphasized the striking formal similarity between these two enthroned figures, both monarchs of their respective realms.³⁰ The wide divergence between my proposed arrangement and that presented on *What Jane Saw* illuminates the degree of speculation involved in such endeavours. Authors of reconstructions should strive to highlight such uncertainties.

Some images of individual works presented on the site also pose problems. Locating images is a major challenge for any reconstruction project. In the case of the Reynolds exhibition of 1813, many of the canvases shown have changed hands, changed titles, exist in multiple variants, or are known only through prints. In sourcing images for *What Jane Saw*, overall visual appearance was prioritized over obtaining images of the objects displayed in 1813. As a statement in the “About” section explains:

Where more than one copy of the same painting is known to exist (Mannings records how Reynolds’ studio occasionally made multiples for different clients) we selected the best available image, regardless of which Reynolds copy hung in the gallery in the 1813 show. Perhaps these visual approximations can, in time, be substituted for with good color scans of the precise material objects.³¹

In the meantime, however, these images are misleadingly presented. Individual instances where an image of an alternate object has been used are not clearly marked.³² Nor are the substitutes necessarily copies from Reynolds’s studio. For example, consider the full-length portrait of Admiral Rodney painted in 1788 and shown on the south wall of the South Room in 1813. On the site, the entry for this portrait is labelled “Mannings #1545 . . . Location: The Royal Collection”. But the image provided is not of the painting from the Royal Collection (fig. 4). Instead, it represents a replica painted by Matthew Shepperson in 1824, now in the collection of the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich (fig. 5).³³ This substitution of a copy by another artist is nowhere indicated. The vast majority of visitors to the site will mistakenly believe they are looking at an image of a work that was painted by Reynolds and present in 1813, neither of which is true; indeed, the Shepperson replica was created eleven years after the exhibition took place.



Figure 4.

Sir Joshua Reynolds, George Brydges, First Lord Rodney (1719?-92), 1788-89, oil paint on lined canvas, 238.7 × 148.2 cm. The Royal Collection (RCIN 405899) Digital image courtesy of Royal Collection Trust / Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2016



Figure 5.

Matthew Shepperson, after Sir Joshua Reynolds, Admiral Lord George Brydges Rodney (1719–1792), 1st Baron Rodney, 1824, oil on canvas, 238.8 x 146 cm. Collection of the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London, Greenwich Hospital Collection (BHC2971) Digital image courtesy of Royal Museums Greenwich

The Shepperson replica is, at least, a decent copy. The same cannot be said for an image substituted for a related object that hung on the adjoining east wall, an earlier half-length portrait of the same sitter, Admiral Rodney. Here, an attempt is made to acknowledge the use of an alternate image: the accompanying text notes that the image shown “is a later version—as even Mannings cannot locate the original”. This statement, combined with the label “Unlocated; version at Petworth House, Sussex”, might lead one to believe that the image on the site depicts the Petworth version.³⁴ This would have been a good choice: the Petworth painting is an autograph Reynolds dated around 1761; a colour photograph of it has recently been published; and Mannings speculates that it may even have been the object shown in

1813 (fig. 6).³⁵ But instead, the image provided is of a copy by an unknown artist now in the collection of the National Portrait Gallery (NPG), although it is not labelled as such (fig. 7).



Figure 6.

Sir Joshua Reynolds, Admiral Lord George Brydges Rodney, 1761, oil on canvas, 127 × 101.6 cm. Petworth House collection Digital image courtesy of Lord Egremont / Petworth House



Figure 7.

Unknown artist, after Sir Joshua Reynolds, George Brydges Rodney, 1st Baron Rodney, n.d., oil on canvas, 239 x 146 cm. Collection of the National Portrait Gallery, London (NPG 1398) Digital image courtesy of National Portrait Gallery, London

These unmarked substitutions may initially seem to be of interest only to experts in the field. Indeed, one of the most laudable aspects of *What Jane Saw* is that it is designed to appeal to a wide audience, attracting users who might not be familiar with art history, much less the details of Reynolds's career. But the very fact that this site is aimed at the general public as well as scholars makes it all the more important that it be transparent about the nature of the experience and the information it is offering. In addition to being misleading, the decision to substitute images of copies by artists other than Reynolds has serious visual consequences for the exhibition reconstruction. For instance, the NPG painting is not a good replica: the Gallery's own cataloguer describes it as "a crude copy" in which "the uniform is skimped and the features misleadingly and incompetently softened".³⁶ In the Petworth canvas, Rodney's shadowed features and firmly pressed lips

suggest a forceful personality tempered by genteel restraint; the copyist transforms the admiral into a slightly louche figure with a cupid's bow mouth and a superciliously raised eyebrow. The scale of this replica also presents problems. The NPG copy measures only 99 by 79.4 centimetres.³⁷ But in the *What Jane Saw* reconstruction, the digital image has been expanded to fill the space occupied by the object shown in 1813, which was roughly three times that size.³⁸ As a consequence, the figure looms larger in the frame than those in the surrounding compositions, although this would not have been the case in the actual installation.

The precise visual and material qualities of individual canvases matter: as the site notes, the two portraits of Admiral Rodney discussed here were part of a fascinating moment in the installation. Hung near each other on adjoining walls, the juxtaposition of two works “painted 30 years apart . . . allows the viewer to see Rodney age before their eyes”.³⁹ This important insight into the complex temporal effects created by this display is undercut by the problematic approach to sourcing images: viewers of the site are not actually comparing images of two paintings created by Reynolds thirty years apart, but of two later replicas created by different artists. In 1813, the juxtaposition of the two portraits not only allowed viewers to assess how Rodney had aged over thirty years, but also allowed them to evaluate how Reynolds's style might have evolved over that same period. But one cannot do the same with the *What Jane Saw* site, as the images provided do not depict works by Reynolds.

The designers of *What Jane Saw* have exhibited an admirable commitment to bringing their project to a wider audience. But such projects do that audience a disservice if the information presented is inaccurate or misleading. Too often *What Jane Saw* becomes not even what Jane might have seen, but rather what Jane did *not* see. Recently, a second exhibition reconstruction has been added to the site. It represents the British Institution's predecessor at 52 Pall Mall, John Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery, in 1796, although no historical evidence exists that Austen attended this exhibition. The Shakespeare Gallery presents even more daunting methodological challenges than the Reynolds exhibition, as only a third of the pictures displayed in 1796 can be traced today. The sizes of the missing works are unknown. For the *What Jane Saw* reconstruction they have been estimated using “averaging of typical dimensions” of works (the precise calculations used to determine the scale of individual canvases are not provided).⁴⁰ Uncertainty is a necessary element of any digital reconstruction. But one cannot employ as many elisions, speculations, and unmarked substitutions as *What Jane Saw* does, and at the same time assert “we believe that we

have ‘frozen’ the gallery precisely as it looked in 1796.”⁴¹ To do so abuses the trust of the audience and discredits the practice of exhibition reconstructions.

Accuracy of the type claimed by its creators for *What Jane Saw* may not even be possible. But if we proceed with an awareness of the historiography of exhibitions and of the limitations of our sources, we can provide something equally exciting: an exhibition reconstruction that illuminates the process of making both nineteenth-century exhibitions and their twenty-first-century representations. Instead of certainty, we can offer exploration. Heeding recent calls for a “process-oriented research and publication approach”, the following section seeks to demonstrate the many stages and decisions involved in reconstructing an exhibition.⁴² In other words, I will show development as well as final product. I am deeply aware that in crafting this reconstruction, my collaborators and I may have introduced fresh errors or raised unanticipated methodological issues. But the goal of this project is not to create a definitive visualization. Instead, this article and its accompanying reconstruction are intended to begin a conversation about the nature of exhibition reconstructions and about the significance of the British Institution Reynolds exhibitions. As I hope to demonstrate, speculative and transparent reconstructions can increase our understanding of historic exhibitions. In particular, they can revive visual dialogues created among works hanging on the crowded walls of nineteenth-century exhibition halls.

Rehanging Reynolds at the British Institution in 1823

The exhibition of 1813 was the first in a series of Institution-sponsored Reynolds exhibitions, held once every ten years for forty years. By returning repeatedly to the subject of Reynolds, the administrators of the Institution kept his works before the eyes of the public and continued to fuel debates about the status of Reynolds and of the national school of art. Here, I will focus on the second of these events, held in 1823. The first exhibition presented Reynolds in splendid isolation; the second put him in conversation with the continental old masters, making an even bolder claim for his art-historical significance.

In order to understand how this installation might have appeared, we must first understand who organized it, and why.⁴³ The British Institution was a collectively funded philanthropic organization established in 1805.⁴⁴ Its founders sought to increase the quality of British art, so that it might compete internationally. Controversially, they advocated study and emulation of continental art; the idea was to beat the old masters at their own game, as it were. By the 1820s, the mission had expanded; the administrators also sought “to extend to a wider circle the love and

admiration, and patronage of the arts".⁴⁵ Exhibitions promoted both of these aims. By showing historic British art alongside continental precedents, these displays argued visually for the inclusion of the British school of painting in the international canon. They also allowed viewers to compare and contrast examples of different artists, styles, and periods. The Institution thus made an essential component of connoisseurship, direct observation, available to a wider public. In 1824, an early historian of the British Institution advocated comparative viewing as the best route to expertise in the arts: "that knowledge which has been called *Vertù*, is best acquired by conversation, and a constant examination of the best works of the best masters; and is formed by comparison of one of them with another, each predominant example having been stored in the memory."⁴⁶ The arrangement of Institution exhibitions encouraged this kind of viewing. Period aesthetics valued juxtaposition over strict categorization, and the arrangement of the works into symmetrical patterns invited visual comparisons, for example among works of like size but unlike subject or style.⁴⁷ Reviewers took up this suggestion, routinely assessing artists and works in relation to each other. "Comparison is the great test of excellence", wrote Robert Hunt in the *Examiner*.⁴⁸

The displays that elicited such responses were developed and installed by a group of administrators. The patrons of the Institution are often described as "aristocratic" or "patrician".⁴⁹ But, in fact, its membership was diverse, including representatives of most political persuasions and religious tendencies.⁵⁰ Peers headed its membership lists, but the rosters also included brewers and Bristol merchants; the one thing the leaders of the Institution had in common was money, be it old or new. Although an annual membership (which included free admission to the gallery) could be had for as little as one guinea a year, the real power in the Institution lay in its Committee of Directors, elected from among the members who had donated one hundred guineas or more.⁵¹ This small circle of collectors and connoisseurs administered a diverse programme of activities, including exhibitions. In 1823, many of the founding Directors were still in charge: Sir George Beaumont, who had been a patron and personal friend of Reynolds's; Richard Payne Knight, an aesthetic theorist, collector of antiquities, and provocateur; and Charles Long, later Lord Farnborough, a conservative politician who advised George IV on artistic matters. The Directors developed their exhibitions with the extensive assistance of an employee, the picture restorer and dealer William Seguer. Initially, it was the Directors who drew up the list of loan requests, but by 1823 Seguer had taken over this function, as well as visiting collections to assess possible loans, making transport arrangements, and overseeing the installation of the exhibition.⁵² Although Seguer is sometimes described as a curator in all but name, he was not the sole author of these displays: the Directors also participated in hanging days.

⁵³ In 1821, Joseph Farington visited the Institution in company with Charles Long. He found that “the arranging pictures the works of the Old Masters was going on”, attended by Directors Samuel Rogers, Lord Carlisle, Lord Mulgrave, and Beaumont. ⁵⁴

The Reynolds exhibition that Seguier and the Directors developed in 1823 differed significantly from the event held a decade earlier. Unlike the monographic show of 1813, the new display showed works by Reynolds in the same space as examples by continental old masters. The North Room was devoted to Reynolds, the Middle Room to the Northern European schools, and the South Room to Southern European art, including that of Italy. In addition, while roughly two-thirds of the Reynolds works exhibited in 1813 had been portraits, in 1823, subject pictures were in the majority. As the catalogue preface made clear, one goal of this event was to demonstrate Reynolds’s range as a painter. The preface praised his ability to evoke a variety of emotions, claiming that although Reynolds was naturally inclined to “select subjects which belong to the gentler feelings . . . the examples here presented to us fully show, that the most forcible expression of the strongest passions was not above his reach.” ⁵⁵ By evoking Reynolds’s ability to convey “the strongest passions”, the author insists on his importance not simply as a portrait painter, but also as a painter in genres considered more elevated at the time, including history. The predominance of subject pictures also created a thematic link to many of the old masters on view, against whom observers were invited to judge the English artist. At the same time, the exhibition invited comparison among different types of Reynolds’s artistic production, by hanging portraits of actresses and royalty alongside subjects from Dante and images of destitute waifs.

To reconstruct these visual narratives, we must first reconstruct the contents of the exhibition. The development of the video presented here was a collective endeavour, made possible by the support of *British Art Studies* and its partners. The designer, George Voicke, created the video from notes, source images, and mock-ups that I provided; this process was overseen by Tom Scutt, Digital Manager at the Paul Mellon Centre, who also worked on production of the final video and provided crucial editorial suggestions. The result is a visualization of the British Institution galleries in 1823 that is meant to be evocative instead of precise. It seeks to highlight uncertainty, rather than to provide an illusion of direct access. For the purposes of this exercise, we focused on how to present the various possible arrangements of a single wall. The reconstruction thus considers only one element of a complex installation; in the video, the rest of the display is invoked by shadowy picture frames that indicate the presence of other works without precisely rendering them. No attempt was made to represent the audience, although the two annual displays at the Institution in 1823, the winter sale exhibition and the summer loan exhibition, attracted over 38,000 visitors. ⁵⁶

In addition, as the text in video strives to make clear, many elements of the depiction are conjecture rather than fact. Text panels interspersed throughout the video provide additional historical information; they also puncture the illusion of exactitude by explaining, within the reconstruction itself, the many decisions and guesses that went into its creation (fig. 8).



[Watch Video](#)

Figure 8.

Duck Duck Zeus, Digital Reconstruction, *Pictures by Sir Joshua Reynolds, with a Selection from the Italian, Spanish, Flemish, and Dutch Schools*, exhibition held at the British Institution, London, 1823



Figure 9.

R. Grave, after A. Pugin, Gallery of the British Institution, published in *Magazine of Fine Arts*, 1821, illustration following page 240. Digital image courtesy of University of Michigan Library, Ann Arbor, MI

Information about the architecture and dimensions of the room was taken from Thomas Smith's *Recollections of the British Institution*, published in 1860.⁵⁷ Smith's book is the only source discovered so far that provides precise measurements of the space, so if Smith's measurements were off, so too is our reconstruction. Period images also played a major role, although they were consulted with caution, always keeping in mind that these images are creative statements in their own right. Available images of British Institution exhibitions include a watercolour by James and Francis Stephanoff, oil paintings by John Scarlett Davis and Alfred Joseph Woolmer, and engravings published in the *Microcosm of London* and the *Magazine of Fine Arts* (fig. 9).⁵⁸ These images provide only a starting point for analysis of the space's possible appearance: as I have shown elsewhere, John Scarlett Davis, in particular, often invented more than he transcribed when representing a display space.⁵⁹ Even in images, such as the Stephanoff watercolour, where the hang depicted closely tracks the number order in the catalogue, its appearance might have been tidied up to enhance the aesthetic appeal of the overall image (fig. 10).⁶⁰ These images were therefore consulted in concert; an individual architectural or decorative feature was considered likely to have actually been in the space only if it appeared in multiple images, preferably confirmed by a textual source.



Figure 10.

James Stephanoff and Francis Philip Stephanoff, *The Interior of the British Institution*, 1817, watercolour on paper, 20 × 29.4 cm. Collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum, London Digital image courtesy of Victoria & Albert Museum, London

Nonetheless, a major takeaway lesson of the design process was that creating a reconstruction can put pressure on the authors to visualize features about which little or nothing is known. A guiding principle of our project was to make the rendering evocative, rather than illusory. In some places, as in the surrounding walls, I believe this tactic was effective. But some aspects remain more definitive than I would like, such as the lighting; the skylights cast visually compelling patterns of light and shadow, but do not reflect potentially confounding issues like the possible height of surrounding buildings. A decision late in the process to trade blue skies for overcast (as more appropriate for coal-burning, industrialized London of the 1820s) resulted in a dim interior, again a matter of conjecture. Building the reconstruction also revealed the variations (and varying level of reliability) among our visual sources. In some cases, the period images were in consensus. For example, all but one of the images consulted depict broad floorboards whose long sides run along an east-west axis. The outlier is John Scarlett Davis's *Interior of the British Institution*, which instead shows a geometric pattern (see [fig. 1](#)). Examination of other works by this artist, including his representations of the Louvre, the Uffizi, and the National Gallery of Naval Art in Greenwich Hospital, reveal that Davis habitually represented floors with this pattern, perhaps to reinforce a sense of perspectival recession.⁶¹ Once this idiosyncrasy was identified, we could feel confident in showing floorboards in the arrangement seen in the other images. In other instances, disparities among the images were explained by

textual sources. Early depictions of the Institution show a box-shaped skylight. Images from the 1820s, however, show an inward-slanting structure. Institution records confirm that the ceiling and skylights were rebuilt between 1819 and 1820, and therefore the slanting structure was included in the video.⁶² Repeatedly, however, the design process revealed the extent to which images are unreliable witnesses; for example, the available representations variously depict the skirting boards as tan, red, dark brown, and, in one case, non-existent. Once again, the outlier was Davis; his propensity for invention led us to believe there had indeed been skirting boards, but the colour remained a mystery. Given that a close-up view of one wall was a central focus of the project, a choice had to be made. Dark red was selected. In this instance, the impulse to create a visually complete rendering of the space overran concerns about a dearth of evidence. In other instances, we chose to omit features due to a lack of information: for example, our reconstruction does not visualize the possible presence of a fireplace in the middle room, visible only in Woolmer's painting.⁶³ The result of all these choices, however, is still potentially deceptive in its precision, an effect we sought to combat with the inclusion of the source images and of explanatory text in the reconstruction itself.

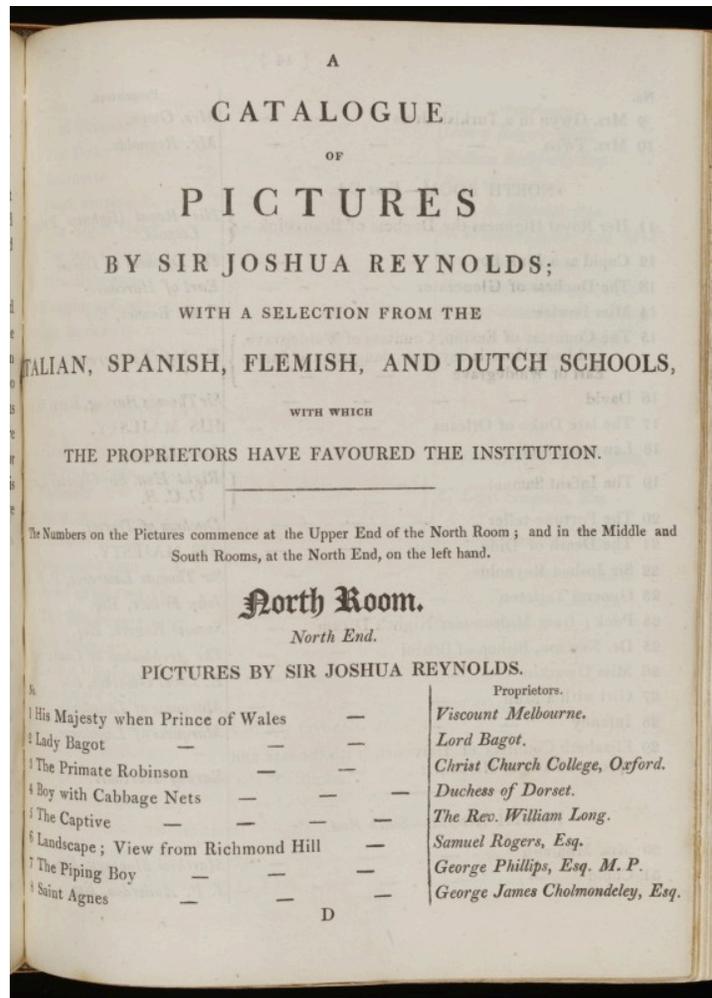


Figure 11.

British Institution, *A Catalogue of Pictures by Sir Joshua Reynolds, with a Selection from the Italian, Spanish, Flemish, and Dutch Schools, with which the Proprietors Have Favoured the Institution* (London: W. Nicol, 1823), page 13 Digital image courtesy of National Art Library, Victoria & Albert Museum, London

The centrepiece of the reconstruction is the depiction of the north wall of the North Room, which visualizes several different kinds of uncertainty. According to the catalogue (which might not reflect last-minute alterations or later additions), ten paintings hung on this wall (fig. 11).⁶⁴ Arranging these works presented fresh methodological challenges: translating a catalogue numbering order into a historically appropriate hang is not a straightforward task, even when the dimensions of both works and wall are known (figs. 12–21). The largest work hanging on the north wall was the monumental equestrian portrait of George IV when Prince of Wales; in a nod to social hierarchy, this painting is listed as number one in the exhibition catalogue. Given hanging practices of the time, it is reasonable to assume that the work was also accorded the primary, central position on the wall, as no work of

similar size was present to serve as a pendant. It was the practice of the Royal Academy hanging committees at this time to start by centring on the walls the most esteemed of the large works to be exhibited.⁶⁵ These large works then formed anchors around which symmetrical patterns could be formed. This approach has obvious benefits, as it avoids the headache of finding space for a massive canvas on an already crowded wall.



Figure 12.

Sir Joshua Reynolds, *George IV*, 1784, oil on canvas, 238.7 × 266.7 cm. Private Collection, UK. Mannings no. 719. This image represents the exact object shown at the British Institution loan exhibition of 1823 as cat. no. 1, *His Majesty when Prince of Wales* Digital image courtesy of Private Collection



Figure 13.

Sir Joshua Reynolds, Lady Barbara Bagot, 1762, oil on canvas, 76 × 63.5 cm. Private Collection. Mannings no. 92. This image represents the exact object shown at the British Institution loan exhibition of 1823 as cat. no. 2, *Lady Bagot* Digital image courtesy of Private Collection



Figure 14.

Sir Joshua Reynolds, Richard Robinson, 1763, oil on canvas, 124 × 99 cm. Collection of Christ Church, Oxford (LP 190). Mannings no. 1535. This image represents the exact object shown at the British Institution loan exhibition of 1823 as cat. no. 3, *The Primate Robinson* Digital image courtesy of Governors of Christ Church, Oxford



Figure 15.

Sir Joshua Reynolds, *A Beggar Boy and His Sister*, 1775, oil on canvas, 76.2 × 63.5 cm. The Faringdon Collection Trust, Buscot Park. Mannings no. 2016. This image represents the exact object shown at the British Institution loan exhibition of 1823 as cat. no. 4, *Boy with Cabbage Nets* Digital image courtesy of The Faringdon Collection Trust, Buscot Park

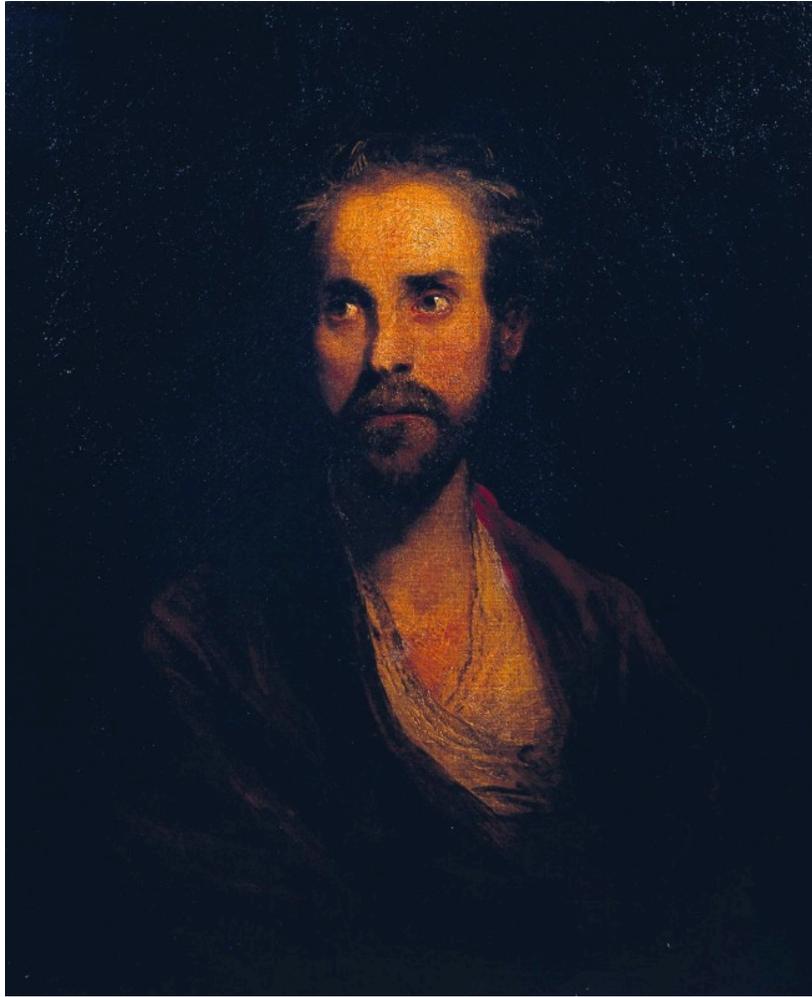


Figure 16.

Sir Joshua Reynolds, *The Banished Lord*, circa 1777, oil on canvas, 76.2 × 63.5 cm. Collection of Tate, London (N00107). Mannings no. 2013. This image represents the exact object shown at the British Institution loan exhibition of 1823 as cat. no. 5, *The Captive* Digital image courtesy of Tate Images



Figure 17.

Sir Joshua Reynolds, *View from Sir Joshua Reynolds's House, Richmond Hill*, 1788, oil on canvas, 69.8 × 90.8 cm. Tate, London (N05635). Mannings no. 2189. This image represents the exact object shown at the British Institution loan exhibition of 1823 as cat. no 6, *Landscape: View from Richmond Hill* Digital image courtesy of Tate Images

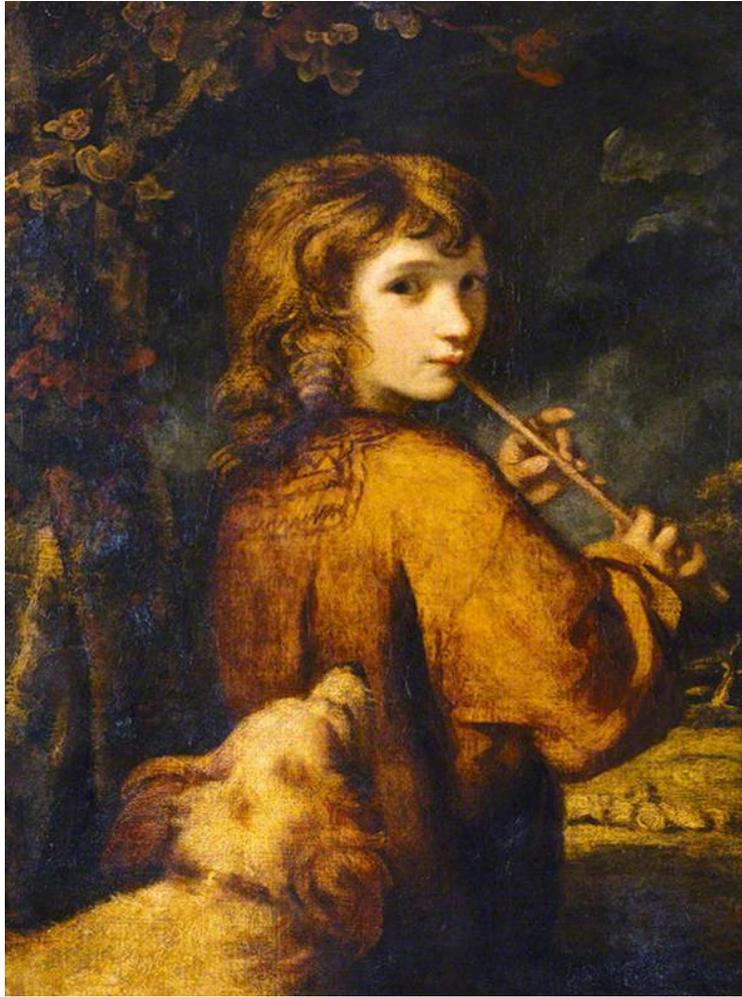


Figure 18.

Sir Joshua Reynolds, Shepherd Boy, circa 1773, oil on canvas, 94 × 63.5 cm. Antony House, National Trust. Mannings no. 2156. This image represents the exact object shown at the British Institution loan exhibition of 1823 as no. 7, *The Piping Boy* Digital image courtesy of National Trust Images / Photo: John Hammond



Figure 19.

Thomas Chambers, after Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mrs Quarrington as St Agnes, 1787, engraving and etching, 39.8 × 27.4 cm. Collection of the British Museum, London (1833,0715.62). The exact object shown in the British Institution loan exhibition of 1823 as no. 8, *Saint Agnes*, was Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Mrs. Quarrington*, 1772. Oil on canvas, 76 × 63 in. Private Collection. Mannings no. 1504. An image of this work could not be located; it is here represented by an engraving after it Digital image courtesy of Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 20.

Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mary Horneck, circa 1775, oil on canvas, 127 x 100 cm. Cliveden Estate. Mannings no. 936. This image represents the exact object shown at the British Institution loan exhibition of 1823 as cat. no. 9, *Mrs. Gwyn in a Turkish dress*
Digital image courtesy of National Trust Images



Figure 21.

John Jones, after Sir Joshua Reynolds, Miss Kemble, 1784, mezzotint, 37.7 × 27.5 cm. Collection of the British Museum, London (Q,3.164). The precise object shown in the British Institution loan exhibition of 1823, cat. no. 10, as *Mrs. Twiss*, has yet to be identified. Mannings noted that it could be as yet unlocated, or it could be identical with the version in Louvre or with the version in the National Museum, Havana, Cuba (Mannings nos. 1027, 1028, 1028c). Here the object is represented by an image of an engraving by John Jones after the canvas now in Havana Digital image courtesy of Trustees of the British Museum.

Once the central anchor is in place, the question becomes how to arrange the nine smaller pictures around it. After paintings were hung at the Institution they were labelled with small numbered pieces of tin that were reused every year.⁶⁶ The catalogue helpfully specifies that the numbers began “on the left hand”; in other words, pictures were numbered from left to right on the wall.⁶⁷ But this direction provides only a starting place for a speculative rehang, leaving many other factors in doubt. Did the numbers proceed from top to bottom? Clockwise or counter-clockwise? How many

rows of pictures were formed? Was there a row of smaller pictures above or below the central work? The reconstruction presents three options, created with an eye to both number order and period hanging practices. Option A follows the most straightforward approach for translating the catalogue numbers into a historically appropriate hang (fig. 22). The works are arranged so that the numbers proceed clockwise, starting with *George IV* at the centre, then moving to the work numbered two in the catalogue, *Lady Barbara Bagot*, at lower left, and so on. Option B instead places *Lady Bagot* at the upper left and proceeds counter-clockwise, an arrangement that lofts *George IV* above a row of smaller works, including one of Reynolds's rare landscapes, that are thus made available for close perusal (fig. 23). Option C presents a broad, vertical hang, inspired by the arrangement of pictures shown in Stephanoff's watercolour (fig. 24). These are certainly not the only options that might be considered, and none of these rehangs can be declared to be definitive.



Figure 22.

Catherine Roach, Option A, a possible hanging arrangement of works by Joshua Reynolds displayed on the North Wall of the British Institution's exhibition *Pictures by Sir Joshua Reynolds, with a Selection from the Italian, Spanish, Flemish, and Dutch Schools*, 1823



Figure 23.

Catherine Roach, Option B, a possible hanging arrangement of works by Joshua Reynolds displayed on the North Wall of the British Institution's exhibition *Pictures by Sir Joshua Reynolds, with a Selection from the Italian, Spanish, Flemish, and Dutch Schools*, 1823



Figure 24.

Catherine Roach, Option C, a possible hanging arrangement of works by Joshua Reynolds displayed on the North Wall of the British Institution's exhibition *Pictures by Sir Joshua Reynolds, with a Selection from the Italian, Spanish, Flemish, and Dutch Schools*, 1823

Even less can reasonably be asserted about another element crucial to the appearance of the display: picture frames. As the paintings were lent from a number of private collections, we can assume that a variety of frames were on view. The frames used in the reconstruction are in three eighteenth-century styles, Carlo Maratta, Rococo, and Neoclassical, known to have been used by Reynolds or by his patrons.⁶⁸ These objects are currently used to display works by Reynolds at the Yale Center for British Art, and all date from

the eighteenth century; however, it is also possible that some lenders had reframed their pictures in more up-to-date, early nineteenth-century styles.⁶⁹ To highlight the high level of uncertainty about the frames, they rotate with each hanging option.

Sourcing images for the reconstruction also raised significant methodological issues and provided further opportunities to visualize uncertainty. Simply obtaining images requires a considerable commitment of resources. This project was made possible by the willingness of the editors of *British Art Studies* to commission new photography, and their policy of negotiating permissions on behalf of authors. But, even with this significant institutional support, it was not possible to obtain colour images of all the works exhibited on the north wall in 1823. Several works remain unlocated or in inaccessible private collections. In the absence of high-resolution digital images of these objects, what substitutes are acceptable? Complicating this question is the fact that many of Reynolds's works exist in multiple versions, to which art-historical discourse traditionally accords different degrees of authenticity: "originals", autograph repetitions, studio replicas, and later copies.⁷⁰ Many of these paintings were also engraved. In the case where the actual object exhibited cannot be located, which is the preferable stand-in, an engraving of the precise object, or an oil variant or copy? All are imperfect substitutes that alter even as they reiterate. Artists of this period were well aware of the specific visual qualities of these various media.⁷¹ As engravers argued in defence of their own profession, the creation of an engraving is an act of translation, one that not only transfers a colour image to black and white (and may reverse the composition), but also reflects the judgment of the highly skilled artist who produced the engraving.⁷² Images of oil variants created by Reynolds might seem preferable, since they provide colour and were produced by the artist himself. Yet, as the exhibition *Experiments in Paint* recently demonstrated, Reynolds used variants as an opportunity for exploration, creating subtly but potently different versions of the same composition.⁷³ Making the existence of these various options clear to viewers helps convey the complex nature of replication in this period.



Figure 25.

Thomas Chambers, after Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mrs Quarrington as St Agnes, 1787, engraving and etching, 39.8 × 27.4 cm. Collection of the British Museum, London (1833,0715.62) Digital image courtesy of Trustees of the British Museum.

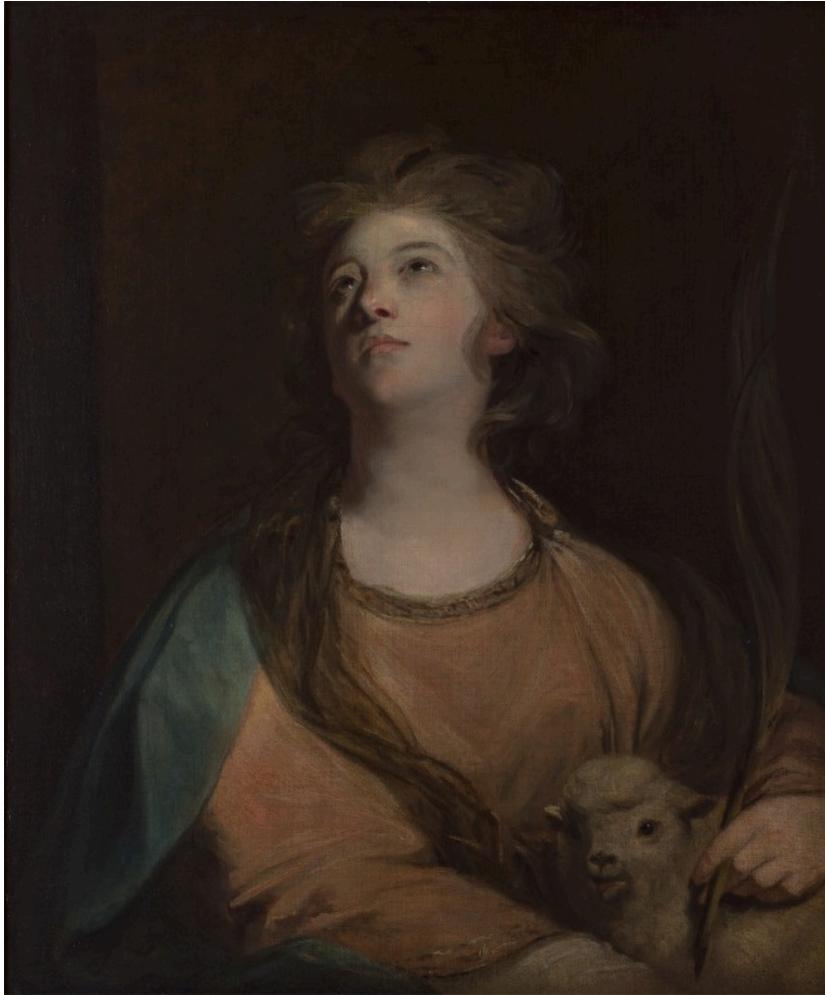


Figure 26.

Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mrs Quarrington as St Agnes, n.d., oil on canvas, 76.2 × 60.9 cm. The Wernher Foundation, UK Digital image courtesy of The Wernher Foundation, UK

The first step for tracing the works shown on the north wall is David Mannings and Martin Postle's *Sir Joshua Reynolds: A Complete Catalogue of his Paintings*, which provides provenance and exhibition histories. Sourcing images for seven of the pictures was relatively straightforward: their provenance matched the lenders identified in the 1823 catalogue, their current location was known, and a colour image could be obtained. The three remaining works presented more of a challenge, however. The portrait of Lady Bagot painted in 1762 was last sold at auction in 1945 and remains in a private collection today.⁷⁴ It is represented in the reconstruction by a scan of the black-and-white photograph reproduced in the catalogue raisonné. This image conveys composition but not colour. More daunting issues are presented by the remaining two paintings on the wall, for which no image of the actual object exhibited in 1823 can be located. For the portrait of the actress Mrs Quarrington as St Agnes, the options are an image of an

engraving from 1787 by Thomas Chambers made after the canvas shown in 1823 (fig. 25), or a colour photograph of an oil variant now held by the Wernher Foundation (fig. 26).⁷⁵ For the purposes of this exercise, I cropped the image of Chambers's print to more closely approximate to the appearance of an oil painting, a decision that robs the print of fundamental aspects of its material existence, including the inscription that attributes joint authorship to Chambers and Reynolds. Both the engraving and the oil variant are at some remove from the object we seek. Both exhibit bold lighting, a dramatic upward eye roll, and a chipper lamb companion. But the woman seen in the engraving is more sweetly pretty, with pronounced lips and deliciously tousled hair. These features are more subtly rendered in the oil variant, which also gives more emphasis to a dark swathe of drapery across the chest. The reconstruction presents both options, allowing viewers to assess for themselves their visual qualities and their impact on the overall hang. Even murkier is the matter of the portrait of Frances Kemble; it is not clear which version of this portrait was present in 1823.⁷⁶ Here it is represented by a 1784 mezzotint by John Jones.

The result of all of these choices is an amalgam of different types of images, each with its limitations and advantages. With the varied tones of mezzotints, line engravings, black-and-white and colour photographs, this assemblage lacks visual unity. But it does allow us to begin to analyse visual relationships among the works. By shifting between various hanging options, viewers can assess the proposed arrangements for themselves. Hopefully, they will also begin to notice visual affinities among the works that remain constant across the various hanging options. Although deliberately, transparently speculative, this reconstruction is also revealing, as the next section seeks to demonstrate.

Analysing the Reconstruction of the North Wall

While we cannot definitively state that any of the options presented in the reconstruction captures the hang exactly as it appeared in 1823, we can still derive great benefit from this exercise. Vivid affinities and contrasts among the works become apparent when their images are seen together and in scale. The preface to the exhibition catalogue stressed Reynolds's ability to depict both "gentler feelings" and "the strongest passions", and that range is certainly on view here.⁷⁷ Multiple genres are represented in these works, which include one of Reynolds's very rare landscapes, two fancy pieces featuring young children, and six portraits of different sizes and subjects. The remaining work, *The Banished Lord*, is generically ambiguous; it is painted on a scale similar to the surrounding fancy pieces, but it presents the kind of emotionally fraught situation most often associated with history painting. Also on view is the development of Reynolds's style over time: the works

span over twenty years of the artist's career, from 1762 to 1784, emphasizing the longevity and development of his practice. Matching this generic and temporal range is the social diversity of the subjects, who range from the king to working-class children. Also represented are an Anglican clergyman, three actresses, a peer's daughter, and a courtier. The centrality of the monarch's portrait maps the existing social hierarchy. It is also fitting given his active patronage of the British Institution; he held the honorary title of Patron and frequently contributed loans to its exhibitions. But in the other portraits, the suggestion of social hierarchy breaks down: for example, the portrait of Lady Bagot, daughter of an earl and wife of a baronet, is smaller than that of the untitled Mary Horneck (later Mrs Gwyn).

This sense of social heterogeneity is enhanced by the formal patterns of the hang. In all of the options proposed here, each of the portraits forms a temporary pendant with a companion of like size. These pairings exhibit vivid visual and social contrasts (see [fig. 22](#)). For instance, *The Banished Lord* forms a temporary pendant with a fancy piece of a similar size, *Shepherd Boy*, opposing the fierce gaze of an adult male in duress with the pert sidelong glance of an Arcadian shepherd boy. A similar contrast of youth and age can be found in the pairing of the portrait of Lady Bagot with that of the actress Frances Kemble, sister of Sarah Siddons. Here, a member of the English aristocracy is paired with a representative of a different kind of lineage, the theatrical Kemble family. The subtle play of equivalence and difference seen here is similar to that created by the exhibition of Reynolds's portraits of Sarah Siddons and the king on the same wall a decade earlier. This juxtaposition of members of aristocratic dynasties with members of theatrical dynasties exemplifies the phenomenon identified by Joseph Roach, in which eighteenth-century "performers, whose celebrity was achieved . . . claimed their place in the public eye beside aristocrats, whose celebrity was ascribed."⁷⁸ Equally intriguing is the pairing of the portrait of Mary Horneck with that of Richard Robinson. Both sitters were personal friends of Reynolds. He was the Archbishop of Armagh in the Church of Ireland, famed for his generous hospitality.⁷⁹ She was the daughter of an army officer, well known for her beauty and charm in London's artistic circles. (Reynolds is alleged to have been so moved by her attractions that he proposed to her during a sitting.⁸⁰) She later married the courtier Colonel Francis Gwyn and served as Woman of the Bedchamber to Queen Charlotte.⁸¹ A formal rhyme links these elite sitters: the billowing white skirt of Horneck's fancy dress outfit echoes the snowy fabric of Robinson's voluminous sleeve. But these temporary pendants are also held in tension by a series of contrasts: male and female, age and youth, sideward glance and frontal gaze, "Turkish" dress and Anglican vestments.

Similar resonances can be found among the groups of three pictures that fall to the left and the right of the central canvas in each hanging option. On the left is an unlikely triumvirate, providing maximum social contrast: the earl's daughter, the bishop, and *A Beggar Boy and His Sister*, which depicts two urchins eking out a marginal living hawking street wares. On the right is a more homogeneous group, which we might label the "line of beauties": Mary Horneck and the actresses Mrs Quarrington and Frances Kemble. In a nod to propriety (or is it a splendid visual joke?), in all three reconstructions presented here, the Prince of Wales, a notorious womanizer, turns his head resolutely away from the actresses and the professional beauty (see figs. 22-24). His gaze falls instead on the clergyman, while his horse's rear end is pointed towards the ladies. These arrangements forestall rude insinuations about the royal image ogling portraits of women, which had been made by critics reviewing eighteenth-century exhibitions.⁸² Yet these likenesses still share a wall. This assemblage of images generates many potential narratives, ranging from a patriotic celebration of Reynolds's versatility to a humorous commentary on the monarch's predilections.

"Dangerous Juxtaposition": Reynolds Among the Old Masters



Figure 27.

Studio of Peter Paul Rubens, Philip II, King of Spain (1527-1598), circa 1635, oil on canvas, 255.9 × 220.3 cm. The Royal Collection (RCIN 404392) Digital image courtesy of Royal Collection Trust / Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2016

Of course, this reconstruction considers only ten works in an installation that contained 175 paintings, roughly two-thirds of which were continental old masters. The visual resonances among the works on the north wall would have been amplified and complicated by the presence of works on the surrounding walls and adjacent galleries. For instance, *George IV* was not the only monumental equestrian portrait on view. On the east side of the adjoining middle room hung a work attributed to Rubens, then titled *Philip the Fourth of Spain on Horseback* (now identified as a portrait of Philip II from Rubens's studio; [fig. 27](#)).⁸³ Mark Hallett has argued that when Reynolds's martial equestrian portrait of George was first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1784, viewers would have compared it with their memories of

previously exhibited entries in the genre by Reynolds and his rivals.⁸⁴ In 1823, a different, more direct visual comparison was offered, one that asserted that Reynolds could compete with the continental old masters.

By standing near the archway in the middle room, a viewer could have glanced from Rubens's equestrian portrait to Reynolds's. Both of these large-scale works depict a richly adorned ruler in full control of a powerful horse, although in Rubens's composition the Spanish monarch is also accompanied by a bare-bosomed allegory of Victory. Such distinctions are key: Reynolds both inhabits the conventions of continental portraiture and adapts them for the purposes of an eighteenth-century Anglican prince. Philip's image was doubly linked to George through both iconography and possession: it was lent to the exhibition from the British royal collection, or, as the catalogue put it, by "HIS MAJESTY".⁸⁵ This conspicuous royal support of the Institution earned George some much-needed good press in the aftermath of his highly unpopular efforts to rid himself of his despised wife, Caroline. One reviewer noted, "His MAJESTY is, as usual, a liberal and valuable contributor."⁸⁶ In addition to positing the Hanoverian monarch as part of a grand tradition of royal patronage, the simultaneous exhibition of these two works also asserted a place for Reynolds in the grand tradition of artists like Rubens who painted for kings. By displaying these works in the same space, the administrators of the British Institution offered proof, in physical form, of the claim made for Reynolds in the catalogue preface: "we rank him among the most eminent Painters the art has produced."⁸⁷ One critic declared victory: "This exhibition furnished to an Englishman abundant matter for pride and exultation. The power and the grasp of the mind of Reynolds are here seen and felt; seen too in the most dangerous juxtaposition with works that have stood the test of centuries."⁸⁸ As this comment suggests, Institution exhibitions were engines for comparative viewing, encouraging their audience to assess works in concert.

Responses to the exhibition were not universally celebratory, however. Much like the temporary pendants it contained, the overall display in 1823 exhibited a compelling tension between opposites, offering both an argument for Reynolds's enduring reputation and a measure of the deleterious effects of time. The same journalist who hailed the force of Reynolds's works in the face of "dangerous juxtaposition" also mourned their deterioration due to the artist's technical experiments: "the means to which he resorted to rival the effects of ancient pictures, while they produced that effect for a season, contained within them the principle of destruction, beneath which his pictures are fast withering away."⁸⁹ Indeed, an important (and as yet under-studied) function of the Reynolds exhibitions was to mark the passage of time for their viewers. The exhibitions of 1813 and 1823 offered an elegy not only for the artist but also for the generation he had

painted: many of those pictured had passed away, and those still living were no longer young. At the same time that these exhibitions mourned the fading of a generation, however, they also celebrated the endurance of Reynolds's memory. Ironically, given the physical condition of his canvases, they could not celebrate the endurance of his images themselves. Yet the monographic project held out the hope of the resistance of time, what one reviewer in 1823 called "the immortality of fame".⁹⁰ The repeated act of assembling Reynolds's works together affirmed the abilities of the work of art to carry the memory of an artist, and his subjects, beyond a human lifetime.

Exhibition reconstructions are not, in fact, time travel. Reconstructions should be crafted with an awareness of their limitations and presented in a way that makes those limitations transparent to the viewer. But while we cannot revisit the galleries of the past, we can rediscover information about them. In particular, we can revive the ephemeral, powerful, and shifting meanings generated through the temporary combination of individual artworks. The works presented in 1823 emphasized Reynolds's range as a painter and his worthiness to hang alongside the continental old masters. The organizers of the Reynolds exhibitions aspired to a different type of time travel: they sought to send Reynolds forward through time, to claim a place for him in posterity. The fact that we are still talking about him today, and arguing about the best way to reconstruct exhibitions of his work, suggests that they were successful.

Footnotes

- 1 See, for example, Norman Bryson's critique of Karl Lehmann-Harleben's mid-twentieth-century diagrams based on an ancient ekphrastic text. "Philostratus and the Imaginary Museum", in *Vision and Textuality*, ed. Stephen Melville and Bill Readings (London: Macmillan, 1995), 174-94.
- 2 Johanna Drucker, "Is There a 'Digital' Art History?", *Visual Resources* 29, no. 1-2 (2013): 12.
- 3 Karen M. Kensek, "A Survey of Methods for Showing Missing Data, Multiple Alternatives, and Uncertainty in Reconstructions", *CSA Newsletter* 19, no. 3 (Winter 2007), <http://www.csanet.org/newsletter/winter07/nlw0702.html>. Representing uncertainty was also the subject of a recent session at the College Art Association. <http://caa2014.thaticamp.org/2014/02/11/representing-uncertainty/>.
- 4 Sheila Bonde, Clarke Maines, Elli Mylonas, and Julia Flanders, "The Virtual Monastery: Re-Presenting Time, Human Movement, and Uncertainty at Saint-Jean-des-Vignes, Soissons", *Visual Resources* 25, no. 4 (2009): 363.
- 5 Nicholas Penny, *The Sixteenth-Century Italian Paintings*, Vol. II: *Venice, 1540-1600* (London: National Gallery, 2008), xviii; for an alternate candidate, see Konstantinos Stefanis, "Nathaniel Hone's 1775 Exhibition: The First Single-Artist Retrospective", *Visual Culture in Britain* 14, no. 2 (2013): 131-53.
- 6 Martin Postle, "In Search of the 'True Briton': Reynolds, Hogarth, and the British School", in *Towards a Modern Art World*, ed. Brian Allen, Studies in British Art 1 (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1995), 121-43.
- 7 Francis Haskell, *The Ephemeral Museum: Old Master Paintings and the Rise of the Art Exhibition* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 2000), 54.
- 8 <http://www.whatjanesaw.org/index.php>.
- 9 On the site's lack of engagement with "visualizing uncertainty", see also Jodi Cranston, "What Jane Saw", 18 June 2015, doi:10.3202/caa.reviews.2015.74.
- 10 Jennifer Schuessler, "Seeing Art Through Austen's Eyes", *New York Times*, 24 May 2013, C1; John Mullen, "New Website Displays Celebrities of Jane Austen's Youth", *Guardian*, 24 May 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/may/24/website-celebrities-jane-austen-youth>; Richard De Ritter, "What Jane Saw", *British Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 20 June 2013, <https://www.bsecs.org.uk/criticks-reviews/what-jane-saw>; Susan Spencer, "What Jane Saw", *Eighteenth-Century Life* 38, no. 1 (Winter 2014), doi:10.1215/00982601-2390034; Cranston, "What Jane Saw".

- 11 Janine Barchas, "Digitally Reconstructing the Reynolds Retrospective Attended by Jane Austen in 1813: A Report on E-Work-in-Progress", *ABO: Interactive Journal for Women in the Arts, 1640-1830* 2, no. 1, doi:10.5038/2157-7129.2.1.12.
- 12 Schuessler, "Seeing Art Through Austen's Eyes", C1.
- 13 Barchas, "Digitally Reconstructing the Reynolds Retrospective".
- 14 Christopher Whitehead, "Architectures of Display at the National Gallery: The Barry Rooms as Art Historiography and the Problems of Reconstructing Historical Gallery Space", *Journal of the History of Collections* 17, no. 2 (2005): 204; see also C. S. Matheson, "'A Shilling Well Laid Out': The Royal Academy's Early Public", in *Art on the Line: The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House, 1780-1836*, ed. David Solkin (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 2001), 39-53.
- 15 Victor I. Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image: An Insight into Early Modern Meta-Painting*, trans. Anne-Marie Glasheen (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1997), 105.
- 16 Catherine Roach, "Domestic Display and Imperial Identity: A Visual Record of the Art Collections of Edward Hawke Locker", *Huntington Library Quarterly* 75, no. 3 (Autumn 2012): 411-28.
- 17 Catherine Roach, "Images as Evidence? Morse and the Genre of Gallery Painting", in *Samuel F. B. Morse's Gallery of the Louvre and the Art of Invention*, ed. Peter John Brownlee (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 2014), 46-59.
- 18 "Monthly Retrospect of the Fine Arts", *Monthly Magazine*, March 1806, 157; on the "much-hated red wallpaper" see also Peter Fullerton, "Patronage and Pedagogy: The British Institution in the Early Nineteenth Century", *Art History* 5 (March 1982): 63.
- 19 Women (and professional artists of both genders) were excluded from the Institution's seat of power, the Committee of Directors; the Governors, who met once a year to hear a report from the Directors and vote on major issues, included a few women, who were invited to vote by proxy rather than attending in person. However, unlike the Royal Academy, the Institution did allow women to enroll in its school. See *An Account of the British Institution for Promoting the Fine Arts in the United Kingdom* (London: John Hatchard, 1805), 6.
- 20 Barchas, "Digitally Reconstructing the Reynolds Retrospective".
- 21 Barchas cites, without fully taking on board, both Haskell's *Ephemeral Museum* and Solkin's *Art on Line*. Prominent studies of period hanging conventions that do not appear in Barchas's bibliography include: Francis Russell, "The Hanging and Display of Pictures, 1700-1850", in *The Fashioning and Functioning of the British Country House*, ed. Gervase Jackson-Stops, Studies in the History of Art 25 (Hanover, NH: Univ. Press of New England, 1989), 133-53; Giles Waterfield, "Picture Hanging and Gallery Decoration", in *Palaces of Art: Art Galleries in Britain, 1790-1990*, ed. Giles Waterfield (London: Dulwich Picture Gallery, 1991), 49-65; and Whitehead, "Architectures of Display at the National Gallery". Barchas, "Digitally Reconstructing the Reynolds Retrospective".
- 22 Waterfield, "Picture Hanging", 51.
- 23 Waterfield, "Picture Hanging", 51.
- 24 David Solkin, "Staging the Spectacle", in *Art on the Line*, 24.
- 25 On the North Room as the principal gallery, see "Fine Arts Exhibition", *Belle Assemblée*, March 1828, 133.
- 26 As listed in the *Catalogue of Pictures by the Late Sir Joshua Reynolds, Exhibited by Permission of the Proprietors, in Honour of the Memory of that Distinguished Artist, and for the Improvement of British Art* (London: W. Bulmer, 1813): no. 1, *Portrait of His Majesty* (Mannings no. 717, *George III, 1779*, Royal Academy, London); no. 2, *Portrait of Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse* (Mannings no. 1619, *Sarah Siddons as the Tragic Muse, 1784*, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA); no. 3, *Piping Boy* (Mannings no. 2156, *Shepherd Boy*, about 1773, Antony House, National Trust, Swindon, UK); no. 4, *Sleeping Girl* (Mannings no. 2077, *Girl Sleeping*, untraced, 1788); no. 5 *Boy with Cabbage Nets* (Mannings no. 2016, *A Beggar Boy and His Sister, 1775*, The Faringdon Collection Trust, Buscot Park, Oxfordshire, UK). David Mannings, ed., with Martin Postle, *Sir Joshua Reynolds: A Complete Catalogue of his Paintings* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 2000).
- 27 Barchas, "Digitally Reconstructing the Reynolds Retrospective".
- 28 Russell, "Hanging and Display of Pictures, 1700-1850", 144.
- 29 Waterfield, "Picture Hanging", 50.
- 30 For the interrelationship of royal celebrity and theatrical celebrity in this period, see Joseph Roach, *It* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 2007).
- 31 <http://www.whatjanesaw.org/1813/about.php>.
- 32 The potential for confusion here is high: one reviewer noted the use of images of prints as stand-ins for some objects, but also praised the site's creators for their "considerable success" in locating "images of all but three of the works originally displayed". De Ritter, "What Jane Saw". Engravings or photographs of variants by Reynolds or of later copies are not, in fact, images of the works originally displayed.
- 33 <http://collections.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/14444.html>.
- 34 [http://www.whatjanesaw.org/1813/rooms.php?location=SRES#wjs\[painting\]/14/](http://www.whatjanesaw.org/1813/rooms.php?location=SRES#wjs[painting]/14/).
- 35 Mannings, ed., *Sir Joshua Reynolds: A Complete Catalogue of his Paintings*, 397. The Petworth canvas was included in Martin Postle, ed., *Joshua Reynolds: The Creation of Celebrity* (London: Tate Publishing, 2005), 98-99.
- 36 John Ingamells, *National Portrait Gallery: Mid-Georgian Portraits, 1760-1790* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2004), 406.

- 37 Ingamells, *National Portrait Gallery*, 406.
- 38 <http://www.whatjanesaw.org/1813/rooms.php?location=SRES>.
- 39 [http://www.whatjanesaw.org/1813/rooms.php?location=SRES#wjs\[painting\]/14/](http://www.whatjanesaw.org/1813/rooms.php?location=SRES#wjs[painting]/14/).
- 40 <http://www.whatjanesaw.org/1796/about.php>.
- 41 Janine Barchas, "Reporting on What Jane Saw 2.0: Female Celebrity and Sensationalism in Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery", *ABO: Interactive Journal for Women in the Arts, 1640-1830* 5, no. 1, doi:10.5038/2157-7129.5.1.2. This claim is repeated in Janine Barchas and Kristina Straub, "Curating Will & Jane", *Eighteenth-Century Life* 40, no. 2 (April 2016), doi:10.1215/00982601-348864.
- 42 Christopher Johanson, "Visualizing History: Modeling in the Eternal City", *Visual Resources* 25, no. 4 (2009): 407; see also Pamela Fletcher, "Reflections on Digital Art History", doi:10.3202/caa.reviews.2015.73, 18 June 2015.
- 43 This section draws on research for my current book project, "The British Institution: A History".
- 44 On the Institution, see Fullerton, "Patronage and Pedagogy", 59-72; Ann Pullan, "Public Goods or Private Interests? The British Institution in the Early Nineteenth Century", in *Art in Bourgeois Society, 1790-1850*, ed. Andrew Hemingway and William Vaughan (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998), 27-44; Nicholas Tromans, "Museum or Market? The British Institution", in *Governing Cultures: Art Institutions in Victorian London*, ed. Paul Barlow and Colin Trodd (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 44-55; and Catherine Roach, *Pictures-within-Pictures in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Routledge, 2016), 24-63.
- 45 *An Historical Catalogue of Portraits, Representing Distinguished Persons of the History and Literature of the United Kingdom* (London: W. Bulmer, 1820), 14. The author of the preface was Charles Long. British Institution Minutes, National Art Library, Victoria & Albert Museum (hereafter Minutes), 21 March 1820; Joseph Farington, *Diary of Joseph Farington*, 17 vols., ed. Kenneth Garlick, Angus Macintyre, and Kathryn Cave (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1978-98), 16: 5515.
- 46 Rev. J. Dalloway, *An Account of all the Pictures, Exhibited in the Rooms of the British Institution, From 1813 to 1823, Belonging to the Nobility and Gentry of England: with Remarks Critical and Explanatory* (London: Priestley and Weale, 1824), ix.
- 47 Mark Hallett, "Reading the Walls: Pictorial Dialogue at the British Royal Academy", *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 37, no. 4 (Summer 2004): 586.
- 48 Robert Hunt, "Fine Arts", *The Examiner*, 17 June 1821, 380.
- 49 Waterfield, "Picture Hanging", 51; Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (London: Pimlico, 2003), 176.
- 50 Peter Funnell, "The London Art World and its Institutions", in *London: World City, 1800-1840*, ed. Celina Fox (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1992), 158.
- 51 In 1822 the minimum subscription was raised from one guinea to three. Minutes, 11 June 1822.
- 52 The Directors drafted the initial checklists for their first two loan exhibitions, but starting in 1815 this task was delegated to Seguier. Minutes, 15 February 1813; 16 June 1814; and 9 June 1815.
- 53 On Seguier as curator, see Tromans, "Museum or Market?", 50.
- 54 Farington, *Diary*, 16: 5664.
- 55 *A Catalogue of Pictures by Sir Joshua Reynolds, with a Selection from the Italian, Spanish, Flemish, and Dutch Schools, with which the Proprietors Have Favoured the Institution* (London: W. Nicol, 1823), 12.
- 56 The actual number of visitors was even larger, as the admission receipts do not include visits by members and their guests, who did not pay at the door. Minutes, 1 June 1824.
- 57 Thomas Smith, *Recollections of the British Institution* (London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1860), 19. On this publication, see Pullan, "Public Goods or Private Interests?", 27-44.
- 58 John Scarlett Davis, *Interior of the British Institution* (1829, Yale Center for British Art); Alfred Joseph Woolmer, *Interior of the British Institution (Old Master Exhibition, Summer 1832)* (1833, Yale Center for British Art); James Stephanoff and Francis Philip Stephanoff, *The Interior of the British Institution* (1817, Victoria & Albert Museum); Thomas Rowlandson and Augustus Pugin, *The British Institution, from The Microcosm of London* (London: R. Ackerman, 1808-10); R. Grave after A. Pugin, *Gallery of the British Institution, from Magazine of Fine Arts* (London: John Warren and G. and W. B. Whittaker, 1821).
- 59 Roach, *Pictures-Within-Pictures*, 24-63; Roach, "Images as Evidence?", 46-59.
- 60 On this work as a "prescriptive rather than descriptive image", see Philippa Simpson, "Titian in post-Orléans London", in *The Reception of Titian in Britain: From Reynolds to Rubens*, ed. Peter Humfrey (Turnhout: Brepolis, 2013), 106.
- 61 For these works, see Tony Hobbs, *John Scarlett Davis: A Biography* (Almeley, Herefordshire: Logaston Press, 2004); Roach, "Images as Evidence?"; and Catherine Roach, "'My Hero': Women and the Domestic Display of Marine Paintings", in *Spreading Canvas: Eighteenth-Century British Marine Painting*, ed. Eleanor Hughes (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 2016), 112-33.
- 62 Minutes, 19 July 1819; 17 March 17 1820; 8 June 1820.
- 63 For discussion of this feature, see <http://www.whatjanesaw.org/1813/about.php>.

- 64 They were, as listed in the *Catalogue of Pictures by Sir Joshua Reynolds* (1823): no. 1, *His Majesty when Prince of Wales* (Mannings no. 719, *George IV*, 1784, Lord Lloyd-Webber); no. 2, *Lady Bagot* (Mannings no. 92, *Lady Barbara Bagot*, 1762, private collection); no. 3, *The Primate Robinson* (Mannings no. 1535, *Richard Robinson*, 1763, Christ Church, Oxford); no. 4, *Boy with Cabbage Nets* (Mannings no. 2016, *A Beggar Boy and His Sister*, 1775, The Faringdon Collection Trust, Buscot Park); no. 5, *The Captive* (Mannings no. 2013, *The Banished Lord*, about 1777, Tate Britain); no. 6, *Landscape: View from Richmond Hill* (Mannings no. 2189, *View from Sir Joshua Reynolds's House, Richmond Hill*, 1784, Tate Britain); no. 7, *The Piping Boy* (Mannings no. 2156, *Shepherd Boy*, about 1773, Antony House, National Trust); no. 8, *Saint Agnes* (Mannings no. 1504, *Mrs. Quarrington*, 1772, private collection); no. 9, *Mrs. Gwyn in a Turkish dress* (Mannings no. 936, *Mary Horneck*, about 1775, Cliveden Estate, National Trust); no. 10, *Mrs. Twiss* (Mannings no. 1028c, *Frances Kemble*, unlocated. Mannings notes this object could be identical with nos. 1027 or 1028 in his catalogue). Mannings, *Sir Joshua Reynolds: A Complete Catalogue*.
- 65 George Dunlop Leslie, *The Inner Life of the Royal Academy, with An Account of its Schools and Exhibitions Principally in the Reign of Queen Victoria* (London: J. Murray, 1914), 77.
- 66 Minutes, 8 June 1821.
- 67 *Catalogue of Pictures by Sir Joshua Reynolds* (1823), 13.
- 68 Nicholas Penny, "Frame Studies: I. Reynolds and Picture Frames", *Burlington Magazine* 128, no. 1004 (Nov. 1986): 810–25; Jacob Simon, *Art of the Picture Frame: Artist, Patrons, and the Framing of Portraits in Britain* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 1996), 64–66, 94–95. Thank you to Jacob Simon for sharing his thoughts on the matter; any errors in frame selection are, of course, my own.
- 69 Penny notes that there was an enthusiasm for reframing works in the rococo style after 1815. Penny, "Frame Studies", 824.
- 70 Jeffrey Muller, "Measures of Authenticity: The Detection of Copies in the Early Literature on Connoisseurship", in *Retaining the Original: Multiple Originals, Copies, and Reproductions*, ed. Kathleen Preciado, Studies in the History of Art 20 (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1989), 147.
- 71 Anne Higonnet, "Manet and the Multiple", *Grey Room* 48 (Summer 2012): 102–16.
- 72 Celina Fox, "The Engravers' Battle for Professional Recognition in Early Nineteenth-Century London", *London Journal* 2 (1976): 3–31.
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- 76 Mannings, *Sir Joshua Reynolds: A Complete Catalogue*, no. 1028c.
- 77 *Catalogue of Pictures by Sir Joshua Reynolds* (1823), 12.
- 78 Roach, *It*, 38.
- 79 G. Le G. Norgate, "Robinson, Richard, first Baron Rokeby (bap. 1708, d. 1794)", rev. Eoin Magennis, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2004); online ed., ed. David Cannadine, Sept. 2010, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23867>.
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- 82 Hallett, "Reading the Walls", 581.
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- 85 *Catalogue of Pictures by Sir Joshua Reynolds* (1823), 12.
- 86 "Fine Arts: The British Institution", *Morning Post*, 19 May 1823, 3.
- 87 *Catalogue of Pictures by Sir Joshua Reynolds* (1823), 12.
- 88 "British Institution", *La Belle Assemblée*, June 1823, 277.
- 89 "British Institution", *La Belle Assemblée*, June 1823, 277.
- 90 "British Gallery", *Times*, 19 May 1823, 3.

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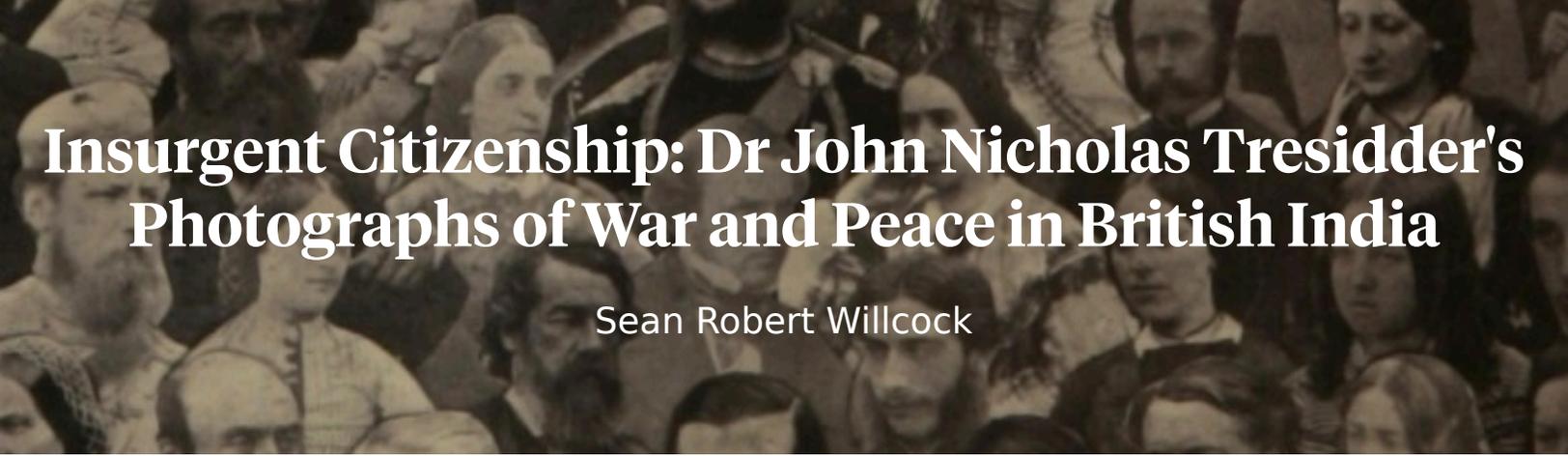
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Insurgent Citizenship: Dr John Nicholas Tresidder's Photographs of War and Peace in British India

Sean Robert Willcock

Abstract

This article focuses on the deployment of the camera during a moment of acute political crisis in nineteenth-century India, when both the significance and the scope of British power were highly unstable, arguing that photography's unique formal features enabled colonials to picture a precarious imperial sovereignty as a viable mode of political administration. The ability of photography to objectify and "other" colonized populations has been well documented, but the efficacy of imperialism as a mode of imperial governance was as much a function of imagining shared political horizons as it was about constructing divisive racial hierarchies. The levelling aesthetic of photography—its capacity to draw heterogeneous peoples into what Christopher Pinney has termed a "common epistemological space"—meant that it could serve as a visual register for the elusive connective tissue of imperial subjecthood, effectively reifying a useful political abstraction. Yet, as much as British sovereign authority could be embodied by this visual logic, British identity could simultaneously be dissolved by the homogenizing grammar of the medium. Looking in particular at the palliative, diplomatic role played by the photographic portraiture of Dr John Nicholas Tresidder in the immediate aftermath of the Indian Rebellion (1857–59), this article assesses how photography engaged with warfare's social upheavals in complex, richly textured and unpredictable ways.

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Histories of early war photography routinely make at least passing reference to the fierce anti-colonial insurrection known variously as the Indian “Mutiny”, Uprising, or Rebellion (1857-59), a campaign from which emerged a plethora of dramatic photographs the like of which had not previously been seen.¹ The extremity of this imagery—ranging in subject matter from scenes of rubble-strewn landscapes to pictures of dead rebels like Felice Beato’s *The Inside of Secundra Bagh Where 2000 Men Were Killed* (fig. 1)—signalled a critical departure from the comparatively staid images of previous conflicts, the most famous being Roger Fenton’s commercially produced photographs of the Crimean War (1853-56) (fig. 2).² The Indian Rebellion therefore marks the point at which war photography fully embraced the shocking spectacle of violence that has continued to characterize the genre to this day. Yet the conflict also generated another important but hitherto overlooked development in the history of war photography. For the first time, landscapes of violence began to be documented by photographers who were civilian residents of the affected regions, with the camera serving as a means of coming to terms with the dizzying impact of warfare on familiar—and familial—environments.



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Figure 1.

Felice Beato, *The Inside of Secundra Bagh Where 2000 Men Were Killed*, 1858, albumen print. Collection of the The British Library Board, Photo 27/(2) Digital image courtesy of The British Library Board



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Figure 2.

Roger Fenton, Valley of the Shadow of Death, 23 April 1855, wet-collodion print. Collection of The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles (84.XM.504.23)
Digital image courtesy of The J. Paul Getty Museum (Open Content Program)

Previous instances of war photography in the nineteenth century had involved western photographers venturing into unfamiliar terrain.³ In 1857, though, when Indian soldiers and civilians rose in revolt against a century-old British rule, they brought the fight to long-standing colonial settlements, threatening the domestic and civic structures of imperial life. Professional photographers like Beato—whose striking images of violence predominate in accounts of the uprising—duly travelled from Europe to cover the distant rebellion in India, but a number of colonials also turned to photography to chronicle what was, from their perspective, a local war. For Dr John Murray from Agra, Harriet Tytler from Delhi, and—the focus of this article—Dr John Nicholas Tresidder from Cawnpore, amateur picture-making formed part of a rooted and multi-layered, albeit violently contested, relationship to place that was very different from Beato's globe-trotting commercialism. Their photography registered warfare's transformative effects—and I mean this in a productive as well as destructive sense—on the civic and domestic realms of colonial society; indeed, for Tresidder, the new forms of visual praxis opened up by photography helped to shape the fraught psycho-social processes of post-conflict reconstruction, with the camera's novel technical and aesthetic properties providing the means of mediating between violently alienated racial groups in India.

Such intimate and socially productive photographic engagements with conflict are significant because, as a genre, war photography is frequently viewed rather restrictively with regard to peripatetic men like Beato. By this I mean that the camera is seen in terms of its touristic quality, documenting events from a position of alienation, and offering only a superficial engagement with violence and its aftermath, effectively peeling off the visual surface of disasters—reducing them to a consumer-friendly visual spectacle—and leaving their political substance un- or under-explained.⁴ Imperial photography is paradigmatic here, emanating as it does from a position of a foreign power seeking to render its violence palatable, and using, as Zahid R. Chaudhary has written about Beato's work, "strategies of distancing" that are the "precondition for an aesthetic that manages to convert brutality into beauty".⁵ Accounts like this identify important ethical and aesthetic issues in colonial conflict and post-conflict photography, and I don't want to refute them here. But their emphasis on the distancing function of photography inhibits our appreciation of the camera's capacity to mediate richly textured engagements with war-torn places.

This article takes a different approach. It explores photography's agency in reweaving the complex social fabric of a place more affected by atrocities than any other: the infamous colonial station of Cawnpore, a byword for cross-cultural slaughter.⁶ In the summer of 1857, following a period of siege, this was the site of a brutal massacre of colonial men, women, and children by insurgents. Afterwards, when the town had been reconquered and the British had discovered the bodies of their compatriots (many stuffed down a nearby well), a punitive wartime regime was installed. Indians suspected of having associated with the rebels were summarily hanged. Those believed to have been ringleaders were confronted with a more inventive vengeance. Prior to execution, they were brought to the dreaded "house of horrors", within which rebels armed with meat cleavers had hacked to death hundreds of colonial civilians. They were then forced, under the threat of the lash, to lick clean a portion of the blood that still swamped the floor, something that was anathema to high-caste Indians and had been devised to make them believe "they doom their souls to perdition."⁷ The animus that motivated this grisly episode was persistent. One tourist, writing over thirty years later, noted that the massacre "seems to hang over Cawnpore like a cloud even to this day, and to cause bitterness in the minds of Englishmen".⁸ Cawnpore stood for violent Anglo-Indian division, a racial binarism underscored by the fact that no "native" was permitted to set foot in the famous memorial gardens erected during the grief-stricken aftermath of the war.⁹

The disturbing resonance of commemorated violence raised urgent questions about how civil society could be reconstructed in the wake of internecine conflict, or a peaceable community imagined in places defined by crisis and rupture. Cawnpore was just one of numerous famous conflict sites that sustained popular practices of war tourism in British India. The geographical and ideological lineaments of these “mutiny tours” ¹⁰ have been tracked by Ian Baucom and Manu Goswami; post-rebellion travel routes functioned as educational acts of “pilgrimage” for colonials, cementing divisive narratives of colonial bravery and native treachery, and ingraining a sense of hard-won British belonging to the Indian landscape. ¹¹ Photography played a key role here, with amateur and commercial practitioners both producing highly conventionalized images that filtered potentially traumatic locales through the soothingly placid aesthetics of the picturesque (fig. 3). ¹² Yet the stress that scholars have placed on the *touristic* dimension to these sites has meant that each is situated within an itinerary of shrines encountered transiently across northern India, as opposed to being theorized as multi-dimensional social environments. For all its grisly wartime baggage, Cawnpore continued to be a lived-in space, where a multi-racial society was painfully reconstructed in the shadow of atrocity and its memorialization. But there is little sense of this in existing accounts.



[View this illustration online](#)

Figure 3.

Bourne & Shepherd, The Memorial Well, Cawnpore, ca. 1865, albumen print. Collection of The British Library Board, Photo 11/(45) Digital image courtesy of The British Library Board

Nowhere does the complexly multi-layered nature of post-conflict British India appear more vivid than in the imagery of the Cawnpore-resident Dr John Nicholas Tresidder, whose portrait of his colonial home consists of

domestic, professional, and martial strands of Anglo-Indian society (fig. 4).¹³ Tresidder's imagery survives in a little-studied personal album that chronicles the doctor's time in Cawnpore and Agra in the late 1850s and early 1860s, some time spent on sick-leave in England around 1863, and his subsequent retirement in Falmouth.¹⁴ Nearly two hundred pages host careful arrangements of albumen and salt-paper prints with handwritten captions that cover everything from picnic parties to atrocity sites. Composed of photographs taken by Tresidder himself as well as scenes by contemporary colonial photographers like Murray and Beato (none attributed to their makers), the album is a record of photographic consumption as well as production. It affords a uniquely detailed insight into the fluid meanings of photographs as they were produced and compiled in ways that formed multiple—and not always harmonious—narratives about loss, revenge, and rapprochement in a settlement traumatized by violence.¹⁵ While the album incorporates some typical examples of contemporary war photography (images showing architectural devastation, sites of conflict, and symbols of social division), overall the collection prompts us to broaden our conception of the genre to include photographs that engage with the countervailing processes of social regeneration with regard to civic and domestic life.



[View this illustration online](#)

Figure 4.

Dr John Nicholas Tresidder, Personal, page 7 of *The Tresidder Album*, ca. 1858–64, albumen and salt-paper prints. Alkazi Collection of Photography Digital image courtesy of The Alkazi Collection of Photography

The ability of photography to objectify and “other” colonized populations has been well documented in scholarship, but the efficacy of imperialism as a mode of rule was as much a function of imagining shared professional and political horizons as it was about enforcing divisive racial hierarchies. ¹⁶ Focusing on the deployment of the camera during a moment of acute political crisis, when both the significance and the scope of British governance in India were highly unstable, this article argues that photography’s unique formal features enabled colonials to picture a precarious imperial sovereignty as a viable mode of political administration. Tresidder’s photographic engagement with war was not confined to grisly spectacle or grief-stricken nostalgia. It emphasized the resurgent civil institutions of Cawnpore in an extraordinary, if ambivalent, attempt to

inaugurate a society that was not defined exclusively by the hostile binary of Briton versus Indian that had come to reign during the insurrection. The levelling effect of photography—its capacity to draw heterogeneous peoples into what Christopher Pinney has termed a “common epistemological space”—meant that it could serve as a visual register for the elusive connective tissue of imperial subjecthood, effectively reifying a useful political abstraction.¹⁷ Ultimately, I argue, Tresidder’s investigation of photography as a medium of portraiture—its grammar of seriality (the arrangement of individual portraits) on the one hand, and its capacity to embody collectivity (the combination printing of multiple portraits) on the other—doubled as a kind of political thought experiment, one in which were probed the very limits of social cohesion under the British Raj.

Citizens, Specimens, or Suspects?

Who exactly were the Indian people? And how did they fit into imperial society? These, ultimately, were the questions posed to the British—and thus also to Dr John Nicholas Tresidder—by the staggering anti-colonial insurrection of 1857-59.

In the build-up to the revolt, the British had failed to properly gauge the depth and breadth of Indian discontent over a myriad of issues: the history of aggressive British expansionism; the increasing number of colonial evangelicals seeking converts to Christianity among Hindus and Muslims; the cuts to material privileges for sepoy (soldiers) in the English East India Company army; and—the final spark—the introduction of the new greased cartridges for the sepoys’ rifles, widely rumoured to be coated in caste-breaking beef and pork fat. So, when some Indian sepoys on a parade ground in Meerut mutinied, killed their colonial officers, and marched on the ancient Mughal capital of Delhi to declare independence from imperial rule, the fact that they garnered significant support among fellow sepoy regiments *and* Indian civilians gave the British something to ponder. Evidently, far too little was actually known about the religious, cultural, and political sensitivities of the Indian people.¹⁸ The British simply hadn’t seen this coming.

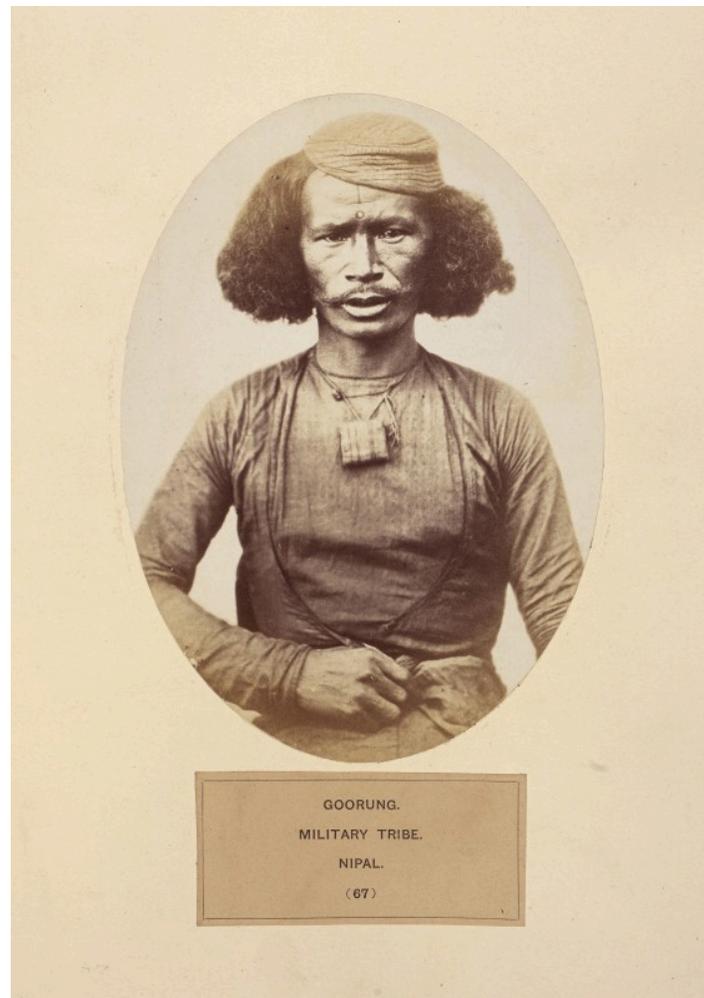


Figure 5.

Sir Benjamin Simpson, Gorumung, Military Tribe, Nipal, in Sir John William Kaye and John Forbes Watson, *The People of India: A Series of Photographic Illustrations, with Descriptive Letterpress, of the Races and Tribes of Hindustan*, 8 vols. (London: India Museum, 1868-75). British Library, (IOL.1947.c.344) Digital image courtesy of The British Library Board

Photographic practices were thus strategically deployed in the aftermath of the Rebellion to garner useful intelligence. Photography's value to the knowledge-power nexus of empire was especially great because its indexicality lent empirical legitimacy to the anthropological projects that sought to collate valuable information on colonized peoples (fig. 5).¹⁹ The photographing of Indian castes and tribes was officially encouraged by the Viceroy of India, Charles Canning, with the diverse imagery received in response to his call being coordinated into an eight-volume collection of 468 albumen prints, *The People of India: A Series of Photographic Illustrations, with Descriptive Letterpress, of the Races and Tribes of Hindustan* (1868-75).²⁰ While this was ostensibly a scientific project, any preoccupations with

Indian ethnicity nevertheless took a back seat to pragmatic political concerns; as Pinney has written, there was a strong desire “to provide practical clues to the identification of groups which had so recently had the opportunity to demonstrate either their fierce hatred of British rule or their acquiescence”.²¹ Such photographic production—structured, ultimately, by military exigencies—was symptomatic of an imperial mindset that viewed Britain’s Indian territories as things that were kept by force.

There were more idealistic perspectives on Britain’s power than this, however. When news of the Indian insurgency had first reached Britain in the summer of 1857, *The Economist* outlined a choice as to whether India was to be treated as “a Conquest”, in which the British were simply the “natural and indefeasible superiors” of their “Asiatic subjects”, or “whether we are to regard the Hindoos and the Mahomedans as our equal fellow citizens . . . ripe (or to be ripened) for British institutions”.²² *The Economist’s* alternative to the colonialism-as-conquest narrative was grounded in a liberal conception of the universal equivalence of Briton and Indian, an equivalence that could be “ripened” into being via the implementation of progressive reforms and increasingly inclusive modes of Anglo-Indian political organization.²³ The “citizenship” that *The Economist* alludes to was not a firm legal category (the category of the citizen was not codified in British law until the twentieth century), but stood instead for a more nebulous liberal aspiration for imperial governance.²⁴ So, when I speak below of how colonial photography worked to nourish Indian claims to citizenship, I am not speaking in strict statutory terms, but am engaging a tradition of thought that has viewed the category of the citizen with some elasticity. Indian citizenship emerged in the Victorian era not as a narrow function of law, but as a product of intersecting representational regimes—literary, legal, aesthetic, and so on—that together registered a liberal political *desire* for imperial citizenship through their attempts to portray Anglo-Indian civic agency.²⁵

Liberal ideals exerted considerable pressure on governmental thinking in India after the quelling of Rebellion. Overall, however, the post-war decades saw more insistence placed on Indians’ fundamental difference from the British.²⁶ The fixity of such difference—encased as it supposedly was in the timeless categories of race and caste—worked to undermine liberalism’s progressive rhetoric. Repeatedly, Indians emerged in colonial photography as anthropological specimens, not imperial citizens. And yet while it is true that the camera undoubtedly lent significant support to ethnographic projects, like *The People of India* (1868–75), that sought to concretize a sense of Indian alterity, the formal properties inherent in photography as a medium—in particular the “serial dynamic of photographic likeness”—also functioned to elide Anglo-Indian difference in powerful, citizenship-crafting ways.²⁷ The rest of this article is primarily concerned with how

photography's levelling visual grammar was mobilized by Tresidder in Cawnpore to forge a civil aesthetic that could bridge the Anglo-Indian divide—an effort informed, at least in part, by a politically liberal impulse towards post-war reconciliation.

The fraught question of an inclusive imperial citizenship had been raised publicly by the Queen's Proclamation of 1858, which formally announced the sovereignty of the British Crown (as opposed to the discredited East India Company) over a still-turbulent India, while promising the Indian people that "all shall alike enjoy the equal and impartial protection of the Law."²⁸ Such conciliatory political sentiments strongly inform Tresidder's photographic vision. By surveying the British and Indian personnel of the Cawnpore civil establishment—those "Offices in Our Service" that the Proclamation had declared "freely and impartially" open to all colonial subjects "qualified by their education, ability, and integrity"—Tresidder locates imperial institutions as privileged sites for rehabilitating racial relations. Yet this liberal project was embarked upon at the very moment when ideals about Anglo-Indian political harmony had never appeared more drastically divorced from the vicious realities on the ground.

What we find in Tresidder's imagery, then, is a palliative political liberalism being cultivated through photographic form, but within a context of personal trauma and racial distrust that simultaneously worked to undermine those liberal ideals. We will see this aporia forcefully expressed in the album by the schizophrenic placements of photographs, arranged in ways that forge visual narratives that sometimes channel, and sometimes challenge, the notion of Indian citizenship. I therefore illustrate the images here as part of the pages they occupy rather than in isolation; the photographs were clearly not conceived of as discrete items, but as a cumulative photographic mapping of the familial, social, and political networks of a post-conflict colonial environment.

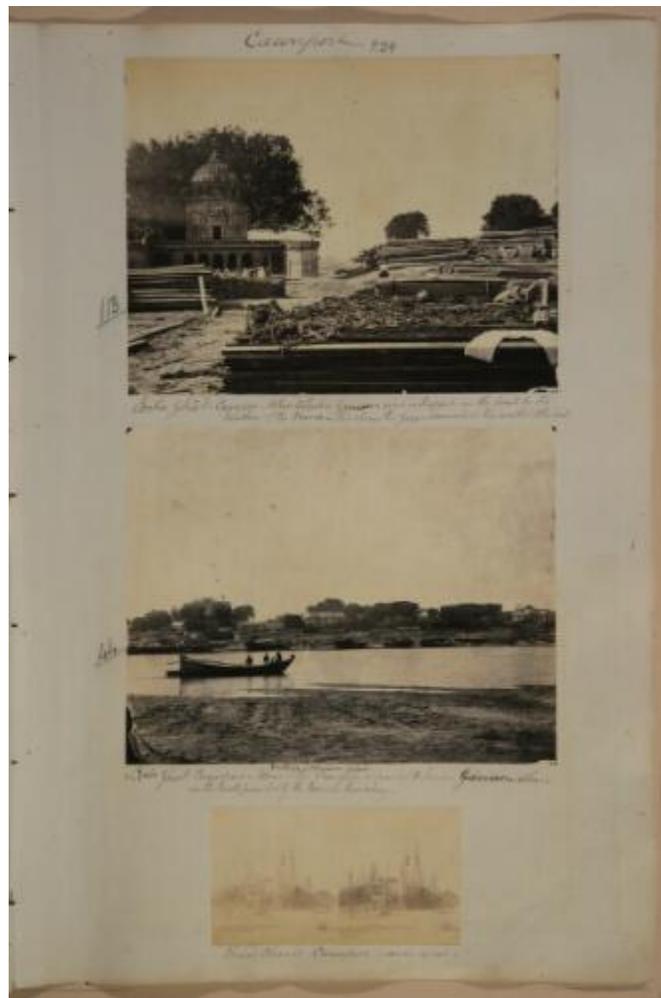
Identity and War

Who exactly was Dr John Nicholas Tresidder? And how did he fit into imperial society? These, too, were the questions posed to the amateur photographer by the upheavals of the Rebellion. Before I prioritize his album's dealings with the mixed-race civil establishment in Cawnpore, it is worth sketching the particular position from which Tresidder and his lens confronted the issue of Indian citizenship.

Tresidder had been the civil surgeon in Cawnpore prior to the 1857 insurgency. Following the death of his first wife there in December 1856, however, he had taken furlough from the following March and travelled to England, leaving behind him a seemingly tranquil India.²⁹ He married his

second wife, Emily Hooton, in Camberwell on 15 August 1857, just as news of the sepoys' violent mutiny was filling British newspapers.³⁰ The doctor who was chosen to replace Tresidder during his absence was Assistant Surgeon H. P. Harris.³¹ Along with his wife, child, and just about every other colonial in Cawnpore, Harris was killed during the siege and subsequent massacres of July.³² Tresidder and his new wife returned to Cawnpore while war was still raging. By the time they arrived, the British were once more in control of the station, but fighting continued to plague the area, and we have a record of Tresidder treating a soldier, Mowbray Thomson, for a recent bullet wound to the thigh in February 1858.³³ The patient was one of the only British survivors of the summertime atrocities.

The backdrop to the construction of the album was therefore the near-total annihilation of everyone Tresidder had known in Cawnpore prior to the war. The doctor had even once treated the rebel commander responsible for leading the insurgent assault, the infamous Nana Sahib. Tresidder's post-war imagery, in combination with some purchased photographs by Beato, grappled with the devastation by surveying key sites from the conflict. Page twenty-four of the album, for example, displays two photographs of the riverside known by colonials as the "Slaughter Ghat", where the British had been massacred while they were boarding boats that Nana Sahib had supposedly prepared for their safe passage up the Ganges to Allahabad (fig. 6). Such scenes' meditation on the empty spaces where significant events had recently occurred is typical of war photography from India at this time; due to its inability to capture movement, the camera frequently confronted empty sites that no longer offered straightforward evidence of war's events.³⁴ Tresidder's desperation to make his photographs bear adequate witness is made plain by the lengthy description given to his "Slaughter Ghat" scene: "Where [General] Wheeler's Garrison were entrapped in the boats by the treachery of the Nana—This shows the Gorge down which they walked to the boats." His engagement with Cawnpore's war sites signalled a "deep exploration of photography as a history machine, a technology for the deposition and traces of what has been lost".³⁵



[View this illustration online](#)

Figure 6.

Dr John Nicholas Tresidder, Cawnpore, page 24 of *The Tresidder Album* (ca. 1858-64), albumen and salt-paper prints. Alkazi Collection of Photography Digital image courtesy of The Alkazi Collection of Photography

Yet the album's spectres of violence are balanced by another form of imagery, one that re-stabilizes Tresidder's presence in India by anchoring it in the reassuring features of the colonial everyday. The entire album is framed in personal terms: opening with portraits of Tresidder and both his late and current wife (fig. 7), it goes on to include ordinary colonial items such as "My favourite trotting cart", a scene in the top centre of page six replete with the eponymous cart and an anonymous Indian attendant (fig. 8). Insistently intimate in tone—his wife is referred to informally as "Emmie"—the album constitutes a defiant reassertion of colonial domesticity on the very site that had become infamous for the violation of the colonial home when Indian men had entered Cawnpore's Bibighar, "The House of the Ladies", and slaughtered the women and children imprisoned inside.³⁶ The extent to

which these events continued to haunt Tresidder's own domestic environment can be gauged by the fact that he gave the name "Cawnpore" to his retirement home in England.³⁷ The album's size is such that it could easily have served as a point of focus for more than one person at a time, enabling group viewings among family and friends in which the imagery's broader political narratives could unfurl in relation to the very personal identifications between particular persons, places, and things.



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Figure 7.

Dr John Nicholas Tresidder and others, P. 1, page 1 of *The Tresidder Album* (ca. 1858-64), albumen and salt-paper prints. Alkazi Collection of Photography Digital image courtesy of The Alkazi Collection of Photography



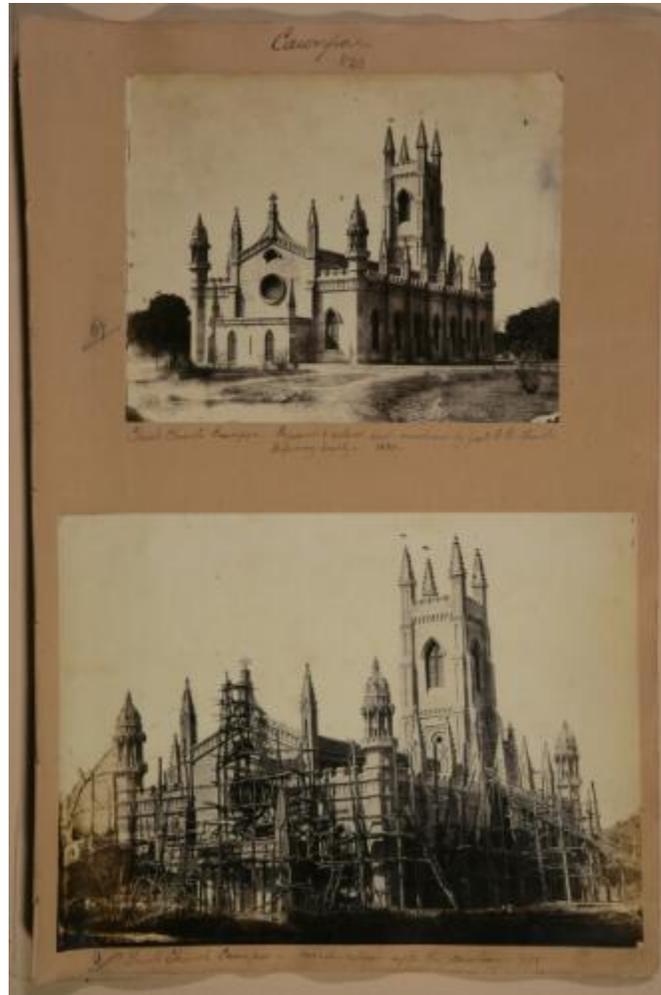
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Figure 8.

Dr John Nicholas Tresidder, Personal, page 6 of *The Tresidder Album* (c. 1858–64), albumen and salt-paper prints. Alkazi Collection of Photography Digital image courtesy of The Alkazi Collection of Photography

However, the rehabilitation of British domesticity is just one element of a much more ambitious photographic project: the virtual reconstruction of Anglo-Indian society. This project is made particularly explicit in the paired scenes of the war-ravaged Cawnpore church undergoing architectural reconstruction (fig. 9), but it also weaves its way through the assemblages of portraits that work to flesh out the local operations of a colonial state that had so recently been confronted with dissolution. The second page of the album (fig. 10) supplements Tresidder’s initial identification of himself as a husband with a portrait of him on the top right-hand side of the page that is captioned according to his public role, “J. N. Tresidder The Civil Surgeon—Cawnpore.” This professional persona is situated within a series of similar portraits that constitute the district’s medical network, most notably

the Deputy Inspector General of Hospitals, Dr Dickson (whose pose is identical to Tresidder's), as well as numerous Indian medical staff, including civil surgeon orderlies for the police and the hospital on the same page as Tresidder, and assistant surgeons and doctors on the following page.



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Figure 9.

Dr John Nicholas Tresidder, Cawnpore, page 20 of *The Tresidder Album* (ca. 1858-64), albumen and salt-paper prints. Alkazi Collection of Photography Digital image courtesy of The Alkazi Collection of Photography



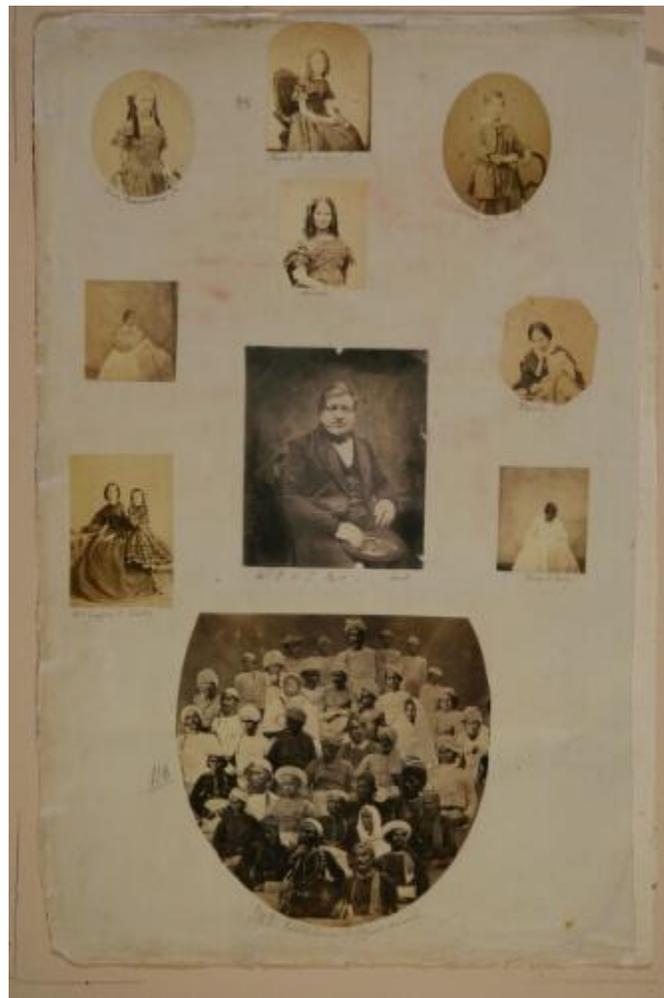
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Figure 10.

Dr John Nicholas Tresidder, Cawnpore Civil Establishment, page two of *The Tresidder Album* (ca. 1858-64), albumen and salt-paper prints. Alkazi Collection of Photography Digital image courtesy of The Alkazi Collection of Photography

Tresidder and his British colleague both stand in their portraits, while all but one of the Indian men sit, thereby establishing a precedence that is underpinned by the higher placement of the British on the page. Ultimately, though, Tresidder's engagement with hierarchy and race is considerably more nuanced than this initial differentiation would suggest. Europeans do not always enjoy compositional prominence within the album, nor do they often distinguish themselves from Indians through pose. By and large, Tresidder's imagery is unconcerned with formulating India in terms of difference via a fixation on religion, race, or caste. Instead, its treatment of Indians can be placed within a bourgeois framework for conceptualizing the colonial state.

True, the album's engagement with *private* life does tend to uphold Anglo-Indian distinctions. On page five, titled "J. N. T's Family" (fig. 11), there is a collage produced from the individual portraits of Tresidder's servants, combined to form a mass of Indian difference against which white imperial domesticity (personified here by the individual portraits of Tresidder's children) can be established. But the album's dealings with the *public* sphere seems to de-prioritize such racial segregations, with Cawnpore society emerging as a network of bourgeois institutions that find expression in the fairly undifferentiated individual portraits of the British and Indian personnel of the medical establishment, the judiciary, and the police.



[View this illustration online](#)

Figure 11.

Dr John Nicolas Tresidder, JNT's Family, page five of *The Tresidder Album* (ca. 1858-64), albumen and salt-paper prints. Alkazi Collection of Photography Digital image courtesy of The Alkazi Collection of Photography

Citizens of the Studio

In Cawnpore at this time, Tresidder would probably have been alone in possessing both the knowledge and the materials needed to produce photographs, meaning that his portrait sittings would likely have been memorable experiences for both their British and Indian participants. All of those photographed by Tresidder are placed in the same studio environment: they sit in the same chair (upon which, in some images, can be seen the initials “JNT”—John Nicholas Tresidder—carved into the arm), against the same white backdrop, and all adopt very similar poses.³⁸ Each is defined in terms of their role within a professional matrix, as for example “Ahmad Ali Khan. Govt Pleader (Barrister) Cawnpore” on the middle left-hand side of page eleven ([fig. 12](#)). As such, Tresidder was mobilizing photography to portray Indian men in much the same way as it had been used in the mid- to late 1850s by William James Heaviside, the drawing master at the East India Company’s military seminary at Addiscombe, to emphasize the professionalism of young colonial cadets, encouraging a broad uniformity of pose individuated by captions detailing name and rank.³⁹ The regimented poses are in both cases a means of becoming situated within the symbolic order of the imperial regime.



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Figure 12.

John Nicholas Tresidder, Cawnpore Civil Establishment, page 11 of The Tresidder Album (ca. 1858-64), albumen and salt-paper prints. Alkazi Collection of Photography Digital image courtesy of The Alkazi Collection of Photography

Notably, the standardization of setting and pose in Tresidder's portraits of Cawnpore's civil establishment recalls the bourgeois aesthetics of the carte-de-visite. Such was the homogeneity of these relatively cheap and small commercial photographic portraits that, as Lara Perry has written, "Virtually the entire class of objects, estimated in the tens of millions per year at its peak, can be described in a few sentences."⁴⁰ Poses included sitting or standing, often by a table or chair and with props such as books, pillars, and curtains. Their interchangeability has been theorized by scholars in terms of offering an index of "emerging notions of equality in citizenship for the bourgeois body politic that emerged in the nineteenth century".⁴¹

Accordingly, by the 1870s, the carte-de-visite had become a popular format with the Indian elite, who used the portraits as symbols of their social mobility and status (fig. 13).⁴²



Figure 13.

Bourne and Shepherd, Mr Nanabhoy B. Jeejeebhoy, 1870, albumen print. Collection of the British Library, Photo 127 /(87) Digital image courtesy of The British Library Board

In her account of such photography's involvement in crafting the identity of the Bengali middle classes, Malavika Karlekar has pointed out that, while some Indian patrons would have been self-consciously fashioning themselves in accordance with colonial poses, many were simply being "directed by an authoritarian photographic establishment used to peddling stereotypical models of 'the professional'".⁴³ This, though, would have been the case with some British patrons as well; and indeed, whether or not the carte-de-visite constituted authentic acts of Indian self-expression, its democratic visual

grammar still provided a counterweight to the aesthetics of difference that tended to characterize British imperialism, incorporating diverse racial groups under a common horizon.

In other words, portraits such as these allowed Indians to emerge into what Judith Butler has termed the “realm of appearance” that was the precondition for making any proper claims to citizenship status:

there are extra-legal conditions for becoming a citizen, indeed, for even becoming a subject who can and does appear before the law. To appear before the law means that one has entered into the realm of appearance or that one is positioned to be entered there, which mean that there are norms that condition and orchestrate the subject who can and does appear. ⁴⁴

Citizenship is therefore not simply contingent upon the narrow—albeit significant—attainment of specific legal rights. Rather, it is the product of diffuse symbolic processes that function to represent a person or group as having a recognizable (and respectable) mode of political agency within society. The diverse “‘languages’ of citizenship” operative in nineteenth-century India have been explored by Sukanya Banerjee in *Becoming Imperial Citizens: Indian in the Late-Victorian Empire* (2010), a study that “situates citizenship not so much in the realm of statutory enactment as in cultural, imaginative, and affective fields that both engender it and are constituted by it”. ⁴⁵ Citizenship was registered by rhetorical as well as legal means, with imperial belonging secured through an engagement with, and appearance within, certain types of literary genres, images, monuments, and spaces. Photographic portraits, with their connotations of bourgeois respectability and professionalism, could thus foreshadow and feed into more wide-ranging liberal agendas. ⁴⁶

The capacity for photographic portraiture to harmonize Anglo-Indian relations through a civil aesthetic was articulated more or less explicitly by George Birdwood in his introduction to Sorabji Jehangir’s collection of photographs of British and Indian men, *Representative Men of India: A Collection of Memoirs, with Portraits, of Indian Princes, Nobles, Statesmen, Philanthropists, Officials, and Eminent Citizens* (1889). ⁴⁷ The book contained a mixture of prominent British colonials, Indian royals, and their ministers, a group of men who, as Birdwood claimed, “however else they may be otherwise discriminated, are all connected together by the honour they share in common, of having, in their various spheres of Imperial and Civic duty, won the confidence and affection of the people of India.” ⁴⁸ The photographs provide an alternative to the anthropological mode of representing Indian figures, and instead

conjure what Pinney has described as “a de-ethnicized elite at ease with itself”.⁴⁹ Their publication in 1889 can be seen as symptomatic of the increasing currency that had been gained by the notion of a formally equal status for peoples across the empire by the late nineteenth century, even if the British continued to display acute ambivalence towards the extension of this imperial equality to non-white subjects.⁵⁰

Tresidder’s album is thus remarkable for positing a similarly liberal visual argument three decades prior to Jehangir’s photographic intervention in these debates. Indeed, the uniformity of portraits is considerably more striking in Tresidder’s work than in Jehangir’s, which incorporates numerous backdrops and a relative diversity of poses. Geoffrey Batchen has argued that the carte-de-visite’s interchangeability signalled to consumers that “class is a look that can be codified and imitated—it’s a mode of performance rather than an inherent quality.”⁵¹ Thus while some Indians look ill at ease in Tresidder’s studio (just as some Europeans do), the fact that others appear to adapt to the demands of the bourgeois portrait format with impeccable confidence (see the “1st native judge Cawnpore” on the top left-hand side of page eleven; [fig. 12](#)) forges a shared aesthetics of citizenship within the colonial system. It presents an image of Indian men not as conquered enemies who are irredeemably different from the British, but, to use *The Economist’s* words, as “equal fellow citizens” that are “ripe (or to be ripened) for British institutions”.

How did these shared acts of posing for the camera operate within war-torn Cawnpore? I would suggest that the aesthetic harmonization of the Anglo-Indian professional was something that marked out Tresidder’s studio space as a site of post-conflict rapprochement. Tresidder’s encouragement of standardized poses pointed to a willingness to allow for the mutual performance of roles within the imperial apparatus to supplant ideas about essential differences between Britons and Indians, and it did so at a historical moment in which Anglo-Indian communities had never been more violently alienated from one another. Against a background of intense racial strife, Tresidder’s studio harboured a liberal cosmopolitanism that went against the ethos of exclusion that the war had instilled in colonial India generally, and, through the ban on “natives” entering the cherished local memorial garden, in Cawnpore very specifically.

Tresidder’s photography thus addressed itself to the crisis of Anglo-Indian relations caused by the Rebellion. It positioned itself as a healing agent within a fragile peace process: the men who visited the studio would likely have been aware that both their British and Indian colleagues were sitting in equivalent circumstances, meaning that the space became one in which the social antagonisms of imperialism were temporarily suspended in favour of a “Photographic Civil Society”.⁵² If we recall that *The Economist* posited the

logic of inclusion inherent to liberalism as an alternative to the view of India as a violent conquest, then Tresidder's inclusive practice can be seen as a palliative photographic treatment of the community, working to soothe the wounds of a ruptured imperial body politic, and serving as a prophylaxis against future outbreaks by identifying a certain bourgeois professionalism as the cooperative endeavour of multi-racial imperial citizens.

Probing the Limits of Cohesion

We may appear to have come a long way from the genre of war photography, but Tresidder's efforts to document a collegial Anglo-Indian society took place under the shadow of counterinsurgency. Even as the photographer's studio was staging a parity of professionalism between British and Indian civil servants, Cawnpore itself was in the throes of a vicious political purge.

One man invited to sit for Tresidder was Mowbray Thomson (whose bullet wound to the thigh the doctor had previously treated). Having survived the horrors of the wartime massacres, Thomson took up the post of Superintendent of Police in Cawnpore following the recapture of the garrison. He can be seen in both European and Oriental garb in his portraits at the top of page thirteen of the album, situated above his Indian sergeants ([fig. 14](#)). According to Thomson's 1859 account of the war, his duties as a police officer "involved secret service, executions, raising native police, and the sale of plunder".⁵³ Policing doubled as counterinsurgency. In a favourable official report, it was noted that Thomson's "Police have distinguished themselves during the year, by eradicating a gang of dacoits, and by the apprehension and destruction of notorious offenders . . . whose removal will, more than anything, tend to the suppression of outrage, and to the deterring of others from violent aggressions."⁵⁴ Executions were a daily occurrence under Thomson's lauded reign; no Indian man was safe from this purge, no matter how embedded he was in the imperial apparatus. One Indian under Thomson's command, who had previously been instrumental in the arrests of numerous suspected insurgents, was himself accused of betraying the British, brought to trial, and sentenced to three years' imprisonment.⁵⁵ Even the Indian executioner responsible for hanging the Cawnpore rebels was ultimately suspended from his own gibbet.⁵⁶



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Figure 14.

John Nicholas Tresidder, Cawnpore Civil Establishment, page 13 of *The Tresidder Album* (ca. 1858-64), albumen and salt-paper prints. Alkazi Collection of Photography Digital image courtesy of The Alkazi Collection of Photography

This climate of persecution was also registered by Tresidder, as condemned Indian men were brought to his studio in chains. It is not known whether or not the portraits of war prisoners were intended to serve as official administrative records of judicial proceedings, or merely as triumphal documents of imperial retribution (such uses were, of course, not mutually exclusive); convict photography was, however, by no means a routine practice in mid-nineteenth-century India, despite official discussion regarding its potential merits.⁵⁷ Two photographs of the captive Gungoo Mehter at the top of page 49 (fig. 15) are thus remarkable in the way that they capture the downfall of a convicted war criminal, showing the thousand-yard stare of a man sentenced to death for his role in murdering British women and

children. A slumped Mehter holds his restraints in his hands; they trail down beneath the frame of the image, presumably tied to Mehter's feet, as they are in a companion portrait on the same page showing Mummoo Khan, a "Paramour of the Queen of Oude", who was condemned to "transportation for life for [being] accessory to murder and a leader of Rebellion in 1857". Chains aside, these images are both extremely familiar, strongly recalling those of the British and Indian professionals who were also asked to sit for Tresidder on this same chair, in this same space—such alternative registers of the studio's operations providing a striking demonstration of Allan Sekula's maxim that "every proper portrait has its lurking, objectifying inverse in the files of the police." ⁵⁸



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Figure 15.

Dr John Nicholas Tresidder, Cawnpore, page 49 of *The Tresidder Album* (ca. 1858–64), albumen and salt-paper prints. Alkazi Collection of Photography Digital image courtesy of The Alkazi Collection of Photography

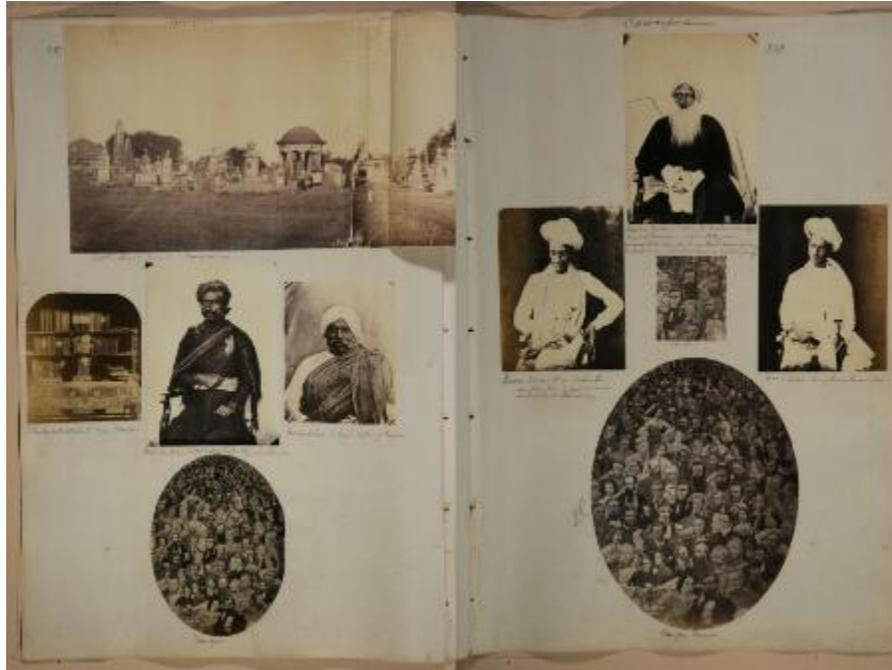
To sit in Tresidder's chair and confront his lens was thus to be situated within a violently resurgent imperial order. The photographer's studio was the stage for either what might be termed a "soft" sovereignty—the liberal extension of some kind of shared citizen-status within the colonial system—or a "hard" sovereignty, in which individuals like Gungoo Mehter were identified as persons subject to state-sanctioned imprisonment and death. The studio served a dual purpose: functioning "both *honorifically* and *repressively*", ⁵⁹ it anointed some Indians as professionals with a stake in the imperial system, while identifying others as what Giorgio Agamben has termed "bare life", wholly exposed to a pitiless imperial bio-power. ⁶⁰ Yet these two currents of the counterinsurgent order in Cawnpore could not be neatly separated (at least not in visual terms): the portraits of Indian prisoners implicate the poses of imperial professionalism as themselves embodiments of a certain disciplinary subjection, so that the spectres of violence and exclusion haunt the inclusive respectability that we see in the portraits of civil society. ⁶¹

However, unlike the portraits that have been examined so far, the captive figure of Mehter was not identified in the album merely with a laconic caption stating his name and occupation. Instead, the portrait was incorporated into a discourse of crime and punishment, conspicuously distanced from the collegial Anglo-Indian portraits through a detailed account of Mehter's alleged role in the Cawnpore massacres:

Gungoo Mehter—Tried at Cawnpore for hacking to death with swords the Futtegharh fugitives taken by the Nana [Sahib]—also for Hacking the women & children at the Slaughter house Cawnpore on 15th July 1857 and for throwing the living wounded with the dying and the dead together into the Well—also for cutting off the arms, noses, and ears, of 9 of Havelock's spies—seven of whom died in consequence—The two living mutilated men were part of the evidence against him—Convicted and Hanged at Cawnpore 8th Sept / 59. ⁶²

Tresidder thus deployed lengthy, detail-laden text to anchor Mehter's portrait in a juridical context. But on an aesthetic level, it was by no means dissimilar from common poses of harmonious imperial professionalism. Once placed in front of the photographer's lens, much-reviled Indian rebels suddenly inhabited an arena that functioned to neutralize distinctions between "good" Indians and "bad" Indians—and even to some extent between colonizer and colonized—because of a shared visual language of pose and placement. The homogenizing visual grammar of photography therefore dissolved important markers of social difference.

To a certain extent, these visual slippages between portraits of convicts and portraits of colleagues appear to have been accepted by Tresidder, who could after all have placed the prisoners in an alternative manner (standing, for instance), but chose to abide by his standard portrait conventions and merely allow for the presence of visible restraints and the addition of captions to recuperate relevant political distinctions. Yet, in a remarkable double-page spread in the album ([fig. 16](#)), certain anxieties about such portraiture's slipperiness do seem to emerge. The ability—or lack thereof—to register political distinctions in the fraught atmosphere of Cawnpore was framed by Tresidder in highly dramatic terms, as a matter of life and death. On the top right-hand side of the spread (page 48) is a photograph of an elderly Islamic cleric, who during the war had issued a decree stating it was morally right for Muslims to kill Christians. Again, this portrait mimics the bourgeois tone of the poses seen earlier, as do the two portraits beneath it: one of an Indian man called Nana Narain Rao, the other of his son. Rao had helped the British by passing them information about the notorious insurgent commander, Nana Sahib, but he was nevertheless suspected as being “one of those double-dyed traitors who hang on the skirts of success and are driven backwards and forwards by every gust of fortune”.⁶³ The inclusion of his portrait (an Indian man whose allegiance to the British was uncertain) underneath the portrait of the cleric (whose antipathy to the British was known) speaks to the mortal difficulty of identifying people as friends or enemies in the murky context of counterinsurgency—a difficulty that was visually articulated by a portrait format in which diversely aligned peoples were cast in more or less equivalent terms.



[View this illustration online](#)

Figure 16.

Dr John Nicholas Tresidder, Cawnpore, pages 47–48 of *The Tresidder Album* (ca. 1858–64), albumen and salt-paper prints. Alkazi Collection of Photography Digital image courtesy of The Alkazi Collection of Photography

While seemingly content to allow for Indian men to occupy a visual (although not textual) space that dramatized ambiguities of allegiance, Tresidder at the same time sought to develop a separate photographic mode through which to assert the unambiguously discernible unity of the British community. To do so, he substantially reworked his photographs in a manner that recuperated the very racial demarcations that his portraits of civil servants had so diplomatically worked to elide. Beneath the images of Rao and the insurgent cleric we find an assemblage of portraits entitled “Cawnpore friends”. This is a photomontage of the *white* members of the community, whose heads have been cut from their bodies and arranged to create a composite negative, from which Tresidder secured a combination print.⁶⁴ Strikingly, the print is placed as if under siege by the enemy cleric and the possibly disloyal Indian men. Even the “loyal native of Cawnpore” on the left-hand side of the spread is cast adrift from colonials; his unreconstructed portrait resides outside of the composite image of Europeans, situated in visual relation to the insurgent preacher and the ambiguously aligned figure of Rao. Indians are thereby partitioned into friends and enemies according to imperial notions of “loyalty”—but the colonial community is seen as formally distinct from both of these Indian categories.

The traumatic atmosphere of crime and punishment, paranoia and suspicion, which reigned in Cawnpore following the atrocities of 1857 thus ultimately spurred Tresidder along new inventive trajectories of portraiture production. The Caucasian unity embodied by the carefully orchestrated composite print is founded on a jointly Christian sense of loss, encapsulated by the two-part panorama, "North burial ground—Cawnpore", which unfolds to span the double-page spread. In this way the death of Europeans is made to literally hang over the post-conflict composition of Anglo-Indian relations in Cawnpore, forming the grisly backdrop to—and the potential consequence of—any colonial difficulties in properly distinguishing between friends and enemies in India. Under this bleakly divisive symbol of imperial mourning, Tresidder's photographic reconstruction of Cawnpore undergoes a profound shift in political emphasis, moving from a visual ordering of Anglo-Indian relations that was based on mutual participation in civic institutions, to an organization of the community based on formally segregated groups, in which "friends" are distinguishable above all by their nationality. The seriality of the photographic portrait thus opened up the opportunity to envision post-war Anglo-Indian society as operating in harmonious accord with liberal ideals of formal equality, but the dedifferentiation involved in this manner of picturing British India also carried the threatening implication that allies and enemies were not always visually apparent. Such disturbing murkiness seemed to call for the reinscription of distinct social boundaries, and thus a photographic mode that worked to emphasize the sanctity of race, still the clearest outward marker of political identity within the imperial imaginary.

Conclusion

Over and above issues regarding the military logistics of maintaining power in South Asia, the question raised by the 1857 insurrection was this: in the aftermath of extraordinary inter-racial violence, could British India still be imagined as a workable political entity? The answer given by Tresidder's photography was that, yes, such an entity could be pictured, but the visual grammar of photography articulated a colonial society that was perhaps a little too coherent, eliding cherished imperial distinctions. The formal possibilities of photography were thus experimented with by Tresidder in ways that paradoxically crystallized: firstly, a comforting sense of Anglo-Indian harmony within the institutions of the civil establishment, as formal equality was compellingly rendered by the standardized photographic portrait; and secondly, a faith in the inviolate nature of the white community against an unstable Indian "loyalty," as the standardized portrait was segmented and spliced until it could satisfy the imperial craving for racial distinction. In this double movement, the imagery serves as a visual register for one of the key ideological antagonisms of the post-1857 empire in India, "the effort to preserve elements of an ongoing liberalism within a conception of Indian 'difference'".⁶⁵

Tresidder's studio and album thus offered cathartic spaces where incompatible desires could be satisfied. The spectre of violent insurgency created an urgent need to stabilize Anglo-Indian society, but it also confronted colonials with their limited capacity to sustain a coherently liberal, socially rehabilitative mode of political and aesthetic praxis. Homi K. Bhabha has identified ambivalence of this sort as a constitutive feature of political liberalism as it is expressed in the colonial context, wherein the ability for the colonized Other to "mimic" the habits of Europe does not validate the imperial mission so much as it causes deep anxiety in the colonizer, who struggles to maintain a stable sense of self, or a distinct aura of authority, that can legitimize their dominance over subject peoples.⁶⁶ Photography in particular was a potent cause of this sort of anxiety, since its own formal logic tended to raise troubling questions about the relative status of Briton and Indian under the imperial regime. Far from providing only a superficial visual appraisal of warfare's effects, the camera allowed for a revelatory probing of political liberalism's (im)possibilities in post-conflict colonial society.

Footnotes

- 1 See, for instance, Mary Warner Marien, *Photography: A Cultural History* (London: Laurence King, 2006), 117-18.
- 2 See Ulrich Keller, "'The Valley of the Shadow of Death': The Triumph of Photography", in *The Ultimate Spectacle: A Visual History of the Crimean War* (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 119-72.
- 3 The earliest examples of war photography include an anonymous American photographer operating in Mexico during the Mexican-American (1846-48); the Scottish amateur photographer John McCosh operating in Burma during the Second Anglo-Burmese War (1852-53); and the English commercial photographer Roger Fenton working in the Baltic during the Crimean War (1853-56).
- 4 Susie Linfield, *The Cruel Radiance: Photography and Political Violence* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2010), 22. Linfield provides an excellent account of prevailing scholarly trends on war photography in the first chapter of this book, "A Little History of Photography Criticism; or, Why Do Photography Critics Hate Photography?".
- 5 Zahid R. Chaudhary, *Afterimage of Empire: Photography in Nineteenth-Century India* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2012), 90.
- 6 For a detailed account of the Cawnpore siege and massacre, see Andrew Ward, *Our Bones Are Scattered: The Cawnpore Massacres and the Indian Mutiny of 1857* (London: John Murray, 2004).
- 7 George Dodd, *The History of the Indian Revolt and of the Expeditions to Persia, China, and Japan, 1856-7-8, with Maps, Plans, and Wood Engravings* (London: W. & R. Chambers, 1859), 144.
- 8 Thomas Stevens, *Around the World on a Bicycle, Vol. 2: From Teheran to Yokohama* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1889), 340.
- 9 See Sean Willcock, "Aesthetic Bodies: Posing on Sites of Violence in India, c. 1857-1900", *History of Photography* 39, no. 2 (2015): 142-59.
- 10 Manu Goswami, "'Englishness' on the Imperial Circuit: Mutiny Tours in Colonial South Asia", *Journal of Historical Sociology* 9, no. 1 (March 1996): 54.
- 11 Ian Baucom, *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire, and the Locations of Identity* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1999), 107.
- 12 See Gary D. Sampson, "Unmasking the Colonial Picturesque: Samuel Bourne's Photographs of Barrackpore Park", in *Colonialist Photography: Imag(in)ing Race and Place*, ed. Eleanor M. Hight and Gary D. Sampson (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), 84-106; and Willcock, "Aesthetic Bodies".
- 13 Sometimes spelled "Tressider". The captions in the album read "Tresidder", a spelling that I have had confirmed in conversation with Robert Haskins, one of Tresidder's descendants, and a family historian.
- 14 The *Tresidder Album* is now held along with the doctor's medical diary in the Alkazi Foundation for the Arts, New Delhi.

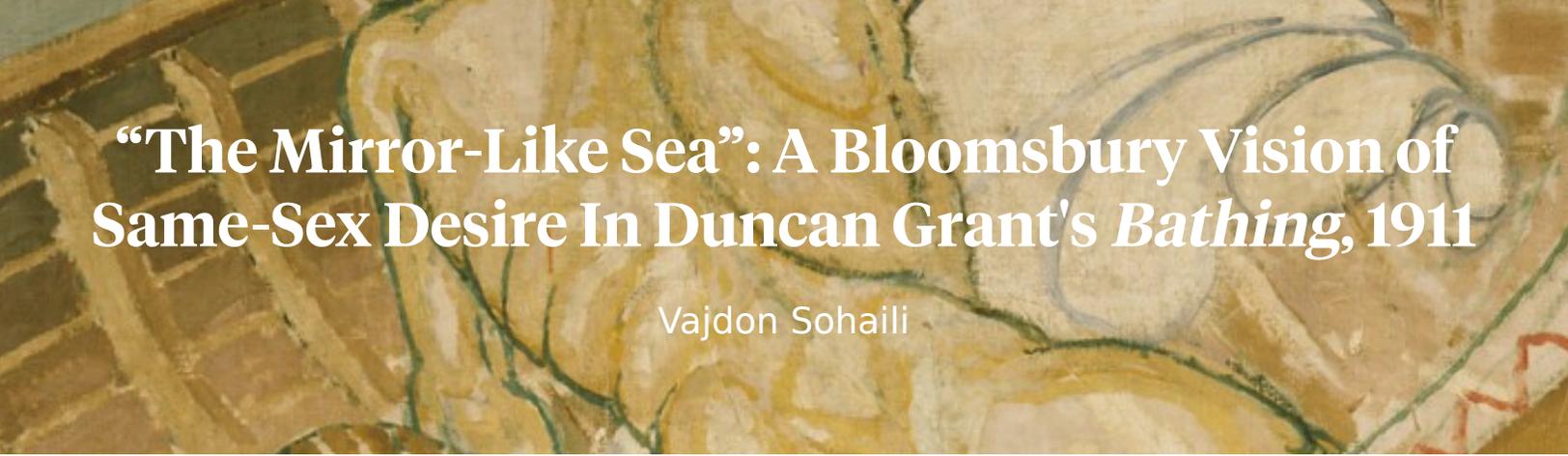
- 15 By confronting the traumas of warfare through the prism of domestic and civil forms of photography, the *Tresidder Album* can be compared to the "Lucknow Album" (1856-57) of the Indian photographer Ahmad Ali Khan. Khan's album was filled with portraits of both Indian and colonial residents of prewar Lucknow. Following the capture of Lucknow in March 1857, the album was discovered by the British and began to circulate in colonial networks. It became a work of imperial mourning, as new meanings constellated around portraits of those lost in recent violence. See Alison Blunt, "Home and Empire: Photographs of British Families in the *Lucknow Album*, 1856-57", in *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination*, ed. Joan Schwartz and James Ryan (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2003), 243-60.
- 16 Forging a shared political framework in British India was a key theme of Queen Victoria's Proclamation to India, issued in response to the Indian Rebellion on 1 November 1858: "We hold ourselves bound to the Natives of Our Indian Territories by the same obligations of Duty which bind Us to all Our other Subjects . . . all shall alike enjoy the equal and impartial protection of the Law." *Copies of the Proclamation of the King, Emperor of India, to the Princes and Peoples of India, of the 2nd day of November 1908, and the Proclamation of the late Queen Victoria of the 1st day of November 1858, to the Princes, Chiefs, and People of India* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode Ltd, 1908), 2.
- 17 Christopher Pinney, "Seven Theses on Photography", *Thesis Eleven* 113, no. 1 (2012): 141-56.
- 18 Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton Univ. Press, 2001), 149.
- 19 See John Falconer, "'A Pure Labour of Love': A Publishing History of *The People of India*", in *Colonialist Photography*, ed. Hight and Sampson, 51-83.
- 20 Sir John William Kaye and John Forbes Watson, *The People of India: A Series of Photographic Illustrations, with Descriptive Letterpress, of the Races and Tribes of Hindustan*, 8 vols. (London: India Museum, 1868-75).
- 21 Christopher Pinney, *Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997), 34.
- 22 *The Economist* 15 (26 Sept. 1857): 1062. Emphasis in original.
- 23 For an account of the ideology of liberalism in British India, see Thomas R. Metcalf, *The New Cambridge History of India*, Vol. 3.4: *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994).
- 24 Sukanya Banerjee, *Becoming Imperial Citizens: Indians in the Late-Victorian Empire* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2010), 23.
- 25 See Banerjee, *Becoming Imperial Citizens*.
- 26 Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, 59.
- 27 See Lara Perry, "The Carte de Visite in the 1860s and the Serial Dynamic of Photographic Likeness", *Art History* 35, no. 4 (Sept. 2012): 728-49.
- 28 Quoted in Banerjee, *Becoming Imperial Citizens*, 22.
- 29 *Allen's Indian Mail*, vol. XIV, Jan.-Dec. 1856 (London: W. H. Allen and Co., 1856), 66.
- 30 Andrew Winter, ed., *The British Medical Journal, Being the Journal of the British Medical Association* (London: Thomas John Honeyman, 1857), 724.
- 31 *Allen's Indian Mail*, vol. XV, Jan.-Dec. 1857 (London: W. H. Allen and Co., 1857), 304 (19 May 1857).
- 32 Sir Edward Arthur Henry Blunt, *List of Inscriptions on Christian Tombs and Tablets of Historical Interest in the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh* (Allahabad: W. C. Abel, Govt. Press, 1911), 114.
- 33 Mowbray Thomson, *The Story of Cawnpore* (London: Richard Bentley, 1859), 252.
- 34 Christopher Pinney, *The Coming of Photography in India* (London: British Library, 2008), 122-23.
- 35 Pinney, *Coming of Photography in India*, 122.
- 36 For an account of the importance of the figure of the British woman within accounts of the Uprising, see Jane Robinson, *Angels of Albion: Women of the Indian Mutiny* (London: Viking Press, 1996).
- 37 Thank you to Robert Haskins, one of Tresidder's descendants and a family historian, for this information.
- 38 These initials can be seen in the portrait of "Native Doctor Jail Hospital—Cawnpore" on page nine of the album.
- 39 William James Heaviside, *Photograph Album of William James Heaviside, Bengal Engineers*, British Library, IOR PDP/ Photo 42.
- 40 Perry, "Carte de Visite in the 1860s", 729.
- 41 Perry, "Carte de Visite in the 1860s", 730. See also, Geoffrey Batchen, "Dreams of Ordinary Life: Carte-de-Visite and the Bourgeois Imagination", in *Photography: Theoretical Snapshots*, ed. J. J. Long, Andrea Noble, and Edward Welch (Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2009), 80-97.
- 42 Malavika Karlekar, *Re-visioning the Past: Early Photography in Bengal, 1875-1915* (Oxford and New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2005), 71.
- 43 Karlekar, *Re-visioning the Past*, 86.
- 44 Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2009), 140.
- 45 Banerjee, *Becoming Imperial Citizens*, 5.

- 46 There is a growing body of literature on photographic portraiture, race, and citizenship. See, for instance, Liam Buckley, "Studio Photography and the Aesthetics of Citizenship in The Gambia, West Africa", in *Sensible Objects: Colonialism, Museums and Material Culture*, ed. Elizabeth Edwards, Chris Gosden, and Ruth B. Phillips (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2006), 61-86; Lily Cho, "Intimacy Among Strangers: Anticipating Citizenship in Chinese Head Tax Photographs", *Interventions* 15, no. 1 (2013): 10-23; and Lorena Rizzo, "Visual Aperture: Bureaucratic Systems of Identification, Photography and Personhood in Colonial Southern Africa", *History of Photography* 37, no. 3 (2013): 263-82.
- 47 Sorabji Jehangir, *Representative Men of India: A Collection of Memoirs, with Portraits, of Indian Princes, Nobles, Statesmen, Philanthropists, Officials, and Eminent Citizens* (London: W. H. Allen & Co., 1889).
- 48 Jehangir, *Representative Men of India*, v.
- 49 Pinney, *Camera Indica*, 97.
- 50 Banerjee, *Becoming Imperial Citizens*, 23.
- 51 Batchen, "Dreams of Ordinary Life", 87.
- 52 Pinney, *Coming of Photography in India*, 114.
- 53 Thomson, *Story of Cawnpore*, 206.
- 54 *Report of Police Administration in the North Western Provinces, for 1861* (Allahabad: Government Press, 1862), 30.
- 55 Thomson, *Story of Cawnpore*, 247-48.
- 56 Thomson, *Story of Cawnpore*, 246.
- 57 Pinney, *Coming of Photography in India*, 63.
- 58 Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive", *October* 39 (Winter 1986): 7.
- 59 Sekula, "Body and the Archive", 6. Emphasis in original.
- 60 See Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1998).
- 61 Jeannene M. Przyblyski, "Revolution at a Standstill: Photography and the Paris Commune of 1871", *Yale French Studies* 101 (2001): 65.
- 62 *Tresidder Album*, 49.
- 63 John William Kaye, *A History of the Sepoy War in India, 1857-58*, Vol. 2 (London: W. H. Allen, 1870), 393.
- 64 Earlier in the album, Tresidder had executed a similar combination print using the portraits of his Indian domestic servants, whose Indianness was contained in a single collage, effectively segregated from the surrounding photographs of white colonial domesticity (fig. 11).
- 65 Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, 49.
- 66 For an account of the ambivalence of colonial discourse, see Homi K. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse", *October* 28, *Discipleship: A Special Issue on Psychoanalysis* (Spring 1984): 125-33.

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“The Mirror-Like Sea”: A Bloomsbury Vision of Same-Sex Desire In Duncan Grant's *Bathing*, 1911

Vajdon Sohaili

Abstract

Originally installed as a mural in the London Borough Polytechnic, Duncan Grant's Bathing (1911) provoked anxieties that it would lead to the moral decay of working-class youth. Employing critical theory, this article finds the root of those anxieties in the painting's linkage of naked homosociality to a subtle but pervasive figuration of desire, which Grant constructs via a sophisticated design programme. Grant's democratic fantasy of homoerotic desire echoes that of his Bloomsbury colleague, E. M. Forster, whose dictum "only connect" induces a state of inoperative touch, made intelligible by Jean-Luc Nancy. The effects of Grant's composition, when viewed through the repetition theory of Gilles Deleuze, create not only a space but a time of desire, a potentiality located in the figure of the peripheral, uncoupled bather. Poised on the brink of sexual self-awareness, this figure invokes a positive form of Narcissus, liberated from the Freudian taint of homosexual non-productivity.

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I often in my journey by the sea longed to get out and live the rest of my life unbeknownst and lost among the beautiful youths I saw playing about in and out of the mirror-like sea . . .
—Duncan Grant, letter to Lytton Strachey, 16 June, 1907

Duncan Grant's *Bathing* (fig. 1) depicts seven male figures in varying stages of immersion in a stylized and highly activated body of water. The painting's action is read in a curve from top right to top left, starting with a pair of figures diving off a grey orthogonal podium, to a pair of swimmers, and finally to a pair climbing into a tilting boat. These kinetic duos leave one figure unaccounted for. In the lower left, that figure seems, peculiarly, to hover, not to swim at all. One cannot help but feel a sense of crisis attached to this body; perhaps it is simply his outsider status in this couple-constituted world; perhaps it is the strange, upturned lifelessness of his feet, or the empty, cupping gesture of his hands, the grasp of a blind man who drifts off-target, away from the up-surgings of bodies and diagonals. Or perhaps it is the treatment of his hair. Unlike the sleek, vigorous patterns of the other bathers, the brushwork of this figure's hair seems thin and unsure, a combination of squiggles and cross-hatches through which the underlying scalp is too apparent. I will return to propose an identity for this figure, but for now it is enough to record a first impression of him: a fringe-dweller, inchoate, unseen, holding onto an illusion or reaching for an ideal—a stark contrast to the coupled, driven vitality of the other figures.



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Figure 1.

Duncan Grant, *Bathing*, photographed in its packing crate, 1911, oil on canvas, 228.6 x 306.1 cm. Collection of Tate, London (N04567) Digital image courtesy of Tate Images / Duncan Grant Estate, DACS 2016

These other figures attracted most of the attention when *Bathing* was unveiled in 1911 in its original setting, the dining-room of the London Borough Polytechnic. The *National Review* warned that paintings like Grant's would "deteriorate young and sensitive minds". Such exercises in avant-gardism were "travesties" beyond the comprehension of the working-class students of the Polytechnic, and could lead to "degeneracy" through "bad examples and false ideals".¹ Fixated on moral disruption, the language of this critique suggests that sexual panic lies just below its surface. Undoubtedly, the muscular virility of naked male bodies painted on a three-metre-wide canvas was in part to blame. But I contend that moral opposition was responding to something even more subversive and inarticulate: not the bodies necessarily, but their harmonious rhythmic interplay, and the almost palpable sense of yearning that ties them together. In other words, not sex, but desire.

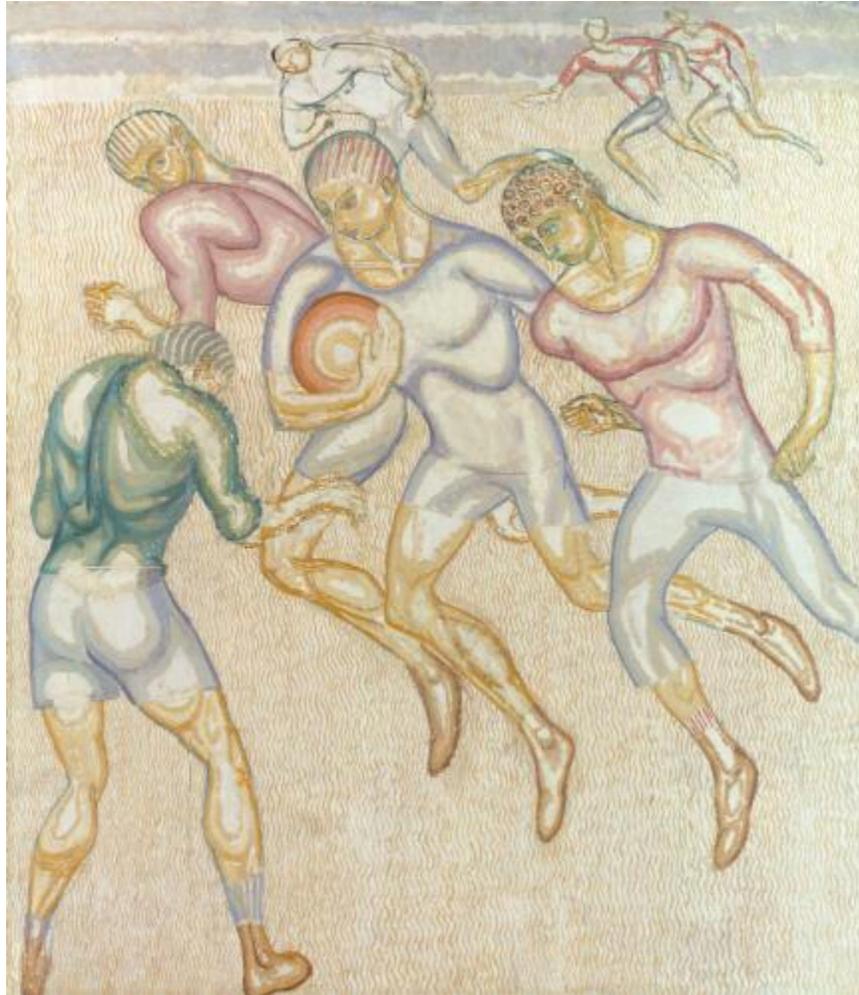
How might we describe desire? What are its figurations? Sex has its language and figures, but desire resists both the linguistic and the formal. In what follows, I will argue that *Bathing* makes an intervention into that recalcitrance by presenting a complex but figural description of desire, situated not in its consummation, but in a suspension of that consummation just beyond reach. To theorize this effect, I will contextualize Grant's painting

within the sexual and social philosophies of the Bloomsbury circle to which he belonged, paying particular attention to the writing of E. M. Forster. Like Grant, Forster longed for an open and egalitarian male sensual community, and he frequently expressed this desire with reference to bathing. However, as I will demonstrate, Forster's famous dictum, "only connect", reveals an ambivalent tension in such encounters, a state of yearning contingent on incompleteness. This connective tension embedded in desire mobilizes the erotic in Grant's *Bathing*. Through decorative strategies, including rhythm, repetition, and difference, Grant imbues his painting with a powerful dynamism constitutive of yearning, and creates an erotic fantasy all the more intense for being suspended on the cusp of consummation. Held together through a circuit of inoperative touch, Grant's picture facilitates a philosophical consideration of the already separate conditions of erotic connection, doing so, radically, through a medium both public and pedagogical. In its staging of multiple encounters—stylistic, physical, and ontological—*Bathing* proclaims desire for a connection among men that is socially inclusive and sexually celebratory, not fraught in its expression, but fluid, productive, and self-affirming.

Living to the age of ninety-three in 1978, Grant was the longest-surviving member of Bloomsbury, that loose alliance of like-minded, mostly literary intellectuals who led the English avant-garde of the early twentieth century. At one time or another, he had been romantically involved with his cousin Lytton Strachey, the economist John Maynard Keynes, and the explorer George Mallory, but he settled down (at least domestically) with Virginia Woolf's sister, Vanessa Bell, with whom he fathered a child. Despite this (probably short-lived) heterosexual contact, Grant continued to enjoy sexual relationships with male friends and working-class models. His daughter said that she never heard him say anything "in any way that made me think that his homosexuality had ever been a real problem to him. . . It always seemed he'd known about it from the word go, and just accepted it." ² Open to an uncomplicated and plural sexuality, Grant brought a similar promiscuity to his art-making. Grant's art resists any single stylistic characterization; his interests were extraordinarily diverse and wide-ranging, alternating easily between decorative objects and easel paintings, between mythological scenes and still lifes, between Byzantine influences and Fauvist ones. As Virginia Woolf said with her typically acerbic affection, "he has too many ideas and no way to get rid of them." ³

The commission to decorate the dining-room of the London Borough Polytechnic, a trade college in a working-class neighbourhood of south London, was Grant's most prominent exposure as an artist to date. The history of the commission has been well documented by other scholars, but some details are worth repeating here as they reveal the conceptual and stylistic context in which Grant was working. Roger Fry—the Bloomsbury-

associated champion of Post-Impressionism and the director of the Polytechnic commission—recruited Grant along with four other artists to produce seven mural-sized canvases under the theme of “London on Holiday”. Fry himself painted a scene at the Zoo, and Grant, the only artist to undertake two canvases, painted a game of football in Hyde Park (fig. 2) and a bathing scene in the Serpentine. Aiming for stylistic consistency, Fry suggested that the artists employ a modelling technique inspired by Byzantine mosaics; ⁴ he had an enthusiasm for the eastern Mediterranean, not only for the decorative expressiveness of Byzantine art (which he compared to Cézanne’s), but also for the temperament of the people, whom he considered friendlier, more sensitive to beauty, and less class-confined than the English. ⁵ Thus, in concept and style, the murals were designed to produce a harmonious social and aesthetic effect. ⁶ Their settings would evoke a modernist attitude to recreation and a sensuous engagement of the body, as well as represent urban spaces and activities to which all Londoners could enjoy more or less open and communal access; while their recourse to a Byzantine muralist mode would signal an aesthetic and social sensibility based on plurality and openness.



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Figure 2.

Duncan Grant, *Football*, 1911, oil on canvas, 227.7 x 197.5 x 2.5 cm. Collection of Tate, London (N04566) Digital image courtesy of Tate Images / Duncan Grant Estate, DACS 2016

Grant's *Bathing* employs eastern Mediterranean precedents more effectively than any of the other murals in the project, filtering these influences through his sophisticated decorative sensibility to deliver a dynamically modernist effect.⁷ His stylized treatment of the undulating water as well as the geometric musculature of his swimmers bears a resemblance to Italian mosaics of the twelfth century (figs. 3 and 4)⁸, while the idealized muscularity of his figures owes much to Michelangelo (fig. 5).⁹ Grant assimilates these influences into a harmonious design programme. Amplifying the Byzantine water technique, he imposes a rhythm of blues, greens, and whites that conveys sensorial and atmospheric qualities, and suggests a body of water variegated in its light, depth, and even temperature. This impression is underscored by a sense of environmental

displacement: other than the grey podium, there is no indication that the scene takes place in a city park. The horizon is distant and uninterrupted, and the surface has an energetic quality suggestive of a much larger body of water. Evoking the powerful motion of waves, Grant juxtaposes “layers” of water in diagonal opposition to each other, almost like scenographic flats or panels of a screen.¹⁰ Integrated stylistically with their environment, the swimmers navigate over and between these layers of water, but also within them. In places, the undulating stripes separate to trail across bodies, creating degrees of transparency and opacity that immerse the swimmers in the water as well as in the decorative unity of the image. The effect of Grant’s harmonizing design strategies is to deliver not only a sense of depth and recession, but also a dynamic diagonal movement that guides the viewer’s eye and justifies the muscular exertion of the figures.



Figure 3.

Unknown, Christ and the Fishermen (detail), 1180s, mosaic, north transept, north wall, Monreale Cathedral, Monreale, Sicily Digital image courtesy of Web Gallery of Art

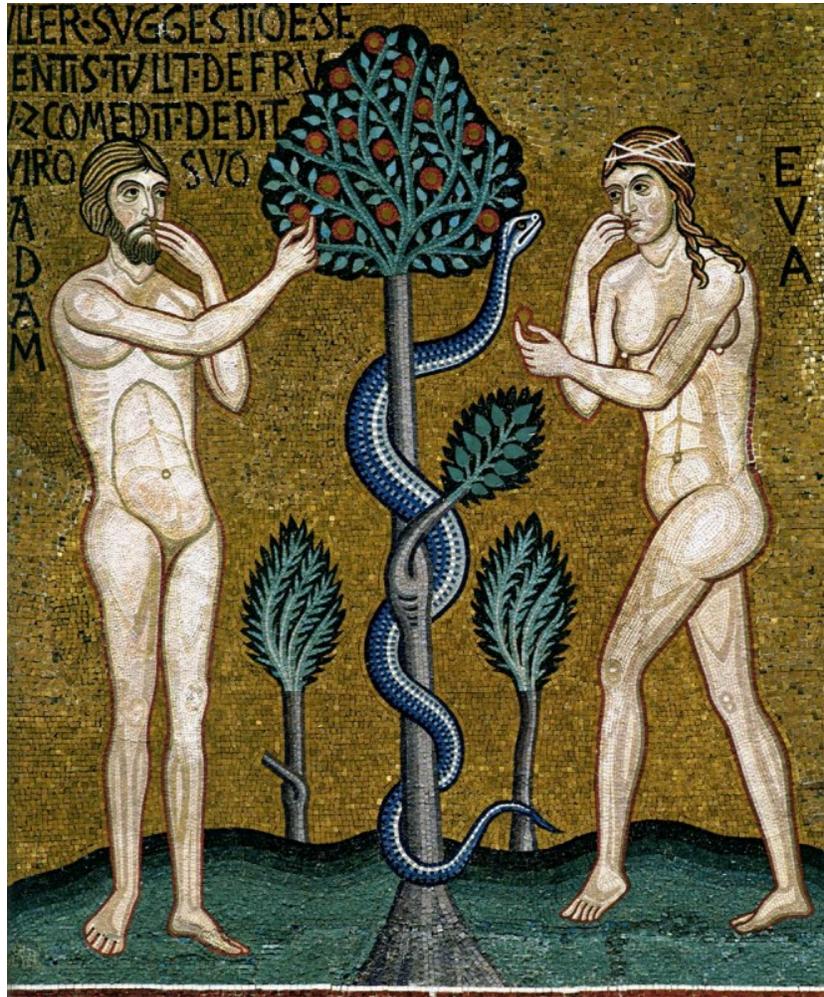


Figure 4.

Unknown, Adam and Eve (detail), 1140–70, mosaic, nave, centre aisle, north wall, Cappella Palatina, Palermo, Sicily Digital image courtesy of @Crash_MacDuff

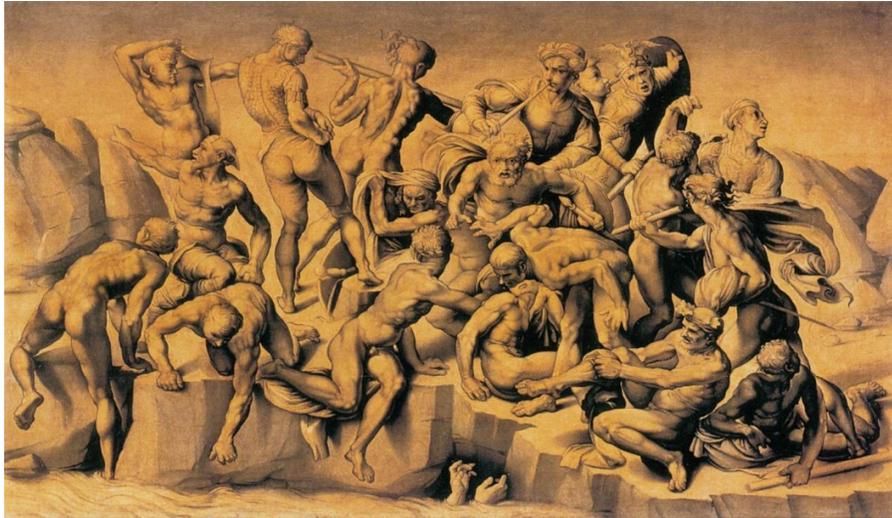


Figure 5.

Aristotile da Sangallo, after Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Battle of Cascina*, 1542, oil on wood, 77 x 130 cm. Collection of Holkham Hall, Norfolk
Digital image courtesy of Lord Leicester and the Trustees of Holkham Estate, Norfolk / Bridgeman Images

If Grant's design sensibilities consolidate his painting's atmospheric effects, his depiction of an all-male bathing scene admits us to its social and erotic dimensions. By the early twentieth century, urban bathing, in most cases separated by gender, was a popular activity among the working classes, influenced by modern ideas surrounding health, hygiene, leisure, and physical recreation. Bathing was also, as Matt Houlbrook notes, a pretext for sex among men, usually at London's numerous indoor baths, but also, undoubtedly, in the bushes around the Serpentine.¹¹ For Grant, male bathing was a topos of ongoing erotic and artistic interest. A letter sent to Lytton Strachey from Florence in 1907 records his delight at watching the "miraculously lovely" young men bathing naked in the Arno.¹² His bathing pictures from 1920-21—*Bathers by the Pond* (fig. 6) and *Two Bathers* (fig. 7)—represent his fantasy of hosting similar scenes around the pond at his home in Charleston.¹³ Borrowing attitudes from Frédéric Bazille's *Bathers (Summer Scene)* of 1869 (fig. 8)—one of the few paintings of male homosocial bathing from the period—and an expressiveness of brushwork that owes something to Cézanne, Grant clearly keys his images to the erotic. The curled-up dog in the corner of *Bathers by the Pond* recalls a convention from Renaissance paintings of Venus (fig. 9), and initiates with a sly, art-historical wink the languid flirtation of the scene. In *Two Bathers*, the extraordinary curve of the supine bather's body echoes the colour palette of the soft rising mounds of water and shoreline. The landscape itself translates as a body—its gently sloping profile is a visual echo of the bather's own

thigh—contributing to a totalizing erotic environment. Through technique and motif, Grant’s bathing pictures appropriate a genre of commonly heteroerotic interest for the homoerotic male body.



Figure 6.

Duncan Grant, *Bathers by the Pond*, 1920-1, oil on canvas, 50.5 × 91.5 cm. Collection of Pallant House Gallery, Chichester Digital image courtesy of Pallant House, Chichester / © Estate of Duncan Grant. All rights reserved, DACS 2016.



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Figure 7.

Duncan Grant, *Two Bathers*, 1921, oil on canvas, 59.5 × 89.7 cm. Collection of the Hamilton Kerr Institute, Cambridge Digital image courtesy of Hamilton Kerr Institute / Duncan Grant Estate, DACS 2016



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Figure 8.

Frédéric Bazille, *Bathers (Summer Scene)*, 1869, oil on canvas, 158 x 159 cm. Collection of Harvard Art Museums / Fogg Museum Digital image courtesy of President and Fellows of Harvard College

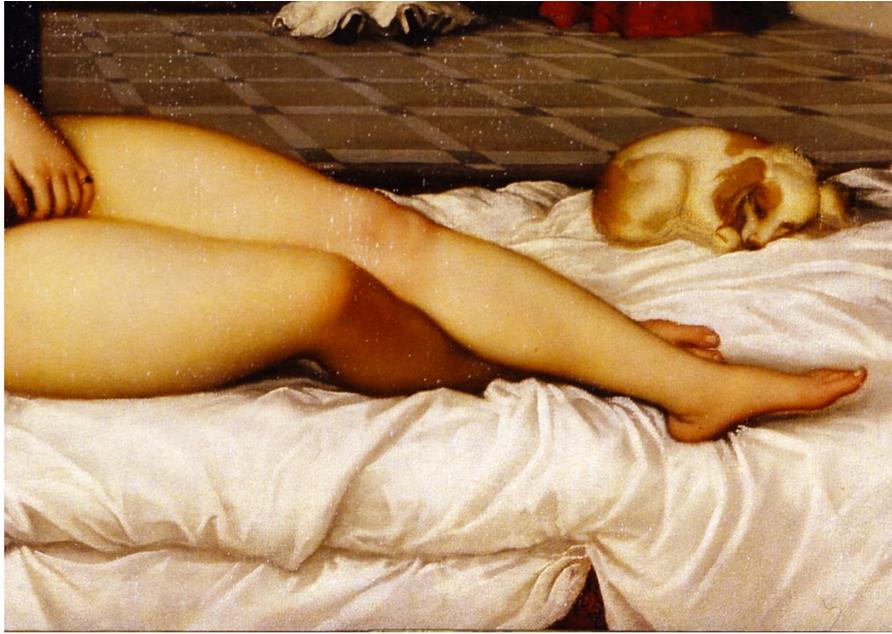


Figure 9.

Titian, *Venus of Urbino* (detail), 538, oil on canvas, 119 × 165 cm.
Collection of the Uffizi Gallery, Florence. Digital image courtesy of Uffizi
Gallery, Florence

However, unlike Grant's small-scale private paintings, *Bathing* was a wall-sized public production in a pedagogical setting. As such, its disruptions of gender and genre intruded into the social realm, provoking the denunciations of critics who feared the painting would corrupt and confuse the Polytechnic's working-class youths—corrupt their sexuality and confuse their place in society. Still more threatening, these elisions of the sexual and the social across the male body were part of a recent intellectual radicalism that merges into a Bloomsbury genealogy. In the second half of the nineteenth century, British intellectuals were exposed to Walt Whitman's visions of a harmonious egalitarian society based on honest work and a respect for nature, alongside a sensuous appreciation of the male body. Whitman's fantasy of idealized democracy—"intense and loving comradeship, the personal and passionate attachment of man to man"—deeply influenced Edward Carpenter, a one-time teacher at Cambridge, who adopted the American poet's "love of comrades" to inform his own views on social and sexual emancipation.¹⁴ In "The Intermediate Sex", Carpenter gave an impassioned and erudite defence of what he called the "homogenic attachment"—notably, in both men *and* women—arguing for its distinguished history, refuting the pathologizing accusations of the medical and judicial establishment, and situating it within a larger campaign of social and class reform.¹⁵ Practising his own philosophy, Carpenter left Cambridge for a rural commune, and formed a life-long partnership with an uneducated working-class man from the slums of Sheffield.¹⁶ In its intersection of radical views

bearing on both the social and the sexual, Carpenter's philosophy had a powerful pull on Bloomsbury agents, even those without the "homogenic attachment", such as Fry, who described Carpenter as "quite one of the best men I have ever met".¹⁷ Grant's view of Carpenter is not known, but in his sexual tastes he was certainly democratic, enjoying the company of working-class men and not blanching at a criminal record.¹⁸ However, it was Grant's friend, E. M. Forster, who was particularly inspired by Carpenter, visiting him and George Merrill several times at their home at Millthorpe.¹⁹ While there, Forster conceived *Maurice*, and we can see a reflection of Carpenter and Merrill in that novel's idealized conclusion, in which class-transcendent male lovers take to the greenwood to spend their lives together. Like its aesthetics, Bloomsbury's sexualities were underpinned by a progressive, even transgressive social conscience.²⁰

Two years following Carpenter's death, Forster would write, "If I am as deep as a pond, and you as a lake, Edward Carpenter was the sea."²¹ As these words suggest, in Forster's cosmology, bodies of water were almost mystical sites of an eroticism that could be harmonized both with nature and society. In his novels, Forster frequently stages or tests the connection of the social, the relational, and the sexual in the context of a male bathing scene. In *A Room with a View* (1908), bathing is a comic idyll shared by Freddy, George, and Mr Beebe, who strip down and abandon themselves to a playful prelapsarian communion.²² In *Howards End* (1910), Charles Wilcox's awkward attempt to go for a bathe is thwarted by his own body-shame and social anxiety.²³ Unlike the unrestrained celebration of nakedness and comradeship in the earlier novel, the failure to connect with nature signifies a deeper human deficiency: an inability to connect to people. Even in *Maurice* (1913-14, though published posthumously), which might seem to present the opportunity for an unencoded celebration of the erotic, Forster resists the overtly sexual bathing scene, preferring instead to use it as an index of intimate relational connection, or of its lapse. From the dissonant attitudes towards bathing of the new lovers, Maurice and Clive²⁴ —a foreshadow of their romantic rupture—to the unrealized moonlit bathe that the servant Alec suggests to Maurice—a mere fantasy that preordains the full consummation of their relationship later that night²⁵ —a bathing scene provides the framework for describing the retreat or advance of an intimate and erotic connection.

In this oscillating aspect of retreat and advance, Forster's bathing scenes and, as I will show, Grant's bathing pictures invoke one of Forster's best-known dicta: "only connect". In *Howards End*, published the year before Grant painted *Bathing*, Forster and his protagonists—Margaret and Helen Schlegel—dream of a social harmony that would transcend the divisive

subject conditions of class, gender, age, and—according to theories about the sexual coding of Forster’s novels—sexuality.²⁶ As Margaret says, “Only connect the prose and the passion, and both will be exalted, and human love will be seen at its height . . . Only connect and the beast and the monk, robbed of the isolation that is life to either, will die.”²⁷ To connect would be to dismantle the oppositions and breach the barriers dividing people, spheres, and ideas. Despite the final word of her quote, her intention is not to eliminate either term of opposition, but to facilitate a third space in which “both will be exalted”—spirit *in* appetite, society *in* nature.

This unified third space is not easily attained, as demonstrated by the fraught climax of the novel and the ambivalence of its dénouement. But I would argue that its elusory quality is inscribed in the words “only connect”, which contain an opposition in themselves, a constitutive linguistic tension that conditions their possibility. Taken separately, each word produces variable, even opposing valences. As an adverb, “only” bears several connotations. It can describe pre-eminence or singularity, an action that should be taken to the exclusion of all others. At the same time, it can suggest that an action is easily taken, requiring little effort. A third (though not exhaustive) meaning can qualify an action as mere, insufficient, or even inconsequential, falling short of expectations. We see, then, a word constantly folding back on itself, refuting its own urgency with gestures of dismissal. The verb “connect” is less slippery in its meaning; the OED’s first definition is “to join, fasten, or link together”. In its most common usage, “connect” suggests a completion, a finishing, a measurable success. But “connect” enjoys a range of applications, from the purely mechanical to the spiritually abstract, and where completion or success is measurable in the former order, the latter offers no rubric for evaluation. Indeed, what constitutes success in an abstract usage such as Forster’s is persistence and continuity *in spite of* immeasurability, an always-succeeding that of course requires an always-failing. In their separate states of ambivalence, “only” and “connect” do not quite connect. Together, they host a dissonance between them—an immeasurable completion against a diminishable urgency, an advancement against a retreat.

The quality produced by the rhythmic oscillations of these two words is yearning, a state of activated desire sustained through deferral. According to Jean-Luc Nancy, the constitutive quality of all human encounters is “a relation without relation . . . an exposure made up of the simultaneous immanence of the retreat and the coming of the relation”.²⁸ Like the linguistic tension between “only” and “connect”, connection between people is always at the same time in disconnection. We observe something of this quality in Grant’s bathing pictures from 1920–1. In *Bathers by the Pond* (fig. 6), bodies appear in sensuous integration with nature, and yet their interconnection remains tenuous. The erotic yearning that pervades the

scene makes itself known in postures of retreat. Backs are unusually prominent; of the six figures, four are pictured facing away. Where we can see them, faces are featureless or obscured by heavy dark shadow, and gazes, such that we can extrapolate, follow trajectories that bypass each other. In this latter aspect, the painting recalls Bazille's *Summer Scene* (fig. 8), in which, as Aruna D'Souza observes, "the circuit of gazes . . . is entirely closed."²⁹ In the one case where Grant permits direct communication—between the two seated figures on the right—they encounter each other with their backs and eye-contact is peripheral. If the disconnections of *Bathers by the Pond* set the gaze free to roam, *Two Bathers* (fig. 7) makes a bid to seize that gaze, but in a manner that disrupts connection. While the eye may want to wander across the warm, sensuous golds of the painting, it is drawn repeatedly back to the face of the supine bather. The incongruously hyper-articulated facial features of this figure jar with the impressionistic treatment of the rest of its body and the facture of the painting as a whole, creating a stylistic and environmental disjunction. Furthermore, by being turned upside-down and placed at the very bottom of the painting, these features perform a sort of double inversion—both facial and compositional—in the words of Darren Clarke, "inverting social protocol".³⁰ Direct and piercing in its address, this figure's bid for connection with the viewer in fact produces spatial and atmospheric disorientations. Though the figures in Grant's paintings are in a sense together—sensual bodies co-located in sensuous environments—their relationality produces an ambivalent but productive tension, a simultaneous push and pull that instantiates that frictional yearning between "only" and "connect".

As Nancy tells us, the connective rift applies not only to the gaze, but also to the figure of the touch. Between individuals, he says, "there is contiguity but not continuity . . . All of being is in touch with all of being, but the law of touching is separation."³¹ Nancy refers to the state of universal shared separation as "the inoperative community"—that which "undoes the absoluteness of the absolute"—and so we can think of touch in similar terms.³² To touch or be touched is to exist, and to exist is to accept the inoperation of the touch, its scant but essential distance from that towards which it reaches. He makes this clearer in *Noli Me Tangere*:

Love and truth touch by pushing away: they force the retreat of those whom they reach, for their very onset reveals, in the touch itself, that they are out of reach. It is in being unattainable that they touch us, even seize us.³³

In other words, that which we long to possess always exceeds touch, but it is also this excess that perpetuates our longing. Touch must linger at the margins of an unbreachable divide between itself and the object of desire, but touch governs that divide. In its approach, touch delimits the space of separation, and in its persistence to enter that space, invests it with yearning.

How might we visualize such a touch, one that draws its intensity from a space of separation? In *Leaves of Grass* (first published 1855), Whitman introduces inoperative touch through the “twenty-ninth bather”, an ambiguously gendered figure, despite the poet’s use of the feminine pronoun. At her window, she gazes at the “twenty-eight young men bath[ing] by the shore” and admires their beauty.³⁴ Physically removed and socially restrained, she is unable to attain her desire. And so she projects that desire into “an unseen hand”, which travels—carried and shared by the poet³⁵—to caress their bodies, to descend “tremblingly from their temples and ribs.”³⁶ Hers, as Whitman says in his preface to the 1876 edition, suggests a “terrible, irrepressible yearning”.³⁷ The “unseen hand” is the vehicle for that yearning; it is the non-touch by which touch may travel across a space of separation. Simultaneously expressing desire and unattainability, it permits a form of consummation that is, in its non-consummate character, perpetually self-renewing.

Notably, we encounter inoperative touch at a crucial moment in the development of Bloomsbury sexuality. According to Virginia Woolf, Bloomsbury’s sexual phase was launched with a single word, uttered by Lytton Strachey in 1906. “Semen?” he asked, pointing at a stain on Vanessa Bell’s dress. From this moment onwards, as Woolf attests, brazen talk of “sex permeated our conversation.”³⁸ Though not touching each other but intensified by their physical separation, a pointing finger, a word, and a stain function to create an enduring erotic circuit. This power of the inoperative touch is located, according to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, in the gesture. To point at something “alludes to the supposed self-evidence and immediacy of the phenomenon pointed at, but at the same time to its ineffability, ungraspability, and indeed emptiness of self-nature.”³⁹ A gesture activates the space between hand and object, producing an “endless vibrancy of . . . resonant double movement”, which occurs, in Bloomsbury’s semen-al moment, in the register of the sexual.⁴⁰

While this discussion of inoperative touch begins as an outgrowth of the tensions embedded in Forster’s “only connect”, it achieves its visual culmination in Grant’s *Bathing*. Indeed, Grant’s painting seems extraordinarily attuned to the tensions induced by “only connect” and the workings of inoperative touch. One of the engines that drives *Bathing* is the

reach that does not quite arrive, but that, in its palpable intention to connect, electrifies the space between. Each bather reaches for the one in front of him, never quite connecting, though investing the attempt with a muscular conviction that perpetuates momentum. In the central foreground, the swimmer with the red swimsuit reaches forward with a hand notable for the manner of its rendering. No other hand in the painting reflects such careful and detailed attention to form, in its marking-off of each digit and crease, and the depiction of the only fingernail in the entire canvas (fig. 10). Curved in a sort of agonized gesture of yearning (counter-productive, it must be said, to any known swimming stroke), it carries an affective power that pulls tension into the space between itself and the buttocks of the figure towards which it seems to reach. This latter figure echoes that same gesture in *his* hands, which, held close together—a gesture facing a gesture—also produce a vibrancy, a space of ambiguous meaning (fig. 11). Like the twenty-ninth bather's hand and Bell's stain, there is an erotic circuitry here. Not produced through contact, it moves along pathways of desire. Through a sort of striving, a straining to reach, it activates a powerful aporetic space between the wanted and the want—"only connect" in diagrammatic form. The painting's space of intimate connection is thus constituted not as one of resolved contact, but as one held on the brink of gratification, a being-with (to invoke Nancy) that is always already separate and together.

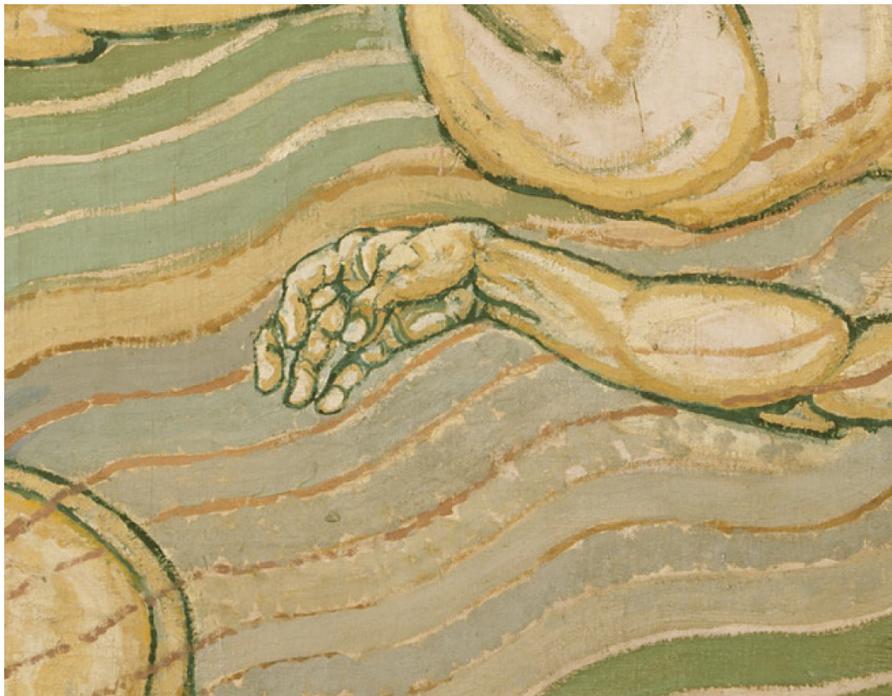


Figure 10.

Duncan Grant, *Bathing* (detail), 1911, oil on canvas, 228.6 × 306.1 cm. Collection of Tate, London (N04567) Digital image courtesy of Tate Images / © Estate of Duncan Grant. All rights reserved, DACS 2016.

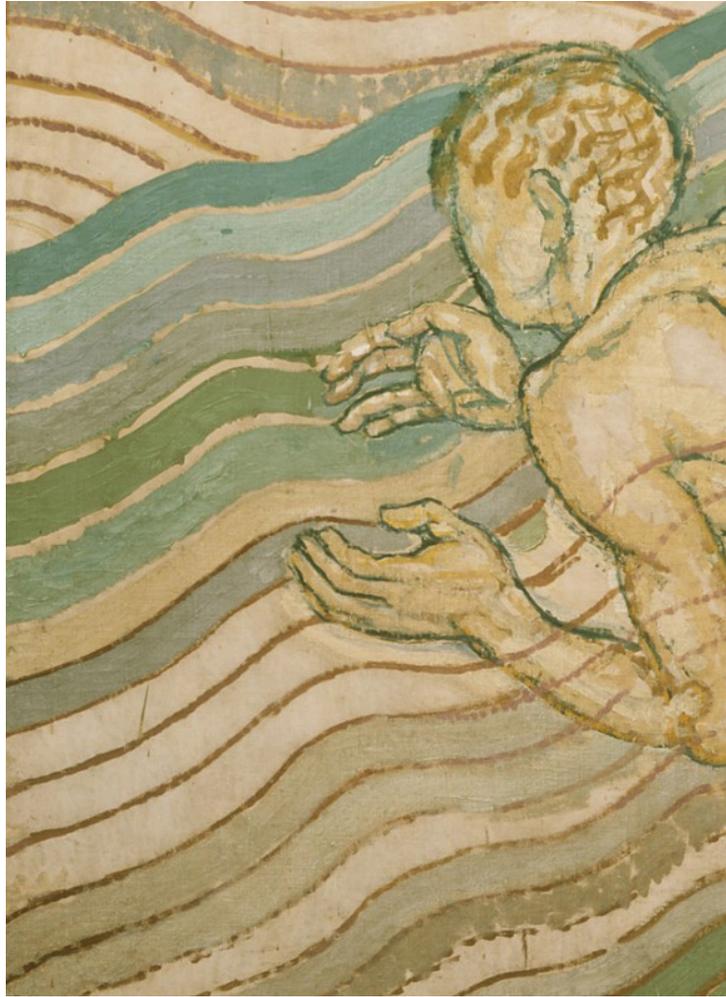


Figure 11.

Duncan Grant, *Bathing* (detail), 1911, oil on canvas, 228.6 × 306.1 cm. Collection of Tate, London (N04567) Digital image courtesy of Tate Images / © Estate of Duncan Grant. All rights reserved, DACS 2016.

If there is an intensification of desire in this lower-left quadrant of Grant's mural, it is not isolated there, but the outcome of a strategic system of effects deployed throughout the painting. This is perhaps an observation that little needs stating: no part or effect in any work of art can be entirely isolated from its whole. But, as I have argued, Grant's mural coheres through his decorative sensibility, each element synthesizing within a consummate and harmonious programme. It is worth applying closer scrutiny to the painting's decorative strategies, to discover how they might specifically contribute to an overall scene of erotic yearning. Can we describe, in decorative terms, those disruptions that "draw the 'homosocial' back into the orbit of 'desire'", as Sedgwick describes?⁴¹ Gilles Deleuze tells us that artists do not create a decorative motif simply by reproducing an identical shape or concept. Rather, "they introduce a disequilibrium into the dynamic process of

construction, an instability, dissymmetry or gap of some kind which disappears only in the overall effect.”⁴² In other words, the essence of the decorative is contingent on repetition and difference. Each is necessarily tied to the other in a frictional, self-renewing relationality, an analogue for the Self and the Other that bears more than a passing resemblance to Forster’s “only connect” and Nancy’s inoperative touch. And, importantly, like Sedgwick’s eroticizing of the homosocial, their co-occurrence operates on the order of the disruptive.

Grant’s *Bathing* does not read as the seven-fold repetition of a single, serial figure. It’s true that Grant worked from photographs of a male model posed in his studio, and he asserted later in life that *Bathing* should be seen as a single body in serial motion.⁴³ However, whatever the artist’s intention, there are problems in adopting the single-body reading. As Clarke observes, such a perspective “helps heteronormatise the gaze, allowing the viewer to be untroubled by the sight of naked male bodies together in pleasure”.⁴⁴ Moreover, visual evidence refutes the singular view: we observe physical differences among the swimmers, such as the variable treatment of hair and the fact that one figure wears a swimsuit.⁴⁵ On the other hand, they are not entirely individuated. Six of the figures clearly appear to pair up, not only in activity, but also in physical interrelations. The two divers are most closely aligned. Seeming to share a single pair of feet, the second figure peels away from the first, whose arms and hands in turn flow into and almost blend with the curving musculature of his partner. The two swimmers vigorously stroking the water also exhibit a sort of bodily conflation, the hips of the higher figure seeming to emerge from the foreshortened head and trunk of the lower figure, creating a continuous, powerful form, a kind of four-armed chimera. And while the two figures climbing into the boat are more distinct than the other two pairs, the undulating flank of the lower climber flows without interruption into the flexed forearm of the upper climber. Aligned in their activities, each of these pairs displays a spatiotemporal intimacy that penetrates and merges the limits of their bodies.

Repetition and difference exert a powerful undertow among the three coupled groups. Each group represents a single activity—diving, swimming, climbing into the boat—but each activity is doubled within its group. That is to say, each diver is repeated by another diver, each swimmer by another swimmer, each climber by another climber, and the space between each repetition represents a moment of movement that underscores a difference. Because, as Deleuze tells us, “difference lies between two repetitions”, the pairs in *Bathing* are not composed of identicals; instead, each unit contains a one and an other.⁴⁶ But it is through this difference, this shared otherness, that a certain unity is established between them; and it is *in* this difference, the rhythmic stop in the space between them, that the discreet action they

perform achieves a sort of completion or at least is set in motion towards a possible completion. This internal, animating difference is repeated externally—in the consecutive progression from one motion-couple to another—so that “the interior of repetition is always affected by an order of difference”, or in other words, difference animates motion in both the unit and the whole.⁴⁷

But there is another way to read this arrangement of bodies, another unitary scheme that also invokes repetition and difference. Instead of three discreet motion-couples linked into a chain, we might see two chains, each composed of three bathers: a diver, a swimmer, and a climber. No longer constituted by a single action performed consecutively by a couple, each unit now represents a three-stage progression performed by a trio, and this progression is repeated by another unit, but again displaced through a rhythmic difference. In other words, diver one, swimmer one, and climber one can be seen to precede diver two, swimmer two, and climber two by a scant spatiotemporal hair.⁴⁸

There is an important difference between these two ways of reading the repetition scheme in Grant’s picture, and I propose to explore it through a rhythmic conceit.⁴⁹ In the first scheme, we experience time rationally and linearly, from the picture’s top-right corner to its top-left. The action has a logical beginning, middle, and end, and each step is inflected, grounded by a couple-form. This is real time, lived time, and its familiarity is underscored by a particular rhythmic quality—double-beat, downbeat, double-beat, downbeat—coronary time. But in the second reading, we are displaced outside linear time. Carried now by singular bodies rather than coupled ones, we experience beginning, middle, and end, only to cycle back and experience the sequence again. A new, accelerated rhythm drives this repetitive cyclicity—triplicate-beat, downbeat, triplicate-beat, downbeat. If the first rhythm suggests the cardiovascular (of the blood, of the heart), that of the trio-form has the quality of the visceral (of the gut, of the affect); unlike the closed, binary oscillations of the couple-form, its restless, syncopative structure drives experience forward, insisting on the repetitive cyclicity of these bodies.

Taken together, these layered, co-existent tempi—of duo and trio, of body and impetus—amount to what I would argue is erotic time. According to Deleuze, experiences that are tied to repression are also tied to repetition. “Eros must be repeated, can be lived only through repetition.”⁵⁰ At the same time, he tells us that repetition is “in every respect . . . a transgression. It puts law into question, it denounces its nominal or general character in favour of a more profound and more artistic reality.”⁵¹ Grant’s artistic repetitions invoke the law—the couple-form—and then transgress it, not only

its gender-configuration, but also its numerical inviolability. Male bodies entwine with male bodies across multiple spectra; they transgress laws of the physiological, the spatial, the temporal; they write and overwrite rhythms. We find similar qualities in Grant's erotic drawings and watercolours (for example, figs. 12, 13, and 14), which he produced prolifically throughout his life, though only for personal consumption. In these sketches, strings of penetrated and penetrating bodies, racially heterogeneous, are arranged in decorative repetitions, converting rhythms of dance, of sport, even of religious ritual into transgressive, concupiscent play. Of course, touch is not complicated by inoperation here; it achieves its target, completes its consummation. It is, perhaps, partly due to this completion of touch that Grant's erotic drawings fall into a register of frivolity. With the state of yearning removed or effectively solved, these images become amusements rather than tensile observations of desire. However, they vividly demonstrate the extent to which Grant imbricated the erotic in matters of decorative invention. *Bathing* is not explicitly erotic nor overtly transgressive, but it bears a familial resemblance to Grant's erotic sketches, perhaps their barely suspended prelude. In the multiple possibility of its repetitive groupings, and its intricate, decorative linkage of male body to male body, *Bathing* also makes erotic mischief. First, it invokes the couple-form in an impermissible homosocial context; and then, it violates the couple-mandate, extending the franchise to a more plural, even promiscuous engagement of bodies.

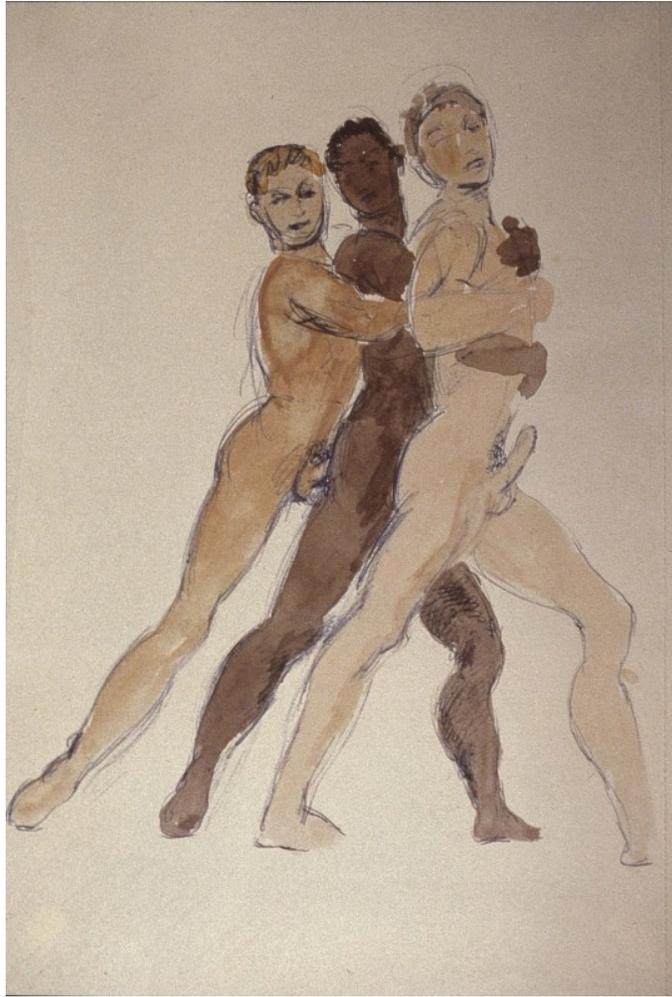


Figure 12.

Duncan Grant, *Pas de Trois (Demonstrating Turnout)*, date unknown, ballpoint pen and watercolour on paper, 25 × 17 cm. Collection of John Whyte and Tom Wilson Weinberg, USA Digital image courtesy of John Whyte and Tom Wilson Weinberg / © Estate of Duncan Grant. All rights reserved, DACS 2016.

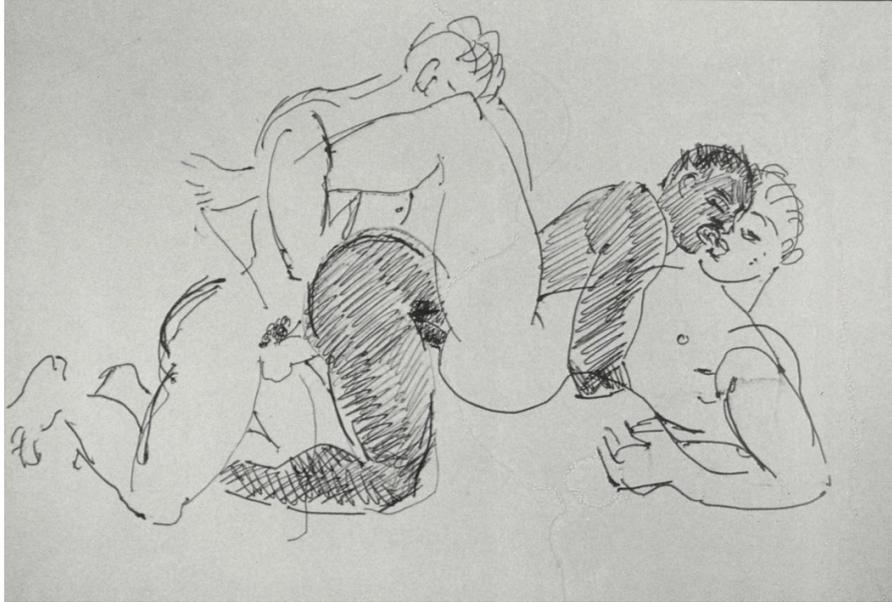


Figure 13.

Duncan Grant, *Pas de Trois 3*, date unknown, ballpoint pen, 18 × 23 cm.
Private Collection Digital image courtesy of © Estate of Duncan Grant. All rights reserved, DACS 2016.



Figure 14.

Duncan Grant, *Descent from the Cross*, date unknown, ballpoint pen and watercolour, 33 x 21 cm. Private Collection Digital image courtesy of © Estate of Duncan Grant. All rights reserved, DACS 2016.

If Grant's repetitive schemata are outside the law, what about that which falls outside his repetitions? It is time, finally, to return to the question I posed at the beginning of this article: the identity of the seventh swimmer, the figure who floats beyond the couple or the trio, beyond (it would seem) relationality, outside erotic time (fig. 15). Literally just out of its reach (the hands of the other swimmers seem to grasp for him, without success), he looks away, into the water, and with a sort of trembling gesture, cradles something precious which he alone can see. Prior to the twentieth century, bathing scenes were permissible in academic painting only when framed in allegorical terms. Ancient mythology supplied Diana and Venus as the precedents for female bathing scenes, but there existed no obvious male counterpart, nor any need for one, given the extreme dearth of male bathing scenes. But if there had been such a need, who better than Narcissus to

answer it? Imagine for a moment that Grant's seventh swimmer is reaching for an image of himself he sees reflected as in a "mirror-like sea".⁵² This figure, then, readily recalls Narcissus, but a particularly negative, anti-social construct identified with the early twentieth-century homosexual. Even before its best-known telling in Ovid, the myth of Narcissus has carried tensions around same-sex desire. But at the end of the nineteenth century, as Steven Bruhm explains, Freud would retell it as a specifically homosexual pathology.⁵³ Doomed to desire himself until death, Narcissus is trapped in a closed loop, not a productive repetition, but a sterile reflection unanimated by difference. This concept of Narcissus was certainly the mainstream in 1911 when Grant's picture debuted; it might also have operated behind the picture's critical opposition. The corruptive power of the painting could have derived from the possibility that young working-class men would see themselves in it, as in a reflection, and be drawn into a state of sterile same-sex love.



Figure 15.

Duncan Grant, *Bathing* (detail), 1911, oil on canvas, 228.6 × 306.1 cm. Collection of Tate, London (N04567) Digital image courtesy of Tate Images / © Estate of Duncan Grant. All rights reserved, DACS 2016.

But what if this risk were even more subversive? What if the space in which the young men might see themselves reflected was not negative or pathologized, but positive and affirming? If we are to see the seventh swimmer as Narcissus (and it is my contention that we can), then we must rationalize his function according to Grant's own open and unashamed sexuality. There is, as mentioned earlier, an aspect of loss and sadness associated with the figure, a sort of sterile yearning that resonates with the Freudian hetero-disruptive view of Narcissus. But as Bruhm describes, Freud scrubbed Narcissus of an essential, ancient quality—his capacity for self-knowledge through aesthetic contemplation.⁵⁴ In the original telling of the

myth, the representative image is invested with transcendent powers, the ability to reflect personal truth back to a viewer, to provoke epiphany and a knowledge of the self.⁵⁵ This reading of the myth also has the effect of restoring repetition as a productive theme and redeeming Narcissus from the charge of sterility. For Deleuze, the distinction between reflection and repetition is fine, but fundamental. Reflection is “static . . . occurring by default in the concept”—that is, a matter of ordinary facts laid out for mere perception. On the other hand, repetition is “dynamic” and “affirmative, occurring by excess in the Idea”. Heterogeneous and multiplicitous, it requires interpretation and understanding; it is resistant and incommensurable; it “carries the secrets of our deaths and our lives”; it has “authenticity as its criterion”.⁵⁶ In other words, where reflection is fact, repetition is truth. I would suggest that Grant’s Narcissus depicts this incipient, transcendent moment of encounter with personal truth: when the figure sees, grasps, and begins to understand the Idea of himself. He is thus not a figure whose errant desires distance him from the flow of life, but one just on the cusp of embracing those desires, of being gathered by reaching hands, drawn back (with respect to Sedgwick) into the productive, affirmative repetitions of erotic time.

The erotic flows, in multiple and subtle ways, through Grant’s *Bathing*—in the sensuality of its naked male bodies and in its induction of philosophies expounding a male intimate community untrammelled by class divisions. But perhaps the painting’s most extraordinary mobilization of the erotic is in its representation of the connective tensions embedded in desire. Through a sensitive choreography of inoperative touch and carefully calibrated decorative rhythms of repetition and difference, Grant’s painting invokes a powerful atmosphere of yearning, and delivers an intensified eroticism held back from the brink of consummation. These effects are extended outwards, as it were, through the figure of the seventh bather, who operates as a link via which the viewer might apprehend himself, a transition-point into self-recognition and acceptance. Rendered almost life-size in sensuous colour and line on the wall of a public educational institution, where they were seen daily by the Polytechnic’s young working-class students, Grant’s bathers deliver a manifesto of sorts: the declaration of an intimate same-sex desiring community that is vibrant, democratic, and in harmony with nature, and an invitation to be swept up into its beckoning, sensual pleasures. A Bloomsbury homosexual agenda, celebrated in paint.

Footnotes

- 1 Anon., *National Review* 58 (Dec. 1911), excerpted in Christopher Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms: Modernism, Subculture, and Domesticity*, ed. Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design, and Culture (London: Published for The Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, 2004), 77–78; and Richard Shone, *The Art of Bloomsbury: Roger Fry, Vanessa Bell, and Duncan Grant*, ed. James Beechey, Richard Morphet, Tate Gallery, Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, and Yale Center for British Art (London: Tate Gallery, 1999), 148.
- 2 Simon Watney, *The Art of Duncan Grant*, ed. Quentin Bell (London: John Murray, 1990), 36.

- 3 Virginia Woolf, quoted in Frances Spalding, *Duncan Grant: A Biography* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1997), 84.
- 4 Christopher Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms: Modernism, Subculture, and Domesticity*, ed. Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design, and Culture (London: Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts, 2004), 72.
- 5 Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms*, 71.
- 6 Fry's resistance to elitist social and aesthetic norms was well established: he had recently ruffled Edwardian feathers by asserting that the viewer of Post-Impressionist painting required no prior cultural or critical training, simply an ability to "look without preconception . . . allow his senses to speak to him." See, Roger Fry, *A Roger Fry Reader*, ed. Christopher Reed (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1996), 87–88.
- 7 Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms*, 72–73.
- 8 Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms*, 69, 74–75.
- 9 Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms*, 75.
- 10 Grant would produce both these formats in other contexts, the former for the French stage director Jacques Copeau, and the latter for the Omega Workshops.
- 11 Matt Houlbrook, *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918–1957* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2005), 93–99.
- 12 Grant, letter to Strachey, 16 June 1907, quoted in Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms*, 56.
- 13 Darren Clarke, "Duncan Grant and Charleston's Queer Arcadia", in *Queer Bloomsbury*, ed. Brenda Helt and Madelyn Detloff (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2016), 153.
- 14 Walt Whitman, *Complete Poetry and Collected Prose* (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, Distributed by Viking Press, 1982), 981; 272.
- 15 Edward Carpenter, *Selected Writings*, ed. Noël Greig (London: Gay Men's Press, 1984), 200–15.
- 16 Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms*, 76.
- 17 Fry, quoted in Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms*, 76.
- 18 Spalding, *Duncan Grant*, 335.
- 19 Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms*, 76.
- 20 For more on this parallel, see Reed's excellent article, "Making History: The Bloomsbury Group's Construction of Aesthetic and Sexual Identity", *Journal of Homosexuality* 27, no. 1–2 (1994): 189–224.
- 21 E. M. Forster, quoted in introduction, Carpenter, *Selected Writings*, 9.
- 22 E. M. Forster, *A Room with a View*, Vintage International edn (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 148.
- 23 Robert K. Martin, in Robert K. Martin and George Piggford, eds, *Queer Forster* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1997), 268.
- 24 E. M. Forster, *Maurice: A Novel* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1971), 66–69.
- 25 Forster, *Maurice*, 173.
- 26 Parminder Kaur Bakshi, *Distant Desire: Homoerotic Codes and the Subversion of the English Novel in E. M. Forster's Fiction* (New York: P. Lang, 1996), 153.
- 27 Forster, *Howards End*, 195.
- 28 Jean-Luc Nancy, "Of Being-in-Common", in *Community at Loose Ends*, ed. Miami Theory Collective (Oxford, OH) (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1991), 7.
- 29 Aruna D'Souza, *Cézanne's Bathers: Biography and the Erotics of Paint* (University Park: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 2008), 94.
- 30 Clarke, "Duncan Grant", 163.
- 31 Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2000), 5–6.
- 32 Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1991), 4.
- 33 Jean-Luc Nancy, *Noli Me Tangere: On the Raising of the Body* (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 2008), 37.
- 34 Whitman, *Complete Poetry*, 197.
- 35 Michael Moon, "The Twenty-Ninth Bather: Identity, Fluidity, Gender, and Sexuality in Section 11 of 'Song of Myself'", in Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass and Other Writings: Authoritative Texts, Other Poetry and Prose Criticism*, ed. Michael Moon, Harold William Blodgett, and Sculley Bradley (New York: Norton, 2002), 855–63.
- 36 Moon, "The Twenty-Ninth Bather", 198.
- 37 Moon, "The Twenty-Ninth Bather", 1011.
- 38 Woolf, quoted in Brenda S. Helt, "Passionate Debates on 'Odious Subjects': Bisexuality and Woolf's Opposition to Theories of Androgyny and Sexual Identity", *Twentieth Century Literature* 56, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 133.

- 39 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*, ed. Adam Frank (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2003), 170.
- 40 Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 171.
- 41 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1992), 1.
- 42 Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1994), 19.
- 43 Watney, *Art of Duncan Grant*, 31. The experiments of Eadweard Muybridge and photographic seriality were also influential in Thomas Eakins's *The Swimming Hole*, the début of which provides a late nineteenth-century, North American example of the sort of controversy that attended male homosocial bathing scenes. See, Sidney D. Kirkpatrick, *The Revenge of Thomas Eakins* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 2006), 282–293. It is doubtful that Grant knew of Eakins's painting in 1911, given that it had been suppressed by its creator after a mere two disastrous showings in Philadelphia in 1885, the year of Grant's birth.
- 44 Clarke, "Duncan Grant", 162.
- 45 This swimsuit is an oddity, particularly since nudity was in fact a requirement in the men-only bathing area of the Serpentine. See, Houlbrook, *Queer London*, 55. Perhaps Grant's strip of bright-red cloth—a mere gist of a garment—was a late and grudging concession to propriety.
- 46 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 76.
- 47 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 25.
- 48 Indeed, even more complex permutations could arise: D1-S2-C2; D2-S1-C1; and so on.
- 49 There is some precedent here for a musical approach. In *Howards End*, Helen's experience of music is pure picture-making, as demonstrated by her interpretation of Beethoven's Fifth as a drama of heroes and goblins (Chapter V). In Grant's own artistic practice, music could be a means into abstraction, as in his *Abstract Kinetic Collage Painting with Sound* (1914)—a work, incidentally, that was the source of a drubbing Grant received from D. H. Lawrence, while Forster looked awkwardly on (Spalding, *Duncan Grant*, 167–68). And in the words of a young mechanic viewing the Polytechnic murals, "this sort of thing makes me want to whistle" (quoted in Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms*, 79).
- 50 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 18.
- 51 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 3.
- 52 Grant, letter to Strachey, 16 June 1907, quoted in Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms*, 56.
- 53 Steven Bruhm, *Reflecting Narcissus: A Queer Aesthetic* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2001), 4–6.
- 54 Bruhm, *Reflecting Narcissus*, 69–71.
- 55 Shadi Bartsch, *The Mirror of the Self: Sexuality, Self-Knowledge, and the Gaze in the Early Roman Empire* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2006), 85–86.
- 56 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 24. All subsequent quotations in this paragraph may be found at the same location.

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Super-size caricature: Thomas Rowlandson's *Place des Victoires* at the Society of Artists in 1783

Kate Grandjouan

Abstract

This article re-examines an ambitious caricature of the French that Thomas Rowlandson (1757–1827) exhibited in London in 1783. Recent research has confirmed that the artist undertook training at the Académie Royale in Paris while still a student at the Royal Academy in London. In the following essay, I argue that this double professional route into comic art can be related to his conception of the Place des Victoires. The broader context for this discussion is provided by several ideas that have been important to recent histories of British art, notably the rise of the public exhibition and the vigorous market for caricature prints. As what I call a “super-size” caricature, the drawing highlights how comic art could take on dimensions and appearances that suited exhibition contexts.

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The Exhibition

In the late eighteenth century, comic art was a minor yet regular feature of London exhibitions. Its historic presence can be difficult to detect, however, because humour has a tendency to hide in other genres: the title of an exhibited work is not always indicative of its pictorial content or of the visual idioms deployed to render its subject. Nevertheless, there are some well-documented examples of a tradition that was initiated by William Hogarth (1697–1764) when he showed his satirical painting of Calais Gate at the second exhibition of the Society of Artists in 1761, long after it had been published as a print.¹ Thereafter, John Collet (c. 1725–1780) established a reputation as a regular exhibitor of comic art, but there were certainly other artists too.² Even at the Royal Academy humour could be included at the annual exhibition: Henry Bunbury (1750–1811) exhibited “caricaturas” of the French in the early 1770s, and the successful commercialization of these drawings as large satirical prints enabled the designs to reach a broader public.³ Ten years later, the theme was taken up by Thomas Rowlandson (1757–1827). His submissions to the Royal Academy included a pair of comic drawings comparing the English with the French, each of which was nearly a metre wide.⁴ As David Solkin and others have shown, the rise of public exhibitions in London encouraged artists to experiment and to diversify, and this was facilitated in turn by the evolution of the print market. Recent studies have explored how these changes impacted the development of the main exhibition categories (portraiture, landscape, and history painting), yet have given less attention to caricature, even though the facts indicate that the arrival of public exhibitions influenced the production and circulation of comic images too. Artists working with humour exploited new print markets, used exhibitions to advertise their skills, and embraced experimentation. Thomas Rowlandson’s *Place des Victoires* offers an interesting case in point (fig. 1).⁵



[View this illustration online](#)

Figure 1.

Thomas Rowlandson, Place des Victoires, Paris, ca. 1783, watercolour in pen and black ink over graphite on medium, moderately textured, cream antique laid paper, 34.9 x 53.4 cm. Collection of the Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Fund (B1981.17) Digital image courtesy of Yale Center for British Art

The drawing is of considerable size for a caricature (it measures 34.9 by 53.4 cm) and was exhibited by the Society of Artists in the spring of 1783. However, it is listed in their exhibition catalogue as a “stained drawing” and with a title, “La Place Victoire à Paris”, that suggests a carefully observed depiction of a celebrated square in France.⁶ The subject would have been instantly recognizable to an English viewer who had crossed the Channel. The Place des Victoires was distinguished by its elegant curved facades and a towering sculpture of “Louis le Grand”, depicting the French King being crowned by Victory. The statue had been designed by Martin Desjardins (1640–1694) and it was erected in the centre of a purpose-built square permanently illuminated by four gas lanterns.⁷ The King was cast in bronze and elevated on a large stone plinth decorated with medallions and long, laudatory inscriptions. Further down, around the base, four chained slaves visually referenced Louis XIV’s military victories over the “enemies of France”. This magnificent structure, inaugurated in 1686 in celebration of the Peace of Nijmegen, was both admired and reviled. In France it was reputed to be the largest royal monument ever made; for critics, however, it exemplified the idolatry of the Sun King, and from the late seventeenth century, both in Paris and further afield, the Place des Victoires had become a familiar target for anti-absolutist jokes.⁸

Rowlandson's stained drawing was one of four that he exhibited with the Society of Artists that year. This group of works pointed to heightened ambitions, for it was the largest number of drawings he had ever exhibited together.⁹ It was now just over ten years since he had entered the Royal Academy in 1772 to train as a painter, a professional commitment that he reinforced in 1775 when he moved to Paris to start a parallel course of training at the Académie Royale.¹⁰ By 1777, he was back in London and from 1778 he became a regular exhibitor of portrait sketches at the Royal Academy, albeit without much success. At a time when portraits accounted for nearly half of all exhibits and it was crucial to develop a distinguishing style or visual formula, Rowlandson's submissions seem to have passed unnoticed. The only critical comment he managed to attract in the press was in 1780 for a *Landscape and Figures*, which was praised by a critic of the *Morning Chronicle* for containing "much humour". The next time he exhibited was at the Society of Artists in 1783; the switch to an alternative venue and a sizeable comic drawing like *Place des Victoires*, suggests a new and consciously adopted strategy for public recognition.¹¹

As a professionally trained artist who was already an exhibitor at the Royal Academy, the Society's exhibition offered Rowlandson a less prestigious venue for presenting art to the public, although in 1783 it may have presented key advantages for showing works on paper. The Society had been founded in 1760 as an independent association of artists, architects, sculptors, and engravers, and it quickly developed a reputation as London's premier exhibiting society. But this was prior to the arrival of the Royal Academy and by the early 1780s it had difficulty competing, or even existing, as an alternative venue for the promotion of contemporary British art.¹² There had been no exhibitions in 1779, 1781, or 1782, so 1783 marked the Society's return to the London scene. For the occasion the Directors rented the "Great Exhibition Room" in the Strand which had, when inaugurated in 1772, provided artists with the first purpose-built exhibiting venue in the capital.¹³ Consequently, all submissions would be displayed together in a spacious gallery that was well lit from above. These arrangements contrasted starkly with the Royal Academy's: since its move to Somerset House in 1780, works on paper had been separated from the oils and relegated to a ground floor "Exhibition Room", which artists had started to criticize for its poor lighting.¹⁴

That the Society of Artists was offering a promising location to show drawings is suggested by their catalogue, in which works on paper accounted for at least a third of all exhibits, mostly "stained", "tinted", or "tinged" drawings as well as a mixture of pastels, chalks, bistres, and prints.¹⁵ In theory, stained or tinted drawings (the terms were interchangeable) were drawn in pen and monochromatic inks, and their lack of colour

distinguished them from watercolours. In practice, however, the “stained drawing” was a loosely defined category: they were submitted to exhibitions by architects, engravers, and painters, and could present a variety of subjects.¹⁶ Stained or tinted drawings exhibited by the Society in 1783 included designs relating to architectural projects, numerous views of picturesque locations, *Sketches, Ideas, a Landscape*, and some genre pieces.¹⁷

In the late eighteenth century, therefore, stained and tinted drawings depicted a range of subjects and were exhibited with varying degrees of finish. They were often displayed in public spaces because they had a commercial value as specimens which were shown to the public to convey accurate information about a forthcoming project, to invite collaborations, or to stimulate a sale. These purposes are confirmed by the additional information that some of the exhibitors supplied in the catalogue, such as notices that printed copies of the drawings would be available by subscription.¹⁸ The commercial functions of exhibited drawings, as market-oriented consumables that were shown to be bought, have been discussed by Greg Smith. As Smith notes, the final format of the intended reproduction (which was usually an aquatint) dictated the size of the prototype submitted for display. Furthermore, if the exhibited piece was destined to be copied, one of the purposes of a prominent black outline in a stained drawing or watercolour was to facilitate its replication: the line was the “matrix” that enabled the design to be traced, this linear method being just one of several used in late eighteenth-century London.¹⁹

Place des Victoires evinces many of these standard functions. Looking closely, we find that a uniform grey tint has been applied to the topographical and figural elements, and that this tonal wash unifies the design. On the architecture it has been used to suggest clarity and accuracy and to provide for the appearance of identifiable edifices, like the towers of Notre Dame. On the figures, however, the monochromatic stain is combined with watercolour and the additional use of pen and black ink to draw over the top of the tint and colour with a pen. This strong black line gives the image its startling vitality and immediacy. Moreover, as it is applied to the sculpture and figures in the foreground, and not to the background, the King joins the lively procession of people who cross the square while the architectural facades look blank and undifferentiated.

Rowlandson’s tonal painting is used to map two graphic modes together: caricature sketching and topographic drawing, whose functions and values seem antithetical. Caricature signifies as a disruptive and imaginative line that forces satirical characterizations on the people depicted. It exaggerates facial features (noses, eyebrows, upturned noses), gives direction to hair and contour to bodies. As some of the figures are more caricatured than others

and as their contours are never complete, their partial rendering in ink can produce passages of extreme sketchiness.²⁰ The result is that the prominent black lines in *Place des Victoires* have not only become the reproductive cues for a print shop, but the signal to iconographies associated with caricature prints. At the same time, a degree of neat and careful observation has been used in the presentation of a grand Parisian square and its remarkable monument, or enough to conjure a convincing French setting for the caricatured depiction of a national group. In addition, the use of perspective, tonal modelling and carefully controlled coloured tints ask that this exhibition drawing be considered in relation to a set of aesthetic codes which were not typically applied to caricature sketches.²¹

The following year Thomas Rowlandson started to exhibit similar drawings at the Royal Academy. In 1784 his submissions included *Vauxhall* and *The Serpentine* and in 1786 the enormous English and French *Reviews* (fig. 2). They were executed using the same pictorial formula: pen and black ink supplied caricature sketching while a combination of monochromatic stain and colour tints filled in the painted areas with alternative representational effects, helping to confer a level of finish consistent with their grand size and exhibited status.²² As the earliest of these comic drawings, *Place des Victoires* has been marginalized. Art historians usually describe it as a watercolour, which tends to diminish its humour. Rarely discussed and seldom exhibited, its significance as the first such piece to survive has been eclipsed.²³



Figure 2.

Thomas Rowlandson, *A French Review*, circa 1786, pen, ink and watercolour over pencil, 50.4 × 89.5 cm. Royal Collection Trust (RCIN 913721) Digital image courtesy of Royal Collection Trust / Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2016

Arguably, however, it achieved some modest success because *Place des Victoires* was copied twice to produce three identical drawings. The image was also published as an expensive aquatint of slightly larger dimensions. William Holland sold one to the Prince of Wales for 10s. 6d., at a time when the average price for a caricature was 2s. to 7s., rising to a guinea for more complex works.²⁴

The existence of these reproductions suggests that the original exhibit fulfilled some of the commercial functions noted above. We could surmise that Rowlandson attracted a sale from a patron interested in acquiring a drawing for a portfolio, or an amateur with a taste for humour, in addition to its success in the print trade.²⁵ Note that Rowlandson made *Place des Victoires* before he had established a professional reputation, even though he had started to publish satirical prints. Only a handful of dated designs predate the Society of Artists' exhibition, yet thirty-three were issued in the year that followed, and more might reasonably be assigned to this period. The prints were issued by a range of London dealers, many during the Westminster Election (April 1784) when they were published as often as one per day.²⁶ In addition to the stream of political satires, Rowlandson produced imitations and adaptations of Hogarth's works. He published *The Rhedarium, A New Book of Horses and Carriages* in 1784, and started the *Imitations of Modern Drawings*, a collection of etchings after the drawings of modern masters that he would eventually publish as a set.²⁷ In retrospect, we can see that the Society's exhibition preceded the publication of greater numbers and varieties of designs which, over the course of a single year and within the dynamics of a busy print market, enabled the artist to establish a reputation as a versatile draughtsman and a sought-after copyist.

Graphic Repertories

One of the few scholars to consider *Place des Victoires* in relation to the caricature print is Diana Donald. She described it in passing as an "inventive variation" of a type of "national subject" that she associated with William Hogarth and Henry Bunbury.²⁸ In considering the relationship between *Place des Victoires* as an exhibited caricature and the satirical prints that it references, it is worth noting how its public display coincided with the rehabilitation of Hogarth as an important comic artist. By the 1780s "Hogarthomania" was in full swing, both fuelled by and reflected in a stream of publications. New editions of Hogarth's engravings were circulating, some of his drawings were being published as prints, and at sales and auctions rare states of the artist's work were reaching previously unheard of sums.²⁹ One of the most important revisions of the painter's reputation was provided by The Right Honorable Horace Walpole (1717-1797) in his *Anecdotes of Painting in England*, which had reached its third edition by 1782. Walpole did

not consider Hogarth to be a great painter in the traditional sense but rather “a writer of comedy with a pencil” who had managed to catch “the manners and follies of an age *living as they rise*”. ³⁰

“Hogarthomania” stimulated artists too. Among those renewing and updating the master’s comic legacies were the amateur artists, John Collet and Henry Bunbury, and professionals, some of whom were foreigners, such as Michel Vincent Brandoin (1733–1807) and his Swiss countryman, Samuel Hieronymus Grimm (1733–1794) and Philippe de Louthembourg (1740–1812) the celebrated French academician active in London from 1772. ³¹ De Louthembourg published his *Caricatures of the English* (fig. 3) in 1776 and some of the paintings he exhibited at the Royal Academy injected caricature into colourful landscape settings. His “happy stile” was still much in evidence in the 1780s. Indeed, his submissions to the Royal Academy in 1784 prompted one critic to congratulate him as a “foreigner [who had] succeeded in expressing English humour. Excepting Mr Bunbury we have had no artist who made any figure with laughable subjects since Hogarth’s death.” ³²



Figure 3.

Philippe de Louthembourg, *From the Haymarket*, 1776, hand-coloured etching, 15.7 × 11.9 cm. Collection of the British Museum (1873,0712.825) Digital image courtesy of Trustees of the British Museum

On the back of Hogarthomania, Henry Bunbury had risen to the height of his fame, and by the early 1780s he was considered to be the leading gentleman caricaturist. Walpole even advertised his *Anecdotes* with the promise of an essay on the “living etchings of Mr. Henry Bunbury”, describing the artist as “the second Hogarth . . . the first imitator who ever fully equalled his original”.³³ Back in 1770, when Walpole had seen the original drawing of Bunbury’s *La Cuisine de la Poste* at the Royal Academy, he had annotated his exhibition catalogue with complimentary remarks about Bunbury’s French “characters” who he found “most highly natural”. “This drawing”, he noted, “perhaps excels the Gate of Calais by Hogarth, in whose manner it is composed.”³⁴ The *Cuisine de la Poste* and *View on the Pont Neuf* (figs. 4, 5) which Bunbury exhibited in 1771 circulated in print throughout the 1770s, whereas in the 1780s Bunbury’s exhibition caricatures depicted English

locations: *Richmond Hill* was shown at the Royal Academy in 1780 and *Hyde Park* in 1781. The drawings were issued as substantial prints. *Hyde Park* was published as a black-and-white caricature frieze composed of three printed sheets, each measuring half a metre in width. ³⁵



Figure 4.

After Henry Bunbury, *The Kitchen of a French Post-House, La Cuisine de la Poste*, 1771, etching and engraving, 41.1 × 44 cm. Collection of the British Museum (J,6.2) Digital image courtesy of Trustees of the British Museum



Figure 5.

After Henry Bunbury, *View on the Pont Neuf at Paris*, 1771, etching, 46.8 x 61.8 cm. Collection of the British Museum (J,6.3) Digital image courtesy of Trustees of the British Museum

The appearance of Bunbury's caricature drawings at the Royal Academy immediately precedes the presentation of Rowlandson's *Place des Victoires* at the Society of Artists, and their large size and the urban themes they depict make them complementary. As publicly exhibited works that were destined for the print market the drawings indicate how resourceful caricaturists could be in adapting their materials for exhibition in London's fashionable West End. A drawn caricature usually meant a fast but ingenious sketch of a single figure or a simple group. These works, on the contrary, offered multi-figural comic narratives.³⁶ Furthermore, if Rowlandson's French subject was modelled on a type of humour that had started with *Calais Gate* (fig. 6), the national subject had proliferated in print culture since Hogarth's death. Collet, Brandoin, Grimm, and de Louthembourg are among the better-known artists producing paintings, drawings, and prints with national themes, and their designs (like Bunbury's too) diversified the sort of comic scenarios that could be meaningfully formulated for British viewers. Rather than starvation, invasion, and war, their subjects related to "genteel mania" and were frequently stimulated by the cross-Channel tourism that the Treaty of Paris of 1763 had made possible.³⁷ Yet, if the activities of an eclectic group of artists point to a distinct vogue for national satire in the decade following Hogarth's death, scattered remarks indicate how this type of subject was considered "low". Francis Grose described national jokes as "stage tricks, [that] will always ensure the suffrages of the vulgar" in his *Essay on Comic Painting* (1780).³⁸ This opinion even extended to Hogarth's

Calais Gate, for Walpole had made it clear in his *Anecdotes* that he considered Hogarth's satires of the French to be examples of the artist's unfortunate lapse in taste: "Sometimes too, to please his vulgar customers he stooped to low images and national satire, as in the two prints of France and England and that of the Gates of Calais. The last indeed has great merit though the caricatura is carried to excess."³⁹



Figure 6.

Charles Mosley after William Hogarth, *O The Roast Beef of Old England, &c.* ("Calais Gate"), 1749, etching and engraving, 38.3 × 45.5 cm. Collection of the British Museum (S,2.113) Digital image courtesy of Trustees of the British Museum

For artists though, engaging creatively with "Hogarthomania" meant building on a well-known graphic legacy. Bunbury's strategy was to reframe national humour as caricature sketching, a vogue activity that at the time was associated with the elite and the Grand Tour.⁴⁰ The appeal of caricature lay in its humorous artlessness, the ironic "deskilling" of the professional skills that Royal Academy exhibitions were designed to showcase.⁴¹ In a similar manner, Rowlandson cross-fertilizes pictorial genres, but his mapping of humour onto foreign topography highlights, on the contrary, an ability to compose, use colour, and manipulate stain. As a caricature of a national group, it belongs to a vibrant local graphic culture and operates referentially, in the manner of a graphic satire.⁴² Yet as a sophisticated satire about a

foreign square, *Place des Victoires* displays cosmopolitan credentials and the artistic skills on which it depends are closer to the virtuosity of the continentals. Brandoin, Grimm, and de Louthembourg had trained in Paris yet they had emigrated to London where they operated across different artistic registers: sending drawings and paintings to exhibitions, inventing comic landscape subjects, designing graphic satires, and exploiting national humour. Understood within broader European pictorial legacies of the “national subject” therefore, Rowlandson’s *Place des Victoires* attached itself to a repertoire of national forms while demonstrating the new uses to which they could be put, “aestheticizing” them, a point that will become clearer when we confront Rowlandson’s comic view with its immediate graphic heritage.⁴³

This particular Parisian square had previously been the target of British graphic satire: it was the subject of a print designed by Charles Brandoin and published in July 1771 by two London dealers. A third was published by Matthew Darly the following year, although this brought minor changes to the artist’s name (*fig. 7*). The latter publisher issued the print again in 1776 in a bound edition of *Darly’s Comic Prints*. At the time, he was also selling one of the printed versions of Bunbury’s *View on the Pont Neuf* (*fig. 5*), and his simultaneous commercialization of the prints could only have enhanced their striking visual duplications.⁴⁴ In both designs, the French settings are used simply, and are only recognizable by the printed titles. Indeed, in Brandoin’s rendering the comic sabotage starts with the anglicization of the name—“Victoire” has become “Victories”—and as the sculpture, like the architectural facades, recedes into the distance, the square is no more than a scratched out setting for the principal focus: the set of louche French characters distributed across the shallow foreground, who signify the alien qualities of a foreign land.



Figure 7.

Matthew Darly after Henry Bunbury, *A View of the Place des Victories at Paris*, 1771, etching, 23.1 × 29.2 cm. Collection of the British Museum (1906,0823.2) Digital image courtesy of Trustees of the British Museum

At first glance, the differences seem too significant for us to align Rowlandson's *Place des Victoires* with the earlier satiric view: in place of Brandoin's rough approximations, Rowlandson's drawing features a degree of topographic accuracy. This starts with the correction of the name, and continues with the appearance of recognizable architecture; scale has become significant (the drawing is nearly double the size of the print) and colour has been introduced. Along with the more convincing depiction of a Parisian square is the greater diversity of national types that overall produces a French crowd. On close examination, however, we find identical characters that connect the two designs. The lawyer, for instance, who is dressed in black and seen on the left of Brandoin's satirical print reappears in Rowlandson's drawing. He still carries a folded umbrella but also an oversized muff, a detail which in the print belongs to the coachman and to the hairdresser on the far right, standing close to a bare-footed friar. This particular visual reference to the church has been retained by Rowlandson, while the coachman has been moved to the left, close to the statue of the King.



Figure 8.

James Caldwell after Michel Vincent Brandoin, *A French Physician with his Retinue going to visit his Patients*, 1771, engraving, 20.1 x 25.2 cm. Collection of the British Museum (1878,0713.1305) Digital image courtesy of Trustees of the British Museum

The recycling of existing printed sources extends to other graphic satires too. Rowlandson's spindly servant taking comically large strides resembles the postilion in Bunbury's *La Cuisine de la Poste* (fig. 4) although his actions are more closely related to a figure in Brandoin's *A French Physician* (fig. 8).⁴⁵ Even the dogs are borrowed from other sources, as is the couple on the far right who have paused to take in the square. This man's corpulence along with the particular style of his hair makes him immediately reminiscent of Collet's *Englishman in Paris* (fig. 9).⁴⁶ In Rowlandson's drawing, this visual code is reinforced by the appearance of the woman at his side wearing riding dress, turning the two into an English pair. Prints of French and English tourists had become a subject of graphic satire in the early 1770s, so it is not surprising that the appearance of an English couple on the right is matched by the French couple on the left; the "French Lady" even turns to look back in their direction, adjusting her hat, or touching her hair.⁴⁷



Figure 9.

James Caldwell after John Collet, *The Englishman in Paris*, 1770, engraving, 34 × 25.3 cm. Collection of the British Museum (J.5.74) Digital image courtesy of Trustees of the British Museum

At the most explicit level of meaning, this visual referencing becomes a source of pleasure, in that the accumulation of nationally specific material furnishes a variety of mini-narratives. As the raiding of existing prints produces new episodes for familiar characters, the complexity of the recycled image plays upon recognition and an awareness of visual displacement. Viewing is undirected and freely creative for it operates in a way that flatters the viewer, encouraging him or her to find new connections and to recognize witty transformations. Furthermore, if the image is sharing a set of nationally specific forms at a more general level the design is repeating some of the tropes that were a feature of eighteenth-century nationalist texts, and their appearance together helps explain the organization of the imagery. Thus we see the predictable reference to a symbol of Catholic authority (in the looming towers of Notre Dame), or to the association of absolutism and slavery (in the statue of the King), or to the

intertwined and mutually dependent figures of the French state (the throngs of soldiers and the processions of monks). Even “apishness” (the dog who dances like his master), “airiness” (the effeminate King), and “trampled under foot” provide visual cues to contemporary national jokes, their visual repetition reinforcing the stability of local English stereotypes for the French.

One way of understanding the process we are witnessing here—the selection and adaptation of existing sources and their transformation into an ambitious caricature of the French—would be in terms of Rowlandson’s academic training, as a display of skills that have been acquired in one type of pictorial practice and which have been transferred to another.⁴⁸ The artist’s passage through the Académie Royale in Paris has recently been confirmed with a date, stimulating fresh scrutiny of the social and professional networks to which he may have belonged.⁴⁹ Rowlandson’s publicly exhibited drawings encourage fresh scrutiny too. Caricature was not just an amateur practice dominated by gentlemen artists, but a cosmopolitan mode of witty draughtsmanship with deep roots in Academy circles.⁵⁰ In addition, a double professional training by two national Academies, where the teaching programmes converged, gave him privileged access to royal and private collections. It took him to *conférences*, life classes and *méthodes de dessin*, and to a curriculum where drawing was considered to be the foundation of an artist’s training, and where “rule” and “theory” were looked upon as one’s *carte fidèle*.⁵¹

More specifically, at the Academy “invention” meant the interpretation of established sources, and this idea is illustrated in one of the central texts of academic doctrine in the eighteenth century, and on both sides of the Channel, Alphonse du Fresnoy’s *De L’Art Graphique*. The text was translated into English in 1715 and reissued in Britain on several occasions, notably in 1769 and in 1783. The novelty of the latter translation was that it incorporated annotations by the President of the Royal Academy, Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792). His comments were subsequently translated into French and published in 1787. In addition, a new version of Du Fresnoy’s text sponsored by the Académie Royale would be published in Paris in 1789.⁵²

According to Du Fresnoy, the first task of the enterprising artist was to find a suitable subject for painting. His “chief business” was then to execute the subject in a manner that would arouse the appropriate response in the spectator, not by copying from nature but by “culling” the most perfect forms from “the sublime arts of the past”. For “there is no better course”, adds Reynolds in the notes to this section, but that “the Artist may avail himself of the united powers of all his predecessors. He sets out with an ample inheritance, and avails himself of the selection of ages.”⁵³ Of course in the Academy, this understanding of artistic invention as the

reinterpretation of established subjects realized by copying from a stock of the best artistic examples of the past was an intellectual process, conceived in relation to history painting. What Rowlandson seems to be doing is transferring the method to the invention of an alternative subject. He has adopted two idioms suitable to the execution of his theme (stained drawing and caricature) and has accumulated a stock of satirical images which will provide the general idea of things—the postures, traits, and types—that were required to produce a comic image of a French group. As he moves down from the “general store” to find the particulars he wants to express, he is selecting, combining, and inventing to “new-cast the whole”, or, to quote Reynolds again, “passing them [i.e. the borrowed forms] through his creative imagination [and] Transforming, for he is bound to follow the ideas that he has received, [and] translate[s] them (if I may use the expression) into another art. In this translation the Painter’s Invention lies.” ⁵⁴

French Jokes

In her detailed study of the caricature print market in late eighteenth-century Britain, Diana Donald drew attention to the appearance in the early 1780s of a new type of political satire that responded to the patronage of elite social groups. The designs in question dispensed with some of the traditional paraphernalia of the caricature print such as the textual annotations and verbal keys that facilitated comprehension. Instead, the prints looked more pictorial, their humour was framed through intellectual allusions (to history or to literature) or via formats that parodied Academy paintings. ⁵⁵ As the decade progressed, this type of sophisticated graphic satire would become increasingly associated with James Gillray (1756–1815) and his burlesques of the “high stile” of British painting. Indeed, Mark Hallett has described a “counter-culture” developed around the Academy composed of professionally trained artists whose “complex and technically assured images” offered “an ironic echo of the artistic hierarchies in place at the Academy”. ⁵⁶ It is this contemporary trend that provides a broader context for understanding the appearance of an ambitious caricature at the Society of Artists, wherein humour—specifically achieved via the recognition of visual incongruity—is generated in a similar way, via intertextual allusion and parody.

By incongruity I mean not just the impossible view of Notre Dame immediately behind the Place des Victoires, or the abrupt switches in scale which make the English man and woman on the right seem enormous in relation to the French monks behind, but also the incongruity that comes from the expansion in scale of a pen and ink caricature sketch. The large size of *Place des Victoires* suggests that it is a parody, a “play upon form”, where the artist has appropriated a pictorial idiom that was printed and widely available and turned it into a commodity more precious and rare. ⁵⁷

Of course, the comic resonance of parody depends on a “consciousness of style”, on the recognition that visual idioms that were familiar in one context could be displaced and recast for another.⁵⁸ If we can see the exhibition drawing as a giant caricature sketch, we could also understand its humour the other way around and in relation to an alternative category of imagery altogether; as a pictorial joke on the iconography of military victory, or a comic Triumph cast in a Parisian setting that was celebrated for its commemorative functions. In the late eighteenth century, London had a famous set of *Triumphs* (1484–82), which had been painted by Andrea Mantegna (c. 1431–1506) and were kept on permanent public display in the Queen’s Drawing Room at Hampton Court Palace. A contemporary guide-book carried a full description and considered them to be among “the best” of Mantegna’s works (fig. 10).⁵⁹



Figure 10.

Andrea Mantegna, *The Triumphs of Caesar: Scene 9, Caesar on his Chariot*, circa 1484–92, tempera on canvas, 270.4 × 280.7 cm. Royal Collection Trust (RCIN 403966) Digital image courtesy of Royal Collection Trust / Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2016

To reread Rowlandson’s *Place des Victoires* as a parody of a “Triumph” is to see Rowlandson’s characters comically trapped within its circular architectural space and condemned to travel endlessly around the statue of

their King, who is dressed like Mantegna's Caesar, *à l'antique*, and is likewise crowned by Victory, although not for the defeat of Gallica. This playful allusion would also allow us to retrieve the topical appearance of a national subject at the Society of Artists in the spring of 1783. Peace with France had only recently been declared, putting an end to the American war that had started in 1778. The definitive Treaty of Versailles would not be signed until September, although a provisional agreement had been ratified in January 1783, halting hostilities and stimulating the return of more peaceful ones. Borders had reopened and travel to Europe was possible again.⁶⁰

Conclusion

I have used *Place des Victoires* to explore the pictorial status of a comic drawing in a public exhibition and in relation to some of the themes that have been important in recent histories of British art. On the one hand, there is the exhibition and its contexts of "competitive individuation" and emulation.⁶¹ On the other, there is the vigorous market for caricature prints, although scholarship has mostly been concerned with the social and political implications of their status as a widely disseminated form.⁶² By the 1780s, caricature featured prominently in the print shops yet it was less visible in the exhibition catalogues of the period—or at least, hard to detect—and this is one of the reasons why *Place des Victoires* is so interesting. The very act of placing a "super-size" caricature in a Society exhibition, of seeing it framed and displayed on the wall, means that it was defined (for its initial audiences at least) as a public painting. To investigate its status as exhibited art highlights the contemporary elasticity of the "stained drawing" category; to consider it as a humorous image emphasizes its flexibility, as well as the ability of caricature to fuse with alternative representational effects. The national subject may have been considered "low" and "vulgar", nonetheless Rowlandson's drawing suggests that if the modality of inscription was changed, a comic image of the French could actually become the means for *displaying* a set of acquired artistic skills. By taking a set of recognizable national characters and demonstrating the new uses to which they could be put, an unknown artist might seek to establish his hand and become a name.

Footnotes

- ¹ Painted in 1748, published in 1749, and exhibited as no. 44, *The Gate of Calais*. See *A Catalogue of the Pictures, Sculptures, Models, Drawings and Prints &c, Exhibited by the Society of Artists of Great-Britain* (London, 1761). The painting is now in Tate Britain; see <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/hogarth-o-the-roast-beef-of-old-england-the-gate-of-calais-n01464>. For a copy of the print in the British Museum (hereafter "BM"), see BM3050. For an account of this first exhibiting society, see Matthew Hargraves, *Candidates for Fame: The Society of Artists of Great Britain, 1760-1791* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 2006).

- 2 Collet exhibited over forty pieces between 1760 and 1783 with the Free Society. See Caitlin Blackwell, "John Collet (ca 1725–1780): A Commercial Comic Artist" (PhD, University of York, 2013), Appendix III. A trawl through the exhibition catalogues yields suggestive titles prior to 1783. At the Society of Artists, for example: "The Italian and British Quack Doctors" (1769), "The Amorous Old Beau" (1772), and "The Procuress" (1775). At the Free Society: "The Hen peckt husband after Mr Dawes" (1768), "The French Hairdresser Discovered" (1771), "The Frenchman's Arrival at Dover in Aqua Tinta" and "The Amorous Admiral, on a Look-out Cruize" (1783). Photocopies of the catalogues are kept by the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, London.
- 3 Some of the drawings, including a *La Cuisine de la Poste* are held by the Lewis Walpole Library in Connecticut. It measures 44.5 x 44.7 cm (sheet) and may correspond to the drawing exhibited in 1771, see <http://images.library.yale.edu/walpoleweb/oneitem.asp?imageId=lwpr15204>. John Harris issued one of the prints (see BM4764; 41.1 x 44 cm, sheet). Other French subjects exhibited by this artist included *A Courier François* (1769), *A View of the Pont Neuf at Paris* (1771), and *A Tour to Foreign Parts* (1777). For printed versions, see BM4737, BM4918, and BM4732. The contemporary reference to "caricaturas" is from John C. Riely, "Horace Walpole and 'the Second Hogarth'", *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 9, no. 1 (Autumn 1975): 28–44.
- 4 The *Reviews* were exhibited in 1786 and are reproduced by Kate Heard in *High Spirits: The Comic Art of Thomas Rowlandson* (London: Royal Collection Trust, 2015), cat. nos. 16 and 17. Each sheet measures c. 50 x 90 cm. Algernon Graves, *The Royal Academy of Arts: A Complete Dictionary of Contributors and their Work from its Foundation in 1769 to 1904* (Bath: Kingsmead Reprints, 1970), lists twelve Rowlandson submissions between 1784 and 1787. They included *An Italian Family*, *A French Family*, and *The French Barracks*, all of which were published. *The Serpentine* and *Vauxhall* remain the best known of these works. For details, see John Hayes, *The Art of Thomas Rowlandson* (Alexandria, VA: Art Services International, 1990), cat. nos. 19 and 20. Between Bunbury and Rowlandson there were other comic pieces; among the French subjects were *A French Kitchen* (1777), *A French Family* (1778), and probably some of the works inspired by Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (1768), such as *Le Patessier or Patty-man vid. Yorrick's Sentimental Journey* in 1775.
- 5 For developments stimulated by the arrival of the public exhibition, see David Solkin, *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1992), 247–76, and the different essays in David Solkin, ed., *Art on the Line: The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House, 1780–1836* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 2001). The field has since broadened and a comprehensive list of relevant studies can be found in the bibliography to David Solkin, *Art in Britain, 1660–1815* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 2015) accessible at https://issuu.com/yalebooks/docs/solkin_biblio_and_index_1. In addition to the works mentioned above, this essay draws on the scholarship of Greg Smith, *The Emergence of the Professional Watercolourist: Contentions and Alliances in the Artistic Domain, 1760–1824* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2002); Hargraves, *Candidates for Fame*; David Solkin, ed., *Turner and the Masters* (London: Tate Publishing, 2009); Rosie Dias, *Exhibiting Englishness: John Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery and the Formation of a National Aesthetic* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 2013); Sarah Monks, John Barrell, and Mark Hallett, eds., *Artistic Ideals and Experiences in England, 1768–1848*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013) and Mark Hallett, *Reynolds: Portraiture in Action* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 2014). For an important early discussion of Rowlandson's comic drawings in the context of the public sphere, see John Barrell, "The Private Comedy of Thomas Rowlandson", *Art History* 6, no. 4 (1983): 422–41, reprinted in *The Birth of Pandora and the Division of Knowledge* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1992), 1–25.
- 6 The drawing is at the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, where it is catalogued under its more familiar name, *Place des Victoires*, pen, stain, and watercolour over pencil, 34.9 x 53.4cm (sheet): <http://collections.britishart.yale.edu/vufind/Record/1670067>. I will use the YCBA version of the title throughout this essay. Three are known to have existed. Hayes, *Art of Rowlandson*, cat. no. 17, dates this one to 1783 and on the basis of style suggests that it may have been the exhibited piece. For the exhibition listing, see *A Catalogue of the Pictures, Sculptures, Models, Designs in Architecture, Prints &c* (London, 1783), no. 223. By the 1780s, the average size of a caricature print was c. 25 x 35 cm. Heard, *High Spirits*, provides plenty of examples.
- 7 The iconographic scheme is described in François Souchal, *French Sculptors of the 17th and 18th Centuries: The Reign of Louis XIV*, Vol. 1 (London: Cassirer, 1977), cat. no. 44. For a lavishly illustrated account of the monument's construction and reception, see Hendrik Ziegler, *Louis XIV et ses Ennemies: Image, Propagande et Contestation*, translated into French by Aude Virey-Wallon (Paris: Centre allemande d'histoire de l'art, 2013), 94–147. The monument was largely destroyed during the Revolution.
- 8 See Zeigler, *Louis XIV et ses Ennemies*, 123–28, with an emphasis on its critical reception in Protestant countries and Huguenot literature. The "anti-absolutist" joke is noted by Malcolm Baker in *The Marble Index: Roubiliac and Sculptural Portraiture in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 2014), 28.
- 9 The other three were *An Inn Yard at Stratford Upon Avon*, *Country People Regaling after Work*, and *The Prodigal*. They were grouped together as stained drawings and remain untraced today.
- 10 For the biographical detail in these years, see Matthew Payne and James Payne, *Regarding Thomas Rowlandson, 1757–1827: His Life, Art and Acquaintance* (London: Hogarth Arts, 2010), 19–70.
- 11 Seven submissions were made between 1777 and 1781 of which five were portraits. None survive, although their numbering in the catalogues suggests that they were works on paper. For a wide-ranging discussion of the small number of extant drawings that precede the *Place des Victoires*, see John Riely, "Rowlandson's Early Drawings", *Apollo* 117, no. 251 (Jan. 1983): 30–39, and John Hayes, *The Art of Thomas Rowlandson* (Alexandria, VA: Art Services International, 1990), cat. nos. 1–16. The competitive dimensions of portraiture in this context are discussed by Marcia Pointon in "Portrait! Portrait! Portrait!", in *Art on the Line*, ed. Solkin, 93–109, and in Hallett, *Reynolds*, 253–83. The critical appraisal is quoted in Payne and Payne, *Regarding Thomas Rowlandson*, 42.
- 12 On this bitter rivalry, see Solkin, *Painting for Money*, 259–76; for a detailed account of their subsequent demise and the difficult context surrounding the 1783 exhibition, see Hargraves, *Candidates for Fame*, 151–61; on the foundation of the Academy in 1769 and its organization, see Holger Hoock, *The King's Artists: The Royal Academy of Arts and the Politics of British Culture, 1760–1840* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2003), 19–51.

- 13 It had actually been built by the Society, but for financial reasons they were forced to sell it in 1776. For a description with illustrations, see Hargraves, *Candidates for Fame*, 117-26.
- 14 Prior to 1780, the Academy's exhibitions were held in a single room in Pall Mall, see Solkin, *Painting for Money*, 257, for a contemporary reproduction. On the tensions generated among artists by new arrangements, see Dias, *Exhibiting Englishness*, 17-63, and for the implications of this relocation for works on paper, see Greg Smith, "Watercolourists and Watercolours at the Royal Academy, 1780-1836", in *Art on the Line*, ed. Solkin, 194-200; and Smith, *Emergence of the Professional Watercolourist*, 23-33.
- 15 See *Catalogue* (1783), where 102 of the 345 works are described in these terms; there were possibly more because the medium is not always designated.
- 16 For definitions and uses in the period, see Smith, *Emergence of the Professional Watercolourist*, 17-23.
- 17 Examples from the *Catalogue* (1783) include: nos. 4-8: Mr John Melchor Barralet, five "stained drawings" of *Scenes in Surry* [*sic.*]; no. 34: Mr Backhouse, "Design for a Villa, stained drawing"; nos. 55-68: Mr R. Cooper, a group of "tinted drawings" that included six *Views of Italy*; nos. 84-89: Mr C. Ebdon, a group of "stained drawings" including *Design for a Temple, Remains of the Temple of Jupiter Stator, and Designs for Lodges to Tehidy Park, Seat of Sir Francis Basset, Bart*; and nos. 126-28: Mr S. Howitt, *Stag Hunting* and *Fox Hunting*, listed as "stained drawings".
- 18 See *Catalogue* (1783), nos. 109-14, for drawings relating to "the Publication of the Antiquities of Great Britain", or no. 286, a drawing from the "Picturesque Beauties of Shakespeare . . . now publishing by Subscription". Exhibition functions are discussed in Smith, *Watercolourists and Watercolours*, 195-200. For an account of "finished" and presentation drawings and their operation in a public space, see Deanna Petherbridge, *The Primacy of Drawing: Histories and Theories of Practice* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 2010), 50-85.
- 19 The term is used by Smith in his discussion of the different copying methods in use in *Emergence of the Professional Watercolourist*, 51-71.
- 20 "Subversive" from Deanna Petherbridge's chapter on caricature, "Charged Lines and Vernacular Bodies", 347-77 in *The Primacy of Drawing*. The author gives a historical overview of caricature, effectively highlighting the values that have been attached to it as "ephemeral satirical commentary, or as an expression of the grotesque and the carnivalesque" (348).
- 21 The dimensions of the *Place des Victoires* are the same as those of tinted drawings with genre or topographical subjects displaying a high degree of finish. For contemporary examples, see Scott Wilcox, ed., *The Line of Beauty: British Drawings and Watercolors of the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale Center for British Art, 2000), cat. no. 91 (Francis Wheatley, *Donnybrook Fair*, 1782, 32.2 x 54.6 cm); no. 95 (William Marlow, *Nimes from the Tour Magne*, c. 1765-68, 36.5 x 53.3 cm); and no. 100 (William Pars, *A View of Rome*, 1776, 38.4 x 53.7 cm). The stylistic dichotomy in the drawing is noted as an unresolved tension between the "pretty" or "elegant" and "the comic" or "exaggerated" that would later be resolved. See André Paul Oppé, *Thomas Rowlandson: His Drawings and Watercolours* (London: The Studio, 1923), 7; Hayes, *Art of Rowlandson*, 16-17, cat. no. 17; and Riely, "Rowlandson's Early Drawings", 37.
- 22 For a discussion of this Academy period, see Payne and Payne, *Regarding Thomas Rowlandson*, 71-109. There were three submissions in 1784, five in 1786, and four in 1787, although the authors suggest more were presented under pseudonyms. Some of the drawings exist as multiples and the published aquatints are of similar dimensions, see Hayes, *Art of Rowlandson*, cat. nos. 19, 20, and 33. The most substantial were *Vauxhall*, *The Serpentine*, and the *Reviews*. There are also large comic drawings that were not exhibited: *George III and Queen Charlotte Driving through Deptford* (c. 1785, 41.9 x 70.5 cm), reproduced in Hayes, *Art of Rowlandson*, cat. no. 22; or *The Prize Fight* (c. 46 x 69.5 cm), in Wilcox, ed., *Line of Beauty*, cat. no. 89. For the *Reviews*, see Heard, *High Spirits*, note 4 above.
- 23 See mainly John Hayes, *Thomas Rowlandson: Drawings and Watercolours* (London: Phaidon, 1972), 32, and Hayes, *Art of Rowlandson*, 16 and cat. no. 17 and Riely, "Rowlandson's Early Drawings". Hayes situated the drawing in a "transitional period" which he found difficult to reconstruct because of the lack of biographical information, but which paved the way for the "great watercolours" like *Vauxhall* that followed at the Royal Academy. Riely connected the work to British drawings but not to satirical prints. For the direction of satiric print culture, see mainly Diana Donald, *The Age of Caricature: Satirical Prints in the Reign of George III* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1996), 132. Donald, Hayes and Riely were writing at a time when the Parisian training had become a rumour; if French "influences" are acknowledged, they prioritize Rowlandson's stylistic affinities with British artists. Different versions of the drawing have been occasionally exhibited: in 1984, see Richard Godfrey, *English Caricature: 1620 to the Present* (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1984), cat. no. 83; in 1990, see Hayes, *Art of Rowlandson*, cat. no. 17; and in 2000 by the Yale Center for British Art, see Wilcox, ed., *Line of Beauty*, cat. no. 86.
- 24 Hayes, *Art of Rowlandson*, cat. no. 17 reproduces one of the other drawings. The aquatint was published in November 1789 (see BM9679). The reference to the Prince of Wales comes from Heard, *High Spirits*, cat. no. 110, which reproduces a copy: 44 x 61.5 cm (print, plate) to 34.9 x 53.4 cm (drawing, sheet). For prices of caricature prints, see Timothy Clayton, "The London Printsellers and the Export of English Graphic Prints", in *Loyal Subversion? Caricatures from the Personal Union between England and Hanover (1714-1837)*, ed. Anorthe Kremers and Elisabeth Reich (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 152.
- 25 Amateurs collaborated with professionals to get their drawings published and generally played an important role in turning caricature into a fashionable printed medium; see Donald, *Age of Caricature*, 14, 35, 60-67. That Rowlandson instructed amateurs in drawing and frequently engraved their designs is noted by Payne and Payne in *Regarding Thomas Rowlandson*, 87, 92-93. See Smith, *Emergence of the Professional Watercolourist* for an analysis of drawings in relation to patrons and commercial markets. Caricature drawings could also be given as gifts. Donald, *Age of Caricature*, 221, note 133, records how Bunbury gave his humorous drawing of *Richmond Hill*, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1780, to Horace Walpole.

- 26 Heard discusses the early printmaking in *High Spirits*, 13–24, and gives examples: see cat. nos. 1–14. I am grateful to Nicholas J. S. Knowles who is compiling a catalogue raisonné of Thomas Rowlandson's works, for the figures quoted above. He estimates that sixty-five could be assigned to this period (simply indicative, running from the end of the Society's exhibition to the beginning of the Academy's). The majority are non-satirical and some belong to projects that would continue for several years, so a cautious number would be lower. By 1784 the publishers included Elizabeth Bull, Thomas Corneille, Elizabeth d'Archery, Samuel Fores, William Humphrey, Hannah Humphrey, John Hanyer, and John Raphael Smith. Payne and Payne, *Regarding Thomas Rowlandson*, 71–95, give a good sense of the artist's busy life immediately after the Society's exhibition.
- 27 For a Hogarth adaptation, *A Sketch from Nature*, published in 1784, see BM6719. Rowlandson's *Tour in a Post Chaise*, carried out in the spirit of Hogarth's *Peregrination* (1732) in April 1784, generated sixty-eight drawings, although they were never published; see Robert Wark, *Rowlandson's Drawings for a Tour in a Post Chaise* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Museum and Art Gallery, 1963). He had already copied Hogarth's *Peregrination* drawings in 1781, possibly in connection with one of the projects to bring them to publication; see Payne and Payne, *Regarding Thomas Rowlandson*, 57. For the *Rhedarium* and the *Imitations* see Payne and Payne, *Regarding Thomas Rowlandson*, 79 and 82–86; 127–28.
- 28 Donald, *Age of Caricature*, 130, 132 with a reproduction. The catalogue description for this drawing notes how the design is "repeating national stereotypes": <http://collections.britishart.yale.edu/yufind/Record/1670067>
- 29 "Hogarthomania" is a contemporary term, and is quoted by Sheila O'Connell in "Hogarthomania and the Collecting of Hogarth", in David Bindman, *Hogarth and his Times* (London: British Museum Publications, 1997), 58–60. Two drawings (*Mr Gabriel Hunt* and *Mr Ben Read*) were published by Jane Hogarth in November 1781 and an edition of the *Peregrination* was published in 1782. For sales, see Timothy Clayton, *The English Print, 1688–1802* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1997), 232–33. On the development of Hogarthian prints, books, ceramics, and so on, see David Brewer, "Making Hogarth Heritage", in *Representations 72* (Autumn 2000): 21–63, a subject that has been revisited recently in Cynthia Ellen Roman, ed., *Hogarth's Legacy* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 2016).
- 30 Quoted from Bindman, *Hogarth*, 13–14. On the significance of this reappraisal, see also Donald, *Age of Caricature*, 34.
- 31 For Brandoin and Grimm, see William Hauptman, "Beckford, Brandoin and the 'Rajah': Aspects of an Eighteenth-Century Collection", *Apollo* 143, no. 411 (May 1996): 30–39, and Hauptman, *Samuel Hieronymus Grimm (1733–1797): A Very English Swiss* (Bern: Kunstmuseum, 2014). Both had trained as topographical artists in Paris before moving to London in the 1760s. Also, both exhibited landscapes at the Society of Artists and the Royal Academy, and Grimm's were occasionally humorous. They published satirical prints with Anglo-French subjects, some of which are noted below. A recent account of de Louthembourg's activities in England is provided in Iain McCalman, "Conquering Academy and Marketplace: Philippe de Louthembourg's Channel Crossing", in *Living with the Royal Academy*, ed. Monks, Barrell, and Hallett, 76–88.
- 32 *From the Haymarket*, hand-coloured etching from the *Caricatures of the English*, see BM5361. The set was composed of six prints, three of which are reproduced in Constance C. McPhee and Nadine M. Orenstein, eds., *Infinite Jest: Caricature and Satire from Leonardo to Levine* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2012), cat. nos. 33–35. For the comic paintings (some of which were copied into print), see Olivier Lefeuvre, *Philippe-Jacques de Louthembourg* (Paris: Athena, 2012), cat. nos. 128, 132, 136 and 138 (quote, 242); although Anne Puetz, "Foreign Exhibitors and the British School at the Royal Academy, 1768–1823", in *Art on the Line*, ed. Solkin, 229–43, notes how, as a foreigner, his critical reputation would soon decline.
- 33 Riely, "Horace Walpole", 36.
- 34 Riely, "Horace Walpole", 32.
- 35 *La Cuisine* was published by several dealers in different editions and sizes; see BM4764 and the Lewis Walpole Library, Connecticut, for examples. The *View on the Pont Neuf* was published in two sizes in 1771 (see BM4763 and BM4918). Figures from both designs were issued as individual prints (see BM4782 and BM4679). On seeing *Richmond Hill* displayed at the Royal Academy, Horace Walpole described it as "a most capital drawing" (Riely, "Horace Walpole", 36). It is now at the Lewis Walpole Library, Connecticut. For the print measuring 46.5 x 75 cm, see BM6143 (1782); *Hyde Park*, see BM5925–7 (1781), each sheet c. 52 x 61.5 cm. A large burlesque of *St James's Park* was published in 1783 (see BM6344).
- 36 See Dias, *Exhibiting Englishness*, 23–24, for emphasis on the fashionable locations of the different venues. Petherbridge, *Primacy of Drawing*, 348, notes how caricature drawings fall into one or other of these categories (i.e. as sketches of single figures that were "speedily produced . . . by the deliberate adoption of strategies of deskilling and infantilism" or as "more complex and public narratives that parody social or political situations and personalities"), but what seems to be happening in England around 1780 is that they were merging.
- 37 On the importance of the 1770s and the contribution of Brandoin and Grimm, see my "Close Encounters: French Identities in English Graphic Satire, c.1730–1790" (PhD thesis, Courtauld Institute of Art, 2010). There were also a considerable number of anonymous designs with French or Anglo-French subjects published during the period. See Donald "'Struggles for Happiness': The Fashionable World" in her *Age of Caricature*, 75–93 for the broader context in satirical print publishing to which they belong.
- 38 Francis Grose, *Rules for Drawing Caricaturas with an Essay on Comic Painting* (London, 1788), 32.
- 39 Horace Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting in England*, Vol. 4, 4th edn. (London, 1796), 157. "France" and "England" refer to a pair of satirical etchings published soon after the outbreak of war with France in 1756 (see BM3446 and BM3454). By the time the *Anecdotes* was published, Hogarth's national satires had become familiar as black-and-white illustrations that were bound into books and given extensive commentaries that reinforced their moral functions. See, for example, John Trusler's *Hogarth Moraliz'd* (London, 1768) and Brewer, "Making Hogarth Heritage" on this development.

- 40 For an account of the aristocratic and foreign roots of British caricature and the important role that amateur artists played in maintaining this association, see Donald, *Age of Caricature*, 9–18, 35, 94–95. Mary Darly had recommended caricaturing to ladies and gentlemen as an entertaining and leisurely diversion in *A Book of Caricaturas on 60 Copper Plates in that Droll and Pleasing Manner* (London, 1762), 117. Bunbury completed his Grand Tour in 1769–70 and this included studying drawing in Rome, see Riely, “Horace Walpole”, 31.
- 41 See Petherbridge, *Primacy of Drawing*, 348 for “deskilling” in relation to normative drawing practice.
- 42 On visual satire’s allusiveness, see Mark Hallett, “James Gillray and the Language of Graphic Satire”, in *James Gillray: The Art of Caricature*, ed. Richard Godfrey (London: Tate Publishing, 2001), 23–39.
- 43 “Aestheticizing” here meaning “taking it out of moral discourse (the low, mean, judgemental) and placing it within an aesthetics of pleasurable response, of sympathetic laughter and comedy”; see Ronald Paulson, *Don Quixote in England: The Aesthetics of Laughter* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1998), xii. Rowlandson has frequently been presented as a close imitator of Bunbury, notably by Hayes, *Drawings and Watercolours*, 48–49; Riely, “Horace Walpole”, 42–44; and Donald, *Age of Caricature*, 35, 94–95. The ability to colour was considered a professionally acquired skill: see Smith, *Emergence of the Professional Watercolourist* for the evolution of distinctive practices by professional draughtsmen and watercolourists in their bid to distinguish themselves from amateurs in the late eighteenth century.
- 44 The first state is clearly signed “Brandoin invt” and was published on 29 July 1771 by W. Darling and J. Roberts; a copy is now in the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York. Darly reissued the print on 1 May 1772. He kept the title but changed the signature to “B- invt”, although this version is now ascribed to Bunbury (see BM4919). The reference to the 1776 edition is taken from the catalogue entry to BM4919. For the *View on the Pont Neuf*, see BM4918 (251 x 357 mm). A larger design in reverse was being sold by John Harris (BM4763; 46.8 x 61.8 cm).
- 45 BM4932, published 20 October 1771.
- 46 BM4478, published 10 May 1770.
- 47 Donald, *Age of Caricature*, 138, notes how Englishness signified as women in riding dress in graphic satire of the 1780s: it was about being dressed down rather than up, and could “signify shameless sexual forwardness and female dominance”. For satirical prints of English and French tourists, see John Collet’s *Frenchman in London* (BM4477) and *Englishman in Paris* (BM4478); Samuel Grimm’s *The French Lady in London* (BM4784) and *The English Lady in Paris* (BM4785) and Brandoin’s *English Lady in Paris* (BM4931) all published between May 1770 and November 1771. For a satirical print with nationally specific dogs, see BM5612, published in 1779.
- 48 The same method—selection and adaptation of thematically related sources—is used by Rowlandson to burlesque the monument. His version is a copy of a small marble depicting Louis XIV dressed à l’antique. It belonged to the Royal Collection and was displayed in the Orangerie at Versailles. It preceded the public monument, for which Desjardins added a coronation robe and baton, neither of which Rowlandson depicts. For the relationship between the two works, see Souchal, *French Sculptors*, cat. no. 45, and Ziegler, *Louis XIV*, 99 and Figure 59.
- 49 Payne and Payne, *Regarding Thomas Rowlandson*, 24–34, although suggesting that that was training as a sculptor. His name appears once on the register for foreign students now held at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris, and is one of only six British (or Irish) students enrolled in the 1770s. See Manuscript no. 45, Microfilm no. 30: “Liste des élèves britanniques et irlandais à l’Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture de 1758 à 1793”, Folio 138: “Thomas Rolanson, d’Angleterre, âgé de 17 ans, Protégé par M. Pigalle, demeure rue d’Autefeuille à l’Hôtel d’Angleterre [?] le 11 mars 1775”. His admission was supported by a Professor of Sculpture, Jean-Baptiste Pigalle (1714–1785) although being “sponsored by” (“protégé par”) a professor was distinct from being their pupil (“élève de”): it was simply a requirement that was necessary to gain access to the academic curriculum. See Isabelle Frère, “L’Enseignement de la sculpture à Paris entre 1740–1770” (Thesis, Ecole du Louvre, 1995).
- 50 For the preponderance of the amateur, see notes 40 and 43 above. For a discussion of caricature’s complex relationship with the Academy, see Petherbridge, *Primacy of Drawing*, 347–77, and more specifically in mid-eighteenth-century France, Laurent Baridon and Martial Guéron, *L’Art et L’histoire de la Caricature* (2006; Paris: Citadelles & Mazenod, 2015), 67–121. For examples of caricatures produced in these contexts, see McPhee and Orenstein, eds., *Infinite Jest*, cat. nos. 7–9, 19–23, 24, 95, and 112–13.
- 51 For education in London and the Academy’s cosmopolitan outlook, see Hoock, *King’s Artists*, 52–62; 109–14. For the Paris Académie, see Jacqueline Lichtenstein and Christian Michel, eds, *Les Conférences de l’Académie royale de Peinture et de Sculpture, Tome VI, Vol. 3 1752-1792* (Paris, 2014), highlighting tradition and the use of repetitive procedures like the rereading of older lectures. The reference to the “carte fidèle” meaning a student’s “faithful card” of internalized methodologies, comes from Frère, *L’Enseignement*, 18, quoting an Académie lecture, “Droits et devoirs de l’Artiste”, read out to the students on 4 May 1748.
- 52 For the publishing history of Du Fresnoy in France in the late eighteenth century, see Lichtenstein and Michel, eds, *Les Conférences*, Annexe II, 1166–67; for the British reception of French art theory and theories of “invention” as interpretation, see Carol Gibson-Wood, *Jonathan Richardson: Art Theorist of the English Enlightenment* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 2000), 143–79.
- 53 *The Art of Painting of C. A. Fresnoy . . . with Annotations by Sr Joshua Reynolds*, President of the Royal Academy (London, 1783), 7 and Note IV, 69.
- 54 Du Fresnoy, *Art of Painting*, Note IV, 69. Of course, the same ideas informed the *Discourses* that Reynolds delivered annually to the students. For an early exposition of his “Theory of Art”, see *Seven Discourses Delivered in the Academy by the President* (London, 1778), the second in particular, delivered December 1769, 29–63.
- 55 See Donald, *Age of Caricature*, 60–74, with an emphasis on the contribution of the amateur caricaturists like James Boyne (c. 1750–1810) in the early 1780s.

- 56 See Hallett, "James Gillray", 30–31 who extends the discussion to Rowlandson but for prints like *A Covent Garden Nightmare*, a parody of an Academy painting that he published in 1784 (BM6543), rather than the exhibited caricatures.
- 57 Around 1783/84, the average size of a caricature print was 25 x 35 cm, whereas the drawing is 34.9 x 53.4 cm and was even larger when published as a print: 44 x 61.5 cm. On jokes as a "play upon form" that depend on the recognition that an accepted practice can change, see Mary Douglas, *Implicit Meanings: Essays in Anthropology* (London: Routledge, 1975), 96, quoted in Simon Critchley, *On Humour* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2002), 10. These ideas are discussed as parody and intertextuality in caricature in Donald, *Age of Caricature*, 67–73. For incongruity as a stimulus to laughter, see James Beattie, "On Laughter, and Ludicrous Composition", in *Essays* (Edinburgh, 1776).
- 58 Donald, *Age of Caricature*, 28.
- 59 See George Bickham, *Deliciae Britannicae, or the Curiosities of Kensington, Hampton Court and Windsor Castle* (London, 1755), 103–04, for a description. The "Triumphs" referred to nine separate paintings hung around the walls of a single room: "the whole is a Triumph of Julius Caesar, consisting of a long Procession of Soldiers, Priests, Officers of State &c, at the End of which, that Emperor appears in his triumphant Chariot, with Victory over his Head, crowning him with Laurel. It is painted in Water-colours upon Canvas." For a more recent account, see Christopher Lloyd, *Andrea Mantegna: The Triumphs of Caesar: A Sequence of Nine Paintings in the Royal Collection* (London: HMSO, 1991).
- 60 For the jubilant reception, see *The New Annual Register or General Repository of History, Politics and Literature for the year 1783* (London, 1784), chapter 2, 12.
- 61 See David Solkin, "'The Great Mart of Genius': The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House, 1780–1836", in *Art on the Line*, 3, for "individuation" in this context; see also David Solkin, ed., *Turner and the Masters* (London: Tate Publishing, 2009), 99–141, on "Education and Emulation".
- 62 Recent studies concentrating on caricature as a printed visual culture include: Vic Gatrell, *The City of Laughter: Sex and Satire in Eighteenth-Century London* (London: Atlantic Books, 2006); Amelia Rauser, *Caricature Unmasked: Irony, Authenticity, and Individualism in Eighteenth-Century English Prints* (Cranbury, NJ: Univ. of Delaware Press, 2008); Todd Porterfield, ed., *The Efflorescence of Caricature, 1759–1838* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011); Ian Haywood, *Romanticism and Caricature* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2013); Joseph Monteyne, *From Still Life to the Screen: Print Culture, Display and the Materiality of the Image in Eighteenth-Century London* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 2013); and Kremers and Reich, eds., *Loyal Subversion?*

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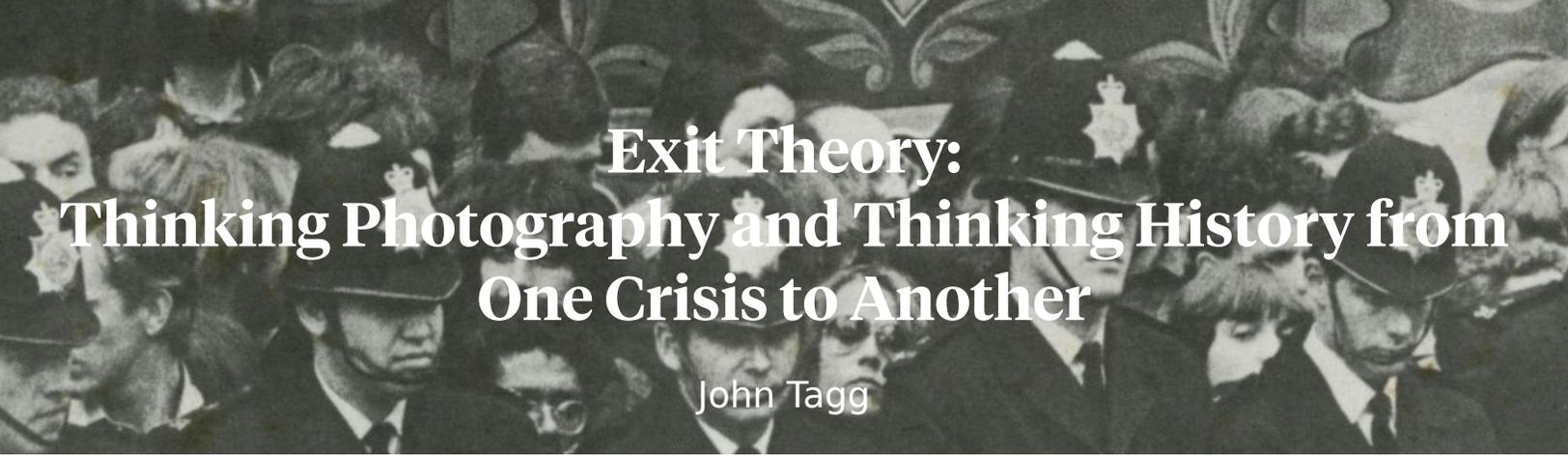
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Exit Theory: Thinking Photography and Thinking History from One Crisis to Another

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Introduction by

John Tagg, Distinguished Professor of Art History, Binghamton University

Provocation

The 1970s in Britain were a period of conflict and upheaval, now seen as marking the end of a long period of economic expansion and the break-up of the postwar social democratic consensus. For many who lived through them, however, these years seemed less of an ending than an opening to new social possibilities and new forms of struggle. A reemerging political radicalism, a second wave of feminist activism and an assertive anti-racist movement challenged ingrained ideas about the space of political action and set in motion new debates about cultural politics that turned on the political function of cultural representations.

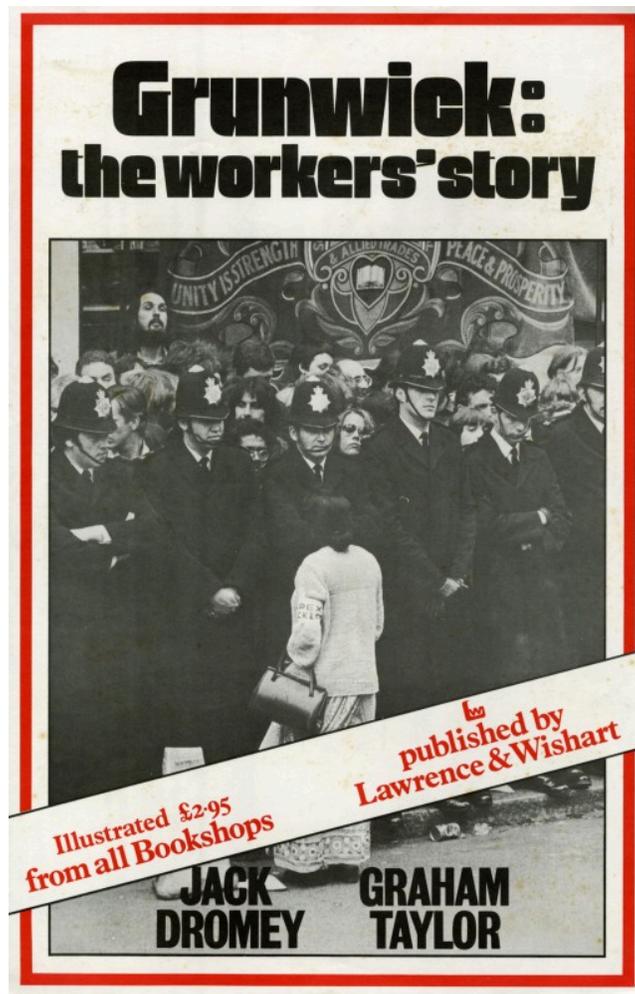


Figure 1.

Jack Dromey and Graham Taylor, *Grunwick: The Workers' Story*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1978)

For photography in Britain, this meant, on the one hand, the shaping of new forms of practice under the influence of conceptual art's increasingly politicized structural and institutional critique. On the other hand, this emergent critical practice also demanded and provoked a critical engagement with the history and theory of photography that represented a radical break in the discourse on photography and its histories. This was, indeed, when Theory acquired a capital letter, unsettling pedagogical habits and threatening the comforting to and fro of photography's two-party system, vacillating between photographic art on one side of the aisle and documentary photography on the other. The principal stalking horse (or straw man) for this new theoretical practice was an institutionally sanctioned and thoroughly marketized formalism, derived from the later writings of the art critic Clement Greenberg. Equally in the firing line, however, was what was seen as a naive reflectionist conception of photography--as evident in

versions of social history as the reflection of social forces as it was in practices of social documentation, whether in their earnest humanist or dissociated modernist guise. For new formulations of the politics of photographic representation, photography could not merely be a tool of political action but had to be seen as a site invested in political relations and in itself productive of political effects.¹

These arguments and provocations changed the game for photographic practice, for photographic education, and for the history of photography, in as much as the latter could be said to have an effective existence as a field of study at this time. The effects of this change may have been staunchly resisted but they were not to be reversed, at least in the short term, even by the political defeat that closed out the decade and set off the triumphant rise of the new orthodoxies of economic neoliberalism and unregulated globalization. It would take another decade for the immutable laws of the global free market in goods, services, finance, and ideas to reinvest and recode the very practices, institutions, and fundamental purposes of education, cultural production, and the image economy, in a process that was to be greatly accelerated by technological change in the ensuing decade. In the 1990s, new digital technologies made 1970s conceptions of image/text seem quaint, while emerging social media made the alternative networks of 1970s counter-culture seem slow and cumbersome and embarrassingly homemade. At the same time, a new generation of art photographs scaled to the emergent visual economy of the museum as spectacle dwarfed the dense and text-heavy works of post-conceptual art, while a booming international art commodity market showed that even these once intransigent works could be readily absorbed.



Figure 2.

Unknown photographer, Violence Outside The Grunwick Processing Company In London During Strike, published in the *Daily Mail*, 15 June 1977 Digital image courtesy of Daily Mail / REX / Shutterstock (893003a)

A similar fate of packaging and distancing also overtook what had now become the institutionally accommodated discipline of the history of photography. Certainly, this brought more scrupulous standards of scholarship, a closer engagement with the materiality of the object, and a keener attention to the image that contrasted with the frequently polemical texts of cultural studies, for which the object was often no more than an allegory of Theory. In the process, however, the larger questions were often lost, along with the sense that the attempt to reframe the terms in which these questions were asked had real consequences for struggles beyond the bounds of academe. A certain insistent historiographical formula also began to be deployed to box and label the unruly work of 1970s photo-theory as a “postmodernist” reaction to the institutionally powerful “Modernism” of the 1960s, substituting a contextualism of the exterior for a formalism of the interior. No matter that the discursive field of the photograph is not a context. No matter that the theoretically heterodox work of the 1970s could never make its mantra of Marxism, feminism, semiotics, and psychoanalysis cohere and thus, fortunately enough, never became an “ism”. No matter, indeed, that the term “Postmodernism” had no currency in Britain outside architectural criticism until the publication in English translation of Jean-François Lyotard’s *The Postmodern Condition*, and Fredric Jameson’s *New Left Review* essay, “Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism”, both in 1984.² The formula enabled a diverse and internally contentious body of work to be both appropriated and decried, while severing it from its

political challenge and distancing it as the expression of a now completed and surpassed dialectical cycle. Politics is displaced by memory; overdetermination by anecdotes of chance; the activist photographer theorist by the market adept; and the archive as instrument by the curatorial platitude of the so-called archival mode.

So what chance now for the re-emergence of an engaged scholarship and a pointedly political practice? The question, of course, is in some ways tendentious and conveniently misleading, since neither has entirely gone away. The reach of critical practice and critical theory also covers a far wider world than that encompassed by the technologically and culturally limited networks of Anglo-American photo-theory in the 1970s. We stand on the threshold of global histories of photographs for which the multiple languages and institutions of photography are, at once, locally rooted and transnationally exchanged. Yet the question still has bite, not least at a moment when the neoliberal consensus installed in the late 1970s is faltering badly on both sides of the Atlantic in the face of popular anger and pervasive contempt for the architects of the age of inequality. But will the current interest in the 1970s prove nothing more than another passing curatorial revival? Or will this present period of disjunction and conflict generate its own inventive forms of practice and theory, its own new modes of intervention in the codes, institutions, and relations of power that have sustained an increasingly insecure globalized economy of museum art and academic knowledge?

Response by

Geoffrey Batchen, Professor, School of Art History, Classics and Religious Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

I came of age as a budding scholar in the later 1970s and therefore was one of the fortunate recipients of the “unruly work of 1970s photo-theory” that John Tagg describes. By 1984, when I returned to Australia from a brief period in New York, the word “Postmodernism” had taken hold in my country of origin and was being used to cohere another unruly group of texts, those produced by French writers such as Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Jean Baudrillard, and Jacques Derrida, to name only a few of the most familiar suspects. I was fortunate that tertiary education was still free in Australia so that, like many of my friends, I was able to audit philosophy classes in which these French proper names featured prominently. So I ended up reading the work of Tagg and his peers (Victor Burgin and Allan Sekula in particular) through that frame, reinventing it for a new decade, or at least for what seemed like a new set of challenges. By that time many of the British contributors to the intellectual provocations of the 1970s had jumped the Thatcherite ship and were teaching in the United States (or even, in the case of Tony Fry, in Australia). They became fixtures of the academy, as did their writings. When my generation began to take up teaching positions of our own, we instituted compulsory classes on “theory”—a strange word that seems to imply that not all texts are equally ideologically loaded. Let’s say we taught classes *about* theory, about the possibility of engaging with the politics of form (of language, of medium, of design, of art history) using the sophisticated, if often somewhat cynical, tools that Postmodernism offered. We were keen to infuse our students with our own enthusiasm for these tools, to get them thinking big thoughts, or just to get them thinking. We made them read Barthes, Foucault, and so on (and, by the way, Tagg, Burgin, and Sekula too) and embedded this kind of discourse in the undergraduate education of the next generation of artists and art historians.

But, in recent years, I have wondered whether this has been the most effective way to choreograph such an education. When I read all those authors myself, it was voluntarily (I never had an art theory course to take) and out of a shared enthusiasm for the task. In Australia in the 1980s, postmodern theory seemed to matter and we applied ourselves to the task of making it matter, at least to us. It felt like it was ours! But what happens when students feel the same way, that the theory they are taught is the discourse of their instructors and not something forged by themselves out of the demands of their own moment? What happens when they repeat it back to me for a grade, faithfully but without any great enthusiasm? This unease is made more acute when I read the criticisms of the work on photography that came out of that moment by, say, Steve Edwards (himself a child of the politicized 1970s, in my estimation).

As I have recounted elsewhere, Edwards complains of the “post-structuralist pyrotechnics” that have tainted recent scholarship on photography. In his view, this kind of scholarship is guilty of “severing representation from social interest”, of abandoning “the terrain of historical persons for transcendental notions of the Subject”, and of favouring “big ideas” over “small, tacky social histories”.³ It is a reasonable enough critique, even if one would want to draw on the remnants of those pyrotechnics to caution against the wisdom of simply moving from one pole (big ideas) to the other (small social histories), as if the second is not just as limiting as the first. Surely some kind of reverberation between them is what is needed? But more than that, we need a discourse about photography informed by and infused with the political demands of the present. We need, to take but one pertinent example, a refugee theory that grounds any discussion of the practice of photography in the very real and pressing challenges of that particular crisis. In short, we need our students to come up with a discourse—a “theory”—of their own, that they have *made their own*. It is their turn to teach us.

Response by

Siona Wilson, Associate Professor, The College of Staten Island and the Graduate Center, CUNY

Is the Personal Still the Political?

If all historical work is shaped to some extent by contemporary issues, reconsidering the 1970s today through the vectors of photography, photographic theory, and political economy seems particularly timely. Beyond the dominant preoccupations of 1970s photographic theory—the documentary and conceptualist pairing John Tagg points to—the theorization of vernacular photography, the family album in particular, had also emerged for the first time. The hyper-expansion of the use of photography in everyday life has given a whole new meaning to today’s vernacular image, making this area of theoretical work especially urgent (fig. 3). Vernacular photography (including the growth of documentary by citizen journalists) is a particularly important site for a reconsideration of the everyday manifestations of the neoliberal project that, as many agree, was nascent in the 1970s.

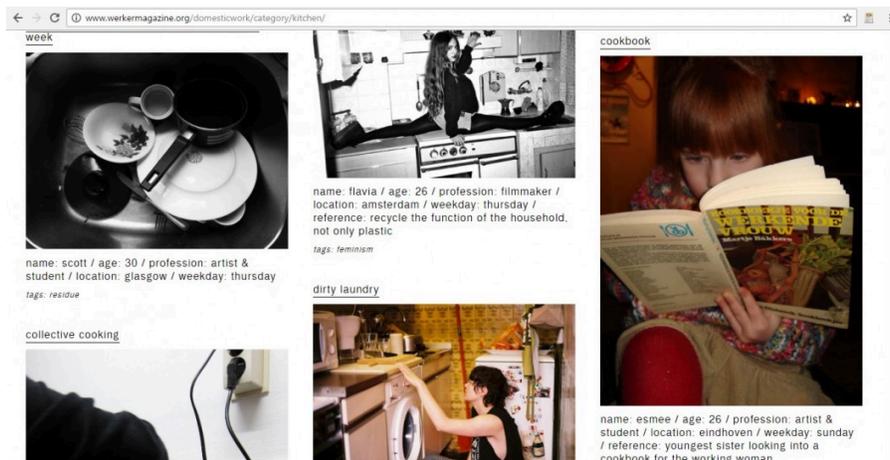


Figure 3.

Werker Collective, Werker 3 / Domestic Worker Photographer Network, Kitchen (screenshot), Digital image courtesy of www.werkermagazine.org

While second-wave feminist photographers such as Jo Spence developed a confessional form of subjective self-imaging to expose the workings of institutional power in everyday life, comparable strategies of self-surveillance have become writ large in today’s digital sphere. The mainstream proliferation and routinization of self-documenting, however, no longer carries the transgressive charge of exposing private images to public scrutiny. Not only are such strategies a new everyday norm, but the family album is also no longer a discrete, material object reserved for private use. It is now dispersed, immaterial, and immediately available to—in many

cases—a mass audience of “friends” and strangers. And even more significantly, these platforms are enabled by and serve commercial interests and, potentially, those of the state. This integration of state, commercial, and personal spheres has profoundly transformed some of the most significant feminist questions of the 1970s, with the vernacular image as a newly central element. For example, the expansion of working life into private spaces, the experience of love and the socialization and psychical development of children are all now mediated in much more visible ways.

For second-wave feminists the political significance of personal images lay in the sustained interrogation of the institution of the family as an important site for gendered subjectivization. Transgressing this public/private divide was part of a broader feminist project of the political analysis of social life—the normalized site of women’s oppression—that liberal theory had traditionally deemed beyond the scope of the political per se. Today such insights about the politics of the social might indeed be more widely assumed, but they have also become subject to an accelerated logic of what Wendy Brown has called a generalized “economization” of political life.⁴ The second-wave feminist leitmotif, “the personal is the political”, popularized by Carol Hanisch in a 1969 essay, is now much more closely linked to the ever pervasive monetization of the self.⁵ Theorizing these transformations, beyond the melancholic laments of neo-avant-garde co-option or the mindless celebration of technological democracy, is one of greatest challenges in bringing the 1970s into critical dialogue with our current moment.

Response by

Dengyan Zhou, Contributing author to *Chinese Photographers* magazine, Beijing

The 1970s in China were a period of profound political, social, and cultural changes, though in a completely different historical context from that in Britain. The death of the great leader Mao Zedong in 1976 marked the end of three decades of central planning, but also of a Party-oriented and politically engaged mass culture. The “Open and Reform” policy initiated in 1978 brought to China a market economy and a flood of diverse and even conflicting cultural ideas, theories, and forms of practices from the West.

For Chinese photographic practitioners in the reform era, a critical engagement with photography first and foremost meant marking a conceptual and pictorial distinction from Maoist socialist realism. On the one hand, independent committed amateurs sought to break through political and institutional constraints by emphasizing photography’s “ontology”—a striking combination of modernist and reflectionist conceptions of photography. On the other hand, officially recognized photographic organizations saw the humanist rhetoric of American documentary as something they could appropriate as a means to restore the credibility and vitality of socialist realist principles. Despite their contradictory perspectives, the shared desire of these two initiatives to reconnect with the outside world has shaped a new photographic culture in contemporary China that is dominated by Eurocentric conceptions of practice and critical theory, yet has entirely overlooked ideas of the politics of photographic representation in 1970s Britain.



Figure 4.

Li Xiaobin, *Petitioner*, 1977, contemporary color print
Digital image courtesy of Li Xiaobin

The tendency towards the depoliticization of photography in China can be seen in the reframing of Li Xiaobin's *Shangfang zhe* ("Petitioner"—a term for citizens seeking justice through state petitioning bureaus) as an icon of Chinese "documentary" (fig. 4). Li took this street snapshot near Tiananmen Square in 1977, but he waited until 1986 to make it public for the first time in an exhibition of his Modern Photo Group. The "Petitioner" became even more widely known after 1988, when it was shown as an award-winning "news photograph" in the National Art Museum. In 1998, Li's photograph was purchased by the Museum of the Chinese Revolution (now the National Museum of China) for its "first-grade" national collections. The effect of this discursive and institutional reframing is to validate ideas of a new realist rhetoric and to transform the anonymous subject into a generalized symbol of the suffering of a Chinese generation during the Cultural Revolution.

As Chinese photography attracts greater scholarly interest as a result of the recent global turn of the history of photography, the opportunity for Chinese scholars to foreground a critical engagement with photography must lie in a rational re-examination of the cultural technology's recent past in relation to current concerns in China. The building of a transnational archive, curatorial cooperation, academic exchange, and the growth of social media may facilitate professional communications, but they also risk reinforcing cliché. An effective open network requires us not merely to participate and appreciate, but also to cultivate new historical viewpoints, broaden and complicate avenues of inquiry, and contribute historical insights and inventive ideas to the field. This will depend, above all, on a conscious engagement with the politics of depoliticization that saturates our everyday working lives and our living environment.

Response by

Elizabeth Edwards, Professor Emerita, De Montfort University, Leicester

While I recognize the history and its political problematic plotted out by John Tagg, in many ways these questions, assumptions, and practices have been premised on very specific ideas of what photography is, what it does, and under what conditions. A whole body of Theory has been built on these foundations, characterized by anxieties about status, the power and ethics of representation, about claims to realism, the workings of the sign, and the nature of the index.

But a theory of photography based largely on instrumentality and the “hermeneutics of suspicion” elides very real photographic desires, both historical and contemporary, of the majority world for whom photographs function within specific cultural discourses of identity, lineage and ancestry, spirit, and in many cases cultural reinvigoration. This resolutely realist ontology and its cultural applications demand a language and theoretical disposition that acknowledges the power relations of the image, but at the same time accounts for the photographic desires, expectations, and uses of photographs in that majority world—an ontology that is allowed to exist in a world in a critical, certainly, but not hostile interpretative environment. This demands not only that assumed categories of analysis are refigured, but also that we engage with different ways of talking about photographs embedding conceptualizations that may make photographs something else entirely. For instance, in Morobe Province of Papua New Guinea, the *punctal* functions as a mark of the presence of the subject’s ongoing agency, not loss. That is, their presence, their social being, remains active as the agency of the living and the agency of the dead become coeval, giving the photograph the status of “a node in the folding and unfolding of persons and places”.⁶ Another cogent example is the photographic application of the seSetho word *seriti* by the South African photographer and artist Santu Mofokeng. *Seriti* is not merely “shadow” but “aura, presence, dignity, confidence, spirit, essence, status, wellbeing and power”.⁷ *Seriti* thus explodes standard definitions of real by presenting another order of things that “materialises a different understanding of the real”.⁸ Similarly, Maori in Zealand challenge assumed categories and the management of “the real” in their recognition of photographs as *toanga*: cultural treasure/power/spirit, located in the values attributed to the “index”.

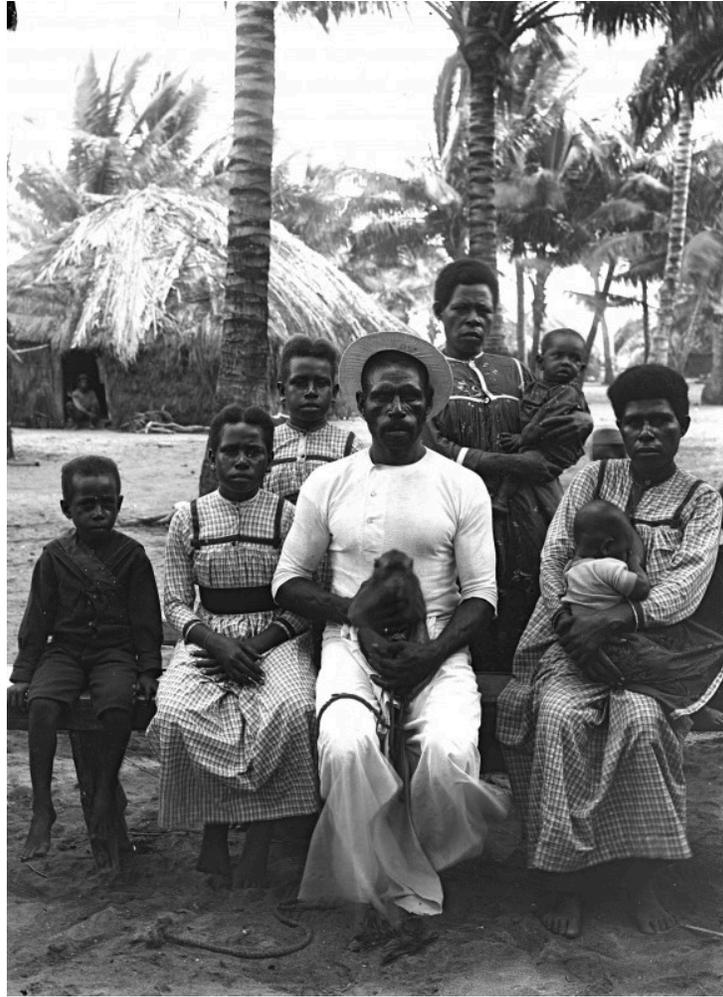


Figure 5.

A. C. Haddon, Family traces: Torres Strait, 1898, photograph

Tagg asks, “will this present period of disjunction and conflict generate its own inventive forms of practice and theory”? A wider definitional base for the medium premised on what photographs *do* in the world might be part of this. One could pile up very numerous ethnographic examples, but the point is that anthropologists are good at disturbing categories and good at thinking within photographic spaces.⁹ Addressing a differently premised *realpolitik* of the image has some possibilities for the successive crises. Photography needs to be, indeed must be, understood as a network of processes and relations, and in relationship with other complex local beliefs.¹⁰ If relations emerge from an almost universal pre-discursive recognition of the ontological scream of the medium and its presence and visceral sympathy, the explanations of how and why this might matter might produce a counter-narrative that opens a more fluid theoretical space, which is nonetheless anchored in the political.¹¹

Response by

Jordan Bear, Associate Professor, History of Art, University of Toronto

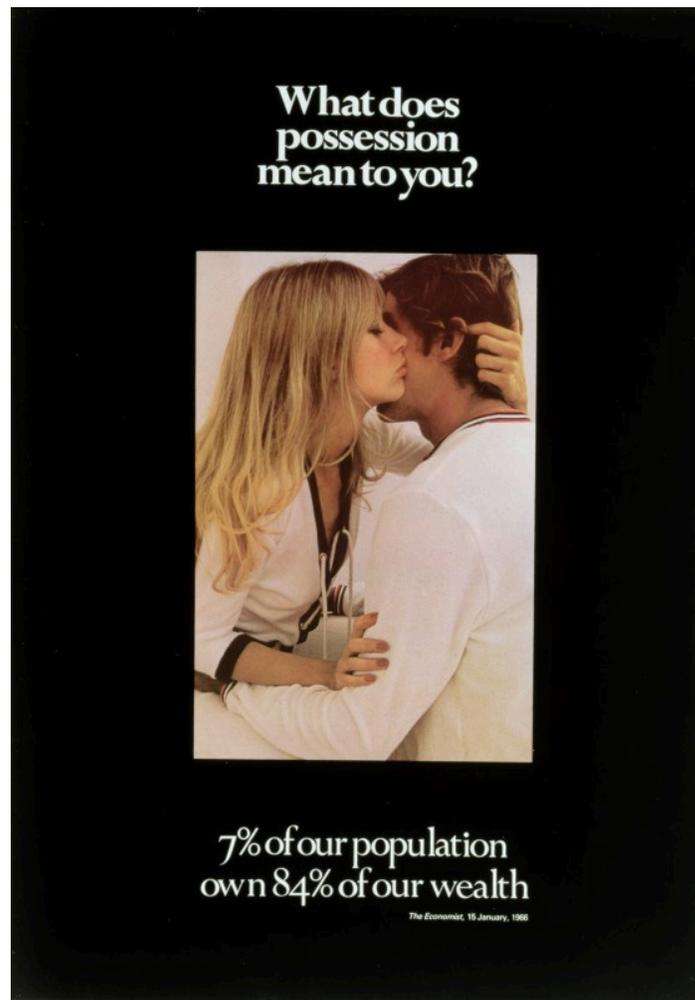


Figure 6.

Victor Burgin, *Possession*, 1976, photograph. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London, Gift of the artist 1980 Digital image courtesy of Victor Burgin / Bridgeman Images

When Victor Burgin's *Possession* (fig. 6) first appeared in 1976, illegally fly-posted on the sides of buildings in Newcastle upon Tyne, it constituted a direct assault on the private property rights of the city's landowners. More oblique, and more potent, was the blow dealt by the composition itself: a forceful critique of the culture industry's commingling of sexual and consumer desire. In reviving a politically engaged poster art, Burgin expanded the terrain of photography's engagement in Marxist struggle, widening out from sober documentary traditions of protest to a broader indictment of bourgeois consumer imagery. He described his aim in an essay published that same year: "to unmask the mystifications of bourgeois culture

by laying bare its codes, by exposing the devices through which it constructs its self-image.”¹² At the heart of the poster is a stock photograph of a couple achieving conjugal satisfaction, turned against itself by juxtaposition with the economic reality that its fantasy enables: “7% of our population own 84% of our wealth.” *Possession* hoists this modern gentry with its own petard. But forty years later, an even more elite cadre has struck back, reclaiming its own mythological iconography and seizing from the left the visual repertoire of resistance.

Getty Images is today the world’s largest repository of news and stock photographs. One image from its news portfolio is representative of the iconographic impoverishment of contemporary mass media (fig. 7). Depicting a demonstration by residents whose lives were “disrupted” by an environmental disaster, it includes all the expected constituents of a protest photograph: the hand-lettered, vernacular signs of the masses are jaggedly arrayed before the civic heft and regularity of a Corinthian column; in focus, their leader stands at a microphone, her clenched fist rising into the air. So generic, so perfunctory is the semiosis of the picture that we sense that, after a suitable interval, the image might be easily extracted from Getty’s news photography range and assimilated into its lucrative stock photography holdings.



Figure 7.

David McNew, US-Energy-Fuel-Fossil Protest, 14 May 2016 Digital image courtesy of David McNew / AFP / Getty Images

Clicking on the “Protestor” tag below the photograph plunges us into that sister database, and reveals that such requirements have already been anticipated. Witness the extraordinary *Protestors with Picket Signs*, in which

a frieze-like assortment of ethnically diverse, well-dressed “activists” hold up blank placards primed to brandish a message of the licensee’s choice (fig. 8). The representational infrastructure of mimed outrage stands at the ready, these evangelists of blankness greeting their unseen antagonist. The metadata tags reveal, among the merely descriptive “Demonstration”, “Low Angle View”, and “Mixed Race Person”, the key element of the photograph: “Copy Space”. The photograph, and its markers in the database, anticipate perfectly the search strings of besieged editors, avaricious marketers, and demagogues alike.



Figure 8.

Martin Barraud, Protestors with Picket Signs, Getty Images stock photo
Digital image courtesy of Caiaimage / Martin Barraud

The corporate consolidation of visual representation under Getty Images has been breathtaking. The firm now controls the intellectual property of some eighty million photographs, including fifteen million from British press archives dating back to the nineteenth century. The spoils of Getty’s own rapacity were, in turn, ingested by a larger predator, when the company was acquired by the Carlyle Group, a firm best known for its influence in the financial, energy, and defence sectors. A more complete absorption of visual communication to the prerogatives of the neoliberal arrangements forged under Thatcher and Reagan would be difficult to imagine.

If the ingenuity of engaged photography four decades ago involved the *détournement* of found imagery, the economic shifts that quickly ensued have powered another turn. The reclassification of virtually the whole universe of extant photographs as private “intellectual property” has secured such imagery from the interventions that, as recently as 1976, could still

prove vital. Before politics becomes entirely resistant to the visual, it is imperative to visualize resistance differently. Absent new means of doing so, and the terrain of dissent is left to the nihilistic, prefab protestors of the contemporary image economy.

Response by

Vered Maimon, Senior Lecturer, Art History Department, Tel Aviv University

I agree with John Tagg's argument that the recent emphasis in photography theory on photographs as material objects often leaves out larger questions and usually refrains from situating photographic discourse in relation to current and urgent political concerns. This is because current photography theory is no longer motivated by the *interventionist* impulse that triggered so much of the work done in the 1970s, where scholars formulated their ideas in response to what they perceived as major economic and political transformations in the operations of post-war welfare states.

This development can be also be linked to the fact that current scholarship is focused on *vernacular* photographic practices, rather than on the mass-produced advertising imagery that stood at the centre of scholarly analysis and artistic practice in the 1970s—for example in strategies of appropriation. Yet, I actually see a potential for engaged scholarship and innovative forms of political practice within these new fields of scholarship, with their emphasis on the tactile and embodied rather than the strictly spectatorial, within specific communities of producers and users. New scholarship points out that photographs have a certain social, political, and emotional efficacy—they are affective: they produce social effects and enable agency, while their concrete modes of production and circulation are embedded within specific social and cultural relations as part of actual *lived* environments.

This move away from problems of representation actually provides a necessary analytical and theoretical framework for understanding photography's changing role within contemporary global and digitalized visual culture. It signals a shift from problems of reference to those of circulation and transmission; and from the focus on images and their institutionally "constructed" meanings to an analysis of their performative modes of re-inscription through which political forms of affiliation are both contested and made possible.

This also explains the recent scholarly critical interest in "counter-archives" that are not simply curatorial or market-driven: the work done, for example, by Anthony Downey on archival projects in the Middle East by artists such as Walid Raad, Akram Zaatari, and Dor Guez. These projects highlight the roles of desire, emotion, and the imagination within processes of archiving. They are concerned with the *practice* and *use* of photography, the temporal contingency and instability of archives, and the multiple lives of images. The images in these archives show signs of damage, touch, and exchange. They are addressed not simply as visual documents, but as material and tactile objects that were held, marked, and sometimes corrupted by their specific

users. That is to say, their meanings derive from their (re)uses and not only from their modes of representation. These strategies can no longer be described through the concept of appropriation because they are not concerned with “anti-aesthetic” issues of originality, authenticity, or the critique of institutions.

Another major concern of recent scholarship is with visual activism, for example in the work of Ariella Azoulay and Thomas Keenan. This body of work has inspired my own recent work, which I see as both scholarly and interventionist, with the photography collective Activestills, documenting protests against human rights violations in Palestine/Israel. Activestills’s photographs take part in the formation of specific protesting communities and their struggles (figs 9 and 10). Their images are meant to be touched, held, carried, and worn, and, in this way, become inseparable from bodily gestures and acts; they function as agents for the propagation of political struggles rather than “fixed” representations of subjection or resistance—objects for passive contemplation.



Figure 9.

Tess Scheflan, Street exhibition, *in the West Bank village of Bil'in marking two years of the Palestinian popular struggle against the Israeli separation wall and confiscation of lands*, 2007 Digital image courtesy of Tess Scheflan / Activestills.org



Figure 10.

Activestills, Protests against evacuation of Bedouin villages in the Negev Desert, Al Araqib, 2011 Digital image courtesy of Oren Ziv / Activestills.org

So while I agree with Tagg's criticism, I also think that the shift away from representation and institutional critique opens the way for newly devised interventionist political forms of theory and practice, and for much needed collaboration between academic research and activist agendas.

Response by

Stephen Sheehi, Sultan Qaboos bin Said Chair of Middle East Studies and Professor of Arabic Studies at The College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia

From Crisis to Condition: A Movement towards the Decolonizing of the “History of Photography”

Standing on the “threshold of global histories of photography”, I look forward and behind me, pondering John Tagg’s question: “will this present period of disjunction and conflict generate its own inventive forms of practice and theory”? Are we—those previously articulated as exterior to the West’s discourse on photography but, currently, integrated (or absorbed) into its art circuits and political grammar of globality and worldliness—positioned to seize the “chance now for the re-emergence of an engaged scholarship and a pointedly political practice”? Rather than reach to the East to find the redemptive power of photography pass into the hands of those photography has historically overlooked, objectified, and kept exterior to its constitutive discourses, let us understand these questions as an invitation for the *decolonization of photography*.

For all the emancipatory possibilities of photography, photographic practice, and historiography—possibilities inspiringly distilled in the 1970s moment—photography is haunted, if not undergirded by, its “darker side” (to crib Walter Mignolo).¹³ From the colonial postcard to Abu Ghraib to the theft and destruction of Palestinian photographic archives, the darker side of photography is central and salient, if not ever-urgent, to those of the global South whose scholarship and practice have never had the privilege to cease being engaged politically. Yet, despite its omnipresence, the darker side of photography endures invisibly. The very term “history of photography”, for example, is itself laden with erasure, because the history of photography is the history of Euro-American photography. It excludes, exoticizes, or, more recently, hails the “Other” (of) photography, beckoning us to search for the history of “other” photographs (“African”, “Middle Eastern”, “South American”, and “Asian”) beneath the “true”, yet now bankrupt and co-opted history of photography. The “history of photography” is one-fifth of the world’s photography.

Connecting new (and old) politically committed photographic practices and histories of the global South with the Anglo-American photography scene of the 1970s is pertinent and productive. The connection highlights the political, class, and formalistic critique that arose during that decade in relation to shifts in national and local economies and politics that foregrounded issues of class, gender, and race in Britain and North America. The association also

calls to centre stage the politics of representation and makes visible the economy of the photograph, its production, dissemination, and discursive (and disciplinary) effects within a larger topography of class, race, gender, economy, politics, and empire. Yet the fate of the 1970s movement provides us with a prescient lesson to avoid looking to the global South exclusively as a fount of salvation. We need to understand the co-opting, containment, and homogenizing of the 1970s photography movement as a forewarning to the perception of “other photographs” as the source of undiscovered possibilities that will aid us in combating the disciplining, dehumanizing, and decentring effects of our local contexts within a global world.

Yet this warning may already be too late, where the art market has successfully absorbed the “threat” of, for example, Arab art over the past fifteen years. The terms “global”, “non-Western”, and so on, function in a similar way to the term “postmodern”, emulsifying the heterogeneity of photographic practices that differ greatly in political power, position, profundity, and relevance into one singularity of “non-Western” or “global” photographic practice. From the Venice Biennale to the Dubai art scene, from the Delfina Foundation in London to the Akademie der Künste der Welt in Cologne, the indeterminacy of photography and local production is defanged by the effort to make it “intelligible” and to retool it to remediate the failures and alienation arising from the suppressed but un-ignorable darker side of photography. If nothing else, looking to the global in order to find the new loops us circuitously back into a containing pattern of looking to art as the latest native informant, the most recent co-conspirator, and the newest prophet.

This critique is not to say that contemporary and historical photography originating in the global South should be ignored, in order to counter the threat of reinscribing the “East” as a place and space of salvation from the destruction and misery wrought on the world by the West. But, rather than suggest that we are on the threshold of a new era of radical practice ushering in those previously excluded from the “history of photography”, perhaps we might look to the 1970s, not as a past, precipitous moment, but as one movement in tandem with multiple others, both contemporaneous to that decade and contemporary to this moment, that gesture towards photographic decoloniality and the project of decolonizing photography. This project, which is less an “option” than an imperative, seeks to stir, highlight, salvage, and forge historic, contemporary and future practices and scholarship, building, built, rebuilt, and perpetually emergent within the fluid global, political, economic, and technological conditions that hegemonically encase, entrap, ensnare, and co-opt us with every good intention. Decolonizing photography involves practices and scholarship that insist on challenging, making visible, reclaiming, and contesting past attempts—even

those failed, contained, co-opted, outmoded, and homogenized--in order to forge, even through epistemic violence, new possibilities of seeing the "history photography" as the history of photography.

Response by

Jonathan Long, Durham University

Feeling Our Way

A constellation of disparate images and ideas coalesces as I read John Tagg's piece "Exit Theory". Tagg's history of photography theory is bookended by the collapse of two kinds of consensus: in the 1970s, the waning of the social democratic consensus that had prevailed since the end of the Second World War, and, in our own day, the faltering (if not yet the terminal demise) of the neoliberal consensus established in its stead. One manifestation of the latter is the EU referendum outcome in Britain.

One way of interpreting the Brexit vote is as a protest born of popular anger against economic neoliberalism and unregulated globalization, whose concrete, visible consequences are felt and seen across the UK: conspicuously increased income inequalities; depressed wages (especially in unskilled occupations); large-scale immigration; and a governmental commitment to shrinking the state by eroding all forms of social welfare. Protest against neoliberalism sounds laudable, yet the most notorious image from the Brexit campaign conjures an uglier form of populist protest ([fig. 11](#)).



Figure 11.

Family design agency, Breaking point: the EU has failed us all, Brexit campaign poster, 2016 Digital image courtesy of UK Independence Party

The interest in the 1970s, to which Tagg alludes, is not the preserve of academics and curators. The poster produced by the unofficial Leave.EU campaign of the UK Independence Party (UKIP) and toured through London on the side of trucks ([fig. 11](#)), is intertextually (and in my view self-consciously) linked to an earlier icon of British electoral politics ([fig. 12](#)).

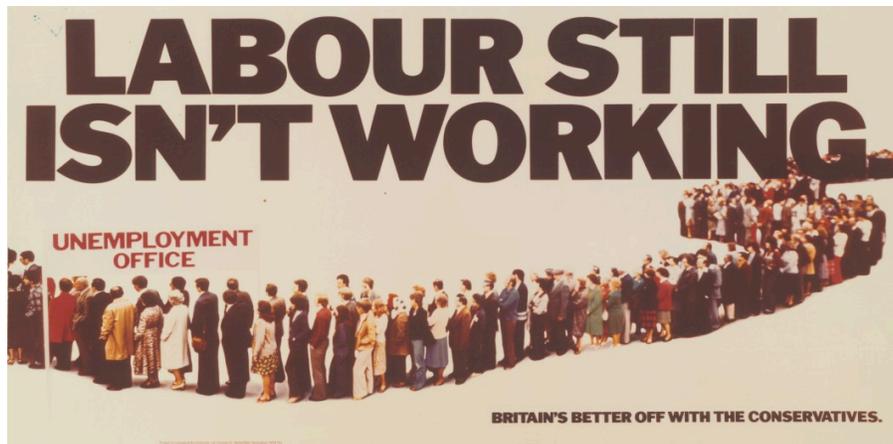


Figure 12.

Saatchi & Saatchi, Labour Isn't Working, Conservative Party campaign poster, 1979 Digital image courtesy of the Conservative Party

But now the wit and humour are gone; nor is there an address to the country as a whole or an invitation to subscribe to the programme of any particular party. We are, instead, offered the contention that the EU has failed all of “us”. It is this “us” that is troubling, precisely because it is one side of a “them and us” polarization in which the people depicted are excluded from the audience apostrophized by the text.

Some years ago I argued that, of the theoretical paradigms that emerged in the study of photography in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Roland Barthes’s *Camera Lucida*, with its emphasis on subjectivity, memory, and temporality, has proven more influential than the politically engaged work of Tagg, Victor Burgin, Allan Sekula, or Martha Rosler.¹⁴ The emergence of emotion and affect as a significant orientation in recent writings on photography suggests that this diagnosis was not wrong-headed. Whether in a Deleuzian or a resolutely anti-theoretical mode, affect studies regard the production of emotional or affective communities as one of photography’s most powerful effects. The problem is that the tacitly presupposed subject of this community formation tends to be a white, Western, liberal bourgeois viewer--the “we” to which Susie Linfield makes such frequent and untroubled reference in *The Cruel Radiance*.¹⁵

As the UKIP poster shows, though, “we” is a treacherous term. Known as a “shifter” in linguistics, its meaning is utterly dependent on the communicative situation, and its capacity for producing inclusion and exclusion unlimited and unpredictable. It is not a sufficient basis on which to found a critical practice adequate to the politics of our time. Better, perhaps, to return to Barbara H. Rosenwein’s account of emotional communities, if we wish to understand the political efficacy of affect. Rosenwein argues that emotional communities are governed by “systems of feeling”, which include

“the modes of emotional expression that they expect, encourage, tolerate, and deplore”.¹⁶ The UKIP poster both expresses and appeals to emotions with variable positions in Britain’s affective economy: antipathy towards the EU; fear of immigration; racist hostility. British political culture has conventionally tolerated the first two and deplored the third. What the poster does is seek to change the rules regarding what emotions can be expressed and tolerated in the public sphere. It offers a form of affective community built around negative emotions that are designed to foster paranoid closure and inwardness, to constitute the “we” of the text through common rejection of the people portrayed in the photograph. Herein lies the political rationality of this image: its capacity to change “feeling rules” in ways that exceed or bypass the accepted limits of political debate.

To come back to John Tagg’s closing questions, it seems to me that the UKIP poster, when understood in this light, represents an intervention in the codes, institutions, and relations of power, but not of the kind Tagg, or indeed I, would have hoped for. This alerts us to the need for a mode of critique that takes seriously the politics of emotions but does not see affective communities as an unalloyed good.

Response by

David Company, Reader in Photography, University of Westminster, London

John Tagg's invitation to respond to his "Exit Theory" dropped into my email inbox while I sat with coffee in New York after seeing two separate exhibitions by the British artist and writer Victor Burgin. A good coincidence.

A Chelsea gallery was presenting two of Burgin's recent video pieces; another gallery, on the less salubrious but upcoming Bowery, was showing the eleven-panel work *UK76*, now forty years old.¹⁷ All the works combine image and text. The video projections comprise scrolling photo panoramas and/or camera movements through computer-generated interiors, intercut with texts, and they consider mid-century modernist architecture (by Mies van der Rohe and Frank Lloyd Wright) through its complex and often suppressed relation to politics and history. Modernism as autonomous, as a "fresh start", is a dangerous myth. This is the gallery's press release:

Prairie . . . describes the history of "The Mecca" apartment building, built in 1892 and destroyed almost sixty years later when Mies van der Rohe undertook a redesign and expansion of the Illinois Institute of Design. Combining images and descriptions of van der Rohe's Crown Hall with those of former Mecca residents, *Prairie* unearths an erased history, revealing the close links between memory and space.

In *Mirror Lake*, Burgin contrasts the history of Frank Lloyd Wright's Seth Peterson Cottage, located in what is now Mirror Lake State Park, Wisconsin, with that of the Winnebago culture and tribe, which was forcefully relocated from that same area to Nebraska in the late 19th century. Burgin's work positions such architectural sites as the crystallization of our wishes and fears about the past, present, and future. The forgotten stories he illuminates, whether real or imagined, underscore that the built environment is not an isolated, physical construct, but rather a shifting perception layered with many different cultural histories.

UK76 is a photo-text work, pasted directly to the wall. Eleven large scale photographic images borrowing the typically mid-1970s rhetoric of black-and-white documentary, reportage and street photography are overlaid with words derived from or mimicking advertising, cinema publicity, and fiction. Back then, text within the frame did seem something of an affront to the aesthetic norms of art. It was also technically quite tricky to achieve,

believe it or not. For his newer works Burgin spent around eighteen months teaching himself how to use industrial strength CGI programs. In the new works and the old, the calculated tensions between image and text do not resolve into easily consumable messages, opening a space for the reader/viewer to negotiate. The technical, aesthetic, and formal differences are as stark as the continuities over four decades. Some things have changed for Victor Burgin and some have not.



Figure 13.

Installation view, VICTOR BURGIN: UK76, 4 December 2015 - 5 February 2016, Great Titchfield Street, London Digital image courtesy of Richard Saltoun Gallery

As Tagg notes, the most radical photographic gestures can be bought, resold, and bought again in the free market of contemporary art. “Even these once intransigent works could be readily absorbed”, as he puts it. Be that as it may, the important distinction is between art that is made with the auctioneer’s easel in mind, and art that isn’t (I think the phrase is Burgin’s own). The only thing the bourgeoisie cannot hang on its walls, wrote Terry Eagleton somewhere around 1990, is its own political defeat.

Although I didn’t live through it as an adult, it seems clear to me that the moment in the 1970s that Tagg describes so well was indeed remarkable, and its implications profound. I came to that moment when I studied photography, film, and video at the end of the 1980s. I soon realized that the positions that had been staked out, in writings and in images, in implicit or explicit opposition to everything—from the unconscious of patriarchy and the persistence of colonial attitudes, to neo-liberal economics and the hegemony of its art market—were positions that were going to remain pertinent for as long as those ills were around.

I don't see the current interest in that 1970s moment as a simple curatorial repackaging and sanitizing, nor as the last gasp of the artists and academics that contributed to that moment and now look to "retirement". Yes, on some level the works are dated and can be subsumed into art history and social history, but only the wilful are blind to their contemporary pertinence (wilful blindness being no more or less common now than I imagine it was in the 1970s when that work reached its first small but vital audience).

Perhaps the single greatest challenge of critical engagement is *vigilance*, the need to keep returning to certain hard-won lessons, but each time formulating them differently, because the "same old problems" do not circle around: they spiral around, never quite repeating themselves. I sense that spiralling vigilance in Burgin's art and writing since the 1970s.

It is a daily challenge, as a teacher, to help students to grasp the history of critical resistance, to feel a part of its various ruptures and the continuities. When I show students the work from the 1970s I don't show it as a "high point", necessarily, nor a foundation. I try to show it alongside either what those artists and writers are doing now, or what younger and older figures do with a similar spirit. So, Hannah Höch with Alexis Hunter or with EJ Major. The Worker Photography movements of the 1930s with Jo Spence or with LaToya Ruby Frazier. Martha Rosler with Mark Neville. Ernst Friedrich with Bertolt Brecht, or with Broomberg & Chanarin. Siegfried Kracauer with Allan Sekula, with Ariella Azoulay or Esther Leslie. It is messy, of course, and full of problems, but it does sidestep the unhelpful fetishizing of the 1970s.

Response by

Shawn Michelle Smith, School of the Art Institute of Chicago

Photography. History. Crisis.

The making and circulation of videos of the police shooting African Americans is a new form of political photographic practice in the United States. The videos provide “new modes of intervention in the codes, institutions and relations of power”, in John Tagg’s words. They offer brute evidence of anti-black police violence and murder, and in this way they are undeniably important. But beyond this, the effects of their circulation remain ambiguous, as a look at historical images of white supremacist violence against the black body makes evident.

The current videos of police brutality have an important historical precursor in the infamous video George Holliday made in 1991 that showed Los Angeles police officers beating Rodney King with night sticks. A year after a portion of the video was first broadcast on television the four white officers charged with the beating were acquitted, sparking the Los Angeles rebellion in late April and early May 1992. According to the Ventura County jury the video did not provide sufficient evidence to convict the officers who delivered fifty-six blows to King’s prone body. However, a wider viewing audience saw enough in the video to refuse a “not guilty” verdict, and rioted. ¹⁸

If the Rodney King video provides a measure, recent videos of police shootings may be ineffective in securing legal prosecution of police officers and instigating institutional transformation, even as they affectively move an expansive audience in powerful ways. The videos beg for accountability that they cannot deliver. They are important records of a recurring nightmare of violence against black bodies that alone they cannot stop.

Lynching photographs provide another precedent for images of authorized and institutionalized white violence on the black body in the United States. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, lynching photographs were used in the press both to condone and to condemn the murder of African Americans. As the circulation of Lawrence Beitler’s infamous photograph of the lynching of Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith makes clear, as late as 1930 the white press could publish a lynching photograph without decrying the violence it presented. *The Muncie Evening Press* (8 August 1930), which ran Beitler’s image, framed the lynching as retribution for an attack on a white woman. The paper also demonstrated that white officials were implicated in the lynching, but failed to censure their inaction. In one of the stories on its front page, reporter William E. Hallberg quoted Sheriff Campbell as saying he had refused to intervene in the mob murder for fear that white people “would

have been endangered". Campbell was at the scene of the crime but, by his own admission, did nothing to protect the young African American men murdered by the mob.

Conversely, the black press framed the same photograph as evidence of white terrorism and used it to condemn institutionalized white supremacy. In their caption for the photograph, editors of *Crisis* magazine (October 1930) drew attention to the clearly visible white faces in the image in order to challenge the official lie that the perpetrators could not be prosecuted because they could not be identified. Editors of the *Chicago Defender* newspaper (16 August 1930), which also ran the image, underscored that "the police made no resistance" to the crime.

Like historical lynching photographs, the current videos of police shooting African Americans show both the victims and perpetrators of white supremacist violence. They show the police firing at unarmed African Americans, and some of them have been used successfully in efforts to indict police officers of murder. This is indisputably important.

However, the videos of police shootings, like historical lynching photographs and the Rodney King video, also make spectacles of the violated black body. They reinforce a vision of African Americans as victims, helpless in the face of systemic racism and institutionalized white violence. They show over and over again that unarmed African Americans can be shot down in the street. In this way, they reinforce white supremacy by suggesting that violence against African Americans is authorized and ongoing.

There are a number of important differences to draw between historical lynching photographs, which are still, analogue prints, and the moving images of digital videos. And there are important differences to draw between the videos themselves. Cameras mounted on the dashboards of police cars produced some, like that of Laquan McDonald's murder in Chicago, while a witness to the crime produced others, like the video of Philando Castile's murder outside Minneapolis, made by his fiancée, Diamond Reynolds. A larger public did not see the video of McDonald until a year after the murder took place, when a judge ordered it to be released, while Reynolds streamed her video of Castile live on Facebook as he was dying.

Despite their differences, reading the current videos in relation to historical images of white supremacist violence reveals important similarities that might give one pause. At the most basic level, such a comparison demonstrates that images that implicate the police in the murder of African Americans have existed for decades, and yet the violence persists. The images alone cannot stop the violence, or dismantle white supremacy, or demand accountability, or effect institutional change.

Like lynching photographs and the Rodney King video, the current videos of the police shooting African Americans provide evidence that is important but ultimately insufficient. Simply circulating the videos or watching them does not constitute an anti-racist act. One needs to stop asking the images to perform work they cannot accomplish. Ultimately, what one might learn from historical images of white supremacist violence against the black body is that the current videos require the efforts of scholars, artists, activists, lawmakers, and politicians to direct their meaning in protest against institutionalized white supremacy, anti-black police violence, and murder. The images alone will not perform this critical political work; they can only incite one to it.

Response by

Young-June Lee, Hanyang University, Seoul

A Need to Renew the Mode in which Critical Discourse on Photography is Employed

We are witnessing a moment of history in which the photographic image has lost the power that it once assumed it had. At this juncture, what matters is not what is being recorded, but the mode in which a record is made and inserted into a complex array of institutions and relations. What is to blame is not the onslaught of digital or artificial intelligence, but the ever more complex layers of contexts and effects in which photography functions.

The emergence of industrial photographers in Korea in the first decade of the twenty-first century is a significant phenomenon, in that Korea's industry is facing a severe crisis after decades of rapid expansion. This crisis in Korea's heavy industry, once the cash cow of the country, is so serious that shipbuilding and shipping companies such as Daewoo Shipbuilding & Marine Engineering Company and Hanjin Shipping are facing radical restructuring. As if in response to Hegel's famous axiom that "the owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of the dusk", the photographic reflection on industrial scenes comes at this moment. ¹⁹

A new type of industrial photographer now enjoys a different status from that of industrial photographers of the past, whose works were produced on commissions from industrial companies. The work of the new type of industrial photographer is based solely on their own interest and motivation. Their presence is significant in that the scene of industry, especially heavy industry, is now being incorporated into the field of sensibility and meaning. Before this, scenes of industry were either used for government propaganda or were criticized as sites of alienation and the exploitation of labour. Leaving this bipolar response to industry behind, some photographers are now producing images of industry which are heavily laden with complex structures and show a new sensibility towards machinery.

Among these photographers, the case of Jo Choonman is peculiar. Born in 1957 into a poor rural family, he went to work at Hyundai Heavy Industries as a welder when he was seventeen. He endured long hard labour, sometimes working at construction sites in Saudi Arabia. As the labour was very tough at this time, sometimes causing him injuries, he did not have the luxury of observing the scenes of industry. But, as time went by, he gradually developed his own sensibility towards industrial scenes, discovering the sublime beauty inherent in complex industrial structures, and began to take pictures of them. His photographs encompass wide fields of heavy industry

such as shipbuilding, the petrochemical industry, and construction sites. He has recorded almost all the production sites in Ulsan, one of the biggest industrial areas of the world.

Though it refers in part to earlier industrial photographs by Margaret Bourke-White, Paul Strand, and Charles Sheeler, Choonman's work requires a new approach to critical discourse. His works are a testimony to the fact that photography these days evokes overdetermined layers of meaning. A new kind of machine critic who delves into the meaning of the history, structure, and function of machinery is required to dig into these layers. The vicissitudes of heavy industry on a global scale are also seen in Choonman's works, which are the result of the prosperity of heavy industry in Korea. Having once thrived in Europe and America in the early twentieth century, the centre of heavy industry shifted to Korea in the late 1980s and is now about to take another shift to China. With the recent decline of heavy industry in Korea, Choonman's photographs have now acquired a new meaning as a record of this history. Thus critical discourse on his photographs also has to consider the mode in which photography has extended its role in relation to industry.



Figure 14.

Jo Choonman, Ship building, 25 March 2016, inkjet print, 110 × 165 cm
Digital image courtesy of Jo Choonman



Figure 15.

Jo Choonman, Petro Chemical Plant, 25 January 2015, inkjet print, 110 × 165 cm
Digital image courtesy of Jo Choonman

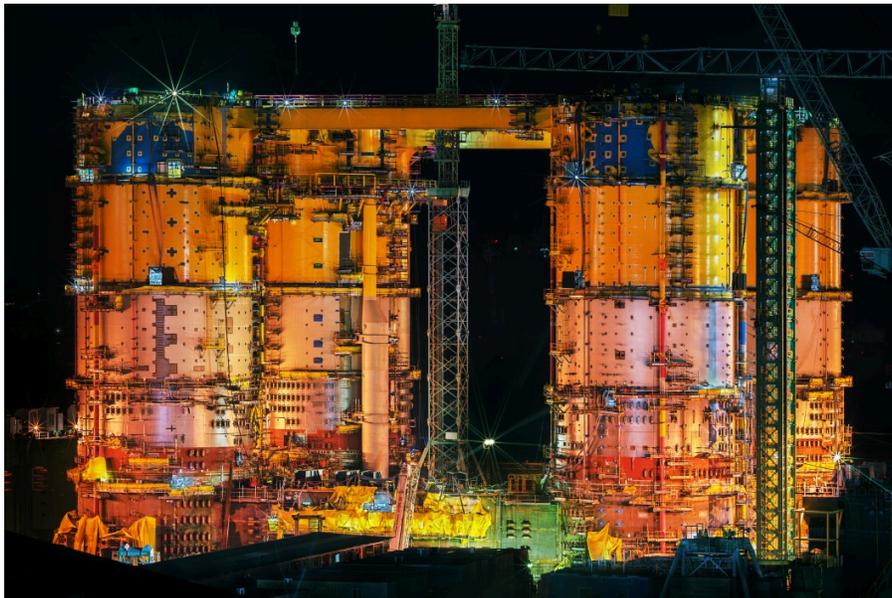


Figure 16.

Jo Choonman, Off Shore Plant, 15 March 2016, inkjet print, 110 × 165 cm
Digital image courtesy of Jo Choonman

Footnotes

- 1 See John Tagg, "Discipline and Protest: Thinking Photography After Foucault", in *The (Un)becomings of Photography: On Reaggregating and Reassembling the Photographic and its Institutions*, ed. Lars Willumeit (Krakow: Fundacja Sztuk Wizualnych, 2016), 57-71.

- 2 Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota, 1984) (original French text, 1979); Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism", *New Left Review* 1, no. 146 (July-Aug. 1984): 59-92.
- 3 See Steve Edwards, *The Making of English Photography: Allegories* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 2006), 300-1, and my "Origins without End", in *Photography and Its Origins*, ed. Tanya Sheehan and Andrés Zervignón (New York: Routledge, 2014), 67-81.
- 4 Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015).
- 5 Carol Hanish, "The Personal is Political", in *Notes from the Second Year: Women's Liberation* (New York: Radical Feminism, 1970).
- 6 Jamon Halvaksz, "Photographing Spirits: Biangai Photography, Ancestors, and the Environment in Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea", *Visual Anthropology* 21, no. 4 (2008): 310-26.
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- 8 David Campbell, "'Black Skin and Blood:' Documentary Photography and Santu Mofokeng's Critique of the Visualization of Apartheid South Africa", *History and Theory* 48, no. 4 (2009): 54.
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- 11 Julia Adeney Thomas, "The Evidence of Sight", *History and Theory* 48, no. 4 (2009): 158.
- 12 Victor Burgin, "Socialist Formalism", *Studio International* 191, no. 980 (March/April 1976): 148-54.
- 13 Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2011).
- 14 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), originally published in French in 1980.
- 15 Susie Linfield, *The Cruel Radiance: Photography and Political Violence* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2010).
- 16 Barbara H. Rosenwein, "Worrying About Emotions in History", *American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (June 2002): 842.
- 17 See, respectively, <http://www.cristintierney.com/exhibitions/victor-burgin-midwest> and <https://www.bridgetdonahue.nyc/exhibitions/victor-burgin-uk76/>.
- 18 <http://timelines.latimes.com/rodney-king/> (1 March 2016).
- 19 G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, tr. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), Preface.

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Introduction by

Martina Droth, Deputy Director and Chief Curator

This cover collaboration was developed in tandem with the conference *Photography and Britishness*, held at the Yale Center for British Art on 4–5 November 2016, at which Martin Parr was the keynote speaker. A central aim of the conference (the proceedings of which are presented in this [issue](#)) was to examine the two-way relationship between photography and Britishness—to ask how each acts upon, defines, and challenges the other. We used Parr’s photographs of British places and people as a reference point for this question: his work is often characterized as capturing an “essence” of Britishness, but it is as true to say that his images have come to define particular notions of what Britishness looks like. This interrelationship is threaded through the huge archive of photographs that Parr has created over his career, which presents the familiar and the strange, the customary and the incidental, age-old traditions and fleeting trends.

Parr describes himself as a documentary photographer, and during his talk he emphasized his commitment to this genre. As he put it, he sees it as his role and responsibility to photographically document the world. His talk presented a chronology spanning forty years, from his earliest black-and-white photographs made in the 1970s, to his forays into colour film in the 1980s, and through to the present day of digital photography. The selection of images presented here is extracted from that chronology and presents samplings of Parr’s work across the decades.

Response by

Martin Parr, Photographer

I was brought up in Surrey, which is one of the home counties, the area surrounding London, where many people commute into the City. These areas, by nature, are rather dull and suburban, and here on a misty winter day stands another commuter on his way to work. The blandness of this backdrop gave me the added advantage that when I went anywhere else in the UK, it became overwhelmingly interesting.



Figure 1.

Martin Parr, Surrey, Epsom, England, UK, 1973 Digital image courtesy of Martin Parr / © Martin Parr / Magnum Photos (LON29514)

Once a week at the spectacular De La Warr Pavilion (one of the best modernist buildings in the UK) in Bexhill-on-Sea the evening dance takes place, or at least it did in the 1970s, when I made a pilgrimage down from Yorkshire to photograph this event. For me, it was one of those wonderful moments, as the vestiges of our fading country and empire danced slowly into the sunset.



Figure 2.

Martin Parr, De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill on Sea, East Sussex, England, UK, 1978 Digital image courtesy of Martin Parr / © Martin Parr / Magnum Photos (LON28062)

Documenting the run-down seaside resort of New Brighton, near Liverpool, was my first venture into colour photography in the early 1980s. I was able to show the shabbiness of the resort mixed with the determination of families to come here and enjoy themselves. This was in the ice cream bar of the now demolished lido. Most of the time when a person is watching the camera and the photographer in a candid shot, it just does not work. But the magic of photography is that all rules are there to be broken and this is a case where the subject's quizzical look helps to bring the photo alive.



Figure 3.

Martin Parr, New Brighton, England, UK, from '*The Last Resort*', 1983-85
Digital image courtesy of Martin Parr / © Martin Parr / Magnum Photos
(LON6977)

Badminton horse trials is an equestrian event held annually in the Cotswolds, a gorgeous rural area within easy driving distance of London. The event is always held on the first weekend of May and there are three days of horses navigating a difficult cross-country circuit. It attracts the young and wealthy from London, especially the horsey types. Back in the 80s when long hair was a done thing, a constant flick back of hair was one of the defining attributes of being a Sloane. This was the phrase that defined the young aspirational upper classes.



Figure 4.

Martin Parr, Badminton Horse Trials, Badminton House, Gloucestershire, England, UK, from '*The Cost of Living*', 1988 Digital image courtesy of Martin Parr / © Martin Parr / Magnum Photos (LON28930)

This is Chew Stoke cricket club searching for a lost ball. In 1992, I spent a year documenting this commuting village that is about seven miles from Bristol. Every aspect of village life was recorded and then mounted as an exhibition in the village hall at the end of the year. Cricket is a deliciously slow game and the pavilion, the teas, and the waiting, are an essential part of this strange and peculiar British game. Even losing a ball is one of the rituals of a sleepy day watching a cricket match.



Figure 5.

Martin Parr, Cricket Players Looking for Cricket Ball, Chew Stoke, England, UK, 1992 Digital image courtesy of Martin Parr / © Martin Parr / Magnum Photos (LON55595)

Weymouth in Dorset is one of the most beautiful seaside resorts in the UK. It has a brilliant beach and seems to attract the older crowd. Everything is reassuringly British. Sunglasses always look good in photographs, their stark shape and contrast standing out, and often giving images a strong lynchpin. Here I was experimenting with how people and objects can appear out of focus, but with a kiss of flash this is one of those rare moments when it all came together and worked.



Figure 6.

Martin Parr, Weymouth., England, UK, from '*Think of England*', 2000
Digital image courtesy of Martin Parr / © Martin Parr / Magnum Photos
(LON19547)

On an August bank holiday weekend in Scotland I came across this stunning outdoor lido in Gourock, a town situated on the Clyde about fifteen miles from Glasgow. The dark brooding sky contrasting perfectly with the bright blue of the water helped to amplify the rather surreal nature of this pool. After publication, the lone swimmer came forward and I was able to send him a print.



Figure 7.

Martin Parr, Gourock Lido, Scotland, UK, 2004 Digital image courtesy of Martin Parr / © Martin Parr / Magnum Photos (LON65518)

This is Fiona Woolf about to be elected Lord Mayor of London at the Guildhall, bang in the heart of the City of London. This ceremony, which always takes place on the second Friday of November, is called the Silent Ceremony as the whole thing has no words uttered whatsoever. Like many traditions in the City, this has been going on for centuries, and the day after is always the Lord Mayor's parade. London, despite being at the cutting edge of world finance and banking is also very feudal, as this tradition demonstrates very well.



Figure 8.

Martin Parr, Installation of New Lord Mayor, Fiona Woolf, Silent Ceremony, Guildhall, City of London, England, UK, 2013 Digital image courtesy of Martin Parr / © Martin Parr / Magnum Photos (LON156681)



Conference Proceedings: *Photography and Britishness*

Sarah Victoria Turner and Martina Droth

Authors

Director at the Paul Mellon Centre

Deputy Director and Chief Curator at the Yale Center for British Art

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to our speakers for allowing their presentations to be filmed, live streamed, and recorded for this issue of *British Art Studies*. We want to thank our partners and collaborators who made the conference possible and worked with us on its conception and development. Our conference committee consisted of John Tagg, Distinguished Professor of Art History at the University of Binghamton, who spent the autumn of 2016 in residence at Yale as the Andrew C. Ritchie Visiting Scholar; Jennifer A. Watts, Curator of Photography at the Huntington; and Chitra Ramalingam, Lecturer in History at Yale University and Research Associate at YCBA; all three worked closely with us on shaping the conference programme, as well as chairing the sessions at the event itself. Filming the conference for online presentation entailed a significant team effort. At the Yale Center for British Art we especially thank Arnold Boles, Media Technician; Paul Harding, Chief of Operations; Sarah Kraus; Senior Administrative Assistant in the Department of Research; Jane Nowosadko, Senior Manager of Programs; and Ronnie Ryz, Senior Associate of Communications and Marketing. At Yale Media Services we are grateful to the Classroom Technology and Media Specialists who assisted at the event: Heather Gwynn, Calvin Stoner, and Remo Capello. The Yale Broadcast Center oversaw video and production, and we are immensely grateful to Patrick Leone, Director; Doug Forbush, Associate Director; Guy Ortoleva, Video Producer/Editor; and last but not least Jude Breidenbach, Associate Producer, who additionally undertook the task of post-production. This conference was the second to have been organized collaboratively by the YCBA, PMC, and the Huntington. The first took place at the Huntington in December 2015, and focused on portraiture. We are thankful to Amy Meyers, Director of the YCBA, Mark Hallett, Director of Studies at the PMC, and Steve Hindle, W.M. Keck Foundation Director of Research at the Huntington, for supporting the continuation of the collaboration.

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Introduction to the conference

The video-recordings presented here were made at the conference *Photography and Britishness*, held at the Yale Center for British Art on November 4 – 5, 2016. The conference was the result of a collaboration between the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, London, and the Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens in San Marino—three research institutions that have a converging interest in British art. The conference sought to investigate the various ways in which notions of “Britishness” have been communicated, inflected, and contested through the photographic image. It was not a conference about the history of photography in Britain, or about British photography. Rather, it sought to consider the nature of the relationship between photography and Britishness: the notion that photography can capture images of Britishness, at the same time that our sense of what Britishness constitutes is produced by the photographic image. A key question for the conference was whether Britishness can have a photographic referent—or whether it is itself an effect of representation. Speakers at the conference approached these questions from a wide range of perspectives and focusing on a diverse number of photographic materials—from family albums and studio portraits to advertisements, reportage, and aerial photography—which demonstrated the complexities and instabilities not only of the term Britishness, but also of the medium of photography.

The conference was opened with an introduction by John Tagg. The videos included here are presented in the order they were delivered.



[Watch Video](#)

Figure 1.

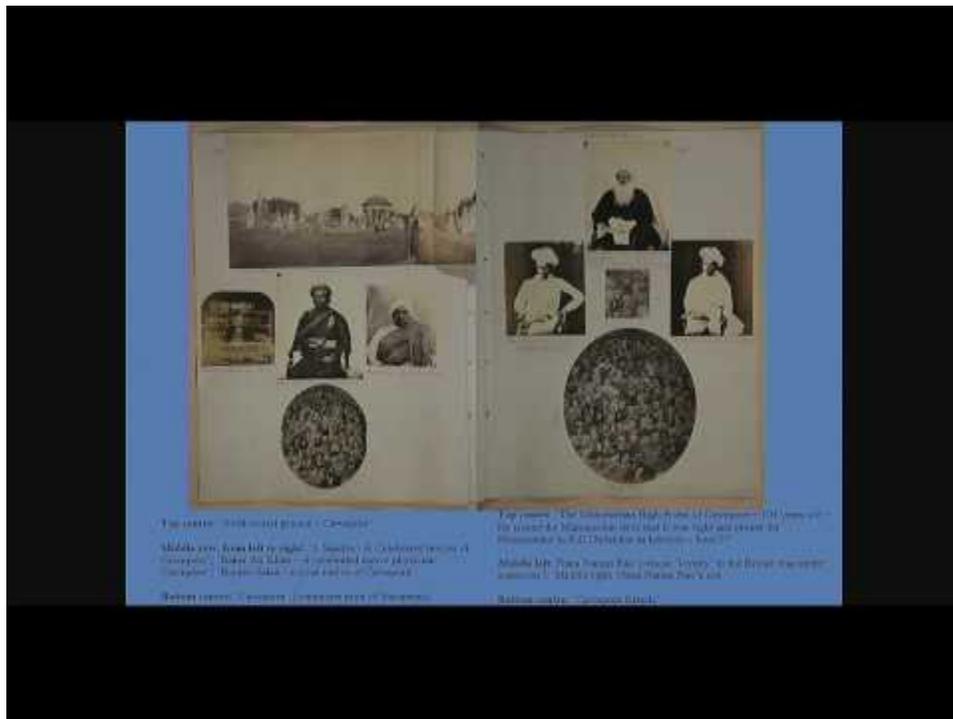
Martina Droth and John Tagg, Welcome and Introduction, *Photography and Britishness*, 4-5 November 2016, at the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT

Session 1—*Imperial Britishness*

Sean Willcock, *Photographing Imperial Sovereignty: Colonial Britishness and Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Nineteenth-Century India*

How did the camera instantiate British sovereignty in imperial contexts during the Victorian period? The ability of photography to objectify and “other” colonized populations has been well documented, but the efficacy of imperialism as a mode of imperial governance was as much a function of imagining shared political horizons as it was about constructing divisive racial hierarchies. This paper focuses on the deployment of the camera during a moment of acute political crisis in nineteenth-century India, when both the significance and the scope of British power were highly unstable, arguing that photography’s unique formal features enabled colonials to picture a precarious imperial sovereignty as a viable mode of geopolitical administration. The leveling aesthetic of photography—its capacity to draw heterogeneous peoples into what Christopher Pinney has termed a “common epistemological space”—meant that it could serve as a visual register for the elusive connective tissue of imperial subjecthood, effectively reifying a

useful political abstraction. Yet, as much as British sovereign authority could be embodied by this visual logic, British identity could simultaneously be dissolved by the homogenizing grammar of the medium. This paper therefore examines how colonials grappled with photography's technical and formal possibilities in ways that attempted to forge a viable imperial polity while preserving a sense of privileged Britishness. Looking in particular at the palliative, diplomatic role played by the photographic portraiture of Dr. John Nicholas Tresidder in the immediate aftermath of the Indian Rebellion (1857–58), this paper assesses how the new visual technology in ected imperial Britishness in complex and unpredictable ways.



[Watch Video](#)

Figure 2.

Sean Willcock, *Photographing Imperial Sovereignty: Colonial Britishness and Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Nineteenth-Century India*, paper presented at *Photography and Britishness* conference, 4–5 November 2016, at the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT

Jeff Rosen, *Julia Margaret Cameron, Prince Alamayou, and the “Secret of England’s Greatness”*

In June 1868, as Great Britain was concluding its war with Abyssinia, the British army stormed the mountaintop stronghold of King Theodore, deposing the child Prince Alamayou, leaving him orphaned and alone. In July, the young boy was transported from Africa to Freshwater on the Isle of Wight in the care of a British officer. Soon thereafter, he was escorted to Julia Margaret Cameron’s studio, becoming the subject of numerous photographs

that Cameron copy- righted on July 23, 27, and 29. Cameron clearly hoped to take advantage of the popular news of Britain's military triumph as much as Queen Victoria's expressed interest in his welfare and future upbringing. On July 15, 1868, for example, the Illustrated London News wrote the following: "Theodore's son is at present staying in the Isle of Wight with Captain Speedy. He is to be brought up as the son of an English gentleman, with the view of his entering the Indian Civil Service."

This presentation examines Cameron's photographs of Prince Alamayou along two distinct axes: Britain's so-called civilizing mission to educate and shape the world in its image defined her first approach to portraying the Abyssinian prince. As a result, she initially depicted the child as an unworldly African, providing a model for his later portrayal as an English gentleman. In the second, related axis, Cameron depicted the Prince and his attendants in allegorical compositions representing the victorious and the vanquished, subjects that acquire special meanings in the context of British colonialism. In her photographs, Cameron portrayed the Prince as emblematic of his country's defeat, but she also appropriated his image to embody the Victorian myth of Britain's altruism and benevolence as a conquering power, embracing the same theme of magnanimity that is found in Thomas Barker's contemporary print, *The Secret of England's Greatness*.



[Watch Video](#)

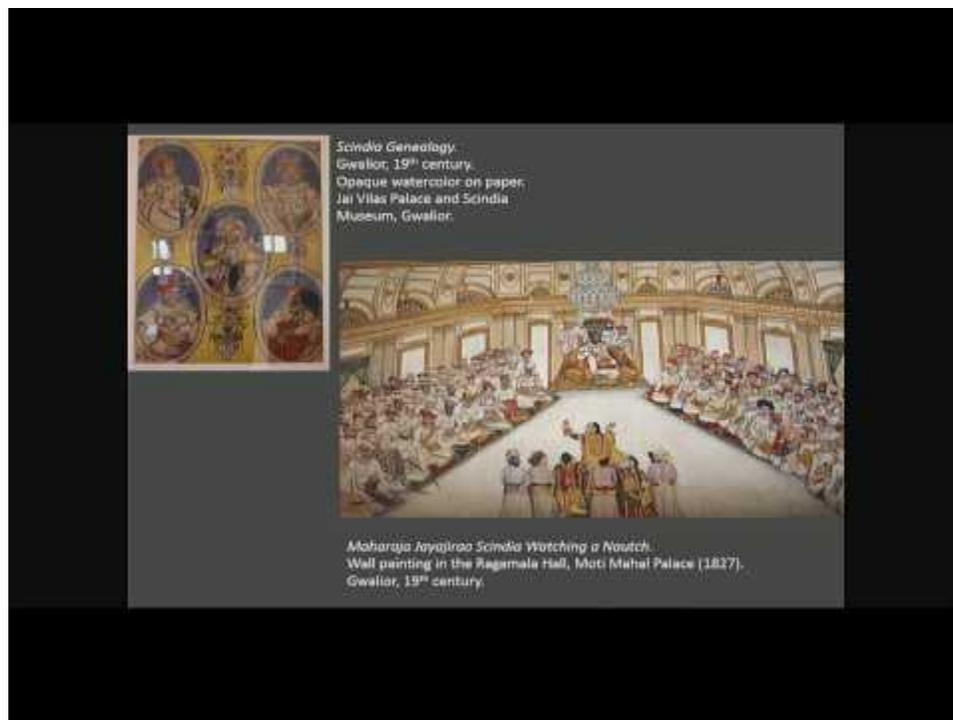
Figure 3.

Jeff Rosen, Julia Margaret Cameron, Prince Alamayou, and the “Secret of England’s Greatness”, paper presented at *Photography and Britishness* conference, 4–5 November 2016, at the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT

Holly Shaffer, *Victoria Photographic India, circa 1900: The Material of Revolution*

In the late nineteenth century, the Poona Photographic Company in western India produced an album titled “Victoria Photographic General.” On each page, the image of Queen Victoria is set within a landscape of swirling vines, elephants, and Indian and British dignitaries. At the center of a diagram of subservience, the Queen also watches over a con guration of rulers, entrepreneurs, and photographers with competing colonial and nationalist a liations. The album is a portrait of society, photography, and revolution. In this paper, I focus rst on the album’s materiality, and then on the transferal of its design across media and anti-colonial purpose. In the format of imperial photographic albums and of carte de visite, the album is also in dialogue with indigenous traditions of portraiture and painting. Unbound by the photograph as contemporary documentation, the album includes photographs of drawings and lithographs of historical personages to fuse media with ornamental design into a lineage of portraiture and artistic practice.

In the second portion of the talk, I examine how the material chain of portraits intersects with Indian nationalists' reuse of the album's format to serve revolutionary rather than colonial ends. On the one hand, nationalists de led Victoria's image while committing violent acts against the empire. On the other, the album offered a unique compositional format ripe for appropriation. The high-ranking Scindia Maharaja, for instance, had portraits painted in the palace to depict Indian nationalists. Drawing on images from across India, and history, the mural program approximates the album's format while collapsing photographic with painted time. A group obeisant to Victoria in the album coalesces into a messianic guard on the walls. The album therefore identifies the photographic means of spreading Britishness across its empire, while its subsequent adaptations of media and content transform it into a tool of anticolonial resistance on Indian visual terms.



[Watch Video](#)

Figure 4.

Holly Shaffer, *Victoria Photographic India*, circa 1900: *The Material of Revolution*, paper presented at *Photography and Britishness* conference, 4-5 November 2016, at the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT

Session 1 - Panel discussion chaired by Martina Droth

In this panel discussion, chaired by Martina Droth, the speakers from Session 1—Sean Willcock, Jeff Rosen, and Holly Shaffer—answer questions from the audience.



[Watch Video](#)

Figure 5.

Photography & Britishness conference, Panel Discussion - Session 1, In this panel discussion, chaired by Martina Droth, the speakers from Session 1—Sean Willcock, Jeff Rosen, and Holly Shaffer—answer questions from the audience

Session 2—*Globalized Britishness*

Jill Haley, *The Colonial Family Album: Māori and Photography in Nineteenth-Century Otago, New Zealand*

With the start of British settlement in New Zealand, the indigenous Māori were caught in a period of transition and a surging tide of modernity. By the 1820s, sealers and whalers had settled at the bottom of New Zealand's South Island and formed relationships with women of the local Kāi Tahu tribe. Their mixed-ancestry children were faced with increasing British influence, first with missionaries and then immigrants to the New Zealand Company's Otago settlement established in 1848. These newcomers brought British goods, technology, practices, and knowledge, and Kāi Tahu became immersed in a British-colonial world that reshaped their lives. Rather than resisting the new influences or being subsumed by them, many Kāi Tahu incorporated aspects of British life into their traditional Māori customs and constructed a new identity. Photography was one of the British practices that Kāi Tahu embraced in their changed world.

This paper considers how Kāi Tahu used photography to shape and communicate their new colonial identity through a case study of a single photograph album. Compiled by the Parata family, a financially advantaged and politically elite mixed-ancestry family, this album offers the opportunity to explore Kāi Tahu engagement with photography. As soon as commercial portrait studios appeared in the Otago colony in the mid-1860s, Kāi Tahu went to have their likenesses taken. The photographs they commissioned of themselves followed the same portrait conventions as British immigrants and bore little resemblance to the ethnographic “type” photographs of Māori produced by professional studios for the commercial market. Photography enabled Kāi Tahu to participate in modern British living, but it also tapped into elements of traditional Māori culture and values, allowing the old Māori world and new British one to be expressed simultaneously. Through photography, Kāi Tahu constructed a new British colonial identity.



[Watch Video](#)

Figure 6.

Jill Haley, *The Colonial Family Album: Māori and Photography in Nineteenth-Century Otago, New Zealand*, paper presented at *Photography and Britishness* conference, 4-5 November 2016, at the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT

Rotem Rozental, *Picturing an Empire: British Aerial Photography in the Middle East*

Hovering above British colonies in the Middle East, this paper examines the early beginnings of aerial photography, its interventions in the region during and after the First World War, its impact over the image of the landscape and, crucially, of the ways in which outsider beholders perceived their national image. A consideration of the tensions between Bavarians and British squadrons, who struggled for dominance in a practice termed as “aerial colonization,” as well as the journey of this photographic viewpoint from East to West, unveils reciprocal relationships in the landscape: formed between surveyed territories, occupiers, and Western viewers. This study therefore goes beyond approaches that situate aerial vision in light of dichotomies between visibility and invisibility, or Paula Amad’s understanding of aerial photography in a “fluid relational context,” to suggest this view from above redefines the limits and capacities of surveillance in civil spaces.

More recently, Eyal Weizmann observed that Winston Churchill’s 1920 support of aerial colonization tactics as means to secure control over occupied territories, introduced a different kind of imperial rule, which substantiated itself upon complete exposure of the edges of a crumbling empire. These previously censored images, as well as the technologies used to produce and preserve them, might therefore uncover a crucial moment in Britain’s existence and demise as a colonizing kingdom. In recent years, these photographs surface in the international legal sphere, where they are recontextualized as historical evidence by authorities and governments that use them to demonstrate questionable ownership over private lands. This study will highlight this slippage in function, before exiting the courtroom and returning to controlled territories: where ancestral links between these early photographic technologies and present-day drones (and their always already-present viewpoint over the landscape) are revealed.



[Watch Video](#)

Figure 7.

Rotem Rozental, *Picturing an Empire: British Aerial Photography in the Middle East*, paper presented at *Photography and Britishness* conference, 4-5 November 2016, at the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT

Orla Fitzpatrick, *Contested Britishness and Photographs of the Belfast Blitz of 1941*

This paper will demonstrate how photographs of the aftermath of the Belfast Blitz of April 1941 were co-opted to reinforce the Northern Irish state's Britishness and its allegiance to the crown. German air raids resulted in spectacular changes to the streetscapes of Belfast, and it is the manner in which photographs of this event were employed that will be explored. It will include a detailed case study of the photobook *Bombs on Belfast: A Camera Record* (1942), which was published during a period of state censorship and control. Images of union flags (a persistent trope within the depiction of the state) and visiting royalty amid ruined homes and factories were coupled with textual references to the religious and political affiliations of the nine hundred victims. Produced by the unionist Belfast Telegraph newspaper, it refers to Ulster gladly paying the price "of its loyalty to the British Empire."

Press photographers, members of the armed forces, and amateurs also created images of the attacks and these appeared in a variety of illustrated books, newspapers, and mass-market magazines such as *Picture Post*. This material will be scrutinized using the tools of design and art history, and

material culture. Narratives surrounding the photographic depiction of ruins will be coupled with references to Calder's "Myth of the Blitz," in which he questioned the overly positive portrayal of civilian morale. Aspects of postcolonial theory are also applicable to the nascent state. Northern Ireland contained a minority population of Catholics who did not identify as British and for whom participation in the war was not welcome. The role of blitz photography in affirming or negating this contested British identity will be fully explored.



[Watch Video](#)

Figure 8.

Orla Fitzpatrick, Contested Britishness and Photographs of the Belfast Blitz of 1941, paper presented at *Photography and Britishness* conference, 4-5 November 2016, at the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT

Session 2 - Panel discussion chaired by Chitra Ramalingam

In this panel discussion, chaired by Chitra Ramalingam, the speakers from Session 2—Jill Haley, Rotem Rozental, and Orla Fitzpatrick—answer questions from the audience.



[Watch Video](#)

Figure 9.

Photography & Britishness conference, Panel Discussion - Session 2, In this panel discussion, chaired by Chitra Ramalingam, the speakers from Session 2—Jill Haley, Rotem Rozental, and Orla Fitzpatrick—answer questions from the audience

Panel Discussion

Chaired by John Tagg, with responses from Angela Kelly, Simon Roberts, and Ego Sowinski Ahaiwe

This panel, chaired by John Tagg, brings together three photographers, Angela Kelly, Simon Roberts and Ego Sowinski Ahaiwe, to discuss how their photographic practices intersect with the concept of Britishness. Examining issues such as identity and belonging, immigration and travel, and the documentation of diverse British experiences and identities within the photographic archive, these practitioners reflect on the work of the photographic image in constructing, reflecting and challenging notions of Britain and Britishness.



[Watch Video](#)

Figure 10.

John Tagg, Angela Kelly, Simon Roberts, and Ego Sowinski Ahaiwe, Panel Discussion, held at *Photography and Britishness* conference, 4–5 November 2016, at the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT

Session 3—*Embattled Britishness*

David Alan Mellor, *That Old, Weird England*

Swathes of British photography, from Henry Fox-Talbot to the present, have been taken up by impulses to conserve uncanny elements from the past during times of change and tension. A primary figure in this process was the late Victorian antiquarian photographer Sir Benjamin Stone, whose pictures of social worthies, pageants and civic ceremonies, and folkloric British festivals were to become so influential for young documentary photographers in the 1970s and 1980s—especially for Tony Ray-Jones, Martin Parr, Anna Fox, and Homer Sykes, when Stone’s books were rediscovered at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s. Ray-Jones was first and chief among the modernizers of Stone by grafting the informalism of the American “New Social Landscape” photography onto a Victorian gothic template that itemized what Stone called “vanishing England.” This paper will deal as much with those dislocating extensions of Stone’s output, which have attempted to renegotiate visions of English identity, sixty and seventy years after his

death, as with Stone himself. Now, in the aftermath of the Referendum to quit the European Union, the British imagination is still dominated by tenacious phantoms from its history.



[Watch Video](#)

Figure 11.

David Alan Mellor, *That Old, Weird England*, paper presented at *Photography and Britishness* conference, 4-5 November 2016, at the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT

Siona Wilson, *State and Documentary: Virginia Woolf's Feminist Photo-Book*

Virginia Woolf's 1938 epistolary text, *Three Guineas*, is widely recognized as a foundational work of feminist pacifism. As her second significant political essay, after *A Room of One's Own* (1929), it is a powerful analysis of the gendered structure of the European nation state on the cusp of the second great twentieth-century conflict. Her argument is structured through a repeated reflection on documentary photographs of the Spanish Civil War and she connects this new liberal-humanist image form to a feminist analysis of the British Empire and the economic legacy of slave-based capitalism. Yet *Three Guineas* is not typically seen as a contribution to 1930s debates about British documentary photography, nor is it understood as a photo-book. This is largely because the few photographic illustrations Woolf inserted into the text, drawn from anonymous press photographs of British male establishment figures, were removed from almost all publications following

Woolf's death in 1941. Even Susan Sontag's scathing discussion of *Three Guineas* in *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003) is unwittingly based upon this doctored (that is, unillustrated) version of the book. The excision of these images has thus rendered Woolf's critical analysis of documentary photography largely opaque. This paper not only presents *Three Guineas* as an overlooked British photo-book but also argues that it is a profound critique of dominant aspects of British documentary practice of the period. If one of the central loci of "Britishness" in the mid-twentieth century is figured through the visual scrutiny of the working class (the British documentary tradition), Woolf instead turns a wry feminist gaze to the British male establishment.



[Watch Video](#)

Figure 12.

Siona Wilson, *State and Documentary: Virginia Woolf's Feminist Photo-Book*, paper presented at *Photography and Britishness* conference, 4-5 November 2016, at the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT

Lynda Nead, "Life in the Elephant": The Grain of Post-War Photography and Identity

In January 1949 the weekly illustrated magazine *Picture Post* published a six-page photo story on everyday life in the Elephant and Castle, a poor and bomb-damaged neighborhood of South London. With words by the journalist

Albert Lloyd and original photographs by the *Post's* Chief Photographer, Bert Hardy, the article powerfully captures the look and feel of life in the run-down terraced streets and homes of postwar Britain.

Hardy's images have an immense depth, both materially and symbolically, which convey the layers of time and accumulated meanings of this moment and the qualities of postwar press photography and its ability to capture a particular historic atmosphere embodied in the faces, clothes, shops, and streets of Britain. What exactly constitutes the atmosphere, which is almost tangible on these pages? It is, of course, to do with page design, but above all is in the photographs; in the figures with their sturdy overcoats and sensible hats, queuing for warm eels. This is the distinctive world of postwar austerity, in which Britishness has been condensed to Englishness and refined in the figure of the resolute Cockney enjoying the first benefits of the new welfare system and enduring ongoing shortages and rationing.

The history of twentieth-century press photography is conventionally told through the revolution in camera technology, but the look of *Picture Post* owes even more to the etchers and printers who translated the photographic image into layers of ink and who, along with photographers, created the pictorial atmosphere of the nation in the postwar years. It is through an understanding of the materiality of the photographs in *Picture Post* that we grasp the empathy between form and subject and the ways in which national identity is defined pictorially in a moment of historical transformation.



[Watch Video](#)

Figure 13.

Lynda Nead, "Life in the Elephant": The Grain of Post-War Photography and Identity, paper presented at *Photography and Britishness* conference, 4-5 November 2016, at the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT

Session 3 - Panel discussion chaired by Jennifer A. Watts

In this panel discussion, chaired by Jennifer A. Watts, the speakers from Session 3—David Alan Mellor, Siona Wilson, and Lynda Nead—answer questions from the audience.



[Watch Video](#)

Figure 14.

Photography & Britishness conference, Panel Discussion - Session 3, In this panel discussion, chaired by Jennifer A. Watts, the speakers from Session 3—David Alan Mellor, Siona Wilson, and Lynda Nead—answer questions from the audience.

Session 4—*Post Britishness*

Mathilde Bertrand, *Photography and the “Condition of Britain”: The Photographic Corpus of the Community Development Projects, 1969-1978*

In 1969, Harold Wilson’s Labour government launched a vast social action program across Britain, known as the Community Development Projects. Teams of researchers and community workers conducted investigations in twelve areas affected by poverty, to assess the effectiveness and coordination of social policies at a local level. Under this program, resource centers were set up locally to encourage community improvement initiatives. Conclusions drawn in the “inter-project reports” criticized the government’s conception of poverty as the result of individual and cultural factors and pointed instead to structural factors in the production of inequalities. Thirteen photographers were commissioned by the projects to produce documentary reports on their activities and to provide photographs for use in the national reports of the CDPs. These images function as documents of an era marked by economic, cultural, and social transition, with a focus on

conditions in poverty-stricken areas. They depict the consequences of industrial, economic, and housing policies on working-class communities but also document efforts to develop campaigns locally.

The photographic corpus of the CDP allows a contextual narrative of British identity in the 1970s to emerge. It also reflects debates over the politics of representation and the critique of social documentary photography, which developed in Britain at the time. This paper presents the first results of a research on the photographic archive of the CDPs, complemented with interviews with some photographers and former workers. It addresses the issues of the nature of the photographers' implication in the projects, the position of these images in the context of evolutions in the British photographic sphere, and their role in the radical social criticism of the 1970s.



[Watch Video](#)

Figure 15.

Mathilde Bertrand, Photography and the "Condition of Britain": The Photographic Corpus of the Community Development Projects, 1969-1978, paper presented at *Photography and Britishness* conference, 4-5 November 2016, at the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT

Anna Arabindan-Kesson, *Landscape, Interrupted: Ingrid Pollard and the Diasporic Imagination*

In the late 1980s, the British artist Ingrid Pollard created several bodies of work (*Pastoral Interludes*, *Seaside Series*, *Oceans Apart*) that explored the intersection of landscape and national identity in the heyday of British multiculturalism, and in the aftermath of the Brixton Riots. This work has most often been read in relation to the placement of (Black) figures within rural landscapes. The presence of these bodies—recalling hidden histories of colonialism—gesture toward the ambivalent meanings associated with “Britishness” and “blackness,” and in turn, materialize the exclusionary logic embedded in constructions of national identity. In part due to the work of scholars such as Stuart Hall, Kellie Jones, Eddie Chambers, and Kobena Mercer, black British artists are receiving renewed attention for their contributions to British art and modernist art practices as a whole. In this context, my paper attends to Pollard’s art historical quotations—her use of nineteenth-century photographic and representational processes—as well as her verbal and visual experiments to explore her relationship to the “Britishness” of landscape representation. Pollard’s black subjects move through the landscape, in an ambivalent space, revealing themselves to be, like tourists or travelers, not quite at home.

All three of the above series draw on several elements of British landscape painting and the tourist culture it was embedded in from the late eighteenth century onward: romanticism, the picturesque, the photographic album, and the postcard. Pollard’s provocative depiction of landscape evokes Wordsworth’s romantic “wanderings.” But in her photographs, such wanderings emerge from a different kind of mobility—one based on oceanic crossings and cultural translation—that appears as a form of historical disruption, or repurposing of, the lineage of associations that have coalesced between landscape, subjectivity, and nation in British art. By focusing on her strategy of interruption, one that moves viewers between memory and desire, I show how Pollard constructs a diasporic art practice that decenters constructions of the “British” artist as they emerged in the artistic and political discourses of the 1980s, with important implications for us still today.



[Watch Video](#)

Figure 16.

Anna Arabindan-Kesson, *Landscape, Interrupted: Ingrid Pollard and the Diasporic Imagination*, paper presented at *Photography and Britishness* conference, 4-5 November 2016, at the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT

Emilia Terracciano, “Letting My Hair Loose”: Revisiting Victorian Legacies in Contemporary Sri Lankan Photography

Within British feminist studies of colonialism, modernist issues are often treated as if the goals of modernization were easily shared by western and colonized women. This paper attempts to dispel the myth, suggesting that to examine gender in a colonial context is to embark upon a historical analysis of power, class formation, and gender. Feminists continue celebrating the aesthetic of British photographer Julia Margaret Cameron as a powerful rebuttal to Victorian patriarchal notions of feminine subjectivity and perceptual mastery. But in the narrative binding of the feminization of photography to Victorian mythologies of motherhood, propriety in the British imagination breaks down when we consider Cameron’s oddly ethnographic photographs of indentured Tamil female laborers from Ceylon. In contrast and as a point of departure, this paper explores Sri Lankan photographer Anoli Perera’s critique of Victorian femininity. Specifically, it considers how Perera’s performative approach to studio photography may subvert Victorian notions of female comportment, virtue, and narrative gaze by using a

powerful symbol of female sexuality: the sitter's hair. Beyond the idea of a protective veil, disheveled hair is turned into a form of resistance in these images.



[Watch Video](#)

Figure 17.

Emilia Terracciano, "Letting My Hair Loose": Revisiting Victorian Legacies in Contemporary Sri Lankan Photography, paper presented at *Photography and Britishness* conference, 4-5 November 2016, at the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT

Session 4 - Panel discussion chaired by Sarah Victoria Turner

In this panel discussion, chaired by Sarah Victoria Turner, the speakers from Session 2—Mathilde Bertrand, Anna Arabindan-Kesson, and Emilia Terracciano—answer questions from the audience.



[Watch Video](#)

Figure 18.

Photography & Britishness conference, Panel Discussion - Session 4, In this panel discussion, chaired by Sarah Victoria Turner, the speakers from Session 2—Mathilde Bertrand, Anna Arabindan-Kesson, and Emilia Terracciano—answer questions from the audience.

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If you believe that we have made a mistake and wish for your material to be removed from our site, please contact us at copyright@paul-mellon-centre.ac.uk.

Please include the following information with your request:

- Name and contact information, including email address and phone number.
- Identification of the resource for consideration of removal. Providing URLs in your communication will help us locate content quickly.
- The reason for the request.

The Publishers respond promptly, normally within 21 business days. We may remove the resource from our site while we assess the validity of the request. Upon completion of the assessment, we will take appropriate action and communicate that action to you.