

For a connoisseurship without frontiers : the new function of old master drawings and the fac-simile in eighteenth-century England

Autor(en): **Griener, Pascal**

Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Outlines**

Band (Jahr): **2 (2004)**

PDF erstellt am: **23.05.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-872227>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Inhalten der Zeitschriften. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern.

Die auf der Plattform e-periodica veröffentlichten Dokumente stehen für nicht-kommerzielle Zwecke in Lehre und Forschung sowie für die private Nutzung frei zur Verfügung. Einzelne Dateien oder Ausdrucke aus diesem Angebot können zusammen mit diesen Nutzungsbedingungen und den korrekten Herkunftsbezeichnungen weitergegeben werden.

Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. Die systematische Speicherung von Teilen des elektronischen Angebots auf anderen Servern bedarf ebenfalls des schriftlichen Einverständnisses der Rechteinhaber.

Haftungsausschluss

Alle Angaben erfolgen ohne Gewähr für Vollständigkeit oder Richtigkeit. Es wird keine Haftung übernommen für Schäden durch die Verwendung von Informationen aus diesem Online-Angebot oder durch das Fehlen von Informationen. Dies gilt auch für Inhalte Dritter, die über dieses Angebot zugänglich sind.

PASCAL GRIENER

For a connoisseurship without frontiers

The new function of old master drawings and the fac-simile
in eighteenth-century England

Richard Krautheimer used to say that nothing is more deceptive than superficial analogies. Long before the comte de Caylus began to multiply his prints after drawings, several engravers had already attempted to capture the spirit of drawings, hoping by this means to ensure their wider diffusion.¹ All these attempts would seem, at first sight, to aim at producing similar types of art works. Yet a world of difference separates them. It is not so much that the techniques of reproduction were radically different, although they were admittedly more refined during the Enlightenment than during the Renaissance, but rather that during the latter period, and for the first time, these reproductions functioned within a totally new framework. They became visual, documentary evidence for the study of art and its history, evidence that could serve as a serious topic for scholarly discussion from Paris to St Petersburg, from Helsinki to Palermo. I should like to outline the economical and epistemological framework that permitted an adequate use of the 'fac-simile'; I shall then try to show that, even if England was not the first country to produce true fac-similes, it was nonetheless here that this form's function was best understood, and where it found its most refined development around 1800.

A NEW ECONOMY OF IMAGES

During the eighteenth century, an impressive array of techniques was developed to facilitate the faithful reproduction of paintings, sculptures and drawings. Connoisseurs and art historians were quick to appreciate the advantages; for the first time in history, they noticed that such documents would enable some art historians to work essentially on reproductions, not on originals; and this was to be achieved in a world without frontiers, where prints could circulate easily.

It was Quatremère de Quincy who, in 1796, was the first to reflect upon the creation of a scholarly world divided up into two groups: those who publish art objects that they have actually seen or visited, and those who produce large syntheses on art without needing to travel, by drawing upon a large corpus of printed reproductions.² What is of particular interest is that Quatremère saw this partition as being the equivalent, in the world of scholarship, of the division of labour explained by Adam Smith in *The Wealth*

of Nations (1776).³ Within the system expounded by Quatremère it became paramount to develop new ways of controlling the accuracy of any reproduction, and to negotiate with considerable care and skill the use both of copies and of originals⁴ – hence the birth of the ‘fac-simile’. An important reflection on the epistemological consequences of the culture of the reproduction was thus underway. I do not need to point out that, in a world where virtual imagery is so pervasive, such history is highly relevant today.

The second decisive contribution to the development of a new economy of images that I should like to examine is that of Christian Ludwig von Hagedorn. In his *Betrachtungen über die Malerei*, which were published in 1762 and reached a wide audience because they were soon translated into French, Hagedorn advocated the public nature of aesthetic contemplation. For Hagedorn, even if a painting belongs to a private owner, this does not give the owner the moral right to restrict access to it. In effect, if the material work of art belongs to the collector, the image that it produces in the mind of any viewer is collective property.⁵ Any amateur, Hagedorn says, ‘acquiert une espèce de propriété sur tout ce qu’il voit.’⁶ Such a theory was ground-breaking: it allowed for the constitution of an open and free gallery of mental pictures, as Richardson called them, which in turn served as a kind of gigantic *instrumentarium* available to all amateurs with a good memory.⁷ Both Quatremère and Hagedorn were thus outlining a Republic of art-historians, as open and as democratic as was the République des lettres in eighteenth-century Europe.⁸

EPISTEMOLOGY OF THE FAC-SIMILE

The fac-simile, as part of an experimental practice of art history, almost materialized during the Renaissance; the attempt failed merely because of the cost of reproducing originals. We all know that when Vasari wrote his *Vite*, he assembled a vast collection of drawings in order to document the various ‘maniere’ of the artists presented in his biographies. At the end of the *Vite*, he states that each artist’s ‘maniera’ is as easily recognizable as is the handwriting of a secretary that can be identified by all of his colleagues.⁹ Since it proved to be impossible to publish his drawings, Vasari had to rely upon a strategy which was to be of lasting significance: either he fell back on a narrative, biographical characterization of each artist, or he referred to his own *Libro dei Disegni* as an external authority for his statements about their ‘maniere’ – the phrase ‘come si vede nel mio libro’ often crops up in his *Vite*.¹⁰ Unfortunately, however, Vasari was not able to produce any visual evidence of it for his readers.

During the eighteenth century, the history of art became increasingly experimental.¹¹ Dézallier d’Argenville owned a cabinet and a laboratory and considered both as similar places of research; prints and drawings are therefore the main tools of the researcher.¹² Instead of writing long biographies, amateurs preferred to amass the most complete col-

lection of visual evidence pertaining to any given artist – the corpus of their works. These corpuses, carefully and empirically formed, were bound up in volumes, the famous ‘books of prints’.¹³ In these collections, the status of the original print and of the drawing, as true documents of the artist’s hand, took precedence over mere reproductive prints, where the plastic vocabulary of the translator was felt to obliterate that of the original.¹⁴ Above all, the true worth of drawings was now appreciated and they thus became a vital instrument: in his *Idée du peintre parfait* (1699), Roger de Piles says: ‘En faisant un Dessain, [l’artiste] s’abandonne à son Génie, & se fait voir tel qu’il est.’¹⁵ The main task of the collector as an art historian was to classify these documents, to annotate them on their mounts. The position of these annotations was of the utmost importance: the commentary remained close to the originals, it developed in their margins, and it never tried to replace them. The most organized form of these compilations was the ‘recueil’.¹⁶ Instructions for the preparation of such ‘recueils’ were to be found in an anonymous essay published in French in 1686,¹⁷ where the philosopher John Locke explained how to gather ideas and notes together and then place them in good order in a register. His complex system enabled the user to reconcile two contradictory features of empirical research: the endless, but random accumulation of data, and the finite, organized nature of the book. Most of the ‘recueils’ of the eighteenth century subscribed to this model. The consequences of such a practice were to be far-reaching: the Vasarian biography was gradually replaced by an approach which gave increasing preeminence to the visual document. A typical example of such a ‘recueil’ is a volume now belonging to the Horne collection in Florence in which a collection of drawings by Simone da Pesaro are brought together. The artist’s portrait, reminiscent of the woodcut to be found in the second edition of the *Vite* (1568), is certainly featured on the first page, followed by a very sketchy biography. After this very slight nod in the direction of the Vasarian tradition, the master’s actual drawings are produced as the most solid evidence for his graphic style.¹⁸ Last but not least, most of the art historians and collectors of the eighteenth century were themselves amateur draughtsmen, who felt that in order to understand the graphic style of a master, the best apprenticeship consisted in imitating him, in following as closely as possible the production of his artistic creations with their own hand. Just one example of this, albeit a particularly vivid one, is John Skippe, a collector who spent much of his life doing just that.¹⁹

CONNOISSEURSHIP, DRAWINGS AND FAC-SIMILE IN ENGLAND

A strange parody of Raphael’s *School of Athens* by Joshua Reynolds serves to illustrate the fact that in England the cognitive image received a new status over the course of the eighteenth century.²⁰ In the centre of the composition, two main figures replace Plato –

the philosopher of ideas – and Aristotle – the philosopher of nature. One connoisseur, a book in hand, points to an illustration of an object of art whilst another, holding a small intaglio between his fingers, scrutinizes it carefully. Reynolds' source of inspiration was probably a drawing by Pier-Leone Ghezzi, in the collection of the Duke of Devonshire, which had been reproduced by Arthur Pond in 1739 and shows two very similar figures.²¹ More important is the fact that the two gentlemen illustrate the confrontation between the cognitive image and the empirical observation of an object of art. They seem to be locked in a 'Disputa', a debate, like Plato and Aristotle in Raphael's fresco. England was to witness the conceptualization of the cognitive status of the image long before the same process occurred in any other European country.²² In effect, the word 'fac-simile' was at this time used only in England, where it had already appeared during the second half of the seventeenth century. Initially, the word belonged to the legal vocabulary and designated the faithful copy of an official document, one which could indeed be substituted for the original. This juridical dimension is paramount to a correct understanding of the 'fac-simile' since it warrants, by reference to an external authority, a perfect correspondence between the original and the copy, even though the two are not the product of one and the same hand. The use of this concept among amateurs and collectors illustrates the high standards expected of the faithful reproduction of a drawing; it was ultimately an ethical question. By falsifying an original, an artist put his reputation at risk; all the more so since it was much easier to produce a fac-simile of a drawing than of a painting. This conceptual innovation was also accompanied by another one, which also appeared in England earlier than on the Continent: the concept of 'specimen'. The word 'specimen' was commonly used by British printers who relied on subscriptions to publish their volumes. In the prospectus for a book they would give some idea of the scope and the nature of the forthcoming work, explain the conditions of purchase and would then include a 'specimen' – printed in the same characters as the planned book – in order to give an accurate idea of the finished product.²³

The word 'specimen' has two meanings which are of the utmost importance: on the one hand, it means a sample of the work of an artist, an 'exemplum', thanks to which, by a process of induction, one may infer the 'maniera' of an artist. But in order to function effectively in this way, a specimen must be representative of an artist's style. Hence, it became necessary to select a drawing illustrative of the entirety of an artist's production, or even of a smaller segment of it. A given drawing should allow the viewer to recognize the 'maniera' typical of Raphael or of Pier-Leone Ghezzi and thus becomes characteristic of the 'type' Raphael or Ghezzi. Simultaneously, the word 'specimen' came to designate any copy of a given print. Since the regularity and fidelity of the printing process guaranteed the identity of all copies in every one of their formal properties, it was possible for schol-

ars located in different countries to discuss the qualities of the same print. It is easy to guess that the two words, when pertaining to 'fac-similes' of drawings, allowed for a new study of the artist's 'maniera' by an international community. Only the 'fac-simile' could turn the concept of 'specimen' into an operative tool for all of those who inspected any copy of a fac-simile. It became possible to multiply, to reproduce the 'recueils' of collectors, so that these compilations could then become true scientific models for the art historians of the world.

FROM SECRETIVE TO OPEN CONNOISSEURSHIP IN ENGLAND:

JONATHAN RICHARDSON SR TO WILLIAM YOUNG OTTLEY

Obviously, the new international community that I have sketched above could not work unless the owners of drawings were prepared to open their collections to the public, be it directly, or even indirectly through the fac-simile reproduction of their best pieces. But this proved to be a sticking point in England at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and a certain reluctance to share knowledge could well have compromised the future development of the fac-simile. It only managed to impose itself thanks to a shift in attitudes, a move away from a secretive towards a more open connoisseurship which relied extensively on originals and fac-similes.

At first, everything seemed to be programmed to allow for the fac-simile. As I have said, England was the first country to coin the concepts of 'fac-simile' and of 'specimen', both of which proved to be highly instrumental in the formation of a community of scholars using reliable reproductions. In addition, Roger de Piles's theories were greatly admired in England and were soon translated into English.²⁴ Last but not least, the development of connoisseurship in England took a dramatic turn in 1710. It was in this year that a famous art-historical collection of drawings assembled by the Italian collector Padre Sebastiano Resta was acquired by a dealer, John Talman, and subsequently sold to an ambitious British statesman, Lord Somers.²⁵ The great rush for the import of continental, mostly Italian, works of art was already well underway and within only sixty years this particular purchase was hailed as a significant historical moment when Talman's letter, describing the collection to prospective buyers, was published by the Society of Antiquaries in 1770.²⁶ The importation of drawings on such a large scale had two main consequences, one of which pertains to the history of art and the other to the art market.

Lord Somers decided to break up Resta's careful arrangement of the drawings which had been classified according to a chronological, formalist model of the development of the history of art. He did, however, request that a copy should be made of all the annotations penned by Resta around the drawings' mounts. This document was printed by

Joseph Duke in 1738, and hence after the sale of Lord Somers's collection, in a form which greatly encouraged an experimental approach to art history through a collection of drawings (fig. 1).²⁷ Resta produced no biography for each artist listed here, preferring to limit himself to indicating their dates of birth and death. Also included is an assessment of the artist's qualities and, above all, his relationship to his masters and pupils – according to Resta's genealogical representation of artistic schools.

From a purely financial point of view, the purchase and import of the Resta collections and their dispersal in England proved that drawings had become a commodity of strategic importance. A connoisseur as important as Jonathan Richardson collected them eagerly and in his treatises such as the *Two Discourses* (1719) he extolled their merits. But one should remember that Richardson never undertook the Grand Tour himself, and therefore had only a second-hand knowledge of many famous Italian masterpieces. Collecting drawings, which he then mounted himself (fig. 2), represented a means of compensating for this lack of first-hand knowledge. The relatively inexpensive *instrumentarium* which he formed enabled him to train his eye and subsequently to identify the authorship and to evaluate the quality of all the great paintings that came up for sale on the Continent.²⁸ By so doing, Richardson conferred upon drawings a new prestige that they had not earlier known. He even went so far as to challenge and ultimately to overturn the traditional hierarchy between drawings and paintings; drawings, he says, are the only true originals from the artist's hand whereas paintings should be considered as mere copies of these drawings.²⁹ However, in order to secure a position of authority for himself, Richardson was tempted to keep his knowledge of drawings for himself. Even his theory of connoisseurship, as expounded in the *Two Discourses* (1719), is explained more as a means of legitimizing the scientific accuracy of his judgements than by a wish to share his trade with the public.

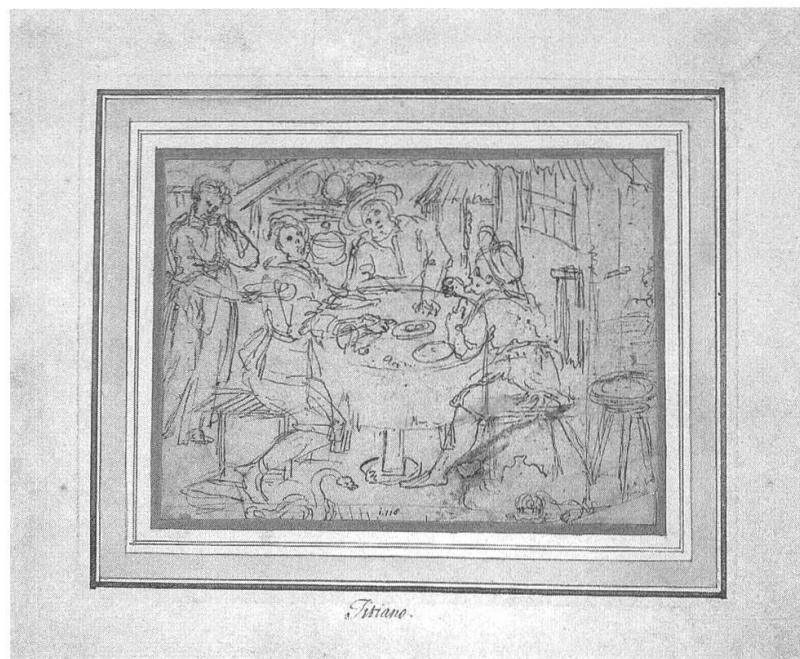
In effect, Richardson deals with the exercise of artistic judgement in two steps – a theoretical, and then a pragmatic one. The theoretical step can be seen in his statement that, ideally, any individual endowed with good judgment may learn Richardson's own new science – 'one Man may be as Good a Judge as Another if he applies himself to it'.³⁰ No collector should trust third parties to select perfect pictures.³¹ Every man endowed with reason may be a good judge, and reason is universally spread among the 'élite'. In his first treatise, Richardson gives a good example of his theory, by analysing a picture from his own collection – a portrait of the Countess of Exeter by van Dyck. In this particular case Richardson proves to be, at one and the same time, both the expert and the purchaser of the picture. However, subsequent examples given in the text suggest that Richardson is slowly shifting towards a more pragmatic approach, where the expert is another person, a third party remunerated for his judgment.

(-18-)

Masters and their Countries	From 1700 to 1750	Whole Dispositions and in what they consist	Places of Residence, and principal Works
TOURNAIEN DE SÈVRES, of Paris	Nov. 1712 Oct. 1711 Age 48	Painting, History.	Paris.
SEBASTIAN RÖNTGEN, of Bonn	Nov. 1649 Oct. 1679 Age 68	History and Landship.	Prussia and Cologne.
CHARLES LE DUC, of Paris	Nov. 1710 Oct. 1690 Age 71	Painting, History and Portraits.	Paris and Paris.
FRANÇOIS LAFITE, of Paris	Nov. 1651 Oct. 1671 Age 71	Joseph Gervais: History and Portraits.	Paris.
CHARLES MARATTE, of Geneva	Nov. 1685 Oct. 1715 Age 89	History and Portraits.	Paris.
JEAN GUICHARD, of Naples	Nov. 1628 Oct. 1708 Age 70	Figures and Deities: History.	Rome, Naples, &c.
CARL PEREL, of Rome	Nov. 1633 Oct. 1663 Age 48	Four de Caracci: History and Portraits.	Rome.
FRANÇOIS BARRON, of London	Nov. 1630 Oct. 1702 Age 72	Painting and Portraits.	London.
SIR CHRISTOPHER WREN	Nov. 1617 Oct. 1702 Age 85	Architecture.	London: where he built Great Churches, and the Cathedral of St. Paul.
WILLIAM VANDERVELDE, of London	Nov. 1640 Oct. 1702 Age 72	Painting, Portraits, and Figures.	London.
FRANÇOIS VANDERMEULEN, of Bruges	Nov. 1611 Oct. 1690 Age 78	History and Portraits.	Brussels and Paris.
ELIAS POLLEIN, of London	Nov. 1647 Oct. 1700 Age 52	Painting, Portraits, and Figures.	London and Oxford: in the last the Refectory in Oxford Chapel, & many others.
HENRY COPE, of London	Nov. 1647 Oct. 1700 Age 52	History.	London, Oxford, &c.
JOHN RILEY, of London	Nov. 1640 Oct. 1691 Age 49	Painting, Portraits, and Figures.	London.
SIR GEORGE KNELLER, of London	Nov. 1640 Oct. 1721 Age 81	Portraits.	London.
GEORGE PAINTER, of London	Nov. 1640 Oct. 1721 Age 81	Painting, Portraits, and Figures.	London.
SIR JAMES TOWNSHILL, of London	Nov. 1640 Oct. 1721 Age 81	Painting, Portraits, and Figures.	London, Oxford, &c. the Chapel of St. Paul, Westminster, &c.

F I N I S.

1 *An Historical and Chronological series of the most eminent painters.* London: Joseph Duke, 1739, last page, private collection



2 Annibale Carracci, *Men eating at a table*, pen and ink, 11,2 x 14,9 cm, with autograph mounting by Jonathan Richardson, private collection

TOWARDS AN OPEN CONNOISSEURSHIP: WILLIAM YOUNG OTTLEY

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, such secretive connoisseurship gradually gave way to a more open one, whose main instrument was the 'recueil' of 'fac-similes'. If, on the Continent, such 'recueils' were often made for the glory of a private collector – such as the Guercinos reproduced by Piranesi for Cavaceppi in 1764 – or of a public foundation, or even for nationalistic purposes, the English 'recueils' often have a more definite didactic purpose. In this way they are similar in intent to those produced under the supervision of Pierre-Jean Mariette. One example of this type of 'recueil' is the *Italian School of Design* by the great artist and art dealer William Young Ottley. The plates were made in around 1808, but the text was only completed later in 1823.³²

An imaginative dealer and a splendid connoisseur, Ottley bought the *Io* by Correggio for a few pounds, and restored the picture himself to show that it was not a copy of the picture but indeed the authentic work. He was an original thinker who did not share the prejudices of many of his contemporaries with regard to Italian art.³³ He was also a talented painter, whose drawings often share features with those of his two great friends, Fuseli and Blake. Furthermore, he proved to be a discerning observer of nature, capable of producing rather perceptive sketches.³⁴ During his Grand Tour in Italy, from 1791 to

1801, he discovered the beauty of Giotto's frescoes at Assisi, of Signorelli and of Botticelli, all of whom were almost wholly ignored at that time. Ottley purchased a large number of drawings and paintings, profiting from the chaos which followed Bonaparte's invasion in 1796; he subsequently brought all these trophies back to London, hoping to sell them at a good price. His first consignment of pictures did very well at auction in 1801, largely because the works chosen corresponded to traditional standards of taste. As for his Botticelli and Signorelli, they did not sell, and he thus found himself obliged to keep them at home.³⁵

A keen interest in fifteenth-century prints gave Ottley a full understanding of the problems related to the regularity of a corpus of printed specimens, as is shown in his book *An Inquiry into the origin and early history of engraving* (1816) (fig. 3).³⁶ His major publication, *The Italian School of Design*, may be seen as an attempt to furnish his reader with an instrument which would allow the latter to appreciate what Ottley himself calls 'primitive art'. That his purpose was partly mercantile is certain – he hoped to open up a new market for such paintings. He was, after all, still smarting from his failure to sell his Botticelli and his Signorelli. Likewise, he also wanted to increase the value of drawings as art objects. But it should not be imagined that this was his sole motivation. He genuinely believed in the outstanding quality of the drawings. The main interest of his approach is that his argument relies on the evidence of the fac-simile reproduction of drawings. *The Italian School of Design* could be described as a ready-made collection of drawings, duly commented and elucidated, which enables each reader to test the validity of Ottley's assertions against the visual evidence which the author presents as proof. It shrewdly proposes a new model for the understanding of art history and of collecting.

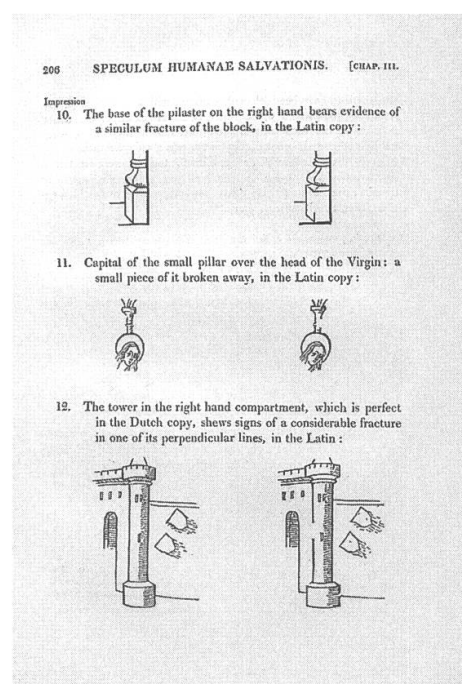
To underscore the originality of this approach, it is useful at this point to compare Ottley's arguments with those adduced by Jean-Baptiste Séroux d'Agincourt in his *Histoire de l'Art par les Monumens*, published from 1810 to 1823. As is well known, the *Histoire* did manage to contribute to a new understanding of mediaeval art, even though its author remained prejudiced against the very works that he was studying, considering them from the point of view of the classical canon.³⁷ In 1793, Ottley had met Séroux in Italy; the latter asked Ottley for his drawings after some of Giotto's frescoes at Assisi. The Englishman duly obliged, and the drawings were subsequently to be etched for the *Histoire de l'art*. Séroux, however, must have feared the seductive power of such unclassical specimens of art, since he was to prefix the suite of images with the following commentary: 'Quelque utile, au reste, que puisse être pour l'histoire de l'Art la connaissance des premières productions de l'époque de sa renaissance, il serait dangereux d'en pousser l'étude trop loin; il faut surtout se garder de l'espèce d'enthousiasme que certaines écoles modernes semblent avoir conçu pour ces premiers essais, trop faibles encore, à tous

égards, pour servir de modèles.³⁸ One cannot help but notice that throughout Séroux's work a very constant graphic vocabulary characterizes the illustrations. He felt a need to unify the scale as well as the codes of representation of the different objects depicted as a means of justifying and reinforcing his comparative method. The result is a graphic style which reproduces the main features of the forms, but where the handling of the original is obliterated by a linear rendering. On occasions this linear reproduction even stiffens the features of the originals, thereby reinforcing the prejudice of the reader against the 'exempla' shown. At any rate, no amateur would be able to recognise and understand Giotto's 'maniera' if he had only read Séroux's book, and before he had seen the artist's famous frescoes in Assisi.

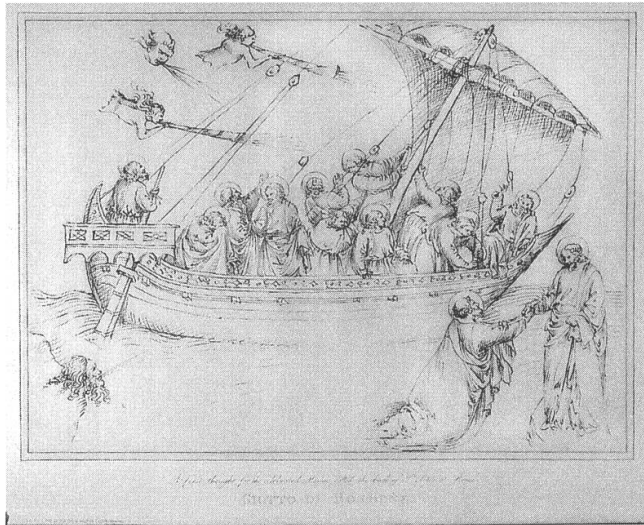
Ottley did not allow himself to be disheartened by Séroux's criticism. His ideas for the *Italian School* were already fixed by this time; he published them later, in 1823, on the completion of the printing of Séroux's *Histoire*. In 1826, he further strengthened his argument with another illustrated book, entitled *A Series of Plates*, and intended, as he says, 'to illustrate the History of the Restoration of the Arts of Design in Italy.'³⁹

Ottley was careful in his strategy. He did not overtly question the chronological model of the decay and restoration of the arts defined by Vasari, and then faithfully followed by Séroux. At first, and making good use of the head-pieces to the chapters in the *Italian School of Design*, he attempted to offset the astonishing modernity of some of the 'primitives': a bassorilievo by Donatello, heading the chapter on the artist, thus here bears a number of startling similarities to Fuseli's *Sleeping shepherd*. This piece, like many others, was designed by Ottley himself.

In the preface to the *Series*, Ottley uses an architectural metaphor to explain his purpose: he wishes to prove that, thanks to Giotto and the primitives, 'the foundations of art, if we may so express ourselves, had been "solidely laid"; the scaffolding "firmly fixed", and even the superstructure, in great measure, "erected".'⁴⁰ The best amongst these artists had been the drawing-masters of Raphael and Michelangelo: 'among the chief characteristics of the paintings and sculptures of the early Florentine artists, [...] they are almost ever exempt from affectation of manner; and [...] their figures often possess the charm of gracefulness, without the alloy of extravagance.'⁴¹ But in order to be able to



3 Comparison of two printings of the same early woodcut, ex.: William Young Ottley, *An Inquiry into the origin and early history of Engraving upon Copper and in Wood*, London: Arch, 1816, 2 vols., vol. 1, p. 206, private collection



4 Print in fac-simile after a drawing by Giotto, *La Navicella*, ex.: William Young Ottley, *A Series of plates, engraved after the paintings and sculptures of the most eminent masters of the early Florentine School; intended to illustrate the History of the Restoration of the Arts of Design in Italy*, London: sold by Colnaghi, Hessey, 1826, facing page 9, private collection



5 Print in fac-simile after a drawing by Raphael, *A Concert*, ex.: William Young Ottley, *A Series of plates, engraved after the paintings and sculptures of the most eminent masters of the early Florentine School; intended to illustrate the History of the Restoration of the Arts of Design in Italy*, London: sold by Colnaghi, Hessey, 1826, facing page 48, private collection

justify his assertion that modern artists were indebted to their late-mediaeval forebears, Ottley needs to find and to present suitable comparisons. *The Italian School of Design* provides this common ground since superbly reproduced specimens of drawings are included for all the masters compared in the book. And these drawings are documents that are eminently suited to a close stylistic analysis. Thus it is that the firm but free outlines of Giotto's *Navicella* are presented as those which taught later generations of artists the importance of a strict economy of expression (figs. 4–5). Ottley takes pains to stress the freedom of the pen, the liveliness of the lines drawn by the primitives; these features, in his view, prefigure the mastery of Raphael.⁴²

Such 'recueils' put a ready-made collection of drawings at the disposal of amateurs. They required that a reader should test the arguments advanced by Ottley. They also allowed travellers from all over the world to perfect *a priori* their knowledge of Giotto, of Donatello, of Signorelli. Armed with the necessary knowledge, and having assimilated the fine typology of each artist that Ottley had presented, they could then set off to Italy

and there admire the famous works by these painters. But more radically, Ottley undertook to transform the aesthetic standards of his readers. This he hoped to achieve with the help of a pedagogical *instrumentarium* created for private consumption: a ready-made and reproducible collection of drawings. Within this framework, and thanks to the fac-simile, the republic of art historians hailed by Quatremère could truly exist as a world community of scholars – a ‘république des arts’.⁴³

- 1 On Caylus, Marc Fumaroli, ‘Une amitié paradoxale: Antoine Watteau et le comte de Caylus, 1712–1719’, *Revue de l’art*, no. 114 (1996), pp. 34–47; Caylus, *mécène du Roi – Collectionner les antiquités au XVIII^e siècle*, exh. cat., Cabinet des Médailles, Bibliothèque nationale de France, 2002–3.
- 2 One such author was Bernard de Montfaucon: see Cecilia Hurley, ‘The vagaries of art-book publishing. Bernard de Montfaucon (1660–1741) and his subscription enterprises’, *Georg-Bloch Jahrbuch*, 7 (2000), pp. 84–95.
- 3 Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, 1776, bk. 1, ch. 2; Quatremère owned a copy of this book. Adam Smith was acquainted with the arts; he owned copies of the works of Bellori (cat. 11), Vasari (cat. 138), Vitruvius (cat. 140), as well as de Piles’ works (p. 107): see Tadao Yanaihara, *Catalogue of Adam Smith’s Library*, New York, 1966.
- 4 Antoine-Chrysostome Quatremère de Quincy, *Lettres sur Le préjudice qu’occasionneraient aux Arts et à la Science, le déplacement des monumens de l’art de l’Italie, le démembrement de ses écoles, et la spoliation de ses Collections, Galeries, Musées &c. Par A. Q.*, Paris, an iv [1796]; repr. ed. by E. Pommier, Paris, 1989, pp. 106–7; p. 119.
- 5 French edition: Christian Ludwig von Hagedorn, *Réflexions sur la peinture*, French trans. by Michael Huber, Leipzig, 1775, 2 vols. (repr. Geneva, 1972), vol. 1, p. xxv; on Hagedorn, see Pascal Griener, ‘La connoisseurship européenne au service de la création artistique allemande: les *Lettres* de Christian Ludwig von Hagedorn (1755)’, in *Théorie des Arts et création artistique dans l’Europe du Nord du XVI^e siècle au début du XVIII^e siècle*, Michèle-Caroline Heck, et al., eds., Lille, 2002, collection Travaux & Recherches, pp. 333–54.
- 6 Hagedorn 1775 (see note 5), vol. 1, p. xxvii.
- 7 On Richardson, see Carol Gibson-Wood, *Jonathan Richardson: Art Theorist of the English Enlightenment*, New Haven and London, 2000.
- 8 This idea of the ‘République des arts’ was formulated by A. C. Quatremère de Quincy, *Considérations sur les arts du dessin en France*, Paris, 1791, p. 102; Oskar Bätschmann, in his *Ausstellungskünstler. Kult und Karriere im modernen Kunstsystem*, Cologne, 1997, wrongly attributes to Quatremère the paternity of such an idea; it was Lafont de Saint-Yenne who compared the public dimension of paintings to that of books (1747), thus paving the way for the comparison between the République des Lettres and the art world. See René Démoris & Florence Ferran, *La peinture en procès*, Paris, 2001, p. 98.
- 9 The importance of the literature on handwriting and calligraphy, helpful in facilitating our understanding of personal graphic style, has not been explored for the history of art. See especially Stanley Morison, *Writing-Books. Renaissance to Baroque*, Nicholas Barker, ed., London, 1990; Oscar Ogg, *Three classics of Italian Calligraphy. Arrighi, Tagliente, Palatino*, New York, 1953; *The Universal Penman. A Survey of Western Calligraphy from the Roman Period to 1980*, exh. cat., Victoria & Albert Museum, London, 1980; David P. Becker, *The Practice of Letters: The Hofer Collection of writing manuals 1514–1800*, Cambridge, Mass., 1997; George Bickham, *The Universal Penman*, London, 1741, esp. p. 42, where a print by Callot is reproduced in fac-simile.

- 10 Giorgio Vasari, *Il Libro de' Disegni del Vasari*, Licia Ragghianti-Collobi, ed., Florence, 1974, 2 vols., vol. 1, p. 28.
- 11 Christian Licoppe, 'Pratique et preuve expérimentale en France au xvii^{ème} siècle. L'émergence d'un modèle coopératif', *Revue de Synthèse*, iv^{ème} série, nos. 3-4 (1993), pp. 383-421; Antoine Picon, 'Les rapports entre sciences et techniques dans l'organisation du savoir: milieu xviii^{ème} siècle-xix^{ème} siècle', *Revue de Synthèse*, iv^{ème} série, nos. 1-2 (1994), pp. 103-20; *The Literary Structure of Scientific Argument*, Peter Dear, ed., Philadelphia, 1991; Claire Salomon-Bayet, *L'institution de la science et l'expérience du vivant*, Paris, 1978; *Non-verbal Communication in Science prior to 1900*, Renato G. Mazzolini, ed., Florence, 1993; Francis Bacon, *Of the Proficiency and Advancement of Learning*, Arthur Johnson, ed., Oxford, 1974, part 1-1, 2.
- 12 *La Collection de dessins d'Antoine-Joseph Dézallier d'Argenville: la politesse du goût*, J. Labbé and L. Bicar-Sée, eds., Paris, 1996.
- 13 On the culture of collecting in the field of drawings, *Collectionner, passionnément. Les collectionneurs hollandais de dessins au xviii^e siècle*, exh. cat., Institut Néerlandais, Hôtel Turgot, 2002, Michiel C. Plomp, ed.; and *Collectionner, passionnément. Les plus beaux dessins dans les collections hollandaises du xviii^e siècle*, exh. cat., Institut Néerlandais, Hôtel Turgot, 2002, M. van Berge-Gerbaud, et al., eds.; *Collecting Prints and Drawings in Europe, c. 1500-1750*, Christopher Baker, Caroline Elam and Geneviève Warwick, eds., Aldershot, 2003; Giulia Fusconi, et al., *Il disegno. I grandi collezionisti*, Turin, 1992.
- 14 See William M. Ivins, *Prints and Visual communication* (1953), Cambridge, Mass., 1989; Caroline Karpinsky, 'The Print in Thrall to its Original: A Historiographic Perspective,' in: *Retaining the Original. Multiple Originals, Copies, Reproductions*, Washington, 1989, National Gallery of Art, Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts Symposium Papers vii, pp. 101-9; Ernst Rebel, *Faksimile und Mimesis. Studien zur deutschen Reproduktionsgraphik des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Mittenwald, 1981.
- 15 Roger de Piles, *Idée du peintre parfait*, in André Félibien, *Entretiens*, Anthony Blunt, ed., Farnborough, 1967, vol. 6, p. 64.
- 16 Pascal Griener and Cecilia Hurley, 'A matter of reflection in the era of virtual imaging: Caylus and Mariette's Recueil de Testes de Caractere & de Charges, dessinées par Léonard de Vinci (1730)', in *horizonte / horizons. Beiträge zur Kunst und Kunstwissenschaft. 50 Jahre Schweizerisches Institut für Kunstwissenschaft*, Juerg Albrecht and Kornelia Imesch, eds., Zurich, 2001, pp. 337-44.
- 17 Index of a 'Recueil', as shown by John Locke, 'Lettre', *Bibliothèque universelle & historique*, 2, 1686, pp. 315-40.
- 18 See the Album Horne: Maria Cellini, *Disegni di Simon da Pesaro*, Milan, 1996.
- 19 Kim Sloan, *'A Noble Art': amateur artists and drawing masters c. 1600-1800*, London, 2000, cat. 124, pp. 180-1, Album of drawings after Giotto and Mantegna, 1773.
- 20 National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin. *Reynolds*, exh. cat., Royal Academy, London, 1986, pp. 20-1; *Grand Tour. The Lure of Italy in the Eighteenth Century*, exh. cat., Tate Gallery, London, 1996, no. 40, p. 84; Chloe Chard, *Pleasure and Guilt on the Grand Tour. Travel Writing and imaginative geography 1600-1830*, Manchester, 1999.
- 21 Louise Lippincott, *Selling art in Georgian London. The rise of Arthur Pond*, New Haven and London, 1983, p. 23.
- 22 The word 'factum simile' derives from the latin 'facere similem'. See Charles du Fresne du Cange, *Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis*, 10 vols, Paris, 1937-8, vol. 7, p. 490, cit. Ugotius (*Glossae antiquae* MSS: 'A similis dicitur Simulare, id est, facere similem, vel esse vel repraesentare'); it was used in England from the mid-seventeenth century onwards, to describe faithful copies of handwritten documents. See, for example, Thomas Fuller, *The History of the worthies of England*, London, 1662, 3rd part, p. 206; Thomas Pownall, *A treatise on the study of antiquities as the commentary to historical learning*, London, 1782, part 1 (Bodleian Library, 8° x 95 BS), preface: 'Sir, As you acquainted me, that you was employed in mak-

- ing a collection of specimens and exemplars of all the various modes of writing practised by various nations, from the earliest to the present time; that you should publish these in drawings, copied per factum simile'; compare with the very late discovery of the word in France, where it is recorded only from 1819 onwards, see P. C. V. Boiste, *Dictionnaire universel de la langue française*, Paris, 1819, *fac-simile*, and Bernard Quemada, ed., *Matériaux pour l'histoire du vocabulaire français. Datations et documents lexicographiques*, Paris, 1970, I, pp. 81–2. For the technique of the 'fac-simile' of drawings in England, see John Hassell, *Calcographia; or, The art of multiplying, with perfection, drawings; after the manner of chalk, black lead pencil, and pen and ink; exemplified by progressive specimens of the various styles which may be produced by this useful invention from drawings by Messrs. Morland, Ibbetson, Clennel, Munn, and Hassell*, London, 1811.
- 23 Peter Wallis, *Book subscription lists. A revised guide*, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1975.
 - 24 Roger de Piles, *Abrégé de la vie des peintres. The art of painting, and the lives of the painters [trad. by John Savage]. To which is added, An essay towards an English-School by Bainbrigg Buckeridge*, London, 1706.
 - 25 Genevieve Warwick, *The arts of collecting. Padre Sebastiano Resta and the market for drawings in early modern Europe*, Cambridge, 2000; Carol Gibson-Wood, 'Jonathan Richardson, Lord Somers's collection of drawings, and early art-historical writing in England', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 52 (1989), pp. 167–87; *Collecting Prints and Drawings* 2003 (see note 13).
 - 26 Anon. Editor, 'A Copy of a letter from Florence; by Mr. John Talman, to the Dean of Christ Church; relating to the Italian Drawings', *Archæologia*, 1 (1770), pp. 130–5.
 - 27 *An Historical and Chronological series of the most eminent painters. Containing, in a concise Manner, the Time of their Birth, Death, and when they flourished. Together with their age, country, places of residence, masters, excellencies, and principal works. Chiefly collected from a Manuscript of the late famous Father Resta*, London, 1739.
 - 28 *Historic Framing and the Presentation of Watercolours, Drawings and Prints*, Nancy Bell ed., Worcester, 1997.
 - 29 Jonathan Richardson, *Two Discourses* (1719), repr. Menton, 1972, vol. 1, pp. 60–1.
 - 30 Richardson 1972 (see note 29), vol. 1, p. 16.
 - 31 'He that relies upon the Judgment of Another, has a Double Chance against him Over and above' (Richardson 1972 [see note 29], vol. 1, p. 16.)
 - 32 William Young Ottley, *The Italian School of Design – Being a Series of Fac-Similes of Original Drawings of the Most Eminent Painters and Sculptors of Italy*, London, 1823.
 - 33 On W. Young Ottley, his biography written by Henry Ottley, *A biographical dictionary of recent and living painters and engravers*, London, 1877, pp. 126–7; Barbara Cinelli, 'William Young Ottley: un caso anomalo nella riscoperta dei primitivi', *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa*, S. IV, Quaderni 1–2, 1996, pp. 409–14; A. A.[tkinson], 'William Young Ottley', *Notes and Queries* 174, April 2 1938, pp. 236–9; J. S. Sartain, *The reminiscences of a very old man*, New York, 1899 (Sartain was an engraver who worked for Ottley); Giorgio Previtali, *La fortuna dei primitivi*, Turin, 1964; Johannes Tiberius Bodel Nijenhuis, 'Biographical sketch of Pierre-David (Giotto) de Superville', *Handelingen der jaarlijksche algemeene vergadering der Maatschappij van Nederlandsche Letterkunde te Leiden*, June 21 1849, pp. 129–44, repr. in Jacob Bolten, ed., *Miscellanea Humbert de Superville*, Leiden, 1997, pp. 3–9; Karin Winkel, 'A supplement to the biography of D. P. G. Humbert de Superville up to the year of his return from Italy', in *ibid.*, pp. 11–25, esp. pp. 17 ff.; John A. Gere, 'William Young Ottley as a collector of drawings', *British Museum Quarterly*, 18 (1953), pp. 44–53; John Ingamells, *A dictionary of British and Irish travellers in Italy 1701–1800*, New Haven and London, 1997, pp. 728–9; Nancy Pressly, *The Fuseli Circle in Rome. Early romantic art of the 1770s*, exh. cat., New Haven, Yale Center for British Art, 1979; Fulvia Spesso, 'Tommaso Piroli, incisore romano, 1750–1824. Proposte per un catalogo', *Nuovi Annali della Scuola speciale*

- per archivisti e bibliotecari*, 9 (1995), pp. 79–94; F. Herrmann, *The English as collectors*, New Castle (DE) and London, 1999, pp. 183–8; Sloan 2000 (see note 19), p. 169, cat. 133, pp. 190–1, cat. 162–3, pp. 225–6; Ellis K. Waterhouse, ‘Some notes on William Young Ottley’, *Italian Studies*, 1962, pp. 272–80; William Buchanan, *Memoirs of Painting, with a chronological history of The Importation of Pictures by the Great Masters into England since the French Revolution*, 2 vols., London, 1824, vol. 2, pp. 20–30 (catalogue of the 1801 sale); Michael Levey, ‘Botticelli and nineteenth-century England’, *Journal of the Warburg and the Courtauld Institutes*, 23 (1960), pp. 291–306, esp. pp. 297–8; Antony Griffiths, *Landmarks in print collecting. Connoisseurs and donors at the British Museum since 1753*. London, 1999, pp. 93–6, pp. 99–100; G. F. Waagen, *Kunstwerke und Künstler in England und Paris, Erster Theil*, Berlin, 1837, pp. 393–403; Colin J. Bailey, *Tour of a German artist in England* [Johann David Passavant], London: Saunders and Otley, 1836, 2 vols., vol. 1, pp. 238–9.
- 34 See Sloan 2000 (see note 19) cat. 163 and 133.
- 35 Francis Haskell, *Rediscoveries in art: some aspects of taste, fashion and collecting in England and France*, Oxford, 1980.
- 36 William Young Ottley, *An Inquiry into the origin and early history of Engraving upon Copper and in Wood, with an account of Engravers and their works, from the invention of chalcography by Maso Finiguerra, to the time of M. A. Raimondi*, 2 vols., London, 1816.
- 37 Pascal Griener, ‘La fatale attraction du Moyen-Age. Jean-Baptiste Séroux d’Agin-court et l’Histoire de l’art par les Monumens’, *Zeitschrift für Schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte*, 54 (1997), pp. 225–34.
- 38 Jean-Baptiste Séroux d’Agin-court, *Histoire de l’Art par les Monumens*, 6 vols., Paris and Strasbourg, 1810–23, vol. 3, p. 131.
- 39 William Young Ottley, *A Series of plates, engraved after the paintings and sculptures of the most eminent masters of the early Florentine School; intended to illustrate the History of the Restoration of the Arts of Design in Italy*, London, 1826.
- 40 Ottley 1826 (see note 39), preface.
- 41 Ottley 1826 (see note 39), preface.
- 42 Michael Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators*, Oxford, 1971.
- 43 Quatremère de Quincy 1989 (see note 4), p. 119. See Pascal Griener, ‘Genius loci. Une archéologie de l’imaginaire archéologique à la fin du XVIII^e siècle’, in: *Paradox. Oder Über die Kunst, anders zu denken. Festschrift Gerhart Schröder*, Kemnat, 2001, pp. 263–6.

SUMMARY

During the eighteenth century, printed ‘fac-similes’ after Old Master drawings became visual, documentary evidence for the study of art and its history, evidence that could serve as a serious topic for scholarly discussion from Paris to St Petersburg, from Helsinki to Palermo. This essay outlines precisely the economical and epistemological framework that permitted an adequate use of the ‘fac-simile’; it shows that, even if England was not the first country to produce true ‘fac-similes’, it was nonetheless here that this form’s function was best understood, and where it found its most refined development around 1800. A major author of such ‘recueils’ in England was William Young Ottley, whose masterpiece was published after much preparation: *A Series of plates, engraved after the paintings and sculptures of the most eminent masters of the early Florentine School; intended to illustrate the History of the Restoration of the Arts of Design in Italy*. London, 1826.