

'The best kind of wealth': Collecting Prints and Drawings

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According to Edmund Malone (1741–1812) Joshua Reynolds once described his portraits by Titian, Van Dyck, Rembrandt and others as 'the best kind of wealth'.¹ Even more so than paintings, Reynolds (1723–1792) is known to have been a life-long collector of prints and drawings. While under the tutelage of the painter and collector Thomas Hudson (1701–1779), the young Reynolds was sent to auctions to buy drawings on his master's behalf and was encouraged to study and copy them to further his skills as a draftsman. Reynolds thus quickly developed a particular fondness for works on paper and, by the end of his life, had amassed a collection of approximately 10,000 drawings and prints.

Although Reynolds's possessions were dispersed after his death, contemporary publications, sales and auction catalogues and the iconic collector's mark devised by the executors of his estate allow for the reconstruction of much of the collection. Despite this abundance of information however, the sole focus in Reynolds scholarship regarding his collection has long been directed towards its function as inspiration in Reynolds's own painterly practice.

The case of Sir Joshua Reynolds, presented at the conference by DONATO ESPOSITO (London), is far from unique, since the history of collecting represents a relatively young topic within the field of art history. Understanding the history of collecting, and of works on paper in particular, is of great import however, because it lies at the very heart of the art world: whether academic, museological or commercial. Ingrid R. Vermeulen, for example, has effectively pointed out that collections of works on paper, rather than of paintings or sculpture, formed the touchstones for the first academic publications to look at artistic schools and stylistic developments.² Questions of provenance and authenticity, moreover, are fundamental to this day.

Having only come into focus as a serious field of study from the 1950s onward, great strides have been made since in the study of individual collectors, of patterns of collecting during specific time periods or geographical regions, and of the formation of institutional collections.

The conference *Collecting Prints and Drawings*, organized by the international forum Collecting and Display in collaboration with Hochschule Augsburg, Staatliche Graphische Sammlung München and Schwabenakademie Irsee – with generous financial support of Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) – provided a welcome opportunity to discuss the history of Western graphic collections, collectors and collectables from the late fifteenth to the early twentieth century. The intense conference program, with contributions from the academic and museum world, heralded future research and publications in this area.

The themes chosen for the sessions emphasized the many aspects of collecting works on paper. Not only are there as many stories as there are collectors, but there appear to be just as many reasons for collecting and choosing what to focus on. The value of this conference lies in the opportunity to appreciate and analyze the idiosyncrasies of individual cases, but also to distil the reasons for the emergence and development of the phenomenon at large.

At the heart of many papers lay the basic but substantial questions of what was collected, by whom, how and why. The overarching theme addressed during the conference was the importance of identifying and interpreting sources and means through which to retrieve this information. Although specific to each individual case, the two main categories of sources consist of the collected objects and of accessory documentary information in the form of account books, inventories, legal documents, catalogues, sales records, advertisements and correspondence. Not surprisingly, the quantity of the latter type of information increases significantly the nearer we get to our own time.

With few exceptions, a dearth in informa-

¹ Edmund Malone, *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, vol. 1, London 1797, p. li.

² Ingrid R. Vermeulen, *Picturing Art History*, Amsterdam 2010.

tion was noted concerning details of storage, use and display of collections during the lifetimes of their principal collectors. Occasionally, information of this kind comes to light in depictions of interiors, contemporary letters, travel accounts and diaries of visitors and family members, but until the establishment of curators and institutionalized collections this aspect was rarely recorded. In the case of a permanent location for the display of works on paper, a treatment more suitable for paintings seems to have been customary. In the inventory of the collections of Elector Palatine Ottheinrich von der Pfalz (1502–1559), presented by LISA M. KIRCH (Sheffield, AL), hand-colored prints were included in a list of paintings hung throughout his castle. BEATRICE HILDALGO (Madrid) explained that the walls of eighteenth-century Spanish Cabinet Rooms were typically covered by drawings, prints and silhouettes. In her discussion of the nineteenth and early twentieth-century incarnation of the Hermitage Museums in Saint Petersburg, CATHERINE PHILIPPS (Bucknell, UK) revealed that the display of drawings remained unchanged over a period of fifty years.

Addressed directly in some of the papers, but emerging as a common thread from the conference program, was the gradual standardization and professionalization of collecting works on paper during the period from ca. 1540 to 1840.

While the tradition of collecting, or rather *retaining* works on parchment, vellum and paper started in the artistic workshop of the Middle Ages, addressed by ALISA CARLSON (Austin, TX) in her paper on Hans Holbein the Elder, the groundbreaking study of Ferdinand Columbus (1488–1539) as collector has given us an indication of when collecting drawings and prints for reasons other than to serve as *ricordi* or models in the creative process took off.³ This development coincides with a general appreciation for the act of design (*disegno*), and the simultaneous rise of the print market, both of which undoubtedly played a significant role in raising the interest of ‘amateurs’ and collectors in both media.

The contributions on the print albums of the prominent early collectors Ottheinrich von der Pfalz, Archduke Ferdinand II of Ty-

rol (1529–1595) and Johann Georg I. Zobel von Giebelstadt, Bishop of Bamberg (1543–1580), presented by Kirch, BORBÁLA GULYÁS (Budapest) and JOYCE ZELÉN (Amsterdam) revealed that between the 1540s and 1570s the first organizational standards were introduced. Grouping was based on subject matter or genre – not unlike Lafreri’s arrangement of the prints from the *Speculum Romanae Magnificentiae* as described by Peter Parshall⁴ – although the internal hierarchy of the subjects differed according to the buyers’ or owners’ personal preferences.

By the end of the sixteenth century, collecting works on paper had developed into a more widespread phenomenon, which became closely connected with one’s social standing. MARÍA LÓPEZ-FANJUL Y DIEZ DEL CORRAL (Berlin) discussed how this aspect was employed consciously by Gaspar de Haro y Guzman, the Marquis del Carpio (1629–1687). One of the first in Spain to build up a significant drawings collection, he had come to realize that through commissioning, collecting and the exchange of works, he was able to widen his circle of relationships and thus shape his prestige. This self-fashioning is further demonstrated by the frontispieces he commissioned for his albums, which contained personal allegories, meant to appeal to the viewers of his collection.

The seventeenth century also saw the first collectors’ marks which must have had a practical purpose principally, although their more metaphysical implication bound the life of a collector inextricably to the works of art he collected. Soon it not only became fashionable to collect drawings or prints, but to collect collectors. The fact that an object had once belonged to a specific individual made it all the more desirable. WENDY WASSYNG ROWORTH (Providence, RI) indicated that when Angelika Kauffman’s (1741–1807) sizeable collection of prints was sold, for example, many other artists and collectors added status to their own collections by purchasing a print once owned by the female artist. The

³ Mark P. McDonald, *The Print Collection of Ferdinand Columbus (1488–1539). A Renaissance Collector in Seville*, London 2004.

⁴ Peter Parshall, Antonio Lafreri’s *Speculum Romanae Magnificentiae*, in: *Print Quarterly. The Scholarly Journal on Prints* 23 (2006), pp. 3–27.

falsification of a collector's marks, such as that of Sir Peter Lely (1618–1680) and Sir Joshua Reynolds, addressed by ANGELA M. OPEL (Augsburg) and Esposito respectively, attests to this development.

The increasing interest in collections of drawings and prints culminated in the eighteenth century with the aspiration to form comprehensive collections. DIMITRI OZERKOV (St. Petersburg) exposed how major efforts to this effect were undertaken in Saint Petersburg during the lifetime of Empress Catherine the Great. With the aid of agents active across Europe, single works of art, but also entire collections were acquired. In 1768, for instance, three hundred albums from the print collection of Heinrich, Count von Brühl (1700–1763) were purchased from the city of Dresden. Ozerkov also implied that the ideal behind these large-scale acquisitions may have been the establishment of a Russian equivalent of the Vatican Library: a natural companion to Quarenghi and Unterberger's version of Raphael's *Loggia* in the Winter Palace.

The new holistic aspirations called for systemization and organization, and thus the role of professional advisor was taken up by several dealers and collectors. Principal among them was Pierre-Jean Mariette (1694–1774) who, as descendant from a family of print and book dealers and an important connoisseur, influenced the formation and organization of some of the most significant eighteenth-century private collections through personal advice and publications. VALÉRIE KOBİ (Neuchâtel) explained how Mariette's model of organizing albums by school and artists combined with introductory notes with biographical information about their creators, simultaneously turned these receptacles of artworks into art historical resources. Thus, collecting became a scholarly endeavor, but this didactic strategy also opened the field of connoisseurship to a wider audience.

Mariette was a significant protagonist in these developments, but he was not the only one. Ozerkov revealed that the Russian Imperial collection was organized in the early nineteenth-century following the principles of Carl Heinrich von Heineken (1707–1791), who had published his *Idée générale d'une collec-*

tion complete d'estampes in 1771 and had curated the print albums of Count von Brühl.⁵ In her presentation EVA MICHEL (Vienna) explained that Duke Albert of Saxe-Teschen sought the advice of the Genoese Count and ambassador to the Viennese Court, Giacomo Durazzo (1717–1794) to impose direction and structure on the graphic collection he compiled with his wife Marie Christine. Durazzo donated one thousand prints from his own collection to the Duke and Duchess and, in another effort to safeguard the wealth of future graphic collections, he instructed Bartolomeo Benincasa (1746–1816) to publish a catalogue of his collection, accompanied by an essay on the principles of collecting prints.

While it would take another century before Albert and Marie Christine's collections were accessible at the Albertina, several collectors in the early nineteenth-century wished for their collections to become institutions. CORINA MEYER (Los Angeles) discussed how, to this effect, the German banker Johann Friedrich Städel (1728–1816) bequeathed his drawings and prints to the city of Frankfurt am Main. Similarly, LAURA ALDOVINI (Milan) revealed that Luigi Malaspina di Sannazzaro (1754–1834) laid the foundations for a museum and academy in his native Pavia. Like Durazzo, Malaspina spent time at the Hapsburg Imperial Court. During his stay as emissary in Vienna (1798–1808), Adam von Bartsch was working on the first volumes of his *Le Peintre Graveur*.⁶ This inspired Malaspina to form his own collection, which offered a survey of the history of printmaking, from its beginnings to about 1800, and contained some 6,000 prints as well as important 'accessories' to printmaking, such as matrices, drawings and books.

Whereas, thus put in retrospect, the developments in the field of collecting works on paper appear to lead organically to their eventual institutionalization, the many idiosyncratic histories shared during this three-day conference highlighted the fact that, although this may have been an ideal cherished by some, many collected first and foremost for

⁵ Carl Heinrich von Heineken, *Idée générale d'une collection complete d'estampes*, Leipzig / Vienna 1771.

⁶ Adam von Bartsch, *Le Peintre Graveur*, 21 vols, Vienna 1803–1821, reprint Nieuwkoop 1982.

their own, immediate enjoyment. Institutionalization played a role in some contributions, including the closing paper, presented by RONIT SOREK (Jerusalem), on the formation of the Print and Drawings Collection of the Israel Museum.

Overall, the rich conference program of *Collecting Prints and Drawings* made for a lively and fruitful exchange of information between audience and presenters, reminding us all that sharing our findings is the key to the advancement of knowledge. While the wealth of the new studies presented during the two-and-a-half days of lectures by both museum and academic professionals worked very encouraging in this respect, it also instilled a hunger for further and deeper investigation, in particular with regards to critical investigation of (international) networks of dealers and collectors, provenance histories, and answers to the question how collectors interacted with their paper collections on a daily basis. Especially in the case of works on paper which are relatively fragile compared to painting or sculpture, it is far from matter of fact that they were passed on down to us over the centuries. As such, aside from matters of conception, attribution, dating and artistic exchange, historians of drawings and prints can only fully understand the significance of these works of art by repeatedly asking the question why someone, somewhere considered them their 'best kind of wealth'.

Conference Overview:

Angela M. Opel (Hochschule Augsburg), Dürer, Raphael, Rembrandt: The Electoral Cabinet of Drawings and Prints Mannheim (1758–1793)

Markwart Herzog (Schwabenakademie Irsee), Welcome address

Michael Stoll (Hochschule Augsburg), Postcards from Treasure Island – Collecting Explanatory Information Graphics

Order, preservation and reconstruction

Dimitri Ozerkov (The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg), The Print collection of Catherine II (1762–1796) in the Hermitage

Joyce Zelen (Rijksprentenkabinet, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam), The Zobel Album: The

Reconstructed Print Album of Johann Georg I. Zobel von Giebelstadt (ca. 1568)

Borbála Gulyás (Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest), „Achtet casten, darinnen allerlei bücher“: Prints and Manuscripts in the Kunstkammer of Ferdinand II of Tyrol

Art-Historical Approaches to Canon Building

Valérie Kobi (Université de Neuchâtel), From Collection to Art History. The Recueil of Prints as a Model for the Theorisation of Art History

Laura Aldovini (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milano), Luigi Malaspina di San-nazzaro and the 'Accessories' to a Print Collection

Corina Meyer (Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles), „Unschätzbare Dinge. Eins immer besser gedacht und ausgeführt als das andre“. J. F. Städel's Print Collection ca. 1800 in Frankfurt a.M./Germany

Documentation and Academic Education

Ralf Bormann (Niedersächsisches Landesmuseum Hannover), Wallmoden's Collections at Hannover-Herrenhausen Depicted: Towards the Reconstruction of a Baroque Aemulatio of the Uffizi

Anne Harbers (University of Sydney), The Macleay Family of Colonial New South Wales 1767–1891: Public Figures Private Collectors – Drawings from the Collection

Camilla Murgia (Independent Scholar, Nyon), „But the Question is: Who is the Connoisseur?“ Pierre-Marie Gault de Saint Germain's Collection of Drawings (1752–1842)

Keynote/Public Lecture

Kate Heard (Royal Collection, London), „That is Treason, Johnny“. The British Royal Family as Collectors of Satirical Prints, 1762–1901

Artists as Collectors

Alisa Carlson (University of Texas at Austin), Collecting Himself: Hans Holbein the Elder's Portrait Drawings

Donato Esposito (Metropolitan Museum of Art, London), Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792) as a Collector of Prints and

Drawings

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Wendy Wassyng Roworth (University of Rhode Island), A Painter's Print Collection: Angelica Kauffman in Eighteenth-Century Rome

Princley Collections

Lisa M. Kirch (University of North Alabama), In My Most Gracious Lord's Study and Beyond: Ottheinrich's Print Collection

Eva Michel (Albertina Museum, Vienna), Collecting in the Age of Enlightenment: The Collection of Duke Albert of Saxe-Teschen

Catherine Phillips (Bucknell), Catherine the Great and the Cabinet of Drawings of the Hermitage Museum

Image and (Re-)Presentation

María López-Fanjul y Díez del Corral (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin), Drawings Collections and Self-fashioning in Seventeenth-century Spain

Sebastian Fitzner (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München), Collecting Architectural Drawings and Prints. Self-Representation of Princes in the Northern Renaissance

Sabine Peinelt-Schmidt (Technische Universität Dresden), The Collection of a Dealer – Carl Christian Heinrich Rost (1742–1798) and his Collection of Prints and Drawings

Display and Displays

Ivo Raband (Universität Bern), A Forgotten Original or an Original Copy? On MS. Douce 387 in the Bodleian Library: Collecting Early Modern Festival Books

Beatriz Hidalgo (Madrid), The Cabinet Room, Artworks on Display. Interior Decoration Influence on Madrid's Drawing and Print Collectors Choices during the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century

Ronit Sorek (The Israel Museum Jerusalem), Everything in Order: The Prints and Drawings Collection at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem

Tagungsbericht *'The best kind of wealth': Collecting Prints and Drawings.*