

A
 C A T A L O G U E
 OF THE
 PICTURES, MODELS, DESIGNS IN
 ARCHITECTURE, DRAWINGS, &c.
 EXHIBITED BY THE
 SOCIETY OF ARTISTS, &c.
 OF
 I R E L A N D,
 AT THEIR
 H O U S E
 IN WILLIAM-STREET, DUBLIN,
 APRIL the TWENTY-SIXTH. 1773.
 Being the NINTH YEAR of their EXHIBITING.



D U B L I N :

Printed by H. SAUNDERS in Castle-freet, Printer to the SOCIETY.



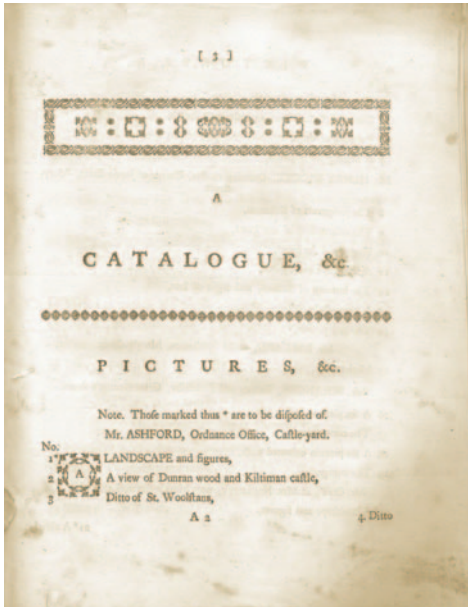
Critiquing Irish art and artists: Truepenny's critique of the Society of Artists' exhibition, 1773

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FOUNDED IN 1764, THE SOCIETY OF ARTISTS OF IRELAND WAS ESTABLISHED TO PROMOTE Irish artists and stimulate interest in native endeavour. Its initial ambition to stage annual exhibitions in its own building was early achieved, with its second show held in 1765 at the Society's newly-built octagonal Exhibition Room on William Street in Dublin. Yet, notwithstanding this feat, the Society's members ultimately clashed over its direction, so that its last exhibition was held in 1780. Its establishment and the exhibitions it held were, nevertheless, a significant advance in the development of an artistic public sphere in Ireland, emulating trends in other European countries. It was the first time that Irish artists became more widely known and their work more easily accessible. The Society and its exhibitions received sustained attention in the 2018 publication *Exhibiting art in Georgian Ireland*, arising out of an exhibition to mark the renovation of the Society's Exhibition Room, which is now known as the City Assembly House.¹ There I explored how the exhibitions had stimulated comment on what observers had seen by publishing critiques in the newspapers. In all, four critiques were discussed for the 1769, 1772 and 1775 exhibitions.² A fifth critique of the exhibition held in 1773 has recently been discovered in the *Hibernian Journal* which is reprinted in full below. It offers further insight into the development of the critique as a genre as well as views on the Society and its members.

Held between 26th April and 5th June, the 1773 exhibition contained 128 entries by forty-two artists.³ The number of artists and works exhibited compared well with other years, though there was a comparatively large number of honorary exhibitors (nine), often pupils of more established artists. This category also allowed women to exhibit, of which four were included in 1773 – Elizabeth Harrison, Miss Green, Miss Sinclair and Miss McMahon. Portraiture dominated the exhibits with fifty-nine entries (46%), which included multiple miniatures under one entry. Nineteen landscapes and seventeen historical

1 – Title page from *A CATALOGUE OF THE PICTURES, MODELS, DESIGNS IN ARCHITECTURE, DRAWINGS, ETC. EXHIBITED BY THE SOCIETY OF ARTISTS, ETC. OF IRELAND ... 1773 (Dublin, 1773)*
(courtesy University of Birmingham)



2 – Opening page from *A CATALOGUE OF THE PICTURES, MODELS, DESIGNS IN ARCHITECTURE, DRAWINGS, ETC. EXHIBITED BY THE SOCIETY OF ARTISTS, ETC. OF IRELAND ... 1773* (Dublin, 1773) (courtesy University of Birmingham)



3 – Hugh Douglas Hamilton (1740-1808), *PORTRAIT OF THOMAS ROBERTS* c.1769, pastel and graphite on paper, 60 x 41 cm (Gandon Archive)

opposite 4 – Thomas Roberts (1748-1777), *A VIEW OF SLANE CASTLE, THE SEAT OF LORD CONYNGHAM*

works followed, accounting for 15% and 13% respectively. Interspersed were ten still-lives (mostly flowers), five needlework pieces, five architectural drawings or surveys, three likenesses in hair, two pieces of sculpture and one waxwork. The inclusion of four draughtsmen (Thomas Penrose, Charles Praval, Thomas Sherrard and James Wilkinson) was a new departure, and not one subsequently repeated. Perhaps the most topical in this category were the three drawings by Praval, who had accompanied Joseph Banks on Captain James Cook's expedition to circumnavigate the globe between 1768 and 1771. His role in that expedition seems to have been in a minor position, not meriting mention in contemporary accounts and overshadowed by better artists. Praval arrived in Ireland in 1773, and may have offered these drawings in the hope of establishing himself as a drawing master, using that description in the catalogue. His drawings may have appealed to a public eager for the novel and exotic, going beyond what might be gleaned from newspapers and books. If he had hoped to establish a career as a drawing master, he was not successful and later offered his services as a teacher of French in the capital.⁴

Seven of the exhibits were offered for sale, indicated in the printed catalogue by an asterisk, suggesting that artists hoped that exhibitions might produce sales.⁵ This was a novel approach to attracting custom, though there is no evidence that any sales were finalised. Although seven exhibits may seem small in the context of the entire show, the fact that the exhibition was dominated by portraits, most of which must have presumably

been commissioned by clients, limited what could be disposed of. The very first exhibit listed in the catalogue, William Ashford's *Landscape and figures*, was offered, along with works by Henry Brooke, James Coy and John Forster. All were landscapes, except for Brooke's historical piece *The burning of Sodom, and the flight of Lot* and a still-life, one of two offered by Forster.⁶

The critique was published in the *Hibernian Journal* on 4th June, featuring prominently on the front and inside pages, just as the exhibition was about to close. Like most other known critiques of Society of Artists' exhibitions, the author used a pseudonym, William Truepenny. The invented surname had long been used in literature to indicate an honest and trustworthy person. Amounting to some 2,791 words, the critique was similar in length to the 1769 'Pictor' review.⁷ It concentrated on twenty-six of the thirty-three principal artists, choosing to ignore all the honorary exhibitors. Of the principal artists, the author chose not to comment on those who exhibited either miniatures, architectural drawings (Thomas Penrose, Thomas Sherrard), waxworks (Samuel Percy) or those who worked with hair (Charles Robertson), betraying, perhaps, a hierarchical view of artistic production. Other earlier and later critiques did the same.⁸ Not all paintings submitted by the principal artists received attention. For example, only two of the six paintings that Thomas Roberts exhibited came under the author's scrutiny (Plates 3 and 4).

The critique also reveals that not all works printed in the catalogue were exhibited, warning the modern reader to be cautious of what appeared in print. Some that did not appear may be explained by the short period between the submission of proposals and the printing of the catalogue (Plates 1 and 2), which was produced for the exhibition by Henry Saunders, a respected bookseller, printer and newspaper publisher. The call for en-



tries to the 1773 exhibition was issued through the newspapers on 9th April, requiring artists to submit proposals within eleven days. Given that the exhibition opened on 29th April, this left little over a week to produce the catalogue.⁹ Though Mary Anne Trotter née Hunter's work, *Minerva introducing Venus*, appeared in the catalogue, it ultimately did not make it to the exhibition, as Truepenny highlighted. This may have been the artist's own decision, but Truepenny hints at a more malevolent reason why the miniatures of James Ballard and James Reily were not exhibited. Without going into any detail, Truepenny promised in a future letter to explore whether it was correct for the Society to refuse to exhibit these works. Though both artists appeared in the catalogue, the critique suggests that some difficulty had emerged at a later stage. It is evidence, perhaps, that proposed submissions were subject to some vetting process, as was the case at London exhibitions, or equally that there might have been some vendetta or animosity towards Ballard and Reily. Yet if only a small number were refused, it would seem to substantiate the later comments of Walter Strickland who stated that 'little discrimination appears to have been exercised in the admission of works'.¹⁰

As with previous reviewers, Truepenny was motivated by a desire to admonish, advise or praise where he thought fit.¹¹ Thus, the portraits of Charles Forest were 'disposed with taste', and the artist considered 'a very promising genius', while Henry Brooke deserved 'great praise for his indefatigable industry', though one of his pieces was considered 'ill conceived and badly executed'. Overall, Truepenny's comments, though critical of certain pieces, was generally praiseworthy. There is some evidence in the critique to suggest Truepenny was acquainted with the artistic world, commenting for example on the pedagogic approach of drawing masters, which he derided. This was a veiled criticism of a number of exhibiting artists, including Brook, who made a living from teaching. Truepenny was certainly familiar with previous exhibitions, able to compare, for example, William Ashford's works submitted in 1772, and those of other artists.¹²

While lauding several individuals, Truepenny was disparaging of the Society as a whole, aware of the divisions within it. He described its members as 'indolent' and the Society 'unable to advance, ashamed to retreat, their affairs are arrived at a precarious crisis'. Since 1772 the Society had struggled to meet the costs of building their Exhibition Room. The anticipated public and private support had not entirely materialised, resulting in significant divisions among the artists.¹³ Indeed, shortly after the 1773 exhibition, several left the Society and formed the Academy of Artists of Ireland, which staged rival exhibitions in 1774 and 1775. A reconciliation was achieved in 1777 which allowed for a joint exhibition that year, but by then the initial enthusiasm had diminished, several founding members having died, while continuing financial problems ensured that there were no exhibitions in the following two years, until a last show was staged in 1780.¹⁴

One of the defining features of Truepenny's critique is its use of literary references, ranging from ancient writers to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century poets and authors. Well-known luminaries such as Shakespeare, Milton, Drayton and Pope are quoted along with lesser known authors such as Edmund Waller and Eliza Fowler Haywood. Allusions to two Irish personalities, Revd Thomas Leland, whose *History of Ireland* had been published the previous month, and Col. William Burton, a noted patron, MP and artist, are made in passing. Truepenny's penchant for linking what he saw in the exhibition to liter-

ature was not only an attempt to demonstrate erudition and knowledge, but may also have reflected an earlier idea that painting and poetry were, in the words of the seventeenth-century French poet and painter, Charles Alphonse du Fresnoy, ‘sisters’, both emulating the other.¹⁵ Du Fresnoy’s ideas were popularised by John Dryden in the 1690s and received renewed attention in the 1780s when du Fresnoy’s original work was translated and republished, with annotations by Joshua Reynolds.¹⁶ Indeed, his ideas stimulated debate about the perceived superiority of one over the other.¹⁷ Truepenney certainly used his imagination to fashion links between both. He also used the critique to mock the Dublin lawyer Gorges Edmond Howard, whose forays into the literary and theatrical worlds had regularly made him the butt of criticism and mockery for his apparent haughtiness, lack of ability and tactlessness.¹⁸ Three years before, Howard and the printer George Faulkner had been engaged in a very public dispute regarding a perceived slight on Howard’s work, which was subsequently seized upon by wits and writers to lampoon both men well into 1772.¹⁹ This lingering episode, perhaps, allowed Truepenney to casually refer to Howard, rendering his name ‘Gorgius’.

While the critique is valuable for the light it casts on attitudes towards art and artists, it also provides a fleeting glimpse of the audience for these shows. Truepenney remarked that the exhibitions were open to all who paid a shilling and whose dress was sufficiently acceptable to the doorkeeper to be admitted. A shilling was a relatively modest entry charge; a skilled craftsman in Dublin might typically earn a shilling a day.²⁰ By contrast, two shillings were charged for non-subscribing gentlemen who wished to attend the fashionable concerts at the Rotunda, while a high profile musical concert in 1773 was pitched at half a guinea or 10½ shillings.²¹ But of equal if not more importance were satirical notions of what constituted a polite audience, which typified much of Dublin’s public sociability.²² Those entering the exhibition had to be politely or genteelly dressed to satisfy the doorman.

Like the other known critiques of Irish exhibitions in this period, Truepenney seemed fully engaged in the Dublin artistic and literary worlds, unafraid to venture an opinion on what was then an annual and seemingly permanent event. Whether critiques were valued or taken seriously by artists and others is not known. Surely the members of the Society of Artists were pleased that observers and critics took notice of their exhibitions, tracking the progress made by Irish artistic endeavour, which was one of the Society’s stated aims. No doubt, too, these critiques stimulated debate and discussion in their own right, as those who had seen the exhibition might contrast their own impressions with those of the critic, though what evidence might survive to elucidate this has yet to be traced. Truepenney’s critique taken with the other assessments of the Society of Artists’ exhibitions provide evidence for the emergence of criticism as a literary genre devoted purely to Irish painting, coinciding as it did with efforts to make indigenous Irish art and artists more visible to a wider audience. Later occasional exhibitions in the 1790s and 1800s would attract reviewers, suggesting that the appetite for criticism remained, and, indeed, would form a conspicuous component of the Irish art world in the decades that followed.

TO THE CONDUCTORS OF THE HIBERNIAN JOURNAL

GENTLEMEN, IN THE ASSEMBLIES OF THE PEOPLE IN THE REPUBLIC OF ATHENS, EVERY one had leave to offer his opinion: to this end, cryers cried aloud, ‘whoever hath a mind to speak, let him rise up’.²³ So, methinks, on entering the Exhibition, I hear the united voice of Artists calling on the public for timely, admonishing, useful advice, or merited praise. – Meanness of birth and condition excluded no man, anciently, nor does it here; produce a splendid shilling, all distinctions become levelled, as in the grave. (How I procure it is no matter) but, after coaxing my stocking, turning my cravat, settling all the economy of my dress, and satisfying the Door-keeper, I strutted into the Exhibition Room with the self-importance of a Scaliger,²⁴ or Gorgius Howard;²⁵ at the same time, fond of justifying merit as Quintilian,²⁶ Leland,²⁷ or Colonel Burton.²⁸ Here, by collecting disjointed propositions; wading through a contrariety of opinions, and properly digesting them, I have been able to offer the subsequent Criticism to the Public. Artists be not alarmed; I have more of the Greek than Tartar in me, and scorn to use the power, right of penship gives me over you. Canopied in cobwebs of my dreary garret, I rest above your malice, or your Friendship. If truths are delivered, mend your faults, if lies, there is no occasion for offence.

That some among you bid fair for reputation, is unquestionable. That the Society of Artists are indolent, needs no glossary. Unable to advance, ashamed to retreat, their affairs are arrived at a precarious crisis. – Some wish for assistance, while others, without the spirit of emulation, callous to the jibes of contemporaries, endanger the common interest of the whole; and what was intended a public good, is sinking to a private property. From the works of many artists, we may form this judgement, that in general their compositions seem as if proceeding from a certain inspiration, or Fury; and that they knew not what they did, no more than those who deliver Oracles know what they say; but, as censuring indiscriminately would be taken them off their Guard; bear with me, and we shall proceed according to the Catalogue.

No. 1. *A landscape and figures*, by Ashford.²⁹ In this picture the artist has got the better of a mistiness which was disagreeably visible in his last year’s production. The distances are tender, and like Nature; the sky clear, and the whole (especially the foreground) painted with care. His works bid fair for Reputation.

3, 4, 5. *Views from Nature*; inferior to his [Ashford’s] former composition.

8. *The Judgement of Solomon*. This subject demands the exertion of the greatest faculties to express it on canvas. In scripture the account is short; the interesting and pathetic passages with which such a transaction would be necessarily connected, are left to be supplied by the heart; but then what pen or pencil can paint the blasted expectation of a fond mother, rendered insensible to the cries of humanity, by her Grief; ‘let the child be neither mine nor thine’ Shocking! While the soul just going to abandon the fainting body of the real mother, who, collecting all her force in the natural efforts of parental transport cries, ‘Give her all!’ The spectators, struck with horror, wait doubtful for the final sentence: at which time the King, with a look of ineffable sweetness, determines by a wisdom from above. Such are our notions of this subject; consequently we dislike the picture under consideration. However, Mr Brooks³⁰ deserves great praise for his indefatigable industry.

9. *The resurrection of our Lord* – ill-conceived and badly executed.



5 – Jonathan Fisher (1740-1809), *FENNER ROCK ON THE BOYNE*
1792, aquatint (Gandon Archive)

10. *Hagar and the Angel*.

11. *A Landscape and figures*; the figures unparadonable – part of this landscape, and No. 10 not amiss.

12. *The Burning of Sodom, and Flight of Lot*. The figures in this are very well, and the picture altogether painted with spirit.

13. *A Moon Light*.

14. The companion. These are small and highly finished; the different effects of Fire have a pleasing appearance.

16, 17, 18, 19, Sea pieces, in Indian Ink, by Mr Beranger.³¹ I am sure if he is happy, we are not angry. – for ‘the bad when compared with the more bad seem beautiful; and to be not the worst, stands in some rank of praise.’³²

20. *A landscape and figures*, by Coy,³³ is composed with judgement; the general forms remarkably well; the ruins are happily situated, but the cascade is painted with too frigid a pencil, and rather hurts than contributes to the effect. There is a warmth in the works of this young artist very commendable.

22. *Charity*, a Basso Relievo, by Master Cranfield.³⁴

‘The tender blossoms, which a young plant bears,
Engage our Hopes for the succeeding years;
And Hope is all which Art or Nature brings.
At the first trial, to accomplish things.’³⁵

23. *A view of Fenner Rock, on the River Boyne*, by Fisher³⁶ (Plate 5). A noble-formed Rock, rising almost perpendicular, affects us with surprise; which, reflecting into the water, fills half the picture with objects truly sublime; these are contrasted by a Grove, which serves as a shade in summer, and a retreat in winter.

‘In such green palaces the first Kings reigned,
Slept in the Shade, and Angels entertained.’

On viewing this picture one cannot help exclaiming, with Waller.

‘Methinks I see the love that shall be made,
The Lovers walking in that amorous Shade,
The Gallants dancing by the River side,
They bathe in summer, and in winter slide;
Methinks I hear the music in the boats,
And the loud echo, which returns the notes.’³⁷

In short, this view which is picturesque to the last degree, Mr Fisher has done justice to.

24. *A view of the remains of the Castle, with the Lake at Castle Blaney* (Plate 6); very like the place it is meant to represent, and the middle distances remarkably well.

26, 27, 28, 29. Portraits by Forster.³⁸ The colouring of these are cold and disagreeable, the drawing also faulty; the pencil of this artist, like Comus’s Cup, ‘unmoulds reason’s mintage, characted in the face’.³⁹

30. *Still Life; studies by candle light*. These subjects are trifling; however, the best of his productions.

32. *Portrait of a lady, her man and horse*, by Forrest.⁴⁰ The lady a very great likeness; the servant, leading the horse, natural and well, and altogether a very pleasing drawing.

33. *A nobleman, and horse*. The for-shortening of the horse’s neck has a disagreeable appearance; such views of nature should be avoided as much as possible.

34. *Portrait, a gentlemen [sic]*. The attitude disposed with taste, the figure easy, well drawn, and altogether worthy of Mr Forrest, who is a very promising genius.

39, 40, 41. Portraits, by Gaven.⁴¹ As an appendage to the arts, let him enjoy our donation of praise; his desires are superior to his execution; and it is a pity his propensity to painting was not originally directed in a proper channel.

43. *Portrait of a gentleman*, whole length [by Robert Hunter].⁴² This represents Doctor Achmet⁴³ in a Turkish dress, which, must be allowed, is favourable for a picture. Hunter, in this portrait, has excelled himself. The head is painted with a force of colour, and firmness of pencil which does him honour; the drapery is executed with freedom and judgement, and (the Turban especially) with a close eye to nature. This may be pronounced a capital picture.

44 to 56. All portraits. Achmet displays his abilities; these furnish the Room, and are diagnostics of his great business.

57. *Minerva introducing Venus*. As the Ancients pictured these goddesses always at variance, I should have been extremely happy at seeing them reconciled by the harmonising pencil of Miss Hunter;⁴⁴ unfortunately, though marked in the catalogue, they are not exhibited.

58, 59, 60, 61, 62. Portraits in crayons, by Hinks.⁴⁵ New to the Dangers of the field



6 – Jonathan Fisher (1740-1809), *THE CASTLE AND LAKE OF CASTLE BLAYNEY*
1795, aquatint, from: "Scenery of Ireland illustrated in a series of prints by Select Views. Castles and Abbies..."

this Hero advances with gaudy plumage; elated with hopes as a Youth must be, we shall not frost-nip him in the bud; his works bear the stigma of genius. We only request he will choose his sitters in a proper state of health, and not, as he has done with poor Alderman H_____,⁴⁶ with a locked jaw, and griped stomach, which visibly affects the muscles of the face.

63. *The judgement of Hercules*, by Kelly.⁴⁷ The statuary, as he cannot give voice, should endeavour, by a combination of exquisite forms, beautiful features, and vivacity of expression, to make the figure of pleasure inexpressibly engaging. In the work before us, Hercules loses the merit of choice. For, the man must be devoid of understanding, that could bend to the assurances of either of these allegorical figures. In one, there are no charms to smooth the rugged brow, enerve, or with voluptuous Hope dissolve; while the other, if she means any thing, it is a great deal more than is expressed.

64, 65, 66, 67 Flower pieces, by Mr Mannin.⁴⁸ A sprightly pencil, a knowledge of effect, and an intimate acquaintance with nature, are characteristics which stamp the merit of this artist, rendering him unrivalled in his style. The pictures before us, are some of the best of his productions.

71. *A drawing of an Indian fortification, built on an Arch Rock, seven miles off the shore of New Zealand.*

72. *An arched rock in Holland [Australia]*, by Mr Praval,⁴⁹ Draftsman to Mr [Joseph] Banks,⁵⁰ during his expedition round the world. To judge from these drawings,

this man possesses every qualification necessary to a good painter, except genius, judgement and a knowledge of design. Have faculties no extenuations? He was seasick the whole voyage; the cold climates benumbed his faculties; the reeling of the ship prevented a steady hand; – all which shows if he knew how, he would do much better.

75. A landscape,⁵¹ by Roberts (Plate 4).⁵² This picture, for grandeur and composition, richness of parts, and beauty of colouring surpasses any thing ever exhibited in this kingdom. The time as sun rising, one can hardly refrain from wishing the scene and moment passed; how charming to walk abroad at that sweet hour of prime, to enjoy the calm of nature, and taste the unripled freshness of the air. The greyness of the dawn seems gradually to decay, while the fleeces of the firmament, tinged with ruddy streaks, rise thinly upon the opening sunshine; all which is expressed to Admiration. To perceive the beauties of his picture requires but a common eye; but to describe them – I am unable for the task.

‘For still how faint precept is exprest,
The living image in the painter’s breast?
Thence endless streams of fair ideas show,
Strike in the sketch, or in the pasture glow.’⁵³

It was feared last year ‘wearied nature could afford no greater store’; but No. 76 a sunset, flatters the expectation. It has luxuriency because exhausted, the creative fancy of this artist would prove a noble resource.

81 and 82. Miniatures and designs in hair, by Mr Robertson,⁵⁴ painted with care, the likenesses good, and the figure of Jessamy⁵⁵ the most curious production we have seen in this manufacture of hair drawing.

86. *Adam and Eve* (Plate 7);⁵⁶ a great design directed to an important subject, marks the genius, and elevates the character of a painter. Tresham⁵⁷ seems, by this picture, to have made an introspection into his own mind, as if to try the strength of his imagination, and has succeeded beyond our most sanguine expectations; the disposition is happily conceived, the light and shadow distributed in great breaths without affectation, and the great light from which the voice of the Lord is supposed to proceed is introduced with judgement, painted with knowledge, and entirely consonant to Scripture. No representation of art can be adequate to our ideas of the first created Pair.

‘----- Eve, last and best
Of all God’s works! Creature, in whom excelled.
Whatever can to sight or thought be formed.’⁵⁸

Ideal beauty is above the reach of a young painter, and cannot always be maintained, where the passions are to be expressed. This enterprising genius has succeeded better in the figure of Adam. His attitude is spirited; the anatomy marked judiciously; and the limbs moved agreeable to the workings of the mind, which are well portrayed in the countenance, and altogether are expressive of guilt, shame and perturbation.

87, 88, 89. Small whole-lengths, in oil colours.⁵⁹ The two gentlemen examining prints, are well grouped, painted with a firm pencil, and have a very good effect. The gentleman viewing the model, is remarkably well drawn: the left thigh is fore-shortened with cleverness, and the attitude well chose. However, the colouring appears too cold and chalky. The portraits of Ladies are not amiss; the Draperies rich; and back Ground the belt we have to Portrait.



7 – Niccolo Schiavonetti (c.1771-1813) after Henry Tresham (1750-1814), *ADAM AND EVE* 1795, engraving, 39 x 48 cm (The Philip Medhurst Collection, Leicester)

90. Several Portraits in Chalk.⁶⁰ This style of drawing we are very fond of: the simplicity of the operation is not more curious than the infinitude of its effects. The late celebrated Mr Healy⁶¹ brought it to its greatest perfection, and was, in fact, the inventor of it. He, by a judicious mixture and modification of two extremes (black and white) produced an immensity of the most varied, beautiful and finished pictures; in which, we were at a loss, whether to admire the accuracy of the workmanship, or the genius that gave them birth. Tresham, in these drawings, emulates his excellence, and guards against his faults, which was a poverty in the extremities of his figures. In short, we may expect the fairest fruit from this young artist, when his aspiring genius is maturated by time, and cultivated by study.

91. *Portrait of a gentleman and his son*, half-lengths, by Trotter.⁶² This artist has just returned from abroad; and happy am I to find a man of merit with fortitude to settle in his own country. That Trotter has merit, the work before us evinces. The whole management of this picture is judicious. The figures well disposed. Nothing can be better than the gentleman's attitude. The boy's head is clear, and amazingly round; the man's hand is rather contracted, and the ruffle too highly starched. To sum up all we may say, with justice of the other parts of the picture,

'Here life awakes, and dawns at every line.'⁶³

92. *The Adoration of the Shepherds*, by West.⁶⁴ The parts of this drawing are executed with the usual cleverness of this master, who possesses a knowledge of drawing,

and immensity of taste, in an eminent degree: – it wants general effect.

94. Drawings in chalk. These are small heads, which for sweetness of expression, and cleverness of execution, cannot be too much admired.

95. *Boys representing Music*, by Wilder.⁶⁵

‘Music hath charms to sooth the savage breast,
to soften rocks and bend a knotterd oak.’⁶⁶

How it affects painters, let their own feelings determine. Wilder has shot wide of the mark.

96, 97, 98. Flower pieces, by Mr Waldron,⁶⁷ drawing master, or M.D. Master of Drawing, superior to criticism.

If it came here within the compass of our design, a few words should be bestowed on the generality of drawing masters. They teach a child, that a sharp knife cuts chalk better than a blunt one; that a portcreyon⁶⁸ may be made of brass, steel or silver, but that the latter is dearest; and a great many equal important etceteras. And here endeth their pride, their knowledge, and their use.

100. *Portrait of a clergyman*, by Warren.⁶⁹ This is an expressive likeness; has a good effect; and the best of the artist’s productions. We are happy at seeing visible marks of improvement.

102. Miniatures, by T. Wogan.⁷⁰ This artist is making large strides to the perfection every young man should be ambitious of attaining.

104. Six landscapes, in water colours, by J. Wilkinson.⁷¹ If there were mounted on fans, we might smile, but should not despise.

By a mistake, and not a wilful oversight of merit, Hamilton’s⁷² miniatures [no. 42] are unnoticed in the above. We acquit him honourably; and it is no more than his merit deserves, to acknowledge that this year his pictures are painted with delicacy, and the best he has yet exhibited.

In a future letter, you shall have some remarks on the arts in general; an examination into the situation of the Artist’s Society in particular; and a few reasons, to show the propriety of refusing the works offered by Mr Reily⁷³ (that justly celebrated painter) and Mr Ballard,⁷⁴ a place in the Exhibition Room.

Adieu.

William Truepenny.

Hibernian Journal, 4th June 1773

ENDNOTES

Editorial interventions: spelling, punctuation and use of capitalisation have all been modernised.

- ¹ D. Fleming, R. Kenny and W. Laffan (eds), *Exhibiting art in Georgian Ireland* (Dublin, 2018).
- ² D. Fleming, “‘Miserably daubed and imperfect’: the Society of Artists and the emergence of Irish art criticism”, in Fleming, Kenny and Laffan (eds), *Exhibiting art*, 44-67.
- ³ *Saunders’s Newsletter*, 4th June 1773.
- ⁴ Máire Kennedy, ‘Charles Praval: an eighteenth-century French teacher in Dublin’, *Dublin Historical Record*, 52, no. 2, 1999, 126-37.
- ⁵ R. Kenny, ‘The promising appearance of a Spring: a brief history of the Society of Artists in Ireland, 1764-1780’, in Fleming, Kenny and Laffan (eds), *Exhibiting art*, 16-43
- ⁶ *A catalogue of the pictures, models, designs, architecture, drawings, etc. exhibited by the Society of Artists, etc. of Ireland* (Dublin, 1773) 3-5.
- ⁷ *Freeman’s Journal*, 30th May 1769.
- ⁸ Fleming, ‘Miserably daubed’, 47-49.
- ⁹ *Saunders’s Newsletter*, 9 Apr 1773.
- ¹⁰ W. Strickland, *A dictionary of Irish artists*, 2 vols (Dublin and London, 1913) II, 603.
- ¹¹ Fleming, ‘Miserably daubed’, 46.
- ¹² Kenny, ‘The promising appearance of a Spring’, 35.
- ¹³ *ibid.*, 38.
- ¹⁴ *ibid.*; *Hibernian Journal*, 8th Oct 1773.
- ¹⁵ Charles Alphonse du Fresnoy, *De Arte Graphica* (Paris, 1668).
- ¹⁶ Du Fresnoy, *The art of painting* (York, 1783).
- ¹⁷ Tom Dunne, ‘Literature in Irish painting, 1700-1900’ in N. Figgis (ed.), *Art and architecture of Ireland, volume II: painting, 1600-1900* (Dublin, New Haven and London, 2014) 109-12.
- ¹⁸ Toby Barnard, *Brought to book: print in Ireland, 1680-1784* (Dublin, 2017) 153-56, 261.
- ¹⁹ Robert E. Ward, *Prince of Dublin printers: the letters of George Faulkner* (Lexington, KT, 1972) 32-33, 112.
- ²⁰ Toby Barnard, *A new anatomy of Ireland: the Irish protestants, 1649-1770* (New Haven and London, 2023) 285.
- ²¹ *Saunders’s Newsletter*, 12th Mar, 21st Apr 1773.
- ²² Toby Barnard, *Making the grand figure: lives and possessions in Ireland, 1641-1770* (New Haven and London, 2004) 361.
- ²³ Lines taken from *Xenophon, The memorable things of Socrates* (Dublin, 1767) 68.
- ²⁴ Joseph Justus Scaliger (1540-1609), Calvinist scholar and author of a number of works of historical criticism.
- ²⁵ Gorges Edmond Howard (1715-86), a lawyer, government official and writer.
- ²⁶ Marcus Fabius Quintilianus (c.35-c.100 AD), known for his twelve-volume textbook on rhetoric, *Institutio oratoria*.
- ²⁷ Revd Thomas Leland (1722-1785), historian and fellow of Trinity College Dublin. In May 1773 he published *A history of Ireland from the invasion of Henry II* (Dublin, 1773).
- ²⁸ William Burton, and from 1781 Burton Conyngham (1733-96), soldier, artist and antiquarian. MP for Newtown Limavady, 1761-76; Ennis, 1776-83, 1790-96, and Killybegs, 1783-90. See P. Harbison, *William Burton Conyngham and his circle of antiquarian artists* (New Haven and London, 2012).
- ²⁹ William Ashford (1746-1824), Ordnance Office, Castle Yard, Dublin. In 1773, he was awarded the Dublin Society’s premium for the best landscape.
- ³⁰ Henry Brooke (1738-1806), historical painter, and drawing master at the corner of Jervas Street and Mary Street, Dublin.
- ³¹ Gabriel Beranger (1729-1817), landscape draughtsman, Great George’s Street, Dublin.
- ³² The quote is from Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, act 2, scene 4.
- ³³ James Coy (fl. 1769-80) landscape painter, at Mrs Nesborne’s, near Market Street, Lazar’s Hill, Dublin.
- ³⁴ John Smith Cranfield (d.1802). He was awarded the Dublin Society’s premium for this work.
- ³⁵ A variation of the lines composed by the English poet Edmund Waller (1606-87).
- ³⁶ Jonathan Fisher (d.1809), landscape painter, Great Ship Street, Dublin.
- ³⁷ Lines taken from a poem by Michael Drayton (1563-1631).
- ³⁸ John Forster (fl.1773-80), Golden Lane, Dublin.
- ³⁹ Lines taken from John Milton’s ‘Song’.
- ⁴⁰ Charles Forrest (fl.1765-80), 1 Dame Street, Dublin.
- ⁴¹ George Gaven (fl.1760-75), Queen Street, Oxmantown.
- ⁴² Robert Hunter (1715/28-1801) of Stafford Street, Dublin.
- ⁴³ ‘Dr’ Achmet Borumbadad, whose real name was Patrick Joyce, established public baths in Dublin in the 1770s.

- ⁴⁴ Mary Anne Hunter (1752-79), who exhibited under her married name.
- ⁴⁵ William Hincks (1752-97), York Street, Dublin.
- ⁴⁶ Could be any number of aldermen: Percival Hunt, alderman since 1741, Sir Patrick Hamilton (since 1756), Henry Hart (1770), James Hamilton (1773), or Gorges Edmond Howard.
- ⁴⁷ John Kelly, carver (fl.1739-75), Colledge Green, Dublin.
- ⁴⁸ James Mannin (fl.1756-79), Lazer's Hill, Dublin.
- ⁴⁹ Charles Praval, draughtsman (d.1789).
- ⁵⁰ Joseph Banks (1743-1820), naturalist who accompanied Captain James Cooke's naval expedition to the Pacific in 1768-71.
- ⁵¹ The catalogue gives 'A landscape, sun-rise'.
- ⁵² Thomas Roberts (1748-77).
- ⁵³ Lines taken from Alexander Pope's 'Epistle to Mr. Jervas, with Dryden's translation of Fresnoy's art of painting' (1716).
- ⁵⁴ Charles Robertson (1760-1821), miniature painter at the Peacock, George's Lane, Dublin.
- ⁵⁵ Presumably a character from Eliza Fowler Haywood's *The History of Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy*, 3 vols (London, 1753).
- ⁵⁶ This picture was awarded the Dublin Society's prize of £15 for the best history painting.
- ⁵⁷ Henry Tresham (1751-1814), historical painter at 2 Dame Street, Dublin.
- ⁵⁸ Lines from John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667), book IX.
- ⁵⁹ by Tresham.
- ⁶⁰ 'Portraits in chalk, small whole lengths, theatrical characters', by Tresham.
- ⁶¹ Robert Healy (fl.1765-71), portrait and animal painter in chalks.
- ⁶² John Trotter (d.1792), portrait painter of 5 Jervis Street, Dublin.
- ⁶³ Lines taken from Pope's 'Epistle to Mr. Jervas...'
- ⁶⁴ Francis Robert West (1749?-1809), draughtsman at Chequer Lane, Dublin. He was appointed master of the Dublin Society's School in 1771 in succession to this father Robert West.
- ⁶⁵ James Wilder (b.1724), landscape and figure painter at Mecklenburgh Street, Dublin.
- ⁶⁶ Lines from William Congreve's play *The mourning bride* (London, 1697).
- ⁶⁷ William Waldron (fl.1772-1801), flower painter and drawing master at Mabbot Street, Dublin.
- ⁶⁸ A metallic handle with a clasp for holding a crayon.
- ⁶⁹ John Warren (fl.1768-77), painter in crayons and watercolour, Dorset Street, Dublin. Secretary to the Society of Artists, 1775.
- ⁷⁰ Thomas Wogan (d.1781), miniature painter, Parliament Street, Dublin.
- ⁷¹ James Wilkinson (fl.1773-1801), draughtsman, Chequer Lane, Dublin.
- ⁷² Gustavus Hamilton (1739-75), miniature painter, Colledge Green, Dublin.
- ⁷³ James Reily (d.1780), miniature painter, Grafton Street, Dublin.
- ⁷⁴ James Ballard (fl.1766-92) miniature painter, Mary's Abbey, Dublin. Secretary to the Society of Artists, 1778-80.