

**London Exhibitions of Contemporary
Art,
1760-1782:
The impact on landscape painting and
its reception**

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ABSTRACT

The institution of annual exhibitions of modern British art has been accredited with the initiation of a consumer-led commercial market which obviated the need for patronage. I argue that the simplistic acceptance that exhibitions were successful in establishing a market for landscape painting between 1760 and 1782 cannot be substantiated. However, two overtly mercantile initiatives, an auction of contemporary British art in 1763 and the subsequent concession to allow exhibitors to mark their work for sale from 1764, did initiate a limited retail market centred on exhibitions. Although these commercial opportunities were embraced by some landscape painters, I argue that this market was no substitute for patronage which remained important. George Barret and Richard Wilson, founder members of the Royal Academy, marked a selection of their exhibits for sale. I propose they resorted to this commercial practice only when commissions failed to provide financial security.

Exhibitions exposed landscape painting, for the first time, to public scrutiny and instigated critical reviews in newspapers. I argue that reviews of the exhibitions between 1760 and 1782 reveal a transformation in the critical response to landscape painting. Connoisseurial rhetoric, based on classically-inspired aesthetic evaluations, was superseded by emphasis on accurate representations of Nature and the ability of landscape painters to evoke subjective responses from perceptive viewers. Nevertheless, there was little correlation between critical acclaim and commercial success; Thomas Gainsborough despite fulsome praise failed to sell his landscape paintings.

In 1769, the Royal Academy was established and Joshua Reynolds, in his *Discourses*, introduced a theoretical platform for evaluation of British art. Landscape painting was marginalised. I suggest that this led to a reduction in the number of landscape exhibits, and a fall in critical interest. However, the exhibitions between 1775 and 1782 exposed the marked disjunction between academic theory and critical response to landscape painting. While history painting was adjudged by Reynolds to be the only genre capable of eliciting an affective response, landscape painters, especially Gainsborough and Joseph Wright of Derby, were increasingly lauded for the emotional impact of their landscape exhibits.

I suggest that these changes in critical response were prescient. The reviews of exhibited landscape paintings presaged the language later espoused for the nineteenth-century landscape paintings of John Constable and J.M.W Turner, recognised as the founder members of the British school of landscape painting.

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ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used in the footnotes to the text:

Exhibiting Societies

S of A	Society of Artists of Great Britain
FS	Free Society of Artists
SEAMC	Society for the Encouragement of the Arts, Manufactures and Commerce
RA	Royal Academy

Exhibitions

S of A 1762, 135	Richard Wilson's <i>View of Holt Bridge on the River Dee</i> was exhibit no. 135 in the Catalogue of the exhibition for the Society of Artists exhibition in 1762
FS 1761, 42	Exhibition of the Free Society, 1761, exhibit no. 42
RA 1769, 42	Exhibition of Royal Academy, 1769, exhibit no. 42
Exh. Society of Artists 1768	Exhibited at Society of Artists exhibition, 1768

Catalogues

<i>Catalogue</i> , 1760, Present Artists	Catalogue of the Pictures, Sculptures, Models, Drawings &c. of the Present Artists Exhibition, 1760
<i>Catalogue</i> , S of A, 1761	Catalogue of the Pictures, Sculptures, Designs in Architecture, Drawings, prints, &c. exhibited by the Society of Artists of Great Britain, 1761
<i>Catalogue</i> , FS. 1761	Catalogue of the Paintings, Sculptures, Architecture, Drawings, Engravings &c ... by the Artists associated for the Relief of their Distressed Brethren, their Widows and Children, 1761
<i>Catalogue</i> , RA. 1769	The catalogue for exhibitions held by the Royal Academy, 1769

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INTRODUCTION

The objective of my thesis is to evaluate the impact on landscape painters of the inauguration of an exhibition culture, and to assess how the change in the constituency of the audience influenced public reception of landscape painting. The period covered is from 1760, when the first exhibition was held, to 1782, when the first book on landscape painting, *An essay on landscape painting* by John Holden Pott was published.¹

The first exhibition of modern British art, staged by the 'Present Artists' opened in London on 21 April 1760. Matthew Hargraves, in *Candidates for Fame*, 2005, declared that 'In 1760 London witnessed an innovation that profoundly changed the character of artistic life; the emergence of public art exhibitions'.² Mark Hallett emphasised in *Reynolds, Portraiture in Action*, 2014, that the first exhibition was 'an event of seminal importance in the history of eighteenth-century British art'. It offered a new experience to British artists; a public, collective opportunity to 'showcase their newest work in an environment that was devoted specifically to the display and viewing of art'.³ David Solkin, in his recent publication *Art in Britain*, 2015, declared that 'There is no more important date in the entire history of British art'.⁴ However, art historical interest in exhibitions has predominantly focussed on the commercial benefit for exhibiting artists. Iain Pears, in *The Discovery of Painting*, 1988, had insisted that exhibitions were established as marketplaces for art,⁵ and John Brewer, in *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, 1997, declared that 'Exhibitions were a commercial tactic that would change the structure of the art market'.⁶ Solkin agreed that exhibitions, by freeing artists from the constraints of patronage, offered commercial advantages that 'were both considerable and obvious'.⁷

¹ John Holden Pott, *An Essay on Landscape Painting, with remarks general and critical, on the different schools and masters, ancient and modern* (London: J Johnson 1782)

² Matthew Hargraves, *Candidates for Fame: The Society of Artists of Great Britain 1760-1791* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2005), 1.

³ Mark Hallett, *Reynolds: Portraiture in Action* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2014), 133.

⁴ David H. Solkin, *Art in Britain 1660-1815* (New Haven and Yale: Yale University Press 2015), 151.

⁵ Iain Pears, *The Discovery of Painting: The growth of interest in the Arts in England 1680-1768* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), 127.

⁶ John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination, English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Harper Collins, 1997), 230.

⁷ Solkin, *Art in Britain*, 151.

Exhibitions as commercial institutions

The political economy of culture, defined by Julie F. Codell in *The Political Economy of Art*, 2008, as 'collective ... support for art and architecture in the public sphere intended to be accessible to the widest public', offered little initial benefit to eighteenth-century British artists.⁸ There was no state or corporate sponsorship of the arts and few arenas for the display of artistic productions.⁹ The first exhibition held in 1760 was thus an event of great importance; it was the first time that modern British art entered the public sphere. The exhibition was sponsored by the Society for the Encouragement of the Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (SEAMC), established by Walter Shipley in 1754 to improve British industrial arts and further the country's commercial interests. Daniel Guernsey, in *The Political Economy*, stated that, 'in eighteenth-century thinking', the benefits of commerce 'became associated with enlightened civility – particularly the refinement of the arts, sciences, manners and morals'.¹⁰ In *A Letter to the Members of the Society &c*, 1761, the anonymous author extolled 'your laudable designs ... of refining the manners of men, by introducing and cultivating the politer arts, which embellish, and adorn human life'.¹¹

Exhibitions were ostensibly instituted 'to Advance the Arts', but they were intended from their inception as competitive commercial institutions.¹² There has been little scholarly analysis, despite the emphasis on the commercial importance of exhibitions, of how successful they were in establishing a market for British art. I argue that, although a limited retail market was established through exhibitions, it cannot be substantiated that the exhibitions between 1760 and 1782 functioned effectively as commercial marketplaces for British landscape paintings. Patronage remained significant for landscape painters.

Patronage offered singular opportunities. The patronage of print publishers was of paramount importance to landscape painters. Subscriptions were raised after bespoke works and publishers bought or commissioned landscape paintings to be engraved for the reproductive print market. Prints introduced landscape painters to a wider, more disparate audience than attended exhibitions. Limited corporate patronage was offered by theatrical entrepreneurs; many landscape painters were employed as scene painters which ensured a regular income.

⁸ Julie F. Codell, ed. *The Political Economy of Art: Making the Nation of Culture*. (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 2008), 13.

⁹ The Foundling Hospital offered limited opportunities to history and landscape painters.

¹⁰ Daniel R. Guernsey, 'Protestant Dissent and Political Economy of Art in Eighteenth-Century England: James Barry's *The Progress of Human Knowledge and Culture*' in *The Political Economy of Art*, 68.

¹¹ Anon, *A Letter to the Members of the Society for the Encouragement of Art, Manufactures and Commerce*. (London: R. Griffiths 1761), 53-54.

¹² 'Preface' in *Catalogue S of A 1762*.

Wealthy landowners commissioned portraits of their country houses and estates, although estate portraiture had a limited audience. A change from reliance on these traditional sources of patronage to a consumer-led market centred on exhibitions demanded substantial modifications from entrenched practices.

The display of commissioned work at exhibitions demonstrated that the exhibiting landscape painters enjoyed prestigious patronage; their reputations were enhanced which afforded the possibility of attracting further commissions. Commissioned landscape exhibits were unavailable for purchase but exhibited speculatively-produced landscape paintings were more open to opportunistic purchase. The most overt declarations of commercial intent, the first public auction of modern British art held in 1763, and the subsequent concession, the asterisking in the catalogue of exhibits 'to be disposed of' from 1764, have received little close attention. I suggest that these initiatives were important for landscape painters. The auction revealed a market existed for relatively inexpensive landscape paintings, and the limited retail market that emerged, centred on exhibitions, was initially dominated by those landscape painters who had participated in the auction. Nevertheless, I maintain that this did not obviate the aspiration of landscape painters for patronage. Four founder members of the Royal Academy, George Barret, John Richards, Paul Sandby and Richard Wilson asterisked exhibits for sale; I propose they resorted to this commercial practice only when commissions failed to provide financial security.

Public reception of landscape painting.

The inauguration of an exhibition culture from 1760, when the viewing of landscape painting became a shared cultural experience, subjected exhibited works to public scrutiny and initiated the publication of critical reviews. These reviews, which reached a wide audience in popular newspapers and pamphlets, were, as Stephen Copley in *Painting and the Politics of Culture*, 1992, declared, significant in determining the 'status of art and of the artists'.¹³ However, as acknowledged by Munsterberg, 'Plenty of writings about painting existed before 1760',¹⁴ and Elizabeth Bohls, in *Eighteenth-century Aesthetics and the Reconstruction of Art*, 1993, declared that 'Eighteenth-century Britain saw an unprecedented flood of writing on aesthetic topics; beauty, sublimity, genius, painting, landscape gardening and scenic tourism'.¹⁵

¹³ Stephen Copley, 'The Fine Arts in Eighteenth-Century Polite Culture' in *Painting and the Politics of Culture*, ed. John Barrell, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992), 13.

¹⁴ Marjorie Munsterberg, 'The beginning of British art criticism in the 1760s', *The British Art Journal* XV:I (2014): 82.

¹⁵ Elizabeth A. Bohls, 'Disinterestedness and denial of the particular: Locke, Adam Smith, and the subject of aesthetics' in *Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics and the Reconstruction of Art*, ed. Paul Mattick. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1993), 16.

I suggest that critical reviews articulate a changing public appreciation of landscape painting between 1760 and 1782, and show that the more discerning critics had an awareness of the contemporary discourses pertaining to landscape painting.

In the eighteenth century, aristocratic collectors and connoisseurs were, as described by Harry Mount, 'primarily concerned with the assessment of absolute aesthetic quality in the light of a particular set of rules'.¹⁶ Munsterberg acknowledged that these rules were dependent upon an artistic canon centred on George Vasari's *The Lives of the Artists*; Vasari had insisted that the purpose of art is the imitation and perfection of Nature, with an insistence that 'invention, expression, design, colour ... were the common elements for painting'.¹⁷ His influence on British eighteenth-century commentators is evident in Jonathan Richardson's *An essay on the whole art of criticism as it relates to painting*, 1719. He stressed the importance of 'a finely Imagin'd Subject' and emphasised that the most significant values were those of expression, design, colouring, light and a truthful rendition of Nature.¹⁸

Solkin, in *Painting for Money*, 1992, emphasised that the principles enshrined in Richardson's *Essay* were not the only 'criteria for good taste empowered by the sanction of an aristocratic elite'.¹⁹ The concepts of artistic beauty were discussed by Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury, and Joseph Addison in the early eighteenth century. Shaftesbury published his collected works, *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, in 1711.²⁰ John Hope Mason, in *The Value of Creativity*, 2003, stressed that Shaftesbury believed in 'the existence of an all-encompassing order, proportion and harmony ... [which] stems from our aesthetic sense of the beauty, order and perfection of the universe'.²¹ Shaftesbury insisted that this appreciation of beauty was the prerogative of the polite: the wealthy, socially refined and aesthetically educated landowners.

Joseph Addison, in his influential articles 'On the Pleasures of the Imagination' published serially in *The Spectator* in 1712, also promoted aesthetic contemplation as a 'gentlemanly pursuit' but Paul Mattick, in *Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics*, suggested his articles were also

¹⁶ Harry Mount, 'The Monkey with the magnifying Glass: Constructions of the Connoisseur in Eighteenth-Century Britain' in *Oxford Art Journal* 29.2 2006, 167.

¹⁷ Munsterberg, 'The beginning of British art criticism', 82.

¹⁸ Jonathan Richardson, *An essay on the whole art of criticism as it relates to painting* (London: W. Churchill 1719), 26 -31.

¹⁹ Solkin, *Painting for Money: The Visual arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven and Yale 1992), 3.

²⁰ Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (London: printed for the author, 1711)

²¹ John Hope Mason, *The Value of Creativity: The Origins and Emergence of a Modern Belief*. (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited 2003), 138.

addressed to the rising middling classes of ‘bankers, businessmen and merchants’ who were beginning to share ‘the leisure enjoyed by the aristocracy’.²² Addison declared that ‘Our sight is the most perfect and delightful of all our senses’,²³ and Charles Harrison, Paul Wood and Jason Gaiger, in *Art in Theory*, 2000, proposed that Addison positioned imagination between the high intellectual understanding of beauty espoused by Shaftesbury and ‘the relatively crude pleasures of the senses’.²⁴ His views were influential in the recognition by critics that the portrayal of the natural world evoked a pleasurable, emotional response in the perceptive viewer. Malcolm Andrews, in *The Search for the Picturesque*, 1999, noted that the acceptance ‘that the recognition of beauty is subjective and individual’ disrupted the concept that appreciation of art was dependent on adherence to a set of fixed rules.²⁵ Nevertheless, Addison declared that only those of ‘polite imagination’ can experience this pleasure; ‘the vulgar are not capable of receiving it’.²⁶ The directors of exhibitions agreed with these sentiments; they sought to exclude those ‘all who cannot be judges or purchasers of works of art’.²⁷

The first published reviews of exhibited landscape paintings were dominated by vehement disagreement between those who defended the right of the aristocracy and those with ‘polite imagination’ to deliver artistic judgement, and those who defended the right of all to express an aesthetic opinion. The principles promoted by Richardson, Shaftesbury and Addison were attacked by commentators who disagreed that aesthetic judgment was the privilege of the elite. Hogarth, in *The Analysis of Beauty*, 1753, attacked the insistence that, to be a connoisseur, ‘English gentlemen’ should be ‘educated in the principles of continental art theory’, and that ‘paintings claim to be an intellectual art was best upheld seen in works of elevated subject matter and idealised modes of representation’.²⁸ He wrote ‘The more prevailing the notion may be, that ... connoisseurs are the only competent judges ... the more it becomes necessary to clear up and confirm as much as possible that no one may be deterr’d, by the want of such previous knowledge.’²⁹

²² Paul Mattick, *Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics*, 5.

²³ Joseph Addison, ‘Pleasures of the Imagination’ in *The Spectator*, 411, 21 June 1712.

²⁴ Charles Harrison, Paul Wood and Jason Gaiger, eds. *Art in Theory 1648-1815: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing), 383.

²⁵ Malcolm Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque*. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1989), 41.

²⁶ Addison, *The Spectator*, 21 June 1714.

²⁷ ‘Preface’ to *Catalogue*, S of A 1762, iii.

²⁸ Harry Mount, ‘The Monkey with the magnifying Glass’, 170.

²⁹ William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty*. *Written with the view of fixing the fluctuating ideas of taste*. London: printed for the author, 1753, 3.

From the mid-1760s, longer, more thoughtful assessments of exhibited landscape paintings were published. Peter de Bolla, in *The Education of the Eye*, 2003, has stressed that, as visitors to exhibitions were increasingly members of the 'middling sort', the cultural authority of the aristocratic connoisseur was challenged.³⁰ Landscape paintings were increasingly appreciated for their accurate representations of the beauty of natural world or admired for their ability to evoke an emotive response from the more discerning viewer. The reviews made little reference to the values of the connoisseurs who were often mocked for their pretensions.

The publication of Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and the Beautiful*, 1757, was of huge importance in the evolution of this new descriptive vocabulary. Burke argued that the sublime 'excites the ideas of pain, and danger ... it is productive of the highest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling'. However, this pleasurable emotion in face of the sublime only exists 'when danger and pain ... are at certain distances'.³¹ His concept of beauty diverged from that of Shaftesbury; an affective response was not engendered through an appreciation of order or symmetry, but 'that quality or those qualities in bodies by which they cause love, or some passion like it'.³² Burke's theories allowed all who saw an exhibited landscape painting to be moved by the experience through its emotional appeal to the senses rather than the intellect; the emergence of the concept of sensibility, with its stress in individual feeling and self-expression, allowed viewers a personal response to an aesthetic experience.

Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry* was not the only contemporary discourse to have an important impact on critical appraisal of landscape painting. Joshua Reynolds, in his *Discourses on Art*, delivered after the establishment of the Royal Academy in 1768, prioritised connoisseurial aesthetic doctrines and the hierarchy of the genres as exemplified by the dictates of the French Académie Royale in the seventeenth century. His theory of the Grand Style prioritised history painting for its 'intellectual dignity ... that ennobles the painter's art'.³³ I argue that his marginalisation of landscape painting was influential in the initial lack of critical response to exhibited landscape painting following the foundation of the Royal Academy in 1768.

³⁰ Peter de Bolla, *The Education of the Eye: Painting, Landscape and Architecture in Eighteenth-Century Britain*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press 2003), 23.

³¹ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and the Beautiful* (London: R. and J. Dodsley 1757) Reprinted by Oxford World Classics, ed. Paul Guyer. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 33-34.

³² *ibid*, 74

³³ *Sir Joshua Reynolds's Discourses on Art*, ed. Edward Gilpin Johnson, Discourse IV (Classic Reprint Series, Forgotten Books, Chicago, 2012), 83-84. I have used this edition throughout my thesis. However, I am aware of a more recent publication, *Discourses on Art, Sir Joshua Reynolds*, ed. Robert J. Wark, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press 1997).

The poetic literature of language had inspired a love of the British countryside and many critics wrote their reviews of landscape paintings as poems.³⁴ I suggest the publication of William Gilpin's *Essay on Prints*, 1768, in which he expounded his principles of picturesque beauty, was also of significance in encouraging public appreciation of the British landscape. He declared that the picturesque was 'a term expressive of that peculiar beauty, which is agreeable in a picture',³⁵ Charles Harrison et al in *Art in Theory*, 2000, positioned Gilpin in relation to Burke's theories; they argued that 'While a given scene might appear neither beautiful nor sublime to the ordinary perception, it might nevertheless provide material attractive to the eye of the painter'.³⁶ Jay Appleton, in *The Experience of Landscape*, 1995, questioned 'Whether Gilpin could be said to have directed public taste in landscape or whether he merely displayed a susceptibility to the kind of visual environment in which the public was increasingly discovering aesthetic pleasure'.³⁷ Nevertheless, Gilpin's ideas were of immense importance in the stimulation of interest in domestic tourism, the art of landscape gardening and exhibited landscape painting.

The concept of picturesque tourism began to fascinate the newly-leisured middling classes. Appleton wrote that 'In the observation of landscape an immense step forward was made by ... Gilpin who between 1768 and 1776, made numerous tours 'with the specific objective of discovering the most 'picturesque type of scenery'.³⁸ He wrote descriptions of these tours, illustrated with his sketches, which were widely circulated before the publication of the first one, *Observations on the River Wye*, in 1782.³⁹ Andrews noted that 'British tastes in natural beauty had derived initially from foreign models, from images of the Italian scenery'⁴⁰, but these models were challenged as it became recognised by 'picturesque tourists' that the British countryside was worthy of observation, with the anti-classical Gothic ruins prominent among sites visited.

Picturesque aesthetics were of undeniable importance in the design of eighteenth-century gardens and parks. The designers of British gardens in the seventeenth century were indebted to the ornate, formal continental style favoured by the French gardener André le

³⁴ This was exemplified in James Thomson, *The Seasons* (London: J. Millan and A. Millar 1730), which celebrated the splendour and harmony of the British countryside.

³⁵ William Gilpin, *An Essay on Prints, containing remarks on the principles of picturesque beauty*. (London: J. Robinson 1768).²

³⁶ Harrison et al, *Art in Theory*, 820.

³⁷ Jay Appleton, *The Experience of Landscape: Revised Edition* (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons 1995), 29.

³⁸ *ibid*, 29.

³⁹ Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye, and several parts of South Wales, &c, relative chiefly to Picturesque beauty: made In the Summer of the year 1770*. (London: R. Balmire 1782).

⁴⁰ Malcolm Andrews, *Landscape and Western Art*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1999), 40.

Nôtre. However, by the early eighteenth century, there was a demand for a more natural look, initially indebted to the classical vistas of Claude, Poussin and Salvator Rosa. In the new style of landscape gardening, initiated by Charles Bridgeman and William Kent, and refined by Capability Brown, the picturesque influence is evident. Symmetry was abandoned for a less regimented vista; serpentine lakes, irregular groups of shrubs and trees, and architectural follies of gothic ruins and grottos complemented Brown's inclusion of the garden within the surrounding countryside. John Holden Pott, in *An Essay on Landscape Painting*, 1782, declared that 'The English painter will owe no small share of gratitude to the ingenious Mr Browne (sic) who has enriched this country with so many and picturesque scenes',⁴¹ and Walpole eulogised, in *The History of the Modern Taste in Gardening*, 1786, 'How rich, how gay, how picturesque the face of the country! The demolition of wall laying open each improvement, each journey is made through a succession of pictures ... [and] the general view is embellished by variety'.⁴²

The Influence of exhibitions on artistic practice.

I maintain that exposure of landscape painting to a public audience impacted on artistic practice. Pears insisted that exhibitions were commercial institutions, but declared that 'The audience was there to be manipulated and moulded, not to have any influence on the development of painting through their reaction'.⁴³ I maintain that these statements are incompatible. If exhibiting landscape painters aspired to sell their work, it was inevitable that they had to exhibit work that appealed to the interests of potential purchasers. Hargraves stated that, despite the claim that exhibitions were 'not to enrich the Artists but to advance the Arts', artists were 'painting for a market' although they 'were as yet unsure of the exact nature of that market'.⁴⁴ Certainly, the variety of the landscape paintings on display attested to this uncertainty as landscape painters sought to exhibit landscape paintings with appeal to the diverse interests and preferences of the visiting public.

The emergence of critical and cultural aesthetic developments in the mid-eighteenth century undoubtedly influenced the critical response to exhibited landscape between 1760 and 1782. I argue that the opinions expressed by the critics, as representatives of the visiting public, remain invaluable. They offer the only extant historical evidence of the reception of exhibited

⁴¹ John Holden Pott, *An essay on landscape painting, with remarks general and critical, on the different schools and masters, ancient and modern*. (London: J. Johnson, 1782), 63.

⁴² Horace Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting in England ... to which is added The History of the Modern Taste in Gardening* (London: J. Dodsley 1786), 308-309.

⁴³ Pears, *The Discovery of Painting: The growth of interest in the Arts in England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1988), 127.

⁴⁴ Hargraves, *Candidates for Fame: The Society of Artists of Great Britain 1760-1791* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2005), 24.

landscape paintings by a disparate urban public viewing landscape painting for the first time. When the reviews are considered in totality rather than as evaluations of individual exhibits, a definitive change in the critical appreciation of landscape painting between 1760 and 1782 is evident.

Before the impact of the public exposure of landscape paintings can be evaluated, it is important to establish my understanding of the genre. The entry for *Landskip* in *A New and Complete Dictionary for Arts and Sciences*, 1754-1755, written by 'A Society of Gentlemen', was dismissive. It declared that it was 'one of the lowest branches of painting, representing some rural scene, as hills, valleys, rivers, country-houses &c. where human figures are introduced as accidents'.⁴⁵ Jean André Rouquet, in *The present state of the arts in England*, 1756, was more insightful. He identified 'landskip-painting' as 'a study of nature' and insisted that the practitioners of landskip painting in England 'ought to excel all others, as nothing can be more charming than the verdure of that country'.⁴⁶ I suggest that the exhibited landscape painting, as well as the exhibited landscape print, extended beyond these narrow parameters.

Exhibited landscape paintings undoubtedly included views of rural vistas; the eighteenth-century viewer, persuaded by georgic pastoral and elegiac poetry, perceived the English countryside as a place of harmony and order in contrast to the taint and corruption of the cities. The exhibits of George and John Smith exemplify these qualities. Landscape paintings were also shown to appeal to an audience with an interest in British heritage. Nicholas Dall and George Barret's exhibits included depictions of ruins, with Richard Wilson and Paul Sandby showing views of castles. Martin Postle, in *Thomas Gainsborough*, 2002, proposed that Gainsborough's rural landscape, *The Harvest Wagon*, exhibited at the Society of Artists exhibition in 1767, was a 'pictorial parable', which reflected the 'transient joys' of rural labourers and their stoical acceptance of the hardship of their lives.⁴⁷ (fig 38) Gainsborough's figures in his rural landscapes were not mere 'accidents'; they carried a significant message. Not all exhibits depicted rural English scenery; views of more distant locations in Wales and Scotland, increasingly visited by domestic tourists, were also on display. Commissioned estate portraiture was also exhibited, although the vistas portrayed were not always 'studies of

⁴⁵ A Society of Gentlemen, *A New and Complete Dictionary of Arts and Sciences, comprehending the Branches of Useful Knowledge* vol. 3, (London: W. Owen 1754-1755), 1852.

⁴⁶ Jean André Rouquet, *The present state of the arts in England* (Dublin: G. and A. Ewing 1756), 54.

⁴⁷ Martin Postle, *Thomas Gainsborough* (London: Tate Gallery Publications 2002), 42.

nature' but were, as described by Horace Walpole in *Anecdotes of Painting*, depictions of 'improved nature'.⁴⁸

Exhibited urban views or townscapes, when critically assessed in reviews as landscape paintings, are included in my analysis of the genre. Views of London were, as noted by Elizabeth McKellar in the *Metropolis and its Image*, focussed on reaches of the river Thames and the 'urban playgrounds [that] extended into the fields and villages beyond'.⁴⁹ The commercial ascendancy of London in the eighteenth century was centred on the Thames, and William James, William Marlow and Samuel Scott were cognisant that the new 'middling' class audience, enriched through commerce, appreciated imagery which reflected the mercantile dominance of the capital. Edward Rooker's exhibited prints series, *Six London Views*, after designs by Thomas and Paul Sandby, showed scenes of 'modern developments set alongside a number of prominent London landmarks ... or historic building projects'. John Bonehill emphasised that these prints were aimed at an audience concerned to improve the city's environment.⁵⁰

Exhibited landscape paintings were not all depictions of the British countryside or townscapes. Landscape painters also sought to attract those with more erudite interests. Wilson displayed views of Italy designed to appeal to those who had undertaken the Grand Tour, with Marlow and Joseph Wright of Derby exhibiting dramatic views of Vesuvius. James Stuart and William Pars exhibited their studies of Greek architecture, designed for those with interest in antiquarian history.

There was slippage between the hierarchy of genre, where history painting was exalted as the pinnacle of artistic achievement. Wilson exhibited *A large landskip, with the story of Niobe*, with the 'Present Artists' in 1760.⁵¹ (fig 29) Influenced by the landscape tradition of Claude Lorrain, and the striking storm effects of the contemporary French landscape painter, Claude-Joseph Vernet, *Niobe* illustrated a story from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* set within a dramatic landscape. Olivia Horsfall Turner, in *Noblesse and Grandeur*, 1995, declared that merging landscape painting, placed among the lower categories of art in the traditional hierarchy of

⁴⁸ Horace Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting in England; with some account of the principal artists; and incidental notes on other arts*. vol. IV. (London: J. Dodsley 1782), 314.

⁴⁹ Elizabeth McKellar, 'Peripheral Visions: alternative spaces and rural presences in mid-eighteenth-century London' in *The Metropolis and its Image; Constructing identities for London c1750-1950*, ed. Dana Arnold (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers 1999), 30.

⁵⁰ John Bonehill, 'The Centre of Pleasure and Magnificence: Paul and Thomas Sandby's London in *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 75, issue 3, 2012. 72-75.

⁵¹ *Present Artists*, 1760, 72.

genre, with history painting, placed at the pinnacle, was a 'radical critical and artistic inquiry into the established orthodoxies of art'.⁵² *Niobe* is identifiable as a landscape rather than a history painting; the figures of Niobe, her children and the avenging gods are subordinate to the background setting. In history paintings, the landscape backgrounds remain subservient to the action, adding atmosphere and credence to the scene depicted. The term 'historical landscape' became accepted by contemporary landscape painters; in 1761 Alexander Cozens exhibited *An Historical landscape, representing the retirement of Timoleon*,⁵³ and Paul Sandby *An Historical Landscape, representing the Welsh Bard*,⁵⁴ illustrating a poem by Thomas Gray, *The Bard: A Pindaric Ode*, published in 1757.⁵⁵

Many exhibited portraits, as in Gainsborough's *A whole length of a gentleman holding a gun*,⁵⁶ and conversation pieces showing informal group portraits of families or friends, as seen in Johann Zoffany's *The Bradshaw Family*,⁵⁷ were painted within a landscape setting.⁵⁸ These works, where the individuals or groups portrayed are the dominant feature, have not been considered. I have also excluded 'fancy pictures'. These paintings were defined by Postle as 'life-size portrayals of cherubic children, ragged street urchins, winsome market women and poor old beggars' sited within a landscape location',⁵⁹ as exemplified by Gainsborough's *Girl with Pigs*, exhibited with the Royal Academy in 1782, (no 76). Animal and sporting paintings, which were usually placed in a rural location, have been rigorously evaluated. When the contemporary critics reviewed the work as a landscape painting, I have included them; a review in 1766 extolled the dramatic background of George Stubbs's *A Horse Frightened by a Lion*.⁶⁰ (fig 36)

The catalogues of the exhibitions held between 1760 and 1782 reveal that landscape paintings and views were regularly exhibited. (Appendix 1) Thomas Mortimer, in *The Universal Director*, 1763, enumerated those artists with studios in London who entitled themselves as landscape

⁵² Olivia Horsfall Turner, *Noblesse and Grandeur, Forging Historical Landscapes in Britain 1760-1850* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1995), 3.

⁵³ SEAMC, 1761, 11.

⁵⁴ S of A, 1761, 95.

⁵⁵ Thomas Gray, *Odes by Mr Gray* (London: R. and J. Dodsley: 1757)

⁵⁶ S of A, 1762, 30.

⁵⁷ RA, 1781, 85.

⁵⁸ Postle, in *Johan Zoffany RA, Society Observed* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2011), 29, stated that Zoffany exhibited ten works with the Society of Artists in 1769, including *The Bradshaw Family*. Three of these exhibits are stated as Omitted at the end of the catalogue, which may mean that they were submitted too late to be included in the alphabetical list of exhibits. I assume that *A gentleman's family*, no 359, was the work mentioned by Postle.

⁵⁹ Postle, *Angels and Urchins: The Fancy Picture in 18th century British Art* (The Djanogly Art Gallery; Lund Humphries Publishers Ltd 1998), 5.

⁶⁰ S of A 1763, 119.

painters. Eleven declared that they were landscape painters with a further ten designating themselves additionally as practitioners of alternative genres.⁶¹ William James was described as a landscape and architecture painter,⁶² and Francis Towne was described as a flower and landscape painter.⁶³ The landscape paintings of these artists are included in my analyses. Other exhibitors, with studios distanced from the metropolis or recognised as masters of alternative genre, are not included in *The Universal Director* as landscape painters. Gainsborough exhibited portraits and landscapes and Wright of Derby showed landscapes, portraits, works of scientific interest and history paintings, with Stubbs exhibiting his animal portraits, sporting pictures and landscapes. Only the landscapes or views exhibited by these artists have been included in my evaluation of the commercial impact of the public exposure on landscape painting.

The commercial importance of exhibitions was emphasised by Solkin in *Art in Britain*, but he accepted that, for many exhibiting artists, they primarily provided 'a showcase for the full range of privately commissioned works' exhibited in hope of attracting further commissions.⁶⁴ Few history painters could afford to exhibit speculatively in expectation of a sale; history paintings were time-consuming and expensive to produce. As Brewer succinctly stated in *Towards a Modern Art World*, 1995, 'History painting was aesthetically paramount but commercially marginal'.⁶⁵ Portraits predominated at the exhibitions between 1760 and 1782, but as Louise Lippincott, in *The Consumption of Culture*, 2005, recognised, 'Few portraitists worked on speculation' and that, as portraits were predominantly commissioned, 'portraits existed outside the commercial market'.⁶⁶ Marcia Pointon, in *Hanging the Head*, 1993, stated 'That portraiture is the major genre in eighteenth-century England is undeniable, for all that we now recognise the importance of sporting prints, landscape and the grand history paintings of Barry, West and the others',⁶⁷ and in *Art on the Line*, 2001, affirmed that, for portrait painters, the Royal Academy exhibitions were 'less a sale room than an advertising suite'.⁶⁸

⁶¹ Thomas Mortimer, *The Universal Director: or, the Nobleman and gentleman's True Guide to the Masters and Professors of the Liberal and polite Arts and Sciences*. (London; J. Coote 1763)

⁶² *ibid*, 15.

⁶³ *ibid*, 23.

⁶⁴ Solkin, *Art in Britain*, 152.

⁶⁵ John Brewer, 'Cultural production, Consumption, and the Place of the Artist in Eighteenth-Century England' in *Towards a Modern Art World* ed. Brian Allen (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1995), 17.

⁶⁶ Louise Lippincott, 'Expanding on Portraiture: The market, the public, and the hierarchy of genre in eighteenth-century Britain' in *The Consumption of Culture 1600-1800* eds. Ann Bermingham and John Brewer (London and New York: Routledge 2005), 81-83.

⁶⁷ Marcia Pointon, *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1993), 9.

⁶⁸ Pointon, 'Portrait! Portrait!! Portrait!!!' in *Art on the Line: The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House 1780-1836* ed. Solkin (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2001), 94.

The inauguration of a limited retail market for speculatively produced exhibits, which were predominately landscape paintings, has received little attention.

The institution of annual exhibitions has been the focus of much scholarly interest, but little within the context of landscape painting. Brewer, in *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, 1997, described the position of artists before the inauguration of an exhibition culture, the formation of the Society of Artists in 1761, and institution of the Royal Academy in 1768.⁶⁹ Hargraves explained the disagreements that arose following the first exhibition held in 1760 which precipitated the emergence of two exhibiting societies, the Society of Artists and the Free Society, from 1761. He gave a comprehensive account of the conflict between members of the Society of Artists over the hanging of the works, and the perceived dictatorial attitudes of the Directors, which led to the establishment, in 1768, of the Royal Academy.⁷⁰ Brewer and Hargraves emphasised the role of individual artists in the establishment of an exhibition culture; indeed, the landscape painter George Lambert was president of the Society of Artists between 1762 and 1764. However minimal reference was made to any exhibited works.

The establishment of the Royal Academy has received much art historical attention. Brewer declared that the foundation of the Royal Academy radically changed the London art world. He declared that artists who had previously found it difficult to display their work now had an opportunity to exhibit publicly, with control of the exhibitions delegated to those who enjoyed the highest reputations.⁷¹ Certainly many of the most critically acclaimed landscape painters who had exhibited between 1760 and 1768 became founder members of the Royal Academy, but Brewer overlooked the success of the exhibitions of the Society of Artists, where landscape painting featured prominently. Holger Hock documented the formative years of the Royal Academy in *The King's Artists* 2003,⁷² and Solkin, in *Art on the Line*, considered the importance for exhibiting artists of the move of the Royal Academy from Pall Mall to new premises in Somerset House in 1780.⁷³ Sarah Monks, in *Living with the Royal Academy*, deliberated on the consequences of the establishment of an exclusive Academy; as an institution, supported by the monarchy and designed to promote 'high art' through a hierarchical system, it inevitably

⁶⁹ Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, 201-215.

⁷⁰ Hargraves, *Candidates for Fame*, 1-88.

⁷¹ Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, 218.

⁷² Holger Hock, *The King's Artists, The Royal Academy of Arts and the Politics of British Culture 1760-1840* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 51-79.

⁷³ Solkin, ed., *Art on the Line, The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House 1780-1836* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2001), 1-8.

exacerbated existing underlying political and cultural tensions.⁷⁴ However, Hoock, Solkin and Monks focussed on the cultural and political relationships between art and the monarchy. Landscape painting had little relevance in these deliberations.

Landscape paintings featured prominently at the exhibitions of the Society of Artists and the Royal Academy exhibitions held between 1760 and 1782, but have, until recently, been largely neglected in analysis of exhibits. Exhibited eighteenth-century portraiture has been comprehensively examined by Pointon, and Solkin in *Painting for Money* discussed the response of history painters to public exposure at exhibitions.⁷⁵ Landscape paintings exhibited at the Royal Academy are considered by Ann Bermingham in *Art on the Line*, but she paid minimal attention to landscape painters who exhibited before the early nineteenth century.⁷⁶ Solkin, in *Art in Britain*, has considered landscape painting. He stressed that, before the institution of exhibitions, landscape painting was dominated by work commissioned by wealthy patrons, 'and/or decorative Arcadian prospects composed in the manner of Gaspard Dughet or Claude Lorrain'.⁷⁷ He emphasised the importance of exhibitions in extending the visibility, and enhancing the reputation, of landscape painters. However, his focus was on the landscape painters now regarded as exemplars.⁷⁸ Landscape painters who were critically acclaimed in the eighteenth century, but now deemed of less interest to the twenty-first century viewer, are not acknowledged for their significant contributions to the contemporary exhibitions.

Interest in eighteenth-century landscape painters has been engendered through exhibitions and the accompanying catalogues. In *Thomas Gainsborough*, published in conjunction with the exhibition held in Tate Britain in 2003, Michael Rosenthal and Martin Myrone located Gainsborough's landscapes paintings within their contemporary setting.⁷⁹ The exhibition, *Paul Sandby, Picturing Britain*, 2009, introduced Sandby's landscape paintings to the wider public. In the exhibition catalogue, Martin Postle emphasised the importance of the Royal Academy

⁷⁴ Sarah Monks, 'Introduction. Life Study; Living with the Royal Academy 1768-1848' in *Living with the Academy; Artistic Ideals and Experiences in England, 1768-1784*, eds. Sarah Monks, John Barrell and Mark Hallett (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate Publishing 2013), 4.

⁷⁵ Solkin, *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1992)

⁷⁶ Ann Bermingham, 'Landscape-O-Rama: The Exhibition Landscape at Somerset House and the Rise of Popular Landscape Entertainments' in *Art on the Line*, 127-144.

⁷⁷ Solkin, *Art in Britain*, 210.

⁷⁸ *ibid*, 210-220. Solkin's main focus was on Wilson, Sandby and Gainsborough

⁷⁹ Michael Rosenthal and Martin Myrone, eds. *Thomas Gainsborough 1727-1788* (London: Tate Publishing 2002), 216.

exhibitions in the promotion of his work,⁸⁰ and Matthew Craske discussed the public response to his views of Windsor.⁸¹ The erudite publication, edited by Postle and Robin Simon, for the exhibition *Richard Wilson and the Transformation of European Landscape Painting*, has greatly enhanced the knowledge, and understanding, of Wilson's work.⁸² While these exhibitions have increased our knowledge of individual eighteenth-century landscape painters, many landscape painters who exhibited between 1760 and 1782 continue to be neglected, and their painting remains unappreciated.⁸³

A lack of appreciation of British modern art, and the dearth of opportunities for British artists was vociferously voiced by eighteenth-century commentators. There was a buoyant commercial art market in London before 1760 but the trade was dominated by the import and sale of revered Old Masters. John Gwynn, in his *Essay on Design*, 1749, bemoaned the failure of British patrons to encourage British artists, and proposed the institution of an Academy for the instruction of young artists to mitigate the perceived lack of interest.⁸⁴ Rouquet agreed that there was little encouragement for English artists; he deprecated that 'the arts are not made the object of public attention in England; for there is no foundation or institution in their favour' and deplored the lack of patronage bestowed on British artists.⁸⁵ Robin Simon, in *Hogarth, France and British Art*, 2007, declared that William Hogarth's 'running complaint [was] that connoisseurs spent money collecting Old Masters, many of them dubious in his opinion, when the money might be better spent on patronising contemporary British artists'.⁸⁶

Twentieth-century commentators proposed that, while exhibitions were ostensibly inaugurated to overcome this disregard, the over-riding concern of the organisers was to establish a commercial market for modern British art. Rosenthal, in *Thomas Gainsborough*, 1999, declared that 'Artists had to work in a market'⁸⁷ and William Vaughan, in *British Painting: The Golden Age*, 1999, asserted that by 1769, when the first Royal Academy exhibition was

⁸⁰ Postle, 'The Sandbys and the Royal Academy' in *Paul Sandby: Picturing Britain*, eds. John Bonehill and Stephen Daniels (London: Royal Academy Publications 2009), 28-37.

⁸¹ Matthew Craske, 'Court Art Reviewed: The Sandbys' Vision of Windsor and its Environs' in *Paul Sandby*, 48-55.

⁸² Postle and Robin Simon, eds, *Richard Wilson and the Transformation of European Landscape Painting*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2014)

⁸³ I accept that exhibitions have also been held outside London and Cardiff: the Holburne Museum, Bath, recently staged exhibitions of Wright of Derby (2014) and Stubbs (2016). However, I suggest that they receive less national attention and attract fewer visitors.

⁸⁴ John Gwynn, *An Essay on Design, Including proposals for erecting a public Academy* (Dublin: G.Faulkner 1749) 81-84.

⁸⁵ Rouquet, *The present state of the arts*, 13.

⁸⁶ Robin Simon, *Hogarth, France and British Art: The rise of the arts in eighteenth-century Britain* (Hogarth Arts 2007), 146.

⁸⁷ Michael Rosenthal, *The Art of Thomas Gainsborough* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1999), 11.

held, 'the commercial exhibition had become a strong part of modern artistic life'.⁸⁸ Solkin, in *Painting for Money*, suggested that exhibitions, by allowing artists to present their work to a large, assorted audience, enabled artists to move away from reliance on a narrow patronage,⁸⁹ and re-iterated in his more recent book, *Art in Britain*, that exhibitions offered artists the opportunity to present their work to a vast selection of potential purchasers.⁹⁰ Despite this insistence, I suggest that a commercial market based on exhibitions emerged erratically and inconsistently as many exhibitors sought to distance themselves from commercial considerations.

Nevertheless, I argue that, for speculatively produced landscape paintings, a limited retail market for landscape paintings did evolve. The Society of Artists, in the *Preface* to the catalogue for their second exhibition, 1762, stated that 'The purpose of this exhibition is not to enrich the artists, but to advance the Art'. Nevertheless, there was a clear declaration of an underlying mercantile objective of exhibitions; the *Preface* continued that 'Many artists of great ability are unable to sell their work for their due price'.⁹¹ The overtly commercial practices introduced, the sale in 1763, and the asterisking of work available for immediate purchase, have excited little interest among the art historians, despite their insistence on the commercial function of exhibitions. Hargraves did comment on the sale but dismissed it as merely demonstrating that exhibitions had failed as commercial institutions, and suggested that the marking of works for sale suggested that exhibitions were unsuccessful in promoting the careers of artists.⁹² However, I maintain that these initiatives, which instigated the first public retail market for art, proved significant for landscape painters. They were in the majority of artists who availed themselves of the blatantly commercial opportunities offered.

The critical discourse that evolved around exhibited landscape painting has also not been viewed as important. Pears insisted that reviews of the early exhibitions were of minimal value. He maintained that, whereas in France, critical reviews of the biennial Salon exhibitions were grounded in philosophical and literary precedents, in Britain comments were based on sarcasm, mockery and parody.⁹³ Brewer dismissed the early reviews in popular newspapers and magazines as merely focussing on descriptions of exhibited works, with advice to the less

⁸⁸ William Vaughan, *British Painting: The Golden Age*, (London: Thames and Hudson 1999), 107.

⁸⁹ Solkin, *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1992), 2.

⁹⁰ Solkin, *Art in Britain*, 151.

⁹¹ 'Preface' to *A Catalogue of the Pictures, Sculptures, Models, Drawings, Prints & exhibited by the Society of Artists of Great Britain (London 1762)*, iv.

⁹² Hargraves, *Candidates for Fame*, 39.

⁹³ Pears, *The Discovery of Painting*, 201.

knowledgeable on how to evaluate them.⁹⁴ Solkin, in *Painting for Money*, recognised that, as the audience for art extended beyond the wealthy connoisseurs who were traditionally the dispensers of patronage, critics increasingly sought to engage the attention of those for whom attendance at an exhibition was their first encounter with modern art.⁹⁵ However, his foci of interest were the critical assessments of history paintings; reviews of landscape paintings were not considered.⁹⁶ Hoock did accede that from the inauguration of exhibitions in 1760, 'the discussion of art expanded rapidly', with newspaper reviews ostensibly offering impartial advice and guidance to 'a visually and aesthetically uneducated audience'.⁹⁷ Hallett, in *Art on the Line*, accepted that reviews and pamphlets published to accompany exhibitions, which underlined the different opinions expressed by contemporary viewers, are valuable in the interpretation of exhibited works.⁹⁸ However, his comments were reserved for exhibits at Royal Academy after 1780.

I maintain that reviews of landscape paintings exhibited provide important verification of the conflicting opinions expressed by critics of the early exhibitions. The first published critical appraisals of landscape painting evidenced the disagreements expressed between self-styled connoisseurs who believed that modern British artists should conform to the standards exemplified by revered continental Old Masters, and those who supported a more innovative and descriptive style. Munsterberg, in *The British Art Journal*, 2014, suggested that there was a well-established precedent for critical analysis of art by the 1760s, based on the premise that connoisseurs held supreme authority over artistic judgement, and acknowledged that this caused conflict. She postulated that many of the critics were practising artists who increasingly disputed that 'the connoisseur was in fact best qualified to judge works of art'.⁹⁹

For a full understanding of the changing appreciation of exhibited landscape painting, I argue that it is essential to chart the evolving shifts in critical reception, rather than concentrating on the critical assessment of the individual exhibits of landscape painters. Only then can the change in appreciation of landscape painting be evaluated. Munsterberg noted that, despite the scholarly interest in exhibitions, 'relatively little interest has been given to the writing they occasioned'. She suggested that 'even those that have been quoted most often by art

⁹⁴ Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, 276.

⁹⁵ Solkin, *Painting for Money*, 3.

⁹⁶ *ibid*, 247-276.

⁹⁷ Hoock, *The King's Artists*, 130-131.

⁹⁸ Hallett, 'The Business of Criticism': The Press and the Royal Academy Exhibition in Eighteenth-Century London' in *Art on the Line*, 65-75.

⁹⁹ Munsterberg, 'The beginning of British art criticism', 83.

historians sometimes read quite differently when considered in their original context'.¹⁰⁰ I maintain that art historians predominantly quote reviews pertaining to individual landscape painters now regarded as eighteenth-century exemplars of the genre. Close analysis of published critical comment on exhibited landscape paintings between 1760 and 1782 reveals that landscape painters who have received little recent attention were also admired and extolled.

As the critical appraisal of exhibited landscape paintings moved beyond comments which focussed on their adherence to, or divergence from, the accepted classical precedents, the vocabulary of reviews became less prescriptive. The ability of the landscape painter to depict a true rendition of the variety of the natural world became important, with the more discerning critics recognising that the viewing of landscape paintings induced an emotional reaction from the responsive viewer. The impact of the academic *Discourses* of Joshua Reynolds on the reception of landscape paintings exhibited at the Royal Academy exhibitions from 1769 has received little consideration. Reynolds's insistence on the hierarchy of genre, with the pre-eminence of history painting, relegated landscape paintings as among 'the lower exercises of the art of painting'.¹⁰¹ In *Observations of the Present State of the Royal Academy; with characters of living artists, by an old Artist*, 1790, the anonymous author described Reynolds as a 'patronising knight' who 'expected a continuance of that subservient disposition among Academicians, which he had long been accustomed to receive'.¹⁰² The prevailing influence of Reynolds was important in the change in the critical commentary on landscape paintings exhibited at the early Royal Academy exhibitions; only history paintings were considered capable of 'powerfully [striking] upon the public sympathy'.¹⁰³ Reviews of exhibited landscape paintings merely stressed the importance of mimesis and accurate colouration. However, as landscape painters increasingly exhibited larger and more immediately visually arresting paintings, the critics again recognised their potential to arouse an emotive and sympathetic reaction from the exhibition visitor.

This change in artistic practice by landscape painters was important in influencing the critical appreciation; these ambitious works demanded more public attention. Pears insisted that

¹⁰⁰ *ibid*, 82.

¹⁰¹ *Sir Joshua Reynolds's Discourses on Art*, ed. by Edward Gilpin Johnson, *Discourse IV* (Classic Reprint Series, Forgotten Books, Chicago, 2012), 117. I have used this edition throughout my thesis. However, I am aware of a more recent publication, *Discourses on Art, Sir Joshua Reynolds*, ed. Robert J. Wark, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press 1997).

¹⁰² *Observations of the Present State of the Royal Academy; with characters of living artists, by an old Artist* (London: J Dodsley, 1790), 4.

¹⁰³ *Reynold's Discourses*, 100.

exhibiting artists felt no obligation to change their practice in the face of the widening public exposure of their work at exhibitions.¹⁰⁴ However, I maintain that it was inevitable that landscape painters, to capture the interest of this new urban exhibition audience, had to produce innovative work that accorded with their preferences. Christiana Payne stressed, in *Toil and Plenty*, 1993, that as few landscape paintings, apart from estate portraiture, were commissioned, speculatively-produced works were exhibited in hope of a sale. She continued that 'artists were not told what to paint, but they had a vested interest in finding subjects that were appealing, and in treating them in ways that pleased their patrons'.¹⁰⁵ The commercial print market in the 1750s had shown that there was widespread interest in prints of named British locations; I suggest that landscape painters increasingly exhibited similar views to appeal to the metropolitan public who attended exhibitions.

The catalogues of the early exhibitions reveal a definitive change in exhibited landscape imagery. At the first exhibition of 1760, staged by the 'Present Artists', seventeen out of seventy-four exhibited paintings featured landscape imagery, largely designated merely as *landskips* or *views*. Only four depicted named sites, with two of these Italian views by Alexander Cozens and Wilson. However, at the Society of Artists exhibition held in 1763, seventeen of the thirty-six landscape paintings on display were of named sites in and around London and more distant locations associated with tourism. Iain Ousby, in *The Englishman's England*, 2002, documented the rise in tourism in the eighteenth century, and emphasised the increased interest in 'country houses or ruins or nature'.¹⁰⁶ Rosenthal, in *British Landscape Painting*, 1988, noted that there was an increase in production from the mid-eighteenth-century of landscape paintings that depicted medieval ruins and wild landscapes; he stated that the growing tourist industry no longer viewed such scenery as ugly or threatening but as reminders of 'the glories of the British past'.¹⁰⁷ I suggest that the increase in exhibits of named locations reflected the recognition by landscape painters of the growing public awareness of picturesque sites of interest, and more distant localities familiar to more adventurous travellers.

As the objective of my thesis is to analyse the impact on landscape painters of the public exposure of their work, it is important to establish the position of landscape painters before

¹⁰⁴ Pears, *The Discovery of Painting*, 127.

¹⁰⁵ Christiana Payne, *Toil and Plenty: Images of the Agricultural Landscape in England 1780-1890* (Nottingham University and Yale Center for British Art, Yale University Press, 1993), 47.

¹⁰⁶ Ian Ousby, *The Englishman's England: Taste, Travel and the Rise of Tourism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 9.

¹⁰⁷ Michael Rosenthal, *British Landscape Painting* (Oxford: Phaidon Press 1982), 48.

the first exhibition was staged. In the first chapter I explore the limited options available to British landscape painters for public display of their work between 1750 and 1759. Patronage was, undoubtedly, of crucial importance for landscape painters, but as commissioned landscape paintings were not in public view, opportunities for landscape painters to gain a widespread reputation were precluded. It is widely acknowledged that the Foundling Hospital offered painters their first meaningful opportunity for public exposure of their work; four large history paintings and eight smaller landscape roundels were donated to hang in the General Court Room where they were on view to visitors. Rouquet, in his assessment of the importance of the Foundling Hospital as the first venue of public display, mentioned the history paintings, but made no reference to the roundels, donated by Gainsborough, Edward Haytley, Samuel Wale and Wilson. Although he had insisted that landscape paintings were 'much in taste', and insisted that 'landskip' painters 'enjoy the first reputation in England',¹⁰⁸ he obviously did not consider the roundels important in promoting the reputations of British landscape painters.

I argue that, from 1750, it was the commercial print market that offered the most promising opportunities for landscape painters to gain a more widespread reputation. Timothy Clayton, in *The English Print 1688-1802*, 1997, acknowledged that, by the mid-eighteenth-century, there was a perceptible increase in the variety and availability of British prints with 'landscape ... setting the pace'.¹⁰⁹ Entrepreneurial British print sellers recognised that there was a growing interest in views of London and its surrounds, together with imagery of more distant locations. This generated a competitive market for prints featuring London vistas, country houses, historical sites and scenic views. Analysis of advertisements in the popular press confirms that, by 1760, a market for British landscape imagery had evolved, albeit through the medium of prints, designed to attract the interest of the diverse social, cultural and economic interests of the purchasing public. I examine the importance of the market for reproductive prints in raising the profile of British landscape painters, and consider whether the commercial market for speculatively-produced landscape prints heralded a rise of public interest in landscape imagery.

The exhibitions staged by the 'Present Artists', the Society of Artists and the Free Society between 1760 and 1768, are considered in chapter two. The number of landscape paintings exhibited, and the imagery depicted, are determined through close reading of the exhibition

¹⁰⁸ Rouquet, *The present state of the arts*, 54.

¹⁰⁹ Timothy Clayton, *The English Print 1688-1802* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1997), 181.

catalogues. I discuss the commercial potential of exhibitions, and determine whether the artistic practice of landscape painters was influenced by the public exposure. The two most explicitly commercial aspects of the early exhibitions are analysed to determine their importance for landscape painters. The first sale of modern British art was held in 1763. I argue that, although the sale did not achieve the ambitious expectations of the organisers, as purchasers were reluctant to spend large amounts of money on modern British art, it was not, for landscape painters, the 'major miscalculation' as described by Hargraves.¹¹⁰ Following the sale, exhibiting artists were given the opportunity to mark, in the catalogues of the Society of Artists and Free Society exhibitions, the exhibited works that were available for immediate purchase. Landscape painters were prominent among those who asterisked their work for sale, and the importance of this retail initiative is assessed.

A wide-ranging analysis of the review literature pertaining to exhibitions published in the popular press between 1760 and 1768 is undertaken in the third chapter. Rosenthal and Myrone wrote, in *Thomas Gainsborough*, that 'Art criticism ... emerged as a genre (and then only as a generally ill-defined genre) only with the first public exhibitions in the 1760s'.¹¹¹ Munsterberg emphasised that individual reviews did not offer 'much useful insight into contemporary opinion'.¹¹² I accept that many early reviews were subjective and superficial, and influenced by personal or cultural prejudices, but I argue that they remain significant. Exhibitions generated much discussion in the newspapers and, as the only extant evidence of contemporary opinion, the published comments and reviews provide important evidence of the changing critical perception of landscape painting. I analyse the public controversies between two competing critical discourses and the emergence of a new descriptive language employed for appraisal of landscape painting. The importance of this critical literature in documenting the changing appreciation of exhibited landscape painting by a public exposed to landscape painting for the first time has not previously been explored.

The majority of critics remained anonymous; they wrote under pseudonyms or merely signed their reviews with initials. Although they cannot, in many instances, be identified, I have throughout this thesis classified them as male. I accept that this assumption may not represent the truth; many women visited the exhibitions, and it is possible that they also sent reviews to newspapers.

¹¹⁰ Hargraves, *Candidates for Fame*, 39.

¹¹¹ Rosenthal and Myrone, *Thomas Gainsborough*, 12.

¹¹² Munsterberg, 'The beginning of British art criticism', 86.

Landscape prints, as well as landscape paintings, were exhibited at the Society of Artists and Free Society exhibitions between 1760 and 1768. In chapter four I discuss the importance of the exhibited print for British landscape painters. I maintain that engravers used exhibitions to promote their emergent expertise in the art of print making, to attract the attention of print publishers and to capture the interest of collectors; the reproductive landscape print was not exhibited to enhance the reputation of British landscape painters. Although prints after British landscape paintings were exhibited, engravers increasingly chose to exhibit prints after works by admired French, Italian and Dutch landscape painters.

Reproductive prints after exhibited landscape paintings were also published. The phenomenal success of William Woollett's print after *Niobe*, (fig 41) exhibited by Wilson at the first exhibition, and the subsequent publication of further prints after his historical landscapes are discussed. However, few other prints were published after exhibited landscape paintings. With the notable exception of Wilson, and to a lesser extent George Smith, the landscape print after exhibited works did little to enhance the reputation of British landscape painters. Print publishers were in the ascendancy. They not only published prints after exhibited landscape paintings, but also commissioned or purchased landscape paintings for publication as reproductive prints. However, anxious to compete in the overseas print market, they preferentially chose to publish prints with appeal to the continental collectors.

In chapter five, I analyse the impact of the foundation of the Royal Academy on landscape painting. The first exhibition of the Royal Academy was held in 1769. I had anticipated that the limited retail market, established at the exhibitions since 1764, would be discontinued at this more exalted exhibition, supported by royal patronage. However, exhibits continued to be asterisked for immediate purchase, with landscape paintings again to the fore; indeed, four founder members, Barret, Richards, Sandby and Wilson asterisked a selection of their work for sale. I discuss whether these artists only resorted to this overtly commercial practice when their failure to attract the commissions threatened penury.

The critical language of reviews of exhibited landscape paintings between 1769 and 1782 is analysed in chapter six. I suggest that the first reviews of the exhibitions were influenced by the relegation in Reynolds's *Discourses* of landscape painting to one of the 'subordinate schools' of painting.¹¹³ Critics concentrated on lengthy explanations of history paintings, with simplistic critical analysis of the formal qualities and mimetic accuracy of landscape painting.

¹¹³ Reynolds, *Discourses*, 117.

However, from the mid-1770s, there was a transformative shift in the appreciation of landscape painting. There was a return to the acceptance, first voiced in the later reviews of the Society of Artists exhibitions, of the emotive reaction induced in the receptive viewer by landscape painting. Truth to Nature, with recognition of the ephemeral quality of the natural world, and the evocation of affective response from the viewer became the criteria of excellence.

In 1782, John Holden Pott published *An Essay on landscape painting*, the first book on English landscape painting. He wrote that 'In this country the merely copying from nature ... would sufficiently establish the taste of an English school' in landscape painting.¹¹⁴ He was advocating an English school based on landscape painting, but insisted that it would only emerge when landscape painters abandoned merely copying continental artists and concentrated on the unique characteristics of the English countryside. I suggest that his opinions were perceptive. The early nineteenth century landscape painters widely acknowledged as the founders of the English school of landscape painters, John Constable, Thomas Girtin and J.M.W. Turner, are lauded for their individualist interpretations of the natural world.

¹¹⁴ Pott, *An Essay on landscape painting*, 53-54.

CHAPTER ONE

The Commercial Market for Landscape Prints.

Introduction

Before the institution of exhibitions in 1760, artists worked as individual practitioners in competition for employment. They lacked a common public identity through which to promote their work and establish themselves as professional practitioners. Patronage represented the most important prospect for artistic success; as R. Campbell, in *The London Tradesman*, 1747, declared, 'Employment depends on a happy Introduction to Business by some eminent Patron, and Continuance of it by a large Acquaintance'.¹ However, commissioned landscape views of country houses and estates remained in the possession of the patron, with visibility restricted to an audience of family and acquaintances. Patronage precluded the establishment of a public reputation.

There were other opportunities for landscape painters to engage more widely with the public before the institution of exhibitions, and, by 1750, the options had become increasingly pluralistic. Theatres, which offered a variety of entertainment for the socially diverse London populace, employed landscape painters as stage designers and scene painters, which accorded the luxury of a regular income. Entrepreneurs who managed the Pleasure Gardens, popular recreation venues within the metropolitan public domain, introduced landscape imagery into their decorative schemes. However, landscape painters working within these locations received no public acknowledgement. The Foundling Hospital offered the first possibility for individual recognition; the public display of donated landscape paintings was seen by the affluent, erudite visitors who frequented the venue. Nevertheless, there is little evidence that this exposure benefitted landscape painters. I maintain that, from 1750, it was the print market that offered the most promising opportunities for landscape painters to gain a more widespread reputation. Clayton identified that, by the mid-eighteenth century, a dynamic commercial market for prints after British locations had evolved, with landscape 'setting the pace'.² The importance of this market in creating an interest in landscape imagery among a wide audience, and in increasing public awareness of landscape painters, can only be fully appreciated when the limitations of the less propitious avenues have been explored.

¹ R. Campbell, *The London Tradesman: being a compendious view of all the trades, professions, arts, both liberal and mechanic, now practised in the cities of London and Westminster* (London: T. Gardener 1747), 100.

² Timothy Clayton, *The English Print 1688-1802*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1997), 181.

Patronage

The dearth of patronage in the mid-eighteenth century was deplored by contemporary commentators; Thomas Bardwell In *The practise of painting and perspective made easy*, 1756, urged those of 'Rank and Fortunes' to support British artists, for without such encouragement, they will 'languish and droop in Shade and Obscurity'.³ Solkin, in *Art in Britain* asserted that, before the establishment of the first exhibition in 1760, 'the demand for landscape painting ... only helped to support the careers of a few native-born artists such as John Wootton, George Lambert and 'the young Thomas Gainsborough''.⁴

Wootton and Lambert were certainly recipients of significant commissions. Arline Meyer, in *John Wootton 1692-1764*, 1984, declared that the significant body of work that has survived to the present day offers the best testimony of the substantial reputation Wootton enjoyed, and suggested that he found favour because his Arcadian-inspired paintings 'reflected the interests of the nobility and the landed gentry'.⁵ Walpole's declaration that he 'approached towards Gaspar Poussin, and sometimes imitated happily the glow of Claude Lorrain' certainly revealed the cultural preferences of his potential patrons.⁶ Nevertheless, by the mid-1740s, his reputation had been eclipsed by that of Lambert. Lambert's early estate portraiture was also classically derivative; he was lauded by Walpole as 'a very good master in the Italian style [who] ... followed the manner of Gaspar, but with more richness in his compositions'.⁷ In his later works, influenced by the growing appreciation of Flemish landscape painters among collectors, Lambert introduced a more informal, naturalistic effect. By the 1750s, Einberg, in *George Lambert*, 1970, noted that he had achieved 'a certain degree of affluence and material comfort' although she admitted it was impossible to ascertain whether this resulted from his landscape commissions or from private means.⁸

There is less evidence to justify Solkin's suggestion that the career of the 'young Thomas Gainsborough' as a landscape painter was supported by patronage. Indeed, in an earlier discussion of Gainsborough's landscapes in *Art in Britain*, Solkin had accepted that Gainsborough's early landscapes 'had proved extremely difficult to sell, forcing him, as a

³ Thomas Bardwell, *The practice of painting made easy: in which is contained the art of painting in oils ... and a new, short and familiar account of the art of perspective* (London: S. Richardson 1756), 4-5.

⁴ David H. Solkin, *Art in Britain 1660-1815* (New Haven and Yale: Yale University Press 2015), 210.

⁵ Meyer, Arline, *John Wootton 1692-1764: Landscapes and Sporting Art in early Georgian England*. (London: Greater London Council 1984), 7.

⁶ Horace Walpole., *Anecdotes of Painting in England; with some account of the principal artists; and incidental notes on other arts*. Vol IV of IV (Twickenham 1786), 129.

⁷ *ibid*, 141-142.

⁸ Elizabeth Einberg, *George Lambert 1700-1765* (London: Greater London Council 1970), 6.

consequence, to concentrate on portraiture'.⁹ John Hayes, in *The Landscape Paintings of Thomas Gainsborough*, 1982, declared that, with the exception of the publication by John Boydell of prints after his drawings in 1744, nothing is known of any patrons Gainsborough may have had in London for his landscape paintings, and that 'scarcely more than half-a-dozen landscape commissions are recorded' during his time in Suffolk. He observed that even for his most prestigious commission, two overmantels for the Duke of Bedford in 1755, Gainsborough received half the amount that Wootton had commanded for similar pieces.¹⁰ Hayes noted that Gainsborough was reduced to sending canvases from Suffolk to the London dealer, Panton Betew for sale in his shop or for the production of prints.¹¹ Rosenthal and Myrone agreed with Hayes; they stated that although Gainsborough had moved to Ipswich in 1751 in search of local patronage, only 'a handful of East Anglian families ... commissioned landscape compositions from the artist'.¹² Susan Sloman in *Gainsborough in Bath*, 2002, emphasised that because Gainsborough failed 'make a living through landscape painting', he moved to Bath in 1758 and 'turned to portraiture to make ends meet'.¹³

Solkin intimated that, by the late 1750s, Richard Wilson was the 'only full-time landscape specialist' in Britain.¹⁴ Wilson, after spending six years in Italy, had returned to England in 1757. Robin Simon, in *Richard Wilson and the Transformation of European Landscape Painting* 2014, acknowledged that Wilson's career as a landscape painter had been launched in Italy; his admiration of the French landscape painter Claude-Joseph Vernet had influenced his decision to abandon portraiture in favour of landscapes. Simon declared that, following his first commission from a British patron in 1752, Wilson had no shortage of patronage for nearly twenty years.¹⁵ His Italian views found favour among those on the Grand Tour, many of whom continued to patronise him on his return to England. His ability to interpret English scenery within an Italianate style, described by Edward Edwards, in *Anecdotes of Painters*, 1808, as 'both in execution and design ... classical, grand and original' confirmed his reputation among wealthy patrons.¹⁶

⁹ Solkin, *Art in Britain*, 118.

¹⁰ John Hayes, *The Landscape Paintings of Thomas Gainsborough* vol.1. (London: Sotheby Publications 1982), 62

¹¹ *ibid*, 64.

¹² Michael Rosenthal and Martin Myrone, eds. *Thomas Gainsborough 1727-1788*. (London: Tate Publishing 2002), 82.

¹³ Susan Sloman, *Gainsborough in Bath* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2002), 33.

¹⁴ Solkin, *Art in Britain*, 210.

¹⁵ Robin Simon, *Richard Wilson and the Transformation of European Landscape Painting*, eds. Martin Postle and Simon. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2014), 4.

¹⁶ Edward Edwards, *Anecdotes of Painters, who have resided or been born in England; with critical remarks in their productions. Intended as a continuation to the Anecdotes of Painting by the late Horace, Earl of Orford*. (London: Leigh and Sotheby 1808), 79.

While commissions were certainly important, it was also possible to establish a public reputation through the sale of work. Many of the London landscape views of Samuel Scott, influenced by the popularity of paintings of the Thames by the Venetian artist, Canaletto, were not commissioned. He painted many similar views of the river and its bridges, which were bought by wealthy patrons, including Horace Walpole, members of the nobility and the more affluent middling classes.¹⁷

Venues for public display

Scene painting

Brewer, in *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, insisted that 'confinement to ... commercial places of public resort was symptomatic of the weakness of the community of contemporary artists'.¹⁸ Nevertheless, the commercial opportunities offered were welcomed by many landscape painters; theatres, central to mid-eighteenth-century cultural activities, offered one of the few available prospects of regular employment. Numerous dramatic performances, with new scenery demanded for each production, were staged throughout the London season at Covent Garden and Drury Lane, the two theatres licensed in the 1750s for spoken drama. Wootton and Lambert worked as scene painters, and Nicholas Dall, John Richards and Philippe Jacques de Loutherbourg continued this practice after the establishment of exhibitions; Edwards wrote that Dall was so busy in the theatre that he had little time for 'easel painting'.¹⁹ Scene painters were rarely publicly acknowledged so this occupation did little to increase the reputation of the artists, and Einberg stated that the work was poorly remunerated, with Lambert only receiving an income of £100 a year.²⁰ However, I suggest that this was no small sum in the 1750s. The pre-eminence of Lambert in this field was recognised. On January 31, 1753, the *Public Advertiser* announced that for *Harlequin Sorcerer*, 'The Scenes [were] painted by Mr Lambert'.²¹ Walpole eulogised that 'He painted many admirable scenes for the playhouse, where he had room to display his genius',²² and Edwards claimed that Lambert's scenery was 'admired by 'persons of first consideration, both in rank and talents'.²³ Indeed, John Harris, in *The Artist and the Country House*, 1979, said that Lambert 'was patronised by a cross-section of society', and suggested that many of his commissions were gained through

¹⁷ William Cosmo Monkhouse, 'Samuel Scott' in *National Dictionary of Biography*, accessed on-line 15 April 2016.

¹⁸ John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination, English Culture in the Eighteenth Century*. (London: Harper Collins 1997), 228.

¹⁹ Edwards, *Anecdotes of Painters*, 55.

²⁰ Einberg, *George Lambert 1700-1765*, 6.

²¹ *Public Advertiser* 31 January, 1753.

²² Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting*, 142.

²³ Edwards, *Anecdotes of Painters*, 19.

this public exposure.²⁴ In a further testament that his theatre work increased his public reputation, a poem addressed to Lambert was published in the *London Magazine* in February 1753.

Each landscape charms ev'n envy's frown
 Each scene confirms thy fame
 While publick praise shall merit crown
 So long shall live thy name.²⁵

Sybil Rosenfeld, in *Georgian Scene Painters and Scene Paintings* 1981 suggested that, from 1750, there was a move away from decorative and sculptural theatrical scenery, with increased emphasis on simplicity and the more naturalistic imagery seen in landscape paintings.²⁶

The Foundling Hospital

The Foundling Hospital, a charitable organisation for babies and infants born to destitute women, provided landscape painters with their first meaningful opportunity for public display of their work. Rouquet chronicled that 'the most eminent artists, in every branch ... agreed each to furnish one or two pieces as a decoration to the principal rooms in the hospital ... the several pieces now exhibit to public view the different talents of the reigning artists in England'. He described the religious history paintings donated by Francis Hayman, William Hogarth, Joseph Highmore and James Wills, and declared that 'This exhibition of skill, equally commendable and new, has afforded the public an opportunity of judging whether the English are such indifferent artists, as foreigners, and even the English themselves pretend'.²⁷

Surprisingly, despite Rouquet's claim that 'landscips are so much in taste, and that this branch of painting is as much cultivated as any other',²⁸ he made no mention of the eight landscape roundels donated by Gainsborough, Edward Haytley, Samuel Wale and Wilson. Smaller and less prominently displayed than the history paintings, the roundels featured views of London hospitals and the Foundling Hospital itself. There was initially little interest expressed by art historians in the landscape paintings at this first public exhibition. Pears made a brief

²⁴ John Harris, *The Artist and the Country House: A history of the country house and garden view painting in Britain 1540-1870* (London: Sotheby Publication, 1979), 247.

²⁵ *The London Magazine* 1753, 88.

²⁶ Sybil Rosenfeld. *Georgian Scene Painters and Scene Painting*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1981), 75.

²⁷ Jean André Rouquet, *The present state of the arts in England* (Dublin: G. and A. Ewing 1756), 25-7.

²⁸ *ibid*, 54.

reference to the Foundling Hospital, but made no mention of the works exhibited,²⁹ and Hargraves named the landscape artists who painted the roundels but made no comment on their imagery.³⁰ Solkin, in *Painting for Money*, discussed the history paintings, but merely noted 'the most puzzling feature of the decorative scheme; the inclusion of seven images of other London hospitals', and suggested that they were exhibited to confer on the Foundling Hospital the 'same level of respect accorded to other better-established hospitals'.³¹ Solkin also proposed that the donations were made with the hope of commissions; donating artists were appointed to the Board of Governors, which 'brought them into contact with potential patrons'.³² He postulated that Hogarth, Hayman and Wills may have subsequently received religious commissions, but cautioned that there was little demand for such work; many thought that religious imagery was tainted with Popery.³³ Nevertheless, Wills attempted to capitalise on his public exposure; in 1754, an advertisement for the auction of '*Eight studied historical Compositions* by Mr Wills', specifically mentioned that the artist had painted *Christ and the Children* at the Foundling Hospital.³⁴

There has been more recent interest in the landscape roundels by Gainsborough and Wilson. In *Art in Britain*, Solkin mentioned that 'eight landscape roundels depicting London Hospitals' were included among the works 'donated by some of the most prominent members of the capital's artistic community', with both Wilson and Gainsborough contributing.³⁵ Michael Rosenthal, in *The Art of Thomas Gainsborough*, 1999, described Gainsborough's *Charterhouse* (fig 1) as 'an exemplar in perspective rather than an object in a cityscape',³⁶ and Rica Jones and Postle noted that Gainsborough's roundel differed from the other seven exhibited; he used a pinkish-orange ground, in contrast to the pale grey of the other artists, and employed more translucent paint. They ascribed this to the influence of Dutch painters, who used these techniques, on the early work of Gainsborough.³⁷

²⁹ Iain Pears, *The Discovery of Painting: The growth of interest in the Arts in England 1680-1768*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1988), 127.

³⁰ Matthew Hargraves, *Candidates for Fame: The Society of Artists of Great Britain 1760-1791* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2005), 11.

³¹ Solkin, *Painting for Money*, 165.

³² *ibid*, 173.

³³ *ibid*, 290, footnote 35. Solkin suggested that Hogarth may have got his commission for an altar piece for St Mary Redcliffe, Bristol following his donation to the Foundling Hospital.

³⁴ *Daily Advertiser* 9 January 1754.

³⁵ Solkin, *Art in Britain*, 103.

³⁶ Michael Rosenthal, *The Art of Thomas Gainsborough* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1999), 9.

³⁷ Rica Jones and Martin Postle, 'Gainsborough in his Painting Room', in *Thomas Gainsborough*, eds. Rosenthal and Myrone, 29-30.



1) Thomas Gainsborough, *The Charterhouse* 1747, oil on canvas, 58.5 x 58.8 cm. The Foundling Hospital, London.

The roundels of Wilson were briefly mentioned by Simon. He acknowledged that the two roundels donated by Wilson in 1746, a view of St George's Hospital, London and one of the Foundling Hospital itself, (fig 2) demonstrated that Wilson had 'dabbled in landscape' before his departure for Italy.



2) Richard Wilson, *The Foundling Hospital, London*, c 1746, oil on canvas, 56 x 56cms. The Foundling Hospital, London.

Simon, who described the display at the Foundling Hospital 'as the new shop window', noted that the genres of painting, history painting and landscape, on display, were those considered by Hogarth and his colleagues 'unjustly neglected in Britain, where portraiture often seemed to be the only kind of contemporary painting to attract support'.³⁸

The Art Market

The art market, established in London since the 1680s, was of little benefit to British artists.³⁹ John Gwynn, in *An Essay on Design*, 1749, complained that 'Art has been in small estimation, unless the Artist was foreign. Our neighbours have spoken contemptuously of us without Reserve: and the few Englishmen who have indisputably excelled were scarcely rewarded with honest and impartial Approbation from their countrymen'.⁴⁰ The market was dominated by the import and sale of well-known Old Masters; professional agents and dealers bought landscape paintings in Italy, France and the Netherlands to sell to British patrons.⁴¹ This was welcomed by wealthy collectors. Horace Walpole applauded that 'many valuable Collections of Pictures are ... established in England on the frequent ruins of the finest Galleries in Rome and other Cities'.⁴² The financial rewards guaranteed for dealers and auctioneers from the sale of paintings with appeal to wealthy collectors meant they had little incentive to sell modern British art. Rouquet summarized the problems faced by British artists. He concluded that 'wherever commerce flourishes, wealth is one of those things that are mostly considered: and as the arts are not the high road to wealth, consequently less value is set upon them'.⁴³ Lippincott, in *Selling Art in Georgian England*, 1989, suggested that the lack of interest in British artists was compounded by their inability to produce imagery that satisfied the demands of collectors.⁴⁴

The sales of the imported paintings were extensively advertised in the popular press. Prestage, a specialist art auctioneer, advertised two sales in *General Advertiser* in February 1750; one featured Dutch and Flemish pictures 'consign'd from abroad', and the other 'A Choice and valuable Collection of Italian Dutch and Flemish Pictures, recently purchased abroad'.⁴⁵ The auction catalogues of deceased collectors revealed their overwhelming

³⁸ Simon, *Richard Wilson and the Transformation*, 3.

³⁹ Pears, *The Discovery of Painting*, 1-2.

⁴⁰ John Gwynn, *An Essay on Design, Including proposals for erecting a public Academy* (Dublin: G. Faulkner 1749), 4.

⁴¹ Pears, in *The Discovery of Painting*, 51-106, described the evolution of the art market between 1680 and 1760, with detailed mention of the main dealers responsible for the import of paintings.

⁴² Horace Walpole, *Aedes Walpolianae: or, a description of the collection of pictures at Houghton-Hall in Norfolk, the seat of the Right Honourable Sir Robert Walpole* (London: J. Hughes 1767), viii.

⁴³ Rouquet, *The present state of the arts*, 22.

⁴⁴ Louise Lippincott, *Selling Art in Georgian London: The Rise of Arthur Pond* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1983), 54.

⁴⁵ *General Advertiser* 14 February 1750.

preference for landscape paintings by Italian, French and Dutch artists. The catalogue for the auction held in 1754, 'of the Genuine and Capital Collection of Pictures by the *most celebrated* Masters' from the collection of the 'late Doctor Richard Mead', included twenty-four landscape paintings by French, Dutch and Italian landscape painters. The only landscape by a British artist was *A landscape with gypsies telling fortunes* by Mr Wootton.⁴⁶ There were no paintings by British artists in the sale of sixty paintings from the collection of Sir Luke Schaub, in 1758; this auction raised £7784.5s 'with many pictures selling at extraordinary prices, particularly a landscape and figures of Claude Lorrain, for 150L'.⁴⁷ The art market also supported an international trade in imported prints after favoured continental landscape artists, avidly collected for display in cabinets or preserved in portfolios. In November 1750, the *General Advertiser* advertised the sale of 'A Very Curious Collection of French, Italian and Flemish Prints and Drawings, largely coming from abroad',⁴⁸ Langford auctioned 'A genuine...Collection of Italian, Flemish and other valuable prints in 1752',⁴⁹ and Darres advertised the auction of 'Prints, Drawing and Books of prints ... by Rubens, Van Dyke etc.' in 1753.⁵⁰

The profitable auctions of imported prints encouraged British print producers to compete in the market for prints, although initially the reproductive prints were after works by continental artists. Arthur Pond achieved commercial success with the publication in 1740 of his forty-four *Italian Landscapes*, drawn from paintings owned by aristocratic British collectors, and marketed through 'saturation advertising' in the *Daily Advertiser*.⁵¹ Clayton suggested that the success of Pond's prints of 'natural scenery', albeit featuring Italian views, stimulated print producers to seek 'British scenes to rival those found in Rome'.⁵² He declared that, by the 1750s, prints had become increasingly popular and that, with the exception of Hogarth's prints which retained their widespread appeal, those featuring British landscape imagery were the most highly sought after.⁵³ Print producers recognised that there was a demand for prints after popular British sites in and around London and further afield. Ian Ousby, in his exploration of the rise of tourism in *The Englishman's England*, 1990 emphasised that 'the leisured mobile middle classes' were increasingly visiting previously unexplored regions of the country;⁵⁴ prints after more distant locations were produced for the more adventurous

⁴⁶ *The London Magazine* March 1754, 130-131.

⁴⁷ *ibid*, May 1758, 257.

⁴⁸ *General Advertiser* 1 November 1750.

⁴⁹ *Daily Advertiser* 4 February 1752.

⁵⁰ *Public Advertiser* 6 April 1753.

⁵¹ Lippincott, *Selling Art in Georgian London*, 139.

⁵² Clayton, *The English Print*, 157.

⁵³ *ibid*, 181.

⁵⁴ Ian Ousby, *The Englishman's England: Taste, Travel and the Rise of Tourism*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1990), 49.

traveller. An intensively competitive domestic print market emerged, with prints advertised widely in the newspapers. Analysis of the advertisements in the popular newspapers confirms that, before the first exhibition was held, a market for British landscape imagery had been established, with print publishers promoting sales to a socially and economically diverse public.

The commercial market in British landscape prints

Two commercial stratagems were employed to market British landscape prints; the raising of subscriptions or direct sales to the public. Subscription schemes were based on those widely used in the book trade, with proposals for the publication of reproductive prints advertised in the popular press. Potential purchasers contributed to the cost before completion of the work. This allowed print publishers to assess public interest before investing time and money in print production, and ensured that the high costs of production were borne by prospective purchasers. Clayton calculated that two hundred expressions of intent to purchase a print were needed to ensure financial success.⁵⁵ Subscription prints were engraved frequently, but not exclusively, after commissioned paintings. This patronage by print publishers enabled a wider audience to experience a landscape painting previously in the possession of a single owner. The name of the commissioner of the painting was usually prominently mentioned in advertisements, but these prints, as Harris stressed, were not produced 'to please the whim of an owner, but for public consumption'.⁵⁶ As Sven Bruntjen, in his thesis entitled *A Study of Art Patronage and Publishing in Georgian England*, 1985, averred, prints 'enabled a new breed of independent-minded artists to reach a large, educated public and thus free themselves from dependence of aristocratic sponsorship which, in England, had been a meagre resource to artists'.⁵⁷

The overwhelming majority of landscape prints were not engraved after bespoke paintings. Advertisements offered speculatively-produced landscape prints, either singly or in series, for sale in the retail market without assessment of prior demand. Advances in technology facilitated the production of less expensive landscape prints; designed to appeal to a less affluent clientele, they featured well-known British locations, scenic views or historic sites. Commercial print sellers had been disparaged by Campbell; he denounced 'Our Print shopkeepers [as] mere Tradesmen. They set up a thing that offers in their shop; if it sells, the End is met; if not they know not where to lay the Blame, for they are no more Judges of the

⁵⁵ Clayton, *The English print*, 134.

⁵⁶ Harris, *The Artist and the Country House*, 248.

⁵⁷ Sven. H A. Bruntjen, *John Boydell 1719-1804: A Study of Art Patronage and Publishing in Georgian London* (New York and London: Garland Publishing 1985), 1.

intrinsic value of the Commodity than they are of Astronomy'.⁵⁸ By 1750, British print producers and sellers were more knowledgeable, and commercially astute, about the products they sold. Their successful marketing of speculative landscape prints demonstrated, as described by Elizabeth McKellar, public interest in the changing face of London, its urban suburbs and extensive rural boundaries, as well as an engagement with the wider British countryside.⁵⁹

These different marketing strategies were significant for landscape painters, although Clayton made no clear distinction between subscription and speculatively-produced prints. Expensive, high-quality, subscription prints after commissioned paintings, with the name of the patron prominently displayed, enhanced the artistic reputation of the landscape painter, and the raising of subscriptions distanced the artist from the taint of the commercial market. They were sold as collector's items, intended for portfolio or cabinet display. Many landscape painters after whose work reproductive prints were published subsequently exhibited at the early exhibitions; their names were already familiar to many of the visiting public. Speculations, the majority of which featured sites around London and other popular tourist locations, were cheaper prints, sold in commercial retail outlets by print publishers. These speculatively-produced prints, many of which were engraved after drawings made by the engraver himself, were often advertised as 'decorative furniture'; they were designed for an audience with different interests, aesthetic preferences and financial resources.

Rouquet, despite his failure to mention the landscape roundels donated to the Foundling Hospital, had been fulsome in his praise of contemporary landscape painters. He averred that 'There are few masters in this branch, much superior to those landskip painters, who now enjoy the first reputation in England'.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, as he failed to name any landscape painters, it is important to ask why he believed that British landscape artists had acquired this reputation by 1756. As a close associate of Hogarth, Rouquet was surely aware of the importance of the print market in establishing artistic reputations. It is conceivable that his praise for British landscape painters was gained through familiarity with prints after their work for, as Marie Gordon-Smith has stated, 'today it is difficult to envision fully the status and role of the print in the eighteenth century'.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Campbell, *The London Tradesman*, 137.

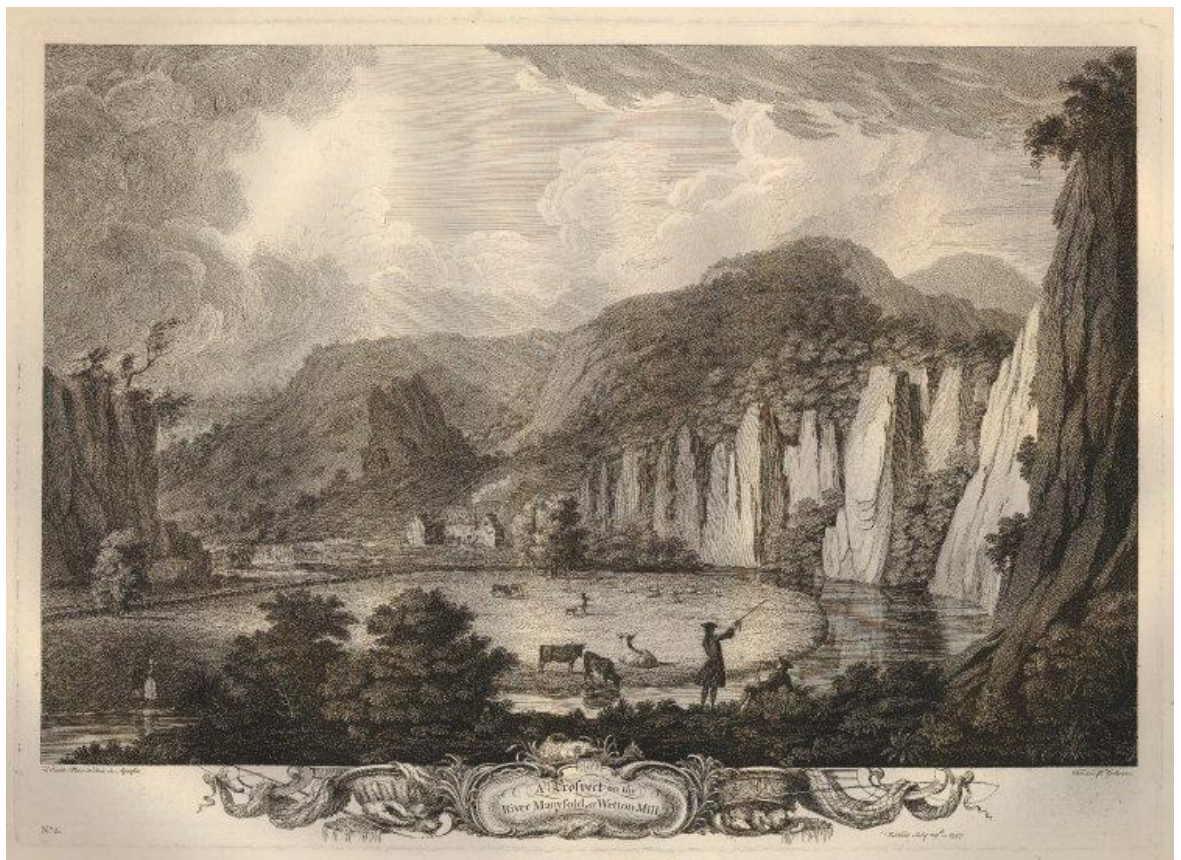
⁵⁹ Elizabeth McKellar, 'Peripheral Visions' in *Art History*, 22: 4 (1999), 495-513.

⁶⁰ Rouquet, *The present state of the arts*, 60.

⁶¹ Marie Gordon-Smith, 'The influence of Jean Pillement on French and English Decorative Art' in *Artibus and Historiae* 21:4 (2000), 173.

Subscription prints

The practice of raising subscriptions for engraved prints featuring British sites had been established before 1750. Samuel and Nathaniel Buck, draughtsmen and engravers, published prints of antiquarian interest in their *Castles and Abbeys of England* (1727-1742) and *Castles and Abbeys of Wales*, (1740-1742) and Thomas Smith of Derby published his *Eight of the most extraordinary Prospects in the Mountainous Part of Derby and Staffordshire*, commonly called *the Peak and Moorlands* in 1743. The series offered an evocative portrayal of the isolated splendour of a largely unknown and unappreciated region of England. (fig 3)



3) Gerard Jean Baptiste Scotin II after Thomas Smith, *A Prospect on the River Manifold, at Wetton Hall*, published by Smith 1743, engraving and etching. 39 x 54.3 cm. British Museum, London.

Edwards described Smith as having 'acquired a respectable degree of eminence in his profession [as] one of the first artists, who explored and displayed the beautiful scenes of his native country'.⁶² Solkin declared that Smith was a 'pioneering figure' for his recognition that there was profit to be made from adventurous domestic tourists interested in views featuring the natural magnificence of the British countryside; ⁶³ indeed, Clayton suggested that Smith's

⁶² Edwards, *Anecdotes of Painters*, 30.

⁶³ Solkin, *Art in Britain*, 122.

prints were influential in the promotion of tourism in the Peak district.⁶⁴ Trevor Brighton, in *Thomas Smith of Derby, 1721-1767*, 2013, proposed that figures were deliberately included to show that these remote regions were accessible to visitors.⁶⁵

Many of Smith's original paintings were unsigned and undated; prints after his designs were deemed the more profitable commercial venture.⁶⁶ The size of the reproductive prints and the subscription price of one guinea indicated that they were designed for portfolio collections. Not all the prints after Smith were of scenic views. Between 1745 and 1761, Smith published twelve collections of prints, including, in 1758, two views of Coalbrookdale in Shropshire, the first accurate depiction of an industrial site. There were four hundred and thirty-five subscribers for these prints from a wide stratum of society, which demonstrated considerable interest in the growing manufacturing industry.⁶⁷

The raising of a subscription was not always straightforward. In March 1745, William Oram advertised a subscription for eight views in Yorkshire and Derbyshire, the latter region already popular following the publication of Smith's prints two years previously. Oram stated his intention was 'in the Choice of prospects as well as in the Points of View, to render them the most Picturesque that have ever hitherto appeared.' Clayton commented that Oram used the term 'picturesque' in 1745;⁶⁸ this was twenty-three years before William Gilpin made the public more familiar with the term in *An Essay on prints* published in 1768. Gilpin had defined the picturesque as 'that peculiar beauty, which is agreeable in a picture'.⁶⁹ However, Malcom Andrews, in *The Search for the Picturesque*, 1989, stated that, as a derivative from French or Italian, the term picturesque had been used indiscriminately from the beginning of the eighteenth century to describe the 'kind of scenery or human activity proper for painting'.⁷⁰

Oram's advertisement continued that 'subscriptions [would be] taken in by Mr Tonson, Bookseller ... and Mr Gibbons, Stationer ... where two Paintings of these Views are to be seen ... Note, As Mr Oram had mentioned to many Gentlemen, that he purpos'd to deliver two of the prints at the Time of Subscribing, which he had expected would have been ready on the 25th of this Month, having articed with his Engravers for the same, which by several unseen

⁶⁴ Clayton, *The English Print*, 159.

⁶⁵ Trevor Brighton, *Thomas Smith of Derby 1721-1767: Pioneer of the Picturesque* (Derby: Bakewell and District History Society 2013), 154.

⁶⁶ *ibid*, 157.

⁶⁷ *ibid*, 137-140.

⁶⁸ Clayton, *The English Print*, 158.

⁶⁹ William Gilpin, *An Essay on Prints, containing remarks on the principles of picturesque beauty*. (London: J. Robinson 1768), 2.

⁷⁰ Malcolm Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press 1989, vii-viii.

Events hath been prevented, and cannot be ready until the same time in May next; by which time will be so late in the Season that many Gentlemen will be out of Town ... [he will ensure] the Two prints punctually sent to them'.⁷¹ Oram's concern was that many potential wealthy subscribers would have left for their country residences by May.

Oram had little control over his subscription. He was dependent on third parties to collect subscriptions and display the original paintings, and on the engravers to complete the work on time; extra expense was undoubtedly entailed in the delivery of the prints. By the 1750s, landscape painters sought to retain more influence over production and distribution of prints after their landscape paintings. Works to be engraved were frequently advertised as available for viewing either in their original position or at the artist's studio, where the subscriptions were raised and prints collected. This was a valuable marketing ploy. The stigma of commerce was avoided and potential purchasers could see further examples of the artist's work.

The raising of subscriptions was not confined to scenes of natural beauty, attractive prospects or industrial sites. In February 1753, an advertisement announced that 'At the request of several of the Governors, and ... to prevent its being executed in a less accurate and elegant Manner, Mr. William Bellers is engraving by Subscription, a perspective View of the London Hospital ... the price be five shillings ... the Print will be ready to be delivered to the Subscribers by the First of May next. Subscriptions are taken in by Mr William Trotter, Secretary, and Mr Benjamin Gifford, Steward, and Mr William Bellers, the Proposer, at Poppin's Court, Fleet Street'.⁷² The London Hospital, founded in 1740 to care for sick merchant seamen and the poor of the East End, was originally based in temporary accommodation, initially in Moorfields before moving to a site adjacent to Tower Bridge. Subsequently, the Governors chose the location, Whitechapel, for a purpose-built hospital. Bellers's painting, after which the print was made, was based on the plans drawn up by Boulton Mainwaring, and hung in the temporary committee room at Tower Bridge.⁷³ The building began in 1752, with patients first admitted in 1757 while the hospital was still under construction. The print (fig 4) shows that the proposed Hospital, a large imposing building, was to be built in a rural area still frequented by labourers working in the fields. When the subscription was raised, the site would not have been the depicted haven of calm and tranquillity.

⁷¹ *Daily Post* 18 March 1745.

⁷² *Public Advertiser* 13 February 1753.

⁷³ www.bartshealth.nhs.uk/our-hospitals/the-royal-london accessed on 10 September 2012, with personal communication from Richard Meunier, Deputy Archivist, St. Bartholomew's NHS HealthTrust.



4) Jean Baptiste Chatelain and William Henry Toms after William Bellers, *View of the London Hospital in White Chapel*, 1753, etching with engraving, 40.1 x 54 cm. British Museum, London.

The advertisement for the print suggested that Bellers sought to maintain his influence over the production of the print. Subscriptions were taken at his address as well as by the Hospital's officials, and he was engraving after his own painting. However, an announcement in March that the etching had been finished by Chatelain, suggests that Bellers may have exaggerated his competence as an engraver.⁷⁴

Subscriptions were also raised for views of more distant locations. An advertisement in the *Public Advertiser* in February 1754 announced a proposal for the engraving by subscription of 'Views from the Original Pictures painted for the Right Hon. the Lord Edgcumbe, by Mr. Lambert; the shipping by Mr. Scott ... The Plates to be engraved by Canot and Mason. The Pictures may be seen at Mr Lambert's, in the Great Piazza, Covent Garden, where Subscriptions are taken'.⁷⁵ There had been previous opportunities for Lambert's commissioned landscape paintings to be seen by a public audience. Many stately homes were beginning to attract considerable interest from affluent tourists, and his four views of Westcombe House at Blackheath, commissioned by the 9th Earl of Pembroke, were mentioned in a guide book on Wilton House, the Earl's country residence, published in 1751.⁷⁶ However these views would only have been seen by those who visited the House. The prints after the

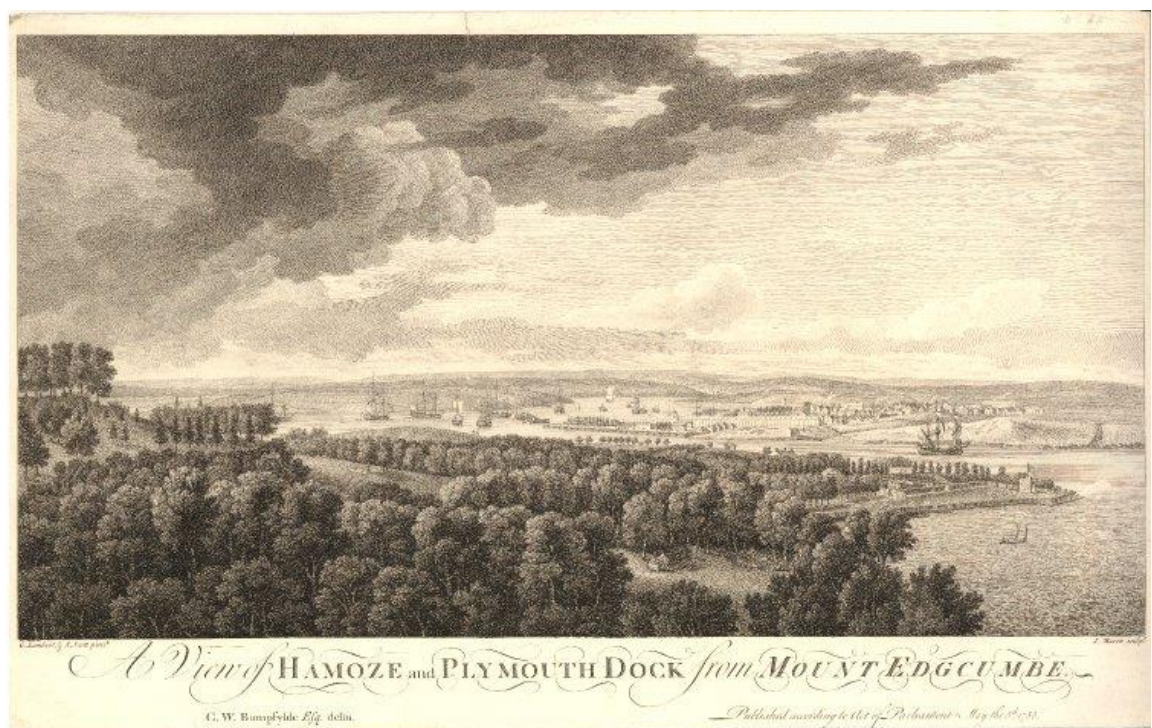
⁷⁴ *Public Advertiser* 3 March 1753.

⁷⁵ *Public Advertiser* 25 February 1754.

⁷⁶ Richard Cowdrey, *A Description of the Curiosities in Wilton House* (London: E. Easton 1751)

Edgcumbe paintings are the first I have found that afforded wider accessibility to his bespoke estate portraiture.

Mount Edgcumbe House, built between 1547 and 1553, became the family seat of the Edgcumbe family in the early seventeenth century. Standing on a peninsular overlooking Plymouth Sound, it is credited as being the first house built specifically for the enjoyment of the surrounding spectacular views rather than constructed as a defensive edifice.⁷⁷ The print after *View of Hamoze and Plymouth Dock* vividly described the magnificent view from the House, and featured Scott's detailed depiction of shipping in the Sound. (fig 5)



5) James Mason after George Lambert. *Five Views of and from Mount Edgcumbe, Plymouth/ A View of Hamoze and Plymouth Dock from Mount Edgcumbe*, 1754, engraving with etching, 383 x 620 mm. British Museum, London.

Lambert's collaboration with Scott, renowned for his paintings of shipping, was not unusual; figures and shipping in landscape paintings were often the work of a second artist. This acknowledgment of the status of Plymouth as a strategic maritime base had great patriotic appeal. England and France were engaged in armed skirmishes in Canada - events that would soon lead to full-scale war. The naval activity portrayed was a timely public reminder of the importance to the nation of the supremacy of the British navy.

⁷⁷ www.mountedgcumbe.gov.uk Accessed 3 January 2013.

The prominent statement in the advertisement that Lord Edgcumbe had commissioned these landscape views emphasised that Lambert enjoyed prestigious patronage. His reputation was further enhanced by the permission given to display the original paintings in his studio, where the subscription was raised. Lambert retained control of this proposal. The cost of the prints was not mentioned until January 1755, when the *Public Advertiser* confirmed the price at 'one and a half guineas the sett', and the dimensions were declared.⁷⁸ These were large expensive prints, aimed at affluent subscribers. The views were published in May 1755, fifteen months after the proposal was first mooted; engraving to the highest standard, in this instance by the French Pierre-Charles Canot and James Mason, who probably trained under François Vivares, was time-consuming.⁷⁹

The success of the Edgcumbe prints was reflected in the further publication of prints after landscape paintings by Lambert. In 1759, a proposal for a subscription was advertised, at twelve shillings, for four further landscapes engraved by Mason.⁸⁰ The advertisement specified the ownership of two of the original works. *A View of Dover Castle* was the property of Sir William Courtney, with an unnamed picture in the collection of Anthony Langley-Swymmer. The third proposed print, of *Saltwood Castle*, a medieval castle uninhabitable since the 1580s, had appeal as a testament to Britain's military strength through the centuries (fig 6).



6) James Mason after George Lambert, *A view of Saltwood Castle at Hythe, Kent*, etching and engraving, 31.8 x 55.2 cm. British Museum, London

⁷⁸ *Public Advertiser* 13 January 1755.

⁷⁹ Bibliographic details for James Mason www.Britishmuseum.org accessed 23 February 2016.

⁸⁰ *Public Advertiser* 17 April 1759.

The final print was after a picture, *Landscape with rural figures*, donated by Lambert to the Foundling Hospital in 1757. Lambert was a well-respected British landscape painter who enjoyed prestigious patronage and was lauded for his scene painting; there was obviously interest among subscribers for prints after his commissioned landscape paintings.

In contrast, Gainsborough was less successful in gaining commissions for landscape paintings. However, in 1758, a subscription was proposed by the Suffolk engraver, Joseph Wood, for a print after landscape paintings by Gainsborough and Wilson. The advertisement stated that 'The first called the Gypsies, etched by Mr Gainsborough, and finished by J. Wood; the second, now Engraving by him, after a picture painted by Mr. R. Wilson of the *Lake of Nemi*, near Rome. Prints ready in January 1759 ... 8s'.⁸¹ The original painting by Gainsborough, c1753-4, is lost; the work is only known from the etching by Gainsborough and the engraved print of Wood.⁸²

Wood's subscription for a print of *Lake of Nemi* was perhaps the more conventional choice. Wilson enjoyed high esteem among his patrons, and had painted many versions of this location. The inscription under the print stated that it was in the possession of Henry Hoare at Stourhead, and Postle acknowledged that receipts show that Henry Hoare purchased a painting by Wilson in 1758. However, a comparison with *Lake of Nemi* still in the possession of a branch of the Hoare family appears to indicate that the print in the British Museum is not after the same work'.⁸³ (fig 7) Postle suggested that, although it may not be after the same painting, it is possible that Wood had altered the 'compositional format of the painting in order to match it with the upright Gainsborough print'.⁸⁴ Wood may have chosen these two contrasting prints to highlight the difference between the enclosed, wooded English countryside, and the more open classical Italian landscape.

⁸¹ *Public Advertiser* 14 October 1768.

⁸² Hayes, *The Landscape Paintings of Thomas Gainsborough* vol.2, 376.

⁸³ *The Lake of Nemi* purchased by Henry Hoare is Plate 92, pg. 277, in *Richard Wilson and the Transformation*.

⁸⁴ Postle, *Richard Wilson and the Transformation*, 127.



7) Joseph Wood after Richard Wilson, *The Lake of Nemi or Speculum Dianae*, published by John Boydell 1764, etching and engraving, 49.4 x 40 cm. British Museum, London.

In February 1759, Wood informed subscribers that his prints would be published in March and that 'this small delay is occasion'd by his desire to deliver them as highly furnish'd as possible, he flatters himself their accuracy will make the best Apology for it'.⁸⁵ Wood's reputation depended on recognition of his skill as an engraver; it was preferable that his subscribers waited, rather than be presented with less than perfect prints. Wood advertised the prints as available in 1761, but they were not published until 1764 when Boydell issued them as a pair.

Postle suggested that the delay in publication may have been due to failure to attract sufficient subscriptions or Wood's ill-health. Wood had died by 1764, and John Boydell may have subsequently acquired the copper plates. The published print after Gainsborough showed alterations from the original engraving by Wood; Boydell, commercially astute, presumably made the alterations to increase the attraction of the print to purchasers.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ *Public Advertiser* 28 February 1759.

⁸⁶ Postle, *Richard Wilson and the Transformation*, 127.

Subscriptions were also raised for prints after landscape paintings by Sandby. In April 1758, an announcement was made in the *General Evening Post* that ‘*Eight Perspective views of Windsor Great Park*, by Thomas and Paul Sandby, dedicated to his Royal Highness the Duke of Cumberland, were ready to be delivered to subscribers’.⁸⁷ John Bonehill in *Paul Sandby: Picturing Britain*, described these views as ‘one of the most lavish print series of the eighteenth century’. He stated that a ‘private’ subscription had been proposed in December 1754 and that the prints ‘were presumably published the following year’ before they reached a wider audience when they went on sale in 1758.⁸⁸ I have found no advertisements for the proposal which, as ‘private’, is understandable. If indeed it was made in 1754, the prints took Vivares, Canot and the English engraver Edward Rooker a considerable time to engrave. The *General Evening Post* clearly indicated that, in 1758, the prints were available for subscribers rather than for sale to the public, and there was no indication of the price to be paid if they were indeed available for purchase. When reissued by Boydell in 1773, they cost one guinea.



8) Paul Sandby after Thomas Sandby, *Eight Views of Windsor Park/The Great Bridge over the Virginia River*, 1754, etching, 34 x 56.6 cm. British Museum, London.

The views of Windsor Great Park were a collaborative venture; Thomas Sandby provided the accurate architectural background, with Paul adding the details of the figures. Bonehill suggested that their publication, at a time of political upheaval following the death of the Prince of Wales, not only showed the improvements to Windsor Great Park made by the Duke

⁸⁷ *General Evening Post* 27-29 April 1758.

⁸⁸ John Bonehill, ‘Catalogue Plates and Entries’ in *Paul Sandby: Picturing Britain*, eds. Bonehill and Stephen Daniels. (London: Thames and Hudson 2002), 192.

of Cumberland, but were also a visual testament that, having retired from public life, he was content to renovate his estate and retained 'no designs on the throne'.⁸⁹ *The Great Bridge* shows the renovation in progress; men are shown at work with shovels, picks and carts. (fig 8)

Speculatively-published prints

Not all prints after the landscape paintings of Bellers, Gainsborough, Lambert and Sandby, were published following the raising of a subscription. In 1753 Sayers and Overton advertised a series of '*Eight perspective Views of Cities, Castles and Forts in Northern Britain*, drawn and engraved by Paul Sandby'. This series, which featured views of Edinburgh, Leith and Fort William and the castles of Bothwell and Dumbarton, were 'priced at 8 shillings plain and 16 shillings colour'd'.⁹⁰ Bonehill and Stephen Daniels wrote that Sandby, following his 'extensive tours' of the country 'as a military draughtsman and then as professional artist, pioneered the artistic depiction of Scotland'.⁹¹ Scotland was, at that time, viewed as unexplored territory. Prints of the cities and fortifications of a region only recently subdued by the English served to document the historical and architectural features of an area unfamiliar to the public, as well as a patriotic celebration of the conquest of North Britain.

Philip Thicknesse, a friend, and subsequent biographer of Gainsborough, was one of the few landowners in Suffolk who commissioned his landscape paintings. In 1754, he persuaded Thomas Major to publish a print after Gainsborough's *Land-Guard Fort*, commissioned in 1753 but destroyed by damp during his lifetime.⁹² (fig 9) Thicknesse, in *A Sketch of the Life and Paintings of Thomas Gainsborough Esq*, 1788, claimed that this print 'made Mr Gainsborough's name beyond the arch of his country residences';⁹³ but Major, uncertain of sales, only undertook to publish the print after Thicknesse, who was Lieutenant- Governor of the Fort, 'offered to take ten guineas worth of impressions himself'.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Bonehill, *Paul Sandby*, 19.

⁹⁰ *Public Advertiser* 6 December 1753.

⁹¹ Bonehill and Daniels, *Paul Sandby*, 8.

⁹² Hayes, *The Landscape Paintings of Thomas Gainsborough*, vol.2, 368-369.

⁹³ Philip Thicknesse, *A Sketch of the Life and Paintings of Thomas Gainsborough Esq* (London: printed for the author 1788), 14.

⁹⁴ *ibid*, 13.

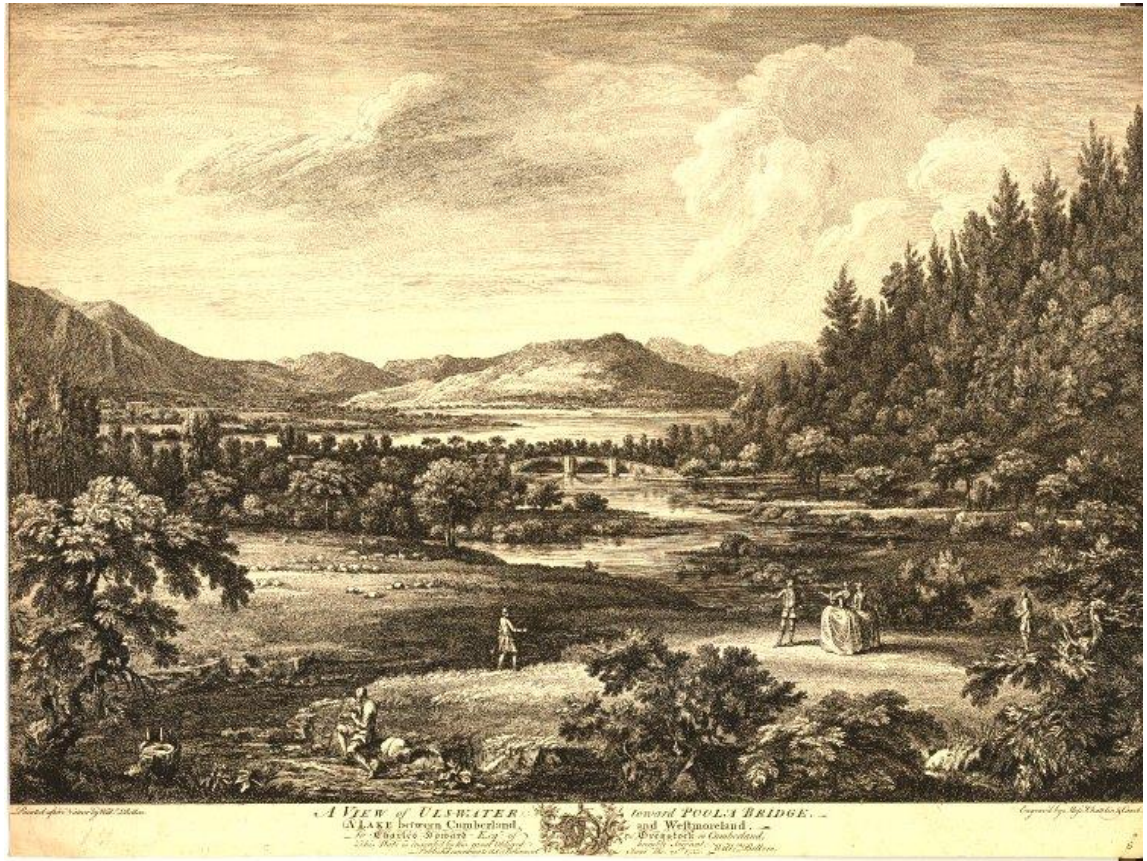


9) Thomas Major after Thomas Gainsborough, *Land-Guard Fort in Suffolk*, 1754, published by Thomas Major, etching and engraving, 35 x 59.8 cm. British Museum, London.

Bellers, a dealer in prints as well as a landscape painter, advertised the publication of 'Six Select Views' of the Lake District 'Drawn on the Spot with the greatest Accuracy by Mr William Bellers, and to be sold at his house', priced at 'one guinea the Sett', in 1754.⁹⁵ (fig 10) The Lake District was less well-known than the Peak District; it did not become a centre for tourism until the publication of *A Guide to the Lakes* by Thomas West in 1778.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, domestic tourists were, by the early 1750s, venturing beyond the environs of London, and a fascination with the newly-appreciated ruggedly-dramatic scenery of more remote regions, generated an interest in prints of more distant sites. The mountains looming over Ullswater and the dense forestation attest to the splendour and seclusion of the depicted location. Nevertheless, the man-made structure of the delicately arching Poola Bridge and the two fashionably-dressed females show that the area was accessible to the travellers.

⁹⁵ *London Evening Post* 9-12 November 1754.

⁹⁶ Thomas West, *A Guide to the Lakes* (London: Richardson and Urquart 1778)



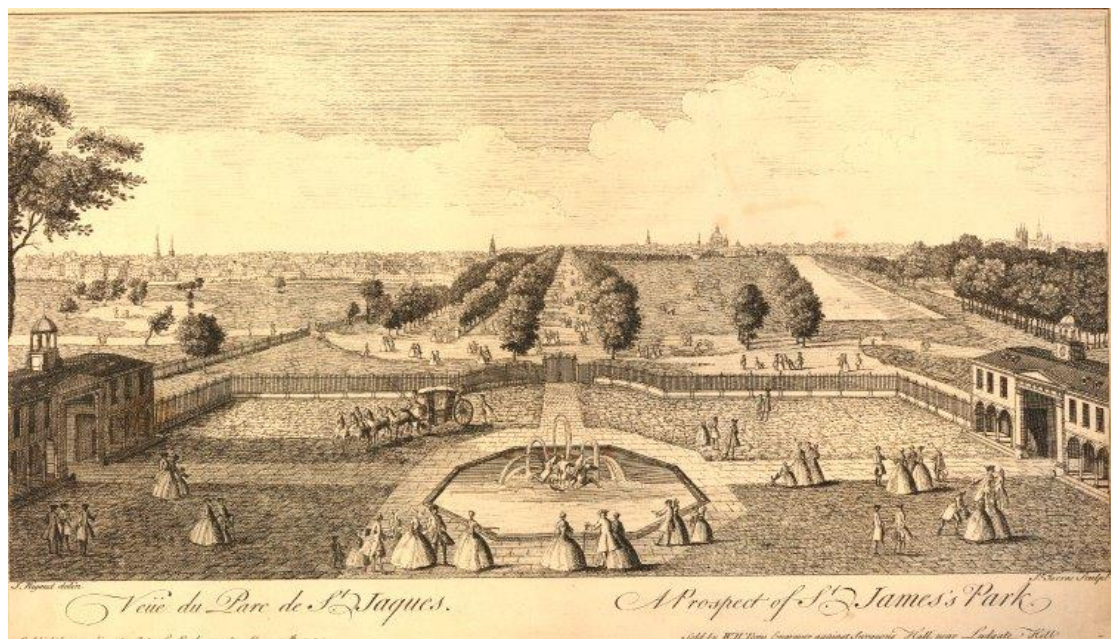
10) Jean Baptiste Chatelain and Pierre Charles Canot after William Bellers, *A View of Ulswater (sic) towards Poola bridge*, published by William Bellers, etching with engraving, 1753, 40 x 53.8 cm. British Museum, London.

However, the overwhelming majority of the speculatively-published landscape prints offered for sale between 1750 and 1760 were not after works by established landscape painters. The technological advances in print production facilitated the institution of a domestic retail market for landscape prints designed to appeal to the less affluent with an interest in images featuring British locations. Print producers sought to advertise their prints, many designed by the engraver himself, through competitive advertising campaigns in the popular press, as well as displaying them in their shops. These prints promoted the engravers, who were predominantly established continental artists; they received credit in the inscriptions below the work. While these prints may not have increased the reputation of landscape painters, they certainly encouraged an engagement with landscape imagery. I propose that these prints were promoted for different markets. The more expensive prints were obviously intended for portfolio collections, cabinet display or to be framed and displayed as luxury items whereas the less expensive speculations were often described merely as genteel or decorative furniture.

The cheaper prints predominantly featured sites around London. An advertisement placed in the *General Advertiser* in 1750 by William Henry Toms, an engraver and print seller,

exemplifies the commercial strategies employed. Toms announced the sale of two discrete sets of prints. The first, at the price of 5s, was for 'Ten perspective Views of the most remarkable places about Hampstead and Highgate, drawn and engraved by Mons. Chatelain and W.H.Toms'.⁹⁷ The Hampstead and Highgate Views had previously been offered for sale by Toms in 1745; print sellers regularly re-advertised prints, with no mention of the date of their original production, whenever a further opportunity of sales was envisaged. Hampstead, with its elevated position and splendid views, had been developed as a spa in the seventeenth century, and by the early eighteenth century, was viewed as a rural alternative to the City of London. Elizabeth McKellar noted in *The Metropolis and its Image*, 1999 that Chatelain's engravings, the first to depict the area, abandoned strict topographical accuracy for a classically inspired 'elegant pastoral', which denied references to its actual 'rusticity and informality'.⁹⁸

The second set featured views of well-known London landmarks; 'Three perspective Views of St. James's Park, two Views of Greenwich and one of Hampton Court, drawn by Mess. Rigaud and Chatelain, Price 1s each'.⁹⁹ (fig 11)



11) S. Torres after Jacques Rigaud, *A Prospect of St James's Park*, published by William Henry Toms 1750, etching, 23.8 x 39.4 cm. British Museum, London.

⁹⁷ *General Advertiser* 5 January 1750.

⁹⁸ Elizabeth McKellar, 'Peripheral Visions: alternative aspects and rural presences in mid-eighteenth-century London' in *The Metropolis and its Image* ed. Dana Arnold (Oxford: Blackwells 1999), 38-43.

⁹⁹ *General Advertiser* 5 January 1750.

St James's Park is the oldest of the Royal Parks, the land having been acquired by Henry VIII in 1532. By the mid-eighteenth-century, a canal had been filled in to create Horse Guards Parade, and it became the centre of royal and ceremonial life.¹⁰⁰ Jaques Rigaud's design, engraved by S.Torres, reveals that Horse Guards Parade was, by 1750, a popular recreational venue for the public parade of the fashionable escaping from the distant city. The names of the French designers, who had established reputations in England as skilful artists, were prominently displayed on the print to engage public attention. Toms, aware of the differing preferences and purchasing power of his potential customers, had advertised two sets with contrasting views; he demonstrated his commercial astuteness in this opportunistic endeavour to attract custom from a broad audience.

Toms continued his advertisement by announcing the availability of a 'number of other perspective views, which are calculated for, and have a surprising Appearance in the Perspective Glass'.¹⁰¹ The Perspective Glass, introduced in the mid-eighteenth century, was advertised as 'a New constructed Optical Instrument for viewing perspective Prints; in which they are represented to the Eye in such an advantageous Manner, as to excite an idea equal to the real View of the Place'.¹⁰² Prints, placed on a table, were viewed at eye level through a combination of angled concave mirrors and reflectors which were deemed to heighten the perspective effect.¹⁰³ Publishers of prints sought to gain maximal advantage from the popularity of this novel instrument by advertising their prints as specifically designed for this purpose. Toms also stressed that 'All prints may be had coloured in a beautiful Manner'. Purchasers of these more expensive coloured prints acquired a more original and distinctive image than the usual identical productions. In a final astute marketing gambit, Toms declared that his prints were available for purchase, at a reduced price, to 'sell again'.¹⁰⁴ Re-sale in shops around the country ensured a wider distribution, with further publicity for publishers, artists and engravers.

Prints did not only feature views of recreational sites. Publishers were aware that views of the Thames, which epitomised the importance of the river to British domestic and international trade, had popular appeal. In 1753, *Two Views of the River Thames*, described as 'the finest river in the World for its Commerce' were advertised in the *Public Advertiser*; priced at 1

¹⁰⁰ www.royalparks.org.uk/parks//st-james-park accessed March 10 2016.

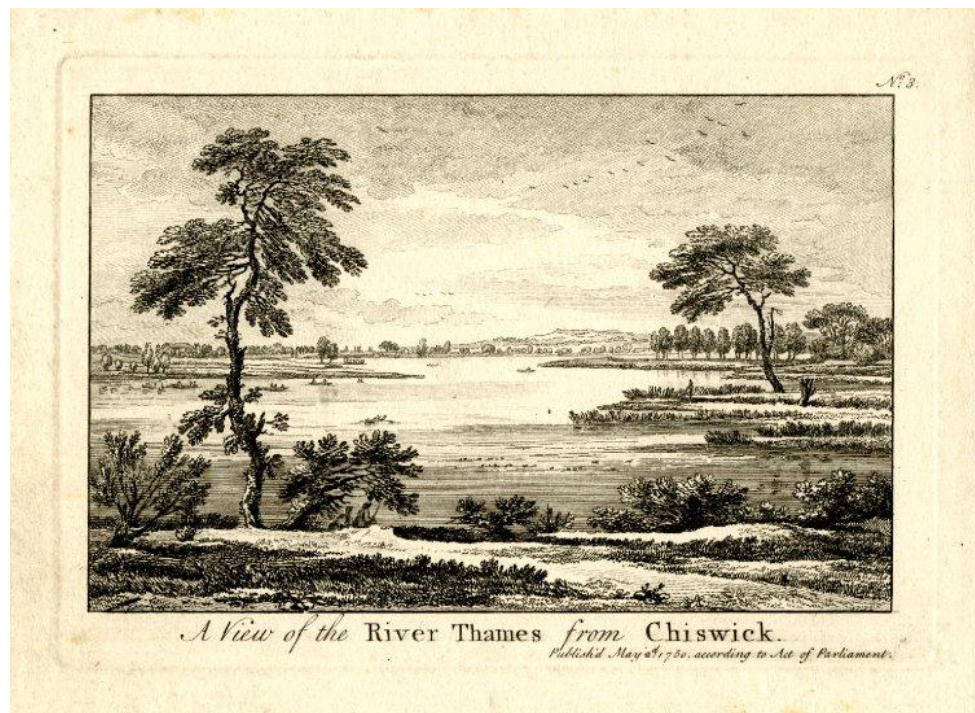
¹⁰¹ *General Advertiser* 5 January 1750.

¹⁰² *London Evening Post* 27 February - 1 March 1753.

¹⁰³ See Clayton, *The English Print*, 140, for an illustration of the Perspective glass and discussion of its use.

¹⁰⁴ *General Advertiser* 5 January 1750.

shilling plain, and 2 shillings coloured.¹⁰⁵ In 1758, a further advertisement announced: 'Price 3s each. Two Prints from Original Paintings, done by Mr. Scott; one of Westminster Bridge, with the Parts adjacent; the other of London-Bridge before the present Alterations. To be had of Mr Scott in Henrietta House'.¹⁰⁶ London Bridge had been the only river crossing in central London before the construction of Westminster Bridge in 1750. Scott, well known for his maritime scenes and views of London, depicted it before the medieval buildings on the bridge were demolished and the two original arches replaced by a single structure to aid navigation. Einberg and Julie Egerton stated that the prints proved a commercial success, ascribing this 'to general nostalgia for the bridge as it had appeared in former centuries'.¹⁰⁷ Not all prints depicted the Thames as central to the economic pre-eminence of London. Thomas Major had published Chatelain's *Six Views of the River Thames* in 1750. Chiswick is shown as a deserted, tranquil up-stream reach of the river. Edged by banks and trees, it is frequented only by fishermen and birds. (fig 12)



12) Jean Baptiste Chatelain. *Six Views and the River Thames/ A View of the River Thames from Chiswick*, published by Thomas Major 1750, etching, 12.1 x 17.5 cm. British Museum, London.

Prints of locations within easy reach of the metropolis, by road or water, were increasingly promoted as print publishers strove to persuade the public that views of the English countryside rivalled those of admired foreign locations. In 1752, John Overton advertised

¹⁰⁵ *Public Advertiser* 29 November 1753.

¹⁰⁶ *Public Advertiser* 2 March 1758.

¹⁰⁷ Einberg and Judy Egerton, *The Age of Hogarth: British Painters born 1675-1709* (London: Tate Gallery Publication 1986), 199.

'Twelve Curious perspective prints from the Designs of the celebrated Mons. Chatelain, and neatly Engraved by Messrs Bowles and Parr'. The chosen locations - Wandsworth, Fulham, Putney, Kew, Chiswick, Rowhampton (sic) and Mortlake - bordered the Thames. Overton appealed to the patriotism of his potential purchasers by adding 'The great Call for, and Success [that] ... Foreign Buildings &c. in Perspective have met with, occasioned the Proprietor to publish these English Villages and rural Prospects, as [they] are well known by most People, and are equal, if not superior, to any Foreign Views of the Size and Price, ever published in England.¹⁰⁸ In 1753, Robert Sayers published a further six views of sites near London, engraved by Grignion and Stevens, which included views of Lord Harrington's gardens at Petersham and Richmond Hill from the Royal Gardens. These prints, priced at one shilling each, were specifically advertised as 'genteel furniture'.¹⁰⁹

Prints were published of more distant locations, less familiar to many of the purchasers. Boydell offered four prints for sale, designed and engraved by himself, of the mountainous parts of Wales, described by Clayton as 'the first ... views of the Welsh mountains', for 1s 6d¹¹⁰ He also published four views of the Peaks in Derbyshire and four prospects of Chester, Caernarvon, Conway and Rhuckllan (sic), renowned for their magnificent castles, priced at 1s the set.¹¹¹ I suggest these prints were intended to interest purchasers unable to afford the more expensive antiquarian prints of the Buck brothers, or those after Thomas Smith of Derby.

Prints were also published to attract the interest of a more affluent clientele. In December 1751, Sayers announced, in the *General Advertiser*, 'This day is published, for 1s each plain, and 2s neatly colour'd, 'Six Views of the Grand Walks, Ornamental Buildings &c. in Ranelagh and Vauxhall- Gardens, all drawn in 1751, by the celebrated Canaletti (sic), and engraved in the best Manner by Messrs. Rooker, Muller and Parr, of an equal size 16 x 10 half Inches'. (fig 13) The advertisement continued that 'these prints may be had, neatly coloured and framed, in best carv'd or in flat standing frames, gilt and glaz'd, at 7s 6d'.¹¹² The paintings by Canaletto of his native Venice were enthusiastically collected by British patrons, and following his arrival in London in 1746, his views of the Thames, which recorded the diversity of commercial and leisure activities on the river, had proved very popular. Canaletto's expertise is evident in the detailed delineation of the architectural features, the elegant disposition of the figures, the subtle use of light and shade and the beautifully described foliage. (fig 13)

¹⁰⁸ *General Advertiser* 15 April 1752.

¹⁰⁹ *Public Advertiser* 26 February 1753.

¹¹⁰ Clayton, *The English Print*, 158-9.

¹¹¹ *London Evening Post* 7-9 June 1750.

¹¹² *General Advertiser* 11 December 1751.



13) Johann Sebastian Muller after Antonio Canaletto, *A View of the Temple of Comus &c in Vauxhall Gardens*, published by Robert Sayers 1751, etching, 26.1 x 40.2 cm. British Museum, London

Sayers was not the only publisher of prints of the Pleasure Gardens. The intense rivalry between print publishers to capture the market for landscape prints was made apparent in the subsequent hostile published exchange between Sayers and Bowles. Eight days after Sayer's announcement, Bowles advertised the forthcoming publication of 'Six different Views of the most beautiful and elegant Parts of the Gardens of Vauxhall and Ranelagh, from original drawings, taken on the spot, by Mr. Wale etc.' The advertisement continued that 'The proprietors of these Prints think it is needless ... to puff them to the Publick (sic) ... the most just and effectual Recommendation is, that the Prints should speak their own Merit, therefore every Purchaser before he buys is desired to compare these prints, with others of the same Places hitherto published ... Let the Judicious in Perspective and Engraving determine which are the best executed, and which claims the Preference as the most beautiful and pleasing'.

The prints are advertised as 'sold, in gold-frosted Frames, neatly coloured, at 7s 6d each'.¹¹³ Wale was best known as a book illustrator, and I suggest this is apparent in these prints. The design is more architectural, the groups of visitors appear stiff and posed and the poorly described trees appear merely decorative. (fig 14)

¹¹³ *General Advertiser* 19 December 1751.

Sayers, clearly incensed by Bowles' claim for the superiority of his prints, published an immediate rebuttal in the *Westminster Post*. 'N.B. It appearing, by a late Advertisement, that Views of the same kind are intended to be published in opposition to the above whereby it is pretended they will be preferable; but as these were taken by Signor Canaletti (sic), whose Skill in Drawing of Architecture and Views of this Nature, is too well established to admit a Comparison with inferior Artists, and appear to his Advantage most when compared with the Objects, from whence they were taken, his Original Drawings now are to be seen at the above Publishers.' He urged the public to judge for themselves the 'beauty of the engraving' and the 'truth of the perspective'.¹¹⁴ The aggressive tone of these 'press releases' manifested the intense competition between commercial purveyors of prints as they endeavoured to capture the attention and interest of the buying public.



14) Thomas Bowles III after Samuel Wale, *A View of the Chinese Pavilions and Boxes in Vaux Hall Gardens* published by John Bowles 1751, etching, 28.7 x 41.8 cm. British Museum, London.

Prints after the magnificent country houses of the wealthy elite were promoted to appeal to the interests of leisure travellers; the estates were often accessible to the paying public. In January 1750, the *General Advertiser* announced the sale of prints, at 5s each, of 'The following

¹¹⁴ *Westminster Evening Post* 19-21 December 1751.

Noblemen's and Gentlemen's Seats', with a descriptive annotation to those furthest from the capital. Eaton Hall, the seat of Sir Robert Grosvenor in Cheshire, was described as 'with an extensive View of the Country adjacent' while Hawarden Castle in Flintshire, owned by Sir John Glynne, Bart showed 'a fine View of the River Dee, and the new Cut, which view takes in from Puckgate to Chester City'.¹¹⁵ Boydell published views of Blenheim, the palace financed by Queen Anne for the first Duke of Marlborough to celebrate his defeat of the French in 1704, as well as views of Oxford, for 4s in 1752,¹¹⁶ and in 1757, John Tinney advertised 'Two Views of the House and Gardens of ... the Duke of Argyll' and 'Four Views of the House and Gardens of Sir Francis Dashwood'.¹¹⁷ No artist or engraver is cited for these prints, although Clayton has attributed the engraving to William Woollett.¹¹⁸ In 1759, Tinney and Bowles published six views of 'remarkable Seats and Gardens' drawn and engraved by Luke Sullivan, featuring Wilton, Oatlands, Ditchley, Cliseden, (sic) Esher and Woobourn (sic); the inclusion of the landowner's name in the advertisement emphasised their proprietary rights.¹¹⁹ These prints were expensive; priced at one guinea, they were produced for collectors of fine prints.

Tom's advertisement in 1750 included 'Sixteen Views of Lord Cobham's Gardens, drawn and engraved by Mr Rigaud and Mr. Baron. Price £2 2s'.¹²⁰ Stowe had attracted visits from the nobility and the wealthier middling classes since the evolution of the regimented parterre garden of 1690 into a less formal, more natural landscape park under the successive influence of the garden designers, Charles Bridgeman, William Kent, James Gibbs and Capability Brown. The fascination for the viewing public was the innovative conception of the landscape design; with no single viewing point, visitors had to walk through a series of naturalistic vistas to appreciate the statuary, monuments, bridges and follies. The original prints of *Views of Lord Cobham's Gardens*, commissioned by Charles Bridgeman between 1733 and 1739, had cost four guineas but, following Bridgeman's death, they were sold to a consortium of publishers and re-sold more cheaply. Nevertheless, they were still very expensive, and Toms was not the only print seller to offer them for sale. In April 1752, Bowles advertised 'Fifteen Perspective Views, and a large Plan of the Gardens of Stowe ... laid out by Mr Bridgman (sic) Principal Gardener to their Majesties King George 1 and 11 ... Mr Bridgman, being desirous to exhibit to the Publick (sic) these fine Gardens, procured (at a very great expense) that celebrated Artist in perspective, Mons. Rigaud, to come over from Paris, to draw several Views on the Spot ...

¹¹⁵ *General Advertiser* 19 January 1750.

¹¹⁶ *London Evening Post* 21-23 April 1752.

¹¹⁷ *Public Advertiser* 9 June 1757.

¹¹⁸ Clayton, *The English Print*, 163.

¹¹⁹ *Public Advertiser* 27 March 1759.

¹²⁰ *General Advertiser* 5 January 1750.

which, for the Grandeur and Delicacy, exceeds any Thing hitherto attempted of the kind ... This grand Set of Prints cost Mr Bridgman upwards of 1400l'.¹²¹ Bowles, aware that he was participating in a highly competitive market, emphasised the skill of Rigaud, Bridgeman's royal connections and the high price paid for the original prints to stress the distinction of his prints. Not all prints of Stowe were so costly; in 1750, George Bickham, jun. published *The Beauties of Stow* (sic), illustrated with 'Thirty Designs, or Drawings...of each building'.¹²² In September, the illustrations were advertised as available as 'Cuts, neatly framed and glaz'ed for the Closet at the lowest prices'¹²³ at 3s plain and 6s coloured. These alternative views were designed to attract the interest for those unwilling, or unable, to pay such high prices. Print publishers, as astute commercial operators, produced speculative prints intended to appeal to all potential purchasers.

Conclusion

When the first exhibition was staged in 1760, a market for landscape imagery, albeit through the medium of the prints, had been established. The prices charged for prints reflect the targeted audience. The more expensive reproductive prints, designed for portfolio collections, were aimed at the affluent purchaser. Landscape painters whose paintings were in the public domain through the raising of subscriptions reached a wide public audience, and their reputation was enhanced through intensive advertising campaigns in the popular press. There is no extant evidence to show that artists received any remuneration; the benefits may have been that, with their work in the public domain, they were brought to the attention of potential patrons. The variety of speculatively-produced landscape prints demonstrated that there was a successful commercial market in reproductive imagery of British locations, both urban and rural. The prices charged for these prints varied dramatically. The cheaper prints tended to feature sites within easy distance of London, and were intended as decorative furniture. The more expensive prints, often of distant locations visited by the more affluent, were more luxury items, intended for portfolio or cabinet collections. (Appendix 2)

The commercial print market was dominated by landscape prints, with a multiplicity of shops selling a variety of reproductive imagery. There were few retail outlets for the display or sale of contemporary British paintings, ignored by the established art market. Those who attempted to sell directly to the public were derided. Edwards dismissed the landscape

¹²¹ *General Advertiser* 22 April 1752.

¹²² George Bickham, *The Beauties of Stow: or a Description of the pleasant seat and noble gardens of the Right Honourable Viscount Cobham*. (London: E. Owen 1750).

¹²³ *Westminster Evening Post* 1-4 September 1750.

paintings of William James who had 'shown his works at his shop window' as 'little calculated to please the eye of a connoisseur'.¹²⁴ Pears proposed that exhibitions were instituted to overcome the shortcomings of the art market,¹²⁵ while Solkin argued that, as British painting entered the modern art world, a reliance on patronage was obviated.¹²⁶ The next chapter considers the impact of the exhibitions between 1760 and 1768 on landscape painting. The importance for landscape painters of the first sale of British art in 1763 and the limited retail market established through exhibitions from 1764 are analysed. The exposure of landscape painting to an audience familiar with landscape imagery through the reproductive print is evaluated to determine the effect on artistic production.

¹²⁴ Edwards, *Anecdotes of Painters*, 26-27.

¹²⁵ Pears, *The Discovery of Painting*, 127.

¹²⁶ Solkin, *Art in Britain*, 151.

CHAPTER 2

Exhibitions as Commercial Institutions.

The decision to hold the first exhibition of modern British art was made at the 'General Meeting of all Artists,' convened at the Turks Head to consider 'A Proposal for the Honour and Advancement of the Arts'. The advertisement announcing this meeting called for the attendance of 'all Artists in the Several Branches of Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, Engraving, Chasing, Seal Cutting and Medalling'.¹ The professed motivation behind the staging of exhibitions was 'not to enrich the Artists, but to Advance the Art'.² The display of exemplary modern British art, organised by an inclusive and cohesive artistic body, would increase appreciation of contemporary art and enhance the reputation of British artists. However, it is clear that exhibitions were also envisaged as commercial institutions.

This commercial objective of exhibitions has been emphasised in art historical deliberations. Pears, in the *Discovery of Painting*, claimed exhibitions were 'most straightforwardly ... a market place',³ Hargraves, in *Candidates for Fame*, insisted that, despite their professed disinterest in personal advantage, 'artists were painting for a market',⁴ while Solkin, in *Art in Britain*, maintained that 'exhibitors could now bid directly for the support of thousands of potential purchasers'.⁵ I maintain that reliance on an open market centred on exhibitions offered little assurance of financial security. Exhibitions did not obviate the desire, or need of, landscape painters for patronage.

The most overtly commercial initiatives delivered at the exhibitions have received little critical attention. The *Preface* to the catalogue for the Society of Artists exhibition of 1762 proposed that an annual sale be held as 'Many Artists of great ability are unable to sell their work'.⁶ The first sale of modern British art was held in February 1763. I argue that, although the sale failed to meet the expectations of the organisers, it revealed that a market existed for moderately priced landscape paintings. Following the sale, a concession was made that exhibitors could

¹ *Public Advertiser* 12 November 1759.

² 'Preface' to *Catalogue*, S of A 1762, iv.

³ Iain Pears, *The Discovery of Painting: The growth of interest in the Arts in England 1680-1768*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), 127.

⁴ Matthew Hargraves, *Candidates for Fame: The Society of Artists of Great Britain 1760-1791* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2005), 24.

⁵ David H. Solkin, *Art in Britain 1660-1815* (New Haven and Yale: Yale University Press 2015), 151.

⁶ 'Preface' to *Catalogue*, S of A 1762, iv.

advertise in the exhibition catalogues ‘those [exhibits] mark’d thus * are to be disposed of’.⁷ An analysis of the works offered for immediate purchase has revealed that landscape painters were in the majority of those who availed themselves of this overtly commercial initiative. (Appendix 3) This limited retail market centred on exhibitions evolved unpredictably and erratically. Nevertheless, I propose that landscape painters who failed to secure lucrative patronage, or retained no permanent London studio, embraced this innovative opportunity to advertise their work for sale.

Pears insisted that although exhibitions were established to provide a market for art, ‘the audience was there to be manipulated and moulded, not to have any influence on the development of painting through their reactions’.⁸ This contention conflicts with the concept of exhibitions as commercial enterprises. Indeed, Solkin, in *Painting for Money* stressed that, to be successful in a competitive market, artists had to ‘give way to the higher laws of supply and demand;’ products available for purchase had to interest potential purchasers.⁹ I suggest that landscape painters recognised that, if they were to gain patronage or sales, they had to shape their artistic practice in accord with consumer preference. The successful competitive trade in landscape prints had demonstrated public appreciation of landscape imagery, both of urban sites and more distant locations. Exhibited landscape paintings increasingly featured popular scenic views, destinations on the burgeoning tourist trails, and the historical artefacts that had proved commercially successful for print publishers. At the first exhibition, only two exhibits were of identifiable locations. In 1762, twelve exhibits at the Society of Artists exhibition were entitled after British sites and by 1766 twenty-one landscape exhibits featured views of popular tourist locations, scenic prospects or views of British heritage sites.

The advent of exhibitions was welcomed by contemporary commentators as challenging the domination of the art market by foreign imports, and the malign influence of those who denigrated British art. John Oakly, writing in *St James’s Chronicle* before the opening of the first Society of Artists exhibition in 1761, bemoaned that it was made ‘a Matter of Ridicule to purchase modern Productions or encourage an English Artist’. He declared that ‘It is a known melancholy Truth, that the Tribe of Auctioneers, Connoisseurs, Picture Brokers, Dealers, Menders, Cleaners &c ... have monopolised the Trade in Pictures’.¹⁰ He applauded the institution of exhibitions as providing a direct interface between exhibitors and a public

⁷ *Catalogue*, S of A 1764, 3.

⁸ Pears, *The Discovery of Painting*, 127.

⁹ Solkin, *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere In Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1992), 2.

¹⁰ John Oakly, *St James’s Chronicle* 23-25 April 1761.

desirous of purchasing modern British art. 'T.B', in *A Call to Connoisseurs*, 1761, railed against picture dealers as 'declared enemies to the Living Artist as all their hopes are from the Dead; every Art must be try'd to prevent the world from knowing his Merit, or having that Opinion of him his labours deserve'.¹¹

The idea that the public, thwarted by perfidious dealers and auctioneers, would embrace exhibitions as an opportunity to purchase modern British painting must, nevertheless, be treated with caution. There is little substantive evidence that these middlemen were actively preventing engagement with contemporary British art; their activities were influenced by the demands of collectors who were only interested in acquiring work by renowned continental Old Masters. The limited commercial art market for landscape painting that emerged at exhibitions had little relevance to the aristocratic connoisseur.

Exhibitions between 1760 and 1762

Following the decision to stage an exhibition of contemporary art, a committee, representative of all attending artists, was chosen to organise this novel initiative. The first exhibition, staged by the 'Present Artists' was arranged remarkably rapidly; it opened on 21 April 1760 in the Great Room of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce. (SEAMC). SEAMC had been the obvious venue to host this innovative event; it was established in 1754 'to embolden enterprize, (sic) to enlarge Science, to refine Art, to improve our manufactures, and extend our Commerce'.¹² The Society was publicly respected, efficiently administered by a committee of aristocrats and gentlemen, and included among its members many well-respected artists, including Joshua Reynolds, Robert Pine and Francis Hayman who exhibited in 1760. Furthermore, SEAMC had the capacity to host the exhibition.

The exhibition offered the visiting public their first collective experience of modern British art. There had been previous attempts to raise awareness of British art. John Gwynn had denounced the contempt accorded British artists by both 'our neighbours' and our 'own Countrymen', and bemoaned the lack of a national institution to support British artists.¹³ He proposed the foundation of an academy to overcome this deficiency for 'Our Artists have Capacity, Ingenuity, and Industry equal to those of any country: But unhappily they have never

¹¹ 'T.B' Esq, *A Call to connoisseurs or Directions of Sense, with respect to the present State of Painting and Sculpture, and their several Professors in the Kingdom* (London: W. Owen 1761), 24.

¹² Thomas Mortimer, *A concise account of the rise, progress, and present State of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce* (London: S. Hooper 1763), 12.

¹³ John Gwynn, *Essay on Design; Including proposals for erecting a Public Academy* (Dublin; G. Faulkner 1749), 4.

been properly initiated into the Rudiments of those Arts'.¹⁴ In 1755, *The Plan for an Academy*, signed by twenty-six artists and submitted to the Society of Dilettanti, declared that 'the present wild and neglected State of the Arts, and of Painting, in particular, is worthy of both Attention and Concern ... it has, therefore, been thought expedient to elicit the Establishment of a Royal Academy ... to accelerate the Progress we had still to make and bring on that State of Perfection which was so much desired on the one hand, and so much despair'd of on the other'.¹⁵ *The Plan* further suggested 'That there be a yearly Exposition of Pictures, Statues or Models, and Designs in Architecture'.¹⁶ A contributor to the *Gentleman's Magazine* supported the proposal to found an academy; he suggested that 'he who contributes to establish an academy, contributes as effectively to secure the liberty and independence of his country, as he who pays for an army, or mans a fleet: for it will be found, that every state has been soon subverted, after learning has been neglected, and the polite arts suffered to decay'.¹⁷ However, no suggestion was made at the inaugural meeting of artists for the establishment of an Academy. Rouquet believed the conflicting agendas of artists would have precluded reaching a consensus; he declared that those who supported an Academy 'forgot to observe that this sort of establishment can never subsist without some subordination, either voluntary or forced; and that every true born Englishman is a sworn enemy to all such subordination, except it be in his own interest'.¹⁸

The exhibition proved a great success. Thomas Mortimer, in *A concise account of the rise, progress, and present state of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce*, 1763, enthused that 'an amazing concourse of people ... daily resorted to this exhibition';¹⁹ it has been estimated that a thousand people a day attended, and that more than six thousand catalogues, which enumerated the one hundred and thirty exhibits on display, were sold.²⁰ Forty-two artists exhibited a total of seventy-four works designated in the catalogue as 'Pictures', of which fourteen were identified as 'Landscips' or Views. Only two exhibits, both commissioned, featured named British locations; Paul Sandby's *A View of Lord Harcourt's Seat at Newnham* and Richard Wilson's *The Banks of the River Dee*. (fig 15)

¹⁴ *ibid*, 11.

¹⁵ Anon, *The Plan for an Academy for the better Cultivation, Improvement and Encouragement of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture and the Arts of Design in General* (London: printed for the author 1755), vii.

¹⁶ *ibid*, xi.

¹⁷ Anon, *The Gentleman's Magazine*, March 1755, 130-131.

¹⁸ Jean André Rouquet, *The present state of the arts in England* (Dublin: G. and A. Ewing 1756), 23.

¹⁹ Mortimer, *A concise account*, 40.

²⁰ Holger Hock, *The King's Artists, The Royal Academy of Arts and the Politics of British Culture 1760-1840*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 19.



15) Richard Wilson, *The River Dee near Eaton Hall*, 1760, possibly exh. Society of Artists 1760, (no. 74) as *A small landscape, the Banks of the River Dee*, oil on canvas, 64.8 x 83.8 cm. National Trust, Petworth House, Sussex.²¹

Kim Sloan, in 'A Noble Art', noted that Sandby enjoyed the patronage of the Harcourt family from 1753, and Bonehill declared that, by the late 1750s, Sandby appeared 'to have acted effectively as painter-in residence to the Harcourt family', tutoring the Earl and his children.²² This professional relationship culminated in the showing, in 1760, of the new family seat at Nuneham.²³ Wilson's exhibited work was less obviously a bespoke work. Oliver Fairclough, in *Richard Wilson, the Transformation of European Landscape Painting*, stated that Sir Richard Grosvenor, who owned the land on either side of the river, had commissioned *The Banks of the River Dee*, in 1759 or 1760.²⁴ The omission of any reference to a patron in the catalogue may reflect a deliberate attempt by Wilson to capture the interest of the exhibition audience. Reference to property inevitably represented the patrician status of the patron, whereas landscape paintings with no reference to ownership had, potentially, wider public appeal. It allowed the urban viewer to appreciate, and to share feelings of national pride, in land apparently available for all to enjoy. Wilson painted three similar views, two of which include

²¹ There is another painting of *The River Dee near Eaton Hall* in the Barber Institute, Birmingham; it is not possible to ascertain which version was exhibited in 1760.

²² John Bonehill and Stephen Daniels eds. *Paul Sandby: Picturing Britain* (London: Thames and Hudson 2002), 174.

²³ Kim Sloan, 'A Noble Art: Amateurs and Drawing Masters c.1600-1800'. (London: British Museum Press 2000), 136.

²⁴ Oliver Fairclough, 'An Artist in his own Country: Richard Wilson in Wales' in *Richard Wilson and the Transformation of European Landscape Painting*, eds. Martin Postle and Robin Simon (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2014), 164.

fishermen on the foreground bank. These three are undated although believed to have been painted around the same time.²⁵ Wilson often reprised his landscape paintings. If a work attracted attention, similar pieces were to be seen at his studio.

Wilson also exhibited *A large Landskip, with the Story of Niobe*,²⁶ (fig 29) and *A small ditto, the Monument of the Horatii on the Appian Way*. George Smith showed *A Landskip, Half Length* and *Two Frost Pieces*, John Smith displayed *A Landskip, half length*, with Thomas Smith of Derby showing *A View*, and Thomas Catton and Herbert Pugh both entitled their exhibits *A Landskip with Cattle*. The work of Smith of Derby, Sandby, Wilson, and George and John Smith, would have been familiar to many of the visiting public through the publication of prints after their work, display of their donated work at the Foundling Hospital or the publicity in the popular press of the landscape premiums awarded by SEAMC.

From its inception in 1754, SEAMC had introduced financial rewards or Premiums to encourage 'such productions, inventions and improvements as shall tend to the employment of the poor, to the increase of trade, and the riches and honour of this kingdom through promoting industry and emulation'.²⁷ In February 1759 it was decided that premiums for history and landscape painting were also to be conferred,²⁸ and in March it was recorded that two history and nine landscape paintings, by unidentified artists, were in competition for the premiums. These were illustrious awards; the president and vice-presidents were co-opted on to the deliberating committee.²⁹ The names of the recipients of the premiums were publicised on 3 April, before the exhibition opened. The first premium of 100 guineas for history painting was awarded to Robert Edge Pine, with the second awarded to Andrea Casali, with 50 guineas bestowed on George Smith for his landscape painting, (fig 27) with his brother, John Smith gaining the second premium of 25 guineas.³⁰ (fig 28) The financial discrepancy revealed the higher esteem accorded history painting, but Solkin suggested that the award of landscape premiums indicate recognition that landscape painters were also in need of encouragement and support at a time when artistic output was dominated by portraiture.³¹

Despite the success of this first exhibition, the 'Present Artists' expressed their disappointment over the organisation. The massed crowd of visitors was not the anticipated erudite audience

²⁵ www.richardwilsononline.ac.uk/Petworth accessed 24 March 2016.

²⁶ *Niobe* is discussed in more detail in chapters three and four.

²⁷ Mortimer, *A concise account*, 24.

²⁸ *Minutes*, SEAMC committee 28, February 1759.

²⁹ *ibid*, 26 May 1759.

³⁰ *London Evening Post* 3 April 1760; *Whitehall Evening Post* 3 April 1760.

³¹ Solkin, *Art in Britain*, 210.

who, it had been hoped, would buy exhibited works; the exhibition was regarded foremost as a social event. To eliminate 'the intrusion of great numbers whose station and education made them no proper judges of statuary and painting', the committee requested SEAMC that admission be restricted to those who purchased a catalogue, with the price increased to one shilling.³² Disquiet was also expressed over the hanging of exhibits, with a decision made to request SEAMC that 'pictures offered for the Premiums be removed. The artists having found great inconvenience in lying under the Imputation of losing those premiums for which they were not candidates'.³³ George Smith's award-winning painting, *A Landskip, half length* (no. 58 in the catalogue) had been hung close to Wilson's *A large Landskip, with the story of Niobe* (no. 72). *Niobe* had not been submitted for a premium, but it was deemed damaging to Wilson's reputation if it was perceived he had been overlooked. Despite these reservations, *Niobe* was one of the few landscape paintings that can be confirmed to have been sold 'off the wall'. Wilson, in *Niobe*, had assimilated the traditional features of the higher genre of history painting into a landscape; he sought to elevate the prestige of landscape painting in accord with the interests of his prestigious patrons for work with classical references. It was bought by the Duke of Cumberland; Paul Spencer-Longhurst, in *Richard Wilson and the Transformation of European Painting* noted that *Niobe* is 'the only surviving example of successful royal patronage' achieved by Wilson.³⁴

SEAMC granted permission for a second exhibition to be staged, but the demand that entrance be conditional on the purchase of a catalogue, cost one shilling, was refused. An attempt was made to reach a compromise. A proposal was made that two constables should be placed at the door to control the crowds, that the catalogue, costing sixpence, had to be bought by all who sought admission, and that tickets were issued for morning admissions reserved for SEAMC members and their friends.³⁵ However the Society of Artists, as they now designated themselves, had already sought alternative accommodation; it was announced on 4 March 1761 that the Great Room at Spring Gardens had been reserved, at the cost of £40, for an exhibition to be held later that year.³⁶ The exhibition of modern British art was to be staged in a venue used for auctions of Old Masters, but there were few alternative sites with space to hold an exhibition.

³² *Minutes*, S of A committee, 8 December 1760.

³³ *ibid*, 25 November 1760.

³⁴ Paul Spencer-Longhurst, 'Buying and Selling' in *Richard Wilson and the Transformation of European Landscape Painting*, eds. Postle and Simon (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2014), 275.

³⁵ *Minutes*, SEAMC committees, 11 and 14 February 1761.

³⁶ *Minutes*, S of A General committee, 4 March 1761.

The dissension between SEAMC and the Society of Artists was ostensibly over entrance charges and hanging policies. However, I suggest that their conflicting aims and ideals rendered the split inevitable. In their address to George III on his accession to the throne in 1761, SEAMC proclaimed that 'The objects our Society have in View are, the Improvements of Agriculture, Manufactures and Commerce, with their assistant Arts, throughout your Majesty's Dominions and Colonies; as well as to give Encouragement here at Home, to those politer Arts of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture, that embellish human Life, and distinguish learned and polished, from ignorant and barbarous Nations ... we shall proceed with all Diligence and Vigour, animated by the pleasing Hopes, that we are usefully employed for the Advantage and Honour of our Country, and rendering acceptable Service to our Sovereign, who makes his Happiness to consist in the Prosperity of his People'.³⁷ This statement was a public declaration that the main objectives of SEAMC were commercial; it sought, through the improvement of domestic industries, to benefit the national economy. Encouragement of 'those politer Arts' was a subsidiary intention. Malachy Postlethwayt, in applause of these aims, emphasised the commercial benefits. He urged the Society to encourage the 'institutions of academies for cultivating the arts of design, painting, sculpture' as a means of bringing 'our commercial arts and manufactures to the utmost perfection'.³⁸ The arts were to be encouraged for the benefit of commerce, not for the benefit of the nation or to promote British artists.

SEAMC's proclamation was surely an anathema for the Society of Artists. Indeed, as Paul Mattick commented in *Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics and the Reconstruction of Art*, 1993, even the title of SEAMC posed a problem as they tried to distance themselves from the mercantile and artisanal activities associated with commerce.³⁹ Harry Mount suggested that artists feared the commercial dominance of SEAMC and the aesthetic preference of its aristocratic patrons for Old Masters. They wanted to establish an 'institutional identity of their own' to attract a viewing audience appreciative of their ambition to exhibit modern British art.⁴⁰ Their address to George III stressed that 'It is our happiness to live in the Age, when our Arts may hope for new Advances towards perfection, assisted by the Favour of a British King, a Monarch no less judicious to distinguish, than powerful to reward; who knows the Usefulness and Value of that Skill, which delights the Eye with Beauty, but does not corrupt the Manners with unlawful Passions, and which has been hitherto learned in Foreign Countries, for want of

³⁷ Benjamin Martin, *General Magazine of Arts and Sciences*. 12 (1761), 617.

³⁸ Malachy Postlethwayt, *Great-Britain's commercial interest explained and improved: in a series of dissertations on the Most Important Branches of her Trade and Landed Interest*. London: W. Strahan and J. Rivington 1759), 191-192.

³⁹ Paul Mattick, Jr, 'Art and Money' in *Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics and the Reconstruction of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1993), 169.

⁴⁰ Harry Mount, 'The Monkey with the Magnifying Glass' in *Oxford Art Journal* 29: 2 (2006): 171.

sufficient Encouragement in our own'.⁴¹ This appeal was designed to flatter the King. It stressed that his patronage was essential if the objective of advancing the British arts and competing with continental artists was to be achieved.

The severance of the exhibiting societies meant that two exhibitions were staged in London in 1761. The first to open, on 27 April, was under the patronage of SEAMC. Twenty-one landscapes submitted by eight artists were included among the eighty-eight paintings exhibited. Only four of the exhibited landscapes were of named locations, two in England and two in Wales. Mindful of the previous furore, the catalogue stated that 'Those pictures mark'd thus * were Candidates for the Premiums given for Historical and Landscape Paintings; all the others are here for the Public Exhibition only'.⁴² Casali, who exhibited twelve historical paintings, was the only applicant for the historical Premium, while Alexander Cozens, James Paine, Dominic Serres, together with George and John Smith, competed for the landscape Premiums, which were again awarded to the Smith brothers.

The *London Evening Post* commented that 'the merits of these two candidates were so equal, that it was for some time debated in the Committee to divide the Premium equally between them'.⁴³ The landscape paintings of the Smith brothers, who conflated the idealised Arcadian tradition of Claude Lorrain and the rustic imagery of the increasingly popular Dutch landscape in their imaginary views of the British countryside, clearly reflected the preferences of the patrician awards committee. Nevertheless, the *Minutes* recorded that 'The three candidates who have not gained first or second premiums in landscape painting appear to the committee to have a great deal of merit; they recommend to the Society to give them a Reward of ten guineas each'.⁴⁴ James Paine had entered *A Landscape*, Dominic Serres, more widely known as a marine painter, submitted *A View of Warwick Castle*, while Alexander Cozens offered *An historical landscape, representing the retirement of Timoleon*. Although this proposal narrowly failed to gain the required two-thirds majority of those present at the meeting, it revealed an increased appreciation of landscape painting.

Admission to the Society of Artists exhibition, which opened in Spring Gardens on 9 May 1761, was conditional on the purchase of a catalogue, cost one shilling. The exhibition was considerably larger than the one staged by SEAMC: one hundred and forty-one paintings were

⁴¹ *Public Advertiser* 12 January 1761.

⁴² *Catalogue*, FS 1761.

⁴³ *London Evening Post* 30 April 1760.

⁴⁴ *Minutes*, SEAMC committee 15 April 1760.

exhibited with thirteen artists, including Wilson, Sandby and Herbert Pugh who had shown their work in 1760, exhibiting twenty-six landscapes. Wilson followed *Niobe* with another historical landscape, *Large Landscape with historical figures* and Sandby exhibited *Historical landscape, representing the Welsh bard, in the opening of Mr Gray's celebrated ode*. Although Pears claimed that exhibiting artists had no intention of letting the public dictate artistic production, I suggest that the sale of *Niobe* in 1760 to a prestigious patron influenced Cozens and Sandby in their decision to exhibit historical landscapes. However, there is no evidence that these works were sold and, unlike *Niobe*, no interest expressed by print publishers for the historical landscapes of Sandby and Cozens.⁴⁵ This lack of interest proved influential; neither artist exhibited further historical landscapes between 1760 and 1768.

Fifteen of the exhibited landscapes were of no specific location, with only six landscape exhibitors showing landscape imagery of named locations. Four of these named sites were in or around London (St James Park, Covent Garden, London Bridge and Richmond Park) with Wilson's *View near Chester* and Lambert's *Part of a ruin of St Radegon's Abbey* (fig 16) depicting locations distant from the capital. Radegon's Abbey was a medieval monastic house which had been converted into a farm house in the 1590s, and further restored in the eighteenth century.⁴⁶ Lambert surely hoped that his exhibit, a reminder of British heritage, would prove attractive to exhibition visitors with an interest in Britain's Gothic past.

⁴⁵ Boydell announced his proposal for subscription prints after *Niobe* and the premium paintings of George and John Smith in October 1760.

⁴⁶ www.bbc.uk.org/history/domesday Accessed 17 March 2016



16) George Lambert, *Part of the ruins of Radigund's Abbey, Kent*, 1759, probably exh. Society of Artists 1761 as *Part of a ruin of Radegon's Abbey*, (no. 61) oil on canvas, 53.5 x 68.5 cm. Sold at Sotheby's 2010, present whereabouts unknown.

The precedent was now established for two competing exhibitions. In 1762, the first to open was held in April in SEAMC's Great Room in the Strand. A printed prospectus proclaimed that artists who continued to exhibit at the Strand had agreed 'to form ourselves into an institution, founded on the sentiments of honour, compassion and prudence, to be called 'A Free Society of Artists associated for the Relief of the Distressed and Decayed Brethren and their Widows and Children''.⁴⁷ However, although the catalogue to the exhibition of 1762, priced at sixpence, explicitly stated that any profits from its sale would be used for this charitable purpose, it did not acknowledge that the Free Society had been constituted. The first time that the Free Society was credited with the promotion of an exhibition was in the frontispiece of the catalogue for the exhibition of 1767.⁴⁸

Fourteen artists exhibited thirty-five landscapes with the Free Society in 1762, none of which depicted named British sites, with the landscape Premiums awarded to John Smith and William Tomkins. A letter in the *London Chronicle* said that 'we hear this is the third time of

⁴⁷ 'The Original Plan of the Artists' Society', cited by Algernon Graves in *The Society of Artists of Great Britain 1760-1791: The Free Society of Artists 1761-1783* (Bath: Kingsmead Reprints 1969), 332-333.

⁴⁸ *Catalogue FS*, 1767. Despite this, I have adhered to common nomenclature, and refer to those exhibiting with SEAMC as the Free Society.

Mr Smith's obtaining a prize (and we doubt not that Mr Tomkins, in time, will meet with encouragement equal to his merit) the value of which consists not in the pecuniary advantage, but in the distinguished honour conferred by the judgement of this truly disinterested, respectable society. The late exhibition also received an additional ornament, by the many pleasing pieces sent in by Messrs' William, George, and John Smith: most of which were admired by several gentlemen of state, who were desirous of purchasing them'.⁴⁹ This letter was the first public recognition of the commercial importance of exhibitions. The Smith's 'pieces' were attracting sales and their reputations were now assured.

The Society of Artists staged their second exhibition at Spring Gardens in May 1762, where twelve artists exhibited thirty landscape paintings. A comparison of the landscape paintings exhibited in 1761 and 1762 reveals a definitive change in artistic practice by landscape painters. In 1761, only six exhibited works featured named British locations; in 1762 thirteen were designated as portraying specific localities. Landscape painters, aware of the popularity of prints of well-known landmarks, sought to stimulate a similar interest in landscape paintings of well-known metropolitan sites and scenic vistas. Five works featured familiar locations in, or around, London; *A View of Rosamond's Pond in St James's Park* by William James, two views of Kew and *A view of the Thames* by Wilson, while William Marlow exhibited *A view of a wharf, St Magnus Church, and part of London-bridge*.

It is probable that *Fresh Wharf, near London Bridge* was the work exhibited by Marlow in 1762. (fig 17) It is dated c1762, and Fresh Wharf, on the northern bank of the Thames, was in close proximity to London Bridge and St Magnus Church. This is not the usual bustling view of commercial activity; the wharf is small, the hut is in a state of disrepair with slates missing from the roof and there is little evidence of activity. A small boat is being loaded with little urgency as children play and a solitary barrel is hauled up into the warehouse. The figure in red, dressed in oriental costume, is apparently checking the merchandise with the seated figure at his feet. This was not the only painting by Marlow of *Fresh Wharf*. In a similar painting, dated c1762-3, the boat is no longer being loaded. Instead an elegantly attired gentleman is disembarking onto the empty wharf. These more intimate views do not emphasise the importance of the Thames to the commercial life of London. Nevertheless, the depiction of Paul's Cathedral identifies its location as near the City, and the grand, imposing buildings flanking the river are evidence of London's wealth.

⁴⁹ *London Chronicle* 25-27 May 1762



17) William Marlow, *Fresh Wharf, near London Bridge*, probably exh. Society of Artists 1762 as *A view of a wharf, St. Magnus Church and part of London Bridge*, (56), oil on canvas, 99.1 x 128.7 cm. Guildhall Art Gallery. London

The more striking difference between landscape exhibits at the two exhibitions of 1761 and 1762 is the increase in exhibits of locations distant from the capital. In 1761, only two exhibits, by Lambert and Wilson, were of sites outside London. In 1762, five artists exhibited seven works of more distant rural views or places of historical interest: I suggest that landscape painters were aware of the increasing popularity of domestic tourism. Lambert exhibited *The great fall of the Tees*, (fig 18) a view that would have been familiar to many from Thomas Smith of Derby's print of the same location, and two views of Powderham castle, and Robert Hopkinson and Sandby showed views of Roach Abbey. William Marlow's exhibits included *Powis castle, in Montgomeryshire*, with Wilson exhibiting *A View of Holt Bridge on the river Dee* in addition to three London views, *A view of Tivoli* and *A landskip with hermits*.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Laura Layfield, in her unpublished University of York MA thesis, available online, *Richard Wilson: Landscape Painting for a new exhibition culture*, noted that 'Part of [Wilson's] exhibiting strategy ... was to present a varied and interesting portfolio of works' designed to appeal to the diverse audience who attended exhibitions. 52.



18) George Lambert, *The Great Fall of Tees*, 1749, oil on canvas, 27.5 x 35.8 cm. exh. Society of Artists 1762, (no. 50), sold at Christies 2005, present whereabouts unknown

Wilson was the only artist to exhibit an Italian view; Solkin has suggested that his classically-inspired landscapes were exhibited to attract those who aspired to share the same values as the wealthy, educated elite.⁵¹ Spencer-Longhurst identified *Solitude* as ‘perhaps’ the work exhibited in 1762 as *A landscape with hermits*.⁵² (fig 19) Only two paintings specifically mentioned ownership – Powderham castle as the seat of Viscount Courtenay and Wilson’s views of Kew from the Princess Dowager’s garden, recently redesigned by Sir William Chambers. However, the catalogue description of Wilson’s views of Kew as having been painted from the Dowager’s garden was not, surprisingly, a reference to them as being commissioned works. Spencer-Longhurst and Simon stated that the first owner of *The Ruined Arch in Kew*, Benjamin Booth, said that Chambers recommended to George III that he purchase the painting, but the king had declined.⁵³

⁵¹ Solkin, *Richard Wilson: The Landscape of Reaction* (London: Tate Gallery Publication 1983), 52.

⁵² Paul Spencer-Longhurst, *Richard Wilson and the Transformation*, 270.

⁵³ *ibid*, 262-3.



19) Richard Wilson, *Solitude*, oil on canvas, 100.3 x 125.1 cm. 1762, possibly exh. Society of Artists 1762, (no.132) City and County of Swansea Art Gallery Collection.

The catalogue for the Society of Artists' exhibition of 1762 included a *Preface*, written by Samuel Johnson, which emphasised that exhibitions were staged to promote the sale of British art.⁵⁴ The *Preface* declared that an entrance fee was charged because the crowds 'frightened away those, whose approbation was most desired' and continued that 'Many artists of great ability are unable to sell their work for their due prices; to remove this inconvenience, an annual sale will be appointed, to which every man may send his works, and send them if he will without his name. These works will be review'd by the committee that conduct the Exhibition. A price will be secretly set on every piece, and register'd by the secretary. If the piece exposed is sold for more, the whole price shall be the Artist's, but if the purchasers value it at less than the committee, the Artist shall be paid the deficiency from the profits of the Exhibition'.⁵⁵ This unprecedented declaration of commercial intent was an admission that exhibitions had failed to create a market for British art. The *Preface* was printed in full in the *London Chronicle* and *St. James's Chronicle* but neither publication commented on the momentous decision to hold the first sale of modern British art. The *London Chronicle* commented that the *Preface* clarified the reasons for the imposition of an admission charge

⁵⁴ Hargraves, *Candidates for Fame*, 36.

⁵⁵ 'Preface' to *Catalogue*, S of A 1762, iii-vi.

and applauded the 'just reasons for this alteration'.⁵⁶ *St. James's Chronicle* noted that it explained the 'Design of the Society in making their exhibition' and 'the laudable Manner in which the Money produced by the Sale of their catalogues is to be applied'.⁵⁷

This commercial opportunity was confined to members of the Society of Artists. At a meeting in June 1762, it was agreed that 'No person except those who had exhibited with this society be allowed to send their Works to the intended Sale', and that the organisation, 'would be left entirely to the Committee ... towards carrying the intended sale into execution'.⁵⁸ By the end of November, the committee had delegated Lambert, as chairman of the Society, 'to enquire of Mr Langford his terms about the sale',⁵⁹ and asked each potential exhibitor 'to send an account ... what numbers of pictures he intends to send to the sale'.⁶⁰ Final approval was taken in January 1763, when it was declared that, as sufficient interest had been shown, 'the sale be carried into execution'.⁶¹

An assurance had been given that the committee would agree a valuation for each work, and that this valuation would be honoured in the event of any deficit arising.⁶² It is probable that this guarantee was given as an inducement to encourage artists to participate in this novel venture. There were clearly misgivings about the financial viability of the event; it was decided that 'A sum not exceeding the profits of the last exhibition be appropriated to make good the deficiencies of the Sale'.⁶³ A catalogue was printed (fig 20) but I have found no advertisements for the auction in the popular newspapers. The only reference I have located is a curious announcement in the *Public Advertiser*, that 'Whereas the Sale of the Broson Barbary Mare, the property of the late Earl of Home was by a Mistake, put off on Friday last: this is to give Notice, that she will certainly be offered for sale, tomorrow the 23rd instant, about One o'clock, at Mr Langford's Auction Room, in Covent Garden, where there is to be a public Sale of Pictures'.⁶⁴ This lack of publicity presumably reflected the desire of the Society of Artists not to be publicly connected with a blatantly commercial event, but begs the question – how were prospective purchasers made aware? It is probable that Langford advertised the sale in his showrooms.

⁵⁶ *London Chronicle* 20 May 1762.

⁵⁷ *St James's Chronicle* 22 May 1762.

⁵⁸ *Minutes*, S of A committee, 6 June 1762.

⁵⁹ *ibid*, 26 October 1762.

⁶⁰ *ibid*, 12 November 1762.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 11 January 1763.

⁶² 'Preface' to *Catalogue*, S of A, 1762, iv.

⁶³ *Minutes*, S of A committee, 22 January 1763.

⁶⁴ *Public Advertiser* 22 February 1763.



20) Catalogue of Picture, Sculptures &c. The Works of Artists who have Exhibited at the Great Room in Spring Gardens, which will be sold by Auction by Mr Langford. London 1763. Paul Mellon Centre for British Art, London.

This was the first time that British paintings had been collectively offered for sale. It presaged the recognition that, if contemporary artists were to find a market for their work, more innovative commercial initiatives had to be considered. I argue that the sale, which realised £503.10s 6d despite making a loss overall, was the first step in the evolution of a tentative, modest commercial retail market for British art.

The sale was totally ignored by the popular press – a search of contemporary newspapers has failed to reveal any reference. The first mention I have found was by Edwards in *Anecdotes of Painters*. In his brief history of the early exhibitions, he mentioned in a footnote that ‘a sale by Auction was made of the works of many of the then living artists at Langford’s in the Piazza, Covent Garden; but the success of the scheme was not answerable to the wishes of its

promoters, and therefore it was never tried again'.⁶⁵ John Pye, in *Patronage of British Art*, 1845, wrote that 'The sale by auction ... having produced ... less than the value set on the pictures by the committee, that deficiency was paid to the artists. A few works were sold for more than the value set upon them by the committee, but far the greater part below that estimate. This plan seems to have discontinued with the first experiment'.⁶⁶ William T. Whitley in *Artists and their Friends*, 1928 made a concise reference; he declared that 'this well-meant but ill-devised scheme was carried out in 1762. (sic) The loss to the Society was considerable and it was never repeated'.⁶⁷

There has been little interest in the sale shown by more recent art historians. This lack of attention may reflect a consensus that the sale, as an isolated occurrence, was of little relevance in the recognition of exhibitions as commercial institutions. Pears made no comment, despite stating that auctions, which sold 'relatively inexpensive works of art to the more modest customers' were very popular in the mid-eighteenth-century.⁶⁸ Hayes mentioned in *The Landscape Paintings of Thomas Gainsborough*, 1982 that the pictures offered for auction included works by 'all the best British landscape painters of the day ... the low top price of twenty-six guineas was fetched by the doyen of painters in that genre, George Lambert',⁶⁹ while Solkin in *Painting for Money* wryly commented that 'One wonders what contemporary art-lovers would have made of this rather bizarre scheme, which seems to have been put into practice only once'.⁷⁰ He made no mention of the sale in *Richard Wilson* although Wilson was one of the painters with established reputations who participated, or in his more recent publication, *Art in Britain*. Postle, in *Johann Zoffany RA*, 2011, merely noted that the sale had been 'a financial disaster for most of the artists involved'.⁷¹

Twenty-two artists sent sixty-seven lots to the auction, held on 23 February 1763. (Sixty-eight appeared in the catalogue but lot six, *King George III, in whole length*, by Webster, was presumably withdrawn before the sale as no sale price was recorded.) Many leading members of the Society of Artists distanced themselves from the sale; they may have envisaged that the

⁶⁵ Edwards, Edward. *Anecdotes of Painters, who have resided or been born in ENGLAND; with critical remarks in their productions. Intended as a continuation to the Anecdotes of Painting by the late Horace, Earl of Orford*. (London, Leigh and Sotheby 1808), xxviii.

⁶⁶ John Pye, *Patronage of British Art* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longman 1845), 109.

⁶⁷ William T. Whitley, *Artists and their friends in England 1770-1799* (New York and England: Benjamin Blom 1928), 179.

⁶⁸ Pears, *The Discovery of Painting*, 106.

⁶⁹ John Hayes, *The Landscape Paintings of Thomas Gainsborough, vol.1* (London: Sotheby Publications, 1982), 3.

⁷⁰ Solkin, *Painting for Money*, 178.

⁷¹ Martin Postle, *Johann Zoffany RA: Society Observed* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2011), 183.

negative implications of commerce in eighteenth-century Britain threatened their aspirations to establish their profession as a liberal art. Nevertheless, Lambert and Wilson were among the eleven landscape painters who presented thirty paintings for sale.

It is probable that many of the paintings up for auction had previously been exhibited but remained unsold. Lambert's *A view of Radegon's Abbey*, (fig 16) Scott's *A View of London Bridge*, *A View of Covent Garden* by Richards and James's *A view of the Parade in St. James Park* had featured in the exhibition of 1761, while Wilson had shown *A ruin at Tivoli* in 1762. The landscapes that Nicholas Dall and Herbert Pugh offered for sale were described in similar non-specific terms as their exhibited works. The other thirty-seven works offered for auction represented a miscellaneous assortment, including six historical paintings or scenes from literature, ten flower pieces, four featuring horses, five of genre or still life, three portraits, eight models and one marble figure. Edward Penny, who put *Jane Shore* up for auction, had shown *A Scene from Jane Shore* in 1762, William Dawes's *A Drunkard reproving his disorderly family* was exhibited in 1761 and his two scenes from Shakespeare in 1762. Thomas Attwood's *A Piece of Flowers, May* was included in the exhibition in 1761 with a similar work entitled *June* in 1762. Francis Vispres's *The Curious Maid* and *A Waiting Maid stealing a Billet-Doux* had been shown in 1761 while Philip Hawck's *Mr Holland, in the character of Jachimo in Cymbeline* had appeared in the exhibition of 1762.

It has to be accepted that there is no extant evidence that the works presented for auction had been previously exhibited. Scott painted many views of London Bridge, Wilson revisited his Italian scenes, and if a work had sold, the artist may have presented a similar work. However, I argue that, as the Society of Artists had admitted that many artists failed to sell their exhibits, it is a plausible suggestion. The insistence of the organisers that works for sale should be presented anonymously for evaluation of the asking price then appears fatuous; they would have surely recognised many of the exhibits proffered for the auction.

On 28 March 1763, the *Minutes* of a general meeting of the Society of Artists recorded that the sale had made a loss. It was agreed that 'the several deficiencies amounting in the whole of £122.15.10½ were ordered to be paid in their several proportions, and that £150 of the Society of Artists' investments were realised to 'make good the deficiency' and to pay for incidental costs.⁷²

⁷² *Minutes*, S of A General Meeting, 28 March 1763.

Hargraves is alone among recent art historians to consider the auction in more detail. He commented that 'the vast majority of the artists who resorted to Langford's sale were landscape painters' and dismissed the sale as 'a major miscalculation ... this fiasco revealed the size of the gulf that lay between the artists and the public perception of the value of their work'. He declared that it had demonstrated that exhibitions had proved 'an ineffective marketplace', and cited the publication of Thomas Mortimer's *The Universal Director* to justify this claim.⁷³ However, *The Universal Director* had been published on February 22, the day before the sale, and the *Preface* was largely devoted to the present state of British art. Mortimer applauded SEAMC for their encouragement of the arts, but made no mention of the Society of Artists. Like Oakly and 'T.B' before him, Mortimer blamed the continued lack of public appreciation on 'picture dealers, and shopkeepers of various kinds [who] ... had it in their power to keep many deserving men in obscurity for years'.⁷⁴ He made no claim that exhibitions had proved commercially ineffective, but suggested in *The Universal Director* that the publication of the address of artists might mitigate the influence of middlemen by facilitating direct communication between artists and patrons. However he suggested that exhibitions had already 'in some measure, removed this inconvenience'.⁷⁵

The Universal Director included the names and addresses of almost two hundred artists working in different genre, of whom twenty-one were designated landscape painters and nine landscape engravers. Many of the landscape painters mentioned had exhibited with the Society of Artists in 1761 and 1762, and engaged with the sale. George and John Smith, who had achieved such success at the exhibitions sponsored by SEAMC, were understandably omitted as they lived in Chichester, while the exclusion of Gainsborough can be explained as he was living in Bath. Following the publication of *The Universal Director*, the catalogue for the exhibition held by SEAMC in 1763 included the full addresses of exhibiting artists, and the Society of Artists followed suit in 1764. The anticipation was that exhibition visitors directed towards the studios of exhibiting landscape artists might buy, or commission, further works from the artists.

The sale of 1763

Meticulous accounts of the sale kept by William Newton, secretary of the Society of Artists, who noted the estimated prices, the money received and amount out paid to make good the

⁷³ Hargraves, *Candidates for Fame*, 39-40.

⁷⁴ Thomas Mortimer, *The Universal Director: or, the Nobleman and Gentleman's True Guide to the Masters and Professors of the Liberal and polite Arts and Sciences* (London: J. Coote 1763), v.

⁷⁵ *ibid*, vi.

resultant deficits, detail how the loss was made. Hargraves argued that the loss sustained exposed a gross over-valuation of their work by participating artists.⁷⁶ However the artists participating in the sale were not responsible for the valuations; the committee tasked with organising the sale agreed the 'prices'. The losses suggest that the organisers were incompetent in handling this new form of commercialism. There was certainly a lack of forethought in the organisation of the sale; paintings that sold for more than the guaranteed price did not defray the loss incurred by those that sold for less. Five of Lambert's paintings sold for £50 more than their evaluation, with one making a 'loss' of £1 17 1½d. This sum was paid out. Newton's accounts reveal that the auction, although undoubtedly not an outright success, was not, for landscape painters, a total debacle as suggested by Hargraves. Nevertheless, it is important to analyse where the recorded loss of £122. 15s 10½d was accrued.

Thirty landscape paintings were offered for sale, and they accumulated a deficit of just over £42. (Appendix 4) Nevertheless, eleven works were sold for prices above the valuation pre-set by the committee. The appeal of Lambert's landscape paintings was grossly under-estimated; his six lots, valued at £80.5s 6¾d, sold for £122.17s. He accrued a 'profit' of more than £42. All three works by Marlow were sold for significantly higher amounts than anticipated, with Richards' single exhibit, and one of three by Dall, and one of four entered by Wilson marginally exceeding the committee's estimation. A further three landscape paintings, two by Pugh and one by Scott, fetched more than £10. This compares very favourably with the highest price realised for a painting of a different genre; £9 9s for Penny's *Jane Shore*.

Nineteen landscape paintings did not reach the committee's estimated price. The Italian landscapes of Wilson made a loss, which concurs with Solkin's assertion that 'very few members of the urban middle class would have been able to grasp Wilson's erudite references to classical culture'.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, his *A large Landscape with Figures, with a weeping willow*, while still sustaining a shortfall, sold for £21.10s.6d, a price only exceeded by four of Lambert's painting and Richards's and Scott's single entries. Scott's *A View of London Bridge*, incurred a deficit of £12.9s.6½d. The committee had valued this painting exceptionally highly at £60. 15. 6 ½d; the next highest 'guaranteed price' was for *A large Landscape with Figures* by Wilson at nearly £27. Scott had an established reputation; at an auction of the 'Genuine and Entire Collection of Italian, Flemish and Dutch pictures of the Rev. Dr. Bearcroft,' which included

⁷⁶ Hargraves, *Candidates for Fame*, 39.

⁷⁷ Solkin, *Richard Wilson*, 85.

works by Poussin, Titian, Rubens and Holbein, Scott's *Sea-piece* was the only work by a British artist,⁷⁸ and prints after his views of London Bridge were familiar to many. Despite incurring a substantial deficit, it was sold for £48. 0s 6d, which was £20 more than the next most expensive work, Lambert's *A Sea Coast*, which raised £27. *A View of London Bridge* was surely the largest landscape painting offered for sale. A painting of the same scene by Scott in Tate Britain, London, is a massive 286 x 546 cm; in comparison, Lambert's *View of the Ruins of Radegon's Abbey* is a mere 53.4 x 68.5 cm. The size may have inhibited purchasers; only the affluent had the space for large works. Without the deficit incurred by this one painting, the loss from landscape painting would have been considerably less.

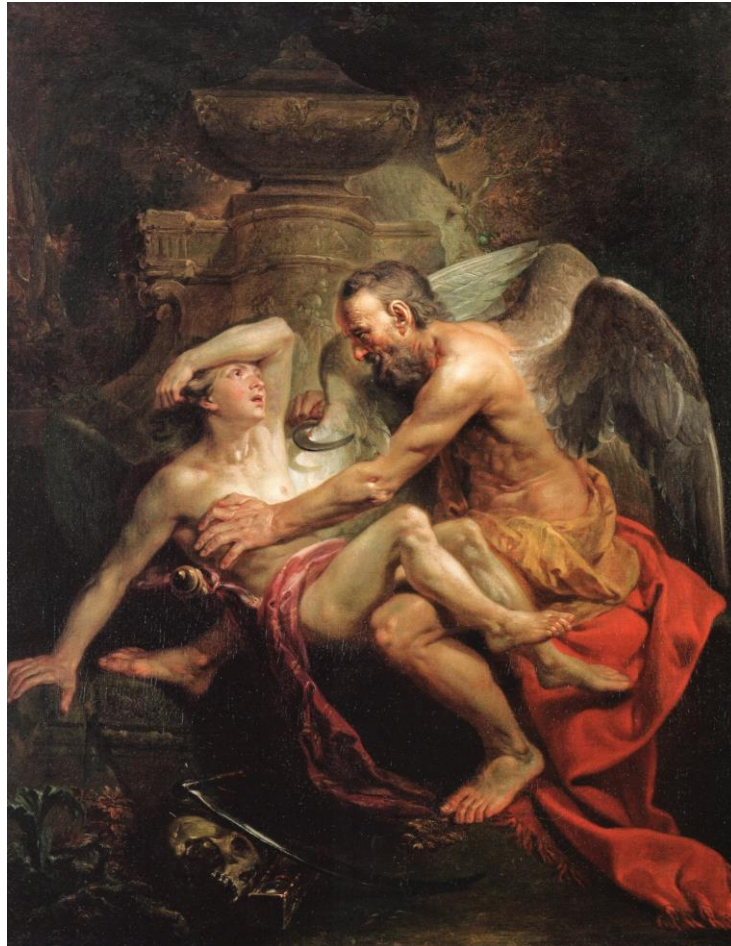
It is of interest that only ten of the landscapes auctioned were of named sites; five in London and two in Yorkshire, together with two Italian views by Wilson and *A View of the Earl of Powis's house in Montgomeryshire* by Marlow. This painting, although mentioning ownership, was a speculation. The participating landscape painters obviously concluded that generic titles were more likely to appeal to the purchasers they aspired to attract. Landscape paintings were 'guaranteed' higher prices than those of other genres, which suggests that the organising committee was aware of public interest in landscape imagery, probably generated through the successful commercial market for prints.

The other twenty-nine paintings auctioned incurred a deficit of almost £57, despite being valued for less. History paintings fared worst. The highest estimated price was for Edmund Penny's *Jane Shore* at £16.13s.3½d, but the painting sold for £9.9s, and Johan Zoffany's *Time clipping the Wings of Love*, valued at £13.1s 4½d, was sold for £4.14s. 6d. (fig 21) Postle commented that Zoffany had already decided to abandon history painting as he sought a more 'lucrative living' through the production of 'agreeable conversation pieces and theatrical portraits'.⁷⁹ Only five works, two by Andrea Soldi, two from Richard Roper and one by Zoffany, exceeded the estimated price. Inevitably, few portraits were auctioned as portraitists were predominantly reliant on commissions, but Francis Vispire's *A Paintress drawing the late Mr Roubillac's portrait* made a loss of £1. 13s, with *Mr Holland, in the character of Jachimo in Cymbeline* by Philip Hauck sold for only £5. 15s. 6d. The minutes of the Society of Artists revealed that William Burgess bought his own work, '*A Portrait of his Majesty in crayons*'. He was denied any benefit from the sale and it was resolved that 'any person buying in one of

⁷⁸ *A catalogue of the genuine and Entire Collection of Italian, Flemish and Dutch Pictures of The Rev, Dr. Bearcroft...will be sold at Auction by Mr Langford, 11 and 12 February 1762*

⁷⁹ Postle, *Johan Zoffany RA*, 183

their own works, shall be excluded sending to any future sale'.⁸⁰ The greatest miscalculation was the evaluation of the models and sculptures offered for sale. Two sculptors, Williams and Holm, made a combined deficit of £22. 17. 8³/₄d.



21) Johan Zoffany, *Time clipping the Wings of Love*, 1761, oil on canvas, 90.8 x70.59 cm. Private Collection

At a committee meeting of the Society of Artists on 2 March 1774, it was proposed that another auction be held the following year, where 'such gentlemen as choose may dispose of their pictures by public sale at the end of the ensuing exhibition'.⁸¹ This proposal did not distance the commercial sale from the exhibition; the committee obviously believed that sales held immediately after the exhibition might prove more financially beneficial. The suggestion, understandably, was vetoed at a general meeting on 8 March. Many members of the Society had been prevented under the rules of the auction – paintings and sculpture only - from proffering their work for sale but were liable for its deficit. As the shortfall was not covered by the profits of the exhibition, £150 of the Society's stock had to be sold to cover them.

⁸⁰ *Minutes*, S of A General meeting, 28 March 1763.

⁸¹ *Minutes*, S of A committee, 2 March 1764.

However a compromise commercial proposal was agreed. The studio addresses of exhibiting artists, and the asterisking of exhibits 'to be disposed of', were to be included in future catalogues.⁸² No contemporary publicity was given to this further concession to commerce; that exhibitions were, for the first time, to function as retail outlets. This has been overlooked by most art historians; Pears, Solkin and Brewer, despite their assertions that exhibitions were instituted as markets for art, ignored this overtly commercial initiative. Hargraves noted that addresses of exhibitors were published in the exhibition catalogues and that 'works for immediate sale' were marked 'with an asterisk' but made no mention of the commercial implications.⁸³

After the sale

The first exhibition held by the Society of Artists that introduced this concession to commerce opened on 9 April 1764. One hundred and sixty 'pictures' were exhibited, of which, forty-four, i nearly one-third, were designated as landscapes or views. This was the highest percentage of exhibited landscape paintings between 1760 and 1768. Twenty-five paintings were asterisked 'to be disposed of', including thirteen landscape paintings, all by artists who had participated in the auction.

Scott, despite the 'loss' made at the auction, asterisked his only exhibit, *A View of Bear-Quay* and Attwood, who had sold flower pictures in the auction, now marked a landscape for sale. Richards advertised three of his exhibits for sale and Herbert Pugh one of his two exhibited works. Dall (four) and James (three) asterisked all their exhibited landscapes. Little is known about James, and none of his work has been positively identified.⁸⁴ Edwards stated that he 'painted landscapes, chiefly views in the neighbourhood of London' and that he was a pupil of Canaletto.⁸⁵ Although this claim cannot be validated, his river scenes certainly demonstrate that he was influenced by the popularity of Canaletto's work; indeed many views of the Thames now tentatively ascribed to James have been previously attributed to Canaletto or Scott. James had marked a *View of London Bridge* for sale and although the painting shown (fig 22) is not the exhibited work, it demonstrates his style of painting.

⁸² *Minutes*, S of A General meeting, 8 March 1764.

⁸³ Hargraves, *Candidates for Fame*, 40.

⁸⁴ The entry in Bonham's sale catalogue for *The Thames at Westminster* stated that 'he remains one of the most elusive figures in 18th century English painting, and apart from having exhibited at the Society of Artists between 1761 to 1768, and at the Royal Academy from 1769-1771, little is known of his life or career'.

⁸⁵ Edwards, *Anecdotes of painters*, 26-7.



22) William James, *The Thames at Westminster with Old Westminster Bridge and the Shot Tower from the Terrace of Somerset House, London*, date unknown, oil on canvas, 76.5 x 126 cm. Sold by Bonhams in 2005, present whereabouts unknown.

Of those marked for immediate purchase, only five were of named sites, three in London (James, Richards and Scott) with Richards offering his views of the dramatic ruins of Corfe Castle. (fig 23)



23) John Inigo Richards, *Corfe Castle*, c1764, oil on canvas, 56.38 x 41.32 cm, probably exh. Society of Artists 1764 (no.64) Yale Center for British Art, New Haven.

The other twelve works for sale, which included flower and fruit pieces, drawings in crayons, and *Phaeton* and *A Tyger and Lion* by George Stubbs, were by artists who had not participated in the auction.

Exhibiting artists who marked their work for sale could name their prices. With a benchmark established at the sale of prices likely to be paid, they were no longer at the mercy of third party evaluations. Unfortunately, there are no extant records to show the prices paid, or indeed whether these works sold. However, it is evident that the introduction of a limited retail market based on exhibitions, with a direct interface between those selling and buying art works, was welcomed by the landscape painters who had contributed to the sale. They were confident that a market now existed, albeit for relatively inexpensive landscape paintings. Nevertheless, many of the landscape painters who exhibited in 1764, including Lambert, Wilson and Marlow, did not asterisk their work for sale. I suggest that there was a multiplicity of reasons for this lack of participation in the retail market.

Lambert, the most successful artist at the sale of 1763, had no need to advertise his landscape paintings; sales were now guaranteed. Wilson, aware that his Italian views had failed to attract the guaranteed prices at the auction, declined to asterisk any exhibits. Simon stated that throughout the 1760s, Wilson enjoyed wealthy patronage.⁸⁶ He was not financially dependent on selling his work at exhibitions; indeed, advertising a work for sale might damage his reputation as it implied that he had failed to secure commissions. Marlow, who had achieved success at the auction, only advertised two drawings *After nature* for sale in 1764. In 1765 he travelled to France and Italy, sponsored by the Duchess of Northumberland who admired his work. On his return, he exhibited many landscape paintings after continental vistas of interest to those who had undertaken the Grand Tour. These works were not offered for sale; they would have had little appeal for those seeking inexpensive views of the British countryside.

Charles Exshaw, John Greenwood and John Miller, who exhibited in landscape paintings in 1764, had not participated in the sale and lacked a benchmark against which to set a purchase price. This may have inhibited them from availing themselves of this retail opportunity. Exshaw, who exhibited a portrait as well as *A View of Salisbury*, was predominantly a printmaker and a draughtsman; Edwards declared that 'he opened an academy for drawing ... but his abilities proved by no means equal to the task he had undertaken; he acquired but two

⁸⁶ Simon, 'Richard Wilson, Rome and the Transformation of European Landscape Painting' in *Richard Wilson and the Transformation*, 4.

pupils and they soon quitted him'.⁸⁷ Greenwood, who had studied in Amsterdam, only arrived in London in 1763; his exhibited landscape, *A view of Boston*, an American colonial town, would have had little appeal to a public interested in British scenery. Neither artist exhibited again. John Miller exhibited a landscape painting for the first time in 1764; although he exhibited further landscape paintings in 1775, 1776, 1767 and 1768, none were marked for sale. I assume he wished to distance himself from this commercial initiative.

William Shaw and Francis Towne, who had contributed landscape paintings to the auction, did not exhibit landscape paintings in 1764. Shaw presented *A landscape with a Horse* for sale, but from 1764 he exhibited only still life and sporting pictures, with a single work, *Horse and Ass* marked to 'be disposed of' in 1768. Towne, who contributed two flower paintings and three landscape paintings to the sale, did not exhibit with the Society of Artists again until 1767. Richard Stephens stated that this was 'puzzling at a time when opportunities for public display were slim'.⁸⁸ He concluded that Towne had left London for Exeter, where he was employed as drawing master. Although he did not asterisk *View of a Mill at Werrington* for sale in 1767, he subsequently marked his work as available for purchase from 1772.

It has to be recognised that not all exhibited landscape paintings were available for sale; exhibitions also functioned as showcases for art, with commissioned works shown in hope of attracting further patrons. Barret, newly arrived from Ireland, emphasised the patronage he already enjoyed by exhibiting views of Lord Powerscourt's estate in 1764. (fig 24) Although *A view of a waterfall at Powerscourt* is the right date, it cannot be definitely established that this was the exhibited work as it is one of many paintings of the location he produced at the same time. However, it graphically illustrates the ability of Barret to capture the power of the cascading water and the magnitude of the cliffs; the small foreground figures are dwarfed within this dramatic scene.

⁸⁷ Edwards, *Anecdotes of Painters*, 38.

⁸⁸ Richard Stephens, *A Catalogue Raisonné of Francis Towne (1739-1826)* accessed online 20 September 2016.



24) George Barret, *A view of the waterfall at Powerscourt in Ireland* c1764, oil on canvas, 103.5 x127 cm, possibly exh. Society of Artists 1764, (no. 3). The Walker Gallery, Liverpool.

Charles Steuart was based in Scotland, where he enjoyed prestige patronage. He did not asterisk his *A small landskip* in 1764, but in 1765 and 1767 he exhibited views of the estates of the Earl of Breadalbane and the Duke of Atholl. William Tomkins exhibited with the Society of Artists for the first time in 1764; he had previously exhibited with SEAMC and been awarded the second landscape premium in 1762. Although he did not offer his work for sale in 1764, he did in subsequent years. Tomkins received many commissions, and subsequently exhibited views of 'gentlemen's seats' from around the country; he did not resort to exhibitions as an alternative to patronage.

Only a minority of exhibitors took advantage of the opportunity to use exhibitions as retail outlets, with landscape painters more open to the concept of advertising their work for sale. Dall, James, Pugh and Richard regularly asterisked their work; they contributed twenty-eight out of the fifty-eight exhibits marked 'to be disposed of' between 1764 and 1768. These artists were obviously satisfied that the auction had established a market, albeit limited, for landscape painting. In 1766, ten out of thirteen works marked for sale featured landscape imagery, with A. Nelson and William Williams marking two out of three of their landscape paintings as available for purchase for the first time. By 1768 eighteen exhibits were

asterisked, of which thirteen were landscape paintings by Bernard Downes, John Hamilton, Elias Martin, exhibiting for the first time, William Hodges, who had previously exhibited in 1776 and, more surprisingly, Paul Sandby. Sandby had exhibited *A View of the north-side terrace at Windsor* in 1766, and he now offered his *View of Windsor on a rejoicing night* for sale. (fig 25)



25) Paul Sandby, *View of Windsor on a rejoicing Night*, 1768, watercolour and bodycolour, 46.5 x 72.5 cm, exh. Society of Artists, 1766 (no. 145). Royal Collection, London.

Kim Sloan, in *A Noble Art*, 2000 noted that Sandby was not ‘successful enough to be financially independent as a professional landscape artist’, and that, in 1768, he had accepted the post of Chief Drawing Master to the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich, which provided a regular annual income of £150.⁸⁹ Postle, despite commenting in *Paul Sandby* that Sandby had ‘the abiding need to sell his art’, made no mention that this work was advertised for sale.⁹⁰ I suggest that it was the failure of patronage to offer financial security that persuaded him to take recourse this commercial initiative. Windsor was a popular tourist destination, and this brilliantly lit, dramatic work would have certainly stood out among landscape paintings in more muted tones.

⁸⁹ Kim Sloan, *A Noble Art' Amateur Artists and Drawing Masters c.1600-1800* (London: British Museum Press 2000), 107.

⁹⁰ Postle, *Paul Sandby*, 32.

The Society of Artists was not the only exhibiting society between 1760 and 1768, but the Free Society has been largely ignored by art historians. Pears, and Hooch in *The King's Artists*, merely stated that, after the exhibiting artists had encountered differences over layout, entrance fees and the hanging of works in 1760, the painters split into two exhibiting societies.⁹¹ Solkin, in *Painting for Money*, noted that the two exhibiting societies had 'different public identities' but made no further comment,⁹² while Brewer merely remarked on the problems experienced by the Free Society in finding venues for their exhibitions.⁹³ Hargraves briefly mentioned the differences between the Society of Artists and the Free Society. He suggested that membership of the Society of Artists was reserved for established artists with reputations established, whereas the Free Society promoted applied arts, including manufactures and needlework, as well as pieces by 'youthful prodigies'.⁹⁴ It thus lacked the more consistent quality of its rival.

SEAMC withdrew their patronage of the exhibitions of the Free Society in 1765; 'a motion made that this Society do permit an exhibition in their present space' was defeated in February 1765.⁹⁵ The number of exhibits at the Free Society exhibition had decreased, and the exhibition was deemed to interfere with their interests. The Free Society held its exhibitions in 1765 and 1766 in alternative accommodation in Maiden Lane. In 1766, sixty-six exhibited works, out of a total of three hundred and six, were asterisked 'to be disposed of'.⁹⁶ They included history paintings, seascapes, still life and landscapes, together with works in stained marble, ornaments in vellum, shell work and flower pieces. Twenty-one of thirty-seven landscapes exhibited were for immediate purchase, including one by George Smith, five by John Daniel Bond, derided by Edwards, as 'little known or spoken of in London ... he lived in Birmingham ... [where he] conducted the decorative department of a manufactory',⁹⁷ and six by Bellers.

These artists were familiar to visitors to the Free Society exhibition. Smith and Bond had received premium awards and they readily embraced the commercial opportunity offered for, as provincial artists, neither had London studios. Exhibitions offered an opportunity to show their work to the metropolitan audience. Bellers asterisked all six of his exhibits for sale.

⁹¹ Pears, *The Discovery of Painting*, 122; Hooch, *The King's Artists: The Royal Academy of Arts and the Politics of British Culture 1760-1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2003), 19.

⁹² Solkin, *Painting for Money*, 176.

⁹³ Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, 232.

⁹⁴ Hargraves, *Candidates for Fame*, 29.

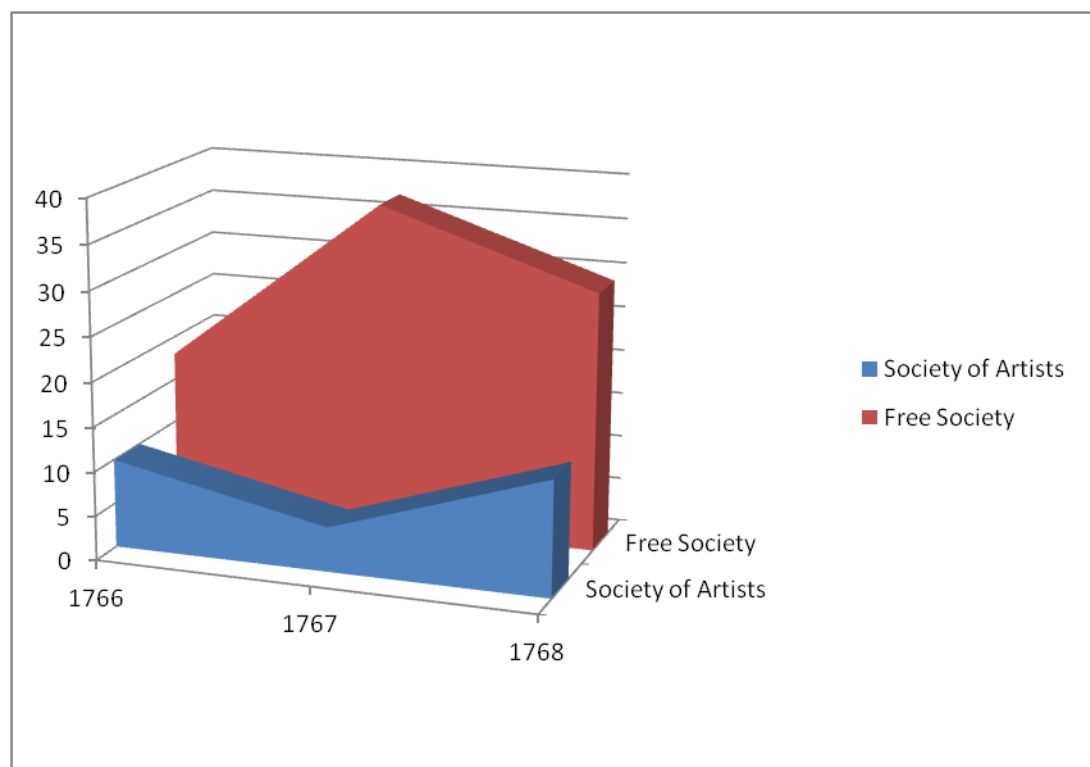
⁹⁵ *Minutes*, SEAMC general meeting, 23 January 1765.

⁹⁶ *Catalogue*, FS, 1766.

⁹⁷ Edwards, *Anecdotes of Painters*, 287

These included two views of Essex, *A view from Staines-bridge* and *Three views of Armathwaite bay in Cumberland*. He had published his prints of the Lake District in 1753 (fig 10) and, as a dealer and print seller, was familiar with the world of commerce. In 1766, one hundred and twenty-four exhibits, out of two hundred and fifty-eight works on show were advertised for immediate purchase, and the catalogue stated that ‘the person who attends the room has a list of the prices of such performances are to be sold’.⁹⁸ These included twenty-nine landscape paintings out of the forty-five exhibited, with Bellers offering six, Bond four and George Smith five of their exhibited landscapes. The Free Society exhibitions had evolved into blatantly commercial enterprises.

A comparison of landscape paintings for sale at the Free Society and Society of Artists exhibition 1766-1768



⁹⁸ *Catalogue, FS 1768.*

The Influence of exhibitions on artistic production

Pears asserted that, when exhibitions were established, there was no intention that public opinion would influence artistic production but Solkin, in *Painting for Money*, declared that 'The arrival of the annual exhibitions marked a crucial watershed in the history of artistic production in Britain',⁹⁹ and Peter de Bolla claimed in *The Education of the Eye*, 2003, that exhibitions 'enfranchised viewers'.¹⁰⁰ If landscape painters hoped to sell their exhibits, they had to accede to preferences of potential purchasers. I suggest that, following the success of the commercial print market for works featuring well-known London landmarks, rural locations, and popular tourist destinations, landscape painters increasingly exhibited comparable landscape paintings.



26) Richard Wilson, *Caernarfon (sic) Castle*, early 1760s, oil on canvas. 63.5 x 125.1 cm, probably exh, Society of Artists 1766, (no 190) National Museum of Wales, Cardiff

The number of exhibited landscape paintings in or around London remained largely constant between 1761 and 1768 but there an increasing number of works of more far-flung destinations. (Appendix 5) In 1763, seventeen exhibited landscapes depicted sites outside the metropolis, whereas in 1766 twenty-two were of views of more distant locations, including Wales, Scotland and the north of England. Heritage sites featured prominently. In 1766 Thomas Jones exhibited views of Carregkennen and Brecknock castles in Wales, Wilson contributed *Carnarvon castle* (fig 26) as well as a view of Snowden, (sic) and Richards included

⁹⁹ Solkin, *Painting for Money*, 247.

¹⁰⁰ Peter de Bolla, *The Education of the Eye; Painting, Landscape, and Architecture in Eighteenth-Century Britain*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press 2003), 7.

views of the ruins of Corfe Castle and Netley Abbey among his exhibits. Richards had exhibited an asterisked view of Corfe Castle in 1764 (fig 23); it cannot be determined whether the view exhibited in 1766, also for sale, was the same work, or whether he repeated a popular view.

In 1765, Barret exhibited *A View of Roch (sic) Abbey* and Dall his *Part of Eastby Abbey, near Richmond, Yorkshire*, and in 1768, Dall presented *A View of Bolton Castle*, John Hamilton showed the historic sites of Harlech Castle and Druid's Altar, with William Hodges contributing a view of Carnarvon Castle. Solkin declared that the growing affluence of the middling classes and the improvements in travelling conditions had led to a 'contemporaneous expansion of the whole business of domestic tourism'.¹⁰¹ Tourists were interested in depictions of places with which they were familiar and sites of special interest, and landscape painters produced imagery to satisfy this demand. Named localities were not reserved to British sites; in 1768 Marlow and Francesco Smith displayed landscape paintings of Italian locations, with Hugh Dean and Elias Martin exhibiting works that depicted sites in Vienna and France. In the same year, James exhibited views in Egypt; Edwards commented that as he had never visited the East, these can only be considered as copies'.¹⁰² Landscape painters were now exhibiting work to accommodate the wider interests of exhibition visitors.

Conclusion

Landscape paintings figured prominently in the early exhibitions. Although only 19% of exhibits at the first exhibition in 1760 featured landscape or views, this percentage rose steadily. An average of 23% of exhibited 'Pictures' at the Society of Artists exhibitions between 1761 and 1768 were of landscape imagery. At the Free Society landscape painting featuring even more prominently; more than 30% of exhibited paintings were designated as portraying landscapes or views. It has been shown that the first sale of modern British art in 1763, organised by the Society of Artists to encourage the market for British art, was not, for landscape painters, the disaster suggested by Hargraves. Landscape painting proved the most popular genre among purchasers. Although the loss precluded a further auction, the concession that exhibitors could mark work 'to be disposed of' introduced a limited retail market based on exhibitions which was embraced most enthusiastically by landscape painters. Many of the landscape painters, now largely forgotten, who used these retail opportunities were artists who lacked patronage or had no London studio. However, Lambert, Wilson and

¹⁰¹ Solkin, *Art in Britain*, 216.

¹⁰² Edwards, *Anecdotes of Painters*, 26-27.

Sandby, who exposed their work to the vagaries of the auction or public sale at exhibitions, are still regarded as important artists.

Landscape painters recognised that, if they were to attract patronage through sales or commissions, they had to satisfy an exhibition audience with diverse interests and expectations. Although landscape paintings without reference to specific locations continued to be exhibited, I suggest that the interest in the 1750s for reproductive landscape imagery of London and more distant locations encouraged the production of scenic views, urban townscapes, heritage sites and the less well-known regions of Britain increasingly visited by tourists.

Exhibitions had exposed artists for the first time to public scrutiny and critical appraisal. Although there was no established precedent for critical analysis of landscape painting, popular newspapers printed letters and reviews relating to exhibitions, which discussed the merits, or otherwise, of individual paintings. These comments were published ostensibly to instruct the exhibition visitor but were, in reality, expressions of individual opinions and beliefs. In chapter three, the relevant literature pertaining to exhibitions will be analysed to determine the contemporary perception of exhibited landscape painting.

CHAPTER 3

Landscape painting and Critical Reviews.

Introduction

The establishment of annual exhibitions offered the public, and their representatives the critics, their first opportunity to appraise modern British art. The significance of this alteration in the constituency of the viewers of landscape painting, from private patrons to a wider audience with different cultural, political and social expectations from those of the patrician elite, has yet to be fully explored. Critical reviews of the early exhibitions were regularly published, and I argue that they offer a valuable insight into the perception of landscape painting by an audience confronting landscape painting for the first time. They reveal that a new descriptive vocabulary evolved for landscape painting which owed little to the language espoused by connoisseurs who insisted that aesthetic judgment depended on adherence to a set of rules. The ability of a landscape painter to portray accurately portray the depicted view or evoke a pleasurable response from the viewer became the criterion of excellence for many critics by 1768.

Reviews of modern British landscape painting were a novel phenomenon in 1760. Stephen Copley in *Painting and the Politics of Culture*, 1992 wrote that before the inauguration of exhibitions, the 'lower forms of art', which included portraits, conversation pieces and landscapes, were 'simply not discussed or ... relegated to dismissive or condemnatory asides in texts that preserve the ideal hierarchy [which prioritised history painting] unquestioned'.¹ It was not until these 'lower forms of art' were publicly displayed, from 1760, that they became the subject of public discussion and evaluation. I argue that the 'new' public, viewing landscape painting for the first time and dismissive, or ignorant, of the established conventions for the evaluation of art, had different expectations and understanding of the genre from collectors or connoisseurs. Indeed, as Paul Mattick, in *Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics and the Reconstruction of Art*, 1993, stressed, 'the growth and differentiation of the art public disrupted at once the supremacy in matters of taste of earlier aristocratic collectors [and] the influence ... of critic-connoisseurs'.² Marjorie Munsterberg declared

¹ Stephen Copley, 'The Fine Arts in Eighteenth-Century Polite Culture' in *Painting and the Politics of Culture*, ed. John Barrell (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1992), 27.

² Paul Mattick, Jr, 'Art and Money' in *Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics and the Reconstruction of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1993), 169.

that, following the institution of annual exhibitions, the 1760s heralded the beginning of art criticism as exhibitions 'produced both newsworthy events and interested readers'.³

The contrasting critical discourses

Mid-eighteenth-century collectors and connoisseurs valued painting for its observance of the classically-inspired values which were, as Munsterberg observed, dependent upon an artistic canon taken from Italian Renaissance texts, notably George Vasari's *The Lives of the Artists*.⁴ His principles were enshrined in *An essay on the whole art of criticism as it relates to painting*, by Jonathan Richardson, published in 1719. He argued that 'To Judge of a Goodness of a Picture, Drawing or Print, 'tis necessary to establish to our Selves a System of Rules to be apply'd to that we intend to give a Judgement of', and insisted that 'these plain rules being thoroughly comprehended ... are sufficient to qualifie (sic) a Gentleman to be a Judge'.⁵ Roger de Piles's in *The Art of Painting*, 1635, translated into English and published in London in 1744, described the 'The Essence of Painting' as dependent on the classical precepts of 'Design, Colouring and Composition'.⁶ These qualities were exemplified by the Old Masters revered by collectors. The highest praise bestowed on British landscape painters by Walpole, in *Anecdotes of Painting*, was for their adherence to these classically-inspired exemplars; Wootton was admired for having 'approached Gaspar Poussin, and sometimes imitated happily the glow of Claud Lorain'.⁷

I argue that the new viewing public, confronting landscape painting at exhibitions for the first time, initiated the creation of a different critical vocabulary which challenged accepted connoisseurial dictates. By 1768, a new critical language had emerged. The change in critical response to landscape painting, as reflected in the reviews of the critics, has not previously been explored. Peter de Bolla suggested in *The Education of the Eye* when a picture was viewed, 'all who can see are able to experience an affective response, to "feel" as an eighteenth-century commentator would have it'.⁸ The culture of sensibility allowed viewers to respond with a more acute receptiveness to aesthetic stimuli. Munsterberg

³ Marjorie Munsterberg, 'The beginning of British art criticism in the 1760s', *The British Art Journal* XV: I (2014): 82.

⁴ *ibid*, 82.

⁵ Jonathan Richardson, *An essay on the whole art of criticism as it relates to painting* (London W. Churchill 1719), 26 -31.

⁶ Roger de Piles. *The Art of Painting, with the lives and characters of above 300 of the most eminent Painters*. Translated from the French and published in London by Charles Marsh in 1744, 18.

⁷ Horace Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting in England: with some accounts of the principal artists*, vol.4, (Twickenham: J Dodsley 1765-1761), 120.

⁸ Peter de Bolla, *The Education of the Eye: Painting, Landscape, and Architecture in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Stanford: Stanford University Press 2003), 22.

accepted that, for the exhibition visitor between 1760 and 1768, 'it was not the idealised and picture presented by academic concepts that the reader wanted, but a substitute for having been there, a vivid evocation of the experience of seeing'.⁹ For some critics, meticulous detail to naturalistic colour, precise delineation of an actual view and accurate rendition of the ever-changing atmospheric conditions were essential prerequisites for a depiction of a landscape view. More perceptive critics accepted that a pleasurable, emotional response, experienced through the admiration of the portrayal of the splendour of the natural world could be evoked by landscape paintings. The new descriptive and expressive vocabulary evolved was influenced by the adages of Joseph Addison.

In *Maxims, Observations and Reflection*, 1719, Addison had reasoned that 'if we consider the World in its Sub-serviency to Man, one would think it was made for our Use; but if we consider it in its natural Beauty and Harmony, one would be apt to conclude it was made for our Pleasure ... Fountains, Lakes and Rivers are as refreshing to the Imagination, as to the Soil through which they pass'.¹⁰ An anonymous writer in the *Annual Register*, 1765, who was influenced by Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Inquiry into the origins of our ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, 1765, sought to explain how the painted landscape evoked an imaginative response. He stressed that 'imitations produce pain and pleasure, not because they are mistaken for realities, but because they bring them to mind. When the imagination is stimulated by a painted landscape, the trees are not supposed capable to give us shade, or the fountains coolness; but we consider, how much we should be pleased with such fountains playing beside us, and such wood waving over us'.¹¹

Critical reviews

Reviews were first published as letters to the popular press before the emergence of longer appraisals in newspaper columns or pamphlets. I argue that only a collective evaluation of the reviews, rather than consideration of individual reactions to individual landscape paintings, can provide evidence of the changing reception and shift in public attitude towards landscape painting. It has to be accepted that many of the early reviews were simplistic and uninformative. This is understandable because, as acknowledged by Rosenthal and Myrone, 'Art criticism ... emerged as a genre (and then as generally ill-

⁹ Munsterberg, 'The beginning of British art criticism', 92.

¹⁰ Joseph Addison, *Maxims, observations and reflections moral, political and divine* (London: E. Curll 1719), 101.

¹¹ Anon, 'On dramatic unity, especially as observed by Shakespeare; from Mr Johnson's preface to his edition of Shakespeare's plays' in *Annual Register, for the year 1765*, (London: J. Almon 1766), 235.

defined genre) only with the inception of exhibitions in the 1760s',¹² and was, as Solkin recognised, 'for the benefit of a viewing audience with relatively little experience of high visual culture'.¹³ Munsterberg noted that 'Although much scholarly attention has been devoted to these shows and their audiences, relatively little has been given to the writing they occasioned'.¹⁴

The reviewers usually remained anonymous; they wrote under pseudonyms, signed the reviews with initials, or described themselves as 'A lover of the Arts' or 'An Impartial Hand'. Although critics maintained that they were offering a disinterested commentary, the views expressed were far from being objective; they can be read as litanies of partiality, with personal opinions and preferences forcefully expressed. Nevertheless, they remain significant. As John Brewer accepted, 'The individual response of the viewer was relevant, even essential, to interpretation and criticism'.¹⁵ A critical trend emerged, with some artists receiving more close attention than others. Brewer, in *Towards a Modern Art World*, 1995, suggested that the critics claimed that they could 'distinguish between good or bad' and 'interpret ... a work of art', which was important in establishing the public reputation of exhibiting artists.¹⁶ As critics appreciated that certain landscape paintings elicited emotive reactions from the viewer, they increasingly paid more attention to these works.

Mark Hallett, in *Art on the Line*, 2001, suggested critical reviews focussed on the best-known exhibitors, who were singled out to be extravagantly praised.¹⁷ I argue that the reviews, written in a language comprehensible to a public viewing landscape painting for the first time, were important in establishing who were the 'best-known exhibitors'. The mid-eighteenth-century critical reviews remain of interest; despite the wildly divergent opinions expressed, the landscape painters lauded by the critics are now largely regarded as eighteenth-century exemplars of the genre. However, many landscape exhibitors critically acclaimed at exhibitions are now neglected. It is only through an analysis of the totality of

¹² Michael Rosenthal and Martin Myrone, eds. *Thomas Gainsborough 1727-1788*. (London; Tate Publishing 002), 12.

¹³ Solkin, *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), 247.

¹⁴ Munsterberg, 'The beginning of art criticism', 82.

¹⁵ John Brewer, 'Sensibility and the Urban Panorama' in *Huntington Library Quarterly* 20:2 (2207):78.

¹⁶ Brewer, 'Cultural Production, Consumption, and the Place of the Artist in Eighteenth-Century England' in *Towards a Modern Art World*, ed. Brian Allen (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 20.

¹⁷ Mark Hallett, 'The Business of Criticism.' *The Press and the Royal Academy Exhibition in Eighteenth-Century London* in *Art on the Line: The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House 1780- 68*, ed. David Solkin (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), 67.

reviews, rather than emphasising the response to individual landscape paintings, that the contemporary importance of these now forgotten landscape painters can be assessed.

Public controversy over landscape painting in 1760.

The two competing discourses pertaining to landscape painting in 1760 were exemplified in an exchange of letters published in the *London Chronicle* before the first exhibition opened. The award of SEAMC's landscape premiums to George and John Smith prompted an acrimonious exchange of letters in the *London Chronicle* between two correspondents expressing widely divergent opinions; the supremacy of the traditional rules of art was challenged by a critic antagonistic to these dictates. Brandon Taylor, in *Art for the Nation*, 1999, declared that these awards 'sparked off what must be one of the earliest public controversies over the values of art'¹⁸ and Solkin, in *Art In Britain* agreed that 'this exchange was the first salvo in the journalistic battle between 'honest' ordinary viewers and 'connoisseurs' that would accompany exhibitions over the following decades'.¹⁹ Munsterberg proposed that, from the tone of their arguments, both writers were artists and that the letters were a continuation of a private disagreement.²⁰

A letter 'By a Gentleman', addressed to 'a Member of the Committee ... appointed to determine the Premiums' was published in the *London Chronicle* on 12 April 1760. The correspondent vehemently disagreed with the award of the landscape premiums to the Smith brothers. Influenced by the writings of Richardson, he asserted that there were a 'few, plain, simple and infallible rules of judging a picture', and argued that the award of premiums should be delegated to those members of SEAMC who had the knowledge to make a reasoned judgement of the merits of paintings. He castigated the Smith brothers for their failure to conform to established conventions and denounced George Smith for 'merely [painting] to captivate the majority of such as he knew would be his judges ... I must confess I can see no knowledge of the true principle of painting, unless excess of labour should be looked upon with merit, which I have always thought a great fault.' His most deprecating remarks were directed against Smith's use of colour; he expressed his distaste for the 'dissonant tones', declared the water had 'no graduation of tints', that the trees were 'a hard glaring green, very stiff and lame' and the foreground was 'a foul brownish yellow

¹⁸ Brandon Taylor, *Art for the Nation: Exhibitions and the London Public 1747-2001* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 1999), 8.

¹⁹ David H. Solkin, *Art in Britain 1660-1815* (New Haven and Yale: Yale University Press 2015), 210.

²⁰ Munsterberg, 'The beginning of British art criticism', 85.

hue'. He asserted that the landscape by John Smith was even less commendable, with the same faults in colouring, depiction of water and lack of clarity of design.²¹

Unfortunately, both of these works are now lost, with only the prints engraved by William Woollett surviving. (figs 27 and 28) The Smith brothers did not depict actual views, but produced an imaginative blend of the natural characteristics of unspoiled rural locations; trees, calm reaches of water, and distant hills accurately describe the alluring beauty of the English countryside. However, the influence of the classical tradition of Claude is clearly demonstrated in their work; the view, framed by trees, fades into the distance, and the small foreground figures appear insignificant. These stylistic references to an admired Old Master clearly appealed to the members of SEAMC responsible for the award of the premiums.



27) William Woollett, after George Smith, *Landscape*, published by John Boydell, 1762, 56.9 x 60.2 cm, etching, First Landscape Premium Award 1760. British Museum, London

The correspondent reserved his praise for two other landscape paintings. One was described as 'a landscape with a large water, with the sun and sky reflected in it. A castle on a hill to the left, and a large foreground, two trees &c ... so that nothing offended the eye or obstructed it in looking at the furthest distances, which it did at ease'. The other admired landscape, an *Evening*, was praised for its adherence to the traditional values of painting. It was described as 'harmonized in a proper degree of fine warm colouring; water ... artfully

²¹ *London Chronicle* 12 April 1760.

and masterly managed ... with great clearness ... great certainty and firmness of hand ... proper breadth in masses of light and shade ... design agreeably imagined and judiciously composed'. He concluded that such a work could only be appreciated by 'a few real judges, who know what a picture ought to be'.²² The *Minutes* of meetings of SEAMC do not reveal the names of the candidates who entered for the landscape Premium, and there was no painting entitled *Evening* exhibited in 1760.



28) William Woollett after John Smith, *Landscape*, published by John Boydell, 1763, etching, 42.5 x 58.8 cm, Second premium Award. 1760. British Museum, London

The criticisms of the Smith brothers were hotly refuted in a riposte published in the *London Chronicle* on 17 April. This anonymous correspondent supported the stance taken by William Hogarth, who had attacked the artistic evaluations of connoisseurs, and their rigid adherence to aesthetic rules, in *The Analysis of Beauty*, 1753. In his *Introduction*, Hogarth assured his readers that 'however they may have been aw'd, and overborn by pompous terms of art, hard names, and the parade of seemingly magnificent collections of pictures and statues ... they are in a much fairer way ... of gaining a perfect knowledge of the elegant and beautiful ... than those who are prepossess'd by dogmatic rules'.²³ The writer to the *London Chronicle* declared that the previous 'Gentleman' had merely revealed 'the badness of his taste and teeth at the same time, and has also endeavoured something

²² *London Chronicle* 12-15 April 1760.

²³ William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty*. *Written with the view of fixing the fluctuating ideas of taste* (London: printed for the author 1753), 3.

more, in a flourishing, pungent, puritanick (sic) way ... he talks about this subject like all superficial b-----s, recommending the most indifferent compositions of those exhibited'. He insisted that the premium paintings brought 'honour to our country'. While he acknowledged that there were problems in George Smith's depiction of water, he argued that 'so great an artist can make it better', and described John Smith's exhibit was 'the most pleasing beautiful landscape I ever saw.' He ridiculed 'A Gentleman' for calling 'warm glowing serenity, a disagreeable woolliness' and insisted 'that this very picture he so much spits venom at, is nothing more than the voice and countenance of dame Nature herself'.²⁴

These comments, influenced by Joseph Addison's precept that pleasure was to be found in the 'natural Beauty and Harmony' of the world,²⁵ were delivered in language devoid of reference to the conventional rules of art. The concept of Nature had many different interpretations in the eighteenth century; it is here used in the sense that the Smith brothers have created, in the landscape paintings, a true portrayal of the natural world, created and nurtured by dame Nature. It is important to recognise that in subsequent critical reviews, which concentrated on naturalistic depictions of landscape views or the emotional impact of the portrayed view, there were many diverse interpretations of 'Nature'.²⁶

The bitter exchange of opinions expressed by the two correspondents in the *London Chronicle* in 1760 prompted further comments. A letter from 'Honestus' in the *London Evening Post* on 25 May 1760, twenty-five days after the exhibition opened, is, as far as I have been able to establish, the first published reference to exhibited landscape paintings printed in a London newspaper. 'Honestus' wrote that he was persuaded to look at the exhibits by the Smith brothers because of his distaste for the 'no little rancour, against the landskips'. He eulogised that 'The Whole of each of these two Mr Smith's Landskips were amazingly fine ... Instead of the tawdry, dissonant, and staring Colours ... I found quite the reverse; a wonderful Variety, entirely harmonious and highly finished, with the greatest Judgement and Freedom'. This review, despite opposing the criticisms expressed by 'a Gentleman', used language indebted to the classical values of harmony, freedom and judgment; there was no suggestion that the landscapes of the Smith brothers had diverged from established pictorial traditions. 'Honestus' concluded that 'the Merit of the two Mr

²⁴ *London Chronicle* 17-19 April 1760.

²⁵ Joseph Addison, *Maxims*, 111.

²⁶ Alternative definitions of Nature are discussed in chapter six.

Smiths was justly rewarded', and insisted that he answered 'this great Connoisseur, not for the sake of Contradiction or Prejudice, [but] because the painters of these two landscapes were Strangers to me, and I believe were so to the Society'.²⁷ He was determined to avoid censure for partiality. Undoubtedly many members of SEAMC were familiar with the Smiths' work; they were the recipients of patronage from the Duke of Richmond, a leading supporter of the Society. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that the Duke influenced the outcome of the ballot taken to choose the premium winners. The identity of the landscape painters was concealed, and the paintings identified by a letter.²⁸

The exhibitions of 1760 and 1761

Richard Wilson exhibited *A large landskip, with story of Niobe*, described by Spencer-Longhurst as 'the focal picture of Wilsons's career', in 1760.²⁹ (fig 29)



29) Richard Wilson, *The Destruction of the Children of Niobe* c.1760 (undated) oil on canvas, 147.3 x 188 cm, exh. 'Present Artists' 1760, (no 72). Yale Center for British Art, New Haven.

²⁷ *London Evening Post* 15 May 1760.

²⁸ *Minutes*, SEAMC committee, 2 April 1760.

²⁹ Paul Spencer-Longhurst, *Richard Wilson and the Transformation of European Landscape Painting*, eds. Postle and Simon (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014), 275

Clayton wrote that ‘the respective merits’ of Richard Wilson’s *Niobe* and the painting of George Smith of Chichester ‘were debated by the newspapers’, and cited the correspondence in the *London Chronicle* and *Evening Post*.³⁰ However, unsurprisingly, the letters made no reference to Wilson. The awards had been announced in early April,³¹ and the letters in the *Evening Chronicle* were published on 12 and 19 April, before the exhibition opened on 21 April. None of the correspondents mentioned *Niobe*.³²

I found no reference to Wilson or *Niobe* in the popular newspapers. However Solkin in *Richard Wilson* cited an anonymous review in the *Imperial Magazine* which said that ‘*Niobe* displayed all the qualities considered necessary to a painting ‘in a very great manner’’,³³ and intimated in *Art in Britain* that the critical acclaim accorded *Niobe* spread ‘Wilson’s name far and wide’.³⁴ *Niobe* undoubtedly aroused interest among the exhibition visitors but Andrew Wilton in *Constable, Gainsborough, Turner* stated that although *Niobe* ‘made a stir when it was exhibited in 1760, its full impact was felt only when it had been engraved’ by William Woollett and marketed by John Boydell in 1761.³⁵ (fig 41) The lack of published critical appraisal in the popular newspapers is explicable; in 1760, critical reviews of exhibited works in the popular newspapers were not yet in evidence. The letter from ‘Honestus’ in the *London Evening Post* was not a review of the exhibition. It was written in riposte to previously expressed opinions about the award of the landscape premiums to the Smith brothers.

Disputes over the hanging of exhibited works and attempts to limit the audience, as described in chapter two, meant that two exhibitions, by SEAMC and the Society of Artists, were held in 1761. Before either exhibition opened, letters were published in the popular newspapers, which again exemplified the differences of opinion between correspondents who defended or attacked British modern art and the values of the connoisseurs. The exact identity of the mid-eighteenth-century connoisseur has been the subject of deliberation. Iain Pears described a connoisseur as aristocratic, educated and possessed of the

³⁰ Timothy Clayton, *The English Print 1668-1802* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1997), 188.

³¹ *London Evening Post* 3 April 1760.

³² *Niobe* is considered in more detail in chapter 4.

³³ Anon, ‘Account of the Late Exhibition of Painting’ in *Imperial Magazine* 1, May 1760, 247, cited by Solkin in *Richard Wilson*, 66.

³⁴ Solkin, *Art in Britain*, 212.

³⁵ Andrew Wilton, ‘A flourishing Partnership: Painters and Printmakers, 1760-1837’ in *Constable, Gainsborough, Turner and the Making of Landscape*, exhibition catalogue (London: Royal Academy of Arts 2012), 3-4.

knowledge to judge the merits of works of art,³⁶ and Brewer agreed that connoisseurship depended on knowledge founded upon classical traditions 'absorbed ... through study or osmosis'.³⁷ However Harry Mount argued that 'connoisseurial practice as it developed in the eighteenth century was ... intrinsically resistant to construction, an elite-defining cluster of skills and tastes exercised in private behind the screens of a socially exclusive argot'.³⁸ Mount suggested that the contemporary critics, as well as many practising artists, denigrated connoisseurs less for their entrenched opinions, but more for their concern with 'the financial value of pictures rather than their artistic qualities', and for their disparagement for modern British art.³⁹

A defence of modern British art, written under the patriotic pseudonym of John Oakly, was published in two letters published in *St James's Chronicle*. Oakly acknowledged that differences had arisen between SEAMC and the Society of Artists, but insisted that this would encourage a rivalry that 'will do themselves and their Country Great Credit and Honour'. He declared that he was not prejudiced against Old Masters, but that 'his Zeal for the dead Professors of the Age is not attended with an unjust and partial Contempt for the Living' and raged against the 'Auctioneers, Connoisseurs, Picture Brokers, Dealers, Menders, Cleaners ... [who] have made it a matter of ridicule to purchase any modern Production or encourage an English Artist'.⁴⁰ Oakly's comments evidently aroused widespread interest; they were republished in May as 'having been a subject of much Conversation, (in Consequence of which the Paper has been lost out of several Coffeehouses)'.⁴¹ In a subsequent letter, in an endorsement of the stand taken by Hogarth, Oakly insisted artistic appreciation was open to all; that 'People come into this World with a good Taste for the Polite Arts, and are only spoiled by a bad Education or wrong Direction ... an accurate Eye and sensible Mind are the two chief Requisites for Judgement in Painting and Sculpture'.⁴² Oakly was attacking the perception of connoisseurs that they were the sole authorities on aesthetic judgement. Munsterberg stated that 'extant records identify John Oakly as David Garrick' and suggested that many

³⁶ Iain Pears, *The Discovery of Painting: The growth of interest in the Arts in England 1680-1768*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1988), 196.

³⁷ Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination, English Culture in the Eighteenth Century*. (London: Harper Collins 1997), 256.

³⁸ Harry Mount, 'The Monkey with the magnifying Glass: constructions of the Connoisseur in Eighteenth-Century Britain' in *Oxford Art Journal* 29.2 (2006): 184.

³⁹ Mount, 'The Monkey with the Magnifying Glass', 176.

⁴⁰ *St James's Chronicle* 23-25 April 1761.

⁴¹ *St James's Chronicle* 5-7 May 1761.

⁴² *ibid*, 14-16 May 1761.

contemporaries would have been aware of this; he had played a character of the same name in a recent theatrical production.⁴³

Oakly's defence of British art drew a spirited response, following the opening of the exhibitions, from Theo Coverley in the *Public Advertiser*. He scathingly declared that 'there is a party formed in support of Modern Painters, and if I am not much mistaken, they are likely to carry their Admiration of their countrymen to as a ridiculous Extreme as was ever done by the Connoisseurs in favour of the ancient foreigners'. Coverley referred to the poor quality of many of the exhibited works. He stated that, following his visit to both exhibitions, he was 'sorry to declare that, throughout the whole, for one good picture, there were at least ten bad ones'.⁴⁴ However, he made no specific mention of any artist whose work had met with his approval.

In May 1761, an advertisement for *A Call to the Connoisseurs*, written by 'T.B', was published in the *Public Advertiser*.⁴⁵ It declared that the book was 'Intended to vindicate the Genius and Abilities of the Artists of our own Country from the Malevolence of pretended Connoisseurs or Interested Dealers, recommended to the Perusal of every true Judge and impartial Critic in Great Britain, previous to a View at the present Exhibitions of the modern Artist'.⁴⁶ Like Oakly, T.B' expressed his contempt for dealers and connoisseurs. He denounced 'Picture Dealers ... as declared Enemies to the living Artist, as all their hopes lie with the Dead', and continued that 'None of these Wretches would exist a Moment, were their wicked Practices not only supported ... [but] actually encouraged by the Indolence, Inattention and want of Discernment of those very N-b-l-ty and Gentry, whom it is their express Intent and profession, to cheat and pillage'.⁴⁷ 'T.B' argued that the best judges of art were the artists themselves. He proclaimed that 'no one has a Right to Judge who have not the Abilities to perform An Artist is therefore the Judge of the whole, an ordinary spectator only a part, and that generally only a very small one, and a Modern Connoisseur, for whom this is chiefly intended, no Judge at all'.⁴⁸ 'T.B' denounced the

⁴³ Munsterberg, in 'The beginning of British art criticism', 89, cites Alexander Chalmer's, 'Historical and Biographical Preface' in *The Connoisseur*, 1808, vol 1, but I have been unable to locate this edition. She identified the play as *Jealous Wife* by George Colman.

⁴⁴ *Public Advertiser* 28-30 May 1761.

⁴⁵ *ibid* 5 May 1761.

⁴⁶ T.B. *A Call for Connoisseurs or Decisions of Sense with Respect to the present State of Painting and Sculpture, and their several Professors in these Kingdoms. Together with A Review and Examination of their comparative Merits and Excellencies* (London: W. Owen, T. Becket and P.A. Hondt 1761)

⁴⁷ *ibid*, 23-27.

⁴⁸ *ibid*, 9-10.

‘Modern Connoisseur’ for ‘their Judgement is always held in proportion to the Money it has cost them’, and railed that they ‘examine the Picture, or rather the Back and the Lining ... [and] then condemn it and no one dares to criticize his judgement’.⁴⁹ Hargraves identified ‘T.B’ as ‘possibly Thomas Bardwell, the writer of *The Practice of Painting*; Bardwell was also a painter although he never exhibited any of his work.⁵⁰ However, Munsterberg proposed that ‘T.B’ was Bonnell Thornton, the organiser of the Sign-Painters exhibition held in 1762.⁵¹

An extract from *A Call to Connoisseurs*, entitled ‘Characters of the Present Artists’ was published in *St James’s Chronicle* in May 1761. ‘T.B’ included artists whose work he admired, but this was not a review of the exhibitions held in 1760 and 1761; of the fourteen artists mentioned as exemplary examples of British artistic talent, Philip Hussey, an Irish painter, and Allan Ramsay, a Scottish portraitist never exhibited their work. However, nine of the artists mentioned, including Wilson and Lambert, exhibited with the Society of Artists in 1761, an early indication of the perceived superiority of this exhibiting society. Despite his attack on the ‘Modern Connoisseur’, ‘T.B’ lauded those he admired in language firmly rooted in the traditional connoisseurial rhetoric. Artists were praised for their masterly design, beauty of conception, great judgement and clear colouring, or enthusiastically compared with revered Old Masters. Wilson was described as ‘without Question the greatest Landscape Painter I have ever seen and possesses the greatest Power of Thought, Judgement and Execution; his Invention is rich, his Stile (sic) noble and his Composition great and beautiful, his Figures admirably elegant, his skies clear and his Water perfectly liquid, tender and transparent: But his works only are capable of doing Justice to this excellent Master, and to them I refer the Skilful and Judicious’, while Lambert is a ‘most pleasing Landscape Painter, always equal, and sometimes superior to Gaspar Poussin’.⁵²

The ‘Modern Connoisseur’ was subjected to further attacks in 1761. A satirical letter in *St James’s Chronicle*, written by an ‘Admirer, but, thank God, no Encourager of the Polite Arts’ lambasted them for their affectation, ignorance and lack of aesthetic judgement. This correspondent described his visit to the Society of Artists exhibition in the company of Lord

⁴⁹ *ibid*, 11-12.

⁵⁰ Matthew Hargraves, *Candidates for Fame: The Society of Artists of Great Britain 1760-1791* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2005), 34.

⁵¹ Munsterberg, ‘The beginning of British art criticism’, 90.

⁵² *St James’s Chronicle* 9-12 May 1761.

Brillus, who was ridiculed for his 'affected Ease in his Manner, Shamle in his Attitude, a something of a half foreign accent'. Brillus asserted that, as a member of SEAMC, he despised 'wretched English dawbs'. When asked to admire a landscape painting, Brillus replied 'D'you mean Wilson's *Niobe*...what colouring indeed! None of the Warmth of Claude's glowing Back-Grounds'.⁵³ Furthermore, Lord Brillus failed to recognise, until it was succinctly explained to him, that Hogarth's 'Tail-Piece' to the catalogue of the Society of Artists exhibition of 1761 was a blatant attack on the ignorance and bigotry of connoisseurs.

The tailpiece, a grotesque caricature of a connoisseur, drawn by Hogarth and engraved by Charles Grignion, was described in detail in *St James's Chronicle*. It was a representation of 'an Ape, fantastically dressed in the Pink of the Mode, holding a spectacle glass to his right hand, and in his left, a watering-pot, with which he bedews the Stumps of three different Plants in three different Pots, which are inscribed OBIT 1502, OBIT 1603, OBIT 1604, with a label on the ground, on it is written Exotics'. (fig 30)



30) Charles Grignion after William Hogarth, 'Tailpiece' to the *Catalogue of the Society of Artists exhibition*, 1761, engraving. Paul Mellon Centre for British Art, London.

In contrast, the frontispiece, drawn and engraved by the same artists and prominently displayed on the second page of the catalogue, extolled modern British art. It was described as showing 'the properest (sic) Emblems that could be chosen for the great

⁵³ *St James's Chronicle* 23 May 1761.

Encouragement given by his Majesty'.⁵⁴ A female figure, under the benevolent gaze of a statue of George III, waters three thriving trees, inscribed Painting, Sculpture and Architecture.

Despite the growing antagonism towards connoisseurs expressed in the popular newspapers, there was continued support for their views. Daniel Webb wrote *An Inquiry into the beauties of painting*, 1760, to offer guidance on appraisal of painting to young travellers undertaking the Grand Tour.⁵⁵ His advice was firmly articulated within the conventional vocabulary. The second edition, published in 1761, was advertised as 'very proper to be read by those who go to see the present Exhibitions of British Artists'.⁵⁶ Modern British art was to be evaluated against the standards set by the 'celebrated artists' most admired by those who considered themselves the authorities on art.

The hostility expressed in the printed correspondence between those who denigrated or supported modern British art was noted in *St James's Chronicle*. On 2 June 1761, an editorial comment declared that 'As both the exhibitions ... are now over, the controversy concerning them (if, indeed, there really has been any) will now subside,' but the paper agreed to publish two final letters from those who had attended the exhibitions. The first letter, from 'Blank', derided the values of connoisseurs. He accused Theo Coverley of buying his spectacles 'from a connoisseur doubly tinged, for the Examination of modern Paintings ... I am sure Mr Coverley loves foreigners from his heart'. The second letter, from 'An Admirer, and thank God, an encourager of the Polite arts', defends the values of a classical education in the Arts. Although the author accepts that 'there may be Lord Brillus's Characters coming from Abroad', there were also 'many young Noblemen and Gentlemen, who ... are admirers as well as Encouragers of the Polite Arts, from having acquired knowledge, which cannot be obtained but by seeing the best Paintings of the Ancients. Without any disparagement of the Moderns I will say no more'.⁵⁷

The acrimony expressed over right to judge modern British art had generated much correspondence in the press in 1761 but, despite these ill-tempered clashes of opinion instigated by exhibitions, there were few published reviews of the exhibited works. The

⁵⁴ *St James's Chronicle* 7-9 May.

⁵⁵ Daniel Webb, Esq, *An Inquiry into the beauties of painting; and into the merits of the most celebrated painters*, (London: R. and J. Dodsley 1760).

⁵⁶ *Public Advertiser* 16 May 1761.

⁵⁷ *St James's Chronicle* 2-4 June 1761.

premiums bestowed by SEAMC in 1761, with George (fig 31) and John Smith again receiving the landscape awards, were widely reported, but with no repeat of the criticisms voiced the previous year.



31) George Smith, *Landscape*, 1761, oil on canvas, 134.4 x 169 cm. exh, Free Society 1761 (no 43). First Premium Award 1761. Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum

An article in *The Library; or moral and critical magazine* declared patriotically that ‘we cannot avoid our satisfaction with this new custom of an annual exhibition of painting, drawing and Sculpture as it will contribute to raise a spirit of emulation among our artists, and ... improve the taste of the nation’, and concluded that ‘In both places there are several pieces of excellence’.⁵⁸ Among the artists singled out for praise were Lambert (at the Society of Artists exhibition) and the Smith brothers (at the exhibition staged by SEAMC). Surprisingly, there was no reference to Wilson who, after his success at the inaugural exhibition, had exhibited six landscape paintings at the Society of Artists exhibition.

⁵⁸Anon, ‘Literary Article’ in *The Library: or, Moral and critical magazine for the year...By a Society of gentlemen* vol. 2. (London 1761-1762), 105.

Exhibition reviews

The first reviews of exhibited works, as opposed to antagonistic comments between connoisseurs and supporters of modern British art, were published in the newspapers from 1762. Before the Free Society exhibition opened on 20 April, an advertisement announced the publication of '*An historical and critical review of the Paintings, Sculpture ... now exhibiting ... Those Gentlemen and Ladies, who have the Patience to wait for the publication of this Pamphlet, will probably receive more Entertainment from this exhibition*'.⁵⁹ *The Beauties of all Magazines* published the *Review*, which was clearly intended as a straightforward guide offering advice to those with little experience of viewing paintings. Nevertheless, it already presages the evolving vocabulary of the critical language. There was a distinct move away from the conventional language of the connoisseurs towards an emphasis on the truthful depiction of the natural world expressed through mimetic exactitude. The author of this exhibition review articulated his critical observations in a vocabulary that could be understood by the new audience for art.

Forty-three works were mentioned, including twelve landscapes or views by artists exhibiting at both the Society of Artists and the Free Society. Many of the remarks were brief and uninformative. Andrea Casali, who exhibited *A Landscape* for the first time, was dismissed for his 'excellence [is] not to be looked for in landscape painting', and *A Landscape with the story of Diana and Acteon* by Dominic Serres was described as 'not extraordinary'. Other comments were more revealing. A landscape exhibited by William Tomkins was reviewed unfavourably; 'This unnatural landscape obtained, so I am told, the second prize. Probably the society was weary of adjudging the premium constantly to the same people'. C. Stewart's *A landscape, representing a summer's evening* was deemed as 'Not sufficiently expressive of the time of day it is intended to indicate: It wants neither labour or imagination but it lacks that pleasing softness so essential to a landscape: 'tis harsh and hard'.⁶⁰ The anonymous author explicitly expressed the opinion that, to portray the beauty of a landscape view, painters should use naturalistic colouring and accurate depiction of atmospheric conditions. Stewart was disparaged as his failure to represent the soft glow of the summer's evening light had rendered his work bleak and austere. The greatest accolade was bestowed on the Smith brothers; their exhibits were praised for their imaginatively constructed, but truthfully described, depictions of nature. 'The

⁵⁹ *St James's Chronicle* 17-20 April 1762

⁶⁰ Algernon Graves, in *The Society of Artists of Great Britain 1760-1791: The Free Society of Artists 1761-1783. A Complete Dictionary of the Contributors and their Work from the Foundation of the Societies to 1791*, made no mention of C. Stewart but he is included in the catalogue for the Free Society exhibition 1762, no. 24.

superiority of the Smiths as landscape painters is so incontestably visible to those who have the least judgement in painting, or in nature, that to declare my opinion is quite unnecessary. Their pieces in general are finely imagined, accurately drawn, and chastely coloured'.⁶¹

The opinions voiced in *An historical and critical review* were inevitably denounced; the new language did not find favour with all commentators. A letter was published in *St James's Chronicle* supported the prerogative of the educated connoisseur to be regarded as the erudite judge of painting. The unnamed correspondent insisted that, while the Public 'will think themselves obliged to the Authors', the criticisms expressed were of little value.⁶² Despite letters expressing support for the artistic values of connoisseurs, they continued to be ridiculed; an anonymous poem in *Lloyd's Evening Post* mocked their affectations.

The money you squander your judgment confirms:
You need not the science, repeat just the terms:
The labour of learning belongs to the poor,
Do but pay, that's enough for the true Connoisseur...

At your own table grac'd midst Exotics supreme
If Music the Subject: or Painting the theme:
All Artists, but English ones, praise and procure,
By your troop of led Captains, you're dubb'd Connoisseur.⁶³

Ten months after the publication of '*An historical and critical review*, it was subjected to further criticism, but for different reasons. 'A.Z', in a communication to *Lloyd's Evening Post* in February 1763 denounced it on the grounds of partiality. He declared that it was 'so much calculated for the purpose and interest of one or two of the Author's friends, that it loses that degree of regard that it might otherwise be entitled to'.⁶⁴ The 'Author's friends' presumably were members of SEAMC, including the Duke of Richmond, who was a patron of the Smith brothers, the only landscape painters to receive unequivocal praise in the *Review*.

⁶¹ *The Beauties of all the magazines selected for the Year 1762-1764* (London: T. Waller 1762-1764) 185-187.

⁶² *St James's Chronicle* 27 April 1762.

⁶³ *Lloyds Evening Post* 17-19 May 1762.

⁶⁴ *Lloyd's Evening Post* 4 February 1763.

The first comprehensive review of Society of Artists exhibition of 1762, spread over three editions of *St James's Chronicle*, opened with a deliberate statement that the author made no pretence to be a connoisseur. I argue that this was the turning point in the critical appraisal of exhibited landscape painting. Although this review necessarily reflected the evaluation of an individual author, it offered further evidence of the emergence of the new descriptive vocabulary used in reviews of landscape painting. The reviewer mocked the pretensions of the connoisseurs who believed that study of Old Masters was a prerequisite for aesthetic judgment by declaring 'That I have never studied Painting in the Schools abroad, is an objection that can scarcely expect to be made of me by *English Artists*'. He discussed a diverse selection of exhibited works, with mention of the landscape paintings by James, Lambert, Marlow, Pugh, Sandby, and Wilson. His greatest accolade was reserved for Lambert. 'It is impossible to speak too warmly of this artist I am glad to find that there is sufficient encouragement in this Country for such Landscape painters as himself, and the Smiths, not forgetting Mr Wilson. The *Water Piece* (no 48) and the *View of the same place in Sunset* are particularly pleasing. But in No. 50, I think the *great Fall of the Tees* is not made sufficiently capital. I have seen that *Fall*, and from the Impression it made on me, I conceive the artist has not made it near so grand and striking as it is in Nature. I think, too, he might have made better water. The Public are particularly obliged ... for the information in the Catalogue that, this is the River that divided the Counties of York and Durham'. (fig 18) This review was the first to compare a landscape painting with an actual location. The critic emphasised the importance of representational accuracy of outstanding natural features; he had visited these falls and felt that Lambert had failed to impart a true picture of the magnificent location.

His observations on the exhibits of Wilson, who again exhibited six landscapes, including *A View of Holt Bridge on the River Dee*, (fig 32) again reflected his emphasis that a landscape painting should be a truthful reflection of the natural beauty of the English countryside. He wrote that 'The Landscapes of this Artist have great merit, and challenge our attention ... His greatest Error is in the making of his Pictures too *green*; an Error into which the very idea of Landscape-Painting is apt to catch the unwary Artists, and which nothing can so effectively remove, as a close Observation of the Diversity of Shades, the minute touches, and nice Pencilling if I may be allowed to give Expression, given by the Hand of Nature to a

real prospect'.⁶⁵ An accurate depiction of Nature was not mere mimesis; it was only possible through close observance of the subtle, natural nuances of colour and shade.⁶⁶



32) Richard Wilson, *View of Holt Bridge, on the River Dee*, ca.1761-2, oil on canvas, 148.5 x193 cm, exh. Society of Artists 1762 (no 135) National Gallery, London.

In the same year, a poem, by an anonymous author, was published in the *Public Advertiser*. This poem suggested, for the first time, that landscape painting aroused a sympathetic response from a viewer. This was a marked shift away from the assessment of landscape imagery based on observance of a formal system of rules. It is interesting that, throughout the subsequent reviews of exhibitions, critics felt more able to articulate the sensitive sentiments aroused by viewing a landscape painting through poetry, a literary form acknowledged for its sensitive expression of feeling.

⁶⁵ *St. James's Chronicle* 25-27 May 1762

⁶⁶ There was no acknowledgement of the striking resemblance to Claude's *Rome and the Ponte Molle*. Simon, in *Richard Wilson and the Transformation of European Painting*, declared 'Wilson must have intended [this] to be noticed'. 28. However the author of the review had stated that he was no connoisseur.

The poem, entitled *On the Landskips, in Gainsborough's whole Length Portraits of Gentlemen and Ladies, walking in pairs*, was addressed to the reader cognisant with the poetry of Milton and the heroic couplets of Alexander Pope.

To charm the Soul, and with equal force conspire
 To Painter's Genius, and the Poet's Fire,
 When Milton sings, thro' Eden's blissful Groves
 With the first Pair, the ravish'd Fancy roves;
 Pursues each Step, by various Passions tost,
 And quits, with Tears, the Paradise they lost.
 Like that blest pair, by Gainsbro's pencil drawn.
 See Nymphs and Shepherds tread the flow'ry lawn:
 And own the pleasing Cheat so well sustained
 Each Landskip seems, a Paradise regain'd.⁶⁷

Milton's epic poem, *Paradise Lost*, published in 1667, described the terrifying fall from Grace of Adam and Eve and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden, while *Paradise Regained* emphasised that when earthly temptations were resisted, the joys of Paradise might be enjoyed once more. The 'Genius' of Gainsborough's art was conflated with the expressive power of Milton's poem to elicit an emotive response; Gainsborough's 'landskips', although painted as background to the figures, were applauded for their imaginative and joyous depiction of England as an earthly Garden of Eden. Gainsborough had only exhibited two portraits and no landscape paintings when this poem was published, yet here it is his depiction of the background landscape that received this fulsome praise.

This poem also claimed, for the first time, that a painter of a landscape merited the epithet of 'Genius'. I maintain that, from the mid-1760s, the accolade of 'genius' became increasingly employed by critics who sought to persuade the public that British painters displayed exceptional mimetic skills or induced sensitive, imaginative reactions from the viewer. Andrew Hemingway, in *Landscape and Urban Culture*, 1992, had proposed that it was not until the nineteenth century that 'the model of the artistic genius' was bestowed

⁶⁷ *Public Advertiser* 28 June 1762

on those who displayed 'originality and a capacity to capture the attention of the public'.⁶⁸ However, in 1763, the anonymous author of *Letters to a Young Nobleman*, in his comments about exhibitions, proclaimed that 'some drawings-prints-landscapes – and even history paintings - exposed to view, discovered both genius and execution'.⁶⁹ When Gainsborough declined a commission from Lord Hardwicke to paint his newly acquired estate in 1764, he recommended Paul Sandby as 'the only Man of Genius ... who has employed his Pencil that way'.⁷⁰ This may have been a facile comment but, Hayes noted, Gainsborough's 'working from models made it abundantly clear that ... he regarded landscape compositions proper as material for invention'.⁷¹ This opinion concurred with the definition of genius in William Duff's *An essay on original genius*, 1767. Duff, who embraced the values of the connoisseurs, wrote that true 'Original Genius' was only to be found in history paintings. Nevertheless, he accepted that original genius 'may sometimes be discovered, in no inconsiderable measure, in Descriptive Pieces ... even landscapes [but only] when they are invented ... and not imitated from scenes that actually exist'.⁷²

Despite the suggestion in *Letters to a Young Nobleman* that exhibited works exemplified the genius of their creators, in 1764, only four years after the first exhibition was staged, disquiet was expressed about the poor quality of many of the exhibits. Critics were voicing concern that exhibitions were failing in their proposed intention, emphasised in the *Preface* to the catalogue of the exhibition held in 1762, to 'Advance the Art'.⁷³ In February, 'Junius' wrote that 'the time approaches when the Publick will again be invited to behold those noble proofs of genius, good sense, and abilities of the sons of England'. He continued that 'I would earnestly recommend to the several artists, to spare no pains to render their exhibitions worthy of themselves ... I would have all indifferent pictures of those who are universally allowed to be masters, totally excluded'.⁷⁴

'Cynthio' re-iterated this concern in his review of the Society of Artists exhibition in 1764. He emphasised that, for the past three years, the Society of Artists had 'obliged the Town

⁶⁸ Andrew Hemingway, *Landscape Imagery and Urban Culture in nineteenth-century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1992), 93.

⁶⁹ Anon, *Letters to a Young Nobleman* (Dublin: G. and G. Ewing 1763), 88.

⁷⁰ John Hayes, *The Landscape Paintings of Thomas Gainsborough*. vol.1 (London: Sotheby Publications), 123. In footnote 35 Hayes cited the letter from Gainsborough to the Earl of Hardwicke. (Woodall, *Letters*, no.42, p 91)

⁷¹ *ibid*, 95.

⁷² William Duff, *An essay on original genius: and its various modes of exertion in philosophy and the fine arts, particularly in poetry* (London: Edward and Charles Dilly 1767), 202.

⁷³ 'Preface', *Catalogue S of A 1762*, vi.

⁷⁴ *London Chronicle* 21 February 1764.

with noble Exhibitions', and mentioned Lambert, Wilson, Barret and 'the modest and ingenious Marlow', among ten painters singled out for particular praise. Marlow had exhibited *A View of Owse-Bridge at York* in 1764; his 'modest and ingenious quality' may relate to his creative ability to portray urban locations, while imbuing them with an aura of peace and tranquillity. (fig 33)



33) William Marlow, *The Old Ouse Bridge, York*, c.1758-c1768, oil on canvas, 53 x 76.8 cm. possibly exh. Society of Artists 1764, (no 64). York Museum Trust, York.

George Barret, at his first exhibition in London, had received the first premium for landscape painting; he was praised for having 'given us Striking Proofs of his great and happy Genius in that style of Painting. There is a richness in his colouring, and a Sublimity in his design, which is truly admirable'.⁷⁵ This is the first mention of sublimity, the term popularised by Barret's friend and patron, the influential Irish philosopher, Edmund Burke. Barret's views of Powerscourt when confronted by a viewer sensitive to the evocative resonances communicated by a painted image, provoked sensations of fear of, and admiration for, the untamed power of the natural world.

⁷⁵ *Public Advertiser* 2 May 1764.

However, at the conclusion of his review, 'Cynthio' echoed the concerns of 'Junius'; he urged that 'to the Lower Class of Artists, they would not extend their Indulgence so much' and that 'no admittance be given to the Basest works, which like Vile Weeds crowded among the finer Flowers of the Garden, will certainly detract from, but not add a jot to their native Beauty'.⁷⁶ Both critics bestow the accolade of genius; a tribute usually reserved for history painters; this intimates that critics were aware of the rising appreciation of landscape painters.

In a supplement to the review by 'Cynthio' in the *Public Advertiser*, 'Crito' admired the same landscape painters. Lambert's *A storm* and *It's companion*, were applauded for their accurate depiction of a natural event; 'His two storms are equal to anything I saw'. Wilson's exhibits were appreciated for their 'pleasant colouring and a Brightness throughout ... joined to a good choice of Subject'. 'Crito' eulogised, in his tribute to Scott, who had exhibited *A View of Bear Quay* 'that it is almost unnecessary to mention this picture, as whoever looks at it, who has any Judgement, will see 'tis a work of a Master', and, for the first time, the landscapes by Richards, were mentioned in a review; they were admired for the 'Variety of Subjects ... all excellent'.⁷⁷ Richards had exhibited two Views of ruins, two views of Corfe Castle, a *View in Westminster Abby* (sic), and his commissioned *A View of Halswell House, a seat of Sir Charles Kerneys Tynte, Bart.* Richards worked as a scene painter for many years; his employment may have influenced the production of this somewhat staged estate portrait with the deliberate placement of the Palladian style temple on the left. (fig 34) The reviews by 'Cynthio' and 'Crito' owed little to the vocabulary of the connoisseurs. The comments were more descriptive, written in the new vocabulary for critical reviews of landscape painting.

⁷⁶ *Public Advertiser* 2 May 1764.

⁷⁷ *Public Advertiser* 5 May 1764.



34) John Inigo Richards, *Haswell House, Somerset*, 1764, oil on canvas, 14.3 x118 cm, probably exh. Society of Artists, 1764. (no 94). National Museum, Cardiff

1764 was the first year that exhibitors asterisked their work 'to be disposed of', but no mention was made that the single exhibit of Scott and three out of the six exhibits by Richards, both admired by 'Crito', were for sale. It is tempting to suggest that 'Cynthio', in his disparaging remarks about the 'weeds' which distract attention from the 'finer Flowers', was alluding to, among others, Pugh, Dall and James, who advertised their landscape paintings for sale. However, there appears have been a deliberate ploy by critics to distance British art from the commercial aspects of exhibitions; the auction in 1763 received no mention, and there were no references in reviews between 1764 and 1768 that exhibits were marked as 'to be disposed of' at the exhibitions of the Society of Artists and the Free Society. Nevertheless, it is interesting that the commercial advantages of exhibition were noted. 'A lover of the Arts', writing in the *Lloyd's Evening Post* in 1765 refuted the disparagement of the standard of exhibits at the Society of Artists exhibition of 1764 by 'Junius' and 'Cynthio'. He proclaimed that 'the Excellency on Polite arts' was no longer confined to France 'but at present is found in London, and carried to such a height as ever they were in Paris'. He contended that a reduction in the price of imported 'Foreign Masters' was due to the 'high estimation of the present English Masters', among whom he included Barret, Gainsborough, Marlow, Richards, Sandby and Wilson, all exhibitors with the Society of Artists.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ *Lloyd's Evening Post* 6-8 May 1765.

There were, by 1764, two distinct groups of exhibiting artists. The Society of Artists was firmly established as the leading exhibiting Society and their exhibitions dominated the published reviews. The Free Society exhibitions received little critical interest, and the few reviews published were generally dismissive. Nevertheless, George Smith continued to receive plaudits for his exhibited landscape paintings; he exhibited thirty-five landscapes with SEAMC and the Free Society between 1760 and 1768. Living in Chichester, he had no London studio in which to show his work; exhibitions offered the opportunity to present his work to the metropolitan audience. 'No connoisseur' wrote in 1765, that the Free Society 'approached nearer and nearer' to the Society of Artists. He declared that 'After the irreparable loss of Mr Lambert to the Exhibition in Spring Gardens, the Superiority of Landscapes is very apparent and chiefly owing to George Smith'. Despite his praise for Smith, 'No connoisseur' disparaged other landscape painters. Jared Leigh's *Romantic View with a Rainbow* was denigrated 'for romantic, read wretched', and it was suggested that Zuccarelli's *The Story of Cadmus and the Dragon, with a landscape*, would 'be better without the figures'.⁷⁹ (fig 35) The Free Society exhibition received further mention in 1766. 'T.B' condemned those who argued that 'there was nothing worth looking at', and declared that 'the landscapes, the sea-pieces, the dead game, as well as some of the portraits, are ... very striking and masterly'.⁸⁰ I have not been able to determine whether this is the same 'T.B' who wrote *A Call to Connoisseurs*. If he was indeed Thomas Bardwell, as an artist, he sought to draw attention to artists largely neglected by the popular press.

⁷⁹ *St James's Chronicle* 25 May 1765.

⁸⁰ *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* 8 May 1776.



35) Francesco Zuccarelli, *The Story of Cadmus and the Dragon, with a landscape*, date unknown, oil on canvas, 126.4 x 157.2 cm, exh. Free Society exhibition 1765 (no 306). Tate Gallery, London.

'Impartial Hand', in the *Preface* to a poetic eulogy, *The Exhibition: or, a candid display of the genius and merits of several masters*, published May 1766, also admonished critics. He urged them to encourage, not disparage, exhibiting artists; 'The noble Endeavour to excel should always be nourished with paternal Tenderness and Care; successful Attempts should be crowned with Applause; while every curious Attack should be repulsed and discouraged'.⁸¹ This plea to the critics became a recurring theme. In 1768 'A Friend to the Art and Lover of Truth' cautioned that 'the young unwary Artist' may be 'discouraged or too much puffed up by the ignorant criticisms, or gross Adulations of an hungry Grub-Street Hireling, who has jumbled together a Parcel of tasteless, ignorant and incongruous Remarks'.⁸² This lends credence to Munsterberg's suggestion that many critics 'had some training as artists';⁸³ they understood the dismay caused by hostile reviews.

⁸¹ 'An Impartial Hand', *The Exhibition: or, a candid display of the genius and merits of several masters* (London 1766) iv.

⁸² *Public Advertiser* 7 May 1768.

⁸³ Munsterberg, 'The beginning of British art criticism', 82.

The Exhibition was not strictly a review of the exhibition of 1766, but a poetic tribute to the artists who had exhibited with the Society of Artists since its inception in 1761. 'Impartial Hand', in his poetic evaluation of landscape painting looks beyond representational accuracy to engage with the emotional responses elicited from the viewer. He cited the exhibits of Stubbs, Barret and Wilson as capable of evoking an affective reaction, but accepted that not all landscape paintings had this capacity. The exhibits of Sandby, William Oram and Thomas Catton were also discussed, but the comments were more mundane.

The poem began with a tribute to Benjamin West; history painting was extolled as the highest artistic genre. However, 'Impartial Hand' recognised the emotive power of landscape painting. He lauded the exhibits of George Stubbs.

His matchless Labours shall unrival'd grow,
His Woods see Waving, his Streams see Flow:
His Skies, his Rocks see mark'd with equal Force
That Strike as strongly as his startl'd Horse.⁸⁴

Stubbs exhibited twenty-two paintings between 1761 and 1766 and the work featuring a startled horse was probably *A Horse and a Lion* exhibited in 1763; Horace Walpole noted in his catalogue 'the horse rising up, greatly startled'.⁸⁵ (fig 36) Stubbs was best-known for portraits of horses, but it was not for this prowess that he received acclaim; it was his 'unrival'd' ability to vividly portray natural surroundings. In the exhibited work, there is a dramatic contrast between the high-lighted palomino horse, with its striking white mane and tail, and the awesome menace of the bare gloomy crags, which almost obscure the predatory lion, and the steep, shaded cliffs.

⁸⁴ 'Impartial Hand', *The exhibition, or a candid display of the genius*, 9

⁸⁵ Algernon Graves, in his dictionary of contributors to exhibitions, noted that Walpole had added this remark to his catalogue for the exhibition of 1763.



36) George Stubbs, *Horse frightened by a Lion*, oil on canvas, 70.5 x 101.9 cm, probably exh. Society of Artists, 1763 (no 119) Tate Britain.

Wilson and Barret were also praised.

Two Master Pencils more Arrest the Eye
In WILSON'S Water, and in BARRETT'S Sky
A Finish'd greatness grows upon the sight
That Yields by Turns a Rich Supreme Delight .⁸⁶

Wilson exhibited three views of the River Dee; *The River Dee near Eaton Hall*, 1760 (fig 15), *The View of Chester*, 1761, and *View of Holt Bridge, on the River Dee* 1762 (fig 32). The translucent water, the superb reflections of foliage, and the atmospheric effect of the light on the water communicate to the viewer an ephemeral feeling of calm and pleasure. Many of Barret's landscapes reveal his fascination with the spectacular effects of the weather. In 1765, he exhibited two landscapes which demonstrate this interest. In '*A landscape, the effect of a rainbow*, (fig 37), a dramatic double rainbow soars against dark clouds, while the rocks, waterfall and people are lit by the last rays of the sun. In *Hawarden Castle*, set high

⁸⁶ 'Impartial Hand', *The exhibition, or a candid display of the genius*, 10.

on a mound above a ravine, the derelict ruins are partially illuminated by the fading light, and are silhouetted against clouds which may augur an approaching storm.



37) George Barret, *Landscape with the effect of a Rainbow*, oil on canvas, 101.6 x 127 cm. probably exh. Society of Artists 1765, (no 4) Sold by Christies 2002. Present whereabouts unknown

The publication of pamphlet guides to the exhibitions was becoming increasingly popular, with two published in 1767. *A critical examination of the pictures* was advertised on 4 May.⁸⁷ This review was in prose, and, unusually, named none of the artists appraised; only the catalogue number was included. Seventy-four paintings were cited, of which twenty-six landscapes, by eleven landscape painters, were mentioned, albeit some very briefly. The anonymous critic utilised a harsh descriptive vocabulary through which to express his negative observations of landscape paintings. Tompkins's three commissioned views were deemed to 'lack effect'.⁸⁸ Gainsborough's portraits were admired, but his *Landskip and figures*, the third landscape he exhibited between 1760 and 1768 and identified by Hayes as *The Harvest Wagon*, was less well-received; it was noted that 'the trees are too hard,

⁸⁷ *General and New Daily Advertiser* 4 May 1767,

⁸⁸ *A critical examination of the pictures, models, drawings, prints &c...intended for the use of those who would understand what they see* (London: W. Griffin 1767), 17.

and the sky too blue'.⁸⁹ (fig 38) Hayes suggested that the ambitious landscapes exhibited by Gainsborough were influenced by his admiration for Ruisdael and Rubens;⁹⁰ the intense rusticity and complexity of design may have intimidated critics unfamiliar with, or ignorant of, these artists. It is difficult to reconcile these comments with those of Walpole. He annotated his exhibition catalogue with more enthusiastic praise; he remarked that 'This landscape is very rich, the group of figures delightfully managed, and the horses well drawn, the distant hill is one tint too dark'.⁹¹



38) Thomas Gainsborough, *The Harvest Wagon*, 1767, Oil on canvas, 120.5 x 144.7 cm. exh. Society of Artists 1767. (no 61) Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Birmingham

Barret's *A View from Creswell Crags* 'had a very good degree of merit' but was spoiled by his 'cold' depiction of the sky ... [and there is] a glare, reigning over the whole, that is not to be found in nature',⁹² and Marlow, although praised 'as a very promising genius', was

⁸⁹ *A Critical Examination*, 9. Spencer-Longhurst, in *Thomas Gainsborough: The Harvest Wagon* (Birmingham: Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery 1995) noted that the 'indigo pigment which Gainsborough used to paint his sky is prone to fading'. 10.

⁹⁰ Hayes, *The Landscape Paintings of Thomas Gainsborough*, vol. 2, 427-430.

⁹¹ Cited by Graves in his *Dictionary of Contributors*, 99.

⁹² *A Critical Examination*, 6-7.

condemned for his 'hard and mannered trees'.⁹³ Although many comments were disparaging, they expressed the growing critical consensus among critics that the natural beauty of England could only be expressed through truthful rendition of colour, attention to atmospheric conditions and a gentle, evocative delineation of natural features. This was emphasised when the author noted that 'there is warmth' in the exhibited landscapes of Nicholas Dall,⁹⁴ and a 'tenderness', described as very pleasing' in Stubb's *Two gentlemen going a shooting, with a View of Creswell Craggs*.⁹⁵ (fig 39) This opinion is in opposition that that expressed by 'M.X' in his review in the *Public Advertiser*; he had advised that Stubbs had 'mistook his Genius' by painting landscape.⁹⁶



39) George Stubbs, *Two gentlemen going a shooting, with a View of Creswell Craggs*, ca.1756, oil on canvas, 99 x 124.5 cm, exh. Society of Artists 1767, (no 157). Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, New Haven.

Two views of Creswell Craggs were shown at this exhibition. Stephen Daniels noted that Barret's view, which received no critical attention, was one of many views commissioned by the Duke of Portland, and that the area of Derbyshire depicted was 'well off the tourist

⁹³ *ibid*, 9.

⁹⁴ *ibid*, 8.

⁹⁵ *ibid*, 16.

⁹⁶ *Public Advertiser* 1 May 1767.

routes, and little known to the travelling public'.⁹⁷ However Stephen Deuchar, in *Sporting Art*, suggested that the exhibit by Stubbs, the first of his series of four shooting scenes exhibited between 1767 and 1770, showed that the area was accessible to shooting parties. Despite the enthusiastic response to the painting by the author of *A Critical Examination*, Deuchar declared that it was not well received when exhibited. He maintained that it was only after the publication of the prints, when it was stressed that the sportsmen shown were not landed gentry but 'city sportsmen' enjoying a day's shooting, that it became appreciated that the paintings articulated 'contemporary notions of the true evocation of the English Countryside', with appeal to the middle-class purchaser.⁹⁸ (fig 46)

A second review of the Society of Artists exhibition in 1767, a poem, *Le pour et le contre*, was also published in May 1767.⁹⁹ The *Introduction* proclaimed 'What a poor and despicable figure would the Pictures of many (who twenty years ago... were estimated as the best Painters in *England*) now make among the performances of our young race of emulating Candidates'.¹⁰⁰ Twenty-four landscape painters exhibited in 1767 but only five were mentioned. *Le pour et le contre* was an eclectic amalgam of the different critical responses employed to evaluate landscape painting. Attention to naturalistic detail was noted, with an acceptance that landscape painting evoked an emotional response, but reference was also made to Old Master exemplars.

Barret's *A moon-light, with the effect of a mist, a study from nature*, was initially disparaged as failing to represent a true image of moonlight, but then admired for its beauty.

Lo- Barrett's *Moon-piece* strikes the dubious sight
With something strange that's neither day nor night...
And yet the surly critic must confess
Its greatest fault is beauty in excess!¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Stephen Daniels., 'Miniature Matlock: Creswell Crags, George Stubbs and Eighteenth-Century Landscape Fashion' in *The British Art Journal*. 9:2: (2008), 79-80.

⁹⁸ Stephen Deuchar., *Sporting Art in Eighteenth-Century England: A Social and Political History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1988), 114-119.

⁹⁹ *London Chronicle* 5 May 1767.

¹⁰⁰ Anon., 'Preface' in *Le pour et le contre. Being a poetical display of the merit and demerit of the capital paintings exhibited at Spring Gardens* (London: printed for the author 1767), iii-iv.

¹⁰¹ *ibid*, 6-7.

Stubbs was applauded for his ability to depict Nature.

For nature in her simplest robe is here ...
Here Nature shakes the sister-hand with Art.¹⁰²

Wilson was admired for his ability to arouse sympathetic sentiments and emotional turmoil in the viewer.

In him alone pathetic strokes we see
The Tragick Narrative in high degree
Terror and pity yield him just applause,
And all the anguish of the heart he draws.¹⁰³

I have been unable to identify the landscape painting exhibited by Wilson in 1767, which was described in the catalogue *Landscape with figures*, but this eulogy shared the emotional qualities accorded to the print of *Niobe*, published in 1761.¹⁰⁴ (fig 41) The admiration expressed for Deane as ‘A present *Lambert*, and a future *Claude*’ and the praise for Marlow that he rivalled the ancient artists of Rome and Greece were a clear affirmation of the writer’s admiration of the works of revered Old Masters.¹⁰⁵ An appreciation of contemporary British art was not incompatible with respect for long-established exemplars of landscape painting.

Little critical attention was paid to the Society of Artists exhibition in 1768, which for ‘A Lover of the Arts’ writing in the *Public Advertiser* was ‘a matter of astonishment’. To rectify this omission, the critic recommended ‘some of the more excellent pieces’. Stubbs was acclaimed for his ‘excellent and well-known talent in painting horses’ but again was deemed to have ‘so much mistaken his talent as to attempt landscape-painting’. It was noted, with regret, that Barret, despite ‘being well-known for his superior excellence in landscape-painting ... has not this year obliged us with a sight of any of his landscapes’.¹⁰⁶ His only exhibit was *Portrait of a dog belonging to Lord Edward Bentick*. (fig 52) Marlow’s

¹⁰² *ibid*, 14.

¹⁰³ *ibid*, 16-17.

¹⁰⁴ Wilson may have exhibited multiple versions of *Niobe*. Graves, in his *A Complete Dictionary* opined that A *Large Landscape with Historical Figures*, exhibited in 1761 was *Niobe*, and Solkin, in *Richard Wilson*, 138, footnote 52, suggests that another version of *Niobe* may have been exhibited as *Landscape with Figures* in 1767.

¹⁰⁵ *Le pour et le contre*, 8.

¹⁰⁶ *Gazetteer and New Daily Press* 23 May 1768.

An Eruption of Vesuvius, at Naples, one of the first images of the volcano, received no critical acclaim. Indeed none of twenty-nine landscape paintings featuring overseas locations exhibited between 1760 and 1768 were mentioned in reviews. I suggest that the critics, few of whom were likely to have ventured abroad, were writing for a middle-class public with little interest in views of foreign sights more familiar to those who had undertaken the Grand Tour.

Persistence of disquiet among commentators

Despite the public enthusiasm for exhibitions, and the increasingly enthusiastic reception of exhibits, concern persisted over the ignorance of, and indifference to modern British art by connoisseurs. John Gwynn, in *London and Westminster Improved*, 1766, wrote that 'the applause bestowed on the several performances ... evidently shows, what a prodigious progress has been made in the arts'.¹⁰⁷ However, he censured the connoisseur who, having travelled abroad 'arrives back in his own country with a depraved taste and a thick cloud of Italian prejudice diffused over his understanding', and condemned the continuing pernicious influence of picture dealers.¹⁰⁸ Charles Jenner's *Letters from Altamont in the capital to his friends in the country*, 1767, supposedly written by a naïve young man on his first visit to London, bemoaned that those who attended exhibitions believed that mere knowledge of 'common term used in the different arts' made him a 'compleat (sic) connoisseur', with paintings purchased for their supposed provenance, rather than for their excellence.¹⁰⁹ Predictably, the connoisseur was defended. Thomas Martyn, in *The English Connoisseur*, 1767, wrote that while 'the polite arts are rising in this country ... one certain way of advancing them is to give all opportunities to those who make them their study, to contemplate the works of the best masters, that they may not form a bad taste or poor manner'.¹¹⁰

Despite this continued concern over the apathy of the connoisseurs to British art, and the insidious manipulations of dealers, most critics had, by 1767, abandoned the traditional connoisseurial vocabulary which emphasised adherence to the classically-inspired rules of

¹⁰⁷ John Gwynn, *London and Westminster improved, illustrated by plans. To which is prefixed. A discussion on publick magnificence: with observations on the state of arts and artists in this country* (London: printed for the author 1766), 25.

¹⁰⁸ Gwynn, *London and Westminster Improved*, 71.

¹⁰⁹ Charles Jenner., *Letters from Altamont in the Capital to his friends in the Country* (London; T. Becket and P.A. de Hondt 1767), 213 and 257.

¹¹⁰ Thomas Martyn, *The English Connoisseur; containing an account of whatever is curious in painting, sculpture &c in the palaces and seats of the nobility* (London; L. Davis and R. Meyers 1766), 51.

art. They sought to attract the attention and interest of exhibition visitors with different expectations of landscape painting through a new descriptive vocabulary, which prioritised a truthful depiction of the natural world and the affective responses evoked. Nevertheless, it was inevitable that some reviews remained indebted to the more conventional vocabulary.

'X.W' wrote in the *Public Advertiser* that, while he accepted that criticism was best delivered by those 'eminently able', he proposed to 'make a few remarks upon some of the most conspicuous Performances' at the Society of Artists exhibition of 1767. Among the thirteen works appraised, four were landscapes. Stubbs's *Two gentlemen going a shooting, with a view of Cresswell Crag, taken on the spot* was derided (fig 39) - 'he widely mistook his Genius when he took up landscape and portrait painting' and Barret was dismissed - he 'does not improve'. 'X.W' reserved his greatest praise for Wilson. He extolled that 'Mr Wilson holds the first Rank among landskip Painters. His view from Moor Park is, in point of execution, capital, and may convince the World that the simple Grandeur of an extensively, richly-cultivated, wooded Plain, and the Verdure, almost peculiar to our Island, so admired in Nature, and so much descried in Imitation, may have extraordinary beauty in a Picture'.¹¹¹ (fig 40) The language used in the description of Wilson's landscape was mocked by 'T.H'. He remonstrated that Wilson needed 'no description of his merit from such an improper a Hand. His view from Moor-park, he says, in *Point of Execution* is capital (What does the Fool mean by *Execution*?)' and mocked the concept of *simple* Grandeur as applicable to a well cultivated, wooded vista.¹¹² Nevertheless, 'X.W', despite his use of connoisseurial terminology, had recognised that it was the depiction of Nature rather than the formal qualities of the work that merited admiration. Furthermore, 'X.W' had hailed Marlow as 'a rising genius'. Marlow, whose work demonstrated his skill in meticulously detailing the natural features of the views depicted, would not merit the appellation of genius in Duff's understanding of the term.

The persistence of the difference in the critical response by critics since 1760 was further exemplified in a rare review of the Free Society exhibition of 1767. 'A Lover of the Arts' criticised Daniel Bond's *A large landscape and figures*, claiming that 'The distance of this landscape is very cold, ill coloured, and is not in harmony with the sky. The leafage of his trees seem more properly adapted to tapestry weaving than an imitation of nature, and his

¹¹¹ *Public Advertiser* 1 May 1767.

¹¹² *Public Advertiser* 5 May 1767.

skies in general, spoil the pretty effect of his smaller pictures'. He was equally negative in his reference to George Smith's *A large landscape and figures*. He protested that 'Mr Smith, I suppose, has a mind to try if he cannot shew the variety of nature with two colours; for in this landscape, (although a very good design) all the lights are green and the shadows umber'.¹¹³



40) Richard Wilson, *Moor Park, Distant view to Cassiobury*, 1765-1767, oil on canvas, 147.6 x 184.3 cm, exh, Society of Artists 1767, Private collection.

'M.H' responded to these remarks. He declared that he had enjoyed 'the pleasure of viewing the different productions of works of genius, and forming proper judgements of their work'. George Smith was described as 'an ingenious gentleman still maintaining the character he has shown for many years; his present performances are nothing short of those which gained him the reputation of one of the best landscape painters we have'. He positively admired the landscapes of Bond; they were 'exceedingly good, his scenes rural and natural, the *chiaro oscuro* pleasing, the colouring sweet, with remarkable ease and freedom of pencilling'.¹¹⁴ These critics made contrasting assessments of the landscapes of Bond and Smith, expressed in a different vocabulary. 'A lover of the Arts' criticised the

¹¹³ *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* 7 May 1767.

¹¹⁴ *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* 9 May 1767.

landscapes for their lack of warmth, unnatural appearance and dull range of colour. This disrupted a true portrayal of the natural world. M.H, in his praise for Bond, had reverted to the conventional descriptive terminology of connoisseurs. Ingenuity, well defined 'chiaro obscura', and skill in drawing were the admired attributes of excellence.

Conclusion

Munsterberg claimed that the reviews of exhibitions between 1760 and 1768 were 'remarkably unhelpful in letting us know what the pictures actually looked like, and by extension, how the original audiences saw them'. However, I contend that the critics, in their reviews of landscape paintings, did communicate how they were seen by the contemporary exhibition visitor. Although it may be argued that the review literature is not representative of the wider audience, critics and visitors to exhibitions, as Andrew Hemingway noted, 'necessarily drew on a common stock of received ideas'.¹¹⁵ By 1768, these 'received ideas' were not those of collectors or connoisseurs, who continued to be denounced for their lack of interest in modern British art. Inevitably, this new critical response to landscape paintings developed inconsistently and unpredictably, with disparate ideas expressed by individual critics,

I argue that, nevertheless, there was growing consensus among critics by 1768. Accurate mimetic representation became less important; depictions of the natural beauty of the countryside or the evocation of a sensory response from the viewer were the most admired qualities of a landscape painting. Munsterberg opined that, in the reviews the 'Most astonishing [feature] is the small number of comments about colour'.¹¹⁶ I suggest that, for landscape painting, this was not true. Accurate depiction of colour was considered essential in the portrayal of nature; harsh and unnatural tones were condemned as it became appreciated that the beauty of nature could only be expressed through truthful rendition of the different hues found in the natural world.

The new descriptive vocabulary had emerged by 1768 was more accessible and meaningful to the middle-class audience exposed to painting for the first time. However, although it was accepted that connoisseurs were no longer the arbiters of artistic excellence, commentators continued to express disappointment at their lack of engagement with modern British art.

¹¹⁵ Hemingway, *Landscape Imagery and Urban Culture*, 105.

¹¹⁶ Munsterberg, 'The beginning of British art criticism', 91.

The exhibitions of SEAMC and the Society of Artists showed not only landscape paintings but also prints and engravings. In chapter four, I evaluate the importance of the exhibited reproductive print for landscape painters. It has already been shown that a commercially successful trade in speculatively-produced landscape imagery was established before exhibitions were inaugurated. The next chapter determines whether the institution of an exhibition culture from 1760 changed the print market for landscape painting. Clayton declared that exhibitions ‘caught the imagination of the public’, and although the thousands who visited may not have been able to afford, or indeed wish to, buy a painting, ‘they could afford prints’.¹¹⁷ Brewer commented on the symbiotic relationship between exhibitions and the print industry. He wrote that ‘the era of exhibitions after the 1760s was a period when British art was reproduced as never before’.¹¹⁸ Analysis of critical reviews of landscape paintings between 1760 and 1768 revealed a growing accord among critics about the landscape painters most deserving of praise. I assess how important the exhibited reproductive print, and prints after exhibited paintings, were in establishing the reputations of landscape painters.

¹¹⁷ Timothy Clayton, *The English Print 1688-1802* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1997), 181.

¹¹⁸ Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, 456.

CHAPTER 4

Engravers and the landscape print.

Introduction

The commercial print market established before 1760 was dominated by landscape prints featuring scenic views, historic sites and popular tourist destinations.¹ These prints, advertised in the popular newspapers, were promoted to suit the different interests of a socially and economically diverse public. The exhibitions of the Society of Artists and the Free Society between 1760 and 1768 offered engravers their first opportunity to display their prints in a communal public arena; before exhibitions, prints were only on display in print shops. I argue that the advent of exhibitions transformed the commercial market for landscape prints. British engravers exhibited their prints to advertise their emergent expertise in the art of print making and print publishers sought to take commercial advantage of exhibitions to sell their prints.

Landscape paintings featured prominently at the exhibitions held between 1760 and 1768 but few engravers exhibited reproductive prints after landscape paintings exhibited by British artists. Only prints after George Smith, Richards, Scott and Wilson can be positively identified as after exhibited paintings. Furthermore, despite the predominance in the commercial market before 1760 of prints depicting locations of British scenery, few exhibited prints featured similar imagery. Only ten of the thirty-two prints after British landscape painters exhibited between 1760 and 1768 were of identifiable locations, with seven showing British locations. Pierre Charles Canot showed his print *London Bridge after Samuel Scott* in 1761, with three prints after Wilson's Welsh views, engraved by Byrne, Canot, and Mason exhibited in 1766 and 1767, together with Mason's three prints after drawings by Woollett exhibited in 1766. Indeed, many British engravers exhibited no prints after British landscape painters; they preferentially chose to exhibit reproductive prints after continental landscape painters. I suggest that British engravers seized the opportunity offered by exhibitions to demonstrate publicly that they could compete with French engravers, who had enjoyed a near monopoly in the international print market in the early eighteenth century.

¹ This was discussed in Chapter 1.

Campbell, in *The London Tradesman*, asserted in 1747 that the best prints were 'executed in France where they excel ... [in] this Art'.² However, by the mid-eighteenth century, contemporary commentators suggested that British engravers were beginning to contest this pre-eminence. Rouquet pronounced that 'we must allow that of all the arts relative to design, that of engraving has made the greatest and quickest progress in England',³ and Robert Dossie, in *The Hand Maiden to the Arts*, 1758, applauded 'the progress we are making towards a rivalship with the French in this art, which they have for a considerable time cultivated and encouraged in the greatest degree'.⁴ Tobias Smollett, writing in praise of exhibitions in the *Critical Review*, 1760, declared 'That we have arrived at great perfection in painting, engraving and metzotinto, the multitudes that flocked to the exhibition were eye-witnesses: particularly in metzotinto, we may justly be said to excel every other nation'.⁵

Twenty-nine of the reproductive prints exhibited between 1760 and 1768 were after Italian, French and Dutch landscape painters. British engravers, encouraged by the acknowledgement of their increased expertise, sought to show publicly their emergent prowess by exhibiting work after continental artists, previously the prerogative of French engravers. Pears noted that the demand for the limited number of paintings by the greatest Old Masters stretched 'the financial resources ... of the aspiring collector', and proposed that the 'growth of print collecting [developed] as a substitute'.⁶ Exhibits after renowned continental landscape painters were designed to appeal to the more erudite collector at home and abroad, and attract the attention of print publishers ambitious to compete in the lucrative overseas market. Clayton's claim that prints were of paramount importance in the 'presentation of the British painting to a public at home and abroad' had little relevance to the exhibited landscape print.⁷

Subscriptions were raised for prints after work on public view at exhibitions. It was emphasised by Gloria Groom that 'public exhibitions of the paintings, followed by their

² Campbell, R, *The London Tradesman* (London: T. Gardener 1747), 113.

³ Jean André Rouquet, *The present state of the arts in England* (Dublin: G. and J. Ewing. 1756), 26.

⁴ Robert Dossie. *The Handmaiden to the Arts*, vol.II (London: J. Nourse 1758), vii.

⁵ Tobias Smollett, *The Critical Review, or, Annals of Literature*, May 1760, 400.

⁶ Iain Pears, *The Discovery of Painting: The growth of interest in the Arts in England 1680-1768*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), 170.

⁷ Timothy Clayton, *The English Print 1668-1802* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1997), xiv

publication as engravings' introduced prints 'to a new type of patron'.⁸ David Alexander, in *The Painted Word* has documented the rise in interest of prints after exhibited history paintings,⁹ and Postle, in *Sir Joshua Reynolds*, noted that Reynolds recognised the value of the print after exhibited portraits in publicising his work.¹⁰ However the exhibited landscape print did little to promote British landscape painters, with the conspicuous exception of Wilson and, to a lesser extent, the Smith brothers. Print publishers eschewed the publication of prints after landscape paintings of scenic views deemed of interest only to the domestic audience. They sought to promote prints that had universal appeal in the lucrative continental commercial print market, now accessible to British print publishers following the end of the Seven Years War.

The first publisher to exploit the commercial potential offered by exhibitions was John Boydell, described by Andrew Wilton as 'one of the great entrepreneurial figures in the London art world at that time'.¹¹ In 1760 he advertised a subscription for prints after two landscape paintings by Wilson, one of which, *A large Landskip with the story of Niobe*, had been exhibited with the 'Present Artists' in 1760, together with exhibits awarded premiums by SEAMC; the landscape paintings by George Smith and John Smith and the history painting of Andrea Casali.

William Woollett's print after Richard Wilson's *Niobe* was a phenomenal success. Richard Godfrey, in *Painters and Engravings*, 1980, acknowledged that it 'established English engraving as a force to be reckoned with on the continent'.¹² The acclaim, at home and overseas, encouraged the publication of further prints after Wilson's historical landscape paintings. Print publishers now controlled the commercial print market. Previously published prints were displayed at the exhibitions with the expectation that the wider exposure received at exhibitions would promote further sales, and landscape paintings were commissioned or bought to be engraved as prints.

⁸ Gloria Groom. 'Art, Illustration and Enterprise in late eighteenth-century Art' in *Art Institute of Chicago Studies* 18:2 (1992), 129.

⁹ David Alexander, 'Print Markets and Print Sellers in England, 1770- 1830' in *The Painted Word*, ed. Peter Cannon-Brookes, (London: The Boydell Press 1991), 23-29.

¹⁰ Martin Postle, *Sir Joshua Reynolds: The Subject Pictures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1995), 41-42.

¹¹ Andrew Wilton, 'A flourishing partnership: Painters and printmakers, 1760-1837 in *Constable, Gainsborough, Turner, Royal Academy of Arts* (Gallery Guide: Royal Academy of Arts 2013), 4.

¹² David Alexander and Richard Godfrey, *Painters and Engraving: The Reproductive Print from Hogarth to Wilkie*, exhibition catalogue (Yale Center for British Art 1980), 24.

This chapter explores the relationship between engravers, landscape painters and exhibitions. Elizabeth Perry stated that, from the 1760s, 'a new school of English engraving emerged' which became 'dominant in the later part of the century'.¹³ Although Perry made no mention of exhibitions, it is surely no coincidence that this acknowledgement of the rise in the reputation of British engravers coincided with the inauguration of exhibitions.

Reproductive prints after British landscape paintings.

Forty-one engravers exhibited prints at the exhibitions staged by the Society of Artists and the Free Society between 1760 and 1768, with twenty-four showing reproductive prints after named landscape painters. Eighteen of these engravers were British, with five French and one German engraver also exhibiting. Exhibitions offered unprecedented important opportunities for British engravers to demonstrate publicly that they possessed the ability to challenge the domination of the genre previously enjoyed by the French. The exhibited landscape print attested to the engraver's ability and allowed exhibition visitors to admire and compare their individual skills; they no longer had to visit the print shops to evaluate the engraver's talent. Sixty-one reproductive prints were exhibited after landscape paintings by named landscape painters. (Appendix 6) Thirty-two prints were after the landscape imagery of eleven British artists; Bellers, Dominic Serres, Gainsborough, Lambert, Robert Price, Richards, Scott, George Smith, James Stuart, Wilson and Woollett.¹⁴ There were no prints exhibited after landscape painting by Barret or Marlow, despite the critical acclaim they had received at the exhibitions. Sandby exhibited a single print, *A View in North America*, but no artist was accredited with the original painting.

Exhibitions were used by print publishers to gain maximum exposure of their prints. This was emphasised by Gloria Groom who wrote that 'public exhibitions of the paintings, followed by their publication as engravings' introduced prints 'to a new type of patron'. Groom intimated that this innovative form of patronage only emerged in the late eighteenth century. However, I argue that this patronage was exploited by Boydell from 1760, when the first exhibition was staged.

The first exhibition, staged by the 'Present Artists', opened on 21 April 1760, and on 6 June Boydell advertised his proposal 'to publish by Subscription, Five Prints from the following

¹³ Elizabeth Perry, *The Handmaiden of Art: British Portrait Engraving*. Brown University Library Center for Digital Scholarship, accessed online 24 August 2016.

¹⁴ Dominic Serres was French born but settled in London in 1758, and was a founder member of the Royal Academy.

Capital Pictures. The Historical Picture of *Gunhilda*, by the Chevalier Casali ... *A Land Storm; in which is introduced the Story of Niobe*, by Mr. Richard Wilson; (fig 29) *A setting Sun, with emblematic Figures*, by ditto; And two *Landscapes* by Mess. George and John Smith.’ The advertisement specified that Ravenet was engraving *Gunhilda*, with Woollett engraving the four landscape paintings, that the historical painting by Casali and the landscapes by the Smith brothers had received premiums from SEAMC, and that ‘the public are desired to take Notice that Wilson did not offer any Pictures for the premiums awarded by that Society.’¹⁵ The relationship between prints and exhibitions was immediately established.

Clayton proposed that Boydell seized the commercial opportunity offered by the debate in the *London Chronicle* over the respective merits of Wilson and Smith to launch ‘his first speculative venture into contemporary fine art publishing’.¹⁶ However, there was no published debate; the correspondence in the *London Chronicle* had appeared before the exhibition opened, with no mention of Wilson. Boydell’s decision was likely to have been determined by his recognition that prints after the exhibited works that had attracted the attention of visitors to the exhibition offered the greatest potential for profit. It may also have reflected his desire to save himself from the expense of having to buy expensive continental prints for distribution in Britain. Godfrey, in *Painters and Engraving* noted that Boydell had imported from France, at great expense, prints after Vernet’s celebrated *Storm*, identified by Godfrey as *La Tempête*, engraved by J.J. Balechou. Godfrey declared that Boydell hoped in future to ‘avoid payment in money’ through the exchange of prints.¹⁷

The importance of exhibitions and the awards bestowed by SEAMC were recognised in an announcement in the *Public Advertiser* on 24 April 1761, which emphasised that the prints to be published after the work of Casali, Wilson and Smith had previously been on public display. Readers were informed that the print of *Gunhilda*, now ready for collection, was ‘elegantly engraved by Mr Ravenet ... N.B. Mr Ravenet, for this plate, received a Premium of Forty Guineas by the Society of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce’.¹⁸ Prints were ignored in reviews of exhibitions, but *The Critical Review* stated that ‘It is with pleasure ... to signify our approbation of another noble print, engraved by that ingenious artist Mr Ravenet ... we likewise beg leave to recommend to the public, the four landscapes, two by Mr. Wilson, and two by Mr Smith, which so agreeably attracted the eyes of the spectators,

¹⁵ *Public Advertiser* 6 June 1760.

¹⁶ Clayton, *The English Print*, 188.

¹⁷ Godfrey, *Painters and Engraving*, 24-25.

¹⁸ *Public Advertiser* 24 April 1761

during the time of exhibition. These four will be engraved by Mr. Woollett'.¹⁹ This was the first public recognition of the importance of the collaboration between exhibitions, engravers and print publishers.

It was suggested by Clayton that, when Boydell advertised his subscription, the Smith brothers and Wilson 'were unfamiliar to the wider public'.²⁰ However Boydell had published etchings after George Smith in 1759, the well-publicised premium awards attested to the appreciation of their work by SEAMC and their landscape paintings had been the subject of public discussion in the exchange of letters in the *London Chronicle*. Wilson may have been less well-known to the masses who attended the exhibition; few of his works had previously been engraved although Joseph Wood had advertised a subscription for a print after Wilson's *Lake of Nemi* in 1759.²¹ Nevertheless, his work would have been familiar to many of the 'patrician' exhibition visitors; he had enjoyed elite patronage in Italy and continued to receive prestigious commissions on his return to England.

The *Public Advertiser* announced on 1 October 1761 that 'Mr Woollett, having finished his Engraving after Mr Richard Wilson's *Picture of a Landstorm, in which is introduced the Story of Niobe*; the Prints ... are now ready to be delivered to the subscribers'. (fig 41) Boydell stated that subscriptions were still to 'be taken in' but that the prints could be purchased separately; *Niobe* for 10s 6d and *Gunhilda* for 7s 6d.²² It was unusual for a print after a landscape painting to cost more than a print after a history painting, but Boydell was obviously confident that the exceptional quality of Woollett's engraving justified the higher price. Clayton intimated that this price had previously only been charged for prints engraved by foreign engravers, but that it soon became 'standard for a British engraving of this size'.²³ Boydell had paid Woollett 'an unprecedented fee of £120',²⁴ and the success of the print reportedly earned Boydell a profit of £2,000, an exceptional amount for a print after a British landscape painter. The purchase price of the painting of *Niobe*, bought by the Duke of Cumberland which represented significant patronage for Wilson, is unknown.

¹⁹ *The Critical Review*, 11 April 1761, 332.

²⁰ Clayton, *The English Print*, 188.

²¹ *Public Advertiser* 5 April 1759.

²² *Public Advertiser* 1 October 1761.

²³ Clayton, *The English Print*, 188.

²⁴ Martin Postle, 'Inspiration and Imitation' in *Richard Wilson and the Transformation of European Landscape Painting*, eds. Postle and Robin Simon (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2014), 128.

However, it would have undoubtedly been a fraction of the amount accrued by Boydell from the print.

Woollett's print after *Niobe*, which established the international reputations of Wilson and Woollett, was not exhibited, despite assertions of many art historians. Alexander, in *The Painted Word*, declared that 'Woollett's success could not have been possible without the exhibition of the Society of Artists, which gave publicity to Wilson's picture ... in 1760 and to Woollett's print the following year'.²⁵ However, the print was not included in the catalogue of the exhibition held in April 1761. Indeed, Boydell announced in an advertisement in the *Public Advertiser* on 24 April that the proof print 'from Mr Wilson's Storm, engraved by Mr Woollett' could be seen at his studio in Cheapside.²⁶ Algernon Graves, in his comprehensive encyclopaedic *Dictionary of Contributors and their Works* at the exhibitions of the Society of Artists and Free Society included the print as exhibited as 205 at the Free Society exhibition of 1762.²⁷ Clayton, in *The English Print*,²⁸ and Charlotte Topsfield, in *Richard Wilson and the Transformation of European Painting*,²⁹ both stated that the print after *Niobe* was exhibited with the Free Society in 1762. However, the exhibition catalogue for 1762 only lists 188 exhibits, with no prints by Woollett included.

Niobe illustrated a story from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. It graphically depicts the appalling vengeance wreaked by the goddess Latona, enraged by Niobe's boasting of her fourteen children – Latona had only two. The horror and desolation of Niobe, as her children are slaughtered by Artemis and Apollo, is poignantly described. Simon, in *Richard Wilson and the Transformation of European Painting*, has identified that the exhibited work was not 'the prime original', which was commissioned by the Duke of Bridgewater from Wilson in Rome. Simon recognised that in the recently re-discovered Bridgewater version, many of the figures had been repainted, probably by the Italian artist, Placido Costanzi, and that Wilson had 'recreated his original composition with all his own figures in place' for the exhibition.³⁰

²⁵ Alexander, *The Painted Word*, 23.

²⁶ *Public Advertiser* 24 April 1761.

²⁷ Algernon Graves, *The Society of Artists of Great Britain 1760-1791: The Free Society of Artists 1761-1883. A complete dictionary of contributors and their work from the foundation of the Societies to 1791* (Bath: Kingsmead Reprints, 1969), 285.

²⁸ Clayton, *The English Print*, 188.

²⁹ Charlotte Topsfield, 'Catalogue' in *Richard Wilson and the Transformation*, 276.

³⁰ Simon, *Richard Wilson and the Transformation*, 20-21.

Woollett's print was greeted with unparalleled acclaim. The *Critical Review* described the dramatic scene; the damaged trees, the violence of the storm and the distraught figure of Niobe. It continued that 'here is an opportunity enough, from the nature of the subject, for an engraver to display his talents ... We therefore wish this truly ingenious artist the encouragement that his merit deserves, as we look upon this performance of his to be the best of the kind that this nation has produced'.³¹ Clayton suggested that the continental interest in the print astounded Boydell; a review of the print in a German newspaper alerted 'German-speaking connoisseurs to the accelerating progress of English engraving'.³²



41) William Woollett after Richard Wilson, *Niobe* published by John Boydell 1761, engraving and etching, 43.8 x 58.5 cm. British Museum, London.

The painting of *Niobe* had not been intended to impress the less 'socially desirable' visitors who flocked to the exhibition in 1760, but the educated 'patrician viewer'.³³ Solkin, in *Richard Wilson*, declared that Wilson, as a follower of the classical European tradition,

31 *Critical Review* XII (1961), 312. Cited by Clayton in *The English Print*, 188-9.

32 Clayton, *The English Print*, 180.

33 Solkin, *Richard Wilson* (London: Tate Gallery Publication, 1782), 65.

sought to appeal to the elite collectors who ‘amassed works by Claude, Gaspard, *et al*’.³⁴ Such viewers would have been familiar with the sculptures of Niobe in the Villa Medici in Rome, which Simon noted were the inspiration for Wilson’s painting.³⁵ Solkin, in *Art in Britain*, affirmed that Wilson, in his historical landscape of *Niobe*, had shown that a British painter had the intellectual ability to compete with the venerated Old Masters of landscape painting.³⁶ The eighteenth-century connoisseur was aware that history paintings by Old Masters, through their emotional and illustrative content, imparted poignant and moral sentiments. Although it was appreciated by the more perceptive critics by the mid-1760s that landscape paintings could elicit a sympathetic response, the poetic eulogy to Woollett by John Lockman, published in the *Public Advertiser* in November 1761, pre-empted this recognition. It was an acknowledgement that a print after a British landscape painting evoked an emotive reaction.

Dire Vengeance by Latona’s Offspring Shed
 ‘On hapless Niobe’s devoted Head;
 Her sons and daughters, sharing the same Fate,
 Transfixed! Pale objects of immortal Hate
 Strongly thy Master-Strokes these Woes impart
 Far as can reach thy imitative Art.’³⁷

Lockman emphasised that the viewer of this print would sympathise with, and be compassionately engaged with, the agony of the grief-stricken mother. Clayton claimed that this poem was printed in the *London Magazine* to celebrate the exhibition of Woollett’s print of *Niobe* in 1762;³⁸ however the print was not exhibited, and the poem had been published the previous year.

The exceptionally enthusiastic reception of the print of *Niobe* encouraged further collaborative co-operation between print publishers and engravers. Woollett exhibited three more prints after Wilson’s exhibited historical landscapes; the stories depicted would all have been familiar to the more erudite viewer. Wilson’s *A large landscape, with Phaeton’s petition to Apollo*, entitled *The Setting Sun with emblematic figures* in Boydell’s

³⁴ *ibid*, 19.

³⁵ Simon, *Richard Wilson and the Transformation*, 18.

³⁶ Solkin, *Art in Britain 1660-1815* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2015), 211.

³⁷ *Public Advertiser* 5 November 1761.

³⁸ Clayton, *The English Print*, 188.

original advertisement, was exhibited at the Society of Artists exhibition of 1763. It depicts a story from Greek mythology when Phaeton, kneeling before his father Apollo, pleads for permission to drive the chariot of the sun. Wilson delayed exhibiting his landscape, until the proof print, exhibited with the Free Society in 1763, was completed. (fig 42) Boydell advertised that the original painting was in the collection of the Duke of Bridgewater, a regular patron of Wilson; the aristocratic ownership of the original work added further status to the print.



42) William Woollett after Richard Wilson, *Phaeton*, published by John Boydell 1763, etching and engraving, 5.83 x 58.3 cm, exh. Free Society 1763. Royal Academy of Arts, London

Boydell was not the only print publisher to take advantage of the acclaim accorded reproductive prints after Wilson's exhibited historical landscapes. Wilson exhibited *Celadon and Amelia* in 1765 with the Society of Artists, with Woollett and John Browne's print entitled *A Summer Storm, with the story of two lovers, from Thompson's (sic) Seasons*, published by John Wynne Ryland, shown with the same exhibiting Society in 1766. James Thomson's popular poem, *The Seasons*, published in 1733, described the distress of Celadon after the death of Amelia, struck by lightning. For Solkin, this was 'a moral theme

suited to a landscape painter of Wilson's Grand-Style pretensions'.³⁹ The original painting was described as belonging to William Lock, the wealthy travelling companion of Wilson in Italy. Wilson exhibited *A storm at day-break with the story of Ceyx and Alcyone* in 1768. It portrayed the moment in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* when Alcyone witnesses the body of Ceyx, her drowned husband, being brought ashore. The print, again engraved by Woollett, and published by William Wynn Ryland and Henry Bryer, was shown in 1769.

These four large, expensive prints, designed to demonstrate the intellectual prowess of Wilson, were produced as a series; each individual work would have been purchased by collectors when the prints were published. Simon emphasised that the debt to Claude-Joseph Vernet, who had persuaded Wilson to concentrate on landscape painting, is evident in Wilson's 'liking for storm scenes'. However, Simon stressed that, unlike Vernet, the figures in Wilson's landscape paintings remain 'subordinate to the overall demands of the total effect that he wished to achieve'.⁴⁰ *Phaeton*, although not 'a storm scene', demonstrated Wilson's ability to depict atmospheric impressions of light, shade and tonal variations. Postle commented that the practice of exhibiting prints after exhibited paintings accorded publicity to both engraver and artists, and emphasised the relationship between the painting and the print.⁴¹

The commercial success of Woollett's engravings encouraged Boydell to publish further prints after landscape paintings by Wilson that were in private ownership. In 1764 a print, engraved by Joseph Wood, after *Lake Nemi or Speculum Dianae* (fig 7) was inscribed as in the possession of Henry Hoare of Stourhead. In 1765, a print engraved by William Byrne, *A View in the Villa Madama*, was published; the original painting of *Villa Madama*, based on numerous sketches made by Wilson when in Italy, had been commissioned by the Earl of Dartmouth in 1753, but Wilson painted many versions of this view. Solkin tentatively identified *Rome from the Villa Madama*, now in The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa as having been exhibited in 1765, and sold to the Marquis of Tavistock.⁴² However, a comparison of Wilson's painting in *Richard Wilson and the Transformation of the European Landscape painting* and the print in the British Museum engraved by Byrne reveals that the print published by Boydell was probably not after this work.

³⁹ Solkin, *Richard Wilson*, 221.

⁴⁰ Simon, *Richard Wilson, and the Transformation*, 11.

⁴¹ Postle, *Richard Wilson and the Transformation*, 131.

⁴² Solkin, *Richard Wilson*, 219.

Wilson was the only British landscape painter to have seven reproductive prints exhibited after his landscape paintings between 1760 and 1768. Two prints after Wilson's Welsh views were shown in 1766. Canot exhibited a print after Wilson's *The Bridge over the River Taaffe*, (fig 43) and Byrne an engraving of *A View of Carnarvon Castle after Mr Wilson*; the original work was exhibited in the same year. In 1767, Mason exhibited *An engraved View of Pembroke town and castle*.



43) Pierre-Charles Canot after Richard Wilson *The Great Bridge over the Taaffe in South Wales*, published by John Boydell, 1775; etching and engraving, 44.1 x 54.5 cm, exh. Society of Artists 1766. British Museum, London.⁴³

Solkin, in *Richard Wilson*, suggested that Wilson's Welsh landscape paintings 'were expressly intended for the print market'.⁴⁴ By the mid-1760s, Wales was a popular tourist destination, with visitors increasingly drawn by its mountainous scenery and antiquarian history. Oliver Fairclough emphasised that Wilson's views, which contrasted the artefacts of the historical past with the peaceful serenity of the present, were, although still framed within the tradition of his Italian landscapes, identifiable portraits of these locations.⁴⁵

⁴³ Although the print was exhibited in 1766, it was not published commercially until 1775.

⁴⁴ Solkin, *Richard Wilson*, 229.

⁴⁵ Oliver Fairclough, 'An artist in his own country: Richard Wilson in Wales' in *Richard Wilson and the Transformation*, 165.

Wilson may have been persuaded that, with his reputation assured through the publication of prints after his historical landscapes, there would be a domestic demand for his Welsh landscape prints. On 12 May 1767 an advertisement appeared in *St James Chronicle*, for 'six engraved Views of the most remarkable and picturesque Places in North and South Wales ... Subscriptions ... Two Guineas'.⁴⁶ Although the six engravings were completed by 1768, they were not commercially published until 1775, when Boydell issued them as a set; it was suggested by Solkin that Wilson sold his plates to Boydell when he experienced financial problems.⁴⁷ At the exhibition held at the Royal Academy in 2011, *Constable, Gainsborough, and Turner*, it was proposed that Boydell published the prints following the commercial success of Sandby's aquatints of Wales;⁴⁸ Bonehill stated that Sandby's first collection of Welsh prints, *XII Views in South-Wales*, were published in September 1775.⁴⁹

Only one print after Wilson's Italian views was exhibited, despite Wilson having shown twelve landscape paintings featuring views of Italy between 1760 and 1768. Michelangelo Rooker exhibited *A View of the Villa Adriana from a Picture after Mr R Wilson* in 1768. Rooker was described by Walpole as 'Marc Antonio of architecture'; Marcantonio Raimondi was an early sixteenth-century engraver, famed for his prints after Raphael and Michelangelo.⁵⁰ Rooker's print certainly attests to his virtuosity. Paul Spencer-Longhurst has identified it as after *Hadrian's Villa, Tivoli*, exhibited with the Society of Artists in 1764.⁵¹ (fig 44) This print, together with a print of *Ditto, its companion*, identified as *Maecenas' Villa, Tivoli*,⁵² also exhibited in 1764, were included in Boydell's publication of *Twelve Original Views of Italy* in 1776. Boydell obviously deemed it more commercially beneficial to include them in a collection of similar views, rather than published as individual items.

⁴⁶ *St James's Chronicle* 12 May 1767.

⁴⁷ Solkin, *Richard Wilson*, 229.

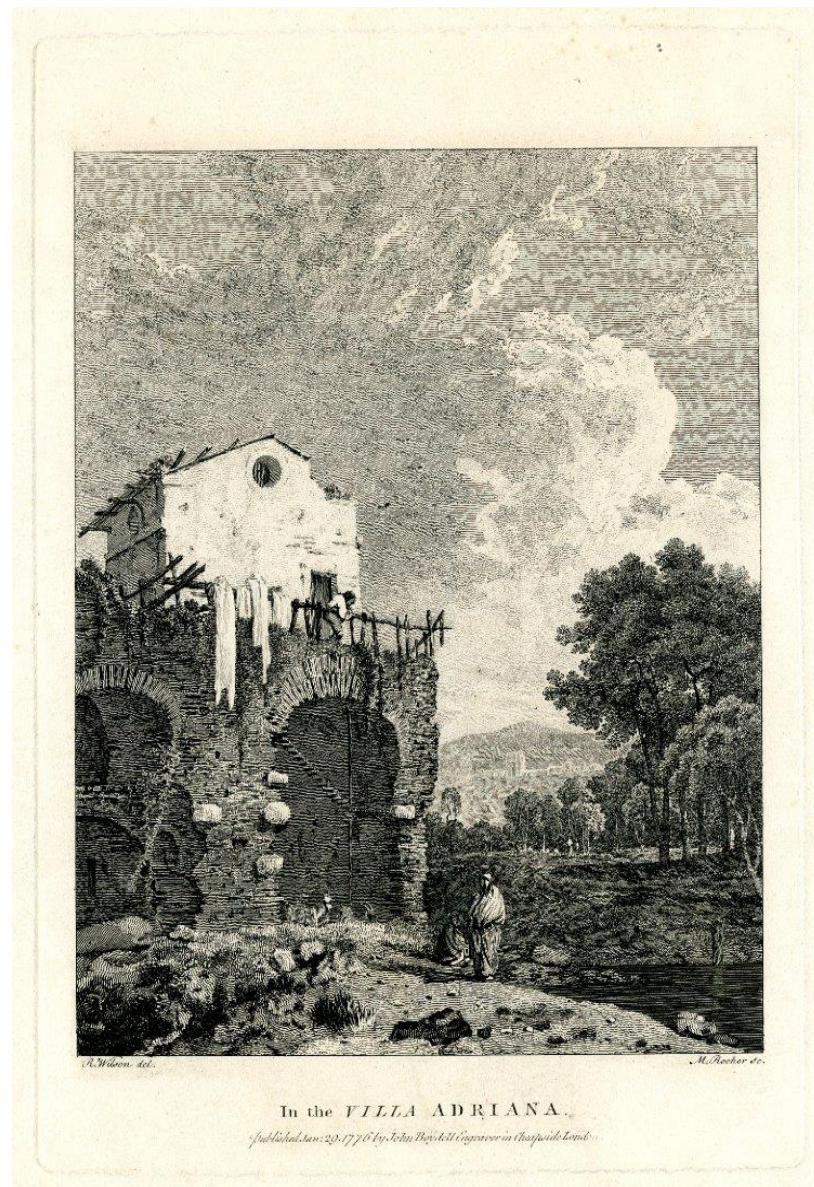
⁴⁸ Information from caption which accompanied Wilson's exhibited Welsh prints at Constable, Gainsborough, Turner exhibition held at the Royal Academy December 2011 - February 2012.

⁴⁹ John Bonehill and Stephen Daniels eds, *Paul Sandby: Picturing Britain*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 2009), 34.

⁵⁰ Horace Walpole, *A Catalogue of engravers, who have been born or resided in England: digested by Mr Horace Walpole from the MSS. of Mr George Vertue*. (London: Strawberry Hill 1763), 128.

⁵¹ Paul Spencer-Longhurst, 'Richard Wilson and the Transformation', 257.

⁵² Spencer-Longhurst, in *Richard Wilson and the Transformation*, identified this work as exhibited by Wilson in 1764. 256-257.



44) Michel-Angelo Rooker after Richard Wilson, *In the Villa Adriana*, published by John Boydell 1776, etching, 26 x18.3 cm. exh. Society of Artists 1764. British Museum, London.

Wilson had attracted affluent patronage in the 1760s but had fallen dramatically out of favour by the 1770s as he did little to ingratiate himself with his patrons or fellow artists. Nevertheless, prints after his work continued to sell. Postle accepted that 'Wilson failed to capitalize on the print as a form of self-promotion to the point when it eclipsed his own achievement'.⁵³ It is poignant that Wilson's achievements as a landscape painter were ignored; it was the reputation of the engravers and print publishers that were enhanced through the publication of prints after his work.

⁵³ Postle, *Richard Wilson and the Transformation*, 138.

The landscape prints after the award-winning exhibited paintings by the Smith brothers, published in 1762 and 1763, (figs 27 and 28) and represented a total contrast to *Niobe*. M.J.H. Liversidge, in *The Smith Brothers*, 1986 suggested that George and John Smith's close attention to the peace and beauty of English rural scenery, described with close reference to the classically-inspired pastoral tradition and Dutch 'rustic' imagery, contributed to their contemporary appeal,⁵⁴ and Brian Stewart noted that 'their reputation [was] spread ... through the reproduction of their work by the best engravers of the day'.⁵⁵ Boydell published a further print after George Smith's exhibited landscape imagery, and again the importance of the premium awards was emphasised. The inscription to *A Landscape* by George Smith, engraved by William Elliott, and published in 1763 (fig 45) stated that 'The Original Picture from which this Print has been taken in the Year 1761, obtained the First premium awarded by the Society for the Encouragement of the Arts, Manufactures and Commerce'. The commercial value of premium awards was underlined by this attribution. The prints by Woollett and Elliot were not exhibited; indeed Elliott exhibited no prints after British landscape painters.



45) William Elliott after George Smith, 1763, *A landscape*, published by John Boydell, 1763, etching, 41.3 x 51.9 cm, British Museum, London

⁵⁴ M.H.J.Liversidge, 'Pastoral and Rustic Themes: Landscape prints by the Smiths of Chichester' in *The Smith Brothers of Chichester* (Chichester: Pallant House Gallery Publication 1986), 39.

⁵⁵ Brian Stewart, 'The Picturesque Ideal' in *The Smith Brothers*, 50.

George Smith's reputation was further enhanced through the publication of prints after his landscape paintings by his London dealer, Thomas Bradford, in 1764.⁵⁶ Stewart, in *The Smith Brothers* claimed that 'the work of the Smiths translated particularly well to engraving and increased their fame not only in this country but also abroad'.⁵⁷ Despite this assertion that prints increased the reputation of George Smith, they were not, unlike the print after *Niobe*, greeted with acclaim. Furthermore, as his exhibited works were often merely entitled as *A Landscape*, it is not always possible to ascertain whether Bradford's prints were after exhibited paintings. Vivares had engraved and published the *Hop Pickers* after George Smith in 1760; it is possible that this print was after *A country family picking their own hops* which Smith subsequently exhibited with the Free Society in 1761.

Boydell was the first to recognise the commercial potential of the publication of landscape prints after exhibited works, and the international success of the print of *Niobe* established that British engravers could emulate French engravers. Alexander declared that the success of Woollett's print after *Niobe* was 'a crucial landmark in this history of engraving ... it established Boydell as a major publisher and made English engraving a force to be recognised on the continent'.⁵⁸ However, Boydell was not the only print publisher to make innovative use of exhibitions for commercial gain. Print publishers were commissioning landscape paintings or buying exhibited works. The domination of the print publisher in their relationship with landscape painters was now firmly established.

Wilson's *Ceyx and Alcyone* was exhibited with the Society of Artists in 1768, with the proof print exhibited the following year. Postle noted that the inscription on the engraving indicated that the 'original painting was "in the possession" of the print publishers William Wynne Ryland and his pupil Henry Bryer'.⁵⁹ Topsfield stated that it had been commissioned, rather than bought, with the intention of reproducing it as a print.⁶⁰ Paul Spencer-Longhurst observed that the first owner of Wilson's *Meleager and Atalanta* was the print publisher, Robert Sayer; this was presumably another commissioned work. The inscription under the print, when republished in 1779, credited John Hamilton Mortimer as providing the figures; he had been employed by Sayer to repaint Wilson's figures before

⁵⁶ Clayton, *The English Print*, 189-190.

⁵⁷ Stewart, Brian, *The Smith Brothers*, 53.

⁵⁸ Alexander, *Painters and Engraving*, 24.

⁵⁹ Postle, *Richard Wilson and the Transformation*, 132.

⁶⁰ Charlotte Topsfield, *Richard Wilson and the Transformation*, 285.

publishing the print in 1771.⁶¹ Postle suggested that, despite Wilson's apparent displeasure, Sayer, 'a consummate businessman, believed that ownership of Wilson's painting, entitles him to "correct" the compositions as he saw fit, without recourse to Wilson'.⁶²

Thomas Bradford was the one of first publishers to buy exhibited works specifically to issue as prints. George Stubbs exhibited a series of shooting subjects from 1767, the first of which, *Two Gentlemen going a shooting, with a view of Cresswell Craggs*, was set against the spectacular scenery of the Craggs. (fig 39) These were not commissioned views. In May 1768, Bradford advertised his 'Proposals for Publishing, by Subscription, Price one guinea and a half, Four prints of Landscapes ... To be engraved by Mr William Woollett after the original paintings, painted by Mr George Stubbs'. The advertisement continued that 'As the Proprietor will be at a very large Expence (sic) in purchasing the Pictures of so great a Master, and employing one of the First Artists in this, or perhaps any other Country, to engrave the Plates; he flatters himself with the Hopes of obtaining the Patronage of the indulgent Public'. Bradford stressed the patriotic motives behind this innovative venture; if the 'indulgent Public' support British art, their encouragement will enable the Nation to 'vie with the Ancient Greece and Rome, where Arts and Artists flourished like their States'.⁶³ Stubbs exhibited further paintings in the series in 1768, 1769 and 1770, with the engraved prints issued in 1769, 1770 and 1771.

Stephen Deuchar, in *Sporting Art*, 1988, emphasised that the verse caption under the first print reveals that it was published with the intention of capturing the interest of 'the urban market'; the print demonstrated the contrast between the countryside and the 'Smoaky (sic) Town'.⁶⁴ (fig 46) Solkin in *Art in Britain*, stressed that, in the prints after the original paintings, Woollett had embellished the stark background to make the print more visually attractive; a comparison with the original painting, (fig 39), clearly shows the addition of foliage and birds. He suggested that Stubbs must have agreed to this embellishment in acknowledgement that Woollett and Bradford were more aware of the expectations of urban print purchasers.⁶⁵ This practice was becoming more commonplace as print publishers asserted their ascendancy over the artists who painted the original work.

⁶¹ Spencer Longhurst, *Richard Wilson and the Transformation*, 287.

⁶² Postle, *Richard Wilson and the Transformation*, 132-133.

⁶³ *Public Advertiser* 31 May 1768.

⁶⁴ Stephen Deuchar, *Sporting Art*, 114

⁶⁵ Solkin, *Art in Britain*, 218

Indeed, Boydell had made changes to the engraving by Wood after Wilson's *The Lake of Nemi* before he issued it as a print.



46) William Woollett after George Stubbs, *Shooting*, plate 1, published by Thomas Bradford, 1769, etching and engraving, 44.5 x 55.2cm, Yale Center for British Art, New Haven.

Print publishers also exploited exhibitions as an opportunity to sell previously published prints. Woollett had received plaudits for his print of *Niobe*, but he was not the most prolific exhibitor of landscape prints after British landscape painters. James Mason, cited by Joseph Vertue as one of the engravers employed by Arthur Pond, had rapidly established a reputation as a talented printmaker.⁶⁶ Between 1761 and 1766, he exhibited prints after drawings by Bellers and Woollett and landscape paintings by Gainsborough, Lambert and Wilson. It was established in chapter one that print publishers frequently re-advertised their prints when they saw a further opportunity to attract purchasers. I propose that many of the prints exhibited by Mason had previously been published, and were exhibited with an expectation that the wider public exposure afforded by exhibitions would generate further publicity and sales and enhance the public reputation of Mason as an engraver.

⁶⁶ Paul Spencer-Longhurst, with Kate Lowry and David Solkin, *Richard Wilson, a digital catalogue raisonné*. Accessed 20 May 2016

Mason had raised a subscription for four prints after Lambert in 1759, which were published by Bowles, Sayers and Boydell in 1761 and 1762. It is probable that the exhibited prints, *Two landskips, after George Lambert* shown at the Society of Artists in 1761, were part of this set. The landscape imagery of Bellers was certainly already in the public arena; *Six Select Views in the North of England* after his drawings had been published in 1754. I propose that as the same engravers, Simon François Ravenet, John Sebastian Muller, Jean Baptiste Chatelain, Charles Grignion, Canot and Mason exhibited six *Landscapes from Drawings by Mr Bellers*, they were the same prints.⁶⁷ Mason exhibited two further prints, *A Sunset* and *A Morning*, after drawings by Bellers at the Free Society exhibition in 1763. Bellers was a prolific publisher of prints; it is conceivable that these exhibits had been previously published.

Mason was the only engraver to exhibit prints after Gainsborough; he exhibited *A landscape after Gainsborough* and *ditto after ditto* with the Free Society in 1763. John Hayes, in *The Landscape Paintings of Thomas Gainsborough*, 1982, wrote that 'no impressions of an engraving after a landscape by Gainsborough made by James Mason and exhibited at the Society of Artists in 1763 seem to have been preserved', and emphasised that the original painting was 'in the hands of Panton Betew, the London dealer'.⁶⁸ Clayton stated that 'pairs of prints by Mason, William Elliott and Frances Vivares ... were added to the body by which Gainsborough's performance as a landscape painter could be measured'.⁶⁹ However, I maintain that Mason's exhibited engraving may have done little to further public awareness of Gainsborough's ability as a landscape painter. His first exhibited landscape painting in 1763 had excited little critical attention. Mason also exhibited three prints after drawings by Woollett in 1766; it might have been expected that Woollett, with his reputation as an engraver well established by then, would have engraved them himself. Perhaps he was too much in demand from print publishers. Mason obviously hoped to capitalise on Woollett's reputation in the overseas print market; the inscription below *An Etching of Lord Westmoreland's House*, exhibited in 1766 was written in French and English.

None of the prints exhibited by Mason were after landscape paintings exhibited with the Society of Artists or the Free Society between 1760 and 1768. Indeed, there was little

⁶⁷ The catalogue of the Free Society exhibition states that one of the landscape engravers was Miller. I believe this to be a misspelling of Muller.

⁶⁸ John Hayes, *The Landscape Paintings of Thomas Gainsborough* vol. 1, 242.

⁶⁹ Clayton, *The English Print*, 190.

interest shown by engravers in exhibiting reproductive prints after landscape exhibits. George Smith exhibited more than fifty landscape paintings at the Free Society exhibitions between 1760 and 1768, and in 1769 Boydell published a collection of twenty-seven called *Picturesque Scenery of England and Wales*. However, only two engravers exhibited prints after his work. James Peake showed his *An Etching from George Smith* in 1764, and *An engraving from a Picture after George Smith* by Thomas Morris was exhibited in 1766. Clayton stated that the print publisher Thomas Bradford, the London dealer for George Smith, published several of his works from 1764, engraved by Peake and Woollett.⁷⁰ It is probable that the exhibited etching by Peake was one of this series. (fig 47)



47) James Peake after George Smith *An etching after George Smith*, published by Thomas Bradford 1764, etching, 40.8 x 51.4 cm, possibly exh. Society of Artists 1764, British Museum, London

Liversidge opined that the rustic view, with a tranquil river winding between woody banks, and a rustic cottage nestling among the trees, evoked 'Claude's idyllic scenes based on the countryside of the Roman campagna.⁷¹ Although probably an imaginary composition, it reflects the closely observed view of the countryside that exemplifies why prints after

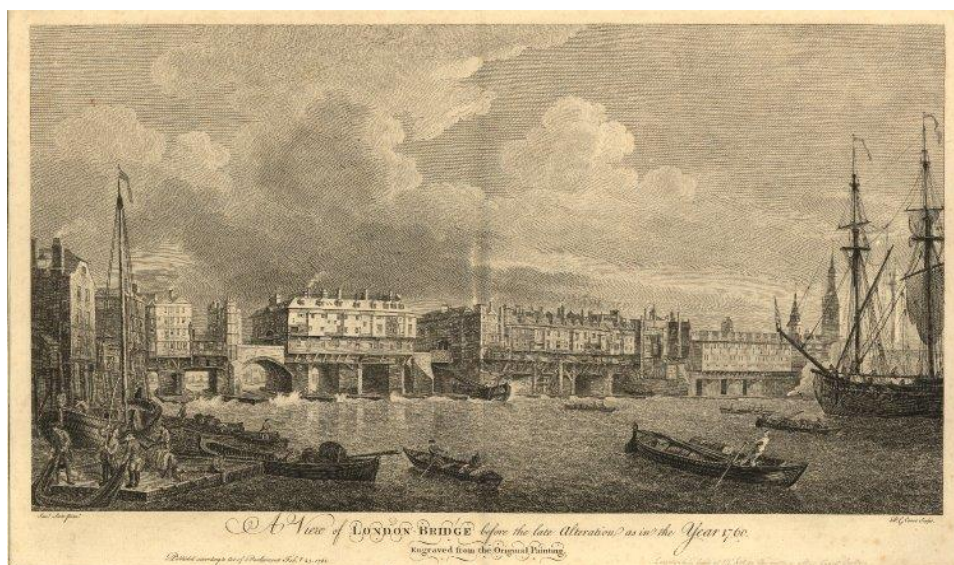
⁷⁰ Clayton, *The English Print*, 190.

⁷¹ M.J.H. Liversidge, *The Smith Brothers of Chichester* (Chichester: Pallant House Gallery Publication. 1986), 43.

Smith's landscape paintings were admired. It is probable that *An Etching* by Peake was exhibited by Bradford as a commercial decision to promote sales.

Richards contributed twenty-nine landscapes and views to the Society of Artists exhibitions between 1762 and 1768. However, only Thomas Hearne and Thomas Simpson showed prints after his landscapes. Hearne designated his print merely as *An engraving after a Picture by Mr Richards*; it is not possible to establish whether this was after an exhibited work. Richards exhibited *A Farmyard*, an unusual subject for him, at the Society of Artists exhibition in 1765; it is possible that Simpson's *An Engraving of a Farmyard from a picture by Mr J Richards* was after this work. There is no evidence that this print was published.

The prints exhibited after Lambert, George Smith and Gainsborough were not designated as after British locations; this was in stark contrast to the popularity of named British imagery before 1760. Only seven prints were after British sites; Wilson's views of Wales, Mason's engravings after Woollett's drawings and Canot's print *London Bridge after Samuel Scott*. This print (fig 48) was engraved in 1758 and exhibited in 1761 when Scott also exhibited the original painting. This was clearly a marketing ploy to promote sales of the print.



48) Canot after Samuel Scott, *A View of London Bridge before the late alteration as in the Year 1757*, etching and engraving, 33.8 x 57 cm, published by Scott, possibly exh. Society of Artists, 1761. British Museum, London.

Not all landscape prints were exhibited to advertise the prowess of the engraver or to increase sales of published prints. They were also exhibited to publicise the publication of books or series of prints. James Basire, renowned for his architectural prints for books of antiquarian interest, exhibited four prints featuring landscape imagery with the Free

Society between 1761 and 1765. Two were after James Stuart; *A View of Athens* in 1761 and *The engraving of the Mediterranean passes*, identified as a view of Pula in Croatia, in 1765.⁷² The print of Athens was probably exhibited to bring to public attention the monumental tome, *The Antiquities of Athens* by Stuart and Nicholas Revett, published in 1762. This work, the first accurate record of Classical Greek architecture, was remarkably popular; the first volume was financed by over five hundred subscribers.⁷³ It is paradoxical that Stuart also exhibited prints after the unfamiliar landscape painter, Robert Price, who exhibited with neither the Society of Artists nor the Free Society. Little is known about this artist but F.I. McCarthy, in *The National Library of Wales Journal*, 1964 noted that Price was described by a contemporary writer as having no equal in his landscape depictions.⁷⁴

Edward Rooker exhibited his architectural views to promote his proposed publication, *Six Views of London*, a collaborative work with his son, Michel-Angelo Rooker. In October 1766, he advertised a subscription for the *Views* and in the same year he exhibited the print of *Blackfriars Bridge, as in the year 1766*, which was included in his publication, and in 1768, *Covent Garden Piazza*. (fig 49) The advertisement also emphasised that Rooker was a fellow of the Society of Artists; membership was deemed important to establish his artistic credentials.

It is surprising that Sandby, recognised by Bonehill and Sarah Skinner as having made print-making 'a central feature of his practice' in his search for commercial success,⁷⁵ exhibited only one work designated as a print; *A View of North America* exhibited in 1761. Kim Sloan, in *A Noble Art*, wrote that Sandby made a series of prints after drawings made by Thomas Pownall, Governor of Massachusetts in 1760. She suggested that 'the initiative for the series probably lay with the print sellers, as they were feeding a market where interest in North America exceeded the information available and money could be made by those who could supply the images'.⁷⁶ The print exhibited by Sandby was undoubtedly exhibited to promote Jeffrey's publication in 1761 of *Eight Views of North America and the West Indies*.

⁷² www.ribapix.com Accessed 16 June 2016.

⁷³ James Stuart and Nicholas Revett, *The Antiquities of Athens and other Monuments of Greece* (London 1762).

⁷⁴ F.I. McCarthy, 'Some newly discovered drawings of Robert Price of Foxley in *The National Library of Wales Journal*. 13: 2 (1964).

⁷⁵ Bonehill and Sarah Skinner in *Paul Sandby*, 31.

⁷⁶ Kim Sloan, 'A Noble Art'; *Amateur Artists and Drawing Masters c.1600-1800* (London: British Museum Press 2000), 139-140.



49) Edward Rooker after Thomas Sandby, *Covent Garden Piazza*, published by Edward Rooker 1768, etching, 39.3 x 53 cm. exh. Society of Artists 1768. British Museum, London

Exhibited prints after landscape paintings by continental artists.

British engravers also exhibited prints after landscape paintings by admired continental artists; twenty-nine after Italian, French and Flemish artists were exhibited between 1760 and 1768 with the majority at the more prestigious exhibitions of the Society of Artists. I suggest that engravers, anxious to convince the public of their ability to compete with the French, exhibited prints designed to appeal to a public familiar with the paintings of admired Old Masters. It is of significance that sixteen prints after continental artists were exhibited by the British engravers who contributed no prints after British landscape paintings: Peter Paul Benazech, Boydell, John Browne, Elliott, Thomas Major, David Martin, Peter Mazell and Robert Pranker. The French engravers Simon François Ravenet, François Vivares and Canot exhibited six prints between them, with the rest by engravers who also showed prints after British landscape painters.

Seven prints after Claude Lorrain were exhibited; as one of the most highly esteemed landscape painters among collectors, these were clearly intended to attract the attention of exhibition visitors and print publishers. As Marie Tedeschi wrote, 'print publishers favoured artists ... whose work would be assured a profitable reception by the art-buying

public'.⁷⁷ Woollett exhibited *A View from Claude Lorrain*, identified as after Claude's lauded *Temple of Apollo*, at 'Present Artists' exhibition in 1760. (fig 50)



50) William Woollett, after Claude Lorrain, *The Temple of Apollo*, engraving, published by John Boydell, 46.9 x 60.1 cm, 1760, exh, 'Present Artists' 1760, Harvard Art Museums.

Postle declared that it was Boydell's publication of Woollett's engraving, which demonstrated that an English engraver could challenge the ascendancy of the French, 'launched Woollett's public career'.⁷⁸ Prints after Claude were also exhibited by Mason in 1765 and 1768, Vivares in 1766 and Peake in 1767. Boydell published a pastoral landscape print after Claude, engraved by Peake in 1769, and included a print after Claude's *A View on the River Po*, engraved by Mason in *The Capital Paintings of England*, published 1761-1768.⁷⁹ However, it is not possible to ascertain whether the prints published by Boydell were those that had been exhibited.

⁷⁷ Marie Tedeschi, 'Where the Pictures cannot go, the Engravings penetrate' in *Art of Chicago Modern Studies*. 31:1 (2005), 13.

⁷⁸ Postle, 'Inspiration and Imitation': Wilson, London and 'The School of Rome' in *Richard Wilson and the Transformation*, 128.

⁷⁹ John Boydell, *Collection of Prints engraved after the most capital paintings in England*, (London, 1761-1768)

The landscape paintings of the seventeenth-century Neapolitan painter Salvator Rosa were also admired by collectors. Malcolm Andrews, *Landscape and Western Art*, 1999, said his paintings, which featured rocky wildernesses, tempestuous skies and the turbulent countryside, became 'increasingly familiar in northern Europe' as travellers on the Grand Tour bought his work 'as well as hundreds of prints'.⁸⁰ Prints after his work were well represented at the exhibitions; Pranker exhibited a print in 1761, with Elliott, Boydell and Browne exhibiting further prints between 1766 and 1768. It is probable that Boydell had commissioned the print by Browne after Salvator Rosa's *St John Preaching in the Wilderness*; it was included in Boydell's *Collection of Capital Paintings*. (fig 51) The print does not do justice to the gloom and drama of the original painting.



51) Peter Browne after Salvator Rosa. *St. John Preaching in the Wilderness*, published by John Boydell 1768, etching and engraving, 46.6 x 57.6 cm, exh, Free Society 1768. British Museum, London

The growing reputation of Woollett, who was deemed to 'rival, and even excel the French in sheer brilliance of engraving,'⁸¹ and the success, both at home and abroad, of his print after *Niobe*, gave publishers increased confidence in the ability of British engravers. Boydell, although his reasons were ultimately commercial as he hoped to gain financially,

⁸⁰ Malcolm Andrews, *Landscape and Western Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1999), 130.

⁸¹ Godfrey, *Painters and Engraving*, 23.

was the first print publisher to provide important patronage to British engravers. In 1761, he launched a subscription for '*A Collection of Prints of the most Capital Paintings in England*'.⁸² The precedent had already been set for the publication in England of prints after continental artists. Louise Lippincott, in *Selling Art in Georgian London*, 1983, described the publication, by Arthur Pond in the 1740s, of his series of twenty-four *Italian Landscapes*. She ascribed the commercial success of these prints, engraved from the 'aristocratic collections', to the high market and aesthetic values placed on the original paintings by Poussin and Claude Lorrain'.⁸³ These prints had retained their popularity; in 1760 an advertisement in the *Public Advertiser* announced the sale of 'the very few sets remaining'.⁸⁴

Boydell's first collection included prints from the collections of the Duke of Devonshire and the Earl of Bessborough, and in 1764 he advertised further prints from works owned by the Duke of Devonshire, Dr Bragg and the Bishop of Bristol. The *Preface* to this collection announced that he had issued these prints to 'convey an adequate idea of those masterly performances we had in England'. He continued that, as most of the engravers working in England were 'foreigners', he was determined to encourage those from Britain. 'His warmest wishes are, that the profit and honour, which may accrue to his countrymen ... may give ample satisfaction to his Patrons in particular, and to the Promoters of the Polite Arts in general'. His commercial objectives are clearly stated; he declared that 'a degree of excellence in the Polite Arts has constantly been considered as greatly contributing to the glory of a civilised people; that the Art of engraving employs many people; ... that it brings into, but prevents money going out, of this Kingdom'.⁸⁵

I suggest that three engravers, Peter Paul Benazech, Elliott, and Mason were also motivated by the financial considerations when they exhibited landscape prints after the French artist Jean Pillement. Pillement, who settled in England between 1754 and 1764, was acclaimed for his decorative rococo-chinoiserie designs and landscape drawings. Marie Gordon-Smith declared that his landscape imagery, which portrayed 'the image of a peaceful countryside, free from violence, aggression, ugliness and sorrow' made him one of

⁸² *General and New Daily Advertiser*, 5 May.

⁸³ Louise Lippincott *Selling Art in Georgian London: The Rise of Arthur Pond* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1983), 138.

⁸⁴ *Public Advertiser* 13 March 1760.

⁸⁵ Boydell, 'Preface' in *A Collection of Prints, Engraved after the most Capital Paintings in England*, vol. 2 (London 1764)

the most popular foreign artists in London.⁸⁶ He exhibited four 'landskips' at the first exhibition in 1760, and the engravers who exhibited prints after his landscape paintings obviously aspired to profit from the reproductions after this admired modern French painter. Gordon-Smith noted that seven leading engravers exhibited prints after Pillement between 1760 and 1768 although only three engraved after his landscapes.⁸⁷

Prints after Dutch and Flemish landscape painters were also prominent. Solkin stated that Netherlandish art had already begun 'to attract unprecedented interest from wealthy collectors' in the 1740s.⁸⁸ Five prints were shown after Aelbert Cuyp. Mazell exhibited *An Aquafortis proof; from Cuyp* in 1767 and *A Landscape with Figures and Cattle from Cuyp* in 1768; Elliot, 1764, and Morris, 1768, both showed prints entitled *A Landscape from Cuyp*, and Martin contributed *An Etching after Cuyp* in 1766. Although Cuyp had never visited Italy, his Dutch landscape paintings were formulated in the 'Italianate style'; his peaceful scenes, his muted use of colour and atmospheric depictions evoked images redolent of more southern climes.⁸⁹ Prints after Asselyn and Berghem, and Wouvermans (sic) engraved by Major and Canot after Peter van Laer were also exhibited.

The contemporary acknowledgement of their increased prestige, the opportunity to display their work in a public area and the patronage of print publishers persuaded many British engravers preferentially to exhibit prints that appealed to collectors, at home and abroad, who were familiar with the work of respected continental landscape painters. Apart from the prints after Wilson, George Smith and Stubbs, there was little interest in the production of prints after other landscape painters who exhibited between 1760 and 1768. I have found no prints engraved after landscape paintings exhibited by Marlow whose exhibits had received critical acclaim in the popular newspapers. Marlow exhibited many views of London and popular tourist destinations, but I suggest that his meticulously-described urban views and scenic vistas had little interest for the elite clientele sought by print publishers. Marlow visited Italy in 1765-6, where he made many drawings of classical artefacts and Italian vistas. This may have inspired his historical landscape, *The Judgement of Midas*, which was issued as a print by Ryland in 1767. Many of his Italian landscapes were later published as prints; they were of more interest to well-travelled collectors.

⁸⁶ Marie Gordon-Smith, 'English Engravings of Picturesque Views after Jean Pillement (1728-1805) in *Artibus et Historiae*, vol 25, no 49 (2004), 67.

⁸⁷ Marie Gordon-Smith, 'English Engravings', 80.

⁸⁸ Solkin, *Art in Britain*, 116.

⁸⁹ www.nationalgallery.org.uk Accessed 10 May 2016.

Prints were made after landscape paintings by George Barret, but only one can be tentatively identified as engraved from work exhibited between 1760 and 1768. Boydell published a print, engraved by James Watson, of a *Spaniel watching a Duck* in 1768. (fig 52) It is conceivable that this was after *Portrait of a dog belonging to Lord Edward Bentinck*, Barret's sole exhibit at the Society of Artists exhibition in 1768, as this was the only occasion when Barret exhibited a work depicting an animal. (fig 52)



52) James Watson after George Barret *A spaniel and wild duck*, published by John Boydell, 1768, mezzotint, 44.1 x 53.4 cm, British Museum, London.

Many of Barret's exhibited landscape paintings were commissioned works of country estates, which would have little interest to engravers and print publishers hoping to sell their prints in the overseas print market. However Boydell later included, in his *Alphabetical catalogue of plates engraved by the most esteemed artists*, 1773, four prints after Barret; *A View of Snowdon*, *Tissington Church in Derbyshire* and two *Views of Hawarden Castle*, exhibited in 1765.⁹⁰ Only two prints were exhibited after landscape paintings by Gainsborough. Rosenthal proposed that Gainsborough had an 'atypical' attitude towards reproductive imagery; he suggested that the artist viewed his landscape paintings as 'private works' intended to be given away or bought by patrons who admired

⁹⁰ Boydell, *An Alphabetical catalogue of plates engraved by the most esteemed artists...which comprise the stock of John and Josiah Boydell* (London: Boydell Press 1773), 38.

his work.⁹¹ No reproductive prints were exhibited after exhibited landscape paintings by James, Pugh, Tomkins or Bond, who were regular contributors to the exhibitions held between 1760 and 1768. Engravers and print publishers had no interest in the work of landscape painters who commanded little attention from visitors to exhibitions.

Despite the dearth of prints after exhibited landscape paintings, exhibitions remained important in the marketing of prints. A proposal for a subscription, for 15s, for an engraving after a work by Alexander Cozens, *South View of London ... from Dulwich Hill*, etched by Austin and engraved by Canot was published in the *Daily Advertiser* in 1764. The advertisement stated that the painting was 'on View at Spring Gardens until the end of the Exhibition, then removed to Batson's Coffee-house in Cornhill'.⁹² The exhibiting of Cozens' *South View* with the Society of Artists was emphasised; it was obviously an essential component in the merchandising of this expensive print. Peter Lamborn exhibited drawings of views of Cambridge in 1764, 1766 and 1768 with the Society of Artists and in his proposals for a subscription for prints after these views, he emphasised that he was a Fellow of the Society of Artists.⁹³

The difficulties involved in raising a subscription for prints by a landscape painter who had not previously exhibited were encapsulated in an announcement in the *General and New Daily Advertiser*. A proposal had been made to raise a subscription for 'A perspective View of Brighthelmstone and the Sea Coast as far as the Isle of Wight. Engraved by Mr P. C. Canot from a drawing taken on the spot by James Lambert, painter at Lewes'. The published statement read that 'Mr Lambert begs to be excused disposing of the painting, according to his proposal, till next summer, the whole subscription falling greatly short of the expense he has already been at for engraving and publishing the print'.⁹⁴ The raising of a subscription without previous public exposure at an exhibition had proved problematic. James Lambert did not exhibit his views of Sussex until 1768; it is important to note that Graves had erroneously attributed the paintings exhibited by George Lambert with the Society of Artists between 1760 and 1764 to James Lambert.⁹⁵

⁹¹ Michael Rosenthal, *The Art of Thomas Gainsborough* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1999), 12-15.

⁹² *Public Advertiser* 13 May 1764.

⁹³ *St James's Chronicle* 24-26 November 1768.

⁹⁴ *General and New Daily Advertiser* 21 November 1766.

⁹⁵ Algernon Graves, *A Complete Dictionary of the Contributors and their Work from the Foundation of the Societies to 1791*, 141.

Conclusion

I suggest that the exhibited print at the Society of Artists and the Free Society between 1760 and 1768 was of great importance for British engravers. Exhibitions offered the first public opportunity for the engravers to demonstrate publicly their growing expertise to a wide public audience and to challenge the hegemony of the French. Simon stated that the 'marketing strategy' of exhibitions 'was designed to promote artist and engraver'.⁹⁶ Wilson's wider reputation was undoubtedly enhanced through the exhibiting of prints after exhibited paintings, and the prints after George Smith brought his work to public attention. However, few prints, with the exception of Wilson, can be identified as after exhibited landscape paintings. Prints were not exhibited to promote British landscape painters; engravers increasingly exhibited prints after continental artists with appeal to collectors with interest in prints after Old Masters rather than British scenic views.

Prints were also produced after exhibited landscape paintings. Wilton declared that 'commercially vital relationship between the printer's skills and the talents of the painter were a central dynamic of the London art'.⁹⁷ However, the commercial market was driven by print publishers. They decided which exhibited landscape paintings to publish, commissioned the engravers, and in some instances, commissioned or bought paintings to be engraved for the print market. Landscape paintings by British landscape painters featuring British locations exhibited between 1760 and 1768 were positively acclaimed in the popular newspapers but few prints after these works were published. Those that were exhibited were intended to appeal to the urban British market; the success of prints after Stubbs' *Shooting* series testified to this. However, print producers were anxious to compete in the international trade in prints. Prints after the historical landscape by Wilson dominated print production after exhibited landscape paintings; such prints had appeal to collectors at home and abroad.

On 20 December 1768, the *Public Advertiser* announced that 'His Majesty, ever ready to encourage useful Improvements, and always intent upon promoting every Branch of Polite Knowledge, hath been graciously pleased to institute in this Metropolis, a Royal Academy of Arts, to be under his Majesty's own immediate Patronage, and under the Direction of forty Artists in their several Professions'.⁹⁸ Engravers were denied full membership.

⁹⁶ Simon, *Richard Wilson and the Transformation*, 131.

⁹⁷ Wilton, *Constable, Gainsborough, Turner*, 11.

⁹⁸ *Public Advertiser* 20 December 1768.

Alexander proposed that because of the 'high profile which engravers assumed in the Society of Artists and the Free Society ... Painters set on raising the status of their profession 'did not want the agents of print publishers to have any say in their affairs'.⁹⁹ Sarah Hyde, in *Art on the Line*, stated that, unsurprisingly, most of the engravers refused to become Associate members of the Academy, and did not exhibit their prints.¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, prints were exhibited, but few were after landscape paintings. In view of the paucity of exhibited landscape prints at the Royal Academy exhibitions, with the preference of publishers for prints after history painting and portraits, I have not considered exhibited landscape prints between 1769 and 1782.

Much has been written about the establishment of the Royal Academy, but not within a continuum of landscape painting at the earlier exhibitions. The academic discourses of Joshua Reynolds, the first president of the Royal Academy, which emphasised the hierarchy of genre and the pre-eminence of history painting, threatened to marginalise landscape painting. Nevertheless, landscape paintings were still exhibited and subjected to public scrutiny. In the next chapter, landscape paintings exhibited at the early Academy exhibitions held between 1769 and 1782 will be discussed.

⁹⁹ Alexander, *The Painted Word*, 24.

¹⁰⁰ Sarah Hyde, 'Printmakers and the Royal Academy exhibitions' in *Art on the Line*, ed. Solkin (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), 219.

CHAPTER 5

The Royal Academy and Landscape Painting

Introduction

The Royal Academy was established following the signing of the *Instrument of Foundation* by George III in December 1768. Sir Joshua Reynolds, the first president, proclaimed in *Discourse I* delivered in January 1769, that 'An Academy in which the polite arts may be regularly cultivated is at last opened amongst us by royal munificence. This must appear an event in the highest degree interesting, not only for the artist, but also for the nation'. He acknowledged that although the foundation of an academy had previously been proposed, it had been 'recommended upon considerations merely mercantile'. However, Reynolds maintained that only when 'the higher art of design' flourished, with artists producing work that appealed 'to the lovers and judges of the arts', would the desired financial rewards be accrued.¹

The commercial intent of the Royal Academy

In Reynolds' academic theory, the Academy was to be distanced from 'considerations merely mercantile', but in practice the exhibitions were never dissociated from commercial intent. An entry fee was charged, despite royal patronage, to ensure that the viewing public were 'lovers and judges of the arts'; the wealthy and erudite patrons who would buy paintings 'off the wall'. The limited retail market, established at the Society of Artists exhibition in 1764 continued unabated. At a Council meeting in March 1769, it was agreed that 'the following should be printed in the catalogue; 'The Pictures marked with an * are to be disposed of'.² Five hundred and twenty-eight exhibits were asterisked for sale between 1769 and 1782, with landscape painters prominent among those taking advantage of this option; two hundred and forty-six of these were landscape paintings. Eleven landscape painters who had regularly asterisked a selection of their exhibits for sale between 1764 and 1768 at the Society of Artists or the Free Society marked their work 'to be disposed of' at the exhibitions staged by the Royal Academy. Furthermore, eleven

¹ Joshua Reynolds. 'Discourse 1' in *Sir Joshua Reynolds's Discourses on Art*, ed. Edward Gilpin. Johnson Forgotten Books 2012) 53-54. Original edition published Chicago: A.C. Mclurg 1891.

² *Minutes*, RA Council meeting 17 March 1769. There was no further mention in the Minutes of the Academy Council meetings of this concession to commerce at the exhibitions until the practice of marking work for sale discontinued in 1805.

landscape painters who had not previously offered work for sale at exhibitions now took advantage of this commercial opportunity. (Appendix 7)

The pervasive impact of Reynolds's *Discourses*.

Reynolds, in his *Discourses*, propounded his theoretical manifesto for the evaluation of art. I suggest that there was a marked disjuncture between his academic theories and artistic practice. He sought to position the Royal Academy as an institution of national importance where the 'higher arts of design'³ took preference over the 'lower exercises of the arts', which included landscape painting portraiture, landscape painting and still life.⁴ In *Discourse IV*, delivered in December 1771, Reynolds stressed the pre-eminence of history painting as the only genre 'in which men are universally concerned'⁵ with landscape painting marginalised to 'the subordinate schools'.⁶ Despite this support for history painting, the dearth of exhibited history painting and the presence of admired landscape paintings was noted by contemporary commentators. 'Gaudenzio', writing in *St James Chronicle* in 1777, bemoaned that 'As to History painting, it would only be repeating what I have already said on that Subject, were I again to mention the Want of them but [exhibitions] have good portraits [and] a great Number of excellent Landscapes'.⁷

The exhibition catalogues reveal that landscape paintings continued to be exhibited, but I suggest that the policies of Reynolds contributed to the decline in percentage of landscape exhibits following the publication of his early *Discourses*. From 1769 to 1771, landscape painting was well represented at the Royal Academy exhibitions. From 1771, following the deliverance of *Discourse IV*, there was a decline in the percentage of exhibits that featured landscape imagery. Reynolds was an influential and controlling figure within the Royal Academy, acknowledged by Postle as 'intimately involved with the day to day running of the Academy'.⁸ I suggest that the pervading authority of Reynolds, disseminated through his *Discourses*, influenced the decisions of the hanging committees. Gainsborough, in protest at the hanging policies, declined to exhibit in 1773. Furthermore, the relationship of many other landscape painters with the Royal Academy was fraught. Wilson and Wright of Derby, ill-suited to academic dictates, became increasingly alienated from the Royal Academy. Marlow, consistently lauded for his exhibited landscapes with the Society of

³ Reynolds, *Discourse 1*, 54.

⁴ *ibid*, 117.

⁵ *ibid*, 100.

⁶ *ibid*, 117.

⁷ *St James's Chronicle* 13 May 1777.

⁸ Postle, *Sir Joshua Reynolds*, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography accessed online July 15 2015.

Artists, retained his loyalty to this exhibiting Society; he did not exhibit with the Royal Academy until 1788, and never sought membership.

Reynolds continued to emphasise in his *Discourses* the importance of an elite audience, who would appreciate his avowal of the superiority of history painting. In *Discourse V*, he urged that exhibitors 'be select in those whom you endeavour to please'.⁹ However, as Solkin stated in *Art on the Line*, most of the 'respectable middle classes, who formed the bulk of the exhibition audience ... took greater pleasure from works ... with subjects closer to their experience'.¹⁰ Landscape paintings were more accessible to this audience than the lofty ideals expressed in history paintings.

Patronage

I argue that patronage remained important for landscape painters despite the claims by Pears, Brewer and Solkin that exhibitions were instituted to provide a market for British art. Commissioned estate portraiture, which advertised that the exhibiting artists had successfully attracted patrons, continued to be exhibited. Indeed, Holger Hooke described the Royal Academy as 'the most prestigious showcase of modern British art'.¹¹ Furthermore, it was asserted by Robert Baker, in his *Observations on the Pictures in the Exhibitions*, published in 1771, that advertising work for sale at exhibitions might damage the reputation of artists as it implied that they lacked patronage.¹² Gainsborough, despite his failure to 'sell off the wall', never asterisked his work, but four landscape painters who were fellow founder members of the Royal Academy took advantage of the retail opportunity offered by the Royal Academy exhibitions. Richards and Sandby had previously marked exhibits for sale. However, I contend that Barret and Wilson, who had enjoyed prestigious patronage, only resorted to asterisking their exhibited landscape paintings when their failure to gain commissions reduced them to penury.

⁹ Reynolds, *Discourse V* 140-141. Solkin cites, in *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1992), 273, this quotation was from *Discourse 111*. However, in his footnote 51, page 301, he gives reference as *Discourse V*, 89-90.

¹⁰ David Solkin, *Art on the Line: The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House 1780-1986*, ed. Solkin (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2001), 158.

¹¹ Holger Hooke. *The King's Artists: The Royal Academy of Arts and the Politics of British Culture 1760-1840*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press 2003), 62.

¹² Robert Baker. *Observations on the pictures now in Exhibition at the Royal Academy, Spring Gardens and Mr. Christie's* (London: John Bell and G. Riley 1771), 4.

The Foundation of the Royal Academy

The establishment of the Royal Academy followed two years of disagreement between competing factions within the Society of Artists. The display of exhibits at the annual exhibitions was a fundamental cause of dissatisfaction; the hanging committees were accused of placing works by senior members, predominantly Directors of the Society, in the most advantageous positions.¹³ Calls were made for electoral reform to mitigate this perceived hegemony and a motion put forward in September 1768 ‘that not more than sixteen of the Present Directors be capable of being re-elected for the year ensuing’.¹⁴ This proposal, seen as a direct challenge to their authority, was adamantly rejected by the Directors. However, following a ballot of members in October, many, including the president, Francis Hayman, were ejected and replaced by leading members of the opposition.

The new president, Joshua Kirby, sought reconciliation between the opposing cliques, but his position was further undermined by a letter received from eight of the recently elected Directors. They declared that ‘the ungenerous behaviour which we and our friends have met ... render it impossible for us to continue in Office’.¹⁵ Following this mass resignation, twenty-two artists, led by William Chambers, successfully petitioned George III to establish an Academy under his patronage. The thirty-six founder members included seven landscape painters, Barret, Charles Catton, Gainsborough, Richards, Sandby, Wilson and Zuccarelli, all of whom had previously exhibited with the Society of Artists.

The Royal Academy was not an elite model of the Society of Artists. George III had no involvement in the governance of the Society of Artists, despite the award of a Royal Charter in 1765. In contrast, the Academy was clearly identified with monarchical authority. The king, as the patron, was closely implicated in its administration; any changes to the rules were subject to the ‘approbation of the King’.¹⁶ The *Instrument of Foundation* stated that there were to be a maximum of forty members, all professional painters, architects or sculptors; regular elections were to be conducted for committee members; an

¹³ The disagreements between members of the Society of Artists are described in detail by Hargraves in *Candidates for Fame: The Society of Artists of Great Britain 1760-1791* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2005), 63-88.

¹⁴ *Minutes*, S of A general meeting, 6 September 1768,

¹⁵ Letter sent to Joshua Kirby on 10 November 1768, signed by Chambers, Moser, Newton, Penny, Sandby, West, Wilson and Wilton. Cited by Hargraves in *Candidates for Fame*, 8.

¹⁶ From *The Instrument of Foundation*, cited by Brandon Taylor in *Art for the Nation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 1999), 20.

annual exhibition held; and an art school established. Professors were appointed in Anatomy, Architecture, Geometry, Painting and Perspective. With no theoretical support – there was no professor devoted to landscape – landscape painting was already marginalised. Furthermore, the *Instrument of Foundation* stipulated that members of the Academy were to be denied membership of any other exhibiting society; Monks described this proscription as a blatant statement of intent that it wished to ‘starve the British art world into submission to Academic authority and hierarchical values’.¹⁷ The founder members of the Academy were already invested with the same hegemonic authority that had precipitated their rejection by the Society of Artists. Their authoritarian style was denounced by critics – for the same reasons that had caused division among members of the Society of Artists. Dissatisfaction over their hanging policies was publicly expressed. ‘A True Lover of the Arts’, writing in the *Morning Chronicle*, 1776, denounced the Academy for excluding exhibits to make room for ‘Academicks (sic), their pupils and adherents’.¹⁸

The importance of the engraved print in establishing the wider artistic reputations of exhibiting artists was ignored by the Royal Academicians. The aesthetic and intellectual principles of Reynold’s ‘Grand Style’, expounded in *Discourse III*, were designed to establish British painting and sculpture as liberal arts, ‘addressed to the noblest faculties’ as opposed to a ‘mechanical trade ... reduced to a mere matter of ornament’.¹⁹ Engravers, deemed practitioners of a ‘mechanical trade’, were denied full membership of the Royal Academy, although it was agreed at a meeting in March 1769, that six engravers be admitted as Associate members, albeit without the privileges conferred upon full members.²⁰ Alexander, in *The Painted Word*, declared that the Academicians, ‘determined to protect their status of their profession, did not want the agents of print publishers to have any say in their affairs’.²¹ Sarah Hyde, in *Art on the Line*, suggested the Academy feared that the inclusion of prints at exhibitions might give them exalted status if placed adjacent to oil paintings, but were reluctant to exclude them altogether.²² Many engravers, unsurprisingly, resented this exclusion from full membership, and refused to accept nominations as Associates. Robert Strange, in his scathing attack in *An Inquiry into the Rise*

¹⁷ Sarah Monks, *Living with the Academy; Artistic Ideals and Experiences in England, 1768-1784*, eds. Sarah Monks, John Barrell and Mark Hallett (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing 2013), 3.

¹⁸ *Morning Chronicle* 2 May 1776.

¹⁹ Reynolds, *Discourse IV*, 99.

²⁰ *Minutes*, RA General Assembly 6 March 1769.

²¹ David Alexander, ‘Print Makers and Print Sellers in England’ in *The Painted Word: British History Painting 1750-1830*, ed. Peter Cannon-Brookes (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press: 1991), 24.

²² Sarah Hyde, ‘Printmakers and the Royal Academy Exhibitions 1780-1836’ in *Art on the Line*, 224

and Establishment of the Royal Academy claimed that he had written his book, although it was not published until 1775, 'soon after the erecting of the Royal Academy of Arts. It was to rescue engraving, an art as useful as ingenious, from the indignity ... thrown upon it by the establishment'.²³ In December a further category of Associate membership was agreed for painters, sculptors and architects. It was only from these members that vacancies arising for new Academicians were to be filled.²⁴

The Royal Academy was now in direct competition with the Society of Artists, but this was not the immediate threat to the Society of Artists claimed by some art historians. Brewer opined that, with the establishment of the Royal Academy, the art world was now controlled 'by the leading painters of the day. The significance of this innovation is quickly apparent when we reflect how hard it had been for painters to exhibit to the public before this'.²⁵ Brewer ignored the popular success of the Society of Artists exhibitions between 1760 and 1768, and Hoock revealed that there were more visitors to the Society of Artists exhibition in 1769 than attended the first Royal Academy exhibition.²⁶ The Society of Artists continued to offer meaningful competition to the Royal Academy until the defection of many leading members amid financial miscalculations precipitated a decline in their fortunes. Solkin concluded that 'the advent of the Royal Academy came as a nightmare to most if not all of that far more numerous body of practitioners who suddenly found themselves excluded from the most prestigious institution devoted to the promotion of the visual arts'.²⁷ Nevertheless, non-Academicians were, although deprived of involvement in the administration of the Royal Academy, given the opportunity to exhibit their work.

Exhibitions held between 1769 and 1771

The catalogue for the first Royal Academy exhibition, which opened on 26 April 1769, made the commercial expectations immediately evident. It was prefaced by an *Advertisement*, which articulated the Academician's rationale for the imposition of an admission fee. It was accepted that, as the exhibition was supported by the King, the public 'may naturally expect the Liberty of being admitted without any expense'. However, the *Advertisement* continued that there were no 'other 'Means, than that of receiving Money for Admittance,

²³ Robert Strange, *An inquiry into the rise and establishment of the royal academy* (London: E. and C. Dillely 1775), iv-v.

²⁴ *Minutes*, R.A Council meeting, 11 December 1769.

²⁵ John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination, English Culture in the Eighteenth Century*. (London: Harper Collins, 1997), 218.

²⁶ Hoock, *The King's Artist*, 64.

²⁷ Solkin, *Painting for Money*, 240.

to prevent the room being filled by improper Persons, to the entire Exclusion of those for whom the Exhibition is apparently intended'.²⁸ This statement was an exact reprise of that issued by the Society of Artists in 1762; 'Improper persons' were not just those who were deemed unlikely to purchase works of art; they also included pickpockets, prostitutes and the great unwashed! C.S. Matheson, in *Art on the Line*, described this *Advertisement* as illustrative of the 'ambivalence' of the Royal Academy 'over its obligations to the viewing public'.²⁹ I suggest that it was indicative of commercial intent. The 'viewing public' desired by the Royal Academicians were the wealthy elite. Reynolds had emphasised this in *Discourse I*, when he had insisted that 'there is a general desire among our nobility to be distinguished as lovers and judges of the arts; there is a greater superfluity of wealth among the people to reward the professors'.³⁰

The Royal Academy assiduously courted this illustrious support at the dinners held before the opening of the exhibitions which were obviously instituted to procure patronage and promote sales of exhibited work. In 1770, the *Independent Chronicle* announced that 'Last Monday ... the Academicians gave a grand dinner ... where their guests, consisting of many of the Nobility, remarkable for their taste or patronage of the polite arts, and gentleman celebrated for their wit and learning, had the double pleasure of feasting, not only their appetites but their eyes, with a splendid profusion of excellent paintings which particularly distinguish this year's exhibition'.³¹ No mention was made of the exhibited works, but the names of three Earls, three Lords and fourteen others, including Walpole, Burke and Garrick were mentioned. These dinners, held annually, were widely reported in the newspapers. These public announcements, which celebrated the aesthetic achievements, and enhanced the social status, of exhibiting Academicians, took precedence over reviews of exhibits. The few critical comments published focussed on exhibited history paintings, privileged by Reynolds, with lengthy explanations of their content and meaning for those readers who may have been ignorant of their historical or mythological significance. Landscape paintings, although remarkably prevalent at the first exhibition, were largely ignored.

At the first exhibition in 1769, forty-two works depicting landscape imagery, by fourteen artists, were among the one hundred and twenty-nine exhibits on display. I suggest that

²⁸ *Catalogue*, R. A., 1769.

²⁹ C.S. Matheson. 'A Shilling Well Laid Out'; The Royal Academy's Early Public' in *Art on the Line*, 40.

³⁰ Reynolds, *Discourse 1*, 54.

³¹ *Independent Chronicle* 25 April 1770.

there was an initial reluctance among many artists to exhibit at an exhibition so closely associated with monarchical authority. The Royal Academy, to stage a viable exhibition, had to include a disproportionate number of works from the 'subordinate school' of landscape painting. 33% of the total exhibits featured landscape imagery. The Academicians, Barret, Gainsborough, Richards, Sandby, Wilson and Zuccarelli, their status denoted by the appellation RA in the catalogue, exhibited sixteen landscape paintings between them. Dominic Serres RA, known as a marine painter, exhibited a landscape, as well as four sea-pieces. A further five landscape painters, James, Elias Martin, Tomkins, Michael-Angelo Rooker and Samuel Hieronymus Grimm, who had defected from the Society of Artists, contributed thirteen works. The most prolific exhibitors were William Pars, showing landscapes for the first time, and Edmund Garvey who abandoned his former allegiance to the Free Society.

There was, at this first exhibition, a hesitancy to exploit overtly the commercial potential of the Royal Academy exhibitions. Only four paintings – all landscapes – were asterisked for immediate purchase. James, who had participated in the auction in 1763 and subsequently advertised his work for sale with the Society of Artists in 1764, 1765 and 1767, asterisked his three views of Egyptian Temples 'to be disposed of'. Edwards derogatively declared that as James had never visited the East, these works 'can only be described as copies'.³² James presumably hoped to excite the interest of erudite visitors to the Royal Academy exhibition. However, as the highest price received for his landscapes at the auction of 1763 was £5 15s 6d, it is unlikely that his Egyptian views commanded a high price.

It is more unexpected that Sandby, a Royal Academician, marked his *A View of Roch Abbey* as available for sale, although he had set a precedent at the previous Society of Artists exhibition, 1768, when his *View of Windsor on a rejoicing night* was asterisked. I suggest that Sandby, in his speculatively produced views of Windsor and Roche Abbey deliberately sought to take advantage of public interest in popular tourist destinations. Indeed, Bonehill declared that 'Views of Roche were a mainstay of Sandby's exhibited work'.³³ Postle, in *Paul Sandby, Picturing Britain*, stated that the majority of his exhibits at the Royal Academy were 'related to commissioned views of English and Welsh scenery', although A

³² Edward Edwards, *Anecdotes of Painters, who have resided or been born in England; with critical remarks on their productions* (London; W. Owen 1808), 26-27.

³³ John Bonehill and Stephen Daniels, eds., *Paul Sandby: Picturing Britain*, (London: Thames and Hudson 1009), 184.

View of Roche Abbey was obviously a speculation.³⁴ Neither Bonehill nor Postle mentioned that Sandby advertised work for sale at exhibitions.

The Royal Academy exhibitions were also prestigious showcases for commissioned landscape paintings; they would have been seen by the distinguished attendees at the dinners held by the Royal Academicians held before the exhibition opened. In 1769, Barret and Tomkins exhibited their commissioned landscape paintings, which advertised that they already enjoyed elite patronage; the expectation was surely that this display of work would lead to further commissions. Barret exhibited two views of the estate of the Duke of Buccleugh (sic) and Tomkins showed *A View of Roehampton, the seat of the Earl of Besborough*, *A View of Belvena, the seat of the Earl of Fife* and *A view of Bolderwood Lodge in the New Forest, Hampshire, belonging to the Duke of Delawar*. (fig 53) The impressive house is set distantly but prominently, and the extensive well-maintained estate, and the presence of the mounted riders, emphasise the wealth, social status and sporting interest of the Duke.



53) William Tomkins, *A View of Bolderview Lodge in the New Forest, Hampshire, belonging to the Duke of Delawar*, oil on canvas, 100 x 181.5 cm, exh. Royal Academy 1769. Sold by Sotheby's 1983, present whereabouts unknown.

Not all commissioned landscape exhibits were of stately homes. Richards included a view of the West Country with *A view of a cascade at Hestercombe, in Somersetshire, the seat of*

³⁴ Martin Postle, 'The Sandbys and the Royal Academy' in *Paul Sandby*, 32.

C.W. Bamfylde, among his three works.³⁵ (fig 54) The inclusion by Garvey of two *Views from Piercefield, the seat of Val. Morris Esq*, underlined he had also been successful in gaining commissions. Piercefield Park, which was opened to the public under the stewardship of Valentine Morris, had acquired a national reputation as an early example of landscaping.



54) John Inigo Richards; *The Cascade at Hestercombe*, ?1769, oil on canvas, 63.5 x 53.5 cm, exh. Royal Academy 1769. Stourhead, Warminster.

The commercial potential of the Royal Academy exhibitions was emphasised by 'Musidorus' in two letters to the *Public Advertiser* in 1769. In his first letter, he did not advocate that exhibitions should function as commercial institutions but expressed his hope that they would encourage patronage. He applauded the 'Munificence of our Sovereign' for expanding the 'Horizon of the polite Arts', and made a plea that, in a country enriched by commerce, artists should now be 'rewarded more liberally than before'.³⁶ He envisaged commissions for history paintings to adorn public and private halls. However, in the subsequent letter, he stressed the commercial advantage of exhibitions; that the

³⁵ Art UK Online, accessed 12 July 2016, dates this work as painted in 1770. However, Richards exhibited this work with the identical name in 1769.

³⁶ *Public Advertiser* 2 June 1769.

expected rise in the status of British art would benefit trade. He expressed his hope that 'As Commerce is very justly made one of the principal Objects of this Island ... should the Improvements expected from the Royal Academy answer our warm Wishes, we then, instead of procuring Performances from Italy &c. shall probably export our own works; if not to that country, at least to others, which would be a considerable saving to this nation ... our signal improvement in Engraving ... may become a considerable article in our Trade'.³⁷ Although he accentuated the value of the retail market in prints, he made no mention that the majority of engravers were denied membership of the Royal Academy.

The Royal Academy exhibitions were not universally greeted with favour. Letters published in the *Middlesex Journal* in support of the Society of Artists, by 'Fresnoy' and his supporters, were virulently critical of Reynolds, the policies of the Royal Academy and its association with monarchical authority. It was recognised that the Society was threatened by the institution of the Royal Academy exhibitions. 'Vosari' in a letter to the *Middlesex Journal* bemoaned that the Royal Academy's seduction of members of the Society of Artists, would 'effectively ruin and annihilate that ingenious body, by stealing away some of the most meritorious of its members'.³⁸ These vicious attacks on Reynolds and the Royal Academy had little impact; indeed, the controversial denunciations may have had the opposite effect by encouraging interest from visitors in 1770 who had shown little interest in the exhibition staged by the Royal Academy the previous year.

The second Royal Academy exhibition, held in April 1770, was attended by nearly five thousand more visitors than in 1769.³⁹ I propose that, at this second exhibition, despite Reynolds's declaration that it was not his intention 'to dictate to his associates',⁴⁰ action may have been taken by the hanging committee to reduce the number of exhibited landscape paintings. Only 29% of exhibits featured landscapes or views. There was, however, a dramatic increase in the number of asterisked exhibits, with landscape painting dominant; twenty of the twenty-four works marked for sale were landscape exhibits. It is immediately evident that landscape painters now sought to take advantage of the commercial potential of an exhibition with close links to prestigious patronage.

³⁷ *Public Advertiser* 3 July 1769

³⁸ *Middlesex Journal* April 14-17, 1770.

³⁹ Hooock, *The King's Artists*, 64.

⁴⁰ Reynolds, *Discourse I*, 57.

James offered further views of Egyptian Temples and three landscape painters who had previously advertised work 'to be disposed of' with the Society of Artists or the Free Society, continued this practice. Garvey, an Irish painter who had visited France and Italy before he settled in Bath, asterisked two of his four exhibits, both views in France. He became a prolific exhibitor with the Royal Academy, exhibiting seventy-two landscape paintings with the Royal Academy between 1769 and 1782, showing views of France, Italy, the Alps, British landscape scenery and 'gentleman's seats'. Thirty were marked 'to be disposed of'. Elias Martin, a Swedish painter who settled in London in 1770, marked all four of his exhibits and William Williams his single work, a historical landscape. Only Robert Terry and Frances Smith, who asterisked views of Naples and Constantinople, had not previously used exhibitions as retail outlets.

Academicians again marked work for sale; Richards advertised his three exhibits, *A landscape with figures*, *A piece of Ruins* and *A View of Okehampton castle in Devonshire* for sale, and Barret *A study for Nature on the lake at Ullswater, in Cumberland*. Richards was familiar with the concept of exhibitions as retail outlets. The single work he had submitted to the auction in 1763 had sold more than the guaranteed price, and he had capitalised on this success by asterisking work at the Society of Artists exhibitions between 1764 and 1767. The majority of Richards's landscape paintings were compositions featuring rural scenic views, often with the addition of classical ruins or Italianate structures, which may reflect his background in scene painting. Richards had been overlooked as a committee member of the Society of Artists. Hargraves intimated that this may have been because 'he was engaged in art as a trade, not as a profession,⁴¹ but many landscape painters worked on stage productions including Lambert, a leading light of the early exhibitions. Few of Richards's exhibited landscape paintings have been definitively identified; the paintings advertised for sale at the Royal Academy only included two of named British locations, the view of Okehampton castle and *Shrewsbury Bridge*, exhibited in 1774. Richards asterisked ten out of twenty-two of the landscape paintings he exhibited at the Royal Academy between 1769 and 1777 – more than any other landscape Academician. In 1777, Richards was appointed as chief scene painter at Covent Garden. I propose that, now assured of a regular income, the retail market based on exhibitions became less important to him. He only exhibited five works between 1777 and 1782, with two exhibits, *Summer* and *Winter*, marked for sale in 1780.

⁴¹ Matthew Hargraves, *Candidates for Fame: The Society of Artists of Great Britain 1760-1791* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2005), 56.

It is more unexpected that Barret, for the first time, advertised landscape paintings for sale in 1770. Two of his three exhibited works were asterisked, his *View of Ullswater* and *A bull*; his third exhibit, *A View of his Grace the Duke of Buccleugh's Park*, as commissioned estate portraiture, was not available for purchase. Barret, an Irish painter, had enjoyed aristocratic patronage in Dublin and initially experienced similar success when he moved to London in 1763. Edwards wrote that for 'several years he was much employed and celebrated',⁴² and four of his views of Dalkeith, the estate of the 3rd Duke of Buccleugh (sic) were exhibited at the Royal Academy between 1769 and 1771. Hugh Belsey noted that, in the early 1770s, he was reputed to earn £2000 a year, but suggested that his irascible temperament was increasingly alienating his patrons.⁴³ Certainly no further patrician estate portraiture was exhibited after 1771. In offering his work for sale, Barret may have hoped to extend his patronage beyond the disaffected aristocracy.

Landscape imagery was again well represented at the Royal Academy exhibition in 1771; 25% of the exhibits and fourteen of the twenty-one works marked for sale were landscape paintings. Richards, Martin, James and Garvey again took advantage of the opportunity to advertise a selection of paintings for sale, with Garvey asterisking three Italian views, including *View of Lake Albano and Castel Gandolfo*, an unimaginative rendition of a famous Italian location, with insipid use of colour and lack of figural animation. (fig 55) Susan Sloman, in *Gainsborough in Bath* recognised that Garvey, a contemporary of Gainsborough in Bath, was not highly regarded; she wrote that 'The principal merit of Garvey's work, as far as the picture-buying public was concerned, was that ... it was cheap'.⁴⁴ Unfortunately there are no extant records of the purchases made at exhibitions, but the sale of 1763, in which Garvey, as an exhibitor with the Free Society, did not participate, indicated that the picture-buying public were prepared to spend modest sums on landscape paintings.

⁴² Edwards, *Anecdotes of Painters*, 98.

⁴³ Hugh Belsey in *Oxford Art Online*, accessed April 11 2015.

⁴⁴ Susan Sloman, *Gainsborough in Bath* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1986), 126-127.



55) Edmund Garvey, *View of Lake Albano and Castel Gandolfo*, 1770, oil on canvas, 103 x 129.5, exh. Royal Academy 1770. Sold by Christies 1998, present whereabouts unknown.

Michael-Angelo Rooker, whose reputation was already established through his prints of London, George Mullins, exhibiting for the first time and, more surprisingly, Samuel Scott, also asterisked their work. Scott, who had previously offered a work for sale with the Society of Artists in 1764, left London in 1765; he moved first to Ludlow and then, crippled by gout, to Bath in 1769. He died in 1772, and painted very little in his later years.⁴⁵ The painting for sale, *A View of the Tower of London, supposed on his Majesty's Birthday*, the last work he exhibited, must have been painted prior to his departure from London, or produced as a copy of a previous work.

Landscape painters were, by 1771, well-represented among the lower ranks of membership of the Royal Academy. The catalogue for the exhibition of 1771 designated, by the inclusion of ARA after their names, artists who had been elected as Associate members. In May 1770, exhibitors 'who intend offering themselves as candidates, in order to be elected Associates' were invited to put their names forward.⁴⁶ In July it was announced that eleven of the eighteen candidates were successful; they included the landscape painters Garvey, Martin,

⁴⁵ 'Scott, Samuel' in *The Oxford Dictionary of Art and Artists*, ed by Ian Chivers (Oxford University Press 2009) Oxford Reference online accessed July 4 2015.

⁴⁶ *Minutes*, R.A General meeting, 14 May 1770.

Pars and Rooker but no history painters, with Major, Ravenet, John Browne, Thomas Chambers and Canot confirmed as Associate Engravers.⁴⁷

The exhibitions of the Society of Artists in 1770 and 1771 continued to be well supported, despite attracting fewer attendees than at the exhibitions of the Royal Academy.⁴⁸ The established practice of using exhibitions as retail markets continued but it is not possible to ascertain which were immediately available for purchase. None were marked for sale in the catalogue. The catalogue stated that 'The Public are desired to take Notice, that the Numbers and Prices as such Performances as are to be disposed of, are left with the Assistant Secretary, who attends the Room for that purpose'.⁴⁹ This was the first time that the selling price was publicly available, but I have found no record of the prices asked or of any successful transactions. However, the continued presence of landscape painters who had previously asterisked their work for sale suggests that they would have been to the fore of those who availed themselves of the commercial opportunity offered.

The Royal Academy exhibition of 1772 was the first to be held after Reynolds' delivery of *Discourse IV* in December 1771. I argue that the overall authority of Reynolds, promulgated through his *Discourses*, influenced the hanging committees at the Royal Academy. These committees were of paramount importance for exhibiting artists; they decided which works should be exhibited, and where they were placed in the exhibition room. Although the number of exhibited portraits was unaffected – Reynolds was an acclaimed portrait painter – the percentage of exhibited landscapes at the Royal Academy exhibition fell from 25% in 1771 to 20% in 1772. In *Discourse IV*, Reynolds had stressed the pre-eminence of history painting, and urged artists to portray 'heroic action or heroic suffering. There must be something, either in the action or in the object, in which men are universally concerned, and which strikes upon the public sympathy'.⁵⁰ He exhorted landscape painters to emulate Claude, praised for founding his practice 'on the same principle as that which the history painter acquires perfect form'. The Dutch school of landscape painters, increasingly popular among collectors, were disparaged for producing naturalistic interpretations of identifiable locations, although Rubens was grudgingly exempted from these criticisms for his ability to 'animate his otherwise uninteresting views' with atmospheric features. Reynolds accepted

⁴⁷ *Minutes*, R.A General meeting, 27 July 1770.

⁴⁸ Hoock calculated that attendance at the Royal Academy exhibitions of 1770 and 1771 was 19,428 and 22,485: visitors to the Society of Artists exhibitions were 12,503 and 15,963.

⁴⁹ *Catalogue*, S of A 1771, 3.

⁵⁰ Reynolds, *Discourse IV*, 100.

that the 'subordinate schools', among which he included portraiture, landscape painting and still life were admired, but attributed this appreciation merely to the colouring and light effects produced by the 'confined labours' of the artists.⁵¹ Despite the increasing number of exhibits at the exhibitions staged between 1772 and 1779, landscape painting never recovered its former prominence. There were two hundred and ninety-two exhibits at the Royal Academy exhibition in 1772, but only sixty featured landscape imagery. In 1779, seventy-two landscape paintings were exhibited out of a total of three hundred and sixty-six exhibited works.

In *Discourse V*, 1772, Reynolds promoted the production of paintings with appeal to those with sufficient knowledge and judgement to appreciate the arts. He warned artists to 'be select in those whom you endeavour to please ... It is certain that the lowest style will be the most popular, as it falls within the compass of ignorance itself'. He cautioned that exhibitions 'have a mischievous effect by seducing the painter to an ambition of pleasing indiscriminately the mixed multitude of people who resort to them.'⁵² It can surely be no coincidence that the percentage of exhibited landscape painting had failed to rise. The hanging committees of an elite Academy would not wish to pander to the taste of an uninformed and ignorant audience.

The decisions of the hanging committees also caused dissension among the exhibiting artists. Gainsborough, who had exhibited with Royal Academy every year since 1769, declined to exhibit in 1773. This decision was provoked by his disagreement with the hanging committee over the positioning of his work. The popular press briefly remarked on his absence; the *Middlesex Journal* merely commented that 'Although the Royal Academy has suffered by the secession of Meyer, Gainsborough, Dance, Penny and Cypriani (sic) and others, yet the remaining artists seem to have exerted themselves in proportion to the loss; so that, on the whole, this year's exhibition cuts a respectable figure'.⁵³

However, it was noted in the *Craftsman and Say's Journal* in May 1773 that 'As some of the first-rate painters have this year withdrawn themselves from the Royal Academy ... and the reasons alleged for it, being the shameful partiality shewn in the hanging of pictures in the best light ... we are told that it is determined to avoid giving of preference for the future, by

⁵¹ *ibid*, 116-117.

⁵² Reynolds, *Discourse V* 140-141.

⁵³ *Middlesex Journal* 4-6 May 1773.

the drawing of numbers, by which the artist drawing No 1, is to have first choice of arranging his works, and so on progressively'.⁵⁴ It was not until December 1775 that the *Minutes* of a Royal Academy Council meeting recorded their awareness of dissatisfaction expressed over the hanging arrangements. A proposal was made that all pictures exceeding half-length be hung above the line, that when pictures are chosen or rejected, all academicians 'have liberty to be present' and that an 'Academician may draw lots for the position of one work, and to a second or third (if that thought proper).⁵⁵

In 1774, an unattributed letter in the *Morning Chronicle* applauded the rise of history painting. The author declared that 'art, in England, had long been confined to mere portrait painting, insomuch that the name of Face Painters has frequently been applied to us as a term of reproach by the Continentals. Within this last twenty years, it has, in part, divided with Landscape, but of late it has looked towards its noblest height, History painting'.⁵⁶ The author's perception was that history painting was now dominant. This accorded with Reynolds' dictum that history painting represented the pinnacle of artistic achievement. Despite this acclaim for the Royal Academy, discontent was expressed in the popular press over the restrictive policies of the Royal Academy. I suggest that, as president, Reynolds must have influenced these strategies. The *Morning Chronicle* complained that exhibitions were intended to 'promote the arts in general, to disclose to the world the latent sparks of genius ... Instead of this, we find that the rooms are covered with the whole years production of those leading people whose reputations are already formed in the publick (sic) estimate; and the works of the younger artists are hereby excluded from that place, which was essentially designed for their particular encouragement'.⁵⁷ In 1777, a further article in the *Morning Chronicle* protested that new regulations, which governed when exhibits should be presented for consideration for inclusion in the exhibition, having not been 'particularly and expressly announced to the artists [meant] that 'several artists have been prevented from exhibiting, and great disgust has been given'.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ *Craftsman and Say's Journal* 22 May 1773.

⁵⁵ *Minutes*, R. A Council meeting, 30 December 1775.

⁵⁶ *Morning Chronicle* 4 May 1774.

⁵⁷ *Morning Chronicle* 2 May 1776.

⁵⁸ *Morning Chronicle* 19 April 1777.

Exhibitions as Retail Outlets 1772-1779

I propose that Reynolds's disparaging attitude towards landscape painting may have inhibited landscape painters from offering their work for sale in 1772. Thirty-five exhibits were asterisked for sale, but only seven, by Christopher Barker, Mullins, Michael-Angelo Rooker, and Mary de Villeburne, depicted landscape views. The paintings 'to be disposed of' were dominated by nine still life works, a genre also dismissed by Reynolds as 'among the humbler walks of the profession', by Stephen Elmer. Elmer exhibited one hundred and seven works with the Royal Academy between 1769 and 1782: many were offered for sale. Edwards dismissed Elmer as producing 'representations of the objects which are familiar to the sportsman, the cook and the *bon vivant*'.⁵⁹ However, Ann Sumner, in *Stephen Elmer, c1715-1796*, stated he became wealthy; the appreciation of his skill in depicting dead animals fuelled demands from aristocratic patrons to paint the prized products of their hunting activities.⁶⁰



56) Richard Earlhom after Stephen Elmer, *Brown trout on a river back in a wooded landscape, a castle in the distance*, published by Z. Sweet, 1803, mezzotint, 49.7 x 35 cm. British Museum, London.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Edwards, *Anecdotes of Painters*, 233

⁶⁰ Ann Sumner, *Stephen Elmer c1715-1796* (Museum of Farnham, Waverley Borough Council, 1996)

⁶¹ Although this print was published posthumously, it shows his skill in the depiction of landscapes.

He is known to have painted landscapes; he advertised *North View of Farnham Castle* for sale at the Free Society exhibition in 1766. (no 80) Sumner concluded that none have survived, but his style as a landscape painter can be seen in many of his still lifes, most of which were undated. The depicted subjects were often set within imaginative landscape vistas of ancient buildings, woodlands, limpid water and stormy skies. (fig 56) His policy of marking his work for sale confirms Solkin's assertion that there was interest among 'ordinary exhibition goers, for paintings of familiar subjects, including views and still life, designed to appeal to 'the middling buyers' of relatively unadventurous tastes'.⁶² Elmer's paintings are not included in my analysis of landscape paintings; they were considered as still lifes by contemporary critics.

De Louthembourg, a leading exhibitor at the French *Salon*, exhibited in London for the first time in 1772. Iain McCalman in *Sensation and Sensibility*, 2005, suggested that by the early 1770s, de Louthembourg's 'aesthetic standing ... and social reputation' in France had declined and that, in debt and embroiled in marital difficulties, de Louthembourg came to England in 1773 as 'British insularity offered the young painter the chance to remake himself'.⁶³ He was certainly working at Drury Lane, as a set designer for Garrick, by 1773. In *Living with the Royal Academy*, McCalman proposed that de Louthembourg was also determined, by exhibiting prolifically at the Royal Academy, to forge an artistic reputation in London.⁶⁴ The reviews in 1773 showed that he succeeded. The *Middlesex Journal* proclaimed that 'It is but common justice to this celebrated foreign artist to say, that he has particular merit in these landscapes, together with his skies, which carry the marks of a masterly hand'.⁶⁵ As a stage designer who lacked British patronage, de Louthembourg took advantage of this encouraging reception to advertise twelve of his exhibits for sale at the Royal Academy exhibitions between 1775 and 1777.

The number of landscape paintings offered for sale at the Royal Academy exhibition of 1773 was maintained at a low level; only nine landscape paintings were marked 'to be disposed of'. Barron, Innocente Columba, Peter Royer and James Lambert asterisked their work for the first time, with Dall, Garvey, Richards and Sandby offering a selection of their exhibits for

⁶² Solkin, 'Crowds and Connoisseurs: Looking at Genre painting at Somerset House' in *Art on the Line*, 158

⁶³ Iain McCalman, 'Magic, Spectacle and the Art of de Louthembourg's Eidophusikon' in *Sensation and Sensibility: Viewing Gainsborough's Cottage Door*, ed. Ann Bermingham (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2005), 184-185.

⁶⁴ McCalman, 'Conquering Academy and marketplace: Philippe de Louthembourg's Channel Crossing' in *Living with the Royal Academy*, 84.

⁶⁵ *Middlesex Journal* 1-4 May 1775.

sale. This was the second time that Sandby offered a work for sale at the Royal Academy exhibitions; in 1769, he had marked *A View of Roch Abbey* 'to be disposed of'. In 1774, he asterisked all four of his exhibits; two views of Windsor, *A View of Wales*, and *An upright landscape*. However, the total of five works marked for sale represented less than 10% of his fifty-five works, mainly watercolours and drawings, shown at the Royal Academy exhibitions between 1769 and 1782. Bonehill stated that, in the early 1770s, Sandby visited Wales for the first time, and that 'following his tours', he made the scenery of Wales a mainstay of his exhibiting and publishing portfolio'.⁶⁶ In 1775, Sandby exhibited *Pembroke Castle at Sunset* (fig 57) and in the same year he published a series of prints of *Views of South Wales*. Sandby engraved and marketed his prints throughout his career, and his reputation was enhanced by the commercial success of these ventures which demonstrated a sustained market for high-quality reproductive landscape imagery by British artists. His abandonment after 1774 of his occasional use of exhibitions as retail outlets presumably indicated that the print market had proved more profitable.



57) Paul Sandby, *Pembroke Castle*, gouache, 26 x 59.5 cm, probably exh. Royal Academy, 1775, (no 273) Sold by Batting in 1971, present whereabouts unknown.

⁶⁶ Bonehill, Daniels and Nicholas Alfrey, *Paul Sandby: Picturing Britain*, 18.

By 1774, landscape painters evidently decided to avail themselves of the commercial opportunities offered by the Royal Academy. Despite Elmer offering eight of his exhibits for sale, landscape paintings accounted for nearly 50% of the asterisked works. Forty-six works were advertised for sale at the Royal Academy exhibition of 1776, of which twenty-four (52%) were by landscape painters. The landscapes offered 'to be disposed of' were dominated by exhibits from Garvey, Dall, Lambert of Lewes and Richards. Richards, although there is no record of him having visited Italy, asterisked two Italian views, *View of the Colosseum* (fig 58) and *St Angelo in Rome*.



58) John Inigo Richards, *View of the Colosseum*, oil on canvas, 39 x 51.5 cm, exh. Royal Academy 1776. Yale Center for British Art, Yale, Paul Mellon Collection, New Haven

View of the Colosseum is undoubtedly indebted to his work as a scene painter; the soaring presence of the Colosseum, and his inventive capriccio of Roman scenery with the inclusion of architectural features that would not have been visible from one viewpoint, contribute to an intensely theatrical effect. Three artists, John Boulton, renowned for his horse portraits, Thomas Boulton, and George Brown, marked their single exhibits, all entitled *A Landscape*, for sale for the first time. This was the only occasion that the Boultons and Brown used the Royal Academy exhibitions to asterisk their work, and John Boulton and Brown failed to exhibit subsequently. This indicates that the venture had not been a commercial success.

The Demise of the Society of Artists

The tenth exhibition of the Society of Artists in 1769 had retained public support; it drew an audience that marginally outnumbered that of the Royal Academy.⁶⁷ Although this was the only time that the attendance figures matched those who attended the rival exhibition, Hoock has shown that a respectable number of visitors continued to patronise the Society.⁶⁸ The catalogue for the exhibition of 1771 advertised that this was to be the last exhibition to be held in Spring-Gardens, the Society 'having purchased a Plot of Ground, in a situation more commodious and central to the Inhabitants of this great Metropolis, on which to erect an Academy, Exhibition-Room, &c'.⁶⁹ The exhibition of the Society of Artists in 1772 was held in their new premises in the Strand. The attendance of more than fifteen thousand visitors was only four thousand fewer than at the Royal Academy exhibition, and four landscape painters, Hodges, Marlow, Parkins, and Seale exhibited patrician estate portraiture, which showed that landscape painters exhibiting with the Society of Artists continued to receive prestigious commissions.

This was the last time that the Society of Artists successfully competed with the Royal Academy. Exhibitions were held in the Strand in 1773 and 1774, but the inaccessibility of the premises and the subsequent defection of prominent members, including the landscape painters, Francis Towne (1775) and Wright of Derby and Farington (1778) resulted in a decline in public interest. Furthermore, the unsecured capital investment in the new building and the collapse of the monetary market, proved too challenging for the Society's already strained finances.⁷⁰ The Royal Academy was, by 1776, firmly established as the pre-eminent exhibiting venue for British artists. In 1777, the *Morning Post* lamented that 'the persecuted and wandering Artists of this drooping Society, driven from their own elegant room, by decrease in their funds, have just enough strength to make another exhibition in its consumptive state, in an auction-room in Piccadilly, which seems the last receptacle for this melancholy body'. The writer did admit that there were 'a few productions that are exceedingly capital, which will do honour to them, when the name of this Society is gone, and forgotten', and conferred high praise on Marlow's landscapes.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Hoock calculated that 14,008 visitors attended the Royal Academy exhibition, held in Pall Mall, compared to 14,980 to the Society of Artists in Spring Gardens. Brewer shows a similar attendance chart in *The Pleasures of the Imagination*; however he inadvertently transposed the figures.

⁶⁸ Hoock, *The King's Artists*, 64.

⁶⁹ *Catalogue*, S of A 1771, 2.

⁷⁰ For a full description of the history of the Society of Artists between 1772 and 1780, see Hargraves, *Candidates for Fame*, 128-163

⁷¹ *Morning Post* 1 May 1777.

The continued importance of patronage

In 1771, Robert Baker published his *Observations on the Pictures now in the Exhibitions at the Royal Academy, Spring Gardens and Mr. Christie's*, which also included comments on the 'merits of twenty of our modern painters' who had exhibited in 1770.⁷² Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade dismissed Baker as a 'hack writer who tried to find a market for a book ... which he thought might interest the general public and might earn him some money'.⁷³ However, I propose that many of his observations were pertinent. Baker was the first writer to express openly the opinion that asterisking work for sale denoted that the exhibitor lacked patronage. In his comments on the exhibits of Francis Swaine, a marine painter, at the exhibition of the Free Society in 1770, he wrote that no 'productions are more perfect in their kind than the moon-light sea-pieces' but he was 'sorry to observe that, by his pictures being all marked for sale, they are not in the request they deserve to be ... this man's work will one day be in esteem, when that esteem (alas) will be of no benefit to their author'.⁷⁴ Swaine had advertised works for sale with the Society of Artists in 1765 and with the Free Society in 1764, 1768, 1769 and 1770. It is probable that he preferentially chose to exhibit with the Free Society which had evolved into a definitively commercial institution, in hope of sales; one hundred and thirty-six exhibits, including forty landscapes, were for sale out of two hundred and sixty works on show in 1770.

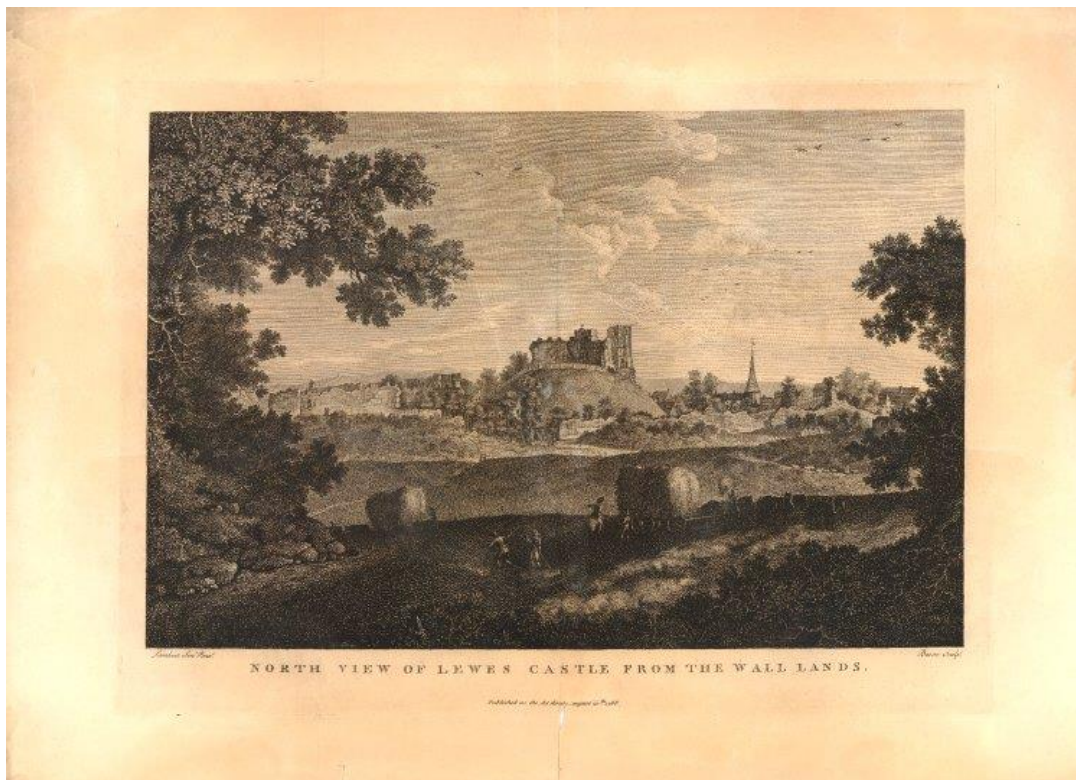
The retail market established at exhibitions represented an attractive prospect to artists who failed to attract patronage. Foremost among these were the provincial artists who, with no London studio had limited opportunities to display their work before the metropolitan audience. Exhibitions offered them the chance to offer their work for sale. Daniel Bond of Birmingham exhibited thirty-five landscape paintings with the Free Society between 1760 and 1780; the majority were marked for sale. James Lambert, a distant relative of George Smith of Chichester, painted local scenery around Lewes in Sussex. There is no record that Lambert ever visited London, but he sent thirty paintings to the Free Society exhibitions between 1768 and 1773; all but one were asterisked for sale. John H. Farrar, in *James Lambert, Senior and Junior, Landscape Painters of Lewes*, 1997, noted that there was a distinct dearth of local patronage in that area of Sussex, as all landowners maintained their

⁷² Baker, *Observations on the Pictures*, 3.

⁷³ Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade 'Henry Fowler and his Eighteenth-Century Predecessors' in *The Henry Sweet Society for the History of Linguistic Ideas*, Issue 15, November 2008, 16.

⁷⁴ Baker, *Observations on the Pictures*, 4.

primary residences elsewhere.⁷⁵ Sixteen of Lambert's exhibited works were designated as landscapes or views; the others were predominantly of sheep and cattle. The print after his work shown may not have been an exhibited work, and indeed may have been after a later work, but it remains typical of his style. (fig 59) The distant Lewes castle is placed within an idealised and decorative vision of the calm, idyllic, pastoral life of the Sussex countryside.



59) James Basire after James Lambert, *North View of Lewes Castle from the Wall Lands*, 1785, etching and engraving 22.8 x 3.15 cm. British Museum, London

George Smith, his reputation assured following the awards of landscape premiums at the exhibitions of SEAMC, maintained the local patronage of the Duke of Richmond. Nevertheless, lacking a permanent London workspace where potential patrons could view his work, he continued to advertise his exhibited landscape paintings for sale with the Free Society. He exhibited only once with the Royal Academy when, in 1774, he asterisked all four of his works for sale.

Barret and Wilson asterisked a selection of their exhibits at the Royal Academy. I argue that this decision was made following the loss of patronage. They only resorted to this blatantly commercial initiative following their failure to attract commissions. This failure was

⁷⁵ John H. Farrar, *James Lambert, Senior and Junior, Landscape Painters of Lewes*, (Sussex Archaeological Collection, vol. 135. 1997)

compounded by their inability, or unwillingness, to change their artistic practice; they were no longer producing landscape painting that complied with patronage expectations.

In 1775, Barret marked all five of his exhibited landscapes, two views of Southampton Water, and *Morning, a landscape with cattle, Mares and Foals, its companion* and *A landscape with a waterfall*, 'to be disposed of'. W.C. Monkhouse stressed that Barret was monetarily imprudent;⁷⁶ he may have been experiencing financial difficulties as patrician patrons no longer commissioned his estate portraiture. Belsey suggested that this failure to gain patronage resulted from his continued reliance on 'compositional formula' that had lost their appeal, and noted that by 1780, he had been declared bankrupt.⁷⁷ Edwards agreed that Barrett became bankrupt but stated that he was 'rescued by Mr Locke'.⁷⁸ Certainly Barret exhibited views of the park of William Locke in 1776 and 1777, and in 1782 he exhibited *A Wood scene in Norbury Park belonging to Locke*.⁷⁹ Locke's patronage may explain why he did not asterisk any of the twelve works exhibited between 1776 and 1782. Nevertheless, despite these commissions from Locke, Barret was obviously impoverished when he died in 1783. In 1784, the Royal Academy minutes reveal that, in response to letters from Mrs Barret and Mr Locke, '£20 was advanced to Mrs Barret from the [Royal Academy] charity account',⁸⁰ and she received further sums in 1785 and 1789.

Wilson, who had exhibited his landscape paintings to acclaim since the first exhibition was staged in 1769, and was further lauded for the reproductive prints after his historical landscapes, was still the recipient of prestigious patronage in the early 1770s. In 1771, he had exhibited two works commissioned by Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn, *Dinas Brân from Llangollen* (fig 60) and *View near Wynnstay, the seat of Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn, Bt*. Oliver Fairclough in *Richard Wilson and the Transformation of European Landscape Painting* observed that Williams-Wynn was the 'richest Welshman of his day', and that Wilson received the 'substantial sum of £210' for each painting.⁸¹

⁷⁶ W. C. Monkhouse, 'Barret, George' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Accessed online 11 April 2015.

⁷⁷ Hugh Belsey 'George Barret', *Oxford Art Online* accessed April 11 2015.

⁷⁸ Edwards, *Anecdotes of Painters*, 98.

⁷⁹ William Locke, a noted connoisseur and collector, had travelled to Italy with Wilson, and was the owner of *Celadon and Amelia*.

⁸⁰ *Minutes*, R.A Council meeting, 3 March 1783.

⁸¹ Oliver Fairclough, 'An Artist in his own Country: Richard Wilson and Wales' in *Richard Wilson and the Transformation of European Landscape Painting*, eds. Postle and Simon (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2014), 166.



60) Richard Wilson, *Dinas Brân from Llangollen*, oil on canvas, 180.3 x 244.8, exh, Royal Academy 1771. Yale Center for British Art. New Haven.

However, Martin Postle noted he was unable to capitalise on this success; he became an alcoholic and, as seen in Zoffany's *The Academicians of the Royal Academy*, was, by 1772, an isolated figure mocked by his peers for his dishevelled appearance, lack of manners and refusal 'to comply with their views on his style of painting'.⁸² Solkin, in *Richard Wilson*, stated that Wilson's career, which must have seemed very secure at the beginning of the 1770s as a founder member of the Royal Academy, had fallen 'apart at the seams'; from 1775 he exhibited no new paintings.⁸³ Scott Wilcox and Rosie Ibbotson in *Richard Wilson and the Transformation of European Landscape Painting* concurred that his reputation had reached a 'nadir ... at least in the commercial sense, in the last years of his life'.⁸⁴

I propose that, with threatened destitution, and little prospect of further commissions, he resorted for the first time to exploiting the retail opportunity offered by the Royal Academy exhibitions to sell previously produced work, unsold paintings.⁸⁵ Between 1775 and 1779, he asterisked five paintings for sale. *The Passage of the Alps at Mount Cenis* was asterisked in

⁸² Postle, *Richard Wilson and the Transformation*, 139.

⁸³ Solkin, *Richard Wilson*, 20.

⁸⁴ Scott Wilcox and Rosie Ibbotson, 'Relenting Fortune weeps o'er Wilson's Grave' in *Richard Wilson and the Transformation*, 149.

⁸⁵ Solkin, in *Art in Britain*, 214, stated that two Welsh landscapes, exhibited in 1766 with the Society of Artists were advertised for sale, but they were not asterisked in the catalogue.

1775, his single exhibit, *A View of Sion House, from Richmond Gardens* in 1776 and two Italian scenes in 1777. In 1775, he had exhibited one of his many versions of *The Lake of Nemi of Speculum Dianae*, and in 1777 offered a landscape with an identical title for sale but it is impossible to verify whether this was the same work. In 1779, one of his five exhibited works, *A small farmyard from nature*, was advertised for sale. Unfortunately, I have found no evidence that these exhibits were purchased, but Postle, in *Richard Wilson and the Transformation of European Painting*, noted that Sandby 'made a conscious effort to purchase his sketches and studies out of kindness and respect'.⁸⁶ The last time he exhibited, in 1780, he showed *Tabley House, Cheshire*, commissioned by Sir Peter Leicester in c.1764-5. Following his death in 1782, he received no gesture of respect from his fellow Academicians. The only mention of him in the *Minutes* of Royal Academy, was a statement by Reynolds reporting that Richard Wilson died on 11 May, and that 'his Majesty had been graciously pleased to appoint Samuel Wale to succeed him as librarian'.⁸⁷

Baker recognised that exhibitions were marketplaces, with more established artists exhibiting in the hope of purchases 'off the wall'. Zuccarelli, a founder member of the Royal Academy, had exhibited two *Landscapes with figures* in 1769 which were not asterisked. Baker commented that 'Many of Zuccarelli's pictures are incomparable. The two large ones he exhibited last year are worth any money'.⁸⁸ The concept of exhibitions as marketplaces was supported by the *Middlesex Journal* which, in April 1771, made one of the few contemporary references to the commercial aspects of exhibitions. It announced that at the dinner hosted by the Royal Academicians before the exhibition opened, 'many of the pictures which are to be disposed of were either bought or bespoke by the company present', and that 'Among the rest, the picture of Garrick in the character of Richard the Third [by Reynolds] is said to be purchased by Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn for 150l'.⁸⁹ Reynolds did not asterisk any of his work for sale; his established reputation and prestigious position as president of the Royal Academy were sufficient to attract purchasers for his few non-commissioned works.

Exhibitions did not function as a marketplace for the landscape paintings of Gainsborough, who advertised none of his paintings for sale. Sloman, in *Gainsborough's Landscapes*, suggested that although there was a market for 'modestly priced decorative landscapes',

⁸⁶ Postle, *Richard Wilson and the Transformation*, 141

⁸⁷ *Minutes*, R.A Committee meeting, 14 June 1783

⁸⁸ Baker, *Observations on the Pictures*, 8.

⁸⁹ *Middlesex Journal* 23-25 April 1771.

Gainsborough's landscapes, although admired, were probably too expensive for potential purchasers.⁹⁰ Rosenthal and Myrone accepted that, although he chose to exhibit 'the most flamboyant and ambitious of his paintings' designed to appeal to the cultured audience courted by Reynolds, he failed to attract purchasers.⁹¹ They noted that 'his landscapes tended to be given away to friends or remain unsold'.⁹² Hayes acknowledged that while 'the early history of at least two-thirds of the fifty-five or so landscapes which survive from the London period is known ... only ten can be shown to have been bought in Gainsborough's lifetime'.⁹³ He identified that *The Wooded Landscape with a peasant family at a Cottage Door*, exhibited in 1780, was only purchased by Thomas Harvey in 1786, many years later,⁹⁴ and that Reynolds bought *Girl with Pigs* exhibited in 1782 for 'an extremely generous price of £100 guineas', several months after the closure of the exhibition.⁹⁵

Gainsborough, who had refused to exhibit in 1773 in protest at the policies of the hanging committees, returned to the Royal Academy exhibitions in 1777. Despite the concession allowing exhibitors more control over the hanging of their work, a review in the *Morning Post*, edited by Henry Bate, a supporter and friend of Gainsborough, complained that *A large landscape*, 'a master-piece of its kind' was 'viewed to every possible disadvantage from the situation the directors have thought proper to place it'.⁹⁶ *A large landscape* has been identified by Hayes as *The Watering Place*;⁹⁷ (fig 61) Sloman, in *Gainsborough in Bath*, attributed this title, gained in the nineteenth century, for its 'perceived indebtedness' to a work with the same name by Rubens.⁹⁸ This tranquil pastoral work, with its banks of trees and shimmering water delineated in soft, muted colours, is illuminated by the glowing evening light of the setting sun, which highlights the centrally-placed placid white cow, while the gesticulating figure emerges from the shadows to the left. This work was acclaimed more highly than the portraits exhibited in the same year. Despite this critical enthusiasm, this work remained unsold; at his death it was still in his possession.

⁹⁰ Sloman, *Gainsborough in Bath*, 133.

⁹¹ Michael Rosenthal and Martin Myrone, *Thomas Gainsborough 1727-1788* (London: Tate Publishing 2002), 93.

⁹² *ibid*, 215.

⁹³ John Hayes, *The Landscape Paintings of Thomas Gainsborough*, vol. 1, (London: Sotheby Publications 1982), 181-2.

⁹⁴ Hayes, *The Landscape Painting of Thomas Gainsborough*, Vol 2. 477.

⁹⁵ Rosenthal, *The Art of Thomas Gainsborough* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1999), 224.

⁹⁶ *Morning Post* 25 April 1777.

⁹⁷ Hayes, *The Landscape Painting of Thomas Gainsborough* vol 2. 467.

⁹⁸ Sloman, *Gainsborough's Landscapes: Themes and Variations* (Bath: The Holburne Museum 2011), 61.



61) Thomas Gainsborough, *The Watering Place*, before 1777, oil on canvas, 147.3 x 180.3 cm. exh. Royal Academy 1777. The National Gallery, London.

Gainsborough exhibited for the last time in 1783. The *Minutes* of a Royal Academy Council meeting reveal that in 1784, he wrote to the committee to say that he could not consent to the placement of one of his portraits in a position where the 'likeness and the work of the Picture will not be seen ... he will not trouble the gentleman against their inclination, but will beg the rest of his Pictures back again'.⁹⁹ From 1784 he showed his work in an exhibition at his home in Schomberg House, which ran concurrently with that of the Royal Academy, until his death in 1788. With his reputation well-established, a solo exhibition might appear more advantageous. He could hang his work in the optimum position and the proceeds from entrance fees came to him rather than funding the Academy. Nevertheless, K. Dian Kriz said that, even at the sale held after his death, his landscapes 'fared poorly'.¹⁰⁰

Exhibitions also failed to serve as a marketplace for Joseph Wright of Derby, who exhibited with the Royal Academy for the first time in 1778. Following his critically lauded exhibits of *A philosopher giving the lecture on the Orrery* and *An experiment on a bird in the air pump* at the exhibitions of the Society of Artists in 1767 and 1768, he was, by 1773 when he left for

⁹⁹ *Minutes*, RA. Council meeting, 9 April 1784.

¹⁰⁰ Kay Dian Kriz, *The idea of the British Landscape painter: Genius as Alibi in the Early Nineteenth Century* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1997), 58.

Italy, one of the most admired artists in England. On his return, in November 1775, he attempted unsuccessfully to establish himself as a portraitist in Bath, while at the same time working on the landscape studies he had made in Italy. He exhibited *An Eruption of Vesuvius* and *The Girandola at the castle of St Angelo* in his studio in Bath and at the Society of Artists exhibition of 1776, where they were marked for sale. Failing to find purchasers, and in debt, he returned to Derby in 1777, where he remained until his death in 1797. He did not exhibit in 1777, and in 1778 abandoned the failing Society of Artists for the Royal Academy where he asterisked similar views for sale; *An Eruption of Vesuvius, with the procession of Januari's head*, *A grotto by the sea-shore in the Kingdom of Naples*, and *The Girandola, or grand fireworks exhibited at the castle of St. Angelo, in Rome*. (fig 62)



62) Joseph Wright of Derby, *The Annual Girandola at the Castel Sant'Angelo, Rome*, 1775-6, oil on canvas, 138 x 173 cm, exh. Royal Academy 1778. The Walker Gallery Liverpool.

The *Morning Post* declared that Wright was 'one of the greatest ornaments of the exhibition' and praised exhibited works for their 'sublimity, grandeur in design, added to a perfection in execution'.¹⁰¹ In 1779, Wright exhibited two further Italian views: *The Girandola ... a companion to the Vesuvius he painted last year* and *Neptune's Grotto at Tivoli*, which were

¹⁰¹ *Morning Post* 29 April 1778.

again available for immediate purchase. Although Wright received great acclaim, and enjoyed considerable middle-class patronage in Derby, he had no London studio. Matthew Craske has intimated that Wright was supported by the patronage of local businessmen and Industrialists in the Midlands;¹⁰² his decision to exhibit works on a repeated theme with the more esteemed exhibition can be seen as an attempt to secure metropolitan patronage. Wright was elected as an Associate of the Royal Academy in 1781, and a full member in 1784; however he declined to accept this honour as he, justifiably, felt slighted by the election of Garvey as Academician in preference to him in 1773.

Somerset House

The move to New Somerset House in 1780 was a commercial success for Royal Academy. Designed by William Chambers, it was the most significant new public building built in London in the mid-eighteenth century. Over sixty thousand visitors attended the first exhibition held there, more than twice as many as the previous exhibition, with sufficient money raised through admission charges to finance the Academy school. Solkin, in *Art on the Line*, claimed that, from 1780, 'the exhibitions were ... a doubly commercial enterprise, operating both as a highly profitable spectacle and a marketplace for expensive luxury goods'.¹⁰³ Exhibitions were certainly profitable spectacles but I argue that exhibitions cannot be categorised as marketplaces for 'luxury goods'; indeed K. Dian Kriz in *Art on the Line*, insisted that if the Academy was to maintain 'its constitutional commitment to promoting national ideals and artistic professionalization, exhibitions had to be dissociated from a marketplace'.¹⁰⁴ Many of the exhibited works were unavailable for purchase; in 1780, as acknowledged by Pointon, 44% of the paintings displayed in the Great Room were portraits.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, not all the visitors attended to gain an aesthetic experience which might lead them to purchase an exhibit; exhibitions were greeted as a social extravaganza where, as Kriz declared, 'art and female bodies vied for the male gaze'.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Unpublished information from Matthew Craske, January 2017.

¹⁰³ Solkin, 'This great Mart of Genius: The Royal Academy exhibitions at Somerset House, 1780-1836' in *Art on the Line*, 8.

¹⁰⁴ K. Dian Kriz, "'Stare Cases': Engendering the Public's Two Bodies at the Royal Academy of Arts' in *Art on the Line*, 60-61.

¹⁰⁵ Pointon, 'Portrait! Portrait! Portrait!' *Art on the Line*, footnote 1, 260 In *Hanging the Head*, 1993, Pointon had suggested that in 1781, only 35% were portraits, but she has obviously re-calculated her figures based on correspondence with Anne Puetz. Furthermore, she suggested that 30% of exhibits in 1781 were landscapes but in her original data she excluded miniatures which I have included in my analysis of the percentage of exhibits that were landscape paintings.

¹⁰⁶ K Diaz Kriz, 'Stare cases' in *Art on the Line*, 57.

Reynolds, in *Discourse IX*, delivered at the opening of the Royal Academy, lauded the King for 'being permitted to take possession of this noble habitation' and expressed his hope that the Academy would enable the establishment of 'a school of English Artists'.¹⁰⁷ He repeated his exhortation that artists strive to produce art that elevates the mind 'to feel itself capable of higher aims and nobler enjoyments'.¹⁰⁸ The first exhibition held at the Royal Academy in May 1780, was enthusiastically greeted by the popular press. The *Public Advertiser* was typical in stating that 'the Exhibition ... does great Credit to the Academicians, being on the Whole much superior to any we have yet seen'.¹⁰⁹ The *Morning Post* insisted that 'so uncommonly did the several artists exert themselves this season to adorn the Royal Academy with their various works, that the president and Committee were under the necessity of refusing three hundred pictures, for which they could find no room'.¹¹⁰

Although this may be hyperbole, what is not in dispute is the record number of works exhibited by Royal Academicians; twenty Academicians exhibited seventy-five works. Only fifteen featured landscape imagery. Gainsborough showed six landscape paintings, Sandby five, Richards three and Barret and Wilson each contributed a single work. Nevertheless, exhibits featuring landscape painting still constituted 20% of exhibited works. Landscape paintings were well represented among the Associates, with Edwards, de Loutherbourg, Martin, Rooker and Tomkins contributing a further fifteen exhibits. Farington who left the Society of Artists in 1778, Francis Towne, who first exhibited with the Royal Academy in 1779, and Wright of Derby, also exhibited landscape paintings.

The number of exhibited landscapes increased from seventy-two in 1779 to one hundred and one in 1780. Nevertheless, there was a fall in the percentage of total exhibits that were landscape paintings in 1780. This reduction was despite the expansion of exhibition space at the new venue accommodating an increased number of exhibits. The Great Room, constructed to house the annual exhibitions of the Academy, proved too small; from the first exhibition, many paintings had to be hung in the Ante-Room and the space designed for sculpture and drawing.

The move to the Somerset House provided the stimulus to change the format of the catalogue from that in use since the first exhibition was held in 1769. The improvement was

¹⁰⁷ Reynolds, *Discourse IX*, 237-328.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid*, 239.

¹⁰⁹ *Public Advertiser* 6 May 1780.

¹¹⁰ *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser* 6 May 1780.

enthusiastically greeted. The exhibited works were now recorded in order of display, whereas previously exhibiting artists had been listed alphabetically. A writer to the *Morning Post* in 1776 had complained that he was 'often anxious to see the performance of some particular artist which I find mentioned in the catalogue; I am sorry to add, that I have frequently been hunting full an hour round the rooms in search of it without success, as the catalogue gives me no kind of assistance as to the place'.¹¹¹ The *London Chronicle* in 1780 declared that 'The Public are this year much more accommodated by the catalogue being printed after a new method. The pictures now are regularly numbered as they stand, so that the spectator has not his attention distracted as before, by being obliged to run from one part of the room to another'.¹¹² In further changes, an alphabetical list of the exhibitors 'with their place of abode' was added at the end of the catalogue, and the works by honorary exhibitors were, for the first time, hung among the other exhibits, their status acknowledged with the inclusion of an H next to their name in the catalogue.

The *Advertisement*, denounced as an 'ingenious literary production' by 'Academicus' in the *London Courant*, was re-printed in the catalogue for the first exhibition at Somerset House to justify the continuation of the admission charge. 'Academicus' argued that as the public had made a contribution of ninety thousand pounds, through taxation, for this 'royal institution ... I should have thought that the people ... might have all been permitted to observe the use and effects of their liberality'. The author concluded that 'I submit it to the Academicians, whether the term of royalty, instead of creating, as they have asserted, an expectation of generosity, does not present the ideas of selfishness, extortion and rapine; and whether the only reason that they have pretended to urge in favour of free admission ... and the pockets of the people be picked with impunity [is] because the *institution* is royal'.¹¹³ The policies of the Academy, and the character of Academicians, were again under attack.

Despite the move to the prestigious new building, works were still asterisked, with landscape painters continuing to advertise a selection of their exhibits for sale. There has been little acknowledgment that exhibits at the Royal Academy were marked for sale in the catalogues of the Royal Academy exhibitions. C.S. Matheson, in *Art on the Line*, showed a facsimile of the first page of the newly designed catalogue, but made no mention of the prominent

¹¹¹ *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser* 18 April 1776.

¹¹² *London Chronicle* 2-4 May 1780.

¹¹³ *London Courant* 15 May 1780.

statement that works were available 'to be disposed of'.¹¹⁴ At the exhibition of 1780, only thirteen of the thirty-four exhibits asterisked depicted landscape views. Richards was the only Academician to mark his work as available for purchase; he asterisked both his exhibits, *Summer* and *Winter*, with three new exhibitors, W. Brooks, W. du Hamel and J. Spilsbury, taking the opportunity to mark their exhibits for sale.

The final throes of the Society of Artists

The Royal Academy now faced no competition from the Society of Artists, which also staged an exhibition in 1780 - there had been no exhibition in 1779 as the committee had been unable to find suitable accommodation. The exhibition was heavily criticized in the press. The *Whitehall Evening Post* railed that 'never did so miserable collection of trash court the public indignation' but, despite this condemnation, praised Marlow as holding 'a very respectable station as a landscape painter',¹¹⁵ and the *London Chronicle* acclaimed 'the many excellent landscapes by Marlow, Deane &c'.¹¹⁶ Indeed, landscape painters were well represented; as well as Marlow and Deane, Thomas Hearne, William Hodges and Thomas Jones still retained their loyalty to the Society. The Society staged only two more exhibitions, in 1783 and 1791, and Marlow, Hodges and Jones subsequently exhibited with the Royal Academy.

The Royal Academy, despite the lack of competition from the Society of Artists and the success of the first exhibition held in Somerset House, was confronted by two major challenges in 1781. De Louthembourg abandoned the exhibition to launch his hugely popular *Eidophusikon*, advertised as showing 'various imitations of Natural Phenomena, represented by Moving Pictures, Invented and Painted by Mr De Louthembourg in a Manner entirely New'.¹¹⁷ McCalman suggested that De Louthembourg, acutely aware that this avowedly commercial enterprise threatened his reputation, argued that it was merely an extension of his easel painting.¹¹⁸ His argument was obviously successful as he was elected a Royal Academician later that year. In a further threat to the Royal Academy's dominant position, the history painter, John Singleton Copley, who moved to England from the American colonies in 1775, enraged William Chambers, the treasurer of the Royal Academy, by declining to exhibit his *Death of the Earl of Chatham* at the exhibition. He chose instead to

¹¹⁴ C.S. Matheson. "A shilling Well Laid Out": The Royal Academy's Early Public' in *Art on the Line* 43.

¹¹⁵ *Whitehall Evening Post* 18-20 April 1780.

¹¹⁶ *London Chronicle* 20-22 April 1780.

¹¹⁷ *Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser* 20 February 1781.

¹¹⁸ Iain McCalman, 'Conquering Academy and marketplace: Philippe de Louthembourg's Channel Crossing' in *Living with the Royal Academy*, 76-85.

show it at a solo exhibition at Spring Gardens. The Royal Academy exhibition was undoubtedly affected by these entrepreneurial enterprises. Attendance fell by nearly nineteen thousand, with door receipts down by almost one thousand pounds.

The decline of landscape exhibits

At the exhibitions held in 1781 and 1782, a decline in the number of total exhibits that featured landscape paintings was marked. By 1782, only 16% of total exhibits featured landscape imagery. Furthermore, although eighteen Academicians exhibited seventy-four works in 1782, only fifteen exhibits, by Barret, Sandby, Gainsborough and de Louthembourg featured landscape imagery. The decline is even more marked when it is realised that of these, only nine were by British artists; de Louthembourg, recently elected to the Academy, showed six. There was also a marked fall in the number of asterisked exhibits; in 1782 only 7.4% of total exhibits were marked for sale. The landscape painters who asterisked their work were largely unknown and ignored by contemporary critics; de Louthembourg was the only Academician to asterisk a selection of his work.

I contend that the decline of exhibited landscape painting, and the lack of asterisked works, can, in part, be attributed to the reduction in exhibits from landscape painters who had forged their reputations at the exhibitions of the Society of Artists exhibitions in the 1760s. Indeed, the *Morning Chronicle* had complained in 1776 that preference was given to those with established reputations, with the exclusion of younger artists.¹¹⁹ Wilson, who died in 1782, had shown no new work after 1775, although he continued to exhibit until 1780. Richards only submitted five paintings after his appointment as chief scene painter at Covent Garden, and Catton only showed one work, *A landscape with a Rainbow*, between 1780 and 1782. In 1780, Gainsborough had exhibited six landscapes, but in 1782, the last year he exhibited with the Royal Academy, he only included two among his twelve exhibits. Barret exhibited for the last time in 1782, when he showed a view of Norbury Park, the estate of his patron, William Locke and *A sunset*. In poor health by 1782, Barret was appointed as official painter to Chelsea Royal Hospital, but died in 1784 without providing any paintings.

By 1782, Sandby remained the only founder member who exhibited landscape painting regularly at the Royal Academy exhibitions. Between 1780 and 1782 he contributed fourteen works, twelve of which featured named locations, including views in Wales and

¹¹⁹ *Morning Chronicle* 2 May 1776.

London. However, as predominantly water colours or drawings, these exhibited works received little critical attention; he earned a wider public reputation through his collections of published prints. The majority of exhibitors of landscape painting were relative new comers to the Royal Academy exhibitions. I suggest that their work had limited appeal to the hanging committees. The landscape painters who were to forge their reputations in the later years of the 1780s, Hodges, Jones, Farington and Towne, were not yet exhibiting regularly, and received little attention from the critics.

Conclusion

The policies of Reynolds, and the reduction of exhibits by landscape painters with established reputations, both contributed to the decline in the numbers of exhibited landscape painting. Reynolds was a hugely influential figure within the Royal Academy. He published his *Discourses* soon after their delivery, presenting a copy to each member of the Academy. In *Discourse III*, Reynolds' had defined his theoretical concept of a 'Grand Style', based on an idealised, universal image designed to emphasise the importance of 'intellectual dignity that ennobles the painter's art'.¹²⁰ Landscape painting, in *Discourse IV*, was relegated to 'the lower exercise of the art' where 'all the little ornamental helps are necessary for its embellishment'.¹²¹ I maintain that the pervading authority of Reynolds, disseminated through his *Discourses*, influenced the decisions of the hanging committees.

The policies of the hanging committees in prioritising the work of Academicians and their associates at the Royal Academy exhibitions, which denied less well-known artists the opportunity to exhibit their work, were consistently derided in the popular press. The reduction of exhibits by landscape painters who had forged their reputations at the early exhibitions of the Society of Artists also contributed to the decline in the percentage of total exhibited works that were landscape paintings.

The early exhibitions of the Royal Academy between 1769 and 1782 neither functioned as 'open marketplaces' nor obviated the desire for patronage. In Gainsborough's case, exhibitions completely failed to provide a market for Gainsborough's landscape paintings. Patronage remained of importance for many landscape painters. Estate portraiture was exhibited to advertise the prestigious commissions gained. I have argued that Barret and Wilson advertised their work for sale following their failure to secure commissions; they only

¹²⁰ Reynolds, *Discourse III*, 83-84,

¹²¹ Reynolds, *Discourse IV*, 177,

resorted to this overtly commercial practice when faced with financial embarrassment. The commercial opportunities offered by the Royal Academy continued to be embraced by landscape painters; in 1782, 45% of the works for sale were landscape paintings. However, the reduction in the numbers of the total exhibits asterisked for sale at the exhibitions of the Royal Academy at Somerset House, suggests that the retail market centred on exhibitions was in decline.

Brewer declared that every exhibitor at the Royal Academy exhibitions was aware of the importance of the 'public approval or praise from the newspaper critics' in procuring commissions.¹²² Published critical comments were also significant in establishing artistic reputations, and it was shown in chapter three that reviews of landscape painting at the Society of Artists exhibitions provided eloquent testimony to an increased public appreciation of landscape painting. The next chapter will determine whether Reynolds' aesthetic doctrines influenced the critical response to, and public reception of, exhibited landscape painting between 1769 and 1782.

¹²² Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, 247.

CHAPTER 6

A Transformative Change in Critical Appraisal

Introduction

The reviews of landscape paintings at the Society of Artists exhibitions revealed that, by 1768, the most admired qualities of landscape paintings were the accurate portrayal of the natural beauty of the countryside or the evocation of a sensory response from the viewer. However, I suggest that critical appraisal of exhibited landscape paintings at the early exhibitions of the Royal Academy was initially influenced by the academic theories of Reynolds. His insistence that only history painting, through the depiction of ‘heroic action or heroic suffering ... powerfully strikes upon public sympathy’ was persuasive. Critics abandoned their emergent acknowledgement expressed in the late 1760s that landscape painting elicited an emotional response from the more perceptive viewer. Reynolds claimed that ‘The art of coloring, (sic) and the skilful management of light and shade are essential requisites’ [for the] ‘confined labours’ of a landscape painter.¹ Critics reverted to the conventional language employed by critics of the early 1760s; they focussed on representational accuracy, with qualitative assessments of colour.

However, as landscape painters exhibited larger, more ambitious works which were immediately striking to the viewer, critics recognised that landscape paintings did not, as pronounced by a critic in 1773, ‘all resemble each other’.² I maintain that, from the mid-1770s, the critical response was transformed. Critics increasingly eschewed conservative precepts for a more emotive and expressive language that reflected an appreciation that landscape paintings were capable of evoking the ‘public sympathy’ deemed by Reynolds to be the prerogative of history painting.³ Munsterberg agreed that the critical language of reviews was influenced by the concepts expressed by Reynolds, and suggested that although the prestige of the Royal Academy made ‘criticism more important ... it might be argued [that it was] more conventional too’.⁴ My contention is contrary to that suggestion; I argue that the language pertaining to landscape painting became less conventional. A new critical vocabulary evolved as the ability of the landscape painter to

¹ Reynolds, *Discourse 1*, 117.

² *Morning Chronicle* 31 May 1773.

³ Reynolds, *Discourse IV*, 100.

⁴ Marjorie Munsterberg, ‘The beginning of British art criticism in the 1760s’, *The British Art Journal* XV: I (2014): 82.

describe the beauty of Nature, and to stimulate the imagination and evoke emotional, sympathetic resonances from the discerning viewer, began to dominate the critical reviews of exhibited landscape painting.

I have previously acknowledged that critical reviews of exhibited paintings published in the popular press cannot be read as a comprehensive narrative of public appreciation; each critic expressed a personal opinion.⁵ However, I argued that, when the pluralities of critical reviews are considered, each individual opinion constitutes an important testament to the contemporary reception of exhibited landscape painting. Indeed, as Walpole declared in his praise of the benefits of exhibitions for artists in *Anecdotes of Painting*, 'The public examines and reasons on their works, and spectators by degrees become judges'.⁶ Hallett, in *Art of the Line*, was dismissive of reviews of the Royal Academy exhibitions. He declared that the criticisms published in the popular press 'were a veritable flood of responses to the Academy's annual offerings, ranging from long discussions on individual paintings and painters to paragraphs of rapid-fire gossip and fragments of satire directed at shows and their clientele'.⁷

However, I argue that, through analysis of the changing concepts expressed, the reviews reveal a transformational change in the critical response to landscape painting; the more perceptive critics sought to persuade the exhibition visitor to see landscape painting as more than a mimetic representation of the natural world. The affective quality of painting has been recognised by Brewer. He declared that, with the emergence of the concept of sensibility, with its stress in individual feeling and self-expression, 'the second half of the eighteenth century was marked by a vigorous enquiry into the techniques, both theoretical and practical, by which the aesthetic and emotional aspects could be conveyed through a range of different sorts of representations'.⁸ Although Brewer was not considering landscape painting within the context of exhibitions, his views are pertinent. He acknowledged that different people were affected by different experiences, and accepted

⁵ See 'Introduction' to Chapter Three of this thesis.

⁶ Horace Walpole, 'On modern gardening' in *Anecdotes of Painting in England, with some account of the principle artists; and incidental notes on other arts*. vol. 4, (Twickenham 1782), 314.

⁷ Hallett, Mark, "'This Business of Criticism'". The Press and the Royal Academy exhibition in Eighteenth-Century London' in *Art on the Line: The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House 1780-1836* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2001), 65.

⁸ Brewer, 'Sensibility and the Urban Phenomenon' in *Huntington Library Quarterly* 70:2 (2007), 239.

that although the affective reactions were heterogeneous, it was 'possible, in some ways, to manipulate the viewer's emotional or aesthetic responses'.⁹

The influence of Reynolds's Discourses on critical reviews

In the first three years of Royal Academy exhibitions, few reviews of exhibited works were published in the popular newspapers. Critical commentary was overshadowed by the publication of acrimonious exchanges of opinion between those who praised the institution of the Academy and its aesthetic ideals, and those who argued that monarchical patronage threatened artistic independence and integrity. However, from the early 1770s, critical reviews increasingly brought exhibits to public attention. It was inevitable that, following Reynolds's advocacy of the Grand Style, critics prioritised history painting; the *Public Advertiser* proclaimed that 'the superiority of History over works of any kind, is now universally acknowledged'.¹⁰ Critics devoted lengthy paragraphs in explanation of the historical or mythological narratives depicted for, as 'A Friend of the Arts' wrote in the *Middlesex Journal*, they were 'little known to the generality of spectators',¹¹ and a correspondent to the *General Evening Post* insisted that 'to acquire a taste and judgement in the art of painting, the spectator must be familiarly conversant in history'.¹²

Landscape painting was considered a lesser genre in Reynold's *Discourses*. I suggest that there was a causal relationship between Reynolds's marginalisation of landscape painting in *Discourse IV*, (1771) and public opinion of landscape painting as articulated in the early reviews of the Royal Academy exhibitions in the popular press. By 1768, critics had intimated that individual landscape paintings exhibited with the Society of Artists were capable of evoking an emotional response from the discerning viewer. Such plaudits were not in evidence at the early Royal Academy exhibitions; the expressive ability of landscape painting was ignored. Critics had reverted to earlier conventions. The reviews of landscape painting were perfunctory and repetitive, and the vocabulary used was bland and lacklustre, demonstrating that landscape was not considered a genre that merited serious attention.

⁹ *ibid*, 242.

¹⁰ *Public Advertiser* 26 May 1769.

¹¹ *Middlesex Journal* 14-16 May 1772.

¹² *General Evening Post* 25-28 April 1769.

The transformative change in critical response

The critical vocabulary of reviews was transformed by 1775. Many critics accepted that imitative representation of a depicted scene was not the most important attribute of landscape painting. I suggest that there was a renewed acceptance of the concepts expressed in the critical responses to landscape paintings exhibited at the later exhibitions of the Society of Artists; these had been abandoned in the face of the pervasive influence of Reynolds's *Discourses*. Truth to Nature was emphasised, and the reviews of exhibited landscape paintings reveal an increasing awareness that landscape imagery depicting the more evanescent or intransigent qualities of the natural world could stimulate an affective response from the viewer. Many of the reviews, in their evaluation of this effect, were written in descriptive prose or poetry which communicated how these responses were elicited from the observant viewer. Dall's three landscapes exhibited in 1775 were described as 'touched with a softness ... that insensibly opens the mind to all the charms of the country'¹³ and the exhibits of Marlow at the Society of Artists were extolled for their ability to impart the 'beautiful idea of that pleasing scene'.¹⁴ This appreciation was predominantly reserved for the generation of landscape painters who had previously been acclaimed for their ability to elicit emotive responses before 1769. Many of the most highly acclaimed landscape painters became founder members of the Royal Academy; exhibits by Academicians were more often the recipients of praise. There was less recognition that landscape paintings by artists exhibiting for the first time with the Royal Academy elicited an affective reaction in the viewer.

The transformation of critical appraisal arose concomitantly with the production of larger, more ambitious, exhibited landscape paintings. Gainsborough's *Wooded Landscape* identified by John Hayes as 'perhaps' exhibited in 1772 measured 100.3 x 128 cm;¹⁵ his *Watering Place*, (fig 61) exhibited as a *Large Landscape* in 1777, described in the *Morning Chronicle* as 'the best of its kind that has been exhibited for years',¹⁶ measured 147.3 x 180.3 cm. Indeed, he was increasingly lauded for his landscapes rather than his portraits. The *General Advertiser* pronounced in 1778 that 'We would forgo the pleasure we experience in his portraits, for the ineffable delights we receive from his landscapes; and that he would also leave the one for the other'.¹⁷ Marlow's *Vesuvius Erupting at Night*,

¹³ *London Evening Post* 29 April – May 2 1775.

¹⁴ *Public Advertiser* 19 April 1775.

¹⁵ Hayes, *The Landscape Paintings of Thomas Gainsborough* vol. 2, (London: Sotheby Publications 1982), 443.

¹⁶ *Morning Chronicle* 25 April 1777.

¹⁷ *General Advertiser* 30 April 1778.

exhibited in 1768, was 91.5 x 127 cm (fig 63) while Wright's *An Eruption of Vesuvius* exhibited in 1778, measured 162 x 213.4 cm, was applauded for its effect and hailed as 'one of the most valuable productions of the present day'.¹⁸ Critics could no longer complain that exhibited landscape paintings 'all resemble each other'.¹⁹ If exhibiting artists sought sales or commissions, their exhibits had to be seen as individual items by the visiting public. As Konstantinos Stefanis wrote 'Exhibitions were not only the platform from which artists presented their work to the public, but also an arena in which they competed with each other'.²⁰

Critical reception of landscape painting 1769-1772

Before the first exhibition of the Royal Academy was staged, the Royal Academicians held an inaugural meeting on 2 January 1769, which was widely reported in the popular newspapers. The *London Evening Post* described how, after Reynolds had delivered a speech emphasising 'the nature and great advantages of the Institution', the Academicians 'adjourned to St Alban's Tavern' where they were joined by 'persons of distinction, lovers and encouragers of the polite Arts'. The newspaper published the Ode, *The Triumph of the Arts*, which was performed at this meeting.

The time, not distant far, shall come
When England's tasteful youth no more
Shall wander to Italia's Classic shore;
No more to foreign Climes shall roam,
In search of Models better found at home ...

With Rapture the prophetic Muse
Her Country's opening Glory views
Already sees with wondering eyes
Our Titians and our Guidos rise,
See new Palladios grace th' historic page
And British Raphaels charm a future age.²¹

¹⁸ *Morning Post* 29 April 1778.

¹⁹ *Morning Chronicle* 31 May 1773

²⁰ Stefanis Konstantis, 'Nathaniel Hone's 1775 exhibition; the first single artist Retrospective' in *Visual Culture in Britain*, 4:1 (2013), 134.

²¹ *Lloyds Evening Post* 2-3 January 1769.

The Ode conveyed a declaration of intent. The new generation of history painters that emerged from the Royal Academy School would transform the reputation of British art.

The aims of the Academy, as expressed in the *Ode*, were enthusiastically acknowledged in the newspapers. The *London Chronicle* applauded 'the exertion of genius that appears in the several performances' and proclaimed that 'we have the pleasing prospect strongly before us, of soon beholding the long-admired arts of Italy flourish here in native vigour under the auspices of so amiable a protector'.²² Nevertheless, the exhibits themselves received little attention. The attendance of the distinguished visitors at the annual dinners was viewed as of more interest to the readers. The *London Evening Press*, in common with the other newspapers, merely listed the 'Pictures that have this season chiefly attracted the attention of the Connoisseurs at the Royal Academy'. Landscape paintings were ignored, despite comprising 33% of exhibited works; the only one mentioned was Barret's '*Capital Landscape, containing a View in Penton Lynn, in Scotland*'.²³

Many of the published comments on the Royal Academy were not germane to the exhibits. They were dominated by the publication in the *Middlesex Journal* of virulent attacks on the Royal Academy by 'Fresnoy', identified by Hargraves as Rev. John Wills, the chaplain of the Society of Artists.²⁴ His letters appeared amid political turmoil and anti-monarchical protest provoked by popular support for the radical politician John Wilkes. 'Fresnoy' attacked the institution of the Royal Academy as yet another instance of the autocratic use of royal power, and insisted that membership of the Society of Artists demonstrated support for democratic rights against the despotism of the crown. He pronounced that the Academy was 'founded on bad principles, rashly adopted, impetuously pursued',²⁵ ridiculed Reynolds for his sycophantic attitude towards the King, described not as a patron on the Arts, but 'a tyrant of them',²⁶ and railed against the admission charges.²⁷

²² *London Chronicle* 27-29 April 1769.

²³ *London Evening Post* 1-4 May 1769.

²⁴ Matthew Hargraves, *Candidates for Fame: The Society of Artists of Great Britain 1760-1791* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2005), 100. Wills took his pseudonym after Charles Alphonse du Fresnoy, 1611 – 1668, a French art critic who was acclaimed for his Latin poem, *De arte graphica*, a critical treatise on the practice of art.

²⁵ *Middlesex Journal* July 6 - 8 1769.

²⁶ *Middlesex Journal* 3-5 May 1770.

²⁷ Although the exhibitions held between 1769 and 1779 attracted average crowds of almost 22,000 visitors, and raised income through an entrance fee, the Academy School remained reliant on the patronage of the king, whose subsidies funded the administration and educational programme, until 1780. Only then, following the first exhibition at Somerset House which was attended by over 61,000 visitors, did the School become financially self-sufficient.

‘Varnish’, in a letter to the *Middlesex Journal*, also declared his support for the Society of Artists; he declared ‘Shame for ever to the schemers of such an institution [designed] to support the pride and ambition of a few’. He remonstrated that the Royal Academy exhibitors ‘have almost cleared their shops, viz. 8 pictures for Sir Joshua, Francis Coates (sic) eleven; Gainsborough seven, P. Sandby seven, Serres six; and so on in proportion: which was never known before’.²⁸ The advent of another exhibition in London was not universally welcomed. The *Public Advertiser* derided that ‘Paris can only boast an exhibition once in three years; we have three every year. Some people think ours should be fewer in number and their single one oftener’.²⁹ The clear inference was that the French exhibitions were superior.

There were, as far as I can determine, no published reviews of the Royal Academy exhibition held in 1770, although the translator of *Aretin: a dialogue on Painting. From the Italian of Lodovico Dolce*, applauded their institution in his introductory dedication ‘To the King’.³⁰ He wrote that ‘after several attempts to establish the arts of painting and sculpture in this country, we at length have a fair prospect of this settling among us ... the merits of several artists ... [which] gives us the hope that the idea of an English school is not so absurd as some writers have represented it’.³¹ He acknowledged the School was to be founded on history painting, and extolled the work of West as ‘an artist whose work would have done honour to Rome, even in the time of Raphael and Titian’.³² Priority was given to history paintings for, as Susan Rather noted, ‘historical subjects, summoned by intellect and imagination, dignified their makers as learned practitioners of a liberal art’.³³

History paintings inevitably dominated comments made by Baker in his *Observations on the Pictures now in Exhibition at the Royal Academy, Spring Gardens and Mr. Christie’s, 1770*. Although this was not strictly an exhibition review, Baker commented on exhibits displayed at the three exhibitions. He made observations on twenty-four artists who exhibited with the Royal Academy, with the history paintings of Benjamin West and Angelica Kauffmann discussed at length. Baker’s *Observations* provide evidence of the lack of attention paid to exhibited landscape paintings at the early exhibitions of the Royal Academy; only nine

²⁸ *Middlesex Journal* 25 April – 1 May 1770.

²⁹ *Public Advertiser* 5 May 1770.

³⁰ *Aretin: a dialogue on Painting. From the Italian of Lodovico Dolce* was first published in 1508. It was translated anonymously and published in London in 1770.

³¹ *Aretin*, vii–viii.

³² *Aretin* xii.

³³ Susan Rather, ‘Benjamin West, John Galt, and the Biography of 1816’ in *The Art Bulletin*, 6:2, (2004) 324.

landscape painters were mentioned, briefly and uninformatively. Gainsborough's two landscapes were described as 'very good. They are executed with a masterly hand, and in excellent *gout* of colouring',³⁴ Scott's *A View of the Tower of London* was deemed 'an admirable picture' and Richards' *The View in St James's Park* was admired as 'an exceedingly well-done piece'.³⁵ It is of interest that he mentioned, for the first time that I found, a work exhibited by an honorary exhibitor, declaring that 'Another of these views, which struck me most, is that of Ivy-Bridge in Devonshire; an honorary exhibition, by C.W. Bamfylde Esq'.³⁶

A lack of meticulous critical appraisal was revealed by Baker's admission that he had missed the landscape exhibits of Sandby and Wilson. He merely commented that Sandby's exhibits' being in water-colours was perhaps the reason for over-looking them: for I have never much admired that species of painting'.³⁷ Sandby was seldom mentioned in reviews; other critics obviously shared Baker's reservations about water-colours. Baker commented that he was surprised to have ignored Wilson and added that 'Tis probable they are good ... for he is undoubtedly one of the best landscape painters we have. In *composition* perhaps he may be said to be the first'.³⁸ No reference was made to Dall, but a letter in the *Public Advertiser*, recommending a visit to the Playhouse Theatre in Southampton, mentioned 'the Scenery [is] painted by Mr Dall, whose performance you may remember we so much admired in the Exhibition at the Royal Academy'.³⁹

Baker was more enthusiastic about the landscape exhibits of Marlow at the Society of Artists exhibition. He declared that Marlow's 'landscapes and views are excellently well done. His colouring is indisputably better than any other landscape painter we have. His pencil is free and masterly, expressing a great deal but with little work ... he wants nothing to make his pictures compleately (sic) executed, but to give his water more transparency, and so to contrive his skies as to produce more effect in regard to clear-obscure'.⁴⁰

³⁴ Robert Baker, *Observations on the pictures now in Exhibition at the Royal Academy, Spring Gardens and Mr. Christies 1771* (London: John Bell and G. Riley 1771), 18.

³⁵ *ibid*, 19.

³⁶ *ibid* 22.

³⁷ *ibid*, 22.

³⁸ *Ibid* 21.

³⁹ *ibid*, 30. It is astonishing that Baker overlooked *Dinas Brân from Llangollen* (fig 60) and *View near Wynnstay: the Seat of Sir Watkin Williams- Wynn, Bt*. Commissioned by one of the richest men in Britain, they were exhibited in 1771.

⁴⁰ *Public Advertiser* 15 July 1771.

⁴¹ Baker, *Observations on the Pictures*, 24.

Baker's comments pertaining to exhibited landscape paintings exemplified Reynolds's insistence that skilful rendition of colour and the accurate depiction of the view were the most important attributes required from a landscape painter. However, he also employed terms - masterly, composition and execution - that suggested he was aware of the classical precepts beloved by the connoisseur. This may be, as suggested by van Ostade, that, he was a 'hack' writer trying to impress his audience;⁴¹ he used the connoisseurial language, so disparaged by the critics in the late 1760s.

Baker had given an overview of the exhibitions held in 1770 and 1771. The first review that I have found of the Royal Academy exhibitions was by 'A Friend of the Arts' published in the *Middlesex Journal* in 1772. History paintings were, inevitably, closely scrutinised. The critic declared that he had 'confined myself to those of an historical nature, and whose subjects are but little known by the generality of spectators. As to the fineness or coarseness, the brightness or faintness of the colours, the expression of the countenance, the gracefulness of the Attitude, and the like; these are circumstances, of which everyone can judge for himself'.⁴² Portraits and landscape paintings required no explanations; there was no need to discuss attributes that 'A Lover of the Arts' considered obvious to the viewer. Only one landscape painting was accorded a brief mention, with attention drawn to the figure; in *A Landscape with Figures* by Anthony Devis, 'The woman in the landscape with a child at her breast is highly finished'.⁴³

A new descriptive language for landscape painting was first evinced in an article in the *Letters concerning the present state of England*, 1772. The anonymous author of *The present state of painting*, who declared that 'our present artists ... have a merit which reflects great honour on the Kingdom', appraised the work of twenty-seven artists.⁴⁴ He asserted that, although France and Flanders had Schools of painting, 'Britain has never been able to boast any such excellency. Foreign artists have always been well received here, and made considerable sums of money by their residence, but native artists have been scarce'. He applauded the Society of Artists, with no mention of the Royal Academy, for kindling 'among our artists a desire to excel' and extolled those artists 'of merit

⁴¹ Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade 'Henry Fowler and his Eighteenth-Century Predecessors' in *The Henry Sweet Society for the History of Linguistic ideas*, Issue 15, November 2008 Henry Fowler, 16.

⁴² *Middlesex Journal*, 28 - 30 May 1772.

⁴³ *Morning Chronicle*, 23 -25 April 1772.

⁴⁴ Anon, 'The present state of painting' in *Letters concerning the present state of England. Particularly respecting the politics, arts, manners and literature of the times*. (London: J. Almon 1772), 243.

sufficient to entitle the nation to more reputation in this branch of the exertions of human genius'.⁴⁵ Among the artists considered, only three, Marlow, George Smith and Gainsborough were landscape painters.

Marlow was described as 'One of the greatest painters of the age. His pieces are always full of fire and expression ... I have seen a view of Vesuvius in the middle of an irruption (sic) by this artist, which alone would have immortalized him: never was greater force seen in a picture'.⁴⁶ The author had presumably seen *Vesuvius erupting at night*, which had received little attention when exhibited in 1768. (fig 63) These descriptive comments lauded Marlow for his accurate and dramatic representation of an awesome cataclysmic natural event; the viewer emphasised that he had felt overwhelmed by the expressive ability of Marlow to describe the force generated by a volcanic eruption.



63) William Marlow, *Vesuvius erupting at night*, c1768, oil on canvas, 91.5 x 127 cm, exh. Society of Artists 1768. Berger Collection, Denver,

⁴⁵ *ibid*, 246 -248.

⁴⁶ *ibid*, 257. I suggest that the author was cognisant of Burke's definition of the sublime and the beautiful; he expressed awe at the spectacle of the erupting volcano.

He noted that, in Smith's pastoral landscapes, 'his colours were pleasing; and his imagination warm, tho' correct'.⁴⁷ This was a sensitive response; an acceptance that viewing an imaginative scene, correctly delineated and accurately coloured, was a pleasurable experience. The imaginative appeal of landscape paintings had been noted by critics in the late 1760s, but the concept had no place in Reynolds's dictate. He insisted that only history paintings were able 'to strike the imagination'.⁴⁸ The re-emergence of this recognition suggests that this critic had ignored Reynolds's pervasive influence.

Gainsborough's talents as a landscape painter received mild praise; the correspondent pronounced that he 'was first known as a landscape painter, in which walk he executed some pieces in a peculiar and pleasing stile, (sic) but never strictly nature, but as a portrait painter his merit is uncommonly good'.⁴⁹ The critic was obviously aware that Gainsborough had started his career as a landscape painter before he became more widely known as a portraitist. Gainsborough's landscape paintings are acknowledged to have an unusual style deemed to be pleasing, but were not accurate descriptions of the natural world; his style of landscape painting did not immediately appeal to this critic.

The insightful analysis of landscape painting in *The present state of painting* proved to be an individual assessment made by a perceptive commentator. There was little interest in landscape paintings exhibited the Royal Academy in 1772, although a critic in the *Morning Chronicle*, in his review of the Society of Artists exhibition, intimated that a landscape painting had the ability to impart a sensation of pleasure to the viewer. Marlow's *Four Views* of Castle Howard, the seat of the Earl of Carlisle, were described as 'Pretty pleasant landscapes, touched with great firmness and facility of pencil; nor are the sites less happily chosen than agreeably contrasted'.⁵⁰ There was an acceptance that well-chosen and well-described landscape imagery heightened the viewer's enjoyment of the view portrayed.

A review of the Society of Artists exhibition by 'A Critic' in the *Public Advertiser* in 1773 revealed the first irrefutable change in the descriptive language employed by more discerning critics. 'Critic' accepted that the ability of landscape to produce dramatic, naturalistic and atmospheric effects through the manipulation of light took preference over artistic technique. Marlow, who again exhibited *An Eruption of Vesuvius* was extolled for

⁴⁷ *ibid*, 260.

⁴⁸ Reynolds, *Discourse IV*, 102.

⁴⁹ Anon, 'The Present state of painting', 254-5.

⁵⁰ *Public Advertiser*, 28 April 1773.

his 'Warmth of Colouring which is remarkable. The *Eruption of Mount Vesuvius* is an Instance of this, and a striking and noble Representation of that Phenomenon. The Merit of this Picture is so great, that I distrust my own Senses for suggesting that the Light is more than would be produced by the Quantity of Fire which issued from the Volcano'. This was a vividly descriptive review, which convincingly communicated the emphasis placed by 'A Critic' on the effect engendered in the viewer by Marlow's painting of Vesuvius through his sensitive colouring and awesome depiction of light. 'Critic's' perception was that no viewer could fail to be moved by the striking evocation of Nature's power. In his commendation of Wright, who had shown *A Moonlight* and *A View, a sea coast*, he declared that 'The Effects of Light are truly amazing ... I have had exactly the same Effects from Nature'.⁵¹ This acclamation does not merely emphasise the 'art of colouring', or mimetic exactitude as espoused by Reynolds. It was recognition that Marlow and Wright had an understanding of the ephemeral nature of the natural world; it emphasises that the full glory of Nature can only be envisaged through the proficiency of the artist to represent the evanescent, but all-revealing, effect of light.

There was further interest shown in landscape paintings at the Royal Academy exhibition in 1773. An anonymous critic in the *Middlesex Journal* declared that Richards's *A Landscape and Figures* was 'In point of composition ... perhaps the best landscape in the exhibition; nor are the other parts at all neglected; so that, on the whole, this picture gives us the representation of a most truly rural scene', with Barret's exhibits described as 'very good, and carry the usual marks of Mr Barrett's excellence. This painter seems to want nothing to make his pieces universally perfect, but to continue his skies so as to produce more effect; at present they look somewhat like a large body of congregated smoke'.⁵² The critic also admired the exhibits of de Louthembourg; he wrote that 'It is but common justice to this celebrated foreign artist to say, that he has particular merit in these landscape, in respect to his designs, colouring and expression; to these may be added his merit in grouping, together with his skies, which carry the mark of a masterly hand'.⁵³ In his assessment of Zuccarelli's *The finding of Moses, A large landscape* (fig 64) a realistic depiction of the natural world was considered important. Although the figures were

⁵¹ *Public Advertiser* 7 May 1773.

⁵² *Middlesex Journal* 24-27 April 1773.

⁵³ *Middlesex Journal* 1-4 May 1773.

deemed unimpressive, 'the other parts are painted in a grand stile. (sic) The colouring, though sober, is finely touched, and the *leafing* of the large tree is Nature herself'.⁵⁴



64) Francesco Zuccarelli, *River Landscape with the Finding of Moses* 1768, oil on canvas, 228 x 387.6 cm. probably exh, Royal Academy 1773. Royal Collection.

His assessments stressed the importance of a truthful rendition of the natural world, but continued to applaud the formal techniques of composition; colouring, masterly handling of paint and design.

A review by 'No Dictator', in the *Morning Chronicle*, of the exhibits at the Royal Academy and Society of Artists exhibitions was more prosaic. He praised Reynolds's portraits and history paintings of West and Barry but was less enthusiastic about exhibited landscape paintings. A *landscape* by Richards, who enjoyed regular employment as a scene painter, was reviewed as 'A bold picture, and painted with great skill, but evidently displays the scene stile of the brush-work'. Barrett's landscapes were condemned for 'too much yellow, and too great tallness in all the trees'. Tomkin's *Views* were deemed to have 'too much green, and the houses are too small objects'. Francis Smith's *Black-friars* and *Westminster Bridges* were criticised because the 'brick-red colour predominates too much'.⁵⁵ *Westminster Bridge from the Terrace of Somerset House*, (fig 65) attributed to Smith, may

⁵⁴ *Middlesex Journal* 4-6 May 1773.

⁵⁵ *Morning Chronicle* 1 May 1773.

not be the work exhibited with the Royal Academy, (no 279), in 1773. However, typical of the work of Francis Smith, it emphasised the continued popularity of views of the Thames.



65) Attributed to Francis Smith, *Westminster Bridge from the Terrace of Somerset House*, undated, oil on canvas, 41x100 cm. Guildhall Art Gallery.

‘No Dictator’ was inflexible in his judgements; realistic colour and accurate representation of depicted objects were, for him, the prime requirements of landscape paintings.

Despite these reviews, a correspondent to the *Morning Chronicle* in 1773 declared that the ‘novice’ visitor to exhibitions ‘never takes proper notice of the landscape, because they all resemble each other in some respects, and he is not capable of seeing which has merit, and which has not; he views them all in one light’.⁵⁶

Confirmation of a changing critical language was evidenced by ‘Dilettante’, writing in the *Public Advertiser* in 1774; he made the first reference I have found to Wilson’s landscape exhibits at the Royal Academy exhibitions. He described Wilson’s ‘Four landscape Views in Italy, Niagara, N. Wales and Devonshire’ as ‘delightful Views of Nature, painted with Freedom and taste, but slight, and somewhat too green in the colouring’; the view in Devonshire was Okehampton Castle (fig 66). Wilson sought again, as noted by Layfield, to appeal to the diverse preferences of exhibition visitors.⁵⁷ De Louthembourg was adjudged in similar tones; his work was ‘composed, and the Light and Shadow distributed with Judgement,’ but he was condemned for having ‘designed from Fancy, with very little attention to Nature either in Colours or Effect; however they possess a mechanical Merit in

⁵⁶ *Morning Chronicle* 31 May 1773.

⁵⁷ Laura Layfield, unpublished University of York MA thesis, available online, *Richard Wilson: Landscape Painting for a new exhibition culture*, 52.

the Spiritedness and neatness of Handling'.⁵⁸ The failure to accurately depict Nature through inaccurate colouring, inadequate rendition of atmospheric effect or lack of precision in the rendering of a natural view was to be denigrated.



66) Richard Wilson, *Okehampton Castle*, Devonshire c1771-4, undated, oil on canvas, 171.4 x 265.9 cm, exh. Royal Academy 1764. Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.

The *Morning Chronicle*, in its reviews of the Royal Academy exhibition of 1774 also emphasised the importance of truth to Nature. The highest accolade given to the six landscape painters mentioned was awarded to Wilson. In contrast to the view expressed in the *Public Advertiser*, there was no complaint about the colour. The anonymous critic asserted that 'There is an unconfined simplicity in these views which, without that high finish of colouring, or laboured precision which belong to other landscape painters more immediately in fashion, cannot fail to be pleasing to all those who prefer the unadulterated traces of nature to the pedantry of profession'.⁵⁹ Barrett was applauded for 'To be pleased with Nature, we must be pleased with this landscape; as the view is perfectly rural, and well-chosen, and the execution equal to both' and Richards was proclaimed for his 'Two very elegant picturesque productions. Mr. Richards has the merit of describing a transparent piece of water, perhaps superior to any of his contemporaries'.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ *Public Advertiser* 2 May 1774.

⁵⁹ *Morning Chronicle* 4 May 1774.

⁶⁰ *Ibid* 3 May 1774.

The criterion for excellence was now 'Truth to Nature'. Critical assessment of landscape painting had moved beyond mere emphasis on mimesis, colour and the accurate depiction of light and shade. What was now judged to be important was how the colour, light and the choice of location were combined to portray a view of the natural world that gave pleasure to the viewer. Influenced by the culture of sensitivity, individuals now experienced a heightened awareness of, and a new way of looking at, landscape painting. Nevertheless, 'A Friend to the Arts' in the *London Chronicle* stated that he would make no mention of 'portraits, landscapes, conversation pieces, and the like, where meaning and merit must be observed at first sight. I shall pass them unnoticed'.⁶¹

The transformative change in descriptive language

The transformative change in the descriptive vocabulary pertaining to landscape paintings was evinced in 1775, as critics began to take 'proper notice' of exhibited works. As landscape painters exhibited more ambitious work, which accentuated their individual talents, critics began to focus on the ability of the landscape painter to communicate, through their landscape paintings, feelings and emotions to the responsive viewer. The reviews became longer and more thoughtful, with an acknowledgment by many critics that viewing landscape paintings aroused a sense of heightened awareness from the more perceptive viewer, who responded with sensitivity and empathic responses. It must be emphasised that not all critics responded with such feeling to landscape paintings, or indeed that all landscape painters could elicit it, but reviews that stressed the importance of representational accuracy were increasingly less apparent. It is possible that, with the outbreak of war against the American colonies, a surge of patriotic feeling elicited an increased awareness and appreciation of the unspoiled beauty of the British countryside.

The *Morning Chronicle* and *Middlesex Journal* published the same review of the Royal Academy exhibition of 1775. They included a landscape painting among the works considered most praiseworthy; 'The exhibition this year, at the Royal Academy, is said to contain a greater number of fine pictures, than at any one they have yet had, among which the pictures of Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr West, Mr Stubbs, Mr Barrett (sic) and Mr Hone, are particularly fine.' Moreover, the review provided an early indication that the language of appreciation of landscape painting was changing. Barret's *The Morning, A landscape* was pronounced as offering 'everything that a warm imagination can produce. The groups of

⁶¹ *London Chronicle* 26-28 April 1774.

cattle are admirably disposed; the sunshine true; the plan well-conceived, and finished with the most natural brush imaginable. The vast productions of nature, when sporting in the fields, amongst rocks, trees, cattle and rural figures of every sort, are subservient to his will; and he imitates them so well, that it may with truth be said, he adds to her beauties and does not impoverish her works'.⁶² The language of this review shows sensitivity to, and an intense consciousness of, the beauty of the natural world. Barret, through his 'warm imagination' is deemed not merely to copy nature, but to add to her beauty through his ability to creatively assemble disparate elements of the natural world into a perfect composition. The mention of figures demonstrates that they have captured attention; their inclusion may add to the expressive qualities of the painting. There was no mention that Barret's four exhibits were asterisked for sale; contemporary commentators continued to ignore the commercial potential of exhibitions.

Not all landscape paintings were reviewed so sympathetically, but the vocabulary used was certainly more thoughtful and evocative. A review in the *Morning Post* pronounced that *The Large Landscape* by Dall was 'very good ... the keeping and harmony of the colours are most agreeably conceived; if it wants anything, it is more elegance and wildness'.⁶³ The contradictory juxtaposition of 'elegance' and 'wildness' demanded close attention from the viewer as he sought to understand the reasoning and meaning behind this descriptive dissonance. A review of the Society of Artists exhibition described Thomas Jones's *A View of the House in Chalfont ... where Milton resided* as 'Neatly handled and good perspective; little effect and colours rather too yellow. The light and shade not picturesque or industriously introduced, in order to give the spot that seeming ruralness, sufficient to engage a great Poet as Milton to live in it'.⁶⁴ (fig 67) This was an interesting exploration of the work; the atmospheric effects were not sufficient to depict the rural view that had been enjoyed by the epic poet, Milton.

⁶² *Middlesex Journal* 20-22 April 1775

⁶³ *Morning Post* 27 April 1775

⁶⁴ *Middlesex Journal* 29 April-1 May 1775.



67) Photograph of Thomas Jones *A View of the House in Chalfont...where Milton resided*. 1744. In John Milton's House at Chalfont St. Giles, Whereabouts of original work unknown.⁶⁵

The *Morning Post* and *Middlesex Journal* were not the only newspapers to publish discerning analyses of landscape painting. The *London Evening Post* offered 'Impartial Observations' on the 'Principal Pictures' exhibited with the Royal Academy in 1775. Twelve of the thirty-six artists mentioned were landscape painters, despite landscape paintings representing only 21% of total exhibits. Barret was highly acclaimed; 'The long established reputation of Mr Barret, as a Landscape Painter, makes it almost unnecessary to add another eulogium to his character. His landscapes of this year are some of the best in his manner, particularly number 14 (*A Landscape*). The waterfall among the rocks in this piece has a very sublime sheen, in opposition to the gloom which surrounds it'.⁶⁶ The acknowledgment of the striking contrast between 'sublime sheen' and 'gloom' which dramatised these complementary elements of nature, represented a radical departure from conventional analysis of landscape paintings.

Dall's three landscapes were commended; 'Nothing can be conceived more beautiful than these landscapes, particularly the former, (*The East View of Bradburn, Kent*) which is touched with a softness, and accuracy of pencil, that insensibly opens the mind to all the charms of the country. The sheet of water which runs through the domain, is remarkably

⁶⁵ Photograph from www.Culture24orguk/history-and-heritage I have not been able to trace the original work.

⁶⁶ *London Evening Post* 25-27 April 1775.

transparent as to reflect the building ... with all the seeming forces of nature; indeed Mr Dall has long stood unrivalled in this last excellence.⁶⁷ These comments were articulated in an inventive, expressive vocabulary, with perceptive analysis of the techniques used to produce effects. The critic offered an explanation for Dall's ability to render his work so redolent with feeling; his delicate artistry evoked subliminal awareness of all 'the charms of the country', while the reflective surface of the water attracted an appreciation of the wonder of nature. I have been unable to locate this admired work, but Dall's *A View of Aysgarth Falls*, (fig 68) commissioned by Edwin Lascelles for his recently built stately home Harewood House, clearly attests to his ability to reflect the 'forces of nature', and his skill in the depiction of water.



68) Nicholas Thomas Dall, *Aysgarth Falls*, c. 1777, oil on canvas, 87.5 x 133.5 cm. Harewood House, West Yorkshire.

Not all the critiques in the *London Evening Post* were voiced so eloquently and unconventionally, but the language remained thoughtful, and the opinions of the critic are well-considered. De Loutherbouurg, who had exhibited two landscapes and three drawings, was judged to have produced a 'pleasing effect that is always obtained by good colouring, handling and disposition',⁶⁸ Garvey's *Views* 'are well kept and coloured; the sun set has some merit; but the moonlight is remarkable fine';⁶⁹ Sandby is commended for executing his work 'with great boldness, freedom and fidelity'⁷⁰ while Wilson is praised for the

⁶⁷ *London Evening Post* 29 April - 2 May 1775.

⁶⁸ *ibid*, 2-4 May 1775.

⁶⁹ *ibid*, 29 April-2 May 1775.

⁷⁰ *ibid*, 6-9 May 1775.

‘mellowness of his pencil, and accuracy of descriptions ... which recommend them to public attention’.⁷¹ A brief comment that Tomkin’s landscape paintings were ‘very pleasantly finished’ but would give more pleasure ‘if we were not reminded too much of the manner of Claud Lorrain (sic)’⁷² signified the critic preferred originality rather than adherence to classical precedents.

Despite the eulogies in the *London Evening Post* in 1775, landscape painting received less attention in 1776. History paintings, and disquiet over the policies of the Royal Academy, dominated critical comment. ‘Guido’ in the *Morning Post* declared that the ‘it is in our opinion as capital a collection of modern painting as ever was exhibited in the country’, and hailed West’s *Devout men taking the body of St Stephen* as ‘the best historical painting we ever beheld from the pencil of an English artist’.⁷³ However, ‘A True Lover of the Arts’ in the *Morning Chronicle*, although accepting that West’s ‘St Stephen does great honour to this country’ argued that ‘the space it occupies should, at least, have been the limits of his prerogative there’.⁷⁴ When the size of this painting is considered, 895 x 575 cm, it is difficult not to agree; it would have dominated the exhibition space.

The only landscape painter considered in depth by ‘Guido’ was de Loutherbourg, who exhibited five landscapes, a *Banditti* and a portrait. ‘Guido’s’ reflective comments vividly emphasised the shift in the language employed in the critical analysis of landscape painting. This is the first review I have found that of de Loutherbourg’s exhibited landscape in which that truth to Nature and the ability to express an emotional response have been applauded. He declared that ‘Mr Loutherbourg’s (sic) great excellence in landscape style has been universally acknowledged... *The Landscape with Cattle* is finely coloured, admirably relieved, and the cattle naturally disposed ... (fig 69) *The Skating piece* – at the same time it gives us a fine wintery view, exhibits as expressive and well contrasted characters as ever were seen – *The Summer’s evening* – a picture in every aspect highly comic, and natural - *The rocky landscape with a cataract* – this is a most capital performance;- the water, sky and rocks afford a fine display of variegated colourings; the horror in the countenance of the man who steps on the serpent is finely expressed’.⁷⁵

⁷¹ *ibid.* 9-11 May 1775.

⁷² *ibid.* 6-9 May 1775.

⁷³ *Morning Post* 27 April 1776.

⁷⁴ *Morning Chronicle* 2 May 1776.

⁷⁵ *Morning Post* 30 April 1776.



69) Philippe-Jacques de Loutherbourg, *Landscape with Cattle*, date unknown, oil on canvas, 132.5 x 161 cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London

De Loutherbourg exhibited many versions on the theme of landscapes with cattle and figures at the Royal Academy exhibitions. Although this is unlikely to be the painting he exhibited in 1776, it shows originality in the disposition of the cattle; their highlighted central positioning, and calm evening light, contrast with the darker, dramatic ruggedness of the rocks, down which a torrent tumbles.

Despite the ascendancy of the Royal Academy exhibitions, the exhibitions of the Society of Artists continued to receive attention. The *Daily Advertiser* announced that the exhibition of 1776 was ‘the most remarkable Proof of the amazing Strides to Perfection the Arts ... are making in this Nation; the Reputation and Consequences of the Society, already Favourites of the Public, cannot but be greatly increased’.⁷⁶ The *General and New Daily Advertiser* in 1776 praised the ‘many capital performances ... which cannot fail to immortalize their artists’.⁷⁷ As the Society had already been deserted by many of its artists and was under severe financial pressure, it is probable these were ‘puffs’ inserted by

⁷⁶ *Daily Advertiser* 22 April 1776

⁷⁷ *General and New Daily Advertiser* 23 April 1776.

members or supporters. Although there are no extant figures for attendance at this exhibition, Hoock has shown that by 1773, the public were already abandoning the Society.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, the landscape paintings of Wright and Marlow at the Society of Artists exhibition continued to receive acclaim.

The *Morning Post* applauded Marlow as 'a master whose productions, in this style of painting, have long done himself, and this country great honour. The two pieces (*A View of Naples* and *A ditto*) are superior to his former work, so generally admired: the colouring is inexpressively beautiful, the pencilling masterly, and the distances correctly kept.'⁷⁹ Marlow's *Views* were also commended in the *Public Advertiser*; *A View of London-Bridge* was deemed 'an exact representation and admirably executed' while *A View of Richmond Hill* was described 'as a beautiful idea of that pleasing scene.'⁸⁰ These reviews accepted that meticulous attention to accurate representation of natural features remained an important attribute of landscape painting. Wright of Derby's large, impressive *An Eruption of Vesuvius* was the focus of the attention of the critic in the *Morning Chronicle*. He observed that 'One picture represents the *Eruption of Vesuvius*, and a gentleman who was once present at the explosion of the Mount, declared that he thought it was impossible that art could ever, in so close a manner, imitate nature as to exhibit on canvas the most true and exact representation of that dreadful pile, and to make the lava that runs from the mountain appear equally as clear as liquid fire, as it did to him when upon the spot'.⁸¹ This critic, in his description of Wright's ability to represent the awesome power of nature, was undoubtedly influenced by the ideas expressed by Burke; the work aroused the same impassioned response of fear and horror induced by the visual spectacle.

Landscape paintings exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1777 were greeted with an intensified reception. A series of letters by 'Gaudenzio', purportedly from an Italian artist in London to an English artist in Rome, were published in *St James's Chronicle* in 1777. 'Gaudenzio' first bemoaned that 'I cannot help lamenting again the Want of Historical Pictures', but continued to mention six landscape painters. He described Wilson's *A Landscape with historical figures* as 'a beautiful piece. This Artist's Abilities are so well known to you, as to all the World besides, therefore it is needless for me to enlarge upon it.

⁷⁸ Holger Hoock, *The King's Artists: The Royal Academy of Arts and the Politics of British Culture 1760-1840*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 65.

⁷⁹ *Morning Post* 25 April 1776.

⁸⁰ *Public Advertiser* 19 April 1776.

⁸¹ *Morning Chronicle* 22 April 1776.

Let it suffice to say, that it is a rocky Scene, indicating however, a capital City is not far off. A storm is happily introduced to spread a Gloominess, well adapted to the Anger with which Latona inspired Apollo and Diana against Niobe and her innocent children, which the painter has chosen for the historical Part of this Picture'.⁸² I have been unable to identify this work, but Solkin, in *Richard Wilson*, has suggested that Wilson had exhibited a revised *Niobe* in 1767, so it is conceivable that a third version was exhibited in 1777.⁸³ The vocabulary in the review by 'Gaudenzio' was descriptive and expressively emotional. He evoked the fury of Latona's anger, personified by the spreading gloom of the storm, and the poignant reference to the 'innocent' children' elicited an immediate, sympathetic response from the viewer. His comments on de Loutherbourg's exhibits were more mundane. He admired *A Midsummer Morning* for its humour, while in *A landscape with cattle*, 'the cattle are fine, the colouring clear and brilliant'.⁸⁴

'Gaudenzio' continued his review in a subsequent letter, including Gainsborough, Barret, Hodges and Tomkins among the seventeen artists discussed. He reserved his greatest 'Encomiums' for Gainsborough, now exhibiting again with the Royal Academy after his defection in 1773. His *Large Landscape* (fig 62), identified by Hayes as *The Watering Place*,⁸⁵ was described as 'inimitable. It revives the colour of Rubens in that line. The scene is grand; the Effect of Light is striking; the Cattle very natural. But what shall I say about the Pencilling? I really don't know; it is so new, so original; that I cannot find any words to convey any idea of it ... Were you in London I could only tell you to go and see'.⁸⁶ This description goes beyond mere enthusiasm for the quality of the Gainsborough's exhibit ... 'Gaudenzio', overwhelmed, was unable to articulate why this work is so incomparable, or why it has so seized his attention and admiration.

'Gaudenzio' was not alone in his admiration of Gainsborough's *A large Landscape*. The critic in the *Morning Chronicle* wrote that 'Nothing can shew the master more forcefully than the latter. It is one of the best of its kinds that has been exhibited for many years. The red cow, the perspective light with the broken bank and the lucid water are all fine parts of the picture'.⁸⁷ The descriptive vocabulary – the distinctive colour of the cow, crumbling bank, and lucidity of the water – incited the imagination of the viewer to

⁸² *St. James's Chronicle* 26-27 April 1777.

⁸³ Solkin, *Richard Wilson* (London: Tate gallery Publication 1983) 138, footnote 52.

⁸⁴ *St James's Chronicle* 7-12 May 1777.

⁸⁵ Hayes, *The Landscape Paintings of Thomas Gainsborough, Vol 2*. (London: Sotheby's Publications 1982), 465.

⁸⁶ *St James's Chronicle* 6 May 1777.

⁸⁷ *Morning Chronicle* 25 April 1777.

envisage a truly rural vision. 'Guido', in the *Morning Post* declared that 'As the pencil of this gentleman has evidently entitled him to the distinction, we have impartially placed him at the head of the artists whose works we are about to review'. He admired the five portraits exhibited by Gainsborough and continued '*A large landscape*. A rural scene from nature, which discloses Gainsborough's superior taste and execution in the landscape - it is confessedly a master-piece of its kind, but is viewed in every possible disadvantage from the situation in which the directors have thought proper to place it'.⁸⁸ The *Morning Post*, edited by Henry Bate, a supporter of Gainsborough, took every available opportunity to complain about the hanging of his work.

Gainsborough's exhibited landscape paintings were increasingly prioritised over his portraits. In *The Present State of Painting*, 1772, the correspondent had commented that it was as a portrait painter that 'his merit is uncommonly good'.⁸⁹ However, a review in the *General Advertiser* in 1778 declared that 'We would forgo the pleasure we get from his portraits for the ineffable delight we receive from his landscapes; and that he would also leave the one for the other'.⁹⁰ The critic in the *Morning Post* asserted that 'for as he rivals the President of the Royal Academy in the happiness of likeness, so is he equally a competitor of Rubens in the comprehensiveness of the plan, and in the peculiar characteristic of his landscapes. He has been reproached with negligence in finishing, but if his pieces were viewed at a proper distance, which, as is manifestly his design, is the only just way of estimating their merit, this imputation would appear totally without foundation'.⁹¹ It was stressed once more that poor positioning of his work was detrimental to a full appreciation of their merit.

Despite the pre-eminence of Royal Academy, Marlow continued to be lauded for his landscape paintings at the exhibition of Society of Artists. In 1777, Gaudenzio observed that, despite 'of all the Difficulties' there were 'a great number of excellent Landscapes'. He eulogised that 'Marlow shines with the greatest Lustre among the Landscape Painters of the Age. He has many paintings exhibited here; the most capital, in my opinion, a *View of the Castle of St Angelo at Rome* ... It has a very striking effect ... The Sun shone when I was in the Room and I thought it the natural Effect of Light and Shade. The sun disappeared while I was there and I thought it was still shining on the Picture. The houses are very

⁸⁸ *Morning Post* 25 April 1777.

⁸⁹ Anon, *The present state of painting*, 254-5.

⁹⁰ *General Advertiser* 30 April 1778.

⁹¹ *Morning Post* 27 April 1778.

much in the stile (sic) of Canaletto'.⁹² This laudatory review expressed amazement at Marlow's ability to portray the tenuous quality of light, with admiration for his creation of a work in the style of the much admired Canaletto. Such references were deemed to confer aesthetic prestige on British landscape painters.

Admiration for Marlow's landscape continued into 1778. 'M.L', writing in the *Morning Chronicle*, declared, of *A View of the Coast of Italy*, that 'the beautiful and romantic scene is so replete with truth and nature, the aerial perspective so well-conceived, the water so strongly expressed and limpid, that the painter has thrown us into a state [of] uncertainty; whether to pronounce it nature or art; and we cannot help thinking that we are beholding the place instead of the picture'. 'M.L' departed radically from previous emphasis on colour and design. He was thrown into visual confusion by the indefinable brilliance of Marlow's portrayal of nature. Critics were increasingly adopting a more sophisticated attitude towards truth to Nature; landscape paintings were not only praised for the accuracy of representation, but for the effect produced through accurate depiction of light, water and perspective. The *Whitehall Evening-Post* condemned the exhibition of 1780 as a 'miserable collection of trash' but continued that Marlow's exhibits 'will not discredit his well-earned reputation'.⁹³

A more exalted aesthetic genre?

Reviews of the Royal Academy exhibition of 1778 were dominated by Wright, exhibiting with the Royal Academy for the first time. Although they were all in agreement that Wright deserved the major plaudits, their admiration was expressed using different criteria of excellence. The review in the *Morning Post*, which hailed the exhibits of Wright as 'one of the greatest ornaments of the exhibition', evaluated *The Eruption of Vesuvius* and the *Girandola* in terms that stressed that adherence to classical precedents exemplified the standard of excellence. The anonymous critic admired Wright's exhibits for their 'sublimity and grandeur of design' which 'added a perfectness in the execution that has a very fine effect, and shows the author capable of uniting ... the characteristic excellencies of both the Flemish and Italian schools'.⁹⁴ By 1778, it was unusual for modern British landscape paintings to be assessed for their formal qualities, or to be compared with revered Old Master. The terms employed – sublimity, grandeur, genius, invention – were descriptive of

⁹² *St James's Chronicle* 13 May 1777.

⁹³ *Whitehall Evening Post* 18-20 April 1780.

⁹⁴ *Morning Post* 29 April 1778.

the Grand Style in Reynolds's *Discourse III*.⁹⁵ The use of this vocabulary may indicate that this critic was anxious to rank landscape painting as a more exalted aesthetic genre.

The critic writing in the *General Advertiser* eulogised that Wright, with *The Eruption of Vesuvius, with the procession of St Januarius's head* had 'contrived a new way to confound the critic ... he has brought into assemblage so powerful a glow and fire of colouring, that the eye is dazzled and confounded in beholding it. The vision is so powerfully attached to the principal object that it cannot wander over the beauties of the whole.' (fig 70) The critic acknowledged the effect that 'the procession, illuminated by the glow behind it ... enforces upon the mind.'⁹⁶



70) Joseph Wright of Derby, *An Eruption of Vesuvius with the procession of Sr. Januarius's Head*, 1778, oil on canvas, 162 x 213.4 cm, exh, Royal Academy, 1778, (no 357). The Pushkin Museum of Fine Art, Moscow.

The originality of the work, together with glowing colour and powerfully depicted forces of nature, inspired wonder and amazement. However, it was the procession of figures,

⁹⁵ Reynolds, *Discourse III*, 81-97.

⁹⁶ *General Advertiser* 30 April 1778.

dwarfed by the volcano but irradiated by its light, which aroused the more intuitive, intimate response.

The critic also endows this work with qualities more usually reserved for the highest genre, history painting. For Reynolds, only history painting had ‘the intellectual dignity ... to produce great effects in an instant’.⁹⁷ The *Morning Chronicle* accepted that Wright ‘has very deservedly been long esteemed as one of the first artists of this kingdom. His *forte* is peculiar to himself, and is not more singular than excellent... *The Eruption of Vesuvius &c* is an admirable picture; it has only one fault and that is, the red circle which surrounds the top of the volcano ... when every other respect so masterly, it may be said a mean effect’.⁹⁸ This appears to be an unnecessary quibble; maybe it was included to prove that the critic had seriously studied the painting.

Gainsborough and Wright were not the only landscape painters to be eulogized. The *Morning Chronicle*, in 1777, had noted that two of Barret’s exhibits were views of ‘the same situation in Wales, with a different circumstance of placid weather and a storm. The subjects rather limit the power of the pencil, than afford scope for the artist’s skill, although they serve to shew the diversity of his genius’.⁹⁹ (fig 71) Despite these reservations, Barret was still accorded the accolade of genius. This praise would not have been bestowed by Duff in his *Essay on Original Genius*; it was reserved for imaginative landscapes, not depictions of real scenery.¹⁰⁰ It is difficult to equate this work with that appellation when compared with the exhibits of Gainsborough and Wright. However, the review may be by a critic anxious to raise the status of British landscape painting, although the lack of further interest in Barret’s work that year suggests this may be a partial opinion.

⁹⁷ Reynolds, *Discourse III*, 83-84.

⁹⁸ *Morning Chronicle* 25 April 1778.

⁹⁹ *Morning Chronicle* 8 April 1777.

¹⁰⁰ William Duff, *An essay on original genius: and its various modes of exertion in philosophy and the fine arts, particularly in poetry* (London 1767), 202.



71) George Barret, *Llanberis Lake and Dolbadarn Castle 1777*, oil on canvas, 121 x 170.8 cm, probably exh. Royal Academy 1777 as *A Storm, Llanberis Lake in the mountains of Wales*. (no 16) Nottingham Castle Museum and Art Gallery.

It has to be stressed that critics were not always in agreement with each other. A review in the *General Advertiser* pronounced that Wilson's *View in Windsor Park*, (fig 72) was 'one of the most beautiful and perfect representations of nature in the room The design faultless ... the light sweetly distributed, the distances finely kept, and the colouring is bold, vigorous and warm. The subject gives the idea of a sultry effect of a summer's day ... the trees catch the light ... he has naturally disposed his cattle ... and kept his warmth to the horizon'.¹⁰¹ It is difficult to disagree with this critic; the reflections of the trees in the water, the hint of the distant horizon and encroaching clouds and the pervading languid calm allow viewers to immerse themselves in a vision of summer in the unspoilt countryside.

However, the critic in the *Morning Post* declared that 'We are sorry to say that we cannot praise this picture in any matter equal to the many productions we have seen of this great master; the colouring is muddy, wants force in the foreground and more precision to the object ... it is with regret that we have said anything to the prejudice of an artist from

¹⁰¹ *General Advertiser* 2 May 1778.

whose landskip paintings we have derived so much pleasure'.¹⁰² Rachel Flynn and Simon, in *Richard Wilson and the Transformation of European Painting*, state that this work was in the style of Wilson's work in the early 1760s; it was painted when he was at the height of his artistic power. They suggest it was exhibited in 1778 as 'a riposte' to Gainsborough's *Watering Place*, exhibited the previous year, as 'proof that Wilson had long been master of this type of composition'.¹⁰³



72) Richard Wilson, *View in Windsor Great Park* early 1760s, oil on canvas, 106.9x140cm, exh. Royal Academy 1778, (no 352) National Museum of Wales, Cardiff.

In another instance of disagreement between critics, Francis Wheatley's *A View of Ivy Bridge* was judged to be 'rather too blue and cold, and the falls of water are in general too low' in the *Morning Post*,¹⁰⁴ whereas he was hailed 'as a man of rising genius' in the *General Advertiser*.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² *Morning Post*, 23 May 1777.

¹⁰³ Rachel Flynn and Robin Simon, 'In the footsteps of Wilson' in *Richard Wilson and the Transformation of European Landscape Painting*, eds Postle and Simon, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2014), 312.

¹⁰⁴ *Morning Post* 11 May 1778.

¹⁰⁵ *General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer* 2 May 1778.

Gainsborough exhibited *A Landscape*, and Wright included *The Girandola ... a companion to the Vesuvius he painted last year* among the three paintings he exhibited with the Royal Academy in 1779. However, these landscape paintings attracted little critical interest, despite the acclaim accorded to Gainsborough and Wright the previous year. *St James's Chronicle* observed that the Royal Academy exhibition, despite having 'successfully militated against all others',¹⁰⁶ now appeared to be in decline, and there were further complaints concerning the lack of encouragement, and opportunities, for history painters. A letter from 'A sincere Well-wisher to the Polite Arts', published in the *Public Advertiser* and *St James's Chronicle*, appealed for more patronage for history painters from those who 'had it so much in their Powers to give Effectual aid and Encouragement to the Polite Arts'.¹⁰⁷ The author urged that only then would artists forsake portraits and landscapes and enable a British School of painting, based on history painting, to be established. The *General Advertiser* remarked that the shortcomings of the Academy exhibition appeared to be 'part of the general decay that had pervaded our political and commercial departments'.¹⁰⁸ There was little doubt that political and commercial situations were fraught as the British had been at war with the American Colonies since April 1775 with George III, who declared the colonies were in rebellion in August that year, ordering an embargo on trade with the rebels.

The only landscape painting to receive attention was the single exhibit by de Loutherbourg. A review published in both the *London Chronicle* and *Morning Chronicle* commended his *Landscape, in which are represented the manoeuvres of an attack performed before their Majesties on Warley Common* as 'a most bold and admirable piece. The subject is proof of the artist's uncommon genius, and the stile (sic) of its execution shews his ability and imagination are equally powerful ... The figure of the Post-boy and the fat fellow's refusal to obey the sentinel are natural touches of humour'.¹⁰⁹ From this description, it is probable that *Warley Camp: the Mock Attack* (fig 73) is the same work. The picture offers a reassuring vision of the strength and discipline of the British army amid increasing political turmoil between those who either supported or opposed the war against America. It is interesting that de Loutherbourg, a Frenchman, chose to depict an event with such patriotic sentiments for British viewers. The French had recognised America's Independence in 1778; it is conceivable that de Loutherbourg chose this subject to prove

¹⁰⁶ *St James's Chronicle* 17 April 1779.

¹⁰⁷ *St James's Chronicle* 18-19 May 1779; *Public Advertiser* 19 May 1779.

¹⁰⁸ *General Advertiser* 17 April 1779.

¹⁰⁹ *London Chronicle* 24-27 April 1779; *Morning Chronicle* 26 April 1779.

his patriotic attachment to his adopted country. His French origins were ignored by the newspapers, he retained his popularity among the British public, and the success of his *Eidophusikon* in 1781 undoubtedly attracted new admirers.



73) Philippe-Jacques de Loutherbourg, *Warley Camp; the Mock Attack*, 1779, oil on canvas, 129 x180cm, exh. Royal Academy 1779, (no 182) Royal Collection

The exhibitions at Somerset House, between 1780 and 1782

The twelfth exhibition of the Royal Academy, which opened in the new premises at Somerset House on 24 April 1780, was greeted with noticeably more enthusiasm than the one staged the previous year. The *Public Advertiser* proclaimed that the new *Exhibition Room* ... does Honour to the Royal Munificence; the Exhibition likewise is such as does great credit to the Academicians, being on the Whole much superior to any we have seen yet'.¹¹⁰ Not all commentators were so complimentary. The *London Courant* complained that, although the Royal Academy had been established for more than eleven years, the 'national improvement' in the arts was 'not to the degree that might have been expected.' Interestingly, he bemoaned the 'inferiority of both history paintings and landscapes, blaming this 'on the want of liberal encouragement', while admitting that in the 'humbler walks of portrait-painting, fruit pieces, dead game &c', many artists excelled.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ *Public Advertiser* 2 May 1780.

¹¹¹ *London Courant* 2 May 1780.

This is the first time that the genre of landscape painting was designated as superior to portraiture. It suggests that the critical success accorded the work of Gainsborough and Wright had successfully raised the status of landscape painting. Certainly, the landscape paintings of Gainsborough continued to garner high praise. He exhibited six landscapes in 1780 which were received almost universal critical acclaim. The *Public Advertiser* declared that 'Tis hard to say in which branch Mr Gainsborough most excels, Landscape or Portrait. Let the connoisseurs ... determine – if they can.¹¹² The *London Chronicle* eulogised that 'every one of his landscapes beggars description',¹¹³ the *Morning Chronicle* that his landscapes were 'incomparable indeed',¹¹⁴ and the *Morning Post* eulogised, in the first paragraph of the review, of his 'superior excellence in either style'.¹¹⁵

A Candid Review of the Exhibition, written by 'An Artist' in 1780, carried the only criticism I have found of Gainsborough's landscape paintings exhibited that year. Dedicated to the King, the *Preface* was a hymn of praise for his patronage of the Royal Academy. Ninety-three paintings, by forty-four artists, were mentioned; all were exhibited in the Great Room. Mark Hallett, in *Art on the Line*, suggested that this pamphlet 'functioned as part of the Academy's publicity apparatus', and that it may indeed have 'been sanctioned by certain senior Academicians to pre-empt attacks in the press on the institution and its display'.¹¹⁶ This certainly appears likely. 'An Artist' reserved his most extravagant praise for history paintings and the portraits of Reynolds. The highest acclaim accorded a landscape painting was for Louthembourg's patriotic *Troops at Warley-Camp*; 'Too much cannot be said in commendation of this piece'.¹¹⁷ His thoughts on Gainsborough's landscapes were mixed. Whereas one was acclaimed as 'inimitably fine',¹¹⁸ another was criticised as having too little attention paid 'to the finishing'.¹¹⁹ This somewhat derogatory remark may reflect the wish of the Royal Academy to preserve the sacrosanct position of history painting, or be viewed as an expression of jealousy by Reynolds at Gainsborough's success. Gainsborough's landscape paintings, in the *London Courant*, had been more highly commended than his portraits.

¹¹² *Public Advertiser* 20-22 April 1780.

¹¹³ *London Chronicle* 2 May 1780.

¹¹⁴ *Morning Chronicle* 2 May 1780.

¹¹⁵ *Morning Post* 4 May 1780.

¹¹⁶ Mark Hallett, 'The business of criticism': The Press and the Royal Academy Exhibition in Eighteenth-Century London' in *Art on the Line*, 72.

¹¹⁷ 'An Artist', *Candid Review of the Exhibition of the Royal Academy* (London 1780)

¹¹⁸ *ibid*, 20.

¹¹⁹ *ibid*, 13.

The dearth of exhibited history painting was further denounced by 'A Friend to the Arts' writing in *St James's Chronicle* in 1781. He complained that 'In England we see a number of Artists sprung up in about 20 years, self-instructed, self-animated, and self-encouraged, striving to inspire the Publick (sic) with the same Love of their Art as they themselves feel; but the Fashion is against them ... they must now droop their heads, follow the Current of the Times, and forsake that Great Road of Excellence, History Painting without which Art sinks to a mere ornamental Occupation'. Although he accepted that there were many excellent landscape paintings, he relegated them as 'Assistants in an exhibition'.¹²⁰ Not all critics viewed landscape painting as mere 'Assistants'. 'Guido', in the *Whitehall Evening-Post* claimed that 'Gainsborough is confessedly the principal support of the present Exhibition. The critic's eye alternatively wanders from his portraits to his landscapes, and becomes too enraptured with either to decide which are the most entitled to excellence ... Gainsborough's two Sea Views shew the universality of his genius'.¹²¹ (fig 74)

The critic in the *Public Advertiser* noted that Gainsborough had exhibited 'three delightful landscapes and several portraits'. Although he admired the portraits, he continued 'yet even *these*, when compared with the *superior* merit of the three *landscapes*, confirm our former opinion, that Mr Gainsborough should entirely confine himself to the *Landscape Painting*'.¹²² Despite these tributes to Gainsborough's landscapes, the critic offered no explanation of why they were deemed so outstanding.

'Candid', in the *Morning Chronicle* in 1781 sought to elucidate Gainsborough's exceptional qualities. After first complaining that the exhibition was inferior to previous years, with indifferent paintings admitted, he bestowed great praise on Reynolds's portraits and Gainsborough's landscapes, described as 'beyond all compare excellent'. He expounded on the incomparable qualities manifested. He praised them 'as full of the chearfulness (sic) of the best Flemish painters, the elegance of the first Italian artists, and have as much truth and correctness as has fallen to the share of any subjects of this sort; yet they appear, when near, like mere sketches, and everything is found in their effect'. This is an acceptance that the landscapes of Gainsborough rivalled the revered continental exemplars of landscape painting. 'Candid' continued that, in exhibit no 94, (*A Landscape*) 'the clouds seem in motion, the waves to be retiring from the beech, (sic) and the fishing boats really

¹²⁰ *St James's Chronicle* 28 April–1 May 1781.

¹²¹ *Whitehall Evening-Post* 1-3 May 1781.

¹²² *Public Advertiser* 2 May 1781.

float on the waves ... In a word, beautiful nature calls to our feelings for admiration, and calls upon us in a voice that her admirer cannot be deceived in'.¹²³



74) Thomas Gainsborough, *Coastal Scene*, 1781, oil on canvas, 100.3 x 127, exh, Royal Academy 1781 (no 94), Private collection.

For 'Candid', it was Gainsborough's unique style of painting, and his extraordinary ability to convey, through his descriptive, expressive imagery, a transient moment of the natural world, that produced an immediate empathetic effect through both visual and sensory effects.¹²⁴

The new descriptive language for landscape painting was now firmly established in the reviews. There was now little reference to mere mimetic accuracy. Critics now emphasised the ability of the landscape painter to communicate emotional and expressive responses, together with their skill in their observation of the natural world. 'Candid' mentioned Farington's *The Grange in Borrowdale* in his review of exhibits at the Royal Academy exhibition of 1781. Although he accepted that Farington earned credit for

¹²³ *Morning Chronicle* 1 May 1781.

¹²⁴ This work was described as *A Landscape* in the *Catalogue* S of A 1781, and critically assessed by the critics as a landscape, so I have included it in my analysis of exhibited landscape paintings.

precision, perspective and design of the work, he complained ‘that the sallow greenness which we find everywhere, gives the whole an air of severity’.¹²⁵ He argued that a ‘few warm tints’ were needed for the picture to be admired. The inference was that a more expressive nuance would be achieved if the ‘severity’ was balanced by a contrasting, more sympathetic sensation of warmth.

Fourteen landscape paintings were included in the review of the Royal Academy exhibition of 1781, published in the *London Courant*. Barret’s *View of Windandermere*; (sic) *the effect of the sun beginning to appear in the morning, with the mists breaking and dispersing* was described as ‘an unusual scene but most astonishingly painted; the clouds breaking upon the hills, the fog ascending as light and thin as possible; the aerial perspective exactly preferred; and the whole equal to any master ancient or modern’. (fig 75) A sensation of amazement was inspired by the perceptive depiction of differing atmospheric effects.



75) George Barret, *View of Windermere Lake*, 1781, oil on canvas, 149 x 240.5 cm. exh. Royal Academy 1781 (no 40). National Gallery of Victoria. Melbourne.

This review also included mention of landscape paintings by Oram, Bourgeois and Groombridge, who had received little previous critical attention. The critic’s observations of these works were largely confined to concise comments on colour, depiction of contrasting light and shade, choice of location and accuracy of design. I suggest that there was recognition that not all landscape painters had the ability to evoke an emotive

¹²⁵ *Morning Chronicle* 5 May 1781.

response; this critic reverted to the more conventional terminology. However, it is interesting that, in his review of Groombridge's *A Wood Scene after Sunset*, the critic suggested that 'if this painter must copy an artist in preference to nature, I would advise him to copy Barrett (sic), Wilson or Gainsborough, rather than Smith'.¹²⁶ These were lauded British landscape painters, not the revered Old Masters against whom British landscape painters had been previously judged. Furthermore, the recommendation referred to landscape painters consistently praised for their ability to elicit poignant, emotional resonances that were not apparent in Smith's pastoral landscapes.

The anonymously written, scurrilous pamphlet *The earwig; or, An Old Woman's Remarks on the Present Exhibition of Pictures of the Royal Academy*, was published in April 1781, timed to coincide with the opening of the exhibition.¹²⁷ In contrast to *A Candid Review*, published the previous year, *The earwig* launched a defamatory and vitriolic tirade against the perceived mediocrity of the exhibition, and incompetence of many of the artists. Hallett declared that the author was probably Mauritius Lowe, who 'enjoyed a notoriously troubled and bitter relationship with the Academy'.¹²⁸ Many exhibits are described in derogatory terms, but the twelve landscape paintings largely escaped censure. Indeed, many comments were made in the descriptive vocabulary now prevalent in evaluation of landscape painting. Gainsborough was accorded the highest praise; 'It is impossible for the art to produce any work more complete and more pleasing than this landscape and its companion. The pellucid pencilling of the water, the unaffected composition, and the just reality of the colour, renders these pictures admirable to any eye, learned or unlearned'.¹²⁹ The writer insisted that all viewers, not only the 'learned' connoisseurs could appreciate this work. In an observation made on a later landscape exhibit by Gainsborough, the policies of the hanging committee were again condemned. 'The works of this artist have always been prejudiced by being hung too near or too far from the eye ... This gentleman's professed ability entitles his work to a preference of place'.¹³⁰ Barret, in his *View of Winandermere* was applauded as being 'successful in the highest degree in the

¹²⁶ *London Courant* 1 May 1781

¹²⁷ Anon, *The earwig: or an old woman's remarks on the present exhibition of the pictures of the Royal Academy* (London: G. Kearsley 1781)

¹²⁸ Hallett, *Art on the Line*, 73.

¹²⁹ *The earwig*, 10.

¹³⁰ *ibid*, 17.

representation of his sublime choice of Nature',¹³¹ and Sandby's *View of Conway Castle* was described 'most beautiful – nature, truth and taste'.¹³²

The second edition of William Hayley's *An Essay on Painting in a Poetical Epistle*, dedicated to the portraitist George Romney, was published in 1781.¹³³ It commented on the late rise, and rapid improvement, of painting in England, and included 'a slight sketch of the most eminent living artists'.¹³⁴ After paying tribute to Reynolds, and the history painters West, Copley, Dance and Mortimer, Hayley paid homage to Wright, Gainsborough and Wilson. Wright was adulated for his magnificent rendition of the eruptions of Vesuvius; his hyperbolic manipulation of vocabulary rendered 'Art 'more powerful than 'Nature'.

Alone he rules his Element of Fire:
Like Meteors darting through the gloom of Night,
His sparkles flash upon the dazzled sight;
Our eyes with momentary anguish smart,
And Nature trembles at the Powers of Art.¹³⁵

Gainsborough's gentler talents, both as a portraitist and a landscape painter, were acknowledged.

Art with no common gifts her Gainsb'rough grac'd
Two different pencils in his hand she placed:
This shall command, she said, with certain aim,
A perfect semblance of the human frame:
This lightly sporting on the village-green,
Paint the beauties of the rural scene.¹³⁶

Wilson was applauded, with his past success remembered.

In Storms Sublime the daring Wilson soars

¹³¹ *ibid*, 8.

¹³² *ibid*, 6.

¹³³ William Hayley, *An Essay on Painting in a Poetical Epistle to an eminent painter, with Notes*. (Dublin: Pat Byrne 1781)

¹³⁴ *ibid*, 24.

¹³⁵ *ibid*, 34.

¹³⁶ *ibid*, 35.

And on the blasted Oak his mimic Lightning pours;
 Apollo triumphs in his flaming skies.
 And classic beauties in his scene arise.¹³⁷

Despite the obvious differences between *The earwig* and *Poetical Epistles*, both writers enthused about landscape painters. *The earwig* commented that both the educated and uneducated viewer could appreciate landscape painting, while Hayley's comments replicated the views of the more discerning critics writing in the newspapers. By 1781, it was becoming accepted that landscape paintings could be esteemed by an aesthetically uneducated public who could appreciate the true renditions of nature or sympathise with empathetic impressions expressed.

Landscape paintings continued to be well received at the Royal Academy exhibition in 1782. The *Public Advertiser* noted that the exhibited works were, as ever, a mixture of 'good, bad and indifferent'; the good works were the portraits of Reynolds, West's history paintings and the landscapes of de Loutherbourg and Gainsborough.¹³⁸ Gainsborough was lauded for his landscapes, despite an announcement in the *Morning Herald* that, for the exhibited portraits of the Prince of Wales and Major St Leger, he had received five hundred guineas for each.¹³⁹ The *London Chronicle* greeted the exhibition with enthusiasm, declaring that 'the powers of the pencil improve apiece, and that our arts advance, though our arms are unfortunate'.¹⁴⁰ The British troops under Cornwallis had surrendered in October 1781 to a Franco-American army, and peace negotiations commenced in March 1782. Not all comments were so enthusiastic; *St James's Chronicle* complained that younger artists received no encouragement and 'the Encomiums and Praise never pass beyond the Academy'.¹⁴¹

The *Morning Chronicle* carried a long review by 'Candid', including comments on the exhibits of Barret, de Loutherbourg, and Gainsborough. Barret's *Wood Scene* was admired for 'the animals, the character of the trees, of the choice of the whole; and, were his skies less broken, and his colouring less yellow, too much can hardly be said in his praise'. However he had reservations about the two exhibits, both entitled *Cattle*, of de

¹³⁷ *ibid*, 38

¹³⁸ *Public Advertiser* 28 May 1782.

¹³⁹ *Morning Herald* 27 March 1782.

¹⁴⁰ *London Chronicle* 27-30 April 1782.

¹⁴¹ *St James's Chronicle* 27 April 1782.

Loutherbourg. He noted that the 'curled draperies, combed cattle, fluttering herbage, amber ground ... transport the common observer out of his judgement, and by the magic of their execution, divest at first even the studious artist of his discernment, but let him beware this style ... it is the reverse of Poussin and Claude'. 'Candid' accepted that the aesthetically uneducated viewer could be overwhelmed by the effect of these works, and the unflattering descriptive language, together with his warnings that de Loutherbourg's artistic approach should be avoided, exposed his personal antipathy *toward* this style of landscape painting. However, 'Candid' had only praise for Gainsborough's exhibits, especially *Girl with Pigs*. (fig 76) Postle, in *Angels and Urchins* noted that Gainsborough's fancy pictures 'evolved out of his landscapes', with children the most popular subject.¹⁴²



76) Thomas Gainsborough, *Girl with Pigs*, oil on canvas, 125.6 x148.6 cm, exh. Royal Academy 1782. Castle Howard Collection.

His review was lengthy and thoughtful, offering considered opinions. The vivid, contrasting vocabulary used revealed his absolute empathy with Gainsborough's emotive resonances and exemplified his ambivalence about de Loutherbourg's artistic technique. However, I

¹⁴² Martin Postle. *Angels and Urchins: The Fancy Picture in 18th -Century British Art* (Nottingham: Draig Publications 1998), 7.

have not included *Girl with Pigs* in my analysis of landscape painting; it is the tender facial expression of the poorly dressed young girl that evoked feelings of sympathy and pathos.

The *Morning Chronicle* was not the only newspaper to express admiration for Gainsborough. The *London Courant* declaimed in his evaluation of *A landscape*, identified by Myrone and Rosenthal as *Wooded Landscape with cattle by a pool*, that 'we despair of doing justice to the merits of this charming piece of art, having never felt so much pleasure in viewing a painting of this sort before. Whether we consider the accuracy of the drawing, the natural disposition of the figures, the warmth and mellowness of the colouring, the Claude Lorrain sky, or the general composition of the performance, we are at a loss what to admire most.'¹⁴³ (fig 77) The tone and vocabulary of critical appraisal had, by 1782, departed radically from the emphasis on mimesis in the reviews of the early 1770s.



77) Thomas Gainsborough, *Wooded landscape with cattle by a pool*, oil on canvas, 120.4 x 147.6 cms, exh. Royal Academy 1782. Gainsborough's House, Sudbury.

¹⁴³ *London Courant* 8 May 1782.

Conclusion

The critical language in reviews of landscape painting was transformed between 1769 and 1782. The early reviews, influenced by the dismissal of landscape painting by Reynolds as a lesser genre, focussed on mimetic accuracy and formal qualities. However, as landscape painters exhibited larger, more ambitious works, which were more immediately striking to the viewer, there was a dramatic shift in the critical language. I argue that, from the mid-1770s, the vocabulary of the reviews became less conventional, with the recognition that landscape painting could evoke an affective response for the viewer. Critics showed a heightened awareness that landscape painting which illuminated the more evanescent moments of Nature could stimulate the imagination of the viewer. Truth to Nature, and the ability of the landscape painter to communicate emotional and expressive responses, became the criterion of excellence in a landscape painting. Furthermore, their comments remain relevant in the twenty-first century; the landscape painters extolled by the eighteenth-century critics continued to be admired for their ability to invoke an emotive response.

It has to be recognised that the increase in perceptive reviews was not universal. Critics, in the same review, used different standards of appraisal. The classical tradition remained important to many critics; comparisons with Old Masters were still apparent. I suggest that although the transformative change in the critical language emerged inconsistently, it was prescient. The emphasis of the critics on the ability of the landscape painter to portray accurately the more ephemeral qualities of Nature presaged the language used to extol those landscape painters adulated as the founders of the British School of landscape painting, John Constable and J.M.W Turner.

In 1782, the first book on landscape painting, *An Essay on Landscape Painting*, by John Holden Pott, was published. I suggest that this *Essay* can be seen as visionary. He advocated an English School of landscape painting, but was insistent that this would only emerge when English painters abandoned producing imitative copies of continental artists to focus on the singularity of the English countryside. Constable and Turner are admired for their individual observations on, and interpretations of, the natural world.

CONCLUSION

The first exhibition, held by the 'Present Artists' in the Great Room of SEAMC in April 1760, heralded the advent of annual exhibitions of modern British art. Exhibitions afforded artists their first opportunity to show their work collectively before the public, where it was subjected to public viewing and critical valuation. However, as Hock described, 'London's artistic community was in a state of permanent strife'.¹ Between 1761 and 1768, following disagreement between exhibiting artists, there were two competing exhibiting societies, the Society of Artists and the Free Society. In 1768, further disputes led to the foundation of the Royal Academy, with the first Royal Academy exhibition held in 1769. Landscape paintings featured prominently at these exhibitions. In this thesis I have determined the impact of the emergent exhibition culture on landscape painters, and the production and reception of landscape painting between 1760 and 1782.

Exhibitions were of vital importance in raising a public awareness of landscape painting. Before their institution, landscape painters had few opportunities to establish a public reputation or to present their work before a communal audience. They were predominantly reliant on patronage, with visibility of commissioned landscape paintings largely confined to patrons, families and acquaintances. Popular metropolitan venues of entertainment, the theatres and Pleasure Gardens, offered employment, but little public recognition. The landscape paintings at the Foundling Hospital, widely acknowledged as the venue for the first public display of modern British art, received little attention. The competitive commercial print market that evolved from the 1750s stimulated an interest in landscape imagery with subscription prints, usually after bespoke paintings, promoting the reputation of landscape painters. However, it was the inauguration of an exhibition culture from 1760 that introduced landscape painting into the public domain. As Mortimer emphasised, in *The Universal Director*, exhibitions facilitated the first direct interface between artists and the public audience.²

¹ Holger Hock, *The King's Artists: The Royal Academy of Arts and the Politics of British Culture 1760-1840* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 19.

² Thomas Mortimer, *The Universal Director: or, the Nobleman and gentleman's True Guide to the Masters and Professors of the Liberal and polite Arts and Sciences* (London 1763), v-vi.

Did exhibitions between 1760 and 1782 function successfully as commercial enterprises?

The commercial importance of the inauguration of an exhibition culture has long been acknowledged by art historians.³ Solkin, in *Art in Britain*, emphasised their significance; exhibitors, freed from the constraints of patronage, could 'bid directly for the support of thousands of potential buyers'.⁴ However, a change from a patronage economy to a consumer market centred on exhibitions would have required a major readjustment of traditional practices. Exhibitions did not suddenly transform the market for British art; indeed, many exhibits, as commissioned works, were not for sale. However speculatively-produced landscape paintings were available for opportunistic sales. The two overtly commercial opportunities offered by exhibitions, in 1763 and 1764, have not been previously explored, and there has been little interest in analysing how successful the early exhibitions were in establishing a market for British art. I argue that landscape painters took advantage of the opportunity to sell their work in the limited retail market that emerged from these commercial initiatives. Landscape paintings were in the majority of exhibits advertised for sale at the exhibitions between 1760 and 1782.

The professed artistic objective for the meeting in November 1759, at which the decision was made to stage an exhibition, was to consider a proposal 'for the Honour and Advancement of the Arts'.⁵ Exhibitions proved immediately popular; Mortimer declared that 'an amazing concourse of people' visited the first exhibition in April 1760.⁶ However, there was an acceptance in *Preface* to the catalogue of the Society of Artists exhibition in 1762 that exhibitions had failed to promote a market. A blatantly commercial proposal was made that 'an annual sale be appointed, to which every artist may send his works',⁷ in the expectation that it would encourage the public to buy British art.

No effort was made to advertise the auction which was held in February, eight months after the decision had been made. I found only one announcement informing the public of the date, and the catalogue was not publicly advertised despite many of the leading

³ Iain Pears, *The Discovery of Painting: The growth of interest in the arts 1680-1768* (New Haven and London, 1998); Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination; English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Harper Collins, 1997); Solkin, *Painting for Money: Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1983)

⁴ David H. Solkin, *Art in Britain 1660-1815* (Paul Mellon Centre for Studies of British Art: Yale University Press 2015), 151.

⁵ *Public Advertiser* 12 November 1759.

⁶ John Mortimer, *A concise account of the rise, progress, and present state of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce* (London 1763), 49.

⁷ *Catalogue, S of A 1762*, v-vi.

members, including the landscape painters Lambert, Wilson and Marlow, engaging with this novel opportunity to offer their work for sale. It has to be assumed that, as suggested by Brewer in *Towards a Modern Art World*, the artists 'had to adopt a series of stratagems to distance [themselves] from, and obscure or conceal [their] dependence on the market.⁸ Furthermore, it was ignored in the popular press. The *London Chronicle* and *St James's Chronicle* published the *Preface*, but made no comments on the decision to hold an auction.⁹ However the *London Chronicle* did acknowledge that exhibited works were available for purchase; it noted that the exhibits of George and John Smith at the SEAMC exhibition in 1762 'were admired by many gentlemen of state, who were desirous of purchasing them'.¹⁰

This first auction of modern British art has not been considered important by most art historians. It has been largely ignored or dismissed as an unsuccessful 'one-off' initiative. Hargraves, who briefly analysed the event, described it as a 'major miscalculation' as the prices paid failed to match the expectations of the organisers.¹¹ I have argued that, for landscape painters, the sale was significant. Four out of five landscape paintings by Lambert exceeded the estimated price, all three by Marlow fetched more than anticipated, and fifteen landscape paintings sold for more than £10. I suggest that many landscape paintings that had remained unsold at the previous exhibitions now found purchasers. The sale demonstrated that a market existed for moderately priced landscape paintings. History painters were much less successful; the highest price paid for any other work offered for sale was £9.9s for *Jane Shore* by Penny, and Zoffany's *Time Clipping the Wings of Love*, with an estimated price of £13. 15s. 4¼d fetched only £4.14s. 6d. (fig 21)

A proposal was made that a second sale be held, immediately after the next exhibition. The expectation of the proposers was that, if the work for sale had been recently displayed, an auction might prove more successful. The rejection of this plan was tempered by the concession to allow exhibitors to asterisk in the exhibition catalogue the work 'to be disposed of'. The importance of this compromise has not been acknowledged previously. The sale had set a benchmark for the price that purchasers were prepared to pay, and many of the landscape painters who sold their work at the sale embraced this commercial

⁸ Brewer, 'Cultural Production, Consumption, and the Place of the Artist in Eighteenth-Century England' in *Towards a Modern Art World*, ed. Brian Allen (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1995), 18.

⁹ *London Chronicle* 20 May 1762; *St James's Chronicle* 22 May 1762.

¹⁰ *London Chronicle* 25-27 May 1762.

¹¹ Matthew Hargraves, *Candidates for Fame: The Society of Artists of Great Britain 1760-1791* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2005), 39.

opportunity, and asterisked their work at successive exhibitions. From 1771, not only were works at the Society of Artists exhibitions marked for sale, but the asking price declared; the catalogue stated that 'the Numbers and Prices as such Performances as are to be disposed of, are left with the Assistant Secretary, who attends the Room for that purpose'.¹² Although I found no extant evidence that marked works were sold, I suggest that, as landscape painters continued to asterisk their exhibits, they had expectations of sales. Exhibitions now functioned as limited retail markets for speculatively-produced landscape paintings by landscape painters who lacked secure patronage, and for provincial artists with no London studio.

The practice of asterisking paintings was continued at the more prestigious Royal Academy exhibitions. Landscape painters again predominated among those who marked as their work as available for immediate purchase. Forty-eight landscape painters who exhibited with the Royal Academy between 1769 and 1782 exploited this commercial opportunity. Baker, in *Observations on the Pictures in the Exhibitions*, suggested that the reputations of artists were damaged through the advertising of works for sale; it revealed that they lacked patronage.¹³ For Baker, commercial initiatives were incompatible with artistic success. It was, therefore, unexpected that four landscape painters who were founder members of the Royal Academy, Barret, Richards, Sandby, and Wilson asterisked their work.

Solkin insisted that exhibitions released artists from limitations imposed by patronage.¹⁴

I maintain that patronage remained important for landscape painters. Barret and Wilson only advertised their work for sale following their failure to secure commissions; the subsequent financial embarrassment forced them to participate in this overtly commercial practice. Nevertheless, patronage did not always provide financial security, and exhibitions highlight that there was a mixed economy. Sandby offered five landscape paintings for sale between 1769 and 1774, despite the majority of his exhibits being commissioned work. Postle stated that Sandby had an 'abiding need to earn a living'¹⁵ and it was probably a pragmatic decision to asterisk his landscape paintings for sale. Following the publication of his *XII Views of South-Wales* in 1775 and *XII Views of North-Wales* in 1776, he advertised no further works for sale as engraving 'became a central feature of his

¹² *Catalogue, S of A 1771*, 3.

¹³ Robert Baker, *Observations on the Pictures at the Exhibitions of the Royal Academy, Spring Gardens and Mr Christie's* (London: John Bell and G. Riley 1771), 4.

¹⁴ Solkin, *Art in Britain*, 151-152.

¹⁵ Martin Postle 'The Sandbys and the Royal Academy' in *Paul Sandby: Picturing Britain*, eds. Bonehill and Stephen Daniels (London: Thames and Hudson), 32.

practice'.¹⁶ Richards's sole exhibit in the sale had narrowly exceeded the asking price; his decision to mark work for sale can be seen as a commercially astute option.

Exhibitions were intended to promote a commercial market for modern British art, and paintings were undoubtedly 'sold off the wall'; the Duke of Cumberland purchased Wilson's *Niobe*, exhibited in 1760. However, the decision to hold the auction in 1763, and the concession to allow the marking of work for sale demonstrate that, from their inauguration, the commercial expectations of exhibitions were not being met. This was, perhaps, inevitable. Exhibitions also functioned as showrooms, and many exhibits were not available for purchase. Landscape painters exhibited their commissioned work to advertise that they had patrons and in anticipation of further patronage. This practice was established in 1760, and continued at the more prestigious exhibitions of the Royal Academy from 1769.

Exhibitions were instituted with commercial intent, with the expectation that viewers would buy exhibited work. The overtly commercial initiatives, the sale and the inauguration of a limited retail through the asterisking of exhibits, were most enthusiastically embraced by landscape painters. However, a simplistic acceptance that exhibitions were successful in establishing a commercial market for landscape painting between 1760 and 1782 cannot be substantiated. The lack of extant evidence means that it is impossible to establish whether asterisked landscape paintings were sold. Furthermore, critical commendation was no guarantee of sales; Gainsborough failed to sell his exhibited landscape paintings despite the acclaim published in the popular press. Exhibitions did not transform the market for British landscape painting, or obviate the financial advantage of patronage.

¹⁶ Bonehill and Sarah Skinner, "Grand Secrets': Sandby's materials and techniques' in *Paul Sandby*, 70.

Do the reviews reveal a new appreciation of landscape painting?

The inception of exhibitions meant that the viewing of art from 1760 became a shared cultural experience, and initiated the first published critical debates on contemporary landscape painting. Art criticism was a novel practice in 1760 and, inevitably, many of the early published reviews were uninformative, banal or prejudiced. Nevertheless, they remain important as representing the only extant evidence of the contemporary responses to exhibited landscape painting. Review literature was slow to develop; the first evaluations of exhibitions were in the form of letters addressed to the editors of the newspapers but from 1762, more formal reviews and pamphlets were published. Munsterberg accepted that regular art criticism of modern British art began with the advent of exhibitions, but emphasised that ‘plenty of writing about painting existed before 1760’.¹⁷ The aesthetic theories of Richardson, based on Renaissance texts, were certainly important in determining the judgements and opinions of connoisseurs. However, the establishment of annual exhibitions allowed landscape paintings to enter the public arena where, for the first time, they were open to critical evaluation. The opinions of the critics, as representative of this new public audience, reflected an evolving changing dynamic in art criticism. I maintain that critical reviews of exhibitions were of paramount importance in promoting a new awareness and appreciation of landscape painting.

The initial published commentaries on landscape painting were dominated by two competing discourses; the traditional classical rhetoric of connoisseurs and those who attacked their precepts. The letters in the *London Chronicle* in 1760 following the award of landscape premiums by SEAMC to the Smith brothers exemplified these conflicting ideologies. The landscape painting of George Smith was condemned as demonstrating ‘no knowledge of the true principle of painting’;¹⁸ the anonymous rebuttal was in support of the ideas of Hogarth, who had denounced the ‘dogmatic rules’ beloved by connoisseurs.¹⁹ The opinions of the connoisseurs were further attacked by Oakly in his letters to *St James’s Chronicle* in 1761, the publication of *A Call to Connoisseurs* by ‘T.B’ and satirical letters published in the popular newspapers.

¹⁷ Marjorie Munsterberg, ‘The beginning of British art criticism in the 1760s’, *The British Art Journal* XV: I (2014): 82.

¹⁸ *London Chronicle* 12-15 April 1760.

¹⁹ Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty*, (London: 1753), 3.

From 1762, the critics increasingly rejected the language of the connoisseurs, and a new, alternative, descriptive vocabulary emerged that was more accessible to the middling class audience exposed to landscape painting for the first time. A critical vocabulary evolved that moved beyond adherence to the connoisseurial 'rules' of aesthetic judgement. The ability of the landscape painter to represent Nature through naturalistic colouring, and to elicit an ephemeral response through engagement with the natural world, became a criterion for assessment. At the same time, it became accepted that, for the more perceptive viewer, landscape paintings evoked an emotive reaction.

Few reviews were published in the first three years of the Royal Academy exhibitions. Published comments were dominated by heated exchanges of opinion between those who supported the establishment of the Royal Academy and its aesthetic ideals, and detractors of the institution. From the early 1770s, reviews were published but, influenced by Reynolds' espousal of the Grand Style, and his insistence that only history painting, through the depiction of 'heroic action or heroic suffering ... powerfully strikes upon public sympathy',²⁰ critics prioritised exhibited history painting. Munsterberg suggested that the reviews of the early Royal Academy exhibitions were more conventional, influenced by the increased prestige of the institution and the *Discourses* of Reynolds. Certainly, in the early reviews, critics reverted to the language of the connoisseurs, with stress on adherence to design, composition and style, or focussed on the mimetic abilities of the landscape painter. The descriptive language that had evolved before 1769 which emphasised the affective qualities of landscape painting was largely abandoned.

However, I argue that from the mid-1770s, the language of reviews became less conventional, with the recognition that landscape painting, like history painting, could inspire an affective, sympathetic response. As landscape painters exhibited larger and more ambitious works, the vocabulary of the reviews was transformed. Critics, influenced by the literary language of sentiment espoused for poetry, showed a heightened awareness that landscape painting which illuminated the more evanescent moments of Nature could stimulate the imagination of the viewer. I maintain that the critical reviews revealed a new appreciation of landscape painting, expressed through a heightened perception of the emotive responses engendered in the viewer.

²⁰*Sir Joshua Reynolds's Discourses on Art by Sir Joshua Reynolds.* ed Edward Gilpin Johnson. (Forgotten Books, 2012) Originally published by Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Company 1891), 100.

I contend that not only were the critical reviews influential in promoting landscape painting at the exhibitions between 1760 and 1782, but that the views expressed still resonate in the twenty-first century. Many of the landscape painters extolled by the critics between 1760 and 1782 are those still regarded as exemplars in the twenty-first century. However, Marlow and Barret, despite their enthusiastic reception in the critical reviews, and Nicholas Dall, whose work received positive accolades, have been largely ignored. I suggest they merit more recognition.

The recognition of the emotive power of landscape painting emerged inconsistently in the 1770s, but I suggest that it was prescient. The ability of landscape painting to appeal to the senses, and evoke passionate or sentimental responses became the critical criterion of excellence. Solkin stated that 'In the journalistic criticism of the 1790s, landscape artists were beginning to assume the position of natural importance previously reserved for history-painters'.²¹ I suggest that this change in journalistic emphasis began to emerge in the reviews of the 1770s, with the critical reviews presaging the language later espoused for the nineteenth-century landscape painters, John Constable and J.M.W Turner.

Did exhibitions impact on artistic practice of landscape painters?

Pears, despite insisting that exhibitions were marketplaces, stressed that the visiting public were to have no 'influence on the development of painting through their reactions'.²² These were clearly contradictory statements. I maintain that it was inevitable that exhibitions impacted on artistic practice of landscape painters. If exhibitions were indeed viewed by exhibiting artists as commercial institutions, their exhibits would only sell if they complied with consumer expectations. Exhibitions demonstrated the wide range of landscape imagery created, as landscape painters sought to produce work for the differing expectations of the visiting public. The Arcadian pastoral landscapes of the Smith brothers contrasted with more natural rural views of Lambert and Barret. Urban townscapes and river scenes by Marlow and James, which demonstrated pride in the modern commercial ascendancy of the capital, were displayed together with views of derelict castles and ruined abbeys which acclaimed the nation's historic past. Hargraves stated that, although artists were 'painting for a market, [they] were as yet unsure of the exact nature of that market';²³ the variety of the landscape paintings on display attests to this uncertainty.

²¹ Solkin, *Art in Britain*, 260.

²² Iain Pears, *The Discovery of Painting*, 127.

²³ Matthew Hargraves, *Candidates for Fame*, 24.

A competitive commercial market in prints featuring landscape imagery had been established before the first exhibition was held in 1760. Prints, advertised in the popular newspapers, revealed the popular appeal of rural and urban views, as well as distant tourist destinations. I suggest that the popularity of these views was influential in determining the artistic practice of exhibiting landscape painters. Landscape paintings which reflected the imagery of published prints were exhibited between 1760 and 1768, with a marked increase by 1768 of those depicting more distant sites. Solkin declared that the rise in landscape painting in the second half of the eighteenth century 'is inseparable from the contemporaneous expansion of...domestic tourism'.²⁴ Certainly landscape painters, aware of the interests of the domestic tourist, increasingly exhibited scenic views of more remote locations.

Landscape paintings at the early Royal Academy exhibitions received little critical attention. However, by the mid-1770s, the reviews were more fulsome. The change in critical appreciation correlated with a definitive change in artistic practice by Gainsborough and Wright; they exhibited more ambitious, appreciably larger, landscape paintings, designed to attract maximum attention. *The Watering Place*, exhibited by Gainsborough at the Royal Academy in 1777, which was greeted with enthusiastic acclaim, was a massive 147.3 x 180.3 cm. (fig 61), and Wright's spectacular *An Eruption of Mount Vesuvius with the Procession of Januarius's Head*, 120 x 176.4 cm. (fig 63) was greeted with awe when exhibited in 1778.

Landscape painters, in search of sales or commissions, had to exhibit work that appealed to the exhibition audience. Exhibitions inevitably affected artistic practice. The variety of exhibited landscape paintings, and the more ambitious works exhibited at the Royal Academy, demonstrate that landscape painters were cognisant that they had to exhibit work of interest to the viewer.

Was the reproductive print market, 1760-1768, important for landscape painters?

The print market in the 1750s was shown to be important in gaining public exposure for landscape imagery before the first exhibition was held. There was a burgeoning commercial market for landscape prints of urban and rural locations, places of historical

²⁴ Solkin, *Art in Britain*, 216

interest and tourist destinations. Landscape prints were exhibited at the Society of Artists and the Free Society exhibitions between 1760 and 1768, and print publishers published reproductive prints after exhibited landscape paintings. I suggest that exhibitions transformed the commercial market for prints.

The exhibited print did little to enhance the reputation of exhibiting landscape painters, with the notable exception of Richard Wilson. Few prints were after exhibited landscape paintings, and there was a marked deficiency of exhibited prints featuring British sites, despite their strong showing at the exhibitions. Indeed, many engravers preferentially exhibited prints after continental landscape painters. Engravers showed their prints to advertise their emergent proficiency in engraving, to challenge the domination of the art by the French and attract the attention of print publishers. William Woollett's print after *A View from Claude*, exhibited in 1760, and its publication by John Boydell, was a clear demonstration that British engravers could emulate the prowess of French engravers,

Boydell was the first print publisher to take advantage of the commercial opportunities offered by exhibitions. He published Woollett's print after Claude and, in 1760, he advertised a subscription for prints after the exhibited landscape paintings of Richard Wilson and the Smith brothers. The phenomenal commercial success of the print after *Niobe* encouraged the production of further prints after the historical landscapes of Wilson. The prints were shown in the same year as his exhibited landscapes, thus encouraging interest from the exhibition visitors and promoting sales. The reputation of Wilson was undoubtedly enhanced through the publication of prints after his exhibited work, and the print market certainly influenced his artistic production. However, as noted by Postle, Wilson was 'entirely divorced from the print process and any profits' and received no direct financial benefit from the sale of the prints after his work.²⁵

The ending of the Seven Year War in 1763 opened up the lucrative international print market to British publishers; prints after Wilson appealed to the continental collectors with shared inheritance of cultural interests. The majority of landscape painters who exhibited at the Society of Artists and Free Society exhibitions did not benefit from the patronage of print publishers. Cognisant that prints after British landscape imagery were of little interest to erudite collectors, few prints were published after landscape paintings featuring

²⁵ Postle, *Richard Wilson and the Transformation of European Landscape Painting*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2014), 138.

British locations. The majority of artists who exhibited at the Society of Artists or Free Society exhibitions did not benefit from the patronage of print publishers. Print publishers were now in the ascendancy. They were commissioning or buying paintings to be engraved as prints, as well as publishing prints after exhibited landscape paintings, notably after Wilson. Clayton proposed that the engraver ‘tried to produce as exact a translation as possible of the original painting as he possibly could’,²⁶ but the published prints were not always exact replicas of the original paintings. The engraved print was often altered to make it a more attractive commercial proposition.

The Royal Academy excluded engravers from full membership; they were deemed craftsmen rather than artists. I suggest that Royal Academicians also wished to divorce themselves from association with such overtly commercial practices. Hyde stated that ‘it was not surprising that the majority of British printmakers boycotted the Academy’.²⁷ As my thesis is centred on exhibitions, and few landscape prints were exhibited, I have not considered prints shown at the Royal Academy.

The first published book on landscape painting

In 1782, the first book on landscape painting, *An essay on landscape painting* by John Holden Pott was published. Pott, educated at Eton and St John’s College Cambridge, was only twenty-three when he wrote his *Essay*, but he declared in his introduction addressed ‘To the Reader’ that he had ‘paid close attention to the subject; to the best works of the masters here and abroad’.²⁸ Although he makes no reference to exhibitions, I contend that it is inconceivable that he had not attended the Royal Academy exhibitions or read the reviews. He would surely have been aware of the changing nature of criticism; that critics recognised that the criterion of excellence was expressively painted depictions of Nature.

²⁶ Timothy Clayton, *The English Print, 1688-1802*, (New Haven and London; Yale University Press 1997), 191.

²⁷ Sarah Hyde, ‘Print makers at the Royal Academy’ in *Art on the Line: The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House* ed. Solkin (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2001), 219.

²⁸ John Holden Pott, *An Essay on landscape painting. With remarks general and critical, on the different schools and masters, ancient or modern* (London 1782), iii

A N
E S S A Y
ON
LANDSCAPE PAINTING.
WITH
REMARKS GENERAL AND CRITICAL,
ON THE
DIFFERENT SCHOOLS AND MASTERS,
ANCIENT OR MODERN.

L O N D O N:
PRINTED FOR J. JOHNSON, NO. 72, ST. PAUL'S
CHURCH-YARD.
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78) John Holden Pott, *An Essay on Landscape Painting, with Remarks General and Critical on the Different Schools and Masters, Ancient and Modern* (London 1782) Title page.

In the first chapter, Pott made no reference to landscape painting but considered the 'Powers of Painting in exciting Pleasure'. He declared that there were two ways that looking at a picture affords pleasure to the viewer; through admiration of 'the skill of the painter, his knowledge, the grandeur of his ideas, the excellence of his pencilling' or through the 'perception of a strong resemblance to nature'. Pott insisted that not everyone had the ability to value a painting equally, as both 'great judgement', over which connoisseurs claimed authority, and an understanding of nature, which the connoisseur may lack, were required. He hoped that an appreciation of this 'may satisfy the doubts and repress the ridicule of the ignorant and unskilful in art, by rendering the passion of the connoisseur more intelligible to them'.²⁹ These comments indicate that Pott was aware of the 'first salvoes in the journalistic battle between 'honest' ordinary viewers, influenced by the writing of Hogarth, and 'connoisseurs' who stressed adherence to 'the rules of art' as described by Jonathan Richardson, which would regularly accompany exhibitions over the

²⁹ Pott, *An Essay on Landscape painting*, 9-11.

following decades'.³⁰ I suggest that he is attempting to achieve a compromise between two views regarded by many critics as incompatible.

Following his deliberations of the different merits of continental artists, Pott, in chapter three, declared that 'Hitherto few attempts have been made towards forming an English school. And in this branch of the art particularly, our countrymen have contented themselves with imitating the ideas of other masters, when they should have copied nature only. In this country the merely copying from nature... would sufficiently establish the taste on an English school'.³¹ He insisted that the great variety of trees in the parks and forests gave English painters an advantage over the Dutch, who have 'only willows and poplars', and that the beauty of the northern skies was preferable to the 'placid southern hemisphere'. He insisted that English Gothic remains and derelict castles had 'a finer, a more noble and interesting effect, than the piles of buildings that decorate Poussin's landscapes'. He eulogised that a painter had no need to leave England if he sought 'sublime scenes, stupendous mountains, precipices, waterfalls ... and the most beautiful effects of nature'.

This chapter is a paean to England, written with a patriotic pride in the nation's heritage, and xenophobic appreciation of the natural splendours of England, at a time of apparent national disaster; 1782, when *An Essay on Landscape Painting* was published, was the year when Parliament voted for the cessation of the war in America. When the American colonies gained their independence, many of Britain's imperialist dreams were shattered.

An English school of landscape painting had been proposed before Pott wrote his *Essay*. Hayes noted that Lord Shelburne had, in the 1760s, commissioned landscape paintings by Gainsborough, Wilson, Barret, Dean and Nicholas Pocock to hang in the drawing room at Bowood House which were 'intended to lay the foundation of a school of British landscape'.³² Walpole, in *On modern Gardening* had praised the changes wrought through the landscaping of country estates; he eulogised 'how rich, how gay, how picturesque the face of the country'. He declared that 'Enough has been done to establish a school of landscape, as cannot be found on the rest of the globe...If wood, water, groves, vallies, (sic)

³⁰ Solkin, *Art in Britain*, 210.

³¹ Pott, *An Essay on Landscape Painting* 53-54.

³² Hayes, *The Landscape Paintings of Thomas Gainsborough*, vol. 2, (London: Sotheby's Publications 1982), 431.

glades can inspire ... poet or painter, this is the country, this is the age to produce them'.³³ However Pott was the first to articulate how this might be achieved.

Pott listed 'the most eminent landscape painters of this country: Lambert, Wilson, Gainsborough, Barrett, (sic) Marlow and Wright of Derby'.³⁴ All had exhibited with the Society of Artists or the Royal Academy, and received reviews in the popular newspapers that attested to their ability to depict the natural world. Although Pott, in his evaluations of the merit of these artists, made references to Old Masters, and used traditional connoisseurial descriptive terminology, he laid the greatest stress on the importance of an accurate representation of the English Nature. Lambert was deemed to have 'imitated Poussin, yet he chose his scenes frequently from his own country, and often from real views'.³⁵ He declared that Wilson was familiar with 'the finer effects of nature' and eulogised that 'No one ever understood the aerial perspective better than he: not even Claude. His scenes are rich and grand, the parts extremely simple, which contribute greatly to their effect'. However, Pott disparaged Wilson's historical landscapes, as he deemed 'historical incidents' were unnecessary.³⁶ Barret was described as a 'force of genius' who chooses only the 'richest and most beautiful features for his imitation', although he is criticised for his 'flaring and improper' use of colour.³⁷ Marlow is praised for his use of more natural colouring and better finishing than Barret.³⁸

Wright of Derby was lauded as 'an artist of very singular genius; he is fond of exhibiting 'grand effects of fire, sun and moonlight' executed with 'great force, spirit and effect'; he is deemed to show 'delicate touch, and his work well finished with 'visible pencilling throughout. His representation of the eruptions of Vesuvius, are the most sublime and celebrated of his work'.³⁹ Wright's views of Vesuvius had been applauded in the newspapers for their brilliance and the effect they had on the viewer; they were the only works mentioned by Pott that were not British views. It is notable that only in his praise of Wright does Pott acknowledge that landscape painting could inspire an affective response.

³³ Walpole, 'On modern Gardening' in *Anecdotes of Painting in England with some account of the principal artists; and incidental notes on other arts vol.4* (Twickenham 1782), 148.

³⁴ Pott, *Essay on Landscape Painting*, 65.

³⁵ *ibid*, 66-67.

³⁶ *ibid*, 67-69.

³⁷ *ibid*, 69-71

³⁸ *ibid*, 71.

³⁹ Pott, *An Essay on landscape painting*, 74-75.

The greatest praise is accorded to Gainsborough. Pott acknowledged that although his early style was influenced by the Flemish style, he nevertheless gave 'a faithful representation of English nature'. Pott accepted that his later style was 'more elevated...nothing can be more charming, forcible and harmonious than his colouring is now; his pencilling is broad and masterly, the light and shade wonderfully well managed, and the effect of his pictures not to be equalled by any master, ancient or modern'.⁴⁰ Rosenthal suggested that Pott's lavish tribute to Gainsborough was 'remarkable', and he suggested that Pott's account of Gainsborough's change of style may have been based 'on what he heard from the artist himself'.⁴¹

Pott excoriated the landscape paintings of de Louthembourg, which had been greeted with enthusiasm in critical reviews of exhibitions. His landscapes were damned as 'without a trace of nature, and are painted with all that French pomposity so unlike the truth of the Flemish, or the chaste elegance of the Italian way. His cattle, trees and every object labour under the charge of Affectation and extravagance'. Pott was promoting British landscape painters as pre-eminent in the depiction of the natural world; he dismissed de Louthembourg as an 'unrivalled' scene designer, who would only excel when he devoted himself to copying nature, rather than composing his own ideas.⁴²

Reynolds, in *Discourse IX*, delivered in October 1780 before the move into the new premises at Somerset House, proclaimed that it would add to the glory of the nation 'if it should be enabled to produce, in consequence of this institution, a school of British artists'. *Discourse IX* was not concerned with the aesthetic theories of Reynolds' 'Grand Style' and the supremacy of history painting; it articulated the importance of art 'to the general purpose and perfection of society'.⁴³ Pollingrove Robinson, in *The Beauties of Painting*, 1782, addressed to the members of the Royal Academy, declared that 'Britain has been long aiming at superiority in Painting, but that pre-eminence is still to be obtained'.⁴⁴

The continued lack of exhibited history paintings was noted by critics; a letter published in the *Public Advertiser* and *St James's Chronicle*, appealed for more patronage for history painters from those who 'had it so much in their Powers to give Effectual aid and

⁴⁰ *ibid*, 71-74

⁴¹ Michael Rosenthal, *The Art of Thomas Gainsborough* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1999), 95-96.

⁴² *ibid*, 77-79.

⁴³ Reynolds, *Discourse IX*, 238-240.

⁴⁴ Pollingrove Robinson, 'Introduction' in *The Beauties of Painting* (London 1782), 1.

Encouragement to the Polite Arts’.⁴⁵ Valentine Green, in *A Review of the Fine Arts in France, 1782*, also deplored the lack of history paintings. He concluded that the failure of production was ‘not ascribable to [British artists] want of Powers, but to the way into which it is thrown by the trifling pursuits of Public Taste’.⁴⁶

It is tempting to suggest that Pott wrote his *Essay* in support of an English school of landscape painting in recognition of the perceived failure of the establishment of a school based on history painting, as advocated by Reynolds. Pott positions landscape painting as an alternative aesthetic preference. He urges reconciliation between the connoisseur’s esteem of Ancient Masters, and the appeal of Modern Masters for the exhibition visitor, whose preferences, as exemplified by the critics, were for an accurate portrayal of Nature, or the elicitation of an affective response. Rosenthal agreed that Pott’s *Essay on landscape painting*, ‘despite its limited impact, deserves note as a possible attempt to sway public taste’.⁴⁷

An Essay on landscape painting was, inevitably, a retrospective account of British landscape painting. By 1782, the majority of landscape painters lauded by Pott were either dead or soon to withdraw from exhibiting with the Royal Academy. However, I contend that Pott’s book can be seen as prophetic. He was advocating an English school based on landscape painting, but insisted that it would only emerge when landscape painters abandoned merely copying continental artists and concentrated on the unique characteristics of English nature. He has an almost visionary, nationalistic expectation that a national art form would emerge to celebrate what makes England specifically English. The early nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of the landscape painters now recognised as the most important protagonists of the English school of landscape painting, John Constable, Thomas Girtin and J.M.W. Turner. These artists were influenced by the earlier continental artists, the transformative landscape paintings of Wilson and Gainsborough, and the *Discourses* of Reynolds. However, as envisaged by Pott twenty years previously, they shaped their styles through their individual observations and interpretations of the primacy of English nature.

⁴⁵ *St James’s Chronicle* 18-19 May 1779; *Public Advertiser* 19 May 1779

⁴⁶ Valentine Green, *A review of the Polite Arts in France, compared with their present state in England* (London 1782, 74

⁴⁷ Michael Rosenthal, *The Art of Thomas Gainsborough*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1999), 96.

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London Courant

Middlesex Journal

The Morning Chronicle

Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser

Morning Post and Daily Advertiser

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Further illustrations

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Landscape painting as a percentage of the total of exhibited paintings at the exhibitions of the Society of Artists 1760-1768 and the Royal Academy 1769-1782.

Year	Total exhibits	Total landscapes	Percentage of total exhibits that were landscapes
Society of Artists Exhibitions			
1760	74	14	19
1761	141	26	18
1762	138	30	22
1763	140	38	27
1764	146	42	29
1765	168	29	17
1766	199	48	24
1767	197	47	24
1768	196	49	25
Royal Academy Exhibitions			
1769	129	42	33
1770	217	54	25
1771	243	61	25
1772	292	60	20
1773	321	67	21
1774	325	72	22
1775	352	75	21
1776	330	76	23
1777	386	77	20
1778	363	74	20
1779	366	72	20
1780	454	101	20
1781	503	91	17
1782	522	90	16

Appendix 2: Examples of the prices of prints advertised in the popular newspapers between 1750 -1759

Subscription prints

1753 'Mr. William Bellers is engraving by Subscription, a perspective View of the LONDON HOSPITAL in the committee room...the price be five shillings'.⁴⁸

1754 'Four views from the Original Pictures painted for the Right Hon. the Lord Edgcumbe, by Mr. Lambert; the shipping by Mr. Scott...The Plates to be engraved by Canot and Mason.⁴⁹ Price announced in 1755 as 'one and a half guineas the sett'.⁵⁰

1754 'Six Views in the North of England, drawn...with the greatest accuracy, by Mr William Bellers, and executed by the best engravers'. Priced at 'one guinea the Sett'.⁵¹

1758 Subscription raised by Joseph Wood. 'The first called the Gypsies, etched by Mr Gainsborough, and finished by J. Wood; the second, now Engraving by him, after a picture painted by Mr. R. Wilson of the *Lake of Nemi*, near Rome. 8s'.⁵²

1758 '*Eight Perspective views of Windsor Great Park*, by Thomas and Paul Sandby, dedicated to his Royal Highness the Duke of Cumberland , were ready to be delivered to subscribers'.⁵³ Private subscription.⁵⁴ Re-issued by Boydell, priced at one guinea, in 1773.⁵⁵

1759 Four Landscapes after paintings by Mr Lambert...engraved by Mr Mason. 12s.⁵⁶

Speculative published prints

Less expensive prints

1750 '*Ten perspective Views of the most remarkable places about Hampstead and Highgate*, drawn and engraved by Mons. Chatelain and W.H.Toms,' 5s the set, first offered for sale in 1745 and reissued in 1750. '*Three perspective Views of St. James's Park, two Views of Greenwich and one of Hampton Court*, drawn by Mess, Rigaud and Chatelain, Price 1s each'.⁵⁷

1752 '*Twelve...Perspective Views*'. Published by Overton. 1s plain, 2s coloured.⁵⁸

1752 '*Twenty Perspective Views up the River Thames*'.⁵⁹ Published by Bowles 1s plain, 2s coloured.

1753 '*Six ... Perspective Views*' of places near London.⁶⁰ Published by Sayer and Overton. 1s plain, 2s coloured.

⁴⁸ *Public Advertiser* 13 February 1753

⁴⁹ *Public Advertiser* 25 February 1754

⁵⁰ *Public Advertiser* 13 January 1755

⁵¹ *London Evening Post* 9-12 November 1754

⁵² *Public Advertiser* 14 October 1768

⁵³ *General Evening Post* 27-29 April 1758

⁵⁴ John Bonehill, 'Catalogue Plates and Entries' in *Paul Sandby: Picturing Britain*, edited by John Bonehill and Stephen Daniels, (London; Royal Academy of Arts 2010), 192

⁵⁵ A Catalogue of prints published by John Boydell, engraver in Cheapside, London, 1777, 35

⁵⁶ *Public Advertiser* 17 April 1759

⁵⁷ *General Advertiser* 5 January 1750

⁵⁸ *General Advertiser* 15 April 1752

⁵⁹ *General Advertiser* 18 April

1753 *Two Views of the River Thames*, described as 'the finest river in the World for its Commerce' were advertised in the *Public Advertiser*.⁶¹ Published by John Lever. 1s

More expensive speculative published prints

1750 *'Impressions of Noblemen's and Gentlemen's Seats'*, published by W.T.Toms. 5s

1751 *'Six Views of the Grand Walks, Ornamental Buildings &. in Ranelagh and Vauxhall- Gardens'*. Published by Sayers. ⁶² Gold framed and coloured; 7s 6d.

1751 *'Six different Views of the most beautiful and elegant Parts of the Gardens of Vauxhall and Ranelagh*, published by Bowles. ⁶³ Gold framed and coloured; 7s 6d.

1753 *'Eight perspective Views of Cities, Castles and Forts in Northern Britain*, drawn and engraved by Paul Sandby'. Published by Sayers and Overton. 8 s plain and 16 s coloured'.⁶⁴

1754 *'Six Views in the North of England'*⁶⁵ Published by Bellers. 1 guinea the set

1757 *'Two Landskips, after George Lambert'* were shortly to be published,⁶⁶ 7s 6d

1757 *'Two Views of the House and Gardens of...the Duke of Argyll'* and *'Four Views of the House and Gardens of Sir Francis Dashwood'*.⁶⁷ Published by Tinney .1 Guinea

1768 *'Two prints from the Original painting, done by Mr Scott...to be had off Mr Scott.* ⁶⁸ 3s

1759 *'Six views of 'remarkable Seats and Gardens'* Published by Tinney and Bowles. ⁶⁹ 1 Guinea

⁶⁰ *Public Advertiser* 26 February 1753

⁶¹ *Public Advertiser* 29 November 1753

⁶² *General Advertiser* 11 December 1751

⁶³ *General Advertiser* 19 December 1751

⁶⁴ *Public Advertiser* 6 December 1753

⁶⁵ *London Evening Post* 9-12 November 1754

⁶⁶ *Public Advertiser* 23 May 1757

⁶⁷ *Public Advertiser* 9 June 1757,

⁶⁸ *Public Advertiser* 22 March 1758

⁶⁹ *Public Advertiser* 27 March 1759

Appendix 3: Percentage of total exhibits asterisked for sale that were landscape paintings in the exhibitions of the Society of Artists 1760-1768 and the Royal Academy 1769-1782

Year of Exhibition	Total number of exhibits	Total number of exhibits for sale	Total number of landscape paintings for sale	Percentage of total exhibits for sale	%age of exhibits for sale which were landscape paintings
Society of Artists					
1760	74				
1761	141				
1762	138				
1763	140				
1764	146	25	13	17	52
1765	168	14	6	8	43
1766	199	13	10	6.5	77
1767	197	6	5	3	83
1768	196	20	12	10	60
Royal Academy					
1769	129	4	4	3.1	100
1770	217	22	17	10.1	77
1771	243	21	14	8.6	66
1772	292	35 *	7	11.9	20
1773	321	24	9	7.5	37
1774	325	47**	23	14.5	49
1775	352	58	27	16.5	50
1776	330	46	24	14	52
1777	386	42	22	10.8	51
1778	363	54	30	14.9	56
1779	366	42	20	11.5	48
1780	489	34	13	10.8	47
1781	547	58	15	10.6	26
1782	556	41	19	7.4	45

*Stephen Elmer advertised 9 still life paintings for sale

**Elmer advertised a further 10 for sale

Appendix 4: Landscape paintings at the auction held in 1763 – the deficits accrued

Artist	Catalogue Number	Committee Valuation	Actual Sale Price	Deficit	Total Deficit for each artist
*Town	1	£3. 6s.4d	£2. 2s.0d	£1.4s.4d	
	30	£2.13s.0d	£2.2s.0d	£0.11s.0d	
	49	£6.1s.10½d	£4.14s.6d	£1.7s.4¼d	£3.2s.8¼d
Lambert	2	£14.6s.2½d	£27.0s.0d		
	3	£12.7s.8½d	£15.4s.6d		
	8	£12.7s.1½d	£10.10s.0d	£1.17s. 1½d	
	12	£13.3s.2d	£22.11s.6d		
	52	£13.14s.0d	£22.1s.0d		
	63	£14.7s.4¼d	£25.4s.0d		£1.17s. 1½d
Hopkinson	10	£1.18s.5¼d	£3.3s.0d		
	61	£2.3s.0¼d	£2.1s.0d	£0.2s.0¼d	£0.2s. 0¼d
Wilson	11	£6.14s.2d	£5.15s.6d	£0.18s.8d	
	28	£6.15s.11d	£8.8s.0d	£1.12s.1d	
	40	£7.13s.6½d	£8.8s.0d		
	42	£26.17s.3¼d	£21.10s.6d	£5.6s.9¼d	£7.5s.10¼d
James	13	£6.0s.3¼d	£5.5s.0d	£0.15s. 3¼d	
	15	£5.16s.9¼d	£5.5s.0d	£0.11s.9¼d	
	22	£6.11s.9d	£5.15s.6d	£0.16s.3d	
	65	£7.0s.10¼d	£5.5s.0d	£1.15s.10¼d	£3.19s.1¼d
Marlow	16	£16.6s.6d	£19.19s.0d		
	26	£10.1s.0d	£13.13s.0d		
	44	£13.1s.11½d	£15.4s.6d		
Pugh	14	£11.3s.6d	£11.0s.6d	£0.3s.0d	

	25	£12.14s.2d	£11.0s.6d	£1.13s.8d	£1.16s.8d
Dall	19	£8.15s.4½d	£5.5s.6d	£3.9s.10¼d	
	20	£13.14s.2d	£7.17s.6d	£5.16s.8d	
	67	£12.0s.8½d	£12.1s.6d		£8.6s.8d
Scott	21	£60.15s.6½d	£48.6s.0d	£12.9s.6½d	£12.9s.6½d
Richards	55	£22.14s.8½d	£23.2s.0d		
**Shaw	56	£5.1s.10¼d	£2.12s.6d	£2.9s.4¼d	£2.9s.4¼d
(TOTAL)					£43.2s.9¼d

*Town also exhibited 2 pieces of flowers: Graves, in *The Society of Artists of Great Britain, 1670-1791; The Free Society of Artists 1761-1783*, stated that Town and Francis Towne were the same person; he averred that 'in all cases in the Society of Artists' catalogues it is spelt Town'.⁷⁰

** Shaw Also exhibited 2 portraits of horses

⁷⁰ Algernon Graves, *The Society of Artists of Great Britain 1760-1791: The Free Society of Artists 1761-1883. A complete dictionary of contributors and their work from the foundation of the Societies to 1791* (Bath: Kingsmead Reprints, 1969), 260

Appendix 5: Landscape paintings with named locations at the Society of Artists Exhibitions 1760-1768

Date	Landscapes	Named Locations	London	Rest of Britain	Foreign
1760	3			2	1
1761	26	10	4	2	4
1762	30	13	5	7	1
1763	38	17	4	12	1
1764	42	20	4	11	5
1765	29	12	3	8	1
1766	48	25	3	21	1
1767	47	32	4	22	6
1768	49	24	5	10	9

Appendix 6 Exhibited Prints after named landscape painters 1760-1768

Date	Society	After British Landscape Painters		After Continental Landscape Painters	
		Engraver	Title of Print	Engraver	Title of Print
1760	Present Artists			Woollett	A View, from Claude Lorraine
1761	Society of Artists	Canot	London Bridge, after Samuel Scott	Elliot Ravenet	A Landscape, from Pillement A View, from Salvator Rosa
		Mason	Two Landskips, from Mr Lambert		
	Free Society	Chatelain Ravenet Grignion Mason Chatelain Muller Canot Basire	Three Landscapes from drawings by Mr Bellers * Three Landscapes from drawings by Mr Bellers * A View of Athens after Mr Stuart	Pranker	A Landscape. After Mr Pillement
1762	S of A			Benazech Benazech	A Landscape from Pillement Its companion
	Free			Major Major Pranker	A Landscape and Cattle after Asselyn and Berghem A Riding School after Wolvermans (sic) A Landstorm after A Carrache
1763	S of A			Ravenet Elliott	Shepherds in Arcadia, from Poussin A print after Rubens
	Free	Woollett	Phaeton's Petition to Apollo after Wilson		
		Mason	A View after a drawing by Bellers – A Sunset * Ditto after ditto – A Morning * A Landscape after Mr Gainsborough Ditto after ditto A View of Bellisle, after a picture by D. Serres	Mason	A Landscape and Figures after Pillement
1764	S of A	Peake	Etching from George Smith	Elliot	A Landskip from Cuypp
	Free	Basire	A Landscape after Robert Price Esq		
1765	S of A				
	Free	Mason Basire	An Etching from Zuccarelli** The engraving of the Mediterranean passes. From the designs of Mr Stuart A Landscape after Robert Price Esq	Mason	An Etching from Claude Lorraine

1766	S of A	Byrne Canot Woollett and Browne	A View of Carnarvon Castle after Mr Wilson The Bridge over the River Taaf in Glamorganshire after Mr Wilson Celadon and Amelia (after Mr Wilson)	Elliot Martin Boydell Peake Vivares	A Print after Rosa of Tivoli An Etching after Cuyp A proof print after Salvator Rosa A proof print of a Landscape, from Claude Lorraine Two Landscapes after Claude Lorraine
1766	Free	Mason Morris	A View in Kew Gardens from a Drawing by Mr Woollett* A Ditto from Ditto* An Etching of Lord Westmoreland's House from Ditto* An Engraving from a Picture after George Smith		
1767	S of A	Mason		Browne Mazell Peake	St John Preaching in the Wilderness, an Etching after Salvator Rosa An aquafortis proof from Cuyp A landscape, from Claude Lorraine
	Free	Hearne Simpson Mason	A Print, engraved after a Picture by Mr Richards An engraving of a farmyard after Mr Richards An engraved view of Pembroke Town and Castle. After a capital picture painted by R. Wilson		
1768	S of A	M-A Rooker	A View of the Villa Adriana from a Picture after Mr R Wilson		
				Canot Browne Mason Mazell Ravenet Vivares	An Etching from Peter van Laer St John Preaching in the Wilderness, a proof print after Salvator Rosa A Landskip, an Etching from Claude Lorraine A Landskip with figures and cattle from Cuyp The Prodigal son: from Salvator Rosa A Landskip from Vernet

* - after drawings by Bellers and Woollett

** although Zuccarelli was Italian, he lived and worked in England between 1752 and 1771, and exhibited with the Society of Artists.

Appendix 7

Landscape artists who had advertised their work for sale at the Society of Artists or the Free Society exhibitions between 1764 and 1768 and also advertised their work for sale at the Royal Academy exhibitions

Society of Artists	Years and numbers of works advertised for sale at Royal Academy exhibitions between 1769 and 1782
William James	1769 x 3; 1770 x 2; 1771 x 1
Paul Sandby RA	1769 x 1; 1774 x 4
Elias Martin	1770 x 4; 1771 x 3; 1777 x 2
John Inigo Richards RA	1770 x 3; 1771 x 1; 1774 x 2; 1775 x 3; 1776 x 2
Samuel Scott	1771 x 1
Nicholas Dall ARA	1773 x 1; 1774 x 1; 1776 x 1
William Williams	1777 x 4; 1778 x 5
Free Society	
Edmund Garvey ARA	1770 x 2; 1771 x 3; 1773 x 3; 1774 x 3; 1775 x 3; 1776 x 7; 1777 x 3; 1778 x 1; 1779 x 4; 1781 x 1
James Bunck	1773 x 2
Paul Lambert	1774 x 1; 1775 x 2; 1776 x 1; 1777 x 1; 1778 x 1
George Smith	1774 x 4

Landscape artists who had exhibited with the Society of Artists or the Free Society exhibitions between 1764 and 1768 but only advertised their work for sale at the Royal Academy exhibitions

Society of Artists	Years and numbers of works advertised for sale at Royal Society exhibitions between 1769 and 1782
George Barrett	1770 x 1; 1775 x 5
Michel-Angelo Rooker	1771 x 3; 1772 x 3; 1778 x 3; 1779 x 3
Richard Wilson	1775 x 1; 1776 x 1; 1777 x 3
Free Society	
Robert Terry	1770 x 2
Stephen Elmer	1771 x 1
Samuel Buck	1775 x 2
Robert Crone	1775 x 2; 1776 x 2
James Gandon	1775 x 1
Edward Oram	1775 x 1
William Tomkins	1778 x 4; 1779 x 2
Joseph Wright of Derby	1778 x 3; 1779 x 3