

The Print Before Photography

AN INTRODUCTION TO EUROPEAN PRINTMAKING 1550–1820

Antony Griffiths

The British Museum

CONTENTS

- Preface 9
Acknowledgements 13

INTRODUCTION

1 The European print 1550–1820 15



PART I: PRINT PRODUCTION

2 The technology and its implications 28

- Copper plates 28
- Paper 30
- Ink 32
- Other supplies: etching grounds, acid, burins 33
- Transferring designs 34
- Reversal 35
- The process of engraving and etching 38
- Working proofs and 'touching' 40
- Lettering 42
- Proof states made for sale 43
- Rolling presses 44
- Printing 44
- Printers 45
- Woodcut 47
- The time required to produce plates in the intaglio techniques 48

3 The printing capacity of copper plates 50

- The printing capacity of engraved plates 52
- The printing capacity of etched plates 55
- The printing capacity of mezzotint and drypoint 56
- The printing capacity of stipple and other processes 58
- The mass-market trade 59
- Woodcut 60
- Contemporary views about retouching and reworking 61

4 The costs and profitability of new print production 62

- Costs of woodcut 62
- Costs of engraving 62

- Fixed costs (copper, engraving, lettering, designs) 63
- Variable costs (paper, ink and printing) 65
- Some representative costings 69
- Break even points and profitability in engraving 70
- Profitability of other intaglio processes 74
- Delays in production 75
- How long was a print run? 76
- Economies in printing 77

5 Lettering, language and text 78

- Lettering styles 81
- Languages 81
- Terms relating to the printmaker and designer 82
- Terms relating to the publisher 84
- Privileges, publication lines and dedications 86
- Verses on prints 87
- Texts on prints and the interpretation of paintings 89
- Titles 90
- Absent lettering 91
- Incomplete lettering 92
- Inaccurate and misleading lettering 93
- Text added after publication 94

6 The print and the state: censorship, copyright, privileges, taxation and promotion 95

- Censorship and prosecutions for publishing prints 95
- Licences to publish prints 97
- Copyright 99
- Privileges 99
- Multiple privileges 101
- Procedures and types of privilege 103
- Notes on privileges by country 104
- Taxation 107
- Court engravers 108
- State mercantilism 113

7 Copying prints 114

- The extent of copying 114
- The methods and costs of copying 115
- Unlawful copying 117
- Copying within the law 118
- Replicas 119
- Authorized or permitted copies 121
- Pastiches 122
- Drawn copies 122

Harmless copying 124
The swipe 126
Copying as an industry 128

- 8 Reprinting plates and blocks** 132
The value and reuse of plates 132
The survival of plates and blocks 135
Altering plates and blocks 136
The profitability of reprinting 138
The trade in second-hand plates 140
The scale and length of reprinting 141
Plates and collectors 142
- 9 Colouring prints** 144
Attitudes to colouring 144
Methods of colouring 145
The colouring trade and its levels 146
Publishers' colouring 147
Retailers' colouring 151
Some special cases 151
Bespoke colouring 153
Colouring to match the original 154
Outline etchings for colouring 155
Other types of colouring and decorating prints 157
Printed colour 160
The printed painting 161
Colour values in black and white 163
- 10 Single sheets, pairs, sets and oeuvres** 164
Single sheets: sizes and formats 164
Pairs for framing 168
Sets, series, suites: some general remarks 169
The Netherlandish development of the set 172
Extending and altering series 173
Retrospective 'false' series 173
Books of prints 175
The *recueil* (the collected edition) 176
The oeuvre 177
- 11 Book illustration** 181
Combining illustrations with text 182
Frontispieces, title-plates and authors' portraits 185
Producing a set of book illustrations 186
Covering the costs of illustrated editions 188
Ways of further exploiting a set of plates 189
The involvement of authors in financing plates 190
The importance of book illustration for the print trade 191
Bibliophiles and collectors 192
- 12 The survival and loss of prints** 195
Collectors' prints 195
The law of print survival 196
The problem of the quantification of losses 196
Literary evidence for losses 200
Lost types of prints 202
Surviving prints with unfamiliar and forgotten functions 205
Prints intended for pasting 210
Cut-outs (*découpage*) 212



PART II: THE EUROPEAN PRINT TRADE

- 13 The European print trade 1550–1820** 216
- 14 The participants in the print trade** 223
- 15 The printmaker** 234
Apprenticeships and training in drawing 234
Specialist and general engravers 236
Employees and subcontractors 238
Advancing a career: travel and further training 239
Working independently on commission 240
Publishing on one's own account 242
Selling 246
Further options 247
Jean Daullé 249
- 16 The painter and designer** 250
The legal and moral background 250
The artist's interest in prints of his work 251
Artists' supply of designs for the print trade 255
Collaborations between painters and engravers 257
The painter as publisher 259
The painter as printmaker 262
The painter's etching 264
Printmaking and history painting 265
The *actor intellectualis* 267
Constable on print publishing 269
- 17 The publisher: finance and production** 270
Publishers who emerged from the print trade 271
Establishing a business as a print publisher 272
Backers 273
The large-scale publishing dynasties 274
Partnerships and corporate publishing 276
Publishers who remained anonymous 278
Strategy and specialization 280
Publishers as individuals: the variety of background and approach 281
- 18 The publisher: distribution** 286
Direct sale by the printmaker or painter 286
Wholesale distribution at fairs 289
Exchanging stock 290
The correspondent 292
Terms of trade 293
Discounts and length of credit 294
Accounting and payments 297
Importers and exporters 298

Publishing for distribution in another country 299
 Packing prints 301
 Shipping prints 301
 The reach of the European print trade 303



- 19 Patronage and subsidized publication 306**
 Patronage and subsidy 306
 Dedications 307
 Rewards for dedications 308
 Presentations 310
 Specialist and scientific publications 312
 Sponsored illustrations in books 314
 'Gallery' and collection series 315
 Fund-raising and charity plates 317
- 20 Non-commercial State and private publication 320**
 State-sponsored publications 320
 State control of publications 324
 Festival books and prints 324
 Private plates 326
 Thesis prints 329
 Amateur printmakers 332
- 21 The printseller 334**
 The great printsellers 334
 Lesser printsellers 335
 Other shops that sold prints 336
 Selling from stalls 337
 The print shop and its development 339
 Changes in demand in the later eighteenth century 341
 The antiquarian trade 342
 Restorers and mounters 345
 Auctions 346
 Selling antiquarian stock by catalogue 349
- 22 Marketing, advertising and subscriptions 350**
 Catalogues and stock lists 350
 Promotional fliers and other ephemera 353
 Newspaper advertising 354
 Announcements and reviews 355
 Selling prints by subscription 356
 Exhibitions 361
- 23 The buyer 363**
 Buyers and their prints 363
 Prices and affordability 364
 The relationship of new to antiquarian prints 368
 Shopping for prints 369
 Speculation 372
 Looking at and enjoying prints 374
- 24 Cheap prints and the itinerant trade 375**
 The country pedlar 375
 The urban street seller 377
 The publishers of cheap prints 378
 Woodcut or engraving? 380
 The range of the middle and lower market 383
 The 'popular' print and international subject-matter 384
 The cheap print as big business 389

PART III: THE USE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE PRINT

- 25 The variety of the print 394**
 Some contemporary views on the utility of the print 395
 Three examples of the variety of prints within a single class 396
 Prints as historical evidence 408
- 26 The display and storage of prints 411**
 Multiple-sheet prints 412
 Prints pasted on walls 415
 Domestic display and framing of single-sheet prints 417
 Glazing prints 419
 Styles of framing in the eighteenth century 420
 Storing prints 422
 Albums 423
 Portfolios 425
 Mounts 426
- 27 Print collecting 427**
 Print buyers and print collectors 428
 The world of the print collector 429
 Connoisseurship 430
 First impressions ('premières épreuves') 431
 Rarity 433
 Fakery 436
 Some common types of print collecting 436
 The complexity of print collecting 442
 The taxonomy of print collections 443
 The ideal print collection 444
 The history of print collecting 445
- 28 The knowledge and literature of prints 446**
 The first publications on prints 446
 The beginnings of the print catalogue 447
 The position around 1700 448
 The expert and unpublished knowledge 448
 The rise of the oeuvre catalogue 450
 The new wave of publications in the later eighteenth century 451
 The public collection and exhibition 456
- 29 The understanding and usage of the print in the art world 457**
 The 'constrent': the print as an independent work of art 457
 'Disegni a stampa' and the chiaroscuro woodcut 458
 The print as product of the artist's studio 460
 The rise of painting and the professional engraver 462
 The print as facsimile 463

- The print as translation *464*
- The status of the engraver vis-à-vis the painter *467*
- Prints as training material *467*
- Prints as a crutch for the poor artist *468*
- Prints and artistic originality *468*
- 30 The hierarchy of the techniques of printmaking *470***
 - Burin engraving *470*
 - Mixed engraving and etching *473*
 - Miniaturist etching *474*
 - Etching for the trade *476*
 - The painter's etching *476*
 - Girard Audran and the etching of history *479*
 - The origin of the method of Bartsch *481*
 - Mezzotint *484*
 - Stipple and aquatint *484*
 - Woodcut *486*
 - Tail-piece *487*

CODA

- 31 The print since 1820 *489***
 - Steel plates *489*
 - Lithography *491*
 - Wood-engraving *492*
 - Photography *494*
 - The position of the hand-made processes *496*
 - The changed understanding of the hand-made print *498*
- Abbreviations used in bibliography and footnotes *500*
- Bibliography *501*
- Notes *506*
- Glossary of print terminology *546*
- Coinage and exchange rates *548*
- Name index *550*
- Subject index *556*
- List of illustrations *559*