

researcher in space, standing at the Trevi Fountain and noting that nearby, below ground—unbeknownst to many—Piranesi's once "lost" copper plates are stored in the Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica.

By situating Piranesi's most important *oeuvre* in the bookshops and libraries, milieu and marketplaces where they originated, Minor uncovers the histories and context needed to understand not only Piranesi's profound creativity but also the delirious complexity of his artistic methods. ¶

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Joan Coutu

Then and Now: Collecting and Classicism in Eighteenth-Century England

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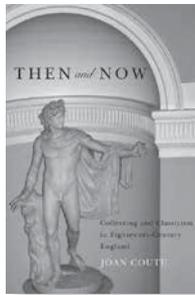
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Ersy Contogouris

IN THIS BOOK JOAN COUTU foregrounds an important and unstudied period of transition in the practices of collecting and displaying classical sculpture in England in the eighteenth century. Her focus is on four mid-century collections, which she analyzes in relation to the politics of their owners—three members of the landed aristocracy and one newly rich bourgeois, all Whigs—and to their country's shifting political and cultural landscape. The opening and closing chapters provide a historical frame for these four case studies by giving an overview of collecting practices earlier and later in the century, so that we follow a shift from a practice that favoured the collecting

of plaster casts and reproductions of well-known classical statuary to a preference for authentic antique pieces, and one that went from displaying classical statuary throughout the home to cloistering it in dedicated gallery-like spaces.

Coutu's focus is on acquisition and display. She demonstrates that although the works themselves were not political, they were "activated politically" within their owners' Whig agendas (6). She rightly insists from the outset that statuary was used differently by each owner, and that "each collection is as much about the collector as it is about the objects within it" (3). Ultimately, though, patterns emerge, revealing how these sculptures came to define the classical canon that was being integrated into contemporary art and aesthetic discourse, most notably in Britain with



Sir Joshua Reynolds's Grand Manner. This volume takes us seamlessly from the minute analysis of individual objects to the broader view of Britain's changing place in the world, offering the reader a wide range of new insights into a formative period of British art and society.

In the first chapter, Coutu presents the decorative programs of the vast Palladian villas that were erected in post-Restoration England of the first half of the eighteenth century. In these villas, classical statuary was interspersed with sculpted busts and painted portraits of the owner and his family so that "entering into a room," Coutu writes, "meant becoming involved in a pre-existing

conversation among characters of different times and places" (18). Classical statuary and other pieces of *virtù* had to be exhibited in a way that was tasteful and that served as an *exemplum*, in order to highlight perceived qualities that the natural aristocracy wanted to put forward, such as their balanced nature and their inherent right to lead.

Each of the central four chapters is then devoted to the practices of one collector from the next generation. The first examines the collection of Charles Watson-Wentworth, 2nd Marquess of Rockingham (1730–82). It begins with Rockingham on his Grand Tour, during which he bought vast quantities of casts of classical statuary on behalf of his father. These acquisitions are contemporaneous with the publication of J.J. Winckelmann's *Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks* (1755), and we see in Rockingham's choices the same preference for the graceful and the beautiful, the same distaste for extreme emotion as displayed, for instance, on Laocoon's face. When he acceded to his peerage Rockingham became increasingly involved in the affairs of state, and was appointed Prime Minister in 1765. But when the Whigs were sidelined by George III, Rockingham retreated to Wentworth Woodhouse in Yorkshire, his political power base, and the estate became the centre of his political strategizing. Analyzing the different pieces of statuary and their placement, Coutu demonstrates that Rockingham's collection at Wentworth Woodhouse was at once shaped by his particular Whig agenda and gave voice to it, and that it should be read both as a claim to power on behalf of his class and as an inspiration to virtue.

The second study is dedicated to the sculpture gallery in Whitehall of Charles Lennox, the 3rd Duke of Richmond (1735–1806), which Richmond created in 1758 and made available to young aspiring British artists for the purposes of training. It was established in the midst of calls, by William

Hogarth among others, for the development of British artists who could rival with those on the Continent. Richmond's sculpture gallery "functioned in a much more active way" Coutu writes, "as a didactic tool to inculcate a classical aesthetic in young British artists" (94). More than that, it provided an alternative to the model of the Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture in Paris for those who, like Richmond, distrusted the monarchy's interference, particularly given George III's increasingly autocratic rule. In creating his sculpture gallery, Richmond challenged the king's authority and asserted the patriciate's role as provider of *exempla*. Although Richmond's project ultimately failed and George III did establish the Royal Academy in 1768, his sculpture gallery at Whitehall contributed to the training of major British artists such as George Romney, some of whom, like Romney, had uneasy relationships with the RA.

The next chapter takes us back to the countryside, with the collection of Francis Hastings, 10th Earl of Huntingdon (1729–89) at Donington Park in Leicestershire. After he returned from his Grand Tour, Huntingdon joined the royal household and rose quickly to become Groom of the Stole. But he was disgraced after a series of faux-pas—including announcing to the king that the queen had given birth to a daughter, when in fact it was a son, the future George IV—and retreated to Donington Park in what Coutu names a "political act of self-removal" (154). Unlike Rockingham, who used his retreat to strategize, Huntingdon removed himself completely from political life and turned toward the creation of an Arcadia (151), specifically in a Masonic setting. While Freemasonry runs as a thread throughout the book, it is in this chapter that Coutu's interweaving of Masonic ideas with collecting practices and the socio-political context is most convincing. Huntingdon's use

of his collection at Donington Park is less openly political than Rockingham's or Richmond's, and in this is more like those of previous generations, which reflects the unevenness of the transition traced in the book.

The last case study focuses on Thomas Hollis (1720–74) who was a member of the rising bourgeoisie. Hollis was a great collector of sculpture, paintings, books, and other items of *virtù*, but unlike many of his contemporaries who found themselves with newly acquired wealth, he did not build a grand country home in which to house and display them. Instead, he lived in rented apartments in London. And although Hollis was a Whig like Coutu's other three subjects, for him Whiggery was not so much a political party as "a moral code of conduct" (157). His *exemplum* also differed from Rockingham's and Richmond's: he refused to take part in politics, and chose instead to disseminate his ideas by presenting his books, tracts, paintings, prints, sculptures, medals, coins, and other objects as gifts. He also donated thousands of items to Harvard University and to the British Museum, the latter of which, he felt, "encapsulated his Whig concept of education and enlightenment," having been "founded in 1753 'for the benefit of the public'" (161).

Having used these four case studies to demonstrate the wide range of collecting practices in the mid-eighteenth century, Coutu adopts a larger time frame for her concluding chapter and shows how these collections participated in shaping the classical aesthetic canon. She insists that there was no reason—natural or otherwise—for the canon to emerge as it did. It was forged by these and other collectors, and it was linked with Whiggism and with the leadership shift from the landed aristocracy, who felt they had a natural and civic duty to rule, to career politicians. It also related to Britain's growing imperialist presence and the increasing centralization of power in the hands of

George III. As collections began to be housed in separate sculpture galleries, with "the objects ... to be admired as discrete artefacts of a bygone era," the distancing necessary to forge a canon emerged (201). The shift in preference from plaster casts to original antique works was an aspect of this distancing in that they became perceived as "samples of another time and another place," and no longer functioned only as *exempla*.

Coutu's book achieves what it sets out to demonstrate: that the middle of the century was the "apotheosis of the true English natural aristocrat, of which the connoisseur and the man of politics were integral and co-dependent components" (205). Throughout her book, she engages with recent writings on collecting practices in the eighteenth-century, including the writings of Craig Hanson and those of Vicky Coltman, whose works focus on the earlier and later parts of the century respectively. Coutu also points to the work of Martin Myrone on masculinity and Douglas Fordham on imperialism in the latter part of the century, and although she does not discuss these issues in detail in her case studies, she opens the door to understanding how masculinity and imperialism are articulated in the collections of the generation of men discussed here.

Then and Now is a carefully argued and beautifully illustrated book. In weaving together detailed analyses of the collections with a nuanced picture of the politics of the time, as well as the much wider picture of shifting collecting practices and changes in political culture, it will be important not only to art historians but to anyone interested in the eighteenth century and in the dialogue between politics and aesthetics. ¶

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