

LICEUL BILINGV “GEORGE COȘBUC”

THE MASTERS OF ENGLISH PAINTING

Hogarth-Gainsborough-Constable

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THE MASTERS OF ENGLISH PAINTING



Hogarth-Gainsborough-Constable

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FOREWORD

The history of British art is a journey through a wealth of artistic works, which begins in the Middle Ages and ends in the late twentieth century.

This paper looks chronologically at Britain's artistic heritage, from the 18th to 19th century, a period in which a number of artists strived to create a national school of painting that exists to this day: The Royal Academy. The three key artists are Hogarth and Gainsborough from the 18th and Constable from the 19th century.

In my paper, I wish to prove that, although British art can seem insular and self-contained, it is in fact extraordinarily diverse and has been shaped partly by outside influence-painters such as Hans Holbein and Anthony van Dyck. These painters came to settle from other European countries and played their part in shaping the development of British art.

I chose the title “**Masters of English painting: Hogarth-Gainsborough-Constable**” for my paper to emphasize the overwhelming influence these painters had not only on their compatriots, but on foreign artists as well.

The first part of this paper consists in a short **history of British art**, from The Dark Ages to the beginning of the 18th century and the development of the free press.

The second part, entitled “**Trends and Style**”, comprises the two main trends that influenced both European and English painting: Rococo and Romanticism.

The third part, entitled “**English Painters**” is composed of three chapters that present the lives of the three artists and their favorite themes and technique.

The Appendix, presents a comprehensive presentation, with illustrations, of a well-known painting for each of the three artists.

The footnotes indicate the appropriate illustration for some of the paintings I mentioned in my paper, which can be found in the double **Annexe**.

PART ONE

HISTORY OF BRITISH ART

Art in Britain, its form and function, has always been in a state of change due to the constant flow of outside influences on the British Isles.

The lack of a national school of painting leaves the impression that during the Middle Ages, one cannot talk about British painting. The cause is the Religious Reformation, which brought the massive destruction of works of art since they were considered typical for the Catholic religion.

Starting with the Renaissance, England was under the strong influence of Protestant austerity that rejected the art of painting. Therefore, the contacts with Italian art lessened.

The rarity of religious or cultural heritage in Britain is explained by Henry VIII's (1509-1547) self-appointment as Supreme Head of the Church of England in 1531. As a result, the wealth and properties of the monasteries were redistributed for various purposes and this left them powerless after an era in which the Church had been the principal patron of the arts.

Seventeenth century Britain was a revolutionary one since the conflicts between the Parliament, on the one hand and the King, together with the aristocracy, on the other, had intensified. The gentry and the middle class were to participate directly in the struggle for power since the 16th and the 17th centuries marked the rise of a strong middle-class that grew richer and more educated. This middle-class broadened the art-buying „community” considerably and changed the nature and mood of British painting. At the royal court, as well as among the aristocrats, only portraiture was regarded as a respectable genre. The English appreciated the North European technique of oil painting on wood panel used by the Flemish, Dutch and German painters such as Frans Hals (1582-1666) or Jan Steen (1625-1679). Due to the fact that there were no local artists, the royal authorities used to bring foreign painters in the 16th and the 17th centuries. At the royal court arrived, among others, Hans Holbein the Young (1497/ 1498-1543), who created a tradition of portraiture unlike anything seen in England before, and Anton van Dyck (1549-1641). Portraiture has been the dominant art form in Britain for centuries and much of it has played a part in propaganda. Portraits were not admired for their mastery, but for their size and the expense of materials used. During the 16th and the 17th centuries, this art form was patronized by the ruling classes, but tapestries and furnishings were equally in demand. Portraits were commissioned for a variety of reasons: to commemorate official appointments or achievements of rank, marriages or alliances and they were intended for private display. Painters in England occupied a low status earning four pounds a year, half the sum received by goldsmiths, and they often turned to decoration or engraving in order to make a decent living.

Hans Holbein came to England to serve as painter at Henry VIII's court. Holbein brought with him Italian and European influences that had not been seen in English portraiture prior to his arrival and this gave his works "*monumentality and solidity*".

He achieved unparalleled mastery in creating the illusion of the physical presence of the sitter. His technique would consist in an important source of inspiration for the 18th century portraitists.

The miniature was at the height of fashion with Nicholas Hillard as its master. Elizabeth I (1558-1603), more than any monarch, knew the power of the royal image and stipulated that no shadow should fall upon her face in Hillard's miniatures. The result was an iconic, goddess-like image.

While the Tudor image was one of leadership and political strength, the Stuart portrait was of elegance and van Dyck strived to create a sense of royalty and aristocracy, "*innate in pose and gesture*". Van Dyck revolutionized British portraiture thanks to his facility to work with oil and canvas; figures became fully three-dimensional for the first time, placed in a real space with "*articulated movement emphasized by the beauty of colour and play of light on exquisite fabrics.*" Influences of van Dyck's genius can be seen in Gainsborough's idealised paintings of society women almost a century later.

After the Civil War led by the Puritan Oliver Cromwell, followed a period of Republican experiments (1649-1660). Notwithstanding the Restoration in 1660, the old regime left deep social and political scars in Britain. The „Habeas Corpus Act" in 1679 infringed Stuart autocracy and guaranteed the inviolability of the private person. The events in 1688, the Glorious Revolution, followed by the accession of William of Orange, James II's son-in-law, to the English throne and the establishment of a Constitutional monarchy, brought great change to the status of the crown in Britain, its power and role. John Locke (1632-1704) was the ideologist behind those changes and his works underlined the necessity of broadening the Parliament's rights and of respecting the natural rights of man. The English middle-class had great hope in those very popular new theories. An enormous optimism was the basis of a true intellectual awakening.

At the beginning of the 18th century, thanks to the freedom of speech and to the ever-growing free press, the citizen could finally enjoy his liberties. Historian Pierre Albert noted that: "*Under the reigns of the Stuart dynasty and Cromwell, the English press was minutely supervised. Censure and the obligation to have a authorization for anything that was to be printed were abolished in 1695. At that time, when politics was dominated by endless conflicts, the press blossomed without precedent. Due to its diversity, its independence and the fact that it was read even on the continent, the British press earned its name, given by E. Burke (1729-1797) as 'the forth power'*". The craft of engraving on wood panel developed and allowed editors to leave more space for drawings in the newspapers. Thanks to this unprecedented development, Hogarth was able to use his talent and satirical zeal to transmit his beliefs to all the social classes in Britain.

PART TWO

TRENDS AND STYLE

The “English School of Painting” is an expression for English painters who produced characteristically English paintings. Generally, the term “school” is used to designate a special collection of traditions and processes, a particular method, a particular style in design and colouring, all contributing to the representation of a national ideal existing in the minds of native artists at the same time. However, the term cannot be used in this way to characterize English art, because there is an absence of any national tradition due to the fact that each English painter seems to stand by himself, isolated from his brother artists. In the **Tudor period**, there were no local artists since the authorities did not establish a national school of painting. Hence, British artists were considered inferior to those of foreign origin brought to the royal court, such as Holbein or Van Dyck.

Baroque

In European art, Renaissance Classicism created two different movements- Mannerism and Baroque art. In the 16th century, Mannerism was a reaction against the idealist perfection of Classicism. It employed “*distortion of light and special frameworks in order to emphasize the emotional content of a painting and the emotions of the painter.*” The word “Baroque” possibly derived from a Portuguese word for a misshapen pearl and until the late 19th century, it was used mainly as a synonym for “*absurd*” or “*grotesque*”. Baroque art took the perspective, and implicitly the realistic representation of three dimensions, of the Renaissance and emphasized detail and movement often, making it over rhetoric and dynamic. The best-known Baroque artists are Rembrandt and Peter Paul Rubens. Baroque art is seen as part of the Counter- Reformation –the artistic element of the revival of spiritual life in the Catholic Church in its search for beauty. Louis XIV said: “*I am grandeur incarnate*” and many Baroque artists served kings with this goal in mind as the many complex additions are intended to catch the viewer’s attention. Nevertheless, the Baroque love of detail is often considered overly ornate, especially as it developed into the even more richly decorated style of Rococo. After Louis XIV’s death, the Rococo style flourished for a short while, but soon fell out of favour and Neoclassicism emerged. **Rococo** is characterized by the over abundance of decorative elements, movement, extravagant colouring, the lack of symmetry and the emphasis on frivolous subject matter.

Romanticism

Just as Mannerism rejected Classicism, so did Romanticism reject the ideas of the Enlightenment and of Neoclassicism.

Romanticism was a cultural movement in the late 18th century that was against the norms of order, calm, harmony balance and rationality that Classicism upheld.

Romanticism emphasized the individual, the subjective, the irrational, the imaginative, the spontaneous, the visionary, the transcendental and was generally optimistic about humankind.

It focused on the use of colour and movement in order to portray emotion and it used, like Classicism, Greek and Roman mythology as an important source of symbolism. It was also characterized by a general exaltation of emotion over reason and of the senses over intellect; there was a preoccupation with the genius, the hero and the exceptional figure in general and a focus on his passions and inner struggles; an obsessive interest in folk culture, national and ethnic cultural origins and the medieval era.¹

Another important aspect of the Romantic movement was its emphasis on nature and portraying the power and beauty of the natural world.

Portraiture

In the 17th century, the miniature portrait flourished. Portraits and caricatures were sold or they were used as book illustrations. Portraits in exceptionally large numbers figured in interiors, where they were arranged to convey domestic as well as political or dynastic messages. The aristocrats seldom admired British paintings and sitting for portraits had become a rather boring duty. During the 18th century, however, it had become both interesting and fashionable. Having one's portrait painted by a famous British artist had become a social adventure. The 18th century can be considered as the moment of triumph for portraiture. Under the influence of fashion, the bourgeois removed the great number of historic paintings and replaced them with portraits. When producing portraits, artists put great emphasis on psychology since the époque was dominated by theoretical debates.

Physiognomy, a part of science that determines a man's character by examining his physical traits, was an important concern for a portraitist. Instead of creating an idealised and static portrait, artists strove to bring out that parson's character through a more relaxed view. This change was the result of an accelerated development that took place throughout the whole century.

Full-length portraits, life-size, set against an imaginary landscape background, characterized Gainsborough's Bath period. His portraits depict the noble and refined grace of the figures by using cool and fresh colours, chiefly greens and blues, thinly applied. Unlike Gainsborough's style, whose art was intended to please the frivolous, pleasure-seeking customers, Hogarth engraved and painted scenes showing the hardships of the middle-class in contrast with the upper-class who was shown as indolent and vulgar. Moreover, Gainsborough differs a great deal from Reynolds's style. Reynolds was sober-minded and the complete professional, whereas Gainsborough was much more easy-going and often overdue with his commissions, writing that "*painting and punctuality mix like oil and vinegar*". Despite these differences, Gainsborough and Reynolds had great mutual respect and following Gainsborough's passing, Reynolds praised "*his manner of forming all the parts of a picture together*"

¹ Also it had a predilection for the exotic, the remote, the mysterious, the occult and the monstrous. Cf. Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, European Art History

and wrote of “*all those odd scratches and marks*” that “*by a kind of magic, at a certain distance seem to drop into their proper places.*”

The common trait

William Hogarth, Thomas Gainsborough and John Constable are among the most well known British painters whose original styles influenced not only their fellow compatriots, but also several artists from abroad. They contributed to the diversification of subject matter in the art of English painting in an era when this domain was falling behind the European tendencies. The most important aspect, which needs to be remembered, is that these painters had a great influence on each other. As a result, there are some similarities between the three.

Firstly, Hogarth portrayed in parks, gardens, manors or palaces, English ladies and gentlemen engaged in conversation. Gainsborough successfully continued this tradition by combining the person's portrait with a landscape background. The psychological realism is mixed with an original composition and, in the background, the painter integrates a landscape, which is not just an ornament or a manner of filling the rest of the painting, but it has its own meaning. Gainsborough's uniqueness lies in his endeavour to harmonize the person with the background. In the painting entitled “*Mr. and Mrs. Andrews*” (1749)², the influence of Hogarth is evident in the couple's attitude, informal and at ease.

Secondly, Gainsborough had great love for nature and landscape painting, which was evident in his work and he displayed those tendencies, which were to characterize English landscape painting, such as fidelity to natural appearance combined with a poetic feeling for the English countryside. Because of this aspect of Gainsborough's art, Constable had great admiration for the artist that would influence the Romantic painters of the late 18th century. Constable himself recognised the importance of Gainsborough's style, which was full of sensibility and reverence for nature's beauties.

Another common trait is fact that they were more or less forced to be portraitists since this was the only way through which they could earn a decent living. Portraiture was the 18th century fashion because it was a way through which one could embellish a woman's traits and this appealed to many bourgeois women.

² see section entitled “Annexe 1”. Oil on canvas. Cf. Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

PART THREE

ENGLISH PAINTERS

CHAPTER 1: THE FIRST ENGLISH PAINTER

WILLIAM HOGARTH (1697-1764)



“My paintings are a stage; the characters are the actors who, without the use of words, through the force of their gestures and attitude, play an exquisite pantomime.”

(William Hogarth)

From prison to an engraver’s studio

The artist’s father, Richard Hogarth, who had opened an unsuccessful Latin-speaking coffee house, was imprisoned for debt in Fleet Prison for five years. Near the prison, there were special grounds on which the convicts’ families lived. Young William lived for almost five years amongst the jail’s buildings. He took a lively interest in the street life of the metropolis and the London fairs, and amused himself by sketching the characters he saw. The life he led taught him to discover *“the beauty of the flower that grows in the gutter”*.

After his father’s release, the family moved and William was sent as an apprentice to the silver-plate engraver Ellis Gamble, where he learned to engrave shop cards, he worked on arabesques and the grotesque (i.e. ornaments that had animal, human and vegetal motifs). Early satirical works included *“An Emblematical Print on the South Sea Scheme”* (1721)³, *“The Lottery”* (1724)⁴, *“The Mystery of Masonry brought to Light by the Gormogons”* (1724), *“A Just View of the British Stage”* (1724), some book illustrations and the small print *“Masquerades and Operas”* (1724). The latter was a satire on contemporary follies, such as the masquerades of the Swiss impresario John James Heidegger and on the exaggerated popularity of Lord Burlington’s protégé, the architect and painter, William Kent (1685-1748). Hogarth opposed the Neoclassical trend whose chief representative was Kent.

Hogarth enrolled in the Art Academy founded by the French Louis Cheron and the English John Vanderbank (1694-1739), who was the former apprentice of Sir James Thornhill (1675-1734), the famous painter of the royal family.

Hogarth’s opinion of “Grand Art”

In portraiture and history painting Hogarth could not reach the mastery of the acclaimed decorative painter, James Thornhill. Hence, political satire dominated Hogarth’s first paintings,

³ see section entitled “Annexe 1”. Cf. The Site for Research on William Hogarth (1697-1764): English Art of the Eighteenth Century

⁴ idem

produced between 1725-1728 and because he rejected the strict aesthetic canons of the time, he was not immediately covered in glory.

The following years, he turned his attention to the production of small “*conversation pieces*”, an art introduced in Britain from France, largely by Philip Mercier. These conversation pieces allowed for groups of people to be portrayed at one go and informal settings were preferred by the middle-class.

Among his efforts in oil painting were “*The Fountaine Family*” (1730), “*The Assembly at Wansted House*”, “*The House of Commons examining Bambridge*”(1729)⁵ and several pictures of the chief actors in John Gay’s popular “*The Beggar’s Opera*”⁶. Shortly after Hogarth’s arrival in the Thornhill household, he became enamored with his master’s daughter, Jane, who was thirteen years younger than William. The two wished to marry, but because of the painter’s modest origins, the girl’s parents were against this possibility. In 1729, Hogarth and Jane eloped and married on March 23rd, settling in South London. After a year was Hogarth able to come to an understanding with Jane’s father and to accept him as a son-in-law. According to the anecdote at the time, when Jane’s mother placed the painting entitled “*A Harlot’s Progress*”, painted by Hogarth, in the saloon, Thornhill would have exclaimed: “*Marvelous! A person who can paint in such a manner is able to support his wife without a dowry.*”

Furthermore, in 1729 Hogarth was hired to decorate the new Spring Garden, also known as the Vauxhall gardens, which was the gathering place of the pick-and-flower of London society. Thanks to Hogarth and his co-workers, the Garden became the finest example of English Rococo art. After the work was completed (1732), the artist received the right to enter Spring Gardens, accompanied by six guests, without paying any fee. As a result of this success, London saloons received Hogarth with great reverence. Nevertheless, Hogarth did not forget his middle-class friends. He often met with them at Bedford Arms Inn.

A social militant

Hogarth had an active social, political and cultural life. He elaborated his own philosophy about art and he firmly sustained his beliefs. Some of these beliefs were not viewed with sympathy and in 1734 a conflict broke out between William Kent and Hogarth. Kent was representative for the Neoclassical group of artists, supported by the Count of Burlington, an important benefactor of the arts, who was also an architect. Kent’s followers believed in the Neopalladian aesthetic that was based on the architect Andrea Palladio’s (1508-1580) works. Hogarth constantly criticized the lofty character of Classic art and this brought his temporary removal from the royal court.

⁵ see section entitled “Annexe 1”. Cf. The Site for Research on William Hogarth (1697-1764): English Art of the Eighteenth Century

⁶ idem

In 1731 he completed the earliest of the series of moral works which first gave him his position as a great and original genius. This was “*A Harlot’s Progress*”⁷, first as paintings (now lost), and then published as engravings. In its six scenes, the miserable fate of a country girl who began a prostitution career in town is followed remorselessly from its starting point to its shameful and degraded end, the girl’s death of venereal disease and the following merciless funeral ceremonial. The series was an immediate success and it was followed in 1735 by the sequel “*A Rake’s Progress*”. Between 1743 and 1745, Hogarth painted his six pictures of “*Marriage à la Mode*”⁸, an accurate depiction of upper class 18th century society showing the miserable tragedy of an ill-assorted marriage. Many critics regard this as his finest series. In 1746 he painted actor David Garrick as Richard III⁹, for which he was paid two hundred pounds, “*which was more*”, he wrote, “*than any English artist ever received for a single portrait*”.

After having discovered several imitations of his engravings sold at a low price, he decided to put an end to the illegal reproduction of artists’ engravings. At the beginning of the 18th century in England the notion of copyright did not exist. In consequence, Hogarth drew up a law that protected engravers’ rights. In 1736, King George II (1727-1760) approved this law and it was known as “The Hogarth Law”.

In 1735, he founded together with some friends the association entitled “*Sublime Society of Beef Steaks*”, which was a combination between satirical writers and gourmés. Its slogan was: “*Beef Steaks and Liberty!*”

Hogarth did not ignore the more serious problems of the time. In 1736 he was named governor of Saint Bartholomew’s Hospital. Three years later, he was named curator of the Foundling Hospital (today known as the “*Thomas Coram Foundation for Children*”) which was financed by the well-known philanthropist Thomas Coram. Throughout the 1740s, artists hung on the walls of the hospital, works of portraiture, history and landscape painting. Thanks to Hogarth, a body of artists took shape, and in 1760 became first “*The Society of Artists*” and in 1768 “*The Royal Academy*”.

The trip to France

In 1743, Hogarth traveled to Paris to study French art and discovered that the works of French were more advanced than the English painters.

After five years he returned to France, but he was “*so imprudent as to take a sketch of the drawbridge at Calais*” (Horace Walpole). He was seized and carried to the governor, where he was forced to prove his talent by producing several caricatures of the French, particularly a scene of the shore, with an immense piece of beef landing before the “*Loin d’argent*”, the English inn at Calais, and several hungry friars following it. The officers enjoyed his drawings and dismissed him. Back home,

⁷ see section entitled “Annexe 1”. Cf. The Site for Research on William Hogarth (1697-1764): English Art of the Eighteenth Century

⁸ idem

⁹ idem

he immediately executed a painting of the subject (1748), in which he unkindly represented his enemies, the Frenchmen, as weak and superstitious people, while the enormous piece of beef arrives, destined for the said inn as a symbol of English prosperity and superiority.

Hogarth wrote a paper on the art of painting entitled "*The Analysis of Beauty*"¹⁰ which appeared in 1753 and was translated in German and Italian. The author became famous throughout Europe and, in 1757, the Royal Academy of Augsburg (Germany) accepted him as an honorable member. In the same period, he was appointed Sergeant Painter to the king. In 1760, he painted "*The Elections*"¹¹ which are a series of four satirical works depicting the comic situations one could observe during the election period.

Sensing his end was near, he wrote his last will and testament on May 16th, 1764. On October 25th, already very sick, he managed to gather the strength to answer a letter sent to him by Benjamin Franklin. He died two hours later.

The English school of painting

Many scholars believe that there was no school of painting before the 18th century, as the most important painters who worked in Britain came from abroad and art lovers preferred paintings of foreign old masters. In those days, the wealthy British nobility visited foreign countries where they acquired a large acquaintance with European, chiefly Italian, art and its many schools. As Sir James Thornhill's paintings were executed in the Baroque style of the European continent, William Hogarth may be considered the first genuine English artist- English in habits and temperament, as well as by birth. Despite his violent anti-French sentiments, he was heavily influenced by the continental Rococo style. Early in his career, he succeeded in breaking away from portraiture and his satirical works, full of black humour, are entirely English, pointing out to contemporary society the deformities, weaknesses and vices of London life under the reigns of George I and George II. The swiftness and lightness of touch of his figures reveal the influence of the French Rococo combined with a strong sense of irony and humour, depicting timeless truths.

By 1725, Hogarth was painting small "*conversation pieces*" that were groups in oil of full-length portraits from twelve to fifteen inches high with several figures shown engaged in everyday activities.

Modern moral subject

Detesting portraiture, Hogarth single-handedly created a new genre, the "*Modern Moral Subject*". The painting entitled "*The Beggars Opera*" marked the transition from portraiture to his best known works, the series of moral subjects, influenced by Dutch models, in which he satirized the

¹⁰ see section entitled "Annexe 1". Cf. The Site for Research on William Hogarth (1697-1764): English Art of the Eighteenth Century

¹¹ idem

vices of the age: “*A Harlot’s Progress*” (1732), “*A Rake’s Progress*” (1735), “*Marriage à la Mode*” (1745), “*The Election Series*” (1754).

He invented a new form of narrative painting that transmits a moral. These paintings are often tragicomedies that did not depend upon any text and they were invented to be engraved for a large public as well as seen in a private picture gallery, just as plays were intended to be performed as well as read.

Hogarth lived in an age when artwork became immensely commercialized, something no longer just exhibited in churches and the homes of connoisseurs, but viewed in shop windows, taverns and public buildings and sold in print shops. Old hierarchies became less important and new forms began to flourish: the ballad opera, the bourgeois tragedy, and especially, a new form of fiction called the “*novel*” with which authors such as Henry Fielding had great success. Therefore, by that time, Hogarth had a new idea: “...*painting and engraving modern moral subjects...to treat my subjects as a dramatic writer, my picture as my stage*” as he himself remarked in his manuscript notes. Hogarth was a restless moralist, a didactic artist who thought that his obligation was to “*improve the mind*” and to contribute to “*public utility*”. Hogarth ignored ancient history and mythology and he confronted reality without idealization by depicting the corruption of the contemporary world with comic precision. Despite his style, he insisted on being taken seriously and considered that his “*comic*” pictures symbolize the artistic and moral virtues that had been regarded as specific for the history paintings that were produced in the “*Grand*” or “*Monumental Style*”¹².

Technique

William Hogarth’s technique consisted in the careful chiseling of every detail. He began his work by sketching the basic elements of the painting. For the garments, he used several layers of paint in order to obtain the desired effect. Some critics believe that Hogarth desired to undermine the Orthodox belief in an immanent God who intervenes in the lives of people and produces miracles. Indeed, Hogarth was a Deist, a believer in a God who created the universe, but has no direct influence in the lives of his creations. Thus, as a “*comic history painter*”, he often mocked at the old-fashioned subjects of religious art in his paintings and prints. Hogarth also rejected Lord Shaftbury’s ideal of the Classical Greek male in favour of the female¹³. His satirical engravings are often considered an important ancestor of the comic strip. Stravinsky’s opera, entitled “*A Rake’s Progress*”, with a libretto done by W.H. Auden, was inspired by Hogarth’s series of paintings, which had the same title. “*His rich, creamy paint handling and brilliant characterization of textures have a freshness and vitality unequalled in the work of any of his contemporaries.*”¹⁴

¹² i.e. an elevated style typified by classical robes and idealized poses. Cf. William Vaughan, *British Painting* (London, 1999)

¹³ he stated : “*Who but a bigot, even to the Antiques, will say that he has not seen faces and necks, hands and arms in the living women, that even the Grecian Venus doth but coarsely imitate.*”. Cf. William Vaughan, *British Painting* (London, 1999)

¹⁴ Cf. William Vaughan, *British Painting: The Golden Age from Hogarth to Turner* (London, 1999)

CHAPTER 2: BETWEEN PORTRAIT AND LANDSCAPE

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH (1727-1788)



“I paint portraits to live, landscape because I enjoy it and play the cello because I cannot refrain myself.” (Thomas Gainsborough)

A nonconformist family

Thomas Gainsborough had a rather unusual family. His father used to dress as a magnate, he took sword lessons and he sauntered down the streets of Sudbury equipped with a sword. Susannah Burrough, the artist's mother, was an educated woman, who enjoyed painting still-life with flowers and she encouraged her son's natural talent. Thomas spent most of his time with his mother and he never separated from his drawing notebook. It was said that Gainsborough was a pleasant boy with excellent manners; one who was respectful, bright, clever, light-hearted, and self-confident. He spent the most of his childhood roaming the countryside, sketching the trees and cottages in the neighbourhood of Sudbury, even forging notes from his parents in order to skip school to spend more time in the forest.

When he did attend school, young Thomas was a shrewd student. He began his artistic career drawing pictures of his classmates in return for their doing his homework. He was very close to his older brother, John, who was an unsuccessful inventor due to the fact that his contraptions never worked. Once, he attempted to fly with two large metal wings and another time he placed his younger brothers in a cradle that rocked on its own. Humphrey, one of Thomas' older brothers, was a more rational inventor who succeeded in designing a steam-machine that functioned rather well. In 1740 he became an apprentice under a French silver engraver, Hubert Gravelot (1699-1773) who worked in the French Rococo style. Gravelot was a first class engraver, draughtsman and book illustrator who had studied under William Hogarth- who later invited Gainsborough to contribute a painting for public exhibition to be hung on the walls of the new Foundling Hospital. To fulfil this request, Gainsborough produced his first well-known work, *“The Charterhouse”*¹⁵.

He also studied at *“Saint Martin's Lane Academy”* which was the central gathering place for the cosmopolite ideas of London avant-garde, where he met Francis Hayman (1708-1776), a painter of historical events, who became one of his mentors. To earn his living, the artist worked for Hayman to repair and restore old paintings. Those works enabled him to study the Flemish style of painting, especially the works of Jacob van Ruisdael (1628-1682) or Jan Wynants (1630-1648), which influenced his landscapes. Many of the small portrait groups, with figures set in a realistic landscape, which Gainsborough painted at the beginning of his career, are a direct result of the time spent

¹⁵ see section entitled “Annexe 1”. Cf. English Art in the 18th Century

working with the masters. Moreover, he started painting miniature landscapes and he contributed to the decoration of the supper boxes at Vauxhall Gardens.

Back home

During one of his voyages back home, he met Margaret Burr, his future wife. The strikingly beautiful young girl was believed to have been the illegitimate daughter of the wealthy Duke of Beaufort. The fact that Thomas wished to marry Margaret made his parents rather uneasy. Without his parents' knowledge, at the age of nineteen, he married Margaret in the summer of 1746, at Mayfair chapel. According to the family tradition, each year, on their anniversary, Gainsborough painted his wife's portrait.

In 1752, the family would move to Ipswich, a small town located twenty-five kilometers away from Sudbury, where he would rent a small house on Lower Brook Street. Although mainly interested in painting landscapes, he soon began to undertake commissions for portraits in order to support his family. His patrons were mainly the merchants of the town and the neighbouring squires and his work at this time consisted mainly of heads, for which he demanded eight guineas, and half-length portraits, that were fifteen guineas, whereas London artists demanded between fifteen and thirty guineas. Once in Bath, Gainsborough hung examples of his works in the Pump Room, and very soon his personal charm and talent convinced the fashionable world to flock to his studio. Bath was a fashionable spa and health-resort, and a centre of fashion and culture.

He began to exhibit in London at the Society of Artists in 1761 and he selected portraits of notorious clients in order to attract attention. When the Royal Academy was founded on December 10th 1768, Gainsborough's reputation was such that he was elected one of the original members. From that moment on a portrait executed by Gainsborough would cost thirty guineas, a half-size- sixty and a full-size portrait- also known as a "*sitting portrait*"- no less than one hundred guineas.

Together with his nephew, he used to take long walks on foot or horseback. These walks through the neighbouring countryside allowed him to draw several sketches of rural life and they were also an opportunity to break away from the severe atmosphere of his household which was dominated by his wife. The differences between the two had become more and more evident with the passage of time that led to the degradation of their married life. Margaret had become excessively attentive with the family's money, although Gainsborough started gaining very well. Unlike his wife, Gainsborough was of an unalterable serenity and carelessness.

London- A place of fame and fortune

His relations with the Royal Academy were always uncertain and undermined by disputes with the hanging committee. Gainsborough was incredibly particular as to the way his paintings were to be hung, and was furious when his painting of Lady Horatia Waldegrave, in 1773, was hung where it would be obscured by the skirts of women crowding around to look at the higher pictures. Consequently, he did not exhibit again until 1777.

In 1777, he again began to exhibit his paintings at the Royal Academy, with portraits of contemporary celebrities, including the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland¹⁶ who were related to the Royal family. These exhibitions continued for the next seven years.

In 1780, he painted the portraits of King George III and his queen and afterwards he received many royal commissions. In 1784, he completely lost his temper when the Council rejected his request to hang his portrait "*The Three Eldest Princesses*"¹⁷ at his required height, which had been planned for a specific location and had been painted with the viewer's eye level in mind. These incidents led to Gainsborough's withdrawing of all his paintings from the Exhibition, and provoked a great deal of public debate and articles in the press. This was the last time that Gainsborough exhibited at the Royal Academy, preferring from then on to hold private exhibitions at his home, Schomberg House, in London. Gainsborough remained deeply attached to the countryside. He wrote to William Jackson, a composer with whom he used to sing, saying: "*I am tired of portraits, I wish very much to take my cello and walk off to some quiet village where I can paint landscapes and spend the remaining years of my life away from the city's commotion.*"

Jackson wrote that Gainsborough "*avoided the company of literary men, who were his aversion...he detested reading.*" The artist could no longer tolerate the hypocrisy of London's high-society and the sterile conversations and the loud parties annoyed him. He preferred to rest by drawing or playing the cello.

Gainsborough greatly admired the theatre and personally knew all the famous actors and dancers. Some of them had their portrait painted by him as Giovanna Baccelli¹⁸, the Italian dancer, Prince Dorset's mistress. Prince Dorset was the English ambassador in France. Except from the theatre and the sitting visits, Gainsborough did not participate in the capital's social life.

Throughout his professional life, Gainsborough had had a friendly artistic rivalry with Allan Ramsay, painter to the King. Ramsay died in 1784 and the King was obliged to give the job to Gainsborough's rival and Academy's president, Joshua Reynolds, but Gainsborough remained the personal favorite painter of the royal family.

In 1787, the painter, who was close to sixty years of age, discovered a swelling on his neck that became more and more painful. In the summer of 1788, the doctors confirmed to him the fact that he had cancer. He died in full glory on August 2nd, 1788. His last words were: "*We are all going to Heaven and van Dyck is of the company.*" He was buried at Kent cemetery. He left a legacy of more than five hundred paintings and a new respect for British landscape.

Gainsborough's lifelong rival, Reynolds, paid him posthumous tribute in his Fourteenth Discourse, saying: "*If ever this nation should produce genius sufficient to acquire to us the honourable*

¹⁶ see section entitled "Annexe 1". Cf. English Art in the 18th Century

¹⁷ idem

¹⁸ idem

distinction of an English School, the name of Gainsborough will be transmitted to posterity, in the history of Art, among the very first of that rising name." The house Thomas Gainsborough was born in still stands, and is now a museum dedicated to the work of the town's most famous citizen.

Portraiture and landscape

Gainsborough sometimes said that while portraiture was his profession, landscape painting was his pleasure, and he continued to paint landscapes long after he had left the countryside. He produced some small portrait groups in landscape settings, "*conversation pieces*", which distantly echo the French painter Antoine Watteau (1684-1721), the chief representative of French Rococo. Posing his models in the open countryside enabled him to satisfy his taste for landscape.

Landscape

Although the art of landscape is particularly associated with Britain, 18th century theorists condemned landscapes as inferior because, as Richardson declared: "*They cannot improve the mind, they excite no noble sentiments.*"

That is why the Royal Academy and its first president, Joshua Reynolds, ranked landscape low in their strict hierarchy of subject matter, at the very top of which came "*History Painting*", those pictures of mythological or Biblical origin which supposedly did improve the mind and excite noble sentiments.

The first English artists, who ventured to depict their own countryside, were treated with indifference or even contempt because the Italian landscape was deeply embedded in the English consciousness. Richard Wilson spent most of his life in abject poverty, while Gainsborough, who liked nothing better than painting landscapes, had to abandon them and turn to portraits to earn a living. Gainsborough painted more from his observations of nature than from any application of formal rules. From 1780, Gainsborough turned from portraiture to pictorial compositions with pastoral subjects. He called these paintings, which were an extension of his interest in landscape, his "*fancy pictures*". The poetic sensibility of his paintings caused Constable to say: "*On looking at them, we find tears in our eyes and know not what brings them.*"

Technique

Thomas Gainsborough's technique was fluid and it had the ability to emphasize the particular characteristics of the sitter through psychological realism. Gainsborough always started his work by drawing the overall contour of the painting. He then produced an introductive sketch in lilac or chalk on the canvas, which was covered with a yellow-grey background; afterwards he traced the contour of the shapes with the help of much diluted paints. On that delicate coat which dried easily, he applied more consistent and darker colours and finished the background by using lacquer. At the end, he varnished the painting with a mixture he invented.

CHAPTER 3: ONE OF THE GREATEST BRITISH LANDSCAPE ARTISTS

JOHN CONSTABLE (1746 – 1837)



“The sound of water escaping from mill dames, willows, old rotten planks, slimy posts and brick-work, I love such things. These scenes made me a painter.” (John Constable)

The birth of passion

The Constable family's forth child, John, was born on June 11th, 1776. At the age of seven, as it was customary for wealthy English families, he was sent to college. Despite the fact that he was not a brilliant student, he continued his studies up to the age of seventeen. At the moment when Constable decided to abandon his studies, he had been dealing with painting for several years.

He learned the basic rules of painting from the town's glazier and locksmith, John Dunthorn, who was also an amateur artist. For a brief period of time he attempted to follow his father's line of work, but he soon realised that milling was not his passion. Thanks to his mother's influence, Constable met Sir George Beaumont who was an amateur artist and ardent art collector. Beaumont encouraged Constable to continue painting and advised him to make copies of known works. He drew Constable's attention to Thomas Girtin's (1775-1802) watercolour works and to Claude Gellée's, also known as Lorrain (1600-1682), painting entitled *“Hagar and the Angel”*, a work that arouse Constable's admiration.

The prolonged period of study

Two years after he had met Beaumont, Constable visited London for the first time. He was admitted in 1799 as a student at the Royal Academy. He earned his living thanks to his father's monthly rent. The picturesque and agitated London life did not attract Constable, who remained in love with the English countryside. Constable traveled a great deal in order to study nature. In 1801, he visited Derbyshire, in Central England.

Two years later, he returned home after traveling in a ship down the Thames from which he painted sailing boats. When the ship docked in Denver port, the artist forgot his works aboard. He retrieved them the following year when the ship returned from a voyage in the Orient. In 1806, Constable scoured the lakes situated in Northeast England and the landscapes he saw there would influence his future works. After spending some years working in the picturesque tradition of landscape in the manner of Gainsborough, Constable developed his own technique and started receiving commissions for portraits. Moreover, he produced several paintings, which he began to exhibit at the Royal Academy from 1802, but because his paintings went unnoticed, Constable did not consider applying for a place in the institution.

Difficult times

In the summer of 1809, Constable returned to East Bergholt where he met twenty-one year-old Maria Bickwell, a local girl whose solicitor father was personally acquainted with the King. The two fell in love and wished to marry, but Maria's parents considered that Constable's social status and occupation were not stable enough for their daughter's well-being. There followed seven years of courtship during which Maria's grandfather threatened to disinherit her if he was to hear that the two met in secret. Constable devoted all his energy to the love he felt for Bickwell's daughter and the mere supposition that Maria would desire to end the relationship made Constable take a coach and travel across country to encourage his love to resist her parents' insinuations not to marry him.

Recognition was hard to obtain

In 1816, at forty years of age, Constable married Maria Bickwell in secret before the girl's grandfather died leaving all his fortune to his grand-daughter. On December 4th, 1817, their first child was born- John Charles. Each of the other six children arrived at a year's distance.

Constable's recognition did not come immediately and the financial worries had become more and more evident, especially when he was obliged to support an entire family. At the beginning of the 19th century, in Britain, landscape painting was not a very popular genre and Constable had difficulty in finding buyers for his paintings. In 1819, he became a special member of the Royal Academy, which led to his official recognition, especially from abroad.

His wife had to move to a warmer climate in order to treat her tuberculosis and in 1824, the Constable family moved to Brighton, a famous spa for the elite of English society. The artist disliked Brighton and named it "*the Piccadilly of the seaside*". Weakened by her last birth, Maria died on November 28th, 1828, an event which devastated her husband. His work became darker and more threatening, infused directly or indirectly with a sense of mourning. Constable hired a nurse to look after his children (with ages between eleven months and eleven years), but he also took great care of them.

The perseverance he showed in his work finally brought him the just reward- in 1829 he was "*grudgingly*" made a full Academician, elected by a majority of only one vote. In the same year, he exhibits the painting entitled "*Hadleigh Castle*"¹⁹, a work which expressed the artist's grief at the loss of his wife. In order to reach more public, Constable decided to edit his engravings and he started to paint in watercolour. His mastery is evident in the work entitled "*Old Sarum*"²⁰, painted in 1833. Notable works include "*Golding Constable's Kitchen Garden*"(1815)²¹, "*Wivenhoe Park*"(1816)²², "*A Mill at Gillingham in Dorset (Parham's Mill)*"(1826)²³.

¹⁹ see section entitled "Annexe 1". Cf. Hutchinson Encyclopedia: English art

²⁰ idem

²¹ idem

²² idem

²³ idem

When the artist accompanied Charles, his eldest son, to the ship which would take him in a voyage to India, Constable was uncertain if he would ever see his son again.

On March 31st, 1837, John Constable suffered a heart attack. The servants hurried to bring him a bottle of brandy, but the painter died before they returned. After his death, his paintings were sold by auction at rather low prices.

Romantic painter

Just as his contemporary, William Wordsworth, rejected what he called the “*poetic diction*” of his predecessors, so Constable denied the conventions of the 18th century landscape painters, who, he said, were always “*running after pictures and seeking the truth at second hand*”. Constable shared Wordsworth’s belief in the beautiful aspects of nature and in the value of the humble.

He also had a strong tie with poetry, occasionally exhibiting his works together with lines of noted poems. His subjects had, as they did for all Romantic artists, strong personal meaning; his attachment to nature was emotional as well as intellectual.

Nature

John Constable studied the properties of shifting light and the movements of clouds by inspiring from Dutch masters as Ruysdale (1628-1682), that were unfashionable at the time. Constable was thirty-nine before he sold a picture and in his fifties before he was invited to join the Royal Academy. Unlike his contemporary, Joseph Mallord William Turner, Constable painted landscape in a more realistic manner. By working out-of-doors, Constable was anticipating the principal themes that the Impressionists would prefer. Constable, who made nature his subject, was concerned to understand and develop new methods to depict its ever-changing character. He was especially attentive with the portrayal of the sky.

“*The sky is the source of light in nature and governs everything*”, he remarked, and his passion gave birth to the largest number of cloud studies produced in Western art. Constable was one of the earliest Western European artists to study the fleeing of light and the unsteady atmospheric conditions so minutely. Thus, he kept notes and diaries recording weather conditions and times of day. He completed his studies by reading Thomas Forester’s paper entitled “*Forster Researches about Atmospheric Phenomena*” and “*The Climate of London*”. Constable thought that: “*No two days are alike, nor even two hours; neither were there ever two leaves of a tree alike since the creation for the world*” and in an innovatory manner for his time, he represented in paint the atmospheric effects of changing light in the open air, the movement of clouds across the sky. In the open air, he drew and sketched in oils, but he finished his paintings in his studio. Constable’s sketches of skies and sites such as Dedham Lock and Mill are regarded today as works that splendidly depict the spirit of the English countryside. In England, many did not follow Constable’s style and the numerous imitators, who included his son Lionel (1825-1887), were rather formal and lacked the more original manner of the artist. Nevertheless, in France, he was a major influence on Romantics such as Géricault and Delacroix

who admired his “*freedom of brushwork and the freshness of his subject matter*”. After seeing Constable’s paintings, Delacroix repainted the sky in his work “*The Chios Massacre*”²⁴.

He was a fundamental inspiration to the French Romantics, on the painters of the Barbizon School, and ultimately on the Impressionists²⁵.

Technique

John Constable experienced with different techniques, such as stippling the canvas with white flecks to capture the effect of wet leaves and dew, or adding dots of red that would make the green of the vegetation stand out. His technique made critics to claim his works were unfinished. To render the fleeing of light and weather he abandoned fine traditional methods, catching the sunlight “*in blobs of pure white or yellow and the drama of storms with a rapid brush.*” Henry Fuseli was among the contemporaries who praised the freshness of Constable’s technique, by stating: “*I like the landscapes of Constable; he is always picturesque, of a fine colour and the light is always in the right places; but he makes me call for my great coat and umbrella.*”

Because Constable painted from direct studies of nature, he reduced the influence of the Classical style, which obliged the artist to create the landscape in the studio and the result was a rather “static” image of nature. In contrast, Constable strove to capture the effects of fleeing light and the drama of the sky and cloud formations with his naturalist method. His method of adding flecks of white on the canvas brought energy and the impression of wind and movement.

²⁴ see section entitled “Annexe 1”. Cf. Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

²⁵ The Impressionists revolutionized the use of light in painting as they attempted to capture life as seen from the human eye. Cf. *** The World Book Encyclopedia, 1987, vol. 8-9, USA

CONCLUSION

Although British art had numerous continental influences, they did not dominate this domain to such an extent that they prevented the establishment of a traditional **English school of painting**. Foreign artists brought to Britain the knowledge, the form, which had to be respected by the painter in order to please the public. The British artists, starting with Hogarth, had the courage to adapt these influences to the British way of thinking. Thus, The Royal Academy was “born”. Its role was to educate young artists in the spirit of originality but it failed to do so due to the fact that it compelled the artists to respect the strict canons of the time, thus hindering their artistic individuality. By breaking the rules, Hogarth, Gainsborough and Constable proved to be the true English painters, painters who depicted the beautiful, the ugly, the grand and the natural in a humorous or sensitive manner. Through the power of their creations, they influenced each other and many other generations of painters who adapted their unique styles.

Before the middle of the 18th century, much painting had been done in England, even by native British artists, but a native tradition, both original and capable of forming a background of native styles to be handed down from one generation to another, is not found in England before William Hogarth.

In the 18th century, Hogarth beat the nationalist drum in an effort to encourage patronage of contemporary British artists and the foundation of a British tradition of history painting. Nevertheless, his work was heavily influenced by that of the Old Masters he so loudly denied. He realised that for the future enrichment of art in Britain it was absolutely necessary that the public showed interest in the artists’ creations. Therefore, he decided to continue the tradition set by James Thornhill’s academy by opening his own studio.

At one of the Foundling Hospital’s Administration Committee meeting, Hogarth decided to organise an exhibition with the creations of London painters. Thus, the walls of the Foundling Hospital supplied a limited venue for artists to exhibit their works and the Vauxhall pleasure gardens provided quite a numerous audience. There followed in 1760 the establishment of The Society of Artists, which began to hold annual exhibitions. In 1768, four years after Hogarth’s death, a breakaway group of artists from this society obtained royal approval for the establishment of The Royal Academy, which would provide both annual exhibitions and a school of art. The Royal Academy educated the best artists, with Sir Joshua Reynolds as president and Thomas Gainsborough as one of the founding members. Moreover, the Academy helped to raise the status of the artist, encouraged a sense of professional identity amongst its members by offering them a sense of national purpose and with “The Hogarth Law”, established in 1736, the artists’ rights were protected against illegal copying.

The real founders of an English school of painting were Hogarth and Gainsborough (with his landscapes) as their art was formative of the art of later generations.

However, one cannot deny the fact that British landscape painting was deeply influenced by the Italian, Dutch and French painters who established the basis of a European tradition for the later development of a native British style. The English countryside would always be a source of inspiration for Gainsborough. Gainsborough's landscape was a more naturalist one, completed with a play of light and shade and passing clouds. Gainsborough paid as much attention to the landscape as to the sitter and he succeeded in combining the background with the sitter in order to obtain a harmonious, natural and profound composition. Hence, he was one of the most esteemed portraitists and the royal family's favorite painter. In time, his technique would become less detailed and shapes became pure poetic elements. Thanks to Gainsborough, the landscape became a highly respected subject matter.

Romanticism, a fundamental shift of consciousness, an emotional response to nature, became a stronger movement towards the end of the 18th century. It was with the inspiration of Gainsborough that the Romantic painters, especially Constable, would fully develop the English style, and the fundamental value of this trend, the belief in the divinity of nature that allows the soul to revolt against reason, which led to the great 19th century Romantic movement. For the first time an English painter succeeded, through his art, to inspire artists from abroad, artists who would later establish the Impressionistic movement.

From my standpoint, the art of the three painters I discussed in my paper is an eloquent example of the way in which the British succeeded in building brick by brick a national school of painting that promoted an authentic English art. Each of the three artists brought "*a breeze of fresh air*" in the British art, either by caricature, subtle hints or by sheer dedication to their style.

For me, Hogarth's satirical paintings reflect the truth behind the pump that the 18th century British bourgeois upheld. In the flawless portraits that were commissioned in that époque, the aristocrats strived to cover their human defects with a "velvet glove", but Hogarth unveiled the vulgar and decadent life of the upper-class and the hardships endured by the working-class in a humorous and unique manner.

What impressed me about Gainsborough's work is his impeccable technique in portraiture; more precisely, the manner in which he captured the expression of the sitter, a man or a woman who lived almost three hundred years ago. In addition, his landscapes depict the beauty of a country, which is often thought of as having a rather dim and monotonous appearance.

Constable's art is the "windiest" and purest in European art. What amazed me about Constable's work is the way the artist combined the colours so as to create a breathtaking landscape that may still exist today. Constable showed through his work the calmness of the beauty that characterizes Britain, the fleeting changes of light and the spectacle of the sky and cloud formations.

The research stage of my paper was the most rewarding since I came to acknowledge the magnificence of British painting throughout two fascinating centuries and the will of men not to subside to peer pressure and to stay true to one's credos.

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- Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org>)

APPENDIX

NOTABLE PAINTINGS

William Hogarth - *A Rake's Progress*²⁶

In his works, Hogarth uses a technique close to stage designing. His first attempt of combining painting with theatre was by creating a cycle of six paintings describing the story of a prostitute. Thanks to the cycle's success, he began in 1735 a series of light paintings, which depict the reckless life of Tom Rakewell, the son of a rich merchant, who dwindles away all his money on luxurious living, whoring and gambling and ultimately finishes his life in a madhouse. Hogarth was probably inspired by the work "*Vita del lascivo*", published in Italy between the 16th and 17th century, or Henry Fielding's comedy written in 1730. The story begins with "*The Inheritance*". After his father's death, the young man receives a large amount of money. "*The Matinée*" shows Rakewell in his new manor surrounded by artists and scholars. By introducing the man who is blowing the hunting horn, the artist compares the people around the rake with a pack of dogs. In "*The Tavern Scene*", Rakewell is shown in the company of frivolous women in an orgy at an inn where the two prostitutes are stealing his watch. Next, he is arrested for debt, an episode inspired from Hogarth's childhood. The episode "*Marriage with an Old Maid*" shows Tom's cunning in marrying for a better financial situation. In "*The Gamehouse*", Hogarth reveals Rakewell's behaviour who is so absorbed with the game that he does not observe the fire. The consequences of his lifestyle can be seen in the episodes entitled "*Prison*" and "*Scene in Bedlam*", which was the first time in the history of painting that a madhouse was depicted.

The gradual darkening of the colours also emphasizes Rakewell's downfall. The contours seem to be less accurate and the atmosphere more and more dim. The light colours that were present in the first episodes are replaced with brown, ash like shades.

Thomas Gainsborough - *Mrs. Sarah Siddons*²⁷

Sarah Siddons (1755-1831) English actress, the eldest child of Roger Kemble, manager of a small travelling theatrical company and sister of Charles, John Philip and Stephen Kemble, English actors. She acted in her father's traveling theater since early childhood and in 1782 joined Drury Lane. Her success was immediate, and from then on, she was the undisputed queen of tragedy on the London

²⁶ see section entitled "Annexe 2". Cf. The Site for Research on William Hogarth (1697-1764): English Art of the Eighteenth Century. 1735, Oil on canvas, Soane Museum, London

²⁷ see section entitled "Annexe 2". Cf. Isabella Steer, History of British Art (Parragon 2002):1785, Oil on canvas, National Gallery, London

stage. In 1803 she followed her brother John Philip Kemble to Covent Garden, where she performed until her retirement in 1812. Her portrait is among Gainsborough's best works.

Half of the painting reveals details of Mrs. Siddons' clothing in a dynamic manner so as to allude to the actress' tumultuous life, while the other half is dominated by dark colours and it has little detail. The great black hat is evident thanks to the red curtain similar to the stage curtain.

Gainsborough ignored the canons of the time and used in the foreground cold colours that are in contrast (the cold blue of the dress with the yellow of the shawl and the red of the curtain) together with the play of light and shadow in order to emphasize Sarah Siddons' strong personality.

John Constable – *The Hay Wain*²⁸

Constable painted his works in the workshop after sketches and drawings he had made outdoors, thus most of the landscapes he portrayed do not have a real correspondent.

In "*The Hay Wain*" there are many typical elements of Constable's style: the black and white dog, the horses, the figures, Willy Lott's house and the precise details. At first the viewer's eye stops on the dog, then it moves towards the wain and rests on the fresh green field from afar. Because of the dark clouds above the house, the left side of the painting is covered in shadow; hence, the viewer will turn his attention towards the right side in search of light.

The painting was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1821, the year it was painted, but failed to find a buyer. French painter Géricault (1781-1824) saw "*The Hay Wain*" and he was so impressed with the work that, at his request, it was bought by a French art dealer and exhibited in the Paris saloon in 1824, where the painting was awarded the Gold Medal by Charles X. The painting also won Delacroix's (1798-1863) admiration, whereas the English public was rather reserved towards Constable's works.

²⁸ see section entitled "Annexe 2". Cf. Hutchinson Encyclopedia: English art. 1821, Oil on canvas, Royal Museum, London

ANNEXE 1

HOGARTH



An Emblematical Print of the South Sea Scheme



Bambridge before the Committee of the House of Commons



The Lottery



Beggar's Opera Burlesqued

A Harlot's Progress



1. Ensnared by a Procuress



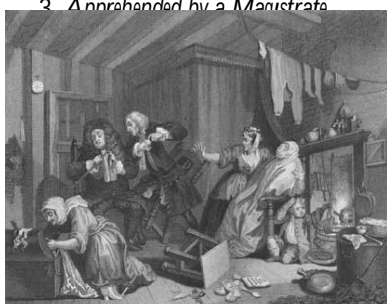
2. Quarrels with her Jew Protector



3. Apprehended by a Manistrate



4. Scene in Bridewell



5. She Expires while the Doctors are disputing



6. The Funeral

HOGARTH



Garrick in the Character of Richard III



The Analysis of Beauty, Plate 2



Election Series, Canvassing for votes



Election Series, Chairing the Members



The Analysis of Beauty, Plate 1



Election Series, The Pooling



3. Scene with a Quack



5. Death of the Earl



4. Toilet Scene



6. Death of the Countess



1. The Contract

Marriage à la mode

2. Breakfast Scene

GAINSBOROUGH



The Charterhouse, Presented to the Foundling Hospital by the artist, 1748. Oil on canvas. Thomas Coram Foundation, London, UK.



Portrait of Henry, Duke of Cumberland, with the Duchess of Cumberland and Lady Elizabeth Luttrell, 1783-85. Oil on canvas. Royal Collection, UK.



The Three Elder Princesses, 1784. Oil on canvas. Royal Collection, UK.



Giovanna Baccelli, Exhibited R.A. 1782. Oil on canvas. Swinton Park, Earl of Swinton, UK.



The Chios Massacre, Delacroix, 1824, Louvre, Paris



Mr. and Mrs. Andrews, c.1750; Oil on canvas; National Gallery at London

CONSTABLE



Hadleigh Castle, The Mouth of the Thames - Morning After a Stormy Night, 1829, oil on canvas, 48" x 64 3/4"



Old Sarum., 1829. Oil on canvas. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK.



Golding Constable's Kitchen Garden, 1815. Oil on canvas. Ipswich, Museums and Galleries, UK.



Wivenhoe Park, 1816. Oil on canvas. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, USA.



A Mill at Gillingham in Dorset (Parham's Mill), 1826, Oil on canvas. Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, USA.

ANNEXE 2

Hogarth

A Rake's Progress



The Young Heir Taking Possession



Surrounded by Artists and Professors



The Tavern Scene



Arrested for Debt



Marriage with an Old Maid



Scene in a Gaming House



Prison Scene



Scene in Bedlam

Gainsborough



Mrs. Sarah Siddons

Constable



The Hay Wain