

William Hogarth (1697-1764)

From an apprenticeship to a silver engraver and training in the informal drawing academies of the day (one of which was run by Sir James Thornhill, Sergeant Painter to the King, whose daughter Jane he married), William Hogarth became the leading artist of his generation. The advancement of his own career went hand-in-hand with a wider promotion of British art. In 1735 he set up a drawing academy in St. Martin's Lane, London, which for thirty years was run on a co-operative basis and formed a focus for the development of the rococo style in Britain; in the same year he was largely responsible for the passing of the Engravers' Copyright Act; in 1736 and 1737 he gave two large-scale paintings, *The Pool of Bethesda* and *The Good Samaritan*, to St. Bartholomew's Hospital (where they still hang) in order to demonstrate that a British artist was capable of historical composition on a grand scale; in the 1740s his gifts of paintings to the Foundling Hospital helped to establish it as a place where artists could exhibit their work to the public. His last years, however, were dogged by disputes with younger artists largely caused by his opposition to plans for a British royal academy. In 1753 he published his controversial treatise *The Analysis of Beauty* the manuscript material for which can be read in the British Library (Egerton MSS.3100-16).

Hogarth was equally important as a painter and as an engraver and he derived a large income from publishing engraved versions of his paintings. Although a fine portrait-painter, he is best remembered for his 'Modern Moral Subjects', combining a rococo style with satirical comment on contemporary society. His first great success in this genre came in 1732 with *A Harlot's Progress*. One thousand two hundred and forty sets of the first edition were sold at one guinea (£1.05) each.

Right: *A Harlot's Progress*, Plate 3, 1732. Etching and engraving, 319 x 384 mm, Paulson 123



Hogarth's paintings were mainly worked direct on to the canvas and his studies from life often took the form of thumbnail sketches. Only about one hundred drawings survive, and more than half of these belong to the British Museum. They have all been entered on the computer database which is available for consultation in the Study Room. No complete catalogue of Hogarth's drawings has been published since A. P. Oppé's *The Drawings of William Hogarth*, 1948.

The Museum's collection includes all known preliminary drawings for the series *Industry and Idleness* and the copper plates. There are also drawings by Hogarth in *Hogarth's Peregrination*, his friend Ebenezer Forrest's manuscript account of a boisterous tour of the Thames estuary undertaken in 1732.



Prints by Hogarth can be found in most of the leading museums in the UK, as well as in many smaller collections. Almost all his copper plates survived until the early part of this century and were frequently reprinted, with the consequence that many worn and re-worked impressions exist. The Museum has one of the finest collections of the prints, including rare early impressions, and was used as one of the principal sources for the standard catalogue of prints, Ronald Paulson's *Hogarth's Graphic Works* (three editions: Yale University Press, 1965, 1970; The Print Room, 1989). The main series of Hogarth's prints is arranged according to Paulson, in parallel mounted and unmounted series.

All the important prints and a number of minor examples are on permanent display at Hogarth's summer villa at Chiswick in west London which is open to the public and was refurbished for the tercentenary of his birth in 1997.

Left: William Hogarth, *Self-Portrait with Pug*; *Gulielmus Hogarth*, etching and engraving, 1749

Paintings in Other Collections

London National Gallery
 Sir John Soane's Museum
 Tate Britain

Further Reading

Beckett, R.B. *Hogarth*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1949

Bindman, D. *Hogarth*. Thames and Hudson, 1981

Bindman, D. *Hogarth and His Times: Serious Comedy*. British Museum Press, 1997

Oppé, A. P. *The Drawings of William Hogarth*. Phaidon Press, 1948

Paulson, R. *The Art of Hogarth*. Phaidon Press, 1975 (with bibliography of early publications)

Paulson, R. *Hogarth*. Lutterworth Press, 1992-1993

Uglow, J. *Hogarth: A Life and a World*. Faber and Faber, 1997

Craske, M. *William Hogarth*. Tate Publishing, 2000

Hallett, M. *Hogarth*. Phaidon Press, 2000