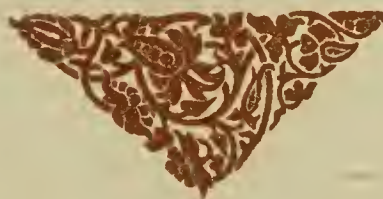


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**Prominent Mezzotinters
of the XVIII Century**





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AMELIA ELISABETHA, D.G. HASSIÆ LANDGRAVIA etc.
COMITISSA HANOVIE MVNTZENB:

*Illustrissimo ac Celsissimo ac Dno Dno WILHELMO VI D.G. HASSIÆ LANDGR. etc. hanc Serenissima Vestra
ac Incomparabilis Heroina effigiem ad verum a se primum degustam novam, jam sculpturæ modo a Marcantonio
cristi Sc. S. A. Dny 1715 CXLII*

First Mezzotint

*Notes on Prominent
Mezzotint Engravers
of the XVIII
C e n t u r y*

*New York
M. KNOEDLER & CO.
Fifth Avenue at 34th St.
1904*

PUBLISHED AND COPYRIGHTED

BY

M. Knoedler & Co.

355 FIFTH AVE.. N. Y.

MCMIV

I n t r o d u c t i o n

We issued last year a brochure giving “some information regarding 18th century mezzotint engravers and their work.” This was so well received that we have concluded to add to the subject by noting a few interesting facts connected with the men of the profession who worked most successfully during that period, and the last few months of of the 17th century.

This little pamphlet is not intended for reference, but simply to convey to the lovers of art a few facts which may interest them in a subject concerning which the more one learns about the more fascinated with it does one become. In order to thoroughly appreciate the difficulties met with and overcome by these early mezzotint engravers, it must be remembered that in their day our modern mechanical and chemical reproductive processes were unknown. Their engravings had to be made direct from the painting, the manifold color and tonal values of which had to be correctly rendered by the mezzotinter, whose range was limited to the tones between his two extremes, namely black—the ink, and white—the paper. This being the case, it can easily be conceived that to attain, in so difficult a

medium, such perfect results as are to be found in the works of the great mezzotinters of the 18th century, necessitated not only patience and long practice but artistic skill of a high order and a thorough knowledge of the technicalities of the art. It is only by the most careful and judicious scraping and burnishing of the "grounded" or prepared copper plate that it is rendered capable of taking the exact amount of ink required to produce the varying tones, ranging from the deepest shadows to the highest lights.

We have confined the list to the most eminent exponents of the art, giving such facts connected with their lives and work as we believe will be interesting and useful and will lead to a proper understanding of the great mezzotinters of this period. We have found it most difficult in many instances, owing to the lack of contemporary information, to obtain all we have sought for, and ask therefore the reader's kind indulgence for any short-comings. It has seemed advisable to commence with the name of the best artist of the earliest period, then pass to those who followed him, concluding with the acknowledged leaders.



Isaac
Beckett

The earliest English mezzotinter of eminence was Isaac Beckett. He was an Englishman, and indeed the first of that nationality to found

the school in his own country, for Place and Sherwin who preceded him, were practically amateurs. In early life Beckett was apprenticed to a calico printer, but became a pupil of John Lloyd. After Lloyd had shown him what was possible to be done in mezzotinto he became an enthusiastic worker, and not only acquired all Lloyd's knowledge, but improved and added to it. It seems probable that Lloyd did not himself produce any plates, but contented himself with publishing and selling the work of others, attaching his name to the prints he published, "Lloyd ex." or "excudit."

**John
Lloyd**

It is said that E. Luttrell engraved many of the works which bear Lloyd's name. Luttrell was an Irishman, and flourished from 1681 to 1710. He made a thorough study of the art, and it is said that while seeking to acquire it laid in his grounds with a roller. It was the practice of these early engravers to publish their own as well as other engravers' works, simply adding "ex" or "excudit," after the signature. There is no question but that John Lloyd, even though he actually made but few plates, taught the art to a number of pupils. As suggested, Lloyd was more of a business man than an artist. While he appreciated and foresaw what could be accomplished, he preferred that others should do the work. He is said to have procured the secret from Blois, who learned it

E. Luttrell

**Abraham
Blooteling**

from Abraham Blooteling, a distinguished engraver, born in Amsterdam in 1634, and a scholar of the great master, Cornelius Visscher. Blooteling worked in line and mezzotinto; the latter art he probably acquired from Furstenberg. He spent a number of years in the latter part of the 17th century in England, where he improved the process by additional working of the ground, making its texture closer and giving a much more brilliant effect to the print. From Beckett we turn to the foremost engraver of his time—John Smith. Writers on the life of this artist do not all agree upon the date of his birth and death. It seems, however, but reasonable that we should accept the inscription upon his tombstone at St. Peters, Northampton, where he is buried, which runs: “Near this place lie the remains of John Smith, of London, Gnt, the most eminent engraver in mezzotint of his time. He died the XVII. Jan. MDCCXLII, age XC.” This would make the year of his birth 1652. There is some uncertainty as to who were his teachers, but it has been generally accepted that J. Beckett and Vandervaaert did more than any others towards his advancement. A number of engravers became publishers of his plates. Beckett was one of them; others were R. Palmer, P. Tempest, Browne and E. Cooper, until Smith went into business for himself at the “Lion & Crown.” Most of his works bear the publishers’ addresses. Those which have not

**John
Smith**

were finished for private personages and not for sale. John Smith was highly appreciated during his life. Sir Horace Walpole considered him "One of the great improvers of the art." He excelled in brilliancy of effect, and was powerful, clear and correct in drawing. In some ways he might be considered inferior to J. Beckett and R. Williams, being more metallic and less vigorous than they. He did not have the tender artistic feeling of John Simon, an early engraver of note. Some plates marked "John Smith ex" were originally engraved by J. Beckett, B. Lens, J. Simon, R. Williams, and others. This is accounted for by the fact that he would take a finished plate by another engraver, work over and improve it. The list of mezzotint portraits engraved by Smith number 287. He also engraved a large number of subject pieces. In a financial way he was a success, for he retired from business after realizing by his industry and talents a comfortable independence. That Smith knew the value of earliness of impression is shown by the fact that he preserved his proofs. He also destroyed his plates when worn. Some of these destroyed plates have been carefully restored since his death, and one may find prints in the market on which are still signs of the marks made to deface them. His first plate was about 1687. He did a large number (127) from Sir Godfrey Kneller's paintings.

**John
Smith**
(continued)

Two engravers of this period are worthy of notice, viz, the two Fabers :—John Faber, Sr., who died in 1721, and his son, who died in 1756. They both came to England from Holland in 1687, the son being then three years old. The latter's works were mostly portraits, and mark the period between Kneller and Reynolds, whose names have so entirely eclipsed those of the painters who came between them, that of these comparatively little is known. The younger Faber probably introduced the practice of cutting down plates. The father engraved about 78 portraits, and the son about 419. We mention these engravers because they mark an important epoch in the glorious period which reached its climax some forty years after the younger Faber's death.

John
Faber, Sr.

John
Faber, Jr.

The most prominent engraver to follow Smith was James McArdell, who was born in Dublin about 1728 and died in 1765. He came to London in 1747 with John Brooks. Afterwards in 1757 he established himself as a publisher at the Golden Head, Convent Garden, where most of his prints were published. He died young, being only 37 years old. He was a pupil of John Brooks, of Dublin, a line engraver, who afterward started mezzotinto, but does not seem to have left anything remarkable unless it is the portrait of Margaret Woffington, dated "June ye 1st, 1750," an impres-

James
McArdell

sion of which is in the British Museum. This is the earliest known portrait of her. He had a number of pupils; viz, McArdell, Houston, Spooner, Purcell, and Ford, and, as customary at the time, published their work with his own name as engraver. In McArdell we find his greatest scholar. He became indeed one of the most eminent masters in mezzotinto, for he possessed qualities that neither his master nor his fellow-pupils had; namely, great natural capacity, application and industry. He carried on the art from the point where Faber left off, displaying boldness, decision, and freedom of handling, without losing either accuracy or truth. McArdell engraved over 200 portraits, of which about 35 were after Reynolds. He it was who engraved in 1754 the portrait of "Lady Charlotte Fitzwilliam," and "Anne Dawson in the character of Diana," after Reynolds. These are the earliest mezzotints from portraits by this celebrated painter. How near the prediction of Sir Joshua came true when he said that "his own fame would be preserved by McArdell's engravings when pictures had faded away" can be seen by an inspection in various museums of the many paintings by him, which show the result of using the injurious mediums with which he experimented. On the other hand we find the prints have become even more beautiful with age, none having deteriorated from natural causes.

James
McArdell
(continued)

When McArcell died he left a number of unfinished plates. Five of these were completed by Sayer; others were tampered with without altering the addresses; some were falsified so as to resemble proofs. It is interesting to note that he engraved six plates of David Garrick, one of George II., and two of George III.

Valentine Green

One would think, after examining the works of the foregoing engravers, that there was little to learn beyond what they had accomplished, but we find in Valentine Green a mezzotinter who carried the art even farther, and has left behind him a name which will always rank among the greatest of its exponents. Born 1739, he died in 1813 at the age of 74, having in that time accomplished much. The principal things to be remembered in his career are as follows: In 1767 he was elected a Fellow of the Incorporated Society of Artists. In 1769 his first plate after Sir Joshua Reynolds was engraved. In 1773 he was appointed mezzotint engraver to George III. and in 1774 was elected one of the six associate engravers of the Academy. In 1775 he was appointed mezzotint engraver to Charles Theodore, Elector Palatine; and also made a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries. In June 1789, the Elector Palatine (who was Duke of Bavaria) granted to Green and his son the exclusive privilege of engraving prints from the Dusseldorf Gallery.

He completed over 20 plates, but it was a most unprofitable undertaking, for in it he lost all his savings. In 1793 were exhibited copies of the Dusseldorf pictures. In 1804 his son and partner, Ruppert, died. In 1805 he was appointed keeper of the British Institution on its establishment, a position he held until his death. It is stated that V. Green's father was a dancing master, that he started life in a town clerk's office, studying law. Upon coming of age he left the legal profession and apprenticed himself to Robert Hancock, the potter and line engraver of Worcester. It was while he was with Hancock that his "Survey of Worcester" appeared, in 1764. In 1765 he left Worcester for London to become one of the greatest of his craft. He was almost self-taught, for although Hancock "scraped" (a word which is used to indicate mezzotint engraving) and must have imparted to him the process, he never produced anything of note while with him or aught which showed that he was acquainted with much more than the rudiments of the art. His style was peculiarly his own; the grounding of his plates was made with a fine toothed rocking tool, producing a soft, velvety quality, and the scraping was performed with a delicate, refined touch that no other mezzotinter excelled. All his early training, his dancing, studying law, line engraving, and antiquarian studies seem to have fitted him most thoroughly

Valentine
Green

(continued)

Valentine
Green
(continued)

for the profession which he so ably represented. His great mastery of his art enabled him to produce the leading characteristics of the painters of the day, making them works of art apart from their representations of the personages. Sometimes both objects were attained, often, especially with Reynolds, the picture was more thought of than the likeness which had been the object of the earlier painters, with the exception, perhaps, of Lely. The best plates done by him are those after Sir Joshua Reynolds, portraits of ladies. The list of these portraits contains 20 numbers, not so many as Mc Ardell owing to the quarrel he had with Reynolds about the portrait of Mrs. Siddons as "The Tragic Muse." Mrs. Siddons had requested Reynolds to have it engraved by Francis Haward, although she did not remember the engraver's name at the time she wrote Reynolds. When Valentine Green was told by Reynolds that Mrs. Siddons had asked to have the work done by Haward he thought that Reynolds was deceiving him, and that he it was instead of Mrs. Siddons who wanted it done. To convince Green, Reynolds was obliged to show him Mrs. Siddons' letter. This letter still exists, is in possession of Sir Robert Edgecombe, and reads as follows: "Mrs. Siddons' compliments to Sir Joshua Reynolds, and thinks with all submission to his better judgement that the picture should be put into the hands of that person (whose name she cannot

at this moment recollect) who has executed the print of the children from a picture by Sir Joshua in so masterly a manner. May 7, 1783." The picture referred to was "The Infant Academy," belonging to Lord Iveagh.

The quarrel was so bitter that Sir Joshua lost his temper and wrote Green saying: "That note, as I expected to be believed, I never dreamed of showing, and I now blush at being forced to send it in my own vindication." Green never engraved any more of Reynold's works after this episode.

Valentine Green engraved 325 plates; of these 163 were portraits after various artists; at least 50 different ones are mentioned in his list, while 99 of his plates on all subjects were after different artists.

Valentine
Green
(continued)

On January 1, 1780, he made the following announcement:—"PROPOSALS, by Mr. Green for publishing by subscription six whole length portraits of the Nobility (Ladies) from original pictures by Sir Joshua Reynolds, Knt., forming a series of BEAUTIES of the present age, on the plan of those in the Royal collection at Windsor by Sir Peter Lely, and at Hampton Court by Sir Godfrey Kneller. Engraved and published by V. Green, Mezzotinto Engraver to His Majesty, &c.

CONDITIONS. Two portraits will be published together. Price to Subscribers Twelve Shil-

lings each; Non-Subscribers Fifteen Shillings each. N. B. This Series of Portraits will be extended in proportion as the Nobility and the Public patronize the Undertaking. Subscriptions are received by Mr. Green only at his House, No. 29, Newman-Street, Oxford-Street."

Afterwards this number was increased to nine. These plates are those for the possession of which there is to day such keen competition, and whose prices have thus been so greatly enhanced. The following is a list of the nine subjects:—

Valentine
Green
(continued)

"LADY JANE HALLIDAY." Died 1802. Daughter of 3d Earl of Dysart. Married (1) John D. Halliday, 1771, and (2) George D. Ferry, 1802. Published Dec. 24th, 1779.

"LADY LOUISA MANNERS." Born 1745, died 1840. Daughter of 3d Earl of Dysart. Married John Manners, M. P. Became Countess of Dysart in her own right, 1821. Published Dec. 24, 1779.

"COUNTESS OF HARRINGTON (JANE FLEMING)." Died 1824. Wife of Charles Stanhope, 3d Earl of Harrington. Engraved May 1, 1780.

"DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE, (GEORGINA SPENCER)." Born 1757, died 1806. First wife of William Cavendish, 5th Duke of Devonshire. Published July 1, 1780.

“DUCHESS OF RUTLAND, (MARY ISABELLA SOMERSET).” Died 1831. Wife of Charles Manners, 4th Duke of Rutland. Published July 1, 1780.

“VISCOUNTESS TOWNSHEND, (ANN E. MONTGOMERY).” Born 1754, died 1819. Second wife of George, 1st Marquess Townshend. Published Dec. 1, 1780.

“LADY ELIZABETH COMPTON.” Born 1760, died 1835. Daughter of Chas. 7th Earl of Northampton. Married George Cavendish, 1st Earl of Burlington, 1782. Published Dec. 1, 1781.

“COUNTESS OF SALISBURY, (MARY AMELIA HILL).” Born 1750, died 1835. Wife of James Cecil, 1st Marquess of Salisbury. She perished in the fire at Hatfield House, November 27, 1835. Published Dec. 1, 1781.

Valentine
Green
(continued)

“COUNTESS TALBOT, (CHARLOTTE HILL).” Born 1754, died 1804. Wife of John Chetwynd, 1st Earl Talbot. Published May 1, 1782.

Green engraved a great many subjects after Benjamin West. These do not, however, add anything to his reputation, although during his life many of these subjects were more popular and brought prices far in advance of his portraits after Reynolds.

It may be of interest to know that 103 different engravers in all are on record as having made plates

Valentine Green
(continued) from Sir Joshua Reynolds' works. There are 4000 authenticated paintings by him, of which 504 have been engraved by eminent engravers, and 151 by others, making 655 up to 1822.

James Watson
1740-1790 James and Thos. Watson, although of the same name, and only three years apart in age, were not of the same family. James was born in Ireland, and Thomas in England. The latter was associated in business with William Dickinson, publisher and engraver. Both Watsons were prominent mezzotint engravers, James producing about 167 portraits, the most prominent of which were 59 after Reynolds; 19 after Cotes, 4 after Gainsborough, 8 after Read, 4 after Van Dyck, and 5 after Webster. He reproduces in the list of his engravings of portraits 58 different painters. What may seem strange is that he made only one plate after Romney. This was the portrait of Charles, Duke of Richmond, executed in 1778. It is understood that he learned the art from McArdell. He left a daughter, Caroline, who was an accomplished stipple and mixed engraver, and was appointed engraver to Queen Caroline, wife of George III., in 1785. She died June 1, 1814. James Watson's style was delicate and finished. He was particular to have his plates as perfect as possible, often re-engraving another plate instead of retouching and altering the original one. He scraped a number of

Thos. Watson
1743-1781

subject pieces after Metz, Moreelse, Schalken, and other Dutch artists; also, "The Children in the Wood," after Reynolds. James Watson lived 50 years, while Thomas was taken suddenly sick and died in his 38th year. Thomas engraved a number of plates, assisted by Wm. Dickinson, with whom he became associated in 1776. Dickinson was an excellent draughtsman, producing many beautiful mezzotints, after Reynolds, Romney and Peters. He worked also in stipple, a method much in vogue at that time. Thomas Watson died in Paris, in 1823.

James
Watson
1740-1790

Thos.
Watson
1743-1781
(continued)

His first engravings appeared in about the year 1775. He was highly thought of by the artists, and especially by George Romney, of whose portraits he engraved at least 17; 29 are recorded after Reynolds. These do not include 5 fancy or composition works by the same painter. He engraved a number of plates after Gainsborough, Raeburn, Hoppner, &c. His style is powerful and artistic, but not, as a general rule, carefully finished. He worked both in mezzotinto and stipple. He seems to have practiced only about 20 years, producing in that time about 87 mezzotints.

John
Jones
About
1740-1797

We now come to one whom many believe to be the greatest mezzotint artist of the 18th century. He might also be classed among the portrait painters and miniature artists, for he produced

John
Raphael
Smith
1752-1812

many such works, often reproducing them in mezzotinto. His work, however, with the brush was secondary in merit to that with the scraper. He worked in the stipple method, also, but not to any great extent. The portraits after Reynolds, Gainsborough, Peters and Romney were the most successful of his works. He succeeded in producing the feeling of the brush, being distinguished for great freedom and delicacy. Rarely are the finest impressions seen at auction or the printsellers. When they do appear they attract earnest attention, and command high prices. At the present time the honor of the highest price for a mezzotint engraving belongs to him. This was the portrait of Mrs. Carnac, after Sir Joshua Reynolds, a whole-length standing figure, with landscape background, which sold at auction for \$6,090. The simplicity in composition and style of Romney's works evidently appealed to him, and he produced many admirable plates,—plates which have never been excelled. He commenced to publish for himself in 1773 at 4 Exeter Court, Strand, removing in 1775 to 10 Bateman Building, Soho. Here he was assisted in publishing by Humphrey and Birchell. From here he removed in 1781 to 83 Oxford Street, where he was appointed mezzotint engraver to the Prince of Wales. In 1784 he finally settled at 31 King St., Convent Garden. The early prints which were issued from 4 Exeter Court are very



Portrait of Mrs. Carnac
Highest Priced Mezzotint

uncommon. Those from 10 Bateman Building and 83 Oxford St., are, with few exceptions, ranked among the most admirable productions of the art. He did some fine plates from 31 King St., which were altered in style somewhat from those issued at his previous places of business, but are not so worthy of notice or so pleasing in subjects. Many of the earlier ones were portraits of fair ladies whose beauty must have been eminently attractive. One of these fair ones, Emma Hart, afterwards Lady Hamilton, he engraved after Reynolds and Romney. There is a list of 302 pieces in a catalogue issued about the close of the 18th century. Of these at least 200 were mezzotint portraits.

John
Raphael
Smith
1752-1812
(continued)

In personality John R. Smith was a most charming and cultivated person. His knowledge and great store of information about art brought him much in society. He was fond of sports and sporting people. This prevented him from accumulating the fortune that he might otherwise have made from his art. He did numerous subject pieces after Morland, Wright, Carter, Fuseli, &c.

William
Ward
1766-1826

William and James Ward were brothers. James was a distinguished painter and engraver. William was a mezzotinter, and the most distinguished pupil of J. R. Smith. They both "scraped" after the greatest artists of the day. James, the younger, lived to

James
Ward
1769-1859

the good age of ninety, while William died very suddenly when only fifty years old, leaving a son who followed the same pursuit, but as he flourished in the XIXth century he finds no place in this article. William lived in a world of art, having married a sister of George Morland, who had, when he was but 20 years old, married Ward's sister. These two ladies were noted for their beauty, and were often the models for their husbands' pictures. Ward scraped a large number of subject prints which are very beautiful and much sought after. "The Visit to the Boarding School," after Morland, is perhaps the best known subject picture in mezzotint. He was appointed mezzotint engraver to the Prince of Wales, and became A. R. A. in 1814.

**William
Ward**

1766-1826

**James
Ward**

1769-1859
(continued)

James Ward was a pupil of his brother, and of J. R. Smith, and seems to have followed the art in the early part of his life but devoting it almost exclusively to painting in his latter years. In 1794 he was appointed painter and mezzotint engraver to the Prince of Wales, was made A. R. A. in 1807, and R. A. in 1811. There is a most interesting collection in the British Museum of his work on copper, for he preserved most of his progress proofs, and this collection represents, with few exceptions, his entire work. It was presented by him June 28, 1817. J. C. Smith, in his work on British Mezzotint portraits, says:

“This most interesting collection amply proves the high artistic requirements of mezzotints, and completely refutes the idea of this mode of engraving being a mechanical imitation of painting. On one proof, after Hoppner, Ward notes that when the painter had suggested alteration, not only was it not carried out in the print, but the picture was actually repainted so as to accord to the engraver’s rendering.”

GOERCK ART PRESS
B'WAY AT 51 ST. N.Y.

88-B3139.3

