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Review: Burne-Jones

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his occasional prints in colour are not discussed. The colour lithograph *Beatrice* (1896) is reproduced in two versions, an earlier and the final state, but without any information on the difference between the two (cat. nos. 136 and 137), nor on the fact that it was commissioned by Vollard for his *Album d'Estampes Originales de la Galerie Vollard* (1897) and printed by Auguste Clot (compare with the Melbourne 1990 catalogue, nos. 92–94, including another early state of the print as well as a pastel from c. 1895 on which the print is based). Also, the investigation of the reciprocal influence between Redon and the younger Nabis during the 1890s might have been more

revealing in regard to their printmaking and to Redon's later involvement with colour.

Despite these minor flaws, the catalogue as a whole undoubtedly offers a substantial contribution to the scholarship on Redon, and pays tribute to the intricate relationship between the various media. Astonishingly, there is still no *catalogue raisonné* of Redon's printed works, for which reason André Mellerio's publication of 1913 (reprinted in 1968) with a list of all the prints known to him is still the only available reference work.

Burne-Jones

Jane Munro

Hidden Burne-Jones: Works on Paper by Edward Burne-Jones from Birmingham Museums, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, 4 April–1 July 2007, London, Leighton House Museum, 12 October 2007–27 January 2008; Kingston, UK, D. Giles Ltd., 2007, 96 pp., 26 col. and 37 b. & w. ills., £17.

Hidden Burne-Jones doubles as the catalogue of an exhibition of 62 works on paper by the artist held in Birmingham and London last year, and as a comprehensive, if abbreviated, listing of the entire collection of the artist's works on paper in Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, the most significant in public (or private) hands.

To be 'hidden' is of course the conservational fate of any collection of works on paper, although the term, while clearly intended to evoke the alluringly mysterious, might jar the nerves of the curators who devote their energies to making them publicly accessible! Certainly, there are many drawings, watercolours and prints by Burne-Jones in Birmingham's astonishing collection that are extremely well-known, some – such as the gouache of *Phyllis and Demophoön* (B.560) – infamous, even, from the moment the latter's naked sex was first controversially displayed in 1870. However, the objective of both exhibition and publication is precisely to look beyond the more finished exhibition pieces and to present a more measured and comprehensive overview of the Museum's holdings. Uncompromised by notions of masterpiece, this approach allows for the inclusion of a vast range of works on paper in all media, from highly worked (and sometimes enormous) compositions in bodycolour, watercolour and gold paint, to wood-engravings, autotypes, photogravures, facsimile volumes, wood-blocks and two letters acquired in the 1980s (B.478 and 479). This is no small undertaking, and the authors – Elisa Korb in particular – should be congratulated for their sustained

efforts in compiling the important online resource associated with this publication, which will significantly benefit all those interested in the artist's life and work.

Preceding the discursive texts on the individual exhibits and the collection listing are three introductory essays: Elisa Korb on the ever-compelling subject of Burne-Jones's women and muses; Tessa Sidey on the formation of the collection at Birmingham; and John Christian on the 'compulsive' tick which, in his words, made Burne-Jones ultimately 'a draughtsman first and a painter second'.

Sidey, who has previously offered illuminating insights into Birmingham's collectors and donors, contributes interesting new information on the rôles of Charles Fairfax Murray and J. R. Holliday in the formation of the collection of works by Burne-Jones. Both men first donated works in the year of the artist's death, and between them were responsible for acquiring almost 700 of the 1,153 works on paper currently in the collection. They shared, too, a particular concern to promote Burne-Jones's achievement as a stained glass designer, an aspect which, as a result, is especially well represented in Birmingham's holdings (B.808–B.982). Holliday in particular transformed his interest into a research project, making regular visits to churches that had windows of Burne-Jones's design, and compiling a detailed alphabetical listing in notebooks that he later bequeathed to the museum.

In his introductory essay John Christian not only highlights the centrality of drawing in Burne-Jones's artistic activity, but also charts the evolution of his drawing technique throughout his career. Here the multifaceted nature of Birmingham's collection serves him well, providing as it does an exceptionally rich and varied range of the artist's work, from his first fumbling marginalia, through the finely worked Rossetti-inspired vellum drawings of the late 1850s

and early 1860s and the more 'personal', Veneto-Ruskinian watercolours of the 1860s, to the finely wrought hard-pencil work of the 1870s and the group executed in his 'less coherent and focussed' late style. This broad range of media and technique also makes the point that for an all-but-self-taught draughtsman (leaving aside, as Christian does, a 'disastrous' first art master and a few 'sporadic' life drawing classes in Bloomsbury), who could absorb influences as varied as Giorgione and Byzantine mosaics, via Rossetti, Dürer, Michelangelo, Luca della Robbia and a host of others, Burne-Jones nevertheless maintained a style that was emphatically and resolutely personal, regardless of media or the function of the drawing. He is thus an 'ideal art-historian's artist', not only, as Christian rightly claims, because his drawings so clearly detail a process of creation, but also because the discernible externally inspired elements in his compositions invite an art-historical dissection of the 'several forces' that attracted his magpie artistic instincts and marked his stylistic evolution.

Although Burne-Jones was never drawn to printmaking himself, the inclusion of reproductive media of all sorts in the catalogue is amply justified, not only because of their rôle in promoting his own paintings (Maeterlinck's quasi-idolatrous worship of photogravures after Burne-Jones's paintings in his otherwise sparsely decorated apartment in the Bois de Boulogne in the early 1890s springs immediately to mind as only one example of the international popularity they enjoyed), but because of the significance of prints of all sorts in his visual formation and in the evolution of his draughtsmanship. Christian makes the interesting point that it was in fact Burne-Jones's literary leanings, as an avid childhood reader, that provided him with his earliest visual stimuli through the in-text engravings of such illustrators as John Tenniel, E. H. Corbould, Daniel Maclise and above all George Cruikshank, in his illustrations to Charles Dickens, an author whom Burne-Jones said made him 'guffaw'. Dürer, too, was an early influence from Burne-Jones's student days at Oxford (the artist's mentor, Rossetti, judged his student's early drawings as rivalling Dürer's own), and his study of prints continued to inform his drawing style throughout his career, be they the anonymous woodcuts in Francesco Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia* that influenced his designs for his friend William Morris's poem *Earthly Paradise* (an unrealized project for which Birmingham has an especially rich cache of preliminary drawings), or the more finely tuned engravings by the Florentine engravers Baccio Baldini and Antonio del Pollaiuolo after Botticelli, played out in the 'linear arabesques' of his 1876 graphite drawings for *The Song of Solomon* (B.803–805).

A number of works in Birmingham's collection show how accommodating Burne-Jones could be in preparing his own work for translation into print. This is especially apparent in his preparatory drawing for the Dalziel brothers' ill-fated *Bible Gallery*, included in the displays in Birmingham and London (cat. no. 15), in which the artist included a framed edge to remind himself of the dimensions of the woodblock for which it was destined (the latter, cat. no. 21, also in Birmingham's collection – one of 93 acquired in 1965 after they

were declined by all three national museums in London). It would be an exaggeration to attribute to Burne-Jones's awareness of the physicality of the block, the broader tendency so evident in his paintings and drawings to work within the constraints of a frame or an often oddly shaped format, especially in the case of stained glass and piano decoration. However, it is interesting how often he imposes internal boundaries on his compositions, even when external forces do not dictate it, as if reasserting the rectangular confines of the page or canvas as a control to an otherwise boundless imaginative range. Arguably some of his most inventive and beautiful drawings – such as those now in Cambridge, UK, for the illuminated manuscript of the *Aeneid* – were produced in response to entirely self-prescribed formats.

The 34-page abbreviated catalogue of works on paper in Birmingham appears in the form of an appendix, and occupies the latter third of the catalogue. Understandable space constraints mean that the information on individual works is limited to 'tombstone' descriptions of media, dimensions, inscriptions and provenance, and the authors make it clear that it is to be consulted in tandem with A. E. Whitely's 1939 catalogue of drawings and with the new online resource that went 'live' earlier this year on the Museum's website and is still 'in construction' (<http://bmag.onlinegalleries.com/metadot/index.pl>). Organizing so large and comprehensive a collection into an intelligible listing is a formidable task. The authors' solution has been to present the works alphabetically and, where possible, given the vagaries of dating, chronologically within subjects and categories, the media intermixed. While this works well in the case of material clearly relating to specific projects or paintings, the negotiation of the categories (which – again understandably – smack of database logic) can be somewhat tortuous and misleading, as a 'hard copy' listing. This is most notably the case where portraits or images of specific sitters are concerned. Some appear independently, others under broader categories of 'female heads', 'caricature' or 'male studies', when the benefits of online cross-referencing do not apply. In the case of those sitters who *are* identified and separately listed, it can also be difficult to acquire a full picture of the holdings, so that Georgiana Burne-Jones or Maria Zambaco, for example, appear as themselves, under the paintings for which they sat, or, in the case of the latter, transgendered in a stained glass design of St Mark for Jesus College, Cambridge. To this extent, the listing is for those who already know their Burne-Jones.

Such selective carping, however, ignores the authors' specific recommendation that the listing be considered in conjunction with the website, and it is here that the somewhat distorting straitjacketing of categories in the printed listing pays off in the searchability of the expanded online resource (a preliminary to a Pre-Raphaelite Online Resource Site, intended to be completed by 2009). It would be pointless to highlight niggles of searching (although the cross-references to the 'B' numbers in the listing could be clearer and some 'popular searches' seem particularly perplexing: 'nude' for example, throwing up references to drapery studies, helmets

and ostrich feathers!), as the malleability of the online version, in a state of semi-permanent page-proofs – will ensure that there is an opportunity to correct, refine and improve.

None of this detracts from the considerable achievement in making scholars and public alike more fully aware of the

range and diversity of Birmingham's outstanding collection. If Malcolm Bell could assert that Burne-Jones and his art owed 'so little to his birthplace',¹ there is no doubt that through the publication and online resource, 'Brummagem' has done its native son proud.

1. *Sir Edward Burne-Jones. A Record and Review*, London 1899, p. 3.

North American Prints

Martin Hopkinson

North American Prints, 1913–1947: An Examination at Century's End, edited by David Tatham, Syracuse, NY, Syracuse University Press, 2006, 198 pp., 57 b. & w. ills., \$34.95.

This volume publishes some of the papers delivered at a conference held at Syracuse University in May 2000, as well as recording a conversation between the printmakers Abe Blashko, Mark Freeman and Charles Keller about their experiences in the 1930s and 1940s. In addition, a checklist is provided of the prints and photographs in Syracuse University's art collection that were included in the exhibition 'Above/Below: Skyscrapers to Subways in New York City, 1913–1949'. The limiting dates of the conference were very carefully selected: 1913 was the year of the Armory Show, 1947 of the first of the National Print Exhibitions organized by Una Johnson at the Brooklyn Museum, which were held annually until 1956 and biennially thereafter. It should be noted that, despite what is said here, prints of quality were exhibited in the Armory Show, of which the most significant American ones were by John Sloan and Julian Alden Weir.

The late Clinton Adams pays tribute to Johnson, who was chairman of the American Institute of Graphic Arts' exhibition committee as well as the Brooklyn Museum's Curator of Prints. For the first National Print Exhibition she worked closely with the *émigré* lithographer and writer Jean Charlot, who drew up a list of 206 artists who were to be considered for selection. These were whittled down to 69, to which a further 27 names not on the original list were added. Charlot was associated with the Mexican muralists and had a firm belief in large editions, as against the preciousness of the limited editions stemming from the Etching Revival. Nevertheless, the decision was made to include a number of conservative artists, including John Taylor Arms, Luigi Lucioni and even Frank W. Benson, whose ducks were derided in an exchange of letters between Charlot and

Johnson. Even this sop to contemporary public taste failed to engender popular success for the show. However, it proved a turning point. Later in 1947 the Society of American Etchers resolved to admit lithographs and woodcuts to their shows. The impact of the presence in New York of Hayter's Atelier 17, and of the teaching of his protégés, Gabor Peterdi and Mauricio Lasansky, bore fruit, thus transforming the face of American printmaking. The *émigrés* Werner Drewes, Louis Schanker and Adja Yunkers had performed a similar service for American block prints.

Adams goes on to chart the growth in scholarly exhibitions that explored American printmaking of the period, after the Library of Congress's publication of its extensive holdings and Francis V. O'Connor's studies of the WPA's Federal Art Programme. Rightly, he singles out the series of shows organized by Janet A. Flint at the National Museum of American Art, and the intellectually ground-breaking 'American Prints 1900–1950' put together by Richard Field at Yale University Art Gallery. Yet, as he notes, there is much still to be done in the investigation of regional printmaking, following up the example of Ebria Feinblatt and Bruce Davis's 'Los Angeles Prints of the 1980s'.

Adams remarks on how until World War II much American printmaking lay under a 'thick fog' of Whistler's influence, and how strong the prejudice was against internationalism and in favour of indigenous printmakers, fostered by Thomas Hart Benton and by the journal *Prints*, run by Thomas Craven. Abstract prints were essentially private, quite unlike the work of the politically and socially committed, which was aimed at a much larger market. This social commitment was one of the driving forces behind the Smithsonian Institution's Special Exhibition Programme, the subject of Helena Wright's contribution and the most important essay in this compilation.

In the 25 years between 1923 and 1948, the painter and printmaker Jacob Kainen counted 184 artists who exhibited