



Ingrid R. Vermeulen

PICTURING ART HISTORY



*The Rise of the Illustrated
History of Art in the
Eighteenth Century*

AMSTERDAM UNIVERSITY PRESS



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CONTENTS

	INTRODUCTION	7
I	UNFULFILLED PROJECTS TO ILLUSTRATE VASARI <i>Bottari, Corsini's Print Collection and the Rise of Art-historical Illustration</i>	19
	THE VISUALISATION OF ARTISTIC PROGRESS IN PRINT COLLECTIONS	22
	THE CORSINI COLLECTION AND ITS DISCONTENTS	28
	Gaps in the Past	28
	Decay and the Necessity of Documentation	31
	Reproduction and the Character of Art	38
	FROM PRINT COLLECTING INTO ART-HISTORICAL ILLUSTRATION	59
	Print Annotations to Vasari's 'Vite'	59
	Print Collections as Bodies of Art History	61
	Filling in the Gaps	63
	Artists' Biographies with Reproductive Prints	69
	Artistic Schools and the Illustration of Artistic Progress	78
2	THE ARTISTIC PAST AT A GLANCE <i>Winckelmann, Cavaceppi's Drawing Collection and the Short Life of Drawn Art Histories</i>	91
	THE PROMINENCE OF DRAWINGS	93
	Winckelmann's Interest in Drawing Collections	97
	The Disadvantage of Antiquarian Collections	99
	Vase Paintings as Drawings	102
	CONNOISSEURSHIP AND THE INVENTION OF ART HISTORY	106
	Detecting Artists	106
	Detecting Artistic Schools	108
	The Question of Artistic Progress	110
	The Art of Art History	114

THE CABINET OF ART HISTORY	123
Drawings as a Point of Departure (Baldinucci)	124
The Unity of Drawings and Biographies (d'Argenville)	130
Acknowledging a Tradition (Winckelmann)	138
DRAWINGS AND THE ILLUSTRATION OF ART HISTORY	154
3 THE 'HISTOIRE DE L'ART PAR LES MONUMENS'	177
<i>D'Agincourt, his Reproduction Collection and the Birth of the Illustrated Survey</i>	
THE BOOK AS MUSEUM	179
ILLUSTRATING THE ARTISTIC PAST	184
The Case of the Bolognese School	185
Artists' Oeuvres at a Glance	194
Expression as an Art-historical Category	203
The Universal Chain	211
THE PROBLEM OF FAITHFUL REPRODUCTION	215
Reproduction Critique	218
Tracing	236
THE REALIZATION OF THE ILLUSTRATED OVERVIEW	250
CONCLUSION	263
APPENDICES	267
ARCHIVAL MATERIAL	281
NOTES	283
BIBLIOGRAPHY	321
INDEX	341
ILLUSTRATION CREDITS	359

Introduction

Today, an infinite number of lavishly illustrated books cover the history of art. Impressive overviews, monographs on famous artists or outstanding artworks, glossy magazines, exhibition catalogues, art-historical textbooks, city guides or e-books, all include images to evoke the visual appearance of valuable or significant works of art. The images are published in the form of anything from inserts in texts to pop-up screens, and cover a range of techniques from black-and-white photographs to full-color images, produced digitally with high resolutions. The presence of such illustrations is so self-evident that, in fact, without them, any story of art seems unimaginable.

In the past, however, the presence of illustrations in books devoted to the artistic past has not always been that obvious, especially not in the pre-photographic era. Up to the middle of the eighteenth century these books usually did not contain reproductions of art. For that reason the readers of art literature by Giorgio Vasari (1511–74), Carel van Mander (1548–1606), Carlo Cesare Malvasia (1616–93), Filippo Baldinucci (1624–96), Roger de Piles (1635–1709) or Antoine Joseph Dezallier d’Argenville (1680–1765) turned to reproductive prints, which had been published separately and haphazardly since the end of the fifteenth century. Those executed by Mantegna and later on those under the direction of Raphael and Rubens belong to the most well-known. For centuries, the publication of art literature and that of art illustrations formed two separate traditions which hardly intertwined.

When both traditions merged in the eighteenth century and gave rise to the illustrated history of art – the central subject of the present study – illustration was more than the embellishment of texts. Firstly, prints and drawings were collected or consulted in historically arranged albums or portfolios in view of publications devoted to the artistic past. Secondly, books were compiled in which reproductive prints and texts were joined together to evoke the story of art.

In fact, the illustrated history of art expressed a new notion of the artistic past. Since the sixteenth century, the story of art was conceived as a succession of lives of artists, whose works were subject to developments from growth to perfection and decline. The lives were recorded in the form of series of biographies and included in often copious compendia. In the eighteenth century, the notion of artistic growth and decline was still current, but now it was renewed by the question, asked by scholars such as Giovanni Gaetano Bottari (1689–1775), Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–68) and Jean-Baptiste Séroux d'Agincourt (1730–1814), of how it could be deduced primarily from the works of art that had been handed down. As a result, the compendia of artists' biographies were replaced by overviews on the history of art, in which not the artists' lives but their art took centre stage. In such a context, illustrations were particularly appropriate to call forth the successive manifestations of art.

This new perspective on the artistic past made it necessary for art scholars to view works of art with their own eyes. Winckelmann stated that art depended on observation and that the best way to learn about it was to 'go and see'. The need to see was felt particularly when scholars read art descriptions in the existing art literature, which did not evoke faithful impressions of works of art. Some believed that writing left too much about the actual appearance of works of art to the imagination, others complained about the often imprecise or even boring nature of art descriptions. According to George Turnbull (1698–1748), a writer could never fully express the observations done on works of art.¹

In those days, the principal way to familiarize oneself with works of art was by traveling to European countries, and in particular Italy, to visit the churches, libraries, studios, auction houses, galleries and palaces in which they were stored. Scholars such as De Piles, d'Argenville, Bottari and Luigi Lanzi (1732–1810) often acknowledged travel as a precondition for trustworthy observations on art.² Yet, the access to the treasure houses was not always a matter of course, and often had to be organized via influential acquaintances on the basis of recommendation letters or under the guidance of local connoisseurs. To go and see was more easily said than done. Bottari, for one, had to climb through the windows of the closed and apparently forgotten chapel of Nicholas V in the Vatican to be able to see the marvelous frescoes of Fra Angelico.

The diffusion of art over so many different buildings, cities and countries did not easily foster coherent knowledge. This problem was counteracted by wealthy owners, collectors, art lovers or scholars, who assembled collections of art, in particular prints and drawings. Leopoldo de' Medici (1617–75), Sebastiano Resta (1635–1714), Neri Maria Corsini (1685–1770), Bartolomeo Cavaceppi (c. 1716–99), Pierre-Jean Mariette (1694–1774), Jacopo Durazzo (1717–94) or William Young Ottley (1771–1836), for instance, brought together large numbers of manageable and easily comparable works on paper in their

cabinets or libraries. To them, prints and drawings were not only collectable items of beauty and riches, they also served as reference material to the history of art. The collections comprised reproductions as well as preparatory designs of final works of art and represented many artists, schools and periods from the past. To be sure, such collections seemed only a second-best solution because they did not contain originals, such as paintings, which were believed to provide the surest key to the artistic past. In spite of this disadvantage, paper collections were even preferred to painting collections because they brought together a large number of representative works in one place. As such, they allowed a richer or fuller understanding of the history of art.

In paper collections, scholars not only found material relating to the artistic past, they also believed they could see art developing under their very eyes. According to Mariette, who particularly enjoyed the ‘cultivation of the muses’ in the seclusion of the cabinet, collections of prints and drawings allowed the pleasure of comparing the different ways of composition and design and recognizing the several phases in painting and the progress which the varying schools experienced in each period. Paper collections often had a chronological or historical order which supported such observations. Chronology may seem a self-evident ordering principle, but it was applied in several different ways. Often, artists’ oeuvres were arranged chronologically within sections devoted to artistic schools, which retained a relationship with the traditional compendia of artists’ biographies. However, chronological series were also realized with a small number of representative artworks assembled in one or a few albums. In the latter, series of artists’ oeuvres were abandoned to facilitate a stronger perspective on developments in art.

In the eighteenth century, in one way or the other, leading art scholars had access to paper collections. They collected on their own account or for a wealthy patron, or they consulted an already existing collection. The structure or the ordering principles of the collections often coincided with those of the books they wrote on art. A remarkable example in this respect is the arrangement of the drawings in d’Argenville’s collection, which corresponded precisely with the order of the artists’ biographies he published in the *Abregé* in 1745. Yet, initially, neither d’Argenville nor other scholars decided to illustrate their books with reproductions of art. What they observed in paper collections was only documented in texts and not illustrated. Books on the artistic past without reproductions remained the norm for a long time.

Gradually, however, scholars began to search for ways to share with their readers that revealing experience of seeing art-historical changes unfold in front of one’s eyes in a well-ordered paper collection. After all, readers did not always have access to such collections. The wish to literally visualize works of art as well as to prove artistic changes in history, which had been fulfilled by paper

collections, now also motivated the inclusion of illustrations in books. In the course of the eighteenth century, more and more art reproductions were gradually integrated in the text in practically all the genres of the art literature, comprising biographies, collection catalogues and monographs on schools. The unique content of paper collections was now transformed into well-founded sets of illustrations published in many copies. It was with d'Agincourt's *Histoire de l'art par les monumens* (1810–23) that the issue of a fully illustrated history of art from Classical Antiquity to the present was finally raised.

Practices of paper collecting clarify what became one of the basic tasks of the art-historian around 1800. This can be deduced from certain characterizations of the art-historical discipline. Marco Lastri, for example, spoke of his illustrated *Etruria Pittrice ovvero storia della pittura toscana dedotta dai suoi monumenti* (1791–95) as 'our historical and iconographical series' or 'our collection'. D'Agincourt stated that for the history of art, it was necessary to 'form the collection of monuments' and compose series of drawings or prints. Even in his definition of the 'science of art' (Kunstwissenschaft), Georg Hegel (1770–1831) stated that works of art were concatenated to form a history of art.³ Where representative series of prints and drawings formerly only added up to accounts of the artistic past, they were now inextricably bound up with them.

Picturing Art History relies on two distinct fields of art-historical inquiry. On the one hand, it depends on studies devoted to the historiography of art, in which traditions of the art literature are explored. In them, works of a range of art historians are discussed, and attention is frequently drawn to the innovative eighteenth-century change when the history of artists' lives was exchanged for that of art, especially in the literature devoted to Winckelmann. It is only recently that the literature on the illustrated art book has begun to draw attention to connections between image and text. On the other hand, *Picturing Art History* is based on studies devoted to traditions of art illustration. The studies belong to the field of the history of collecting, in which reconstructions are made of paper collections such as those owned by Leopoldo de' Medici, d'Argenville, Corsini and Cavaceppi. Further studies dealing with art illustration are those on reproductive printmaking, in which the focus is directed to matters of technique, on reception and especially on discussions about the ever-changing nature of art reproductions.

Up till now in modern historiographical research, art literature and art illustration have been perceived as two distinct phenomena, each with its own tradition. In studies devoted to the historiography of art, the illustrations forming part of books or collections are often neglected.⁴ Although illustration gains in importance in recent studies devoted to the history of the illustrated art book, for which Haskell's *Painful Birth of the Art Book* (1987) has been an

important incentive, no mention is made of their origins in the history of paper collecting.⁵ Vice versa, in studies devoted to the history of collecting or reproductive printmaking, illustrations are in the spotlight, but they are studied without taking recourse to the historiography of art.⁶ This mutual exclusion does not do justice to the particular ways in which eighteenth-century scholars studied art.

In *Picturing Art History* the two fields are combined in the conviction that both traditions of art literature and art illustration intertwined from the eighteenth century onwards. In this way, a better insight may be gained in the phenomenon of the rise of the illustrated history of art. However, I could not have done so without taking recourse to a few studies in which the value of gathering both threads is already recognized.

Since the end of the 1970s, the question has been more frequently asked of how collections of prints and drawings related to notions of the history of art. In 1979, Barocchi explored the relationship between ‘Storiografia e collezionismo dal Vasari al Lanzi,’ in which she paid attention to the fact that Vasari and Baldinucci collected drawings in relation to the artists’ biographies they wrote. In the same volume, Spaletti observed with respect to reproductive prints (also as part of collections) that they were underrated in the contemporary historiography of art, but also that they were acknowledged since the second half of the eighteenth century to form the basis of ‘each stylistic confrontation and of each historiographical system’.⁷ In that same year, after a short discussion of Winckelmann’s consultation of the Cavaceppi drawing collection, Dilly spoke of the ‘rarely mentioned problem of art history (...) in how far the order of objects itself has stimulated art-historical systems, theories, methods, views and knowledge.’⁸

Observations such as these have resulted in a range of studies. In some centering on collections – whether of works of art, or of objects of natural history or archaeology – the arrangements of collections formed clues to the state of affairs in the respective fields of knowledge. Meijers, for example, discussed in *Kunst als natuur* (1991) the chronological arrangement of the Viennese painting gallery in the light of new contemporary insights in the history of art as well as in the natural sciences. She referred to the print collection of Durazzo. In Herklotz’s study on the paper museum of Cassiano dal Pozzo (1999), the order of the collection provided insights into the state of affairs of seventeenth-century archaeology.⁹ Both studies are examples of how collections can be used to clarify aspects of the historiography. They provided me with a method to study the role of paper collections in the historiography of art.

In the 1990s, Borea devoted a corpus of articles to reproductive printmaking. She dealt with the reproductive print as a topic in the historiography of art and pointed out its importance as a kind of source equal to texts for the history of art criticism.¹⁰ Her articles were devoted to Vasari’s remarks on prints

in the *Vite*, to the type of prints which were produced after master drawings or on the use Bellori made of prints in his studies and for illustrations in his books. In one of the articles, she linked the reception of early Italian painting in prints to the advent of the illustrated art historiographical literature in the eighteenth century.¹¹ This article was an important source for *Picturing Art History*. However, the perspective has been modified in the conviction that the rise of the illustrated history of art deserves being a focus of attention, comprising not only the history of art criticism, but also the historiography of art.

In several other works, the use of illustrations in collections and books was discussed in a wide cultural context. In *History and its Images* (1993), Haskell raised the important question of to what extent works of art, artifacts or images were used as sources for historical research. He portrayed a large variety of historians, from Petrarca in the fifteenth to Huizinga in the twentieth century, who were interested in subjects ranging from numismatism, cultural history, art history, antiquarianism and medievalism to expression theory. Bickendorf subsequently drew attention to methods of visual research in *Die Historisierung der italienischen Kunstbetrachtung im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert* (1998). They were developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the sciences, such as palaeography, antiquarianism, natural sciences, medievalism and etruscology, from which the history of art profited. Both studies present an invaluable kaleidoscope of fields of interest. However, both of them largely seem to have passed over ongoing traditions of collecting and illustration in the historiography of art.

In the present study, the central question is how eighteenth-century scholars pictured the artistic past. Such a question cannot be viewed apart from the shift which took place in this period to view the artistic past not as a history of artists' lives but as a history of art, as stated above. In fact, it will be argued that the use of art illustrations in collections and books stood in close service to this change. As the work of art grew in importance to picture the artistic past, art illustrations became indispensable visual tools.¹²

Four main related questions will be explored. In the first place, I shall examine what corpora of images were considered appropriate to the study of the history of art. In the eighteenth century, scholars mostly preferred collections of drawings, collections of prints or art reproductions in books. Their relevance was confirmed by scholars who preferred them to collections of originals, such as coins, gems, sculptures, paintings, vases or antiquities. They brought together large numbers of representative works of art in one place, which could not be equalled in collections of originals.

In the eighteenth century, the notion that paper art collections and illustrated art books embodied the artistic past was widely accepted. How this

should be understood is the second question of the present study. An answer will be formulated by a comparative analysis of the contents of paper collections and the contents of books devoted to the history of art. It will show that paper collections as well as books were characterized by the same ordering principles of artistic school, artist and chronology, which functioned to divide and make sense of the artistic past. Apparently, they were directly or indirectly compiled in relation to each other. Such correspondence reinforced opinions on the history of art. It increased to maximum effect in illustrated art history books, in which art reproductions were joined to texts to support views on the history of art.

The third question is how traditions of paper collecting relate to those of the historiography of art. Collections of drawings and prints were already assembled in the sixteenth century in relation to books devoted to the artistic past, such as the drawings Vasari collected in addition to his *Vite*. As appendices to artists' biographies, they functioned primarily as examples of the production and skill of artists. It was only at the end of the seventeenth century that they gained in importance, in the work of Bottari for example, as a result of the increasing empirical value ascribed to works of art and the development of connoisseurship for the analysis of art. Such new insights came to determine notions of the artistic past, which resulted in the change of art-historical writing from surveys of artists' biographies into the illustrated history of art. The work of Winckelmann and d'Agincourt are good examples of the new art history from the middle of the eighteenth century onwards. This change is often perceived as a profound break, but it did not occur as suddenly as it may seem if the ongoing preoccupations of scholars with paper collecting are taken into account.

To what extent scholars believed that works on paper were faithful representations of the artworks they studied as clues to the history of art is the fourth and last question. Were prints or drawings in collections or books reliable renderings of works of art? Most drawings did not reproduce paintings but formed part of the preparatory phases or recorded 'first ideas'. Nevertheless, scholars felt that the style of a painter was expressed better in a drawing than in the final painting, a reason why drawings were conceived as an important source for the history of art. Prints, on the other hand, elicited much discussion on their value as reproductions of paintings. They had been executed in varying degrees of faithfulness, depending on the techniques used and the acuteness of the engraver. Judgments on the reliability of reproductive prints, however, went together with an aesthetic appreciation of the quality of engraving. A possible lack of faithfulness was therefore sometimes excused because of the artistic ingenuity of the print. Later on, scholars aimed to rule out the interpreting hand of engravers and looked for more mechanically produced reproductions, such as those based on tracings. Such aims prepared the way for the mechanically produced photographs, which appeared from the early nineteenth century onwards.

Picturing Art History consists of three chapters. Each starts from a case study on a leading eighteenth-century art scholar using illustrations as visual tools to picture the artistic past, namely Bottari, Winckelmann and d'Agincourt. In the case studies the focus is on a specific kind of art illustration for which the scholars had a preference, i.e. prints, drawings and book illustrations, respectively. Taken together, these three types represent the possibilities of art illustration in the eighteenth century. Each chapter shows that the initial study of illustrations in paper collections preceded their publication in art history books. Furthermore, the various characteristics of the illustrative material, of prints and drawings in particular, resulted in distinct kinds of illustrated art history books.

The first chapter is devoted to the art scholar Bottari, his consultation of a Roman collection of prints belonging to the Corsini family, and the results of his proposal to illustrate Vasari in the subsequent art literature. He was a man of strong opinions who, as librarian of the Corsini library and later 'custode' of the Vatican library, maintained relations with a large group of scholars active in the field of antiquarianism, theology and art history. He acquired fame with the monumental catalogue in four volumes of the *Museo Capitolino* (1741–82). It seems, however, that he did not so much generate new research himself as redirect attention to important texts from the past by presenting new editions. He revised Bosio's *Roma Sotterranea* (1632) in an entirely new edition (1737–54), republished Borghini's *Il Riposo* (1730), published letters by artists and art scholars (1754–73) and presented the first extensive annotation on Vasari's *Vite* (1759–60).

The edition of Vasari's *Vite* of 1759–60 was not illustrated with art reproductions. Nonetheless, it did contain a proposal by Bottari to illustrate Vasari's idea of artistic development from growth to perfection with a carefully selected series of reproductive prints. He never fulfilled the proposal, but the notes to Vasari's text testify to Bottari's frequent consultation of the Corsini collection of prints. An analysis of the collection will clarify why a selection of prints and not the whole collection was preferred to illustrate the history of art. The notes further demonstrate that Bottari was concerned not only about gaps in the collection – hardly any reproductive prints of fourteenth- or fifteenth-century art occurred, for example – but also about the documentation of art in a precarious state of conservation and about the qualities of prints as reproductions. In the second half of the eighteenth century, Bottari's proposal inspired many editors of illustrated art history books, although none of them realized a full illustration of Vasari's *Vite*.

Winckelmann, the art scholar to whom the second chapter is devoted, was a colleague of Bottari. He initially had no sympathy for the Italian scholar, whom he described as a pedant with little knowledge, but later on Winckelmann entrusted Bottari with an editorial check-up of his manuscript of the *Monumenti*

Antichi Inediti (1767).¹³ As the son of a German cobbler, Winckelmann worked his way up as an art scholar with a strong passion for Greek classical art. In 1755 he traveled to Rome where he was able to study classical art first hand in many antiquarian collections. He continued his scholarly work in the service of Cardinal Albani from 1758 onwards, and in that of the Pope as a commissioner of antiquities from 1763 onwards, and made a name for himself with the *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* (1764).

It was around the time the *Geschichte* was published that Winckelmann consulted the drawing collection of the sculptor-restorer Cavaceppi. In the second chapter of *Picturing Art History*, the question is explored of how a collection containing drawings from the Renaissance onwards could be of use to Winckelmann in relation to the *Geschichte*, in which classical art was central after all. The presumption is that he was not insensitive of the fact that drawing collections had a reputation – fostered by connoisseurs such as Baldinucci and d’Argenville – that they revealed the history of art. In Cavaceppi’s collection, he found art-historical arrangements which did not occur in antiquarian collections. In agreement with new insights on connoisseurship, the drawings were arranged according to school and period, which corresponded with the divisions Winckelmann projected on the history of classical art. They therefore visually backed up his views on the artistic past. Winckelmann’s interest for the Cavaceppi collection is typical for the widespread art-scholarly use of drawings, which led to a kind of art-historical literature with reproductions of drawings in the second half of the eighteenth century. This short-lived branch of the historiography of art has received little notice up till now.

The third chapter of *Picturing Art History* deals with d’Agincourt, who intended to continue Winckelmann’s story of art from the fall of the Roman Empire into the Middle Ages. D’Agincourt, who was of lower French nobility, started his career in the army and spent a long time as a tax farmer in the service of King Louis XV. In his spare time, he collected art and moved in circles of scholars and artists in Paris, which attracted him so much that he settled in Rome in 1779, after a trip through Europe, to devote himself entirely to the as yet almost unexplored and vast field of medieval art. He maintained many contacts with scholars such as Guglielmo della Valle (c. 1745–after 1805), Lanzi and Leopoldo Cicognara (1767–1834), and received visitors such as Goethe. The project which finally resulted in the *Histoire de l’art par les monumens* (1810–23) paused temporarily when publication was postponed in 1789 due to the effects of the French Revolution. Only in 1810, when he reached the age of 80, was publication started, but he did not live long enough to see the final result.

The pursuit of collecting prints and drawings lay at the root of d’Agincourt’s *Histoire*. This emerges from the striking similarities between

habits of display in the *Histoire* and, for example, in albums of prints and drawings. Also, analysis of a selection of the reproductive plates from the *Histoire* and its preparatory drawings shows that the ways to visualize the history of art closely adhered to the ordering principles of artist, school and chronology formerly applied to paper collections. The connection is further established by linking d'Agincourt's opinions on the faithfulness of reproductive engraving to those of former print collectors, albeit in a negative sense. He did not put his trust in the capabilities of engravers to adapt their style to that of the original work. Instead, he diminished the interpreting hand of the engraver by the adoption of the much more mechanical technique of tracing. In spite of the fact that d'Agincourt has hardly been acknowledged for it by contemporaries, his *Histoire* is an important case in eighteenth-century art history books, relying on paper collections, and illustrated art-historical overviews from the nineteenth century.

The selection of case studies which make up the contents of *Picturing Art History* was determined by several factors. First of all, it was based on the accepted reputation the authors have today among scholars of the historiography of art. Winckelmann hardly needs an explanation for the widely acknowledged role of reformer he played in the history of the art-historical discipline. D'Agincourt has received due attention as the first historian of medieval art, although it is only very recently that his work is being studied more thoroughly. The least studied of the three, in my opinion undeservedly so, is Bottari, who among other stimulating projects re-evaluated a highly important art-historical source by his acclaimed and copiously annotated re-edition of Vasari's *Vite*.

Another factor that determined the selection of the case studies was the possibility to retrieve the contents of the paper collections used by art scholars. The contents of both the Corsini collection, studied by Bottari, and the Cavaceppi collection, studied by Winckelmann, can still be viewed in the Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica in Rome and the Kupferstichkabinett in Berlin, respectively. Important information on the original order of these collections is provided by several archival documents. In the present study, the illustrations in d'Agincourt's *Histoire* will be interpreted as a collection of images, and thus not only the book itself will be studied, but also the collection of reproductive drawings kept in the Vatican library.

The diverse nature of the paper collections used was the next factor to decide the selection of the case studies. They comprise prints, drawings and book illustrations. They moreover cover the best possible paper media to illustrate the history of art in the eighteenth century. Bottari consulted a print collection in relation to the annotation he published of Vasari's *Vite*, Winckelmann saw the development of art from growth to perfection in a drawing

collection, and d'Agincourt illustrated his book on medieval art with reproductive prints.

Lastly, the choice of the case studies was determined by factors of time, place and subject. The selected scholars largely executed their work in the middle and second half of the eighteenth century, the period in which they strongly contributed to the fundamental change of perspective on the artistic past, in which the stress was no longer placed on the history of artists' lives but on that of art. They shared a home base of research in Rome, and all drew attention in one way or the other to Italian Renaissance art for which they had a preference. Moreover, taken together, their books comprise much of the time scale the history of art covered at the time. Winckelmann devoted a study to the art of the Classical Antiquity, and Bottari to that of the Renaissance. D'Agincourt linked both eras in a study devoted to the art of the Middle Ages, in the conviction that the history of art was not limited to single periods, but formed part of a historical continuum.

The selection of certain case studies always entails the exclusion of others. A scholar who would not have been out of place in the present study was Giovan Pietro Bellori (1613–96). He, too, owned a paper collection. However, because it proved to be impossible to reconstruct the contents of this collection, aside from a few items, it is difficult to define its role in Bellori's research.¹⁴ Another figure who was apt for selection was Mariette. Although his collecting activities were highly valued, as will be pointed out on several occasions, he did not publish an art-historical book in relation to them, in spite of his intentions to do so. For similar reasons, other possible case studies have not been dealt with, such as the print and drawing collection of Nicola Pio (c.1677–after 1733), the print and drawing collection in the Uffizi, then Real Galleria, consulted by Lanzi, or the print collection of Cicognara. Nevertheless, all of them belong to the early history of the illustrated history of art.

The beginnings of my research for *Picturing Art History* lie in the rich holdings of the Print Room of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. During an internship in the middle of the 1990s, I was given ample opportunity to consult prints or drawings in any volume, box or folder of my liking. Next to the many masterpieces which caught my attention, I was struck by a set of late eighteenth-century reproductive prints engraved by Feodor Iwanowitsch in outline after the bas-reliefs from the Doors of Paradise, which were cast by Lorenzo Ghiberti for the baptistery in Florence in the fifteenth century. Their appearance was startling, because it was difficult to understand the correspondence between the flat and decorative line patterns in the prints and the illusionist space which Ghiberti had so remarkably grasped in the panels of the gilded bronze doors. How could such a work function as a depiction of art from the past?

The questions aroused by this particular encounter were elaborated in a dissertation on the use of outline prints in the historiography of art around 1800, with which I completed the study of art history at the VU University Amsterdam in 1997. It was the steppingstone for a PhD thesis devoted to the role of prints and drawings in the eighteenth-century historiography of art, which I defended under the title *Picturing Art History* in 2006. Both projects profited hugely from the guidance and enthusiasm of Dr. Paul van den Akker. I thank him and Prof. Ilja M. Veldman for the opportunity to pursue a subject which lies at the very foundation of the art-historical discipline. Thanks to the good care of Amsterdam University Press, I have had the opportunity to improve the manuscript and turn the whole into an illustrated book.

An important factor encouraging the research to flourish was the Royal Dutch Institute in Rome. For several years in a row I was granted visiting fellowships, which allowed me to discover the vast international world of libraries, institutes, archives and museums, such as the Archivio di Stato, the Biblioteca dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei e Corsiniana, the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, the Biblioteca Casanatense, the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Roma, the Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica, and the Hertziana. The Roman journeys of study were completed with shorter, but no less important incidental visits to the Dutch Institutes in Florence and Paris and the Kupferstichkabinett in Berlin. Back in the Netherlands, the Print Rooms of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and the university library in Leiden, the Royal Library in The Hague and the university libraries in Amsterdam, Utrecht, Leiden and Delft were all essential to tie the final threads together.

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