1 Auguste Blanchard after William Powell Frith
_The Derby Day_
Engraving, published by Gambart and Co.,
1858
49.6 x 110.5

2 Ferdinand Joubert after William Rimer
_Victims entering the Castle of Indolence_
Engraving
20.2 x 30.2

Baillieu Library, University of Melbourne
Art at Second Hand:
Prints after European Pictures in Victoria before 1870

ALISON INGLIS

Looking back over the first few decades of Victoria’s history, it seemed to several of the original colonists that their fledgling society had been singularly lacking in the Fine Arts. As the historian H. G. Turner remarked in 1918, when describing his early life in mid nineteenth-century Melbourne:

[As for] pictorial art in that era — It was a barren time — no Victorian Artists Association — no Art Schools, and practically no demand for artists’ work. — We were just beginning to get into the way of furnishing our houses with necessary comforts, but had not reached the stage of wanting decoration.¹

Nicholas Chevalier’s assistant, E. Wake Cook, reached a similar conclusion when he considered his colonial childhood from the vantage point of the present century. As he simply observed: ‘when I landed in Melbourne in 1852, … there was an utter absence of visible art.’²

Recent scholarship has done much to refute this conception of a colonial cultural desert by documenting and reconstructing the considerable artistic activity which flourished in Victoria before 1870.³ One interesting aspect of the arts during this period, however, has received little attention — and that is the presence of a substantial number of prints after European works of art in both the private and public collections of the day. The neglect of this subject can be easily understood, for not only does it fall outside the nationalist definition of ‘Australian’ art,⁴ being predominantly European in origin, but it also belongs to a category of art, ‘the copy’, which until recently, the modern movement’s reverence for originality had relegated to the twilight zone of art history.⁵

Prints of pictures, or reproductive prints as they are known, were amongst the first examples of art to be brought to the Port Phillip district. As early as July 1839, John Pascoe Fawkner could advertise that

some of the first-rate engravings and paintings of Martin and other artists are open for inspection at the Melbourne Library, Print and Stationery Warehouse, Collins Street.⁶

Apart from such commercial ventures, the majority of prints were to be found in private hands, having been conveyed to the colony as part of the first settlers’ household goods. The more educated and culturally-minded of the new community sought, wherever possible, to uphold and reproduce the trappings of polite society, and this included such ‘tangible and ornamental’ aspects as libraries, pianos and works of art.⁷ Georgiana McCrae, for example, noted in her diary for June 1841:

Mr John Reeve . . . came to early dinner. As he is interested in art, I had great pleasure in showing him my prints and paintings.

The following year, when the woodwork was completed in her new house ‘Mayfield’, Mrs McCrae ordered that ‘the cedar that was left [be used] in making a pair of frames for Brierly’s prints of The Royal Adelaide and The Pique.’⁸

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The presence of such engravings alongside the family portraits in the early colonists' baggage, was no doubt partly due to the relative convenience in conveying prints half way across the world compared to oil paintings. As one contemporary writer remarked: 'Where the picture cannot go, the engravings penetrate.' However, it also indicates the status that the reproductive print held during the nineteenth century as an appropriate work of art for the decoration of a civilized home.

Since the middle of the preceding century, printmaking in Britain had enjoyed a spectacular revival, as a growing interest in new techniques (such as stipple, aquatint and colour printing) had combined with the artists' and publishers' recognition of the commercial potential of the reproductive print. Great quantities of increasingly better quality prints were produced to meet the expanding market as it became fashionable for the upper classes to purchase prints after pictures. As Horace Walpole observed: 'The Art of Engraving was never more encouraged than in the present day, ... where almost every man of taste is in some degree a collector of prints.'

Works by the great reproductive engravers, such as Woollett and Strange, were eagerly sought — an unlettered proof of a Woollett print could command a higher price than a fine Rembrandt etching. However, the widespread availability of prints at reasonable prices meant that this type of art was also within the reach of the middle class patron. One writer, when describing his childhood at the end of the eighteenth century, recalled:

[My father] was an admirer of the fine arts, but pictures being too costly for his purchase, he limited himself to prints ... [I remember] the beautiful prints of Vivares, Bartolozzi, or Strange, from the pictures of Claude, Carracci, Raphael, and Corregio (sic) with which [the parlour] walls were elegantly adorned.

The public's enthusiasm for reproductive prints continued, and indeed grew, during the early decades of the nineteenth century. The leading artists of the day — Lawrence, Turner, Constable, Wilkie and Landseer — all sought to enhance their reputations through the sale of prints after their work, and were quick to exploit the potential value of the artist's copyright. They authorized, and occasionally even collaborated in, the production of high quality engravings and mezzotints which were often exhibited at the Royal Academy. The artistic standing of these prints was further emphasized when that Institution finally admitted professional engravers to the rank of full Academician in 1855 — thereby acknowledging the engravers' claim that their art was one of translation and interpretation rather than mere copying. Thus, William Hazlitt was simply reflecting the contemporary attitude to these works when he observed:

Good prints are no doubt better than bad pictures; or prints, generally speaking, are better than pictures; for we have more prints of good pictures than of bad ones.

Colonial society inherited this taste for reproductive prints from the 'Old Country', and was alike in preferring a fine engraving to a poor quality painting. When the Melbourne writer, Patrick Just, criticised the local art market of the 1850s for consisting of the rubbish of picture-dealers' shops, landscapes of the most inferior description, painted in England for the colonial market, he was quick to point to the exception of a few good works brought with them by private individuals, a prize or two from an English Art Union, [and] impressions of some of the most popular engravings.

When one further considers the suitability of the medium for the export market, it is not surprising to find that English and European prints were a prominent feature of the mid nineteenth-century Melbourne art world.
The high regard in which these works were held was also demonstrated by their appearance in the colony’s first art exhibitions, which were organized during the 1850s and 1860s. Indeed, one of the earliest of these events, the Melbourne Exhibition of 1854, included examples of line engraving, wood engraving and lithography in its small Fine Arts Section.\(^22\)

A clearer idea of the range and quality of reproductive prints in Victorian private collections is given by the later exhibitions which incorporated loan sections or else were specifically devoted to displaying the ‘art treasures’ of the colony. There, amidst the scores of prints put before the public eye during the 1860s,\(^23\) appeared the famous contemporary engravings after Constable’s *Cornfield*, John Martin’s trilogy of *Judgement* pictures, Landseer’s *The Old Shepherd’s Chief Mourner*, Frith’s *Derby Day* (fig. 1) and Holman Hunt’s *Finding of the Saviour in the Temple*.\(^24\)

While the importers and local Victorian agents for the big London print dealers ensured that a steady flow of single prints entered the colonial market,\(^25\) reproductive engravings were also readily accessible in the form of portfolios, albums and illustrated books and journals. For those who could afford the price of 42d. per year, a major source of contemporary British line engraving — the *Art Journal* — was available in Melbourne.\(^26\) The high quality prints in these volumes were often removed and separately framed, as was the case with Armytage’s engraving after Wilkie’s *Guerilla Council of War*, from the *Art Journal* of 1859, which appeared in the 1869 Melbourne Exhibition.\(^27\) For those less affluent, the free Public Library had actively acquired a comprehensive collection of illustrated books and catalogues.\(^28\) However, when it came to the promotion and distribution of prints throughout the early colony, one of the most influential agencies was that remarkable nineteenth-century phenomenon, the Art Union.

The Art Union movement originated in the 1830s, and during its mid-Victorian heyday, spent enormous sums on the commissioning and dispensing of art throughout ‘the United Kingdom and the Colonies’.\(^29\) An ‘art union’ was an art lottery, in which each subscriber was given the opportunity of winning a work of art — usually a painting or sculpture — from a current exhibition. In this way the movement’s promoters sought ‘to extend a knowledge and love of Art throughout all classes of society . . . by placing specimens of good art within the reach of all’.\(^30\)

Two major Art Unions, the Association for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in Scotland and the Art Union of London were active in Melbourne from the 1840s.\(^31\) These two societies were the most important and successful of the British bodies, and their activities extended beyond lotteries to include an annual issue of specially commissioned engravings — ‘one impression for each guinea subscribed’.\(^32\) The popularity of this scheme led the London Art Union to commission prizes in other media such as etchings, bronzes, parian figures and medals, and many of these works appeared in early colonial exhibitions. John Pascoe Fawckner, for example, sent two London Art Union parian statuettes, *Innocence* and *Dancing Girl Reposing*, to the 1856 Victoria Fine Arts’ Society’s Exhibition.\(^33\)

It was the Art Unions’ subscription prints, however, which were best known to the Victorian populace, for not only did many of the colony’s more prominent citizens receive one or more annually, but so too did such influential public establishments as the Melbourne Mechanics’ Institute.\(^34\) By 1857, there were four local agents acting for the London Art Union, with over 180 members throughout the colony. So high indeed was the Victorian subscription rate that the London Committee of Management could announce
with satisfaction: 'we may be excused from anticipating good effects on society there from this occurrence'.

Unlike most contemporary prints, the London Art Union's subscription engravings did not merely reproduce the most popular pictures of the day. Instead, its governing Committee sought to foster a taste for 'High' art by choosing to engrave the best contemporary examples of historical and literary painting. An equally serious attempt to improve the public's taste was made in the series of bound prints, executed in the outline style, which were received by its subscribers during the 1840s and 1850s (fig. 2). Through these volumes, which combined a highly abstract outline technique with patriotically British subject-matter, the London Art Union hoped to promote a greater appreciation for 'simplicity of composition' and 'purity and correctness of drawing' qualities that were then much admired in contemporary German art. While the success of these artistic ambitions within the early colony is debatable, the mere physical presence of such prints gave Victoria's more culturally inclined citizens access to the prevailing debates on taste and style.

Indeed, at a time when there were only fifteen paintings in the Melbourne Museum of Art, and those non-colonial modern pictures in private hands were predominantly portraits, landscape or minor genre, it was primarily through reproductive prints that the Victorian public was able to keep abreast of contemporary developments in British (and occasionally Continental) art. For the latest prints were exported to the colonies with
considerable efficiency. The engraving after Maclise’s large history piece *Caxton’s Printing Office*, for instance, which was first issued in London in 1860, was being exhibited at the Ballarat Mechanics’ Institute by 1863; while a proof engraving of Noel Paton’s *Pursuit of Pleasure* (fig. 3), was donated to Melbourne’s youthful art gallery within a year of its publication in London.

However, it was not only modern pictures that were conveyed to Victoria through the medium of the reproductive print. There was also a small but decided market for prints after Old Master paintings and drawings, a time-honoured subject for professional engravers, which had gained new impetus from the growing nineteenth-century interest in art history.

According to the evidence of the early loan exhibitions, the purchasers of Old Master prints can be divided roughly into two categories. To the first category belong those private individuals and public institutions who wished to possess reproductions of specific works of art. It is from their print collections that one can gain a new insight into the nature of the early colony’s taste.
5 John Noone after Albrecht Dürer
The Sufferings of our Lord: The Crucifixion
Photo-lithograph
41.5 x 30.5
From The Albert Durer Album, photo-lithographed under the direction of the Melbourne Public Library by John Noone Esq., Government Photo-lithographer, Melbourne, 1869, Plate VIII.
The State Library of Victoria
Photo: Library Council of Victoria
The preference of most Melbourne collectors for engravings after the traditional ‘celebrated’ Masters, such as Raphael, Domenichino, Guido Reni and Rubens, was very much in keeping with orthodox British taste at the beginning of the Victorian period. However, the first half of the century also witnessed several major artistic re-evaluations — the most significant being the growing interest in the so-called ‘Primitives’ and the new appreciation, centred in France, for Rococo art — and it is equally possible to find a distant echo of these revisions of taste in the acquisitions of certain Victorian print collectors.

The reproductive prints in the fledgling Museum of Art, for instance, are a clear reflection of the new enthusiasm for the early Italian, (and to a lesser extent German and Flemish) ‘primitives’, even though their presence in the collections was dictated by educational rather than aesthetic considerations. Thus we find the Trustees purchasing a complete set of the Arundel Society’s publications, probably the most important record of Quattrocento art then available (fig. 4), as well as single prints after van Eyck and other Northern masters, and even arranging for the photo-lithography of ‘a selection from the works of Albert Durer’ (fig. 5). Moreover, the appearance at the loan exhibitions of engravings after Quentin Matsys and Memling indicates that this new taste extended beyond the Museum’s advisors to the more enlightened sections of the general public.

This was also the case with the revival of interest in French eighteenth-century painting, which again appears to have filtered through to the colony in the form of reproductions. An interesting example of this taste is the collection of the connoisseur and amateur artist, E. L. Montefiore, who by the late 1860s had acquired, alongside other more conventional prints, an engraving after Watteau’s Plaisirs du Bal, and several ‘photographic facsimiles’ of drawings by Boucher, Fragonard, Watteau and Vigée-Lebrun.

In addition to these individuals, these existed a second category of Old Master print collectors, a discriminating group who did not purchase reproductive engravings for their subject matter alone, but also for the rarity and intrinsic artistic value of the work itself. For while the relatively new printing techniques like lithography were regarded as purely ‘mechanical’ productions, the traditional intaglio processes such as line engraving, mezzotint and etching, had a prestige and artistic standing all their own.

Quite a number of the colony’s citizens collected examples of old and rare reproductive prints — in particular the work of the great eighteenth-century line engravers, who were highly esteemed during the Victorian period. Prints by Strange, Woollett (including the latter’s famous engraving after Richard Wilson’s Niobe), Bartolozzi and Raphael Morghen appeared in the loan exhibitions, as did Hogarth’s Complete Works, ‘from the original plates’. Some of the exhibitions’ catalogues even supplied the engraving’s date, and stated whether it was a proof impression or not.

It has been argued that Victoria’s earliest private picture collections were built up largely according to chance, because there is little to suggest that the acquisitions were governed by any specific canons of taste. This is not the case, however, with the colony’s more serious print collectors. For instance, the early Melbourne doctor, William Howitt, formed an extensive collection of over seventy reproductive prints, including examples of the great eighteenth-century line and mezzotint engravers (fig. 6), rare prints from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and impressions by some of the finest contemporary engravers. Similarly, Sir George Verdon, one of the members of the 1863 Commission on the Fine Arts, built up a large group of ‘Fine Old Engravings’, which contained the work of Hogarth, Cipriani, Bartolozzi and several early French and Dutch engravers.
The high quality and breadth of these collections, as well as their attention to such considerations as date and publisher, demonstrate that Howitt and Verdon’s purchases were based upon informed connoisseurship and not mere fancy. Certainly such collections reinforce the viewpoint of one colonial art dealer, who claimed that:

considerable discernment was shown by the public in the choice and purchase of engravings and etchings, but that a refined taste in oils and water-colours was confined to a limited circle.57

It would be hard to exaggerate the importance of the reproductive print in any discussion of early Victoria’s art and taste. Quite apart from the print’s major role in the education58 and practice59 of colonial artists, it was also one, if not the chief means by which the community at large came to know and appreciate art. The impact of these prints upon public taste, moreover, can be seen to operate on two levels. Firstly, and most obviously, they were a direct link to the art world of Europe — acquainting Victorians with a wide range of contemporary British and Continental painting (including examples of modern ‘High Art’, which rarely reached the colonies in painted form)60; while at the same time conveying, through Old Master reproductions, the various re-discoveries and re-assessments of the art of the past.
On a more fundamental level, however, there is the influence of the print medium itself — its 'conditioning' effect upon the general audience's appreciation of art. It has been claimed that mid nineteenth-century painting is characterised by 'the complete predominance of subject over treatment,' and certainly the reproductive print's inability to convey the surface of the picture would have reinforced a preference for form and composition over colour and texture. Furthermore, the printing technique's actual qualities of high finish and minute detailing conformed with, and doubtless to some extent inspired, the British and colonial taste for pictures showing 'fidelity and finish which testify to the patience and the conscientiousness, as well as the skill, of the artist.'

The reproductive print's capacity to influence taste did not go unnoticed by contemporary writers and critics. In fact, John Ruskin complained that the public was being misled into attributing to the painter himself qualities impertinently added by the engraver... and are gradually and subtly prevented from looking, in the original, for the qualities which engraving could never render.

This pessimistic view was not as prevalent in the colonies, however, where the choice was not so often between copy and original, but between copy and copy. Sir Redmond Barry was probably voicing the general opinion when he wrote that, for educational purposes,

an engraving may convey a more faithful representation of form, composition, drawing, grouping light and shade, than an ordinary painted copy, inasmuch as for success in the first rank of engravers more genius is required than is usually possessed by... mere copyists.

But he went on to state, prophetically, that 'a photograph may afford, in some respects, a still more unerring prototype,' and with these words foreshadowed the reproductive print's eventual downfall during the last decades of the century, under the combined onslaught of photography and the growing demand for 'original' graphic art. This latter re-adjustment of aesthetic values, which made 'originality' the fundamental ingredient of a work of art, still affects the way we regard the reproductive print today. Nevertheless, it should not allow us to ignore the vital role played by these prints in the early artistic life of the colony.

Alison Inglis
University of Melbourne

NOTES

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1 H.G. Turner, 'Some representatives of Literature and Art in Melbourne in the Fifties', paper read at the Beefsteak Club, 10 Aug. 1918. MS 8062, Henry Gyles Turner Papers, La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria.


4 Not surprisingly, Australian art historians have focused upon the production of colonial artists and the depiction of Australian subjects. For an interesting discussion of 'the triumph of the nationalist mode' of thought, see R. Dixon, The Course of Empire, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1986, pp. 4-5.


8 H. McCrae, ed. *Georgiana’s Journal*, William Brooks, Sydney, 1983, pp. 61, 110. The ‘Briery’ mentioned is Sir Oswald Brierly (1817-1894), the marine painter. As he briefly visited Australia in 1841 it is possible that these prints were purchased in Melbourne. However, Georgiana’s 1841 ‘Inventory of Packages’ for their outward journey included one of ‘pictures’ and one of ‘Cabinet-drawers, pictures’ (*ibid.*, p. 31).

9 Many of the ‘gentlemen colonists’ of Port Phillip brought family portraits with them. Lady Stawell wrote in 1844: ‘We have my poor uncle’s picture up in our parlour and some other little knick-knackeries which give us a very civilized appearance’ (*My Recollections*, privately pub., London, 1911, p. 62); for McCrae family portraits see *Arthur’s Seat, The McCrae Homestead*, National Trust, Melbourne, n.d., pp. 10–18.


15 Quoted in S. Bruntjen, *John Boydell (1719-1804)* A Study of Art Patronage and Publishing in Georgian England, Garland, New York/London, 1985, p. 31. Although prints were purchased by a relatively wide spectrum of the community, it was not until the later Victorian period that cheap impressions could be afforded by the lowest social strata. See L. Errington, *Tribute to Wilkie*, National Galleries of Scotland, 1985, p. 99. J. Skinner Prout observed that there were cheaper prints in ‘the houses of the lower class’ in Sydney in 1847, but also noted that some of these ‘popular prints’ could cost as much as fifteen guineas a pair. (*op. cit.*, p. 332).


20 P. Just, *An Appeal to the Government and Colonists of Victoria in favor of the Employment of the Arts of Painting and Sculpture, in decorating the new Houses of Parliament and Merchants’ Exchange*, Melbourne, 1856, p. 17. Patrick Just was a merchant in Melbourne from 1851–1857, who also wrote several articles for *The Age*. Note that the presence of fine engravings ‘from Wilkie, Landseer and Turner’ was regarded by J. Skinner Prout as ‘proof of the diffusion of taste for the Fine Arts’ in the colonies. (*op. cit.*, p. 332).

21 This enthusiasm for prints lasted for most of the nineteenth century. For the colonial print market during the 1880s and 1890s see G. Vaughan, ‘Art Collectors in Colonial Victoria 1854–1892: an analysis of taste and patronage’, B.A. (Hons) thesis, Melbourne University, 1976, pp. 9–11. The author wishes to thank Dr. Vaughan for allowing her to read and refer to his pioneering study, which includes a chapter on the taste for prints in colonial Victoria.

22 *Official Catalogue of the Melbourne Exhibition, 1854*, in connexion with the *Paris Exhibition*, Melbourne, 1854, Nos. 287, 311, 321; the example of wood-engraving, *Christ in the Tomb*, is actually in the ‘Printing, Engraving, Books Section’, no. 239.
23 The major loan exhibition *Works of Art, Ornamental and Decorative Art*, Melbourne Public Library, 1869, [henceforth 1869 Melbourne Exhibition] included over 160 engravings and etchings.


25 For example, the importers and furniture makers, W.H. Rocke and Co., Collins St. offered 'the choicest engravings, the most elaborate and artistic chromo-lithographs...' at their show-room, while J.L. Grundy, Importer, exhibited prints at the 1854 Melbourne Exhibition (Nos. 311, 321); Messrs. R.E.C. Waters and Augustus Tulk were agents for the Arundel Society. (Information on Tulk kindly provided by Ms Christine Downer).


27 1869 Melbourne Exhibition, No. 98 and *Art Journal*, 1859, p. 368.

28 See list of 'Works on the Fine Arts' in *Catalogue of Casts, busts, reliefs and illustrations to the School of Design and Ceramic Art in the Museum of Art*, Melbourne Public Library, 1865.


30 G. Godden, 'The Victorian Art-Union Movement,' *Apollo*, LXXIV, 439, 1961, pp. 68–70, p. 68.

31 M. Holyoake, 'Art Unions — Catalysts of Australian Art,' *Art and Australia*, XII, 4, 1975, pp. 381. These were not the only foreign art unions active in Victoria — works from the Ceramic & Crystal Palace Art Union were shown at the 1869 Geelong Exhibition (Nos. 317-323), and also entered the collection of the Beechworth Library and Burke Memorial Museum during the 1870s. A number of smaller local art unions also had European reproductive prints as prizes — see B.S. Nayler's 'Art Union of 520 prizes', Melbourne, 1867 (La Trobe Collection, *Vicrtorian Pamphlet* v. 87).

32 Aslin, *op. cit.*, p. 13. The Association for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in Scotland began to commission engravings 'for members of the association' in 1837. See *Art Union*, v.1, 1839, p.3.

33 *Catalogue of the Victorian Exh. of Art*, Dec. 1856, no. 230. Fawkner and his wife won several other Art Union prizes including a porcelain bust of Cyltie, see *Report of the Council of the Art-Union of London*, 1855, 1856. Five of the eleven engravings presented by Fawkner to the Melbourne Public Library in 1869 were from various British Art Unions, see *The Argus*, 8 February, 1869, p. 6.


38 Ibid. For the London Art Union's promotion of the German outline manner, see W. Vaughan, *German Romanticism and English Art*, Yale University Press, New York/London, 1979, pp. 142–44.


Over forty prints after Old Masters were sent to the 1869 Melbourne Exhibition. For the relationship between reproductions of art and the nineteenth-century interest in art history see F. Haskell, Rediscoveries in Art, Cornell University Press, New York, 1976, pp. 166-169.

Engravings after Raphael’s Transfiguration and Virgin and Child, Domenichino’s Lot and his Daughters, Da Vinci’s Last Supper, Rubens’ Agony in the Garden, and Salvador Rosa’s Apollo and Sybil etc., were exhibited at the 1869 Melbourne Exhibition.

Francis Haskell has described this as the generation whose taste had been formed at the Orleans . . . and similar sales: see Haskell, op. cit., pp. 39-51, 87 (quoted), 157.

Catalogue of Oil Paintings, watercolour drawings, engravings, lithographs, photographs etc. in the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 1879, p. ii; Von Guérard, the Master of the Gallery’s School of Painting, claimed that the Arundel Society prints and the photo-lithographs of Dürer’s wood engravings formed ‘the most excellent instruction in the history of painting’. See Report of the Committee of Trustees for the National Gallery, Melbourne, 1871, p. 6.


H.T. Dwight sent an engraving after Quentin Matsys to the 1869 Ballarat Exhibition, No. 907; Bishop Godd lent a lithograph after Memling’s Adoration of the Magi to the 1869 Melbourne Exhibition, No. 1B.


Alexander and Godfrey, op. cit., pp. 1, 6-7; E. Jussim, Visual Communication and the Graphic Arts, R.B. Bowker Co., New York, 1974, p. 247. The distinction between intaglio and mechanical prints was recognised in colonial Victoria. When discussing N. Chevalier’s print collection, the Argus critic observed ‘Chromolithography seems out of place among a notice of engravings’ (16 October, 1868, p. 6); while the 1869 Melbourne Exhibition was divided into categories of ‘Engravings & Etchings’ and ‘Plain & Chromo-lithographs’.


1869 Melbourne Exhibition, Nos. 6, 31, 37, 79, 92; 1863 Ballarat Exhibition, no. 400.

G. Vaughan, op. cit., p. 7.

Catalogue of a large collection of very old and rare proof engravings, etchings, etc., formed by the late Dr. W.G. Howitt, Lamb Smith & Co, sold on 29 October, 1896, pp. 1-8. (Private Collection, Victoria,) Dr. William Howitt (1833-1889), was the son of one of the original Port Phillip colonists, Dr. Godfrey Howitt. It is not known when Dr. W. Howitt formed his collections, but it is possibly significant that the contemporary engravings, like T. Landseer’s The Monarch of the Glen after E. Landseer, or C. Turner’s A Shipwreck after J.M.W. Turner, date from the 1840s and 1850s. The collection also included engravings by Strange, Woollett, Bartolozzi, Moyreau and Hogarth; mezzotints from Boydell’s Haughton Gallery; etchings by De Beissauw; even Dürer’s Die Heilige Familie bei ihrer Hauslichen.

Catalogue of the Most Beautiful and Cosily Art Furniture, Marble Statuary, Real Bronzex, Art Treasures, Oil Paintings, water-colour drawings, Fine Old Engravings etc. collected by Sir George Verdon, K.C.M.C., C.B., Gemmell, Tuckett and Co., sold on 1 June, 1891 at 86 Queen St. pp. 27-30. Verdon’s art collection contained six oil paintings, twenty-four watercolours, and sixty prints, as well as three early volumes of engravings. Again, it is impossible to ascertain when the prints were actually purchased, but certainly Verdon’s interest in art dates from the early 1860s. See A.G.L. Shaw, ‘Sir George Frederick Verdon’, Victorian Historical Magazine, 43, 4, 1972, pp. 959-977.


59 The exhibition catalogues of the 1860s would often specify whether an artist’s painted copy was ‘from an original etching’ or more commonly, ‘after the picture’, (e.g. Catalogue of Intercolonial Exhibition, Melbourne, 1866, Nos. 132, 260). For examples of colonial artists owning collections of reproductive prints, see Catalogue of the Fine Collection of the late G.F. Folingsby, 18 March, 1891, pp. 9–12; and ‘The Sale of M. Chevalier’s Pictures’, Argus, 16 October, 1868, p. 6.

60 G. Vaughan, op. cit., p. 11; An exception was the collection of relatively modern history paintings in the possession of the Melbourne collector, R. Twentyman. (See Exhibition of Paintings and Sketches by the late B.R. Haydon, Historical Painter, Fowis’ Fine Art Gallery, 5 Queen St., Melbourne, n.d.)


65 Rix, op. cit., pp. 64–65.