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978-1-108-07501-5 - The Genuine Works of William Hogarth: Illustrated with Biographical Anecdotes, a Chronological Catalogue, and Commentary: Volume 1

John Nichols and George Steevens

Frontmatter

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This illustrated three-volume catalogue of the works of painter and engraver William Hogarth (1697–1764) was the result of ‘Hogarthomania’, the enthusiasm for all his productions which arose soon after his death. The publisher and author John Nichols (1745–1826), assisted by the collector and literary critic George Steevens, published a life of Hogarth and a list of his works in 1781, and as disputes increasingly arose over the genuineness of some of the prints attributed to him, enlarged versions appeared in 1782 and 1785. This work, published between 1808 and 1817, is the last in the sequence of Nichols’ works on Hogarth, and remains a useful source for art historians and anyone interested in the cultural life of the eighteenth century. Volume 1 contains a biography of Hogarth and a short account of the continuing issues of his prints after his death.

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# The Genuine Works of William Hogarth

*Illustrated with Biographical Anecdotes,  
a Chronological Catalogue, and Commentary*

VOLUME 1

JOHN NICHOLS  
GEORGE STEEVENS



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[More information](#)

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OF  
WILLIAM HOGARTH;

ILLUSTRATED WITH

*Biographical Anecdotes,*

A CHRONOLOGICAL CATALOGUE,

AND

COMMENTARY;

*By JOHN NICHOLS, F. A. S. Edinb. & Perth;*

AND THE LATE

*GEORGE STEEVENS, Esq. F. R. S. and F. S. A.*

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOLUME I.

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LONDON :

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**NICHOLS and SON,**  
**PRINTERS,**  
***Red Lion Passage, Fleet Street.***



## P R E F A C E.

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ALMOST eighteen centuries ago it was observed by HORACE, of men of genius and attainment superior to the vulgar, that the honours and applause, which were denied them by Malignity or Envy during their lives, would be rendered them by more generous and just Posterity after their decease :

“ Urit enim fulgore suo, qui prægravat artes  
Infra se positas : extinctus amabitur idem.”

If this remark were ever true or applicable, it has proved peculiarly so with respect to HOGARTH. The man who with persevering application, in the exercise of extraordinary talents, found himself at a very advanced period of life before those talents were suitably rewarded, before he could enjoy the ease of independent affluence, had no sooner left the world, than a multitude of advocates and admirers presented themselves, to comment on the productions of his

genius; to point them out to that admiration which had been cautiously and coldly bestowed; and to excite that spirit of prejudice in his favour, which, by rendering his Works the objects of search and curiosity, progressively made them more and more valuable.

The productions of HOGARTH'S satirical and humorous pencil have been universally allowed to have promoted the cause of Morality and Virtue, by painting Vice in those disgusting colours which compose its natural and unavoidable contrast. This being admitted, the man himself, anecdotes of his life and character, the object and the consequence of his performances, became proper and indeed indispensable subjects of animadversion and critical attention.

Of those who have particularly taken this part upon them, the first was a Swiss, named ROUQUET, in whose work much is not to be found.

The next was of greater extent, by Dr. TRUSLER, who was assisted by Mrs. HOGARTH. But, as Mr.

JOHN IRELAND has pointedly observed, the Doctor professing no intimate acquaintance with the Arts, the Reader will find nothing but a very dull and languid, though very moral, commentary.

The next pen which exercised itself on the Artist and his Prints was Mr. WALPOLE'S (afterwards Earl of ORFORD); whose refined taste and elegant diction deserve every commendation. In Lord ORFORD'S Work is seen the first tolerably complete Catalogue of HOGARTH'S Works.

Mr. GILPIN also, whose universal taste, and whose particular skill with respect to subjects of this nature, have often and abundantly contributed to the public amusement, introduced in his "Essay on Prints" some pertinent and ingenious observations on Mr. HOGARTH.

But to the labour, the judgment, and discriminating taste of Mr. STEEVENS, the admirers and collectors of this Artist's performances are perhaps most of all indebted. He it was who carefully collected,

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## vi

systematically arranged, and judiciously commented upon, whatever related to HOGARTH as a Man or as an Artist. The object which he obviously had in view was, to dispel the many vague and idle conjectures and assertions about HOGARTH'S early life, his improvement as an Artist, his progress to well-earned reputation; as well as to give, in a regular and connected series, an account of all the Prints from his Works, from his first ruder efforts to his last more exquisite productions. How well this attempt succeeded, the rapid sale of three former impressions of the "Anecdotes" is the most certain and unequivocal testimony

Thus far, with little more than the alteration of a word or two (*mutato nomine*) was written in 1792 by my late elegant Coadjutor; whose liberal critique on the Illustrations of Mr. JOHN IRELAND will be transcribed in a future page of this volume. To that valuable publication, and to the subsequent labours of Mr. SAMUEL IRELAND, it would be ungenerous in the extreme, if the present Editor were not to acknowledge repeated obligations.

## vii

Desirous of assigning to Mr. STEEVENS his appropriate share of commendation, the principal passages from his nervous pen are in general pointed out. The succeeding Volume, which contains the Catalogue of Prints, may be said to be almost entirely his production.

Another material Assistant (in the theatrical part more particularly) was Mr. ISAAC REED; who during his life-time would not even permit his name to be mentioned, but who has himself recorded the circumstance in a note which will be given at large in a future page.

With such Auxiliaries, and animated by the encouragement the former Editions have received, the present Volume is with confidence submitted to the candour of the Publick.

J NICHOLS.