

THE STAIRCASE

An occasional Record of Notes & Gleanings from the Life and History of the British Museum and its Library contributed to meetings of the Madden Society



To Fate I must resign myself, and my motto must be

Fata viam invenient!

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Wednesday, 7 December 2011

‘Portraits’ (arranged by Leslie Webster)

Portraits in the British Museum: from Sloane to Pope-Hennessy

Aileen Dawson



My talk covered, in principle, only sculptural portraits and only a small selection of those in the British Museum collection were discussed. It comprises around 90 busts in marble, terracotta, bronze and plaster, catalogued in my Portrait Sculpture, A catalogue of the British Museum collection c. 1675-1975 (London, British Museum Press, 1999). The majority are connected with the history of the Museum and its benefactors and staff. Apart from those acquired in the eighteenth century, which have always had a special status, many pieces have rarely, if ever, been seen in the public galleries. They were kept in Departments or in storage, where some still remain. Some even remained unregistered until the 1980s, as they were considered the property of the Museum Trustees and in some cases had been paid for by them or presented to them. Despite the fame of the artists responsible for these works (nearly all were done by sculptors who were well-known and successful in their own time, even though their reputations have not always lasted), many were unpublished and unknown to the scholarly community and to the general public. The catalogue was an attempt to rectify this situation. More details about the pieces listed below can be found in this publication.

The pieces discussed *[with some additional material]* were:

Sir Hans Sloane, PRS (1660-1753), physician and collector, founder of the British Museum, terracotta,

Michael Rysbrack (1694-1770), c. 1737,

reg. 1756,0619.1, presented by Sloane's daughters, Elizabeth, Lady Cadogan and Mrs Stanley.

[Full-length stone statue of Sloane in the Chelsea Physic Garden (now on loan to the Museum and kept in store). Oil painting now attributed to John Vanderbank (1649-1737) (displayed in the Manuscripts Saloon, Room 2).]

The bust is displayed in the Enlightenment Gallery.

Madame Anne-Marie Fiquet du Boccage (1710-1802), writer, terracotta,

Jean-Baptiste Defernex (1728-83), 1766,

reg. 1766,0801.1, presented by the sitter.

[View of the Glass and Ceramic Gallery, 1888, showing busts, including that of Madame du Boccage, on top of the showcases.]

The bust is kept in the Department of Prehistory & Europe.

Philip Dormer Stanhope, 4th Earl of Chesterfield (1694-1773), politician and diplomatist, marble,

Joseph Wilton RA (1722-1803), signed and dated, 1757, from the life,

reg. 1777,0620.1, presented by Sir Thomas Robinson, 1777.

The bust is displayed in Gallery 46.

Sir Robert Bruce Cotton, Bt. (1571-1631), antiquary and politician, terracotta,

Louis-François Roubiliac (1737-1823), about 1757;

reg. 1924,0412.1, purchased.

The bust is displayed in the Enlightenment Gallery.

Dr Charles Burney the Elder, FRS (1726-1814), musician and author, marble,

Joseph Nollekens, RA (1737-1823), signed and dated 1802, from the life,

reg. 1944,0704.1, presented by Edward Burney, MC through Mrs S.M. Burney.

The bust is kept in the Department of Prehistory & Europe.

Revd. Charles Burney Younger, DD, FRS (1757-1817), schoolmaster and book collector, marble,

Joseph Nollekens, RA (1737-1823), signed and dated 1815,

reg. 1944,0704.2, presented by Edward Burney MC through Mrs S.M. Burney.

[Engraving after the bust by J. Thomson, from the 'European Magazine', 1819.]

The bust is displayed in the Enlightenment Gallery, south end.

Rt. Hon. Thomas Grenville (1755-1846), politician and book collector, on inscribed pedestal, marble,

Giovanni Battista Comolli (fl. 1821-37), about 1749,

reg. 1849,0630.1, presented by the Rt. Hon. Sir David Dundas, MP.

[Design for plinth from the office of Sydney Smirke, 1851, National Archive.]

The bust is kept in the Department of Prehistory & Europe.

Sir Anthony Panizzi (1797-1879), librarian, marble,
Baron Carlo Marochetti (1805-68), 1855,
reg. OA 10553, presented by the staff of the British Museum. Transferred to British Library
1997.

[Drawing from the office of Sydney Smirke, National Archive.]

Displayed in the British Museum at the entrance to the Round Reading Room, now displayed
in the British Library outside the Humanities I Reading Room.

Sir Joseph Banks PRS (1743-1820), naturalist and patron of science, Trustee of the British
Museum, bronze, formerly on a turntable device,
Anne Seymour Damer, RA (1749-1828), signed in Greek letters,
reg. 1814,0312.1, presented by the artist.
The bust is displayed in the Enlightenment Gallery.

Sir Joseph Banks PRS (1743-1820), full-length marble with inscribed plinth,
Sir Francis Chantrey (1781-1841), signed and dated 1826,
reg. 1821,0714.1, presented by the Linnean Society, transferred to the Natural History
Museum, 1886.

*[Woodcut after P. J. Smit of the Central Hall, Natural History Museum Guide, 1891 showing
the statue on the Botany Landing.]*

The statue is in the Natural History Museum, second floor of Central Hall outside the
herbarium.

John Edward Gray FRS (1800-75), zoologist and museum curator, marble,
Richard Westmacott the Younger (1799-1872), signed and dated 1845,
unregistered, presented by Mrs Gray, 1875, transferred to the Natural History Museum in the
1930s.

*[Photograph of the Mammalia Saloon, British Museum, 1875 showing the bust on a
pedestal.]*

The bust is kept in the Natural History Museum, General Library Reading Room (can be seen
by appointment).

Charles Townley (1737-1805), collector of antiquities, marble,
Joseph Nollekens, RA (1737-1823), signed and dated 1811,
reg. OA10272, probably presented by Richard Payne Knight.
The bust is displayed in the Townley Basement (currently closed).

Charles Townley (1737-1805), marble,
Christopher Hewetson (1737/8-1798), signed and dated 1769, reg. 1995,0402.1, purchased, in
the family of the sitter until 1995.
The bust is displayed in the Enlightenment Gallery.

Richard Payne Knight (1751-1824), art collector and writer, marble,
John Bacon the Younger (1777-1859), signed and dated 1812,
reg. 1824,0429.92, bequeathed by the sitter.
The bust is displayed in the Enlightenment Gallery.

Sir Austen Henry Layard GCB (1817-94), archaeologist and politician, marble, Patric Park, RSA (1811-55), signed and dated 1855, reg. 1922,0708.1, donated by Raymond Layard. The bust is kept in the Department of Prehistory & Europe.

W. H. Carpenter (1792-1866), Keeper of Prints & Drawings, British Museum, marble relief, J. H. Foley, RA (1818-74), signed, reg. OA 10562. The plaque is kept in the Department of Prehistory & Europe.

Dr Alfred Percival Maudslay (1850-1931), archaeologist, plaster, Lorenzo Guintini (active c. 1880-c.1908), signed and dated 1885, reg. OA 10761. *[Photograph of Maudslay at work in the southern chamber, Chichen Itza, Yucatan, by Henry N. Sweet, 1899.]* The bust is kept in the Department of Prehistory & Europe.

Sir Augustus Wollaston Franks FRS, KCB (1826-97), British Museum curator and benefactor, bronze roundel, Charles J. Praetorius, FSA (fl. 1888-1914, d. 1956), signed and dated 1898, reg. 1898,0302.1, donated by the Society of Antiquaries of London. *[Franks's bookplate by C.W. Sherborn showing him full-face and a metal plaquette with the same image as the roundel and the device of the Society of Antiquaries, probably made for his friends, reg. OA 10560.]* The roundel is kept in the Department of Prehistory & Europe.

Harry G. Beasley (1882-1939), collector and anthropologist, bronze, Elsie March RBA (1883-1974), signed and dated April 1939, reg. OA 10566. The bust is kept in the Department of Prehistory & Europe.

Sir John Pope-Hennessy CBE, FBA (1913-94), museum director and art historian, bronze with Perspex (for the spectacles), Dame Elisabeth Frink, DBE, CH, RA (1930-93), reg. 1977,0603.1, commissioned as a leaving present for the Director, presented by the artist. At one time displayed in the British Museum Trustees' Board Room.

The Soldier, the Merchant and the Orphan: Three Paintings in the British Library's Boardroom.

Jennifer Howes, The British Library.

Whilst the British Library's main collections are made up of printed books and manuscripts, there are many items in other formats, such as oil paintings. Over three quarters of the British Library's paintings are historically connected with the East India Company, and British Colonial rule in South Asia. The purpose of this short paper is to look at three oil paintings with this colonial provenance. All three of them are currently hanging in the British Library's Boardroom, and were discussed in a talk I gave to the Madden Society in that very room, on 7 December 2011. Each painting connects with the life of an individual whose life was affected by the East India Company. I have chosen to describe these three individuals as the soldier, the merchant and the orphan.

I will look at the paintings in chronological order, beginning with a landscape of Madurai made in the early 1770s by the soldier-artist, Francis Swain Ward. The second painting, made in around 1790, is a portrait by Thomas Hickey of the Calcutta based merchant, John Mowbray. The third painting is a portrait dated 1833 by John King of Ram Mohan Roy, the orphaned son of the social reformer, Raja Ram Mohan Roy. The paintings are connected because they all tell us something different about the East India Company's history from the late 18th to the early 19th century. The stories behind these paintings speak volumes about the changes that occurred to the East India Company during that period, and how these changes affected the lives of three individuals.



The Soldier

The Teppakulam, a sacred tank near Madura, 1772-73 by Francis Swain Ward (1736-1794)

British Library Reference: F34.

Size: 81 by 130 cm.

This oil painting of the large stone tank (known in Tamil as a 'teppakulam') at Madurai was painted in London in the early 1770s. It is part of a set of ten paintings that were given to the East India Company by the artist, Francis Swain Ward, in 1773. By today's standards, Ward's 'gift' would be seen as a bribe. In exchange for the paintings, Ward was allowed into the East India Company's Madras Army at the rank of Captain, and the Company directed that 'a warrant be immediately made out to Captain Ward for two hundred guineas, and that on his arrival at Fort St. George he be presented with a further sum of one thousand pagodas, as a testimony of the esteem the Court entertains of his valuable and very ingenious performances' (Rohatgi 1995, note 18).

This is surprising, when one considers Ward's shady past with the East India Company before the 1770s. He first joined the Madras Army in around 1760, but in 1764, Lieutenant Ward, along with four other lieutenants, resigned their commissions as a protest against being overlooked for promotion. Ward returned to England, apparently as a deserter, and resumed his previous career as a professional artist, working the sketches he had taken in India during the early 1760s into

paintings. He exhibited a number of oil paintings in the Chartered Society of Artists' exhibitions from 1770 to 1773, but failed to earn enough money to make a living. This led him to approach the East India Company, along with 10 paintings, to persuade them to re-engage him in the Madras Army at the rank of Captain. The Company agreed to this, but the fact remained that Ward possessed a strong will, which meant he was not a very good soldier. By the time he died in India in 1794, the East India Company regarded him as a difficult person, and there is documentary evidence that his professional reputation damaged the employment prospects of at least one of his children (Howes 2010, p.237).

All ten of the British Library's Ward paintings are based on drawings taken in the south of India in the early 1760s. Two of them, including this one, are of monuments at Madurai, in southern Tamil Nadu. Today Madurai is famed for the massive temple complex dedicated to the goddess Minakshi at the city's centre. Ward's two views at Madurai pay little attention to the temple, and instead reflect the circumstances of his employment as a soldier in India. In 1762 Yusuf Khan, the ruler at Madurai who had been appointed by the East India Company in 1759, dropped all contact with the British. The Company perceived this as a rebellion, and in 1763 the British sent troops to seize control of Madurai. The British reclaimed the city in 1764 and Muhammad Yusuf Khan was hanged. Ward was clearly part of this campaign to reclaim the city of Madurai. The British Library has another painting from Madurai by Ward which gives a view of the city walls from the east side, near to the Teppakulam tank (British Library reference: F31). This was the area where the British military encampment was located in 1763-64.

The British Library is extremely fortunate to hold such a large set of paintings by Francis Swain Ward. Other institutions with paintings by Ward include the Yale Centre for British Art in New Haven, Connecticut and the UK's Government Art Collection. But unlike these other institutions, the British Library's Ward paintings have a unique provenance that connects with the East India Company's history. In 1773 the East India Company instructed 'the Committee of the House to give directions for framing the said pictures and for placing them in the most convenient part of this house'. Ten matching frames were made in London, and these frames, which are in a late 18th Century neo-classical style, are totally unique. These ten paintings are all still in their matching 18th Century frames, making the British Library's set of Francis Swain Ward paintings all the more special. Together, they reflect a particular point in the East India Company's history. During the second half of the 18th Century, the East India Company, which was originally set up as a commercial body, rapidly took control of more and more territory on the Indian Subcontinent. It was during this period of imperial expansion that Ward was in India with the East India Company's army, first in the 1760s as a Lieutenant, and then again in the 1770s and 80s, as a Captain, having 'bought' his way back in.



The Merchant

Portrait of John Mowbray in his office at Calcutta, c.1790, attributed to Thomas Hickey (1741-1824)

British Library Reference: F638

Size: 104 by 81 cm.

Although dating to the late 18th Century, this painting is a relatively recent addition to the collections. It was received by the India Office Library in 1938 as a gift from Mrs. J. Bull. Mowbray was Mrs. Bull's great-great grandfather, and the painting was brought to England by Mowbray's daughter (Mrs. Bull's great-grandmother) in around 1818. It is attributed to Thomas Hickey for a number of reasons. First and foremost, Hickey was one of the few Western painters in Calcutta at that time. Also, John Mowbray's friend and business partner, Robert Graham, had his portrait taken by Hickey in 1790, so it is extremely likely that Mowbray similarly commissioned Hickey to take his portrait as well (Archer 1979, p.215). There are clear stylistic similarities between the Mowbray painting and Hickey's other work from this period.

The picture shows the inside of John Mowbray's office in Calcutta, where he was a partner in a mercantile firm called Graham, Mowbray and Skirrow. He is seated at a desk piled high with account books, and is wearing a velvet suit with a cravat and silk stockings. Standing in the background to the left is an Indian messenger dressed in pink and wearing a turban. In the foreground on the right there is a 'banian' or money agent, wearing a white dhoti. The banian is holding an account book and some keys, and is in discussion with Mowbray. On the back wall, behind these three figures, there is a map of Bengal and Bihar, indicating the areas where they conducted business. This painting is more than a portrait. It documents the interior of a late 18th Century Calcutta office, and it gives an idealised picture of how business was conducted by Europeans in India at that time, with Indian 'banians' working as agents to the British.

This portrait doesn't fairly reflect the reality of John Mowbray's career. He must have been at the height of his career when the portrait was painted because by 1790, Graham, Mowbray and Skirrow had suspended payment 'for an immense sum of money'. Skirrow went mad, and was for 'two or three years a confirmed lunatic'. Mowbray left Calcutta, along with Robert Graham, and moved to the Dutch settlement of Chinsurah, presumably to escape from their debtors. About fifteen months later, in despair at the sad reversal of their circumstances, Mowbray and Graham both died from drinking spirits (Spencer 1925).

This painting represents another stage in the East India Company's history. If the mid 18th Century was characterised by the Company's imperial expansion, then the late 18th Century was characterised by the Company clamping down on the financial ventures of East India Company servants. It had become customary for men who worked for the Company to supplement their incomes through private trade, and many Europeans, and the Indians who they worked with, amassed fortunes through private business. However, the business interests of these men often came into conflict with the policies of the East India Company. In the late 18th Century, controls were placed around the Company that were designed to stop these contradictory trade activities. Trading firms set up by East India Company servants, such as Graham, Mowbray and Skirrow, would have been adversely effected by these changes.



The Orphan

Portrait of Raja Ram Roy, son of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, 1833. Painted by John King (1788-1837) at Bristol, in 1833.

British Library Reference: F599

Size: 91.5 by 71 cm.

This half length portrait is of Raja Ram Roy, the adopted son of the Bengali social reformer, Raja Ram Mohan Roy. The son came with his father to England in 1831 on a tour which was paid for by the Mughal King of Delhi, who declared Raja Ram Mohan Roy as his envoy (India Office Records F/4/1268/50911). The father, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, was a respected intellectual who wrote in both English and Bengali. He advocated religious and educational reforms in India, and was perhaps best known for his efforts to abolish practices such as child marriage and sati. He was treated with great interest and curiosity by the colleagues he met in England, as is evidenced in the following entry in Sir Frederic Madden's journal, dated Thursday 16 June 1831.

This morning the Brahmin [Ramohun] Roy came to the Museum, and was introduced to me by Mr Baker, the Historian of Northamptonshire. He is a fine well made man, very swarthy, with fine eyes, very thick black curly hair, and black moustache. The head inserted in the Library Gazette is extremely like him. He was dressed in a close gown of blue cloth, a handsome turban of yellow worked in gold, and a sort of silk handkerchief or shawl around the neck, which was tucked into his vest. The sleeves of his robe came below the hands. Altogether a handsome & becoming dress. He speaks English very well and appeared very well acquainted with our history. I shewed him several MSS. and among them the Alexandrian MS. at which he was particularly struck, and asked in a quiet tone of voice if the disputed passage in 5 John 7 v. was in it. On my replying in the negative his eyes expanded with extraordinary vivacity - & he proceeded to term it a most important interpolation. He remarked, that Sir Isaac Newton was the first to point out its surreptitious introduction into the text. He remained with me about an hour, and I was much pleased to find so much intelligence in a man who had rendered himself so great an object of attention¹

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was probably one of the first Indian intellectuals to have come to England on such a tour. He clearly made a positive and memorable impression on the people he met, such as Sir Frederick Madden.

Unfortunately for the young son of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, his father died just outside of Bristol on September 27, 1833. It appears that the son was provided with an allowance of 'Rs 3750 per month' by the King of Delhi following his father's death. However it is difficult to say for how long these payments actually reached him in England. The records of the Board of Control, which oversaw the King of Delhi's expenses, indicate that the British queried these payments. (IOR/E/4/781, p.511-551) Whatever his circumstances, Raja Ram Roy remained in England for another 5 years before returning to India. This portrait shows him wearing a turban and tunic, probably soon after his father died in 1833. He is holding a map of Bengal in his right hand while gesturing with his left hand to Calcutta, his home.

In August 1835, almost 2 years after his father's death, Raja Ram Roy was appointed 'for one year as an extra Clerk at the Board of Control at East India House with a salary of £100, to be charged among the contingencies of the office'. The Board of Control was the same government office set up in 1784 to regulate the East India Company's previously unbridled activities, and which oversaw the King of

¹ I would like to thank Marjorie Caygill for showing me this quote.

Delhi's expenses. Raja Ram Roy's employment at the Board of Control was unusual because he was the first non-European to be employed by the Civil Service. His employment was discussed in parliament, and was supported by both Whigs and Liberals. They saw his employment at the Board of Control as a learning opportunity for the young man, who could return to India and disseminate new insight into the running of public business to his Indian peers (Ballhatchet 1957). He worked as a writer in the Board of Control for two years, then in February 1838 he 'expressed a wish to return to India'. He was paid up to 4 August, 1838, and according to the Board of Control's minutes, was given a 'Donation of £100 in consideration of his diligence in the discharge of his duties, and the circumstances under which he accompanied his Father Ram Mohun Roy to this country' (IOR/F/1/6, p.460-462, 512-513). By 1840 he was back in India, but it appears that he died soon after his return.

These three paintings show three different phases of the East India Company's development. The first painting is by a soldier who was employed by the East India Company during a period of rapid imperial expansion. Ward himself took part in at least one military campaign in the south of India in the early 1760s, while he was stationed at Madurai. The second painting, showing John Mowbray in his office, reflects the changing fortunes of Calcutta based mercantile firms in the late 18th Century. In 1790, when the portrait was painted, Mowbray was a partner in a seemingly lucrative business, but within less than a year he was bankrupt, and soon afterwards he had died of alcohol poisoning. The third painting, showing Raja Ram Roy in England soon after his father's death, tells us something about the West's early exposure to Indian intellectuals, and also links with the establishment of the Board of Control in London. All three of the paintings tell us something about the lives of people who were somehow involved with the East India Company, in different places, and at different times.

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Additional material

Barbara McCrimmon

Barry Johnson reports the death of the book collector and author Barbara McCrimmon on 31 July 2011 at the age of 93. Among her publications were *Power, Politics and Print: the Publication of the British Museum Catalogue, 1881-1890* and *Richard Garnett: The scholar's librarian* (1989). Barry notes "I found the Biography of Dr Garnett very valuable in my work on the Garnett family. It is not only thorough – the sort of book in which you usually find what you're looking for – but, over twenty years after its publication, and over a century after Dr Garnett's death – it remains the only 'life'. It seems a great pity that there's never been a British edition."