

WORKS of GENIUS

Amateur Artists in Walpole's Circle





Richard Bentley,
A View in Jersey, 1753

An influential writer, collector, and historian of art, Horace Walpole (1717-1797) was also a great champion of art produced by persons who were 'not artists' — perhaps best translated today as non-professional or amateur artists. In fact, Walpole's enthusiasm for art by amateurs figured critically in his notions about the visual arts and is reflected in his art-historical writings, including *Anecdotes of Painting in England*, acknowledged as the first published history of English art.

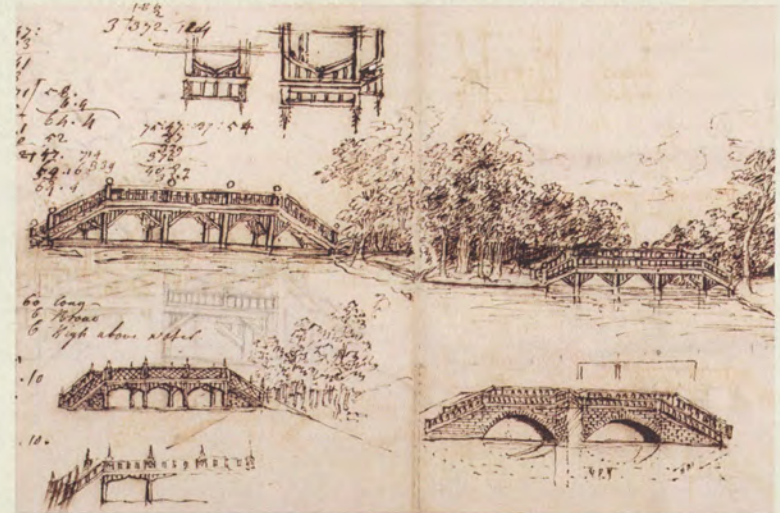
Walpole included a manuscript list of 'Works of Genius at Strawberry Hill by Persons of rank and Gentlemen not Artists' in one of his own copies of the *Description of the Villa at Strawberry Hill* in which he catalogued his celebrated collections. The list of 'works of genius' includes art only by people in his closest circles: dear friends and family members. Initially, the amateur architects Richard Bentley and John Chute, together with Walpole himself, formed a 'Committee' to design his famous house Strawberry Hill as well as many of its furnishings. Works of art by amateurs also became a vital focus of Walpole's patronage and figured prominently in his



Agnes Berry, *The Ruins of Cicero's Villa...*, n.d.;
(right) Horace Walpole after Watteau, *A Rural Ball*, 1738



collection. At Strawberry Hill, works by those who were 'not artists' hung alongside master paintings by Anthony van Dyck, Peter Lely, and Nicolas Poussin, miniature portraits by the best artists of the genre, and fine furniture and decorative arts. Later in his life, Walpole began to count an



John Chute, *Seven Sketches of Bridges*, n.d.

increasing number of women among these amateur geniuses, including Lady Diana Beauclerk, Miss Agnes Berry, and Lady Hamilton (Viscountess Frances Anne Vane).

The art of these amateurs was primarily work on paper — drawing, paper cutting, and watercolor. Painting, which required greater labor, was the realm of professionals, from whom these amateurs were carefully distinguished as 'not artists.' Nevertheless, the works of these amateurs, like those of professionals, were exhibited at the Royal Academy of Art, published as book illustrations, or used as designs for the commercial enterprises of reproductive printmaking and ceramic manufactories.

Selected Sources

Bermingham, Ann. *Learning to Draw: Studies in the Cultural History of a Polite and Useful Art*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000.

Sloan, Kim. *'A Noble Art': Amateur Artists and Drawing Masters, c.1600-1800*. London: British Museum Press, 2000.

Snodin, Michael, ed. *Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009.

Walpole, Horace. *Anecdotes of Painting*, in *The Works of Horatio Walpole, Earl of Orford*. vol. 3. London: Printed for G.G. and J. Robinson, 1798.

_____. *A Description of the Villa of Mr. Horace Walpole, Youngest Son of Sir Robert Walpole Earl of Orford at Strawberry-Hill near Twickenham, Middlesex*, in *The Works of Horatio Walpole, Earl of Orford*. vol. 2. London: Printed for G.G. and J. Robinson, 1798.



Lady Diana Beauclerk,
Portrait of the Artist's Daughters, 1800 (detail)



Mary Berry, *Pagham Church*, 1796;
(left) Horace Walpole after Watteau, *A Conversation*, 1737
(detail)

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

LADY DIANA BEAUCLERK
(1734 - 1808)

Letter with a Sketch for a Ceramic Plate, ca. 1785
Pencil with pen and ink,
32 x 21 cm



Leonora ... Translated from the German of Gottfried Augustus Bürger by W.R. Spencer... with Designs by the Right Honourable Lady Diana Beauclerc (London, 1796)

Theodore and Honoria (illustration for Dryden's *Fables*), 1797

Watercolor on laid paper, 61.5 x 50.5 cm (sheet)

The Fables of John Dryden Ornamented with Engravings from the Pencil of the Right Hon. Lady Diana Beauclerc (London, 1797)

Portrait of the Artist's Daughters, Mary and Elizabeth, ca. 1800

Pastel, 50.7 x 80 cm (sight)

AGNES BERRY
(1764 - 1852)

"The ruins of Cicero's Villa at Mola di Gaeta," in *Book of Drawings and Prints*, n.d.
Watercolor on wove paper,
23 x 32 cm (image)

MARY BERRY
(1763 - 1852)

"Pagham Church 18th August 1796," in *Sketchbook*, 1796
Pencil on laid paper,
16 x 23 cm

RICHARD BENTLEY
(1708 - 1782)

Landscape with Waterfall, 1753
Watercolor on laid paper,
10.9 x 15.8 cm
(image right)



A View in Jersey, 1753
Watercolor on laid paper,
10.8 x 15.6 cm

Designs for the End of the Library at Strawberry Hill by Mr. Bentley, 1753

Gray and brown wash with ink and pencil on laid paper,
17.3 x 20.5 cm

Alternative Design for the Library at Strawberry Hill, 1753

Brown wash with ink and pencil on laid paper,
14.2 x 30.3 cm

Temptation of St. Antony, ca. 1755

Watercolor on laid paper,
32.8 x 24.2 cm

HENRY WILLIAM BUNBURY
(1750 - 1811)

Man with a Stick, ca. 1770
Pen and ink on laid paper,
37.8 x 23 cm

(image detail above)

Macbeth and the Murderers, ca. 1792

Watercolor and pencil on wove paper, 37 x 46.8 cm

Etchings by Henry William Bunbury, Esq. and after his Designs (Strawberry Hill, 1765 - 1792)

Twenty-two Plates, Illustrative of Various Interesting Scenes, in the Plays of Shakespeare, Engraved by Bartolozzi, Tomkins, Cheeseman, Meadows ... from the

Designs of the Late Henry Bunbury, Esq. in the Possession of ... the Duchess of York (London, ca. 1810)

JOHN CHUTE
(1701 - 1776)

The Vyne, Hampshire, Elevation of Alterations Proposed to Wings, ca. 1756
Pencil on laid paper,
23 x 37 cm

Seven Sketches of Bridges, n.d.
Pen and pencil on laid paper,
23 x 37.5 cm

LADY HAMILTON
(Viscountess Frances Anne Vane)

(bap. 1715 - 1788) and
JEAN HUBER (1721 - 1786)

A Set of Four Sheets: Découpages and Collage with mss notes by Horace Walpole, 1762 - 1777

HORACE WALPOLE
(1717 - 1797)

Lord Massereene, 1765
Pen and ink, 11.2 x 6.6 cm

Caricature of an Unknown Woman, ca. 1765

Pen and ink, 8.5 x 5.5 cm

After Jean-Antoine Watteau
(1684 - 1721)

A Rural Ball, 1738
Gouache on paper,
18.5 x 16 cm (sight)

After Jean-Antoine Watteau (1684 - 1721)
A Conversation, 1737
Gouache on paper,
25.5 x 31 cm (sight)

Cover Images: main - Richard Bentley, *Temptation of St. Antony*, ca. 1755; back - Horace Walpole, *Lord Massereene*, 1765



FARMINGTON, CONNECTICUT
The Lewis Walpole Library

Yale University