

A Window on Antiquity: The Topham Collection at Eton College Library

A conference at The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, London,
17 May 2013,
in collaboration with the University of Buckingham and Eton College

To accompany the exhibition *Paper Palaces: the Topham Drawings as a Source for British Neo-Classicism*
(Eton College Library, Verey Gallery, 3 May–1 November 2013)



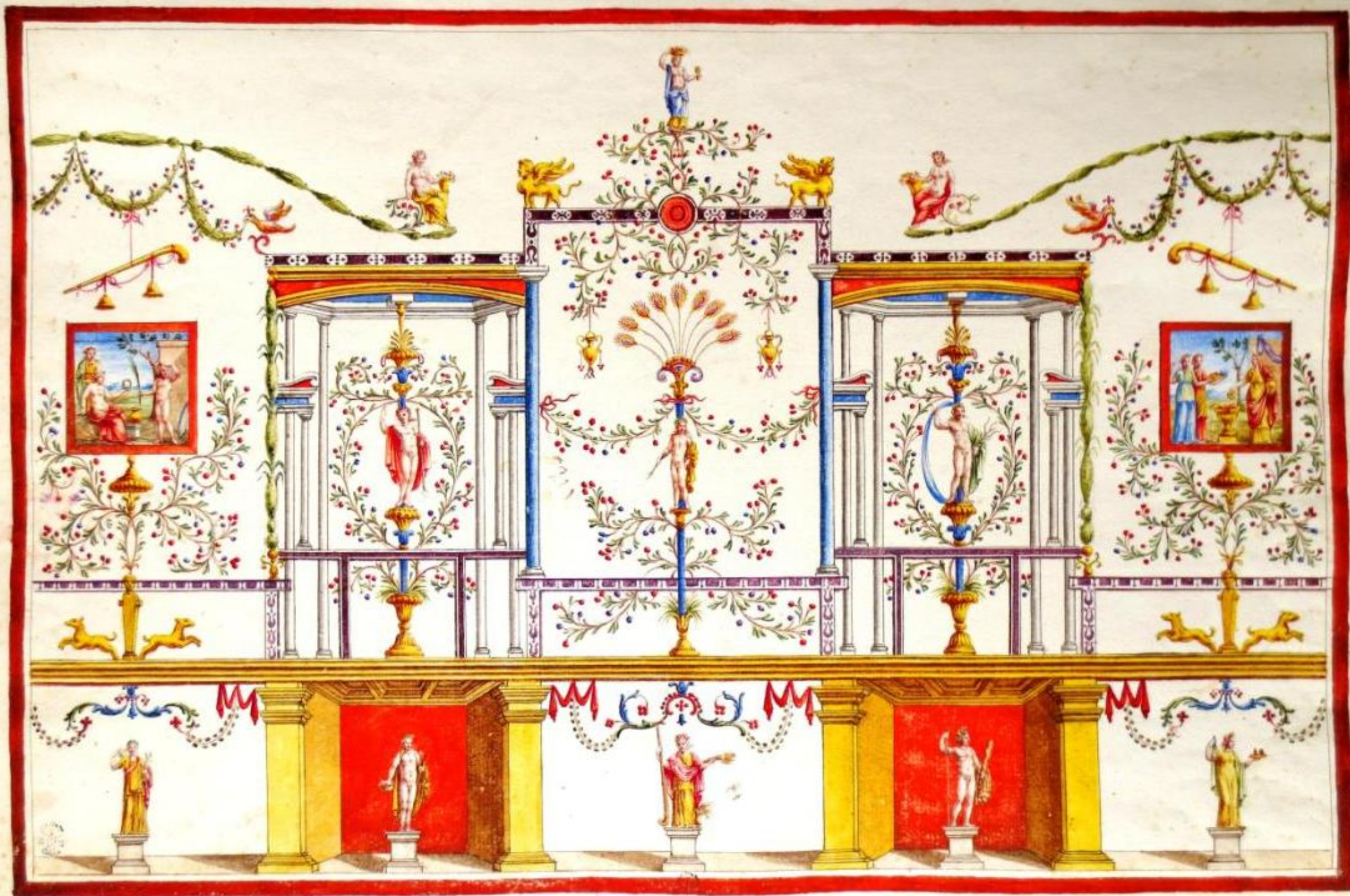
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THE UNIVERSITY OF
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The Topham Collection

Consisting of 37 volumes and more than 3,000 items, the collection amassed by Richard Topham (1671-1730) is one of the most significant resources for the history of antiquarianism and for the culture and industry of the Grand Tour in Europe. This collection of drawings, watercolours and prints after antique sculptures and paintings in Rome and Italy is the largest of its kind assembled in England, surpassing in both scale and breadth those collected by other celebrated antiquarians such as John Talman, Dr Richard Mead or Thomas Coke, 1st Earl of Leicester.

Since its arrival at Eton in 1736 the Topham Collection has fascinated and served archaeologists, researchers investigating collections of antiquities and scholars of the history and reception of the classical tradition. The drawings have also attracted the attention of art historians, as Topham managed to assemble an extraordinary range of works by some of the best Italian draughtsmen of the first half of the eighteenth century, such as Pompeo Batoni, Giovanni Domenico Campiglia and Francesco Bartoli, or by artists who later excelled in other fields, including the architect William Kent. More recently it has also emerged that Francesco Bartoli's drawings of ancient ceilings and wall elevations in the collection were extensively copied and re-adapted by neo-classical architects such as Robert Adam, James Wyatt and Charles Cameron, becoming one of the most important sources for a decorative language that would spread over Europe.

However, despite the growing body of scholarship on the Topham Collection produced in recent decades, notably the work of the late Louisa M. Connor Bulman, a comprehensive study of the whole collection and of its role in eighteenth-century antiquarian and artistic culture is still wanting. This conference wishes to indicate new avenues of research and is intended as the first step towards an online catalogue of the whole collection.

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| 9:00: | Registration |
| 9:30-9:40: | Opening Address and Welcome Lucy Gwynn (Eton College Library) |
| Session 1: | The Topham Collection and Its Context: Antiquarianism and the Grand Tour Market in the Early Eighteenth Century Chair: Ian Jenkins (British Museum) and Lucy Gwynn (Eton College Library) |
| 9:50-10:15: | Cinzia Maria Sicca (Università di Pisa) <i>The Mind behind the collection: John Talman, antiquary and advisor to Richard Topham and Henry Hare, 3rd Baron Coleraine</i> |
| 10:20-10:45: | Eloisa Doderò (Royal Collection Trust, Windsor Castle) <i>Did Topham know of the 'Museo Cartaceo'? The Paper Museum of Cassiano dal Pozzo and the Topham Collection of drawings</i> |
| 10:50-11:20: | Novella Barbolani (Università di Roma La Sapienza) and Valentina Rubechini (Università di Firenze) <i>Francesco Maria Niccolò Gabburri, John Talman and Richard Topham: artistic exchanges between Florence and Britain</i> |
| 11:20-11:40: | Tea and Coffee |
| 11:40-12:05 | Bruno Gialluca (Independent Scholar) <i>William Kent's drawings after the Antique in the Topham and Holkham Collections</i> |

12:10-12:35: Lucia Faedo (Università di Pisa)

The Topham Collection and the Roman palaces: British visitors to the Palazzo Barberini

12:35-13:00 Discussion

13:00-14:15: **Lunch**

Session 2: The Topham Collection and Its Archaeological Value
Chair: Helen Whitehouse (University of Oxford)

14:15-14:40: Mirco Modolo (Università degli Studi di Roma Tre)

From philology to the market: the archaeological value of Francesco Bartoli's drawings in the Topham Collection

14:45-15:10: Delphine Burlot (Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art-INHA, Paris)

Forgeries of ancient paintings in the Topham Collection

Session 3: Richard Topham: His Library, Legacy and Influence
Chair: Richard Hewlings (English Heritage)

15:15-15:40: Paul Quarrie (Maggs Bros Ltd; Eton College Librarian 1977-1994)

Richard Topham and his library

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| 15:45-16:10 | David Noy (University of Wales Trinity St David) <i>Richard Topham's will: a collector plans for the future</i> |
| 16:15-16:40: | Adriano Aymonino (University of Buckingham) <i>The Topham Collection as a source for British eighteenth-century classicism</i> |
| 16:40-17:00 | Discussion |
| 17:00- | Drinks Reception |



Cinzia Maria Sicca (Università di Pisa)

The mind behind the Collection: John Talman, antiquary and advisor to Richard Topham and Henry Hare, 3rd Baron Coleraine

The paper will explore the formation of the two collections of drawings and engravings owned by Richard Topham and by Henry Hare, third Baron Coleraine. The intellectual context of these collections, firmly rooted in the discussions on art unfolding in Oxford academic circles as well as in the early London gatherings of antiquaries, and the material history of their assemblage, will be discussed.

The core argument will centre on the role played by John Talman in shaping and guiding the tastes of Topham and Hare. He acted as an agent and impresario on the European continent, seeking and commissioning drawings, buying engravings, but also overseeing the development of specialized collections that would bring England on a par with Italy. The paper will also explore the relationship established by Talman with Italian antiquarian circles and his instrumental role in fostering a dialogue between the two countries.

Eloisa Dodero (Royal Collection Trust, Windsor Castle)

Did Topham know of the Museo Cartaceo? The Paper Museum of Cassiano dal Pozzo and the Topham Collection of drawings: a comparative case study

The Topham drawings are often associated with the celebrated *Museo Cartaceo* assembled by Cassiano dal Pozzo in the seventeenth century. While the ‘influence’ of the dal Pozzo Paper Museum on the Etonian collection is generally taken for granted, no study has yet investigated whether and through which channels Topham may have been acquainted with this collection. Taking the Farnese, Medici and Mattei collections of ancient sculptures as a starting point for a comparative case of study of the Topham and dal Pozzo drawings, the intent is to trace the means through which Topham might have known of Cassiano’s Paper Museum. Focuses of the paper will be the reports of Topham’s agents in Rome, the circulation of prints and

etchings after dal Pozzo originals and the testimony of artists and English travellers who visited the dal Pozzo and Albani libraries between the second half of the seventeenth and the first two decades of the eighteenth century.

Novella Barbolani (Università di Roma La Sapienza) and Valentina Rubecchini (Università di Firenze)

Francesco Maria Niccolò Gabburri, John Talman and Richard Topham: artistic exchanges between Florence and Britain

This paper will examine the relationships between John Talman, Richard Topham and Francesco Maria Niccolò Gabburri by analysing their respective drawing collections. At the very beginning of the 18th century, Gabburri collected the drawings of artists working in Italy, and was acquainted with many of them, particularly with the Florentine artists. Some of those artists had already worked for John Talman, who also acted as an intermediary between these artists and Topham, and their drawings appear in the volumes at Eton. We will briefly examine some of the English artists who had relations with Gabburri during their Grand Tour in the first decades of the 18th century and who are mentioned in his *Vite di pittori*. Particular attention will be paid to Giles Hussey and his album.

Bruno Gialluca (Independent Scholar)

William Kent's drawings after the antique in the Topham and Holkham Collections

The two identical sets of drawings after the antique by William Kent and others, belonging to Richard Topham and to Thomas Coke, have already received some attention by Louisa M. Connor Bulman. This paper determines the connections between the antiquarian interests of Richard Topham, shaped by the great Roman antiquarians of the sixteenth century, and the subjects of the “duplicate” drawings, placing a special focus on *fasci consulares* and a small Ares/Pyrrhus bronze passed from the Massimi collection to the Gualtieri collection, and thence to Castle Howard. The paper will also look at the relations among William Kent, Richard Topham, Thomas Coke in the years 1714-1718, when Kent acted as their agent, elucidating Kent's crucial role in Coke's “Artemis incident”.

Lucia Faedo (Università di Pisa)

The Topham Collection and the Roman palaces: British visitors to the Palazzo Barberini

Topham Finding Aid 3, which records Richard Topham's programme of collection of his drawings, and its related graphic documents, must be considered as a principal source for the knowledge of fittings and collections in Roman palazzi between 1720 and 1730. This paper will look at the case of the Palazzo Barberini "alle Quattro Fontane". The Finding Aid manuscript, and its related drawings, enables a reconstruction of the planned itinerary of the draughtsmen working for Topham at the Barberini, and testifies to a large selection of works of art, not limited to ancient sculpture. The reports of contemporary British visitors to the Barberini (including Richardson Jr. and Edward Wright), permit the examination of analogies and discrepancies in criteria for selecting works of art.

Mirco Modolo (Università degli Studi di Roma Tre)

From philology to the market: the archaeological value of Francesco Bartoli's drawings in the Topham Collection

The graphic work of Pietro Santi Bartoli was characterized by a philological sensitivity and precision which all but disappears in the work of his son, Francesco. This can be seen in the works of Francesco in the Topham collection, in which he freely reproduces drawings executed by his father without paying attention to genuine provenance, and inserts invented drawings among those that faithfully reproduce authentic fresco cycles. A second group of drawings document ancient wall-paintings discovered after his father's death; here Francesco does not trace plans of ancient buildings to identify the find spots of each wall-painting, as had been his father's practice, nor does he hesitate to mix up in the same drawing elements which had originated in different contexts. The result is the creation of real counterfeits.

This paper offers a critical analysis of the documentary value of the production of Francesco Bartoli's drawings in the Topham collection and compares them with Pietro Santi's drawings and his translation techniques, as well as with the surviving original frescoes from the excavations at Palazzo Rospigliosi (1709) and the Palatine Hill (1721).

Delphine Burlot (Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art-INHA, Paris)

Forgeries of ancient paintings in the Topham Collection

At the beginning of the 18th century, the new taste for ancient wall paintings and mosaics had consequences: fragments of ever more beautiful and more 'curious' ancient paintings began to appear on the antiquarian market in Rome. A few Englishmen bought them and took them back to England – and Richard Topham had them copied for his collection. Those fragments are now lost, but thanks to Topham, we still have images of them. Their unlikely composition raised, and raises, doubts about their authenticity. It is very likely that those fragments were forgeries made in Rome in the 1720's, probably by Gaetano Piccini (as Louisa Connor has suggested in the past). Other forgeries that made their way to France and England have survived, which in their similarities to the Topham drawings suggest that they were made by the same forger.

Paul Quarrie (Maggs Bros Ltd; Eton College Librarian 1977-1994)

Richard Topham and his library

The library of Richard Topham of Windsor, who died in 1730, forms an important record of early 18th-century connoisseurship, and as such is a pointer to the subsequent development of the *amateur's* rather than the scholar's collection. This relatively small group of printed books added a completely new dimension to the College Library, as it encompassed up-to-date editions of classical texts and books on antiquities, most of them in contemporary English bindings, elegantly gilt, together with some splendid rarities from earlier periods.

His books will not only be looked at as illustrating his interests, but also within the context of other contemporary collections such as those of his friend the earl of Sunderland (1675-1722), or the physician and collector Richard Mead (1673-1754), whose agency was responsible for Topham's collections coming to Eton in 1736, and will be contrasted with another great collection of the period, that of the first earl of Macclesfield (1667-1732.) Those are dispersed, but Topham's collection is fortunately intact.

David Noy (University of Wales Trinity St David)

Richard Topham's will: a collector plans for the future

Richard Topham was well known as a collector of prints and drawings during the last years of his life. He evidently regarded his books as equally important. He showed the true collector's obsessive concern with what would happen to the collection after his death, and contemporary newspapers took considerable interest in it too. When he made his will in June 1729, with a codicil a year later which was nearly as long as the original document, his priority was "my books prints and drawings that are kept and placed in my new library". The will also shows him as a collector of coins and of ancient and more recent artefacts, some of which he treated as an integral part of his house. This paper looks at Topham's ideas about his collection and about himself as a collector, considering his will in the contexts of the wills of other collectors and other landed gentlemen of the period. With no close relatives except a sister, Topham had an unusually free hand in the disposal of his estate, and came up with elaborate arrangements which had the unintended effect of making the collection unavailable to scholars for six years before it reached its permanent home in Eton College Library.

Adriano Aymonino (University of Buckingham)

The Topham Collection as a source for British eighteenth-century classicism

From its arrival at Eton in 1736, the Topham Collection became a well-known resource on antiquity amongst circles of antiquarians and *virtuosi*. It was only from the late 1750s, however, that the Collection started to be used by architects and decorators as a practical source of inspiration. In particular, the Francesco Bartoli drawings of ancient ceilings and wall elevations became a real treasure trove for architects in search of models to furnish their interiors in the 'true style of antique decoration'. Robert Adam, James Wyatt, and Charles Cameron are among those who plundered the collection to create a decorative language whose influence was felt not only in Britain but throughout Europe and amongst later generations of architects and designers. This paper focuses on the 'afterlife' of the Topham collection, concentrating on its importance as one of the major sources for the neo-classical taste.





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