



fig. 1 H.W. Smith, **Egerton Ryerson**, engraving, n.d. (Photo: Ryerson Archives)

EGERTON RYERSON AND THE OLD MASTER COPY AS AN INSTRUMENT OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

In 1855 and 1856 Egerton Ryerson (1803-82), the Chief Superintendent of Education for Upper Canada, and his daughter Sophia traveled through Europe buying copies of works of art for the Educational Museum that he would open in the Toronto Normal School upon his return. A major figure in the religious, political and educational life of nineteenth-century Ontario, Ryerson was successively a Methodist minister, a lobbyist for equal status for Methodists and other non-Anglican Protestant groups, and architect of Ontario's educational system (fig.1). Appointed Chief Superintendent of Education for Upper Canada in 1844, he laid the groundwork for the centralized free compulsory education system much as it exists today. He set up structures to ensure a standardized curriculum, the printing of textbooks by Canadian authors, the training, examination and inspection of teachers, pedagogical conventions, libraries in schools, and founded the professional publication, the *Journal of Education*.

In 1852 he established the Normal School in St. James Square, at Gerrard and Yonge streets in Toronto, and it was here in 1857 that he established his Museum of Natural History and Fine Arts for the education and pleasure of both future teachers and the public. When it closed in 1920, most of its paintings disappeared, as did the museum itself in terms of its textual presence in Canadian art historical writing. This erasure could be explained by the fact that projects like Ryerson's have been viewed as misguided Victorian follies, and the artists who made them possible regarded as hacks unworthy of commemoration. In her 1984 book, Fern Bayer, the curator of the Ontario government's collection, brought the Educational Museum to the attention of Canadians as the province owns the majority of the few extant works collected by Ryerson.¹ This article looks behind the paintings at the ideas that underlay his museum and the Old Master copy.

Painted copies of Old Master paintings were a fundamental part of the art world of the nineteenth century and a mainstay of European cultural tourism. Travelers bought copies of the famous paintings they had seen in Paris, Antwerp or Florence and elsewhere, to serve both as mementos of European travel and as home decoration once they returned to their native lands. Tourists sometimes commissioned copies of favourite or famous works they had seen in the museums,

but in other cases they bought ready-made copies. Professional copyists worked in many European cities, but were especially active in Florence where the copying business was regulated by an elaborate set of rules and procedures. The making and selling of copies was part of the extremely lucrative tourist trade that was, next to agriculture, the city's main source of revenue. The tourists, both men and women, also copied. Along with the professionals, they wrote letters applying for permission to reserve a four-to-six-week spot in front of particular paintings in the Uffizi Gallery or the Pitti Palace. Some travelers brought home one or two copies, perhaps of Raphael's *Madonna of the Chair*, a sweet-faced Magdalen by Carlo Dolci, or a Rachel Ruysch flower painting. Others, however, bought in quantity and these copies would sometimes form a substantial part of important and admired art collections.

Along with their role in private collections, copies of Old Masters also served another function in nineteenth-century culture, one with a broader scope and more specific aims. The first half of the century saw the development of a new type of art institution, the museum of copies, intended to serve as an instrument of moral as well as cultural education, and directed in particular at the lower social levels of the developing urban centres. The shifting complex of beliefs about the social and moral utility of art had informed European culture since the era of classical Greece, but in the latter part of the eighteenth century it had taken on an increasingly urgent tone. In earlier decades, philosophical notions about the connections between art and the moral development of the viewer had tended to assume an elite audience, but by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries they came to include a lower-class urban audience in their purview.

Indeed, public perception often came to regard art as a substitute for religion in terms of its ability to help create good citizens from potentially disruptive, even criminal elements, and thus lower-class viewers assumed special importance. The ennobling effects of art were assumed to arise from both the aesthetic experience engendered by outstanding artworks and through uplifting subject matter. Sir Joshua Reynolds had popularized the idea that the development of taste assisted in the development of moral character. Such beliefs were then vulgarized in the popular press and widely diffused in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Britain and in the United States. In the process, Reynolds' arguments were replaced by the simpler idea that the individual profited by looking at exemplary behaviour depicted in paintings. An American essayist, writing in 1815, summarized his views on the subject in the following words: "the great object of all the pleasures of cultivated taste is to disentangle the mind from appetite and to teach it to look for its pleasures in intellectual gratification, till at length that freedom from the thralldom of sense, which began in taste, may, as it is exalted and refined, conclude in virtue."²

While eighteenth-century thinkers sometimes believed that only the leisured classes had the time and perhaps the innate capacity to benefit from aesthetic experience, the postulated viewer then shifted to include increasingly lower social levels. As Lillian B. Miller demonstrates in *Patrons and Patriotism: The Encouragement of the Fine Arts in the United States 1790-1860*, the British discourse broadened into a democratic concept of art and morality in America where works of art were considered capable of elevating the taste, knowledge and morality of all classes of society.³ The Philadelphia artist Rembrandt Peale clearly had this in mind when, in 1845 he wrote a description of his painting *The Court of Death*, 1820 (Detroit Institute of Art). He took special pride in the fact that his cook was able to correctly interpret its allegorical burden: "my old black cook, Aunt Hannah, on seeing the Picture, exclaimed 'Lack-a-day! How I feel for that old man, and his good daughter! There's his Son lying drowned before him, but he says the Lord's Prayer, Thy will be done'."⁴

Peale explains that he chose his imagery with the express intention that the painting "could be understood by the unlearned and the learned." His discussion of viewers' reactions indicates that their moral response was uppermost in his mind, and the ideal of moral betterment for all levels of society is highlighted by his singling out viewers from the least educated groups in his society: servants, African-Americans, and small children. Hannah reads correctly while a spoiled little girl is unable to absorb the painting's message: "After the explanations relative to the Aspect of Virtue and that of fascinating vice, a pretty little Girl was asked by the Teacher which she preferred? With an arch expression she answered, 'I love the one that supports her father, but I would rather be like the other beautiful creature.' It is to be hoped she was afterwards better instructed."⁵

The emphasis on the potential of art to mould good behaviour was part of the rhetoric of the movement to found new American museums. On occasion, this rhetoric even extended to warding off crime. The writer William Cullen Bryant, at a committee meeting planning New York's Metropolitan Museum, stated: "It is important that we should counter the temptations to vice in this great and too rapidly growing capital by attracting entertainments of an innocent and improving character."⁶ These new public museums sought paintings that could inspire the viewer to lofty spiritual and moral states, as well as perform the more mundane task of educating viewers about past or distant cultures. A consequence of the idea that art could thus take over the declining place of religion was the development of the view that the subject matter of a painting and its membership in the category of masterpieces could be more important than being an original artwork.

Collecting works for the American Academy of the Fine Arts formed in New York in 1802, the artist John Vanderlyn arrived in Europe with a salary of \$500 a year and a generous purchasing account provided by the seventy-nine individuals

who had subscribed fifty dollars each to buy copies for the Academy.⁷ Sarah Worthington Peters made five buying trips to Europe in the mid-nineteenth century for the Ladies' Gallery of Cincinnati. Her choice of copies was typical: Raphael's *School of Athens* (1510-11, Vatican Palace) substantial even in half size, Murillo's *Virgin of Seville* (1670, Louvre), Poussin's *Diogenes Casting Away the Cup* (1647, Louvre), Van Dyke's *Charles I* (1635, Louvre), Raphael's *Virgin with the Veil* (1510-11, Louvre) and two self-portraits by Rembrandt.⁸ The belief that it was possible for a copy to be faithful reproduction of the original, the emphasis on the importance of subject matter, and the impossibility of obtaining either famous originals or even of a large quantity of original little-known works of high quality, made the copy eminently acceptable for such museums - indeed their *sine qua non*.⁹

Similar projects were initiated in Europe, among them John Ruskin's museum of copies, the Museum of Saint George, founded in 1875 to serve the working men of Sheffield; and the ill-fated Musée des Copies in Paris that opened its doors in 1873 and closed them a mere nine months later.¹⁰ But it was in the New World where masterpieces were in shorter supply that the idea found its widest application. American museums of this kind, sometimes combining natural history with works of art, had been founded as early as the late eighteenth century, Charles Willson Peale's Philadelphia Museum being an example.¹¹ Their further development in the nineteenth century was in part an expression of a desire to catch up with and emulate the cultural institutions of the European tradition. However, it was also a consequence of the conviction that art had a moral function that could contribute to the smooth and peaceful functioning of society. Although this phenomenon was most widespread in the United States, Canada also had an exemplary instance in Egerton Ryerson's museum of copies, founded in 1857. A decade earlier the Toronto Society of Arts had formed a collection of at least sixty-one plaster casts of sculptures, and copies of paintings by Italian, Flemish, Dutch and French Renaissance, and Baroque artists as well as contemporary Canadian and European works. These works were presented in the Society's exhibitions in 1847 and 1848.¹² However, Ryerson's was the first museum in the city to put copies on permanent display.

During the ten months in the mid-1850s that Ryerson and his daughter Sophia spent traveling in Europe, he wrote numerous letters to John George Hodgins, his Deputy Superintendent in the Ontario Education Department. They give detailed accounts of his activities and also his thoughts on the museum and the art works he was buying for its collection. His letters show that Ryerson shared the same complex of ideas about the social usefulness of art that prevailed in the American discourse. To be sure, Ryerson was concerned with elevating the level of culture in a general sense, but his correspondence also reveals a strong concern with the social role of art. This is confirmed by the name of his proposed

institution – the Educational Museum – and its affiliation with the Normal School. Future teachers, as well as the public, would have their minds and spirits broadened through acquaintance with art.

The consummate public servant, Ryerson chronicled his thoughts in minute detail. While his letters reveal him to be a man of his time in his artistic preferences, they also suggest that he did not select works merely on the basis of the established canon. He pondered his purchases long and carefully, and his collecting enterprise as a whole was marked by thorough planning and conscientious execution of his plans. As well as revealing something of his evolving thoughts on art, his letters provide an unusually complete account of how a buyer of copies would have gone about his or her task. They show the indefatigable Ryerson enacting a virtual *langue* of copy buying, a routine that one doubts many other buyers managed to achieve. Examined in conjunction with correspondence and memoranda related to the regulation of copyists in the Florentine grand-ducal galleries, the letters provide a rare glimpse into the process of commissioning and buying Old Master copies.¹³

In the course of his tour, Ryerson purchased two hundred and thirty-six paintings by one hundred and forty-four artists, all but a handful of them copies as well as nearly a thousand plaster casts of sculpture and a multitude of other items. Originally, however, he had not planned to buy paintings at all. When he left for Europe in July of 1855 with Sophia and the latter's (unnamed) young lady companion, he intended to collect objects for what he envisioned primarily as a museum of natural history and examples of such things as the agricultural implements he expected to buy at the Paris Exposition. But encouragement and advice from an old acquaintance, Sir John Beverley Robinson (1791-1863), Chief Justice of Upper Canada, and from Robinson's son-in-law Capt. John Henry Lefroy (1817-1890), as well as from the Earl and Countess of Grey led him to change his mind. Writing to Hodgins from Antwerp on 5 December 1855, Ryerson speculates enthusiastically on the additional prospect of an art collection. "I have," he says,

received a long & excellent letter from Capt. Lefroy on taking measures to encourage & promote a taste for the fine arts in Upper Canada, by commencing a collection of paintings [copies] & statuary – one or two paintings of *each* school, & some statues & busts – in Plaster of course – such as have been proposed/proffered for the Sydenham Palace. I think I shall go to London next week, & confer with Capt. Lefroy more fully on the subject, & procure & order all that we may get from London, & then return to the Continent. But I do not wish to leave Paris until I have observed & selected all that I think advisable in the Exhibition, which I go from day to day, as regularly as I go to the office while at home. Every time I go I see new objects & become more conscious how little I know of the whole exhibition.

In London, Ryerson committed himself to the idea of a collection of copies, and on his return to Paris began buying paintings in earnest. Given his dedication to the cause of universal compulsory education, it is not surprising that as the concept of his museum took more detailed and larger shape, it would resemble the American model described in Lillian Miller's *Patrons and Patriotism*. In Ryerson's 1858 report to Hodgins, he reveals his concern for the educational aspect of his museum as well as the democratic scope of its intended audience:

in Canada, where there are no such Art Treasures, where we are so remote from them, where there is no private wealth available to procure them to any great extent, a collection (however limited) of copies of those paintings and statuary, which are most attractive and instructive in European Museums, and with which the trained teachers of our public schools may become familiar, and which will be accessible to the public, cannot fail to be a means of enjoyment, to numbers in all parts of Upper Canada.¹⁴

In an early 1856 letter written to the politician Georges-Étienne Cartier from Munich, Ryerson discussed at great length his belief in the elevating qualities of works of art. Attributing the comparative refinement he observes in the working classes in some European countries to the influence of art, he calls attention to its special usefulness for those who lack the resources of literacy and intellectual training:

From the introduction into our country of these new elements of civilization and refinement, I anticipate the happiest results as in places in Europe where there is an order and propriety of conduct in the labouring classes, a gentleness and cheerfulness of manners that I have not observed among the same classes elsewhere. If all cannot read and speculate on abstract questions, all can see, and feel, and derive both pleasure and instruction from what the creations of Art present to the eye, the heart and to the imagination.¹⁵

Casting artworks as vehicles for the improvement of the working classes was, as noted above, an expression of a characteristically nineteenth-century idea. But Ryerson also takes up a theme with a much longer history when in a letter from Rome of February 18th. he tells Hodgins that, in contrast to the Dutch works, which will speak more directly to the less educated, the Italian paintings will have a particular appeal to "persons of some culture in the fine arts." He comments that they "will much exceed the others in interest, as well as, I think, for the most part, in beauty, although they are less varied in subject, less domestic, less connected with common life, yet more classical, more historical...more elevated in style & character." The notion that Northern art was less informed by the intellect and less formally elevated than Italian art seems to have appeared first in the Italian Renaissance, notably in the famous statement attributed to Michelangelo:

It [Flemish painting] will appeal to women, especially to the very old and the very young, and also to monks and nuns and to certain noblemen with no sense of true harmony. In Flanders they paint with a view to external exactness or

such things as may cheer you...without reason or art, without symmetry or proportion, without skillful choice or boldness and, finally, without substance or vigour.... It is practically only the work done in Italy we can call true painting, and that is why we call good painting Italian.¹⁶

In his eighteenth-century *Discourses*, Sir Joshua Reynolds introduced these same reservations about Northern painting into the mainstream of British culture. Recasting Michelangelo's attitude, Reynolds now cites Dutch secular works of the seventeenth century rather than earlier Flemish paintings; but the contrast with Italian art is the same:

One would wish to be able to convey to the reader some idea of that excellence, the sight of which has afforded so much pleasure: but as their merit often consists in the truth of representation alone, whatever praise they deserve, whatever pleasure they give when under the eye, they make but a poor figure in description. It is to the eye only that the works of this school are addressed.¹⁷

Ryerson's interest in the social and educational utility of his collection is also expressed in his plans for its physical arrangement in the museum. He followed the now widespread practice of arranging artworks by nationality; and he also divided them by subject matter, a plan that suggests the French Academy's hierarchy of genres revised according to didactic principles. History painting, the highest tier, is subdivided into two categories: works of a scriptural nature and theme, that are "calculated to touch the heart...please the eye, and gratify the taste," and those with historical subjects and events that Ryerson saw as serving to illustrate the "costumes of different ages and Countries, important events of History and celebrated Characters." Northern genre pictures he classed together as representations of "Common life in its everyday relations, illustrating the Costumes, Habits, Usages of the People of Holland, Belgium and Germany." The other levels in his hierarchy were landscapes and marine scenes seen as "reflective of Animal Nature in action, at rest, alive and dead," and still life, with its depictions of fruit and flowers "in undecaying beauty and brilliance sometimes animated with examples of Insect life."¹⁸ Ryerson's response to painting, however, was not entirely based on moral and social considerations; indeed he frequently reveals his sensitivity to their beauty in words that were undoubtedly heartfelt, if not entirely original:

the paintings of sacred subjects by the Van Eycks...and Matsys, Rubens, Van Dyck, Rembrandt etc. can hardly be considered second to any Italian paintings of the same subjects. Yet there is an *unrivalled charm* in both the Perugino, Leonardo da Vinci, Titian & Francia, Raphael, Fra Bartolomeo, Guercino, Domenichino, the Carracci, Guido etc. etc. that cannot be resisted & grows upon you every time you look at them.¹⁹

Over a period of ten months Ryerson made purchases in eight or possibly nine cities. Among the Northern cities, he rated Antwerp where, "[t]he collections of copies...are much much larger & the prices more moderate than I had expected," higher than Paris, Frankfurt, Munich and Brussels. In Antwerp he scrutinized

copies in museums, in artists' studios, and in the Cathedral, where artists were at work copying Rubens: "of the Flemish School of Painting, here are the *chef d'œuvres* of the Great Masters such as Quentin Matsys, Rubens, Van Dyck etc.; and there a large number of artists are constantly employed in copying them for sale. I saw today no less than seven copies (for sale) of Ruben's great painting *Descent from the Cross*."²⁰ He also mentions that the winter months were a buyer's market: "This is the best season for buying paintings cheap here. Many Americans & others who have visited the Paris Exhibition have come here & bought paintings." A week later he describes the crush of would-be sellers:

As I am the only purchaser of these [copies] in Antwerp (that is from Abroad) I am sought for in every direction & by every person who wishes to sell paintings. I have usually placed my own value on [illegible] for the objects I had in view, after having heard the prices demanded, & in some instances I have bought for just half the price at first demanded.... As a general rule I believe from what I am told that I have bought...paintings for at least one third less than similar ones were sold for a few months since; but all say it is more the dead season & there is no hope of selling any Paintings before next Summer.²¹

Ryerson worked hard at making his choices. In the same letter from Antwerp he refers to "a week during which I have examined some thousands of paintings & purchased 142.... In some instances I have compared! Two, three, four or six...[and] I have had recourse from time to time to examine the original paintings before buying copies." Writing on 18 December from his next stop Frankfurt, he notes with satisfaction the quality of his Belgian purchases: "the copies of Paul Veronese, Raphael & Guido de Reni, that I purchased in Antwerp are far superior to any that I have seen today in the Frankfurt Museum & better than any I saw in Paris...while the copies I got of Flemish, Dutch & German Masters are the best I have seen anywhere."²² Two weeks later, he laments the high prices in Munich:

To my disappointment I find objects of art dearer here than at Paris or in Belgium. Statuary is cheaper in Paris than here; & paintings & copies of celebrated Masters are cheaper in Belgium than here.... I am now more gratified than ever at the cheap & advantageous purchases I have made at Antwerp – finding that the prices of the same pictures are much higher in Cologne, Frankfurt & *Munich* than at Antwerp.²³

Ryerson's letters include numerous details that help to fill out our picture of the interaction amongst copyists, dealers and buyers. The letter cited above indicates that although copies were normally available only in the cities where the originals hung – he had gone to Bologna expressly to buy copies of Francia, the Carracci and Domenichino – there were times when they could be purchased elsewhere. We also learn that on one occasion works that may have been originals were sold to him as old copies, that is to say contemporary with the original. He purchased certain older works that he says were "affirmed to be *originals*, & declared

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fig.2 The Quebec-born Old Master copyist Antoine-Sébastien Falardeau (1822-1889) with one of his hunting dogs. The photo was sent by the artist's daughter Dianora Carraresi Falardeau to the artist's great-nephew Emile Falardeau in the 1930s. (Photo: Luigi Focardi, Stabilimento Fotografico di Luigi Focardi & C.)

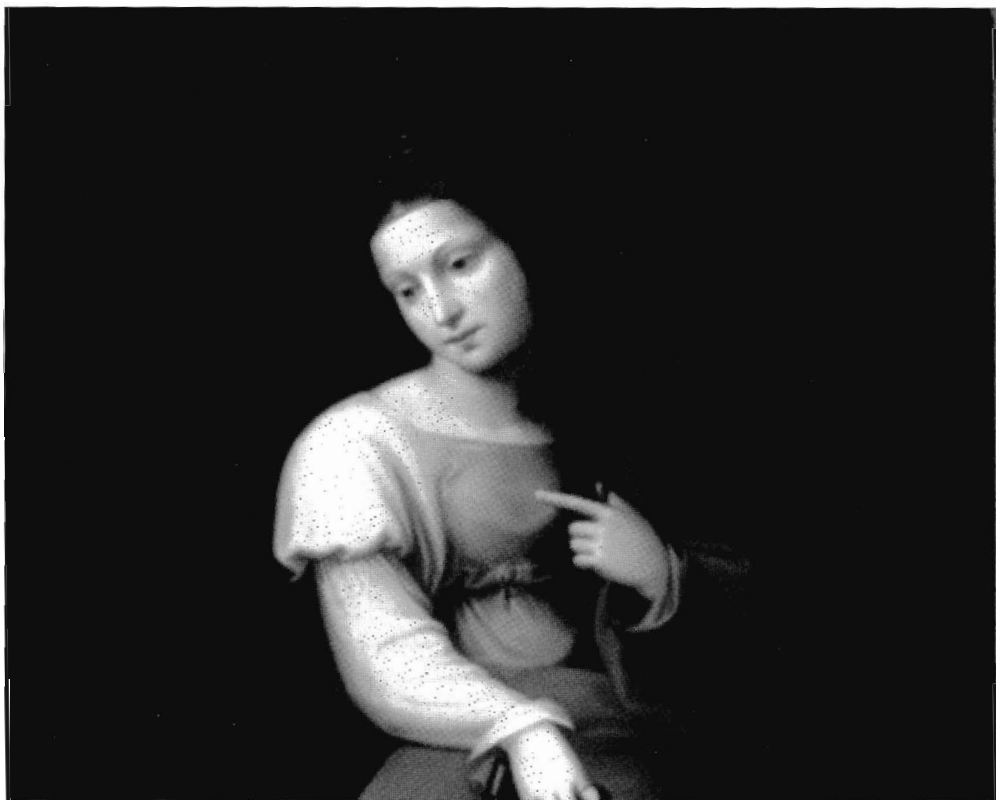


fig. 3 Antoine-Sébastien Falardeau, **Saint Catherine of Alexandria** (after Mariotto Albertinelli 1474-1515), oil on canvas, 105 x 66 cm, Purchase from Antoine-Sébastien Falardeau for the Educational Museum of Upper Canada by Egerton Ryerson, 1856. (Photo: Government of Ontario Art Collection, Archives of Ontario)

2 meals a day, breakfast 8:30 dinner 5:30...once or twice a week up before 7 & never go to bed before 12. Nor have we gone to see anything that was not connected with the public objects I have in view. Yet the galleries, ateliers, & copies are so numerous, so various in subjects, sizes & quality that I am embarrassed & perplexed sometimes beyond expression. I find persons buying copies of paintings for themselves, are never less than three weeks & sometimes much longer...before they buy at all. But though I have worked as hard as I could for nearly two weeks here I seem only to have begun to see the ateliers & Marchands de Tableaux.³⁰

After the abundance of Florence, Rome proved something of a letdown: "The first day I was quite disappointed & thought I would get nothing in Rome, as the copies appeared...inferior in quality & higher in price than in Florence."³¹ Ryerson did purchase some works, but complained in the same letter not only about the quality of the copies, but about the originals too: "The Collection of Paintings, with the exception of a few chef d'œuvres, are incomparably superior in Florence than in Rome, & the copies better & cheaper. I buy no copies in Rome except those which are necessary to my purpose, & which can only be obtained in Rome." This letter also indicates that he made good use of the Roman contacts provided by his London friends:

Lady Grey [aunt of Lord Grey] is going around with us to several Studios and other places, where she knows that there are good copies. I have also met with other persons who can give me all needful information on these matters.... Among other Letters of Introduction, I had one to Cardinal Antonelli [Pope Pius IX's Secretary of State], or rather "the King of Rome," as he is called.... He told me that any Objects of which I wished to get a copy I need only let him know, and permission should be given immediately. I had another Letter to Prince Hohenlohe, – Cousin to our Queen Victoria, – who resides at the Vatican.

Ryerson took pains to assemble what he felt was a representative collection for his institution. As might be expected, his Italian copies privileged the High Renaissance and Baroque, with Raphael, Titian, Leonardo da Vinci, Guido Reni, Carlo Dolci and Cristofano Allori represented by more than two copies apiece. He also purchased two copies each of works by Francia, Giulio Romano, Andrea del Sarto, Correggio, Veronese, the Carracci, Domenichino, Canaletto, and Murillo, along with single copies of Palma il Vecchio, Luini, Daniele da Volterra, Alessandro Allori, Caravaggio, Guercino, Castelfranco, Gerrit van Honthorst (Gherardo della Notte), Pietro da Cortona, Francesco Albani, Giovanni Martinelli, and Pietro Rotari. The Northern artists included Van Eyck, Matsys and Pieter Breughel but the majority were seventeenth-century Dutch painters such as Aelbert Cuyp, Adriaen van Ostade, Nicolas Maes, Jan Steen and Rembrandt as

well as copies of some Italianate works by Maerten van Heemskerck and Leonaert Bramer. Ryerson's purchases also included a handful of French and German copies along with "twenty-five or thirty not yet classified."³²

This list, in particular Ryerson's Italian artists, echoes the roll call that appears over and over again in the mid-nineteenth-century copy requests submitted to the directors of the Pitti and Uffizi. It is in effect a nineteenth-century modification of the canon established in English-speaking circles in the eighteenth century, comprising primarily High Renaissance and Baroque with some eighteenth-century works, notably those of Vigée-LeBrun. In the 1858 catalogue for the Educational Museum only four – Fra Angelico, Perugino, Ghirlandaio and Jan Van Eyck – of the two hundred and thirty-seven paintings listed were by painters active before 1500.³³ Nevertheless, Ryerson did not restrict himself to the paintings recommended by his advisors. In one of the letters he wrote Hodgson from Munich in December of 1855, he notes that his friend John Lefroy "did not mention the German, Dutch, Flemish, French & Spanish Schools of Paintings, of which we shall have a handsome collection...[and he] has not mentioned Caravaggio, although he merits more prominence in the history of Italian painting than Guido Reni."³⁴ Ryerson's ranking of Caravaggio over the more popular Reni sets him apart from many of his contemporaries and supports the image of him as someone accustomed to listening to advice but making up his own mind.

Egerton and Sophia Ryerson returned to Canada in the summer of 1856 and the Museum of Natural History and Fine Arts, as it was then named, opened the following year. It was renamed the Ontario Provincial Museum after Confederation. Its significance declined when the Department of Education relocated to Queen's Park in 1912, the year of the opening of the Royal Ontario Museum. Ryerson's Museum closed in the 1920s and its copies were distributed to normal schools and other institutions throughout the province. Since then the majority of the paintings have disappeared. The few survivors are now found in the Ontario Legislature Building in Toronto and the Art Gallery of Peterborough. They remain modest and often-misinterpreted reminders of an institution that once represented a passionate expression of the conviction that art should play a significant role in the lives of Canadians from all walks of life.

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Notes

- 1 Fern BAYER, *The Ontario Collection* (Toronto: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1984); the book contains several colour images of the copies.
- 2 *Analectic* 5 (June 15, 1815), 492, cited in Calvin TOMPKINS, *Merchants and Masterpieces* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1970), 18.
- 3 Lillian B. MILLER, *Patrons and Patriotism: The Encouragement of the Fine Arts in the United States 1790-1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966).
- 4 Rembrandt PEALE, "Letter on his Court of Death, 1845," in *American Art 1700-1960: Sources and Documents*, ed. John W. McCoubrey (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1965), 55.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 56.
- 6 Cited in TOMPKINS, *Merchants and Masterpieces*, 30.
- 7 MILLER, *Patrons and Patriotism*, 91-93, 149.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 39 ff, 143, 199.
- 9 On the Old Master copy in the nineteenth century see Virginia NIXON, "Antoine-Sébastien Falardeau (1822-1889) and the Old Master Copy in the Nineteenth Century," M.A. Thesis, Concordia University, 1988.
- 10 See Jeanne CLEGG, "John Ruskin's Correspondence with Angelo Alessandri," *Bulletin of The John Rylands Library Manchester* 60 (1977-78): 404-33. It is now called the Ruskin Collection and housed in the Millenium Galleries in Sheffield. When the idea for the Musée des Copies in France was proposed by Louis-Adolphe Thiers in 1834 it received broad state support but by 1873 state-supported copying had been drastically reduced. See Paul DURO, "The 'Demoiselles à Copier' in the Second Empire," *Woman's Art Journal* (Spring/Summer 1986): 1-7, and DURO, "Un Livre Ouvert à l'Instruction: Study Museums in Paris in the Nineteenth Century," *Oxford Art Journal* 10, no.1 (1987): 44-57; Albert BOIME, "Le Musée des Copies," *Gazette des Beaux Arts* 64 (1964): 237-47. Collections of photographic copies of art works are discussed in Trevor FAWCETT, "Graphic versus Photographic in the Nineteenth-Century Reproduction," *Art History* 9 (1986): 186-211.
- 11 See MILLER, *Patrons and Patriotism*, 90.
- 12 Artists included Rembrandt, Rubens, Van Dyck, Greuze, Canaletto, Murillo, Raeburn, Titian, Raphael, Claude, Wouvermans, Ostade, Guido Reni, del Sarto, and Ribera [Lo Spagnoletto]. Carol D. LOWREY, "The Toronto Society of Arts, 1847-48: Patriotism and the Pursuit of Culture in Canada West," *RACAR* 12, no.1 (1985): 3-44.
- 13 Egerton Ryerson, Paris, to John George Hodgins, Toronto, 12 Sept. 1855. The correspondence with Hodgins in Toronto is found in the United Church Archives, Victoria University Library, University of Toronto, Roll 3, Ryerson Letters from 1847-1856. Unless otherwise noted, all quoted letters are from the United Church Archives. That Sofia had a traveling companion is mentioned in *The Story of My Life, by the late Rev. Egerton Ryerson, D.D., LL.D.*, ed. John George Hodgins (Toronto: Briggs, 1883), 366.
- 14 *The Educational Museum and School of Art and Design for Upper Canada with a Plan of the English Educational Museum, Etc., Etc., From the Chief Superintendent's Report for 1856 to Which is Added an Appendix* (Toronto: Lovell & Gibson, 1858), 15.
- 15 Ryerson, Munich to G-É Cartier, 1 Jan. 1856, reprinted in J.C. HODGINS, *Documentary History of Education in Upper Canada from the Passing of the Constitutional Act of 1791 to the Close of Rev. Dr. Ryerson's Administration of the Education Department in 1876*, vol. 12 (Toronto: L.K. Cameron, 1894-1910), 127, cited in BAYER, *The Ontario Collection*, 15.

- 16 Francisco DE HOLLANDA, *Four Dialogues on Painting*, trans. Aubrey F.G. Bell (London: Oxford University Press, 1928), 15-16.
- 17 Joshua REYNOLDS, *The Works...containing his Discourses...[and] A Journey to Flanders and Holland...*, vol. 2, 4th ed., 3 vols. (London: Printed for T. Cadell, jun. and W. Davies, 1809), 369.
- 18 Ryerson, Munich to G-É Cartier, 1 Jan. 1856, reprinted in J.G. HODGINS, *Documentary History*, cited in BAYER, *The Ontario Collection*, 18.
- 19 Ryerson, Rome to Hodgins, 18 Feb. 1856.
- 20 Ryerson, Antwerp to Hodgins, 5 Dec. 1855. He adds: "The prices varied from 12 pounds Sterling to 80 pounds. I also saw admirable copies of two of Van Dyke's masterpieces. I shall be able to get them for some 10 pounds each. I shall see them tomorrow. I think after having seen and examined & compared them all, as well as I can, as to both quality & price, I shall make a selection."
- 21 Ryerson, Antwerp to Hodgins, 12 Dec. 1855. He notes that: "Thousands of Paintings are bought here annually from England & the United States."
- 22 Ryerson, Frankfurt to Hodgins, 18 Dec. 1855.
- 23 Ryerson, Munich to Hodgins, 23 Dec. 1855.
- 24 Ryerson, Frankfurt, to Hodgins, 18 Dec. 1855. See also BAYER, *The Ontario Collection*, 17-18 and 35-57. In a partially illegible letter of 25 Jan. 1856, to Hodgins from Florence, he refers to: "some of the best pictures I bought; especially two Raphaels (the one a copy by Julius Romano & the other by Sassoferrato. A copy of Raphael by either of those...would sell here for £500." He comments: "I have had all cleaned...that required it, new frames made for all that were without frames, & old frames repaired & regilded, as needed."
- 25 Ryerson, Munich to Hodgins, Toronto, 23 Dec. 1855. He continues: "I propose to limit my further journey to Leipzig, Dresden & Berlin – the former for books, & the two latter for objects of art.... I have reluctantly given up Vienna & Italy. In Vienna I had a reason to expect some handsome contributions from the Government. In Italy I had hoped to give full effect to the suggestions of Col. Lefroy, & do much more. But I have already gone far beyond what he proposed. What he proposed in regard to Statuary was nothing in comparison of what I have purchased & shall purchase."
- 26 Ryerson, Munich to Hodgins, 31 Dec. 1855.
- 27 Ryerson, Florence to Hodgins, Toronto 17 Dec. 1856. Ryerson makes several references to the shipping of the copies. From Frankfurt, he wrote to Hodgins on 18 Dec. 1855: "Had it not been for the great expense of freight I would have had them all shipped by the Government Mail steamer which is to start for New York the 29th of this month, but as it is, I have arranged to send some twenty or thirty, (embracing several of the largest) paintings by the Steamer ("Belgique", I believe), so that you will receive them about the 14th of February. The rest will be sent by the first *sailing* ship, & will not reach you before Spring."
- 28 Ryerson, London to Hodgins, 28 Sept. 1855. On Falardeau see NIXON, "Antoine-Sébastien Falardeau." Ryerson appears to have consulted tourist guidebooks for two other Florentine copyists that he patronized, as Fern Bayer states that Raimondo Campanile and Giuseppe Mazzolini are mentioned in John Murray's widely used *Handbook for Travellers in Central Italy, Including the Papal States, Rome and the Cities of Etruria* (London: John Murray, 1843). Ryerson also bought from Petrini Fece, Agostino Gagliardi, and from Antonio Sasso who is mentioned in Henry James' *William Wetmore Story and his Friends* (New York: Kennedy Galleries, 1969 [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1904]), 97, via the "little pale exotic card of 1847" that falls out of one of Story's books, bearing the legend "F. Antonio Sasso: Pittore al Olio e all'Acquerelle, Negoziante di Quadri e di Mobilia Antica." The

Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec owns a copy of Titian's *Flora*, dated 1860, by Giuseppe Mazzolini (34.608), and a Mazzolini copy of a painting entitled the *Bay of Sorrento* [present location unknown] is listed in the Art Association of Montreal's 1870 spring exhibition catalogue (#5, coll. Jos. Mckay).

29 Another Falardeau copy of the Grimoux work was sold at a Shaw & Frères auction in Montreal 19 July 1862. (*L'Ordre*, 18 juillet 1862; *La Minerve*, 19 juillet 1862). Purchases of frames are recorded in the Archives of Ontario, Ontario Department of Education Records, R.G.2, Series L-3, vol. 15, Record of Purchases for the Educational Museum and Library, 1853-1861. In Ryerson's invoices regarding frames, some specify the intended paintings, others note that the frames are made to order. One invoice refers to four frames from Carlo Bortolini, gilder, for copies by the Bolognese copyist Giuseppe Viscardi. The account book also lists paintings bought in Siena. "I would wish you to pay Mr. Falardeau from time to time for the pictures and frames he has engaged to make for me...." Ryerson wrote to the Florentine bankers Maquay & Pakenham. AO, R.G. 2, Department of Public Instruction Series C Outgoing General Correspondence C-1, Letter Book R (Vol. 16), Letter #1211 (letter copy) Transcription 1211 R. A second letter, also to Maquay & Pakenham, asks that payment be made to Falardeau for pictures "which you have received from Bologna." Vol. 18, Letter Book T, Transcription 3760, J.

30 Ryerson, Florence to Hodgins, 25 Jan. 1856. Copyists took commissions for specific paintings, but they also sold ready-made copies. Usually sales were made at the artist's studio or display salon but sometimes in the galleries. An 1885 document filed in the Archivio delle gallerie fiorentine asks for the names of the painters who showed their copies in "salle des copies de la gallerie degli Uffizi." (AGF, Affari dell'Anno 1885, Cartella D., No. 38, Pos. 2, cited in Rieke VAN LEEUWEN, *Kopieren in Florence: Kunstenaars uit de Lage Landen in Toscane en de 19de-eeuwse Kunstreis naar Italie* (Florence: Nederlands Interuniversitair Kunsthistorisch Instituut, 1985), 101. The author of *The Lions of Florence* does not mention the selling of paintings in the galleries, but he implies that the gallery is the place for prospective clients to make contact with copyists when he says that the five copyists whose names he gives "may be found in the galleries hard at work." *The Lions of Florence and its Environs: with a copious appendix, hints for picture buyers etc.* (Florence: Felix Le Monnier, 1852 ed.), 65.

31 Ryerson, Rome to Hodgins, 30 Jan. 1856.

32 *The Educational Museum and School of Art and Design for Upper Canada*, 32-40.

33 The list includes eighty-eight Italian, one hundred and twenty-two Dutch or Flemish, seven German, fifteen French and five Spanish works, along with the "twenty-five or thirty" unclassified ones. *The Educational Museum and School*, 33-40. For information on mid-nineteenth-century requests for permission to copy in the Uffizi and the Pitti Palace see NIXON, "Antoine-Sébastien Falardeau."

34 Gerard REITLINGER, *The Economics of Taste: The Rise and Fall of Picture Prices 1760-1960* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1961) does not list Caravaggio. Requests to copy his paintings were infrequent, but they do occur in the Florentine copy request files and some American institutions bought Caravaggio copies.

EGERTON RYERSON ET LES COPIES DE MAÎTRES ANCIENS COMME INSTRUMENT D'ÉDUCATION POPULAIRE

En 1855-1856 l'éducateur torontois Egerton Ryerson (1803-82), surintendant principal des écoles publiques du Haut-Canada, accompagné de sa fille Sophia, voyage à travers l'Europe pour acheter des œuvres d'art pour le musée de copies qu'il allait fonder l'année suivante. En tout, il achète deux cent trente-six toiles de cent quarante-quatre artistes, presque toutes des copies, ainsi que près d'un millier de moulages en plâtre de sculptures et une multitude d'autres articles. Mais ce sont surtout les copies de maîtres anciens qui captivent son imagination. Dans une série de lettres à John George Hodgins, commis en chef du ministère de l'Instruction publique, il relate ses pérégrinations, en compagnie de Sophia, de Paris jusqu'à Rome et Florence en passant par Anvers et Munich, à la recherche de copies pour le musée.

Ces lettres sont précieuses pour les historiens de l'art. Tout d'abord, elle révèlent que le musée de Ryerson n'était pas une entreprise excentrique comme on l'a parfois perçu, mais qu'il s'inscrivait dans un vaste projet, dans l'Europe et l'Amérique du Nord du XIX^e siècle, visant à créer des musées comme instruments de progrès social et moral. Ryerson était, en effet, le fondateur du système d'éducation en Ontario, et il voyait son musée comme un outil éducatif dans la formation des enseignants et l'éducation du public, pour accroître leurs connaissances des cultures anciennes et lointaines, développer leur sensibilité et, en les mettant en contact avec l'art, contribuer à combattre le déclin moral que l'on commençait à percevoir comme une menace à une vie civique saine et paisible. En cela, son musée était l'équivalent d'institutions semblables aux États-Unis et en Angleterre au XIX^e siècle.

Pour réaliser une telle entreprise il fallait nécessairement des copies d'œuvres d'art célèbres, puisque les originaux n'étaient évidemment pas à vendre. De plus, les caprices du marché de l'art étaient tels qu'il n'était pas rare que les acheteurs préférèrent une bonne copie à un original d'origine douteuse ou possiblement faux. Des copistes professionnels travaillaient dans plusieurs villes d'Europe. Leurs œuvres étaient achetées par des touristes aux revenus moyens ou élevés. La popularité des copies n'était pas due entièrement à leur coût relativement peu élevé – le talent, la réputation et les prix des copistes variaient –, elles étaient aussi appréciées comme rappels de certains tableaux célèbres admirés dans des musées.

Pour Ryerson, Florence était par excellence la ville des copies. Le tourisme était, après l'agriculture, la principale source de revenus de la Toscane au XIX^e siècle, et les autorités florentines ne ménageaient pas leurs efforts pour que copistes, autorités muséales et clients se coordonnent dans une harmonie profitable. Des règles strictes régissaient l'accès des copistes aux originaux et les listes d'attente étaient longues pour les toiles les plus célèbres, surtout la *Vierge à la chaise* de Raphaël. Le père et la fille se levaient de bonne heure et passaient la journée à examiner les tableaux de la Galerie des Offices et du palais Pitti, à visiter les ateliers des copistes et les galeries des marchands. Le soir – Ryerson dit qu'ils se couchaient rarement avant minuit – ils allaient rendre visite à des contacts haut placés pour lesquels leurs amis de Londres leur avaient donné des lettres de recommandation. De plus, ils devaient certainement profiter des activités que la Cour grand-ducale offrait pour le divertissement des touristes.

Les lettres de Ryerson sont particulièrement précieuses parce que, alors que les archives florentines contiennent une abondance de documentation relative aux rapports entre copistes et autorités muséales, les lettres à Hodgins montrent le point de vue de l'acheteur – bien qu'on puisse douter qu'il y ait eu plusieurs acheteurs aussi méticuleux et systématiques que Ryerson. De plus, les contacts de Ryerson avec Antoine-Sébastien Falardeau (1822-1889), copiste de maîtres anciens originaire de Québec de qui il a acheté un certain nombre de toiles, jette plus de lumière sur cet artiste qui était l'un des copistes les plus réputés de Florence au milieu du XIX^e siècle. Les observations de Ryerson confirment la haute opinion qu'on avait du talent de Falardeau et la haute estime dans laquelle on tenait le Québécois que d'autres voyageurs mentionnent aussi dans leurs lettres.

En matière d'art, Ryerson partageait les préférences de son temps, préférences établies pour une large part par les aristocrates et écrivains anglais qui racontaient leurs voyages en Italie à la fin du XVIII^e siècle. On recherchait par-dessus tout les maîtres de la Haute Renaissance et du Baroque, en particulier Le Titien, Guido Reni, Carlo Dolci, Léonard de Vinci, Raphaël et Le Corrège. Parmi les œuvres populaires du XVIII^e siècle on compte l'auto-portrait, très souvent copié, peint par Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun à son arrivée à Florence après sa fuite de Paris envahi par les révolutionnaires. On recherchait aussi des toiles du baroque hollandais, bien que Ryerson, comme plusieurs autres, les décrive comme étant d'un art moins élevé que l'art italien, mais, peut-être pour cette raison même, il les considère comme particulièrement appropriées pour les moins instruits des visiteurs de son musée. Il se conformait aussi au goût conventionnel en achetant très peu de copies – quatre pour être précis – de toiles peintes avant 1500. Il est considéré comme légèrement audacieux, toute comparaison gardée, dans ses remarques sur l'excellence du Caravage.

Le Museum of Natural History and Fine Arts fut ouvert 1857, relocalisé en 1912, et fermé dans les années 1920. Quelques-unes des toiles font maintenant partie des collections de la législature ontarienne, à Toronto, et de la Art Gallery of Peterborough. Mais la plupart ont disparu.

Traduction : Élise Bonnette