Print collecting in provincial England prior to 1650
The Randle Holme Album

Robert Tittler & Anne Thackray

The increasing popularity of print-collecting in 17th-century England was a reflection of, and manifested itself in, the expansion of English printmaking and the London print trade over the century. The diversification of print stock and the extension of the trade into the provinces - through the publication of printseller's catalogues - certainly encouraged print collecting in Restoration England. The two most familiar, and probably most important, English print collections of the century remain the troves of Samuel Pepys (1633-1703), and John Evelyn, both working principally from London in the latter half of the century. These two monumental collections reflect attitudes which had become common among print collectors by the second half of the century: that prints were more than aesthetic additions to the domestic environment. They served as important vehicles for the communication of information, and as such were kept as part of libraries. Their display contributed to the social, cultural, and intellectual legitimation of their owners. Although the aesthetic qualities of prints were increasingly appreciated by such collectors, for many who engaged in collecting, their didactic function continued to dominate. Evelyn recommended the use of prints to teach children, adolescents, and princes, and to communicate scientific discoveries - particularly among gentlemen like himself. He dedicated his book on printing, Sculpturns, to the scientist Robert Boyle, explaining that he had written it in response to Boyle's request that he produce a treatise on chalcography:

... as you are pleased to judge it useful for the encouragement of the gentlemen of our nation, who sometimes please themselves with these innocent diversions... and especially, that such as are addicted to the more noble mathematical Sciences, may draw and engrave their schemes with delight and assurance.

Yet the greater incidence of print-sellers in London, the greater survival rate of prints kept in library albums, and the familiar London-based examples represented by Pepys and Evelyn in the Restoration era, appear in several ways to have distorted our understanding of print-collecting in 17th-century England. So vivid are those examples in our minds that they overshadow evidence of such activity outside the London metropolis, or amongst those below the ranks of the aristocracy and court circle, or at an earlier time. The generation or so before Pepys and Evelyn began their collections - especially the late Elizabethan and early Stuart years - remain something of a dark corner in the history of English print production and collection. This is even more true for the provincial scene than for London, and for the middle rather than the upper ranks of society. Those 'middling sorts of people' attracted to print-collecting in those earlier times had not yet attained the level of material culture which would blossom, despite the intrusion of warfare and political upheaval, in the mid-century and after.

We do know of course that the great collectors of the late Elizabethan and early Stuart era, including Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester; John, Lord Lumley; and both the Earl and Countess of Arundel, collected prints as well as paintings and drawings. We know that several English engravers of prints were at work by 1600, and that the first specialist print publishers, John Sudbury and his nephew George Humble, opened their shop at the sign of the White Horse, Pope's Head Alley near Newgate, in 1603. And, as Antony Wells-Cole has shown, English embroideries, painted cloths for walls, decorative carvings, and even portraits reveal the familiarity of their makers with continental prints. These men must have owned print collections, or had access to them. Yet the collections, and the identity of their collectors (below the very conspicuous ranks of the aristocracy and outside the London metropolis) remain elusive. Indeed, the entire question of the cultural relations between London and provincial centres has become more contentious for this period, as traditional assumptions about London as the inevitable hub and the provinces as the invariable recipient of metropolitan styles and fashions now come into question.

These factors enhance the importance of a small but highly instructive collection which has come to light, deriving not from London, and not even from one of the provincial centres favoured by an affluent and sophisticated continentally proximate gentry community such as one might find in, eg, Norwich. Nor does it derive from collectors of anything like...
aristocratic standing. It derives instead from the more remote city of Chester, with its relatively impoverished "cultural hinterland" of Cheshire, north-west Flintshire and southern Lancashire. This is the album of collected prints and drawings in the British Library, catalogued as Harleian 2001, whose contents were acquired by the Cestrian herald painters Randle Holme the Elder (1570/1-1655) and his son, Randle Holme the Younger (1601-59), chiefly in the first third of the 17th century. While there is not enough space here to discuss this rare survival in full detail, the Holme Album has much to say about the relationship between provincial painters and the visual culture of the wider world – specifically London and continental Europe – in the generation before Pepys and Evelyn began their labours. It speaks as well to the emergence of connoisseurship among the middling ranks of people at a pre-protestant time in English cultural history.

The Holmes emerged from respectable but distinctly modest social origins in and around Chester and rose through their own efforts to the ruling elite, first of their local "Guild of Painters, Glaisiers, Embroiderers and Stationers," and thence eventually to the mayoral ranks of their native city. Randle Holme the Elder was born c.1571. A blacksmith's son with connections to the minor gentry of Cheshire and Flintshire, he apprenticed from 1578 with Thomas Chaloner (d. 1598), deputy to the Norroy King of Arms, and eventually married Chaloner's widow. From these modest beginnings Holme worked his way between 1600 and 1618 to a post as deputy herald for the Chester area, covering Cheshire, Lancashire and North Wales, and thence to higher office in that city: sheriff in 1628, alderman in 1629, and mayor in 1633. After surviving the siege of Chester by a Parliamentary army (1645-46), and an outbreak of the plague, Holme died in 1655 aged 84. Randle Holme the Younger apprenticed with his father and followed a very similar career pattern: deputy herald for Lancashire in 1627, Chester city treasurer in 1633, and Royalist mayor of Chester in 1643-45. As mayor, he defended Chester against a Parliamentary siege before being dismissed from his posts upon the fall of the city. He died in 1659.

The main work of both Holmes related to heraldry: organizing and recording funerals for armigerous families in the area, painting hatchments, and collecting fees payable to the heralds. In addition they took on the broad range of work associated with the 'painter-stainers' of their time. Payments to them are recorded for such diverse tasks as painting a sword-vest in St. Olave's Church in 1606 (and again in 1609), and painting a trumpet-bearer in 1627. They may well have painted a number of conventional portraits, and were perhaps even more likely to have painted the family trees common in the period at hand, on which miniature portraits of family members drooped like apples from the various branches of the subject family. But along with others like themselves, the Holmes would not usually have signed their work, making it impossible thus far to identify any actual surviving portraits as their own.

The volume which we refer to as the Holme Album here is one of well over 200 volumes of Holme manuscripts in the British Library (catalogued as Harleian 1920-2180). Almost all the other volumes are devoted more or less exclusively to heraldic drawings and notes, but Harleian 2001 is not a heraldic reference tool. Rather, it contains over 150 prints and drawings covering a range of subject-matter, pasted or drawn on 72 pages. Though it has proved impossible to ascertain whether they were bound together at a later time or by the Holmes themselves, it is none the less clear that much of the contents of the Album were collected by Randle Holme the Elder and his son. Most of the items in it are labeled either "rh f" or "rh ft." This may have been done as a protection against theft, as a declaration of pride in ownership, in emulation of collecting practices seen elsewhere – or as a combination of more than one of these motives. But it certainly does indicate that the Holmes considered these prints valuable possessions, and reflects an obvious desire to connect the importance and quality of the images with the person of their collector.

Most of the prints are engravings rather than woodcuts. They would have been issued as independent prints or as part of a set of prints, although a few appear to have been cut from books. The earliest print so far identified is represented in the Album by a drawing (after a Lucas van Leyden print of c1514); the latest, from the 1680s (25 years after the death of Randle Holme II). Such late prints must have been acquired by subsequent Holmes, possibly by Randle Holme III, himself a compiler by nature (see n11 here). Most of the prints which can be dated, though, derive from the 17th century. Almost nothing in the Album has been labelled by its compilers, though we have been able to identify nearly all the prints (and several of the drawings after prints) from standard reference sources. Leaving aside most of the Album's drawings for future consideration, we turn our attention here to the prints (along with several drawings closely reproducing prints), and then to a consideration of the nature, function and significance of the collection as a whole.

We can only speculate about where the Holmes acquired the prints in question, but the possibilities are worth considering. The obvious assumption is that they would have been purchased from dealers in London. As a deputy herald intermittently from 1600, the elder Holme was required to make occasional trips to London to report to the College of Arms. He probably did so a number of times up to the early 1620s. His appointment to the higher post of deputy to the College of Arms for Cheshire and North Wales in 1619 would have required visiting London more often. But a painful hernia incurred around that time forced him to delegate any long-distance travel to others. Even his required attendance at the coronation of Charles I proved too much for Randle Holme I, and he was fined for not coming. Under these circumstances we cannot rule out a provincial or even local provenance for at least some of the prints. Though Chester apparently had no resident booksellers even into the early decades of the 17th century, and though we still know little about print availability in the area, Holme's guild included stationers as well as painter-stainers, glaisiers and embroiderers, and those stationers may well have provided prints as models for those decorative arts. Randle Holme II served as clerk to the Stationers in 1643, and Randle Holme III was the Stationers' steward in 1656.

Then, too, as most of the prints were produced, as we will see below, either in England or in northern European workshops, it remains possible that some Netherlandish prints at least came directly from their place of production to the port city of Chester. Research into the use of continental prints in Elizabethan and Jacobean decorative arts indicates that such prints were more plentifully used in areas near ports. Though Chester merchants only very rarely traded with northern European ports directly, France, Spain, and Ireland being the preferred destinations, Dutch and especially Flemish prints could readily have come from Habsburg Spain. These are of course nothing more than possibilities, but they are also nothing less. They do little to support the assumption that cultural dissemination in England was a one-
way process, a simple matter of London exporting innovation to the provinces. The reception by provincial English society of fresh visual information was far from a passive or undiscriminating acceptance of everything novel that came its way. Instead, received notions from London seem to have blended in some proportion or other with well established local traditions of visual craftsmanship, a process to which the evidence of the Album certainly attests.

However they were acquired, the prints in the Album suggest a wide range of interests on the part of the collectors, and one which was by no means exclusively locally-oriented. They also suggest that their collectors had a keen eye for, and an effective means of acquiring, the relatively obscure and new as well as the familiar and commonplace. We find, for example, an engraved portrait of Captain John Smith (1616 or earlier), an impression of the first state of a portrait print by Simon van de Passe (PI 1).

It was neatly cut from the corner of a map, the cutter choosing to slice along the lines 'framing' Smith's portrait, thereby discarding the last section of the verses praising Smith by the poet John Davies (inscribed underneath Smith's image), as well as the rest of the map – an early map of New England. Only the portrait itself – a fine image of a gentleman wearing body armour – found its way into the Album, perhaps as a useful model for painters of gentry portraits. As heralds and heraldic painters, the Holmeses would have been in close contact with many of the gentry families within and well beyond the cultural hinterland of the Cheshire/Lancashire/Flintshire region, and may well have been expected to supply similar portraits. The map of New England was of little professional use to them, but the image of a well-known explorer may well have been of interest. So, for that matter, might a figure in ceremonial body armour at a time when many landed gentry were attempting to gild the lily of their ancestry by adopting visual references to chivalric culture.

Though the Album does not exhibit the same concentration on portrait images as Pepys's print collection, and is of course nowhere near as large, it does indeed hold portraits aside from John Smith's. Most of these depict English monarchs, including some rarities. One is a barded impression of William Rogers’s celebrated full-length portrait, Queen Elizabeth standing in a room with a latticed window (PI 2). This fine engraving would have been a relatively expensive print, compared with the cheaper woodcut portraits of the queen which once abounded. This impression is of the first state of the print, with the Queen depicted full-length. The plate was cut down to a half-length portrait for the second state, issued by Sudbury and Humble in 1603 or later. A third state was sold by Peter Stent, before the cut-down plate was reworked for the fourth state.

Holding her orb and sceptre, symbols of her monarchy, Elizabeth wears an elaborate, jeweled farthingale gown (an English court fashion of the 1590s), ropes of pearls and a pearl coronet. At right, a prayer-book lies open at Psalm 35: *Plead thou my cause... and stand up to beleve me*. Its position, on a cushion placed across the arms of the Queen’s chair of state, associates the Queen’s rule with Divine protection. The impression in the Album is reduced on all sides, with losses at upper left and at lower left and right. Although it has lost much of the cloth of honour behind the Queen’s chair of state (including the letters ‘DIEV’), the print retains the inscription at bottom identifying its maker as William Rogers (‘Willis Rogers sculp.’), as well as the cartouche with its laudatory verses hailing Elizabeth as ‘Th’admird Empresse through the world applaued...’ As Hind has pointed out, these verses address the Queen as a living monarch, indicating the print was issued during her lifetime. To left and right of this cartouche are the Queen’s badges, in oval frames: a Pelican in its piety and a Phoenix rising from flames – representing Elizabeth’s self-sacrificing and unique role as a female monarch.

For deputy heralds like the Randle Holmes, this magnificent image of the Queen was probably the finest and most up-to-date portrait affordable: a superb model for any portraits of Elizabeth they might have been commissioned to produce. As painters, they would have appreciated Rogers’s handling of the fall of light through the glazed window at left (inspired by Dürer’s *St Jerome in His Study*, an engraving of 1514).

As Elizabeth’s heir James I reigned during the prime years of Randle Holme the Elder, there are also a number of images of the king and his family. Though Holme may not have been able comfortably to travel to London by the latter years of James’s reign, he may well have seen James closer to home. The King visited Cheshire in 1617, staying at Vale Royal on August 21 and spending a few hours in Chester. Holme, as ‘servant to Henry the most Illustrious Prince of Wales’, may well have attended upon the King during this visit. His son, who had no disabilities so far as we know, was even more likely to have seen James – and Charles as well. Another portrait of James in the Album is an impression of Renold Elstrack’s *James I and Anne of Denmark*: one of three large engravings of the King and his family created by Elstrack in the early 1610s. It was published by John Sudbury and George Humble, then the leading London print publishers.
The Album also includes a royal portrait print made abroad for the English market: a double full-length allegorical portrait of Frederick V and Elizabeth of Bohemia with four lions (Pl 3) identified by their combined arms at upper left, and further enhanced by the inclusion of the Bohemian Protestant martyr, John Hus. This intrinsically polemical image would have catered to common English loyalties at the time of Frederick's disputed accession to the throne of Bohemia in 1618, and to the fortunes of his wife Elizabeth, the daughter of James I, in the year 1618-19. Its inscription, 'Printed at Dort by Abraham van de Soeste', identifies it as part of the vast amount of printed material (books and prints) produced in the Netherlands for export to England. These publications were often written or designed by Puritan preachers serving the English Nonconformist communities in Holland. Financed by their congregations, the printed material was shipped to England with the aid of English merchants. Such a congregation flourished at Dort, where this print was made, and at least one of the congregation's members doubled as a printer.

The image depicts Elizabeth and Frederick standing at centre, wearing their coronation regalia. The Queen holds a palm of victory. The lions of England and the Palatinate prowl the foreground. In the left background are the Protestant leaders Calvin and Luther. They place their hands on a Bible held by Hus. A peaceful scene of ploughing is visible beyond. In the right background is a scene of violence, terror, and Divine intervention in favour of the Protestant cause in Bohemia. As devils fly overhead, Catholic clergy and an army flee from a rain of lightning and millstones. The soldiers have abandoned their cannon, though not before using them: corpses lie scattered on the ground. In the distance is a city engulfed in flames, with a steeple toppling from a burning church. At the centre top of the print, over the royal regalia of the Protestant monarchs, appears the Hebrew letters representing Jehovah, inscribed on a radiant sun. A line from Psalm 118 is inscribed above Frederick and Elizabeth's heads: 'Faciamus et est unus super omnes'. The Protestant rejoicing expressed in this print proved premature, as Frederick lost his kingdom to Catholic Imperial forces only a year after gaining it, and was unable to retain it. The 'Winter King' and 'Winter Queen' spent the rest of their lives in exile, mostly at The Hague.

Despite the obviously religious tone of this print, the Holmescs do not seem to have been overly concerned with partisan religious issues or religious imagery in general. This overly Protestant print co-existed in the Randle Holme album with Catholic prints, among them Lucas Vorsterman's engraving after a painting by Rubens (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna) St Mary Magdalen trampling on a box with all her riches, c1622/23. What seems primarily to have attracted the interest of the Holmescs in assembling or copying prints was the potential value of certain images as a source of visual information which might come in handy for their own work. The Album, through these prints, and the accompanying life drawings (to be considered in a later study), reveals that the Holmescs' painterly ambitions surpassed heraldry and traditional head-and-shoulders portraits. The Lucas Vorsterman print reproduced an artwork by Rubens, an important artist at the London royal court. A full-length depiction of a seated human figure, elaborately draped, it gave the Holmescs an image of a woman in an intense emotional state - something at which Rubens excelled. Other prints offered the Holmescs the chance to study (and perhaps copy) naked men or women (Maarten van Heemskerck's The Pylgasmatic Temperament, 1566, or the human figure seen in unusually twisted poses (Hendrick Goltzius's Standard-Bearer, Facing Left and Standard-Bearer, Facing Right, both dating from the 1580s.

Indeed, it is striking how many of the Holmes Album prints depict the full-length human figure in action or undress. To some extent, the Album constituted a reference tool for a dynasty of working painters interested in learning how to depict the human figure naturalistically or dramatically. Its contents are evidence that this particular dynasty of provincial painters aspired to share some of the professional skills acquired by continental artists at institutions like the Académie Royale de Peinture et Sculpture, founded in Paris in 1648.

Indeed, the Album has a strong continental component. In general, prints by Netherlands printmakers dominate the collection, outnumbering even the English prints perhaps because of their more sophisticated artistic qualities as much as their availability. Griffiths and Gerrand have pointed out:

So slight was the native production by comparison with the Continental that the gap was filled with a flood of imports. Anyone going to a London printseller, particularly in the first two-thirds of the century, must have seen far more imported prints than English ones, and every printseller... must have had a very large number of imported prints.

We can only assume that this same predominance of foreign over English-produced prints applied, perhaps even more strongly, to prints available in the provincial areas of the realm. Though English prints were available to the Randle Holmescs, their limited number in the Album testifies to their generally poorer design and execution, reflecting the less sophisticated art training available to English printmakers in the first half of the 17th century – and the difficult position of engravers in the London print trade. Habitually poorly paid, the English had little incentive to produce high-quality work, ensuring that foreign-trained engravers, particularly Netherlanders, dominated the trade. The Album bears ample evidence of inferior English (and Netherlands) printmaking. At folio 3 recto (image 2) we find a copy – probably Netherlands – of Thomas Cross's memento mori print, Memoriae Nosissimae (Pl 4). The copyist (whose name, only partly legible, includes a 'van' indicating that he was Flemish or Dutch) simplified Cross's design and (perhaps inadvertently) reversed it – but only partially. He seems to have been insufficiently familiar with the effect of copying a print from an impression rather than from the original plate. In consequence, he has successfully imitated the major elements of the print, but overlooked the less important areas. And, although the English work remained poor in the face of foreign craftsmanship, the origins of such imports were not indiscriminate. Despite the growing acceptability by the 1620s of Italian models in contemporary architecture and other visual media, the Album's emphasis remains on northern European examples. Italian artworks are represented in the album only by drawn copies, or by reproductive engravings – some by Netherlandish printmakers – for example, Jacob Matham's engraving after Child Playing a Tambourine, which bears an inscription identifying the painting it reproduces as by Titian, a very prestigious name. By far the most impressive copy of an Italian artwork is a somewhat clumsy drawing of Cornelius Court's engraving, after Titian's painting The Adoration of the Trinity (La Gloria). Cort's engraving, considered one of his finest prints, was greatly admired – and much copied. The Album contains a number of subjects, including impressions of some of the same prints, which were also drawn upon by other professionals working in the visual arts in England at this period. A case in point emerges in a print of Mabomere, presumably from a set of prints of the Nine Worthies. This was a popular subject from about 1575 to 1625 in English visual, musical and literary culture. Different
versions of the 'Nine Worthies' survive in wall paintings, embroideries, prints, pageants, painted wall cloths, and - most famously - in lines from Shakespeare's Love's Labours Lost (Act V, scene II, lines 574-578, written c1594-95). Thomas Trevilian's drawings of the 'Nine Worthies' for his Miscellanies albums (1608 and 1616), and 'Nine Worthies' figures at Montacute House, Somerset and Wiston, Sussex, further demonstrate the appeal to English painters and embroiderers of this particular set of Phillips Galle prints. They formed part of what Heathfield Wolfe has described as a 'common vocabulary' drawn upon by English painters and craftsmen at this period: a visual culture made up of gleanings from Bibles, almanacs, pattern books, imported prints, broadside ballads and household manuals. Trevilian incorporated the 'Nine Worthies' into his books alongside the 'Nine Muses', 'Seven Deadly Sins', 'Seven Virtues', and 'Seven Liberal Sciences', a time-line of history, a calendar, astronomical diagrams and lists of English counties. The 'Worthies' functioned for him as an intrinsic part of a larger corpus of cultural information conveyed through texts and visual images triggering emotional responses or supporting memory. In contrast, the Holmes retained from the 'Nine Worthies' only the image of Mahomet - a notably foreign Worthy in unfamiliar garb. Their collection was very different from Trevilian's, its very different function reflected in its far more random arrangement. The Album constitutes an assemblage of clippings and copies, presented without concern for such niceties as painted borders or elegantly-arranged pages. As a sourcebook for professional painters, it contains little text. Even where the Holmes chose to retain pages from books, they selected only title pages with interesting visual elements.

As already mentioned, the Holmes owned the first state of a print after Maerten van Heemskerck's design: The Violent Temperament. (Folio 2 recto, image 1). It comes from a set of Heemskerck prints of 'The Four Temperaments' (1566) by Herman Jansz Muller. Another print from the set inspired the maker of a painted cloth from about 1600 at Hardwick Hall. This example of a form of wall-covering popular in Tudor and Stuart times is by the well-known John Painter. He took his design partly from The Violent Temperament, incorporating details from the print - and from three other sets of prints - into painted cloths at Hardwick.

As we have seen, the Holmes valued accomplished print-making and artistic expertise. They were interested, for example, in Lucas van Leyden - a printmaker whose works were highly sought-after by contemporary collectors. (The great collector Michel de Marolles, abbe de Villeloin (1600-1681), listed his Lucas van Leydens along with the prints of other artists whose works are esteemed above all others, eg, Durer, Callo, Parmigianino (and Raphael reproductions). Though the Holmes seem not to have found, or been able to afford, an original Lucas van Leyden for their far more modest collection, they did own a drawn copy of van Leyden's small engraving of The Annunciation (c1514). The unknown copyist (perhaps one of the Randle Holms) reproduced it in a large drawing, which was cut in two, presumably to fit it into the album. The draughtsman was evidently trying to reproduce Lucas's delicate hatching, using pen and ink to copy a tiny print on a much larger scale. He lost patience while copying the angel's wings, rendering them with bolder, clumsier lines and failing to notice that the lower section of the angel's wing at left touched the left margin of the original engraving. Similarly, the Holmes owned two copies of prints after Parmigianino, original prints being unobtainable or beyond their means. The inclusion of very detailed copies of prints alongside original engravings in the Album testifies to the Randle Holme's determination to acquire prints beyond their reach - and their desire to study the techniques of hatching and cross-hatching. Elsewhere in the Album are other drawings, sketches after and, probably, designs for portraits or portrait prints, and a succession of life drawings, some accompanied by drawn copies. We hope to consider these - and the other prints in the album - more fully on another occasion but, suffice it to say here, the presence of these life drawings indicates that the Album functioned as more than a repository for the Holms's most cherished prints. Though the drawings are not highly accomplished, they suggest that the Holms aspired to levels of technical competence in draughtsmanship closer to conti-
ental standards than to those of most provincial English painters in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. This in turn suggests that the Holmes' concept of what a painter should be was something closer to French, Netherlands or Italian ideals than might have been expected from Chester painters at this time. If this is so, the prints in the album would have functioned not only as a source of design details to be closely copied in one project or another, but as an inspiration for the Holmes' entire production. It is true that we are as yet unable to identify artworks by the Holmes. However, there are clues in the nature of the Album collection indicating the artistic aspirations of this dynasty of Chester herald-painters, and their own ideas about what a painter could, and should be. It is noticeable that the Album abounds in both printed and drawn images of the human figure, especially seen full-length, depicted in vigorous action or in unusual positions of repose. The lacunae of the print collection are also interesting: there are no flower prints, no emblem prints, few 'celebrity' portraits except for royalty, no costume prints or topography, and none of the sheets of sheets, ears and eyes conventionally published for students to copy early on in their training. On others, of academic drawings of nude men, demonstrates how the visual world of this family of Chester herald-painters was expanding during the 17th century.

Another aspect of this collection's significance undoubtedly lies in the Holmes' role as masters of their guild who took on apprentices on a regular basis, and in the likely use of these images as models to be emulated by the next generation. This application seems more than the usual model-work which lay at the heart of apprenticeship to contemporary crafts, because the prints and drawings in the Album allowed the masters to teach styles which, at least in the elder Holmes' case, had not been part of his own apprenticeship. Thomas Chaloner the herald painter no doubt taught Randle Holme the Elder the elements of heraldic painting, a long-standing and traditional form of English vernacular painting. But by using these images as his models, Holme was able to teach his apprentices, and they their, styles and perspectives which were entirely new and novel. In the process they elevated their metier from artisanal craft to 'art' in the course of one or two generations.

Proof of this pudding does not yet lie in any surviving work of the Holmes themselves, for none has been able to be identified. But it does seem to lie in the work of the former apprentice to Holme the Elder, and contemporary and friend of Holme the Younger, John Souch (1594-1645). Following his apprenticeship with Randle Holme the Elder between 1607 and 1617, Souch became a well known and well-patronized painter of portraits for the regional gentry and middle classes of the Chester hinterland, over a dozen of which survive to the present day. It is hard to imagine that Souch, who remained close to both Holmes for most of his life, did not benefit from the very same sorts of images which the latter were collecting, and some at least of which probably found their way into the Album before us.

Souch's Sir Thomas Astor at the Deathbed of his Wife, of 1635 (Pl 6) reflects the training the painter received from his master. Souch was a mature artist when he painted this group portrait. He was fully capable of rendering lifelike human figures and capturing the nuances of different textiles. He had real difficulty, though, in placing his figures naturallyistically in...
relation to one another, and in recreating a visually convinc-
ing, illusionistic interior. Not only does Sir Thomas Lean towards the left, but the cradle, the bookcase, and the bed itself are oddly angled. One has only to consider what Rubens might have made of a similar composition to recognize that for all its power and sophistication, Sir Thomas Aston reveals the limitations of its creator's English provincial training. Evidently Randle Holme was able to teach his pupil how to paint people (and coats of arms), but architectural perspec-
tive was beyond him, or of little interest to him. And indeed, the Randle Holme Album is singularly lacking in prints sug-
gestng any serious interest in perspective or architecture. It is hard to believe that no such prints were available, given what is already in the Album. Admittedly, the Holmes may well have accumulated architectural prints in a different album, or relied on architectural books. However, Souch's difficulties in Sir Thomas Aston point to something else: to ignorance or dis-
interest in one aspect of contemporary continental art on the part of the Holmes.

Conclusion

Taken in all, the Holme album offers a snapshot of the grow-
ing interest of regionally-based herald-painters and painters-trainers, artists craftsmen working very much in the English vernacular tradition, within a wider visual culture. The Album shows how one family of such painters gathered paintings and drawings of both domestic and foreign provenance to learn about how to convey contemporary styles and subjects in a more avant-garde visual language than that traditionally available in provincial England. Many of these images, drawings as well as engravings, seem to have been intended in a very broad sense as didactic models: not perhaps for the gentle-
men apprentices to whom Evelyn referred and certainly not for children. Not either as patterns to be copied by appren-
tices: there were already drawing manuals designed for that purpose. But they appear to have served as sources of inspi-
ration, for the Holmes themselves and perhaps their advanced apprentices or fellow gildsmen such as Souch, from which to appreciate and understand a higher level of draughtsmanship and design than was yet available to a native, vernacular, English School painter of the day. In this sense images like this will have inspired and encouraged the leap from the world of Thomas Chaloner and Holme the Elder to that of the latter's apprentice John Souch: a world expanding beyond the traditions of English vernacular por-
trature, moving from anonymous work to signed work, and from craftsman to artist.

The Album therefore affirms that the Holmes were more than producers of visual images and masters to their appren-
tices. The very act of collecting these items, and of providing them with personal initials which surely must mark the pride of ownership rather than authorship, identifies the Holmes also as collectors. To go even further, the aesthetic quality of many of the items in the Album, and the contemporary reputa-
tion of some of those virtual virtuosos of their times who produced them, allows us to see the Holmes as early but genu-
ine and self-conscious connoisseurs. To some considerable degree, the Album represents a collection of prints that were admired, enjoyed and hence preserved, not chiefly for their religious or political subject-matter, which was seen as relatively rel-
tant, but for their design and aesthetic qualities and for the contemporary reputation of their producers. Though the Holmes' decidedly middling status and income must have placed numerous coveted works out of their reach, many of these prints are nevertheless of fine quality. One or two, cer-
tainly including Goltzius's St. Sebastian Bowing, Placing Right, are real prizes and would have been assets to any European portrait collection of that time. The Holmes's acquisitions became 'their' Titians, 'their' Maarten van Heemskercks, 'their' Goltzius, and 'their' Lucas van Leyden. When some prints were beyond their power to acquire, they either drew copies of such prints themselves, or acquired drawn copies of them. In that regard the material footprint of the Album speaks to the development of a fashionable material culture, not simply in the great metropolis, but also in relatively remote regions of the realm, and fixes that arrival at a full generation before Pepys and Evelyn set about their labours in London.

The authors would like to thank Reemyn Pannone and Gillian Kennedy for their assistance in the preparation of this article.


2 The Holme album contains no portraits of men or women, although the Album contains some of the Holme's self-portraits.


4 See also the Bowron family album of 61 mezzotint portraits, mostly after Lev, Van Dyck, and Goltzius, by Alexander Bowron (British Library and Archive at the National Portrait Gallery, London).

5 See also the Bowron family album of 61 mezzotint portraits, mostly after Lev, Van Dyck, and Goltzius, by Alexander Bowron (British Library and Archive at the National Portrait Gallery, London).


8 See also the Bowron family album of 61 mezzotint portraits, mostly after Lev, Van Dyck, and Goltzius, by Alexander Bowron (British Library and Archive at the National Portrait Gallery, London).

9 See also the Bowron family album of 61 mezzotint portraits, mostly after Lev, Van Dyck, and Goltzius, by Alexander Bowron (British Library and Archive at the National Portrait Gallery, London).

This content downloaded from 132.205.7.55 on Mon, 01 Aug 2016 14:03:13 UTC
All use subject to http://about.jstor.org/terms
22. Harlowe MS 2001, image 3, £10d.
23. Harlowe MS 2001, image 10, £10d.
25. The cheap woodcuts were marketed, along with popular ballads and broadsides, by itinerant hawkers and peddlers, and are now rare. For an example of such a woodcut, printed on the same sheet as verses, see the portrait of Queen Elizabeth I, 1595 (British Library, 16th. Collection no. 11) reproduced in Terri Cooper, *The Queen’s Visual Presence*..., David Starkey, Elizabeth the Exhibition at the National Maritime Museum, ed Susan Doran, ex cat. (National Maritime Museum, London, 2005), p178.
26. Queen Elizabeth used varying interpretations of the Pelican and Phoenix as her reign progressed to address contemporary anxieties about her gender, marital status, and—in the absence of a declared heir—her approaching death. For Crispin I’s earlier portrait prints of the Queen, in which the Pelican and Phoenix are prominent, see Anne Thackeray Tingling, Elizabeth as Empress: A Portrait Engraving in the National Gallery of Canada, *National Gallery of Canada Review*, Ottawa, 2005, vol 9, p15-19.
27. Sheriffs, *Such a vivacious likeness*, p27.
29. This is the first state of the print. In the second, the plate was altered to update James I's face in keeping with a new standard portrait by Simon van de Passe (1566-1650). See Griffiths and Gerrard, *The Print in Stuart Britain*, p48, cat. no. 6 ( nep.)
32. *A Dominus faciem eum illud, et est notable in ovulis nostris.* (Psalms 118, line 23) *This is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes*.
34. Harlowe MS 2001, image 1, £10.
35. Harlowe MS 2001, image 94.5lb.
36. See Griffiths and Gerrard, *The Print in Stuart Britain*, p7. *It would be absurd to pretend that British print production of the seventeenth century is in any way comparable with what was being produced on the Continent. The gap was enormous, and did not begin to close until the eighteenth century*.
37. *It would be absurd to pretend that British print production of the seventeenth century is in any way comparable with what was being produced on the Continent. The gap was enormous, and did not begin to close until the eighteenth century.*
38. See Griffiths and Gerrard, *The Print in Stuart Britain*, p7. *It would be absurd to pretend that British print production of the seventeenth century is in any way comparable with what was being produced on the Continent. The gap was enormous, and did not begin to close until the eighteenth century.*
39. See Griffiths and Gerrard, *The Print in Stuart Britain*, p7. *It would be absurd to pretend that British print production of the seventeenth century is in any way comparable with what was being produced on the Continent. The gap was enormous, and did not begin to close until the eighteenth century.*