



A pair of Viennese porcelain twin handled vases and covers, c.1880-1900, each vase of elongated tapering form with cerise ground, richly gilded with stylised flowers, cream and gilt cartouches and decorated to the body, each with a scene after Sir Joshua Reynolds, reserved within a gilt and turquoise 'jewelled' border, underglaze blue "beehive" mark and titles of images to base, 41.5cm.

The single smaller vase was made in the same factory and decorated by the same artist. It has the same two images on opposite sides of the vase, 21.5cm, including stand.

There was a large export trade in English prints in the 18th century and the scenes on these vases were copied from black and white mezzotint engravings so that the colours are totally different from Reynolds's original oils as the artist who decorated the vases has made up his own colours. The left image is taken from *Reddere Personae scit convenientia cuique* [known as Garrick between Tragedy and Comedy] engraved by Edward Fisher and published in 1762 and the right image is taken from *The Hon.ble Mrs. Beresford. Mrs. Gardiner. The Right Hon.ble Anne Viscountess Townshend* (The Montgomery Sisters), engraved by Thomas Watson, published in 1776 and republished in 1784 with the title "Three Graces Decorating Hymen". The collection includes superb proof impressions of both of these prints and these are illustrated in this booklet.



**Sir Joshua Reynolds**, an 18<sup>th</sup> century wax portrait by T.R. Poole. A daguerreotype photograph of this portrait was exhibited at Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery in their 2009 exhibition "Sir Joshua Reynolds – The Acquisition of Genius".

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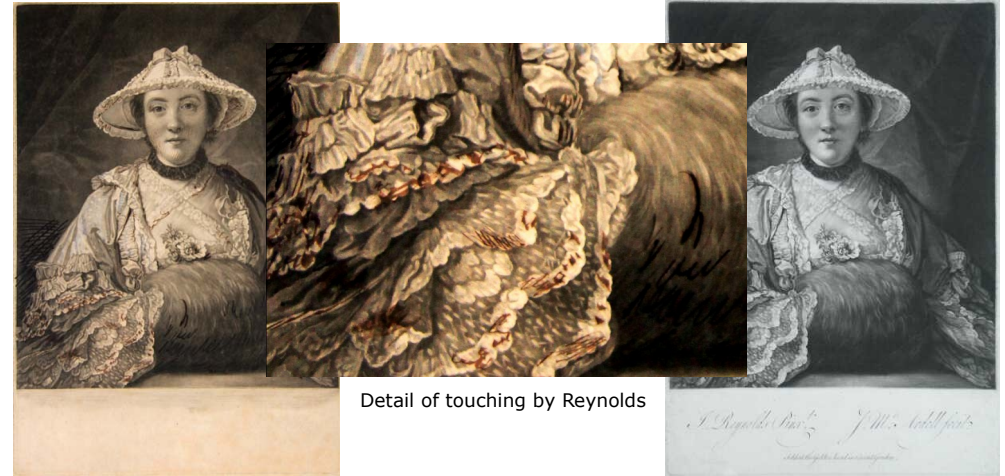
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## Sir Joshua Reynolds

### The Rob Dixon Reynolds Collection

A unique collection of fine prints and other objects  
after Sir Joshua Reynolds, P.R.A



**Lady Fenhoulet**, mezzotint after Sir Joshua Reynolds, engraved and published by James McArdell in 1760. The first is a unique early unfinished proof impression that has been touched (or corrected) in ink and chalk by Sir Joshua Reynolds. Although touching of engraver's unfinished proofs by the original artist was commonplace, very few proof impressions touched by Reynolds are known to have survived. The second impression above is a standard published state.

Fine prints engraved in the 18<sup>th</sup> century after the paintings of Sir Joshua Reynolds were widely sought after from the time that they were first published. With increasing demand outstripping limited supply, prices rose continually for about 150 years until a single proof impression of Valentine Green's mezzotint of "The Ladies Waldegrave" after Sir Joshua Reynolds, from the Fritz Reiss collection, sold at auction in 1923 for 2,900 guineas (£3,045), the equivalent of perhaps £180,000 today. That was a world record price for any print at that time, even higher than those achieved for any Rembrandt etchings up to then. That impression is now in my collection.

Fine English mezzotints are amongst the most exceptional prints engraved in any medium at any time in any place. Proof mezzotints, particularly those engraved after Reynolds's originals, were collected by Royalty, the aristocracy and the very wealthy, in the United Kingdom and Europe and later in the United States. They competed to assemble the best collections that money could buy, to demonstrate their good taste and perhaps their wealth, in the same way that the super rich today collect Ferraris and other supercars.

My research suggests that only 50 proof impressions of "The Ladies Waldegrave" and many of the other best known mezzotint plates were printed. Many of these are in museum collections around the world, others have been destroyed and some are not known. Because so few fine prints after Reynolds come onto the marketplace these days, it seems most unlikely that it will ever be possible in the future to assemble another fine collection of such prints.

“The Ladies Waldegrave” was part of *The Beauties of the Present Age*, the most important and historically most sought after set of mezzotints, engraved and published by Valentine Green from 1779 to 1782 after Sir Joshua Reynolds. My collection has the only known complete set of the eleven *Beauties* in first proof state and, despite its rarity, also has a second superb proof impression of “The Ladies Waldegrave” from the Martin Erdmann Collection.

With the Depression, mezzotint prices collapsed, so that, when I became interested in the 1970s, they were very affordable, and, over a 40 year period, I was able to accumulate an outstanding collection. Many of my impressions have come from the finest collections of the past, such as those of Sir Thomas Lawrence P.R.A, Queen Victoria, the Duke of Buccleuch, Fritz Reiss, Martin Erdmann, John Charrington, Sir Edward Hulton, Bt and others. As a result, my collection is at least as fine as any assembled at any time in the past, even though fine impressions are even harder to find today. Despite their wealth, these collectors often had to make do with non-proof impressions for some of the plates because there were no proofs available at any price. I have managed to acquire fine proof copies of all the most important mezzotint plates.

My collection includes nearly 700 prints after Reynolds, with a large number of really fine early proof impressions, quite a few unfinished impressions, with several touched unfinished working proofs, including one touched by Reynolds himself and others by the engravers; also contemporary copper plates, mezzotint transfer engravings on glass of two plates from *The Beauties of the Present Age*, possibly created in Valentine Green's studio, and impressions of unrecorded plates. Impressions of previously unrecorded states in the collection show that there was rather more reworking of plates than had been known. This satisfied a demand that was much higher than had previously been thought. A large number of the prints are in matching fine frames, made about 1880-1920. There are also mezzotint engraver's tools.

The breadth and depth of my collection allowed me to undertake in-depth research into print making after Reynolds and this has provided considerable evidence of Reynolds's direct involvement in the print trade. He instigated the engraving of many of the prints and often selected the engraver. A significant number of mezzotint plates were engraved in his studio by his studio assistants, under his supervision. I have not found any record of these engravers being apprenticed to other mezzotinters, and it even seems possible that they learnt the process of mezzotint engraving from Reynolds, although he did not do any engraving himself. When apprenticed to Thomas Hudson, Reynolds no doubt acted as a runner, taking Hudson's paintings to leading mezzotinters such as James McArdell, where he would surely have watched and learnt the theory of mezzotint engraving. Reynolds was very aware of the importance of prints as a means of enhancing a painter's reputation and believed that mezzotint was the most appropriate method for translating his high chiaroscuro paintings into another medium. There was a large export trade in English prints and many of these were copied in the continent of Europe, sometimes rather badly.

I have written a scholarly catalogue of my collection with several essays and detailed entries for 600 of my prints. This contains over 110,00 words. A few prints and other objects from the collection are illustrated here.



**Cupid and Psyche**, mezzotint, fine impression printed in colours, by William Say after Sir Joshua Reynolds, published 12<sup>th</sup> February 1816 by Thomas Macklin at the Poet's Gallery, 39 Fleet Street, London. There is also a black and white proof impression of this plate in my collection.



**What avails ingenuous Worth,  
Spritely Wit, or noble Birth? and  
Melt to Love the yielding Fair,  
teach her not to give Despair.**

Stipple engravings, printed in colours, after Sir Joshua Reynolds, possibly engraved by Thomas Kirk. This pair of previously unrecorded prints was intended to be trimmed to the image and mounted on fans. They were copied from other prints after Reynolds.







**Reddere Personae scit convenientia cuique** [Garick between Tragedy and Comedy], mezzotint after Sir Joshua Reynolds by Edward Fisher, published 1762. Of the five portraits painted by Reynolds of his friend David Garrick, this is the most famous. It was not commissioned by Garrick, and was a piece of opportunism by Reynolds, to associate himself with the most famous actor of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. He soon sold his painting to George Montagu-Dunk, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Halifax. The engraver, Edward Fisher, was a neighbour of Reynolds in Leicester Fields (now Leicester Square) in London and was presumably selected by him to engrave the plate. The painting is at Waddesdon Manor.



**Master Crewe, as Henry VIII and Lady Caroline Montagu, Daughter of his Grace the Duke of Buccleugh** (as Winter).

Mezzotints by John Raphael Smith after Sir Joshua Reynolds, P.R.A., Fine scratched letter proof impressions, published 1775 and 1777.



**Lady Elizabeth Laura, Lady Charlotte Maria & Lady Anne Horatia, Daughters to James late Earl of Waldegrave.** [The Ladies Waldegrave], mezzotint after Sir Joshua Reynolds, engraved and published by Valentine Green, 1<sup>st</sup> December 1781.

Provenance: This superb proof impression belonged to John Tetlow of Alkington Hall (Lugt 2868). His collection was sold on 14-15<sup>th</sup> July, 1874 by Capes, Dunn & Co. in Manchester. This copy was presumably purchased there by a (Mr?) "Mitchell" who sold it in 1875 for 235gns (£246.15s). It became the property of the Duke of Buccleuch and Christies sold it as part of his collection in March 1887 for 250gns (£262.10s) as lot 1087. It passed into the hands of Fritz Reiss (possibly via Agnews) and was sold by Christies as part of his collection on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> December 1923 for 2,900gns (£3,045) as lot 119. **This was a world record price for any print at that time**, an extraordinary amount, equivalent today to about £150,000. Proofs were originally sold by Green for 2gns (£2.05). It was purchased by a commission agent, a Mr. Arthurton, and press cuttings of the time suggested that he had purchased it for "the former owner of a group of newspapers" although he would not reveal his client's name.

It then disappeared for 90 years but resurfaced when it was sold by Busby Auctioneers on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2013 at Bridport, Dorset, as lot 188, with the provenance of Sir Edward Hulton, Kt (1906-1988). The client of Mr. Arthurton in 1923 had been his father, Sir Edward Hulton, Bt., the proprietor of the London Evening Standard. His son did not inherit his father's baronetcy as he was an illegitimate child. He founded the Picture Post and received a knighthood. His collection passed to his son who was the vendor at the Busby sale. The impression was purchased by me.

My collection has a second superb proof impression of this plate from the Martin Erdmann Collection and a very poor mid or late 19<sup>th</sup> century impression, printed when the plate had become extraordinarily worn due to excessive demand. A proof copy of the print hung in the dining room of Strawberry Hill House, the home of Horace Walpole who had commissioned the painting of his great-nieces.





**Mrs Hartley**, mezzotint by Giuseppe Marchi after Sir Joshua Reynolds, P.R.A., the first impression an unrecorded unfinished working proof and the second in the first finished scratched letter proof state, published by Marchi 20<sup>th</sup> February 1773. The very early unfinished impression clearly shows how the mezzotint engraver works from black to white, whereas all other engraving methods work from white to black. Elizabeth Hartley was a very popular actress. Reynolds selected Marchi, one of his studio assistants, to engrave his original painting. Marchi, who lived with Reynolds, would have engraved the plate in Reynolds's studio and under his supervision.



**Lady Charlotte Fitzwilliam** was the first plate to be published after a painting by Reynolds. This mezzotint was engraved by James McArdell. Reynolds wrote in July 1754 to Countess Fitzwilliam, the mother of the fourteen year old sitter, "to beg the liberty of having a Mezzotinto Print from it, which will be finish'd whilst the Picture is drying, so that it will not be detain'd on that account. If your Ladyship

has no objection to having a Print taken from it I shall beg the favour to know what is to be writ [sic] under the Print". This is the only print that he is known to have published. He eventually passed (or sold?) the plate to McArdell and the publication line was changed. The first impression shown above is a fine proof before letters whilst the second somewhat less well balanced impression is of the standard published state with lettering. The plate seems to have been heavily inked to compensate for wear caused by printing. The third copy shows that the plate has been reworked, the background to the right now much lighter than the curtain. This is a previously unrecorded state. Even at this early stage of Reynolds's career, there was clearly considerable demand for this print.



**The Hon.ble Mrs. Beresford. Mrs. Gardiner. The Right Hon.ble Anne Viscountess Townshend**, mezzotint by Thomas Watson after Reynolds, published 1<sup>st</sup> January 1776. Depicting the "Irish Graces", the three beautiful daughters of William Montgomery, this is one of the most famous prints after Reynolds. This superb impression is of an unrecorded early proof state, of which only one other impression is known, found in the collection of Christopher Lennox-Boyd by Nicholas Stogdon, and now in the collection of the National Gallery of Art, Washington.



**The Executors & Family of Sir Joshua Reynolds return Thanks for the tribute ...**, etching by Francesco Bartolozzi after E.F.Burney, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1792.

This funeral ticket was issued by Reynolds's executors to all who attended his funeral. When the front of Reynolds's funeral cortège arrived at St. Paul's Cathedral, the rear was still coming out of Somerset House, about one mile away. Provenance: Benjamin West, P.R.A., Reynolds's successor as (2<sup>nd</sup>) President of the Royal Academy. Copies would have been distributed in order of precedence, and, after Royalty, West would have received this early fine copy.