

# A Painter's Progress: Matthew Pratt and *The American School*

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IN 1766 MATTHEW PRATT (1734–1805), a colonial American painter residing in London, exhibited a canvas titled *The American School* with the Society of Artists of Great Britain (Figure 1). In the histories of American art, this work occupies a position of importance out of all proportion to the esteem accorded its artist, whose reputation is based exclusively on that work. Representing a group of artists in Benjamin West's London studio, *The American School* has been widely understood to celebrate the coming of age of American art and owes its canonical status to the association with West, who appears at the extreme left. A recent émigré from the colonies, West (1738–1820) was the first British painter successfully to free himself from the stricture of portraiture and to enter the more professionally rewarding realm of history painting. Thus he fulfilled the highest aims of painting as defined—although never fully achieved—by Jonathan Richardson and Joshua Reynolds. West also became a legendary mentor and teacher (the role in which he appears in *The American School*), while Pratt remained a minor provincial painter.

These factors, which can be appreciated only in hindsight, contributed to historical reconstruction of *The American School* as an homage to West, leaving Pratt, as it were, out of the picture altogether. Indeed, historians do not even agree as to which figure is Pratt among the participants in the scene, whose identities have confounded writers for at least one hundred years; most assume he is the man receiving a drawing critique.<sup>1</sup> The only figure for whom there is consensus is the evident instructor, the man standing with a palette, believed to be West largely on the basis of resemblance to portraits of that artist. Of course, identification by resemblance is always problematic because it fails to account for

the particularities of artistic style.<sup>2</sup> In this case, however, the existence of an exactly contemporary portrait of West by Pratt offers a greater than usual measure of certitude (Figure 2).

But who in this picture is Pratt, and why? Before I argue this point, I should make clear that it is not my purpose to resurrect Pratt's admittedly rather feeble career or to name all the players in *The American School*. The picture, far from passively mirroring an actual situation, represents an active attempt to shape public perception of the colonial painter.<sup>3</sup> And yet—the driving ambition of West and John Singleton Copley notwithstanding—Pratt's picture has seemed to confirm the tentativeness and modesty of the American school during the late colonial period. I believe the work far more ambitious than usually credited. Pratt's *American School* predicts for Americans a vigorous and authoritative role, a leading role, in the struggle to establish British parity with the greatest artistic achievements of the Western world.

When Matthew Pratt arrived in London in midsummer 1764, he was not a novice to the practice of art, at least not by colonial standards.<sup>4</sup> Born in Philadelphia in 1734, the son of a goldsmith, Pratt had been apprenticed at age fifteen and soon after the death of his father to his maternal uncle, James Claypoole, a "Limner & Painter in general."<sup>5</sup> In other words, Claypoole painted signs and houses as well as portraits.<sup>6</sup> Approximately three years after the release from his indenture in 1755, Pratt began to paint portraits in Philadelphia.<sup>7</sup> Only two examples survive, both dated around 1760; they depict Benjamin Franklin (possibly copied after his portrait by Benjamin Wilson) and Elizabeth Moore Pratt, the artist's bride. Surely overstating Pratt's indebtedness to West, scholars have discerned the young Benjamin West's influence on the latter picture, noting Pratt's adoption of mannerisms that West had absorbed from the English painter John Wollaston.<sup>8</sup> It is more likely that Pratt took certain

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Figure 1. Matthew Pratt (1734–1805), *The American School*, 1765. Oil on canvas, 91.4 x 127.6 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Samuel P. Avery, 1897

characteristics, such as the distinctively almond-shaped eye, from his own observation of Wollaston, who was active in Philadelphia in 1758.

Pratt sailed for London as escort for his cousin Elizabeth Shewell, who had become engaged to West prior to the latter's departure from Philadelphia in 1760. After three years of study in Italy and an auspicious year in England, West had sent for his fiancée. Pratt gave his cousin in marriage and then accompanied the Wests on their honeymoon (his own wife had remained in Philadelphia) before moving with them into a fine town house in Castle Street, Leicester Fields.<sup>9</sup>

Among Pratt's earliest works in London must be the pendant portraits of Elizabeth and Benjamin West, which were perhaps a wedding gift (Figures 2, 3). These reveal substantive improvement in

Pratt's artistic skill over the meager ability he demonstrated in his early Philadelphia work. As a member of West's household, he enjoyed constant contact with a painter far more sophisticated than any of his American experience. From a practical point of view, therefore, Pratt is justifiably considered the first of West's many pupils. Pratt himself did not characterize the association in this way; as he later recorded: West "rendered me every good & kind office . . . , as if I was his Father, friend and brother."<sup>10</sup> It is well here to recall Pratt's real familial relationship to West, his prior experience as an artist, and his seniority to West by four years. Pratt had little reason—and apparently no inclination—to overstate his artistic debt to West, however great that debt might actually have been. Elizabeth West, who thought Pratt's talent "merely mechanical," de-

clared in private correspondence that her cousin possessed “a great share of vanity & always over-rated his Ability.”<sup>11</sup> In a self-portrait believed to date early in his London sojourn, Pratt indeed projects an air of assurance: brass porte-crayon in hand, he appears the relaxed, independent, and self-confident artist (Figure 4).

Pratt took immediate advantage of the professional opportunities that London offered and America lacked: in 1765 he exhibited a *Fruit Piece* (now lost) with the Society of Artists, one of two artist organizations founded earlier in the decade. This must have been a relatively modest work, but in the following year he showed the ambitious *American School*—the only one of his paintings known to bear a signature and a date, 1765, marked at the lower left-hand corner of the canvas depicted on the easel. Pratt evidently developed the theme of “art” as he worked on the painting. A recent thorough analysis of *The American School* revealed that the original composition did not include the easel, the palettes and brushes, the boy with the portfolio, or the plaster bust.<sup>12</sup> At the outset, then, Pratt planned

a conventional conversation piece; in the end, he produced an artistic manifesto. The picture resonates with proud authorship, and by its internal logic Pratt is the only plausible candidate for the man at the easel. The full implications of this identification—and therefore also the richness of this image—remain underexplored.

Consider the details of *The American School*. Five male subjects pursue various art-related activities in an interior space. On the far side of the table the smallest and apparently youngest removes several sheets of paper from a portfolio. The next student, somewhat older, pauses in the act of drawing a bust that rests on the table (its form appears at the corner of his paper). On the one hand, this statue refers to the classical past, the well-spring of Western art; but here antiquity seems to be looking to the moderns, since the bust is positioned so that it appears to observe the lesson. Significantly, it represents a child considerably younger than any of the students, of an age when the intellect and motor skills remain insufficiently well developed to benefit from artistic training such as the painting depicts. So young a

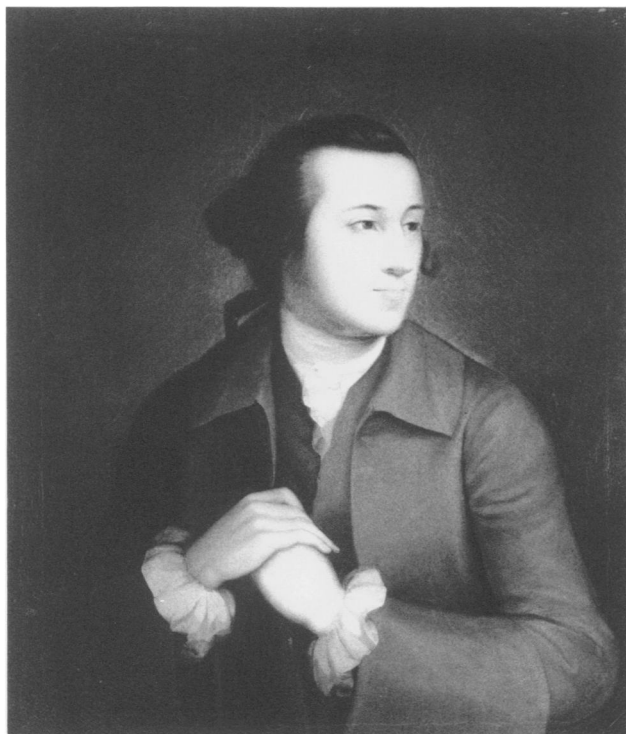


Figure 2. Matthew Pratt, *Benjamin West*, 1765. Oil on canvas, 77.5 x 63.8 cm. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Gift of Mrs. Rosalie V. Tiers Jackson (photo: Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts)



Figure 3. Matthew Pratt, *Mrs. Benjamin West*, ca. 1765. Oil on canvas, 84.1 x 64.1 cm. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Gift of Mrs. Rosalie V. Tiers Jackson (photo: Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts)



Figure 4. Matthew Pratt, *Self-portrait*, ca. 1764. Oil on canvas, 76.2 x 62.9 cm. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (photo: National Portrait Gallery)

child might be regarded as a lump of matter, full of potential, yet to be molded.<sup>13</sup> The boy who has been drawing the bust has not been idly distracted but looks on and listens to the critique taking place at his right. The object of discussion, a drawing (indiscernible to present-day viewers) on blue paper, is held by a seated young man, against whose chair the commentator leans in the cross-legged serpentine stance signifying gentility in countless English male portraits of the period. Another serpentine line, extending from the bust on the table to the standing man, knits together these figures, collectively absorbed and engaged in art by touch, sight, and sound.

To the right of the composition appears another man, seated in a fashionable Chippendale chair. Although he watches and listens to the instruction that unites the group on the left, his autonomy is guaranteed: compositionally by his isolation in front of the rectilinear and light-colored canvas and narratively by the activity in which he engages. This man paints. Not only does he—like the man giving instruction—hold palette, brushes, and mahlstick (a tool used by artists to steady their hand while paint-

ing); he also sits at an easel, resting his foot casually upon its base, having turned, we feel, only briefly away from his work. In its present state, the depicted canvas appears blank except for a bit of drapery in the upper right-hand corner. Ultraviolet light reveals, however, that it once held the outline of a veiled woman, which has become transparent over time (Figure 5).<sup>14</sup> Pratt, clearly, does not attempt to hide the labor of the hand that the art of painting involves, but he invests that labor with dignity by emphasizing qualities of mind. All of the participants in this scene appear thoughtful and engaged as they listen, look, or teach, affirming a point on which academic theorists insisted: intellect drives the painter's skill.<sup>15</sup>

Pratt's *American School* offers condensed visual exposition of the recommendations for artistic education offered in treatises popular throughout the eighteenth century. Roger de Piles, giving oft-repeated advice, counseled that the student should commence at a very young age, training the eye and the hand in exercises proceeding from geometry (which "teaches to reason"), perspective, anatomy and proportion, study after the antique and such modern masters as Raphael, and study of the model



Figure 5. Detail of Figure 1, right side of painting under ultraviolet light

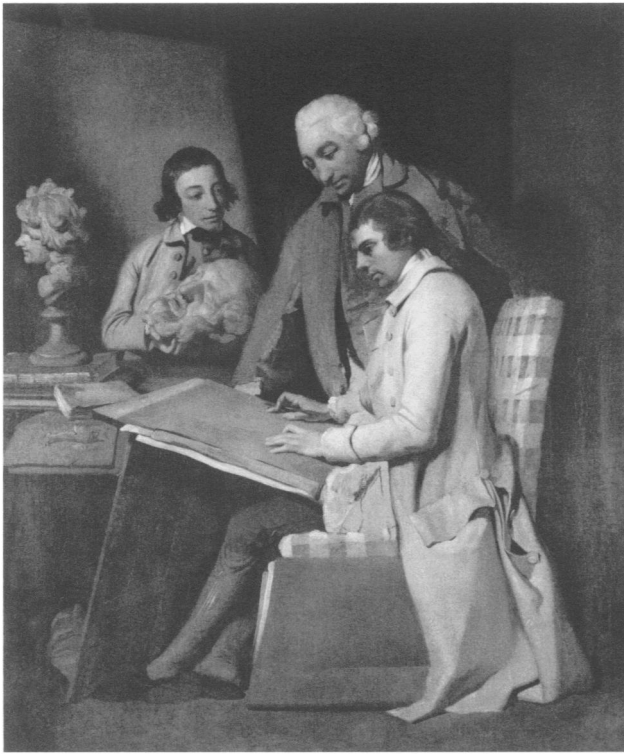


Figure 6. John Hamilton Mortimer (1740–79), *Self-portrait with Joseph Wilton and a Student*, mid-1760s. Oil on canvas, 76.2 x 63.5 cm. London, Royal Academy of Arts (photo: Royal Academy of Arts)

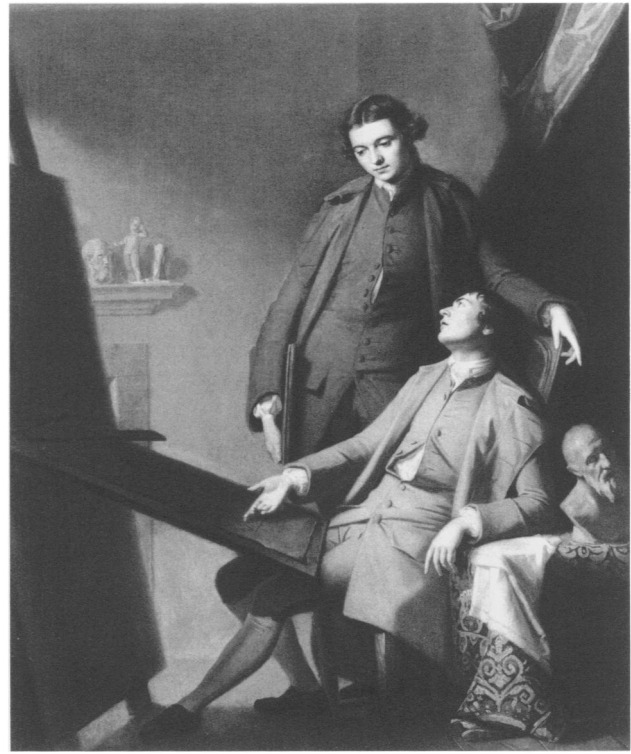


Figure 7. George Romney (1734–1802), *Peter and James Romney*, 1766. Oil on canvas, 110.5 x 87 cm. New Haven, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection (photo: Yale Center for British Art)

and prints.<sup>16</sup> After gaining basic mastery in design through these studies, the student learns coloring, again by emulation of the masters and by copying nature. Books such as de Piles's focused on the proper sequence of artistic education and on the theory of art, not the mechanics of art-making. Practical manuals, by contrast, provided the "how-to," offering detailed technical information and occasionally promising that success "may be attained in a short Time without a Master," as the subtitle to *The compleat drawing-master* announced.<sup>17</sup> Artists for whom formal training was unavailable or limited—those in provincial areas, for example—often had to rely on such books.<sup>18</sup> However, few can have considered them an adequate substitute for study "under the Discipline of a knowing Master"; as Du Fresnoy declared: "He who has begun well has already perform'd half his work."<sup>19</sup>

Pratt was far from alone in choosing the education of the artist as a subject for painting. At the Society of Artists exhibition in 1766, his work joined Nathaniel Hone's *Boy Deliberating on His Drawing*. John Hamilton Mortimer (1740–79) likewise focused on drawing in a painting (Figure 6) of ap-

proximately the same date, which includes a number of elements familiar from *The American School*: a young man drawing (believed to be Mortimer himself), another man (perhaps Joseph Wilton [1722–1803]) offering guidance, a boy who watches and listens but does not yet fully participate, and casts after the antique. George Romney (1734–1802) featured an even earlier stage of artistic training in a painting exhibited in 1766 with the Free Society of Artists, the rival to the Society of Artists. Although Romney's highly successful later career was very different from Pratt's, at this early point there are some interesting parallels. Exact contemporaries, each served a provincial apprenticeship, set up independent practice in the late 1750s, and moved to London a few years later.<sup>20</sup> Both clearly wished to identify themselves with theoretically orthodox artistic training.

Romney's painting, titled for exhibition *A Conversation*, shows his younger brothers in an intimate studio setting (Figure 7). Peter, an aspiring artist, makes a point to the attentive James about one of several geometric figures; presumably Peter has rendered the two triangles and circle with the aid of



the ruler and compass that rest on his drawing board. The activity reminds us that during the eighteenth century British artists still struggled to establish the dignity of painting as a liberal art, a cause in which the science of perspective, with geometry as its basis, played a key role. Virtually every tract on art since the Renaissance, theoretical and practical, made this point, and Leonardo da Vinci was an authoritative early voice. An English edition of his *Treatise on Painting* (1721), which Romney reportedly studied, begins: "Whoever would apply himself to painting, must, in the first place, learn perspective"; later Leonardo calls perspective "both the guide and the gate, . . . without which, it is impossible to succeed either in *designing*, or in any of the arts depending thereon."<sup>21</sup> Perspective is "the very soul of all painting," iterated Jean Dubreuil in 1726, "and that alone which can make the painter a master."<sup>22</sup> On a more practical level, a how-to book that Romney owned counseled: "Make your entrance [to the practice of art] . . . with plain geometrical figures, such as are the circle, square, oval, cone, triangle, cylinder, which at first . . . mark out with your rule and compass, till you can readily do it with your hand."<sup>23</sup>

Peter Romney engages in just such a pursuit, but not as a beginning artist, since he received instruction from his older brother George between 1759 and 1762 and was active as a painter (if without much success) by 1766. In this picture, Peter, in his turn, instructs James, demonstrating that a liberal art can be passed on by intellectual processes—an idea that *The American School* also endorses. Specifically, Peter indicates a triangle; he points to it with one hand, while looking upward, face in profile, at James. The exchange demonstrates a point made in contemporary drawing manuals: that the triangle offers an aid to the construction of the half face.<sup>24</sup>

Heads and hands figure prominently in Romney's painting. The eye is drawn first to James's head, brightly illuminated against a neutral background. His gaze directs us to Peter's open hand, and then our eye follows the line from Peter's arm to his face and then back (following his glance) to James's face. James's left arm is draped with studied casualness across the back of the chair, and his hand, reversing Peter's gesture, can be read as pointing to the bust on the table. The little group on the mantel echoes the principal figures: the putto mimics James's serpentine stance and, like him, gestures at a plaster head (while touching its own head). Romney again underscores an idea important in Pratt's *American*

*School* and to British artists of this period generally: that the painter succeeds not only by the skill of his hands but also by intellect. If Pratt's picture highlights mental skills, then it does not do so at the expense of the manual aspects of artistic creation. Following Jonathan Richardson, Pratt rejects the idea that making is more suspect than judging—that the painter, who uses his hands, ranks below the gentleman, who knows the theory of painting.<sup>25</sup> The artist, in Pratt's canvas, is both thinker and maker.

Only the recognition of West's later importance as teacher and public figure can have blinded viewers to the autobiographical aspect of *The American School*. This painting, surely, is not about Benjamin West (who is in shadow), but about Matthew Pratt, its author—the man in full illumination at the easel. Curiously, Pratt shows himself as right-handed in *The American School*, left-handed in the roughly contemporary self-portrait. If one assumes that he was right-handed, it is hard to imagine the left-handed representation, which records the reversal he saw in the mirror, as a merely careless error. Perhaps he wanted the viewer to see him as he saw himself, thereby marking the painting as a self-portrait and, in effect, signing it. In *The American School*, Pratt alone is shown in the process of painting, the highest level of achievement according to the system of academic education alluded to in the work itself: a measured progression of drawing engravings and casts after the antique, drawing from life, and, finally, painting. Pratt himself cannot have trained this way in America, although he possibly augmented his education in Britain. Undoubtedly he hungered for the dignity and authority that such artists as Reynolds and West ascribed to the painter who had pursued such academic study. In *The American School*, Pratt thus constructs and visually collapses a past that had not been his.

*The American School* also confidently projects Pratt's future. He shows himself as West's equal, a master in his own right no longer requiring guidance. He is at once the creator of *The American School*, the would-be artist of the canvas on the easel (which bears his signature), and—in the painting's present state—the subject of that canvas, since he appears in profile, silhouetted and centered against its blankness. But as already noted, the canvas once held the outline of a woman, a woman not present in the studio space (and, given Pratt's emphasis on pedagogy in this work, probably not to be construed as a portrait sitter outside our field of vision). Pratt

must conjure her from memory and imagination, using powers of mind, and, through technical mastery, give her life on the flat surface of the canvas. He has already painted a decorative swag, a common element in portraits of the period, but unlikely to be so fully realized at this early stage of a work. Its role in *The American School* belongs to the larger composition, which it closes at the upper right-hand corner and balances in providing an arching motif corresponding to the accented highlight on West's shoulder. Significantly, the blended pigments displayed conspicuously on Pratt's palette do not correspond to the drapery on the depicted canvas; rather, they are the blue and green that figure prominently in *The American School* itself. The parallel spatial relationship of the depicted and actual canvases reinforces their identification with one another. Pratt, in short, distinguishes the seated man at the easel—himself—as the creator of *The American School*.

Nineteenth-century references to Pratt's painting as the "School of West," "The London School of Artists," and "West's School of Painters in London" identify the work with its most famous subject but not (or only indirectly) with America.<sup>26</sup> The Society of Artists exhibition catalogue, however, confirms *The American School* as the original title, presumably the artist's own selection.<sup>27</sup> What, in 1766, distinguished this American school from any other?

Pratt may have wished to signal a contrast between the academy he depicted and the practice in Reynolds's studio across Leicester Square. James Northcote (1741–1831), who worked with Joshua Reynolds (1723–92) between 1771 and 1776, is the major source of information about Reynolds's studio practices, if a somewhat self-contradictory one. Despite his respect for Reynolds the artist, Northcote thought him "a very bad master in Art."<sup>28</sup> "His scholars," Northcote related (referring to Reynolds's assistants, of whom there were four in 1763), "were absolute strangers to Sir Joshua's manner of working. . . . He made use of colours and varnishes which they knew nothing of, and [they] always painted in a room distant from him."<sup>29</sup>

Northcote had something quite different to say about West: "West was a learned painter, for he knew all that had been done in the art from the beginning; he was exactly what is called 'the schools' in painting, for he did everything by rule, and could give you chapter and verse for every touch he put on the canvas. He was on that account the best pos-

sible teacher, because he could tell why and wherefore everything was to be done."<sup>30</sup> Northcote's assessment is borne out by (and probably based on) the testimony of West's three generations of pupils, who frequently referred to him as "a friend, a brother, or a father."<sup>31</sup> They found West the ideal teacher because he guided by positive example and allowed them ample freedom to exercise their developing skills; the diversity of their production bears out his leniency. West, for his part, would explicitly denounce pedagogical rigidity and efforts to induce conformity in a forum that only invited comparison with Reynolds: West's first Discourse as president of the Royal Academy, a position in which he succeeded Reynolds in 1792.<sup>32</sup>

In *The American School*, West plays a genial supervisory role, his primacy seemingly signaled by the fact that he alone wears a hat. But men of West's generation no longer wore hats indoors, so the distinction might appear negative to eighteenth-century viewers. There is, however, another possibility, consistent with the egalitarian tenor of West's studio: Quaker men retained their hats indoors, removing them, whether indoors or out, for no authority save their God (as when praying). West drew attention to this practice in depicting his father and stepbrother with hats on in *The Artist's Family* (1772).<sup>33</sup> West himself was not a practicing Quaker, but his family portrait and other references to his Quaker heritage reveal his stake in the association nevertheless.<sup>34</sup> Perhaps he wanted to redeem a somewhat clouded past—his mother had been dismissed from the Quaker meeting as a young woman and her future offspring barred from membership as well. In claiming his hat-wearing Quaker relatives, West in effect also endorsed their sect's distrust of aristocratic society (although, in his fashionable powdered wig, he appears its perfect exponent in the family picture).<sup>35</sup> Pratt can have had little personal investment in or even knowledge of the West family's checkered past as Quakers, but in *The American School* he may well have intended the hat worn indoors to evoke the Quaker challenge to authority: the hat marks West—and the American school that he and Pratt led—as fundamentally nondeferential.<sup>36</sup> The fact that West wears a hat, at any rate, cannot signify that he has come in from out-of-doors since he holds palette, brushes, and mahlstick; these tools suggest that West has simply stepped away from an easel close by. Undoubtedly they also have symbolic significance, marking their bearer as a mature artist. Pratt's painting, in any

event, conveys the unmistakable impression of good-natured and open pedagogic exchange.

West taught his pupils in a manner that the leading educational theorists of the age would have approved. The critical importance of positive example, especially parental example, dominated John Locke's enormously influential *Some Thoughts concerning Education* (1693), reprinted nineteen times before 1761. Locke's model presented the mind at birth as a tabula rasa, to be written on by later experience; only exposure to positive role models could form an autonomous and self-reasoning adult. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the other giant in eighteenth-century pedagogy, disagreed with Locke on the possibility of educating children by reason, a faculty he considered to develop later in the maturation process. In *Émile, ou de l'éducation* (1762), Rousseau placed greater emphasis on the role of experience, arguing that children should be allowed to explore their "natural" inclinations, guided by the hidden hand of a wise adult.<sup>37</sup> Both mimicry or emulation and experiential training belonged to the proper artistic education as well. And just as the child needs a good parent, so the student must have an enlightened teacher; thus de Piles warned the master not to withhold instruction for fear of being surpassed by the pupil.<sup>38</sup> Reynolds, for whatever reason, guarded his method, leaving his "scholars" in the dark, according to Northcote. No evidence exists that West did.

The relatively egalitarian arrangement of *The American School* evokes the second St. Martin's Lane Academy, particularly under the leadership of William Hogarth (1697–1764). During the 1760s this was the only formal school for art instruction in London. West himself drew at the St. Martin's Lane Academy after returning from Italy in 1763 and, in 1766, he became one of its directors.<sup>39</sup> Hogarth's active association with the school had long since ended, however, and his opposition to the founding of a state academy along Continental lines had deepened his alienation from the community of artists with which West associated. Unlike members of that group, Hogarth rejected the traditional academic method of instruction based on copying and argued for nature as the ultimate source of beauty. Pratt's painting clearly endorses copying and a hierarchical system of training; but, at the same time, it champions intimate and friendly dialogue between artists at different stages of advancement, suggesting Pratt's fundamental sympathy with at least that aspect of Hogarth's pedagogy.



Figure 8. William Hogarth (1697–1764), *Self-portrait with Pug*, 1745. Oil on canvas, 90.2 x 69.9 cm. London, Tate Gallery (photo: Tate Gallery)

When Hogarth died in 1764, only two months after Pratt's arrival in London, the proud English painter—who once signed a portrait "W. Hogarth Anglus pinxt"—was something of a has-been in his native country.<sup>40</sup> But the artist's profile remained high in Philadelphia, where in 1763 William Williams, the peripatetic English painter who had earlier taught West, transacted business "at the sign of Hogarth's Head."<sup>41</sup> Hogarth's prints and, most important, his *Analysis of Beauty* were also available for study or purchase.<sup>42</sup> Whether or not Pratt ever read this book, it is unthinkable that he did not know it. Of course, many English artists, including Reynolds, rallied against Hogarth's treatise—not least because they disliked its author; this opposition gave the book a certain notoriety.<sup>43</sup> Among Americans, the *Analysis* seems to have fared better. Although West's opinion at the time is unknown, he later praised the *Analysis* as "of the highest value to every one studying the Art."<sup>44</sup> Other Americans agreed. John Trumbull, who was unusually well read in art



theory, portrayed himself with his elbow on a copy of Hogarth's *Analysis* in a self-portrait of 1777. And when Charles Willson Peale, after study with West between 1767 and 1769, set out to instruct members of his family in art, he initiated his brother St. George with the "line of beauty."<sup>45</sup> In *The American School*, the prominent serpentine configuration that unites the left-hand group (a figure that can be read in depth as well as across the surface of the canvas) suggests Pratt's own attentiveness to that characteristically Hogarthian device.

More suggestively, the manner of Pratt's self-portrayal in *The American School* evokes two of Hogarth's self-portraits, which had been engraved and prompted considerable verbal and visual commentary during Hogarth's lifetime. Pratt's isolation of his own form against the canvas—an unusual configuration in self-portraiture—recalls Hogarth's even more explicit presentation of himself as a work of art in the *Self-portrait with Pug* of 1745 (Figure 8); that picture introduced the line of beauty, well before publication of the *Analysis*, as a figure on the painter's palette.

In his final self-portrait, Hogarth placed himself at the easel (Figure 9). As first engraved, in 1758, the image bore the legend "Wm Hogarth, Serjeant Painter to His Majesty," an office that carried financial benefit but positioned its holder as a glorified house painter, in company with the Serjeant Plumber and the Rat-killer to the King—hence, Ronald Paulson has suggested, Hogarth's wry selection of the comic Muse as the subject of his canvas.<sup>46</sup> When the much-embittered Hogarth reworked the engraving in 1764, he abandoned the title and replaced the comic Muse with the satiric. The absence of a model in either version suggests Hogarth's desire to assert his own creativity at the sacrifice of his former insistence on the primacy of nature. It may also allude to a notational system that Hogarth advocated in the *Analysis*—a linear system of visual shorthand that would allow a painter to call to memory a figure taken from nature; even in the absence of the model, art can have nature at its base.<sup>47</sup> In notes unpublished during his lifetime Hogarth made clear the importance that such ability had for him: "Whoever can conceive part [of] a human figure with all its circumstances and variations when absent as distinct as he doth the 24 letters with their combinations is perhaps a greater painter . . . than ever yet existed."<sup>48</sup>

Pratt's pretense to greatness—his own and that of the American school—unquestionably extends be-

yond a boast of skill in visual mnemonics. In *The American School*, the lack of an external referent for the figure depicted on the internal canvas gives primacy to the artist's imagination. Pratt illustrates, in effect, a passage from the Dryden translation of Du Fresnoy's *The Art of Painting*: "At length I come to the work itself, and at first find only a bare stain'd Canvas, on which the sketch is to be disposed by the strength of a happy Imagination; which is what we properly call *Invention*."<sup>49</sup> Invention, the passage continues, "is a kind of Muse."<sup>50</sup> Using powers of invention, Pratt has sketched a figure on the canvas: the Muse herself.<sup>51</sup>

The Muse links the participants in *The American School* to a European classical tradition with which British artists of the period so fervently sought connection. West, as is well known, was among the earliest and most successful to forge that connection, thanks in significant measure to his lengthy period of study in Italy and close association with others in the forefront of Neoclassicism. Anton Raphael Mengs in particular held special importance for



Figure 9. William Hogarth, *Hogarth Painting the Comic Muse*, 1758. Engraving, 40.6 x 35.6 cm. New Haven, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection (photo: Yale Center for British Art)



Figure 10. Anton Raphael Mengs (1728–79), *Parnassus*, 1761. Fresco. Rome, Villa Albani (photo: Alinari/Art Resource)

West, who called the German painter—the only living artist whose work he copied after leaving America—his “favorite master.”<sup>52</sup> Both men moved in the circle of Cardinal Alessandro Albani, who, about the time of West’s arrival in Rome, commissioned Mengs to decorate the ceiling of the reception room in his new villa outside the city’s gates.

Mengs’s principal painting for Albani, *Parnassus*, represented Apollo with the nine Muses and their mother Mnemosyne (Figure 10). To Apollo’s left, Calliope, the leading Muse, holds the scroll that identifies her as the Muse of heroic or epic poetry; in this capacity, she crowns the poet on Parnassus. But Apollo holds the crown in Mengs’s work; he represents Poetry, and Calliope—whose scroll bears Mengs’s signature—symbolizes Painting. Not only the poet but also the painter is worthy to be crowned on Parnassus. Mengs, in other words, honors himself at the very center of the work he created, a painting that visually explicates the doctrine of *ut pictura poesis*.<sup>53</sup>

Johann Joachim Winckelmann, Albani’s librarian and an important contributor to the decorative program of his villa, wrote of the *Parnassus*: “A more beautiful work has not appeared in all modern times; even Raphael would bow to it.”<sup>54</sup> In his *History of Ancient Art*, published in late 1763, Winckelmann went a step further: “All the beauties . . . in the figures of the ancients, are embraced in the im-

mortal works of Antonio Raphael Mengs . . . the greatest painter of his own, and probably of the coming age also. He arose, as it were, like a phoenix new-born, out of the ashes of the first Raphael to teach the world what beauty is contained in art, and to reach the highest point of excellence in it to which the genius of man has ever risen.” Winckelmann then hailed Mengs as “the German Raphael.”<sup>55</sup> Mengs himself found Raphael “unquestionably the greatest painter” among the moderns, but this did not mean that he suspended critical judgment of the Renaissance master.<sup>56</sup> Mengs’s *Parnassus* challenges Raphael, specifically the latter’s *Parnassus* for the Stanza della Segnatura. Mengs “improved” upon Raphael according to the very standards of ancient art exalted by Winckelmann, in the spirit of Winckelmann’s recommendations to artists in *Reflections on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture* (1755). Thus Mengs earned his inclusion in the *History of Ancient Art*.

Mengs may have been the “German Raphael” but he had an American counterpart: Benjamin West. West received the name “American Raphael” while still in Italy, and the title followed him to London.<sup>57</sup> West’s nascent Neoclassicism certainly fostered the comparison, but the designation signaled more than stylistic affinity; it amounted to a compliment of the highest order, for no artist enjoyed greater fame among West’s contemporaries than Raphael.<sup>58</sup>

West's choice of the name Raphael for his first child, a son born in April 1766, makes plain both his own admiration for the Renaissance master and his personal investment in the greatest exponent of the Italian school.

*School* in this usage identifies a group of artists with a particular place. Eighteenth-century English writers on art were anxious to promote the idea that there was an English school, and "An Essay towards an English School" appeared in the 1754 London edition of Roger de Piles's *The Art of Painting*, a book consisting for the most part of "the Lives and Characters of above 300 of the most Eminent Painters," in which company British artists had been conspicuously absent.<sup>59</sup> The artists surveyed included Sir Godfrey Kneller, who, though German born, attained a high position in England as a portraitist. But therein lay the proven double threat to the perception of English artistic strength: first, the prominence in England of foreign-born painters—the essayist gamely notes that the German and Flemish schools "only excel [the English] by the performances of those masters whom we claim as our own" (Holbein and Van Dyck, for example)—and, second, the long-standing dominance of portraiture, an art ranking low in the academic hierarchy of the genres. Thus, when the Society of Arts offered a prize for history painting in 1759, Samuel Johnson could hope that such a reward "might excite an honest emulation, and give beginning to an English School."<sup>60</sup>

West, of course, earned his fame precisely as a painter of historical subjects—and surely the title "American Raphael" also identified him with history painting. He represented an American school that promised to succeed as the English school had not, and thereby to lead British art to full respectability in the international sphere. While in Italy, West had found it advantageous to highlight his American origins, and Pratt endorsed continuation of that practice in England.<sup>61</sup> The word *American* in the title of Pratt's painting signals affirmative regionalism, rather than protonationalism, at a time of America's expanding economic role in the British Empire and of attendant prophecies of America's cultural greatness.<sup>62</sup> In its relationship to the mother country, America was growing up; and just as America might serve as a political example to its wayward, even corrupt parent, so might it be an example—a school—in the arts.<sup>63</sup>

George Berkeley had anticipated such a glorious New World in his "Verses on the prospect of Plant-

ing Arts and Learning in America," composed in 1726 but not published until 1752. The poem, which contains the famous line "westward the course of empire takes its way," opens:

The Muse, disgusted at an Age and Clime,  
Barren of every glorious Theme,  
In distant Lands now waits a better Time,  
Producing Subjects worthy Fame . . .<sup>64</sup>

The Muse flees Europe "in her decay" to the site of another golden age, its achievements to be sung by future poets. Berkeley's poem received widespread circulation in the colonial press about 1760, but its basic theme was something of a commonplace.<sup>65</sup> In a poem celebrating the "Present Greatness of the English Nation," published in 1762, Philadelphian Nathaniel Evans also called upon the Muses to relocate in America, a land he presents as fully worthy to receive them.<sup>66</sup> A few years earlier, Evans's friend Francis Hopkinson prophesied that a "future Muse" would swell with West's name.<sup>67</sup> But Pratt obviously did not intend that this American school be perceived in terms of West alone as founding father/teacher, but of West and himself, fellow colonials in London.<sup>68</sup> It is Pratt, not West, who possesses the Muse in *The American School*, and their relationship is symbiotic. She draws aside her veil—a convention by which Nature reveals herself to Art—to whisper in his ear even as he, inspired, creates her.<sup>69</sup>

Matthew Pratt gave lasting visual definition to the American school, a school in which he reserved a privileged place for himself. This was his original achievement, his invention. At a time of intensified debate over the social role and education of the British artist, he anticipated American leadership in the empire of the arts; he invented a past and posited a future for American art. But these had little to do with America's present. The harsh reality of the colonial artistic situation is forcefully conveyed by the words of another American painter represented at the Society of Artists in 1766: John Singleton Copley. Copley, who sent from Boston a portrait of his half brother Henry Pelham, craved the recognition that success at the exhibition could bring. "A taste of painting is too much wanting" in America, he complained; "was it not for preserving the resemblance of particular persons, painting would not be known in the place. The people generally regard it no more than any other useful trade, as they sometimes term it, like that of a Carpenter,

tailor or shoemaker.”<sup>70</sup> Perhaps Matthew Pratt, caught up in London’s artistic community and buoyed by his countryman West’s success, forgot the lonely situation of the colonial artist. Or perhaps he remembered it all too well and needed to insist on an American school that existed most fully on English soil—and even then most strongly in his imagination. Either way, Pratt’s ideal, studio self-portrait celebrated his own achievement and envisioned the American contribution to British painting, just at that moment coming of age.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## NOTES

1. A selective list of those naming Pratt as the man drawing includes: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (hereafter PAFA), *Loan Exhibition of Historical Portraits* (Philadelphia, 1887) pp. 105–106; Charles Henry Hart, “A Limner of Colonial Days,” *Harper’s Weekly* 40 (July 4, 1896) p. 665; Theodore Bolton and Harry Lorin Binsse, “Pratt, Painter of Colonial Portraits and Signboards,” *The Antiquarian* 17 (Sept. 1931) pp. 24, 48; William Sawitzky, *Matthew Pratt, 1734–1805, A Study of His Work* (New York, 1942) pp. 35–38; John Wilmerding, *American Art* (New York, 1976) p. 47; Dorinda Evans, *Benjamin West and His American Students*, exh. cat., National Portrait Gallery (Washington, D.C., 1980) pp. 27–28. The MMA will reaffirm this identification in the forthcoming first volume of the catalogue of its American collection. Dissenters include Jules David Prown, *American Painting from its Beginnings to the Armory Show* (Geneva, 1969) p. 34, and Ellen G. Miles in Miles and Richard H. Saunders, *American Colonial Portraits, 1700–1776*, exh. cat., National Portrait Gallery (Washington, D.C., 1987) pp. 265–268.

2. Condition further complicates identification; the figure presumed to be West was “savaged by a previous restorer,” according to a 1978–79 Record of Painting Examination and Treatment in the Curatorial Files, Department of American Paintings and Sculpture, MMA.

3. Pratt’s desire for recognition and his attempt to shape the form that recognition took was shared by English artists, as numerous studio and self-portraits of the period compellingly record. For self-portraits, see Ruthann McNamara, “The Theme of the Learned Painter in Eighteenth-Century British Self-Portraiture,” Ph.D. diss., Bryn Mawr College, 1983, esp. the appendices covering self-portraits mentioned by George Vertue (the 18th-century engraver who intended to write a history of the arts in England) in his “Note-books,” *Walpole Society* 18, 20, 22, 24, 26, 29, 30 (Oxford, 1929–52) and Horace Walpole’s *Anecdotes of Painting in England* (New Haven, 1937), as well as those exhibited with the Society of Artists, Free Society, and Royal Academy (pp. 189–205; data summarized pp. 18–20).

4. Pratt’s later autobiographical notes record a July 1764 landing, but West’s fiancée, Elizabeth Shewell, documents the party’s arrival on Aug. 6 in her Pocket Almanack (Princeton University Library); cited in Helmut von Erffa, “Benjamin West: The Early Years in London,” *American Art Journal* 5 (1973) p. 9.

5. In “Pratt’s Autobiographical Notes,” as reprinted in Sawitzky, *Matthew Pratt*, pp. 15–16. Believed written in 1770, these notes exist only in a transcription made by Charles Henry Hart in 1892, published by him in *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 20 (1895) pp. 460–466, and now in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. The circumstances and length of Pratt’s apprenticeship were altogether traditional; on that subject generally, see Ian M. G. Quimby, *Apprenticeship in Colonial Philadelphia* (New York, 1985).

6. Charles Willson Peale identified Claypoole as a house painter and glazier in his manuscript autobiography, in the Library of the American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia; see Charles Coleman Sellers, “James Claypoole: A Founder of the Art of Painting in Pennsylvania,” *Pennsylvania History* 17 (April 1950) pp. 106–109. No portraits by James Claypoole, Sr., have been identified.

7. William Dunlap believed Pratt to have been active in New York as well, but no such mention appears in Pratt’s autobiographical notes, nor has other evidence to support that contention appeared; *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States* [1834], Frank W. Bayley and Charles E. Goodspeed, eds. (Boston, 1918) I, p. 114.

8. Sawitzky, *Matthew Pratt*, p. 9. Sawitzky deemed West the dominating influence on Pratt’s entire career.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

10. *Ibid.*

11. Letter from Mrs. Benjamin West to “Kitty,” ca. 1770; transcription from the E. P. Richardson Collection, in file on Matthew Pratt, National Museum of American Art/National Portrait Gallery Library. Rembrandt Peale likewise noted that Pratt “was considered but an indifferent painter, incapable of profiting by the opportunities he had in England,” although he inherited his father’s opinion that Pratt was “a mild and friendly man, not ambitious to distinguish himself” (Rembrandt Peale, “Reminiscences,” *The Crayon* 3 [Jan. 1856] p. 5; C. W. Peale, manuscript autobiography).

12. MMA conservator Dorothy Mahon examined *The American School* using X-radiography, ultraviolet illumination, and infrared scanning in summer 1991.

13. In his *Traité des sensations* (Paris, 1754) the abbé de Condillac explored the development of mind using the conceit of a statue (or a human being with a marble exterior) brought to life through the successive endowment of each of the five senses. English translation awaits Geraldine Carr's *Condillac's Treatise on the Sensations* (London, 1930). In observations on Charles Alphonse Du Fresnoy's *The Art of Painting*, Roger de Piles counseled the young artist to study antique busts of subjects of various ages, including a child, "for example . . . the little Nero"; I have used the John Dryden translation (London, 1716) p. 218.

14. The entry on *The American School* in the forthcoming first volume of the MMA American paintings catalogue refers to this detail as a "chalk underdrawing"; however, this imprecisely identifies what Pratt intended to represent with the means of representation. Most likely, the artist used lead white to create the "drawing," later rendered nearly invisible to the naked eye by abrasion of the paint surface and a change in the refractive index. Certainly no evidence exists that anyone ever deliberately obliterated the image. The discovery of the underdrawing was published by Trudy E. Bell, "Technology: Ultraviolet Detection," *Connoisseur* 210 (May 1982) pp. 140–141.

15. See, for example, Jonathan Richardson, *An Essay on the Theory of Painting* (London, 1715) pp. 29–30.

16. References to de Piles in this paragraph are from the section "On the order which ought to be observed in the study of painting," in *The Principles of Painting* (London, 1743) pp. 234–252; this was the first English translation of *Cours de peinture par principes* (Paris, 1708).

17. *The Compleat Drawing-master* (London, 1763); see also Thomas Bardwell, *The Practice of Painting and Perspective Made Easy* (London, 1756) and [Robert Dossie], *The Handmaid to the Arts*, 2 vols. (London, 1758; 2nd ed. 1764).

18. See Janice G. Schimmelman, "Books on Drawing and Painting Techniques Available in Eighteenth-Century American Libraries and Bookstores," *Winterthur Portfolio* 19 (Summer–Autumn 1984) pp. 193–205. She found Robert Dossie's *Handmaid to the Arts*—which Charles Willson Peale purchased on a visit to Philadelphia in 1762—the most popular of these publications.

19. Du Fresnoy, *The Art of Painting*, pp. 213, 59.

20. Romney's master, Christopher Steele, possibly spent time in Philadelphia in 1763–64, just prior to Pratt's departure for London, according to the later recollections of Charles Willson Peale (Miles in Miles and Saunders, *American Colonial Portraits, 1700–1776*, pp. 31–32). For Richard L. Bushman, not only America but most of England as well were cultural provinces of London ("American High-Style and Vernacular Cultures," in *Colonial British America: Essays in the New History of the Early Modern Era*, Jack P. Greene and J. R. Pole, eds. [Baltimore/London, 1984] p. 367).

21. Leonardo da Vinci, *Treatise on Painting* (London, 1721) pp. 29, 36. John Romney mentioned his father's study of Leonardo's book in *Memoirs of the Life and Works of George Romney* (London, 1830) p. 11.

22. [Jean Dubreuil], *The Practice of Perspective*, E. Chambers, trans. (London, 1726) p. iii.

23. C. K., *Art's Masterpiece* (London, 5th ed., 1710?) p. 8. For Romney's use of this manual, see John Romney, *Memoirs of the*

*Life and Works of George Romney*, p. 11.

24. See, e.g., *The Artist's Vade Mecum* (London: Sold by R. Sayer, 1762) [pl. 5]; *The Compleat Drawing-master* (London: Printed for Henry Parker, 1763) p. 2.

25. Richardson, *An Essay on the Theory of Painting*, pp. 29–30.

26. The painting was titled "School of West" on the occasion of its second recorded exhibition, with the Society of Artists, Philadelphia, in 1811 (six years after Pratt's death); "The London School of Artists" in Dunlap, *History*, I, p. 114; "West's School of Painters in London" in PAFA, *Loan Exhibition of Historical Portraits*, p. 105.

27. *A Catalogue of the Pictures, Sculptures, Designs . . . Exhibited by The Society of Artists of Great-Britain, at the Great Room, Spring Garden, Charing-Cross, April the Twenty-first, 1766* (London, 1766).

28. As quoted in Charles Robert Leslie and Tom Taylor, *Life and Times of Sir Joshua Reynolds with notices of some of his Contemporaries* (London, 1865) I, p. 418; see also II, pp. 159–160.

29. Stephen Gwynn, *Memorials of an Eighteenth Century Painter (James Northcote)* (London, 1898) p. 49; also pp. 46–49, 58–59, 110–111, 225–226. For the number of assistants in 1763, see James Northcote, *The Life of Sir Joshua Reynolds* (London, 1818) I: 120. For an overview, see M. Kirby Talley, Jr., "'All Good Pictures Crack'—Sir Joshua Reynolds's practice and studio," in *Reynolds*, Nicholas Penny, ed. (New York, 1986) pp. 55–70.

30. Northcote, in *Conversations of James Northcote R.A. with James Ward on Art and Artists*, Ernest Fletcher, ed. (London, 1901) pp. 153–154.

31. Dunlap, *History*, I, p. 112. Such coupled references to one's benefactor as father and friend betray a changed model for social relations—from a patriarchal to an affectional paradigm—that emerged during the later 18th century; on this subject, see Jay Fliegelman's superb *Prodigals and Pilgrims: The American Revolution Against Patriarchal Authority, 1750–1800* (Cambridge, 1982). Pratt used such terms in describing West's kindnesses to him but, significantly, placed *himself* in the paternal role. For a survey of West's pupils, see Evans, *Benjamin West and His American Students*.

32. Benjamin West, *A Discourse Delivered to the Students of the Royal Academy on the Distribution of the Prizes, December 10, 1792* (London, 1793) pp. 11–12.

33. In "Benjamin West's Family Picture: A Nativity in Hammersmith," *Essays in Honor of Paul Mellon, Collector and Benefactor* (Washington, D.C., 1986), Jules D. Prown explains the somewhat fixed stare of the two Quakers as evidence that they are focused inwardly, in prayer (p. 277). However, Quaker doctrine clearly indicates that the head should be uncovered in prayer; see, e.g., Robert Barclay, *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity* (7th ed., Dublin, 1737) pp. 15, 529–530 (Fifteenth Proposition), and *Canons and Institutions Drawn Up and Agreed Upon By the General Assembly or Meeting of the Heads of the Quakers* (London, 1669) p. 7. Charles Robert Leslie, writing of West's painting in his *Autobiographical Recollections* (London, 1860) p. 41, described the Quakers as sitting "for a few minutes in silent meditation which will soon be ended by the old man's taking off his hat and offering up a prayer for the mother and infant." For a general account of hat-wearing among the Quakers, see Amelia Gummere, *The Quaker: a study in costume* (Philadelphia, 1901; repr., New York/London, 1968) pp. 57–90.



34. On West's investment in his Quaker background, see Ann Uhry Abrams, *The Valiant Hero: Benjamin West and Grand-Style History Painting* (Washington, D.C., 1985) pp. 36–38.

35. In *The American School* Pratt and his fellow students do not wear wigs, in accordance presumably with a short-lived fashion for younger men to wear their own hair. See C. Willet Cunnington and Phillis Cunnington, *Handbook of English Costume in the Eighteenth Century* (London, n.d.) p. 241.

36. Ultraviolet illumination of *The American School* reveals two other hats hanging on the wall: one (barely visible to the naked eye) just above and to the left of the internal canvas, the other above the boy third from left—both apparently painted over as the composition evolved.

37. Rousseau's books enjoyed wide circulation beginning in the early 1760s and were available in English in Philadelphia by 1763; according to Paul Merrill Spurlin, no book of Rousseau's was advertised more often by American booksellers than *Émile* (*Rousseau in America, 1760–1809* [University, Ala., 1969] p. 74).

38. De Piles, *Principles of Painting*, p. 237. Some writers on art implicated parents, the first teachers; thus Francesco Algarotti cited a lack of parental encouragement as a factor inhibiting excellence in the sciences and liberal arts. He proposed carefully directed education as a remedy and detailed its course for artists in *An Essay on Painting* (London, 1764)—a book noteworthy for its dedication to the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce in London. This treatise had an American audience at an early date; in a letter of Nov. 12, 1766, for example, Copley queried West on a point in Algarotti (*Letters & Papers of John Singleton Copley and Henry Pelham 1739–1776* [Boston, 1914] pp. 51–52).

39. *Public Characters of 1805*, 7 vols. (London, 1805) p. 533; William T. Whitley, *Artists and Their Friends in England, 1700–1799* (1928; repr. ed., New York, 1969) I, p. 195.

40. William Hogarth, *A Gentleman in Red* (1741), Dulwich Gallery, illustrated in Ronald Paulson, *Hogarth* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1992) II, fig. 77.

41. Williams, advertisement in the *Pennsylvania Journal and Weekly Advertiser*, Jan. 13, 1763, cited in David Howard Dickason, *William Williams, Novelist and Painter of Colonial America, 1727–1791* (Bloomington/London, 1970) pp. 30–31.

42. See, e.g., Joan Dolmetsch, "Prints in Colonial America: Supply and Demand in the Mid-Eighteenth Century," in *Prints in and of America to 1850*, John D. Morse, ed. (Charlottesville, Va., 1970) pp. 54, 55, 63; and E. McSherry Fowble, *Two Centuries of Prints in America 1680–1880* (Charlottesville, Va., 1987) pp. 19, 258–259. The Library Company of Philadelphia—of which Pratt's father was a charter member—was among the first public institutions to acquire Hogarth's treatise; *The charter, laws, and catalogue of the Library Company of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1764) p. 43.

43. See, e.g., Northcote, *The Life of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, II, p. 54.

44. John Thomas Smith, *Nollekens and his Times* (London, 1828) II, p. 343.

45. Charles Willson Peale, manuscript autobiography. Benjamin Ralph included a lesson on drawing the line of beauty in his *The School of Raphael: Or the Student's Guide to Expression in Histori-*

*cal Painting* (London, 1759), because he thought Hogarth remiss in that regard.

46. Ronald Paulson, *Hogarth* (New Haven/London, 1971) II, pp. 250–251.

47. Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty*, Joseph Burke, ed. (Oxford, 1955) pp. 8–9. McNamara made this suggestion in "The Theme of the Learned Painter," pp. 60–61.

48. Michael Kitson, "Hogarth's Apology for Painters," *Walpole Society* 41 (1968) p. 69 (ll. 678–681).

49. Du Fresnoy, *The Art of Painting*, p. 13. Cf. the later, more graceful translation in Du Fresnoy, *The Art of Painting*, William Mason, trans., with commentary by Sir Joshua Reynolds (Dublin, 1783), verses 106–109. In *A Checklist of European Treatises on Art and Essays on Aesthetics Available in America Through 1815* (Worcester, Mass., 1983) pp. 124–130, 172, Janice G. Schimmelman found thirty references to *The Art of Painting* (the first in 1744), making it the third most prevalent aesthetic treatise in America during the time period she surveyed. It was one of the books William Williams reportedly owned and lent the young Benjamin West (John Galt, *The life, studies, and works of Benjamin West, Esq.* [London, 1816] I, p. 28).

50. The "Observations" in the 1716 edition of *The Art of Painting* explains: "The Attributes of the *Muses* are often taken for the *Muses* themselves; and it is in this Sense, that *Invention* is here call'd a *Muse*" (p. 109).

51. I thank David Steinberg for first suggesting to me that the figure on Pratt's canvas might represent a Muse.

52. West, writing from London to Joseph Shippen, Sept. 1, 1763; letter published in Edgar P. Richardson, "West's Voyage to Italy, 1760, and William Allen," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 102 (Jan. 1978) pp. 21–22. Galt reports contact between West and Mengs in *The life, studies, and works of Benjamin West*, I, pp. 118–123, but the relationship was probably not one of formal tutelage. For West's copies after Mengs, see Helmut von Erffa and Allen Staley, *The Paintings of Benjamin West* (New Haven/London, 1986) pp. 444–446, cat. nos. 510, 511.

53. This interpretation is from Steffi Röttgen, "Mengs, Alessandro Albani und Winckelmann—Idee und Gestalt des Parnass in der Villa Albani," *Storia dell'arte* 30–31 (May–Dec. 1977) pp. 100–122, esp. p. 101.

54. J. J. Winckelmann to J. J. Volkmann, March 27, 1761, *Briefe*, H. Diepolder and W. Rehm, eds. (Berlin, 1952–56) II, p. 130, no. 397.

55. Winckelmann, *The History of Ancient Art*, G. Henry Lodge, trans. (Boston, 1880) I, p. 407.

56. Mengs, *Gedanken über die Schönheit und über den Geschmack in der Malerei* (1762), as translated in *Neoclassicism and Romanticism, 1750–1850*, I: *Enlightenment/Revolution*, Lorenz Eitner, ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1970) p. 32. Mengs's book did not appear in English translation until 1796.

57. The *Public Advertiser* (London) published an anonymous poem dedicated to "Mr. West, a celebrated painter . . . known in Italy by the name of the American Raphael" (quoted in Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting in England*, IV, p. 113). Cf. the abbé Peter Grant's reference to West as "your young American Raphael" in

a letter to Dr. John Morgan from Rome, Aug. 31, 1765 (quoted in Arthur S. Marks, "Angelica Kauffmann and Some Americans on the Grand Tour," *American Art Journal* 12 [Spring 1980] p. 23) and the anonymous pamphleteer who in 1766 praised "the mystic wonders of [West's] Raphael's school" (Whitley, *Artists and Their Friends in England*, I, p. 212).

58. Between 1711 and 1759, the maximum price paid at auction was for a Holy Family attributed to Raphael, sold in 1758 for £703.10s; in auctions during that entire period, only 545 pictures brought more than £40 (Iain Pears, *The Discovery of Painting: The Growth of Interest in the Arts in England, 1680–1768* [New Haven/London, 1988] pp. 166–168).

59. B. Buckeridge, "An Essay towards an English School," in Roger de Piles, *The Art of Painting* (3rd ed., London [1754]) pp. 354–439. See also T.B., *A call to the connoisseurs, or decisions of sense with respect to the present state of painting and sculpture, and their several professors in these kingdoms* (London, 1761) pp. 37–43.

60. Samuel Johnson, *The Idler* 45 (Feb. 24, 1759) as quoted in Morris R. Brownell, *Samuel Johnson's Attitude to the Arts* (Oxford, 1989) p. 47; Brownell (p. 73) credits Robert Folkenflik with recognizing the connection between Johnson's remark and the Society of Arts premiums.

61. Cf., for example, West's famous comparison of the *Apollo Belvedere* to a Mohawk warrior (Galt, *West*, I, pp. 105–106), surely a calculated rather than naive utterance.

62. See Joseph J. Ellis, *After the Revolution: Profiles of Early American Culture* (New York/London, 1979) pp. 3–21. Ellis cautions against regarding such prophecies, which increased with the conclusion of the French and Indian War, as "protonationalistic" (p. 3). Even during the Revolution, the word *American* had by itself little nationalistic resonance; see, e.g., Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Americans: The National Experience* (New York, 1965) p. 297. On provincialism as a stimulus to originality and creative vigor, see Bernard Bailyn and John Clive, "England's Cultural Provinces: Scotland and America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 11 (1954) pp. 200–213.

63. The sense of the term *school* as "example" figures in William Aglionby's *Choice Observations Upon the Art of Painting* (London, 1719) pp. 26–27 (first published in 1685): the "first Rank of Painters," he writes, are those "whom all must look upon as the Great Originals that Heaven hath given to Mankind to Imitate; and whose Works will not only be the School, but the Delight and Admiration of all the Ages." Benjamin Ralph employed *school* in this sense in the title to his practical manual *The School of Raphael: Or the Student's Guide to Expression in Historical Painting* (London, 1759).

64. For the six-quatrain poem in its entirety and editorial commentary, see George Berkeley, *The Works of George Berkeley Bishop of Cloyne*, A. A. Luce and T. E. Jessop, eds. (London, 1955) VII, pp. 369–373.

65. See Ellis, *After the Revolution*, pp. 3–21, and Rexmond C. Cochrane, "Bishop Berkeley and the Progress of Arts and Learning: Notes on a Literary Convention," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 17 (May 1954) pp. 229–249.

66. Nathaniel Evans, *Ode, on the Late Glorious Successes of His Majesty's Arms, and Present Greatness of the English Nation* (Philadelphia, 1762).

67. *American Magazine* (Sept. 1758) p. 607. See also Hopkinson's invocation of the Muse in *Science, A Poem* (Philadelphia, 1762).

68. At least one other colonial-born painter also then resided in London. John Greenwood (1727–92), active in Boston between 1747 and 1752, had spent a decade in Surinam and Amsterdam before settling in London about 1763, where he devoted the remainder of his career to art-dealing and auctioneering (Alan Burroughs, *John Greenwood in America* [Andover, Mass., 1943] pp. 50–51).

69. See, for example, the frontispiece and explanatory verse in G. Smith, *The Laboratory, or School of Arts* (London, 1739).

70. John Singleton Copley to either West or R. G. Bruce, 1767?, *Letters and Papers of John Singleton Copley*, pp. 65–66. Orthography and punctuation adjusted to modern standards.