

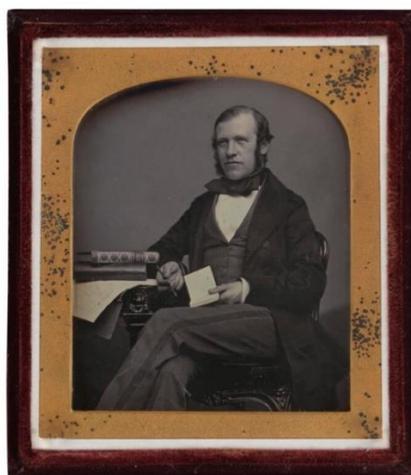
## 1. Introduction to the database

by Philip Cottrell

### 1.i. George Scharf

Sir George Scharf (1820-1895) (**fig. 1.i**) was the London-born son of a Bavarian émigré artist and lithographer, George Johann Scharf (1788-1860). At the age of thirty-six, he became the first long-established Director of the National Portrait Gallery, although initially his post was defined as ‘Secretary’ and he worked under the close direction of the Board of Trustees chaired by Philip Stanhope, 5<sup>th</sup> Earl Stanhope (1805-1875). Scharf accepted the appointment on 4 March 1857, before he had discharged his duties as Art Secretary at the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition, a post he had secured the previous August. These positions put his professional and financial affairs on a much surer footing than had previously been the case. Until then he had pursued a varied career as an engraver, draughtsman, art tutor and lecturer, and general consulting art historian. During his 20s he had also specialised as an illustrator of ancient monuments, and in the company of Sir Charles Fellows (1799-1860) travelled extensively throughout Asia Minor, developing considerable expertise as a connoisseur and art expert.<sup>1</sup>

**Fig. 1.i.** Sir George Scharf by William Edward Kilburn. Daguerreotype, circa 1847, 78 mm x 59 mm. National Portrait Gallery, London (NPG P859).



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<sup>1</sup> Scharf's role as Director was confirmed in 1882. For a recent detailed appraisal of Scharf's career in the context of his role at the National Portrait Gallery see Heath, 2018. This draws on the same author's PhD thesis, 'Sir George Scharf and the early National Portrait Gallery: reconstructing an intellectual and professional artistic world, 1857-1895', University of Sussex/ National Portrait Gallery, 2018. Form more on Scharf's career see also Pergam, 2011, pp. 25 & 61.

He was knighted only at the end of his life, and in recognition of his decades-long service at the National Portrait Gallery. Scharf had no high-born family connections, had not worked as a dealer in art, or as a successful painter or sculptor. He should therefore be celebrated as the epitome of a new Victorian phenomenon: a professional art historian whose successful career was the product of his cultivated knowledge, ambition and industry – all of these qualities, particularly the last, are clearly exhibited throughout the more than one-hundred-and-thirty personal sketchbooks he compiled over the course of his busy life, and which are preserved at the Heinz Archive of the National Portrait Gallery. Seven of these, SSB 43-49, cover his countrywide survey of old masters in British Art Collections as part of his duties at the Art Treasures Exhibition of 1857. It is these which form the basis for the current database.

For more on Sir George Scharf's career and involvement with the National Portrait Gallery see:

<https://www.npg.org.uk/research/archive/archive-journeys/sir-george-scharf/>

### **1.ii. The Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition, 1857**

By any standards, the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition surely remains the largest and most ambitious public art exhibition ever mounted. It was inspired by the enormous success of the Great Exhibition of 1851 in which Scharf was also involved, assisting in the arrangement and cataloguing of the Greek, Roman and Pompeian Courts. Subsequent rival exhibitions, particularly the Dublin Great Industrial Exhibition of 1853 and the Parisian *Exposition Universelle* of 1855 were also of direct influence, particularly the former due to the shared involvement of the Art Treasures' General Commissioner, John Connellan Deane (1816-1887) (see below).<sup>2</sup> But unlike these forerunners, the focus of the Manchester Exhibition was exclusively and uniquely directed toward art, and this also indicates the fundamental purpose of this vast undertaking; it was sponsored by a group of local eminent

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<sup>2</sup> On Scharf's role in the Great Exhibition see Pergam, 2011, p. 61. Scharf himself cited earlier less renowned public exhibitions in a lengthy lecture on the origins and organisation of the Art Treasures Exhibition to the Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire on 15 April 1858 – see Scharf, 1857-1858, pp. 269-272.

businessmen who wished to dispel Manchester's popular reputation as the dystopian 'Cottonopolis'. Often dismissed by outsiders as a smoke-ridden urban wen symptomatic of the country's thriving cotton industry, it was also regarded as a breeding ground for radicalism and social unrest. "What on earth do you want with art in Manchester, why can't you stick to your cotton-spinning?" was the supposed response of one eminent aristocrat on hearing of the scheme (the common suspicion that this was William Cavendish, 6<sup>th</sup> Duke of Devonshire still cannot be totally discounted – see below). The underwriters of the enterprise were mainly businessmen and industrialists, but many of them were also keen art collectors and even connoisseurs. They wished to energetically and ambitiously assert Manchester's position on the cultural map of the country drawing on the vast, untapped reserves of the United Kingdom's art collections. Here, in the world's most industrial of settings, industrial exhibits would not be shown.<sup>3</sup> Instead, the organisers wished to conjure a vast Aladdin's cave of Britain's art treasures of all schools and periods for the enjoyment and edification of members of the general public, who came in their thousands. To achieve this in Manchester would, in itself, dramatically demonstrate a fundamental interdependence between the country's industrial and artistic wealth. Nevertheless, the siting of the exhibition building, grandly dubbed the Art Treasures Palace, at Old Trafford was due to it being sufficiently removed from the city centre, where the "prevalent west winds drive the smoke of the town in a great measure away from...the proposed building".<sup>4</sup>

In its attempt to summarise centuries of human endeavour in the visual arts, the Exhibition was also designed to promote pride in craftsmanship and technical ability among the local workforce and the country at large. It therefore made a huge contribution to one of the great national debates of the period: the extent to which the country's economic wealth might depend on a greater appreciation of art and design among its manufacturing classes.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> On this crucial distinction see Hunt and Whitfield, 2007, p. 59.

<sup>4</sup> The quotation is from the Executive Committee's final report - see *Exhibition, 1857*, pp. 10-11, also cited in Hunt and Whitfield, 2007, p. 16. Designed in collaboration with the Edinburgh Iron Foundry, C. D. Young & Co. and Edmund Salomons (1828-1906), the Art Treasures Palace endured for around eighteen months. It was disassembled after its auction on 5 May 1858 - a year to the day after the exhibition's opening – see Scharf, 1857-1858, pp. 328.

<sup>5</sup> On the genesis of the exhibition see Pergam, 2011, pp. 2-5 & 20-25.

Between 1835 and 1836 a select committee of the House of Commons sat to consider the merits of “extending a knowledge of Arts and of the Principles of Design among the People (especially the Manufacturing Population)”. Its findings highlighted the belief that, as regards standards of manufactory, “in nothing have foreign countries possessed a greater advantage over Great Britain than in the numerous public galleries devoted to the Arts and gratuitously open to the people”.<sup>6</sup> The committee’s subsequent report had boosted the development of the National Gallery in London, and paved the way for the promotion of the arts during the Great Exhibition of 1851. Another consequence was the foundation of the British Government Schools of Design, the first provincial example of which was set up in Manchester in 1838.<sup>7</sup>

Any summary of the Manchester Exhibition inevitably abounds with an array of impressive statistics. The Art Treasures Palace (**fig. 1.ii**) involved the construction of an enormous (700 x 200 ft) iron, brick and glass pavilion at the exhibition site at Old Trafford. Reminiscent of Paxton’s Crystal Palace, it became home to around sixteen-thousand works of art, of which over one thousand were European old masters, lent by hundreds of British lenders (around two-hundred alone contributed to Scharf’s department, the Gallery of Ancient Masters).<sup>8</sup> The whole enterprise was proposed, developed and executed within just fifteen months: planning began in February 1856; construction of the Art Treasures Palace started over the summer; having proffered his services in July, Scharf came on board as Art Secretary during August, and the scouting for works, which ranged across painting, sculpture, and the applied and decorative arts, started in earnest during September.<sup>9</sup> These began to arrive in Manchester during March and April 1857, all thanks to an extension of the local railway which trundled into the Art Treasures Palace itself. Opened by its enthusiastic royal patron, Prince Albert, on 5 May 1857, the exhibition ran until 17 October, attracting over a million visitors over 144 days. Given the breath-taking numbers involved, the quality of works shown was inevitably variable, but one should be in no doubt as to the exhibition’s success in assembling hundreds of the most celebrated examples of Western art, many of which are

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<sup>6</sup> Taylor, 1999, p. 45.

<sup>7</sup> See Denvir, 1984, pp. 19 & 207-231; Taylor, 1999, pp. 68-70.

<sup>8</sup> On the design and development of the Art Treasures Palace see Pergam, 2011, pp. 52-59.

<sup>9</sup> On Scharf’s application for the post of Art Secretary in July 1856 see Croal, 2005, p. 53.

now widely dispersed. Scharf's achievement as overseer of the Gallery of Ancient Masters deserves particular recognition, and his efforts also sealed the reputation of several important pictures, including Michelangelo's so-called *Manchester Madonna* (National Gallery, London).<sup>10</sup>

**Fig. 1.ii.** The Manchester Art Treasures Palace - detail of a lithograph showing a view of, 1857 (Heinz Archive, National Portrait Gallery, NPG7/2/2/3).



### **1.iii. Scharf as Director of the Gallery of Ancient Masters**

Given his future career trajectory as the founding Director of the National Portrait Gallery, it is ironic that Scharf's jurisdiction at the Art Treasures Exhibition did not officially extend to the over three-hundred-and-fifty paintings intended for its British Portrait Gallery. Instead, the task of overseeing this department fell to the scholar and historian Peter Cunningham (1816-1869), a friend of Charles Dickens, and also the son of Allan Cunningham (1784-1842), the author of *The Lives of the Most Eminent British Painters, Sculptors and Architects*. Although Scharf's activities were frequently of direct benefit to Cunningham, his own expertise was focused on the Gallery of Ancient Masters - a section which was almost four times larger, and far more diverse in its content, comprising of around twelve-hundred works by continental artists born before 1700.

The very title of the Art Treasures Exhibition reflected the prominence given to the Ancient Masters section and the debt it owed to the *Treasures of Art in Great Britain* – a multivolume survey of continental old masters in British collections published by the eminent German art historian and Director of the Berlin Gallery, Gustav Friedrich Waagen

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<sup>10</sup> For further discussion of the Art Treasures Exhibition see in general Pergam, 2011. See also Haskell, 2000, pp. 82-89, Cooper, 2001, & Hunt and Whitfield, 2007.

(1794-1868). This was published as three volumes in 1854, with a supplementary fourth volume which appeared in the same year as the Art Treasures Exhibition. Waagen had drawn attention to what Suzanne Fagence Cooper has described as an “astonishingly rich artistic heritage that was hidden from public view”.<sup>11</sup> In wishing to further expose this hoard, the Exhibition’s executive committee employed Waagen as an advisor, especially in the early stages of planning. Waagen’s most notable intervention was with regard to negotiating the loan of forty-two important old masters from the prickly Richard Seymour-Conway, 4th Marquess of Hertford (1800-1870) (see the **introduction to SSB 44**). Waagen also endorsed the Executive Committee’s appointment of Scharf as Art Secretary – a somewhat ambiguous title which reflected a fluid range of duties: Scharf was chiefly employed as Director of the Gallery of Ancient Masters, but in surveying British Collections for potential loans, it was anticipated that he would also occasionally scout out items for other departments. Such proved to be the case, particularly with works for the British Portrait Gallery and items of Ancient Art.<sup>12</sup> On 19 August 1856, less than a fortnight after his appointment, Scharf dined with Waagen in London in the company of the future director of the National Gallery, William Boxall (1800 –1879), and the sculptor John Gibson (1790–1866).<sup>13</sup> Waagen later wrote to the Chairman of the exhibition’s Executive Committee, Thomas Fairbairn (1823-1891), on 18 October that, “I am much pleased that you [have] got now the assistance of a so clever and industrious man as my friend George Scharf”.<sup>14</sup>

Despite Waagen’s early role as an advisor and negotiator, Scharf would later remark that “notwithstanding the activity of Dr Waagen during his repeated visits, he had by no means exhausted all the choicest works contained within these shores”.<sup>15</sup> Scharf’s duties, therefore, involved following Waagen’s lead initially, personally trawling through hundreds

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<sup>11</sup> Cooper, 2001, p. 37.

<sup>12</sup> Scharf was, however, scrupulous in avoiding any involvement with the Gallery of Modern Masters. He arranged that his official duties should only extend as far as sourcing, cataloguing and arranging items for the exhibition, and would have nothing to do with the return of items following the exhibition’s closure – see Scharf, 1857-1858, p. 315.

<sup>13</sup> As confirmed by Scharf’s personal diary - NPG7/3/1/14. On Boxall’s tenure at the National Gallery see Avery-Quash, 2003, p. xxxiii, and for Boxall’s friendship with Scharf see Heath, 2018, p. 22.

<sup>14</sup> MCL M6/2/11/447.

<sup>15</sup> Scharf, 1857-1858, p. 312.

of British collections, looking for and corresponding with potential lenders of European old masters. But he would increasingly exploit his own considerable knowledge and expertise in sourcing works and making informed selections, and soon found himself well able to act independently of Waagen's guidance. By January 1857 Scharf was frequently asserting his personal authority as "Director of pictures by artists born before the year 1700" in his Art Treasures correspondence.<sup>16</sup> In a letter of 7 January 1857 to the dealer William Buchanan (1777-1864) Scharf confidently stated that, "the collecting and arrangement of the works of Old Masters are solely under my control".<sup>17</sup>

Scharf eventually caught up with Waagen, who had long since returned to Berlin, in a lengthy letter of 17 March 1857 that acquainted the German art historian with the current (advanced) state of preparations for the Manchester Exhibition. It is clear from this that the two had not been in touch for a while and that Scharf regarded the letter more in terms of a general courtesy (and also a means of exchanging gossip - for a discussion of this letter see the **introduction to SSB 46**).<sup>18</sup> As a further example of Scharf's general self-sufficiency, another letter written on 6 April briskly rebuts a petition for employment at the exhibition from Scharf's sometime associate, the brilliant Italian art historian Giovanni Battista Cavalcaselle (1819-1897). The latter had fled to London in 1850 as a political refugee, and had been employed by Scharf as an illustrator and consultant in European, and particularly Italian art. Notwithstanding numerous acknowledgements of Cavalcaselle's advice and scholarship within the pages of the Art Treasures Catalogue, Scharf wrote to him as follows:

I would gladly help you if I could and even pay you a weekly stipend out of my own salary if I clearly saw how your services could be made available to myself. You want to see the pictures and study them. This would not help us: besides any person wandering about whilst I am hanging the pictures would be in the way and only

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<sup>16</sup> MCL M6/2/6/1/198 (letter to J. P. Smyth, 15 January 1856).

<sup>17</sup> MCL M6/2/6/1/170.

<sup>18</sup> MCL M6/2/6/2/112-116. It seems too that Scharf was only prompted to write thanks to a letter he had recently received from Waagen. On 26 March 1857 Scharf wrote to the Scottish collector James Gibson Craig, "I have been really too busy to write to our friend Dr Waagen although he sent us a very pleasant letter about 10 days ago" - MCL M6/2/6/2/193-196.

hinder the workmen...I must reluctantly forego the pleasure of seeing you here before the opening of the Exhibition in May next.<sup>19</sup>

By way of a stark contrast, one individual who Scharf clearly thought would not be in the way was Anna Brownell Jameson (1794-1860), author of the *Handbook to the Public Galleries of Art in London* (1840) and its later companion *Private Galleries of Art in and near London* (1842) which Scharf frequently cited alongside Waagen and a handful of other eminent sources in his contribution to the Art Treasures catalogue. In a letter to the lender William Fuller Maitland (1813-1876) on 1 October, Scharf had been keen to acknowledge that in making his selections, he “had been guided not only by Waagen’s notes, but what my friend Mrs Jameson has at various times mentioned to me”.<sup>20</sup> Scharf dispatched several letters to her over the next few months, including one from Manchester of 9 January in which Scharf writes, “you will always find me ready and thankful to talk with you about our great undertaking and I should be only too happy to welcome you here and show you what advances we have practically made.”<sup>21</sup>

Although grateful for the advice of such scholars, in terms of his day-to-day activities, Scharf frequently acknowledges in letters to colleagues and lenders that it was mostly necessary for him to act alone; the intervention of delegates and assistants over the course of his survey might have easily led to overlaps, and the unnecessary repetition of subjects and compositions. However, during the spring of 1857 his workload was such that he did make some (largely unsuccessful) efforts to obtain the services of a junior assistant-come-deputy - see the **introduction to SSB 45**.

#### **1.iv. Scharf’s canvassing of lenders**

When not engaged on countrywide visits to collectors or on return visits to London, Scharf based himself in the Art Treasures Exhibition’s offices at 100 Mosley Street, Manchester. This is where he was frequently confined day-in-day out as “a close prisoner” occupied on Art Treasures correspondence and general administrative matters related to his directorship

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<sup>19</sup> MCL M6/2/6/2/248-249. Scharf did at least make use of two assistants in the hanging of the pictures - see Croal, 2005, p. 54.

<sup>20</sup> MCL M6/2/6/1/24-25.

<sup>21</sup> MCL M6/2/6/1/171-172.

of the Gallery of Ancient Masters.<sup>22</sup> The scale of his letter-writing was literally voluminous: copies of the nearly six-hundred letters he wrote to potential lenders were duly filed in two thick 'Art Secretary Out-Letters Books' assembled between late September 1856 and mid-April 1857. These are preserved, alongside a further wealth of Art Treasures correspondence in the Central Library in Manchester (for more details of his living and working arrangements see individual introductions to the sketchbooks, particularly SSB 43-45).

In casting his net wide for potential lenders, Scharf was keen to act on his own initiative, exploiting his close connections with the British Museum, the British Archaeological Institute, and his experience with such projects as his recent compilation of the sale catalogue of the art collection of the late poet and connoisseur, Samuel Rogers (1763-1855) (see the **introduction to SSB 43**).<sup>23</sup> As previously mentioned, the Executive Committee was happy for him to intermittently solicit works other than old master paintings - so much is also clear from the text of his first letter to an owner preserved in the Art Secretary's Out-Letters Book. It was written on 25 September to a G. Forman, and is worth quoting extensively in order to illustrate how Scharf typically approached potential lenders:

Dear Sir, I am requested by the Committee for conducting the Art Treasures Exhibition to forward the accompanying papers for your notice, explanatory of their views, together with a copy of the letter addressed by Prince Albert to the President of the General Council of the Exhibition. They direct us to solicit your assistance by contributing objects of ancient and modern art to their collection. I am happy to say that nearly all the applications hitherto made to noblemen and distinguished possessors of art have been attended with complete success and that many voluntary offers have been made of the most gratifying description. The gallery of paintings by the old masters will be extraordinarily fine and we have already secured some of the finest specimens of antique statuary known to exist in the private galleries of this country. We shall also have a rich department of ancient vases and jewellery ornaments etc. and you will not, I dare say, be surprised of my taking this opportunity to enquire of my especial object of admiration, your amazing vase and the magnificent golden bulls from Mr Rogers's collection.

I do sincerely hope that you may be disposed to entrust these (and any other objects of art that may seem good to you) to the furtherance of our great national undertaking and that several of your treasures may be permitted to enrich the Exhibition. Complete arrangements have been made with regard to the packing and

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<sup>22</sup> See his letter to Charles T. Maud on 8 March 1857 - MCL M6/2/6/2/39-40.

<sup>23</sup> On Rogers see Avery-Quash, 2003, p. xvi.

transport department and upon this the general commissioners will be prepared to give you every information. I am happy to inform you that the selection and management of objects of art is carefully restricted to gentlemen and connoisseurs and that actual dealers have been altogether avoided.<sup>24</sup>

Scharf would certainly have to give way on that last point: dealers were too essential as intermediaries, as valuable sources of intelligence, and would themselves furnish important loans – see in particular the **introduction to SSB 45**.

As this first owner letter implies, the canvassing of potential lenders was already well under way. Before Scharf's arrival in Manchester in September 1856, this process had been overseen by the Chair of the Exhibition's Executive Committee, the industrialist and art collector Thomas Fairbairn (1823-1891), in conjunction with the Director of the British Portrait Gallery, Peter Cunningham (1816-1869), and the exhibition's General Commissioner, John Connellan Deane (1816-1887). The latter was a failed barrister, entrepreneur and son of the Irish architect, Thomas Deane (1792-1871) (of the firm Deane and Woodward). Having played an important organising role in the Dublin Great Industrial Exhibition of 1853, for which he had served as Assistant Secretary to the Executive Committee, it was Deane who first proposed the idea of the Manchester Exhibition in a letter to Fairbairn in February 1856.<sup>25</sup> Acting on the advice of Waagen, who was also paid a fee for his trouble, Fairbairn, Cunningham and Deane had already dispatched numerous letters to the most sought-after lenders by early September, among them the Earls Yarborough, Spencer and Warwick. However, the last of these, Guy Grenville, 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Warwick (1818-1893), responding on 4 October to an initial approach by Deane, took a dim view of the list of requested loans from Warwick Castle: "In the present instance the selection...appears to have been made from the description given by Dr Waagen, who wrote after a very hasty visit there about 20 years ago when I fancy he only saw a portion of the collection, and that very imperfectly." While Lord Warwick acknowledged that Waagen's expertise was "justly so much prized", he went on to point out the German scholar's inconsistent attributions, highlighted choice items which he had missed, and drew the committee's attention to some later acquisitions worthy of consideration.<sup>26</sup> Warwick had

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<sup>24</sup> MCL M6/2/6/1/1-2. The letter is also discussed in Pergam, 2011, pp. 31 & 46 n. 107.

<sup>25</sup> For Deane see Pergam, 2011, pp. 52 & 42 n. 49

<sup>26</sup> MCL M6/2/11/274.

also expressed his misgivings about the list of requested loans in an earlier letter to an agent, the Bond Street art dealer, Henry Farrer (1798-1866), of 26 September (see also the **introduction to SSB 43**).

Warwick's comments clearly illustrate why there was now a pressing need for a trained expert like Scharf to intervene in the selection of particular items (Warwick Castle was, in fact, one of the first collections Scharf was able to personally survey, on Monday 20 October - see the **introduction to SSB 43**). By visiting in person, Scharf was able to build upon Waagen's advice, take note of what the owner and/ or their intermediaries and advisors had to say (the value of which could vary enormously), while also bringing his own considerable art-historical skills to bear in recording, selecting, and rejecting European old master paintings. It was in this area that his expertise well surpassed that of Fairbairn, Deane and Cunningham, and one should also acknowledge how Scharf was able to update and correct many of Waagen's unsound attributions (on this point see in particular the discussion of the hang of Saloon A in **the introduction to SSB 49**).

Although the general response of lenders to the various letters and circulars soliciting works of art was overwhelmingly positive, an overriding concern involved the fragility of the items and the risks of transportation. In this, Deane's role in the recent Dublin Great Industrial Exhibition could be something of a liability: responding to another overture from Deane on 27 September, one particularly important lender, Charles Anderson-Pelham, 2nd Earl of Yarborough (1809-1862), seemed initially reluctant to cooperate, citing damage inflicted on works that he had previously lent to the Dublin Exhibition:

I feel disinclined to send any [works] when after being assured that the works of art I sent to the Dublin exhibition would be returned in a safe state, much of the sculptures I sent and saw in good condition at Dublin, were returned considerably damaged and the bad packing of one of the pictures caused it injury...

Perhaps mindful of chipped and ripped items returned from the Dublin exhibition, Scharf had shrewdly made it clear to the Executive Committee that his role as Art Secretary at Manchester would only extend so far as the sourcing and arranging works of art, he would

not be involved in their return following the closure of the exhibition.<sup>27</sup> Yarborough also pointed out that many of the items requested were already accessible to the public:

Mr Colnaghi of Pall Mall East has the arrangement of tickets admitting parties into my house [at Arlington Street, London] two days on each week and during the summer every Thursday my house at Brocklesby Park is open to the Public. You will hardly be surprised then to learn that I do not again feel inclined to renew the risk of having valuable works of art damaged, but for the circumstances I have alluded to I should have been anxious of meeting the wishes of the Executive Committee...<sup>28</sup>

**Fig. 1.iii.** George Scharf,  
*Sketch of an antique head of Niobe at Brocklesby Park, Lincolnshire, 31 December 1856.* Page 105 of Scharf Sketchbook 44. Heinz Archive, National Portrait Gallery, London.



Yarborough was, at least, talked round with regard to paintings: he generously contributed over twenty loans to the Ancient Masters section and several more to the British and Modern Masters Galleries. In early October, with Deane conveniently in Scotland, it was time for Scharf to step in and assume his role as chief intermediary; he visited Yarborough's London collection on numerous occasions between November and January, and surveyed works at Brocklesby on 31 December (see the **introductions to SSB 44 & 45**). In a letter of Saturday 11 October, Scharf lost no time in agreeing to the request that Yarborough's own

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<sup>27</sup> Scharf, 1857-1858, p. 315: "In my preliminary arrangements with the Executive Committee of the Manchester Exhibition, I undertook to collect for them various objects of ancient art and pictures by the old masters, and to arrange and catalogue them on the walls of the Exhibition. Here my engagement terminated. I strictly, from the first, limited my labours to the old masters, avoiding any connection with the galleries of modern art, and I particularly declined to do with returning the pictures after the close of the Exhibition".

<sup>28</sup> MCL M6/2/11/226.

man, Mr Joseph Green, would pack the paintings sent to Manchester, but also seized the opportunity to prod the Earl once more as to his refusal to lend sculpture.

I hope your Lordship will pardon my expressing a regret that the lovers of ancient art will not have the gratification of studying the fine head of Niobe which I have always heard is closer allied to the hands of Scopas as Praxiteles than the celebrated statue existing at Florence.<sup>29</sup>

That this was not mere flannel is suggested by Scharf's covetous sketch of the item made on his New Year's Eve visit to Brocklesby (SSB 44, p. 106 - see also **fig. 1.iii**). But it was to no avail, Yarborough's mind was as unmoveable as his sculpture.

What has not been previously acknowledged is the way Yarborough's misgivings are strikingly similar to those which Joseph Paxton (1803-1865), architect of the Crystal Palace, attributed to his long-term patron and the Art Treasures' most famous non-lender, William Cavendish, 6<sup>th</sup> Duke of Devonshire (1790-1858). On 7 October, in a letter to the Executive Committee, Paxton responded sympathetically to their wish to employ him as a trusted intermediary in convincing the Duke to lend valuable works of art from Chatsworth and Chiswick House. Once again, damage suffered from previous loans, not only to Dublin but also to the Paris Exhibition of the previous year, were cited as reasons for the Duke's reluctance, as was the fact that many works sought were already publicly accessible:

The objections he has are two – in the first place, he says, Chatsworth is open to the public and all these things can be seen there, and if they are sent away a large number of people will be deprived of the pleasure of seeing them. The second is that the things sent get damaged, this is a fact, and was the case both at the Dublin and Paris exhibitions, despite all precautions.

Paxton goes on to express the hope that "some very beautiful paintings and some statues" from the Duke's collection at Chiswick "which are not shown except by ticket" might be lent, "but I doubt very much his allowing any objects from Chatsworth". In the end Cavendish refused to lend anything, and this is perhaps unsurprising given that elsewhere in his letter Paxton stresses that, "it was with very great reluctance [that the Duke] sent anything either to Dublin or Paris, but in both cases there were peculiar circumstances which had weight with his Grace".<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> MCL M6/2/6/1/66-67.

<sup>30</sup> MCL M6/2/11/307.

Paxton's letter, which was written from Chatsworth, needs to be implicated in any further efforts to lay to rest the myth of the Duke's notoriously snooty reaction to the aims of the Art Treasures Exhibition. In her recent monograph on the exhibition, Elizabeth Pergam challenged the generally accepted belief, arising from the journalism of the period, that Cavendish was the "noble duke" who, when approached to lend, retorted, "What on earth do you want with art in Manchester, why can't you stick to your cotton-spinning?". She drew attention to a contradictory letter sent to the organisers from the Duke himself in January 1857 in which he cited ill health as a reason for not engaging with the project (he died a year later in January 1858). Scharf himself later reported that the Duke had been a visitor to the exhibition and "repeatedly expressed his regret at not having been a contributor".<sup>31</sup> Cavendish even held a gathering in honour of the Art Treasures organisers at Chatsworth on 2 November 1857, a month after the Exhibition's closure (if Scharf had been invited, he did not go).<sup>32</sup> Perhaps the Duke had a sincere change of heart, but as regards his initial reaction to the overtures of the Art Treasures Executive Committee, Paxton's letter suggests that the jury is still out.

Aside from the anxieties of the Earl of Yarborough and the Duke of Devonshire, Scharf's general correspondence with lenders is often at pains to placate fretful owners. Frequent topics include the professionalism and experience of packers, the logistics of transportation and insurance, but also the general conditions of public display in Manchester, and issues of security (see also the **introduction to SSB 47**). One particularly lengthy and entertaining letter to the Hampshire-based lender the Rev Francis Leicester is worthy of attention. Scharf visited Leicester at his residence at Hayling near Southampton - a long way from Manchester - on 11 February 1857 (see the **introduction to SSB 45**). In a follow-up letter of 3 March 1857 Scharf was forced to respond to Leicester's concerns as to how the recent general election might have affected Manchester's not wholly unfounded reputation as a hotbed of social unrest and radicalism.

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<sup>31</sup> Scharf, 1857-1858, pp. 328-329. Scharf offers no explanation of his own as to why the Duke did not lend.

<sup>32</sup> Pergam, 2011, pp. 27 & 45 n. 94. Pergam's scepticism is followed by Fine, 2017, p. 25. The identification with the Duke of Devonshire is not challenged in Hunt and Whitfield, 2007, p. 19. The attribution of the comment to the Duke of Devonshire appears in Taylor, 1857, p. 3. On 2 November, Scharf was in London lecturing at Queens' College, London, according to the diary of his aunt - NPG7/3/7/4/1/6.

I beg to assure you that all is quiet in Manchester, that the election has passed off in the most tranquil manner and that since Manchester has changed her representatives there is less fear than ever of the old revolutionary spirit being revived. [other lenders] Lord de Tabley, Lord Ward and Royalty itself do not exhibit any of those pernicious symptoms of fear which seem to be in danger of rooting themselves in your breast. Pray divest yourself of them as soon as possible.<sup>33</sup>

One other temporary Manchester resident of German extraction, Scharf's exact contemporary, Friedrich Engels (1820-1895), seems to have been in agreement with Scharf's analysis of a flagging "revolutionary spirit" in the face of the Art Treasures Exhibition. Not long after the exhibition's opening, Engels wrote to Karl Marx (1818-1883) that "Everyone up here is an art lover just now and the talk is all of the pictures at the exhibition".<sup>34</sup>

A more frequent cause for concern was the safety of items transported by rail. Scharf was forced to allay Leicester's worries over a recent rail accident involving some valuable works of art belonging to John Naylor (1813–1889) of Leighton Hall, Montgomeryshire. These were damaged on a return journey from an exhibition at George's Hall Liverpool:

The case you quote of Mr Naylor was simply this; he would not trust the railway. He insisted on his pictures being conveyed home by a waggon and horses instead of employing the railways as the rest of the picture owners did without hesitation. The waggon wheels with his pictures in the waggon, stuck fast whilst trying to cross the railway in the streets of a country village. The train came up before it was possible to extricate the waggon – the horses were fortunately got out of the way just before the catastrophe took place. The railway train, containing the pictures of the more confiding part of the community ran completely through the waggon of the solitary mistruster and completely annihilated its contents...Do not therefore my dear sir quote this tale as an argument against the railway; but dismiss all your fears, assuredly the committee will not listen to any questions of insurance against more than fire...<sup>35</sup>

Scharf exaggerates as to the scale of the accident, which took place on 24 November 1854, but possibly to serve his own ends. The consignment included John Martin's *Joshua Commanding the Sun to Stand Still* which is identifiable with a surviving painting in the National Gallery of Washington (another ironically-titled work, Clarkson Stanfield's *The*

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<sup>33</sup> MCL M6/2/6/2/2-3. On Manchester's unsavoury reputation See also Pergam, 2011, pp. 3-4 and Hunt and Whitfield, 2007, pp. 38-41.

<sup>34</sup> Cited in Hunt and Whitfield, 2007, p. 38. On Engels and Manchester see Pergam, 2011, p. 4.

<sup>35</sup> MCL M6/2/6/2/2-3.

*Wreckers*, was listed in press reports).<sup>36</sup> Naylor also lent to the Art Treasures Exhibition, although only to the Modern Masters section, and there is no evidence that he persisted in his resistance to rail haulage. The running of the railway line directly into the Art Treasures Palace was one way of reassuring lenders as to the practical difficulties of heaving works of art on and off trains - see also the **introduction to SSB 45** for Matthew Cotes Wyatt's unease when it came to the transportation of his gargantuan *Juno Transferring the Eyes of Argus* by Rubens.

### **1.v. Building itineraries; the extent of Scharf's survey**

Britain's expanding railway network was not only essential to the conveyance of paintings and people to the Art Treasures Palace.<sup>37</sup> The scale and scope of Scharf's preparatory fact-finding survey of contributing collections would have been impossible without the speed and convenience of rail travel. He embarked on his country-wide survey of old masters in British art collections toward the end of September 1856, and it occupied him for the next seven months. Sketchbooks 43-49 encapsulate the fruits of this survey, which involved visits to over a hundred lenders throughout London, the Midlands, the South, West and Northwest of England. Scharf originally intended to travel much further afield, but his plans to survey the east of England, Scotland and even Ireland (and presumably Wales) had to be reluctantly abandoned in March 1857 as the deadline for hanging the pictures approached. He expressed his regrets on the subject in a letter to the Edinburgh-based collector and bibliophile James Gibson Craig (1799-1886) on 26 March:

I am deeply mortified to see my chance of visiting Scotland still diminishing. As Art Secretary I ought to have visited both Scotland and Ireland because I am sure that in each capital a rich store of material was open to me. The very limited time for operation and the rapidly accumulating duties in my present locality combined with geographical difficulties seem to render all further departure from Manchester impossible.<sup>38</sup>

The result was that Scharf frequently had to accept scores of loans from these and other areas of the United Kingdom 'sight unseen', falling back as necessary on notes supplied to

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<sup>36</sup> See for example *The Gentleman's Magazine*, January, 1855, p. 51.

<sup>37</sup> On the role of the railways see Pergam, 2011, p. 21; Hunt and Whitfield, 2007, p. 25.

<sup>38</sup> MCL M6/2/6/2/195-196.

him by Waagen (for more on the curtailment of his plans see the **introductions to SSB 45 & 46**).

In planning each phase of his - still hugely ambitious - survey, Scharf seems to have fixed on a certain geographical area with a careful eye on the rail-timetables included in his most recent edition of 'Bradshaw'. He would confirm a time with a major lender, before contacting another, perhaps equally important, owner for a second appointment in close proximity. Around these he would then build a sequence of lesser fixtures. His sketchbooks, diaries and 'long books' (see below) build up a picture of him zig-zagging around an area by rail, to be met by a fly from the station which would then convey him to one country house or another. He would often cram several appointments into the one day, and the fading light lent his itinerary a frenetic, against-the-clock dimension; he was forced to carry out the bulk of his survey in the winter months when the days were short, and the light poor (for more on this point see the **introductions to SSB 44 and 45**).

A summary of the first major leg of his survey in October 1856 further reveals the mechanics of Scharf's approach. In a letter of 10 October addressed to William Thomas Spencer Wentworth-Fitzwilliam, 6<sup>th</sup> Earl Fitzwilliam (1815-1902) at Milton Hall, Scharf writes:

...I am about to commence a tour for the express purpose of selecting works of art from Galleries in the central parts of England. On the 15<sup>th</sup> I go by appointment to [Earl Spencer at] Althorp and am waiting for an appointment with Earl of Warwick as soon after as may be convenient but on the Tuesday the 14<sup>th</sup> I would with your Lordship's permission proceed direct to Milton and then prosecute my studies.<sup>39</sup>

Flagging up an appointment with one or two eminent neighbours obviously did no harm, and this is a technique Scharf regularly employed in building up as productive an itinerary as possible. In the end, Scharf's visit to Milton was arranged for Friday 17 October, and he had to wait till the following Monday to be received at Warwick Castle. No matter: in between Scharf managed to secure an appointment at Garendon Park (destroyed by fire in 1964), where he surveyed the collection of former local MP Charles March Phillipps (1779-1862), and also with Mr Earles of Leamington Spa. This also presented Scharf with the opportunity of staying overnight at Rempstone, near Loughborough, the home of his friend, the society hostess Lady Sarah Caroline Sitwell (1779-1860) on the Saturday. Even here no time was

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<sup>39</sup> MCL M6/2/6/1/68-69.

wasted as she had some pictures worth considering for Manchester and Scharf dutifully sketched them before making a formal application (for more on this section of Scharf's survey see the **introduction to SSB 43**). In this opportunistic and at times ad-hoc fashion, Scharf was able to recruit lenders he might not have otherwise considered. His approach could, however, cause him embarrassment on occasion, as was the case with his rather-too-impromptu arrival at Newnham Paddox, Monks Kirby the home of William Fielding, 7<sup>th</sup> Earl of Denbigh (1796-1865) on 3 November (see the **introduction to SSB 44**).

#### **1.vi. Sketchbooks 43-49: format and function**

In harvesting the best of British art collections, Scharf later recalled that he "had already formed an *ideal* gallery on paper, taking the choicest specimens of every master in the history of art, as far as I remembered their existence in this country."<sup>40</sup> The actual basis for this conceptual collection were the numerous sketchbooks and notebooks in which Scharf recorded his immediate impressions of the places he visited, and the works they contained. Of particular value in this regard are the sketchbooks compiled between June 1856 and October 1857, SSB 43-49.

They are of a uniform type: small, black leather-bound sketchbooks of a horizontal format, 16 x 10 cm in size. Their covers are held together with brass clasps and are personally embossed in gold with the numbers "43.", "44." etc. on the front. Each is composed of around seventy leaves and paginated according to Scharf's own handwritten method. This can vary in format and coherence but is usually reliable enough for the purposes of cataloguing. Thumbnail pencil studies of paintings surveyed dominate the content, and these are generally organised in the chronological order of the over one-hundred collections Scharf personally visited over the course of the compilation of SSB 43-46, between September 1856 and March 1857. SSB 47-49 were, by contrast, compiled almost exclusively *in situ* at the Art Treasures Palace during September and October 1857, and are more random in their organisation, but display greater time and care in detailed studies of individual items. The pencil drawings of paintings, a fair proportion of which were not selected for Manchester, are often spread across the page, three-to-four at a time. It is difficult to make an audit of all the works of art represented in SSB 43-49, but the number is

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<sup>40</sup> See Scharf, 1857-1858, p. 274.

certainly in the low thousands. Even disregarding the hang diagrams included in SSB 46 and SSB 49, individual sketches of Art Treasures items come to between seven to eight-hundred.

These drawings are best considered as *ricordi* intended as a quick and efficient tool of record (see **fig. 1.iv**). Larger half or full-page studies of paintings which particularly struck Scharf sometimes stand out for their impressive level of detail and better represent their author's attractive, filigree style of sketching. Numerous notes in pencil also appear, and at a later point, Scharf appended catalogue numbers in pen to works he had selected for Manchester. He even noted later auction appearances and lot numbers here and there, sometimes adding comments decades after the original sketch was made – this has proved essential to the complex task of identifying the hundreds of works featured in this run of sketchbooks (which does not, however, pretend to be a wholly complete record). Scharf also punctuated his studies of paintings with sketches of innumerable places, people and things encountered on his travels. These often recall the anecdotal characters and street scenes associated with his father's own output as a talented (if increasingly impoverished) illustrator, printmaker and general recorder of London life. Further analysis of Scharf's graphic style is included as part of the **introduction to SSB 48**.

In addition to the sketchbooks that usually accompanied Scharf on his visits to lenders, he also kept with him a smaller type of personal note book – his so-called 'long books' - also preserved in the Heinz Archive of the National Portrait Gallery. These usually supply a more prosaic diary of his various itineraries and expenses. There are ten of these long books, although the last two volumes he also referred to, confusingly, as his 'Inscription Books' – as these are crammed with notes and elaborate tracings taken from the inscriptions on paintings he was able to carefully scrutinise when they were assembled in Manchester (the long books are a subject of study in themselves, although references to them are included in the current database).<sup>41</sup>

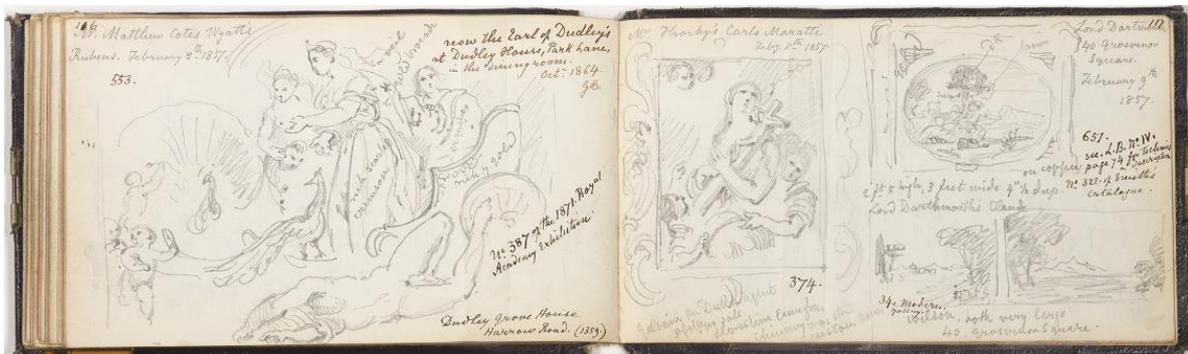
Comparing the sketchbooks and the long books, one gets the impression of Scharf making brief, intense sketches directly in front of paintings in the former, but then constantly fumbling in his waistcoat pocket for a smaller long book in order to make more detailed

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<sup>41</sup> The ten volumes of these long books are gathered under heading 'General Notes 1856-1857' in the Heinz Archive of the National Portrait Gallery, NPG7/2/2/4.

written notes. In any case, he seems to have had both constantly on the go at any one time. There was method in this madness: the sketchbooks represented an at-a-glance, easily navigable, visual record of pictorial compositions, and functioned, therefore, in a way that is analogous to how one might use a digital camera today. At the risk of straining an anachronistic and perishable analogy, the long books were more akin to a smartphone, and a means of gathering more expansive textual information. They offer a denser, if more haphazard, repository of auxiliary data. There are, however, plenty of sketches of works of art interspersed among the written material covered in the long books, and they occasionally seem to have taken over the role of the sketchbooks as his primary tool of visual record.

What is certainly noticeable is how Scharf's regular appointment diaries for 1856 and 1857 are often kept chaotically, or abandoned altogether, as the sketchbooks and long books asserted themselves as Scharf's primary means of recording his general day-to-day activity during this period (see also **frequently cited archival sources** below, and also the **introduction to SSB 44**).



**Fig. 1.iv.** George Scharf, *Notes and sketches on works of art in the collections of Matthew Cotes Wyatt, Thomas Thorby, and William Walter Legge, 5<sup>th</sup> Earl Dartmouth, 8 February 1857*. Pages 116-117 of Scharf Sketchbook 45. Heinz Archive, National Portrait Gallery, London.

### 1.vii. The sketchbooks' role in reconstructing the Art Treasures' hang

In harvesting the best of British art collections, Scharf aimed to provide visitors to the Art Treasures Exhibition with a comprehensive survey of European painting from the Byzantine to the Rococo. In doing so, one exceptionally important and influential contribution to the history of public art exhibitions was his organisation of the Gallery of Ancient Masters, which represented the first British attempt at hanging a major collection of old masters

chronologically, within their national schools.<sup>42</sup> In a letter of 9 October 1856 to Alfred North of the Liverpool Royal Institution, Scharf explained the rationale, declaring that, “However interesting particular masters may be when viewed individually their importance becomes greatly enhanced when measured with their contemporaries or considered with reference to the history of art”.<sup>43</sup> According to the text of a widely circulated official letter to Francis Egerton, 1st Earl of Ellesmere (1800-1857), the original Chair of the exhibition’s General Committee, the initial suggestion for a chronological hang was owing to Prince Albert, albeit inspired by Waagen’s approach to the organisation of the Berlin Gallery: “If the collection you propose to form were made to illustrate the history of Art in a chronological and systematic arrangement,” Prince Albert wrote, “it would speak powerfully to the public mind...”.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, the execution, success and impact of the overall Ancient Masters’ hang, involving the chronological juxtaposition of national schools across opposing walls belongs to Scharf (for more on the specifics of the organisation of the hang see the **introduction to SSB 49**).



<sup>42</sup> On the impact and influence of Scharf’s organisation of the Ancient Masters’ hang see Pergam, 2011, pp. 62-67.

<sup>43</sup> MCL M6/2/6/1/58-59.

<sup>44</sup> “Letter from H.R.H. Prince Albert to the President of the General Council of the Exhibition” - reproduced in Appendix IV of Pergam, 2011, pp. 249-250. On Waagen’s influence over the chronological hang see pp. 26-27 & 52 at the same source.

**Fig. 1.v.** Digital reconstruction by Philip Cottrell of the East Wall of Saloon C in the Gallery of Ancient Masters at the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition, 1857.

Although a definitive detailed catalogue of the Manchester exhibition was produced, it was unillustrated and inevitably out-of-step with modern attributions - chiefly as a result of the Executive Committee's wish to respect the ascriptions maintained by owners, as opposed to Scharf's own critical designations. It was also inconsistent in its efforts to provide information on the history and dimensions of thousands of items. Photographic albums were produced in conjunction with the exhibition, but these were selective in what they included, and the numerous photographs and engravings of the interior of the Art Treasures Palace cannot be used as a basis upon which to build a detailed record of what actually went on display (photographs are in any case singularly lacking where the Ancient Masters hang is concerned).<sup>45</sup> As part of her 2011 monograph on the Art Treasures Exhibition, Elizabeth A. Pergam compiled an extensive and enormously useful register of paintings from the Manchester exhibition now in public collections around the world. This included around five-hundred-and-fifty items contributed to the Ancient Masters and British Portrait Galleries (not counting several hundred works relevant to the Gallery of Modern Masters). But by her own admission this was "work in progress", and she could only offer a partial record of surviving exhibits; the identity and whereabouts of many works of art incorporated into the Ancient Masters and British Portrait Galleries has remained a matter of speculation.<sup>46</sup>

The present database aims to make great strides in this respect, and contributes around two-hundred additional identifications, as well as providing further information on dozens of other untraced works. Scharf's sketchbooks can now be used in conjunction with other archival material to correct and significantly augment Pergam's register of works, as well as providing new information as to the provenance and historical condition of certain items. This research is, however, still incomplete and the authors of the database are eager for further information/ corrections regarding featured items. A comprehensive reconstruction of great swathes of the Art Treasures hang is also now feasible thanks to the wealth of

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<sup>45</sup> See for example Caldesi and Montecchi, 1857.

<sup>46</sup> See Pergam, 2011, pp. 259-325: "Appendix VII. Paintings Exhibited at the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition Now in Public Collections". For earlier research into the content of SSB 43-49 see Cottrell 2012.

previously unpublished material contained in the database. Digital reconstructions of the appearance of the hang are also increasingly viable (see for example, **fig. 1.v**). SSB 46 and SSB 49 are particularly useful in this regard as they contain detailed diagrams of the chronologically-arranged hangs of both the Ancient Masters and British Portrait Galleries. Although some of these have already been published by Pergam, it is only now that all are accessible and a thorough inventory of items featured has been possible.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Pergam, 2011, pp. 140-143, 152-153, 172-173 & 222-223. An attempt, unfortunately only partially successful, to digitally reconstruct two partial views of the Ancient Masters Gallery appears in Croal, 2005, pp. 58-60 – see also the **introduction to SSB 49**.