

Curiously Drawn: Early-modern Science as a Visual Pursuit

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Kohn Centre, Royal Society, 6-9 Carlton House Terrace London SW1Y 5AG

Abstracts of papers

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Disease in the Philosophical Transactions

The visual representation of diseased bodies, organs, and body parts in early modern texts posed a number of problems to anatomists, physicians, and artists; and continues to pose them to modern readers. My essay seeks to map the representation of disease in the early decades of the *Philosophical Transactions*, to analyze these representations, and to identify some problems and questions for further investigation.

Lorraine Daston

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Super-Vision: weather watching across space and through time at the early Royal Society and Académie Royale des Sciences

At both the Royal Society of London and the Paris *Académie Royale des Sciences*, considerable effort was expended in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to discover the "laws of the weather". Correspondents from near and far were encouraged to send in their observations, which were increasingly displayed in tabular form. Positioned midway between text and image, the table was a device of synopsis, of "seeing together", which, it was hoped, would reveal subtle correlations between all manner of variables: the fluctuations of the barometer; the phases of the moon; the outbreaks of diseases; the advent of storms. Although the rhetoric was in terms of new-fangled "laws of nature", the visualization techniques were as ancient as the Mesopotamian sciences of divination, albeit turned to novel ends.

Paula Findlen

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The specimen and the image: John Woodward, Agostino Scilla, and the depiction of fossils

Among the approximately 9,400 specimens in the natural history collection that Royal Society member John Woodward (1665-1728) bequeathed to the University of Cambridge is a box containing the fossils he acquired in 1717 from the heirs of the Messina painter, antiquarian, and naturalist Agostino Scilla (1629-1700). They are accompanied by Scilla's original drawings for *La vana speculazione disingannata dal senso* (1670), his important study of the fossil record of Malta, Sicily, and Reggio Calabria. Both can be found today in the Sedgwick Museum, Cambridge, and compared with the engravings of Perugian artist Pietro Santi Bartoli in the printed book as well as copies of some images made for the *Philosophical Transactions* and other publications that discussed Scilla's work.

This talk examines Woodward's critique of Scilla's technique of representation as he inspected, labelled, and catalogued Scilla's fossils. What were his expectations of the depiction of nature? What differences can we see between Scilla's understanding of a good portrait of a fossil in the mid-seventeenth century and Woodward's expectations of scientific illustration by the early eighteenth century? This talk explores how both naturalists understood the relationship between the specimen and the image in light of larger debates about scientific images in the early modern period.

Nathan Flis

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Barlow's Pursuits: pictures of birds and beasts before the era of modern scientific illustration

Francis Barlow (c.1626-1704) was England's 'famous Paynter of fowle Beastes & Birds' (John Evelyn, *Diary*, 11 February 1656): a painter of landscapes and the hunt; a political satirist; a stationer; and, in the words of Antony Griffiths, the 'central figure of British graphic art of the second half of the seventeenth century'. From the 1650s onwards, Barlow's business as a designer and purveyor of pictures of birds and animals brought him into contact with the individuals who would found and become the earliest members of the Royal Society, including Evelyn, John Wilkins, Robert Morison, and likely also Thomas Browne of Norwich, Henry More, John Ray, and Francis Willughby. Barlow's commissions for paintings and book illustration reveal a much wider circle of fellow picture-makers, printers, publishers, natural philosophers, antiquarians, writing masters, poets, and politicians. In engaging with the question of whether we can distinguish between artistic and scientific images, this paper presents a selection of tantalizing instances in which Barlow's specialty as painter of birds and beasts brought him into contact with those interested in the describing the natural world.

Barlow's pictures provide the opportunity to come to terms with what constituted 'natural history' before the advent of modern science. Field observation in the spirit of the Royal Society was essential to Barlow's craft, but his artistic sources (and consequently, the way he viewed the natural world) also included emblem books that stressed cosmological associations in nature, and a wealth of what we would now identify as folklore. Instead of viewing Barlow, and what are in many ways late-medieval ways of seeing the natural world, as out of tune with the 'scientific revolution', I suggest that, at least at the beginning of his career, Barlow's pictures reflect a vision of nature that was precisely in tune with widely held beliefs. However, by the end of the century, ways of seeing the natural world were changing, and though Barlow flirted with new concepts and was involved in the illustration of some of the Royal Society's cutting-edge publications, it appears that he never completely relinquished his earlier vision.

Urs B. Leu

Director Rare Book Department, Zentralbibliothek Zürich

Swiss mountains and English scholars: Johann Jacob Scheuchzer's contributions to the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society

The famous Swiss physician and polymath Johann Jacob Scheuchzer (1672–1733) became a member of the Royal Society of London in 1706; his son Johann Kaspar was accepted into this famous and illustrious circle in 1728. It is well documented that the Royal Society supported Scheuchzer in the publication of his *Itinera alpina* (London, 1708), one of the first scientific descriptions of the Swiss Alps. Less well known however is the fact that Scheuchzer wrote numerous contributions for the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* and about a dozen of them were published. In my lecture I will analyze the contents of these papers and attempt to explain why some of them were published and others not. Furthermore, I will illuminate the Anglo-Swiss connection between Scheuchzer and some of the members of the Royal Society, including James Petiver, Hans Sloane, John Thorpe and John Woodward.

Scott Mandelbrote

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Illustrating the history of the earth

This paper will discuss the form and function of illustration in the controversy surrounding Thomas Burnet's *Telluris theoria sacra* (1681-9), in which several Fellows of the Royal Society were involved. It will consider what role illustration played in forming Burnet's ideas about the history of the earth, how his illustrations related to those of others dealing with similar problems (and with contemporary biblical

illustration of the events described), and what his critics felt it necessary to illustrate in their own responses. In all cases, the processes of illustration and the publication of illustration will also be considered.

Kim Sloan

The British Museum

Sir Hans Sloane's pictures: the science of connoisseurship or the art of collecting?

Sloane's pictorial collection was vast. However, his paintings, drawings and prints are not all in the British Museum but widely dispersed, and so the correspondence related to his collection is buried in his papers in the British Library. Furthermore, because many of the specimens illustrated don't survive, or are scattered through the Natural History Museum, scholars have only begun to explore Sloane's own understanding of the relationship between objects and the visual arts in early modern science. Art historians have wanted to categorize him as a connoisseur, a natural philosopher who used art as a tool, or a virtuoso collector, but it is unlikely that he and his contemporaries would have made such distinctions. In this paper I propose to examine a number of portraits and albums of drawings in Sloane's collection with Royal Society connections to explore what they tell us about the specific relationships between art, connoisseurship, science and collecting in the seventeenth century.