



HISTORIES OF BRITISH ART

1660-1735 RECONSTRUCTION AND TRANSFORMATION

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“...il celebre David Paton pittor di chiaroscuro...”: an Edinburgh limner at Ham House and the Medici court’

The career of the now little-known Scottish draughtsman David Paton (fl. 1667 – died in or after 1709) raises many questions about the status of an artist moving between Restoration Scotland riven by religious strife, the Lauderdales’ rural powerhouse beside the Thames at Ham, and the refined patronage of Cosimo III de’ Medici in Florence. The artist’s self-portrait, which was drawn by the Arno in 1683, is arguably the earliest such work by a native-born Scottish or English artist to enter the renowned collection of autoritratti in the Galleria degli Uffizi.

Less than fifty of Paton’s portrait drawings and copies after old master paintings from the Royal Collection survive (thirteen of them still at Ham House), while his career is documented episodically – but revealingly - in the Edinburgh city records, the household accounts of the Scottish nobility, and the diplomatic correspondence of the Medici. Paton can now be linked through copies and Medici patronage to the miniaturist Samuel Cooper, and can also be understood in the context of his contemporary portrait draughtsmen working in plumbago - William Faithorne, David Loggan, Robert White, John Faber, George White and Thomas Forster. This paper will begin to examine how Paton’s refined achievement as a peripatetic draughtsman, can be re-assessed by establishing his oeuvre and repositioning him within the interlinked artistic communities and protective circles of aristocratic patronage in Edinburgh, London and Italy. It will reveal how he was promoted by well-connected Scots at court in London and participated in their cultural activities on the continental Grand Tour.