



# HISTORIES OF BRITISH ART

## 1660-1735 RECONSTRUCTION AND TRANSFORMATION

### ABSTRACT: PETER MOORE

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'Portrait Prints in British Colonial America, c 1718-1728: Reconstructions and Transformations

By the turn of the eighteenth century, the graphic art of mezzotint – a process that was enigmatically introduced to the British public by John Evelyn in 1662 – had become a ubiquitous part of the nation's visual culture. Favoured as a means of replicating painted portraits, the medium not only excelled at emulating the tonal effects of oil on canvas, but also facilitated the dissemination of polite modes of bodily display to a broad spectatorship.

As the population of Britain's burgeoning American colonies increasingly sought cultural refinement through artistic production, the mezzotint came to play a determining role in the kinds of images produced in these regions. Identifying the mezzotint's role as an imported commodity, this paper shall offer a new geographical context for understanding a medium that came to be known to Europeans during the eighteenth century as the *manière anglaise*.