



# HISTORIES OF BRITISH ART

## 1660-1735 RECONSTRUCTION AND TRANSFORMATION

### ABSTRACT: MARTIN MYRONE

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'Engraving's third dimension'

The resurgence of scholarly interest in the seventeenth- and early-eighteenth century print has been driven in no small part by a new appreciation of the graphic image as part of a more extensive 'print culture' which was undergoing a massive transformation over this period. Considered alongside the transformations within the political and intellectual realms, in empire, banking and trade, it may seem self-evident that the printed image was bound into a set of revolutionary changes which together established the 'modern' world.

In this paper I want to interrogate the relationship between the graphic image and the wider 'print culture', and the apparently inevitable complicity of print with (commercial) modernity. By focussing on the characterisation of the graphic image in John Evelyn's *Sculptura* (1662), and by thinking particularly about the significance of his emphatically sculptural conception of the intaglio print (apparent in the very title of this volume) I will explore an alternative understanding of print in the era. Although there are no reasonable grounds to doubt that print production was faster, more efficient, larger, and more socially penetrating in 1740 than it was in 1660, I want to suggest that neither was print's complicity with the advent of modernity either simple or complete.