



HISTORIES OF BRITISH ART

1660-1735 RECONSTRUCTION AND TRANSFORMATION

ABSTRACT: HELEN PIERCE

Helen Pierce (University of Aberdeen)

“this Ingenious young Gent and excellent artist”: William Lodge (1649-1689) and the York Virtuosi’

The antiquarian George Vertue sets the scene: during the later decades of the seventeenth century ‘...there were then residing at York a set of most Ingenious Virtuosos.’ This collection of gentlemen, largely of independent financial means, included a physician, a topographer, a mathematician, several amateur artists and a glass painter, who met regularly in the city on social and intellectual terms.

The creative output of one of the group, the amateur painter, etcher and potter Francis Place, has been the subject of previous scholarly attention, most notably an exhibition of his work at York City Art Gallery and Kenwood in 1971; less interest has been directed towards his fellow ‘virtuoso’ and companion on sketching and fishing tours, William Lodge. During his relatively short lifetime Lodge was involved in a number of projects which highlight the developing role of the visual arts, in both historical and practical terms, in the polite recreations and self-improvement of the independently wealthy individual.

This paper will examine William Lodge’s complementary roles as amateur artist and printmaker, and gentleman connoisseur, paying particular attention to his activities as a member of the Earl of Fauconberg’s ambassadorial visit to Venice between 1669 and 1670, and the subsequent publication in 1679 of *The Painters Voyage of Italy*, Lodge’s English translation of Giacomo Barri’s *Viaggio pittoresco d’Italia*.

And what better location than the King’s Manor in York, once home to Lodge’s ‘sworn brother’ Francis Place, and just twenty miles from the Fauconberg seat at Newburgh Priory, to reassess the contribution of ‘this Ingenious young Gent and excellent artist’ (in the words of Vertue) to British art of the Restoration period on a local and national scale?