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ART THEORY AND PRODUCTION IN THE STUDIO OF BENJAMIN WEST

By

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INTRODUCTION

"The way to be an excellent painter is to be an excellent man."[1]

In 1805, artist and diarist Joseph Farington reported that he and Benjamin West were together, and that West "...dictated to me His whole process of painting & I wrote it. He said He had been 30 years trying to ascertain a good system & had at last obtained it."[2] Unfortunately, Farington's record of West's painting methods are lost to us today, but the passage is significant because it reflects West's and other eighteenth-century artists' continued interest in the experimentation and refinement of their craft. This dissertation examines the process of art production in the large and prosperous studio of Benjamin West, one of the most successful artists of his generation. This study is critical because West's fifty-year career spanned a period of pivotal changes in the way artists painted and, equally important, the way in which they were regarded by their public. West's artistic methods and investigations were guided in large part by academic theory that emerged in France and Italy during the seventeenth century. These traditional artistic methods were called into question by younger artists, however, and the activities of West's studio echo significant changes in the formation of artists' studios in general from the late eighteenth through the early nineteenth centuries. These transformations are seen in the gradual shift from an emphasis on history painting by the Academy to a reluctant acceptance of smaller-scaled landscape and genre pictures. As a result, the predominant aesthetic theory of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries began to change from an almost exclusive adherence to the principals of classical art to an approach guided by direct observations of nature. Moreover, scientific advancements in the manufacture of artists' materials dramatically influenced the scale and make-up of the artist's studio as less and less outside labor was required to produce works of art. Consequently, artists became more and more distant from the labor of their craft, and began to participate in the theoretical, rather than the mere mechanical, discourse of painting. Thus, an exploration

of West's studio provides us with valuable insight into a pivotal moment in the history of art, when the artist emerged from his lowly position as craftsman to the respected practitioner of a liberal art.

Benjamin West was one of the most influential and prolific painters of his generation. During his sixty-year career in London, his studio turned out over 550 history paintings, portraits of family, friends and patrons, mythological and genre pictures, designs for architectural projects, and landscapes.[3] West's meteoric rise to fame was virtually unprecedented. In less than ten years after his arrival in London in 1763, this young Quaker from rural Pennsylvania became History Painter to the King of England and established one of the most important art studios of his day. His introduction to the London art world began in Italy, prior to his arrival in England, where he was introduced to Rome's leading connoisseurs and intellectuals, as well as the British artists Gavin Hamilton and Nathaniel Dance.[4] Once in London, West met the imminent landscape painter Richard Wilson, as well as the famous portraitist Sir Joshua Reynolds, through his Italian connections. He became involved in various artistic societies and eventually would succeed Reynolds as president of the Royal Academy, an office he held for almost thirty years. Like other artists of his generation, West understood that a large and elegant studio was an important step in attracting and securing patronage. In order to assert himself as a major artistic figure, while at the same time obscuring his unassuming background, the artist attempted to convey the appearance of wealth and education by adapting a fashionable lifestyle. His studio emulated the grand portrait studios of Anthony van Dyck and Sir Peter Lely, and was built to rival those of his contemporaries.[5]

In 1775 West purchased a fashionable residence and studio at 14 Newman Street, thus placing himself in the very heart of artistic activity in London.[6] West's studio was large by eighteenth century standards, an extravagance that looks forward to the spacious studios of the later nineteenth century. This new home, located in one of the city's most fashionable neighborhoods, boasted imposing views and enough land to accommodate

the addition of a large painting room and the conversion of outbuildings into two smaller rooms for mixing colors, as well as a gallery for exhibiting works.[7] Ample studio space was necessary for West, for as History Painter to the King he was required to produce large-scale historical pictures. His annual allowance of 1500 pounds softened the financial burden attached to his new home, and he was able to paint a number of works on speculation. The size of West's studio reflects the vast scale of his artistic enterprise, while its elegance attests to the recent elevation of his profession from that of a craft to a liberal art.[8] This new professional status was marked by the formation of the Royal Academy in 1767, an organization founded by artists, endorsed by the king, and led by Reynolds' learned voice. The resultant exhibitions, press and published annual lectures enhanced the public's regard for the field. With this newfound, though not unrestrained, respect of the aristocracy, the artist's world was significantly broadened, both culturally and financially. Patrons, most often members of the upper classes, began to socialize more and more with the artistic community. A hundred years earlier, very few artists entertained patrons in their studios. When they had occasion to visit a patron's home, it was usually on matters of business like painting a portrait, taking an estate view, or, in some cases, giving private lessons. This marginalized condition changed over the next century and by the 1780's English painters had achieved unprecedented wealth and celebrity.[9]

In spite of their elevated social condition, however, artists were not fully accepted by the gentlemanly classes because they worked with their hands and accepted money for their efforts. Jonathan Richardson understood the problems inherent in his profession and expressed them in his 1715 treatise:

> ...as to setting ourselves to hire, we Painters are content to own this is really the Case; and if this has something Low and Servile in it, we must take our place amongst Men accordingly. But here we have this to comfort us, we have good Company...[10]

Seen in this light, the painter was no different than other middle class professionals like

doctors and lawyers who were trying to elevate their social position. Thus, in his search for respectability, West's grand studio was essential to his professional and personal goals.

In spite of the close proximity between the fine arts and the realm of manual labor, painting, as well as sculpture and architecture, did remain somewhat distinct from other art forms whose practitioners worked with their hands. In fact, painting became one of the most viable means for social elevation, a fact partially due to a romanticized view of the profession. In 1747 Robert Campbell called painting a "noble art" in his The London Tradesman and describes the artist as the possessor of an innate sense of genius, an attribute not required for more lowly or mechanical trades.[11] Richardson likened painting to poetry and added that practitioners of this honorable profession should avoid:

> all low, and sordid actions, and conversation, all base and criminal passions: his business is to express great, and noble sentiments; let him make them familiar to him, and his own, and form himself into as bright a character as any he can draw...The way to be an excellent painter is to be an excellent man; and these united make a character that would shine even in a better world than this.[12]

West modeled his own career and self-perception on the guidelines espoused by Richardson and Campbell, deflecting the reality of his poor background through a self-created mythology of artistic genius. Throughout his lengthy career, West continued to build on this laudatory self-image, and in this way, helped to establish himself as one of the most important artists of his age.[13]

One of the clearest indications of West's importance to the London art world is seen in his role as a teacher. Although the Royal Academy had opened its doors to students by 1770, it was usual for art students to receive their formal art instruction from the Academy while supplementing their education with hands-on training in a master's studio. West's Newman Street studio was one of the most important centers for art education in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. Known for being a kindly teacher, he encouraged his students to explore their own interests, thus developing

individual talents. Unlike traditional master/apprentice relationships, this open and flexible approach led to a casual pedagogical arrangement in which students were allowed to stop by as they wished, at which time they could receive advice on a number of matters of interest including draughtsmanship, composition and color theory. But while his open door policy was flexible, his lessons about art were closely tied to traditional academic methods that emphasized the study of antiquity, anatomy and perspective. This somewhat restrictive adherence to classical traditions led to an approach to his craft characterized as scientific by his contemporaries. Both American and British students were drawn to him because he was able to clearly explain the purpose behind every brushstroke, rendering his individual instruction particularly helpful. Since nearly all American artists of note spent at least some time there during their formative years, knowing more specifics of their artistic education leads to a greater understanding of their subsequent careers, as well as the way art was taught in this country well into the nineteenth century.

In addition to his students, West also employed a number of assistants through the years, although towards the end of his life this number was dramatically reduced. Unfortunately, while we know the names of many of his American students, their precise role in the studio remains somewhat obscure. In most prosperous studios, assistants provided a substantial amount of supportive labor by taking appointments from sitters, mixing paint, laying in dead-coloring or painting background details and copying works. They also acted as the master's messengers, bringing paintings to the framer's workshop and the homes of patrons, as well as fetching and returning bits of costume lent by sitters. While a large number of students passed through West's studio at various times in his career, many of these came exclusively for instruction and not to assist the master. There is evidence, however, pupils sometimes did aid West by making copies of historical pictures and served as models for some of his more elaborate paintings. Moreover, if a student or assistant showed an unusual talent in one particular area, he was often given

more specific duties. It seems clear, for example, that when Gilbert Stuart lived with West, he was most often occupied in the service of portraiture.[14]

Although a number of people may have played a role in the creation of his paintings, West designed and planned the pictures his studio produced himself. In preparing his pictures, he followed the methodology outlined in art manuals that were based on seventeenth-century art theory as espoused in the art academies of France and Italy. The traditional stages of planning a picture included inventing the work in one's mind and designing its composition through a series of preparatory drawings and oil sketches, each having a specific role in the creative process. Not surprisingly, the initial stages of his artistic invention are most clearly seen in West's vast output of drawings. The materials used and appearance of these preparatory works is greatly varied, and their composition and degree of finish were dictated by their ultimate function. The whole of West's drawings not only record evolutions in his style, but reveal important insights into his working methods not apparent when examining his paintings.[15] For example, it is evident from a number of West's landscape drawings that he made frequent use of optical aids like the camera obscura, an aspect of his working methods not observable in his finished paintings.[16]

Once the design of a work was complete, West began the process of paint application. His own mature technique was initially informed by his student years in Italy where he studied under the German neo-classical painter, Anton Raphael Mengs. His later works reveal an indebtedness to the painterly canvases of the Venetian school as manifested in the style of Reynolds and other contemporaries. As evidenced in his preparatory sketches, West's painting technique reflects accepted methodologies recorded in contemporary art treatises. During the early stages of his career, his studio was filled with students and assistants who not only learned the academic rudiments of composition and draughtsmanship, but also became familiar with the technique of mixing and storing paint. With the advent of the retail color shop, a phenomenon that coincided with West's

own ebbing career, student activity in his studio tapered off. But regardless of his age, West's methodology seldom varied from the standard practice of art production which included the transfer of a design from drawing to canvas, and three stages of paint application; dead coloring, middle coloring and finishing. Moreover, like many other artists, he was continually influenced by color theory, especially that emerging from Sir Isaac Newton's discovery of the color spectrum. His beliefs about the properties of various colors and pigments guided his system of coloring. Never allowing his style to stagnate, West knew that innovative studio techniques were essential to his financial success. In his continued search for the ultimate finish, he even obtained what he believed to be a secret recipe for paint that produced color resembling that of Titian. This fraudulent formula, called the Venetian Secret, was the only aspect of his studio production that the artist kept from his assistants.[17]

The study of West's studio and art production is an important one, for as late as the end of the nineteenth century, American and British artists maintained a lasting veneration for the techniques of the great masters of his generation. In his 1833 treatise, "Hints to a Young Painter," John Neagle continuously referred to the art and lectures of Reynolds and over fifty years after the master's death artists continued to speculate over his mysterious technical practices.[18] The high regard felt for these artists is also indicated by the number of laudatory biographies published during the last century. Some of the most helpful books for shedding light on the day-to-day life of the studio were written by studio assistants, such as James Northcote on Reynolds, Thomas Jones on Richard Wilson and William Dunlap on Benjamin West.[19] Described through the eyes of students, the individual personalities and eccentricities of each master, as well as descriptions of their studios, are thus brought to life. While these anecdotal accounts are not entirely reliable, they often offer valuable glimpses into what daily life was like in the studios of these great men. One of the most essential sources for West is Joseph Farington's diary, which he kept from 1794 until after West's death in 1820. As a fellow

Academician and artist, Farington's insights into West's painting techniques are invaluable, especially during West's later years when the relationship of the two men became more and more friendly.

Today, interest in the eighteenth-century art studio has sparked a number of studies, and the subject of art production in general has been explored in monographs on artists as well as in blockbuster art exhibitions.[20] Investigations into the process of art production have been largely two-fold. Scientific information about the manufacture of art objects and related materials is vital to the field of art conservation. In recent years it is not unusual for museum conservators, benefiting from advances in scientific tools like radiographs and chemical analyses, to contribute essays to exhibition catalogues on the technical aspects of picture making and the resultant problems in conservation and restoration.[21] Reynolds is an especially good example of an artist whose experimental techniques have made it difficult to preserve his works without a vast amount of technical knowledge.[22] Also related to the field of conservation are the studies published on artists' materials, including their physical and chemical make-up, country of origin, as well as their common usage and availability. Three texts that are especially useful in reviewing the eighteenth-century artist's methods are James Ayres' 1985 study, The Artist's Craft: A History of Tools, Techniques and Materials, William Constable's book, The Painter's Workshop, originally published in 1954, and Frederick Schmid's 1948 text, The Theory and Practice of Painting.[23]

In addition to the art conservator's scientific interest in the process of painting, social historians have begun to analyze the economic aspects of art production. Most of these studies treat art as a commodity that was made, bought and sold within an existing economic system. The most extensive study of this type is the 1995 compilation of essays, The Consumption of Culture, 1600-1800: Image, Object, Text, edited by John Brewer and Ann Bermingham.[24] These writers reject previous cultural histories of the period that see consumerism as unique to our present age, and claim instead that modern

capitalism flourished during the eighteenth century. For example, in her introductory essay, Bermingham outlines the economic risks in painting large-scale historical subjects, likening the "speculation" in history painting with stock market speculation. Painting historical pictures was a time-consuming venture that required a fair amount of up-front capital, and the artist was by no means assured a patron.[25] With a mind to the market, the steps involved in designing, producing and marketing an historical painting are detailed, and thus relevant to the present study. Portrait painting, not as financially risky as history painting, was how the majority of artists earned their livings. For this reason, most writers who explore the economic business of painting in eighteenth-century London use the portrait studio as a backdrop to their discussions.[26] The most comprehensive study of this topic is Marcia Pointon's 1993 text, Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England. This insightful examination of the business atmosphere of the portrait artist's studio includes the breakdown of labor requisite to maintain a successful painting practice, as well as the iconographic significance of various poses, costumes and props. In this consumerist analysis, the location of an artist's studio was pivotal to his economic success. West's home on Newman Street was located in close proximity to a host of subsidiary businesses that existed to support his practice, such as framers and drapery painters, just to name two.

Although commercial concerns were directly related to the production of art during this period, formal, theoretical and practical concerns also occupied the mind of the artist. These issues, which had a lasting effect on the way art of the period looked, often existed outside of, or in spite of, larger economic trends. For example, despite the economic hardships attached to historical painting, it was still practiced by a number of artists who believed in the genre's primacy as espoused by the then-popular hierarchical theory of painting. Painting manuals and artistic treatises written and published during the period often offer the best insight into the discipline's collective mindset regarding everything from professional ambition to the studio's daily routines and painting

practices. These books, emerging out of French and Italian academic traditions established in the seventeenth century varied somewhat in content, but were by and large derivative. Two of the earliest examples, Charles Alfonse Du Fresnoy's The Art of Painting, originally published in London in 1668, and Jonathan Richardson's treatises on art and connoisseurship available by the early 1700's, were owned by West before his departure from America.[27] These sources not only provided insight into artistic methodology, but also guided his self-promotional efforts after his arrival in Europe. Some of the most helpful treatises in revealing contemporary painting techniques were not surprisingly the most popular during West's day. They include Thomas Bardwell's The Art of Painting in Oil Colours, published in 13 editions by 1832, Gerard de Lairesse's The Art of Painting, available in English by 1778, and Roger de Piles' book by the same title, translated into English in 1744.[28] By linking the theoretical and technical information found in these books with firsthand accounts of West's studio, a picture begins to form about this great master's philosophies and techniques.

[1] Jonathan Richardson, The Works of Jonathan Richardson, Jonathan Richardson, Jr., ed., (London: T. Davis, 1773, reprint facsimile, Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1969), p. 18.

[2] Joseph Farington, The Diary of Joseph Farington, Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre, eds., 16 vols., (New Haven: Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art by Yale University Press, 1978-1984), Sun. 7 April, 1805, vol. 7, p. 2540.

[3] Helmut von Erffa and Allen Staley, The Paintings of Benjamin West, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).

[4] Ibid., p. 14.

[5] Reynolds was one of the first artists of his day to understand that he worked in a period when financial success functioned as a sign of artistic merit. Acting on this knowledge, he moved his studio into the same exclusive neighborhood frequented by his patrons. Giles Walkley, Artists' Houses in London, 1764-1914, (Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 3. In addition to a sizeable studio in town, complete with gallery and sitting room, this son of a village schoolmaster and parson kept servants, rode in a lavish gold carriage, and owned a country home in Richmond Hill for entertaining. Marcia Pointon, Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Reform in Eighteenth-Century England, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 41.

[6] Ibid., p. 36.

[7] Walkley, p. 15.

[8] For a discussion of the change in the artist's status during this period see Iain Pears, The Discovery of Painting: The Growth of Interest in the Arts in England, 1680-1768, (Yale University Press, 1988), pp. 106-132.

[9] Gerald Reitlinger, The Economics of Taste: The Rise and Fall of Picture Prices, 1760-1960, (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1961), p. 58.

[10] Jonathan Richardson, An Essay on the Theory of Painting, (London, 1715), p. 31, quoted in Pears, p. 110.

[11] Robert Campbell, The London Tradesman, (London, 1747), pp. 95-99.

[12] Richardson, p. 18.

[13] For a discussion of West's self-promotion see Ann Uhry Abrams, The Valiant Hero: Benjamin West and Grand-Style History Painting, (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1985).

[14] Stuart not only helped West in the studio by assisting in portraiture and giving some instruction, he also was allowed to receive his own sitters in a room set aside for that purpose. See Dorinda Evans, Benjamin West and His American Students, (Washington, DC: National Portrait Gallery, 1980), pp. 52-59.

[15] West's romanticism may be more clearly demonstrated in his vigorous sketches than in his paintings. See Ruth Kraemer, The Drawings of Benjamin and Raphael West, (New York: Pierpont Morgan Library, 1976), p. xi.

[16] Jenny Carson and Ann MacNary, "Naturalism and the Search for the Ideal: The Use of the Camera Obscura in Eighteenth-Century Britain," unpublished paper, delivered at The British Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies: 26th Annual Conference, St. John's College, Oxford, England, 3-5 January 1997.

[17] Robert C. Alberts, Benjamin West: A Biography, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1978), pp. 225-239.

[18] John Neagle, "Neagle Notebook," Roll 3910, Archives of American Art, National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

[19] See James Northcote, The Life of Sir Joshua Reynolds, (London: H. Colburn, 1819), William Dunlap, Diary of William Dunlap, 1766-1839, (New York: B. Blom, 1969), and "Memoirs of Thomas Jones," Walpole Society 32 (1946-1948)pp. 1-142.

[20] Recent blockbuster exhibitions on Johannes Vermeer and Winslow Homer at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, explored studio techniques in subsidiary gallery spaces dedicated to the subject. See Nicolai Cikovsky and Franklin Kelly, Winslow Homer, (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1995) and Frederik J. Duparc and Arthur Wheelock, Johannes Vermeer, (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1995).

[21] See Marjorie Shelley, "Painting in Crayon: The Pastels of John Singleton Copley," and Morrison H. Heckscher, "Copley's Picture Frames," in Carrie Rebora and Paul Staiti, John Singleton Copley in America, (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1995), pp. 126-141, 142-159. Rica Jones, "The Artist's Training and Techniques," in Manners & Morals: Hogarth and British Painting, 1700-1760, (London: The Tate Gallery, 1987), pp. 18-28. Stephen H. Kornhauser, "Ralph Earl's Working Methods and Materials," in Elizabeth Mankin Kornhauser, Ralph Earl: The Face of the Young Republic, (Hartford: Wadsworth Atheneum, 1991), pp. 85-91.

[22] For a recent study of Reynolds' painting practices see M. Kirby Talley, Jr., "All Good Pictures Crack: Sir Joshua Reynolds's Practice and Studio," in Nicholas Penny, ed., Reynolds, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1986), pp. 55-70.

[23] James Ayres, The Artist's Craft: A History of Tools, Techniques, and Materials, (Oxford: Phaidon, 1985), William George Constable, The Painter's Workshop, (New York: Dover Publications, 1979), and Frederick Schmid, The Theory and Practice of Painting, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1948).

[24] John Brewer and Ann Bermingham, eds., The Consumption of Culture, 1600-1800: Image, Object, Text, (New York: Routledge, 1995).

[25] Bermingham, "Introduction: The consumption of culture: image, object, text," in The Consumption of Culture, p. 77. West was an exception to this rule, as he was unusually prolific, and, as History Painter to the King, he earned an annual salary that eased the financial burden inherent in launching such projects.

[26] Marcia Pointon, "Portrait-Painting as a Business Enterprise in London in the 1780's," Art History 7 (1984): 187-205; David Mannings, "At the Portrait Painter's," History Today 27 (May 1977): 279-287; and John Hayes, "The Theory and Practice of Eighteenth-Century Portraiture," in Ellen G. Miles, ed., The Portrait in Eighteenth-Century America, (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1993), pp. 19-33.

[27] Charles Alphonse Du Fresnoy, The Art of Painting, Translated by William Mason, Annotated by Sir Joshua Reynolds, (London, 1783, New York: Arno Press, 1969).

[28] Thomas Bardwell, The Art of Painting in Oil Colours, 13th edition, (London: R. H. Laurie, 1832), Gerard de Lairesse, The Art of Painting, in all its Branches, Methodically Demonstrated by Discourses and Plates, (London, 1778), and Roger de Piles, The Art of Painting with the Lives and Characters of Above 300 of the Most Eminent Painters, 2nd edition, (London: C. Marsh, 1744).

Chapter One: The Studio and West's Rising Reputation

Artists working in England during the eighteenth century experienced significant changes that took place within their society as a whole. Cultural issues, from rapid economic growth that in turn influenced the art trade, to new building codes enacted into law in London in 1774, directly and indirectly affected the way artists worked. Perhaps the most important societal influence on Benjamin West and other artists of his generation, was the possibility, arising with unprecedented likelihood in the eighteenth century, of professional and social advancement.[1] Importantly, this type of social advancement was often related to financial gain. West's material success, coupled with the king's personal patronage, allowed him to achieve a lofty social position not available to him by his birth. In order to obtain the level of success enjoyed by West, artists were forced to make themselves known to their public, not through traditional advertisements and signage, but through their artistic reputations. West's artistic reputation was based on wealth (or the illusion of wealth), innovative painting strategies, and a professed knowledge of contemporary art theory. To all of this he added self-promotional tales of his own biography which, according to West, was proof of his artistic genius. His concept of artistic genius was based on two opposing ideas; an artistic "innocence" born of his close ties to nature and the natural world, and his inherent understanding, from an early age, of the artifice characteristic of eighteenth-century art theory.

When West arrived in London after his three-year study in Italy, England was undergoing one of its most fertile periods of growth. By 1760, London began a period of expansion that continued throughout the nineteenth century. The once provincial city became an international center and the city's population jumped from

676,750 in 1750 to 900,000 by the close of the century.[2] Because London was not as tied to its court as other European capitals, lavish signs of wealth, usually associated with the reigning powers, were not frequently seen. At the same time, however, London was an important commercial center. Opportunities for buying and selling goods, including arts-related merchandise and services, drew hopeful money-makers from all over Europe. These new, fertile economic markets were centers of fashion and culture, and as a result, London became something of a fashion leader for the rest of Europe.[3] Within this cosmopolitan atmosphere a number of disciplines, philosophical beliefs and professions expanded simultaneously, particularly in the realms of technology and science, commercial activities, art, music and literature. By the later eighteenth century new art societies and annual Royal Academy exhibitions allowed artists for the first time to regularly present works to the art-buying public for sale, thus increasing the demand for pictures. A number of artistic and scientific societies sprang up across the city. A few organizations that promoted the growth of the visual arts like the exclusive Dilatanti Society, had been in existence since 1732, and others, like the British Institution, a patrons' organization, began just after the turn of the century. These organizations were comprised of men from the upper classes who took an educated interest in art and importantly, often included the participation of artists. Gentlemen who belonged to these groups were well versed in the famous works of the old masters, as well as art from England's own history, and recognized that their country was in the midst of what would later be termed its "golden age."

From our current historical perspective we recognize the intellectual, scientific and artistic accomplishments of the late eighteenth century in Britain. Mastery over a wide range of intellectual pursuits was highly valued. Artists were among those

professionals expected to exhibit a wide breadth of knowledge, a concept dating back to Michelangelo's and Leonardo da Vinci's struggles to bring painting into the sphere of the liberal arts, so evidenced in Leonardo's notebooks filled with both scientific and artistic investigations. Leonardo had argued that because painting required the knowledge of mathematics and science, it was distinct from the mechanical arts.[4] Artists were different from gentlemen, or those individuals who did not practice a profession, in one important respect, however. While it was important for individuals of a certain class to exhibit an intellectual mastery over a variety of disciplines, these men were by no means familiar with the day-to-day labor involved in actually working in a particular profession. Unlike their gentlemen counterparts, painters working in London during this period, even those of West's lofty status, were in a precarious social position for two reasons; they worked with their hands and they accepted money for their efforts. And while the growing art market and increased art sales gave artists an opportunity to elevate their social positions through financial success, that same success tied them dangerously close to the base commercial world. In order to obscure his reliance on the art market and the fact that he worked with his hands, West, like other artists of his generation, developed the persona of a gentleman. To be truly successful, West needed to acquire the manners, as well as the material goods of a gentleman, become known as a knowledgeable connoisseur of art in addition to its manufacture, and promote himself as a creative genius. West's self-made identity relates to his efforts at marketing his works, but it also had a direct impact on the way his studio looked and how art was practiced there.

Benjamin West's Newman Street Studio, which he moved into in 1774, was large and elegant by any standards. It's spaciousness allowed the artist to raise a family, to train a large number of students, and to paint a variety of pictures, both

large and small, at any given time. Moreover, the large art gallery attached to his home and studio attracted a host of visitors and provided an important instructional tool for both the public and the students under West's tutelage. The elegance and grandiosity of this domestic arrangement served another, equally important function. By living the moneyed lifestyle of his patrons, West was more readily accepted into London's art world, and his ability to obtain the commissions necessary to maintain this existence was almost assured. But while West's lavish home served to further his artistic enterprise, the need for such conceit has partially obscured our knowledge today about the eighteenth-century artist's working methods. For example, although evidence that money was being made by an artistic enterprise was visible in abundance, the artist, as a gentleman, created the illusion that he was far-removed from the tedious labor involved in art production. Like their Renaissance and Baroque predecessors, artists of the eighteenth century came to regard themselves as practitioners of a liberal art, thereby shedding the label of "craftsman." Through his studio and lifestyle, West was apparently successful in creating the illusion he was wealthy, even in lean years. In 1807 his wife complained to Joseph Farington that "...reports of Mr. West being rich were unfounded. That Mr. West never had a shilling in the funds in his life..."[5] Money was so scarce at that time, West was not able to take his wife to Bath in an effort to remedy her "paralytic complaint."[6]

In addition to its role in promoting his career, West's large studio reflected the physical space necessary to produce his vast artistic output. Early in his career West required room for his large canvases, as well as space for his many assistants and students, but as we shall see in the following chapters, with new and innovative strategies regarding the labor associated with art production, less assistance, and thus space, became required. For example, as a result of new technological advancements

in the manufacture of pigments, artists came to rely on the services of professional colormen rather than their own assistants. This new, more commercial approach to art production allowed artists to take advantage of specialized services that could provide better goods at better prices than some of those produced in-house. As a result, many artists, including West, lived in a region of the city that placed them near to industries that supported their labors, including frame makers and colormen, just to name two.[7]

West's spacious studio and home were located at 14 Newman Street, in a new residential development just off Oxford Street. He moved there in 1774 from his more modest dwelling in Leicester Square. His new property faced Newman Street and was bordered by Rathbone Place at its rear. This sizable arrangement contained living quarters and several outbuildings. At the time of his move there, the property was surrounded by countryside but by the end of the eighteenth century, West's Newman Street address was central to much artistic activity in London. He was surrounded by his students, who dropped in at his studio to paint and discuss matters of artistic interest whenever they pleased. Moreover, his studio was in close proximity to various art-related institutions and businesses including the Royal Academy which moved from Pall Mall to Somerset House on the Strand in 1780. Henry Moses, the printer who reproduced a series of his paintings for his volume of West's works published in 1811, lived close to West on Newman Street.[8] At the time West moved to Newman Street, which was described as "a retired street in the west end," he was the first artist in the neighborhood.[9] Soho, located almost a quarter of a mile south of Newman Street, was the region favored by artists prior to the 1780's, but by 1800 Newman Street, Leicester Fields and Oxford Street achieved prominence.[10] According to Rembrandt Peale, West's growing fame is what

popularized his neighborhood for other artists.[11]

An advertisement of West's property prior to its purchase from about 1770 described it as spacious and substantial, consisting of a coach house, a large garden, an extensive green-house and pinery. The ad, which offered a 99-year lease of the property through Christie's Auction House, goes on to describe:

> At the bottom of the garden is a superb music room, 23 feet x 30 feet, and 15 feet high, finished in exquisite taste, late in the possession of Samuel More, Esq., deceased. The House was built for his own residence, and furnished with taste, elegance, expense, most conveniently laid out and completed with a great number of valuable fixtures, situate in the best part of Newman Street, No. 14, opposite Castle Street.[12]

Because of new building codes that were enacted in 1774 that required minimum spatial content and more stringent standards of safe construction, dwellings like this one, built prior to the ruling, were usually bargains.[13] Upon taking up the Newman Street lease, West made some alterations to the property so that it might better serve the purposes of an artist's studio. He converted what was described as a music room into a large painting studio and converted the subsidiary outbuildings into two small color rooms and a light gallery.[14] The light gallery was probably used to exhibit his collection of art. He also added a long gallery for the display of his own works that connected the property's living quarters with the studio rooms. According to his wife's account book, in the mid 1780's he spent just over 20 pounds to put skylights in his gallery.[15]

West's remodeling created three principal regions in Newman Street home; the family residence, the long art gallery, and the painting/work rooms. Each area of the home was distinct and served a specific function. Initially, it was important for West's home to provide elegant and spacious surroundings for potential clients, as well as social acquaintances and friends. In his autobiography of 1850, Leigh Hunt

recalled visiting the West's home as a child, and his description provides one of the best contemporary accounts of its understated elegance. According to Hunt, while West was at work, his wife would most often be found reading in the parlor, a good-sized room decorated with engravings and colored prints like one after Rubens' Lion Hunt, with two windows looking out on to a little garden.[16] One of the parlor's principal features was that it overlooked a garden that was, "very small but elegant, with a grass plot in the middle and busts upon stands under an arcade. The garden with its busts in it, and the pictures which you knew were on the other side of its wall, had an Italian look."[17]

A drawing of West's garden, now in the Toledo Museum of Art, was probably executed in the 1780's, and illustrates the artist under a parasol, his wife descending several stairs, and his two young sons, standing before an entryway to their home (Figure 1.1). This is likely the entry to the family parlor that Hunt described as a large window that opened directly onto the garden by a flight of steps.[18] West's studio buildings are located in the background, and to the immediate right of the foreground structure, the roofline of the connecting gallery is visible. An illustration of West's garden is found in the artist's own painting of the site from about 1809, now in the National Portrait Gallery, Washington, DC (Figure 1.2). The picture depicts West and his wife, their two sons Raphael and Benjamin Jr., along with their two daughters-in-law, grandchildren and pets gathered in the family garden.[19] The view is taken from the property's main residence, visible on the far left. The studio rooms in the background are connected to the residence by a long picture gallery, visible directly behind the family group. This small plot of land, later the site for the

large gallery built by West's sons after his death, reflects the genteel and Italianate setting described by Hunt.

When receiving potential clients, the proper balance needed to be struck between a gentleman's residence and a working studio. In both the painting and the drawing of his garden, West emphasized the elegance of his surroundings by picturing himself and his family enclosed within a picturesque garden. The refinement of his residence, visible in these pictures, was echoed in the West's lifestyle. West kept up to five servants at his Newman Street home, and according to the diary his wife kept for several years in the 1780's, the couple hosted a number of dinner parties and frequently entertained guests.[20] Visitors at the West's home were greeted by the artist's porter, James, described by Hunt as "a fine tall fellow" who "was as quiet as he was strong."[21] The porter's full name was James Dyer, a former private in the House Guards who served with West for fifty years. West probably met him at the Royal Academy where James acted as a model in the Academy schools.[22]

According to contemporary accounts, those who arrived at West's studio were struck by the artist's diligence and commitment to his craft, but were not always aware of the daily toil that took place within the large workshop. When the South Carolina artist John Blake White met West around 1800, he was struck with West's personal appearance and residence, both of which were maintained in impeccable order:

> Mr. West is now an old man of about the age of 71.[23] A little above the middle stature in height, a fair complexion, and aquiline nose, and rather small hazel eyes, steady and penetrating. A high but rather a narrow forehead, inclining to be bald. His hair is perfectly gray, and he wears powder

> constantly. He is remarkable neat and comely in his person and dress, and particularly cleanly about his painting apartments.[24]

The impression of elegance extended to West's manner of working in his studio where he could be found, "...seated at his easel," working on a "beautiful composition...as if in sport, not labour..."[25]

West was not the only artist of the period to understand that his presentation was important both inside and outside of the studio. In a letter to her father, Angelica Kauffmann, an artist and personal friend of West's, observed that her reputation could not be "sustained by my work alone." She went on to lament that she "could not possibly receive people in a poorly furnished house."[26] Likewise, Sir Joshua Reynolds, the most successful and well-respected portrait painter of the late eighteenth century bought a large house in the fashionable Leicester Fields in 1760. This residence was situated so that carriages could draw up to his door, and he added on a gallery and a large room for sitters. He gave balls, put his servants in livery, and even owned a lavishly painted carriage, which, according to James Northcote, Reynolds' one-time student and biographer, was a primary source of advertisement:

> The carriage...was particularly splendid, the wheels were partly carved and gilt; and on the pannels were painted the four seasons, very well executed by Charles Catton, RA, the most eminent coach painter of his day. The coachman frequently got money by admitting the curious to a sight of it; and when Miss Reynolds complained it was too shewy, Mr. Reynolds replied, "What! Would you like to have an apothecary's carriage?" He sent his sister to ride around in it because he didn't have the time--when a crowd collected, they would ask whose it was--just what Sir Johsua wanted.[27]

As this account about Reynolds suggests, painters did not utilize traditional advertising techniques, like signage, to attract customers, but instead relied on word-of-mouth and reputation.[28] West's own home was marked with a nameplate in which he simply called himself "Mr. West." The omission of his first name indicated that an artist and gentleman resided within, for the inclusion of Benjamin in this title

would have indicated the home and studio of a tradesman.[29]

It was important for artists to be ready for guests and potential clients because in addition to word-of-mouth recommendations, the studio was the artist's most important form of advertisement. Often when painters were in the process of working on commissioned pictures, usually portraits, for particular patrons, the sitters might drop in to observe the artist's progress, or to show the work to a friend. Portraits in progress could be seen in an artist's painting room. A letter written in January of 1781 by Lady Beauchamp-Proctor (painted by West three years earlier) to her friend Edward Jeringham reflects this practice:

> If you can spare a moment from your seven studies, I shall be happy to meet you at Romney's to-morrow between one and two to pass judgment on two portraits of some friends of yours.[30]

According to contemporary accounts, West welcomed visitors into his studio while he was working and considered the practice beneficial to his painting. Dunlap reported that West advised, "Don't shut yourself up from visitors when engaged on any great work. Hear their remarks and encourage their criticism. From the various opinions something useful may be gathered to improve your picture."[31] In spite of, or perhaps because of, West's open-door policy, he often complained in later years about the constant interruptions to his work. When advised by his friend Farington in 1817 to turn callers away, the artist replied that "the conversations he had on such occasions were a relief to his spirits and enabled him to proceed with more vigor. Without such respite as he thus obtained, unremitting application wd. be too much for Him."[32]

Jonathan Richardson also complained about this custom because it often put the artist in an awkward position if a commissioned portrait were not in a sufficient stage of completion for viewing:

> ...works of the portrait-painter must be seen in all the periods of beginning,

> and progress, as well when finished, as when they are not, oftener than when they are fit to be seen, and yet judged of, and criticized upon, as if the artist had given his last hand to them..."[33]

In addition to keeping track of the progress of one's own portrait, portraits of notable individuals could attract crowds to a particular studio. As Andre Rouquet observed, "...the women especially must have their pictures exposed for some time in the house of that painter who is most in fashion."[34] In this way, painting famous clients added to the fame of the artist. Londoners may have been drawn to view portraits of others for more than social reasons. Observing artists at work allowed potential patrons to make more informed decisions about purchasing works of art. In Mortimer's The Universal Director; or, the Nobleman and Gentleman's True Guide to the Masters and Professors of the Liberal and Polite Arts and Sciences, the author recommended that members of the consuming public should rely more on their own judgment in soliciting works of art. In the introduction to his directory, he explained the need for such a publication:

> The following work is offered to the Public, by means of which the patrons of merit will have an opportunity of visiting the artists of this metropolis, and of employing them in their several departments, instead of applying to those general undertakers who engage to furnish a gentleman with a picture, or any other curious performance, at an exorbitant price; which they deliver wretchedly executed, either because they have privately employed an inferior artist, or have given a man of great abilities such a miserable price, that he could not afford it that time and attention which is required to complete a finished piece.[35]

In addition to looking at an artist's paintings, potential clients could leaf through portfolios of prints that were on hand in many studios. The artist could then repeat a particular pose for a client wishing to have his or her portrait painted.[36]

It was not in the painter's studio, however, but in his art gallery, that the artist's home most often entered the public sphere. The late eighteenth century saw a

burgeoning of art exhibitions, and as a result, a rise in artistic experimentation resulting in more and more works done on speculation. This increase and new variety of art also led to the growth of art criticism.[37] In addition to the annual exhibitions at the Royal Academy, a number of small galleries sprang up across the city and a variety of individuals could and did view art as never before. By the middle of the eighteenth century, thousands of Londoners enjoyed attending a variety of commercial and private galleries across the city, a number of which were attached to artists' studios.[38] Andre Roquet observed that every painter in England had, "...a room to show his pictures, separate from that in which he works. People who have nothing to do make it one of their morning amusements to go and see these collections."[39] In this context, the artist's gallery played a pivotal role in the public's ability to view art in the eighteenth century. Because museums did not exist at this point, one of the only ways the public got to see paintings, in addition to the annual Academy shows, was at the artist's studio. Of course, artists were not always home to receive visitors, so when additional exhibition sites opened, like the British Institution, it was easier for the public to view art.[40]

After West's death, his son Raphael recalled how popular his father's studio gallery was amongst London's elite:

> All the nobility, all the great and honoured of the age for half a century, there used to assemble; and there were first discussed by the enlightened leaders of public taste those measures which awakened the rulers of the state to a sense of the national importance of the culture of the Fine Arts.[41]

Raphael's account of his father's gallery suggests that visits to an artist's studio could be more than mere social affairs. In a period when many believed in the existence of specific standards of taste, gallery tours had a pedagogical purpose. Leigh Hunt's mother used the time she spent in West's gallery in service of educating her young

son:

> The quiet of Mr. West's gallery, the tranquil, intent beauty of the statues, and the subjects of some of the pictures... made a great impression upon me. My mother and I used to go down the gallery as if we were treading on wool. She was in the habit of stopping to look at some of the pictures, particularly the Deluge and the Ophelia, with a countenance quite awe-stricken. She used also to point out to me the subjects relating to liberty and patriotism, and the domestic affections. Agrippina bringing home the ashes of Germanicus was a great favorite with her...[42]

As indicated by Hunt's remembrance of the studio, West prominently displayed his own artworks. In addition to his own works, however, West was one of the most significant collectors of his generation, and like other connoisseurs of his day, his collection of old master works was also available for viewing.

Most commonly in the artist's studio, old master and fine contemporary works were exhibited side by side with the painter's own works. In his memoirs, the artist James Northcote advocated this kind of picture arrangement:

> It never did a painter much credit to have no other pictures than his own in a collection, as it became tiresome to the spectator from the want of variety, and also, because the painter's particular defects become more conspicuous by seeing them so oft repeated.[43]

Interestingly, according to contemporary accounts, West used his main art gallery exclusively for exhibiting oil sketches and drawings after his own works, as well as some preparatory oil sketches. Just after his arrival in London in 1784, the young American artist William Dunlap remembered feeling awe upon first seeing West's works displayed in his spacious gallery:

> The impression made upon an American youth of eighteen by the long gallery leading from the dwelling-house to the lofty suite of painting rooms--a gallery filled with sketches and designs for large paintings--the spacious room through which I passed to the more retired atelier--the works of his pencil surrounding me on every side--[44]

As Dunlap's description suggests, the gallery, which was an elongated room that connected the living quarters with the painting studio, was decorated primarily with studies of West's works. Samuel Morse, who visited West's gallery in 1811 noted that there were over 200 sketches after, and in preparation for, the master's original large-scale pictures in this gallery.[45] Importantly, by displaying works by his own hand in his main gallery space (the passageway connecting his living quarters to his studio), West drew attention to his role as the country's most important history painter. Although West's studio did produce a number of portraits, a pursuit necessary to help sustain his household, he de-emphasizes this aspect of his career. Charles Robert Leslie was one artist who was impressed by West's output when he first saw West's gallery in 1811. He later recalled that West, "left no walk untried; I had no idea till I saw his gallery of the versatility of his genius."[46] Unlike other artists who attracted visitors to their studios with collections of old master works, West's historical works drew in the public on their own merit. Only after being impressed by West's own works, impressive by their sheer scale, did one see the works he owned by other hands.

Although displayed towards the rear of the house, West's collection of old master works was significant and many visitors probably came to see it. At the time of his death, he owned almost 4000 prints after old master paintings and contemporary works, over 1000 old master drawings, and almost 200 drawings by modern masters, as well as almost 100 art books and books of prints and drawings.[47] Highlights of his print collection included Albrecht Dürer's St. Jerome, a number of prints based on the works of Rubens, including his Rape of the Sabines, and head studies by Leonardo da Vinci. Almost 200 prints were etched by or based on the works of Parmigianino, and most of these illustrated Christ and the Apostles. West

also seems to have been drawn to the work of Guido Reni, and he owned just over 50 etchings of paintings by that master. Prints after his contemporaries included a copy of a print after Copley's Death of the Earl of Chatham, and Christ in the Garden by his Italian mentor, Anton Mengs.

West's drawing collection was also formidable, and in addition to providing instructional material for himself and his students, he found great joy in them.[48] One of West's favorite drawings was Guercino's St. Peter in Prison, thus designated by West's own initials and the date 1784 in the drawing's right-hand corner. He also owned a number of landscapes by Poussin and Rembrandt. West's sculpture collection included plaster casts after some of the most important ancient statuary. According to auction catalogues, he owned copies after the Venus de Medici, the head of a horse after the Elgin marbles, at least 12 figures after Michelangelo, over 30 studies of hands and feet, examples of various animals, at least 30 male and female antique heads, and portrait busts of Benjamin Franklin, William Pitt, Horatio Nelson and Alexander the Great.

West's painting collection included examples of works by many of the best old master painters, as well as examples by his own contemporaries. His Italian pictures included a portrait of a Venetian lady by Veronese, Annibale Carracci's Death of St. Francis, a picture of an angel by Guido Reni, and Titian's Magdalen in Prayer and a sketch for his Last Supper. Art of northern Europe was represented by a shepherd and nymph scene by Rubens, several oil sketches by Rembrandt, and several landscapes by Nicholas Poussin and Claude Lorraine. The paintings he owned by his contemporaries were mostly landscape and genre pictures. Landscapes by Richard Wilson and Paul Sandby were represented, as well as George Stubbs' Horse Attacked by a Lion, now in the Paul Mellon Collection, Upperville, Virginia.

One of the artist's principal pictures was Titian's Death of Actaeon, a painting West found covered with grime in the corner of the shop of picture dealer John Greenwood. According to newspaper accounts, West recognized the painting to be a masterpiece and purchased it for only 20 pounds, and the story was told as proof of the artist's remarkable connoisseurship skills.[49] West was apparently so proud of this purchase, he rearranged his principal gallery at Newman Street in order to showcase the picture.[50]

Sophie von la Roche, a visitor from Germany, recorded her impressions of West's gallery and studio in 1786. According to la Roche's account, while West used his large gallery to exhibit examples of his own works, he displayed his collection in an additional room:

> We found West, the painter of historical scenes, there in person, surrounded by pupils and masterpieces by his own hand. He received us nobly, though unassumingly, in the manner of all great achievement. He works in a room lit from above, and the gallery leading to it is hung with sketches of completed pictures of which engravings had been made. He showed us some of the large historical canvases he is painting...Then he led us to his collection of old and modern masters, for he possesses one choice piece by every famous painter.[51]

As the above descriptions suggest, West's home and studio were large enough to accommodate students, large-scale works in progress and on display, and the exhibition of a sizable art collection. In 1820, just before his death, West planned for a larger gallery to be built in the place of the existing one, and his sons spent between 1500 and 2000 pounds enlarging and modernizing the structure.[52] Architect John Nash widened the previous gallery which was little more than a large hallway, and added skylights. This new and elegant interior measured approximately 70 by 43 feet, and was built to accommodate West's sizable collection after his death, forming a kind of museum that would provide his family with some profit in the form of

admission fees and sales.[53] The gallery also served as a model for how pictures should be hung and demonstrated the most modern and innovative lighting strategies.[54]

Of course, West's large and lavish studio was far more than a social arena and a vehicle for publicity. The size of West's studio was necessary in order to accommodate his large-scale historical productions, a not uncommon trend during a period when many historical works were done on speculation.[55] Once West earned the patronage of the king, his space was especially necessary to turn out a number of massive works, some of which were over 20 feet high. In addition, during a period when artists began to specialize in one or more genre, they needed studios that would be specifically suited to their particular needs. West himself experimented with a variety of artistic genres, including print making, and the layout of his studio reflects his many diverse activities.

West left few written accounts concerning his daily business. He did not keep a journal, or even a sitter's or visitor's book, so we must rely on the contemporary accounts of his routine by some of his students, as well as various anecdotes from Joseph Farington's diary.[56] Accounts of his day-to-day activities help to elucidate the particulars of his studio layout. West did most of his work in his painting room that measured 22 x 29 feet. This is undoubtedly the room that Sophie von la Roche found "lit from above." Top lights, rather than windows, became the favored light source for artists by the nineteenth century because the quality of light did not change as much. As landscape painting grew more popular, top lights were appreciated because they best approximated outdoor light.[57] West was evidently a diligent worker and could almost always be found painting in his studio wearing a white work robe.[58] According to student John Blake White's recollections of 1800, his daily routine

seldom varied:

> He rises generally with the sun and goes into his painting room to work upon some of his pictures, in a light morning undress, just before breakfast his valet shaves and dresses him, and after breakfast he returns & generally sits or stands steadily at painting. One who was unacquainted with the steady and constant habits of Mr. West in the pursuit of his profession, might be filled with astonishment at the immense number of pictures of all descriptions which he has painted, though it is nothing to be wondered at when his character is known. His very existence seems to depend upon being employed with his brush.[59]

An early riser, West painted before breakfast, and by 10 a.m. he was working on his historical canvases until 4 in the afternoon.[60] West also received visitors in his painting room throughout the day, and he often emerged mid morning to comment on the efforts of his students who were working in smaller adjacent rooms. Although his number of students and assistants lessened in later years, his own schedule remained unrelenting. As he grew older his family and friends voiced concern over the toil of his professional application. He most often woke around 6 or 7 in the morning, and did not go to sleep until midnight. If he were working on a particularly important project he might not retire until 2 a.m., usually taking a short nap after dinner.[61] The only period of time West did not work was during the dark months of December and January, and he felt his most productive period of the year was in the early fall.[62]

Several subsidiary rooms adjoining the principal painting room provided the artist with additional work and storage space. While their exact function is not clear, it is evident that West's assistants occupied these smaller rooms and it was there that the dirtier tasks associated with painting were accomplished. His own painting room undoubtedly needed to be kept clean for visitors. One of the smaller surrounding rooms, called a "colour room," served as a storage closet for his paints in order to keep dust from contaminating the colors.[63] Other rooms provided a place for the

storage of studio props, lay figures and plaster casts. Moreover, West owned at least four rolling easels, frames mounted on castors for holding especially large canvases. Two of these measured 23 feet long and 20 inches in width. Two others were a bit smaller, measuring fifteen feet in length and 28-1/2 inches in width. While most artists used a three-legged easel for their canvases, West probably favored these rolling easels for his largest historical canvases.[64] He also owned a printing press that was 2 feet, 9 inches high, 20 feet long, and 2 feet deep. It held four drawers large enough to hold grand eagle paper, presses with folding doors and sliding shelves of oak.[65]

Another small room attached to the painting room was likely a room for students, and where Gilbert Stuart worked from 1777 until 1782, one of the few pupils who ever actually lived with West for several years. The room was subsequently occupied by John Trumbull who painted for West there in the mid 1780's. West's relationship with Stuart was unique amongst his pupils and will be explored in the following chapters. Most of West's pupils lived in nearby lodgings, often locations suggested by him, and went to the master's studio each day for instruction. When John Singleton Copley arrived in London in 1774 he did some studio work for the famous history painter for a short time. West could not accommodate him in his own home because he was in the process of moving to Newman Street. Instead, he found lodgings for Copley in which he rented the first floor of a house consisting of two rooms and a dressing room. Copley paid one guinea per week for the place which he called, "very Genteel," and he was offered an open invitation to dine with the Wests whenever he was not otherwise engaged.[66] For William Dunlap, West recommended the home of fellow painter Robert Davey, located on Charlotte Street just behind his property. Davey provided a painting room,

a bed chamber, board, fire and candles for one guinea a week.[67] Samuel Lovett Waldo, Samuel F. B. Morse, Robert Leslie, and Charles Bird King were all directed by West to lodgings on Titchfield Street, located just four blocks west of Newman Street.[68]

In addition to his studio at Newman Street, West also retained a studio in the village of Windsor so he could be in close proximity to the King when the monarch was not in London. During the summer months, West and his whole family, including many of his students, would move into his studio on Park Street, Windsor. According to a letter to his landlord dated 1804, West's rent for that property was approximately 33 pounds per year.[69] At his Park Street home, West was conveniently near to his painting room in Windsor Castle.[70] In spite of the opportunity the King's patronage afforded West in allowing him to almost exclusively practice history painting, he did have other painting duties to perform for the king. For example, he was required to paint portraits of the King that were periodically sent abroad to various outposts of the kingdom. According to an anecdote told by Gilbert Stuart, West enlisted the aid of some of his assistants for these tasks.[71] He painted portraits of the Royal Family and, until the project was canceled, worked on his Revealed Religion scheme for Windsor Chapel. He also planned the chapel's stained glass windows and developed a plan for the ceiling motifs at the Queen's Lodge.[72] He advised the Royal family on everything from decorative schemes for Royal entertainment to the Queen's clothing and jewelry. Fanny Burney, the Queen's maid, recalled evenings at the castle:

> The Queen was most brilliantly attired; and when she was arrayed Mr. West was allowed to enter the dressing-room, in order to give his opinion of the disposition of her jewels...[73]

West also oversaw the work of artisans there, especially those involved in the

Windsor Castle project. He supervised the work of Mr. and Mrs. Forrest and the Irish artist, Thomas Jarvis, who painted the stained glass that West designed. He advised Mr. Evelyn in the repairs of woodwork in the chapel. He, along with the King and others in attendance, would invent subjects for the chapel's stained glass windows, particularly if a previous design were not appropriate for some reason.[74] As the King's chief painter, West had unusual privileges at the palace, and was allowed to participate in nightly entertainments. He and Biagio Rebecca, an Italian artist responsible for painting the borders of the canopy of the throne room and other state apartments, seem to have been the only artists accorded such privilege. In contrast, when Thomas Lawrence went to Windsor Castle in order to paint the Princess, he spent his evenings playing Whist in the pages' room until a kindly court attendant gave the young artist permission to visit him during the evenings.[75] In addition to West's position as History Painter to the King, he succeeded Richard Dalton as Surveyor of the King's Pictures. As late as 1812 he was required by the Prince Regent to compose a comprehensive listing of the Royal collection housed in the family's various palaces.[76]

Even before West arrived in London in the summer of 1763, he knew the importance that public image would pay in his ultimate success.[77] In America, as in England, artists had to assume the trappings and high style of the gentry class in order to attract business. The most successful Colonial painters did not advertise in newspapers, relying instead on word-of-mouth publicity, and following the example of their British counterparts, adapted the old-fashioned guinea, rather than the pound, as a means of exchange.[78] John Smibert, the British artist who immigrated to America via the West Indies in 1729, set the standards in America for the gentrified artist. Smibert, who benefited financially through marriage, built a large house,

studio and shop that attracted other artists, as well as potential patrons. Moreover, his style of painting reflected the aristocratic modes of portraiture popularized by the late Baroque artist, Sir Godfrey Kneller.[79] After Smibert's death, his nephew John Moffatt continued to run his uncle's art supplies and print shop, and allowed visitors to view his art collection.[80]

While it is not certain that West knew of Smibert's work, the artist's need for self-promotion echoes the advice to painters given by British artist and writer Jonathan Richardson. Richardson wrote several books on art and criticism, including An Essay on the Theory of Painting, first published in London in 1715. Richardson's text, along with Charles Alphonse Du Fresnoy's The Art of Painting, with Remarks, was given to West while he was still a young man in Pennsylvania by the artist William Williams, the boy's first art instructor.[81] According to Richardson, a painter's lifestyle reflected his talents as an artist. Not only did portrait painters need to understand the characters of their subjects in order to capture a convincing likeness, but, "as his business is chiefly with people of condition, he must think as a gentleman, and a man of sense, or it will be impossible to give such their true, and proper resemblances."[82] A secondary theme that runs throughout Richardson's text is the idea that true artistic merit was a "gift bestowed but upon a few even of our own species."[83] The belief that true genius could not be taught, but was a trait one was born with, is echoed in countless books on art of the eighteenth century. In his popular painting treatise of 1744, Roger de Piles argued that, "Genius is the first thing we must suppose in a painter; 'tis a part of him that cannot be acquired by study or labor."[84] Du Fresnoy also believed that genius could not be taught, and suggested that true talent is an innate feeling: "By tedious toil no passions are expressed, His hand who feels them strongest paints them best."[85] Although West was largely

uneducated, a shortcoming that manifested itself in his later efforts and writing and public speaking, he did understand the significance of these early art treatises by Richardson and Du Fresnoy. It is clear from his subsequent efforts at self promotion, that he saw the benefit of presenting himself as uniquely gifted. Because his family history and limited financial condition did not command the immediate respect of his peers, West needed to set himself apart from the rest of his profession by claiming to be the divine recipient of unparalleled talent.

West communicated the fact that he was one of the rare possessors of artistic genius through the telling of stories of his early childhood that served to mythologize the strength of his artistic calling. He delighted fashionable London dinner guests with details of his boyhood, focusing on accounts of his earliest aspirations to become an artist. These tales were then recorded late in the artist's life in the autobiography he dictated to the Scottish writer, John Galt. Galt's The Life and Studies of Benjamin West, Esq... was published in two volumes in 1816 and 1820 respectively, and although the book's style is largely anecdotal, it does offer an outline of major biographical facts and reveals certain insights into West's working methods.[86] Galt's biography is also important because it increases our understanding of the artist's self-perception and efforts at self-promotion right up to the end of his life.[87] West may have gotten the idea to orchestrate his own biography in response to James Northcote's biography of Sir Joshua Reynolds, exerpts of which were published in the newspaper in 1813. The artist later told Farington that "much that was included should not have been and he did not want to see any more of it."[88]

The idea that West was preordained to become a great artist was especially useful to the young American who defied the rigid class system that ordered England's social strata. Indeed, it is little short of amazing that this young man from

rural Pennsylvania would rise to the much coveted position of History Painter to the King. Galt's aggrandizement of West's early life is a biographical device that was common in nineteenth-century artistic biographies and he records that the artist's first encounter with art was at the age of seven. West was left alone to sit with his niece for a short time, and when his sister and mother returned, they found he had drawn a portrait of the girl with pens and red and black ink. His family was surprised at this early demonstration of his talent, and this event foreshadowed the magnitude of his later accomplishments.[89] In addition to a natural artistic ability, West was able to anticipate what artistic materials might be useful in the pursuit of his interests. According to Galt, local Native Americans taught him how to mix paint and provided him with pigments, while his mother gave him indigo, the blue dye she used for her own clothing.[90] When he needed a paintbrush, young West fashioned one from the fur he cut from his own cat's tail.[91] This inherent understanding and knowledge of artistic tools from a boy who had likely never even seen a painting was, to Galt, "the surest indication of original talent."[92]

Although he was encouraged by his parents to pursue a career in the arts, they were not able to provide their son with a classical education. He was taken to Philadelphia for the first time at the age of nine by his cousin Edward Penington. There he saw prints and engravings after European paintings, and was exposed to the classics by the gunsmith William Henry and the Provost of the College of Philadelphia, Reverend William Smith. West learned the rudiments of painting from the German artist John Valentine Haidt, and the British immigrant, William Williams. In Philadelphia, he was also able to study the works of John Wollaston and Gustave and John Hesselius. West painted his first portraits, to much critical acclaim, at the age of fourteen, and was soon able to earn money as an itinerant portraitist. Even as a

young man, however, West's ambitions went beyond portraiture. West viewed history painting as the highest branch of the arts, an idea undoubtedly learned from one or more of the art treatises he had read, and he painted at least two historical pictures before he left America.[93] Again, West's early and unusual ambition is recorded in Galt. According to Galt, one day West met an old school friend with a horse. The boy asked West to ride with him and suggested the budding artist sit behind him on the saddle. West responded by declaring that he would never sit behind another person, so the boy obligingly sat in the rear. Once underway, the old school mate mentioned he was soon to be apprenticed to a tailor, and West told him that he would be a painter. The boy reportedly asked:

> "What sort of trade is a painter? I never heard of such a thing."
> "A painter," said West, "is a companion for Kings and Emperors."
> "Surely you are mad," replied the boy, "for there are no such people in America."
> "Very true," answered Benjamin, "but there are plenty in other parts of the world."

When the other boy remained determined to become a tailor, West said, "Then you may ride by yourself, for I will no longer keep your company."[94]

As Ann Abrams suggests in her 1985 study of West's history paintings, The Valiant Hero, this story, as it was recalled late in the artist's life, is telling for two reasons. Importantly, West separates himself philosophically and physically from the realm of manual labor, here represented by the young tailor. In this way, he emphasizes the dignity of his own chosen profession, that of history painter, who, as West asserted, is worthy enough to be "companion to kings and emperors." Secondly, West attempted to establish himself as the inheritor of artistic genius, thus placing himself within the pantheon of those who went before him, such as the great Italian Renaissance masters, Raphael, Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci. By

doing so, he tacitly claimed an aristocratic rank in the field of art when his humble beginnings did not provide him one at birth. As Galt's account suggests, West did not deny his early years in America. Instead, he embellished certain childhood stories to distinguish himself from his European counterparts.[95]

In Galt's biography, West's American roots served two purposes. Firstly, as we have seen, he presented himself as an inheritor of artistic genius, a condition evident through his self-proclaimed affinity with nature. As West wrote the Philadelphian, Shrimpton Hutchinson in 1771,

> ...I have found since my Arrival in Europe was the most fortunate Circumstance that could have happen'd to me: My having no other Assistance but what I drew from Nature (the early part of my life being quite obscured from Art) this grounded me in the Knowledge of Nature...[96]

Thus, according to West's retrospection, isolation from artistic theory and the study of art of the old masters was a blessing and not a curse. Of course, in spite of West's later claims, he did have at least a limited access to paintings and prints after the old masters. Not surprisingly, West's earliest historical works, done prior to his seeing very many figural paintings, were heavily based on prints. The composition for his first ambitious work, The Death of Socrates (Figure 1.3), painted in 1756, was modeled after a print of the same subject by the French engraver Hubert Francois Gravelot. The source for the print was the frontispiece of Volume V of Charles Rollin's Ancient History (Figure 1.4).[97] The compositions of the two works are closely related. In each, a bearded Socrates holds the cup of hemlock in his right hand as he sits on a bench gazing up at his classically-draped poisoner whose gaze does not meet his victim's. But whereas Gravelot's Socrates is held in a stone prison, complete with shackles on the wall, West's setting is more expansive, allowing for the inclusion of more figures and soldiers as witnesses to the scene. In this way, West

could experiment in depicting a wider range of reactions to Socrates' suicide. In order to accommodate the additional crowd, West changed the orientation of this work from a vertical format to a horizontal one.

West ignores his use of Gravelot's print in Galt, but instead draws attention to his reliance on nature to compose the picture. When West was hesitant to paint a partially clad figure because he had only worked from clothed figures up to that point, his patron, the gunsmith Henry Smith, indicated that West could use one of his employees as his model. According to Galt,

> The appearance of the young man, whose arms and breast were naked, instantaneously convinced the Artist that he had only to look into nature for the models which would impart grace and energy to his delineation of forms.[98]

According to art theory espoused during the eighteenth century, nature should be the artist's guide, but his depictions of nature should be tempered with the underlying principals of art, like concepts of symmetry and beauty. Thus, West's use of an existing work of art in the formation of his composition was standard Academic practice and advice on the utilization of prints and paintings was recommended by Du Fresnoy and Richardson, as well as scores of other contemporary writers of art manuals.[99] Perfection in nature, or beauty, as defined by Sir Joshua Reynolds in his Discourses, was ultimately derived from nature, but was an abstract form, and only through diligent study of existing works of art could an artist hope to recognize it.[100] In his claims of artistic genius, then, West needed to strike a balance between an artist who derived his education from nature while possessing an inherent understanding of the more abstract (or artificial) principals of art. This balance between nature and art was something West constantly strove for, and it was this quest that made his works so popular at the beginning of his career, while rendering them anachronistic by the

time of his death. It was through a story told in Galt about his alleged discovery of the camera obscura, an instrument that allowed artists to trace objects with precise accuracy, that West first fully introduced his remarkable gift.

The camera obscura, whose name means "dark chamber" in Latin, is best known today for its role in the development of the photographic camera in the 1830's, but it has been known in some form since antiquity.[101] The first cameras were no more than dark rooms with a hole in the wall to admit light. The light was reflected off of an object of scene outside and resulted in an inverted projection of that object on the room's interior wall opposite the opening. By the sixteenth century art manuals were advising the camera's use as a drawing tool because it allowed individuals without much training to trace an image with accuracy.[102] Over the next few centuries lenses and mirrors were employed to correct and focus the reflected image, and the "dark chamber" itself became portable. Interestingly, most academic artists who used the camera did not mention even owning the machine, but through Galt, West left behind written documentation about his use of the camera.[103] According to Galt, West first encountered the camera obscura when he was recuperating from an illness at his sister's house at the age of fifteen. While confined in darkness, the only light that he saw entered the sick room through small fissures in the window shutters, creating the effect of a room-type camera obscura. Through Galt, West remembered that:

> While he was thus lying in bed, he observed the apparitional form of a white cow enter at the one side of the roof [ceiling], and walking over the bed, gradually vanish at the other. The phenomenon surprised him exceedingly, and he feared that his mind was impaired by his disease...[104]

Curiosity overcame the young artist and he found a small knothole in one of the window shutters. Covering the knothole caused the mysterious apparitions to disappear. West was delighted with the phenomenon, seeing it as a useful means of studying

> The pictural appearance of Nature, and he hailed the discovery as a revelation to promote his improvement in the art of painting. On his return soon after to his father's he had a box made with one of the sides perforated; and, adverting to the reflective power of the mirror, he contrived, without ever having heard of the instrument, to invent the Camera.[105]

Believing he had made a new discovery, West reported his experience to his mentor William Williams who told the excited artist that the phenomenon he observed was not new, and that he himself owned such a device, and it was called the camera obscura. Although Galt's book is at times anecdotal and deemed unreliable as an historical document, it is significant that this story was included as it was remembered late in the artist's life (West was 78 at the time). The "discovery" of the camera by an artist who had no formal training suggested not only remarkable skills in observation, but an ability to recognize the potential of a device which could allow the artist to better manipulate the natural world. Interestingly, prior to West's recounting of this story to Galt, he told Williams biographer John Eagles that it was Williams who gave him the camera. Apparently his "invention" of the instrument was a later embellishment.[106]

In his biography, Galt continued to build on these early anecdotes that emphasize West's remarkable native abilities. The artist first established his reputation as a genius from the wilds of America during a three-year stay in Italy and

the individuals he met there proved invaluable in establishing patronage back in London. He set sail for Italy from Philadelphia in April 1760, provided with letters of introduction by Robert Rutherford, an English merchant, and traveled straight to Rome.[107] As the first American artist to visit Italy, he attracted a great deal of interest from the artistic community there. He studied the art theories of Johann Wincklemann, the student of classical statuary who was at the cusp of contemporary aesthetic theory. He learned the newest neo-classical painting style from Anton Raphael Mengs, and entered the inner sphere of Cardinal Alessandro Albani, the man considered to be one of Italy's finest art collectors and connoisseurs. Cardinal Albani's interest in West was especially important, for it gave the young artist access to one of the most impressive art collections in Italy. According to Galt's account, on one occasion West was asked to join the Cardinal, along with a group of Italian dignitaries, on an art tour of the Belvedere Palace. The Italian group was especially keen to witness West's initial aesthetic response to the Apollo Belvedere, considered at that time to be the epitome of perfection in classical sculpture. Upon seeing the sculpture, the young American unexpectedly exclaimed, "My God, how like it is to a young Mohawk warrior." The audience was at first scandalized by this remark, but when West described the natural dexterity, grace and strength of the Mohawk men he had seen, they were delighted with his response.[108] In the telling of this story, West acknowledged that although his background was nontraditional, it provided him with a unique perspective. Thus, his natural good taste was not suppressed, but enhanced by his early surroundings. Likewise, as we have seen, West continually gave thanks

to the fact that no art existed for him to study when he was a boy, forcing him to learn from nature, the art student's most important aesthetic teacher.

The direct, charming naiveté that won the respect of the Italian artistic community was useful upon his arrival in England when he was forced to seek out patronage. Fanny Burney, in an unpublished portion of her famous diary, recalled that West spoke of his work with "frank praise and open satisfaction," and "yet all with a simplicity that turned his self-commendation rather into candour than conceit." A few years later she recalled that "such language about his own performances," would in another man, "be totally ridiculous...but there is, in Mr. West, a something of simplicity in manner, that makes his self-recommendation seem the result rather of an unaffected mind than of a vain or proud one."[109] According to Galt's account, it was West's unassuming manner that first attracted the attention of potential English patrons. One day West went ice skating in Kensington Gardens, a spot frequented by London's finest gentlemen. Once there, he was induced by an American acquaintance to perform the "Philadelphia Salute." This tricky skating maneuver attracted the attention of a number of important gentlemen who went to the pond to see him skate over the next several days. West apparently drew in "more business as a skater than he could have otherwise."[110]

Even when West was at the height of his career, he continued to call attention to his American roots, especially his association, loose though it was, with Quakerism. In his The Artist's Family of around 1772, now in the collection of the Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, West depicted both his father

and half-brother Thomas in the broad-brimmed hats traditionally worn by Quakers. Charles Robert Leslie, a one-time student of West in London, interpreted the scene as the first time West's father and brother visited Benjamin West, Jr., West's younger son, pictured as a baby here. Upon seeing an engraving of the painting in a Philadelphia print shop, Leslie observed, "The hats...in the presence of a lady, mark the sect who never uncover their heads in token of respect, but when they kneel to God."[111] On the other hand, West distinguished himself from his Quaker relations by presenting himself in a powdered wig, an elegant high-collared vest, and loosely draped jacket. Although West was never a devout Quaker, and indeed sets himself apart from the religious group here, he repeatedly wore a hat in meetings of the Royal Academy. In Henry Singleton's The Royal Academicians in General Assembly of 1795, West is pictured rather regally seated in the presidential chair wearing a three-cornered hat. This habit may have been a nod to his Quaker heritage, although the hat he wears here is not the traditional broad-brimmed hat worn by his father and brother. More likely, West wore a hat at these gatherings because it echoed the practice of presiding officers of parliament who always covered their heads at formal occasions.[112]

West furthered his reputation by augmenting the novelty of his American background to establish his reputation with claims he was the descendant of Lord Delaware, whose family name was West, and who became a hero in the wars of King Edward III which took place in the fourteenth century. During the 1780's, West painted several pictures, along with a number of studies and copies, commemorating

the battles of Edward III. In his The Institution of the Order of the Garter from this series, painted in 1787, he even includes a picture of himself and his family, as well as several of his assistants, as witnesses to the historic fourteenth-century episode.[113] In spite of his assumptions at royal lineage however, he later declined the opportunity of being Knighted, reportedly saying, "I really think I have earned greater eminence by my pencil already, than knighthood could confer upon me."[114]

It was not solely on the basis of marketing strategies that West gained respect and patronage, however. In addition to several early canvases which justifiably impressed the London art world, West had the distinct advantage of having studied in Italy, for as Robert Campbell advised in his London Tradesman, accomplished English painters, "must have the Name of having travelled to Rome ..."[115] Campbell goes on to suggest that pleasing a noted connoisseur upon one's return to England was essential to establishing one's reputation as an artist. In Italy West had earned commissions from important British patrons including artist and dealer Gavin Hamilton, the British Resident in Venice John Murray, and Lady Anne Somerset Compton. He also received a royal commission from Richard Dalton, George III's librarian whom West met in Venice in 1762. Upon his arrival in London West was encouraged in his hopes for additional patronage and shortly thereafter he exhibited three works at the Society of Artists exhibition in 1774 to much critical acclaim.[116]

In spite of West's early successes, he was not spared from the arduous task of earning money. His salary as History Painter to the King did not begin until 1778 and was 1000 pounds per year, plus other, small incidental expenses. When he received

his last annual payment in 1810, he had earned 34,000 pounds from his Royal patron.[117] This income was helpful, but by no means all that West needed to maintain his large studio on Newman Street, which required approximately 1600 pounds per year.[118] And, as we have seen, wealth, or more importantly, the appearance of wealth, was probably the most viable means of breaking through the rigid British class system of the eighteenth century. After a visit to England at mid-century, the French writer Andre Rouquet observed:

> Every Englishman constantly holds a pair of scales, wherein he exactly weighs the birth, the rank, and especially the fortune of those he is in company with, in order to regulate his behaviour and discourse accordingly; and on this occasion the rich tradesman is always sure to outweigh the poor artist.[119]

Jonathan Richardson understood this predicament all too well when he defended the artist's necessity of taking money for his work in The Theory of Painting:

> ...to make a profession of, and take money for this labor of the head and hand is the dishonorable circumstance, this being a sort of letting himself to hire to whosoever will pay him for his trouble...And as to letting ourselves to hire, we are content to own this is really the case; and if this hath something low, and servile in it, we must take our place amongst men accordingly.[120]

West himself recalled late in his life, that:

> Artists stood, if possible, lower in the scale of society than actors; for Garrick had redeemed the profession of the latter from the degradation to which it had been consigned from the time of the Commonwealth; But Reynolds, although in high repute as a portrait painter, and affecting a gentlemanly liberality in the style of his living, was not so eminently before the public eye as to induce any change of the same consequence toward his profession.[121]

As West implied, even painters as successful as Sir Joshua Reynolds, one of the few artists to have been honored with a Knighthood, fought for respectability in the highest circles. West's comments about Reynolds' professional struggles may have served his own purposes, however. He noted that Reynolds, although titled and

financially and professionally successful, was still a mere portrait painter.

West also suggested that in their efforts at respectability, artists were not alone. Scientists, particularly members of the medical profession, were also trying to gain respectability.[122] This simultaneous struggle is not surprising in an age when the boundaries between science and art were often blurred or even non-existent. But although art was linked to science, it was considered different, too. What was required of the artist, and not of the scientist, was taste. Alexander Gerard, in his 1774 An Essay on Genius, argued that scientific genius required "only that kind of judgment which has truth for its object," while artistic genius requires both truth and, "...another kind of judgment, that which pronounces concerning beauty, and is ordinarily called taste..."[123] According to Gerard, artistic taste was what allowed artists to determine the potential quality of a design or composition from its inception, that is, prior to its completion on canvas. In this way, a minimum of alterations needed to be made after the picture had been painted.[124] Although much of the practice of the visual arts could be taught, a certain "turn of mind, " or innate genius, was necessary at the outset.[125]

For most writers of the period, including Gerard, what could and should be taught to the painter was anatomy, osteology, geometry, perspective, the nature of colors, literature, history and architecture.[126] Knowledge of history was especially important for the historical painter, for in addition to understanding the events of the story he wishes to paint, the artist must be able to, as Richardson stated,

> conceive it clearly and nobly in his mind, or he can never express it on canvas: he must have a solid judgment, with a lively imagination and know what figures and what incidents ought to be brought in, and what everyone should say and think. A painter therefore of this class must possess all the good qualities requisite to an historian...And as his business is not to write the history of a few years, or of one age, or country, but of all ages, and all

> nations...he must have a proportionable fund of ancient and modern learning of all kinds."[127]

And, according to Richardson, in addition to being both a poet and historian, the artist must also know much more than is required of these two fields. For a man with the limited education of Benjamin West, the history painter's credentials must have seemed all but out of reach. Richardson may have exaggerated the tenets of his profession, but he was speaking to an audience that may have questioned its respectability. Thus, all of the skills laid out by Richardson were also areas of learning pursued by his contemporaries of the gentleman class. According to Richardson's description, the artist could be seen as one who occupies himself primarily with intellectual pursuits. The reality was, however, that much of an artist's time was taken up with day to day hands-on studio production, as well as the marketing of work and managing studio assistants. These activities were a constant reminder to the artist and his public that his success and status relied on the whims of his patrons and the economy as a whole, a reality all too real for West during the years when the King's illness ended his Royal patronage.

Another way artists could exert a degree of control over their economic situation was through the field of connoisseurship, or in the aesthetic and financial assessment of works of art. As connoisseurs, artists were able to contribute to their own wealth and reputation through the buying and selling of art. At the same time, in their role as connoisseur, artists aided their patrons in purchasing works for their collections. Connoisseurs were arbiters of artistic taste in England during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a job that was especially important given the period's active art market. In his Anecdotes of Painting in England, Horace Walpole distinguished between the vulgar audience and the connoisseur, but acknowledged that some art, like that of Peter Paul Rubens, was popular amongst

both audiences.[128] In spite of pedagogical efforts of some writers, the skills of the connoisseur were under the almost exclusive auspices of the gentlemanly class.[129] Even Walpole attempts to aid his readers in the pursuit of their own collections by offering descriptions of the collectors marks of some noted individuals, like that of the King, the Duke of Arundel and the artist Sir Peter Lely.[130]

Most collectors necessarily relied on the advice of connoisseurs in the building of their own collections, and West, as well as other artists, were called upon as experts to provide both intrinsic and market values to individual works of art, as well as entire collections.[131] By virtue of their profession, most artists were regarded as knowledgeable in this area, but even in this regard they strove for status. Reynolds reportedly observed that:

> Any miserable artist who has failed in his profession as a painter, from want of ability, and had afterwards, from necessity, turned picture dealer, was always considered, by pretended connoisseurs, as well as by a great part of the world, as a much better judge of the art than the most successful artist.[132]

West himself was not removed from this impudence either. When he asked Captain William Baillie, an engraver who specialized in copies after Rembrandt's etchings, to show him one of the Dutch master's finest prints, the Captain showed his guest one of his own copies. West recalled that he put forth one of his own works, "with as much confidence as my little friend Edwards' attempts to teach perspective in the Royal Academy."[133] Some recent scholars have seen West's participation in valuing pictures as self-serving. For example, in 1779, when West established the prices for the best Van Dyck portraits in the Houghton Hall sale he set them at 200 pounds each, somewhat lower than the cost of portraits produced by living Royal Academicians. According to the correspondence of Scottish art dealer, William Buchanan, West was one of his principal paid advisors, and the dealer implied that

West may have been persuaded to stretch the truth in his comments about valuable Italian works that entered the market. Buchanan's relationship with West is suggested in an unflattering rhyme the dealer wrote about the artist in 1804: "Dr. West, that learned and enlightened quack, who has the address to make some folks believe that white, is black, and au contraire, Black, White."[134]

A wealthy artist's art collection was not altogether different from that of other collectors. They often included old master drawings and paintings, as well as prints after modern, Renaissance, and ancient art. Reynolds especially encouraged young artists to collect engravings, which allowed every artist to, "avail himself of the inventions of antiquity."[135] In fact, the subsequent value of an old master art work could depend a great deal on its provenance. A study of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century collectors' marks on old master drawings indicates that artists sought to purchase art that was previously owned by older, revered artists and collectors.[136] Not surprisingly, some of the most notable art collections of the age were amassed by artists and West's own collection was considered one of the most spectacular in the land. When part of his collection was auctioned off at the time of his death, no description of individual works was given in the catalogue because the collection was so "universally known."[137] No other artist's opinion was more sought after regarding the value of art during this period than Benjamin West's.[138] Washington Allston, a one-time student of West's, advised a friend to show a group of anonymous old-master drawings to West in the hopes of establishing the works' authorship. Allston called his former teacher, "one of the most learned in Europe in these matters..."[139]

Through his self-prescribed roles as connoisseur, wealthy gentleman and artistic genius, West was able to achieve a degree of fame in England that would not

have been possible had he remained in America. His relationship with the King allowed him access to a wide range of well-placed individuals and his various artistic enterprises earned him enough money to live a comfortable lifestyle. He built his reputation on unusual aspects of his early life, from his childhood inclinations towards art in Pennsylvania, to his familiarity with the latest neo-classical trends learned in Italy. His approach to his craft was diligent and firmly entrenched in eighteenth-century art theory and methods and reflected his attempts to reconcile a growing inclination towards naturalism with the idealism so valued in the Academy. But West's fame was not based solely on innovative marketing strategies. As we shall see in following chapters, his artistic accomplishments contributed significantly to the eighteenth-century art world.

[1] Marcia Pointon, "Portrait-Painting as a Business Enterprise in London in the 1780's," Art History 7 (June 1984), p. 187.

[2] John Summerson, Georgian London, (Pleiades Books, 1945), p. 5.

[3] Celina Fox, "A Visitor's Guide to London World City, 1800-1840," in Celina Fox, ed., London—World City: 1800-1840, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 12-14.

[4] Constable, pp. 11-12.

[5] Farington, Wed., May 6, 1807, vol. 8, p. 3038.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Pointon, " Portrait Painting," p. 191 and Walkley, p. 14.

[8] Henry Moses, The Gallery of Pictures Painted by Benjamin West, Esq., (London, 1811), introduction, not paginated.

[9] Rembrandt Peale, "Notes and Queries," The Crayon 4 (October 1857), p. 307.

[10] Pointon, "Portrait Painting," p. 190.

[11] Peale, p. 307 and Pointon, "Portrait Painting," p. 191.

[12] Undated newspaper clipping from London newspaper, c. 1770, in Mr. Christie, Catalogue of the First Part...June 9, 1820, Frick Reference Library, New York.

[13] Walkley, p. 15.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Alberts, p. 170.

[16] Leigh Hunt, Autobiography of Leigh Hunt, (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1850), vol. 1, p. 102.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid..

[19] von Erffa and Staley, p. 426.

[20] During leaner years, West and his wife kept only one man and two maids. Farington, Sun. 17 Dec. 1797, vol. 3, p. 949.

[21] Hunt, vol. 1, p. 103.

[22] William T. Whitley, Artists and Their Friends in England, 1700-1799, (New York and London: Benjamin Blom, 1928, 1968), vol. 1, p. 281.

[23] West would have been about 61 when White met him.

[24] Paul R. Weidner, ed., "The Journal of John Blake White," South Carolina Historical and Geneological Magazine 42 (April 1941), p. 64.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Quoted in Richard Wendorf, Sir Joshua Reynolds: The Painter in Society, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 103.

[27] Wendorf, p. 103, and James Ward, Conversations of James Northcote, RA with James Ward on Art and Artists, Ernest Futcher, ed., (London: Methuen, 1901), p. 204.

[28] Wendorf, p. 106.

[29] Peale, p. 308.

[30] Letter Files, Huntington Library and Gardens, San Marino, California.

[31] Dunlap, Diary, p. 66.

[32] Farington, Tue., July 16, 1816 and Fri., July 18, 1817, vol. 14, pp. 4874 and 5057.

[33] Richardson, p. 13.

[34] Andre Rouquet, The Present State of the Arts in England, 1755, London: Cornmarket Press, 1970, p. 40.

[35] Mr. Mortimer, The Universal Director; or, the Nobleman and Gentleman's True Guide to the Masters and Professors of the Liberal and Polite Arts and Sciences; and

of the Mechanic Arts, Manufactures, and Trades, Established in London and Westminster, and their Environs, (London: J. Coote, 1763), p. vi.

[36] Wendorf, p. 113.

[37] For a discussion of the growth of art genre see David H. Solkin, Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), and Pears.

[38] Solkin, p. 2.

[39] Rouquet, p. 42.

[40] Farington, Sun., May 4, 1806, vol. 7, p. 2746.

[41] Quoted in Whitley, p. 22.

[42] Hunt, vol. 1, p. 102.

[43] Northcote, vol. 2, p. 42.

[44] Dunlap, William, The History of the Rise and Progress of The Arts of Design in the United States. (Boston: C.E. Goodspeed & Co., 1918), vol. 1, pp. 71-72.

[45] Edward Lind Morse, ed., Samuel F. B. Morse: His Letters and Journals, (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1914), vol. 1, p. 45.

[46] Quoted in Dorinda Evans, p. 168.

[47] For a listing of West's art collection see the auction catalogues which describe the sales of his collection in the years following his death. Located in the Frick Reference Library in New York, they are, Christie, Mason and Woods, Catalogue of the Collection of Pictures, Drawings and Sketches by Benjamin West, PRA Which have remained in the possession of the Family every since his Death, (London, March 19, 1898); Christie's, Catalogue of the First Part of the Superb Collection of Prints and Drawings Formed by the Late Benjamin West, Esq..., (London, June 9, 1820); A Catalogue fo the Truly Capital Collection of Italian, French, Flemish and Dutch Pictures Which were Selected...by Benjamin West, Esq., PRA, (London, June 23, 1820); Catalogue of the Last Part of the Superb Collection of Drawings, Prints, and Books of Prints, Formed by the Late Benjamin West, Esq., PRA, (London, July 1, 1820); A Catalogue of the Remaining and Reserved Part of the Very Valuable Collection of Italian, French, Flemish and Dutch Pictures, of Benjamin West, Esq., Deceased, (London, May 28, 1824); and Mr. Southeby and Son, Catalogue of the

Reserved Portion of the Valuable Collection of Original Drawings by Early Masters, The Property of the Late Benjamin West, Esq., PRA, (May 11, 1836).

[48] John Thomas Smith, A Book for a Rainy Day: or Recollections of the Events of the Years 1766-1833, (London, 1905), p. 387.

[49] Whitley, Artists and Their Friends, vol. 2, pp. 31-33.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Sophie von la Roche, Sophie in London, (London: J. Cape, 1933), pp. 152-53.

[52] Alberts, p. 387 and Dunlap, History, vol. 1, p. 97.

[53] Walkley, p. 28.

[54] Alberts, p. 120.

[55] Ayres, p. 23.

[56] The artist's wife did keep a small account book during the year 1785 which was a daily record of household expenditures. The original is in the Philadelphia Historical Society. For a summary of the book see Alberts, pp. 168-170.

[57] Constable, p. 22.

[58] Hunt, vol. 1, p. 102 and Charles Merrill Mount, Gilbert Stuart: A Biography, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1964), pp. 50-51.

[59] Weidner, p. 64.

[60] Mount, pp. 50-51.

[61] Farington, Sun. 11 May 1806, vol. 7, p. 2758; Wed. 20 Nov. 1811, vol. 11, p. 4033; and Fri. 13 Dec. 1816, vol. 14, p. 4942.

[62] Ibid., Sat, 11 Sep. 1813, vol. 12, p. 4423 and Thurs. 17 Dec. 1807, vol. 8, p. 3173.

[63] Ayres, p. 36.

[64] Constable, p. 24. Farington saw some of West's large canvases on his rolling easels in 1812. See Farington, Fri. 31 Jan. 1812, vol. 11, p. 4072.

[65] Mr. Christie, Catalogue of the Last Part of the Superb Collection of Drawings, Prints and Books of Prints..., (London, July 1, 1820).

[66] Letters from Copley to his brother Henry Pelham from London, July 17, 1774 and August 17, 1774, in Guernsey Jones, Letters and Papers of John Singleton Copley and Henry Pelham, 1739-1776, (Boston: The Massachusetts Historical Society, 1914), pp. 227, 236.

[67] Alberts, p. 162 and Dunlap, Diary, p. 256.

[68] Dorinda Evans, p. 161.

[69] Letter from West to ---, July 20, 1804, Archives of American Art, Benjamin West Papers, Reel 556, Frame 24.

[70] Mount, p. 51.

[71] Ibid., pp. 62-63.

[72] Dorinda Evans, p. 19 and Von Erffa and Staley, p. 409. West sometimes employed his son Raphael in painting decorations for entertainment and billed the monarch for his services. See Farington, Sat. 21 July 1810, p. 3695.

[73] Quoted in Mount, p. 52.

[74] Charlotte Louise Papendiek, Court and Private Life in the Time of Queen Charlotte, (London: R. Bently & Son, 1887), volume 2, p. 39.

[75] Ibid., p. 145.

[76] Farington, Mon. 3 Feb. 1812, vol. 11, p. 4076.

[77] For a discussion of the economic aspects of Colonial American art see Margaretta M. Lovell, "Painters and Their Customers: Aspects of Art and Money in Eighteenth-Century America," in Ronald Hoffman and Peter Albert, eds., Of Consuming Interest, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994), pp. 284-306.

[78] Ibid., p. 294.

[79] Wayne Craven, Colonial American Portraiture: The Economic, Religious, Social, Cultural, Philosophical, Scientific, and Aesthetic Foundations, (Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 153.

[80] Jules Prown, "Charles Willson Peale in London," in New Perspectives on Charles Willson Peale: A 250th Anniversary Celebration, Lillian B. Miller and David C. Ward, eds., (Pittsburgh: Published for the Smithsonian Institution by the University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991), p. 31.

[81] Charles Alphonse du Fresnoy, *De Arte Graphica*: The Art of Painting, with Remarks, translated by John Dryden, (London: Printed by J. Hepinstall for W. Rogers, 1695). It is not certain exactly which of Richardson's three treatises were borrowed by West. They are, Jonathan Richardson, Two Discourses, (London: W. Churchill, 1719), and An Essay on the Theory of Painting, 2nd edition, (London: A. Bettesworth, 1725). See David H. Dickason, "Benjamin West on William Williams: A Previously Unpublished Letter," Winterthur Portfolio 6 (1970): 128-133.

[82] Richardson, p. 12.

[83] Ibid., p. 1.

[84] de Piles, p. 1.

[85] Du Fresnoy, p. 27.

[86] John Galt, The Life, Studies, and Works of Benjamin West, Esq., part 1, and The Life and Works of Benjamin West, Esq., part 2, published in 1 volume, (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1820).

[87] For a discussion of West's self-promotional strategies in London see Ann Uhry Abrams, The Valiant Hero: Benjamin West and Grand Style History Painting, (Washington, DC: Smithsonian University Press, 1985).

[88] Farington, Sat. 28 Aug. 1813, vol. 12, p. 4416.

[89] Galt, part 1, p. 10.

[90] Ibid., p. 18.

[91] Ibid., p. 19.

[92] Ibid., p. 20.

[93] These are The Death of Socrates, c. 1756, oil on canvas, private collection and Trial of Susanna, c. 1756-1759, location unknown. The latter picture is thought to have been destroyed in a fire before 1840. von Erffa and Staley, pp. 164 and 320.

[94] Galt, part 1, pp. 29-31, quoted in Abrams, pp. 42-43.

[95] Abrams, p. 43.

[96] London, 18 June 1771, Guernsey Jones, p. 119.

[97] Peter S. Walch, "Charles Rollin and Early Neoclassicism," The Art Bulletin 49 (June 1967), p. 123.

[98] Galt, vol. 1, p. 37.

[99] Du Fresnoy, p. 13 and Richardson, p. 47.

[100] Sir Joshua Reynolds, Discourses on Art, Robert Wark, ed., (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), p. 47.

[101] For the most comprehensive study of the camera obscura see John Hammond, The Camera Obscura: A Chronicle, (Bristol, 1981). See also Martin Kemp's useful, The Science of Art: Optical Themes in Western Art from Brunelleschi to Seurat, (New Haven and London, 1990).

[102] Jo. Baptista Porta, *Magiae naturalis, sive de miraculis rerum naturalium*, (Naples, 1558), quoted and discussed in Helmut Gernsheim, The History of Photography from the Earliest Use of the Camera Obscura in the Eleventh Century up to 1914, (Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 2-19.

[103] For example, Sir Joshua Reynolds owned at least two cameras during his lifetime, but he derided painted landscapes that seemed to rely too heavily on the accuracy the instrument afforded. In other words, the camera should not be used if the resultant picture were not tempered with artifice. Reynolds, p. 237.

[104] Galt, volume 1, p. 45.

[105] Ibid., p. 48.

[106] John Eagles, "The Beggar's Legacy," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine 77 (March 1850, p. 270.

[107] Allen Staley, "Benjamin West in Italy," in Irma B. Jaffe, ed., The Italian Presence in American Art, 1760-1860, (New York: Fordham University Press and Rome: Istituto Della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1989), p. 1.

[108] Galt, volume 1, pp. 104-106.

[109] Quoted in Dorinda Evans, p. 19.

[110] Galt, part 2, pp. 30-31.

[111] Charles Robert Leslie, Autobiographical Recollections, (London, 1860), p. 41, quoted in Ann C. Van Devanter, "Benjamin West and his Self-Portraits," Antiques 103 (April 1973), p. 766.

[112] Richard Kenin, Return to Albion: American Artists in England, 1760-1940, (Washington, DC: National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 1979), p. 30.

[113] The Institution of the Order of the Garter, 1787, (Her Majesty the Queen), described in Abrams, p. 33 and Von Erffa and Staley, p. 199.

[114] Quoted in William Dunlap, History, vol. 1, p. 79.

[115] Campbell, p. 97.

[116] von Erffa and Staley, p. 33.

[117] Helmut von Erffa, "Benjamin West at the Height of His Career," The American Art Journal 1 (Spring 1969), p. 20.

[118] Alberts, p. 165.

[119] Rouquet, p. 17.

[120] Richardson, p. 15.

[121] Galt, vol. 2, p. 3, quoted in Pears, p. 109.

[122] Pears, pp. 110-111.

[123] Alexander Gerard, An Essay on Taste, (London: W. Strahan, T. Cadell & W. Creech, 1774), p. 392.

[124] Ibid., p. 393.

[125] Ibid., p. 420.

[126] Richardson, p. 11 and Gerard, p. 421.

[127] Richardson, pp. 9-10.

[128] Horace Walpole, Anecdotes of Painting in England with some Account of the Principal Artists...collected by the late Mr. George Vertue, (London, 1762), vol. 1, p. 78.

[129] See, for example, Jonathan Ricardson's A Discourse on the Science of the Connoisseur, in Richardson, p. 338.

[130] Walpole, vol. 1, p. 54, and vol. 3, p. 19.

[131] According to the Scottish picture dealer William Buchanan, only Sir George Beaumont established his own art collection without the guidance of a connoisseur. Francis Haskell, Rediscoveries in Art: Some Aspects of Taste, Fashion and Collecting in England and France, 2nd ed., (Oxford: Phaidon, 1980), p. 29.

[132] Northcote, Memoirs of Sir Joshua Reynolds, KNT, vol. 2, p. 46.

[133] John Thomas Smith, p. 115.

[134] Haskell, Rediscoveries in Art, p. 29.

[135] Reynolds, p. 106.

[136] For a list of many collectors of drawings, as well as their collectors' marks, see Frits Lugt, Les Marques de Collections de Dessins & d'Estampes..., (The Hague, 1956).

[137] Mr. Christie, Catalogue of the First Part of the Superb Collection of Prints and Drawings Formed by the Late Benjamin West, Esq., R.A...Which Will Be Sold by Auction...June the 9th 1820, and Successive Days, (London, 1820), n.p.

[138] Gerald Reitlinger, The Economics of Taste: The Rise and Fall of the Picture Market, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964-65), p. 57.

[139] Jared Bradley Flagg, The Life and Letters of Washington Allston, (New York: B. Blom, 1892), p. 90.

Chapter Two: West as Teacher: Art Education in the Studio

Throughout West's long English career, he was one of the most popular private teachers in London. Virtually every American art student who visited England spent some time working and/or studying in his studio. His pedagogical program was more casually arranged than that of a traditional apprentice-master relationship, allowing him to reach a greater number of pupils. The student's role in West's studio was one of mutual benefit. Not one to carefully guard the secrets of his trade, West helped to educate aspiring artists in the areas of draughtsmanship, composition, color harmony, and even marketing. In return, West had a virtually unlimited supply of studio labor that could aid him in a variety of artistic endeavors, such as modeling for large compositions and portrait bodies, making copies of his compositions, mixing paint and preparing palettes, just to name a few. And importantly, in his role as History Painter to the King, West's belief in the public function of art, particularly in the realm of history painting, provided inspiration to idealistic young artists determined to avoid the drudgeries of portraiture.

West's own art production was guided by a series of rules, a regimented and traditional methodology that he generously shared with all his students. James Northcote voiced a popular sentiment about West's success as a teacher when he said:

> West was a learned painter, for he knew all that had been done in the art from the beginning; he was exactly what is called "the schools" in painting, for he did everything by rule, and could give you chapter and verse for every touch he put on the canvas. He was on that account the best possible teacher, because he could tell why and wherefore everything was to be done.[1]

Samuel F.B. Morse who spent time in West's studio from 1811 to 1815 recalled that his teacher was indefatigable in his studies and that the

> ...result of those studies is a perfect knowledge of the philosophy of his art. There is not a line or a touch in his pictures which he cannot account for on philosophical principles. They are not the productions of accident, but of study.[2]

West believed that it was necessary to reduce the philosophical tenets of the fine arts to a series of rules in order to elucidate aspects of art production that may appear complicated and difficult to young students.[3] His systematic educational program echoed advice given by Sir Joshua Reynolds who wrote in his annotations to Du Fresnoy's The Art of Painting, published in 1783,

> To become a great proficient, an Artist ought to see clearly enough to enable him to point out to others the principle on which he works, otherwise he will be confined, and what is worse, he will be uncertain.[4]

West's reliance on a regimented approach to painting reflected the general belief during this period that if art were assiduously studied, it was an educational pursuit that could be mastered, similar to the fields of science and mathematics. Like Reynolds, his predecessor as President of the Royal Academy, West believed that great artistic insight, or "genius," was not the result of a moment's inspiration, but the consequence of careful study and experience.[5] As leaders of an institution whose primary goal was to provide artistic instruction, it is not surprising that Reynolds and West believed genius could be taught. But whereas Reynolds' teachings about art were more philosophical than practical, and his painting was often a mysterious process even to his students, West's own studio output was guided by methods based on long-standing traditions that he openly shared with his students.

West's approach to painting closely emulated the techniques and strategies rehearsed by numerous art manuals and treatises of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The majority of these texts provided a systematic method for drawing and painting, and celebrated the supremacy of art of the Italian Renaissance and Antiquity. In keeping with this tradition, West's artistic philosophy was guided by academic principles such as symmetry, proportion, anatomy, and theories of linear perspective.[6] This approach to art education also guided the curriculum of the Royal Academy and other similar institutions. Countless artistic treatises of the period record the same themes, the most popular being those by Alphonse du Fresnoy, Gerard de Lairesse, Roger de Piles, and Thomas Bardwell. Most of the treatises published before the second half of the eighteenth century provide some philosophical insights into art production, as well as listing recipes for mixing paints and outlining specific methods for drawing and painting. Later on in the century, however, when paint was provided by merchants and not mixed in the artist's studio, these treatises became more theoretical in nature, focusing instead on topics like color theory and art criticism. While the need for recipe books diminished by the close of the century, traditional methods for painting large canvases prevailed until after the turn of the century. It is clear through an analysis of West's studio and art, that his program provides a model for the traditional and predominant way in which art was taught during this period. And as we shall see, by the time West died in 1820, this was a program that began to operate at odds with more modern trends.

Significantly, it is through West's role as a teacher that we glimpse some of the most probing insights into the creation of his own artwork. There are three principal documents that outline West's philosophies about art. In 1773 West wrote a letter to

John Singleton Copley, still in America, instructing him as to which art works he should study in Italy.[7] He repeated this same advice over ten years later in a letter from the late 1780s to a German student, Johann Heinrich Ramberg.[8] The most comprehensive discussion of his beliefs about art are found in his Discourses delivered periodically before the Royal Academy beginning at the time of his presidency in 1792.[9] All three of these sources reveal his continued interest in the art of the Ancient world, as well as that of Raphael, Michelangelo, Correggio, and Titian. In naming these specific artists, West's advice echoes that set forth by Alphonse du Fresnoy whose book, The Art of Painting, was given to him by his first teacher William Williams before he left America. Du Fresnoy's book, first published in 1668, remained popular throughout the eighteenth century, providing an important link between seventeenth-century art theory and neo-classical ideas that became prevalent in the late eighteenth century.[10]

In his lectures before the Academy West expanded his views on the importance of studying antique and Renaissance models by including his thoughts on color theory, and he even gave specific advice regarding the correct application of paint. He also emphasized the importance of art education in general and began his first lecture by defining his role as President of the Royal Academy, describing his "zeal for the cultivation of genius."[11] In spite of his enthusiasm for the existence of innate talent, West regarded it as a hindrance if not properly guided, observing that, "Genius is apt to run wild if not brought under some regulation. It is a flood whose current will be dangerous if it is not kept within proper banks."[12] He warned students to carefully follow the edicts of good taste, the aesthetic guidelines of which could be discovered by studying artistic examples from Italian Renaissance art and antique statues. West's

annual Academy lectures, which essentially reflected the official aesthetic stance of that organization, emphasized the importance of classical traditions to the practice of painting during his tenure as president.

To begin their cultivation of good taste, West advised his students to focus their attentions specifically on the Venus de Medici and the Apollo Belvedere, the two sculptures then believed to exemplify the male and female ideals of physical perfection inherent in ancient Greek statuary.[13] Greek art provided the essential model for West's artistic endeavors for two reasons. First, ancient artists adhered to specific guidelines regarding the character of the subjects they portrayed. In 1773 he wrote Copley, "...The works of the Antient Satuarys are the great original whare in the various charectors of nature are finely represented, from the soundest principles of Philosophi."[14] For example, statues of Apollo necessarily exhibit one or more of the young god's unique personality traits, like his interests and skills in music and poetry, his heroic stoicism, as well as his predilection for terrible outbursts of temper. West advised his students to choose the figures from antiquity that would most appropriately contribute to the narrative and expression of their paintings. In this way, they would be following the established rules (or philosophy) of expression in painting, and "...without Philosophy [method] Genius has and will produce extravagance and monstrous absurdities."[15] Secondly, ancient Greek models provided numerous examples of male and female nudes from which to study. This was particularly important to West who believed the most important element of any picture (particularly in historical works) was the human figure. Not only do a figure's actions provide a picture's principal narrative, but West considered the human figure to be more beautiful than any other in nature, "distinguished, above

every other, by the variety of the phenomena which it exhibits, arising from the different modifications of feeling and passion."[16] Moreover, in keeping with the neo-classical thought that guided West's agenda, his high regard for the human figure in art echoed the ancient belief that man was the measure of all things.[17]

In a lecture before the Royal Academy West analyzed the way in which a sculpture of Apollo should be formed:

> ...his body, strong and vigorous from constant exercise, should be nobly erect; that, as his lungs were expanded by habits of swiftness in the chase, his chst should be large and full; that his thighs, as the source of movement in his legs, should have the appearance of enlarged vigor and solidity...The nostrils ought to be elevated, because the quick respirations of running and dancing would naturally produce that effect...the mouth should appear to be habitually a little open. While his arms, firm and nervous by the exercise of the quoit, the sling and the bow, should participate in the general vigor and agility of the other members; --and would this not be the Apollo Belvedere?[18]

As this lengthy description suggests, for West, the formation of a human figure was an abstract process based on a careful analysis of each anatomic part of the model. A volume of prints at the Royal Academy, published in 1813, illustrates the Academy's pedagogy regarding the human figure. The prints, taken from parts of West's own paintings, illustrate various individual body parts, including leg, arm, hand and torso studies, as well as measurements for the delineation of the heads of men, women and children.[19] Artists were encouraged to compose their pictures by synthesizing individual and varying features into one idealized figure, an inherently artificial process.[20] It was perhaps this piece-meal quality to West's figures that prompted one critic to say of his 1817 altarpiece for St. Marylebone Church that "the principal figure in the angelic group had the face of a child, with the thigh of a porter."[21] One of the best examples of West's academic approach to the human figure is seen in his painting, The Choice of Hercules

from 1764 (Figure 2.1). The painting depicts a nude Hercules posed between Virtue and Vice at the moment just before the god chooses between them. The composition of the picture was likely based on Nicolas Poussin's painting of the same title that West saw in an English collection the previous year.[22] The painting is important because it is West's first English neo-classical canvas, inspired by his recent stay in Italy. As William Gerdts has pointed out, West's Hercules is not simply a naked body, but a symbol of antique sculpture, as he seems to directly quote various antique sources.[23]

By 1800 some artists began to question this strictly academic approach to painting, preferring instead to rely solely on the study of nature itself. Whereas traditional methodology as espoused by West advocated composing a picture piece by piece, artists of the naturalist school depicted nature as an organic whole.[24] One of the most important catalysts for rethinking the academic canons by which the figure was depicted was the arrival of the Elgin Marbles in England in 1806. The Elgin Marbles were so named because they were removed from the Parthenon and brought to England by Lord Elgin. They were especially significant because they were genuine Greek sculptures and not merely Roman copies after Greek originals. After studying the marbles, artists and connoisseurs began to distinguish between the inherent naturalism of the Greek originals which revealed a close relationship to the living model, and the more artificial forms of Roman copies, like the Apollo Belvedere, an antique type.[25] For example, the surface detail of the Parthenon marbles exhibited subtleties of musculature and veins not seen in Roman copies.[26] West himself believed the sculptures represented nature, and not simply the ancient canon of human proportion that forced anatomical proportions to be "made obedient to system."[27] This was an important revelation to a

younger generation of artists who sought to reconcile the well-established canons of the antique with a growing impulse towards naturalism and the nude. In order to study the marbles in relation to the human figure, some artists hired a pugilist to pose nude before the statues in order to compare the two.[28]

Ironically, while the Elgin Marbles were embraced by members of both schools of thought, traditionalists like West and his colleague Martin Archer Shee, were concerned over a growing disregard for the "correctness of taste" that would be obtained only by the study of antiquity.[29] By the time the Parthenon marbles arrived in England, two approaches to art education had emerged. West and most of his colleagues at the Royal Academy represented the traditional school of thought in which ancient and Renaissance art formed the principal foundation of the practice of painting and formation of taste. As we shall see, this traditional approach extended beyond mere aesthetic concerns, as it represented the methodical, almost scientific, formula for oil painting embraced by West. As early as 1797 West differentiated between those artists who "paint only from the eye and not from scientific principles."[30] On the other hand, younger artists began to rely more and more on direct observations of nature when composing the figure.

Although artists of the late eighteenth century relied heavily on academic principles to paint the figure, the impulse towards naturalism and the figure was seen as early as 1750 when an interest in the study of anatomy emerged amongst artists, including the animal painter, George Stubbs.[31] In his first Discourse, delivered in 1769, Reynolds lamented that when confronted with a living model, students in the Academy did not study the nude carefully enough. Instead of recording exactly what they saw, Reynolds observed that they were prone to "make a drawing rather of what they think the

figure ought to be, than of what it appears."[32] Still a member of the academic camp, however, for Reynolds, a high degree of competency in copying the live model would better enable an artist to temper the figure in more finished works with the perfection of antique types.[33] By the end of the century, more and more artists were following the advice of the young history painter Benjamin Robert Haydon who advocated that artists' pictures should reflect their practice of drawing directly from the live model. This interest in naturalism also extended to the realm of landscape painting and is seen in the works of landscape painters like John Varley. Considered the father of plein-air painting in England, Varley ran a school for landscape painters. Although he believed in the academic principles of composition, he encouraged his students to draw directly from nature.[34] John Linnell, a student of West's in 1805, attended both the Royal Academy School and Varley's school. He later recalled his experiences at the Royal Academy separated him in practice from the Varley school of art, providing him with the "perceptions and taste more allied to the Italian masters."[35] By the time of West's death, naturalism, as opposed to the artifice of relying too heavily on art of the past, was seen as a characteristic of a new British art and considered to be a matter of nationalistic pride. In his 1817 treatise on painting, Henry Richter considered French art to be imitative and artificial, while the English artists had eschewed such "artificial correctness, which is but a substitute for truth," which is the "genuine grace and expression of living nature."[36]

Artists of West's generation however, were not prepared to wholly embrace new naturalistic trends. In addition to ancient statuary, West particularly recommended the study of Michelangelo's works for offering a "compleat knowledge of the forme of the human figure..."[37] But, West warned, students should not simply copy Michelangelo's

figures, for as "fine as they may be in themselves when misaplyed in subject become offensive and disgusting."[38] Instead of simply copying works of antiquity or the Renaissance in order to master the depiction of the human figure, West suggested a clear method of study. Students should begin their work by studying and drawing a body's (statue's) individual parts. Comparing the human body to the geometry of an ancient column, he recommended depicting each aspect of the figure with mechanical precision. Thus, the student should rely on established canons of proportion rather than nature in his rendering of the body. If more guidance was needed in depicting individual anatomical parts, the pupil should augment his efforts with a careful study of osteology (the study of bones) and anatomy. In his 1804 instruction book on drawing, Thomas Hodson summarized how thorough an artist's understanding of the human body needed to be:

> It is not to be understood...that the student is to enter as deeply into the subject of anatomy as the surgeon or physician. It is enough for him to be acquainted with the skeleton; or the form and connection of the bones; and the origin, insertion, and use of each of the principal muscles, with their general appearance when in action...[39]

If a student learned how to construct the figure by studying a variety of artistic and scientific sources, he would avoid the danger of becoming "mannered," in which his works too closely resembled those of another artist.

Interestingly, in his Lectures, West provided an economic justification for his pedagogical interest in drawing the figure, as well as the cultivation of artistic taste. He outlined the commercial benefits of art education for all members of society. While the nobility should of course be acquainted with "that correctness of taste which is so ornamental to their rank in society,"[40] the work of artisans, mechanical draftsmen and inventors would also improve through the study of drawing the human body:

> We can form no idea to ourselves how many of the imperfections in the most ingenious of our machines and engines would have been obviated, had the inventors been accustomed to draw with accuracy.[41]

West must have hoped that his emphasis on art's direct relationship to England's technical and economic success during this prosperous period in the nation's history would engender artistic patronage. Interestingly, his call for education for all anticipates the need for artists to work more closely with designers largely brought about by the Industrial Revolution of the early nineteenth century.[42] He does not limit his arguments to strictly utilitarian concerns, however. In addition to the improvement of mechanical expertise through more competent draftsmanship, artisans could also enjoy the simple pleasures of enhancing their sense of sight. To West, the ability to discriminate between varying hues and forms in art and nature was as valuable and pleasurable as discerning musical melodies.[43] The relationship of color harmonies to musical harmonies was explored in Sir Isaac Newton's Opticks, first published in English in 1704, and as we shall see, West was one of many artists influenced by his experiments.[44]

According to West, what distinguished the artist from an ordinary artisan, was his ability to apply philosophical insight to the production and analyses of works of art. This intellectual approach revealed art's moral purpose, without which

> ...painting and sculptures are but ornamental manufactures; and the works of Raphael and Michel Angelo, considered without reference to manifestations which they exhibit of moral influence, possess no merit beyond the productions of the ordinary paper-hanger.[45]

If one was confused about how to find virtue or moral value in a work of art, West provided a simple methodology in which the composition of a work was linked to its ultimate message. The student should begin an aesthetic evaluation of a painting or statue by contemplating the work's general outlines, or, composition. He should then

analyze the piece's individual components, study their interrelationships and evaluate the manner in which the work was made up in its entirety. For the study of composition and individual expression within a painting, West advised the close study of Raphael, in whose works one sees "the fancey in the arraignment of his figures into groops, and those groops into a whole with that proriety and fitness to his subject, Joynd to a trouth of character and expression, that was never surpass'd before nor sence."[46]

In West's educational program, the study and practice of painting required not only a regimented methodology, but also a wide-ranging knowledge of the liberal arts, a moral character consistent with art's lofty public purpose, and lots of hard work. As these strict standards for the artist suggest, when a young man or woman decided to become an artist during the eighteenth century, they set about on an arduous journey. Similar in tone to West's lectures, numerous art manuals and treatises of the day recorded that much was expected of these individuals in the way of professional, and more importantly, personal, development. Richardson was perhaps the most demanding of the budding artist. In his Treatise on Painting, he suggested that a painter should be competent in the areas of geometry, proportion, anatomy, osteology, perspective, and possess a thorough knowledge of classical art and literature.[47] Francesco Algarotti, in his Essay on Painting, translated into English from Italian in 1763, echoed these sentiments in more practical terms. He warned against delving too deeply into the philosophical realms of various subjects like anatomy and perspective. Instead, he advised the art student to learn only what is necessary to their vocation. For example, he encouraged the artist to take advantage of scientific devices in obtaining perspective, like the camera obscura, in this way bypassing many of the complicated math and geometry requisite for

fully understanding the philosophy of one-point perspective.[48] Not all artists agreed with Algarotti's pragmatic approach, however. The study and knowledge of perspective, an area of study considered to be a science, helped to elevate painting from the level of craft to liberal art. As a result, many artists emphasized its importance.[49]

In addition to a comprehensive knowledge of the practices of art, eighteenth-century art educators believed that artists needed to possess a greatness of character. Richardson called for the artist's mind to reflect grace and greatness, and be "beautifully and nobly formed."[50] For Richardson, A "sweet and happy turn of mind" was important to an artist, so that "great and lovely ideas may have an easy and natural reception there."[51] As West espoused this theory in his discourses, he stressed the need for using arts in the service of "truth, justice, honor and the love of our country."[52] Principally, West was referring to the supremacy of History Painting, an art form that was publicly exhibited and often disseminated to larger audiences through prints. Historical pictures allowed artists to explore lofty, universal themes like patriotism, virtue and honor. Many of West's American pupils adopted this theme, a popular idea in England during the period, and sought to propagate such grandiose ideas throughout their native country.

Eighteenth-century writers also agreed that artists needed to be born with a natural talent or predisposition towards their craft. In his London Tradesmen, the popular guide for parents wishing to apprentice their children in a trade or craft, Robert Campbell observed that a painter, "must be born, not made; that is, if he has not a natural genius, all the Learning and Art on earth cannot make him eminent or tolerable in his profession."[53] If a child were possessed of this genius, it would likely reveal itself at an early age. Campbell went on to describe early indications of artistic genius that may be:

> ...discovered in Children in their Infancy, by their Inclination to be scrawling upon the Wall, or Paper, with whatever they can get: If a Boy is observed to amuse himself in this Manner...it is a plain Indication of a Genius disposed for this art.[54]

With this in mind, he cautioned parents that a child disposed to a career in painting should be placed in the proper educational environment at an early age because the "joints and Fingers, if soon used to the Pencil, become pliable, and naturally answer the Dictates of the Mind..."[55] Count Algarotti offered similar advice when he encouraged parents to "allow their children to be brought up to painting at an early age if they show any aptitude."[56]

Once it was determined that a child should pursue an artistic career, he or she had several options. He could set about on a course of self-instruction with the aid of published instructional guides; he might obtain an apprenticeship in an artist's or craftsman's studio, seek out instruction from an independent drawing master; or, he could attend one of several art academies. Often these avenues of study were complementary, and by the late eighteenth century art students could benefit from a diverse education. In fact, because each branch of study was distinct, artists were compelled to piece together their education for the well-rounded experience necessary to opening up one's own studio. Whatever educational course a young artist chose to take, it was important that his training complement his chosen area of practice.

The most traditional way an artist learned his craft was through an apprenticeship in a master's studio. Although many of the most successful British artists during this period took on studio assistants and apprentices, it was argued by some that, prior to the opening of the Royal Academy, artists who wished to specialize in the more respected branches of painting should study in an academy abroad. In his career guide, Campbell,

writing in 1745, asserted that for the young artist wishing to practice portraiture or history painting, he needed to attend an Academy in either Rome or Venice. There, professors were available to direct the students, and a wide variety of models were provided to further assist pupils in producing accomplished figural groupings. Painters lucky enough to attend one of these schools usually did so for two or three years, then traveled about the region studying the architecture, statuary and paintings by both Ancient and Renaissance masters.[57] West himself modeled his European training after this course of study. As Campbell's program suggests, talented painters were rare and the education of an artist was costly. Further, students should be assured, through family connections and well-placed friends, that they could procure the desired patronage upon the completion of their studies.[58] If a young man wished to specialize in one of the lower branches of art, like landscape or still-life painting, it was not as necessary for him to travel abroad. There were several independent drawing masters in London and various small academies that existed prior to the opening of the Royal Academy schools in 1768. In spite of Campbell's reservations about native art education, some writers believed these small academies were a viable option. Mr. Mortimer, writing almost twenty years after Campbell, suggested that artists could learn their craft at home, in one of the several drawing schools that existed by mid-century. In this way, "parents in the middle rank of life," who did not have much disposable income, could avoid the expense of settling a child in a master's shop.[59] He went on to list a number of independent teachers of drawing throughout the city. West himself designed the tradesman card for drawing teacher Thomas Sandby, Junior, who advertised he gave eight lessons for the price of two guineas.[60]

For parents who did wish to apprentice their children in a master's shop, they had several options. Some were skeptical of the fine arts profession in general because it was not regarded as a secure industry, so they apprenticed their children in related areas of study that were deemed more practical. Joseph Farington noted that a number of eminent eighteenth and nineteenth-century artists began their professional lives apprenticed to coach or sign painters.[61] Thomas Jones recalled that he wanted to find a master that specialized in portraiture, but when he could not find acceptable terms amongst the city's portraitists, he settled with Richard Wilson, a landscape painter.[62] Apprenticeships with picture dealers were another option, but dealing was frowned upon by the artistic community because of the suspicion of shady dealings. In fact, the concept of an academic program for artists was established in direct opposition to "Dealers and Cleaners, and other ignorant and designing People" who are "inveterate Enemies to an Academy."[63] The artist Julius Ibbetson, in his instructional treatise on painting of 1803, recalls his early years under the tutelage of an unsavory picture dealer whose clumsy attempts to clean canvases often led to the picture's destruction.[64]

Many well-respected artists did accept apprentices, and reasonable rates were often agreed upon. Campbell lists 50 to 100 guineas as the range of funds necessary to set an apprentice up in an artist's studio at mid-century.[65] Painting was among the professions that received the highest premiums for apprenticeships, and artists of note could not only set their fees even higher, but they were often selective about whom they took on.[66] In 1751 Arthur Devis required 150 guineas to take on an apprentice for a seven year period, but only if the lad were "Boy of Genius, otherwise not at all."[67] In that same year, William Hoare of Bath required 105 pounds, excluding board and lodging,

and the London engraver Charles Grignion required the same.[68] Thomas Hudson, Reynolds' former master, took pupils to live with him at 80 pounds a year and promised that a talented student could greatly advance in only 3 or 4 years.[69] George Knapton required 50 pounds a year and Arthur Pond needed 200 pounds per student for a five-year period.[70] Thomas Jones paid Wilson 50 guineas for only two years of study, and a short time later Joseph Farington followed suit.[71] Two other apprentices in Wilson's studio were unable to pay a premium, so they worked off their debt by assisting the master for a stated amount of time each day.[72] In 1795, Robert Smirke took on an apprentice for three years for 100 guineas down and 100 guineas a year for room and board.[73]

A traditional apprenticeship usually lasted about seven years and because of the complex legal nature of the arrangement contracts were always signed. A master agreed to provide room, board and fatherly guidance to his charge, while the apprentice agreed to keep his master's secrets and to avoid any activities, like gambling, which would put his master's property at risk.[74] In some cases, the apprentice system in an artist's studio emulated the structure of a large aristocratic household in which all subsidiary labor was reliant upon the success of the master. In this hierarchical arrangement, paid assistants and students who did not sign apprenticeship contracts were subject to the same unpredictable market that their master was.[75] Julius Ibbetson later complained about the circumstances of his indenture, including his lack of funds:

> I possessed a most insatiable curiosity...but the least attempt at painting any thing of my own was discouraged to the last degree, by the gloomy fanatic with whom I was a prisoner.—Prisoner I may well call myself; instead of raising my pittance, on which I could not exist, he would advance me trifling sums, and I became his debtor.—Seven whole years, that I lost in this manner, I had the dread of the consequences continually hanging over me.[76]

In addition to the inconvenience of being tied to one artist for seven years, if one's master were not especially well known or widely regarded, the student was forced to establish his own practice without any recommendation. One way to avoid the lengthy relationship required by an apprenticeship was to become a master's pupil for a period of one year. If the situation did not suit one or both parties, the pupil could relocate to another master's studio. According to advice given by William Hogarth in 1751, art students were increasingly choosing this shorter, more independent course of study rather than the unwieldy bonds of an apprenticeship.[77]

However an aspiring artist decided to embark on his professional career, it was almost universally agreed that a course of self-instruction was fraught with dangers. The biggest hazard was that a budding artist might not properly learn the rudiments of painting and the universal standards of taste. George Brickham, in his 1747 manual, An Introductive Essay on Drawing, warned students not to copy pictures from the published books available in most print shops: "They will deprave his taste by an infinite number of mistakes."[78] Benjamin West, in his lecture before the Royal Academy in 1797 warned, "...and in addressing myself to the young, it is my duty to guard them against those deviations from good taste...It is my wish to preserve them from the innovations of caprice and fashion..."[79] Count Algarotti also stresses the importance of an artist's earliest training, which, when unguided, may ruin an artist's taste forever:

> It is not a matter of so little importance, as some are perhaps, apt to imagine, upon what drawings a pupil is first put to exercise his talents. Let the first profiles, the first hands, the first feet given him to copy, be of the best masters, so as to bring his eye and his hand early acquainted with the most elegant forms and the most beautiful proportions...A vessel will ever retain the scent which it has first contacted.[80]

When independent study was recommended, it was best if it were augmented with Academic study or the advice of a respected artist. Joseph Farington, when advising a young man on his artistic education, suggested that he should live in close proximity to an artist who would be willing to lend him works to copy, and when prepared, enter a drawing course at the Academy.[81]

If more attentive instruction were needed, artists could take lessons from a host of private tutors. At least thirteen drawing-masters were listed in Mr. Mortimer's 1763 directory of artistic professions in London. These private instructors often worked in direct competition with the various art academies that had existed in London since the middle of the seventeenth century.[82] The principal advantages to an academic education, rather than a private course of study, was the opportunity to draw from live models, and many academies were initially formed solely for this purpose. Moreover, an academy was usually established to offer a standardized or regimented education, which, in an ideal setting, allowed each pupil an equal quality of instruction. The earliest academies were usually founded by artists who provided a space near their own studios where artists could gather to paint from live models. One of the first of these types was opened by Sir Godfrey Kneller in 1711. Kneller's school, located in Covent Garden, emphasized drawing and painting from life, and was primarily geared towards practicing artists who paid a subscription for upkeep and to employ a model.[83] When adequate training was not available elsewhere, artists sometimes allowed pupils to enter their studios with or without the payment of premiums. In this way, the artist trained the pupil, and if he achieved an acceptable level of competency, he would be hired on as a studio assistant.[84]

The most long-standing early academy was called the St. Martin's Lane Academy, founded in its original inception by Louis Cheron and John Vanderbank in 1720. This school, which operated under several leaders over the next forty years, did not close until it was absorbed by the Royal Academy in 1768.[85] West himself was a director of the school when it was run by the Society of Artists, prior to his involvement in the formation of the Royal Academy several years later. Here, students paid a subscription of two guineas a season for the room's rental and lighting in order to paint models, both male and female. After the first year, the subscription was reduced by a half a guinea. The great disadvantage to the art student, however, is that unlike later academies, professors were not available to advise students. Instead, the St. Martin's Lane Academy was mostly a vehicle for more mature artists to gather to paint from the model, an opportunity usually not available in a working studio in England.

An unfinished painting from about 1761, now housed in the Royal Academy of Arts, probably illustrates the St. Martin's Lane Academy (Figure 2.2). The painting, long thought to be a depiction of the Royal Academy life class, has been re-identified, and attributed to Johan Zoffany.[86] A sketch for the canvas, recently discovered at the British Museum, provides a key to the identity of the individuals pictured. Included in the composition are portraits of young professional artists working in London, including Guiseppe Marchi (?1735-1808), Reynolds' chief studio assistant; William Pars (1742-82), teacher of drawing at a neighboring school; the portraitist Allan Ramsay, and Biagio Rebecca, the Italian decorative painter who often worked with West at Windsor Castle. The identities of the artists pictured here are relevant to our study because this painting illustrates a common aspect of the way in which work in an art studio was complemented

with academic training. Further, this training apparently did not end with a period of standard indenture, but might continue throughout an artist's life. In other words, this academy was probably established for the purposes of drawing from a model, and not particularly dedicated to the teaching of beginners. West was a member of the St. Martin's Lane Academy prior to the formation of the Royal Academy and several of his drawings now at the Pierpont Morgan Library reveal that he continued to draw periodically from the nude.[87]

In addition to the St. Martin's Lane school, several other small academies appeared for brief periods of time. The most significant of these was William Shipley's drawing school at the Royal Society of Arts which was founded in 1754. In conjunction with their experiences sketching at the St. Martin's Lane Academy and Shipley's School, artists could visit and sketch from Dr. Richard Mead's cast collection until his death in 1754, and from 1758, they were allowed to utilize the Duke of Richmond's cast collection in a similar manner. Thomas Jones entered Shipley's School in 1761 and later recalled feeling the program was too basic. In his autobiography he remembered being humiliated at the "situation of copying drawings of ears, eyes, mouths and noses," amongst a group of boys half his age.[88] As Jones' complaints imply, art curricula standards did not exist and the teaching programs at most private drawing academies was fairly basic. Moreover, there was no central repository for casts, prints, paintings and sculpture that artists could copy.

The Royal Academy of Art, formed in 1768, sought to change this situation and by the late eighteenth century the Royal Academy School was the most sought after avenue of art instruction. There, under the auspices of Royal Patronage, a facility was

established which was to provide an education to artists, guided by a standardized curriculum and sanctioned by the principal artistic leaders of the day. Importantly, the school was also to house adequate models, casts, laymen, and a library of prints and books for the purposes of art education. Moreover, visiting professors attended the school at varying intervals to evaluate student progress and provide instruction as needed. Public lectures were read annually by professors of Anatomy, Architecture, Painting and Perspective. For all of this, tuition was free to accepted pupils. The advantage to this type of program was its emphasis on more standardized training. In theory, for the first time, students were not forced to seek out an education from a variety of sources, but instead, could take advantage of a diverse and full course of study. The curriculum required students to demonstrate proficiency in one area of study before advancing to the next. For example, pupils began by drawing after plaster casts, and only after the instructor considered them ready could they advance to drawing after live models. In spite of the comprehensiveness of this program however, many students did seek out a private master and studio in which to study, particularly prior to the opening of the Academy's Painting School in 1815.[89]

Aside from the Royal Academy, Benjamin West's Newman Street studio was one of the most popular gathering places for young art students in London during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It is impossible to know just how many pupils he counseled because students did not live at his residence, so consulting city directories and addresses listed on the Royal Academy rosters are not illuminating. With few exceptions, students lived in nearby lodgings that allowed them to drop in on West as often as they liked. In this way, pupils often augmented their instruction at the Royal

Academy in a manner far less restrictive than the year-long pupil/master arrangement advocated by Hogarth. The best sources for gaining insight into who studied with West are the diaries and letters kept by his American students beginning as early as Matthew Pratt's residence there in 1764. The most comprehensive list of West's American students was made by William Dunlap. He published his own account of the studio, as well as the names and experiences of other pupils, in his Diary and his History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Design in the United States.[90] According to Dunlap's account, West worked with twenty-four American students. Unfortunately, the names of most of his British pupils are not known.

West's American students are listed in Dorinda Evans' 1980 catalogue, Benjamin West and his American Students. Based on Dunalp's listings, as well as several other artists associated with West's studio, Evans' list includes Matthew Pratt, Abraham Delanoy, Charles Willson Peale, Joseph Wright, Gilbert Stuart, Ralph Earl, John Trumbull, Mather Brown, Thomas Spence Duche, William Dunlap, George William West, Henry Sargent, Robert Fulton, Washington Allston, Rembrandt Peale, Abraham G.D. Tuthill, Edward G. Malbone, Charles Bird King, Thomas Sully, Samuel Lovett Waldo, Samuel F.B. Morse, Charles Robert Leslie, and Gilbert Stuart Newton. Other American artists who at least spent some time in West's studio are John Blake White and Edmond Brice.[91] British artists who studied there included Thomas Walker, Richard Livesay, John Linnell, William de la Motte, and West's own son, Raphael Lamar West.[92] At the suggestion of the King, West also advised the German artist, Johann Heinrich Ramberg for a short time.[93] Interestingly, there are several references in Farington's diary to students whose names are not known to us today, including a young woman

named Miss Hay, over whose paintings he apparently had control.[94] In reference to Miss Hay, art patron and amateur landscape painter Sir George Beaumont suggested to Farington in 1806 that West sometimes used young, talented artists "for his own purposes."[95]

In spite of these enigmatic references to West's ulterior motives, virtually all contemporary recollections of art instruction in his studio contain accounts of his availability and kindness, and of all the painters in England, West's paternal wisdom was universally acknowledged and praised. Washington Allston later recalled:

> Mr. West...received me with the greatest kindness. I shall never forget his benevolent smile when he took me by the hand: it is still fresh in my memory...His gallery was open to me at all times, and his advice always ready and kindly given. He was a man overflowing with the milk of human kindness. If he had enemies, I doubt if he owed them to any other cause than his rare virtue...[96]

Likewise, Samuel F. B. Morse remembered that he and Charles Robert Leslie were always shown into the master's studio upon their arrival by West's manservant Robert, even if the artist was engaged in his private studies.[97] When Mather Brown arrived in London in 1781 he worked in the studio of John Singleton Copley, but Brown sought out West after realizing that Copley did not spend much time with his students.[98] In contrast to Copley's rather removed method of instruction, Sir Martin Archer Shee remembered that:

> No man could be more liberally desirous than West to impart to others the knowledge which he possessed. He never, indeed, appeared to be more gratified than when engaged in enlightening the minds of those who looked up to him for instruction...[99]

In addition to his willingness to offer helpful advice, he opened his home up to young American artists away from home. William Dunlap was a frequent visitor at West's table

and West was even known to call on his students.[100] Benjamin Robert Haydon, a young artist who often disagreed with West on matters of aesthetic principles, praised the older artist for lending him money in 1814 so that he could finish the painting on which he was working.[101]

West's daily routine was flexible enough to accommodate the needs of his many pupils, but rigid enough to allow him to spend the bulk of the day working on his own pictures. Leigh Hunt recalled visits to the West home as a child and remembered that the artist spent the day working in his studio, emerging only for dinner and tea.[102] West usually began his day around eight, and often did not work on his own paintings until he had counseled all the students who wished to see him that day.[103] John Thomas Smith observed that West, "...often, in the kindest manner possible, gave up whole mornings to the instruction of those students who solicited his opinion of their productions. I have frequently known him correct their errors with his own hand..."[104] In contrast, James Northcote recalled the restrictive training he received from Sir Joshua Reynolds. Northcote complained that he and Reynolds' other assistants seldom saw their master as he painted in a room set apart from the rest of his studio, and as a result, all of the master's color preparations were hidden from his students, "and perpetually locked in his drawers; thus never to be seen or known by anyone but himself."[105] In addition to being secretive, Reynolds did not readily give constructive advice on students' works, even when asked. John Trumbull, who worked and studied in West's studio in the 1780s, brought one of his portraits to Reynolds for guidance. Reynolds took one look at the sitter's coat and said sharply, "That coat is very bad, sir, very bad. It is not cloth—it is tin, bent tin." Trumbull responded by picking up his picture and saying:

> I did not bring this to you, Sir Joshua, merely to be told that it is bad. I was conscious of that, and how could it be otherwise, considering the short time I have studied? I had a hope, sir, that you would kindly have pointed out to me, how to correct my errors.[106]

Reynolds regarded his students as studio assistants. Unlike West, who spent time with his pupils, if the talents of Reynolds' studio labor did not match his needs, he got rid of them.[107]

In addition to his kindness, another advantage to study in West's studio was his ability to guide students in whatever direction they desired, from the rudiments of drawing to marketing finished paintings. West encouraged his students to augment their study at the Academy school and sometimes prepared them to take up study there. According to Trumbull, West offered him, along with Gilbert Stuart and West's son Raphael, drawing lessons in preparation for their entering the Academy School. To this end, every evening he tutored the three students until he thought they were accomplished enough to meet Academy standards.[108] Morse and Allston also took individual instruction from West prior to being accepted by the Academy.[109] Even after admittance to the Academy school, students benefited from a continued association with West. The Royal Academy School's educational program relied on Academicians to provide instruction, but the quality of this instruction was determined by the personality of individual teachers. For example, while a professor in the Antique Class, Fuseli apparently made very few comments to the students about their work and many students were frightened of his gruff manner.[110] Moreover teachers at the Academy were paid to give a certain number of lectures each year, but they did not always fulfill their obligations. For example, in 1808 none of the scheduled lectures were provided.[111] It has been argued that by 1800 the Academy was more a social club for its members than a

center for art education and exchange.[112] Aditionally, when the Academy's painting program opened, it's collection of study materials was not adequate, consisting as it did of six paintings for students to copy, leant to the institution by Dulwich College.[113] Just two years earlier, in 1813, Prince Hoare, an official at the Royal Academy wrote:

> Few degrees of inadequacy will be found to exceed those of the provisions for study in the Royal Academy. Scanty is its supplies of Models and Plaster Casts; the latter crowded into so narrow a space, that it is difficult for the students even to obtain a proper view of them...[and] not a single original Picture is to be found in its schools.[114]

In contrast, West's home was full of his extensive art collection. His generosity as a teacher extended to lending artists works to copy, both in his studio, and in their own lodgings. Morse reported in 1811 that he had "almost finished a copy of a portrait which Mr. West lent me,"[115] and Charles Bird King and Thomas Sully also copied pictures lent to them by West.[116]

Perhaps the most significant gift West gave his pupils during his half-century as a teacher, however, was his belief that Historical Painting was a desirable and viable career choice. In a letter of 1771West expressed his commitment to the genre and hoped that other artists would follow suit:

> The Exhibitions hear have drove men to pursue defirent departments in the art of pinting--amongst which I have undertaken to whele [wield] the club of Hercules--in plain English I have imbarked in Historical painting--by which meanes I have removed that long received opinion That was a department in the art that never would be incourage in the Kingdom. But I can say I have been so fare successfull in it that I find my pictures sell for a prise that no living artist ever received before. I hope this is a circumstance that will induce others to do the same; for the great necessity a man is under hear to have money in his poket often directs the studies of youth contreary to theire geniues--It is to this I impute theire Timidity in not haveing ever produced a painter in that department of art and not that want of guenies which the Illnatured voyce of critick's have alleged.[117]

In West's studio, artists could work with a successful painter of historical subjects in a day when specializing in the genre was not practically encouraged. While the Academy praised the supremacy of history painting from its inception, its acceptance of the lack of public support for the genre discouraged this lofty pursuit. For pragmatic reasons, the Academy's educational emphasis during the late eighteenth century was on portraiture. Not only was it possible for an individual to earn a comfortable living painting portraits, as we have seen, portraiture was one avenue in which an artist could enhance his social status. The academy's bias towards portraiture is evidenced in the make-up of its annual exhibitions. During the 1780's, historical pictures comprised the lowest percentage of pictures exhibited, while portraits sometimes comprised as much as half.[118]

In contrast to the prevalence of portrait painting at the Academy, West encouraged his students to believe in the value of history painting, and gave them emotional support in their ventures, as well as artistic advice. In 1782 Mather Brown wrote, "While I daily overlook Mr. West in producing those miracles of historic art, I seem to feel more than inspiration."[119] Upon Morse's completion of a clay model of the Dying Hercules from around 1812, a study for his award-winning painting of the same name, West told the young American he was "extremely delighted" with the work. "He said it was not merely an academical figure, but displayed mind and thought. He could not have made me a higher compliment."[120] After Morse's success with his Dying Hercules, West advised him to "paint large as much as possible."[121] West guided John Trumbull in the painting of his series on the American Revolution and some of the pictures were painted in the master's studio, under his supervision.[122] When writing Charles Willson Peale of Peale's son Rembrandt's progress as a portrait painter, West

said, "Although I am friendly to portraying eminent men, I am not friendly to the indiscriminate waste of genius."[123] West also encouraged Allston to devote his time to large-scale historical subjects. In contrast, when Allston confessed to Fuseli that he was an aspiring history painter, the older man replied, "You have come a great way to starve, sir."[124]

Although West's dedication to history painting never waned, he did express some bitterness about the commercial nature of art during the years of George III's illness when royal patronage ran dry. He warned students in the Academy School,

> You must live. You cannot live by historical painting. Do you sigh for riches? Turn the whole bent of your mind—expand all of your anxious and laborious hours in becoming fashionable painters of vacant faces. Are you not equal to this? Then design vignettes for books of travel and novels, or subjects for engravers or calico rollers, or daubings upon china ware.[125]

In spite of these occasional cynical comments, West's faith in art's higher moral purpose remained firm. This belief in art's ultimate importance to society, coupled with his commercial success in the realm of history painting, was compelling to young American artists who, even into the nineteenth century, attached the way a man lived with the quality of his art. With this in mind, artists measured their own success as an artist and as an individual on the kinds of works they produced. Samuel F.B. Morse, the first president of America's National Academy of Design, was one artist who did not wish to be saddled with portraiture. He wrote that the idea of "lowering my noble art to a trade, of painting for money, of degrading myself and the soul-enlarging art which I possess, to the narrow idea of merely getting money," was not satisfactory.[126] Like West, Morse saw art as moral, and he believed that:

> ...the art of painting has powers to dignify man, by transmitting to posterity his noble actions, and his mental powers, to be viewed in those invaluable lessons of

> religion, love of country, and morality; such subjects are worthy of being placed in view as the most instructive records to a rising generation.[127]

For the later generations, so firmly entrenched in Romantic traditions, West's seemingly anachronistic philosophies were encouraging and welcome, especially during a time when the fine arts were not fully accepted in the United States.

West was not the only advocate of history painting during his lifetime. Benjamin Robert Haydon, a younger contemporary of West, founded his own school in direct opposition to the Royal Academy. Like West, Haydon believed in the existence of genius, a condition that needed to be fostered from its first inception in the proper educational environment.[128] But unlike West's casual pedagogical arrangement, Haydon's dogmatic program was focused entirely on history painting. West and his program were more versatile and although he considered himself principally a painter of historical subjects, he encouraged his students to follow their own individual pursuits. Even before the Academy Schools opened, West guided his students in seeking out the training they needed in order to pursue their individual goals. Charles Willson Peale drew at the St. Martin's Lane Academy,[129] and when he expressed an interest in learning the art of miniature painting in 1767, West promised to borrow some miniatures for him to copy from a respected artist since he did not paint in that mode himself.[130] Once, he even sent Stuart to Reynolds for instruction under the guise of delivering "some choice colors" that West had promised the eminent portraitist.[131] If students were uncertain about their options, they would have seen West's own diverse artistic efforts, ranging from print making, portraiture and landscape painting to experiments with optical devices and painting on transparent canvases.[132] West's wide-ranging pursuits in art and science were undoubtedly encouraging to artists with similar interests. Years after Charles Willson

Peale had returned to the United States, he and West continued to share an interest in artistic and scientific novelties.[133]

In spite of West's willingness to instruct, it is clear that some of his young students did not take full advantage of this opportunity. Whereas education in the Academy was rigid in its adherence to certain standards of quality and behavior, life in the artist's studio could often prove chaotic and haphazard, a situation most often exacerbated by the temperaments of pupils. Students in an artist's studio who were not apprenticed or hired as assistants could take advantage of a teacher's expertise without any demands on their own time. This loose arrangement often led to squandering time away in idle pursuits. Thomas Jones and Joseph Farington were often left to their own devices in Wilson's studio, a situation that sometimes frustrated their master. Jones recalled that time that should have been dedicated to study was "squandered away in idle mirth--when our master surprised us at our gambols, he only shook his head and in his manner said, 'Gentlemen--this is not the way to rival Claude.'"[134]

The casual atmosphere of Wilson's studio was often echoed in that of West. Even the structure of the instruction was left up to the students. Although many students lived near West and were placed in their lodgings with his aid, some did not seek him out on a regular basis. Peale criticized Abraham Delanoy for living so close to West and not coming to his studio every day in the service of his art.[135] This criticism also implies that Delanoy could have been of some use to West. South Carolina native John Blake White met West in 1800 and later recalled he dropped by the Newman Street studio several times a week.[136] Morse, who was largely under the tutelage of Washington Allston remembered visiting West "now and then."[137] By his own admission, William Dunlap

was one of the worst offenders. Although he was accepted into the Royal Academy on the merit of his drawings, he apparently never attended classes. Eventually, young Dunlap spent more time socializing than painting, and as a result his parents forced him to return home.[138] Not surprisingly, Dunlap is best known today, not for his paintings, but for his three-volume book on the history of American art.

The arrangement of West's studio required individual students to piece together a suitable schedule for their studies. For those pupils who attended the Academy, their days were free, while nights were spent drawing at school. The Academy's life class met from about 6 to 8, or, students could spend that time drawing from plaster casts. Following these sketching sessions, students had the opportunity to attend lectures on topics like anatomy and perspective.[139] In 1811 Morse records that he followed this schedule, usually painting at home during the day.[140] Sometimes a group of artists who did not wish to attend the Academy collectively hired a model to come to their quarters for several evenings a week. Rembrandt Peale remembers being forced into such a scheme when he was denied admission to the Academy's life school after playing an unnamed trick on West.[141] Some art students were forced to spend their days earning money to help defray living expenses and the cost of materials. Morse lamented:

> My greatest expense, next to living, is for canvas, frames, colors, etc., and visiting galleries. The frame of my large picture, which I have just finished, cost nearly twenty pounds, besides the canvas and colors, which cost nearly eight pounds more, and the frame was the cheapest I could possibly get. Mr. Allston's frame cost him sixty guineas.[142]

In order to earn extra money, Morse painted portraits of friends and acquaintances. John Trumbull also took on portrait clients and Charles Willson Peale painted miniatures.[143]

In spite of the casual atmosphere of West's school, and the individual directions that various artists took, a solid sense of community developed through the years. When Charles Willson Peale wrote to West in 1771 he sent his compliments "to my fellow students."[144] West's own kindness seems to have inspired camaraderie amongst his students, and older, more experienced pupils advised the newer arrivals. As West's practice became busier, younger students relied on older students more and more. When John Trumbull arrived in London in 1780, Gilbert Stuart helped him find the necessary painting materials to begin working.[145] Washington Allston gave encouraging advice and praise to Morse on more than one occasion and when Morse and Charles Leslie roomed together, they considered Charles Bird King and Allston their mentors.[146] Morse wrote to his family,

> You must recollect, when you tell friends that I am studying in England, that I am a pupil of Allston and not Mr. West. They will not long ask who Mr. Allston is; he well very soon astonish the world. He claims me as his pupil, and told me a day or two since, in a jocose manner, that he should have a battle with Mr. West unless he gave up all pretension to me.[147]

More than a student/mentor relationship, Allston and Morse were friends. Like other artists, they spent time in their rooms discussing theoretical issues. Morse recalled trying to get Samuel Coleridge out of a funk by staging a debate with Leslie on "lines of beauty," which caused the poet to become animated. In these nightly escapades Morse was often joined by Charles Bird King, Allston, Leslie and the essayist Charles Lamb.[148] John Blake White recalled meeting fellow artist Thomas Walker at West's gallery and together they visited other art studios and both private and public art collections.[149]

For the students who did choose to frequent West's studio, his program was methodical and reflected the most common manner for teaching drawing and painting

during the eighteenth century. In this studio curriculum, a tradition dating back to the Renaissance, students began their studies by drawing. Initially they copied prints and other drawings, often those by the master's own hand. In this way, students and assistants became familiar with the "house-style," while developing their own skills as an artist.[150] This was important especially for studio assistants, who, in a traditional master/apprentice arrangement, often painted parts of their master's pictures. The Royal Academy's program emulated this traditional order of art education by requiring pupils to begin their studies with a strong emphasis in drawing. Edmund Burke expressed the importance of drawing for the beginning student in 1766:

> Nothing could be more dangerous to a young painter than to indulge himself in that glare of colours which catches the eye, and imposes on the imperfect judgement...to begin with a wish of excelling in colour is to begin at the wrong end of the art.[151]

Most studio masters adhered to this program. Thomas Jones was confined to drawing the in black and white chalks the first year he was apprenticed to Wilson.[152] Likewise, Morse began his work with West by drawing from a cast of the head of Demosthenes to get accustomed to handling black and white chalk.[153] According to contemporary accounts, upon an artist's initial arrival in the studio, West often asked to see a sample of the student's work. If an artist failed to bring one of his own works, he was asked to paint a copy of a picture in West's own collection. Many artists who presented themselves to West were beginners however, and for these individuals, the program of study was more basic. Often he would have his students render everyday objects casually arranged in the studio, like a piece of drapery thrown over a chair.[154] He also gave rudimentary demonstrations of concepts like light and shadow using pictures he was in the process of

painting.[155] And of course, he sometimes gave drawing lessons to pupils unprepared to enter the Academy.

Perhaps one of the most instructive illustrations of West's school is the painting, The American School, painted in 1765 by Matthew Pratt, one of his first students (Figure 2.3). Pratt's picture depicts four young men seated around a table in an elegant interior while West, standing at left, seems to be in the midst of commenting upon a drawing one of the men shows him. West is identified as the group's teacher by the hat he wears, his standing position, and his casual, yet instructive pose. Pratt, the author of the picture, has been identified as the individual seated upon a Chippendale chair in the right foreground.[156] He is presumably halted from his own painting to listen to West's commentary. Although the painting on which Pratt appears to be working contains only a drapery in its upper right-hand corner, it originally pictured the outline of a veiled woman, an image since faded and visible now only with the aid of ultra-violet light. This picture is one of the few contemporary depictions of West's studio. Its importance lies in its reflection of the methodology of artistic education that emphasized drawing from prints and casts, prevalent in artists' studios of the period.[157]

The standing boy at the far side of the table appears to be looking through a portfolio of drawings. Based on his age and activity, he may be seen as a beginning student. The art works he leafs through will undoubtedly aid him in the formation of his sense of good taste, and the first works he produces will be drawings after these. The two young men to his right are slightly older and they have already begun to draw. They are paused in the midst of their work to listen to West's instruction. Although the subject of the foreground student's drawing is indiscernible, the young man to his left has paused

from sketching the classical bust of a child that rests upon the table. These two students have progressed from copying drawings and prints to drawing from casts after antique statuary. Pratt does not include the third stage of art education, drawing from the human figure. Art studios in England were apparently not equipped to provide students with a model from which to draw. A proper facility would necessarily include a large wooden platform for the model to stand on, and a system of ropes and pulleys overhead to assist the model in maintaining a pose for an extended period of time. In contrast to English studio schools, masters of Italian and French studios made drawing from the nude an important component in their curriculum.[158] The casual atmosphere of West's studio school was not conducive to this type of program, so his students practiced drawing from the nude at the St. Martin's Lane Academy, and later the Royal Academy, or a group would hire its own model. And of course, artists often continued to draw from the nude periodically throughout their careers.

When a student was sufficiently knowledgeable of the human form, he was ready to begin painting. The first phase of this program required students to paint copies of existing works of art, usually pictures from West's own collection. The practice of copying great works of art was widely accepted as beneficial to the student of art who was working to improve his draftsmanship, skills as a painter, and perhaps most importantly, his taste.[159] Alexander Gerard, in his An Essay on Taste published in a collection of his essays in 1774, wrote about the benefits of copies:

> Copies derive their charms, not merely from exactness of imitation, but also from the excellence which they represent, and the gratitude which these copies afford may almost as properly be ascribed to the sublimity or beauty as to imitation.[160]

Roger de Piles, in his The Art of Painting of 1744 encouraged the artist to copy works of note, advising that, "He may look on the productions of those able painters as safely as on nature herself, and by them assist his invention in some future production."[161] De Piles believed that copying other works should precede direct contact with nature for two reasons:

> ...one is, he will see nature free from many things, which a man is oblig'd to throw aside when he copies after he. The other is, he will by this method learn to make a good choice of nature, and to take nothing from her that is not beautiful, and to mend what's defective in her.[162]

As Trumbull's first encounter with West indicates, choosing the proper image to copy was as important as the quality of the copy. After presenting himself to West, Trumbull was asked if he had brought a sample of his work in order to assess the young man's talent. After declaring that he had not, West advised him to select a picture to copy from his own collection. Not realizing the importance of his decision, Trumbull chose a copy of Raphael's Madonna della Sedia. Pleased with Trumbull's choice, West declared, "That, Mr. Trumbull, is called the Madonna della Sedia, the Madonna of the chair, one of the most admired works of Raphael. The selection of such a work is a good omen."[163] In addition to West's own numerous works, art students could receive permission to copy works at the British Institution after it opened in1806. The Institute displayed a collection of works by contemporary artists, and also displayed old master works, including a landscape by Rembrandt that West himself spent sometime copying. As West relayed to Farington, the exercise of copying pictures there made him feel "like a Boy—in pursuit of art," and he felt his presence at the Institution stimulated the students.[164] In copying works by Rembrandt and Van Dyck, West also aimed to uncover

some of the painting secrets of the Dutch masters, a common practice, as we shall see, amongst eighteenth-century artists.

After a student had sufficiently developed his skills as a painter, and developed an adequate sense of good taste, he was ready to begin composing original compositions. Matthew Pratt, as seated here with palette, brushes and maulstick in hand, represents this final phase of art education. In fact, as Susan Rather suggests, he presents himself not as a student, but as a fellow artist.[165] The veiled woman no longer visible on his canvas was an invention of his imagination, drawn from a mental reservoir of classical and Renaissance imagery. In spite of a collegiate, rather than student/master, relationship that Pratt wished to convey here, (Pratt was, after all, West's wife's cousin), Pratt probably did assist West in his growing painting practice during the two years he lived with him in London.[166] It is not known if Pratt was paid for his work, but it is likely that his service in the studio was a way of repaying West's hospitality.

In addition to Pratt, several other artists seemed to have an informal employee/employer relationship with West. According to Dunlap, after West had established his reputation in London and moved into his Newman Street home, he employed pupils and other artists to provide supportive labor in the studio.[167] When Charles Willson Peale arrived in London he paid one guinea a month for a place near West on Silver Street, Golden Square, lodgings he found with West's aid. In exchange for West's valuable artistic guidance, Peale was allowed to do odd jobs around the house, like clock and watch repair. He also helped as a studio assistant by modeling, painting drapery, mending mechanical items as well as a palette that was about to be thrown away, and helping the Wests when they moved from Castle street to Panton Square.[168] John

Singleton Copley also worked occasionally in West's studio in the late 1770's, presumably to make a few extra dollars while trying to establish himself in London. Apparently Copley was not entirely happy with this arrangement. He was already an able artist and was more skillful than most of his fellow assistants.[169] In addition to Copley, West had at least one other assistant, Richard Livesay, who began as a student, then worked in the Newman Street studio during the 1780's and at Windsor copying pictures during the 1790's.[170]

John Trumbull seemed to have had a similar arrangement with West. Although he did not live with West, letters indicate that he frequently dined there.[171] In addition, he had his own painting room in West's Newman Street studio by 1783, (probably the room previously occupied by Gilbert Stuart), where he worked on his canvases of the American Revolution, as well as other works on which West advised him.[172] Trumbull also copied canvases for his master, the most significant being West's Battle of LaHogue which he worked on in 1785.[173] Something of the nature of Trumbull's arrangement with West is learned from a letter he wrote his brothers in July of 1785:

> I shall be...wholly employ'd...in assisting Mr. West in some of his works for the King for which I shall more than receive my present support without taking me entirely from my own pursuits:--and he has just proposed to assist me in some other things for 1000 or 1500 pounds—I hesitate on this point lest it should interrupt me too much.[174]

As Trumbull's letter suggests, his relationship with West was more professional than that of a traditional student. He was paid for his work while still maintaining the time and space to pursue his own works.

In spite of Trumbull's artistic independence within West' studio, the work he did for his master was dictated by West's own style and method of working. Whereas West

encouraged his students to seek their own styles, studio assistants had to emulate the style of the master's studio. The artist Thomas Jones remembered his first commission by another artist:

> I was applied to by an eminent artist to paint a back-ground to a picture where a number of figures were introduced. This being my first employment as an auxiliary, I engaged in it with fear and trembling--I had not to paint a landscape after my own way, but to adopt a precision of Pencil, and an arrangement of tints quite different from what I had been accustomed to, so as to make the whole seem as if painted off the same pallet, that is to say by the same person.[175]

Jones received room, board, and two guineas for his trouble. It took Trumbull three months to copy West's Battle of LaHogue and he was instructed to leave 6 inch borders on each side, and 3 inch borders on the top and bottom of the canvas so that West himself could extend the composition to the edges of the canvas.[176] According to Trumbull's own account, the entire picture was then "retouched and harmonized" by West.[177]

One of West's most productive assistants was Gilbert Stuart. Stuart began his relationship with West as a student, but his remarkable skills as a portraitist and his rapid manner of working rendered him invaluable to West's large artistic enterprise. Proof of their close, businesslike association is found in their living arrangements. Stuart was provided lodgings and paid half a guinea per week for the work he did which included modeling for compositions, painting subsidiary figures in large-scale compositions, assisting West's new art students in their work, and even painting some of the portraits commissioned of West.[178] It was unusual for someone who was not a member of West's family to reside at the Newman Street address, for in spite of the generosity West showed his students, few artists actually lived with him. Early on it seems he did allow students to live in his home. According to his son Rembrandt, Charles Willson Peale was invited to move into the West home when his funds became low after his first year in London, an

offer Peale declined.[179] Eight years later, in 1774, Copley wrote his brother that West would have invited him to live with them, but was just preparing to move to a new house, and could not accommodate him.[180] It is possible that West's assistants did live with him, but in a letter of 1771 to Shrimpton Hutchinson, West recorded his longstanding rule prohibiting students residing at his home.[181]

Stuart's privileged existence within West's home indicates his perceived value within the studio. Early on, Stuart was provided with instruction and encouraged by West to attend classes at the Royal Academy, although he rarely took advantage of that opportunity. By the late 1770's, he was given a private painting room in the studio where he was allowed to receive his own clients when not performing tasks for West. Stuart's role in the studio was one of immense importance. He and West had formed something of a partnership, particularly in the realm of portraiture, an arrangement that would last until Stuart opened up his own studio in 1782. In that year, a newspaper account summarized the relationship between the two men:

> Mr. Stuart is in partnership with Mr. West, where it is not uncommon for wits to divert themselves with applications for things they do not immediately want because they are told by Mr. West that Mr. Stuart is the only portrait painter in the world; and by Mr. Stuart that no man has any pretentions in history painting but Mr. West. After such authority what can we say of Mr. Stuart's painting?[182]

Although Stuart reportedly made only one guinea for assisting West on his portraits, for several years it was beneficial for him to remain in the Newman Street studio.[183] Stuart later recalled,

> When I had finished a copy of a portrait for my old master, that I knew he was to have a good price for, and he gave me a guinea, I used to think it hard—but when I looked on the establishment around me, which with his instruction I enjoyed, and knew it was yet to be paid for, I fully exonerated West from the charge of niggardliness, and cheerfully contributed my labor in return for his kindness.[184]

West's fame and prestige drew people in and when Stuart was not painting portraits of his own clients, he was aiding West with his numerous portrait commissions. According to Stuart, he often executed the bulk of these commissions, like the portrait of King George III that West was expected to produce for the new Governor-General of India. Because the methods of the two artists were so different, West's hand in the picture proved so awkward that Stuart was forced to retouch the work.[185] Stuart was also responsible for the compositions of the five panels that West designed for the lecture room ceiling of the Royal Academy's residence at Somerset House.[186] After he made a name for himself by exhibiting portraits under his own name at the Royal Academy, Stuart was encouraged to branch out on his own. Nathaniel Dance told him, "You are strong enough to stand alone. Take rooms; those who would be unwilling to sit to Mr. West's pupil will be glad to sit to Mr. Stuart."[187] The rooms he took were close to Newman Street and when he did not have lots of work to do, he still did work for West.[188] Moreover, West often sent persons who applied to him for portraits to Stuart.

The only other assistant besides Stuart known to have lived in West's home was the artist's own son Raphael Lamar West. Rafe, as he was called, proved to be something of a disappointment in the studio because as a young man he was apparently idle and lazy. Dunlap, his constant companion for several years, recalled that Raphael West actually painted very little.[189] According to an account given by Joseph Farington, painting caused Rafe "trouble with his bile," and he would have preferred to be left alone along with a payment of 100 pounds per year.[190] Trumbull recalled in his account book that his copy of The Battle of La Hogue had been begun by West's son, "who was soon fatigued and gave it up."[191] In spite of Raphael's early reluctance to assist his father early

on in his training, he did help West on a regular basis towards the end his father's long career by transferring designs onto large canvases that would have been too labor intensive for West's feeble state.[192]

In spite of West's gradual failing health, in the five years prior to his death, his artistic activity barely diminished. His younger son Benjamin West, Jr. and his family moved into the Newman Street home to run the household in the wake of Mrs. West's death, allowing the artist to continue his numerous activities. Students continued to call on West frequently. He not only gave them encouragement and guidance, but he provided them with letters of introduction to view important private collections. In spite of his growing frailty however, West's activities in the realm of history painting and his unceasing devotion to the art of ancient Greece and Rome, as well as that of the Italian Renaissance, continued to provide inspiration to younger generations of artists. His methodical and academic approach to his craft and art education contributed significantly to the development of the growth of the fine arts in England and America. Even when West's reputation began to flag shortly after his death, his role as a teacher continued to be praised and acknowledged. His success as an educator was due not only to his kindness, but also to the clear and concise curriculum he generously provided to all his students.

[1] Ward, pp. 153-54.

[2] Morse, volume 1, p. 68.

[3] Galt, volume 2, p. 110.

[4] Joshua Reynolds' annotations to Charles Alphonse du Fresnoy, The Art of Painting, translated by William Mason, (London, 1783; New York: Arno Press, 1969), p. 71.

[5] Reynolds, p. 96.

[6] Stuart Macdonald, The History and Philosophy of Art Education, (London: University of London Press, Ltd., 1970), p. 41.

[7] For West's letter to Copley see Benjamin West to John Singleton Copley, 6 January 1773, in Guernsey Jones, 194-97.

[8] Franziska Forster-Hahn, "The Sources of True Taste: Benjamin West's Instructions to a Young Painter for his Studies in Italy," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 30 (1967), pp. 367-382.

[9] West's Discourses are found throughout Galt, volume 2. Published separately was Benjamin West, A Discourse Delivered to the Students of the Royal Academy, (Dec. 10, 1792)...to Which is Prefixed the Speech of the President to the Royal Academicians (March 24, 1792), (London, 1793).

[10] Forster-Hahn, p. 375.

[11] Galt, volume 2, p. 81.

[12] Ibid., p. 85.

[13] Ibid., p. 99-102.

[14] Guernsey Jones, p. 194-96.

[15] Forster-Hahn, p. 377.

[16] Galt, vol. 2, p. 94.

[17] For example, Polykleitos's Canon for depicting the human figure continuously occupied artistic thought from the Renaissance through the nineteenth century. See Macdonald, p. 44.

[18] Galt, vol. 2, pp. 99-101.

[19] A copy of the folio is in the Drawings and Prints Department of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. The pages were engraved by E. Schriver, and published by T. Clay, London, 1813.

[20] Nikolaus Pevsner, Academies of Art past and Present, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1973), p. 203.

[21] Quoted in Gerald L. Carr, "Benjamin West's Altar Paintings for St. Marylebone Church,' The Art Bulletin LXII (June 1980), p. 297.

[22] von Erffa and Staley, p. 36.

[23] William Gerdts, The Great American Nude: A History in Art, (New York and Washington: Praeger Publishers, 1974), p. 24.

[24] Pevsner, p. 191.

[25] Martin Postle, "The Artist's Model from Reynolds to Etty," in Ilaria Bignamini and Martin Postle, eds., The Artist's Model from Reynolds to Etty, (Nottingham: University Art Gallery, 1991), p. 24.

[26] A.D. Potts, "Greek Sculpture and Roman Copies I: Anton Raphael Mengs and the Eighteenth Century," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 43 (1980), p. 166.

[27] Farington, Sat. 21 May 1808, vol. 9, p. 3282.

[28] Ibid., Mon. 20 June 1808, vol. 7, p. 3300-01; Thurs. 30 June 1808, vol. 7, p. 3306.

[29] Postle, p. 24.

[30] Farington, Wed. 18 Jan. 1797, vol. 3, p. 751.

[31] Postle, p. 21.

[32] Reynolds, p. 20.

[33] Ibid., p. 21.

[34] For more about Varley see C. M. Kauffmann, John Varley: 1778-1842, (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd., with the Victoria and Albert Museum, 1984).

[35] Alfred T. Story, The Life of John Linnell, (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1892), vol. 1, p. 84.

[36] Henry Richter, Day-Light; a Recent Discovery in the Art of Painting, (London: R. Ackermann, 1817), p. vii.

[37] Forster-Hahn, p. 377.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Thomas Hodson, The Cabinet of the Arts: Being a New and Universal Drawing Book..., (London: T. Ostell, 1804), p. 160.

[40] Galt, vol. 2, p. 94.

[41] Ibid., p. 96.

[42] Rosamund D. Harley, Artists' Pigments, c. 1600-1835, (London: The International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, and Butterworth & Co., Ltd, 1970), p. 175.

[43] Galt., volume 2, p. 95.

[44] Gerald E. Finley, "Turner; An Early Experiment with Colour Theory," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 30 (1967): 367-382.

[45] Galt, vol. 2, pp. 96-97.

[46] Guernsey Jones, p. 196.

[47] Richardson, p. 79.

[48] Count Francesco Algorotti, An Essay on Painting Written in Italian by Count Algorotti, (London: L. Davies and C. Reymers, 1763), p. 36.

[49] Susan Rather, "A Painter's Progress: Matthew Pratt and The American School," Metropolitan Museum Journal 28 (1993), p. 174. See also the reported comments on the subject by William Hogarth and George Knapton in a letter from Captain William Thynne to Humphrey Senhouse, November 28, 1751, quoted in Edward Hughes, North Country Life in the Eighteenth Century, vol. 2, (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 91.

[50] Richardson, p. 115.

[51] Ibid., p. 117.

[52] Quoted in Dorinda Evans, p. 142.

[53] Campbell, p. 94.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Algarotti, p. 5.

[57] Campbell, p. 99.

[58] Ibid., p. 100.

[59] Mortimer, p. v.

[60] Ambrose Heal, London Tradesmen's Cards of the XVIII Century: An Account of Origin and Use, (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1968), p. 74.

[61] For example Robert Smirke and William Daniell began their careers as coach painters. See Farington, Mon. 22 Aug. 1803, vol. 6, p. 2113 and Joan Lane, Apprenticeship in England, 1600-1914, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), p. 12.

[62] Thomas Jones, p. 9.

[63] Anonymous (probably Alexander Nesbit), An Essay...on the Necessity and Form of a Royal Academy..., (London, 1755), quoted in Sidney Hutchison, History of the Royal Academy, 1768-1986, 2nd edition, (London: Robert Royce, 1968), p. 33.

[64] Julius Ibbetson, An Accidence, or Gamut, of Painting in Oil and Water Colours, part 1, (London, 1803), pp. 5-7. Gilbert Stuart, in his advice to Matthew Jouett, also warned of picture dealers and cleaners. He cautioned his pupil, "Never to glaze on the face no where in fact unless you have such a body of colour underneath the glaze as stand against all accidents, from picture cleaners. See John Hill Morgan, Gilbert Stuart and His Pupils, (New York: Kennedy Galleries, 1969), p. 90. West and Sir Thomas Lawrence became angry with a picture dealer who ruined two pictures by Claude by stripping off too much paint. See Reitlinger, volume 1, p. 33.

[65] Campbell, p. 337.

[66] Lane, p. 23. Artists' apprentice fees were lower than soap boilers, bankers, merchants and brewers. Artists received premiums similar to those of coach makers, insurers, lacemen, notary publics, timber merchants and sugar bakers, just to name a few.

[67] Ellen G. D'Oench, The Conversation Piece: Author Devis and his Contemporaries, (New Haven: Yale Center for British Art, 1980), p. 34, and Lane, p. 22. For a more complete look at the correspondence describing this artist's apprenticeship see Hughes, vol. 2, pp. 89-101.

[68] Lane, p. 22.

[69] John Brown to Humphrey Senhouse, March 7, 1752, quoted in Hughes, vol. 2, p. 92.

[70] Ibid., pp. 92-93.

[71] Thomas Jones, p. 9.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Farington, Mon. 14 Dec. 1795, vol. 1, p. 442.

[74] Lane, p. 251.

[75] Marcia Pointon, Hanging the Head, p. 38.

[76] Ibbetson, part 1, p. 25.

[77] Captain William Thynne to Humphrey Senhouse, November 28, 1751, quoted in Hughes, pp. 90-91.

[78]George Brickham, Junior Engraver. An Introductive Essay on Drawing. With the Nature and Beauty of Lights and Shadows and Cuts Suitable for the Young Practitioner, in the Manner of the Greatest Masters. London, 1747, p. 9.

[79] Galt, vol. 2, pp. 106-7.

[80] Algarotti, p. 6.

[81] Farington, 23 November 1793, volume 1, p. 97.

[82] The Academies were the Museum Minervae, established in 1636 at the home of Sir Francis Kynaston in Covent Garden, in which a variety of subjects, including painting, was taught, and the Gerbier Academy, held at the house of Sir Balthazar Gerbier at Bethnal Green, opened for a short time beginning in 1649. See Gilbert Benthal, "Early Schools in London (1635-1770)," unpublished paper, National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and Hutchison's, The History of the Royal Academy, p. 25.

[83] Hutchison, "The Royal Academy Schools, 1768-1830," The Walpole Society 37 (1960-1962), p. 124.

[84] Benthal, p. 10.

[85] For a brief history of the St. Martin's Lane Academy see Hutchison, The History of the Royal Academy, pp. 26-29, and Ilaria Bignoamini, "The Artist's Model from Lely to Hogarth,' in Bignamini and Postle, pp. 8-15.

[86] For a convincing discussion of this reattribution see Martin Postle, "The St. Martin's Lane Academy: True and false records," Apollo 134 (July 1991): 33-38.

[87] Study of a Male Nude, Three-Quarter Length, Black chalk heightened with white on gray-brown paper, 12-7/8 x 9-5/8 inches and Standing Male Nude, Black chalk, 25 x 17-3/4 inches. Illustrated in Kraemer, catalogues 113 and 118.

[88] Thomas Jones, p. 8.

[89] Sidney Hutchison, "The Royal Academy Schools," p. 130.

[90] Dorinda Evans, p. 11.

[91] Edmond Brice's name is found in a letter of introduction to West written by Charles Willson Peale, to Benjamin West, June 6, 1772, Lillian Miller and Sidney Hart, eds., The Selected Papers of Charles Willson Peale and his Family, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press for the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 1983-1996), vol. 1, p. 122. Brice evidently at least visited West's studio because he carried a subsequent letter, dated February 10, 1775 from West to Peale, Ibid., p. 139; and John Blake White's journal is found in Weidner, "The Journal of John Blake White," South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine 42 (April 1941): 55-71; (July 1941): 99-117; (October 1941): 169-186; (January 1942): 35-46; (April 1942): 103-117; and (July 1942): 161-174. The name Brooksby is also mentioned, but nothing is known of him.

[92] In his journal, John Blake White refers to Walker as a native of Notingham and the son of the owner of a prosperous coal mine. Weidner, p. 65. He is listed as a native of London in Brian Stewart and Mervyn Cutten, The Dictionary of Portrait Painters in Britain up to 1920, (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Antique Collectors Club, 1997), p. 471. Livesay is listed in Stephen Leslie and Sidney Lee, eds., Dictionary of National Biography, (Oxford University Press, 1964), vol. 11, pp.1258-59. John Linnell recalls his year with West in A. T. Story, The Life of John Linnell, (London: Richard Beatley & Son, 1892).

[93] Forster-Hahn, p. 367.

[94] Farington, Fri. 25 April 1806, vol. 7, p. 2734 and Thurs. 1 May 1806, vol. 7, p. 2740.

[95] Ibid., Fri. 14 Nov. 1806, p. 2905.

[96] Wright, p. 337.

[97] Morse, p. 43.

[98] Alberts, p. 149.

[99] Dunlap, History, vol.1, p. 105.

[100] Morse, p. 62.

[101] Edmund Blunden, ed., Autobiography of Benjamin Robert Haydon, (Oxford University Press, 1927), p. 219.

[102] Hunt, volume 1, p. 102.

[103] Dunlap, History, volume 1, p. 97.

[104] John Thomas Smith, Nollekens and His Times, 2 volumes, Wilfred Whitten, ed., (New York and London: John Lane, 1917), vol. 1, p. 301.

[105] Northcote, vol. 1, p. 21.

[106] Theodore Sizer, The Autobiography of John Trumbull, Patriot-Artist, 1756-1843, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), p. 86.

[107] Northcote, volume 1, p. 227.

[108] Alberts, p. 136.

[109] Morse, p. 43.

[110] George Leslie, The Inner Life of the Royal Academy, (London: J. Murray, 1914), p. 9 and Hutchison, The History of the Royal Academy, p. 80.

[111] Macdonald, p. 63.

[112] Ibid., p. 62.

[113] Hutchison, "The Royal Academy Schools," p. 130.

[114] Quoted in Frederick Cummings, "B. R. Haydon and his School," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 26 (1963), p. 369.

[115] Morse, p. 56.

[116] Andrew J. Cosentino, Paintings of Charles Bird King, (Washington, DC: National Collection of Fine Arts, 1977), p. 199.

[117] Letter from West to John Green, 10 September 1771 in "Letter from Benjamin West," Journal of the Archives of American Art 4 (January 1964), p. 12, Quoted in Solkin, p. 181.

[118] Pointon, Hanging the Head, p. 38.

[119] Quoted in Dorinda Evans, p. 75.

[120] Morse, p. 85.

[121] Ibid., p. 103.

[122] Trumbull painted The Death of General Warren at the Battle of Bunker's Hill and The Death of General Montgomery in the Attack on Quebec in West's studio. See Sizer, p. 88-92.

[123] Lillian Miller and Carol Eaton Hevner, Rembrandt Peale, 1778-1860: A Life in the Arts, (Philadelphia: The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1986), p. 20.

[124] Letter from Allston to William Dunlap, 15 October 1833 in Wright, p. 338.

[125] Quoted in Stanley Weintraub, "A Pennsylvania Yankee at King George's Court: Benjamin West," in Stanley Weintraub and Randy Ploog, Benjamin West Drawings from the Society of Pennsylvania, (University Park, Pennsylvania: Museum of Art, Penn State, 1987), p. 10.

[126] Quoted in Dorinda Evans, p. 172.

[127] Miller and Eaton, p. 20.

[128] For more information about Haydon's teaching philosophy see Cummings, pp. 367-380.

[129] Whitely, p. 150, v. 1; Alberts, p. 72, Dorinda Evans, p. 44.

[130] Charles Willson Peale to John Beale Bordley, London, March 1767, Miller and Hart, vol.1, p. 48.

[131] Mount, p. 87.

[132] Alberts, p. 130, Dunlap, History, vol. 1, p. 96, and Northcote, volume 1, p. 188.

[133] Rembrandt Peale, "Reminiscences," The Crayon 1 (June 13, 1855), p. 369.

[134] Thomas Jones, p. 10.

[135] Miller, Selected Papers, volume 3, p. 174.

[136] Weidner, April 1941, p. 64.

[137] Morse, p. 47.

[138] Dunlap, History, volume 1, p. 314.

[139] Dorinda Evans, p. 75.

[140] Morse, p. 56.

[141] Rembrandt Peale, "Reminiscences: Exhibitions and Academies," The Crayon 1 (May 9, 1855), p. 290.

[142] Morse, p. 103.

[143] Rembrandt Peale, "Reminiscences: Charles Willson Peale," The Crayon 1 (February 7, 1855), p. 82, Jaffe, p. 61 and Morse, p. 75.

[144] Charles Willson Peale to Benjamin West, Annapolis, April 20, 1771, Miller and Hart, vol. 1, p. 95.

[145] Sizer, p. 61.

[146] Morse, p. 59.

[147] Ibid., p. 105.

[148] Ibid., p. 95.

[149] Weidner, April 1941, p. 65.

[150] George Knox, "Francesco Guardi as an Apprentice in the Studio of Giambattista Tiepolo," Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture 5 (1976), p. 35.

[151] Burke to James Barry in Rome, quoted in Northcote, volume 1, p. 155.

[152] Thomas Jones, p. 9.

[153] Morse, p. 43.

[154] George C. Mason, The Life and Works of Gilbert Stuart, (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1879), p. 14.

[155] Dunlap, History, volume 1, p. 306.

[156] For a detailed discussion of this picture see Rather who concludes the figure in the right foreground is Pratt because of his resemblance to a contemporary self-portrait. Moreover, the canvas on which he works is signed "Matthew Pratt" in the lower left hand

corner. John Caldwell and Oswaldo Rodreguez Roque, in a less convincing argument, suggest that the young man showing a drawing to West is Pratt because he resembles a contemporary self-portrait. They also contend the painting on which the right foreground figure works resembles compositions produced by West at that time, and regardless of Pratt's signature on the canvas, this figure is probably another studio assistant. See John Caldwell and Oswaldo Rodriguez Roque, American Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, volume 1, (New York and Princeton: Metropolitan Museum of Art in Association with Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 57.

[157] Not all artists agreed with this traditional method of art instruction. Hogarth believed that more emphasis should be placed on a careful study of nature as the source of good taste and beauty. See Rather, p. 176.

[158] Pevsner, p. 216.

[159] William Hogarth, in his Analysis of Beauty, was one artist that expressed his disdain for the practice of copying pictures. In this belief, however, he was in the minority during this period. For a contemporary assessment of Hogarth see Thomas Bardwell, The Practice of Painting and Perspective Made Easy, (London: S. Richardson, 1761), p. 20.

[160] Gerard, p. 51.

[161] de Piles, p. 12.

[162] Ibid.

[163] Sizer, p. 61.

[164] Farington, Sat. 15 Nov. 1806, vol. 8, p. 2907.

[165] Rather, p. 174.

[166] It has been suggested that Pratt assisted West in a portrait of the Royal Family, but no extant portraits of the Monarchy by West exist from the dates Pratt was in London. See Dunlap, "Matthew Pratt," Crayon 2 (August 29, 1855), p. 131 and Dunlap, History, vol. 1, p. 99.

[167] Dunlap, Diary, p. 66.

[168] Prown, p. 33.

[169] Copley also painted draperies for Nathaniel Dance and occasionally worked for Reynolds too. See Mount, p. 56.

[170] von Erffa and Staley, p. 200 and Leslie and Lee, vol.11, pp. 1258-59.

[171] Irma B. Jaffe, John Trumbull: Patriot-Artist of the American Revolution, (Boston, 1975), p. 68.

[172] Dunlap, History, volume 1, p. 305.

[173] According to his records, Trumbull also copied a replica of a Holy Family by Correggio and a small head of the King for West in 1784. Lee Cuthbert, Early American Portrait Painters, (New Haven: Yale University Press), p. 132.

[174] Quoted in Jaffe, John Trumbull, p. 83.

[175] Thomas Jones, p. 14.

[176] Jaffe, John Trumbull, p. 70.

[177] Trumbull's account book, quoted in Ibid., p. 316.

[178] Morgan, p. 4. According to Stuart's daughter, he moved into West's home in 1777. See Dorinda Evans, p. 52 and Dorinda Evans, The Genius of Gilbert Stuart, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 13, and Morgan, p. 11. In his biography, Charles Merrill Mount suggests that Stuart lived in separate lodgings, but resided with the Wests only during the summer months at Windsor. See Mount, p. 51. Regardless of where Stuart slept, he attended West daily and had a private painting room for his own use.

[179] Rembrandt Peale, "Reminiscenses. Charles Willson Peale: A Sketch by his Son," p. 82.

[180] Letter from Copley to Henry Pelham, London, 5 August 1774, Guernsey Jones, p. 236.

[181] Letter from West to Shrimpton Hutchinson, London, June 18, 1771, Ibid., p. 118.

[182] The St. James Chronicle, May 2, 1782, Quoted in Mount, p. 73.

[183] Dunlap, Diary, p. 66.

[184] Ibid.

[185] Dunlap, History, volume 1, p. 212 and Mason, p. 62.

[186] Mount, p. 57.

[187] Ibid., p. 73.

[188] Mount suggests Stuart may have also worked for Nathaniel Dance and Thomas Gainsborough. Ibid., p. 64.

[189] Dunlap, History, volume 1, p. 305.

[190] Cited in Alberts, p. 165.

[191] Quoted in Jaffe, p. 316.

[192] Farington, Fri. 8 September 1815, vol. 13, p. 4703.

Chapter Three: West's Preparatory Drawings: Invention, Composition and Design

As his teaching philosophies suggest, West's methods of painting were highly systematic and closely tied to academic traditions. Based on precedents set forth by the French Academy at its foundation in 1648, the curriculum of the Royal Academy in London adhered to this traditional approach to art education and production, which became, for many students, too rigid.[1] Academic methods in Europe and England provided specific rules for art production that had been outlined in art manuals dating from the seventeenth century. The first stage of painting, according to eighteenth-century art theory recorded in a plethora of contemporary art manuals, was called invention. Invention was the mental creation of a work, and was considered to be the most difficult aspect of art production. Because invention took place in the mind of the artist, it was one task that could not be farmed out to assistants, and was therefore the truest gauge of an artist's skill. Composition was the next stage in the artistic process, and referred to devising the general arrangement of the picture. Once the composition was established, the artist could refine this arrangement even further through a process called design.[2] In his preliminary sketches, West left behind a visual record of these early phases of his painting process and his studio provided a model for traditional academic practices. Focusing primarily on West's preparatory drawings, this chapter examines West's method of invention, composition and design, for it is through his sketches and drawings that we see the clearest record of his thought processes and manner of working.

At the same time drawings can provide us with a glimpse of a painter's working methods, they have been considered an important aspect of art production since the Renaissance, at which time artists desired to be regarded as practitioners of a liberal art

rather than mere craftsmen. The Italian word for drawing, or design, was *disegno*, referring not only to a graphic work of art, but the inception of an idea.[3] In this context, a sketch or drawing was more than a utilitarian tool to create a painting, but the early reflection of an artist's creativity. During the Renaissance artists began to exchange and keep drawings as mementos and by the seventeenth century drawings became financially valuable to collectors.[4] As we have seen, West himself was an avid collector of Old Master and contemporary drawings and at least some of his collection had a personal significance. John Thomas Smith remembered that four days before West's death, the aging artist kept two volumes of Fra Bartolommeo's drawings beside him in bed so might peruse them when he had the strength.[5] In addition to their financial or personal value, an artist could utilize drawings, either by himself or others, for ideas in his own works of art. The collector Samuel Woodburn claimed West borrowed so extensively from the draperies of his Bartolommeo drawings that the artist decided this collection of drawings should never be sold publicly.[6]

The popularity that drawings achieved as collectors' items during the late eighteenth century stemmed from the Renaissance belief that the ability to invent a great picture was what separated a mere draughtsman from being a great artist.[7] According to Vasari, it was the preparatory sketch for a work that showed "that fire" that finished works lacked.[8] West understood the role his sketches could play in establishing his reputation as a great master, and he exclusively exhibited many of his finished oil sketches and preparatory drawings in his largest studio gallery.[9] He also showed many of his preparatory works in the annual Royal Academy exhibitions. In the Academy's exhibition catalogues, West distinguished between the terms design and sketch. Designs

were more preliminary than sketches and were usually drawn in pen and washed, often on paper, and sometimes retouched with oils, a technique Thomas Sully saw West often employ in his preparatory works.[10] His The Last Supper of around 1784 was exhibited at the Royal Academy Exhibition that same year as, "The last supper, a design for a picture for his Majesty's chapel in Windsor-castle."[11] Works exhibited under the heading of sketches, on the other hand, were more finished. They were usually oil paintings in grisaille, and much smaller and looser in technique than his finished canvases. His The Last Supper of 1787 was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1804 under the heading, "The Last Supper, the original sketch for the great picture over the communion table in the Collegiate Church, Windsor."[12] Interestingly, West dated the sketch 1787, while the work was completed in 1786. It is likely that he retouched the preparatory sketch specifically for the Royal Academy exhibition, for the sketch was evidently completed in preparation for one of two large Last Supper subjects West painted for the King.[13]

By exhibiting preparatory works, West drew attention to his ability to invent and compose large historical canvases, two aspects of art production that could not be farmed out to one's students or assistants. Interestingly, his painterly, seemingly spontaneous, oil sketches were usually more critically acclaimed than his finished canvases which often had a stiff or formal quality to them.[14] When Washington Allston saw West's oil sketches for the first time in the Newman Street Gallery in 1801, he came to appreciate works he had only previously seen in prints:

> You will no doubt be surprised that among the many painters in London I should rank Mr. West as the first. I must own I myself was not a little surprised to find him such. I left America strongly prejudiced against him; and indeed I even not think it with good reason, for those pictures from which I had seen prints would do no credit to a very inferior artist, much less to one of his reputation. But when I saw his gallery and the innumerable excellencies which it contained, I

> pronounced him one of the greatest men in [the] world. I had looked upon his understanding with indifference, and his imagination with contempt. But I have now reason to suppose them both vigorous in the highest degree.[15]

Seeing these examples of the stirrings of West's imagination struck a chord in Allston's romantic sensibilities about the nature of art. Almost a century earlier Jonathan Richardson argued that preparatory drawings and oil sketches might even be more important than finished paintings. He lamented that too few drawings survive, because "in them we see the steps the master took to arrive at a finished painting which is little more than a copy of the drawings, and frequently by some other hand, at least in part."[16]

West celebrated the powers of his own imagination through the public exhibition of his oil sketches in his own home, as well as in the annual Royal Academy exhibitions. Art students during this period, however, were required to follow a rigid pedagogical program that did not encourage innovation of design or spontaneity of technique.[17] In his sixth Discourse, Reynolds chastised those writers of art manuals who emphasized the concepts of genius and inspiration as necessary to artistic excellence. According to Reynolds, these writers mistakenly consider genius to be "a power of producing excellencies, which are out of the reach of the rules of art; a power which no precepts can teach, and which no industry can acquire."[18] On the contrary, to Reynolds, great art was formed of diligent study and was "the result of long labour and application of an infinite number and infinite variety of acts..."[19] Of course, as the President of the Royal Academy, Reynolds had a vested interest in promoting the value of artistic education.

Perhaps the best insight into the intricate steps an artist needed to take to arrive at a finished picture, according to eighteenth-century art theory, is through the progress of his preparatory graphic works. One of the most popular books of the period was written

by Roger de Piles who knew the important role drawings played in understanding the stages of art production so carefully followed by artists of this period. He believed it would be a valuable exercise,

> ...to remark how skillful painters at first conceived their thoughts before they digested them, and sketches show us further what touches great masters make use of to characterize things with a few strokes. To satisfy one's curiosity therefore, it would be well if one had designs of all kinds of the same master, to wit, not only of his first, second or last manner, but even his lightest sketches, as well as his most finished designs.[20]

While these drawings may be studied to satisfy one's curiosity, writers of art manuals like de Piles carefully outlined the specific progress an artist should take, through his preliminary graphic works, from the invention of a picture to its finished design.[21]

As one would expect, West's own preparatory works reveal his adherence to the traditional academic methods for invention, composition and design. Most of the drawings by West that survive were made in preparation for his numerous historical compositions. In addition to these, he sketched a number of landscape scenes throughout his career and some of these can be related to specific paintings. Fewer drawings relating to portraiture survive. West did paint a number of portraits when he first arrived in London for financial reasons, but he only needed to do that until the 1780's. After that decade, most of his portraits are of family members and close friends.[22] The preponderance of extant historical drawings may partially be due to the heightened importance placed on this genre by eighteenth-century connoisseurs, and West may have been inclined to preserve more carefully the preparatory studies for his historical works. Additionally, West painted more historical pictures than he did of any other genre, so it is not surprising that more of them survive. The proportionately large number of these drawings also reflects the complicated process involved in undertaking a large historical

picture. For example, after West had decided upon a subject, he usually sketched out a series of small and loose compositional studies. He then executed, in varying degrees of finish, additional studies he deemed necessary, including more elaborate compositional drawings, studies of individual figures that were to appear in the production, and costume and chiaroscuro studies, just to name a few.

Although a number of West's preparatory works do survive, the vast majority, unfortunately, do not. For example, in 1774 West told Copley that he had made over fifty drawings and oil sketches prior to his execution of The Departure of Regulus from Rome of 1769, the sizable work that would launch forty years of Royal patronage.[23] Today, however, only one drawing relating to the painting is known. Included amongst those lost is the highly finished oil sketch he painted as a presentation piece to show the king prior to the finalization of the commission.[24] On the other hand, at least ten drawings survive for Thetis Bringing the Armor to Achilles of 1805, a work privately commissioned by the antiquarian Thomas Hope, a smaller, less important canvas than the Regulus.[25] It may be that West prepared so many drawings for Hope's canvas because of his patron's well-publicized beliefs in the importance of preliminary works.[26] Although the drawings by West that do exist today do not always reflect the importance of the painting to his career, generalizations can be made about his methods. By linking the existing visual evidence and contemporary accounts of his works by friends and students to what is known about standard academic painting practices of this period, a consistent picture begins to form about the routine in West's studio.

Du Fresnoy, in his The Art of Painting, goes so far as to claim that taste in the act of painting, or the skill requisite to inventing an historical picture, was present in only the most gifted artists:

> Then bold INVENTION, all thy powers diffuse,
> Of all thy sisters thou the noblest Muse:
> Thee, every art, thee every grace inspires,
> Thee Phoebus fills with all his brightest fires.[27]

Relying heavily on Du Fresnoy's late seventeenth-century publication, Thomas Hodson, who published his treatise The Cabinet of the Arts in 1804, considered the choice of a picture's subject to be the greatest effort of the artist's genius.[28] Not only did the artist need to be familiar with subjects that would be appropriate to grandiose compositions, he had to know his own level of skill since invention preceded any preparatory drawings. As Gilbert Stuart explained to his pupil Matthew Jouett:

> When one has in view the painting of a picture he should in privacy digest as well as practicable the subject and previous to his drawing a single figure he should have made in his mind the necessary selection of means. This falls under the head of invention in painting and is expressive of the same idea of invention in poetry.[29]

Likewise, according to Hodson, it was important that a painter understand the intricacies of his subject, as well as the extent of his own abilities, so that a picture would look as the artist first imagined.[30] In this way, less time and materials were wasted in the actual painting of the picture.

Choosing the proper subject for an historical picture was accomplished through a careful reading of important literature or texts that recounted heroic or religious tales. Artists were also advised to converse with individuals who were experts in various areas of ancient and modern history.[31] An extensive knowledge of the story that was to be represented was important because it enabled artists to render each figure of a

composition in its correct attitude and action. West would have been familiar with a number of appropriate texts in his own collection, the Royal Academy's library and the King's library at Windsor. At the time of his death, West owned Milton's Paradise Lost, Charles Heath's The Heroines of Shakespeare from about 1800, Sir William Chamber's A Treatise on Civil Architecture first published in 1759 and a book on the Antiquities of Herculaneum, just to name a few.[32] His historical paintings reveal that he based most of his pictures on a series of standard texts, including the Old and New Testaments, the works of Shakespeare, Homer, and David Hume's History of England published between 1754 and 1762. For West, the most important sources for his works appear to have been the Bible and the histories of ancient Greece and England. He included volumes on these subjects in two self-portraits from the early 1790's painted to document his recent appointment as President of the Royal Academy and his election into the Society of Dilettanti.[33] His inclusion of these particular texts in this context reflects the educational value he placed on such ancient histories, as well as his commitment to history painting.

West had known the importance of choosing an appropriate subject since his early days as an artist in Philadelphia when he became inspired by the writings of Richardson and Du Fresnoy. In addition to standard historical texts, he often got ideas for his paintings from patrons or potential patrons. Colonel William Henry of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, West's first patron, allegedly suggested the story of the death of Socrates as the subject for West's first history painting, The Death of Socrates,[34] painted when the artist was just 16 years old. According to family lore, Colonel Henry showed West the story in a volume of Charles Rollin's Ancient History and the artist had not heard of the story before that time.[35] In London, West's first principal patron, and the inspiration for

his most important painting of the 1760's, The Landing of Agrippina at Brundisium with the Ashes of Germanicus (Figure 3.1), was Dr. Robert Drummond, Archbishop of York. According to Galt, Drummond read the story of Agrippina from a volume of Tacitus, taken from his own library. Following his reading of the passage, "he commented on it at some length, in order to convey to Mr. West an idea of the manner in which he was desirous the subject should be treated."[36] Moreover, his painting for antiquarian Thomas Hope, Thetis Bringing the Armor to Achilles of 1805 (Figure 3.2), was guided by Hope's interests and expertise in Ancient costume.[37]

Sometimes at the behest of his patrons, but often on his own initiative, West conducted extensive research in preparation for his pictures. In doing so, he was following the advice of Jonathan Richardson who believed the artist who painted history well was also able to write it. Richardson argued that the artist must be cognizant of every aspect of an historical event, "and conceive it clearly, and nobly in his mind, or he can never express it upon the canvas."[38] He even suggested the artist write down, as an historian would, the event he was to depict, even before executing the first sketch.[39] One of West's most successful early pictures in London was The Landing of Agrippina at Brundisium with the Ashes of Germanicus of 1768 (Figure 3.1). The story, as told in Tacitus, took place in 19 A.D. when Agrippina's husband, the military leader Germanicus, was likely poisoned by his jealous uncle, the Emperor Tiberius. In West's painting, Agrippina has returned to Rome carrying her husband's ashes and demanding justice for his murder. Painted in the classical style of Poussin, West's picture of Agrippina presents us with a dignified and sympathetic heroine proceeding along the dock with downcast eyes, accompanied by her young children. In order to achieve a

level of historical accuracy with regard to the setting of the picture, West consulted Robert Adam's engraving of Diocletian's palace in his book, Ruins of the Palace of the Emperor Diocletian at Spalato, published in London in 1766.[40] Because Diocletian's palace was built almost three hundred years after Germanicus' death, however, West altered the configuration of the palace's columns to conform to the time period in which Agrippina lived. Hints at West's continual devotion to historical accuracy in his pictures, though always liberally tempered with poetic license, are perhaps first seen here.

In another series of pictures, painted for the King's Audience Room at Windsor Castle between 1787 and 1789, West explored a medieval theme. These works illustrate the victories of Edward III during the Hundred Years War, and the subsequent establishment of the Order of the Royal Garter.[41] In his biography of West, Galt described the research for "historical truth" conducted by West. The story probably came from Hume's history of England and Jean Froissart's Chronicles.[42] In order to properly depict the period clothing and armor, West visited the Tower Armories, and consulted several antiquarian texts on medieval costume.[43] A sketch of costume studies, now at the Pierpont Morgan Library (Figure 3.3) can be connected to his painting, The Burghers of Calais of 1788 (Figure 3.4). West borrowed the costume of the bearded man wearing a high hat in the center of the canvas from illustrations he found in a fourteenth-century manuscript, Chroniques de France ou de Saint Denis in the Royal Library.[44] The artist also seems to have closely copied examples of period costume and armor for other works in the series from Joseph Strutt's Regal and Ecclesiastical Antiquities and Elias Ashmole's Order of the Garter, published in 1672.[45] Although West did not strictly

adhere to the texts he consulted, as a result of his research, he was the first artist of his generation to so accurately represent the Middle Ages.[46]

It was precisely West's documentary approach to painting that attracted William Beckford's patronage in the late 1790's. Beckford, one of England's richest citizens during this period, hired a number of artists to help him decorate Fonthill Abbey, a lavish neo-Gothic style home, complete with tower (although some of the structure was never completed due to financial difficulties) and elaborately landscaped grounds. Beckford, a bibliophile and avid student of his own genealogy, commissioned West to paint at least four portraits of his ancestors. While it has been suggested that these likenesses were no more than copies of previous family portraits, West's preliminary drawings for the works point to his inventiveness in the project.[47] If one compares his study for Beckford's grandmother, Mrs. Peter Beckford (Figure 3.5) with the finished portrait (Figure 3.6), his predilection for historical accuracy is apparent.[48] While West used the drawing to obtain a general sense of the portrait's composition, he heightened the details of costume and setting to correspond more closely to ladies' fashion at mid-century. While Beckford hired the most fashionable portrait painters of the day to paint portraits of his immediate family, he hired West, a noted history painter, to record his ancestry.[49]

West's reputation as a chronicler of history persevered into the nineteenth century. One of his most critically acclaimed paintings, The Battle of La Hogue, painted in between 1775 and 1780, was lauded as an accurate depiction of the sea battle that took place in May of 1692 between the combined English and Dutch fleets against the French.[50] Although outnumbered and outgunned, the British and Dutch forces burned the French warships and destroyed their transport ships full of troops that were to invade the

British mainland. This battle permanently frustrated Louis XIV's attempts to conquer England. According to Dunlap, West, in search of accuracy, was taken by an admiral to Spithead so that he might witness firsthand a simulated naval battle.[51] Dunlap further asserts, "It was a maxim with West to paint nothing without studying the object, if it was to be obtained."[52] West's research of the scene was noted during his own lifetime when the writer for the 1802 publication, La Belle Assemblee, noted that the scene's historical accuracy is evident in "every object that is represented...[they] are all described in the character of the age in which the battle took place, without any manner but that which belongs to the subject..."[53] Unfortunately, the sketches West made at Spithead are not known today.

One of West's most famous paintings of an historical event was The Death of General Wolfe, painted in 1770, just two years after the success of Agrippina. The painting, which commemorates the death of General James Wolfe at the Battle of Quebec in 1758, was widely popular, partially due to the replicas he painted after its initial reception and the success of the print published after the work in 1776.[54] In addition to Wolfe's demise, the background scenes illustrate the decisive battle of the French and Indian War that took place on the Plains of Abraham just west of Quebec in 1758. It is well documented that this picture was revolutionary in the development of history painting because of West's introduction of contemporary dress.[55] Instead of presenting his figures in classical garb as recommended by Reynolds, who advocated the painter ignore modern dress and custom in order to address more universal themes, West attempted to achieve a level of historical accuracy by dressing his soldiers in contemporary clothing. Most of the soldiers depicted around Wolfe are real individuals

who served with the General at Quebec, including Brigadier-General Robert Monckton, Colonel George Williamson, Major Isaac Barre, Captain Hugh Debbieg, Captain Hervey Smyth, and the surgeon Mr. Adair. Each man wears a uniform appropriate to his rank and class and in order to achieve this accuracy in dress, West probably borrowed a uniform from Robert Rogers who headed a group of Rangers that served with Wolfe.[56]

In defense of his use of modern costume in the Wolfe picture, West claimed his role as artist was akin to a record keeper, similar to that of his counterpart in ancient Greece. There, according to West, the arts were the means of "perpetuating all public fame, all private honor and all valuable instruction...Is the artist indeed not the watchman who observes the great incidents of his time, and rescues them from oblivion?"[57] In spite of West's belief in his role as historian, he took a number of liberties with the facts, and as a result, there are many historical inaccuracies in the picture. For example, most of the individuals surrounding Wolfe are essentially portraits of the soldiers and the surgeon they represent, but all were not present at the General's death.[58] Moreover, Wolfe died in near isolation, far away from the raging battle visible behind the slain general in the painting. West's deviations from the facts are far from shortcomings, however, because he used these discrepancies to record more of the battle than other artists who had painted the same subject. Whereas James Barry and Edward Penney focused on Wolfe and his death, West added figures, a background battle narrative, dramatic effects of weather and a panoramic landscape.[59]

As Dennis Montagna, in his 1981 article on this painting, has pointed out, West provided his viewers with a continuous narrative of the battle.[60] Using compositional devices and dramatic atmospheric effects, West takes us from the first British ships to

arrive on the scene to the battle's culmination in the death of General Wolfe. By enhancing the narrative of the event, West provided his viewers with what he called an "epic representation." This kind of historical picture resulted from the marriage of the factual reporting of an event with its dramatic enhancement. West explained to Joseph Farington in 1807 that representations of dying heroes necessarily needed to invoke feelings of awe and admiration in the viewer. In speaking of his 1806 painting, The Death of Lord Nelson,[61] West advised that any additional information should be included in a picture to emphasize the subject's heroism:

> Wolfe must not die like a common soldier under a Bush, neither should Nelson be represented dying in the gloomy hold of a ship, like a sick man in a Prison Hole. To move the mind there should be a spectacle presented to raise & warm the mind, &and all sh[oul]d be proportioned to the highest idea conceived of the Hero. No Boy, s[ai]d. West, w[oul]d be animated by a representation of Nelson dying like an ordinary man, His feelings must be roused & His mind inflamed by a scene great & extraordinary. A mere matter of fact will never produce this effect.[62]

These kinds of laudatory depictions of events from English history were especially popular during this period when artists were encouraged to celebrate the important events of their own country's history.[63]

According to contemporary art theory, the kind of artistic freedom West took in his Death of Wolfe was one of the most important aspects of invention. While Richardson asserted that a good artist must first be a good historian, he did believe that adding figures to a scene to enhance the monumentality or expression of a scene was perfectly acceptable and even desirable.[64] West was also guided by de Piles in creating his epic representations. Roger de Piles believed that the artist need to express ideas "readily and boldly,"[65] and in addition, he should strive for "perfect truth" in his works. This was achieved by combining the simple, or literal, truth with an ideal truth, or the

borrowing from sources such as the antique. Perfect truth, then, was often "more true than truth itself."[66] Literal truth here is achieved through the use of contemporary costume, veracity with regard to setting, scenes illustrating various stages of the battle, and such symbols as the Native American whose presence provides a clue to the event's locale.[67] Ideal truth, on the other hand, is evident in the unreal dramatization of the event, seen in the staged quality of the General's death and in the continuous battle narrative of the background. In combining these visual references together on one canvas, West provided his viewers, at a glance, with historic fact, patriotic sentiment and a potentially morally uplifting experience.

Although painted eleven years after the death of Wolfe, West's 1770 version of the battle captured England's veneration for the general and their patriotic feelings surrounding the battle long after the event took place. According to the accepted rules of depicting figures within such a composition, not only did Wolfe's facial features need to conform to the scene as a whole, but the attitude and placement of his body also needed to coincide with the picture's general mood. In this endeavor, artists were encouraged to quote from appropriate examples from art of the past and in depicting such an heroic event, it was necessary for West to seek out prototypes fitting his lofty purpose. The study of earlier works not only provided the artist with added inspiration for figural placement and expression, a quotation of a particular figure or type of figure could also add layers of additional meaning to the picture. In the case of General Wolfe, West found the most appropriate prototype for this dying hero in Christian iconography, specifically the swooning dead Christ-type figure exemplified in Baroque paintings, like Anthony van Dyck's The Lamentation.[68]

While the visual relationship between the deaths of Christ and Wolfe was made here to punctuate the heroic manner in which Wolfe died, West sometimes borrowed imagery for general mood and, as we have seen, historical accuracy. In his 1768 canvas, Agrippina Landing at Brundisium with the Ashes of Germanicus, West modeled the figure of Agrippina and her entourage on the bas-relief frieze on the Ara Pacis, the Roman altar that West certainly saw and sketched while visiting the Uffizi Gallery in Florence.[69] The linear, frieze-like formation of the ancient sculpture was borrowed here, for its theme, formal qualities, and mood. The stoicism of the sculpted procession informs the somber mood of the painting, and Germanicus himself is one of the children featured on the Ara Pacis.[70] While artists were encouraged to utilize works of the past, specifically antiquities, in their canvases, West was sometimes criticized for his more direct borrowings. Art critic Anthony Pasquin wrote in 1796 that although ancient statuary should influence West's works, he did not, as he sometimes did, want to recognize the statue on canvas.[71]

West did not limit his use of the epic representation to scenes from history. He also practiced this type of epic composition in some of his illustrations of Shakespeare's plays. Scenes from Shakespeare's works had been popular since the seventeenth century and by the end of the eighteenth century it was believed by some that illustrations of his plays could represent a national school of history painting.[72] In this nationalistic spirit, John Boydell commissioned West and a number of other artists in 1786 to paint illustrations of various scenes of Shakespeare's plays for his Shakespeare Gallery that opened in 1789. As in his Death of Wolfe, the series of pictures illustrating Shakespeare for this commission reflect West's interests in de Piles' concept of the perfect truth.

During a period when many of Shakespeare's plays were altered to make them more intelligible to an eighteenth-century audience,[73] West often went back to the playwright's texts and combined various new elements with the originals. In his King Lear of 1788, Boydell's first of two commissions from West for his Gallery, the artist depicted Lear, Gloucester, the Fool, Kent, his knight, and Gloucester's son Edgar on the heath amidst a terrible storm. In deference to Shakespeare's text, West included the fool who was absent from most eighteenth century performances of the play. He did include, however, at lower left, Cordelia and her maid, who, according to Shakespeare's account, do not belong in this scene. They refer to a later version of the play, popular in the eighteenth century, in which a love affair between Edgar and Cordelia, was introduced.[74] While the inclusion of these figures could be no more than a nod to popular appeal, it is more likely that West wanted to provide the viewer with a generalized feeling of the scene rather than a specific moment.[75] The epic and historical qualities of his figural works called to mind multiple layers of meaning, contributing significantly to their popularity and to West's reputation as an artist.

After West invented his subject, he began the task of composing his work. This aspect of artistic production was known as composition. Composition, strictly speaking, was the arrangement of figures, architecture and landscape on the picture plane. In his translation of Du Fresnoy's The Art of Painting, John Dryden likened a picture's composition to a machine, because both are an assembling of many parts that need to agree with one another.[76] While invention required genius and taste, the rules governing composition were more specifically laid out in art manuals and following them was similar to following a recipe. Some writers suggested that the first step in composition

should be the study of the works of other artists in order to hone one's skills and to find suitable models to follow in one's own work. For artists who were not certain about where to look for compositional guidance, Benjamin Ralph suggested they read "...the best authors who have laid down rules for the attainment of art scientifically, and given their judgment upon the performances of the greatest painters."[77] Reynolds also recommended the study of previous works of art, but warned against relying too heavily on them when developing a composition.[78] Instead, he advised the artist to work his image up

> ...to a kind of enthusiasm, till in a degree he perceives the whole event, as it were, before his eyes, when, as quick as lightening, he gives his rough sketch on paper or canvas...After a painter has made a sketch from his idea only, he may be allowed to look at the work of his predecessors for dresses, ornaments, etc., of the times he intends to represent.[79]

This approach enabled artists to avoid borrowing too extensively from existing sources.

Thus, in order to compose a work properly, artists needed to study works of art from the Renaissance, particularly, as we have seen, the art of Raphael, Michelangelo, and Correggio. They needed to be familiar with famous works of literature like Shakespeare and Milton. And most importantly, artists also should have had an intricate knowledge of antique statuary, painting and literature. Drawing on all of these diverse sources, an artist could not only rival the work of his predecessors, but he could improve on it because he benefited from a vaster store of knowledge. West often borrowed the visual sources that were available to him, including prints, paintings and sculpture. Sometimes he utilized an entire composition from a painting or print, presumably because the placement of figures and setting matched his own needs. At other times he quoted from one aspect of another work of art. This latter kind of artistic quotation often

lent credibility or particular meaning to a painting, as in West's use of a depiction of Christ's death as a model for Wolfe's demise. Although most of West's compositional drawings are not known to us today, evidence of his borrowing from other sources is often easily seen in his finished paintings.

As we have seen, West based his first effort at historical composition, The Death of Socrates, on an engraving by Gravelot, but even after three years of study in Italy, West turned to Gravelot at least one more time. His Death of Epaminondas from 1773, painted after his career as a history painter in England was established, is closely related in almost all matters of composition to Gravelot's engraving of the scene in Rollin's Ancient History, Volume IV.[80] While West's earliest pictures were largely neoclassical in style, his later works were painted in a romantic manner. Almost apocalyptic in nature, these more painterly works were created to appeal to the viewer's emotions. West's Death on the Pale Horse, the final version of which was completed three years prior to his death in 1817, was largely informed by Peter Paul Rubens' The Lion Hunt, a print of which West owned.[81] Both pictures depict a chaotic scene that includes a figure in billowing drapery atop a rearing horse, and other figures either trampled under the animal's hooves or attempting to fight with swords. Another famous example of West's direct borrowing from a previous work is the portrait of his wife and son, Mrs. West and Raphael West, of 1770, modeled after Raphael's Madonna della Sedia, a picture West had copied when a student in Italy.[82] For the most part, West did not rely too heavily on specific works of art for compositional inspiration. Reynolds encouraged artists to become familiar with the work of eminent masters, but warned not to consult them while

actually preparing a composition because their presence could "prevent a proper independent exertion of the mind."[83]

As most writers of eighteenth-century art manuals recommended, the majority of West's initial compositional drawings are small, seemingly quickly executed studies in black chalk. Charcoal or black chalk was the most popular media for preliminary drawings such as these because marks could be rubbed away when an artist changed his mind about the composition.[84] Interestingly, some writers, including Reynolds, Du Fresnoy and Hodson, did not advocate drawing the initial sketches.[85] Rather, they encouraged artists to paint their initial sketches in order to improve their skills in coloring. Early on in his career, particularly as a self-taught artist in America, West seems to have been more comfortable, even in a picture's preliminary stages, with painting rather than drawing. Shortly after West's arrival in Italy in 1760, his mentor, Anton Raphael Mengs, asked the young American to draw a portrait of his friend, a Mr. Robinson. West, admitting to Robinson he had never learned to draw, was afraid he could not "produce any sketch like those made by the other students; but that he could paint a little."[86] West chose to paint his friend's portrait instead of drawing it, and the final product allegedly met with so much approbation Mengs told West he had "mastered the mechanical part of his art."[87] An examination of West's methods once he arrived in London, however, indicate he soon adopted the more traditional method of utilizing preparatory drawings. By 1797, in a lecture before the Royal Academy, West asserted that drawing was the basis of everything in art.[88]

A fine example of one of West's initial compositional drawings is his Agrippina with Her Children Going through the Roman Camp (Figure 3.8). The subject of the

picture, which West later worked up into a finished washed sketch, now in a private collection, is Agrippina's procession out of the Roman military camp which housed her husband's troops (Figure 3.9). Here the troops, repentant about a rebellion they had planned against her husband, change their minds and beg her and her entourage to stay. In spite of the abbreviated style of the drawing, the essential elements of the final composition are already evident. A pregnant Agrippina, carrying her baby, is followed by a group of women. This group forms the focal point of both the initial drawing and the final washed sketch, although West moved the heroine from slightly left of center to just right of center in the final washed sketch. The soldiers who surround Agrippina appear as no more than circular forms in the sketch, but in the final wash West included several diagonal lines to the composition's left to indicate the soldier's outstretched arms and two flags. West's early drawing appears as no more than a rough, short-hand guide to the final composition. This kind of quick notation was precisely what was recommended to begin composing a picture. Gerard de Lairesse, whose treatise on painting was first published in London in 1738, explained that only a few strokes were necessary to mark out the most salient objects in a picture.[89] He described the first sketch as, "Far in advanced in general, but little in particulars; design is as yet no more than as if a person, standing on an eminence, or the top of a steeple, were viewing in the open country, as a soldier observes his troops."[90] Richardson described the first sketches as not being intended to express more than the pictures general ideas, and that

> ...any incorrectness in the figures or perspective and the like, are not to be esteemed as faults; exactness was not the idea--the sketch may show a noble thought, and be executed with a great spirit, so it may be said to be well-drawn.[91]

Some writers suggested that all of these early drawings should be kept in a sketchbook so the artist could continually return to his original idea in order to refine it further.[92] Several of West's sketchbooks survive today and he often utilized them for initial compositional notations.[93]

Given the sketchy quality of West's initial Agrippina drawing, it is remarkable how many details of figural placement and posture he was able to capture, as well as how closely the finished work resembles the sketch in matters of composition and figural arrangement. For example, the positions of the three women's heads to the right of Agrippina, as well as their slumped postures, are clearly discernable in the drawing. It was believed that a truly gifted artist was able to imagine the scene in his head almost completely before making the first stroke of his pencil. This aspect of invention was useful in the composition of a work because the real creativity took place in the artist's mind. To the eighteenth-century artist, the closeness in composition from West's early drawings to his finished works would have reflected his level of innate talent. West himself always believed that composition was his strongest gift. In 1803, as he retouched his 1783 canvas, Moses Striking the Rock, West showed Joseph Farington several drawings he had begun at different periods. Farington recalled that West "said he knew as much of Composition when he was 26 years old as now, but his judgment in heightening, & of effect is better."[94]

In spite of his West's confidence in his compositional skills, he sometimes executed more than one drawing of this type in preparation for a picture. Often these, like his Agrippina with Her Children Going Through the Roman Camp (Figure 3.10), now in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, are slightly more finished than his initial

drawing. Moreover, in these intermediary compositional studies he often used pen rather than chalk or pencil, presumably to achieve a higher level of finish. In this way, West could work out the details of figural placement not allowed by the smaller charcoal or chalk studies.[95] Unlike the earlier Pierpont-Morgan sketch, the Philadelphia Agrippina was composed in a vertical format that allowed West to focus on the central portion of the composition. As evidenced in the small chalk study (Figure 3.8), West's first conception of the subject placed Agrippina and her child separate from her followers, seemingly leading an entourage as she did in his earlier renowned canvas, The Landing of Agrippina at Brundusium with the Ashes of Germanicus (Figure 3.1). The focus of this group behind Agrippina is a group of three women and in the Philadelphia drawing, West eliminated the woman on the trio's left and placed the figure of Agrippina there in her stead. In the final washed sketch, he maintained this grouping, but placed Agrippina to the left of her companions rather than to the right. He highlighted the women by using a light colored wash and separated them spatially from the two groups of figures to either side of them. Incidentally, West's three-part composition here echoes the advice he gave Thomas Lawrence in 1796, when he asserted there should always be three points in a picture.[96] This tighter composition allows the three women, who now stand in the center of the picture plane, to become the focal point of the picture. By emphasizing the central group of women, West followed the advice of Du Fresnoy and subsequent writers, who recommended that a composition should always be balanced while not appearing too symmetrical. Moreover, although he included several groups of figures, he maintained one principal focal point, achieved by not overcrowding the main figure, a technique recommended by Du Fresnoy.[97]

In one of West's sketchbooks now at the Yale Center for British Art, the artist drew an initial study for Moses Receiving the Laws, an oil sketch that was to be worked up into a larger painting for the King's chapel at Windsor Castle (Figures 3.11 and 3.12). In this small pencil drawing, Moses appears suspended in mid-air in the midst of a circle of billowing clouds while startled onlookers, most of whom are on their knees, gaze up at the prophet in wonderment. The dark clouds surrounding Moses are configured almost exactly as they were laid out in the drawing, and the white, diagonally placed cloud on which Moses seems to stand makes up the lower left of the cloud circle in both works. As in his Agrippina pictures, West chose one focal point for emphasis that he separates from the remaining figures. Moses alone occupies the upper half of the picture plane and is literally framed by clouds and backlit by a mystical light.

The composition recalls Raphael's The Transfiguration, of 1518-20, the painting that inspired John Singleton Copley's The Ascension, of 1775.[98] In Raphael's work, the figure of Jesus is suspended in a similar manner to West's Moses. Physically and metaphorically, both prophets exist on a higher visual plane than the other figures. West and other artists of his generation considered Raphael's greatest strength as an artist to be the distribution and expression of his figures.[99] This was particularly important because according to eighteenth-century thought, diversity was required in the attitudes of individuals forming the groups around the principal figures. This could be accomplished through varying the attitudes, gender, and ages of the individuals who make up a crowd, and by the placement and posture of each figure. For example, it was specifically advised that one or more figures should be turned away from the viewer.[100] West planned on this aspect of his composition even in his earliest sketch. In the foreground,

the two figures to the left and right of center have their backs to the viewer, while the profiled squatting figure in the center foreground raises his arms to Moses in a manner that almost ushers the viewer into the picture plane. The placement of this important figure is already in place in the Yale sketchbook. The figure to the right of this man is almost identical to his counterpart in the earlier drawing, even down to the drapery folds. The greatest change West made from the early study to the finished one is the reorientation of the figure in the left foreground. Instead of leaning inward, as he does in the Yale drawing, he leans outward in the later composition. The result is a more dynamic Baroque composition with outward thrust rather than a more symmetrical, circular arrangement.

Sometimes, when West was not satisfied with his placement of figures in a drawing, he would cut the figures out of the drawing and reattach them in another configuration. His pen and ink wash entitled Christ Bound (Figure 3.13), a preliminary study for the never realized canvas, Christ in the Hall of Caiaphas, depicts Christ in a submissive attitude accompanied by a Roman soldier to his left. West had originally placed the soldier to Christ's right, then cut the drawing in half and reversed their positions. Evidently he preferred the figures' original placement, for in an 1814 gouache and oil sketch of the subject, Christ is on the soldier's left (Figure 3.14). Cutting out and reattaching figures in a preparatory study was a technique West used several times.[101] Once West had composed an effective figural grouping, he sometimes used it more than once. For example, he may have adapted the Christ figure in his Christ Rejected of 1814 for the one that appears in Christ in the Hall of Caiaphas. This same Christ, which first appeared in the 1811 oil sketch for Christ Rejected, is also seen in a small compositional

drawing called Christ Bound with a Group of Soldiers. This black chalk study may be related to an 1819 wash study for a never realized picture entitled, Peter's Denial of Christ.[102] It is interesting to note West's use of the same figure in different contexts over an eight-year period, from 1811 to 1819. This may reflect West's practice of continually reworking earlier drawings, sketches and canvases, as well as revisiting previous themes.[103]

In addition to blocking in large areas of a composition, the generalized, monochromatic nature of compositional drawings allowed an artist to plan for the chiaroscuro of a particular picture from the earliest stages. Drawings done specifically to explore a picture's light and shadow contrasts were often more abstractly rendered than compositional studies. John Singleton Copley wrote his brother from Rome in 1775 describing how he determined, through loose drawings, the chiaroscuro of The Ascension, even before he decided on figural placement.[104] Artists often used a medium colored paper and rendered highlights in white chalk and shadows in black. A fine example of one of West's chiaroscuro studies is The Vision of St. Anthony of Padua (Figure 3.15), a work in preparation of a painting of the same name for William Beckford, and now unlocated.[105] In the drawing, which was done on brown paper, the figure of St. Anthony kneels in monk's garb before an altar. Rays of heavenly light, rendered in white chalk, stream from the upper right hand corner of the picture. Also highlighted in white chalk is the figure of a baby, presumably the infant Jesus, whom St. Anthony receives into his arms. St. Anthony's face and neck appear to be reflecting this heavenly light. Strokes of white chalk have been dabbed in other areas of the composition as well, including the top of the altar, the surface of the clouds that are

suspended over Jesus at the altar, and various unreadable surfaces in the picture's lower left hand corner. In this way, West balanced the composition by distributing lighter areas throughout the picture plane.

While chiaroscuro helped in balancing compositions, it also could create interest in a picture by emphasizing its principal parts. Most manuals advised that in any given picture there must not be two equal areas of light and that the principal figure should receive a stronger light and shadow than any other aspect of the scene.[106] Here, the infant Jesus and a light source to his immediate rear become the focal points of the picture as they are rendered in the highest concentration of white. From behind Jesus, the light source radiates outward and gradually weakens just past St. Anthony's head. The fact that most of the picture is in shadow provides a stark contrast to Jesus' mystical appearance. The use of large dark areas punctuated by dramatic points of light was a compositional device advocated by Edmund Burke for evoking exalted emotions in his landmark treatise, A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, published in 1756. In this stark setting, such a raking light emphasized St. Anthony's surprise confrontation with Jesus' appearance and was likely to evoke an equally strong emotional response in the viewer. This style is also reminiscent of Caravaggio's striking religious pictures of the seventeenth century. Grose Evans identified such pictures by West as examples of his "Dread Manner," and according to Evans, West's dramatic use of chiaroscuro played an important role in provoking an observer's reaction to a picture.[107] Other drawings that might be considered chiaroscuro studies are the more finished monochromatic oil, ink and wash sketches West executed in preparation for some of his large religious pictures, particularly those intended for

Windsor Chapel.[108] Through the years, these sketches were included in annual Royal Academy exhibitions.

In addition to working up sketches for exhibition, West often used these sketches for transferring his designs onto canvas, usually a much larger format. For example, at an 1839 sale of West's works which included his sketch for Christ in the Hall of Caiaphas, the auction catalogue claimed that the never realized painting after this sketch was originally intended to be over twenty feet long.[109] Jonathan Richardson urged artists to complete highly finished studies in preparation for a canvas, for the more detailed the drawings and sketches were, the easier it was to paint the subject.[110] West acknowledged that the more firmly a work was established before the painting began, the quicker it was to complete. In April of 1810, West told Joseph Farington that he completed Christ Showing a Little Child as the Emblem of Heaven in only twenty days because his design was decided upon prior to his beginning to paint the subject.[111] He completed a small compositional study in preparation for the picture, as well as an oil sketch of the same subject that was the same size as the final painting.[112] The compositional study, which closely resembles the final painting, was squared for transfer and was evidently used as the basis for his oil sketch of the subject, an exercise that took him four or five days.[113] West almost always painted sketches for his larger pictures and it was not unusual for him to take about ten days to complete them.[114] Once a design was transferred onto canvas, however, West sometimes had to make alterations, especially if the sketch were a significantly different size than the final painting. When he painted Christ Rejected in 1814, he was compelled to add figures in order to fill up the empty spaces that were created when transferring a 2-1/2 x 3-1/2 foot sketch onto a 16 x 20 feet canvas.[115]

When comparing West's grisaille study, The Last Supper, of around 1784 (Figure 3.16) with the version in oil painted for George III (Figure 3.17), it becomes evident that the light and dark contrasts in the chiaroscuro sketch are far more stark than those of the painting. Jesus literally glows, and the light that emanates from him reflects off of his surrounding disciples. The only unlit face at the table is that of Judas who sits in profile closest to the viewer. In the final canvas, now at the Tate Gallery in London, Judas is rendered almost entirely in shadow, but West softened the contrast between him and his companions. Because West exhibited this and similar grisaille sketches at the Royal Academy exhibitions, calling them chiaroscuro studies for larger paintings intended for the King's chapel, the public was introduced to the majority of West's religious paintings for the King. Moreover, it was thought by some of his contemporaries that his exhibited sketches underlined the importance of preliminary studies in the painting process and provided an appropriate model for other artists to follow.[116]

While these oil sketches that West exhibited were worked up to a fairly finished degree, as we have seen, his small chalk studies appear almost abstract, and in some cases, are difficult to read. This is due to the fact that the principals of chiaroscuro could be applied to all objects in nature equally, and so West emphasized areas of light and shade exclusively, ignoring other aspects of the composition that might provide clues to the picture's subject. In other words, within one picture in a study of this type, both figures and inanimate objects might be given equal emphasis. According to William Dunlap, on at least one occasion West lectured on the subject in his studio, and advised the same rules could be applied to a drawn circle, a portrait head and a landscape:

> He was at work in the room where I had first seen him, and his subject this time was a landscape, a scene in Windsor forest... He elucidated the doctrine of light

> and shadow by drawing a circle on an unoccupied canvas, and touching in the light with white chalk, the shadow by black, and leaving the cloth for the half-tint and reflexes. He then pointed to a head in the room to show that this theory was there in practice, and turning to the landscape said that even the masses of foliage on the oak tree there represented were painted on the same principle.[117]

West's lecture to Dunlap and his fellow students reflects the older artist's systematic approach to his craft. Although primarily a history painter, and considered somewhat old-fashioned by the end of his career, West's ability to clearly explain his methods was widely respected by younger artists. Even the landscape painter John Constable appreciated the concise and accurate analysis of a painting West was capable of giving. When his picture Flatford Mill was rejected by the Academy, probably around 1811, Constable took the painting to West for advice.[118] After giving the young landscapist words of encouragement, West took a piece of chalk

> ...and showed Constable how he might improve the chiaroscuro by some additional touches of light between the stems and branches of the trees, saying, "Always remember, sir, that light and shadow never stand still."[119]

In order to achieve this desired sense of movement in a landscape, de Piles advised artists to avoid over-finishing their pictures by using "lively strokes," a stylistic characteristic evident in the landscapes of both Constable and West.[120] Although Constable was later critical towards West's historical canvases, in an Academy lecture, using a print of West's historic landscape, The Reception of Telemachus and Mentor by Calypso after their Shipwreck, he complimented West's "beautiful combination of landscape and figures."[121]

West's ability to understand the movement of light and shadow in nature may have been due to his study of chiaroscuro through the camera obscura and it is through his drawings that we find the most compelling evidence he sometimes used this

compositional aid. After his "invention" of the instrument while still a young man in Pennsylvania, West apparently continued to use the device throughout his career. The camera's ability to frame a scene provided artists with a useful model for transforming a three-dimensional view into a two-dimensional work of art. Moreover, topographical accuracy was assured when he made use of the camera obscura for tracing. The instrument also enhanced and highlighted a scene or object's color, light, and shadow. Art collector and connoisseur Horace Walpole, wrote his friend Reverend William West about his new camera obscura called Storer's Accurate Delineator: "Sir Joshua Reynolds and West are gone mad with it, and it will be their own faults if they do not excel Rubens in light and shade, and all the Flemish masters in truth."[122] As Walpole's letter suggests, it was widely accepted by West's contemporaries that through the camera the effects of light and shadow in nature were intensified.[123] In his 1813 landscape painting manual, Samuel Prout noted that the "camera obscura affords the finest examples of light, shadow and color. Indeed, no effects can be painted that are more beautiful than in the camera obscura."[124] In his Methode pour Apprendre le Dessein of 1755, Charles Antoine Jombert noted that the reflected light of the camera "rendered shadows visible and pleasantly coloured, thus shadows are rendered darker by it than they would be naturally."[125] Moreover, Dr. W. Hooper, in his 1782 treatise on optical effects, observed that the motion of objects and their relationship to light and shadow are more easily studied through a camera because color is intensified through a camera lens:

> ...thus we see the animals walk, run or fly, the clouds float in the air, the leaves quiver, the waves roll, etc., and all in strict conformity to the laws of nature."[126]

Evidently West utilized the camera to study such natural effects because he later recalled through Galt that his second attempt at history painting, the now unlocated Trial of

Susannah, was superior to The Death of Socrates in composition partially because of his use of the camera.[127]

In addition to the study of chiaroscuro, there is evidence in some of West's landscape drawings that he used the camera in aid of his draftsmanship. West spent many months outside of London at various intervals and he took pleasure in recording the English countryside in both sketches and paintings. His Parsonage House at Henstead (Figure 3.18) is a picturesque view of a rustic farmhouse and its dependent buildings at the edge of a small pond. Clues that West used the camera here are found in the delineation of the architecture and the background landscape. Like many artists using the device, West probably traced particular basic elements like the buildings first, while additional picturesque features were added in a free hand. As we have already seen, West often sketched out individual elements of a picture that he later pieced together, but the marked contrast between the style of various elements within this drawing is a clue that he traced part of this scene. The buildings in this picture were precisely rendered in even pencil lines, then traced or "fixed" in ink, a style that contrasts sharply with the sketchy and choppy pencil strokes West used to render the remainder of the drawing, like the cow and milkmaid who visits with a young farmhand on the foreground water bank. While the drawing's architectural elements appear accurately proportioned and evenly drawn, the scale of the foreground figures is inconsistent and unnatural. For example, the cow is far too large compared to the milkmaid and her companion, and the kneeling figure on the far shore is out of proportion. The feathery, sketch-like quality of the foreground figures, typical of West's graphic style as a whole, contrasts sharply with the sure and flowing graphic and ink lines of the house and barn which the artist laid down

accurately, with seeming confidence, and without continually lifting the drawing implement. This contrast in style is also evident in West's Landscape Study with a Tool Shed (Figure 3.19). Drawn at Windsor Great Part, the study depicts a rural setting including a shed with an array of scrap wood, and tools spread at the foot of a gnarled tree. A meadow can be seen in the middle distance. To complete this farm-like setting, West included a grazing horse or donkey at the far left. The hut and tree of this signed drawing are similar in style to the buildings in the Parsonage House at Henstead (Figure 3.18). These elements in both drawings are formed of sure, confident, and seemingly accurate lines that differ from the sketchy quality of the majority of West's drawings. It is this linear quality and precision in detail and scale that point to his use of the camera here.

The tree and hut in Landscape Study with a Tool Shed appear in an oil painting, now in the Queen's collection, Landscape Representing the Country Near Windsor (Figure 3.20), from around 1785. West transformed the picturesque, rustic scene of the drawing into a more significant landscape painting by widening the scope of the view, adding peasants and pigs in the foreground, and including a depiction of the king's hunting party in the background. The appearance of the house and tree here indicate how West used his preliminary landscape studies in aid of his paintings. In preparation for the painting, West executed at least five drawings, in varying degrees of finish, of gnarled trees.[128] One of these, Gnarled Tree Trunk, signed and dated 1784, is a close study of Herne's Oak in Windsor Park, the particular tree mentioned in Shakespeare's The Merry Wives of Windsor (Figure 3.21).[129] Rather than simply transfer the tree from Landscape Study with Tool Shed (Figure 3.19) to the painting as he did the shed itself, West

combined elements from his various tree studies to compose the two gnarled trees that appear in the final canvas. West explained his approach to creating landscape compositions to Joseph Farington in 1810. Although he often painted specific sites, he was apt to omit various elements, like trees, that tended to interrupt a principal view. As in his epic compositions of General Wolfe and Lord Nelson, his landscapes were painted to "give the true character of the scene with all its magnificence," and not to simply copy nature exactly as it appeared.[130]

West's love of nature and his enjoyment in drawing and painting outdoor scenes is evident in his drawings. The individuality of each of his gnarled tree studies point to close, on-the-spot observations and as a result, they are finished works in and of themselves, and anticipate the plein-air landscape studies of the early nineteenth-century naturalists like John Constable. He also composed intimate chalk studies of tree-lined meadows and in these he captured the natural groupings of trees and how they relate to each other compositionally in nature. At least one of these, Trees in a Park (Figure 3.22), was chalked on the reverse for transfer. The drawing is a straightforward study of several trees sketched in black chalk in varying degrees of finish. It may seem odd that West would go to the trouble to transfer the exact arrangement of these trees from such a simple drawing, but it was this precision of naturalistic detail that attracted artists such as Constable to his landscapes. Of course, the process of combining varied visual sources into one composition could lend an artificiality or stiffness to West's final picture, often obscuring the vibrancy and naturalism of many of his preparatory drawings. As an academician and a traditionalist, West was not likely to bypass the individual studies required for conventional methods of composition.

In addition to his studies of the chiaroscuro of a composition as a whole in both figural works and landscapes, West also studied the effects that light and shade would have on individual figures within his pictures. To do this, he executed the bulk of his more detailed figural studies in chalk on colored paper with highlights in white in order to get a good sense of light and dark contrasts, a technique widely adapted by artists of the period.[131] At the Royal Academy this medium was often used for drawing from both the life and the antique.[132] He produced a number of detailed studies using this technique to experiment with the chiaroscuro of hands and pieces of drapery. His drawing of a hand holding open a book (Figure 3.23) is a study for the hand of his portrait of Mrs. Peter Beckford (Figures 3.6). While his compositional sketch of Mrs. Beckford (Figure 3.5) is loosely drawn and is not a vehicle for exploring details of anatomy, these more detailed studies allowed West to focus on areas he needed to work out more thoroughly before proceeding with paint. Lairesse is one writer who recommended the practice of working out details of larger sketches in these smaller chalk sketches on colored paper and West seems to have used this technique often.[133]

The necessity of composing individual studies in preparation of formatting a picture was especially important in aid of figural placement, particularly in the realm of history painting. Artists were strongly advised to investigate, through careful research and study sketches, the proper attitude of each figure within a narrative picture. In any given composition the figure's clothing and actions should represent the story being told and any lack of conformity on the part of a figure was unwelcome. de Piles argued that an artist who managed his expressions well,

> ...will not only make them relate to the parts of the face, but also to those of the whole body, and will expose them in such manner, that even the most inanimate objects shall agree with the general expression of the subject.[134]

De Piles does not put all the pressure on the artist, however. As important as the artist's performance was the spectator's ability to understand and appreciate a subject.[135]

The study of a figure's features, attitude and gestures was called expression, and most writers agreed that mastery of expression was one of the most difficult aspects of composition. Leonardo da Vinci had previously suggested that painters should base their figures on the actions of the deaf who through necessity communicated their emotions through gestures.[136] As in other academic or theoretical treatises popular in West's lifetime, the theory of expression was codified in France in the seventeenth century where it was believed that natural laws governed an individual's response to emotional stimuli. The French artist Charles Le Brun was the foremost authority on expression and defined it as:

> ...the lively and natural resemblance of the things we are to represent...A piece cannot be perfect without Expression: it is what stamps the true characters of everything: it is by this we distinguish the nature of bodies; that figures seem to have motion; and whatever is feigned to be real.[137]

In his manual on the subject, entitled, A Method to Learn to Design the Passions, published in English in 1734, Le Brun provided visual examples of how facial features and bodily gestures reflected specific emotions. With line drawings and textual descriptions, he illustrated and described twenty different passions including, veneration, ecstasy, contempt, horror, fright, love, desire, hope, fear, jealousy, hatred, sadness, bodily pain, joy, weeping, laughter, anger, despair and rage. Based on Rene Descartes' earlier theories on the subject, Le Brun tried to demonstrate how each emotion, due to blood

flow and subsequent muscular response, had a specific effect on an individual's facial expression.[138]

West's drawings in aid of expression represent how complicated the correct depiction of an individual figure within a large canvas could be. Some of these studies are careful delineations of one or more body parts or facial expressions, while others attempted to capture a figure's motion or general attitude. It was recommended that the first expression studies should be quick, sketchy recordings of posture and/or movement.[139] Like early compositional studies, early drawings in aid of expression were often loose in technique and seemingly quickly executed. One of the best examples of drawings of this type is the sheet West did based on one of his many encounters with the Elgin marbles (Figure 3.24). The small chalk study contains four figural groupings in which each figure is rapidly executed in short, choppy strokes. According to the younger artist Benjamin Robert Haydon, West was interested in the statues only for their general attitudes and figural placement, foregoing any detailed studies of the works. In his autobiography, Haydon recalled that in 1808, while he was drawing the marbles, West entered the room saying, "Hah, Hah, Mr. Haydon, you are admitted, are you? I hope you and I can keep a secret."[140] Haydon recalled that West made drawings of the figures directly on canvas. While those studies do not survive, or have been painted over, West also drew quick figural notations based on the metope sculptures during that period. Haydon recalled with disdain West's general approach to the marbles:

> ...He did not draw the marbles and study their hidden beauties. He merely made a set of rattling compositions, taking the attitudes as models for his own inventions. This was not doing what I had done, investigating their principles deeply and studiously. West derived little benefit from this method, while in every figure I drew the principle was imbibed and inhaled forever.[141]

West's drawing of the Parthenon metopes does bear out Haydon's claims. The positions of the figures on the bottom left of the sheet resemble those on South Metope XXVII of a Lapith tackling a fleeing centaur while preparing to strike the beast with his outstretched right hand. The two figures to the immediate right can be linked to the Lapith fighting a centaur on South Metope VII.[142] West, seemingly not interested in recording the sculptures' antique qualities, or appreciating their inherent naturalism, replaces the relief fragments' missing heads limbs in order to get a clearer picture of their gestures and interaction.

West did a similar series of quick chalk drawings in preparation of his painting, Thetis Bringing the Armor to Achilles, painted for Thomas Hope in 1805 (Figure 3.2). The picture is based on a story from the nineteenth book of the Iliad and features a seated Achilles, brooding over his dead friend Patroclus as he receives a new set of armor from his mother, Thetis. Based on his preparatory drawings, West seems to have especially labored over the figure of Achilles who sits, legs apart, on a small chair next to Patroculus' bed. With one leg supported by a low stool, and the other extended to his right, Achilles supports his head in his left hand while his left elbow rests on the bed. His right arm crosses in front of his chest, allowing his right hand to hold lightly Patroculus' arm. In a small, quickly executed chalk study, he repeated the hero's pose six times (Figure 3.25). In one version, Achilles' right arm is outstretched, echoing the position of his right leg, while in another his right arm is tightly drawn across his chest while his left arm rests near his groin. The pose West finally decided upon is the largest pictured here, although the incline of Achilles' head and position of his right arm do not exactly correspond with the finished picture. This pose, worked up to a higher degree of finish

than the smaller drawings, allowed West to explore the strength of Achilles, exemplified in his muscular, outstretched leg. At the same time, the figure is cautious and morose, indicated by his folded right arm, while his left elbow, resting on the slain hero in the final picture, draws attention to the cause of Achilles' distress.

Once West had determined Achilles' general attitude and posture, he began a series of more detailed studies of the figure. In a chalk study of Achilles' torso, West did not execute details of the figure's face and legs, and focused instead on the placement of his arms and hands (Figure 3.26). Because of the specificity of Achilles' pose, it is likely that West used a model to achieve anatomical accuracy and naturalism of the torso. Artists were advised by art manuals to base all nude figures in a picture upon life models, while draped figures could be gotten from lay figures. If a model were not available, an artist could pose in front of a mirror and take the study from his own image.[143] Although this figure may have been drawn from a live model, the circular markings on his face indicate that West used a then-common formula for achieving ideal proportions in the human figure. Treating the head as no more than an oval, West divides the skull vertically and horizontally with faint chalk lines.[144] Additional chalk studies for the legs of Achilles also exist and complement the torso study (Figure 3.27).[145] In these drawings West focused on the musculature of Achilles' thighs and calves, as well as the placement of his feet. He did not include the low stool on which Achilles rests his left foot in the painting, but accounted for its slightly elevated position. Interestingly, the legs for Achilles closely resemble the legs in a plate in the academic drawing book for use by Royal Academy students.[146] West's piecemeal approach in preparing for the painting of

the Achilles canvas echoes the academic teaching practices that were so criticized during the period by Haydon and other younger artists.

In addition to aspects of figural placement and chiaroscuro that needed to be explored in preparation of a picture, the artist had to establish, through detailed sketches, the attitudes and expressions of individual figures within a picture. Not only was it necessary for the attitudes and clothing of figures to conform to the picture's narrative and historical content, they should also create interest for the viewer. According to Du Fresnoy, diversity in the attitudes of a group of figures was necessary. He wrote:

> Man's changeful race, the sport of chance and time,
> Varies no less in aspect than in clime;
> Mark well the difference, and let each be seen
> Of various age, complexion, hair, and mein.[147]

In creating his large historical canvases, West used the art of Raphael as his model, for he believed the Renaissance master was the most accomplished practitioner of expression. Other artists shared this view and it was considered one of a picture's most important attributes if a variety of emotions could be portrayed successfully. When West painted his large canvas, Christ Rejected, of 1814, he produced a catalogue describing his intentions. In a paragraph headed, "Object of the Artist" he deals with the issue of expression.[148] He explained that he purposefully included several incidents in the picture specifically to contrast the meekness and suffering of Christ, and claimed, "The delineation of nearly the whole scale of human passions, from the bases to those which partake most of the divine nature, has thus been attempted."[149] For example, the grandiose gestures of the priests and church Elders contrast with Christ's tied hands and meek, down turned head. In his large painting, Christ Healing the Sick, painted in 1815 for the Pennsylvania Hospital in Philadelphia, West included the figure of a boy whom he

described as a "demoniac" who represented "most of the maladies which were healed by Our Saviour."[150] The figure of the boy, then, not only represented an individual person, but also served as an allegory for physical and mental illnesses in general.

The representation of a larger meaning through an individual figure was not only common in historical works of the period, it was desired. It was for this reason that Le Brun codified a range of emotions in his A Method to Learn to Design the Passions, and West and other artists consulted this text for guidance in forming their figures. Le Brun's text included a series of line drawings illustrating the appropriate facial expressions for representing specific emotions, and he explained the physiological reasoning behind his claims. For Le Brun, the eyebrow was the most telling feature of the face for revealing the passions. Although the pupil of the eye can indicate an underlying agitation, the nature of man's discomfort may not be evident. On the other hand, the eyebrows play a dominant role in depicting and interpreting the specificity of a particular emotion.[151] In a letter to the writer and critic, Uvedale Price, from 1797, West voiced agreement with Le Brun's assertions about the eyebrows' role in expression. In this letter, West maintained that an eye without eyebrows "cannot mark the emotions of [a person's] soul, no more than the eye of the insect can mark its resentments or opinions." To West, it was the movement of "an eyebrow, which in all the animal creation, is one of the deciding factors which [determines] pleasure; pain, or anger."[152]

West's agreement with Le Brun's treatise went beyond a theoretical application. As Charles Mitchell has pointed out, at least two figures in The Death of General Wolfe appear to have been based on Le Brun's drawings.[153] The face of the grenadier standing at the far right of the picture was likely modeled after Le Brun's depiction of compassion.

Both figures are in profile, their eyes downcast with wrinkled foreheads and slightly opened mouths. Robert Bromley's four-volume history of the fine arts, published in 1793, celebrated this picture for its epic qualities and the author drew particular attention to this young, compassionate soldier. The grenadier's compassion was so strong that he has not even noticed his fallen hat on the ground at his feet, evidently blown off his head by a wind, perhaps the same wind that ruffles his hair. To Bromley, West further emphasized or illustrated the expression of his figures through details such as this.[154] Moreover, General Wolfe's raised eyebrows, upturned eyes, and slightly open mouth closely resemble Le Brun's examples of bodily pain. Le Brun described the face of the individual in pain as having eyebrows that come so close together near the bridge of the nose that they almost obscure the eyes' pupils. The nostrils should appear to rise up, forming wrinkles in the cheeks.[155] Curiously, Le Brun's depiction of bodily pain closely resembles that of ecstasy. His illustration of ecstasy features an upturned head and slightly opened mouth, similar in position to that of Wolfe. It could be argued that Wolfe is in the process of leaving this pain-filled world and entering another, more blissful one.

In addition to Le Brun's important text, West could have found a visual model for Wolfe's transitional spiritual state from Cesare Ripa's Iconology, first published in Italy in 1593 and translated into English by the British architect George Richardson in 1779.[156] Richardson's version of Ripa's text was dedicated to the King and its numerous subscribers included West. By the time of its publication it had been translated into seven languages. Ripa's text, which was recommended by Winckelmann, explained and defined a number of traditional iconographical and allegorical symbols, as well as saintly attributes. It also covered a wide range of expressions and bodily gestures, including that

of spiritual conversion. Wolfe's upturned eyes, which seem oblivious to his earthly surroundings, could have signified his soul's elevation to heaven as illustrated and defined by Ripa.[157] West included similar figures in several religious works, particularly in the subjects that feature heavenly apparitions hovering above earth-bound spectators. In his highlighted chalk study for The Ascension, of which he painted several versions, he depicted five upturned heads and three groups of prayerful hands (Figure 3.28). The heads closely resemble those of three of the many spectators beneath Jesus as he rises up through clouds towards heaven in West's 1782 canvas of the subject (Figure 3.29). Likewise, the clasped and upturned hands appear to have been precisely copied from the sketch for use in the final painting.

West's method of preparing for the actual painting of a work reflected his belief that once a painting's design was decided upon, much of the labor involved in art production was already complete. An examination of his preliminary graphic works reveals his adherence to the established Academic canon as it was passed down, mostly in numerous art treatises, from seventeenth-century France and Italy. Although West was essentially a traditional painter in terms of his artistic process, he was also at times remarkably innovative. Because drawings and sketches are an inherently immediate medium, the essence of West's artistic vision is most readily discovered there and they begin to illustrate why West was so popular amongst the general public during his lifetime. His research-like approach to many of his pictures resulted in an elevated emotional response in his viewers due to the immediacy of historical accuracy. His skills at invention led to his early and unprecedented popularity amongst both the public and connoisseurs. Even after his popularity waned amongst his colleagues, he continued to

appeal to a wide public audience through the emotional and nationalistic content of his 'epic' compositions and his students continued to recognize his abilities as an innovator. Samuel F. B. Morse recalled that while West may not have been a very good colorist, he excelled in the grandeur of his thought, saying, "Mr. West is to painting what Milton is to poetry."[158] Even an informed connoisseur like Sir George Beaumont believed that much of West's work contained "the true quality of art...that comprehensiveness and completeness which is found in the work of the great masters...Since the time of Le Brun there has been no artist to be compared with West."[159]

[1] Pevsner, pp. 190-242.

[2] The stages of designing a painting are repeated in a number of art manuals, including Du Fresnoy, p. 10, Lairesse, pp. 24-26, de Piles, p. 27, Hodson, p. 85, and Repton, p. 213, just to name a few.

[3] Susan Lambert, Drawing: Technique and Purpose, (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1981), p. 3.

[4] Ibid., p. 41.

[5] John Smith, p. 387.

[6] Chris Fischer, Fra Bartolommeo, (Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, 1990), p. 15.

[7] Benjamin Ralph, The School of Raphael: Or the Student's Guide to Expression in Historical Painting, (London: John Boydell, 1782), p. 5.

[8] Ayres, p. 54.

[9] For the purposes of clarity, hereafter, the term drawing will refer to studies done on paper in pencil or chalk, while the term sketch will be used to identify preparatory works done in wash or oil.

[10] Thomas Sully, Hints to Young Painters, (Philadelphia: J.M. Stoddart & Co., 1873), p. 47.

[11] Quoted in von Erffa and Staley, p. 353.

[12] The Last Supper, 1787, Oil on canvas, 19-1/2 x 27-1/2 inches, University of Virginia Museum of Art, Charlottesville, Virginia. Quoted in von Erffa and Staley, p. 355.

[13] The Last Supper, 1784, Oil on canvas, 72-1/4 x 109 inches, Tate Gallery, London and The Last Supper, 1786, Oil on canvas, 98 x 140-1/2 inches, Detroit Institute of Arts.

[14] Anthony Pasquin, Memoirs of the Royal Academicians; being an attempt to Improve the National Taste, (London, 1796), p. 75 and Judy Sund, "Benjamin West: A Scene from King Lear," Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts LVIII (1980), p. 134. West's patron William Beckford told Farington in 1797 that he wished West's paintings looked more like his sketches. See Martha Hamilton-Phillips, "Benjamin West and William Beckford: Some Projects for Fonthill," Metropolitan Museum Journal 15 (1981), p. 172.

[15] Allston to Charles Fraser, London, 25 August 1801, in Wright, p. 26.

[16] Richardson, p. 82.

[17] Mark M. Johnson, Idea to Image: Preparatory Studies from the Renaissance to Impressionism, (Cleveland Museum of Art, 1980), p. 9.

[18] Reynolds, p. 96.

[19] Ibid., p. 94.

[20] de Piles, p. 47.

[21] Ibid., pp. 21-29, 45-48.

[22] Allen Staley, "Portraits by Benjamin West," Antiques 136 (June 1989), p. 1458.

[23] Copley to Henry Pelham, Parma, 25 June 1775, in Guernsey Jones, p. 339. The Departure of Regulus from Rome, 1769, Oil on canvas, 88-1/2 x 120 inches, Queens's Collection, London.

[24] The surviving sketch is a small compositional study now in the collection of the Royal Academy. See von Erffa and Staley, p. 168.

[25] Thetis Bringing the Armor to Achilles, 1805, Oil on canvas, 96 x 70 inches, Location Unknown. See Von Erffa and Staley, p. 252.

[26] Farington, Sun. 9 June 1805, vol. 7, p. 2572.

[27] Du Fresnoy, p. 10.

[28] Hodson, p. 85.

[29] Morgan/Jouett, p. 92.

[30] Hodson, p. 89.

[31] de Piles, p. 21 and Hodson, p. 87.

[32] Christie, Catalogue of...Drawings, Prints and Books of Prints, Formed by the Late Benjamin West, Esq, July 1-6, 1820, Frick Reference Library, New York.

[33] Self Portrait, c. 1792, oil on panel, 40 x 52 in., London, Royal Academy of Arts and Self Portrait, 1793, oil on panel, 36 x 27-1/2 in., London, Society of Dilettanti.

[34] Benjamin West, The Death of Socrates, c. 1756, oil on canvas, 34 x 41 inches.

[35] Walch, p. 123.

[36] Galt, vol. 2, p. 12.

[37] David Watkin, Thomas Hope (1769-1831) and the Neo-Classical Idea, (London: John Murray, 1968), p. 45.

[38] Richardson, p. 17.

[39] Ibid., p. 68.

[40] For a full discussion of West's historical accuracy in this picture see Allen Staley, "Benjamin West's 'The Landing of Agrippina and Brundisium with the Ashes of Germanicus,'" Philadelphia Museum of Art Bulletin LXI (Fall 1965/Winter 1966): 10-19.

[41] The paintings are in the collection of Her Majesty the Queen. The largest and most significant of this series are: Edward III with the Black Prince after the Battle of Crecy, 1788, Oil on canvas, 113 x 176 inches; The Institution of the Order of the Garter, 1787, Oil on canvas, 113 x 176-1/2 inches; and Edward, the Black Prince, Receiving John, King of France, Prisoner, after the Battle of Poitiers, 1788, Oil on canvas, 113 x 177 inches.

[42] Jean Froissart, Chronicles of England, France and Spain, translated by Thomas Johnes, (London and New York: The Colonial Press, 1901).

[43] Roy Strong, Recreating the Past: British History and the Victorian Painter, (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1978), p. 81.

[44] Kraemer, pp. 29-30.

[45] Strong, pp. 79-85.

[46] Ibid., p. 81.

[47] Hamilton-Phillips, p. 162.

[48] Ibid., p. 164.

[49] Ibid., p. 161.

[50] Dunlap considered this picture to be one of West's best pictures. See History of the Rise and Progress, volume 1, pp. 98-101; It is also included in E. Hamilton, The English School, A Series of the Most Approved Productions in Painting and Sculpture Executed by British Artists, (London and Paris, 1831-32), volume 4, p. 280; and as late as 1867

Tuckerman mentioned the picture as one of West's best works. See Henry Tuckerman, Book of the Artists, (New York: G. P. Putnam & Sons, 1867), p. 100.

[51] Dunlap, History, p. 69-70.

[52] Ibid., p. 70.

[53] Quoted in von Erffa and Staley, p. 209.

[54] Alan D. McNairn, "Benjamin West and the Death of General Wolfe," Antiques 90 (November 1996), p. 679.

[55] Edgar Wind, "Penny, West and the 'Death of Wolfe,'" Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 10 (1947): 159-162 and Charles Mitchell, "Benjamin West's 'Death of General Wolfe' and the Popular History Piece," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 7 (1944): 20-33.

[56] Von Erffa and Staley, p. 212. Over ten years later West attempted to procure uniforms of the American army in aid of his never-realized series on the Revolutionary War. See Arthur S. Marks, "Benjamin West and the American Revolution," The American Art Journal VI (November 1974), pp. 16-17.

[57] Galt, vol. 2, pp. 88-89.

[58] von Erffa and Staley, p. 212 and Michael Pantazzi, "A Preliminary Study for Benjamin West's 'Death of General Wolfe,'" Drawing VII (May-June 1985), p. 2.

[59] For an insightful discussion of meaning in this picture see Dennis Montagna, "Benjamin West's The Death of General Wolfe: A Nationalist Narrative," The American Art Journal (Spring 1981), pp. 72-88.

[60] Ibid., pp. 77-80.

[61] The Death of Lord Nelson, 1806, Oil on canvas, 70 x 96 inches, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.

[62] Farington, Wed. 10 June 1807, vol. 8, p. 3064.

[63] Richardson, p. 225 and Solkin, p. 153.

[64] Montagna, p. 87.

[65] de Piles, p. 45.

[66] Quoted in Mitchell, "Benjamin West's 'Death of General Wolfe,'" p. 22 and Montagna, p. 86.

[67] Bromley, Robert Anthony, A Philosophical and Critical History of the Fine Arts, (London: Philanthropic-Press, 1793), volume 1, p. 57.

[68] Sir Anthony Van Dyck, The Lamentation, Oil on canvas, Alte Pinakothek, Munich. This similarity was first noted by Mitchell, "Benjamin West's 'Death of General Wolfe,'" p. 21. In 1763, prior to West's depiction of Wolfe, Edward Penny painted, Death of Wolfe, now in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, which features the fallen hero in a similar Christ-like guise.

[69] Allen Staley, "Benjamin West's The Landing of Agrippina at Brundisium with the Ashes of Germanicus," p. 14.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Pasquin, p. 76.

[72] T. S. R. Boase, "Illustrations of Shakespeare's Plays in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 10 (1947), p. 94.

[73] Sund, p. 128.

[74] Ibid., p. 131.

[75] It has been suggested that West took artistic license for this reason in his Lear and Cordelia of 1784. See von Erffa and Staley, p. 274.

[76] Dryden in Du Fresnoy, p. 80.

[77] Ralph, introduction, n.p.

[78] Reynolds, p. 95.

[79] Quoted in Northcote, vol. 1, pp. 55-56.

[80] Walch, p. 123. The Death of Epaminondas, 1773, Oil on canvas, 87-1/2 x 70-5/8 inches, Her Majesty the Queen, London.

[81] Death on the Pale Horse, 1817, Oil on canvas, 176 x 301 inches, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia. Grose Evans points to an even more direct relationship between West's Diomedes and his Horses Stopped by the Lightening of Jupiter of 1793 and Rubens' painting, The Defeat of Sennacherib, which was also engraved. See Gross Evans, p. 74. Von Erffa and Staley note the additional influence of Rubens' Wolf and Fox Hunt and Jacob Rothenberg, in his 1967 doctoral dissertation on the Elgin Marbles, suggests the influence of West's copy of the Horse of Selene from the pedimental sculptures from the Parthenon. See von Erffa and Staley, pp. 389-90 and

Jacob Rothenberg, *Descensus ad Terram*: The Acquisition and Reception of the Elgin Marbles, (Doctoral Dissertation, Columbia University, 1967; New York and London: Garland Press, 1977).

[82] Mrs. West and Raphael West, 1770, Oil on canvas, 36 inches in diameter, Utah Museum of Fine Arts, Salt Lake City, and Raphael, Madonna della Sedia, Oil on panel, 27-7/10 inches in diameter, Pitti Palace, Rome.

[83] Farington, Wed. 2 Aug. 1809, vol. 10, p. 3520.

[84] Lambert, p. 14.

[85] Reynolds' Annotations of Du Fresnoy, p. 74, Hodson, p. 87, and Malcolm Cormack, Oil on Water: Oil Sketches by British Watercolorists, (New Haven: Yale Center for British Art, 1986), p. 10.

[86] Galt, vol. 1, p. 119.

[87] Ibid., p. 122.

[88] Farington, Mon. 11 Dec. 1797, vol. 3, p. 943.

[89] Lairesse, pp. 26-27.

[90] Ibid., p. 27.

[91] Richardson, p. 83.

[92] Lairesse, p. 27.

[93] Some of West's sketchbooks are located at the Royal Academy in London, the Pennsylvania Historical Society in Philadelphia and at the Yale Center for British Art in New Haven.

[94] Farington, Fri. 18 November 1803, vol. 6, p. 2166.

[95] A similar pair of sketches are now located at the Pierpont-Morgan Library entitled, Esau Selling His Birthright for a Dish of Pottage. The smaller and presumably earlier sketch was executed in black chalk, while the more detailed composition is slightly larger and was drawn in brown ink on light brown prepared paper. See Kraemer, Plate 22, catalogues 33 and 34.

[96] Farington, Mon. 11 April 1796, vol. 2, p. 523.

[97] Du Fresnoy, p. 16.

[98] Raphael, The Transfiguration, 1518-20, Oil on panel, 159-1/2 x 109-1/2 inches, Pinacoteca Vaticana, Rome, and John Singleton Copley, The Ascension, 1775, Oil on canvas, 32 x 29 inches, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, bequest of Susan Green Dexter, in memory of Charles and Martha Babcock Armory.

[99] Reynolds, pp. 59-60, Guernsey Jones, pp. 43, 302.

[100] Du Fresnoy, p. 17.

[101] Kraemer, p. 55.

[102] Ibid.

[103] Farington, Wed. 10 June 1807, vol. 8, p. 3064; Sun. 29 Oct. 1815, vol. 13, p. 4725.

[104] Guernsey Jones, p. 297.

[105] Other examples of chiaroscuro drawings in a similar medium are The Rider on the White Horse, Black chalk, heightened with white, on blue-grey paper, 9-1/4 x 7 inches, and Sketch for a Last Judgment, Black and white chalk, on blue-grey paper, 5-15/16 x 11-7/8 inches, both at the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York.

[106] Du Fresnoy, p. 35 and Hodson, p. 89.

[107] Grose Evans, pp. 67, 80.

[108] See, for example, Christ Healing the Sick, c. 1780-81, Oil on canvas, 35-3/8 x 27-1/2 inches, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, England. Reproduced in von Erffa and Staley, p. 346, catalogue 335.

[109] von Erffa and Staley, p. 355.

[110] Richardson, p. 81.

[111] Farington, Fri. 6 April 1810, vol. 10, p. 3627.

[112] Christ Showing a Little Child as the Emblem of Heaven, pen and ink, 7-11/16 x 6-1/8 inches, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. The oil sketch is unlocated. See Von Erffa and Staley, p. 343.

[113]Farington, Fri. 6 April 1810, vol. 10, p. 3627.

[114] Ibid., Sat. 3 March 1804, vol. 6, p. 2259.

[115] Ibid., Wed. 22 July 1812, vol. 12, p. 4161.

[116] Ibid., Thurs. 21 April 1796, vol. 2, p. 527.

[117] Dunlap, History, vol. 1, pp. 258-59.

[118] Constable painted several versions of Flatford Mill and first exhibited the subject in 1812. It is possible that the work was rejected by the Academy in 1811 because West reportedly praised Constable's exhibited picture the following year. See Leslie Parris, Ian Fleming-Williams and Conal Shield, Constable: Paintings, Watercolours & Drawings, (London: The Tate Gallery, 1976), p. 80. Several years later, in 1814, Constable's works were criticized by Academicians, specifically because of their seeming lack of finish. Farington advised the young artist to study the finish of Claude's pictures before he began any subsequent landscape studies. See Graham Reynolds, Catalogue of the Constable Collection in the Victoria & Albert Museum, (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1960), p. 104.

[119] Quoted in Alberts, p. 364.

[120] de Piles, p. 32.

[121] R. B. Beckett, ed., John Constable's Discourses, (Suffolk Records Society, 1970), p. 68.

[122] Quoted in Ann Wilsher, "Horace Walpole, William Storer and the Accurate Delineator," History of Photography 4 (July 1980), p. 247. Moreover, Gilbert Stuart apparently examined one of West's optical devices in his Newman Street studio. Dunlap calls the instrument a camera lucida, (a small lens suspended on a short rod to aid in drawing) but since Gilbert Stuart had left London by 1788 and the camera lucida was not invented until 1806, it was likely some other optical device like the camera obscura or the Claude mirror. Dunlap, History, vol. 1, p. 87.

[123] Lairesse and Charles Jombert both discuss the intensified visual effects of nature through a camera. See Mary Sayer Hammond, The Camera Obscura: A Chapter in the Pre-History of Photography, (Ph.D. Dissertation, Ohio State University, 1986), p. 360.

[124] Samuel Prout, Rudiments of Landscapes in Progressive Studies, (London, 1813), p. 16.

[125] Quoted in Mary Hammond, p. 360.

[126] W. Hooper, M.D., Rational Recreations, in which the Principles of Numbers and Natural Philosophy are clearly and copiously elucidated, by a series of easy, entertaining, interesting experiments, (London, 1782), p. 25.

[127] Galt, vol.1, p. 78.

[128] Gnarled Tree Trunk, Brush and brown wash, over black chalk, on brown paper, 25-4/8 x 17-3/4 inches, Pierpont-Morgan Library, New York, Kraemer, plate 96, pp. 75-76;

Herne's Oak, in Windsor Little Park, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Gift in Memory of John H. Sturgis by His Daughters, in Kraemer, fig. 44, p. 76; Knotty, Gnarled Tree, Black chalk, 16 x 9-1/2 inches, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, Kraemer, plate 97, p. 76; Landscape with Gnarled Tree Trunk in Right Foreground, Black chalk on letter paper, 7-5/8 x 6-1/4 inches, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, Kraemer, p. 76;

[129] Kraemer, pp. 75-76.

[130] Farington, Sat. 30 June 1810, vol. 10, p. 3680.

[131] Lairesse, pp. 27-28.

[132] Anne Lyles, "The Landscape Drawings of Constable's Contemporaries: British Draughtsmanship c. 1790-1850," in Constable, a Master Draughtsman, (London: Dulwich Picture Gallery, 1994), p. 28.

[133] Lairesse, pp. 27-28.

[134] de Piles, p. 29.

[135] Ibid.

[136] Grose Evans, p. 31.

[137] Charles Le Brun, A Method to learn to Design the Passions, proposed in a Conference on their General and Particular Expression, Translated by John Williams, (London, 1734), pp. 11-12.

[138] Michel Gareau, Charles Le Brun: First Painter to King Louis XIV, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1992), p. 77.

[139] Lairesse, p. 27.

[140] Blunden, p. 90.

[141] Ibid., p. 110.

[142] The metopes are pictured in B. F. Cook, The Elgin Marbles, (London: British Museum Press, 1984, 1997), p. 28, figure 21 and p. 29, figure 22.

[143] Guernsey Jones, p. 298 and Postle, "The Artist's Model," p. 21.

[144] For a detailed discussion of how to draw the human face according to accepted canonical proportions see Hodson, pp. 18-19.

[145] See also Study for the Right Leg and Drapery of Achilles, Black chalk, 9-1/8 x 6-7/10 inches, Pierpont-Morgan Library, New York.

[146] Kraemer, p. 47.

[147] Du Fresnoy, p. 15.

[148] Christ Rejected, 1814, Oil on canvas, 200 x 260 inches, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia.

[149] Quoted in von Erffa and Staley, p. 359.

[150] Christ Healing the Sick, 1815, Oil on canvas, 120 x 180 inches, Pennsylvania Hospital, Philadelphia. von Erffa and Staley, p. 348.

[151] Gareau, p. 98.

[152] Benjamin West to Uvedale Price, London, 16 June 1797, Archives of American Art reel 24, frame 611, Washington, DC.

[153] Mitchell, "Benjamin West's 'Death of General Wolfe,'" p. 31

[154] Robert Bromley, A Philosophical and Critical History of the Fine Arts, Painting, Sculpture and Architecture, (London: Philanthropic Press, 1793), vol. 1, p. 61.

[155] Le Brun, p. 41.

[156] Cesare Ripa, Iconology: Or a Collection of Emblematical Figures, 2 volumes, translated by George Richardson, (London, 1779).

[157] Ibid., vol. 2, p. 318, plate XCVIII.

[158] Morse, p. 63.

[159] Farington, Mon. 5 June 1815, vol. 13, p. 1638; Quoted in Von Erffa and Staley, p. 361.

Chapter Four: The Application of Paint in West's Studio

After West had finished the preliminary sketches and drawings for a particular picture, it was then necessary to translate them onto canvas. The sheer number of pictures he painted reflects the diligence with which he went about this task. In the painting stage of his craft, West, like most other artists of his day, was concerned with two principal issues. Firstly, West's painting procedure was guided by the philosophies of color theory, or, the study of the color spectrum largely based on Sir Isaac Newton's prismatic treatises first introduced in 1672. The study of the visible spectrum, which included the investigation of complementary colors and the principals of light and shade, allowed artists to mix and use pigments for optimal pictorial effect. Secondly, in addition to the theoretical aspects of color, throughout his career, West was concerned with perfecting the actual process by which he placed paint on the canvas. Based on the established directives espoused by art manuals, West followed a specific set of procedures for oil painting, but within this established regimen artists were encouraged to experiment with their own techniques. When West died in 1820, although his large-scale paintings of grandiose subject matter were considered anachronistic, his methods of painting continued to be representative of current trends, although this would change shortly. By looking at his few unfinished canvases, as well as his reflections on his own technique recorded in his lectures and by his contemporaries, today's viewer comes to appreciate the elaborate and time-consuming process involved in art production of this period.

Artists are known to have been interested in color theory since the seventeenth century when Rubens illustrated a book about the subject called Opticorum libri sex,

written by Francois d'Aguilon, and first published in 1613.[1] Over the next hundred years, writers of art manuals based many of their ideas about color and paint on the ideas of Rubens and d'Aguilon who evaluated the visual properties of pigments based on empirical studies. For example, echoing Rubens' earlier advice, in 1677 Roger de Piles advised artists to place their colors on the canvas separately, allowing for the viewer's eye to mix the colors, in this way avoiding muddy colors caused by too much mixing.[2] Rubens and his followers offered other practical advice as well. In the application of shadows, the artist was encouraged to use neutral glazes in order to achieve translucency, while highlights, contrasting with the translucency of the shadows, should be opaque.[3] Writers also hoped to provide the artist with precise guidelines with regard to gradations of light and dark by relating them to their ideal proportionate intensity according to their placement in the visual field. For example, it was known that the vibrancy of a color would progressively fade over distance, an aspect of atmospheric perspective that had been known since Leonardo's studies of the phenomenon in the late fifteenth century.

Perhaps the most important source for West and other eighteenth-century color theorists was Isaac Newton's discovery that white light, or sunlight, was actually a composite of heterogeneous rays of light, each embodying different wave lengths and properties.[4] In his book Opticks, published in 1704, Newton listed the seven colors he considered to be the principal components of the prism; red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet. This discovery led to the development of the color wheel, the most important being published by Moses Harris around 1770, in which three primary colors and three complementary colors were identified.[5] Armed with this knowledge, artists of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were able to enhance their use of color.

Now a more harmonious effect of color could be achieved by using prismatic sequences of color and by juxtaposing hues and their opposites, the intensity of a given color could be strengthened or lessened.[6] While Newton's theories were important in the development of color theory for painting, he was mistaken in his belief that the properties of light were identical to those of pigments. For example, when all the colors of the visible spectrum are combined, the result is white light; when the same colors of pigment are mixed together, the result is gray or brown.

Because artists were concerned with achieving harmonious effects of color, they were drawn to an additional proposal by Newton in which he associated the seven hues he discovered with the seven tones of the musical scale. In an 1803 essay entitled "Theory of Colours and Shadows," a Dr. Milner claimed that Newton had proved the relationship between color and sound mathematically so that the "spaces occupied by the colors in the prismatic spectrum correspond with the parts of a musical chord, when it is so divided as to sound the notes of an octave."[7] Milner does acknowledge, however, that rules that apply to the visual arts may not necessarily be true in nature.[8] Also influenced by Newton's theory, in at least two of his lectures West equated the emotion that was evoked when he looked at paintings with that sensation he felt when he heard the harmonious blending of musical sounds.[9] Moreover, in 1802 West observed to Farington that brilliancy of color is obtained by discord, as the same effects are produced by discordant tones in musical compositions. West was obviously referring to juxtapositions of primary and complementary color and asserted that Rubens had worked on this principle and "dazzled by it".[10] As we have seen, Rubens did place his colors separately on the canvas and he often worked with a highly keyed palette. In contrast, West found

the works of Titian and Correggio more harmonious in that they did not place opposing hues side by side as often as Rubens did. It is interesting that West applied Newton's theories so specifically to Rubens and Titian because the Baroque masters predated the optician's works by several years.

What we know about West's own philosophy of color theory is learned from two of his lectures before the students of the Royal Academy.[11] In 1797 he addressed the properties of color in a lecture on light and shade, an aspect of painting he hoped to reduce to the "simplicity of rule or principle," so as not to appear too difficult to young art students.[12] According to West, most shapes in nature are round, and when light illuminates a form, two extremes of light and shadow, two "balancing tints,' and a middle tint, or, aerial tint, are created. The example he used is a ball, illuminated on one side, casting the opposite side of the ball in shadow. West referred to the area between the brightest point or illumination and the point on the ball at which the shadow begins as the transparent tint, and the part of the ball in darkness he referred to as the aerial or middle tint. Without fully establishing the source of the light, West further explained that if a ball casts a shadow on a flat plane, its length would be 1.25 times the diameter of the ball. He recommended that all students practice this experiment prior to attempting to render objects in nature.

In the same lecture, West related these experiments of light and shade to the study of color because, as he explained, each shade of light or dark, could be associated with a specific hue.[13] He suggested that the student could actually replace each of the ball's tints with a specific hue or color. Yellow was to be used for the brightest point of illumination, and the other hues should naturally follow suit. For example, on the lighted

side of the form, artists were encouraged to use warm colors like yellow, orange, red and sometimes violet (an intermediate color), but these colors should never be used on the side of the object in shadow. The part of the composition or object in shadow should be composed of the cooler colors of the spectrum like green, blue and purple. West further added that these same principles of color should be applied to the depiction of flesh, and although seemingly complex, his method was predictable and straightforward:

> When the sun illuminates a human body the focus of the illumination in that body will partake of the yellow; and the luminous or transparent tint, will have the orange and the red. These produce, what is called, the carnation. The pure red, occasioned by the blood, lies in the lips, cheeks, joints, and extremities of the figure, and nowhere else. On the receding side of the focus is the local color of the flesh, and on the receding side of that is the greenish tint; in the shade will fall the cold or bluish, and in the reflection will fall the tint of the purple.[14]

While West's approach does reflect the tenor of similarly detailed guidelines to painting found in many eighteenth-century art manuals, some artists did not agree with this non-intuitive technique. Gilbert Stuart, upon giving advice to John Trumbull and William Dunlap in their attempts to paint a hand, said he liked the results of their labors "pretty well," but was critical because the hand they had painted was "more like our master's flesh than nature's:"

> When Benny teaches the boys he says, "Yellow and white there," and he makes a streak; "red and white there," another streak; "blue-black and white there," another streak; "brown and red there for a warm shadow," another streak; "red and yellow there," another streak. But nature does not colour in streaks. Look at my hand; --see how the colors are mottled and mingled, yet all is clear as silver."[15]

Stuart's criticism of West's approach reflects his own unorthodox method of painting flesh. Instead of beginning with drawings and an outline, Stuart formed his figures entirely from variations of colors directly on the canvas.[16] West's practices ran contrary to this approach, acknowledging that while success may sometimes be had using an

unscientific method of coloring, "that success is at all times extremely hazardous and dependent on chance."[17]

West's belief in the prismatic system of coloring did not diminish through the years, and in 1817 he presented another lecture before the Royal Academy based on his previous theories.[18] In an effort to provide a formula for History painters to follow,[19] West attempted to prove that the order of the colors in a rainbow should provide the model for the arrangement of colors in an historical picture. Similar in theme to his previous lecture on the subject, West argued that the warmest and brightest colors in a picture should be placed closest to the source of light, while cool colors should be reserved for the shaded areas. Also, because a smaller or weaker rainbow often accompanies the primary rainbow, the artist should repeat his principal coloring arrangement with an auxiliary one in order to complement the primary color display. This lecture was given, as Sir Thomas Lawrence later remarked, "extempore," and delivered with "great self-possession, also with a readiness of delivery beyond what had been before heard from him."[20] West must have realized the success of his lecture for he claimed that his portrait by Lawrence painted between 1818 and 1821 for the American Academy of the Fine Arts in New York was a depiction of his delivery of this speech (Figure 4.1).[21] The top painting on the easel behind West may be his unfinished canvas, Noah Sacrificing, of about 1801 (Figure 4.2), which features a rainbow in the upper right hand corner.[22] The canvas on the easel just below this is Raphael's cartoon, The Death of Aninias, one of a set of cartoons brought to England during the early seventeenth century by Charles I.[23] According to Dunlap, Thornhill's copies of Raphael's cartoons were hung around the room and it may be one of his copies that we see here.[24] At the time of West's

lecture, the cartoons hung at Hampton Court and were occasionally lent to the British Institution by George IV when he was Prince Regent. The cartoons were especially important to West because he believed them to be the most perfect examples of the arrangement of colors in the world. He acknowledged that they did not possess a high degree of chiaroscuro, but believed that "the Harmony of Colours, as far as arrangement goes, is as perfect as the Prism, and the principles upon which Raphael made his arrangement is as true as any of the established discoveries of Sir Isaac Newton."[25]

Because the tapestry cartoons were cleaned in 1966, it is difficult to know what they looked like during West's day; however, its principal color scheme was probably evident during the early nineteenth century. Reconciling Newton's prismatic theories with a painting is also not an easy task. According to West's interpretation of Newton, not only should all the colors of the prism be present in any given work, but they should appear in specific proportions. West believed, as recorded by Mary Gartside's text, "An Essay on Light and Shade," published in 1805, the amount of each color used in a composition should roughly relate to its proportional width in Newton's spectrum.[26] For example, green, blue and violet occupy the widest spectral bands, while the band width of the warmer colors, yellow, red and orange, are shorter. While painters should not be tied to these proportions entirely, they should use the scheme as a general guide. Thus, because yellow is double the width of orange in the spectrum, a harmonious picture should include twice as much yellow as orange. If one considers the background, balcony and foreground setting of The Death of Ananias to be of a neutral shade, rather than a warm shade, and thus not required to conform to West's prismatic ratios, it does appear that greens and blues dominate the color scheme, seconded by red and yellow. In

addition to its harmonious color scheme, the composition of the picture would have appealed to West because of its three-part arrangement.

West was not alone in his interest in color theory, but while he largely based his ideas on the optical theories of Newton, some other artists were guided by empirical studies of light and shade, rather than on theoretical beliefs. Many artists were also influenced by the potential symbolism of a given color. Gerard de Lairesse was one artist whose published experiments about color and his observations appear to have come from his own experiments with color, and not out of an acceptance of Newton's color spectrum. After naming the six primary and complementary colors, Lairesse, noted the influence the background color had on the way a foreground color is perceived by the eye. According to Lairesse's study, if a yellow sphere were placed on a black background the tint will appear more intense than if it were placed on a neutral ground.[27] He also listed the symbolic significance of each color, where blue was the proper color for the deity, purple symbolized authority and jurisdiction, and yellow represented glory and luster.[28] Anton Raphael Mengs and James Barry were also skeptical of Newton's theories. Whereas Newton did not regard white and black as primary colors, Mengs included them on his color scale, thus advocating five rather than three primaries.[29] Athough Mengs' philosophies about color do not agree with those of Newton, it is important to note that Newton's philosophies about the color spectrum were a catalyst for the development of the large number of wheels that followed. What is interesting about West's approach to color theory is his ability to incorporate Newton's seven prismatic colors into more traditional philosophies of color, shading and modeling.[30] This melding

of science and old-fashioned artistic techniques is perhaps what made his 1817 lecture on the rainbow so popular.

It may seem unusual today that artists approached their craft in such scientific terms, but during the eighteenth century the boundaries between science and art did not exist. It was not until the Romantic era at the beginning of the nineteenth century that hostility towards science's role in art developed. This reaction against science came out of the Romantics' fear that too much analysis about color, and art in general, would rob a work of its emotional and poetic content.[31] For West, however, a rigid, predictable approach to art was what guided his successful and prolific practice and he was praised by several of his contemporaries for his analytical methods. In 1813 West advised artist Henry Howard that he had not arranged his colors properly and proceeded to instruct him regarding which colors should be used for each figure. Howard reported to Joseph Farington that he "yielded to West's observations, being...convinced that West had a very scientific judgment in this respect."[32] It is not surprising that artists were guided by a scientific approach. The process of painting was not taught or emphasized in late eighteenth-century art academies.[33] Thus, art students were forced to consult private masters or a number of art manuals available, all of which outlined a specific methodology, or recipe, for painting. Interestingly, recent scientific evaluations of eighteenth century paintings have revealed that authors of art manuals who were also practicing artists did not always precisely adhere to their own published procedures.[34] As we shall see, artists were continually experimenting with techniques and materials, often to the detriment of their pictures' longevity.

Although color theory was not officially taught at the Academy, young artists were expected to be familiar with its discourse. West warned students that if the applications of their colors were not "disposed to and according to the immutable laws of science, not fine effect, or accordant tones of colours, can possibly be produced."[35] He further advised them that the only way to ensure success in coloring was to follow the example of Titian and Correggio by "making yourselves masters of the whole philosophy of colours."[36] He went on to claim that Titian studied chemistry to understand the properties of color, and that in his works, "the minutest scrutiny will never find a colour misplaced or prejudiced by its disposition with the others."[37] Ironically, while West particularly admired the colors of the Venetians, there is no evidence that the Venetian school ever theorized or formulated a color philosophy.[38] He did admit that Titian did not truly discover the true theory of coloring until he was 75 years of age.[39]

West's interest in color theory reflects a larger trend during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in new discoveries in the fields of chemistry and optics. It also marks an important turning point in the history of art when the more scientific study of pigments led to their being produced by industrial means in chemists' shops rather than in the artist's studio. This phenomenon caused artists to become divorced from the mechanical aspects of their craft and had a lasting influence on the structure and purpose of the artist's studio. Because West's studio was active during this important period of transition, it provides a useful model for a discussion of artistic changes during this period. From the middle ages onward, artists' pigments were prepared in the artist's studio by apprentices or assistants. One of the principal skills that had to be obtained by an apprentice was the art of mixing colors. Once the painter had purchased the pigment

from an apothecary's shop, assistants would grind it to a smooth consistency, then mix it with an oil medium to render it a proper consistency for painting.[40] Recipes were handed down from master to pupil and often assistants were sworn to secrecy lest they divulge the secrets of their master's studio.[41] Even during the Renaissance when the craft of painting became more theoretical through the writings of artists like Leonardo and Alberti, painters maintained a close knowledge of the mechanics of their craft.

During the seventeenth-century, however, changes began to take place in the break down of studio labor. A growing number of amateur artists, largely informed in their craft by private tutors and art manuals, created the demand for professional sellers of paint, called colormen. According to Reynolds' onetime student James Northcote, the first colorman in London was Sir Godfrey Kneller's servant, brought to England.[42] There were two different kinds of color shops; those that sold house paint and those that sold pigments to artists. In 1763, Mortimer listed special colormen "whose art consists in mixing and properly preparing the finer colours, for the use of the painters, for whom they likewise prepare canvasses of all sizes, ready-stretched on frames; which is quite foreign to the ordinary colour shops."[43] By "ordinary colour shops," Mortimer was referring to merchants who dealt exclusively in house paints.[44] Early in their existence, color shops used the same tools found in the studio for grinding colors, the grinding stone or the pestle and mortar. As their operations grew larger, however, they began to employ more industrialized techniques like windmills or horsepower and waterpower to grind pigments. Once these pigments were ground, they were placed in small bladders, tied at one end, to keep them moist. When artists wanted to use a given color, they punctured the bladder bag with a tack, took what paint they required, then plugged the hole with the

tack.[45] Unfortunately, often colors began to deteriorate once the bladder was punctured and as a result, the pigment might not last more than a week.[46]

Because the grinding and preparation of pigments was the most labor-intensive aspect of the painter's workshop, with the advent of the color shop, the need for studio labor diminished dramatically by the late eighteenth century.[47] As a result, more and more art students came to rely exclusively on the academy for their education. While this separation from the artist and the mechanical aspect of his craft may be regarded as a decline in the craft of painting,[48] most artists, including West, continued to experiment with paints and pigments. This experimentation was motivated by an attempt to achieve innovative artistic effects, and because manufactured colors often could not be trusted.[49] In fact, it was this experimentation that led to the deterioration of a number of important art works of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, often just a few years after an artist's death. By the mid-nineteenth century artists became alarmed at the deterioration of the works of revered predecessors like Reynolds and Turner, and afraid their own works would not stand the test of time due to faulty knowledge of the physical properties of pigments, lobbied for official academic instruction. In response to these requests, instruction in the chemistry of color was established at the Academy, but not until 1871.[50]

Regardless of the experimentation with pigments that still went on in the artist's studio, the purchase of pigments from colormen did serve to separate artists, especially younger generations, from their craft. This phenomenon was an important aspect of the general shift in the regard of painting from craft to liberal art by the end of the eighteenth century. Art manuals that had previously read like recipe books for mixing pigments became more theoretical in nature by the early nineteenth century, and the books that did

focus on the manufacture of pigments were published by the colormen who manufactured them.[51] The manufacture of pigment became a competitive business venture and colormen were compelled to provide customers with a scientific analysis of their materials as artists were continuously concerned with a color's durability and permanence. Thus, as in other fields during the industrial revolution, in painting an age of specialization was emerging.[52] Likewise, as West's lectures before the Royal Academy on color theory and connoisseurship indicate, artistic discourse by painters took on a more theoretical bent. And because colormen could provide pigments to a growing number of amateurs, by the second half of the eighteenth century more and more books were published on the process of painting. While many of these texts were aimed at the non-professional, they were most often written by artists and thus reveal a broad scope of information about eighteenth-century artistic methods.

Like the steps for invention and design, the process of painting as followed by West and his contemporaries was carefully outlined in art treatises. As Du Fresnoy's Art of Painting was the prototype for numerous followers, Thomas Bardwell's The Art of Painting in Oil Colours was the most significant work of its type during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[53] For this reason, it provides today's scholar with a basic outline for how pictures were painted during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. First published in London in 1756, Bardwell's treatise was unusual because it focused entirely on techniques of oil painting.[54] While other treatises on oil painting had been published in England as early as the end of the seventeenth century, Bardwell's text was the most comprehensive and well-organized work of its kind. His book was widely respected as evidenced by its numerous editions published well into the nineteenth

century. In 1808, Edward Edwards, artist and art chronicler wrote, "It must be confessed, that the instructions contained in that short work, so far as they relate to the process of painting, are the best that have hitherto been published, and many young artists at that time found it useful."[55] Although used by beginners, it was not a remedial text, and artists using the work would have had to have some experience using artistic tools and materials. Bardwell's book was unique, not because of the information it held, but because of its easy-to-follow format. The method he outlined for oil painting had already been firmly established and followed by artists since the Renaissance and most artistic treatises repeated each other in basic content, thus his book provides a useful model for our discussion.[56] Another useful source for a discussion of painting practices of this period is Gerard de Lairesse's The Art of Painting, published in London in 1778, a copy of which was owned by West. More comprehensive in scope than Bardwell's treatise, Lairesse's text covers aspects of painting, composition, expression and perspective.

The first step in the painting process was to obtain a canvas. West, like most of his contemporaries, bought some, and probably most, of his canvases through a color shop. When Robert Campbell published The London Tradesman in 1747 he knew of only one color shop that provided canvases to artists, but by the end of the century, the number had increased. West himself was known to have purchased goods from at least four color shops during his lifetime.[57] Charles Taylor's 1797 guide for painters listed a wide variety of canvases available in various sizes at his shop.[58] Sizes ranged from quarter-length canvases that measured 2-1/2 feet by 2 feet to whole length canvases that measured over seven feet long. The colorman named Middleton of St. Martin's Lane, sometime provider of canvases to West, offered a special ticked or textured canvas that

ranged in price from 4 or 5 shillings for a quarter-length size to 26 shillings for a whole length size.[59] Once a size was decided upon, the canvas was then attached to a stretcher or straining frame either by the shop or the artist himself. While strainers were anchored to a specific size, the tension of a canvas on a stretcher could be adjusted with keys or wedges attached to its corners.[60] The artist or color shop then prepared canvases to receive paint through a process called priming that usually involved the application of a coat of glue, or size directly on the raw canvas. On top of this coat, a layer of primer was added that consisted of powdered plaster mixed with oil, or a medium consistent with the paints later used. Several layers of this plaster coat could be applied and it was necessary to repeatedly rub the surface of the canvas smooth with pumice.[61] It was imperative that the preparation of the canvas was done properly or the integrity of the paint applied on top of it was jeopardized. Julius Ibbetson lamented as late as 1803 that colormen, "to whom everything is left," were preparing canvases that too easily became brittle and cracked.[62] This was prone to occur if the plaster mixture was too thick or stiff, or if it did not properly adhere to the size beneath it. To remedy this, Ibbetson recommended the artist prepare his own canvases.

According to Farington, West allowed the colorman to prepare the sized surface, but then added another sized ground on top of that one.[63] Canvases could be purchased in any stage of preparation and West always had a variety of both prepared and unprepared canvases in his studio at any given time. At the time of his death, his family sold at least 35 prepared canvases on strainers of various sizes, 8 large straining frames, and at least 6 large prepared canvases already on stretchers. Some of these may have been canvases he had previously painted, then covered over with white paint because he

did not want his name attached to certain paintings "in case he might drop."[64] He also owned at least 45 mahogany panels, about 5/8 inches thick, the largest over 8 feet high. Panels were prepared in a manner similar to that used on canvases. They could be purchased at a color shop, then prepared, by the artist or color shop, with white lead paint mixed with an oil medium like turpentine. The surface would then be sanded smooth and plastered so that the pores of the wood and brush marks could be filled in. Like the canvas, the panel that was carefully covered with several coats of plaster would provide the most durable surface for the oil paint. In 1816 the artist Richard Livesay recalled that West often used mahogany boards and "esteemed them good."[65] While West did paint on panel on numerous occasions, due to their relatively small number in his oeuvre, he seems to have preferred canvas.

Once the initial preparation of the canvas or panel was completed, West laid his ground, which was a layer of opaque paint applied to the primed support to provide a surface on which to paint. Because oil paint is translucent, the color of the ground was important for it would, over time, show through the pigment on its surface.[66] Grounds were usually prepared at the color shop with white lead, but it became common to mix them with black coal or red paint to create a medium tint rather than stark white.[67] In 1803 West told Farington his preferred mode of painting was to purchase a canvas primed in white by the colorman Middleton, to which he made up another sized ground in a slight tint, usually a buff color.[68] When painting a landscape he might vary his ground to a shade of blue, grey or purple, "for those colours partake of the complexion of the watery sky in which the rainbow appears, or the ground which best exhibits the prismatic colours."[69] In this way, the ground served as the medium tint on which lights and darks

could be applied in the form of a chiaroscuro sketch. West believed that the medium tints, or aerial tints as he called them, were particularly important to a picture. By the middle of the nineteenth century, colored grounds went out of fashion completely because commercially manufactured materials could not be varied enough to accommodate individual artists.[70] An example of West's use of a buff colored ground is seen in the unfinished oil sketch entitled, Signing of the Treaty of Peace in 1782, from about 1784 (figure 4.3).[71] Here he only completed the left portion of the picture, and the entire right side of the canvas is a flat tan. In addition to its color, a ground layer, as well as the priming layer beneath it, needed to be absorbent so that both layers could be permeated by excess oil from the pigments, thereby creating a bond between the paint and ground. If the primed and ground layers were not absorbent, the paint would never fully adhere to the canvas and flake off at a later date. If the priming were not properly applied, the artist was forced to compensate by adding additional layers of oil and ground. In 1796 West told Farington that he painted Moses and Aaron Before Pharaoh in only three weeks, and claimed it would have been finished even earlier if it had been better primed.[72]

At times, West retouched or repainted pictures he had previously painted and for these canvases he had to create a new ground over the old. The most famous example was his Hagar and Ishmael, a picture he first painted and exhibited in 1776, then repainted and attempted to exhibit in 1803. The paintings West reworked are evident through his practice of giving a canvas two dates. For example, Hagar and Ishmael is signed and dated 1776 at the lower right corner, and signed and dated 1803 at lower left. According to Academy rules, artists were not allowed to exhibit paintings they had

previously shown there. West's detractors, specifically Copley, accused him of trying to take advantage of the Academy. West denied these charges, claiming he had completely repainted the work, having introduced new draperies and completely repainted the background.[73] This practice of reworking pictures, especially towards the end of West's life, was alarming to his family and friends who were concerned that the new colors he applied did not sufficiently harmonize with the old.[74] West, who believed the new and old colors would be indistinguishable after a period of 10 or 12 years, adopted a specific procedure for repainting canvases. He advised artists who wished to repaint or retouch their pictures to coat the dry canvas with a coat of varnish and let it sit for a day or two. When he was ready to paint, West mixed some of the same varnish he used on the canvas with the colors he intended to apply, a procedure he believed would allow the colors to appear more vibrant. By mixing the varnish itself with the pigment, he avoided having to varnish the entire work once he was finished, but could varnish the areas of the canvas that needed touching up due to dullness.[75] Unfortunately, the only picture in which West began to make changes and left it unfinished is the unlocated The Fright of Astynanax (Hector Taking Leave of Andromache), dated around 1766. According to a description of the work in the 1829 auction catalogue however, it is evident that West intended to alter both the composition and the format by cutting the canvas down on one side.[76] The catalogue also states that proposed changes in one of the figures could be seen in the form of an outline of the reconstructed figure on the canvas.

The use of an outline to designate a composition, including figural placement and details of expression, was typical of the way West worked on both new and existing pictures. Designating the design of a work on canvas was the next step after a ground was

laid. Judging from his large number of preparatory sketches, West used his drawings in establishing the design, chiaroscuro and expression of his paintings. Once a design was decided upon, it could be transferred almost exactly from the smaller graphic medium to a larger canvas. There were several methods of transferring sketches onto canvas and this process could have been one of the jobs performed by West's assistants. We know his pupils would have been well rehearsed in copying pictures during their studio training. Extant drawings by West suggest he transferred images through at least two processes. The simplest manner of transferring one image onto another surface was by tracing. In order to trace a picture, chalk was rubbed on the reverse side of drawing to be traced, then placed, reverse side down, onto the receiving surface. Pressure was then placed on the outline of the drawing, usually with a thin instrument called a stylus. The chalk underneath the paper would adhere to the new surface wherever pressure had been applied, thus the new image would appear in exactly the same size on the new surface. West seems to have used this technique to convert drawings into prints, because the formats of the two media were usually comparable. An example of this type of drawing is a line drawing of Christ, now at the Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore, for his 1802 lithograph of Christ based on the painting, The Baptism from about 1794, now in Greenville, South Carolina.[77] The Swarthmore drawing corresponds exactly to the print, except that it is in reverse, so it may be the drawing was transferred directly to the lithographic stone.[78] He may have based the Swarthmore drawing on a chalk study of Christ, undoubtedly a study in aid of expression, now at the Pierpont Morgan Library.[79]

The most common form of transferring an image was through a process called squaring up because it allowed the artist to change the size of the image. This was

especially important in West's studio because he often worked on such a large scale. In squaring, a grid of vertical and horizontal lines was drawn on the surface of the drawing and the canvas and the image is transferred freehand onto the new surface. Several of West's drawings are gridded, including the compositional study, Christ Showing a Little Child as the Emblem of Heaven, dated 1810, now in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.[80] The painting that corresponds to this drawing, now in the Trafalgar Galleries in London, is proportionately similar to the 7 x 6 inch drawing, but is over seven feet tall and six feet wide (Figure 4.4). Interestingly, West told Farington that it only took him twenty days to complete this canvas because, "His design was before settled and drawn in upon another canvas which took him 4 or 5 days, so that upon this picture He only had to endeavour to paint it as well as He could."[81] Thus, if the preparatory work were taken care of properly, the painting of the picture went much more smoothly.

Early on in his practice, West probably used a number of assistants in his studio to aid him in tasks like making copies of his historical pictures and painting parts of a canvas.[82] Interestingly, no direct or anecdotal evidence exists to suggest that assistants participated in the transfer of images, presumably one of the more mundane tasks in the studio. Regardless, by the end of his life, West's studio operation, like others of its day, scaled down, and so participation in studio tasks by assistants became more and more rare. American artists of the early nineteenth century like Washington Allston and Samuel F. B. Morse did not frequent his studio as often as those artists of earlier generations did. This may have been due to West's advancing age which did not allow him to spend as much time and energy with young students. As early as 1806 Farington

noticed West's health seemed to deteriorate dramatically when he worked too hard in his studio.[83] Moreover, his large historical commissions for the King had ended, along with other duties that went with the title Historical Painter to the King. His operation was also undoubtedly influenced by the decline in a need for constant studio labor brought about by the advent of the colorman. At any rate, towards the end of his life, it is evident that West relied on his son Raphael to perform most of his studio tasks. In 1815 Raphael West, then almost 50 years of age, reported that he had been

> ...assisting his father tracing on large canvasses the subjects for which His father made sketches, who when he comes to paint finds every form in its place, but nothing more than a general outline, a space for Him to fill up agreeably to his own ideas.---Thus all the tedious & dry business of preparation His father is relieved from, besides the fatigue of doing it.[84]

Raphael West traveled from his house in nearby Staines every other week to aid his father in this endeavor.[85]

Once a transferred design was laid in on a primed canvas with charcoal or pencil, West could make it more permanent by going over the outline in watercolor, his preferred mode of working and a not uncommon technique during this period.[86] If the canvas were a new or fresh surface, he would be placing the outline directly on its ground. Once a design's outline had been established, it was then necessary to create an absorbent surface on the dry ground to create a bond with the oil paint. An absorbent ground pulled away superfluous oil from the applied pigments and also served as a drying oil, an agent to mix with oil pigments to aid in their drying faster. West's preferred medium for creating an absorbent ground was linseed oil, the most popular of its type, which he spread evenly over his watercolor outline.[87] With the drawing showing through the translucent layer of oil, West could then apply layers of paint to its surface. Although linseed oil did have a

tendency to turn slightly yellow, it hardened over several weeks, and was thus the fastest drying oil used during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[88] If one pigment had a tendency to dry faster than another, additional drying agents or oils could be added to particular colors.[89] Again, West's method of placing an outline on the canvas ground prior to painting is seen in his unfinished pictures, including Signing of the Treaty of Peace, 1782 (Figure 4.3). In contrast, if West were making alterations to an existing picture, he created a new ground with varnish.

Although West outlined his figures in watercolor, he did not paint in that medium for its own sake and in spite of its growing popularity, professional success within the Academy continued to demand the use of the oil medium.[90] This rather old fashioned trend may have been connected to a concept dating from the early seventeenth century that painting in oils was for professionals, while watercolor paints were considered to be the medium for amateurs. Of course, during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries the preparation for oil painting was so time-consuming, it was seen as an activity that was best left in the professional realm and thus maintained a higher degree of respect from connoisseurs. Henry Peacham wrote in 1622 in The Compleat Gentleman that "Painting in Oyle is done, I confesse, with greater judgement, and is generally of more esteeme than working in water colors..."[91] Peacham goes on to lament that oil painting will take up too much time and if it spilled on one's clothes it probably wouldn't come out. West did occasionally use watercolors and they were readily available at most color shops in easy to use cakes, but he used watercolor as a supplement to the oil medium. For example, he often retouched earlier ink drawings that hung in his gallery with a form of watercolor called body color.[92] Body color was formed by mixing

watercolor pigments with an opaque white oil paint to give the watercolor a density consistent with oil paint.[93] According to Farington, when West utilized this technique he did not use any of the standard watercolor bonding agents, but simply mixed the watercolor cakes with oil. He then put a coat of varnish over the entire drawing, a manner of finishing a picture consistent with oil painting.[94]

In the same way preparatory drawings could aid in the more rapid execution of a work, the preparation of one's palette was essential. No matter how spontaneous a painter's technique, it was dependent upon a well-organized palette consisting of tints already mixed.[95] Because of the instability of oil paint in general, artists were advised to prepare only the colors they needed for that day. The way an artist chose to set his palette was a personal choice and was often based on color theory, and of course, the palette would be tailored to correspond to the subject matter on which an artist worked. One of the most telling ways to learn about West's palette is to study his self-portrait of 1806, now at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia (Figure 4.5).[96] The picture features West in the process of painting a portrait of his wife. West, dressed in his painting robe, is looking off to the left at an odd angle, presumably at his wife, as he places the finishing touches or highlights on the canvas. His wife, visible only in her portrait, stares out at the viewer before a red drapery. In addition to his oval palette, the shape most preferred by the end of the eighteenth century,[97] West holds a handful of brushes and his mahlstick is resting against the canvas. He presumably used, or is in the process of using, all of the brushes in his hand for several of them contain paint that corresponds to various colors on the palette. The brush he holds in his right hand has been dipped in the shade of white seen on his palette closest to his thumb.

In laying out their palettes, artists mostly followed the rules established by the French Academy in the preceding century, and the arrangement did not really change throughout the eighteenth century.[98] West's palette depicts single colors arranged loosely from light to dark along its upper edge. The white is nearest his thumb and it was often used for mixing; thus more of it was needed and it was placed on the steadiest part of the palette. Although partially in shadow, West's palette seems to represent a common arrangement of colors. Most artists used about eight colors, mainly earth tones, that included yellow, brown, light red, vermilion, burnt sienna, raw umber and burnt umber. Usually vermilion was placed separately near the thumbhole, alongside the white, because it was an expensive color and not much of it was used.[99] As suggested, a small dab of vermilion is visible just above the white and near West's thumb here. The colors in the middle of the palette, just to the left of the white, are colors that have been mixed for this particular picture at the time of their use, and were also arranged from light to dark. These middle colors were often those used for flesh in painting portraits and other figures.

Not only was an artist's palette systematic, it was also highly personal. While general guidelines were followed regarding the organization of pigments on a palette, artists often used tints unique to their own practices, and thus included these on their palette. For example, West particularly admired the flesh tones of Correggio and believed they were accomplished by mixing ultramarine with white, then adding warmer flesh tones.[100] Thomas Bardwell also mentioned using ultramarine in one's flesh colors.[101] On the contrary, Hogarth advised that blue was a very difficult color to bring into flesh.[102] Moreover, because Hogarth did not consider orange to be one of the basic

prismatic colors, he omitted it from his palette.[103] As a follower of Newton's theory of optics, West would not, as a general rule, eliminate the color from his palette, and a shade of orange is visible here just to the left of the white. Perhaps because an artist's palette related so specifically to a personal theory of colors, it represented a system of coloring and was mentioned in contemporary criticism as an individual element of a picture. For example, in 1765 Horace Walpole wrote of West's palette as being "very tawdry" and "abominally gaudy."[104] An anecdote involving a picture by Gilbert Stuart in West's studio further implies the personal nature of the palette. During the years Stuart was in his studio, West was required by George III to produce a portrait of the monarch that would be shipped to one of England's territorial outposts. In order to save time, West reportedly said, "Stuart...it is a pity to make His Majesty sit again for his picture; there is the portrait of him that you painted. Let me have it...I will retouch it and it will do well enough."[105] Stuart was offended by West's glib remarks about his portrait and took a perverse pleasure in West's inability to complete the work. It seems that West's palette was incompatible with that of Stuart, for after a day of working on the picture, West had made a muddle of it. In order to remedy the problem, he asked Stuart, "have you got your palette set?...Well, you can set another; let me have the one you prepared for yourself; I can't satisfy myself with that head."[106] According to Stuart's account, he eventually had to finish the portrait for West because their styles and systems of coloring were so different. This anecdote also reveals something specific about the role of the assistant in West's studio. As the master of the studio, it was important for West to place the finishing touches on any picture that his operation produced. If the picture were not especially important, however, like a portrait destined for a colonial outpost, it was

apparently not essential that his hand be so closely attached to the work. Even in these works, however, West was responsible for their quality.

One job that was traditionally facilitated by assistants, was the dead coloring of a picture, or the initial laying in of coloring upon a prepared ground. The term dead coloring had been used since the Renaissance to designate an absence of color or lightly applied color during the first stages of painting.[107] Using the outline of the design as a guide, dead coloring was laid in with earth tones, most often with the ground serving as a middle tint, to designate broad areas of light, dark and middle tones. It is unknown how much assistance West obtained from his pupils once the outline of the picture's design had been established. No specific record or account of an assistant aiding West in this regard exists, but it was a tradition in large painting studios for preparations of this type to be done by studio labor. Certainly West had students copying pictures that he himself had painted, and in order to do this task correctly, West believed they needed to understand his entire system of coloring.[108] He also seems to have had a plethora of prepared canvases about the studio at any given time, although he apparently preferred to work on one picture at a time. In 1807 he voiced criticism of Turner's practice of having a large number of incomplete or dead colored pictures around his studio at any given time, saying he would be "distracted to be in a House crowded with pictures begun."[109] Perhaps he still had Turner on his mind when he told Farington a few months later that a painter who, "does not possess His mind fully with His subject and proceed unremittingly upon it till it is finished but on the contrary runs from one subject to another will do little."[110] Regardless of who worked on any given picture, each studio master, including West, had an idiosyncratic way of working.

Bardwell, who presented a general guideline for proceeding with dead coloring, suggested the artist should paint the shadowed areas first, then add the lighter tones which he recommended mixing with a little red to better represent the warmer shades of nature. After the light tones were painted in, he advised a warm tint could be laid on the shadow tints as well to give the whole picture a more harmonious hue.[111] It is evident from an examination of West's unfinished canvases that he worked in this vein. West's Pharaoh and His Host Lost in the Red Sea from about 1792 is an unfinished oil sketch for his Windsor Chapel project (Figure 4.6).[112] In this picture, the king of Egypt and his entourage, pictured in the lower half of the composition, are engulfed in a vortex of chaos as water swirls around them. The Israelites, pictured just above their pursuers, are guided to safety by an angel, while Moses, cast in darkness on the upper left side of the composition, directs the madness with sweeping arms. Although West had begun to finish isolated areas of the composition, the majority of the picture remains dead colored. Evident here are the sketchily painted outlines of the initial design laid down and undoubtedly reinforced as the picture progressed, as well as the monochromatic shading and highlighting of the design. West especially emphasized the dark areas of the picture like the lower center of the composition symbolizing the Pharaoh's plight and the right side of Moses' body in the upper left hand corner which provides a marked contrast to the lighted angel on the right. As Bardwell suggested, West laid in the bulk of the chiaroscuro with shadow and highlights, some of which have been applied as mere dabs of white. We also see here how he then proceeded, adding warm colors like yellows and reds, first, before the cooler colors were applied.

While West probably painted most of his larger canvases in this manner, some projects required a different approach, like his Signing of the Preliminary Treaty of Peace in 1782 (Figure 4.3). Unlike his canvases in which the entire design was decided upon and then dead colored, this picture appears to have been painted piecemeal. This oil sketch, which was begun in 1783, was to depict the signing of the Preliminary Treaty of Peace with Britain on 30 November 1782, an event which essentially ended the American War for Independence. The design has not been established on the right side of the canvas, and the portions of the picture that have been painted seem to have been worked up in almost to their finished state. The sketch, which is only 28-1/2 x 36-1/2 inches, was intended to provide the basis for a much larger picture. As we have seen, West preferred to have his large canvases entirely planned and laid out before he began on them, as attempting to work freehand on such a large scale would undoubtedly lead to problems in perspective and proportion. This painting was essentially to be a group portrait, or conversation piece, featuring some of America's most important patriots. His ultimate goal was to obtain portraits of the persons involved to recreate the event as precisely as possible.[113] Judging from the way he proceeded with the sketch, as he received each portrait he copied it onto the canvas separately, probably determining figural placement and compositional details at that time. In fact, he painted John Jay, John Adams, Henry Laurens from life, and obtained portraits of Benjamin Franklin and his grandson to copy into his picture since both men were in Paris and thus unavailable. Because he could not procure portraits of all the essential persons involved in the treaty, he eventually abandoned the project.

It was probably due to the portrait-like nature of this project that West proceeded in this unusual fashion. Not until he had an idea about what the subject might look like would he commit the figure to a position or posture on the canvas. While West may have largely determined a composition before he began a picture, there is evidence that he often referred to live models throughout the painting process to add naturalism to his subjects. Like the Signing of the Preliminary Treaty of Peace in 1782, West painted other historical pictures that included portraits of real persons. In his The Death of Lord Nelson of 1806, West apparently paid several seamen who had been with the Admiral when he died to pose for the final painting.[114] In addition to specific portraits, West sometimes used professional models, studio assistants and visitors as models for various figures in his pictures. In the 1787 canvas, The Institution of the Order of the Garter, West allegedly included himself, his family and three of his assistants in the crowd of onlookers of the scene which depicts Edward III's establishment of the Order of the Garter in 1348.[115] Under the arch at the far left West, his wife and two sons, and his assistants John Trumbull, Gilbert Stuart and Richard Livesay are pictured. It seems that West desired accuracy in the portrayal of his family and thus Gilbert Stuart was commissioned to paint West's head, and probably those of the whole group.[116] West, like his colleagues, used professional models that posed for several of his pictures and were often recognizable by name in the final works. For example, the figure of Chryses in Chryses Invoking the Vengeance of Apollo against the Greeks from 1773 also appears in Chryseis Returned to Her Father from around 1771, Elijah Raising the Widow's Son, begun in 1774, and Tobias Curing His Father's Blindness from 1772.[117] Models like the elderly man who appeared in the previously cited works could have been a laborer,

servant or professional model, and would have been paid an hourly rate and hired as necessary.[118] The portrait-like quality of many of the models West used indicates that throughout the painting process he consulted the live figure.

After a canvas was dead colored, what was called the middle coloring was applied. Middle coloring consisted of many layers of translucent colors, called glazes, that were laid on top of the underpainting. These layers should be thin enough for light to penetrate them so that it could be reflected up from the colors underneath. This elaborate structure of layers required the painting to be fully worked out before the artist had begun, and although the dead colored layer was often monchromatic, the layers of glazes added depth and color.[119] The depth was achieved by glazing divergent colors over each other to produce third colors. For example, a warm transparent yellow or orange over a cool green could produce a shade of gray.[120] This kind of effect was known as the "inner light" and it was a concept with which West was ultimately concerned. West advised George Beaumont that he should paint flesh with a flesh color, the ground acting through it. He, along with many other artists and connoisseurs, erroneously associated this with a technique used by Rembrandt.[121] On this glazing the warm reflected tints of the flesh produce a beautiful effect. Moreover, West believed the reason that Correggio's paintings were so beautiful was because of his practice of placing warm glazes over cool colors.[122] In the nineteenth century, artists also began to use a substance called maglip which was a varnish made up of a natural resin like mastic mixed with turpentine. When mixed with a drying oil like linseed oil, the paint would thicken, and artists could anticipate what the surface of their painting would look like before they actually finished the work.[123] West was using maglip, at least in part, as early as 1801.[124]

After West laid the ground, he proceeded to add color to the picture in thin layers using fresh oil and repeating the process without waiting for the underparts to dry till it was finished. He did not use drying oil at this stage because it would interfere with the ground's absorption properties.[125] The unfinished canvas, Noah Sacrificing (Figure 4.2) provides an indication of how West proceeded after his design and dead coloring were established. The painting, intended for King George's Chapel, is the only full-scale painting for that project that was never finished.[126] The painting depicts Moses sacrificing to God following the deluge. Moses, with outstretched arms, looks heavenward as his followers kneel and stand behind him. The doves and rainbow at the right side of the composition symbolize the end of the terrible flood. Although West painted in some areas of the picture, his sketchily delineated outline is still visible. On top of what appears to be a beige or neutral ground, West has painted in both areas of highlight and shadow. While he has made minor adjustments in figural placement, seen best in the traces of *pentimenti* in the rainbow and Noah's raised hands, the basic compositional lines have been followed.[127] With a painterly hand, West had begun to fill in highlights and shadows with browns, and had begun to glaze over certain areas with color. As was the case with his Pharaoh and His Host Lost in the Red Sea and as Bardwell suggested, he began his middle coloring with layers of warm colors like reds and yellows. Areas of cool colors had begun to be applied in the drapery of two of the figures behind Moses, the rainbow-filled sky and portions of the mountainous background region. While West used layers of glaze to fill in the shadowed portions of the picture, he used a process called scumbling to add highlights.[128] A scumble is a thin layer of opaque paint that conceals the darker ground underneath, allowing for more

vibrant highlights. Scumbled regions in this picture include the doves, the white drapery of the woman behind Moses, areas of Moses' beard and the billowing clouds.

Once a painting was glazed and scumbled, it was finished in a process called the third painting or the finishing. According to Bardwell it was best to allow a painting to dry, then with light strokes of the paint brush, highlights could be added.[129] Based on his observations of Rubens' pictures, West advocated straight opaque highlights in white pigment. In the advice reminiscent of that he gave Constable, he told the amateur landscape painter Mrs. Phipps that she should use a blue-toned pigment to depict distances, while white should be used for highlights. According to Farington, "He repeatedly mentioned that this was the way to obtain the diamond,--the sparkling lights so desirable in pictures."[130] Examples of West's highlighting technique can be seen on any number of his finished pictures, and as we have seen in his unfinished oil sketch, Pharaoh and His Host Lost in the Red Sea, he began to devise the placement of his highlights with opaque white early on in the painting process. In addition to highlighting a picture, artists often finished their pictures with varnish or finishing glazes. Each artist had his own recipe or method for varnishing his pictures, and West's finishing recipe is cited in Charles Taylor's 1797 manual, A Compendium of Colours:

> The finest brown used by Mr. West in glazing is flesh of mummy. The substance must be completely dust-free, after which is must be ground up with nut oil and may be mixed for glazing with ultramarine, lake blue or any other glazing colors. When it is used, a little drying oil must be mixed with the varnish and it may be used in any part of a picture without fear of its changing.[131]

Using a brown color with one's varnish was desirable because of the brownish tone given to pictures in aid of emulating old master works.[132] West's assurance that the varnish would not significantly alter one area of the picture or darken with time was also of

concern to artists. As Taylor's recipe indicates, West combined this brownish glaze with colors like blue or ultramarine. Joseph Farington recalled in 1808 that on Varnishing Day at the Royal Academy, West went over the background of one of his pictures with ultramarine to "give it air."[133]

The finishing of a picture was of great concern to artists, and often this process took place after a painting reached its final destination. For example, at the annual Royal Academy exhibitions, canvases were retouched once they were hung in their intended places on the wall. At the Society of Painters Exhibition at Spring Gardens, prior to the advent of the Royal Academy exhibitions, West and Wilson were joint hangers. According to an anecdote told by Dunlap and later recorded in Whitley, the pictures were not up to par. Wilson reportedly said,

> I'll tell you what, West, he said, this will never do. We shall lose the little credit we have, for the public will never stand such a shower of chalk and brick dust. Well, said West, but what is to be done? We can't reject their pictures now. No, but we can mend their manners. What do you mean? You shall see, said Wilson, what Indian ink and Spanish liquorice can do. He accordingly dispatched the porter to the colorman and druggist for these reformers, and dissolving them in water actually washed nearly half the pictures in the exhibition with this original glaze. There! He said, it's as good as asphaltum, with this advantage that if the artists don't like it they can wash it off when they get the pictures home. And Mr. West acknowledged that they were all the better for it.[134]

In 1796 West advised Lawrence and Hoppner to wash over parts of their pictures with water colors, specifically India Ink, brown, pink, terra sienna or blue, colors he claimed were recommended by Leonardo.[135]

Glazing thin layers of local color and scumbling highlights on top of largely monochromatic dead coloring was the traditional manner in which artists had constructed their pictures since the Renaissance, a technique particularly associated with Rembrandt and Titian. This practice was also widely followed by London artists during the

eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Washington Allston, called the American Titian, was one of the few American artists who practiced glazing which he learned during his English studies.[136] One of the ways artists like West attempted to refine their glazing methods was to study those of the great masters like Titian, Rubens, and Rembrandt, and West associated the technique with all three masters at various points in his career.[137] Interestingly, while West especially admired Rembrandt's use of glazing, calling his The Woman Taken into Adultry the "finest piece of art in the world," recent evidence has revealed that Rembrandt probably used much more opaque local color than previously thought.[138] In spite of interest in English painting methods by nineteenth century artists like Allston, the technique eventually ceased to exist. The systematic procedures that guided West's art had traditionally been handed down from master to pupil, but since the advent of commercially manufactured colors and materials and the resultant breakdown in studio labor, this sort of tradition was abandoned. The use of glazes and scumbles as part of a planned series of layers of paint was abandoned in favor of direct painting with opaque pigments.[139]

In spite of the established rules of painting, artists still experimented and West was foremost in his attempts to perfect his methods. In addition to studying the techniques of old masters, many artists exchanged ideas and paint recipes with each other. One reason artists were drawn to experiment with pigments and processes was due to fact that colormen could not always be relied upon to provide a quality product.[140] Moreover, because art academies of the later eighteenth century did not provide consistent teaching of the actual techniques of oil painting, artists had to either learn with a private master, like West, or educate themselves, a process that often required

experimentation with materials.[141] Perhaps the most important reason for an artist to experiment with technique, however, was to gain an advantage in the marketing or exhibition of one's work. If an artist could claim to have a secret ingredient or method of working, his pictures would attract special attention at the annual Academy exhibitions. As James Northcote put it, "Any painter who merely wished to make his colors stand, had only to purchase them at the first color shop he might come to...it must be remembered that every picture of Sir Joshua's was an experiment of art made by an ingenious man."[142] One way in which Reynolds developed new painting strategies was to destroy old master works, particularly those from Venice, by scraping off layers of paint and glazes to find out their system of working.[143] And of course, West was particularly interested in old master techniques. Thus, while much practical information was shared amongst artists, there sometimes remained an element of secrecy about the precise nature of a procedure.

One of the most embarrassing and scandalous examples of artists attempting to achieve preeminence through innovative methods was their belief they had uncovered Titian's secret of painting, a method that came to be known as the Venetian Secret. As we have seen, artists of the eighteenth century were particularly fascinated with the works of the Venetian masters, the foremost of whom was Titian. Although the Venetian Secret turned out to be a hoax, a review of the process is helpful here because several of West's paintings were produced upon its principles.[144] The secret came to be known through a man named Thomas Provis, who worked as the sweeper to St. James Chapel.[145] According to Provis' account, he found the secret in his grandfather's papers who had obtained the information from a man named Signor Barri. Although the original papers

had been burnt long before, Provis had made a copy of the recipe for his daughter, Mary Ann, an amateur painter herself. Provis hoped to sell the secret to the Royal Academy for 500 pounds, thus establishing an annuity for his daughter. Although this was never realized, due, according to Provis, to West's duplicity in the affair, subscriptions were sold to individual artists who signed a bond of secrecy. Once their money was paid to Provis, his daughter would visit their respective studios and deliver lessons on the principles of Titian's method.

The three primary components of the Venetian Secret were the exclusive use of linseed oil, painting on dark absorbent grounds, and the use of a specific color for the depiction of shadows called Titian Shade, which was made up of Lake, Indigo, Antwerp or Prussian blue, and ivory black. As evidence of the fraudulent nature of this process, Antwerp blue, which was a pigment derived from Prussian blue, was not even invented until 1710.[146] Still, artists were lured into the process by hopes their works would rival those of the great Venetian masters. According to Farington's account, one of the most difficult aspects of the process was working on a dark ground. While some painters of the period did regularly work on dark grounds, most artists, like West, used a neutral or light-colored ground as the basis for their pictures.[147] Like most eighteenth century artists, West used his ground as a half tone, and added deep shadows as well as the highlights through glazing or opaque paint. In contrast, Titian used a brownish or reddish ground on which he built up a monochromatic underpainting, using the ground to form the shadows, as opposed to the middle tints.[148] The lightest portions of the picture were painted with a straight opaque white, on which color was then added, and medium tints

were scumbled, being blended with the shadowy areas.[149] Local colors were then glazed on top of this chiaroscuro underpainting, until the final glazing process was achieved.

West's pictures, like those of his contemporaries that were painted in accordance with the secret, were not generally well-received at the annual exhibition. His Cicero Discovering the Tomb of Archimedes from 1797 was called a "moonlight Landscape with figures in the Sun" by one viewer.[150] It seems the principal difficulty lay in painting on the dark ground. The whites of the picture, seen in the drapery of Cicero and several of his companions, stands out rather sharply against the landscape which appears to have been depicted largely in shadow. Another aspect of the process that was supposed to aid in expediting a picture was the highly absorbent nature of the ground, which served to separate out the oil from the pigment, without the aid of drying oils, thus speeding up the painting process. Possible problems which arose from this method were that the ground absorbed the oil so fast from the colors that they became less manageable and because the oil was absorbed from the pigment at such a rapid rate, the picture took on a matte look until a finishing coat of varnish was added. Because the final picture could not be entirely anticipated until its final stage of production, it was often difficult to make any necessary alterations.[151] These criticisms are partially confirmed by West when he admitted to Farington that his Cicero, criticized because it was so dark, appeared bright at home.[152]

In spite of the continual experimentation by artists of the late eighteenth century, the principal methods of oil painting as established during the Renaissance were generally followed. Even by the end of the eighteenth century, when scientific advancements in the field of pigment manufacture and storage helped to alleviate the

need for large studio work forces, the basic methods of oil painting remained essentially constant. As West's lectures before the Academy indicate, artists augmented this traditional manner of working with investigations of theoretical matters of painting, like aesthetics, as well as the scientific aspects of color theory. Moreover, artists continued to experiment and investigate aspects of pigment composition and painting processes. Although the general methodology for oil painting had been firmly established since the seventeenth century and continued to be followed into the early nineteenth century, as more and more students began to learn their craft at academies and away from the studio, the complex procedures that characterized painting since the Renaissance were lost. However, new technologies of the industrial revolution with regard to pigment and canvas manufacture allowed artists to take short cuts not available to West during the early years of his practice. While this new technology may have served to permanently separate artists from their craft, it also rendered many of the secrets of the studio obsolete.

[1] For a summary of this text see Kemp, pp. 276-279.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Not all artists were as enamored as West was with Newton's theories. William Hogarth, James Barry and Anton Raphael Mengs believed Newton's ideas were irrelevant. See Kemp, p. 292. For a review of Newton's theories see Kemp, pp. 285-286. See also Finley.

[5] Frederick Schmid, "The Color Circles of Moses Harris," Art Bulletin 30 (September 1948), pp. 227-30.

[6] Finley, p. 359.

[7] Rev. Dr. Milner, "Theory of Colours and Shadows," in Humphry Repton, Observations on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening, (London: J. Taylor, 1803), p. 220. Gilbert Stuart also devised a system for associating Newton's theories with the musical scale. See Dorinda Evans, The Genius of Gilbert Stuart, p. 26.

[8] Milner, p. 221.

[9] Galt, vol. 2, pp. 95, 159.

[10] Farington, Wed. 15 Sep. 1802, vol. 5, p. 1854.

[11] For a summary of West's beliefs about color theory see Gross Evans, pp. 105-107 and Galt, vol. 2, pp. 110-115; 139. His 1797 lecture was reproduced in Mary Gartside, An Essay on Light and Shade, on Colours and on Composition in General, (London, 1805).

[12] Galt, vol. 2, pp. 110-112.

[13] Ibid., pp. 112-115.

[14] Ibid., pp. 114-115.

[15] Mount, p. 89.

[16] Ibid., p. 68.

[17] Galt, vol. 2, p. 139.

[18] A transcript of part of this lecture is located at the Archives of American Art, National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, Reel 24, frame 558. See also Farington, Sun. 14 Dec. 1817, vol. 14, p. 5120.

[19] Gross Evans, p. 107.

[20] Farington, Sun. 14 Dec. 1817, vol. 14, p. 5120).

[21] Carrie Rebora, "Sir Thomas Lawrence's Benjamin West for the American Academy of the Fine Arts," The American Art Journal 21 (1989), p. 28. West cites this specific lecture in a transcript of a letter sent to John Trumbull in 1819. See Rebora, p. 44, note 44. Dunlap also mentions this lecture, stating that West did not actually wear the robe he is pictured in to deliver it. The robe was used only in his private painting room. See Dunlap, History, vol. 1, p. 71.

[22] von Erffa and Staley, pp. 287-288.

[23] For more information on the Raphael cartoons, now housed at the Victoria and Albert Museum, see John White, The Raphael Cartoons, (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1972).

[24] Dunlap, History, vol. 1, p. 71.

[25] Farington, Sat. 14 Dec. 1816, vol. 14, p. 4944.

[26] Kemp, p. 293.

[27] Schmid, Theory and Practice of Painting, p. 28.

[28] Lairesse, p. 120.

[29] Kemp, p. 291.

[30] Ibid., p. 293.

[31] C. J. Wright, "The 'Spectre' of Science: The Study of Optical Phenomena and the Romantic Imagination," Journal of the Courtauld and Warburg Institutes 43 (1980), p. 186.

[32] Farington, Fri. 4 June 1813, vol. 12, p. 4363.

[33] Joyce Townsend, Turner's Painting Techniques, (London: Tate Gallery, 1993), p. 15 and Cormack, p. 7.

[34] M. Kirby Talley, Jr. and Karin Groen, "Thomas Bardwell and His Practice of Painting: A Comparative Investigation Between Described and Actual Painting Technique," Studies in Conservation 20 (1975), p. 101.

[35] Galt, vol. 2, p. 139.

[36] Ibid., p. 140.

[37] Ibid., p. 136, 140.

[38] Kemp, p. 274.

[39] Farington, Sun. 14 Dec. 1817, vol. 14, p. 5121.

[40] For a discussion of the development of ready-made pigments see Peter Staples, "A Guide to the History of Pigments," in Lynda Fairbairn, ed., Paint and Painting, (London: The Tate Gallery, 1982) and Michael Goodwin, Artist and Colourman, (Bristol: Partridge and Love, 1966).

[41] Mary Philadelphia Merrifield, Original Treatises on the Arts of Painting, (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1967, originally published in1849), vol. 1, p. cxviii.

[42] Northcote, vol. 2, p. 22.

[43] Mortimer, p. 25.

[44] According to Rembrandt Peale, by 1786 artist's color shops akin to those found in London did not exist in America. Colors were either purchased at the apothecary's (which meant grinding and preparation by artists) or ordered from London. See Rembrandt Peale, "Reminiscences," The Crayon 1 (January 10, 1855), p. 23. As late as 1818, Peale, frustrated in his attempts to make the painting medium megilp, lamented the lack of a ready-made mixture of the substance from an American color shop. See Rembrandt Peale, "Reminiscences: Sketches of a Character," The Crayon 1 (April 11, 1855), p. 226.

[45] It was not until the later nineteenth century that collapsible metal tubes for paint storage came into use. See Rosamund D. Harley, "Oil Colour Containers: Development Work by Artists and Colourmen in the Nineteenth Century," Annals of Science 27 (March 1971), pp. 1-12.

[46] Ibid., p. 1.

[47] Ayres, p. 86.

[48] Ibid., p. 87.

[49] Peter J. Staples, The Artist's Colourman's Story, (London: Reckitt & Coleman Leisure Ltd., 1984), p. 36.

[50] John Gage, "Magilphs and Mysteries," Apollo 80 (July 1964), p. 38.

[51] Rosamund D. Harley, Artists' Pigments, c. 1600-1835: A Study in English Documentary Sources, (New York: American Elsevier Publishing Co., 1970), p. 25.

[52] Goodwin, p. 30.

[53] Harley, Artists' Pigments, p. 22.

[54] Bardwell attached a treatise on perspective to his 1761 edition of the book entitled, The Practice of Painting and Perspective Made Easy: In which is contained, the Art of Painting in Oil with the Method of Colouring, (London: S. Richardson, 1761). For a discussion of the popularity of Bardwell's books see Talley and Groen.

[55] Quoted in Talley and Groen, p. 49.

[56] Frederick Schmid, The Theory and the Practice of Painting, p. 17.

[57] There are several references to colormen by West. His wife's account book from 1797 lists 8 pounds, 10 shillings to a Mr. Jenkins, the colorman. See Alberts, p. 170. West also purchased canvases from two different shops owned by men named Middleton and Brown. See Farington, Thursday 21 Nov. 1811, vol. 11, p. 4035 and Sunday 20 Feb. 1803, vol. 3, p. 1983. Farington also reported that West especially liked the Brown Lake color made by the colormen Atherstone and Nottingham. See Farington, Friday 9 July 1813, vol. 12, p. 4389.

[58] Campbell, p. 105 and Charles Taylor, A Compendium of Colours and Other Materials Used in the Arts, (London: C. Taylor, 1797), p. 66.

[59] Taylor, p. 66. Taylor lists this colorman as W. Middleton, while William Whitley refers to him as John Middleton. He was apparently the most popular provider of artistic materials during the late eighteenth century, offering the best products for the lowest prices. See Whitley, vol. 1, p. 332-334.

[60] Townsend, p. 18.

[61] Philip Hendy and A. S. Lucas, "The Ground in Pictures," Museum 21 (1968), p. 266.

[62] Ibbetson, p. 11.

[63] Farington, Sunday 20 February 1803, vol. 3, p. 1983.

[64] Ibid., Tue. 26 Jan. 1808, vol. 9, p. 3208.

[65] Richard Livesay to Benjamin West, 18 May 1816, Reel 25, frame 473, Archives of American Art, National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

[66] Hendy and Lucas, p. 266.

[67] Schmid, Theory and Practice of Painting, p. 33, 36.

[68] Farington, Sun. 20 Feb. 1803, vol. 5, p. 1983.

[69] Galt, vol. 2, p. 115.

[70] Hendy and Lucas, p. 268.

[71] Three other examples of West's unfinished works in which a neutral toned ground is still visible are Thetis Bringing the Armor to Achilles, likely an unfinished copy of the canvas commissioned by Thomas Hope, 1805, Oil on canvas, 97 x 71 inches, Royal Academy of Arts, London and A Child, Oil on canvas, 9-7/8 x 7-3/4 inches, Private Collection. See Von Erffa and Staley, pp. 253 and 438, and Noah Sacrificing After the Deluge, c. 1798-1801, discussed in Nancy L. Pressly, Revealed Religion: Benjamin West's Commissions for Windsor Castle and Fonthill Abbey, (San Antonio: San Antonio Museum of Art, 1983), p. 40.

[72] Farington, Thursday 21 April 1796, vol. 2, p. 527.

[73] West defended himself in a letter to the Council of the Royal Academy dated 16 April 1803, now in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania and quoted in von Erffa and Staley, p. 289.

[74] Farington, Fri. 3 Sep. 1819, vol. 15, p. 5403.

[75] Taylor, p. 218.

[76] von Erffa and Staley, p. 249.

[77] The Baptism, c. 1794, Oil on canvas, 148 x 115 inches, Bob Jones University, Greenville, South Carolina. The Swarthmore drawing is black chalk on paper, 10-9/16 x 8-7/8 inches.

[78] A copy of the lithograph is now at the New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, Prints Division, and reproduced in Kraemer, p. 34, fig. 24. See Kraemer, pp. 34-35.

[79] Christ (Study for the Figure in "The Baptism"), Black chalk heightened with white on gray paper, 15 x 9-9/16 inches, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York. This same figure of

Christ appears in an oil sketch preparatory to the Greenville canvas, now in a private collection. The Baptism, c. 1779, Oil on canvas, 36 x 28 inches, Mrs. James H. Dempsey, Jr.

[80] Pen and ink, 7-11/16 x 6-1/8 inches. Other examples of gridded drawings are The Infant St. John, Graphite on brown paper, squared for transfer and rubbed with red chalk on the reverse, Pierpont Morgan Museum, New York and his cartoon for a window entitled The Nativity, c. 1792-94, Oil on paper, 196 x 101 inches, H. M. Treasury and the National Trust, Petworth House, Sussex.

[81] Farington, Fri. 6 April 1810, vol. 10, p. 3627. Another large historical picture West allegedly painted in only three weeks was William Penn's Treaty with the Indians of 1772. See von Erffa and Staley, p. 206.

[82] Assistants allegedly painted several of the portrait heads in The Institution of the Order of the Garter from 1787. See von Erffa and Staley, p. 200.

[83] Farington, Sun. 11 May 1806, vol. 7, p. 2758.

[84] Ibid., Fri. 8 Sep. 1815, vol. 13, p. 4703.

[85] Ibid., p. 4704.

[86] Ibid., Sun. 15 March 1801, vol. 4, p. 1522. This technique was likely used since the Renaissance. See Merrifield, p. ccxciv.

[87] In 1812 West told Farington he believed linseed oil to be the best of its type. Farington, Wed. 22 July 1812, vol. 12, p. 4161.

[88] Timothy Sheldrake, "Nature and Preparation of Drying Oils for Painting Pictures," Transactions of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce XIX (1801), p. 210.

[89] Merrifield, p. ccxxxvi.

[90] Cormack, p. 10.

[91] Quoted in Staples, p. 36.

[92] A likely example of this practice is Death on a Pale Horse, 1783-1803, Pen and brown ink and wash, heightened with white, 22-1/2 x 44 inches, Royal Academy of Arts, London.

[93] Cormack, p. 8.

[94] Farington, Sat. 1 June 1799, vol. 3, p. 1232.

[95] Talley and Groen, p. 99.

[96] Schmid recommends looking at self portraits in order to reconstruct artists' palettes. See Schmid, Theory and Practice of Painting, p. 17.

[97] Frederick Schmid, "The Painter's Implements in Eighteenth-century Art," Burlington Magazine 108 (October 1966), p. 521.

[98] Ibid., p. 519.

[99] Ibid.

[100] Farington, Tue 26 Jan 1808, vol. 9, p. 3207.

[101] Bardwell, p. 7.

[102] William Hogarth, The Analysis of Beauty, (London: J. Reeves, 1753), p. 122.

[103] Kemp, p. 292.

[104] Quoted in Solkin, p. 185.

[105] Mount, p. 59.

[106] Ibid.

[107] Ernst Van de Wetering, Rembrandt: The Painter at Work, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1997), p. 30.

[108] When discussing a picture by Rubens, West claimed that if one wished to copy the picture he needed to proceed exactly as Rubens did or he "would make nothing more than a heavy work of it." Farington, Wed. 8 April 1807, vol. 8, p 3008.

[109] Ibid., Tue. 5 May 1807, vol. 8, p. 3038.

[110] Ibid., Thurs 17 Dec. 1807, vol. 8, p. 3173.

[111] Bardwell, p. 12.

[112] Nancy Pressly, p. 42.

[113] For a discussion of this picture see Marks, "Benjamin West and the American Revolution," American Art Journal 6 (November 1974), pp. 15-35.

[114] The Death of Lord Nelson, 1806, Oil on canvas, 70 x 96 inches, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool. von Erffa and Staley, pp. 220-222.

[115] Robins, George. A Catalogue of a Few Finished Original Pictures...Works of the Late Benjamin West, Esq. P.R.A...Which Will be Sold by Auction...the 20th and 22nd June, 1829. London, 1829.

[116] von Erffa and Staley, p. 200.

[117] Ibid., pp. 246 and 281.

[118] James Greig, ed., The Farington Diary by Joseph Farington, R.A., (London: Hutchinson & Co., Ltd., 1927, vol. 7, p. 92.

[119] Constable, p. 86.

[120] Ibid., p. 98.

[121] Farington, Wed. 6 April 1797, vol. 3, p. 815 and Van de Wetering, p. 195.

[122] Farington, Tue. 26 Jan. 1808, vol. 9, p. 3208.

[123] Constable, p. 101.

[124] Farington, Sun. 14 March 1801, vol. 4, p. 1522.

[125] Ibid.

[126] Nancy Pressly, p. 35.

[127] Ibid.

[128] Bardwell, p. 14.

[129] Ibid., p. 15.

[130] Farington, Mon. 26 Jan. 1807, vol. 8, p. 2955.

[131] Taylor, p. 221.

[132] Leslie Carlyle and Anna Southall, "No Short Mechanic Road to Fame: The Implications of Certain Artists' Materials for the Durability of British Painting: 1770-1840,"in Robin Hamlyn, ed., Robert Vernon's Gift: British Art for the Nation, 1847. London: Tate Gallery, 1993, p. 21.

[133] Farington, Friday 29 April 1808, vol. 9, p. 3268.

[134] Whitley, Artists and Their Friends, pp. 198-99.

[135] Farington, Thursday 21 April 1796, vol. 2, p. 527.

[136] Dorinda Evans, p. 136.

[137] Farington, Fri. 27 May 1803, vol. 6, p. 2039, Tue. 18 Nov. 1806, vol. 8, p. 2909, Wed. 8 April 1807, vol. 8, p. 3008.

[138] Ibid., p. 3008 and Van de Wetering, p. 195.

[139] Constable, p. 98.

[140] Goodwin, p. 32.

[141] Talley and Groen, p. 101 and Cormack, p. 7.

[142] Northcote, vol. 2, p. 17.

[143] Ibbetson, p. 7.

[144] For a summary of the Venetian Secret affair see Gage.

[145] In his diary, Joseph Farington recorded many of the major events relating to the Venetian Secret affair, beginning in late 1796 and ending by the following summer. Farington, Wed. 14 Dec. 1796, vol. 3, p. 719.

[146] Whitley, Artists and their Friends, vol. 2, p. 211.

[147] Constable, p. 89.

[148] Ibid., p. 91.

[149] For a contemporary review of the process see Timothy Sheldrake, "Dissertation on Painting in Oil, in a Manner Similar to that Practiced in the Ancient Venetian School," Transactions of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce. XVI (1798), pp. 279-299.

[150] Cicero Discovering the Tomb of Archimedes, 1797, Oil on canvas, 49 x 71 inches, Private collection. See von Erffa and Staley, pp. 174-75.

[151] Sheldrake, "Dissertation on Painting in Oil," p. 296.

[152] Quoted in von Erffa and Staley, p. 174.

Conclusion

In spite of all the changes that took place in the British art world during West's 60-year career, he continued to paint and exhibit large-scale historical works until his death. West understood that this artistic genre was becoming more and more anachronistic and as early as 1807 he lamented to Joseph Farintgton about the waning support for history painting, complaining that "all the encouragement went for trifling works."[1] West was undoubtedly referring to the Academy's increasing acceptance of landscape and genre painting and the growing critical acclaim of the English watercolor school. But in spite of his own flagging critical success, West's large-scale historical works continued to draw crowds up to the end of his career. When his Christ Rejected of 1814 opened in an exhibition hall at Pall Mall in June of the same year, over 400 visitors per day for the following 5 months paid one shilling apiece to view the painting.[2] Moreover, at a time when Academic curricula endorsed by West and his older colleagues was seen by many as unwieldy and old-fashioned, his studio continued to be the stopping place for many young artists seeking advice. West's popular success, both with his late large-scale canvases and in his role as a teacher, was directly related to two aspects of his artistic methods. The first was his ability to incorporate into his works the two, seemingly opposing concepts; fidelity to both nature and the artifice inherent in eighteenth-century art theory. Secondly, West's scientific and dogmatic approach to his craft not only led to a uniquely prolific output, but was easily understood and appreciated by his many students.

Influenced by art treatises by Du Fresnoy and Richardson before he left America, West relied on the physical trappings of wealth and success to attract patronage in Britain. In his persona as gentleman, this artist of low American birth was able to wine and dine with London's most elite residents, including the Royal family. In his role as

gentleman, West projected the image of a man who understood and took part in the theoretical discourse that had emerged from the French and Italian academies of the seventeenth century. His choice of history painting as his principal artistic genre and his reputation as a leading connoisseur enhanced his lofty position. At the same time, however, West took control of his own biography in order to reveal his unusual closeness to nature and its influence on his artistic vision. West would have his public believe that his inherent understanding of beauty, his ability to depict the human figure and artfully compose pictures, was due to a closeness with nature not polluted by traditional academic theory. His retelling of his invention of the camera obscura, an instrument used both to study nature and create artful compositions, reinforced this artistic duality. Thus, West straddled two worlds. His work was a throwback to the old-fashioned, traditionalist realm of history painting based on artifice and theory, while it anticipated naturalist trends of the nineteenth century.

West's ability to combine realism with artifice helped to make his many historical canvases popular. His efforts at historical accuracy lent an immediacy to many of his paintings. By filtering these real-life events through what West called an epic composition, the emotional impact of these pictures was greatly enhanced. Choosing the right subject was essential in this endeavor and was the first job of any painter. Familiar with the texts that described key moments in British history, as well as mythological and religious sources, the stories West told on canvas were drawn to appeal to a wide audience. He began his British career by painting mythological pictures whose subjects may have been considered racy by some connoisseurs, but were widely popular with his general audience.[3] He later chose historical subjects celebrated for their accuracy and obvious references to classical and old master works of art. Artistic quotations like the Ara Pacis in The Landing of Agrippina at Brundisium with the Ashes of Germanicus and Christ's death as a metaphor for that of Wolfe's demise were easily read by West's public. Thus, not only did West flatter his viewers; he added layers of meaning to his

canvases. Additionally, the stories West told were easily interpreted due to his ability to compose works in a readily understood format and his practice of publishing explanatory pamphlets that accompanied his larger paintings.

In order to emphasize his creative skills at organizing and planning pictures, West drew attention to his preparatory drawings and sketches by exhibiting them in his home's principal gallery and Royal Academy exhibitions. West's drawings reflect his adherence to the conventions of eighteenth-century academic methods in which artists were encouraged to follow three specific stages of painting preparation; invention, composition, and design. Through his sketches, we see most clearly the stages of West's artistic production. West began with loose chalk studies that explored the composition of a picture. In spite of their sketchy quality, most of these drawings anticipate a painting's final composition. Subsequent drawings and sketches explored chiaroscuro and expression, both of which were established by combining the scientific or close observation of nature with the artificial technique of composing and synthesizing. These drawings, which range in type from loose, compositional studies to more finished oil sketches, are indicative of West's dogged devotion to his craft even during his later years when he continued to turn out large-scale historical pictures. Interestingly, his drawings were often more highly praised than his paintings because of their spontaneous qualities, a loose technique that appealed to the romantic imagination of the period. His preparatory graphic works also reveal his methodical approach to painting, a predictable regimen often called scientific by his contemporaries and students. A spontaneous, painterly technique may seem at odds with an almost scientific approach to painting, but this seeming dichotomy in method enabled West to produce a large number of works of consistent quality.

Once West had decided upon a subject and completed his preparatory works, he began the process of painting his canvases. As in the case of his drawings, his technique for painting also followed standard academic practices. The steps for painting included

preparing the canvas, the initial stage of paint application called the dead coloring, followed by the middle coloring, and finally, the finishing. In planning the coloring of a picture, West was guided by the color theories of Sir Isaac Newton. He was critical of artists who relied solely on instinct, and used Newton's light spectrum as a key for the coloring of his own pictures. His interests in color theory echo a larger trend in which artists no longer needed to be concerned with the time-consuming manufacture of pigment in the studio. Instead, they became dependent upon the services of the colorman who provided paints and canvases of a consistent quality at reasonable prices. The emergence of the colorman did not preclude artists experimenting with finding new and innovative materials with which to paint, however, and West was often engaged in discussions regarding new materials and techniques. In spite of innovations in the quality and type of artistic materials available to him, he adhered to the standard methods of art production as recorded in countless art treatises of the period.

West's scientific and methodical technique of painting rendered him a valuable teacher. Not only did he have a specific reason for everything he did in the studio, he was willing to share his philosophies with all of his students. Even when he was supposed to be secretive about his knowledge of the Venetian Secret, it was discovered that his son and John Trumbull had learned of the procedure.[4] This was probably due to the fact that students so often surrounded West it was almost impossible to keep certain prepared canvases out of sight for any length of time. This openness, coupled with a specific methodology that could be readily and concisely shared, rendered West one of the most important teachers of his generation. His conservatism was manifested in his continued artistic ties to art of the Italian Renaissance and Antiquity. He was liberal, however, in his belief that artists should pursue the branch of art to which they were best suited and in this vein he was willing to provide career guidance to a number of students and assistants.

As West grew older, the number of students that visited his studio each day

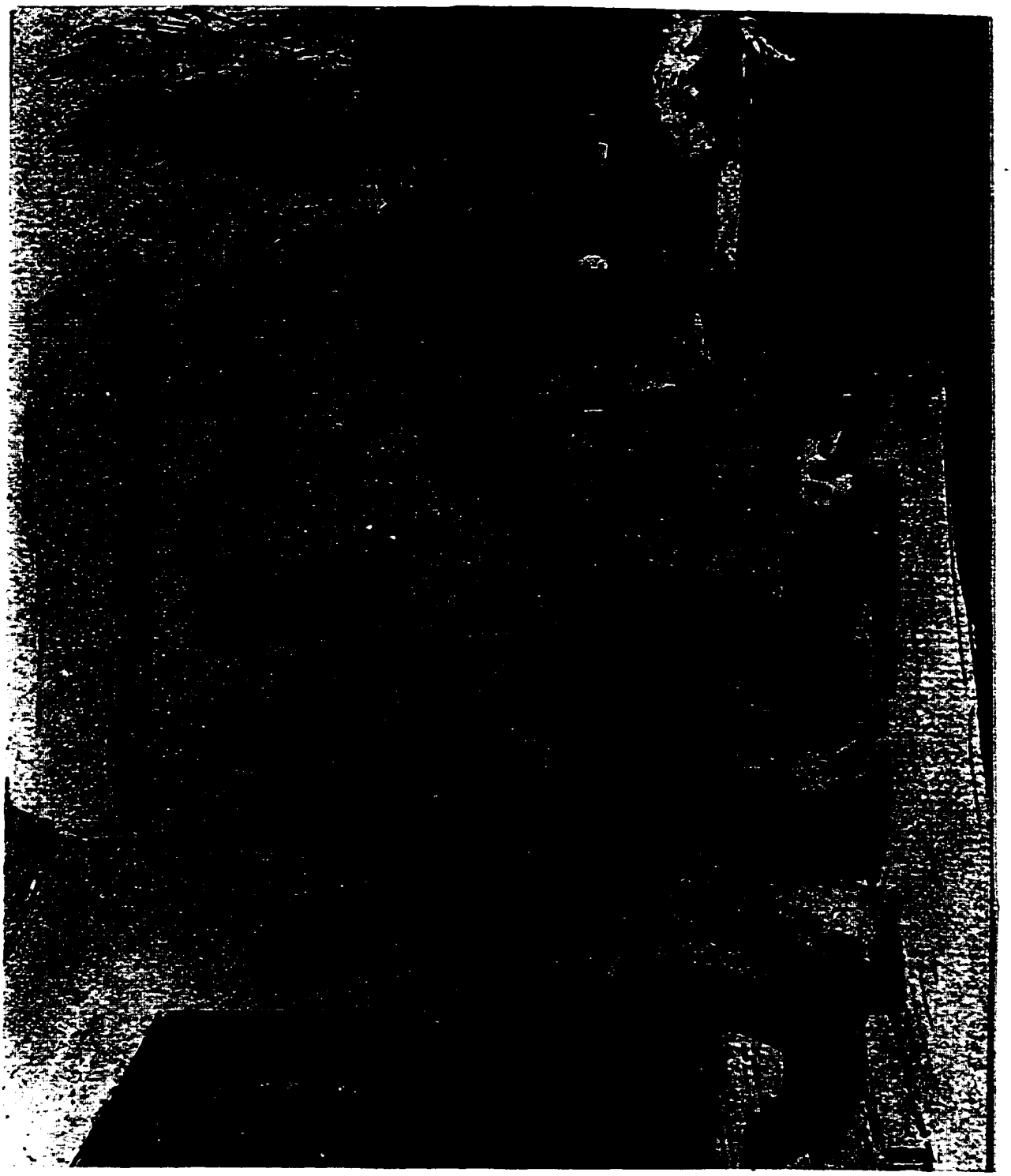
seemed to diminish. As his commissions decreased, along with the need for extensive studio labor, he scaled down his operation, relying principally on his son, Raphael, for assistance. By the time he died, not only was the style and mode of West's art anachronistic, but a studio like his was no longer necessary to most artists. As artists began to paint in less grandiose formats, the need for large spaces such as West's Newman Street address were no longer needed. Moreover, the impulse to emulate a gentlemanly lifestyle subsided in the nineteenth century when the romantic period's concept of an artist did not require material trappings of wealth. In the midst of all these changes, it is not surprising that West's reputation began to suffer, even before his death. But in the wake of all the criticism leveled at West and his oeuvre, he should also be remembered for his innovations. His ability to embrace naturalism, even when working on history paintings, looked forward to the celebrated British landscape school of the early nineteenth century. Importantly, his willingness to clearly share his methods with a large number of students broke with apprentice/master conventions of the period. Thus, his legacy to American artists may not have been the art works he left behind, but the promise of what an American artist could achieve.

[1] Farington, Fri. 8 May 1807, vol. 8, p. 3041.

[2] Ibid., Fri. 26 Aug. 1814, vol. 13, p. 4575, Thursday 13 Oct. 1814, p. 4595.

[3] Solkin, p. 181.

[4] Farington, Wed. 11 Jan. 1797, vol. 3, p. 744.



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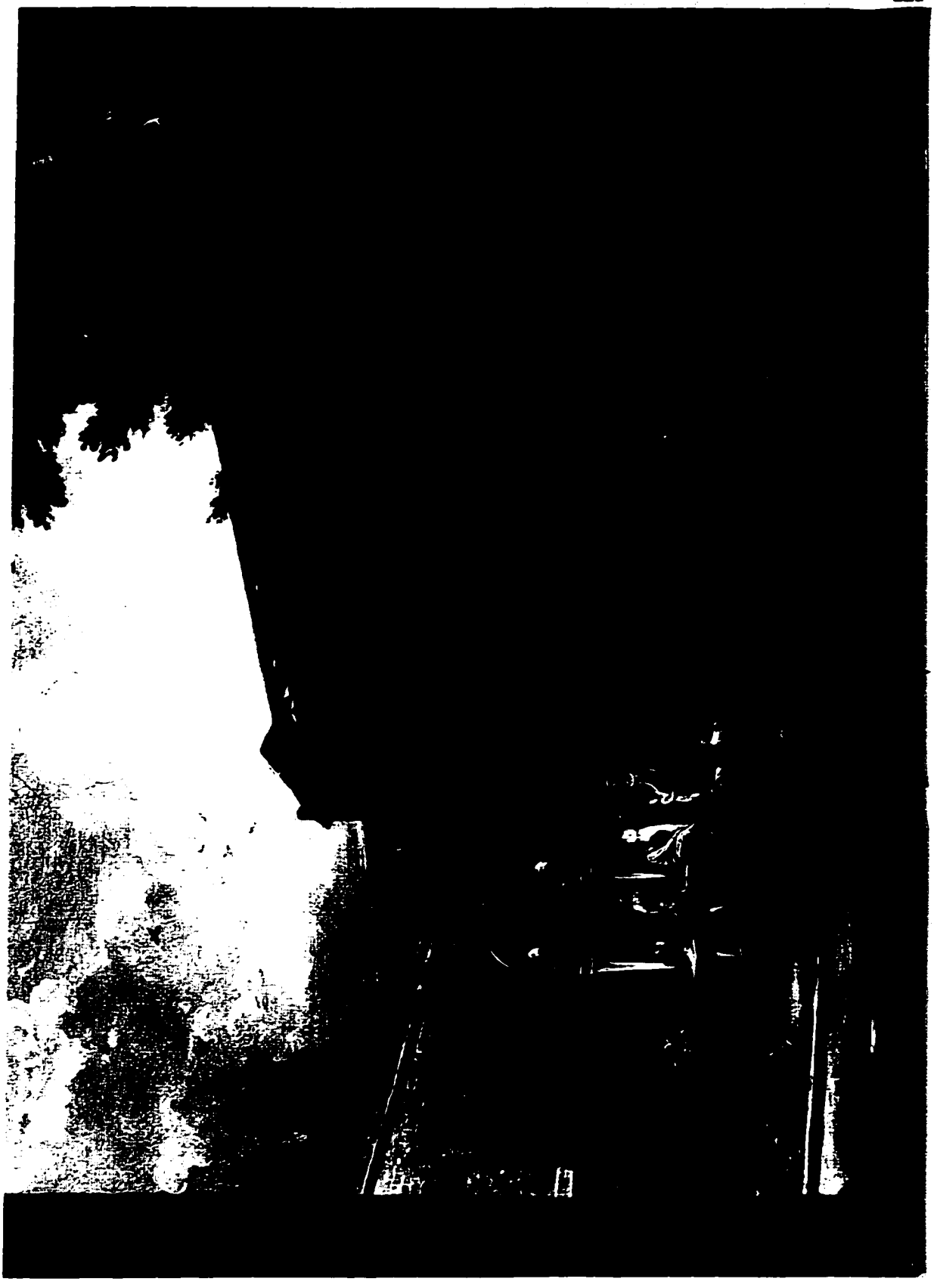

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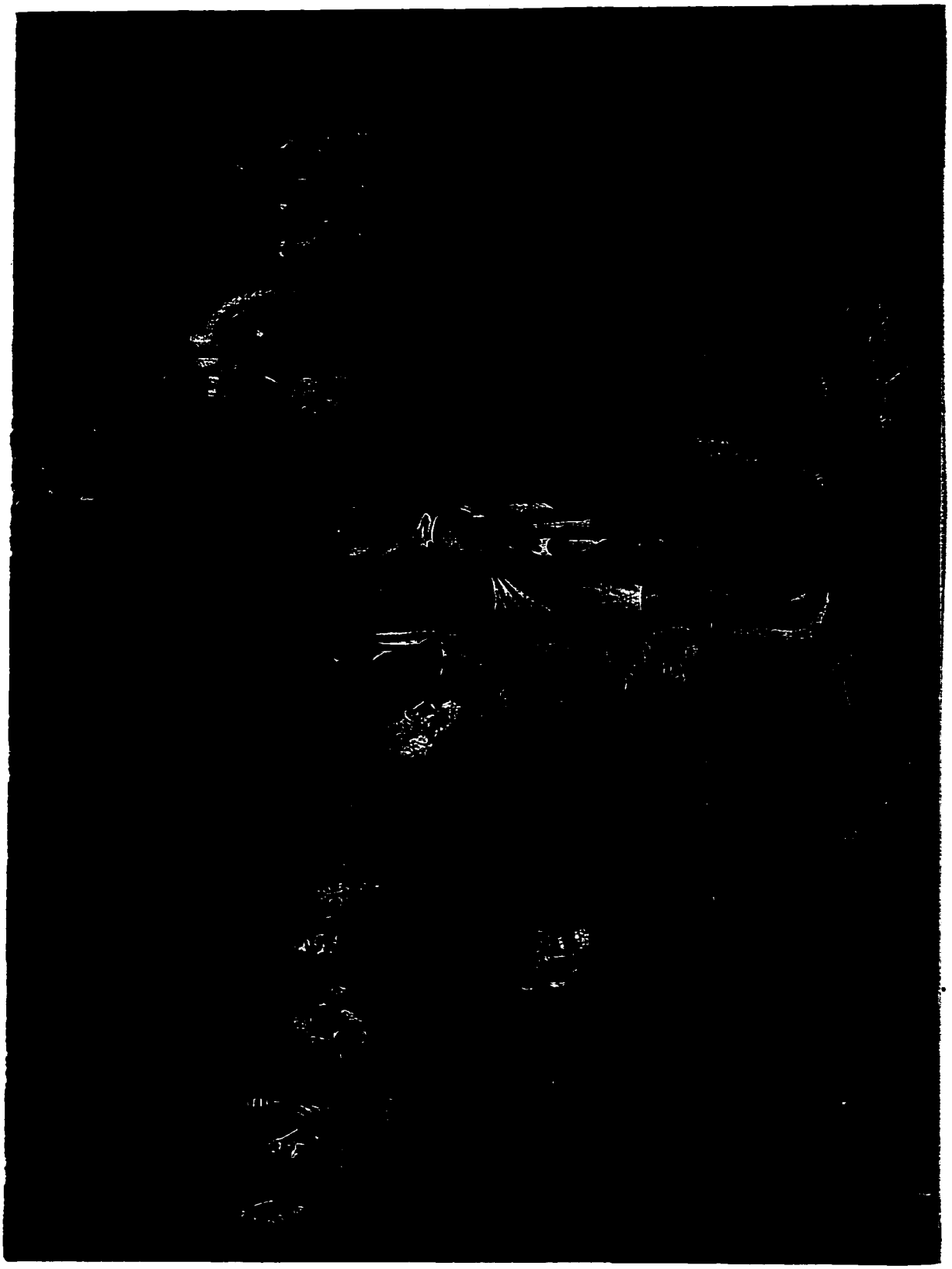

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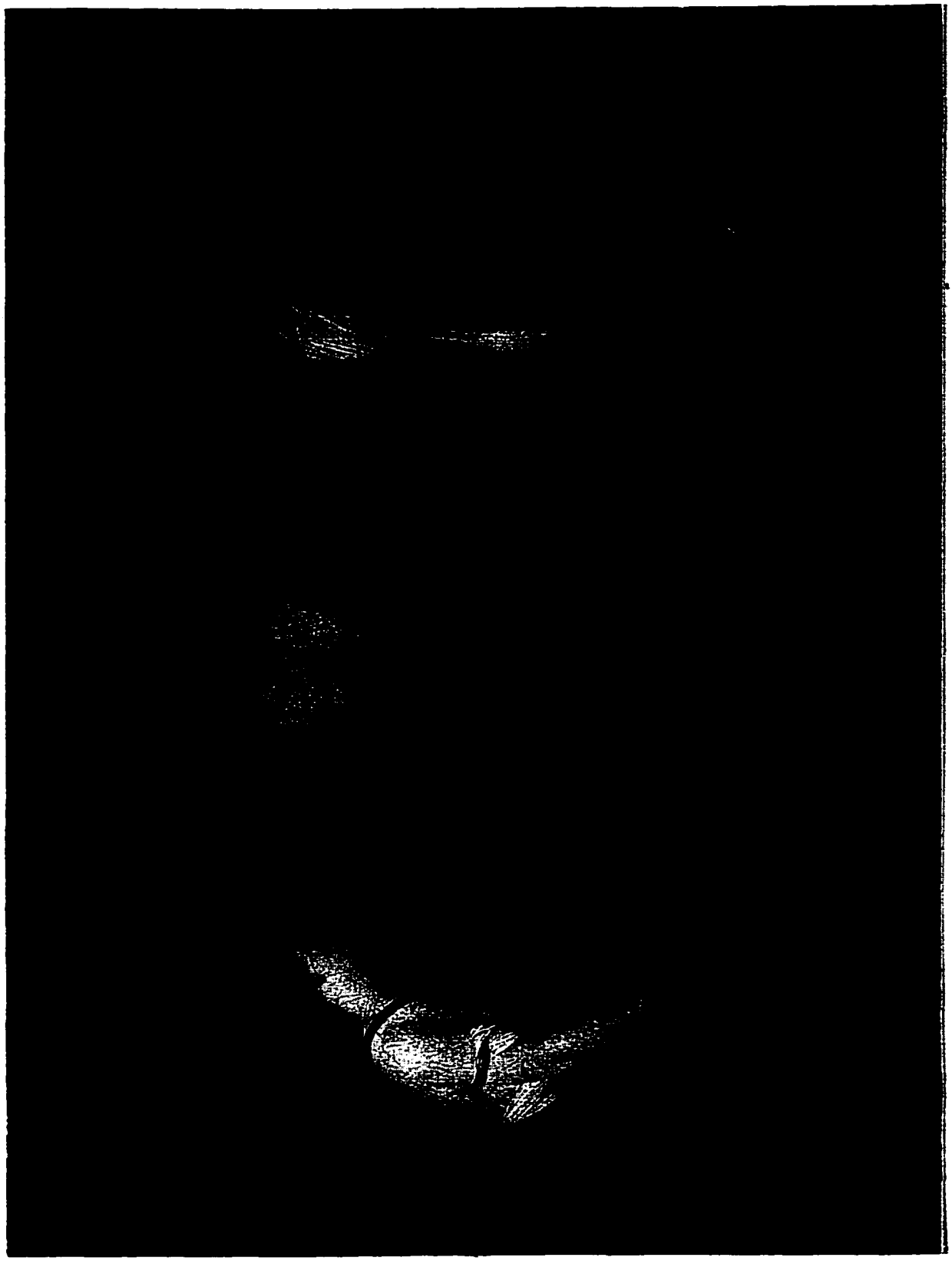

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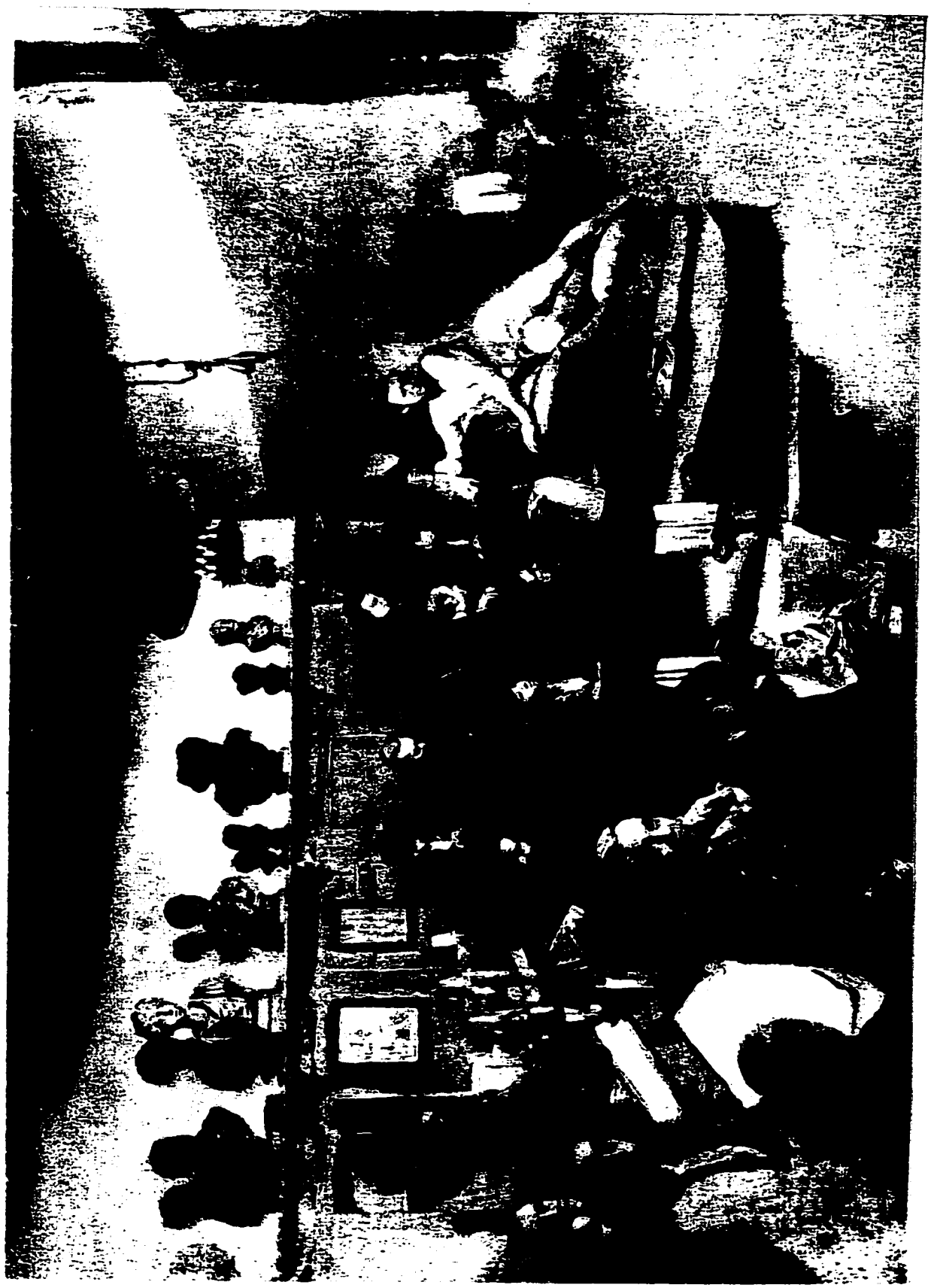

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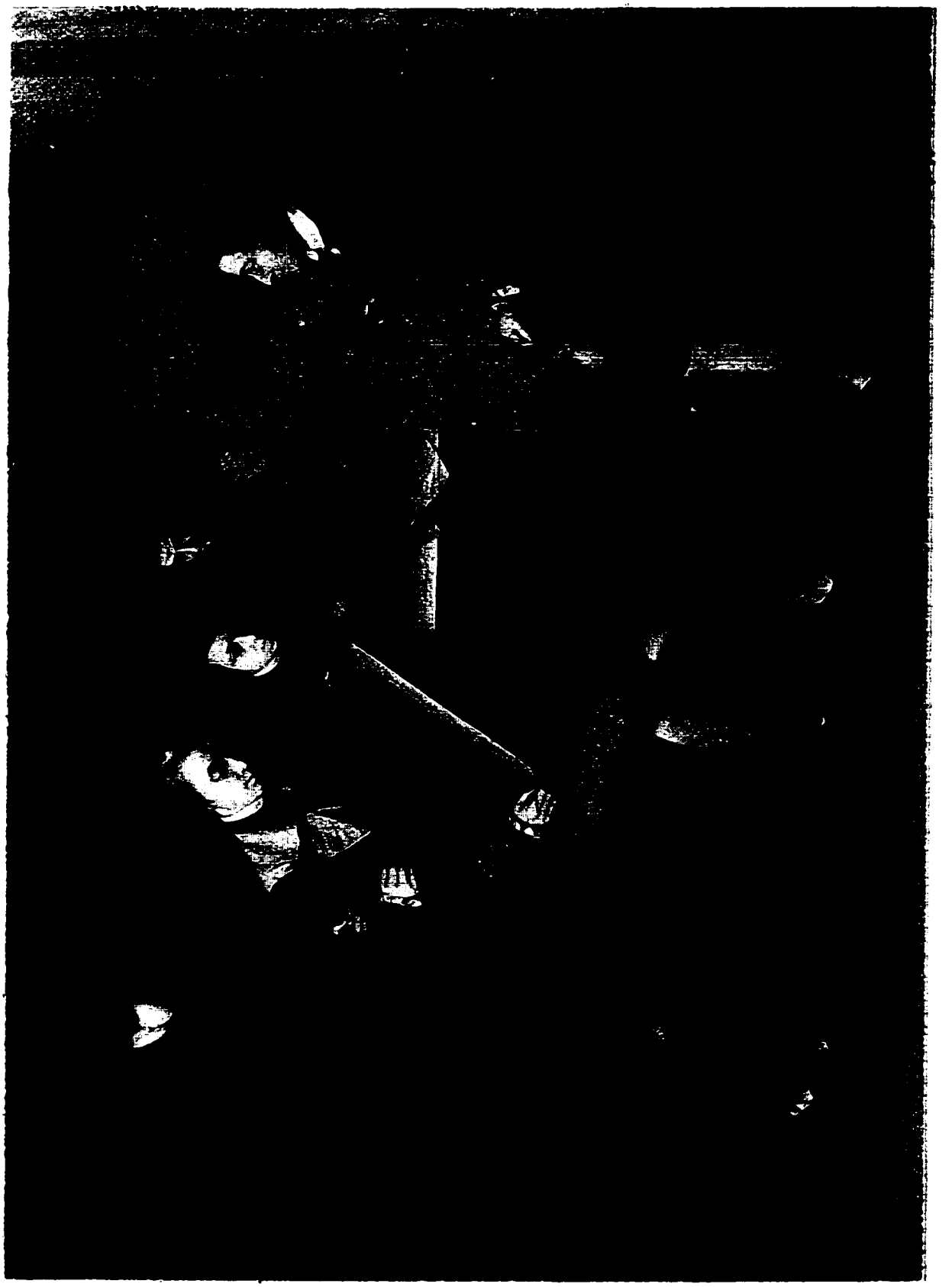

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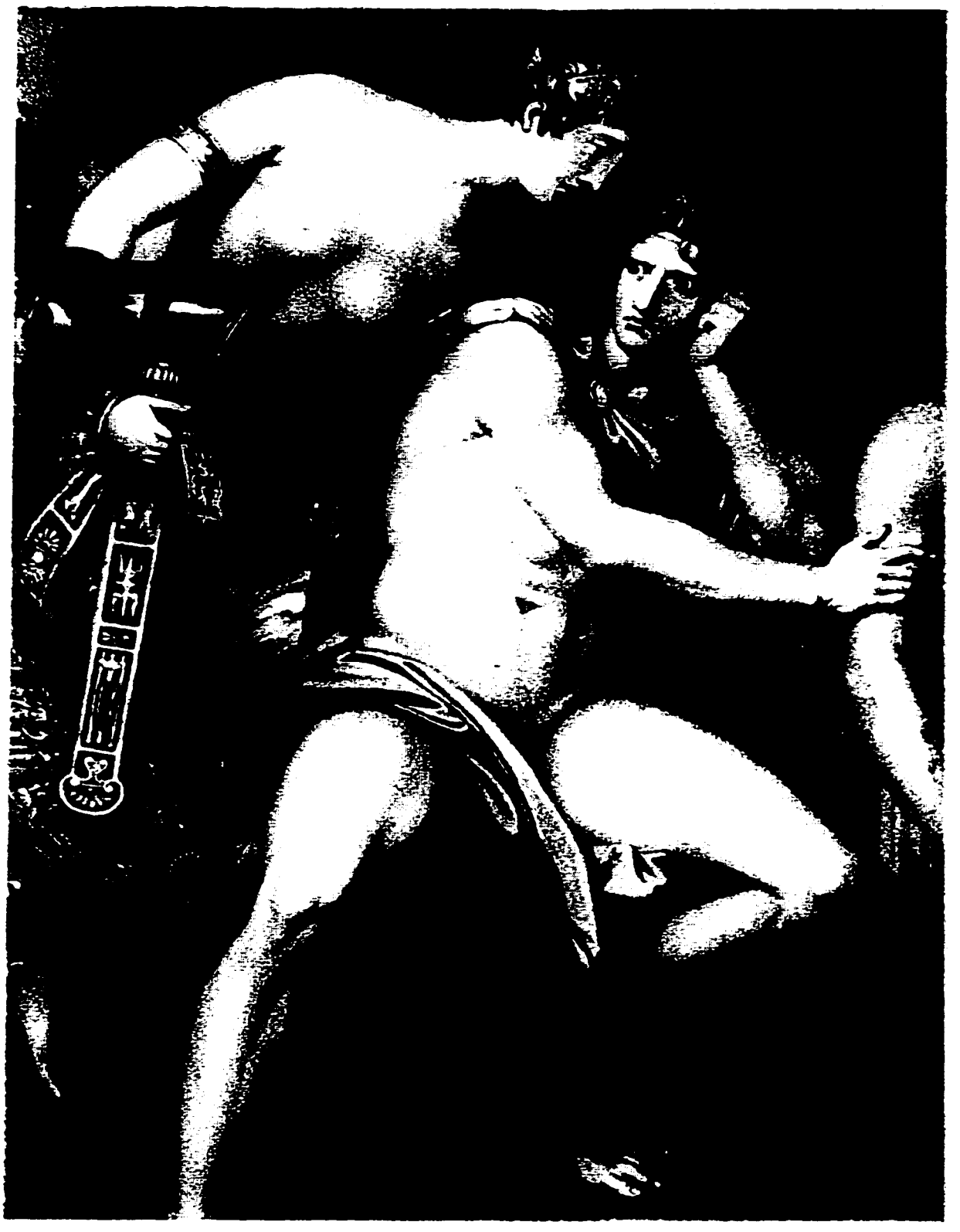

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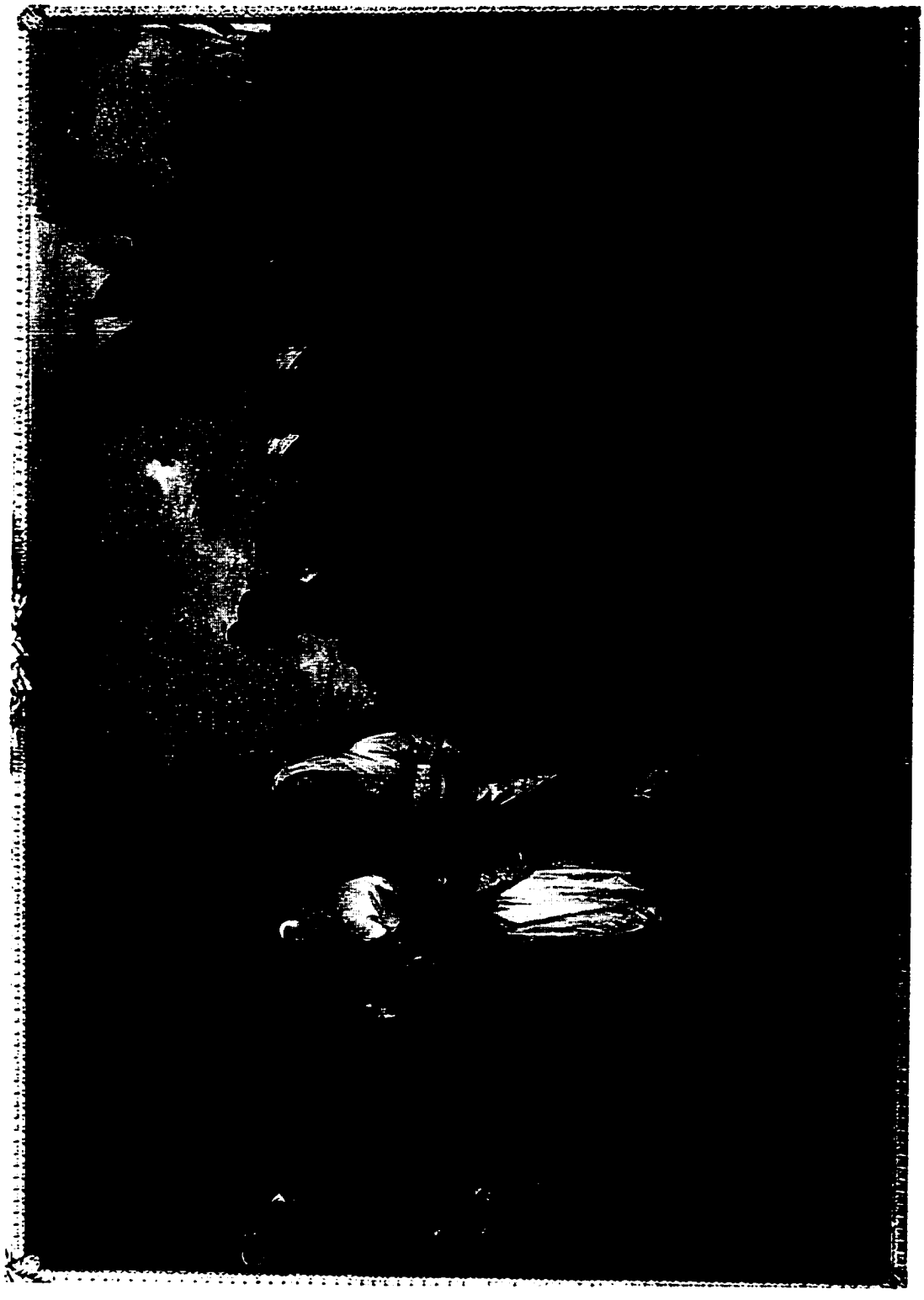

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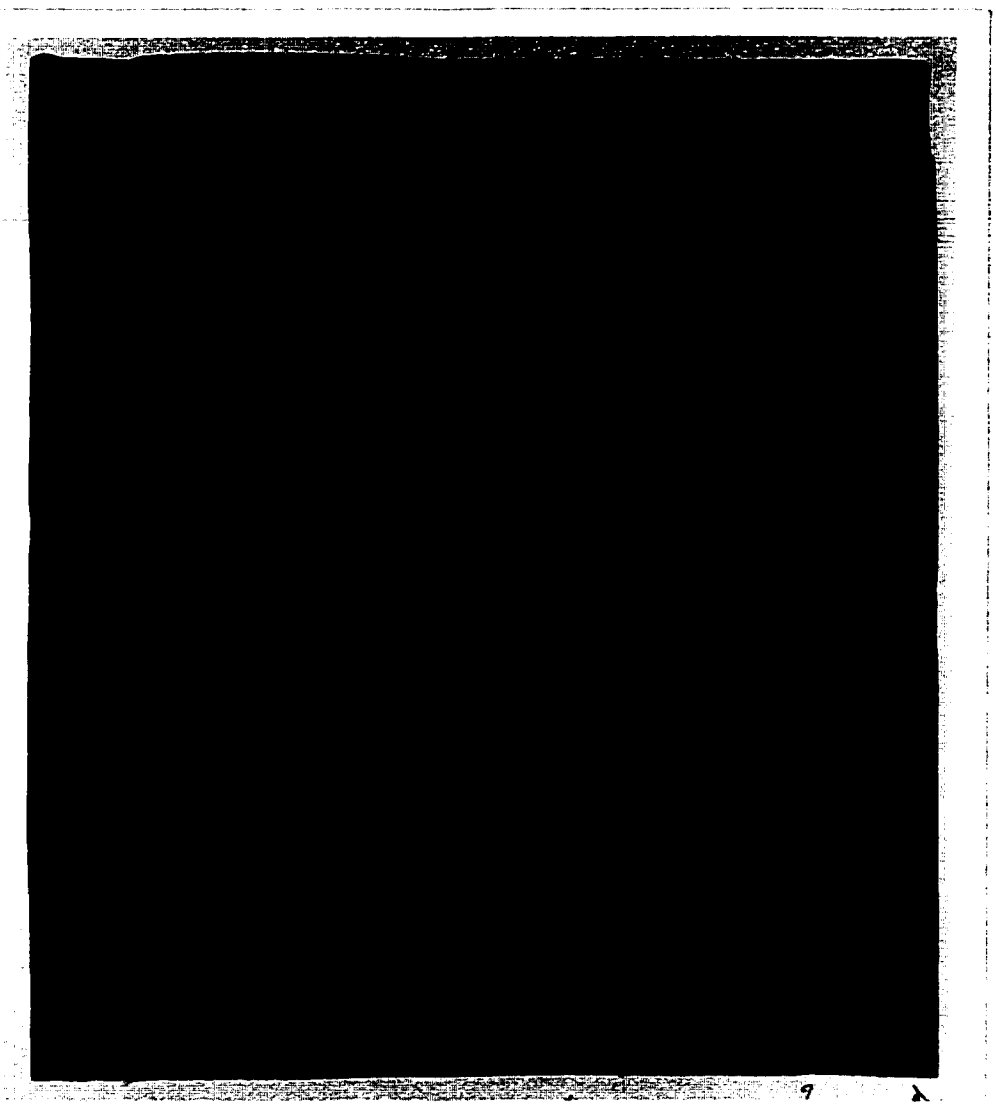

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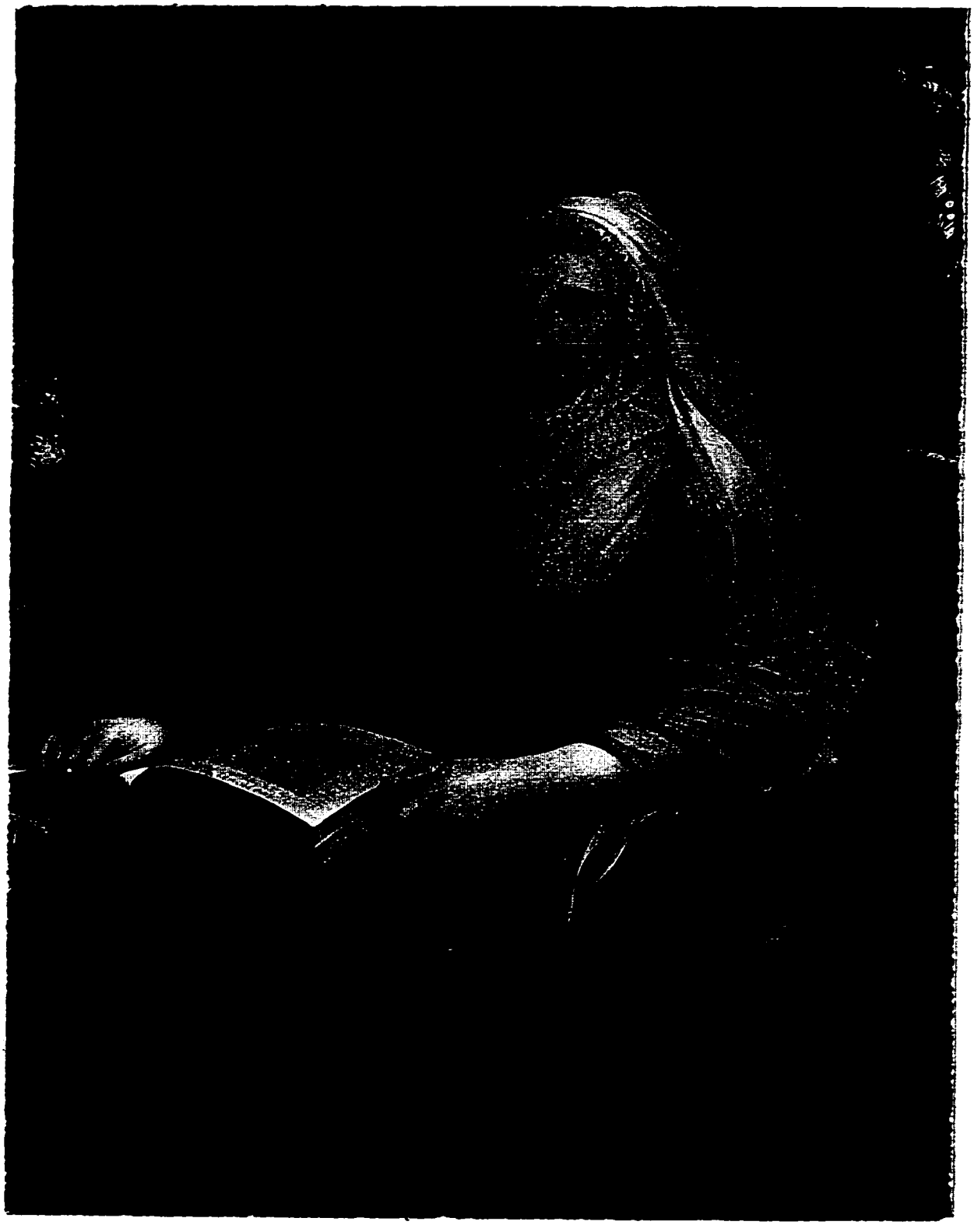

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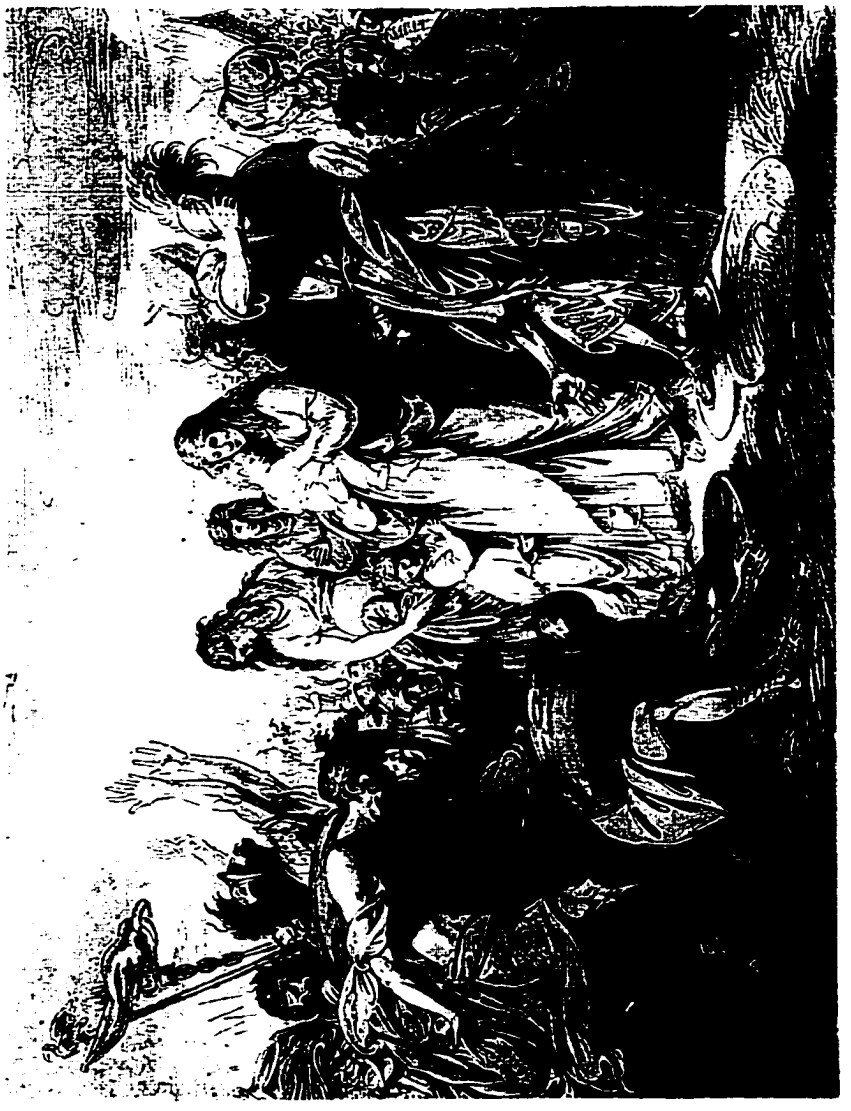

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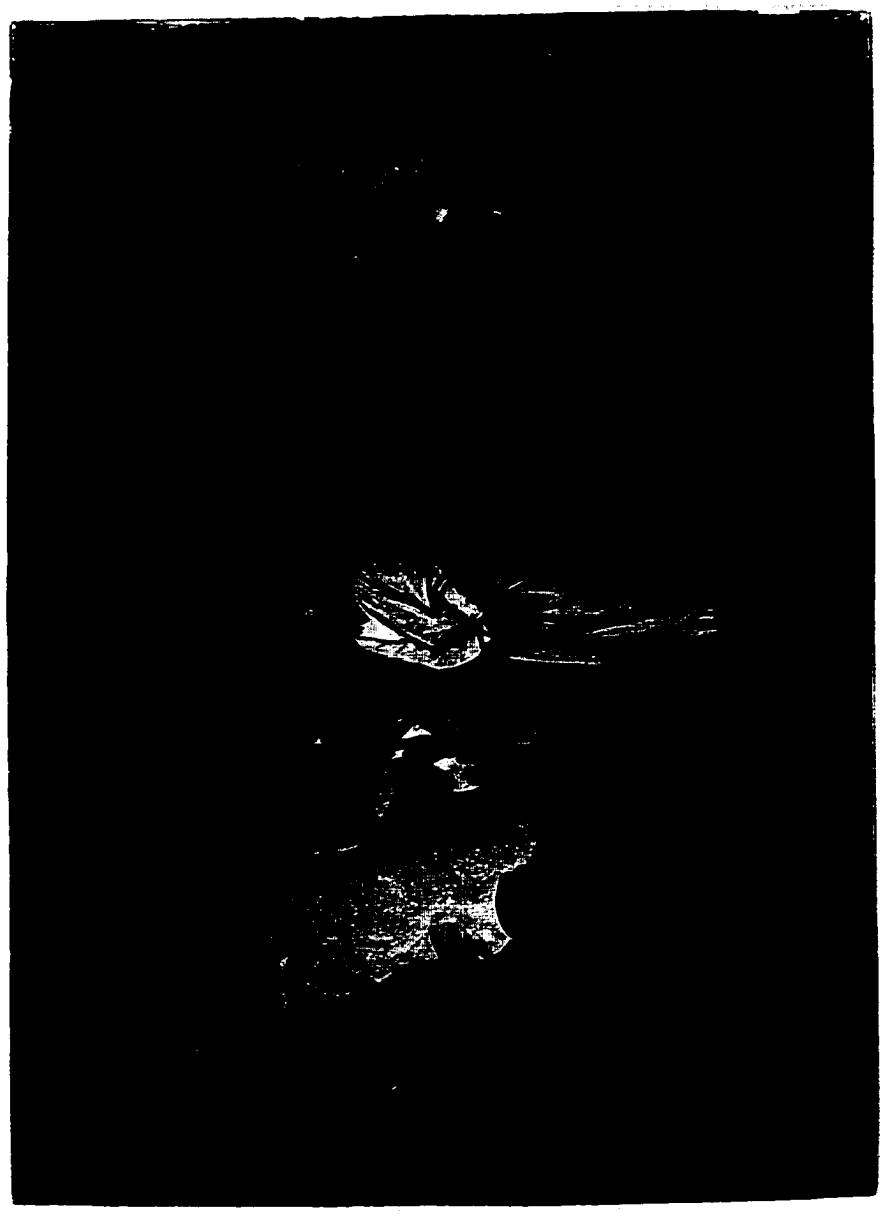

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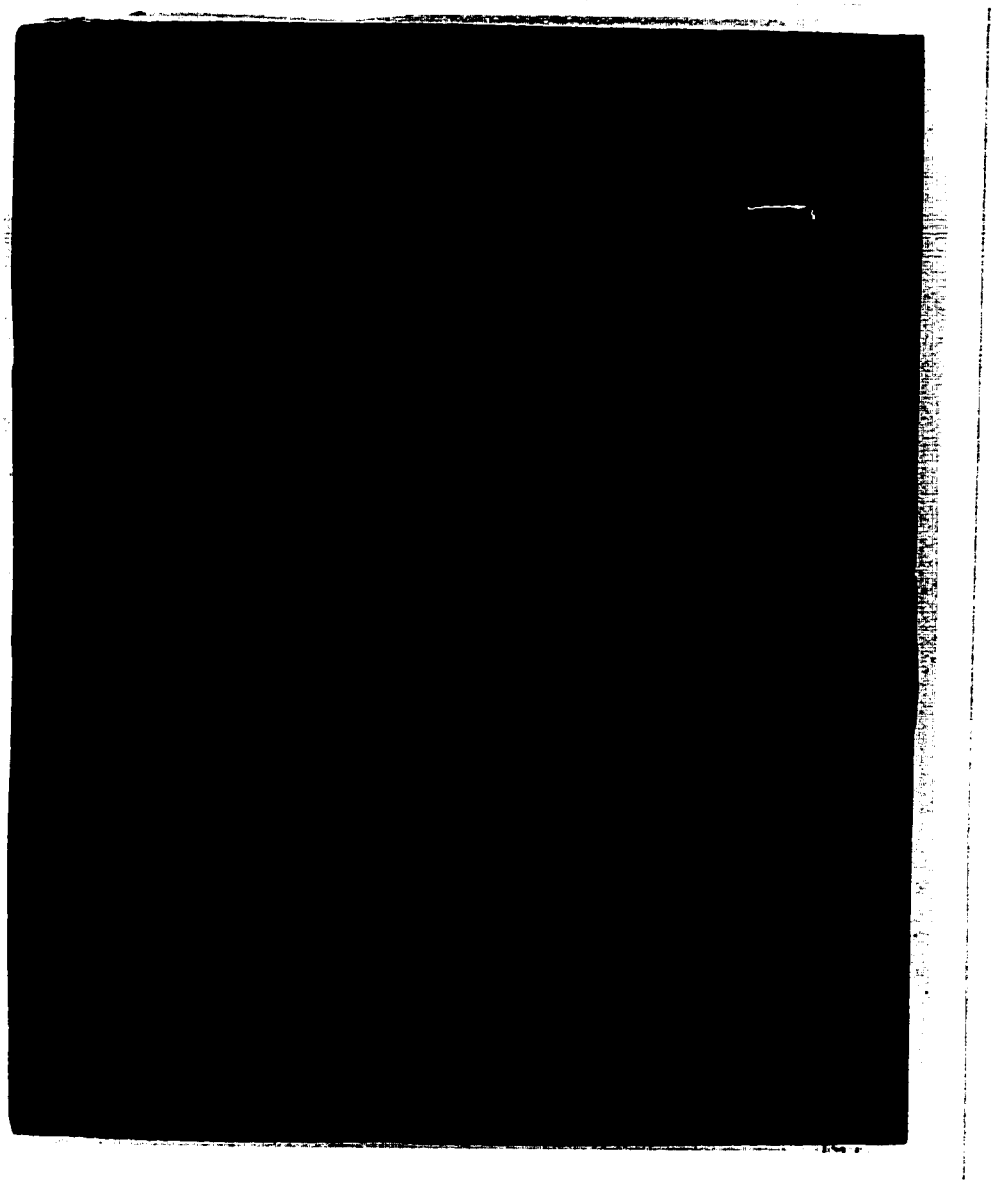

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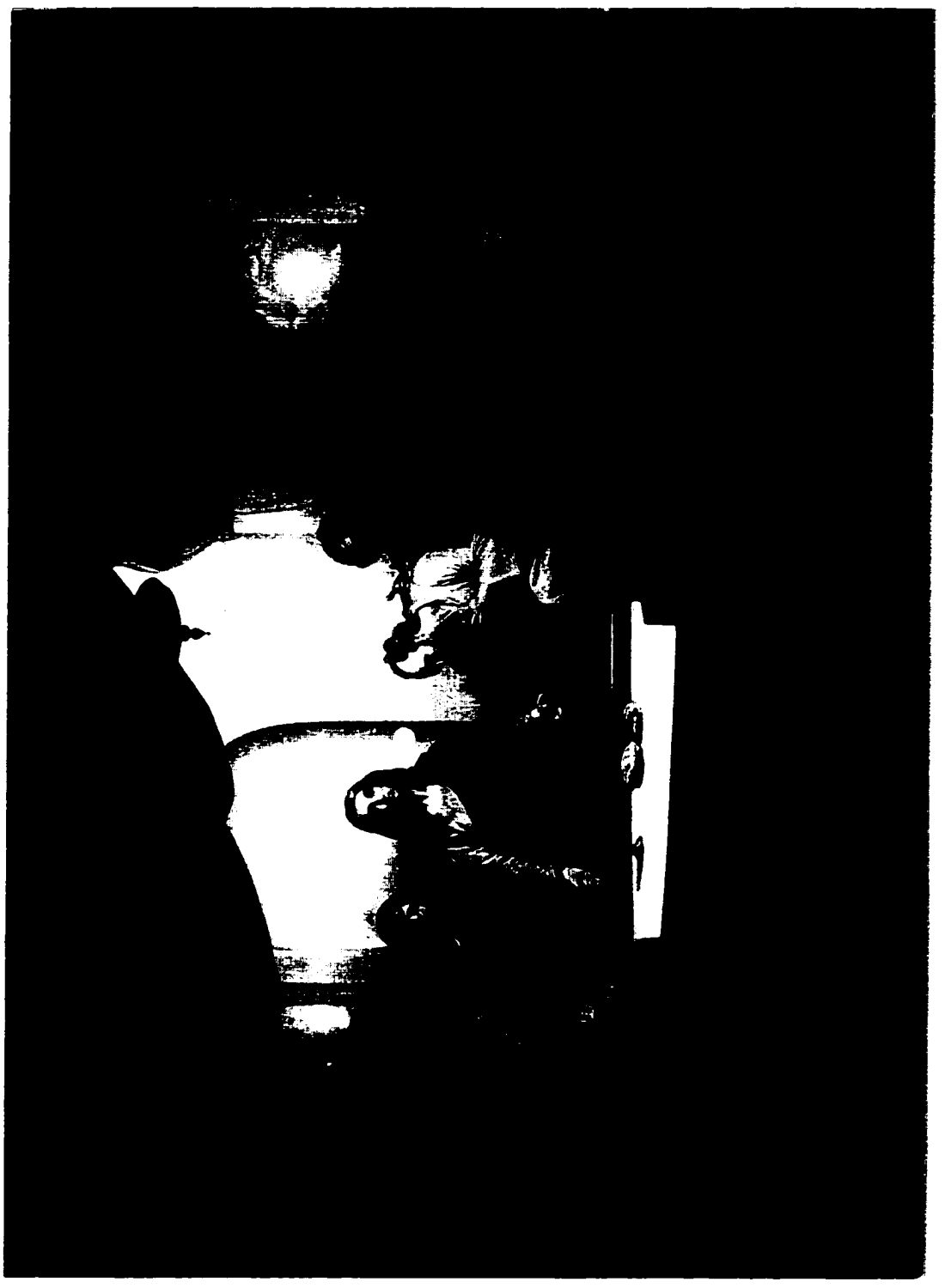

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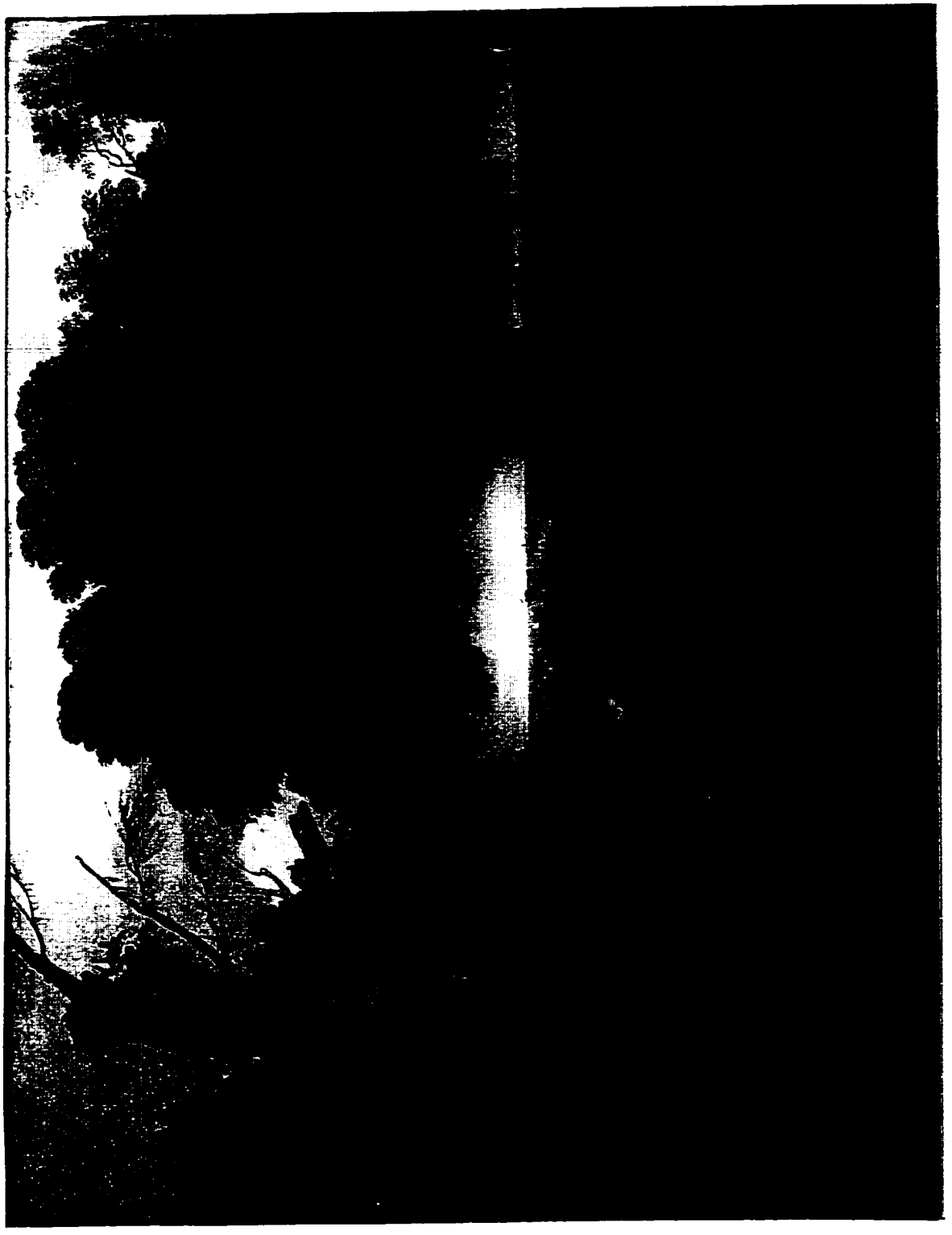

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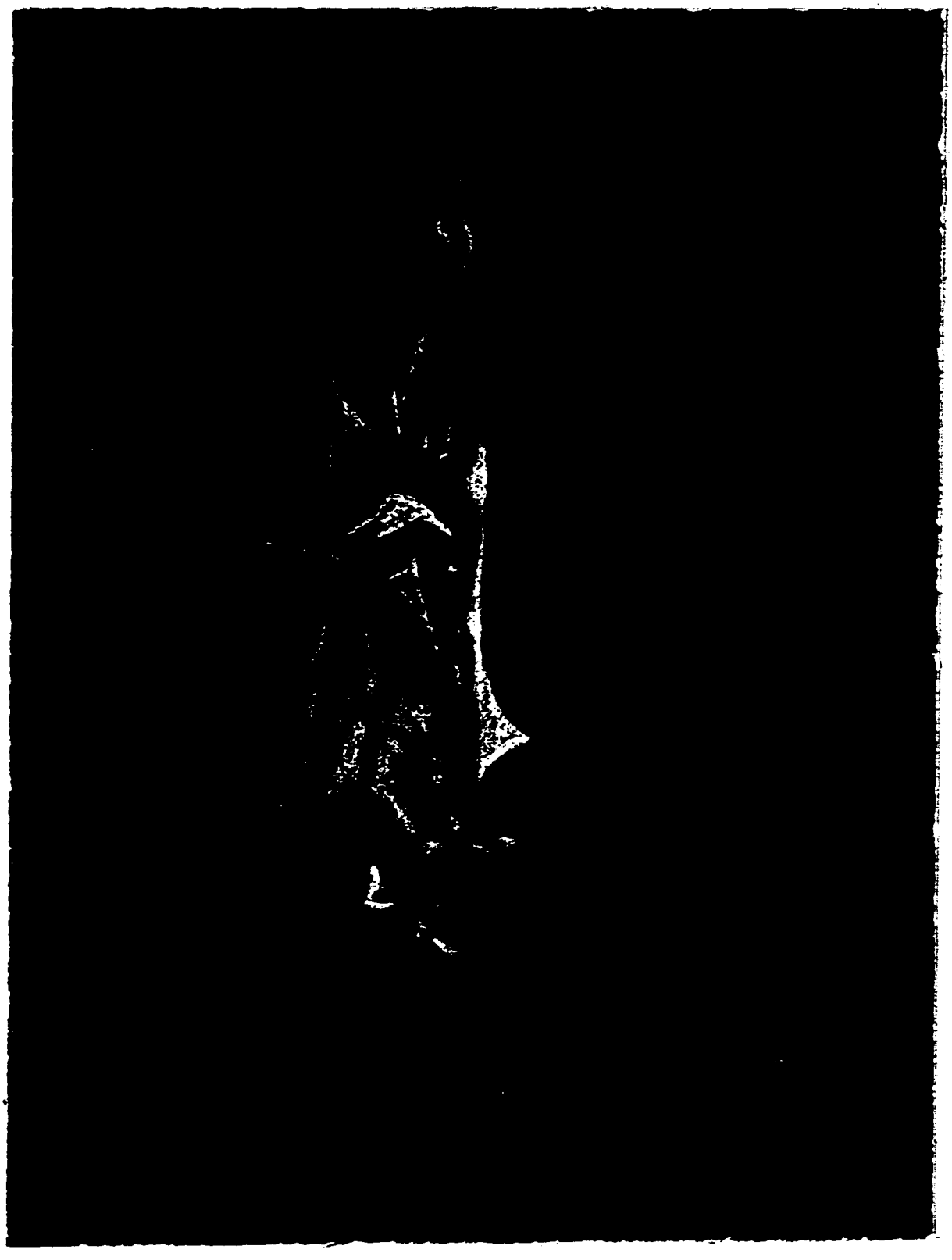

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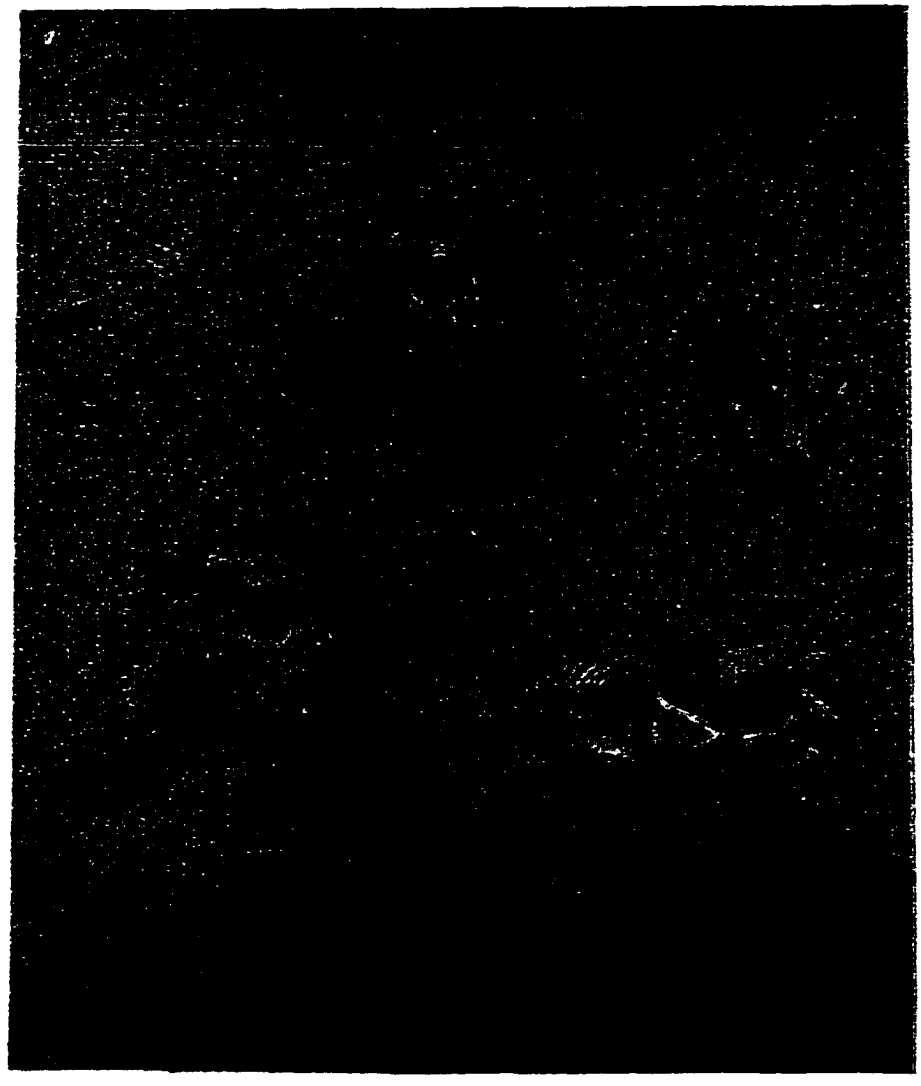

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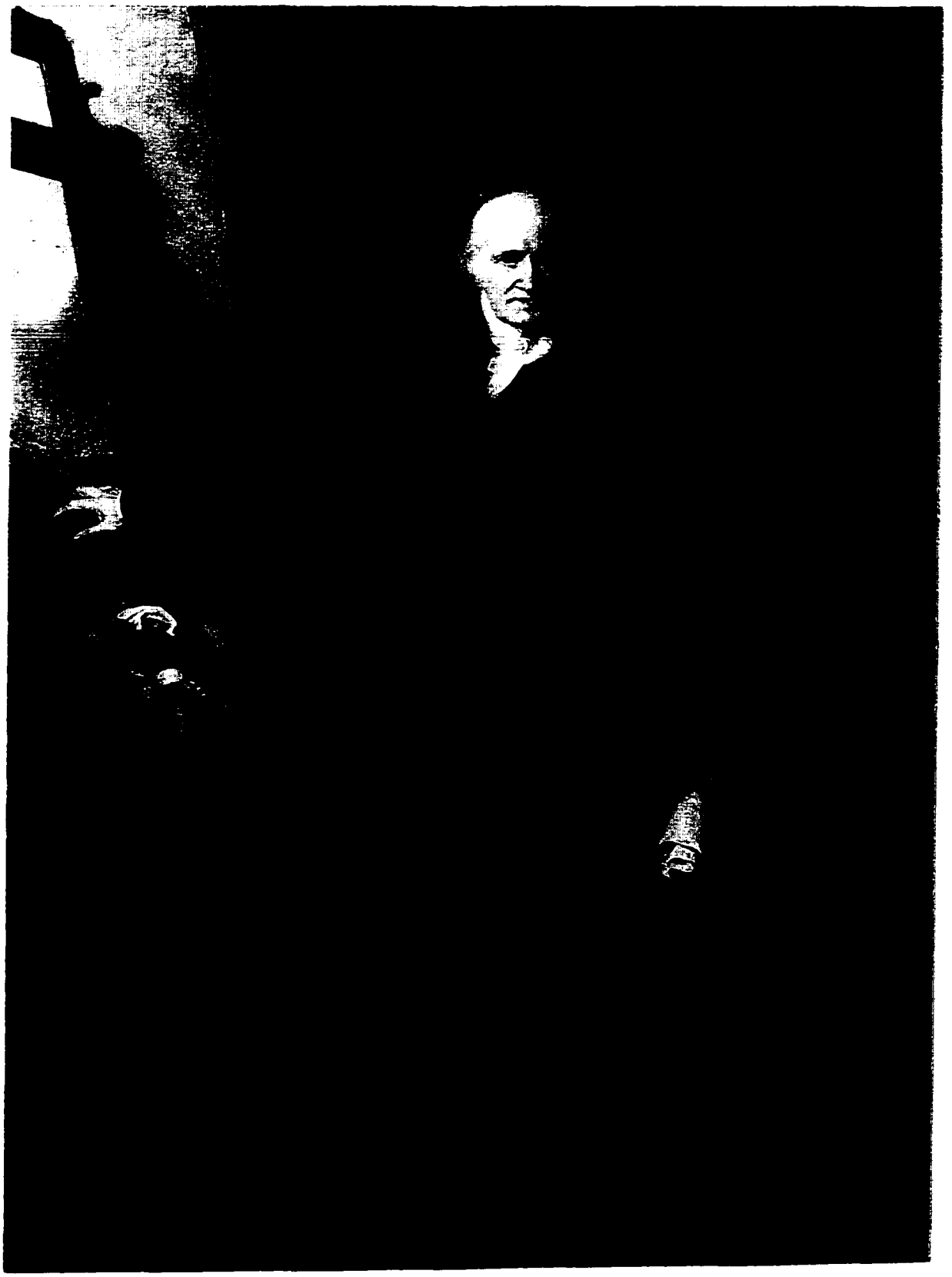

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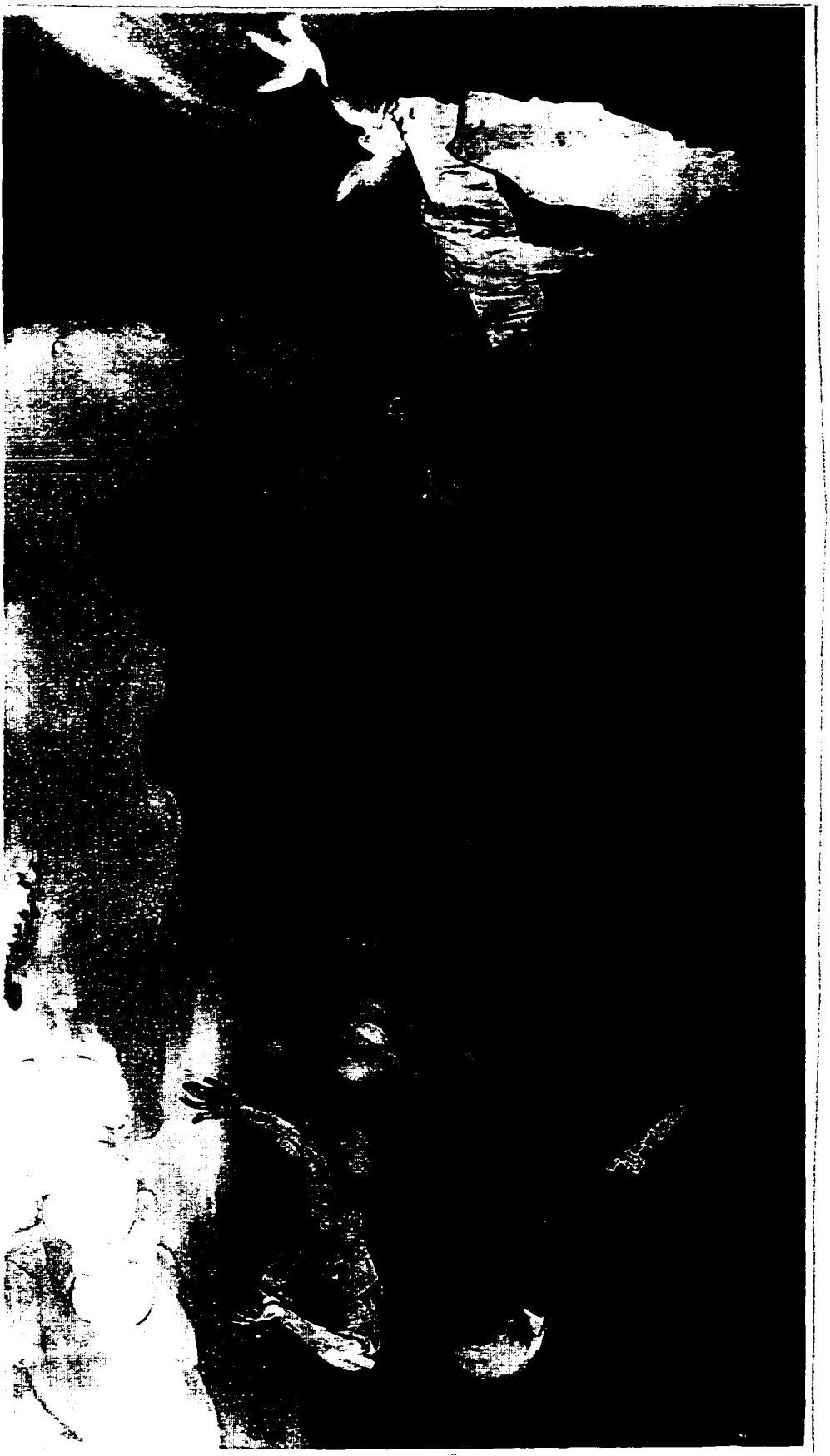

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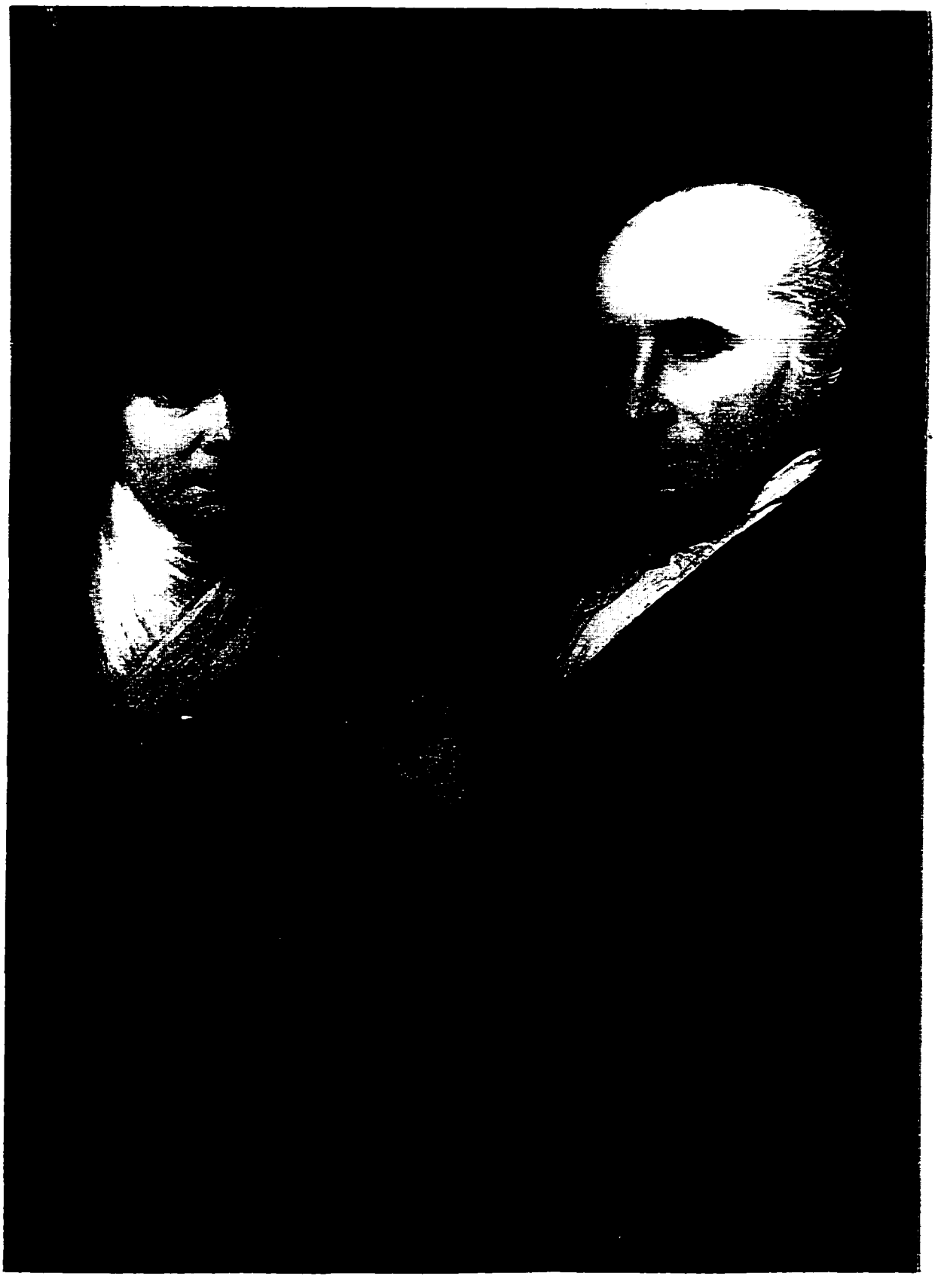

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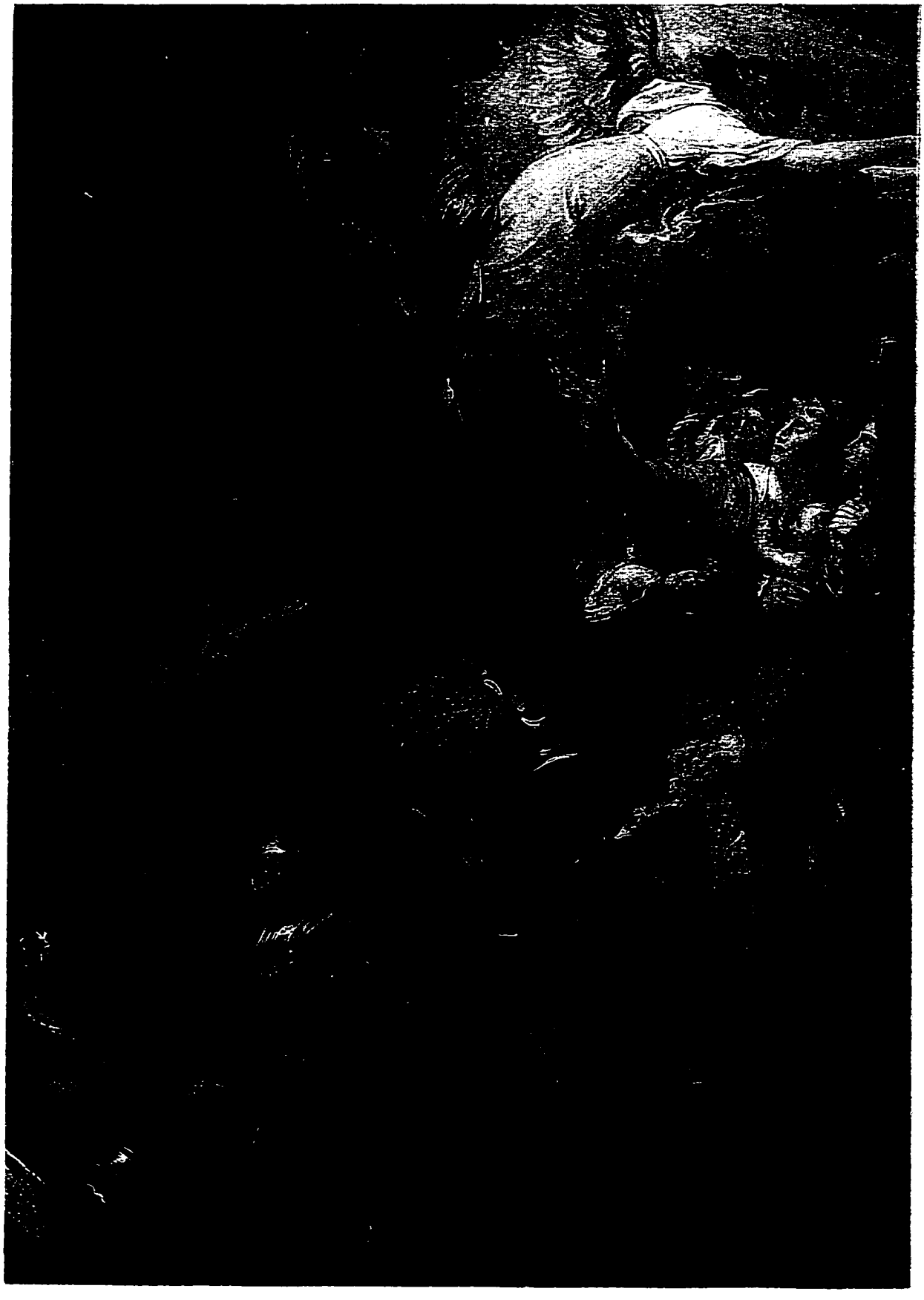

Figure 4.6

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