# Charles Callahan Perkins: early Italian Renaissance art and British museum practice in Boston

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In previous scholarship on the origins of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston ('Boston Museum') — incorporated in February, 1870 as one of the nation's first public art museums — art historians have frequently pointed to its similarity with London's South Kensington Museum ('South Kensington'), particularly as regards its mission to elevate the educational level of the public and the industrial design of everyday objects.<sup>1</sup> While scholars have attributed this shared mission to the influence of the pioneering art historian and fine arts museum expert Charles Callahan Perkins (1823–1886), there has been no systematic and in-depth probing of the specific South Kensington museum practices adopted by Perkins, nor of the precise form that they took under his all-encompassing direction.<sup>2</sup> This article undertakes to fill this lacuna in the belief that such a detailed exploration sheds much light on the particular

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Walter Muir Whitehill, Museum of Fine Arts Boston: A Centennial History, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970, 8–10 and 26–27; Michael Conforti, 'The Idealist Enterprise and the Applied Arts', in: Malcolm Baker and Brenda Richardson, eds, A Grand Design: The Art of the Victoria and Albert Museum, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1997, 40–44; and Hina Hirayama, With Éclat, The Boston Athenaeum and the Origin of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Boston: Boston Athenaeum, 2013, 83–88. I am indebted to Hina Hirayama for her unflagging support and enthusiasm for my research into Charles Callahan Perkins.
<sup>2</sup> For the history of the South Kensington Museum see Baker and Richardson, eds., A Grand Design; Anthony Burton, Vision & Accident: The Story of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London: V&A Publications, 1999; Elizabeth Bonython and Anthony Burton, The Great Exhibitor: The Life and Work of Henry Cole, London: V&A Publications, 2003; and Susanna Avery-Quash and Julie Sheldon, Art for the Nation: The Eastlakes and the Victorian Art World, London: The National Gallery Company, 2011. character of the Boston Museum's foundational years.<sup>3</sup> It asserts, in particular, that the privileging of early Italian Renaissance art at the South Kensington had its distinct echo in Boston under Perkins' management.<sup>4</sup> In this regard, the article posits, as a second important institutional model for Perkins, the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition of 1857 ('Art Treasures Exhibition'), one of the earliest exhibitions to showcase fourteenth and fifteenth-century art in a public exhibition in England.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the article highlights Perkins' professional and personal relationships with, not only the individuals responsible for this emphasis at Manchester and South Kensington, Sir George Scharf, Jr. (1820–1895) and Sir John

<sup>3</sup> The article builds on my recently completed dissertation — the first modern monograph on Perkins' life and work — in which I claim that Perkins' scholarship, illustrations, collections, and museum directorship shared the philosophical premise that the visual language of the fine arts, independent of the literary references that had so long been cherished by an elite heavily invested in classicism, could have an equal if not greater salutary impact on the citizenry. As such, he dramatically expanded the conception of exhibition-worthy art to include the early Italian Renaissance among other periods and genres previously undervalued, and he led the way to a museum of fine arts whose comprehensive collections were visually accessible to a much broader public. See Deborah Hartry Stein, 'The Visual Rhetoric of Charles Callahan Perkins: Early Italian Renaissance Art and a new Fine Arts Paradigm for Boston', PhD diss., 2017, Boston University.

<sup>4</sup> By 'early Italian Renaissance art', I refer to works of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and early sixteenth centuries. For the role of early Italian Renaissance art in the formation of the South Kensington Museum see Helen Davies, 'John Charles Robinson's Work at the South Kensington Museum', Parts I and II, *Journal of the History of Collections*, vol. 10, no. 2, 1998, 169–188 and vol. 11, no. 1, 1999, 111–114; and Charlotte Drew, 'Displaying Italian Sculpture: Exploring Hierarchies at the South Kensington Museum 1852–1862', PhD diss., University of York, 2014.

<sup>5</sup> I am indebted to Susanna Avery-Quash for pointing out that the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition built upon an even earlier ground-breaking public display of fourteenth and fifteenth-century painting. This exhibit, entitled 'a series of Pictures from the times of Giotto and Van Eyck', was held at the British Institution in London in 1848. E-mail correspondence between Susanna Avery-Quash and Deborah Stein, 27 March, 2018.

For the role of early Italian Renaissance art at the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition, see Elizabeth A. Pergam, *The Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition of 1857: Entrepreneurs, Connoisseurs, and the Public,* Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2011; Melva Croal, ""The spirit, the flesh, and the milliner": hanging the Ancient Masters at the Manchester Art-Treasures Exhibition', in: Helen Rees Leahy, ed. 'Art, City, Spectacle: The 1857 Manchester Art-Treasures Exhibition Revisited', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester,* vol. 87, 2005, 53-62; and Francis Haskell, *The Ephemeral Museum: Old Master paintings and the rise of the art exhibition*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000, 82–97. For an analysis of the same issue at the London National Gallery, see Susanna Avery-Quash, 'The Growth of Interest in Early Italian Painting in Britain with particular reference to pictures in the National Gallery', in: Dillian Gordon, *The Fifteenth Century Italian Paintings,* vol. 1, London: National Gallery Company, 2003.

Charles Robinson (1824–1913), respectively, but also the leading adviser to the British Government on the fine arts at this time, Gustav Friedrich Waagen (1794–1868), who strongly influenced Scharf and Robinson. Insofar as Scharf and Robinson's strategies at Manchester and South Kensington were designed in part to overcome resistance from a number of worthies in the English art world to the public display of early Italian Renaissance art, a challenge that Perkins himself faced in establishing a fine arts museum in Boston, his close relationship with these individuals adds much substance to this article's focus.<sup>6</sup> After a brief introduction to Perkins' youthful milieu, the article details his extensive and first-hand involvement with northern European art historical and museological developments, connects the key elements of his programme for American fine arts museums to these developments, and concludes with a demonstration of the close ties between Perkins' specific strategies at the Boston Museum and those inaugurated at the South Kensington.



Figure 1 *Charles Callahan Perkins*, c. 1875. Photograph, 19.7 x 14 cm (mount). Boston: Boston Athenaeum. Gift of the Estate of Miss Eliza Callahan Cleveland, 1914. Photograph © Boston Athenaeum.

<sup>6</sup> Biases against early Italian Renaissance art on both sides of the Atlantic had complex histories. Common to both were anti-papist sentiments as well as views on artistic merit that privileged the naturalism and polish of the High Renaissance and beyond over the less advanced technical virtuosity of the trecento and quattrocento. For a broad treatment of the phenomenon, see John Hale, *England and the Italian Renaissance: The Growth of Interest in its History and Art*, 3rd ed., London: Fontana Press, 1996. See also Robyn Cooper 'The Growth of Interest in Early Italian Painting in Britain: George Darley and the Athenaeum, 1834-1846', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 43, 1980 and Avery-Quash, 'Pictures in the National Gallery', for a discussion of British views on early Italian art. See Stein, 'A New Fine Arts Paradigm', 2 and 331-332 on similar views in Boston.

Charles Callahan Perkins (1823–1886) was born on Pearl Street in the Old South End of Boston.<sup>7</sup> (Fig. 1) As the scion of a major Boston family, Perkins was part of an extraordinarily tight-knit community of elites, a community which shaped his cultural consciousness in a profound manner.<sup>8</sup> In 1829, at the age of six, Perkins lost his father, a tragedy which naturally imposed a great emotional toll, but did have the salutary effect of exposing him in his youth to certain members of the cultural avant-garde of Boston who, as his guardians or close associates of the same, were a significant presence in his life.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, leadership in the fine arts was in Perkins' blood. In 1822, Perkins' grandfather, James Perkins (1761–1822), donated his residence on Pearl Street to the Athenaeum, Boston's premier cultural organization founded in 1807, so that they might have the space needed for their growing book collections and at the same time deliver on their promise to support the fine arts. In 1827, Perkins' great uncle, Thomas Handasyd Perkins (1764–1854), inspired and then executed the first annual fine arts exhibition, a tradition that continued until 1873, when the Athenaeum ceded its authority therein to the new

<sup>7</sup> Perkins was the fourth of five children of James Perkins, Jr. (1791–1828) and Eliza Greene Callahan (1789–1860). Unless otherwise noted, biographical details cited in this article are gleaned from Samuel Eliot, Memoir of Charles Callahan Perkins, reprinted from the Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Cambridge: John Wilson and Son, 1887; Martin Brimmer, 'Charles Callahan Perkins, A. M.', Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, vol. 22, May–December 1886, 534–539; and Hirayama, With Éclat, 53–64. <sup>8</sup> This elite community was related by birth, marriage, and political, economic, and social values. For further treatment of the close-knit nature of the so-called 'Brahmin' elites, a sobriquet given to them by the esteemed physician, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr. (1809–1894), see Ronald Story, The Forging of an Aristocracy: Harvard and the Boston Upper Class, 1800–1870, Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1980; Frederic Cople Jaher, 'Nineteenth-Century Elites in Boston and New York', Journal of Social History, vol. 6, no. 1, Autumn, 1972, 32-37; Paul Goodman, 'Ethics and Enterprise: The Values of a Boston Elite, 1800-1860', American Quarterly, vol. 18, no. 3, Autumn, 1966, 437–451; and T. A. Milford, 'J. S. J. Gardiner, Early National Letters, and the Perseverance of British-American Culture', Anglican and Episcopal History, vol. 70, no. 4, December 2001, 407–437.

<sup>9</sup> These men included Charles Follen (1796–1840), Harvard's first professor of German Language and Literature and an outspoken Unitarian minister and abolitionist; Henry R. Cleveland (1808–1843), classical scholar and fine arts commentator; Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–1882), esteemed poet and professor of modern languages at Harvard; and Cornelius Conway Felton (1807–1862), Eliot Professor of Greek Literature at Harvard as well as its 19th President. They were key players in Boston's development as the so-called 'Athens of America', an appellation that has its origins in an 1819 comment made by William Tudor (1779–1830), one of the Boston Athenaeum's founders. For a discussion of the influence that these and other cultural elites had on Perkins' childhood, see Stein, 'A New Fine Arts Paradigm', Chapter Two. For a recent treatment of Boston's cultural history in this period, see Thomas H. O'Connor, *The Athens of America: Boston*, 1825–1845, Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006. Boston Museum.<sup>10</sup> Together, these two Perkins brothers, James and Thomas, literally launched the institutionalisation of the fine arts in Boston.

Charles Perkins went abroad a few months after graduation from Harvard College in 1843 with the explicit goal of garnering the expertise to build an academy of the fine arts in his native city. In this Perkins differed significantly from the preponderance of his fellow Bostonians who saw travel to Europe as civilising preparation for a gentleman who would return to a career in the law, medicine, commerce, or the church. Studying and working in Rome, Paris, Leipzig, Florence, and London for close to a quarter-century – albeit broken up by several lengthy returns home to Boston - Perkins came into contact, either directly or by association, with a complex web of early to mid-nineteenth century northern European painters, art historians, collectors and critics who, under the influence of late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century German Romantic philosophy and literature had rediscovered the early Italian masters, Raphael (1483–1520) in particular.<sup>11</sup> For example, Perkins spent the year of 1846–1847 in the studio of the Dutch Romantic painter, Ary Scheffer (1795–1858), who, inspired in part by Raphael's Madonnas, used large areas of pale and flat color and sharply outlined figures that stood out against stark backgrounds in a sculpturesque way to

<sup>10</sup> For the history of the fine arts at the Boston Athenaeum, see especially Hirayama, With Éclat. See also Richard Wendorf, ed. The Boston Athenaeum Bicentennial Essays, Boston: Boston Athenaeum, 2009; Stanley Ellis Cushing and David B. Dearinger, eds, Acquired Tastes: 200 Years of Collecting for the Boston Athenaeum, Boston: Boston Athenaeum, 2006; Pamela Hoyle, Jonathan P. Harding, and Rosemary Booth, A Climate for Art: The History of the Boston Athenaeum Gallery 1827–1873, Boston: Boston Athenaeum, 1980; Robert F. Perkins Jr. and William J. Gavin III, The Boston Athenaeum Art Exhibition Index, 1827–1874, Boston: Library of the Boston Athenaeum, 1980; Jean Gordon, 'The Fine Arts in Boston, 1815–1879', PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 1965 and Mabel Swanson Swan, The Athenaeum Gallery, 1827–1873: The Boston Athenaeum as an Early Patron of Art, Boston: Boston Athenaeum, 1940. <sup>11</sup> Leading figures in the German Romantic movement included Wilhelm Wackenrode (1773– 1798), Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829), and Ludwig Tieck (1773–1853). In 1797, Wackenroder published the highly influential Herzensergiessungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders (translated as 'The Heartfelt Outpourings of an Art-Loving Monk'), in which he asserted that the most evocative art was religious art. Schlegel shared this belief in the power of religious art, claiming that the deeply-felt Christian faith of the early Renaissance masters shone forth with a purity as yet untainted by the revival of antique paganism. See Hale, England and the Italian Renaissance, 153–155 and and David J. DeLaura, "The Context of Browning's Painter Poems: Aesthetics, Polemics, Historics," PMLA, vol. 95, no. 3 (May 1980): 367-388.

emphasize the spirituality of his subjects.<sup>12</sup> In addition to this exposure to the early Renaissance revival in paint, Perkins was exposed to literary members of Scheffer's circle, either in his studio or at one of his salons, who believed that the pure religiosity of Raphael and the early Italian masters was an essential curative in the 'hurly burly' of the industrial age.<sup>13</sup>

In 1857, Perkins and his wife Frances Davenport Bruen (1825–1909) — whom he had met in the late 1840s while they were both living in Rome as part of that city's culturally rich Anglo-American community — and their baby daughter established residence in Florence. This was to be the lengthiest, final, and probably also most productive of Perkins' European sojourns, only concluding in 1869 upon the family's permanent return to Boston. They lived at the Villa Capponi, a storied estate in the hills above Florence that had been converted from mediaeval castle to Renaissance villa in the late sixteenth century by the Capponi family. Soon after arriving in Florence, Perkins determined to turn his talents and researches to the discipline of art history, focusing on early Italian Renaissance sculpture as his specialty and publishing two major texts on the subject, Tuscan Sculptors and Italian Sculptors in 1864 and 1868, respectively.<sup>14</sup> Perkins spent a year during this time period (precise date unknown) studying engraving in Paris with Félix Bracquemond (1833–1914) and Maxime Lalanne (1827–1886), both leaders of the mid-century etching revival in France, so that he might ultimately engrave his own textual illustrations.<sup>15</sup> We also know from Perkins' 'Preface' to Tuscan Sculptors that he

<sup>12</sup> See Patrick Noon, 'New Discoveries: A Reduced Version of Ary Scheffer's Christ Consolator', *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* (August 2009): 1–10; accessed on-line 15/12/15 and 30/2/18 at <u>http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/</u> Noon also connects Scheffer to the Nazarenes, a school of German painters who, in the first quarter of the nineteenth century had pioneered the mission to bring back religious content to art, and whose philosophies also had their roots in German Romanticism. For Scheffer and the Nazarenes, see also Lionel Gossman, 'Unwilling Moderns: The Nazarene Painters of the Nineteenth Century', *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Autumn 2003, 4–5, accessed on 27/12/15 at http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org.

<sup>13</sup> Such literary figures included the critic, George Darley (1795–1846), and the novelist turned art historian, Anna Jameson (1794–1860). For Scheffer, his circle, and his Parisian salons, some of the most vibrant such gatherings in Paris at the time, see Edward Morris, 'Ary Scheffer and his English Circle', *Oud Holland, Jaarg*. 99, no. 4, 1985, 294-304.
<sup>14</sup> The full bibliographic details of Perkins' texts are: *Tuscan Sculptors: Their Lives, Works, and Times with Illustrations from Original Drawings and Photographs*, London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts & Green, 1864, 2 vols; and *Italian Sculptors: Being a History of Sculpture in Northern, Southern, and Eastern Italy*, London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1868.
<sup>15</sup> See Cosmo Monkhouse, *Exhibition Illustrative of the French Revival of Etching*, London: Burlington Fine Arts Club, 1891, 5–10 and Eric Denker, 'Félix Bracquemond: Impressionist Innovator – Selections from the Frank Raysor Collection', *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide*, vol. 14, no. 3, Autumn, 2015, 1–10, accessed on 11/1/16 at http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/.

travelled extensively throughout Italy in this period to make 'drawings and collect photographs' as the basis for his illustrations and that he examined 'all MSS., books, and pamphlets connected with the subject', presumably also accomplished during these travels.<sup>16</sup> The fairly small but significant collection of Italian Renaissance quattrocento sculpture in marble, terracotta, and bronze that Perkins brought home in 1869 was undoubtedly the product of these travels as well.

Based on the following circumstantial information, it is clear that Perkins made several trips across the English Channel to London during this last sojourn abroad. First, his publisher, Longmans, Green and Company, was located in London, thus undoubtedly necessitating many visits to this venerable commercial establishment.<sup>17</sup> Second, Perkins' article, 'American Art Museums,' published in 1870 reviewed the strategies and operating practices of the South Kensington at a level of detail that could only have been personally observed.<sup>18</sup> Third, in addition to his acquaintanceship with Scharf and Robinson, Perkins had developed a strong enough relationship with Henry Cole (1808–1882), Secretary of the South Kensington Museum and a formidable public servant in his own right, to call upon him for assistance in appointing Walter Smith (1836–1886), Headmaster at the Leeds School of Art in Britain, to direct Boston's new drawing initiatives of the 1870s.<sup>19</sup> Taken together, this stretch of time, 1857–1869, was an immensely fertile one during which Perkins soaked up the mix of intellectual, cultural, and institutional currents that proved to most powerfully influence his transformative leadership once home in Boston.

In his art historical scholarship, Perkins was profoundly influenced by his friend, the French historian Alexis-François Rio (1797–1874), whose support he acknowledged with gratitude in the dedication to his first major work, *Tuscan Sculptors* (1864). Inspired, like the members of the Scheffer circle, by German Romanticism, Rio glorified the Christian poetry of religious art of the late mediaeval and early Renaissance periods and celebrated its rejection of the 'debasing element of scientific or pagan interest'.<sup>20</sup> Rio's seminal treatise of 1836, *De la poésie chrétienne*,

<sup>19</sup> Prior to his leadership post at the South Kensington, Cole (1808–1882) had served for 20 years as head of the Department of Science and Art and had been appointed by Prince Albert to mastermind the Great Exhibition of 1851. For Perkins' relationship with Henry Cole, see Katrina L, Billings, "Sophisticated Proselytizing: Charles Callahan Perkins and the Boston School Committee." Master's thesis, Massachusetts College of Art, 1987.
<sup>20</sup> Hale, England and the Italian Renaissance, 153–154.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Perkins, *Tuscan Sculptors*, vol. 1, viii–ix.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> For a history of Longmans, see Asa Briggs, *A History of Longmans and their Books*, 1724–1990: *Longevity in Publishing*, London: The British Library and Oak Knoll Press, 2008.
<sup>18</sup> 'American Art Museums,' was published in the *North American Review*, vol. 111, no. 228, July 1870, 1–29. It will be more fully explicated later in this article.

was highly influential in England.<sup>21</sup> Amongst Rio's devotées there was no less a luminary than the art critic John Ruskin (1819–1900). Also indebted to Rio for their introduction to the early Italian masters were Anna Jameson (1794–1860), novelist turned art historian, and Alexander William Crawford, Lord Lindsay (1812–1880), who, along with Jameson, was one of the first British authors to publish on these painters, and who also assembled an impressive collection of their works.<sup>22</sup>

Having been immersed in Scheffer's circle and introduced to the field of art history by Rio, Perkins was strongly persuaded in his own scholarship of not only the merits of early Italian Renaissance art, but also of the self-absorption and paganism — in other words, decadence — of the artists who followed Raphael in the sixteenth century.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, Perkins shared a great deal with the more neutral — that is the less polemic and romantic and more research-based, historicising, and encyclopaedic — art historical methods pioneered by the German art historians, Carl Friedrich von Rumohr (1785–1843), Gustav Friedrich Waagen previously mentioned as the leading adviser to the British government and a personal friend of Perkins' — and Franz Theodor Kugler (1808–1858).<sup>24</sup> For example, Gustav Waagen's *On Hubert and Johann van Eyck* (1822), which appreciated mediaeval art as a product of its environment rather than just evidence of a dark period in art, reflected the German's staunch belief that to represent an artist one must 'discuss political history, the constitution, the character of a people, conditions

<sup>21</sup> Rio had married a Welsh woman in 1834, spoke English fluently, and from 1836 forward made many trips across the Channel, where he was well known and respected by such prominent figures as Prime Minister William Gladstone, the Romantic poet William Wordsworth, the Victorian poet Robert Browning, and the essayist Thomas Carlyle. For treatment of Rio's influence in England, see especially Delaura, 'The Context of Browning's Painter Poems', 367–374 and Camillo von Klenze, 'The Growth of Interest in the Early Italian Masters: From Tischbein to Ruskin', *Modern Philology*, vol. 4, no. 2, October 1906, 48–62. See also J. B. Bullen, *Continental Crosscurrents: British Criticism and European Art*, 1810-1910, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, 93; Hale, England and the Italian Renaissance, 153–154; and Wallace K. Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought: Five Centuries of Interpretation*, Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1948, 141–143.

<sup>22</sup> Lindsay's work, *Sketches of the History of Christian Art* (1847), focused on German and Italian sculpture and painting through the fifteenth century. For Lindsay, see Hugh Brigstocke, 'Lord Lindsay and the Sketches of the History of Christian Art', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, vol. 64, no. 1, 1981, 27–60 and 'Lord Lindsay as a Collector', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, vol. 64, no. 2, 1982, 287–333.

<sup>23</sup> Rio, for example, believed that Raphael's *Disputà*, of the Stanze della Segnatura of the Vatican, had 'fixed the limits, beyond which Christian art...has never since been able to advance'. See discussion of Raphael's decline in Alexis-François Rio, *The Poetry of Christian Art*, Trans. Miss Wall, London: T. Bosworth, 1854, 85–94.

<sup>24</sup> See Mitchell Schwarzer, 'Origins of the Art History Text', *Art Journal*, vol. 54, no. 3, Autumn 1995, 24–25.

of the church, customs, literature, and the nature of the land'.<sup>25</sup> However, as testament to the often fuzzy line at the time between romantic and polemical art history on the one hand and historicist art history on the other, Waagen's scholarship also bore the imprint of the German Romantics in his condemnation of artists after Raphael as well as in his adoption of the philosopher Friedrich Schlegel's almost mystical notion that artworks were 'carriers of historical meaning much like texts'.<sup>26</sup> A voracious reader of classical and modern texts who read Latin and Greek and was fluent in German, Perkins readily incorporated into his own scholarship the historicism, more neutral writing style, and meticulous research of these German historians and philosophers.

While Perkins was earning his place as a highly respected scholar of early Italian Renaissance sculpture, he could not help but become intimately familiar with the institutional developments that ran parallel to the art historical trends of both Rio and the German scholars — those of the new public fine arts museum. In fact, scholars and museum directors were often one and the same person, thus embodying the symbiotic relationship whereby the former needed the latter to illustrate his histories and the latter needed the former to guide his acquisition and exhibition practices.<sup>27</sup> Despite its short-term duration, the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition — His Royal Highness Prince Albert, an ardent backer of the Exhibition, opened it on 5 May 1857, and it closed on 17 October of that same year - stands tall as an example of commitment to the evocative nature of early Italian Renaissance art shared by art historians and museum founders and directors. As the scholar Elizabeth Pergam so thoroughly brings to light, this under-studied exhibition 'was a blockbuster avant la lettre, with over 16,000 works of art', comprising paintings, portraits, works on paper, decorative art, and sculptures visited by over 1,300,000 people.<sup>28</sup> Among the many contributions of the Art Treasures Exhibition to the future of art museums highlighted by Pergam, several point most markedly to the importance of early Italian Renaissance art as a tool in the exhibition organiser's kit. The first such contribution was the legitimisation of the early Italian Renaissance as an aesthetic category worthy of display, as illustrated by the sheer number of works in that category — roughly ninety-five paintings hung on the walls of the Gallery of Ancient Pictures – as well as the expansion of early artists considered noteworthy.<sup>29</sup> Previous to the Art Treasures Exhibition there were many in arts leadership in England who believed that such

<sup>25</sup> Schwarzer, 'Origins', 24–25.

<sup>26</sup> Schwarzer, 'Origins', 28, f.n. 11.

<sup>27</sup> Donald Preziosi, 'The Question of Art History', *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 18, no. 2, Winter, 1992, 7–11.

<sup>28</sup> Pergam, Manchester Art Treasures, 1–2.

<sup>29</sup> Examples of artists now considered worthy of inclusion were Ugolino da Siena (1280– 1349), Taddeo Gaddi (1290–1366), and Taddeo di Bartolo (1362–1422). See Pergam, *Manchester Art Treasures*, 137–144. primitivism was only appropriate for a university gallery whose natural province - in their opinions - was the historical progression of art.<sup>30</sup>

Closely related to this first contribution and emerging in tandem with its corollary in art historical studies, was the privileging of a comprehensive, chronological display that would teach the history of art 'as a modern day *biblia-pauperum*...whose visual nature made those lessons more accessible'.<sup>31</sup> In order to achieve this kind of didactic display, clearly the early Italian Renaissance had to be strongly and unapologetically represented. The third contribution highlighted by Pergam was the conceptualisation of the exhibition as the 'resolution of the traditional tension between exhibitions of modern and ancient art and between the fine and decorative arts'.<sup>32</sup> In this case, early Italian Renaissance art was particularly apt for two reasons: it created the necessary bridge to an understanding of modern art and its production often existed at the boundary of fine art and craft.<sup>33</sup>

At the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition, Gustav Friedrich Waagen and Sir George Scharf were crucially important in bringing about the unprecedented numbers, range, and didactic bent of early Italian Renaissance art.<sup>34</sup> As mentioned above, Waagen was a highly respected art historical scholar of the Northern Renaissance, who, along with Von Rumohr and Kugler pioneered a more historicist approach to the discipline. He was also passionate about the subject of early Italian Renaissance art. In 1821, when the massive collection of the British merchant, Edward Solly, comprised primarily of trecento and quattrocento art, became part of the royal art collection, the Prussian government engaged Waagen to catalogue it.<sup>35</sup> In the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s he further solidified his knowledge and appreciation of the early Italian Renaissance period as he engaged in a comprehensive research

<sup>30</sup> Testimony to the prevalence of this view was that, despite protests from enthusiasts of the earlier styles, in 1853 the dearth of such works at the National Gallery occasioned the establishment of a Select Committee of Parliament to investigate. See Avery-Quash, 'The Growth of Interest in Early Italian Painting in Britain', xxvi–xxix.

<sup>31</sup> Pergam, Manchester Art Treasures, 22.

<sup>32</sup> Pergam, Manchester Art Treasures, 16.

<sup>33</sup> The porous boundary between fine and decorative art is particularly well explicated in Drew, 'Italian Sculpture', 133–203.

<sup>34</sup> Francis Haskell, *The Ephemeral Museum: Old Master Paintings and the Rise of the Art Exhibition*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000, 83–89. Haskell went so far as to call the Art Treasures Exhibition, 'a German exhibition' by virtue of the fact that it was 'the first Old Master exhibition to have been directed by qualified experts open to the influence of German erudition and connoisseurship'. (83–85) Throughout her discussion of the exhibition in *Manchester Art Treasures*, Pergam makes clear that Waagen and Scharf were tremendously influential. For Waagen and the Art Treasures Exhibition, see also Giles Waterfield and Florian Illies, 'Waagen in England', *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen*, vol. 37, 1995, 47–59.
 <sup>35</sup> The collection came into the hands of the Prussian government as payment of Solly's debt to them. Carmen Stonge, 'Making Private Collections Public: Gustav Friedrich Waagen and the Royal Museum in Berlin', *Journal of the History of Collections*, vol. 10, no. 1, 1998, 63–64.

project in which he catalogued most, if not all, of the important early Italian Renaissance works in both public and private settings in England.<sup>36</sup>

As the Solly collection figured prominently in the royal one, early efforts to form the Royal Museum in Berlin (later renamed the Altes Museum) in the 1820s brought Waagen to the attention of the museum's architect, Karl Friedrich Schinkel (1781–1841), especially with regard to the layout of the painting galleries.<sup>37</sup> Given his art historical predilections, Waagen advocated for a comprehensive display that systematically chronicled each successive art historical school from ancient to modern and that was ordered chronologically within each school, a practice that had been gaining traction since the latter part of the previous century in Northern European sites for art display, such as the Düsseldorf Gallery and the Imperial Picture Gallery at the Belvedere in Vienna.<sup>38</sup> By definition, this meant that a dutiful curator had to represent works of the early Italian and Northern Renaissance periods which were generally slighted for their primitivism.<sup>39</sup> In 1830 when the Royal Museum opened in Berlin, Waagen was named Director and in 1844 King Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia named Waagen the University of Berlin's inaugural Professor of Modern Art.<sup>40</sup>

Waagen's popularity in England as an art expert dated to the mid-to-late 1830s when he was asked to appear as a witness before a select committee of Parliament investigating the quality of design in manufacturing and when his treatise *Art and Artists in England* (1838) was translated into English. He went on to counsel the Ashmolean Museum of Oxford regarding lighting in its galleries in 1840, to testify at the Select Committee of 1850 on the reorganisation of the National

<sup>36</sup> As early as 1835, Waagen catalogued the collection of William Young Ottley, one of the pioneering English collectors of early Italian Renaissance art, which included such masterworks of the period as the predella panels of Ugolino da Siena's High Altar for Santa Croce in Florence — now of the Metropolitan Museum of New York. See Pergam, *Manchester Art Treasures*, 139–141.

<sup>37</sup> Stonge, 'Waagen and the Royal Museum', 64.

<sup>38</sup> See Andrew McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre: Art, poliics and the origins of the modern museum in eighteenth-century Paris* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994), 3-4, accessed 31/3/18 online at <u>https://books.google.com/;</u> Stonge, 'Waagen and the Royal Museum', 65–66; and Susanna Avery-Quash and Corina Meyer in their article in this journal edition,

"Substituting an approach to historical evidence for the vagueness of speculation": Charles Lock Eastlake and Johann David Passavant's Contribution to the Professionalization of Arthistorical Study through Source-based Research'.

<sup>39</sup> Waagen was far from perfunctory in his approach to the period, acquiring record numbers of early Italian and Flemish works and ensuring that they were displayed and labelled in such a way as to promote their didactic and aesthetic value. See Francis Haskell, 'Museums and their Enemies', *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, vol. 19, no. 2, Summer 1985, 18.

<sup>40</sup> The University of Berlin was the first university in Europe to establish an Art History department. See Stonge, 'Waagen and the Royal Museum', 66-69.

Gallery, and to serve as a juror for the Crystal Palace Exposition of 1851 in London.<sup>41</sup> In the 1850s, his reputation took on even more lustre with his catalogue of Prince Albert's collection of Byzantine and early German and Flemish paintings and with Lady Elizabeth Eastlake's translation of his three-volume authoritative opus entitled Treasures of Art in Great Britain.<sup>42</sup> Add to this his arts journal article of 1853 on best practices for the National Gallery in London, in which he highlighted his own pioneering curatorship of the collections at the Royal Museum, and it becomes clear that Waagen loomed large in the English art world of collecting and display.<sup>43</sup> As such, it is not surprising that Waagen would have considerable impact on the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition. In fact, Francis Haskell, one of the foremost scholars on British artistic taste in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, credited Waagen's Treasures of Art in Great Britain as the 'foundation stone on which the Manchester exhibition was raised'. This view was shared by Pergam, who noted that the Exhibition's 'very title' connected it closely to Waagen's opus.<sup>44</sup> Thus, Waagen's precedents for display at the Royal Museum as well as his well-known expertise on early Italian Renaissance art were indelibly impressed on the minds of the Manchester organisers as they began to source and select art work and determine methods of display.45

Turning to Sir George Scharf, Jr., it was in his role as Secretary for the Department of Ancient Masters at the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition that he made his mark as an innovative force with regard to early Italian Renaissance

<sup>41</sup> Waterfield, 'Waagen in England', 49.

<sup>42</sup> Prince Albert had acquired the collection from Prince Ludwig-Kraft-Ernst von Oetingen Wallerstein in 1847. Lady Eastlake was the wife of Sir Charles Lock Eastlake, director of the National Gallery. All in all, Waagen's 'energy and imagination, as well as his ability to gain acceptance among the ruling classes of a foreign country' were almost single-handedly responsible for 'the flowering of museums and exhibitions, national and local in Britain in the 1850s and 1860s'. See Waterfield, 'Waagen in England', 47.

<sup>43</sup> Gustav F. Waagen, 'Thoughts on the New Building to be Erected for the National Gallery of England and on the Arrangement, Preservation, and Enlargement of the Collection', *The Art Journal*, vol. 5, 1853.

<sup>44</sup> Haskell, *Ephemeral Museum*, 83 and Pergam, *Manchester Art Treasures*, 33.

<sup>45</sup> Pergam, *Manchester Art Treasures*, 22–24 and Waterfield, 'Waagen in England', 58. Waagen was also more directly impactful in a number of ways. For example, he provided the Executive Committee with supplemental lists of artworks and collectors from his soon-to-be published addendum, *Galleries and Cabinets of Art in Great Britain*. Waagen also counselled the Committee on how to most strategically approach prospective lenders, and the Committee often used Waagen's name in their independent entreaties of same. Those collectors, in turn, consulted with Waagen on occasion as to whether they should, in fact, accede to the Committee's requests of them. See Pergam, *Manchester Art Treasures*, 33–35.

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works.<sup>46</sup> The son of a Bavarian artist and a prolific illustrator, notably of archaeological excavations in Italy and Asia Minor as well as of the English edition of Franz Kugler's Handbook of Painting: the Italian School (1851), Scharf had assisted with the ancient pavilions at the re-assembled Crystal Palace in Sydenham in southeast London.<sup>47</sup> As Secretary in Manchester, Scharf shared responsibility for sourcing and selection of artworks with the Executive Committee.<sup>48</sup> Through their combined efforts they brought in numerous works not yet represented at the National Gallery, which, in many cases, meant early Italian and Netherlandish paintings, making a high-profile emphasis on this period of art.<sup>49</sup> In terms of arrangement of the artworks, Scharf chose not only to embrace Waagen's didacticism in hanging the pictures according to art historical school, but also to augment the installation's educational impact by positioning the different schools of a similar time period across from one another to stimulate visitors' comparisons of styles with similar dates of production.<sup>50</sup> In this, Scharf was aided by the architectural plan of the Exhibition's huge purpose-built structure that was based on the basilican form with a wide central corridor that travelled the entire length of its east-west axis and was flanked by three galleries each to the north and south. Thus, Scharf was able to use the length of the southern wall of the southern galleries to feature Italian art from Cimabue (1240-1302) to the Mannerists of the sixteenth century, and to place the corresponding German, Netherlandish, Dutch, and French

<sup>46</sup> For biographical details on Scharf, see: Haskell, *Ephemeral Museum*, 84–85; Pergam, *Manchester Art Treasures*, 61-62; Helena Michie and Robyn Warhol, 'Adventures in the Archives: Two Literary Critics in Pursuit of a Victorian Subject', *Victorian Studies*, vol. 52, no. 3, Spring 2010, 413–439; Michie and Warhol, *Love among the Archives: Writing the Lives of Sir George Scharf, Victorian Bachelor*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015; and Philip Cottrell, 'Art Treasures of the United Kingdom and the United States: The George Scharf Papers', *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 94, no. 4, December, 2012, 618–640. The Ancient Masters section comprised the Italian, German, and Netherlandish works of the Renaissance (fourteenth through sixteenth centuries) and Baroque works of France, Spain, Flanders, and Holland. See Croal, 'Ancient Masters', 57.

<sup>47</sup> Scharf also applied for the position of Secretary of the National Gallery in London in 1854 but did not win the post despite widespread support from the cognoscenti of the British art world, including a letter from Gustav Waagen, who waxed most enthusiastic not only on Scharf's knowledge of the history of art, his successful lecture series, and his impeccable character, but also on his illustrations. However, this setback for Scharf was soon forgotten with the huge critical and popular success of the Exhibition, and in 1857 he was appointed Secretary and Director of the recently inaugurated National Portrait Gallery in London, serving in this position with distinction until the year of his death, 1895. Introduced to these letters by Pergam, *Manchester Art Treasures*, 61–62.

<sup>48</sup> Pergam, Manchester Art Treasures, 24–25.

<sup>49</sup> Pergam, Manchester Art Treasures, 65.

<sup>50</sup> Haskell, Ephemeral Museum, 86; Pergam, Manchester Art Treasures, 62.

masterworks on the northern wall of the same galleries.<sup>51</sup> The didactic impulse served by this arrangement was not lost, as Pergam highlights, on members of the press who commented, for example, that it facilitated 'the eye to take in at a glance the broad distinguishing characteristics of successive periods and schools of art'.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, given the plethora of collateral materials chosen by the Art Treasure's Exhibition organisers and aimed at varying audiences, Scharf's emphasis on these early works further augmented the knowledge and appreciation for them occasioned by the Exhibition.<sup>53</sup>

At the South Kensington Museum in London, Sir John Charles Robinson, the Museum's first curator, also looked to early Italian Renaissance art, in particular sculpture, as a crucial tool. Resulting from the same impulse as motivated the Art Treasures Exhibition — that of improving industrial design and elevating public taste — but established on a permanent basis, the South Kensington Museum was founded by the British Government in 1857. In her recent dissertation, 'Displaying Italian Sculpture: Exploring Hierarchies at the South Kensington Museum, 1852-1862,' (2014), art historian Charlotte Drew has provided an illuminating portrait of Robinson's significant curatorial and scholarly contributions – despite considerable opposition — to foregrounding the early Italian Renaissance at the young South Kensington.<sup>54</sup> As characterised by Drew, Robinson's primary challenge was to negotiate the line between the museum's stated commitment to improving industrial design through reproductions and his own view that original quattrocento sculptures had much to offer by not only modelling high quality designs, but also by demonstrating that the fine and the decorative arts were two sides of the same coin. Challenges notwithstanding, Robinson built the holdings of original quattrocento sculpture so that by 1862 they formed the largest part of the decorative arts collection at the Museum.<sup>55</sup> He also documented the size and importance of the sculpture collection in his catalogue, The Italian Sculpture Collection, South Kensington Museum (1862), virtually reintroducing such quattrocento sculptural giants as Lorenzo Ghiberti (1378-1455), Luca della Robbia

<sup>54</sup> Drew also explores Robinson's professional practices at the South Kensington Museum in her article, 'The colourful career of Sir John Charles Robinson: collecting and curating the early South Kensington Museum', in this journal edition.

<sup>55</sup> Drew, 'Italian Sculpture', 122–132.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> See Helen Rees Leahy, 'Introduction', in: 'Art, City, Spectacle'; Croal, 'Ancient Masters', 58–62; and Pergam, *Manchester Art Treasures*, 61–67 and 139–176.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> 'Exhibition of Art Treasures at Manchester', *The Times*, 15 May 1857, 12 as quoted in Pergam, *Manchester Art Treasures*, 62. Scharf would have extended the Italian line even further if it had not been for the quantity of Spanish and Flemish paintings that he needed to accommodate and his desire to increase the drama of Van Dyck's *Charles I* at the furthermost easterly end of the Ancient Masters' galleries. (Pergam, *Manchester Art Treasures*, 85, f.n. 55) <sup>53</sup> Pergam, Manchester Art Treasures, 93–135.

(1399–1482), and Andrea del Verrocchio (1435–1488) into art historical discussions of the day.<sup>56</sup>

Thus it was that Waagen, Scharf and Robinson and their respective emphases on early Italian Renaissance art dominated the art historical and museum world which Perkins chose to inhabit while building his professional dossier in Europe. That he knew these three pioneers of the arts personally had to have deepened the impressions that their scholarship and museum practices had on him. We do not know exactly how and when Perkins made Waagen's acquaintance, but no doubt his good friend and fellow Boston elite, the historian, diplomat, and statesman, George Bancroft (1800–1891), had played a role as he had long-standing ties to the foremost intellectual centres in Germany, particularly ones made at the University of Göttingen, where he earned his PhD in 1820.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, Perkins himself spent considerable time in Germany during his second European sojourn of 1851 through 1854, by which time he was already a devotée of both the polemically and historically-inflected art historical movements.<sup>58</sup> Fluent in German, and eager to learn from the best, it is likely that Perkins sought Waagen out at that time. Whatever the circumstances of their first meeting, Waagen and Perkins clearly shared a great deal of mutual respect and affection, as was patently evident in correspondence between Perkins and Bancroft, in which Bancroft played the epistolary go-between. Bancroft asserted in a letter to Perkins of 28 November 1867 that Waagen 'overflows in his serene praise of you'. For his part, Perkins requested of Bancroft in his letter of 1 December 1867 to 'pray remember us all most warmly to Dr. Waagen when you see him.'59

It is also not known when or how Perkins first made Scharf's acquaintance, although the latter's closeness to Waagen may well have occasioned the initial point of contact, perhaps even at the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition. Perkins returned to Europe in the fall of 1857 to make his home in Florence, having just delivered what was likely the first art history course in America at Trinity College in

<sup>59</sup> George Bancroft to Charles Callahan Perkins, 28 November 1867, Ward-Perkins Family Papers, Box 2, Folder 2; Charles Callahan Perkins to George Bancroft, 1 December 1867, Ward-Perkins Family Papers, Box 2, Folder 2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> Drew, 'Italian Sculpture', 123–132 and 214–227.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> Bancroft was one of the first Americans to receive the PhD degree in any discipline. For further biographical details, see A. McFarland Davis, 'George Bancroft', *Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, 26, 1890, 355–70.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> This second sojourn was dedicated to exploring his other major career interest, music. In this pursuit, he studied under the tutelage of the classical cum romantic composer Ignaz Moscheles (1794–1870) in Leipzig.

Hartford, Connecticut.<sup>60</sup> This experience, in combination with the wealth of influences he had absorbed in Rome, Paris, Leipzig and London to that point, made it inconceivable that Perkins would not have visited the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition before turning south to Florence.<sup>61</sup> That he did, in fact, ultimately make Scharf's acquaintance has been confirmed by Elizabeth Heath, author of 'A man of 'unflagging zeal and industry': Sir George Scharf as emerging professional within the nineteenth-century museum world' in this journal, who not only brought Scharf's scholarship, illustrations, and museum leadership to my attention, but also generously shared evidence of his close relationship with Perkins from her own doctoral research. As per Heath's notes, on 20 August 1883, Scharf sent Perkins a copy of his essay published by the Arundel Society in 1882 entitled, 'A description of the Wilton House Diptych, containing a contemporary portrait of King Richard the Second'.<sup>62</sup> A letter of thanks from Perkins dated 6 September 1883 was tucked in the back of Scharf's bound volume in which the American wrote of his own essay on Italian sepulchral monuments about to be published by the Arundel Society and his fond memories of time spent with Scharf in London.<sup>63</sup> Heath also shared dated entries from Scharf's diaries regarding meetings in London with Perkins in 1862 and 1881. These entries list the other Victorian cultural elites present, thus testifying to

<sup>60</sup> In the summer of 1857, Samuel Eliot, then President of Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, invited his cousin and close friend, Perkins, whom he appointed a Lecturer on Art (without pay), to give a 'short course of lectures' on the 'Rise and Progress of Painting to the Beginning of the Sixteenth Century'. According to Eliot's memorial to Perkins, these lectures were 'a turning point' in the latter's career in that 'from the time of their delivery through all the years that lay before him, he was neither painter nor musician by profession, but a writer and a speaker upon Art.' See Eliot, *Memoir*, 8–9.

<sup>61</sup> Research into the Trinity College Archives has yielded no records of Perkins' course materials, a disappointment as this early instance of teaching art history on Perkins' part was pioneering, preceding not only Charles Eliot Norton's first art history courses at Harvard (1876) but also the famed British art critic, John Ruskin, who became the first Slade Professor of Fine Art at Oxford University in 1869.

<sup>62</sup> Elizabeth Heath to Deborah Stein, e-mail correspondence, 22 January 2015. The Arundel Society was founded in London in 1848 to circulate art historical monographs and engravings after iconic art works to subscribers for the purpose of promoting knowledge of art in Britain, with a particular bias toward the burgeoning interest in quattrocento works. See Tanya Ledger Harrod, 'A Study of the Arundel Society, 1848-1897', PhD diss., Oxford University, 1979, 1.

<sup>63</sup> Charles Callahan Perkins to George Scharf, 6 September 1883, Scharf Library, National Portrait Gallery, uncatalogued, as transcribed by Elizabeth Heath in e-mail correspondence to Deborah Stein, 22 January 2015. Published by the Arundel Society in 1883, *Sepulchral monuments of Italy; mediæval and renaissance* was a photographic book (photographed and described by Stephen Thompson, a British artist active in fine art photography in the 1870s) in which Perkins wrote the preface and introduction containing full extracts from the manuscript notes of the recently deceased architect, George Edmund Street, RA (1824–1881). Perkins having made the acquaintance of several members of Scharf's business and social circle of antiquaries, scholars, and museum leaders. Two names stand out, that of Sir Augustus Wollaston Franks (1826–1897), a major collector and benefactor of the British Museum, and that of Sir Richard Wallace (1818–1890) of Hertford House, collector of mediaeval and Renaissance art and founder of the Wallace Collection.<sup>64</sup> Scharf and Perkins were both instrumental in bringing early Italian Renaissance art to the attention of the public – Scharf with respect to painting, Perkins in terms of sculpture — and they were both skilled illustrators and musicians who enjoyed an active social life, shared qualities that suggest a warm personal as well as professional relationship.

While we cannot state unequivocally that Perkins knew John Robinson personally, it is almost certainly the case given the American's closeness to other British museum leaders, as just described. Further, Perkins acknowledged his debt to Robinson's curatorial prowess and scholarly catalogue in his own work, *Tuscan Sculptors*: 'The admirable collection of Italian sculpture at the South Kensington Museum, for which the public is chiefly indebted to J. C. Robinson Esq...makes it possible for a student to learn more about it in England than anywhere else out of Italy.'<sup>65</sup> As a masterful scholar cum museum curator, particularly as related to early Italian Renaissance sculpture, whose landmark catalogue on the collection of these works at the South Kensington Museum was illustrated with outline drawings, and who was an expert on and collector of Raphael's drawings, Robinson's life and works stood out as a model to which Perkins would frequently look once back in Boston.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>64</sup> George Scharf, diary entries dated 15 June 1862; 11 July 1862; and 31 May 1881, Scharf Library, National Portrait Gallery, XXIX-E-9, as transcribed by Elizabeth Heath in e-mail correspondence to Deborah Stein, 22 January 2015.

<sup>65</sup> Perkins, Tuscan Sculptors, vol. 1, vii.

<sup>66</sup> J. A. Gere and Nicholas Turner, *Drawings by Raphael from the Royal Library, the Ashmolean, the British Museum, Chatsworth, and other English Collections,* London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1983, 11–12. While uncredited as such, it is not inconceivable that Robinson was himself the illustrator of the 1862 catalogue as he had been a painter and teacher of design earlier in his career. As described by Gere and Turner, Robinson was also a collector of Old Master drawings, including at least one Raphael. Robinson was particularly familiar with Sir Thomas Lawrence's collection of Raphael's drawings housed in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford University, which he catalogued as part of a study of Raphael and Michelangelo's drawings in 1870.

In using the term 'outline drawing' I am referring to an early nineteenth-century style of illustration that had its roots in the neo-classical tradition of the eighteenth-century sculptor John Flaxman whose spare, clean, and linear minimalist drawings of scenes of Greek mythology and early Renaissance literature evoked the ancients' nobility and clarity of expression. For an illuminating discussion of this neo-classical drive to reach an ever more minimalist expression, see Robert Rosenblum, *Transformations in Late-Eighteenth Century Art*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967, 146–191.

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Figure 2 Charles Callahan Perkins, *Roundel from the High Altar of the Certosa, by Omodeo,* 1868. From Italian Sculptors, A History of Sculpture in Northern, Southern, and Eastern Italy, London: Longmans Green and Co., 133: Plate XV. Photograph of author.

When Perkins returned permanently to Boston in 1869, he had published *Tuscan Sculptors* and *Italian Sculptors* to great acclaim in both Europe and in America and engraved his own 'outline drawings' as illustrations for these texts. (Fig. 2) He also had one more arrow in his quiver, that of his collection of early Italian Renaissance sculpture, briefly alluded to earlier. The collection comprised ten small-scale statuettes, plaques, and bas-reliefs sculpted from terracotta and marble, eight of which were devotional pieces and two of which were emblematic of civic life. In addition, there were eight bronze Renaissance medals of Italian nobles and religious dignitaries crafted in the style of Roman medallions.<sup>67</sup> While small, the collection's

<sup>67</sup> This record of Perkins' collections has been reconstructed from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston's website and the Art of Europe's curatorial files. Sincere thanks are owed to Marietta Cambareri, Curator of Decorative Arts and Sculpture at the Museum, for her generous sharing of these files. Dates of acquisition by the Museum also provide meaningful information, as at least half of the objects were donated by Perkins by the time that the Museum opened its doors to the public in July 1876. The remaining half of the collection came to the Museum from Perkins' wife and children between 1889 and 1923.

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Figure 3 Workshop of Andrea della Robbia, *Virgin and Child*, c. 1500. Glazed terracotta sculpture, 52.1 x 36.2 x 12.7 cm. Boston: Museum of Fine Arts. Gift of Charles C. Perkins. Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

intense reflection of both devotional and civic life in quattrocento Florence, certainly speaks to the kind of object evocative of its time and place that Waagen, Scharf, and Robinson believed would, if displayed in a museum, educate and elevate the taste of the public and the design capabilities of industrial workers. Mindful of the prevailing taste for the classical in Boston and the corresponding lack of familiarity and appreciation for the religious art of the early Renaissance, Perkins appeared very strategic in his choice of devotional works, choosing ones that were as humanistic as they were pious. For example, the white glazed terracotta *Virgin and Child* of c. 1500 by a member of Andrea della Robbia's workshop, which measures 20 by 14 inches, stresses the earthly love shared by mother and child. <sup>68</sup> (Fig. 3). The Virgin embraces Jesus, here the picture of baby chubbiness, in precisely the way an earthbound mother would do, that is firmly and lovingly under his arm and his

<sup>68</sup> Perkins actually attributed the work to Luca della Robbia in the 1876 catalogue. See Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, *Second Catalogue of the Collection of Ancient and Modern Works of Art Given or Loaned* to the Trustees, Boston: Alfred Mudge, 1876, 54.

buttocks. The Child in turn nestles up against her cheek and grasps her around the neck, again a very natural gesture for a baby. His left foot even extends slightly beyond the framing ledge, suggesting that he might squirm his way out of his mother's arms at any moment. The positioning of the left foot also serves to engage the viewer more closely, a feature that emphasises the work's intended use as a devotional aide, as do the holes near the necks of the figures which would have been used to attach pieces of real jewellery as further gestures of reverence to the Madonna and Child.<sup>69</sup>

Perkins was also nothing if not strategic in timing his permanent return to Boston.<sup>70</sup> His close ties to the Boston Athenaeum — in particular to his brother, Edward Newton Perkins (1820–1899), who was Chair of its Fine Arts Committee meant that he would have been aware of the challenges to the fine arts there.<sup>71</sup> Specifically, Perkins would have known of the pressure placed on the Committee by the Athenaeum Trustees since the mid-1850s to divest the institution of its fine arts functions, and that Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of

<sup>69</sup> See <u>http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/virgin-and-child-57552</u> (Accession #76.700). Accessed 12/3/13.

<sup>70</sup> Family considerations also played a role in Perkins' determination to return home in the fall of 1869 and settle his family permanently at 2 Walnut Street on Beacon Hill. Perkins and his wife had determined that their three children, Mary Eleanor (1856–1907), Edward Clifford (1858–1902), and Charles Bruen (1860–1929), between nine and thirteen years of age at the time, should be educated in the United States. See Perkins' sister Eliza Perkins Cleveland to an unknown recipient (summer 1869), *Cleveland-Perkins Papers*, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, Box 6, Folder 12, as quoted by Hirayama, *With Éclat*, 73, f.n. 93. Walnut Street is an extant residence on Beacon Hill in Boston, still seemingly well maintained. Perkins found Boston greatly changed in terms of population, physical landscape, and demographics since he had last made it his permanent home, even since he had last seen it in 1857. See Paul Dimaggio, 'Cultural Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century Boston: The Creation of an Organizational Base for High Culture in America', *Media Culture and Society*, vol. 4, 1982, 39–40.

<sup>71</sup> While the successful launching in 1827 of the first annual art exhibit under the direction of Thomas Handasyd Perkins had unleased great enthusiasm, not to mention exhibition fees, and acquisitions and exhibitions continued apace throughout the 1830s, the arts had been in something of a slump for the two decades preceding the Civil War. The limitations imposed at the institution's founding in 1807, that the fine arts were to be encouraged as long as they did not impinge on the literary functions of the institution, was at the heart of the situation. Acquisitions had dwindled, exhibitions incorporated the same works — American portraits, copies of Old Masters, neo-classical sculptures, and casts of ancient statues — year in and year out, artworks were regularly banished to musty storage areas, and ever-increasing holdings of books pushed the limits of the facilities on Pearl Street. See especially Hirayama, *With Éclat*, 17–49.

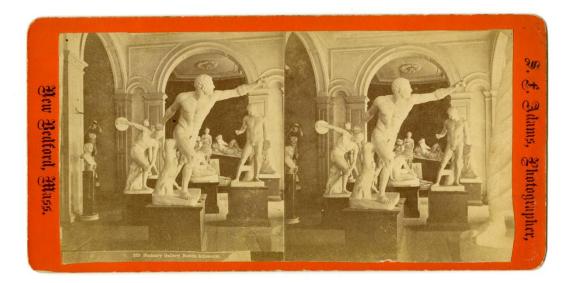


Figure 4 Stephen Fellow Adams, *Statuary Gallery, Boston Athenaeum*, c. 1865. Stereograph, 8.6 x 17.3 cm. Boston: Boston Athenaeum. Photograph © Boston Athenaeum.

Technology were seeking new homes for their art collections.<sup>72</sup> As the brothers were close, the art historian would not have missed the fact that the time was particularly ripe for realising his long-held dream to build an academy of the fine arts in his hometown. Perkins was also well acquainted with the traditional appreciation amongst Bostonians for the visual language of classical statuary, neo-classical statuary and portraiture, and Old Master paintings of the High Renaissance and the Baroque, featuring literary and historical subjects as well as ones from the New Testament and lives of the saints. (Fig. 4) He was equally well acquainted with the long-standing distaste for early Italian Renaissance paintings and sculpture, as evidenced by the fact that elite Bostonians were not bringing such works home from European travels or seeking to exhibit them, despite the fact that they had been in

<sup>72</sup> The pressures on the Fine Arts Committee to cede space to the literary side of the Athenaeum's functions reached a head in the 1860s when the Civil War brought the Fine Art's Committee's efforts virtually to a standstill. In March, 1866, the Athenaeum's Standing Committee ruled that the art collection should be removed. Hirayama, *With Éclat*, 42–49.

Harvard College was in possession of the Francis Calley Gray (1790–1856) collection of prints, which later formed the nucleus of the Fogg Art Museum collection, but at the time, apparently, was peripheral to their mission. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology owned a significant collection of architectural casts it was seeking to relocate. See Marjorie Cohn, *Francis Calley Gray and Art Collecting for America*, Cambridge: Harvard University Art Museums, 1986, 257–268 and Hirayama, *With Éclat*, 129.

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Figure 5 Descent of Christ into Limbo. Left wing: Transfiguration, Right Wing: Seven Scenes from the History of Moses, second half sixteenth century. Tempera on wood, central panel: 25 x 16.8 cm, left wing: 22 x 16.7 cm, right wing: 20.6 x 15 cm. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Art Gallery. Photograph © Yale University Art Gallery.

vogue amongst private collectors across the Atlantic for half a century. The Bostonian James Jackson Jarves' failure in 1859 to sell his large and impressive collection of early Italian Renaissance paintings to the Boston Athenaeum provides a compelling example of this distaste.<sup>73</sup> Scholarly speculation aside as to personal factors impacting Jarves' failure, there does seem to be consensus that the 'primitive' nature of the works overwhelmed their educational potential, which when

<sup>73</sup> Following the rejection in Boston, Jarves exhibited the collection at the Düsseldorf Gallery in New York City in 1860, but was equally unsuccessful in arranging a sale there. Jarves returned to Europe in May of 1861, storing thirty of his pictures in his family home in Boston and the remaining 100 or so at the New York Historical Society, allowing him to exhibit in each city in 1862 and 1863 respectively. In 1867, a transatlantic shipboard acquaintance of Jarves', Lewis R. Packard, Hillhouse Professor of Greek at Yale University, was so intrigued by what he learned of the collection that when he returned to Yale he brought the matter to the attention of his colleagues. After a thorough vetting process, the University offered to loan Jarves \$20,000 with his entire collection as collateral. In 1871, when Jarves defaulted on the loan his collection, which had been exhibited at Yale in the intervening years, became the property of Yale University and is now considered one of the most significant of its kind outside Europe. See Francis Steegmuller, *The Two Lives of James Jackson Jarves*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951, 177–184 and Jarves to Norton, August 1859, in: Charles Eliot Norton, *Letters Relating to a Collection of Pictures Made by Mr. J. J. Jarves*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: private printing, 1859, 7–10. combined with their particularly Roman-Catholic form and contents made them quite foreign to most elite Bostonians.<sup>74</sup> (Fig. 5)

These entrenched views, notwithstanding, Perkins undertook a highly strategic and unrelenting campaign to achieve his goals. That the museum practices that comprised this campaign were, as his scholarship had been, significantly inflected by Waagen, Scharf and Robinson, becomes very clear – despite the absence of explicit documentary evidence to this effect – upon close examination of the practices themselves. To begin with, within a year of his return he had transformed plans for the new Boston museum from 'preliminary' to 'incorporated' (February, 1870) and had firmly established the museum's mission as 'Art, Education, and Industry' - a trio of values prominently featured on its original seal and certainly bearing the imprint of his European models.<sup>75</sup> (Fig. 6) By opening day of 1876, he had also moved the members of the Board of Trustees from a concept of exhibition-worthy art that included largely classical or neoclassical works of sculpture and painting to one that encompassed the fine and the decorative arts and represented not only the early Italian Renaissance, but also ancient Cyprus, Egypt, and the Far East.<sup>76</sup> Such remarkable shifts spoke to Perkins' unequivocal embrace of the philosophical underpinnings of the formation of the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition and the South Kensington Museum.

<sup>74</sup> A rather curious, and certainly ironic, postscript to the tale of Jarves' collection in Boston is that in 1859, when Jarves first offered his collection to the Athenaeum, Edward Perkins consulted his brother Charles, who was in Florence at the time, on the advisability of buying the collection. Charles Perkins advised against the purchase. As a fellow Bostonian and partisan of early Italian Renaissance art, it would seem that Perkins would have been thrilled to see the collection come to Boston. Perhaps professional jealousy was at fault, as Perkins of course had dreamed of establishing a gallery of the arts in Boston for some time. However, all other indications of Perkins' professional persona are contra-indicative of such an attitude on his part. More likely, as a member of the tightly knit expatriate community in Florence he would have known, at the least, that Jarves had of late experienced financial and marital troubles. See Hirayama, *With Éclat*, 71–72.

In terms of anti-Catholicism, Bostonians had harbored a deep-seated antipathy toward those who practised the faith since the time of the Puritans. Bringing with them to the New World their suspicions of Roman Catholics as heretics and subversives, the Puritans had taken pains to see that none were granted entrance to the Bay Colony. Fears that Catholics would undermine, if not destroy, American Protestantism continued to drive public policy and civil unrest throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a situation that only worsened in the nineteenth century, when the substantial immigrant waves from Ireland began in the 1820s. For further discussion of anti-Catholicism in Boston, see O'Connor, *The Athens of America*, especially chapter six, 'Progress and Popery', 127–148. <sup>75</sup> The seal was designed in 1871. See Hirayama, *With Éclat*, 95.

<sup>76</sup> Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, *Proceedings at the Opening of the Museum of Fine Arts*, Boston: Alfred Mudge and Sons, 1876, 5–11 and Hirayama, *With Éclat*, 131–134.

Charles Callahan Perkins: early Italian Renaissance art and British museum practice in Boston



Figure 6 Original seal of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1871. Boston: Boston Athenaeum. Photograph © Boston Athenaeum.

What specifically did Perkins do once back in his native city in order to achieve this result?<sup>77</sup> Perkins' first move in the late summer of 1869, even before settling into Walnut Street, had been to join the American Social Science Association, headed by his cousin, close friend, and memorialist Samuel Eliot.<sup>78</sup> By October, the Association's Committee on Art in Education had made Perkins chair, from which position he orchestrated the incorporation of the Boston Museum in February 1870 and set the stage for his leadership of virtually every aspect of its first decade of operations. When he joined the Committee on Art in Education, the members were working to bring to fruition a plan proposed the year before to place casts of classical Greek sculpture in public high schools in order to produce 'a

<sup>77</sup> As the scion of the Perkins family who had played such a critical role philanthropically in Boston's arts development earlier in the century, Charles Callahan Perkins was a wellknown quantity in Boston, which certainly gave his speedy involvement and active leadership in cultural activities a boost.

<sup>78</sup> The Association, typical of the immodest aims of mid-century social reform efforts on both sides of the Atlantic, had been formed in Boston in 1865 'to collect *all* facts, diffuse *all* knowledge, and stimulate *all* inquiry, which have a bearing on social welfare'. See 'Officers and members of the Association', *Journal of Social Science: Containing the Transactions of the American Association*, no. 1, June 1869, 195 and William B. Rogers, 'Address of the Executive Committee of the American Social Science Association', 22 November 1865, as quoted in Hirayama, *With Éclat*, 73, f.n. 96. Emphasis mine.

favourable effect upon the mental and moral training of the young'.<sup>79</sup> Given such a clear commitment on the part of Boston's elites to broadening the impact of ancient art's educational potential, it must have seemed to Perkins a natural bridge to what he intended to do at the Museum, albeit on a smaller scale. Thus, he selected, sourced, purchased, and transported twenty-two casts for this purpose.<sup>80</sup> Ensuing difficulties in finding public school space actually played into his hands as Committee discussions in the fall turned to constructing a new purpose-built structure for the casts and then in late November to 'the feasibility of establishing a regular Museum of Art'.<sup>81</sup> From this point on, Perkins brooked no obstacles, even forming new committees every few weeks as needed, to keep the flame alive until on 4 February 1870, the Massachusetts legislature voted to incorporate the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.<sup>82</sup>

At the same time that he was pressing forward toward museum incorporation, Perkins was campaigning on several related fronts that underscored the importance of art to education. Very familiar with the central role of drawing instruction at the South Kensington Museum, Perkins joined the effort to implement the Massachusetts Drawing Act of 1870.<sup>83</sup> This initiative, just like that of the South Kensington's, was based on the view that improved draftsmanship was crucial to improvements in the quality of manufactured goods in America.<sup>84</sup> Perkins' employment of his own sketches of early Italian artworks as not only invaluable

<sup>79</sup> Collection of Casts', *Journal of Social Science: Containing the Transactions of the American Association*, vol. 3, 1871, 202.

<sup>80</sup>'Collection of Casts', 202.

<sup>81</sup> Charles Callahan Perkins, 'Art in Education', Reprint, vol. 2, *Journal of the American Social Science Association*, New York: Nation Press, 1870, 1-2.

<sup>82</sup> Hirayama, With Éclat, 74–76.

<sup>83</sup> The South Kensington system was described by Perkins in full in his 1870 article, 'American Art Museums', in the *North American Review*. He stated that in response to a poor showing of British industrial strength at the 1851 Crystal Palace Exhibition the government had stepped in to fund instruction in mechanical, architectural, and figure drawing within the South Kensington Museum itself. Further, support in the form of ambulatory collections of drawings, prints, photographs, and books was offered to cities, towns, and villages throughout the United Kingdom so that they might set up their own schools of art. Finally, instruction in elementary drawing was subsidised for poor children and working artisans. (15–17)

<sup>84</sup> The Act, the first of its kind in the nation, mandated that instruction in drawing be made part of the required curriculum. It was the result of a petition organised by fourteen prominent members of Boston's cultural elite in 1869. The petition organisers were: Jacob Bigelow; J. Thomas Stevenson; William A. Burke; James Lawrence; Edward E. Hale; Theodore Lyman; Jordan, Marsh & Co.; John Amory Lowell; John H. Clifford; William Gray; F. H. Peabody; and A. A. Lawrence & Co. See Katrina L. Billings, 'Sophisticated Proselytising: Charles Callahan Perkins and the Boston School Committee', Master's thesis, Massachusetts College of Art, 1987, 44, 45, and f.n. 55.

documentation, but also as the basis for the illustrations of his scholarship, was testament to his belief in the centrality of draftsmanship to the educational enterprise.85 Speculatively, it could have been Scharf's commitment in this regard, as manifest in his archaeological drawings from Italy and Asia Minor, and in his inveterate sketching in service of the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition and the National Portrait Gallery, that inspired Perkins.<sup>86</sup> Perkins also continued his teaching career, which he had begun in 1857 at Trinity College in Hartford. For example in 1871, Perkins lectured on Greek art at the Girls' High and Normal School in Boston.<sup>87</sup> Between 1871 and 1878, he also delivered three courses, twelve lectures each, at the Lowell Institute in Boston, on Greek Art, Italian Art and the History of the Art of Engraving.<sup>88</sup> In all of these lectures, consistent with his unflagging commitment to the role of illustration, Perkins employed a stereopticon.<sup>89</sup> Finally, in 1869, well before Harvard University appointed Charles Eliot Norton (1827–1908), the highly respected mediaeval scholar and frequent commentator on arts issues, to the newly created faculty chair in the History of Art (1875), they made Perkins University Lecturer in the History of Ancient Art and continued to employ him to teach the history of art for several years.<sup>90</sup>

Of Perkins' initiatives that put art to work for the benefit of educating the public and improving industrial design, certainly one of the most important was his

<sup>85</sup> Perkins' commitment to drawing was also demonstrated in a lecture entitled 'On Drawing as a Branch of General Education', delivered in Fitchburg, Massachusetts on 27 July 1871. He claimed drawing was 'the language of form', and like words, 'the slightest outline traced by a master hand speaks the thought which dictated it, with unmistakable clearness, to people of every nation and of every clime.' This lecture was printed as part of a publication entitled, *The Papers Read before the American Institute of Instruction at Fitchburg, Mass., July 26, 1871 with the Journal of Proceedings*, Boston: American Institute of Instruction, 1872, 81, 85, and 86. <sup>86</sup> See for examples of Scharf's Manchester sketches, Pergam, *Manchester Art Treasures*, 140– 143 and for his other sketches, <u>https://www.npg.org.uk/research/archive/archive-</u> journeys/sir-george-scharf/, accessed on 3/11/2017.

<sup>87</sup> This was the school that was ultimately able to receive the antique casts secured by Perkins under the auspices of the American Association of Social Science. See 'Collection of Casts', 202.

<sup>88</sup> The Lowell Institute was founded by John Lowell, Jr. in 1837 to support free lectures to the public. See the Lowell Institute website accessed 25/6/16 at <u>www.lowellinstitute.org</u>.
<sup>89</sup> Eliot, *Memoir*, 13. Even in 1876 when Charles Eliot Norton was appointed the first Professor of Art History at Harvard, he did not use any imagery in the classroom to illustrate his lectures.

<sup>90</sup> UA II.10.6.6 *President and Fellows OV Reports;* UA II. 10.7.2 *President and Fellows II OV Reports.* Archival details on the curricula for these courses are not available. Nor has documentation been found that would elucidate Harvard's decision to appoint Norton — in lieu of Perkins who was already teaching the subject — although there is also no evidence that Perkins would have been interested given the heavy load of commitments, especially to the Boston Museum, that he was already carrying.

article published in July, 1870, 'American Art Museums'.<sup>91</sup> In a move that reflected Waagen's core museological values as further implemented by his British devotées, Scharf and Robinson, Perkins laid out his new visual paradigm in the foremost literary magazine of the city, *The North American Review*. In itself, this reflected another strategic choice on Perkins' part as the magazine had been founded and edited by the same elites who founded the Athenaeum and who taught classical rhetoric at Harvard.<sup>92</sup> Stressing that the arts of temples and cathedrals had served as 'active agents in cultivating public taste' in antiquity and in the mediaeval period, Perkins made the point that in today's world it was up to museums to play that role.<sup>93</sup> That the museum's function was to promote an understanding of the work's original setting, aesthetics, and purpose, was certainly a concept that could be traced back to Waagen's historicism in general and his article (1853) on the proper disposition of the new London National Gallery building in particular.<sup>94</sup> There the German scholar stated that a museum had responsibility to 'realise in some degree the impression produced by a temple, a church, a palace, or a cabinet, for which

<sup>91</sup> Charles Callahan Perkins, 'American Art Museums', The North American Review, vol. 111, no. 228, July 1870, 1–29. Somehow, Perkins also found time to edit the American editions of two important works in applied art history, Charles Locke Eastlake's Hints on Household Taste in Furniture, Upholstery, and other Details (1874) and Jacob von Falke's Art in the House: Historical, Critical, and Aesthetical Studies on the Decoration and Furnishing of the Dwelling (1879). Leading texts in the 'household art' movement of the second half of the nineteenth century, a movement motivated by the same concern for industrial design and belief in the moral influences of art that prompted the South Kensington Museum system, these volumes were intended to improve middle class taste. Eastlake (1836–1906), nephew of Sir Charles Lock Eastlake, was among the first to publish on household art, and the tenets of his interior design theories betrayed a strong Ruskinian bias for 'truth' and the Gothic style. As such, Perkins' editorial work on these particular texts, which comprised in both cases lengthy prefatory remarks, formed a natural adjunct to his efforts at the public school and museum levels. See Martha Crabill McClaugherty, 'Household Art: Creating the Artistic Home, 1868-1893', Winterthur Portfolio, vol. 18, no. 1, Spring 1983, 1–2. N. B. Charles Locke Eastlake is often confused, understandably so, with his uncle, Charles Lock Eastlake. The younger Eastlake spelled his middle name with an 'e' at the end, which to the extent that his full middle name is spelled out by authors, helps to ameliorate the confusion. <sup>92</sup> The *Review* was founded by William Tudor, Jr. in 1815 as a periodical 'which should be distinctively American in character'. In 1819, Edward Everett, distinguished classicist and orator, became editor. He was followed by Edward Tyrrel Channing and the Reverend Jared Sparks, both classical rhetoricians, and in 1864 Charles Eliot Norton and James Russell Lowell, 'men who at that time had taken a foremost place in American letters', took over as co-editors. See Julius H. Ward, 'The North American Review', The North American Review, vol. 201, no. 710, January 1915, 123–134. The Review is still in publication today. 93 Perkins, 'Museums', 2.

94 Waagen, 'National Gallery', 101–103, 121–125.

those works were originally intended'.<sup>95</sup> Waagen reiterated this basic principle in his testimony before Parliament's Select Committee on Accommodation of National Gallery (1850) when he stated that 'in the ancient times of the Greeks, and during the middle ages, the monuments contributed a good deal towards the education of the lower class, and...in our modern times it might be done a great deal as well.'<sup>96</sup> Following in Waagen's footsteps, Robinson also acknowledged this as the ideal in a lecture on the Museum of Ornamental Art, as the previous home of the South Kensington Museum was called when it was housed at Marlborough House. Referring to 'sculptures, arabesques, frescoes, and mosaics, in their original adaptations', Robinson opined that 'we [in London] must content ourselves with gathering such things into museums.'<sup>97</sup>

Perkins further drew a parallel in his article between the salutary impact that masterworks of music performed regularly by well-trained musicians had on Boston's citizens and the kind of beneficial impact that the visual arts would make in his city.<sup>98</sup> 'Art is a unit...acting upon a unit, the spirit of man', Perkins asserted. His statement betrayed not only the training in classical rhetoric that he had received at the hands of Harvard professors, but also the romantic premise that underlay virtually all of Waagen, Scharf, and Robinson's museum practices, that an art object created a window into the history of the period in which it had been produced. In this regard, Perkins went on to say,

Music, architecture, poetry, sculpture, and painting are but palpable modes of transmitting the thoughts of one mind to other minds, and whether these be conveyed through sounds or stones, verse, marble, or colour, the object of art is to move, raise, and instruct us, to take us out of ourselves, and thus make us share for a time in the lofty dreams of the privileged few who are called sons of genius.<sup>99</sup>

Such a transformative change could only be effected, in Perkins' estimation, 'by the organization of comprehensive museums' whose mandate must be 'before all else educational' and must, owing to a dearth of resources — both in expertise and funds — make 'reproductions of statues, architectural fragments, monuments,

95 Waagen, 'National Gallery', 101.

<sup>99</sup> Perkins, 'Museums', 4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>96</sup> Gustav F. Waagen, *Report from Select Committee on Accommodation of National Gallery*, no. 606-607, as quoted by Waterfield, 'Waagen in England', 53.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>97</sup> John Charles Robinson, An Introductory Lecture on the Museum of Ornamental Art of the Department, London: Chapman and Hall, 1854, as quoted by Drew in 'Italian Sculpture', 133.
<sup>98</sup> Perkins, 'Museums', 4. This state of affairs, not surprisingly, owed a great deal to Perkins himself, who, during his intermittent 'home leaves' in Boston, had involved himself actively with music.

gems, coins, inscriptions, etc., etc.' a priority of their acquisition policies. Summarising all of these principles, Perkins stated:

...a representative collection which shall illustrate the rise and progress of the arts and their gradual decadence. For this purpose the examples in each department must be arranged chronologically, so that the professor of art and archaeology may use them to point out the broad differences between the sculpture of Egypt and Assyria, may demonstrate in what measure each influenced early Greek sculpture...pointing out as he proceeds how and why sculpture steadily progressed until it culminated in the age of Pericles, and as steadily declined until it almost died out in the Dark Ages, then rose again in the Middle Ages from Niccola Pisano to Donatello, and fell away through the splendid extravagances of Michel Angelo and the corrupt principles of his successors.<sup>100</sup>

Here Perkins is certainly demonstrating his adherence to the teleological framework for historical analysis that characterised the scholarship and museum practices of Waagen, Scharf, and Robinson. In terms of his points regarding comprehensiveness and chronological ordering, Perkins' debt to Waagen and Scharf is also indisputable.

With respect to reproductions, Perkins' *North American Review* article provided a series of detailed specifications for ancient cast collections and a review of the strengths of such collections at the various European museums.<sup>101</sup> In this, his thinking was very much in line with Robinson, who, despite his proclivity for original quattrocento sculpture, was under no illusions regarding the necessity for reproductions. In the Introduction to his 1862 catalogue, for example, Robinson stated, 'A systematic collection of mediaeval and renaissance sculpture, therefore, should comprise more than the actual marbles and terra-cottas; besides the original specimens, it should embrace a well-ordered series of auxiliary illustrations, especially of plaster casts.'<sup>102</sup> Perkins concluded his extraordinarily comprehensive and prescriptive rationale for American art museums by noting that the South Kensington was 'the prototype of the Continental museums, and the model upon which most of them have been formed', and by providing a detailed verbal map of the collections and operating strategies of museums in Austria, Russia, and

<sup>100</sup> Perkins, 'Museums', 9.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>101</sup> Perkins, 'Museums', 16.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>102</sup> John C. Robinson, *Italian Sculpture of the Middle Ages and Period of the Revival of Art*, London: Chapman and Hall, 1862, x.

Germany that had followed in the South Kensington's footsteps.<sup>103</sup> His final recommendation for American art museums was to embrace the motto, '*festina lente*', to make haste slowly, being sure not to sacrifice quality to quantity.<sup>104</sup>

As soon as was humanly possible after the February 1870 incorporation, Perkins set about bringing the precepts laid out in 'American Art Museums' to life at the Boston Museum with a programme of acquisitions and exhibitions that broke free of the old restrictions on exhibition-worthy fine art.<sup>105</sup> In this, the Boston Athenaeum was his generous partner, lending space for collections and exhibitions on its third floor, and funding acquisitions with the intention of donating them to the Museum.<sup>106</sup> The management of this process was handled jointly by the Committee of the Museum and the Fine Arts Committee of the Athenaeum. The committees were headed by Charles Callahan Perkins at the Museum and Edward Newton Perkins at the Athenaeum, certainly making for a close-knit collaboration. While the two committees were never officially joined, and thus had no appointed

<sup>103</sup> Perkins discusses the formation, collections, and display of the Museum of Industrial Art in Vienna, the Museum at Moscow, the National Bavarian Museum (Munich), and the German Museum in Nuremberg. The following excerpt exemplifies his detailed descriptions. 'Beginning with Roman antiquities, such as a mosaic pavement..., the visitor [to the National Bavarian Museum] passes on to the Celtic and Carlovingian remains, weapons...gold and silver ornaments found in tombs, ivory caskets, fragments of glass, and figures of saints and symbolic animals in wood and stone. He then visits the Romanesque department, where reliquaries...ecclesiastical vestments...illuminated manuscripts, and some Byzantine paintings of the twelfth or thirteenth century... are collected. In the Gothic division...stained glass windows...carved ceilings...and an immense collection of suits of armor, pieces of furniture, weapons, portraits of celebrated personages, besides divers objects of artistic and historical interest belonging to the Renaissance epoch.' Perkins, 'Museums', 16–24.

<sup>104</sup> Perkins, 'Museums', 28–29.

<sup>105</sup> The discussion which follows is indebted to the thorough accounting of this transitional period in Hirayama's text. See especially Chapter 4 (97–135).

<sup>106</sup> The Museum, led by the Building Committee of which Perkins was a member, began immediately in 1870 to erect its own structure — including raising funds to build it — a complicated task as no sooner had this effort begun and the architects been chosen — Sturgis and Brigham of London and Boston — than the country suffered the economic panic of 1873 and the Boston and Chicago fires of 1871 and 1872, respectively, all of which siphoned off pledged and potentially pledged funds. When the building opened in 1876, only the northwest portion of the Sturgis and Brigham design was completed. Two expansions occurred subsequently in 1878–1879 and in 1888–1889, and even with these the total structure remained just over half of the original design. Within several years of the second expansion it became clear that the Museum would need to relocate, which it ultimately did in 1909 to its present location on Huntington Avenue. See Hirayama, *With Éclat*, 105–113. Chair, Charles Perkins was unquestionably in charge.<sup>107</sup> On opening day, 4 July 1876, the several thousand works on display at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston formed the visual corollary — albeit on a much smaller scale — to Perkins' textual prescription, as outlined in his 1870 article. That the Boston Museum was able to accomplish this level of comprehensiveness was certainly owing to Perkins' acquisitive hand — during the period between incorporation and opening he had acquired three major collections of ancient and Renaissance decorative arts objects, the Cesnola (1870), the Way (1873), and the Castellani (1876) — but also to the Athenaeum's institutional loan of more than eight hundred objects.<sup>108</sup> The large majority of the loan comprised five-hundred photographs of Old Master works, but it also included approximately fifty original paintings, fifty Arundel Society chromolithographs, and twenty plaster casts.<sup>109</sup>

How then does the presence of trecento and quattrocento sculpture at the MFA function in comparison to art of the same period at the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition and the South Kensington Museum? To the extent that the early Renaissance works added to the comprehensiveness of the MFA's opening exhibit, that they spoke eloquently to their time and place, and that they embodied the potential to ameliorate contemporary industrial design, Perkins was certainly heavily influenced by all three distinguished predecessors across the Atlantic. That said, given the emphasis on early Italian Renaissance sculpture that he shared especially with Robinson, it will be to Robinson's textual and display strategies that we will look most particularly in this concluding section of the article. The most notable of Robinson's strategies, as delineated by Drew, concerned the use of highly adroit language in his catalogues and equally skilful display practices. For example, Luca della Robbia, an artist whom Robinson considered critical to the progress of

<sup>107</sup> When the Museum incorporated in 1870, Perkins was made Honorary Director, a title which totally understated the centrality of his functions and suggests, for today's interpreter, a ceremonial role only. Nothing could have been further from the truth. As Chairman of the Committee on the Museum, Perkins' scope was that of a Head Curator, in today's museum parlance. In contrast, General Charles Loring was given the title, 'Curator,' but his role appeared to be more of an administrative one. Perkins also served on the Building Committee until it was disbanded in 1879. See *Annual Reports of the Museum of Fine Arts*, 1876 through 1886.

<sup>108</sup> The Cesnola collection was purchased by Perkins for the Museum in June 1870. It comprised in excess of five hundred archaeological objects from Cyprus. The Way collection of close to 5,000 ancient Egyptian objects was donated to the Museum in June 1872. Following the lead of the South Kensington Museum, in 1876 Perkins persuaded the Athenaeum's Fine Arts Committee to purchase, for the ultimate benefit of the Museum, thirty objects in metals, wood, and textiles from the Castellani collection. Dating from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century, these objects ranged from the secular to the sacred, and were, in the main, of fine design and craftsmanship. Hirayama, *With Éclat*, 99–103, 122–128. <sup>109</sup> Hirayama, *With Éclat*, 132.

sculpture and whose work he acquired in significant numbers for the South Kensington, made heavy use of terracotta, a material that did not comport with the Victorian public's bias for white marble sculpture.<sup>110</sup> This bias was fostered by the highly influential British critic John Ruskin.<sup>111</sup> Ruskin believed that the use of colour in a sculpture compromised the contrast of light and dark needed for the all-important creation of form, in accordance with the dictates of nature.<sup>112</sup> In his 1862 catalogue, *Italian Sculpture of the Middle Ages and Period of the Revival of Art*, Robinson countered this barrier to the appreciation of Luca by making his first catalogue entry for the sculptor not one of Luca's better known polychromatic works, but rather a sketch for the white marble *Cantoria* in the Duomo in Florence.<sup>113</sup> Furthermore, Robinson incorporated Ruskin's ideas into his own descriptive language in the catalogue by claiming for the sculpture that it was superior to Donatello's similar frieze because of its 'truthful rendering of Nature, and general elevation of conception', thus reflecting Ruskin's famed requirement that art be true to nature.<sup>114</sup>

Robinson's second challenge — an ironic one, in light of the first challenge above — arose because his acquisitions policies privileged original historic sculpture, 'fine' art, over well-designed and decorated utilitarian objects, 'applied' or 'decorative' art. In this he was perceived by management, specifically Henry Cole, as working at cross-purposes with the museum's mission to enhance British manufacturing through the study of applied art.<sup>115</sup> This prompted Robinson's use of language to blur the line between fine and applied art. Looking to Luca della Robbia's work again as an example, in his 1856 catalogue of the newly acquired Jules Soulages collection of 200 works of majolica pottery, Robinson linked the

<sup>110</sup> The details and interpretation of Robinson's strategies at the South Kensington Museum are indebted to Drew, 'Displaying Italian Sculpture: Exploring Hierarchies at the South Kensington Museum, 1852–1862'.

<sup>111</sup> Drew, 'Italian Sculpture', 203–214. Drew cites the second volume of Ruskin's *Modern Painters* (1846) as his first public declaration regarding the adverse impact of colour. She notes that Ruskin used Luca della Robbia's works as examples of such an adverse impact. (206–207)

<sup>112</sup> Drew, 'Italian Sculpture', 207–208.

<sup>113</sup> Drew, 'Italian Sculpture', 219–220.

<sup>114</sup> Drew, 'Italian Sculpture', 220.

<sup>115</sup> The friction between Cole and Robinson over the interpretation of the Museum's mission has been addressed frequently in scholarship. See for example, Drew, 'Italian Sculpture', 79– 81; Bonython and Burton, *The Great Exhibitor*, 190 and 211–214; Davies, 'Robinson's Work' Part I, 172 and 181 and 'Robinson's Work', Part II, 111–114. majolica with the Museum's holdings of - then only two - della Robbia reliefs by freely interchanging the use of the words 'sculpture' and 'ware'.<sup>116</sup>

Robinson's displays were perhaps the most important to his strategy of blurring the lines between the fine and decorative arts. For example, he sought to emulate the marriage of painting, sculpture, architecture and decorative objects found *in situ* all over Italy, a context that by definition did not discriminate between 'high' and 'low' arts.<sup>117</sup> To achieve this goal, Robinson had to employ both originals and reproductions. For example, in the central court of the South Kensington Museum, Robinson anchored his display around two iconic masterworks of the Renaissance, the first a life-size (eighteen-foot) cast of Michelangelo's David (1504) and the second, copies of Raphael's arabesques from the Vatican loggia (1508– 1510).<sup>118</sup> Strategically placed in the spaces between the *David* and the arabesques were a variety of decorative objects representing a range of materials — terracotta, bronze, and wood; a range of periods of art — the early Renaissance to the Baroque; and even a geographic range — that of northern and southern Europe.<sup>119</sup> In this way, as Drew's discussion highlights, Robinson made two points that were crucial to the success of his strategy for a museum intended to support industrial design. First, he demonstrated the degree to which the great masters were an inspiration to artisans of their day. Second, he demonstrated the fine line between artist and artisan — this was especially the case with these particular Raphael copies as they were, in their original location, strictly architectural ornament - and suggested that this porous model was particularly apt for the present day.

Perkins, like Robinson, set the stage for easing the Boston elite into his new visual arts paradigm with language, beginning with the catalogues produced in the transitional period of 1870 to 1876. His preface to the 1873 catalogue, for example, was as extensive an introduction to the historical context of the art on exhibit as had been published in the entire run of exhibitions hosted by the Athenaeum since 1827.<sup>120</sup>

<sup>116</sup> Drew, 'Italian Sculpture', 107–108. Jules Soulages (1803–1857) began collecting Italian and French Renaissance decorative art in 1825. The South Kensington Museum purchased his collection over the period of 1859 to 1865. See 'Soulages at the V&A', accessed 30 August 2016 at http://www.vam.ac.uk.

<sup>117</sup> Drew, 'Italian Sculpture', 134–135.

<sup>118</sup> Drew, 'Italian Sculpture', 175–201.

<sup>119</sup> See Drew's article in this journal edition, 'The colourful career of Sir John Charles Robinson: collecting and curating at the early South Kensington Museum', for an illustration of this skillful arrangement.

<sup>120</sup> Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, *Second Catalogue of the Collection of Ancient and Modern Works of Art given or loaned to the Trustees of the Museum of Fine Arts, at Boston*, Boston: Alfred Mudge & Son, 1873, 3–19.

The collection herein catalogued...contains a series of objects which illustrate a wide range of artistic activity in point of time and use of material, including a very valuable collection of Egyptian antiquities, and many specimens of ancient and modern glass, bronze and pottery, Graeco-Italian vases, Italian Majolica, Venetian glass, illuminated manuscripts, tapestry, and pictures; and form an artistic microcosm, well calculated to teach the visitor something of the character and quality of the art-industry of many nations during a long period of the world's history.<sup>121</sup>

In this introductory statement, Perkins made crystal clear his aims for displaying art in Boston, highlighting both the encyclopaedic and artisanal nature of the works on display, and tipping his hand to the chronological scope, mix of high and low art, and educational aims of the museum models that he had come to know and value so well in Europe. Additionally, the education of visitors was a clear goal of his catalogue. His preface provided the visitor with a map not only to the location of the objects in the exhibition, but also to the historical and aesthetical context in which each category of objects belonged. Moreover, for virtually every specific catalogue entry he included a title, a description, dates and artists and, in a number of instances, additional historical references.<sup>122</sup> Throughout the catalogue, Perkins referred to relevant scholarship and museum exhibits and employed his matter-offact, descriptive, and easily-read style.

With respect to the early Italian Renaissance, Perkins' catalogue entries were even more carefully orchestrated to maximise the viewer's comfort level with this previously disconcerting art. In this regard, he began the acclimatization process in his 1872 catalogue to the exhibition held in the Museum Room on the third floor of the Boston Athenaeum. In the catalogue preface, after establishing the importance of the ancient ceramic arts through a formal analysis of the Cypriote pottery and the Etruscan and Greek — of the Archaic and Classical eras — vases, he transitioned immediately to the collection of majolica plates and bottles, beginning his discussion by focusing on Moorish ware. '[It] is what is called Hispano-Moorish ware, [and] brings us to the origin of this beautiful art manufacture. The Moorish potters

#### <sup>121</sup> Perkins, Collection of Ancient and Modern Works, 1873, 3.

<sup>122</sup> In support of the ancient works, Perkins addressed the three main divisions of Egyptian history and the related art production; the antique and decorative nature of the Cyprus terracotta pottery and figurative statuettes as well as the Greek glass from Cypriot tombs; and the varying influences and techniques with a bearing on Italo-Greek painted vases, including a glossary of terms for earthenware vessels. In support of the modern works, Perkins discussed the history of majolica wares, bringing the reader up to the fine and more decorative contributions of della Robbia; the aesthetic beauty, advanced modelling technique, and material quality of the early Renaissance bronze medals; and the production challenges encountered with the Gobelin tapestries that had come into the collection. See Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, *Collection of Ancient and Modern Works*, 1873, 3–19. were...distinguished for the beauty of their metallic oxide glaze.' He then traced the history of the glazing process through the first half of the sixteenth century, attributing its perfection to the patronage of such enlightened rulers as the Dukes of Urbino and Ferrara who, he pointed out, may have owed their interest in part to the mistaken notion that certain of the designs were Raphael's.<sup>123</sup> Perkins concluded his discussion of the majolica by introducing the creative genius of Luca della Robbia, both technically in terms of the glazing process, as well as aesthetically. Copying Robinson's strategic employment of Luca's *Cantoria*, as just discussed, he transitioned artlessly to the sculptor's great masterpiece in marble, but also to the fact that this masterpiece was represented in the Boston Museum's collection in a sculptural cast and that its expressiveness could be linked to that which Dante experienced in the *Purgatorio*.

For excellence of composition and simple, unpretending truth to nature, this group of choristers is worthy of the highest praise. So earnestly do they sing, and so perfectly is the character of each voice conveyed by the facial expression, that like Dante when he looked upon those celestial bas-reliefs, which surpassed the works of Polyclete (Purgatorio, X.Canto), we are in doubt whether we do not hear as well as see...The other casts on either side of this relief are of works by celebrated Tuscan sculptors of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, from Orcagna to Benvenuto Cellini.<sup>124</sup>

Thus, in one masterstroke, Perkins linked the majolica to the glories of Greek art, the beauty of Raphael, and the enlightenment of the Italian nobility, while at the same time positioning the sculptural casts as being read by the viewer as original artworks encountered by Dante, the mediaeval poet much-beloved in Boston.<sup>125</sup>

Turning finally to Perkins' display practices, as may be seen in the Museum floor plans published in 1876, on opening day the visitor progressed from the vestibule to the end of the entrance hall to begin his exploration with Egyptian

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>123</sup> Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, *Catalogue of the Collection of Ancient and Modern Works of Art, given or loaned to the Trustees of the Museum of Fine Arts, at Boston*, Boston: Alfred Mudge, 1872, 11–14.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>124</sup> Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, *Collection of Ancient and Modern Works*, 1872, 14. <sup>125</sup> The Harvard language scholars George Ticknor and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow as well as the mediaevalist and art historian Charles Eliot Norton were largely responsible for the strength of the Dante phenomenon in mid to late nineteenth-century Boston. George Ticknor had corresponded with European Dantists and taught a Harvard course on Dante in the early 1830s, Longfellow started a Dante Club at his home in Cambridge, and Norton had known of Dante since his early childhood when his mother translated the poet and his uncle Ticknor, whose library he frequented, had introduced him. See James Turner, *The Liberal Education of Charles Eliot Norton*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999, 33 and 198.

Deborah Hartry Stein

Charles Callahan Perkins: early Italian Renaissance art and British museum practice in Boston

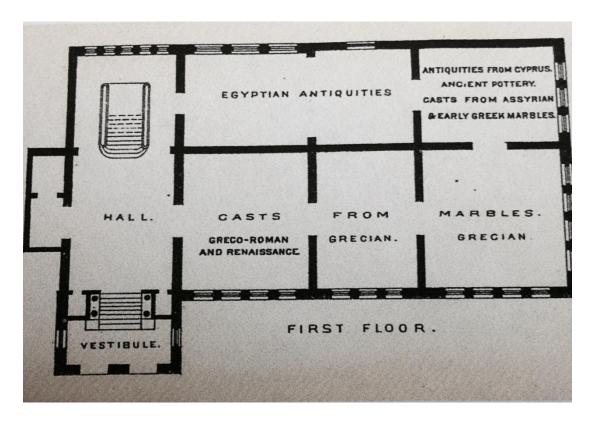


Figure 7 Floor plans of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, First Floor. From: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Second Catalogue of the Collection of Ancient and Modern Works of Art Given or Loaned to the Trustees, Boston: Alfred Mudge, 1876, n.p. Photograph of author.

antiquities (the Way collection), then on to the ancient Cypriote works (the Cesnola collection) and to three galleries filled with eighty-one sculptural casts.<sup>126</sup> (Fig. 7) Of these three galleries, the first two were entirely devoted to Grecian sculptures, while the third and last was split between Greco-Roman and Renaissance ones. As such, the latter, prominently positioned on the first floor with the ancient sculpture of Egypt and Greece, emphasised the continuity of the ancient and Renaissance periods. Even the room's label on the floor plan, the 'Greco-Roman and Renaissance Room,' reinforced this continuity, especially as the number of objects that it contained was evenly split between the two. The Renaissance objects, numbering approximately forty, were almost all quattrocento sculptural casts. Sculptors represented included Ghiberti, Luca della Robbia, Donatello, Mino da Fiesole, and Michelangelo. The subjects of the works were primarily sacred ones from the New Testament, and included even a bust of Savonarola, whose uncompromising stance on the pagan nature of classicism would just two decades earlier have sent off the same anti-popery alarm bells for Bostonians as did the ritualistic works of the Jarves

<sup>126</sup> Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Collection of Ancient and Modern Works, 1876, 131.

collection.<sup>127</sup> However, presented within the context of an historical progression of the arts on the first floor and emphasising as they did the greater naturalism of the quattrocento, these works apparently passed muster with the elite members of the Museum Committee. Thus, between the name of the gallery and the close proximity to ancient objects familiar to and well accepted by the Boston public, the layout on the first floor served to greet the visitor with a comfortable continuity with the sculpture exhibitions of years past.

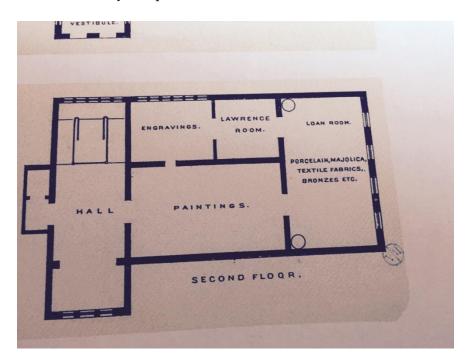


Figure 8 Floor plans of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Second Floor. From: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Second Catalogue of the Collection of Ancient and Modern Works of Art Given or Loaned to the Trustees, Boston: Alfred Mudge, 1876, n.p. Photograph of author.

On the second floor, medium took over from chronology as organising principle. (Fig. 8) The visitor was greeted by a paintings gallery of 34 Old Masters and copies thereof, where, again, continuity with exhibitions of the past eased the visitor on his way to the so-called Loan and Lawrence Rooms. Between these two galleries, they housed the Castellani and Lawrence collections of embroideries, textiles, carved wood, and metalwork as well as majolica and Robbia ware, dating to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.<sup>128</sup> It was here that Perkins recreated the marriage of the fine and decorative arts, already convincingly established in his catalogue language, by placing the majolica together with the original pieces from his own collection, the *Virgin and Child* from the Andrea della Robbia workshop and

<sup>127</sup> Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Collection of Ancient and Modern Works, 1876, 39–40.
 <sup>128</sup> Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Collection of Ancient and Modern Works, 1876, 53–72.

the *Nativity* of c. 1520 from the lesser-known workshop of Benedetto Buglioni. The *Virgin and Child*, in particular, served Perkins' purpose because, as a sculpture covered in a white glaze, it more closely resembled the marble statuary to which Bostonians were so closely attached. Furthermore, its lack of gilding or celestial references — for example, it had no niche to represent the heavens as some other comparable della Robbia works did – made it more compatible with Bostonian taste. Finally, its humanity, as was previously explored, distanced it from the Byzantine-like works that Bostonians had rejected in Jarves' collection. While the Buglioni was polychromatic and not nearly as classically or skillfully rendered, it too avoided gilded references to divinity.<sup>129</sup> Thus, as in his catalogue discussion, Perkins manipulated the objects' placement to transfer the lustre of the 'fine art' by known artists onto the far less prominent and unattributed pieces of maiolica and to demonstrate that the differences between the two categories were not that great. In fact, Perkins used the heading 'Robbia Ware,' as versus 'Robbia Sculpture,' in his 1876 catalogue to denote his original works, perhaps reinforcing the same fine line, or perhaps simply acknowledging that the listing included one 'modern imitation,' presented by the Reverend Mr. Washburn.<sup>130</sup> Either way, Perkins had once again followed an example set by Robinson, who conflated Robbia ware and sculpture in his 1856 catalogue of the Soulages Collection, among other examples of such linguistic conflation.<sup>131</sup>

One final example of Perkins' bravura display practices involved the collection of eight panels from the Hôtel Montmorency in Paris. Seen through the doorway as affixed to the western wall of the Loan Room in an Enrico Meneghelli (1853–1912) painting of the Lawrence Room, these narrow twelve-foot tall painted and gilded oak panels were designed by Claude-Nicholas Ledoux (1736–1806), a leading French neo-classical architect, for his client Monsieur Bouvet de Vezelay in circa 1770.<sup>132</sup> (Fig. 9) The panels were festooned with interlaced floral, figural, and armorial designs, which were highly reminiscent of Raphael's arabesques in the

<sup>129</sup> Furthermore, at the time of the 1876 opening the Buglioni *Nativity* had not been identified as such for Perkins lists the work as being by Andrea della Robbia, thus elevating its status for the viewer. See Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, *Collection of Ancient and Modern Works*, 1876, 54.

<sup>130</sup> Perkins, Collection of Ancient and Modern Works, 1876, 54.

<sup>131</sup> Drew, 'Italian Sculpture', 108.

<sup>132</sup> These panels were purchased at the time of the demolition of the Hôtel in 1848. The identity of the purchaser is disputed, but by 1876 they were in the hands of the Bostonian, Harleston Parker, who loaned them to the Museum at the time of its opening. At a subsequent point, the Boston Athenaeum and the Museum each bought four of the eight panels. The Athenaeum loaned their four panels to the MFA from 1876 until 1976 when the Museum purchased them back leaving them the owner of the full set, which they remain today. See these panels described on the MFA website as accessed 28/8/16 at http://www.mfa.org/ (Accession #79.326–79.329 and 1975.801–804).

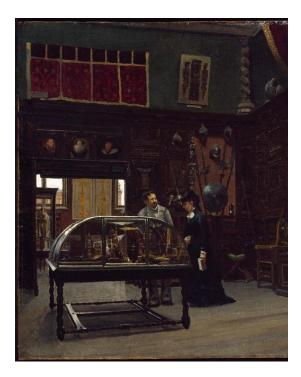




Figure 9 Enrico Meneghelli, *The Lawrence Room, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, 1876. Oil on canvas, mounted on Masonite, 40.96 x 50.8 cm. Boston: Museum of Fine Arts. Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Figure 10 Claude Ledoux (designer) and Joseph Méthivier (carver), *Carved Panel*, c. 1770. Painted and gilded oak, 365 x 81.3 cm. Boston: Museum of Fine Arts. Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Vatican loggie. (Fig. 10) Just as Robinson used the Vatican arabesque copies in the South Kensington's central court in the expectation that visitors would see the close link between the fine and the decorative arts, so too did the Ledoux panels with their distinct Raphaelesque designs have the potential to remind viewers that Raphael, the unquestioned master of Renaissance painting, was not only a genius of history painting, but also a flawless executor of decorative design.

The net effect of Perkins' textual and display strategies was to demonstrate to his fellow elites and to the public that the Early Italian Renaissance formed a bridge between the classically-inspired sculpture that Bostonians had seen for decades at the Athenaeum's exhibitions and the High Renaissance and Baroque paintings that had also been favoured there in significant numbers. Furthermore, through linking the fine and decorative arts in the Renaissance period and insisting upon — and securing — a comprehensive and representative display of the history of western art, whether through originals or reproductions, Perkins demonstrated that he had indeed been inspired by Waagen, Scharf, and Robinson. For Perkins, as for his distinguished predecessors, these strategies were essential to delivering on the promise of public fine arts museums, that of improving taste and elevating industrial design. While Perkins was the first to admit that his acquisition and display strategies were not entirely ideologically driven but rather were also

impacted by funding constraints, he nonetheless believed wholeheartedly — in fact, he dedicated his entire career to the notion — that all of the arts, high and low, polished and rough-hewn, had the potential to enrich the citizens of Boston, and ultimately of the nation.

**Deb Stein** received her PhD in the History of Art & Architecture in January, 2017 at Boston University. Her dissertation is entitled "The Visual Rhetoric of Charles Callahan Perkins: Early Italian Renaissance Art and a new Fine Arts Paradigm for Boston." The first critical book-length study on this nineteenth-century cultural polymath (1823–1886), the dissertation goes beyond an accounting of Perkins' role in founding and directing the new Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. It frames Perkins' contributions as creating a paradigm shift in institutional display of the arts from one which privileged classical and neoclassical sculpture and paintings and thus limited viewership to those with literary knowledge. The new paradigm focused on a comprehensive history of art where viewers could apprehend a work's meaning through their eyes alone, making for an unparalleled democratization of the arts in Boston.

Deb has taught both American and Italian Renaissance art and cultural history at Boston University and has presented her scholarship to a variety of academic audiences. Since 2006, she has served as Gallery Instructor in the American and European galleries at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, where she also coordinated adult education programs. Prior to her career in art history, Deb founded and led a consulting firm serving major banks and has held management positions in the fields of corporate training, commercial banking, and university administration. She earned an MBA from Northeastern University, an MA in Educational Administration from Harvard University, and a BA in History from Carleton College in Minnesota.

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