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Copied by the Sun: Talbotype Illustrations to the 'Annals of the Artists of Spain' by Sir William Stirling Maxwell.

Edited by Hilary Macartney and José Manuel Matilla. Volume 1: Studies and Catalogue Raisonné. 368 pp. incl. 274 ills. Volume 2: Facsimile. 144 pp. incl. 68 ills. (Museo Nacional del Prado/ Centro de Estudios Europa Hispánica, Madrid, 2016),

€85.50. ISBN 978-84-8480-322-5 (vol. I); 978-84-8480-323-2 (vol. II).

Reviewed by PATRICK LENAGHAN

PUBLISHED IN CONJUNCTION with an exhibition held at the Museo del Prado, Madrid (closed September 2016), this work presents a major study of William Stirling's groundbreaking *Annals of the Artists of Spain* (1848). Described by one of the authors as a 'boldly pioneering venture requiring both great imagination and no small amount of bravado' (p.79), the *Annals* was the first art-historical study to be illustrated with photographs. Stirling had fifty copies issued with an extra volume comprising sixty-six calotypes or Talbotypes, a significant achievement for the time. He distributed these presentation copies among his friends. This not only reflected the author's vision but was also an important episode in the history of nineteenth-century English photography and culture. Edited by Hilary Macartney and José Manuel Matilla, the present publication affords readers a chance to appreciate the scope of the achievement. The first volume covers Stirling's biography, the book's context, its place

in the history of photography and issues of conservation, while the second volume provides a facsimile of this rare work.

Through inheritance and marriage, Stirling amassed a great fortune and a position of prominence in Scotland, eventually inheriting a baronetcy from his uncle. As expertly recounted by Macartney, after graduating from Cambridge, Stirling travelled through Europe in 1839-40. In the following years, he made a series of trips to Spain that fired his interest in the land. He amassed an impressive collection of Spanish art, buying paintings from the Louis Philippe sale in 1853. His holdings extended to drawings and prints: many of the former are in the Witt Collection in the Courtauld Institute, London, while several of his fine Goya prints are in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Notwithstanding the dispersal of a sizeable part of his collection, visitors to Pollok House in Glasgow can still appreciate its extent and breadth. Largely self-taught, Stirling became a major Hispanic scholar, writing not just the *Annals of the Artists of Spain* but also monographs on Velázquez and Murillo as well as studies of the Emperor Charles V and Don Juan of Austria.

Stirling's decision to illustrate the book with photographs, a medium then less than a decade old, reflects his vision and scholarship. As Matilla points out, few texts or images of Spanish art were then available to an English public. Moreover, Stirling's models, the editions of Palomino or Ceán Bermúdez, had no illustrations. Drawing on documents and prints in the National Media Museum, Bradford, the authors have reconstructed



37. *The Reading establishment*, attributed to Benjamin Cowdery or Calvert R. Jones. 1845-46. Salt print from calotype negative. (Bradford National Media Museum).

how Stirling contracted Nicholas Henneman to produce the images and the obstacles they had to overcome. The technical limitations of photography at that date presented difficulties: many original works could not be photographed, so Stirling arranged for small-scale copies to be made or for prints and drawings to stand in their place. The close examination of Henneman's proofs has yielded valuable insights into the making of these prints (Fig.37). Some proofs show that paintings were removed from their stretchers and in one instance photographed upside down. As Matilla observes, the process and the final print throw into question many of Walter Benjamin's claims in his famous essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction'. Perhaps the greatest obstacle to appreciating the set of reproductions is that the edges of the photographs faded quickly. Documentation published here shows how Stirling and Henneman quickly detected the problem but were unable to resolve it. However, modern scientific tests carried out for this study have determined that the fading corresponds to the presence of sulphur, which was either airborne or present in the page, although it may also have been residual after incomplete washing of the photographic plates. In a work of digital wizardry, in the second volume the editors present the reader with a facsimile without this defect.

The first volume concludes with an impressive array of documents. The catalogue raisonné records not only each image included in the volume but also lists proofs and variants as well as identifying both the work that was actually photographed and the original. The authors have located almost half of the fifty copies that Stirling presented to his friends. Finally, eight appendices supply extensive documentation. A minor complaint is that some of the images are very small, which makes it difficult to appreciate the photographers' achievement. Nonetheless, these volumes make clear how remarkable Stirling's and Henneman's undertaking was, and should make this episode in the history of photography better known.