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Copied by the Sun: Talbotype Illustrations to the Annals of the Artists of Spain by Sir William Stirling Maxwell: Studies and Catalogue Raisonné

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Copied by the Sun: Talbotype Illustrations to the Annals of the Artists of Spain by Sir William Stirling Maxwell: Studies and Catalogue Raisonné. Edited by Hilary Macartney and José Manuel Matilla. Madrid: Museo Nacional del Prado and the Centro de Estudios Europa Hispánica, 2016. 2 volumes. Vol. 1 paperback: **Studies and Catalogue Raisonné** 368 pp, 274 ills (with contributions by Colin Harding, Brian Liddy, Beatriz Naranjo, Larry J. Schaaf, Jim Tate, David Weston and Maureen Young). Vol. 2 hardcover: Digital reconstruction of the Talbotype illustrated volume of the *Annals of the Artists of Spain* 144 pp, 68 ills. 85.50€ (in slipcase). ISBN: 9788415245551 (complete work).

In 1848, the Scottish scholar Sir William Stirling Maxwell (1818–1878) created the world's first photographically illustrated book on art by adding a volume of Talbotype (or calotype) illustrations to his pioneering three-volume book on Spanish art, *Annals of the Artists of Spain*,

which was the first publication on Spanish art to have been organized chronologically. Only fifty copies of the Talbotype volume were published for friends, relatives, collaborators, collectors, and libraries, and of these only twenty-three are locatable, all revealing different degrees of deterioration or fading due to chemical or environmental factors on the unstable photographic process. Significantly, when the second edition of the *Annals* was published in 1891 there was no mention of the *Talbotype* volume probably because its illustrations had faded. The calotype procedure employed for the book was invented by William Henry Fox Talbot (1800–1877), and patented only seven years before the *Annals* appeared. The splendid publication under review is a two-volume critical edition and facsimile of the digitally reconstructed photographs, which accompanied a Prado exhibition in 2016. It arose from Hilary Macartney's long-standing research at Glasgow University on Stirling and his use of photography, and the fortuitous discovery, whilst José Manuel Matilla was researching a Prado exhibition *Velázquez en blanco y negro* (2000), that its library holdings contained a rare copy of the *Talbotype* volume.

Conveniently for readers untutored in the history of photography, Professor Larry Schaaf (Director of the Bodleian Library's William Henry Fox Talbot catalogue) provides a summary distinguishing the French-derived Daguerreotype from the Talbotype. The former produced a more detailed and clearer image; it was more expensive, and as it was on a silvered copper plate could not be easily replicated. By contrast, the Talbotype, though fainter, could produce multiple images on paper from one light-sensitive paper negative. Talbot saw it as a form of cheaper lithography, which could reproduce an image in tones rather than engraved lines.

Whereas the three text volumes of the *Annals* were well known to Hispanists, the best-known *Talbotype* volume (in the British Museum) was barely consulted and only briefly referenced, mainly by photography specialists. The Prado publication aims to make the fragile volume more accessible to scholars and the public by creating a digitally reconstructed 'ideal' facsimile, based on the best preserved of each of the 66 photographs, with the aid of Prado technicians and of staff and scholars from British museums specialising in printmaking, paper conservation, and digital imaging. The resulting facsimile is beautifully hardbound in turquoise cloth with gold-stamped armorial escutcheon, incorporating the coats of arms of various Spanish cities and Stirling's monogram on front and back respectively, itself a replica of the binding on one of the original surviving volumes.

The accompanying paperback interpretive book contains six scholarly and interdisciplinary essays. Three are co-authored by Macartney with paper and photography conservators from the National Galleries of Scotland and Bradford's National Media Museum, where the proofs and reject negatives are kept. The essays are followed by a meticulously detailed critical catalogue raisonné of the sixty-six photographs, describing their present condition, listing which examples were used to create the ideal facsimile, and noting Stirling's related comments in the *Annals* discussing the original sources, their iconography and provenance before and after the Peninsular War. The catalogue of photographs is followed by a Census, essentially a 'catalogue' of all the recipients of the fifty published copies of the *Talbotype* volume. It concludes with eight appendices of supporting archival documents and an extensive bibliography.

Macartney's first essay discusses the reception of the *Talbotype* volume, giving a biographical overview of Stirling, and considers his aims and achievements. Chapter two by Matilla examines its visual sources. Schaaf outlines the Talbotype's inherent shortcomings as a method of reproducing art, and also the deleterious effects on the stability of the images due to the understaffed production line struggling with a contaminated water supply in Reading. Other contributors examine the environment in which the photography took place and detail the digital reconstruction. Chapter six presents the results of scientific analysis to inform the debate around the different theories put forward to explain the problem of the photographs fading, concluding that it was probably due to a combination of air pollution and additional sulphur migrating from the ink used on the printed borders.

Practical difficulties meant that most of the photographs were not taken directly from original artworks but from drawn, printed or reduced-size oil copies. On exceptional occasions originals were photographed. These were always small works, such as the sculpted reliefs (attributed to Juan Martínez Montañés) and drawings (by Bartolomé Esteban Murillo and Alonso Cano), which were from the collection of Stirling's friend, the Hispanist travel writer Richard Ford (1796–1858), as Stirling's own collection had barely begun. Although some results were good (as wash drawings played to the Talbotype's tonal strengths), both the negative and print of Murillo's largest but delicate and subtly defined red and black chalk drawing of *Christ on the Cross* (then as now in the Ford collection) had to be extensively retouched in order to capture its qualities. Stirling greatly admired Murillo's drawings and considered this one his most beautiful, and, as Macartney comments, its status as a precious relic 'may have been what prompted the decision to attempt the challenge' of reproducing it. Though its catalogue entry briefly discusses dating, and whether preparatory to a painting, there is no mention of its possible relationship to Murillo's painted crucifix in the Pérez Simón Collection, which is inscribed as having come from the Capuchin convent in Seville for whom Murillo painted a great cycle of pictures between 1665–1668.[1]

The *Talbotype* volume was less significant perhaps for the quality of its illustrations, as engraved prints were larger and often captured more detail, than for what was selected. Matilla discusses the nature of the illustrations in all four *Annals* volumes. Stirling used his special knowledge of printmaking in Spain to select illustrations from print series published in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Some portraits came from the 114 *Retratos de los Españoles Ilustres* published between 1788 and 1814, others from Goya's reproductions of Velázquez's equestrian court portraits. Religious images came from prints after paintings in the Spanish royal collections published in the 1790s, and 1826 to 1837. Another source for portraiture and sacred paintings was Louis-Philippe's Galerie Espagnole established in the Louvre in 1838, and which Stirling visited in 1845. Genaro Pérez de Villaamil and Patricio de la Escosura's *España artística y monumental* (1842) provided romanticized images of architecture and sculpted tombs.

Murillo was represented by the largest number of works: out of sixty-six plates, sixteen paintings, two drawings, and one extremely rare, if not unique, etching, were by Murillo; by contrast, ten were by Velázquez, and only one was by Valdés Leal, namely the portrait of *Miguel de Mañara* in the Hospital de la Caridad. Some of Murillo's works had long been reproduced; for example, his *St Ferdinand* had been engraved in 1672. But other key paintings in his oeuvre lacked prints. For these Stirling commissioned José Roldán y Martínez (1808–1871) to paint four reduced-size copies from originals in Seville's art museum. Stirling was proudest of reproducing these heretofore unpublished works, formerly in the Capuchin monastery, and considered them the most valuable Talbotypes in the volume, as he emphasized in a letter to Ford, advising him what to highlight in any potential review.[2] None of Velázquez's mythological narratives were included and only one genre painting, *The Waterseller*, was illustrated. More surprisingly, Zurbarán was only represented by one painting, highlighting how little known he was in 1847.[3] Stirling did not know until 1851 of the now celebrated Zurbarán series of the *Twelve Patriarchs* in Bishop Auckland, and then only via a dismissive letter from Ford.[4] Another artist, Alonso Cano, who is now less known than Zurbarán by the British art-going public, was represented by three works, one in Ford's possession and two in Madrid.

[1] V. Gerard-Powell, *Du Greco à Dalí: les grands maîtres espagnols de la collection Pérez Simón* (Heule: Snoeck; Paris: Musée Jacquemart-André; Québec: Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, 2010), cat. 11, pp. 61, 209–210.

[2] Letter, in Ford family archive, from Stirling to Ford, 8 April 1848, in H. Brigstocke, "British travellers in Spain, 1766-1849." *Walpole Society* 76 (2015), p. 436. Another of Roldán's Murillo copies may be the large *Moses Striking the Rock* now in the lobby of the hotel Gran Versalles, Calle Covarrubias, Madrid, seen by this reviewer in September 2016.

[3] *St Francis in Meditation*, from the Galerie Espagnole, whose acquisition by the National Gallery Stirling defended against parliamentary attack in 1853.

[4] Letter, from Ford to Stirling, 5 October 1851 (T-SK 31/33), in Brigstocke, 'British travellers', p. 452.

Of even greater interest to Hispanists are the recipients of the precious fifty copies of the Talbotype volume. These are identified in the extremely useful Census, which provides a fascinating detailed catalogue of those across British, American, and Spanish society whom Stirling considered worthy recipients of his illustrated history of Spanish artistic culture. It thus gives an idea of how widely diffused was that interest. Ralph William Grey (1819–1869), MP for Tynemouth, and the dedicatee of the *Talbotype* volume (now in Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts), was a long-standing friend and bibliophile, who visited Seville with Stirling in 1845, and one of several of his contemporaries at Trinity College, Cambridge, to receive a copy. Other university colleagues also received volumes, but had no direct links to Spain. They included Francis Napier (1819–1898), 10th Lord Napier, who received his volume whilst in diplomatic service in Naples (1848–49), and perhaps stimulated by it became interested in the art of Ribera and released *Notes on Modern Painting at Naples* (1855). His *Talbotype* volume remains unlocated. His sister Maria (1817–1896) also received a copy (library of University of California, Los Angeles). Ironically another Trinity recipient, the Liberal M.P. William Coningham (1815–1884) is best known for verbally attacking the National Gallery's purchase in 1853 of the only Zurbarán Stirling illustrated (though his criticism was based on his belief that the Gallery should have bought a better, and cheaper, Zurbarán). His copy's binding inspired the design of the facsimile. Another university friend and politician, the 7th Duke of Rutland (1818–1906), who, like Ford, supported the Carlist claimant to the Spanish throne, reviewed the *Annals* for *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1849, and so may have been sent his copy partly for publicity, as were the Rev. John William Robinson (a controversial Anglican clergyman and former fellow at Trinity), whose anti-Catholic views were reflected in his *Fraser's Magazine* review, and John Gibson Lockhart (1794–1854) editor of the *Quarterly Review* and author of *Ancient Spanish Ballads* (1823).

Other recipients were fellow Hispanists who had supported the creation of the volume with original works and advice. The most important of these in England was Richard Ford, the author of the *Hand-Book for Travellers in Spain* (1845), to which Stirling acknowledged he was greatly indebted for his *Annals*. A lesser known collector-recipient was William Wells (1818–1889) of Redleaf, Kent. In Spain, Stirling's main contact was the Seville artist and dealer, José María Escacena y Daza (1800–1858), to whom he turned for the present location of works sold, stolen or moved since the Peninsular War, and who gave Stirling much needed advice and corrections of his text, especially on Murillo, about whom Escacena was knowledgeable. In May 1848 he told Stirling that he was learning the Talbotype method himself. Significantly his copy of the *Annals* (now in the Museo del Romanticismo, Madrid) has had the Murillo Talbotype plates, made from reduced oil copies by Roldán, replaced with photographs taken directly from the paintings. As a result, Stirling's experimental photographically illustrated volume proved even more inspirational in Spain. The Prado's copy was probably acquired by another Spanish artist interested in photography as a tool to reproduce art, Benito Soriano Murillo, the Prado's deputy director (1865–1868).

As well as sending copies to the British Library and his alma mater, Stirling also deposited one in the Faculty of Advocates Library in Edinburgh in thanks for allowing him use of their important collection of early Spanish books (now in the National Library of Scotland), which they had acquired in 1826 from the Marqués de Astorga. The latter is just one example of the titbits of information in the Census of use to all Hispanists interested in the reception of Spanish art in Britain.

Stirling's illustrated volume had the merits and pitfalls of many ground-breaking works. The effects of its experimental nature can be judged by the much better quality of the photographs included in the albums reproducing all known works by Raphael, which Prince Albert initiated

in 1854;[5] or the photography of the 1857 Manchester Art Treasures exhibition, published in its *Gems of the Art Treasures Exhibition* guidebook, where the image of Murillo's *Ecce Homo* is of such high quality that it can still be used to identify the painting as probably that in the Heckscher Museum of Art, Huntington, New York. The illustrated *Annals* were thus too pioneering; had they been published a decade later, the illustrations would have been more successful. Arguably the first photos to make Spanish paintings truly widely accessible in Britain were those (mainly by Murillo) reproduced for the hugely popular block-buster exhibition in Manchester.

Both the catalogue-facsimile and the exhibition are of great interest to historians of photography and those studying the taste for Spanish art in Britain and the authors deserve congratulation for their accomplishment. Also worthy of applause is the continuing commitment of the Centro de Estudios Europa Hispánica to the publication of such studies. The use of scientific analysis of each individual known volume and detailed research into their provenance, as published in the Census, has created an exhibition catalogue of scholarly note, whilst the facsimile allows the fragile original illustrated volume to be more widely accessible for the first time.

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[5] *Marcantonio Raimondi, Raphael and the Image Multiplied*, ed. E. H. Wouk with D. Morris (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2016), p. 124, Fig. 9.1 RCIN 852187. Album showing a Caldesi, Blandford & Co. photograph taken in 1859 of a *Raphael drawing for 'Lucretia'*.