

A Roadshow Trump?

Bought from a dealer in general antiques several years previously, the present owners wanted to know more about their dog. They brought him to a BBC Antiques Roadshow in July 2014 where it was instantly recognised as a copy of the dog in Hogarth's 'Manifesto' self-portrait (1745). But a copy by whom - and when painted? - a contemporary? or someone later? or perhaps even by Hogarth himself? More research was needed.

In a broadcast follow-up programme and after discussions with several Hogarth authorities, the owners were informed that their own dog was deemed to be a good 19th century copy, possibly executed in the National Gallery where, in the 19th century, artists were given out-of-hours access to copy any chosen work on public view.

'Painter Pug'

Short, spirited and humorous, Hogarth enjoyed playing up to his public nickname 'Painter Pug'. Artist and faithful dog were often seen strolling the streets of London together. From his early paintings of the 1730s, to his very last self-portrait (1757/8), Hogarth frequently lightens or subverts the mood by introducing a pug, usually misbehaving and facing the viewer full-on. Hogarth owned at least three pugs over his lifetime, skittishly named Pug, Crab and, best-known of all, Trump. The 18th century pug-dog was larger and more leggy than today's often wheezy toy specimen. With human or monkey-like features, it was a perfect alter ego for a satirist. The pug's comical presence among gentlefolk pricks - or 'trumps' - a gathering of self-importance. Even today in Northern England a 'trump' means 'a blast of wind from below' - (Republicans, take note!).

In his 1745 'Manifesto' self-portrait Hogarth, with conscious false modesty, places his tongue-in-cheek pet before himself. The artist's look of sardonic amusement is countered by the dog's troubled stare off-stage, in seeming mockery of his master's literary aspirations - represented by the pile of tomes (Shakespeare, Milton and Swift) - upon which the inner 'trompe l'oeil' oval canvas rests. The artist repeats the pug pose seen in his earlier Strode Family group portrait where a near-identical pug (Trump again?) upstages a family taking tea.

The Last Trump

In his final, sad-poignant self-portrait (1758) Hogarth included his final pug. But then he changed his mind. An X-ray shows the irreverent pet cocking its leg against his Master's chair. Perhaps feeling this might be regarded as a royal insult (Hogarth had only lately been appointed Serjeant Painter to the King), Hogarth seems to have lost his nerve and painted out the dog - but still there under the paint.

After Hogarth's death in 1764 his dog-and-master double-portrait stayed with his widow until her death twenty-five years later in 1789. Thence it changed hands, eventually entering the Angerstein Collection which, in 1824, inaugurated the newly founded National Gallery. Hogarth and his alter ego, took their final walk upstream to the Tate where they may be seen today.

Meanwhile, the excellent 'Roadshow Trump' looks for his next owner...

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Note: the forthcoming 'Hogarth and Europe' exhibition,
Currently scheduled: October 2021 - March 2022

Print: 'Gulielmus Hogarth' William Hogarth, 1749
In the Dresden Collection © Lars Tharp
Print reversing WH's 1745 painting



Lot 277

William Hogarth's dog 'Trump'
oil on canvas
58.5 x 46cm
£2,000 - 3,000

This painting is based on the celebrated self-portrait of the artist and his beloved pug 'Trump', now in the Tate Gallery.

