

COLLECTING & THE IMAGINATION

Horace Walpole at Strawberry Hill

Conference, Friday 5th December 2003 at the Paul Mellon Centre

Organised jointly with the Friends of Strawberry Hill

Over more than fifty years of activity, Horace Walpole - antiquarian, writer and gossip - amassed an extraordinary collection embracing antiquities, rare books and manuscripts, pictures, prints and drawings, furniture, ceramics, armour and curiosities. These he arranged with fastidious care and an idiosyncratic eye in Strawberry Hill, his little plaything house at Twickenham. A monument of the Gothic Revival, the house and its collections were created largely, as Walpole said, 'to realise my dreams'. Whilst Walpole's collecting and his furnishing of Strawberry Hill reflected, to some degree, contemporary

aristocratic tastes, his particular interest in portraits, miniatures and other items with historical associations represents a new, original kind of programmatic collecting, an attempt to assemble the visual materials of English history and arrange them in rooms that sought to enshrine narratives and spark the imagination. The sale of Strawberry Hill's contents, lasting 24 days in 1842, was one of the most celebrated in auction history; it excited enormous popular interest and polarized the opinion of connoisseurs, scholars and the public concerning the importance or triviality of the collection and Walpole's status as its creator. This conference aims to examine the myths and realities of Walpole's originality and achievements as a collector.

Stephen Calloway: *Reality, Illusion and Effect at Strawberry Hill*

Katie Coombs, Curator, Paintings, Victoria & Albert Museum: *Walpole and the Collecting of Miniatures*

Dr Lucy Peltz, Curator, 18th century collections, National Portrait Gallery: *A Friendly Gathering: the Social Politics of Presentation Books and Extra-Illustration in Horace Walpole's Circle*

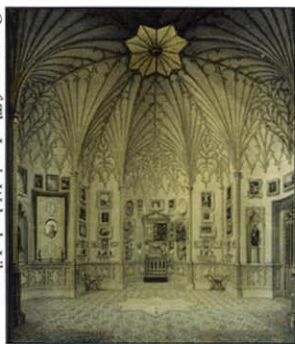
Earle Havens, Wesleyan University, CT: *Imagination and Tradition: Collecting Literary and Historical Books And Manuscripts in the Age of Walpole*

Bet Mcleod, Assistant Curator of Decorative Arts, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA: *Connoisseur or Collector: An Assessment of Walpole's Collection of Decorative Arts & Sculpture*

Tim Knox, Head Curator, National Trust: *Collecting Curiosities*

Stephen Clarke: *The Afterlife of a Collector: The 1842 Sale and Walpole's Posthumous Reputation*

Tickets are £30 (including refreshments & buffet lunch) and can be purchased by sending a cheque to Maisoon Rehani at the Centre, made payable to The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 16 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3JA, marked 'Collecting & the Imagination' Conference. For more information please contact Maisoon Rehani at the Centre (email: mrehani@paul-mellon-centre.ac.uk; tel: 020 7580 0311; fax: 020 7 636 6730).



The Tribune, Strawberry Hill