

High Spirits: The Comic Art of Thomas Rowlandson

The Queen's Gallery, Palace of Holyroodhouse 22 November - 2 March 2014



The Devonshire, or Most Approved Method of Securing Votes, 1784

The Duchess of Devonshire canvassed in support of political candidate Charles Fox in the cut-throat Westminster election of 1784. She gained a reputation for kissing voters to secure their support for him – here she is shown embracing a butcher.



Money Lenders, 1784

This print was purchased by George, Prince of Wales whose increasingly large debts were the subject of this satire. The young man wearing the Garter star is probably the Prince himself.



High Spirits, c. 1790

Rowlandson made numerous studies of drunken figures, showing them in comically compromising situations, or in single figure studies as here.



The Contrast, 1793

This print was circulated as propaganda to counter the threat of radicalism from France. It suggests British liberty is preferable to that in France which will lead to poverty, fear and violence.



Sketches at - an Oratorio!, 1800?

Theatre audiences were a favourite theme for Rowlandson - here he uses the format of a long, narrow print to examine the differing reactions of a group of onlookers at an oratorio, a sacred musical work for choirs, soloists and orchestras.



Doctor Convex and Lady Concave, 1802

In this print the comedy lies in the appearance of individual figures rather than in a humorous situation. Rowlandson contrasts the physical appearance of the two figures as well as their status - he is a doctor, she is a lady.



The Chamber of Genius, 1805

A watercolour with pen and ink depicting the cramped and cluttered living conditions of an impoverished artist. Rowlandson himself gambled and drank away his inheritance, but managed to stave off poverty through his hard work and talent.



The Learned Scotchman or Magistrate's Mistake!, 1807

A magistrate mishears a learned Scot's plea of *Nemo mortalium omnibus horis sapit* ('No mortal is wise at all times') to excuse his drunken behaviour. He berates him for discussing 'whores in a saw pit' in earshot of his wife.



A York Address to the Whale. Caught lately off Gravesend, 1809

In March 1809, a large whale was caught in London. The Duke of York is shown pleading with the whale to distract public attention from accusations that his mistress was paid to secure army promotions from the Duke, as well as her threat to publish their love letters.



The Two Kings of Terror, 1813

This etching shows Napoleon and Death sitting face to face on the battlefield of Leipzig. Although the battle was not a British triumph, Napoleon's defeat was greatly celebrated in Britain.