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DANIEL MACINTOSH AND THE REPOSITORY OF ARTS

IAIN GORDON BROWN

RECENT RESEARCH into the engravings which reproduced and disseminated portraits by Henry Raeburn, and thus promoted the reputation of the artist, has highlighted the important role of the Edinburgh tradesmen who acted as publishers of such prints, but whose main business was as carvers and gilders. David Alexander has shown that these men, the publishers or vendors of mezzotint, stipple or line engravings after Raeburn, were primarily framers: 'publishing prints which people would want to display was good for their core trade.'¹ The Italian immigrant Pasquale Garof, and the Scotsmen David Hatton, John Steel, John Marnoch, Adam Elder and Alexander Hill were all involved in this activity; and their work as print-publishers and -sellers illustrates the diversification in commercial undertakings that might be contemplated by such Edinburgh businessmen.

One carver and gilder who was not involved in the reproduction and selling of Raeburn's work in engraved form was Daniel Macintosh. Nevertheless, if Macintosh missed out on the association of his company with the prestigious business of marketing images by Raeburn of some of the leading figures in Scottish society and intellectual life, he did at least ensure the survival of the memory of the very existence of that commercial enterprise in a particularly attractive way. This was by the production of a splendid, instructive and unusually large-scale trade-card, an example of which has recently entered the collections of the National Library of Scotland (see fig.).²

Macintosh's card of about 1817, engraved by [James] Girtin, is almost more an advertising flyer than a conventional trade-card. Its main function is clearly to inform the interested reader of the nature and equally the range of Macintosh's business. He advertised himself principally as 'English and Foreign Printseller' and as 'Carver and Gilder'. The emphasis given to these aspects of the business

indicates their relative importance. Macintosh adds: 'Ladies fancy Works, Stationery, Water Colours, & all Requisites for Drawing'. Finally there is the statement: 'Drawing taught and Drawings & Prints lent to Copy'.

It would appear, therefore, that beneath the shop-sign, as it were, of the conjoint trades of print-seller and carver and gilder there were carried on various other allied but more specialised and refined aspects of the business of general world-of-art factotum. Macintosh neatly summed up the diversity and omnium-gatherum nature of his activity by giving his emporium the convenient and striking soubriquet of the 'Repository of Arts'. In this he doubtless aspired to mimic the very successful emporium established by Rudolph Ackermann at 101 Strand, London, which bore the same name. *Repository of Arts* was also the title of Ackermann's highly influential periodical, published from 1809, which provided a conspectus of Regency taste and fashion, and this, too, must surely have influenced Macintosh in his choice.³

As proprietor of the 'Repository of Arts' Macintosh had moved up in the world by the time this card was produced. His business is first recorded in 1799, and by 1801 he had adopted the grandiloquent title for his shop that is trumpeted here. His progress is also indicated by the transfer of the business in or just before 1817 from a side street, St Andrew Street, to Princes Street, the most fashionable thoroughfare of the New Town where, presumably, more of the carriage trade could be expected and strollers attracted and these customers be persuaded to part with more money for goods sold at fancier prices.⁴

From the start, McIntosh (as the name was then spelled) advertised himself as carver and gilder, informing the public also that he stocked and dealt in prints. No. 15 South St Andrews [*sic*] Street was the address.⁵ By 1810, as carver and gilder and print

dealer, he had added the title of ‘Repository of Arts’ to this address, which was itself shortened to St Andrew’s [*sic*] Street, though the proprietor’s name was now given as Macintosh. An advertisement in the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* for 17 December 1801 states that he had:

that day received from London some Boxes of Fancy Works, which he would particularly recommend to his friends ... They consist of a well selected Collection of Fine Prints, Transparencies, Medallions, Painted Shells, Feathers, Gold Ornaments, etc, the Productions of the most esteemed of the London Artists; and his assortment of Pasteboard ornaments (which are so much in vogue) ... Stationery and Drawing Materials of all kinds. He has also on hand a great Assortment of Pier and Dressing Glasses, Convex Mirrors, Girandoles, and Fire Screens, finished in the most prevailing New Fashions.

Carving and Gilding in all its different branches executed with Elegance and Taste. Looking Glasses and Pictures framed to any Device and Ladies Work tables, Boxes, etc Varnished with the same beauty and Elegance as the First Shops in London.

Prints and drawings lent to Copy and Commissions from the Country faithfully attended to.

This amounts to an essay in ‘upwardly mobile’ New Town aspiration, aimed at ‘must-have’ patrons drawn from the world of Jessy Allan and her friends, who might be expected to call in on the way to or from one of Alexander Nasmyth’s or George Walker’s drawing classes.⁶ Clearly Macintosh had established himself as both a maker and arbiter of taste, and the servant of acquisitive ambition.

The reference to medallions can be clarified or enlarged upon by reference to a memorandum by the celebrated modeller John Henning in which he states that frames suitable for his wax portraits or for casts of these in enamel could be seen and examined at Mcintosh’s [*sic*] shop or at Garoff’s [*sic*] rival establishment in Hanover Street.⁷

The *Edinburgh Evening Courant* for 2 March 1809 carries an even longer puff for Macintosh’s business. Particularly interesting is the way that the ambitious print-seller had cashed in on the contemporary celebrity market. He advertised an engraving of the Scottish hero of Corunna:

D. McIntosh has the honour to inform the Nobility and Gentry in general, and the friends of the late General Sir John Moore in particular, that he has received this day, from London, a new Print, warranted the best Likeness of the deceased Hero ever published. As [he] has a limited number to dispose of, his Friends will please make an early application. Doing so will not only prevent disappointment, but insure good impressions.

Profile Painting.

D. McIntosh still continues to exercise the celebrated Patent Machine, by which the most correct and striking Likenesses are taken in the short space of one minute, for 5s. each, and in colours of 10s. 6d. — From the vast number of Profiles lately taken and the universal satisfaction expressed by all who have received Likenesses, the best proof is afforded of the great superiority of the Patent Machine, in preference to the common method so long practised here.

Drawing.

D. McIntosh is proud to think, that his plan of encouraging an eminent Artist for private teaching has given universal satisfaction. He still continues to teach Landscapes, Flowers, Fruit, Figures, and painting on Velvet, upon moderate terms.

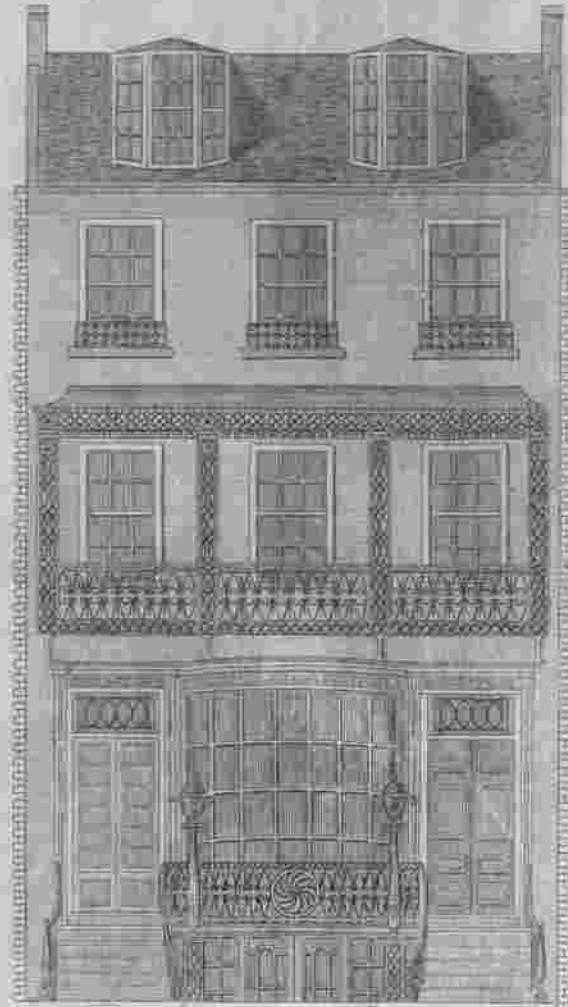
A great assortment of new Medallions, fancy Papers, and Ladies fancy Works, of every description. N.B. the best Collection of Drawings in Edinburgh lent out to copy.

Feb. 23 1809.

It is not difficult to appreciate that with ambition such as this, and with such clientele in view, Macintosh should have wished to move his Repository of Arts to a more ‘up-market’ address. And so to No. 49 Princes Street he transferred his emporium, and he was to continue in business there, on the site of what is now the western part of Jenner’s department store, until at least 1822.

His card advertising the new premises tells us nothing that we do not already know from other evidence of the nature and range of his commercial activities. But it has a greater interest for the student of Edinburgh artistic life. It bears a fine engraved view or ‘portrait’ of the building in Princes Street where his diverse business activities were carried on. The card offers an extremely interesting vignette of the elegant Princes Street that is no more, and which had indeed begun to vanish comparatively early in its

Fig. (opposite): Daniel Macintosh’s Repository of Arts at 49 Princes Street. His handsome trade-card (250 x 150 mm) of about 1817 shows the façade in remarkable detail. (*National Library of Scotland.*)



Repository of Arts
D. MACINTOSH
49 Princes Street, Edinburgh
(English and Foreign Printseller,
(CARVER and GILDER.)
Ladies' fancy Work, Stationers' Water Colours
& all Requisites for Drawing
Drawing taught and Drawings & Prints lent in Copy.

history as the residential use of the houses succumbed to commerce. Some Princes Street buildings were built to serve from the first as shops and business premises. Some, possibly like No. 49, seem to have had a dual status, with the sunk, half-basement floor and the raised ground floor clearly being given over to commercial use. The flats above were presumably reached from one or other of the ground floor street doors, or by an internal stair accessed from within the ground floor premises.

The Repository of Arts was certainly an elegant building as befitted the pretensions of the proprietor and the nature of his business. One is immediately struck by the extensive use of delicate and highly ornamental wrought-iron work on lamp-standards, railings, balustrades, balconies and canopies. The house has five storeys, rising from a half-basement to an attic with angled dormers. The droved ashlar masonry of the façade is clearly shown. The 'laigh' shop in the sunk basement has double doors with an interesting glazing pattern and side windows which are presumably curved and which run back, parallel to the descending flight of broad steps, to the Princes Street pavement. A double perron stair ascends from the pavement to the raised ground floor. Handsome lamps on latticed plinths stand sentinel at the inner curves of the perron. The paired stairs lead to a balcony or walk-way in front of the large bow window of the principal showroom of the shop. Here, no doubt, were displayed the latest portrait prints, but probably not too many lest the tempting views of goods within should be wholly obstructed.

One can only speculate as to what form the interior of the premises would have taken. Ackermann's splendid and unusual trade-card shows the interior of his emporium as art gallery and fashionable meeting place for cognoscenti; and although the Princes Street shop would have lacked the great benefit of the lantern lighting and dome which the view of Ackermann's Repository clearly show, it is probable that the enterprising Macintosh would have sought to make his showrooms look as à la London mode as possible.⁸

The iron balustrade at raised ground floor level is a particularly fine piece of design, incorporating many varied decorative patterns, of which the most

distinctive is a 'cartwheel' form composed of 'strigillated' or swung 'spokes'. The paired doors are not identical twins. That on the west is glazed with horizontal astragals, and is likely to be the shop door. The eastern one is panelled, and is more likely to have been intended to serve the dwelling storeys above. Both have identical fanlights however, each of rectangular pattern with ovoid glazing in an arrangement of four panes. The proprietor's name appears over both doorways, and his business is summed up in the painted inscription on the frieze of the central bow window: 'Printseller & Stationer'.

The first floor balcony and wrought-iron Regency canopy, more Brighton or Cheltenham than Edinburgh, will have had the practical effect of shading the three south-facing windows. There is virtuoso use of filigree iron-work in many patterns, some replicating that at ground floor level. The four pilasters rest on iron brackets projecting from the wall: these features have an oddly un-ornamented and utilitarian appearance, which seems to cry out for some attention from the ladies' handwork department of the shop below. Above the canopy roof of the balcony the three second floor windows have more restrained though still fairly elegant and elaborate balcony railings.⁹ One's only complaint about this trade-card and the wealth of detail it conveys is that no indication is given as to the curtains and blinds that the sunny aspect of the building would have necessitated.

The *Post Office Directories* show that, from the year 1822–23, No. 49 Princes Street was Daniel Macintosh's house as well as his business, a fact not previously recorded in these sources. Macintosh had come to live above his shop. However the dual arrangement lasted but a very brief time. Macintosh does not figure in any capacity at that address from the following year. By 1830 the premises were occupied by Nightingale and Son, tailors and habit-makers, who had previously been next door at No. 48, and before that elsewhere in Princes Street. They, in turn, were succeeded by Joseph Green and Co, shawl and mantle manufacturer. In 1879 the premises were subsumed in the growing real estate of Jenner's, and the independent identity of No. 49 Princes Street came to an end.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

I am very much indebted to Miss Helen Smailes of the National Gallery of Scotland, who has, with characteristic generosity, put at my disposal her notes on Daniel Macintosh compiled from the primary sources that are cited in the notes below.

- 1 David Alexander, 'Henry Raeburn and His Printmakers', in *Henry Raeburn and His Printmakers*, exhibition catalogue, National Galleries of Scotland and Edinburgh University Library, Museums & Galleries (Edinburgh 2006), pp. 13–15.
- 2 National Library of Scotland, RB.m.641.
- 3 I am grateful to Helen Smailes for reminding me of the Ackermann prototype and parallel.
- 4 Ackermann, too, had moved his Repository to number 101 from smaller premises in the Strand.
- 5 *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 8 June 1799.
- 6 On the demand for drawing lessons as part of the education of young ladies in Edinburgh at the time, see Helen Smailes, 'A Genteel Academy: The Edinburgh Drawing Institution, 1825–1836', *Book of the Old Edinburgh Club (BOEC)*, New Series, 4 (1997), pp. 33–50, especially pp. 41–42. See also Iain Gordon Brown, *Elegance and Entertainment in the New Town of Edinburgh: The Harden Drawings* (Edinburgh 1995); and William Park, 'Extracts from the Journal of Jessie Allan, Wife of John Harden, 1801–1811', *BOEC*, 30 (1959), pp. 60–118.
- 6 National Archives of Scotland, Innes of Stow Muniments, GD113/5/41B (32B), memorandum by John Henning [n.d., but 1805].
- 7 Ackermann's Repository is discussed in Giles Waterfield (ed.), *Palaces of Art: Art Galleries in Britain, 1790–1990* (London 1991), p. 161 (this accompanied an exhibition at Dulwich Picture Gallery and the National Gallery of Scotland). Ackermann's trade-card is reproduced, from a copy in the British Museum, at a usefully large scale on p. 159.
- 8 It is not known when (or whether) the shop-front was added by Macintosh. The distinctive façade can be recognised in Kirkwood's Plan and Elevation of 1819, but this appears to show a smaller central window than that on the trade-card. The first floor balcony may not then have had its filigree supports, but the detail is not clear.