



ANZAAB *Aspects of Print Collecting*

Prints on the Art of Satire

Antique Print Room

Background: Early satirical prints are collected as important social documents portraying in a comical style people and situations. The exaggerations of the satirical artist, were not just mere recordings of these people and events but were consciously critical or spiced with popular prejudice's of the times revealing the absurdities of the subjects. Most often the prints were also titled so as not leave any doubt of their intended meaning. Sold singularly and cheaply, ensured that these prints rarely survived the ravages of time.

Range: The satirical print flourished in the mid 18th century and reached its height by the 1830's. The great exponents of the style were artists such as William Hogarth, James Gilray, George Cruickshank, Thomas Rowlandson, just to name a few. The London print trade flourished in the 18th century and led to this observation by William Blake in 1800:

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There are now I believe as many Booksellers as there are Butchers & as many print shops as of any other trade. We remember when a print shop was a rare bird in London.

One much lampooned subject was the "Macaronis"; these were a group of aristocratic young men recently returned from the Grand Tour and belonged to an exclusive club called the Macaroni Club. The Macaronis became synonymous with extreme fashion and were usually depicted with outrageous hair styles and taste for continental clothes.

Availability: Due to their scarcity satirical prints are not commonly found in antiquarian print shops.

Price-range: The majority of satirical prints with "original hand colour" and in good condition are in the \$350-1,000 range but certain ones do sell for upwards of \$15,000.

Footnote: Further reading: *The English Print, 1688-1802* Timothy Clayton, 1996, *The Spectacle of Difference. Graphic satire in the age of Hogarth*, 1999, *The Art of Satire*, Mark Bills, 2006. The British Museum