

RCEWA – Gould’s Original Drawings, Vols I and II

Statement of the Expert Adviser to the Secretary of State that the drawings meet Waverley criterion three.

Further Information

The ‘Note of Case History’ is available on the Arts Council Website:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Brief Description of object(s)

Gould's Original Drawings, Vols I and II

Two albums containing 129 drawings and watercolours and four unpublished lithographic proofs by John Gould (1804-1881), Elizabeth Gould (1804-1841) and Henry Constantine Richter (c.1821-1902)

2 largo folios. 19th century green morocco gilt with marbled boards, 572 x 407 mm. [early to mid-eighteenth century]. Pencil and coloured chalks, watercolour on paper. Good to fair condition, bindings slightly abraded. Both volumes have plates with light to more obtrusive foxing, one loose sheet in volume 1 and some sheets detaching from lower edge in volume 2

- **Volume 1:** 77 drawings and watercolours and 2 lithographs by John Gould and one by Elizabeth Gould for Gould's *Birds of Australia*
- **Volume 2:** 51 drawings and watercolours and 2 lithographs by John Gould, Elizabeth Gould and Henry Constantine Richter for Gould's *Birds of Australia*; *Birds of Asia*; *A monograph of the Odontophorinae, or, Partridges of America*; *A monograph of the Trochilidae, or family of hummingbirds*; *A monograph of the Ramphastidae, or family of toucans*, and the *Zoology of the voyage of HMS Sulphur*, together with unpublished drawings including a watercolour by Richter of the Red Kangaroo and a drawing by Gould of a specimen collected on the voyage of the Beagle

Provenance: Acquired by the 13th Earl Derby, Knowsley, in various parcels from John Gould's clerk, Edwin Charles Prince, c.1843 and thence by descent.

John Gould (1804-1881) was a businessman, publisher and obsessive bird collector. Born at a time which saw the emergence of ornithology as a scientific discipline, he gained a reputation as an expert taxidermist working for some of the leading scientific establishments in England. This early career work provided him with a sound foundation of animal anatomy, in particular birds, the subject that he would devote the rest of his life to and would see him become the leading British and Australian ornithologist of his time. His publication *The Birds of Australia* has been described 'as one of the world's finest books, probably the most valuable and desirable of all printed works relating to Australia' (Lambourne, p.56).

This two-volume corpus of drawings is regarded as a specially selected set of drawings as recorded in a series of letters in 1843 from Gould's assistant Prince to Lord Derby whereby the drawings are offered to Derby for acquisition and their future preservation (Datta, p.170-171). The drawings are also of high significance due to so many of them being signed by Gould.

The volumes lay testimony to Gould's scientific and artistic vision. *The Birds of Australia* (1840-1848) was Gould's greatest venture but also his greatest scientific achievement, compiling and illustrating the first comprehensive accounts of the birds (and mammals) of Australia and in doing so forming the foundation for the future scientific study of its unique fauna. The volumes not only hold outstanding significance and importance for the history of science and natural history but also in relation to their demonstration of the artistic process and the type status of species depicted. Since their publication by Gould, few additional valid species have been discovered.

A self-trained artist, Gould's draughtsmanship abilities demonstrate a remarkable talent for sketching details and creating the compositions of every bird plate he went onto publish. His was an integral role in the design of each plate even though the final published plates were completed by his small team of fine, skilled bird artists. Despite the lack of formal training, he is considered a competent draughtsman which is clearly demonstrated in these volumes of paintings.

Utilising his skills and vast ornithological knowledge, *'in his own strong and distinctive hand'*, Gould produced confidently drawn compositional sketches each one being the conceptual design for every plate whilst also capturing the very essence of a bird's characteristics. Worked up from his own field sketches, observations in life or study in museum or private collections, the drawings played an essential role. They contained all the information and basic instructions for his artists to both interpret and transform them into finished watercolours, subsequently becoming lithographs for his lavishly published works. What Gould also possessed was the ability to capture the field character of birds in his sketches even from those he had not observed in the wild.

In a letter from Prince to the 13th Earl of Derby dated 3rd March 1843, Prince refers to Gould's sketches as being undertaken in *'an entirely new style'* which saw a *'mingling of soft chalks or crayons with watercolour and pencil'* (Datta, p.171). This is clearly evident in Gould's drawings which still feel strikingly fresh alongside his bold use of pencil which strikingly contrasts with the refined and traditionally finished watercolours of his artists. It is these unique features between Gould and his artists, combined with the demonstration of the artistic process from unfinished sketches to finished drawings and to lithographic plates which give these volumes value and importance in both artistic and historical art terms.

The publication of Gould's major works is well documented. During his lifetime he oversaw the creation of no less than 2,999 hand-coloured plates many of which were the first illustrations of previously unknown species. At his death in 1881, he had published fifteen major titles in forty-nine volumes. Eighteen of those works were on birds of every continent in the world except for Africa. He had also written over 300 scientific articles and published a further six smaller format works.

In addition to his publishing achievements, Gould is credited with having described several hundred new species of birds and mammals to science, and supplied thousands of natural history specimens to museums and private collections across the globe (Saur, 1985, p.161 ; Datta, 1997, p.3). His world-wide achievements and renown also bringing him the honour of being called both *'The Father of Australian Ornithology'* and, as used in many publications about him, *'John Gould - the Bird Man'*. His efforts were at the forefront of recording and representing through illustrations accurate descriptions of species that supported the understanding of the natural world and therefore remain of significant cultural and historical importance to understanding the development of the natural history sciences.

Exhibitions:

Liverpool, National Museums & Galleries on Merseyside: *A Passion for Natural History: The Life and Legacy of the 13th Earl of Derby*, 2002, no.6 (vol.II, no.26)

WAVERLEY CRITERIA

These volumes meet **WAVERLEY 3** in that they are of outstanding significance for the history and study of natural history art. The departure of these volumes from the UK would represent a misfortune due to the outstanding significance of them for the study of natural history illustration, in particular Gould's drawing and publication processes but also some of the bird species depicted.

The volumes hold a connection and relationship to type specimen material which Gould collected. The Natural History Museum, London, preserves a large number of Gould types in its collections in addition to collections at the Liverpool Museum which include species from Australia. Even though many of the names are no longer valid, these unique specimens still have type status and hold scientific value.

Although most of the drawings are not the finished watercolours, the sketches are the precursor to the finished originals of not only *The Birds of Australia*, but in the second volume some of Gould's other bird publications. With this they hold significant scientific value, especially if the type specimens were matched up with illustrations from their original description. The type specimen of '*Acanthiza Diemenensis*' (Drawing 11, Vol.I) is preserved at the NHM and with further research others may be discovered. Drawing 38 (Vol.I) is the Paradise parrot a species that is now extinct. Whether these illustrations are of type material (and to identify where that type material may be) remains an area of study for further investigation which would not be possible were the volumes to depart from the UK.

The volumes are highly significant and representative of a period in British publishing history in addition to the development of the study and development of ornithology as a scientific discipline. That a similar volume of original drawings of bird (sketches and finished watercolours) from the Knowsley Collection by John and Elizabeth Gould was considered pre-eminent and allocated through Acceptance in Lieu to the Natural History Museum, London in 2018 clearly demonstrates a precedence for their outstanding significance.

"Gould was not a practicing artist in the sense in which that term applied to Wolf, or even to Keulemans. Nevertheless this particular reflection of his age in the Fine Print of ornithology, a grand expression of nineteenth-century wonder at the richness of bird life in the Empire and exotic lands, and, finally, a portrayal of its peculiar British beauty, were ultimately his. These, initially through the vitality of his rough sketches and then by his sheet tenacity of purpose, were John Gould's contribution to British art" (McEvey, 1973, p.13).

DETAILED CASE

What is depicted?

The two volumes predominately depict the avifauna of Australia, a subject which Gould directed his attention to right up until his death. To realise his vision, he travelled to Australia between 1838-40 with his wife Elizabeth to procure more specimens in order to record and figure Australian birds. Gould and his assistant John Gilbert added about 300 hundred new species to those birds already known to inhabit Australia and by the time of his death, Gould had been able to figure practically every known Australian bird species in his numerous works. In volume II, drawings are of birds which featured in some of Gould's other lavish bird publications and include those of his wife Elizabeth, and his artist Henry Constantine Richter. As such, they offer a global snapshot of the world's avifauna.

Gould's sketches are working studies of his subjects and represent the first step in the process of the production of his plates. They provided essential instruction to his artists to

enable them to complete finished watercolours the outline of which were carefully delineated and transferred to lithographic stones to print the plates and then finished by hand.

What does it tell us about that period?

Born in Lyme Regis, England, Gould (1801-1881) lived during a period when the pursuit of knowledge about the natural world was a recognised and enjoyable pastime. It was also a period of revolution particularly in attitudes to learning especially in the subject of natural history. With improvements to transport and advances in technology which enabled the development of trade, exploration and colonial expansion, it was a period of extensive collecting of products of the natural world in order to satisfy the growing and irrepressible curiosity about nature. This is further evident by the development of scientific circles, networks and societies and the race to explore, collect, describe and name new genera and species.

Gould's passion is demonstrated by the vast number of specimens that were sent to him by his collectors and friends from around the world. Prior to the invention of photography, the need to illustrate and paint the natural world to accompany text descriptions of new species was essential particularly following the introduction of Carl Linnaeus's binomial system of classification. Illustrations were also essential due to the inability to successfully preserve specimens as developing methods and ways of preserving natural products was still in its infancy at the turn of the nineteenth century and very few survived.

This period was also one which saw the exponential growth of lavish publications - none more so than John James Audubon who arrived in Liverpool in 1826 seeking subscribers for what would be his ground-breaking publication *Birds of America*. Unlike Audubon, however, who used the aquatint engraving process for his plates, Gould was an early adopter of the lithography process.

Gould's publications were luxury productions, and this restricted their purchase through subscription to only those wealthy enough to afford them. His success of attracting subscribers which included royalty across Europe, the aristocracy, gentry who possessed a keen interest in natural history along with the desire to collect demonstrates the exceptional business that Gould was. His publications were highly regarded and remain to this day much sought after as what Gould achieved was on par with the success of Audubon's *Birds of America*.

Who made it/painted it/wrote?

"If birds ever had an impresario, it was, surely, John Gould". Sir David Attenborough (Preface, Lambourne, 1987)

John Gould was a British ornithologist and businessman. Appointed the first curator and preserver of the Zoological Society of London in 1827, Gould's proficiency as a taxidermist undoubtedly contributed to his intimate knowledge of bird anatomy and his skill in selecting the right pose for his many bird subjects (Jenkins, p.1). Regarded as Australia's pioneering ornithologist, he is credited as being the first man to point out the relationship between many of the birds of Eastern Australia and South-western Australia and was quick to notice special adaptations for a particular lifestyle (Jenkins, p.3). Recording of the habits of the birds he saw, he also collected their nests, eggs and prepared skeletons for further study. His activities were so extensive and their effects so far reaching, his publishing and collecting

venture has never been surpassed and had a powerful influence on all the natural scientists of his time. Despite many of Gould's names no longer existing in modern taxonomy, those that have survived demonstrate his continued importance in the history and development of ornithology.

Over his lifetime, Gould established a very broad natural history network which is evident from the extant correspondence between him, his scientific colleagues, subscribers, friends and family. At the time of his death, he stood pre-eminent in his field with an international reputation and had established himself as the most prominent British and Australian ornithologist (Lambourne, 1987, p.90). As a result, he received both the approbation of his peers and the eulogy of the press: "*the works of Mr Gould constitute a new epoch in the history of ornithology and we say so advisedly ... Let if no be supposed that we deny great credit to theirsbut from all these Mr Gould's work stand out in bold relief – they are 'themselves alone'.*" (*The Times*, 3 September 1851). He is also credited with having played an important role in the development of Darwin's thinking towards his theory of evolution due to his observations of Darwin's Galapagos finches.

Gould was an entrepreneur and brilliant organiser and so did not work alone but employed a strong team of specimen collectors, administrative agents and highly talented artists who included Edward Lear (1812-1888), Josef Wolf (1820-1899), William Matthew Hart (1830-1908), Henry Constantine Richter (c.1821-1902) and his own wife Elizabeth Gould (1804-1841) in addition to lithographers and colourists (inc Gabriel Bayfield (1781-1870) to translate his preparatory sketches into finished illustrations. Elizabeth Gould created 84 plates for *Birds of Australia*. Richter studied skins and the drawings John and Elizabeth brought back from Australia and produced the majority of the 681 plates for *The Birds of Australia*.

Despite not completing a finished picture, he is remembered as one of the most significant bird artists of the Victorian age.

No. of comparable objects by the same artist already in the UK, in both public and private collections

In 2017, one volume of original paintings for Gould's *Mammals of Australia* and a further volume of original paintings of birds was allocated to the collections through Acceptance in Lieu. The latter volume containing 72 watercolours – 43 by John Gould and 32 Elizabeth Gould – 30 of which are preparatory drawings for plates in Gould's *Birds of Australia* (see also *Summary of related objects in public/private ownership in the UK*).

Significance of figures associated with the object(s): maker/client/owners

Edward Smith Stanley, 13th Earl of Derby was closely associated with Gould and it was to the Earl that Gould dedicated the publication *The Birds of Europe*. The interest of the 13th Earl of Derby in natural history and his contribution to the progress and development of it during the Gould period is well documented. Gould often visited Knowsley and was a regular correspondent of the Earl. According to Fisher and Jackson (2002, p.47), it was this relationship with the Earl that is the reason the Earl's '*collections of Australian paintings and zoological specimens are of such outstanding importance*'.

Significance of subject-matter

The particular significance of these volumes include:

- They represent a large number of original drawings of Australian species with only 4 unpublished lithographs
- The collection is of the highest importance both for the considerable number of authentic 'J Gould' signatures on drawings both before and after his wife Elizabeth's death
- The volumes are a specially selected set of drawings by Gould for the 13th Earl of Derby (Datta, p.170-171)
- Allan McEvey concluded that as far as could be determined, the drawings do not show any sign of having any annotations erased
- They represent evidence of original work by John and Elizabeth Gould and demonstrate the publication process which is rarely captured for such notable and historical published works

Local/regional/national importance of the volumes

The acquisition of the drawings by the Lord Derby is recorded in the Derby-Gould correspondence held at the Natural History Museum, London. There is also a close link between Knowsley and these images as Gould created some of his plates using other paintings and bird specimens held in Lord Derby's collection of ornithological drawings and specimens. There are also links to Liverpool Museum as it was the 13th Earl of Derby whose collection founded this institution.

Summary of related objects in public/private ownership in the UK

The **Natural History Museum, London** holds the largest single collection of correspondence for Gould (c.4,000 letters) in addition to six volumes of manuscript notes, letters and cuttings pertaining to Gould's work for his *Birds of Europe*. While these volumes are heavily annotated and provide additional insight into Gould's working methods, the illustrations are mostly unsigned and not of comparable size or scale to the larger volumes of drawings which also capture parts of birds ie. heads, feet etc. and so are not compositions of the final published plates. Following Gould's death, his hummingbird collection was bought by the NHM where many of the specimens are on public display.

Balfour and Newton Library collection, University of Cambridge

c. 500 sheets of notes on and preliminary sketches of Australian bird species. Presented to the Dept of Zoology in 1875 by the widow of H E Strickland.

The **British Library** holds two drawings on recto and verso of a single sheet

Gould "Family" Collections (3 separate collections according to McEvey, 1968) which include seven watercolours and c.40 rough sketches (unsigned) by Gould along with other more finished watercolours for Gould and Richter plates; various plates and approx. 40 letters. Paintings represent discarded or unused work.

Outside of the UK

The largest collection of 'Gouldiana' is the Ellis Collection held in the **Spencer Research Library at the University of Kansas**. The collection comprises over 1800 items (over 750 unique items comprising the many stages of the production process from rough sketches, finished watercolours, lithographic tracings and lithographic stones in addition to 1600 unbound hand-coloured lithographic plates). This significant collection having been left to

the University by Ralph Ellis in 1945 who had purchased the collection from Henry Sotheran in 1934 and subsequently exported it to the USA. Sketches also preserved in the **Australian Museum Research Library**.

Gould's collection of Australian birds and eggs comprising 1800 specimens was purchased by Dr John Wilson on behalf of the **Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia**.

Key literary references

Datta, A (1997) *John Gould in Australia: letters and drawings*. Melbourne University Press, Melbourne

Fisher, Clemency (ed) (2002) *A passion for natural history : the life and legacy of the 13th Earl of Derby*. National Museums & Galleries on Merseyside.

McEvey, Allan (1968) Collections of John Gould manuscripts and drawings. In *La Trobe Library Journal*, Oct, vol.1, no.2, p.17-31

McEvey, A R (1973) *John Gould's contribution to British Art*. Sydney University Press, Art Monograph 2

Jenkins, C F H (1983) *John Gould and the Birds of Australia*. The Gould League of Western Australia

Lambourne, M. (1987) *John Gould – Bird Man*. Osberton Productions Limited.

Saur, Gordon C. (1982) John Gould the bird man: a chronology and bibliography. Sotheran, London.

Saur, Gordon C. (1985) Forty years association with John Gould the bird man. In *Archives of Natural History*, Issue 1, p.159-166

Tree, Isabella (2003) *The bird man: the extraordinary story of John Gould*. Ebury Press, London

Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest, note of case hearing on Wednesday 12 May 2021: Gould's Original Drawings, Vol I and II (Case 17, 2020-21)

Application

1. The Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest (RCEWA) met on Wednesday 12 May to consider an application to export *Gould's Original Drawings, Vol I and II*. The value shown on the export licence application was £1,062,500 which represented an agreed sale price. The expert adviser had objected to the export of the drawings under the third Waverley criteria on the grounds that their departure from the UK would be a misfortune because they were of outstanding significance for the study of the history and study of natural history art.

2. Eight of the regular eight RCEWA members were present and were joined by two independent assessors, acting as temporary members of the Reviewing Committee. The applicant was consulted about the digital process and confirmed they were content to proceed in this manner. The Chairman explained that the binding offers mechanism was applicable for this case.

3. The applicant confirmed that the value in the licence application did not include VAT. In the event of a UK sale VAT of £37,500 would be payable on the commission. The VAT would be reclaimable by an eligible UK institution. The applicant also confirmed that the owner understood the circumstances under which an export licence might be refused and that, if the decision on the licence was deferred, the owner would allow the drawings to be displayed for fundraising.

Expert's submission

4. The expert adviser had provided a written submission stating that these volumes meet the third Waverley criterion in that they are of outstanding significance for the history and study of natural history art. The departure of these volumes from the UK would represent a misfortune due to the outstanding significance of them for the study of natural history illustration, in particular Gould's drawing and publication processes but also some of the bird species depicted.

5. Although most of the drawings are not the finished watercolours, the sketches are the precursor to the finished originals of not only *The Birds of Australia*, but in the second volume some of Gould's other bird publications. With this they hold significant scientific value, especially if the type specimens were matched up with illustrations from their original description. Whether these illustrations are of type material (and to identify where that type material may be) remains an area of study for further investigation which would not be possible were the volumes to depart from the UK.

6. The volumes are highly significant and representative of a period in British publishing history in addition to the development of the study and development of ornithology as a scientific discipline.

Applicant's submission

7. The applicant had stated in a written submission that they did not contest whether the volumes met the Waverley criteria.

Discussion by the Committee

8. The expert adviser and applicant retired and the Committee discussed the case. It was agreed that Gould was one of Britain's most significant ornithologists, and that these process drawings were extremely valuable in understanding the lithographic plates produced by his wife, Elizabeth Gould and the pre-eminent artist Henry Constantine Richter. The annotations in the drawings were also considered to be important for the study of the process of the plates' creation.

9. Furthermore, the drawings were considered to be a reflection of the Victorian attempts to catalogue and define different flora and fauna in different parts of the world. Gould was appointed the first curator and preserver of the Zoological Society of London and, at the time of his death, he stood pre-eminent in his field with an international reputation as the most prominent British and Australian ornithologist. The drawings, therefore, were the product of one of the most significant natural history artists of the Victorian age.

Waverley Criteria

10. The Committee voted on whether the drawings met the Waverley criteria. Of the ten members, ten voted that it met the third Waverley criterion. The drawings were therefore found to meet the third Waverley criterion for outstanding significance for the study of Gould's work, and the study of natural history art.

Matching offer

11. The Committee recommended the sum of £1,287,500 (inclusive of VAT) as a fair matching price.

Deferral period

12. The Committee agreed to recommend to the Secretary of State that the decision on the export licence should be deferred for an initial period of three months. If, within that period, Arts Council England received notification of a serious intention to raise funds with a view to making an offer to purchase the drawings, the Committee recommended that there should be a further deferral period of four months.

Communication of findings

13. The expert adviser and the applicant returned. The Chairman notified them of the Committee's decision on its recommendations to the Secretary of State.

14. The expert adviser agreed to act as champion if a decision on the licence was deferred by the Secretary of State.

Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest: Note of outcome: Gould's Original Drawings, Vol I and II (Case 17, 2020-21)

During the initial deferral period, we received a serious expression of interest from a private individual to purchase the albums and to secure public access to them under the Ridley Rules. The owner accepted this offer and granted the private individual an Option Agreement and the decision on the export licence application was deferred for a further four months. The albums were subsequently purchased by the private individual who has entered into an agreement with the Natural History Museum to put them on public display.