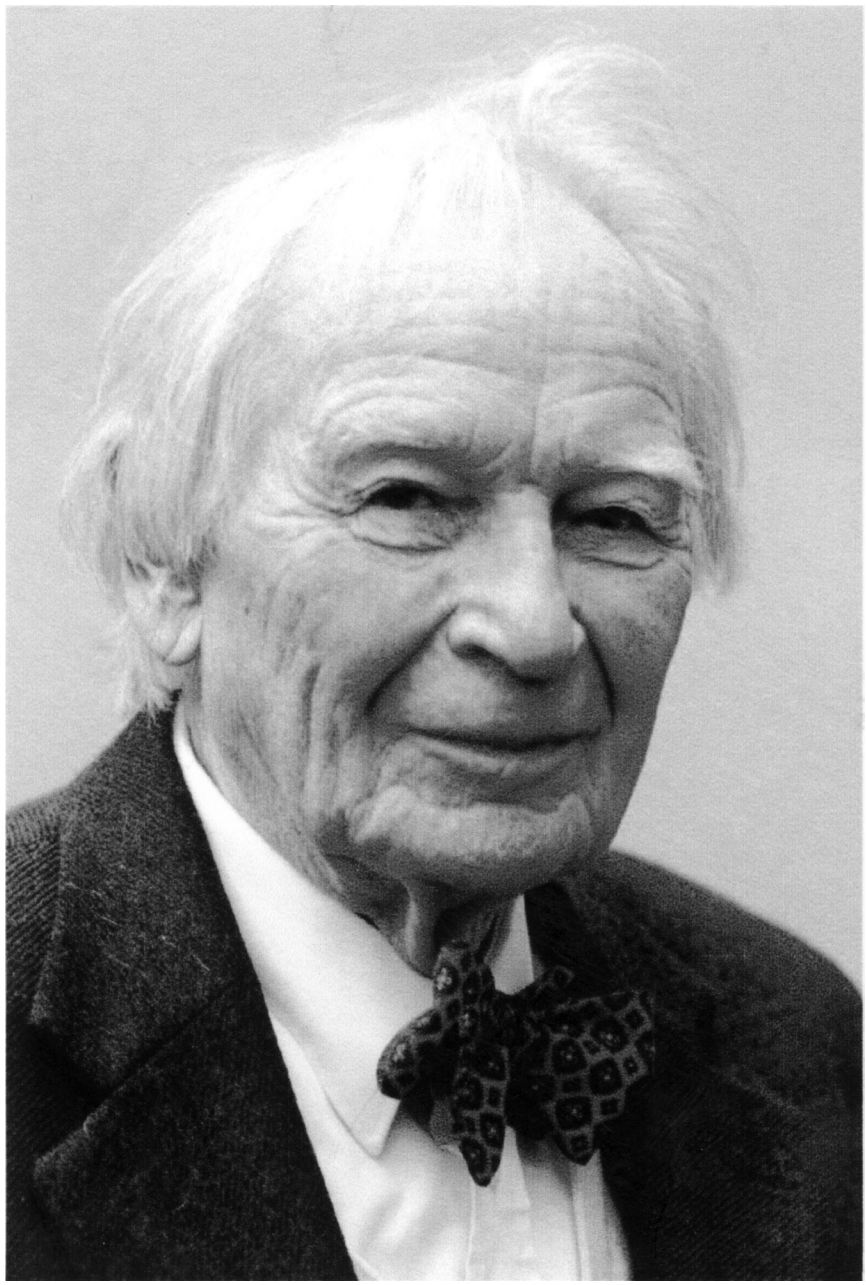

GRAHAM REYNOLDS

Arthur Graham Reynolds
1914–2013

Graham Reynolds (the 'Arthur' was firmly suppressed from an early age) was born in Highgate on 10 January 1914. His father, Arthur T. Reynolds, a monumental mason, made the tombstones and crosses for Highgate cemetery, priding himself on his lettering. When Graham was about ten, his father died as the result of a war wound and his mother, Eva (née Mullins), daughter of a bank clerk, married Percy Hill, a property manager, who became mayor of Holborn in the 1930s. He was, according to Reynolds, a 'bad tempered brute', but he had the saving grace of having acquired a collection of mezzotints which provided the beginnings of a visual education in the home. Furthermore, the family's move to 82 Gower Street, so near to the British Museum, encouraged Graham's early interest in art.

From Grove House Lodge, a local preparatory school, he obtained a scholarship to Highgate School. The years there were largely unmemorable, except for the fact that one of the teachers was descended from Sir George Beaumont, Constable's patron. At school, as he later recollected, he did not suffer unduly from being known as 'the brain' and 'the swot'. In 1932, he went to Cambridge on a maths scholarship at Queens' College. After the first year he switched to English, but something of the mathematician's precision remained with him all his life. He used to say that if there had been a faculty of art history in Cambridge at the time, he would have joined that. In the event he was pleased he had chosen English, not least because he later heard that Eric Maclagan, Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum when he applied for a post there, would not allow any student from the Courtauld Institute—then offering the only art history degree course in England—to be placed on the short list for new appointments. A breakdown in 1934 led to a stay at the Maudsley Hospital, but did not

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prevent Graham achieving a first class degree in English in the following year. His interest in art was more fully aroused by the exhibition of British Art at the Royal Academy and by visits to the Fitzwilliam Museum where he came to admire the work of the director, C. R. Cockerell.

By this time he had formed the decision to try for a museum post and, while submitting job applications, he sought the advice of Arthur M. Hind, Keeper of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum. Hind's advice was simple: 'if you want to read the art historical literature, you must learn German', and so Reynolds spent the next six months as an exchange student with a German family in Cologne. It was, he recollected, an education not only in German but also in opera.

Career

His first employment was a nine months stint working on military range tables at Woolwich Arsenal, a post he obtained thanks to his Part I of the mathematics tripos. A breakthrough in attaining his chosen career followed in 1937 when he was successful in the competition for an Assistant Keepership in the Department of Engraving, Illustration and Design (EID) and Paintings at the Victoria and Albert Museum. The name EID served to distinguish the collection from the Prints and Drawings Department at the British Museum. There was no shortage of Rembrandt etchings and old master drawings, but the distinctive character of the department lay in its links with the decorative arts collections of the Museum. Ornament prints—which served as patterns for artists from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries—preparatory drawings for architecture and the decorative arts, and commercial graphics from posters and trade cards to Christmas cards and valentines formed the staple of the collection. The keeper of the whole department was James Laver, an authority on the history of fashion and then widely known as the author of the popular novel and successful musical *Nymph Errant*. In 1938, with the appointment of John Pope-Hennessy to the Paintings branch of the department, Reynolds did his apprenticeship on the Prints and Drawings side.

With war on the horizon in the summer of 1939, the staff turned to packing up the collections and Reynolds remembered the installation of cases in the vaults at Bradford on Avon and the bricking up of the Raphael cartoons in the area of the Poynter and Morris rooms on the ground floor of the Museum. Once the war started, he was seconded to the Ministry of Home Security, a branch of the Home Office. This work gave him an introduction to administrative competence. As he was later to put it: 'this experience taught me that there

is no necessary conflict between the pursuit of art history and the ability to run a department'. He was also a member of the London Civil Defence Region (1939–45) and it was there that he met a teleprinter operator, Daphne, daughter of Thomas Dent a photographer in Huddersfield and herself a former student at the Huddersfield College of Art. They were married in 1943 and it is no exaggeration to say that Daphne remained a tower of strength for him throughout his life, until her death in 2002.

Back at the V&A, now under the directorship of Leigh Ashton, in late 1945, Reynolds was on hand for the re-installation of the collections at South Kensington, not least of the Raphael cartoons which were installed in their present spacious location. With the departure of Pope-Hennessy to the Sculpture Department and of Carl Winter, Deputy Keeper of the department, to be director of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Reynolds undertook the organisation of the Nicholas Hilliard and Isaac Oliver exhibition in 1947, one of the first major exhibitions after the Museum reopened. He took up the expertise on portrait miniatures from Carl Winter who had himself learnt from Basil Long, author of what has remained the basic reference work on the subject. It was a connoisseurial expertise based on a highly detailed study of stylistic characteristics, almost on lines propagated by Giovanni Morelli (1816–91) who had claimed that artists' treatment of anatomical details, such as hands or ears, could supply proof of authorship. Reynolds had his own exactitude of observation: 'Look at the cross hatching behind the left ear; you can see that this miniature is by Bogle,' as he once explained to the present writer. For the 1947 exhibition, he was able to assemble 108 works attributed to Hilliard and 84 attributed to Oliver and it was a cause of satisfaction to him that these attributions have remained generally accepted. Only occasionally was he called upon to defend his attributions. When, in a later exhibition, Roy Strong attributed Hilliard's *Young Man against a Background of Flames* (V&A) to Isaac Oliver, Reynolds described this as a 'most flagrant misjudgment' and his view has been widely accepted ('The English miniature of the renaissance: a "rediscovery" examined', *Apollo*, 118 (Oct. 1983), 308–11).

After Winter's departure in 1947, Reynolds was promoted to Deputy Keeper of Paintings and it was on the departmental collections that his expertise, his scholarship and his publications were based. The gift of John Sheepshanks in 1857 had founded a collection particularly strong in early Victorian painting which was first curated by Richard Redgrave, painter and historian. The scale and quality of the Sheepshanks gift led to other gifts and bequests, most notably that of Isabel Constable, Constable's youngest surviving daughter, in 1888. Indeed, until the foundation of the Tate Gallery in 1897, the South Kensington Museum held the national collection of British paintings and, although it ceased

to acquire oil paintings after 1900, it remained the national collection of portrait miniatures and British watercolours. In due course, Reynolds became the internationally acknowledged expert in all these areas. Already in these early years, he was the principal contributor to the department's publication of its holdings, publishing small picture books on *Portrait Miniatures* (London, 1948), *Elizabethan Art* (London, 1948), *Victorian Painting* (London, 1948), *French Painting* (London, 1949) and *Constable* (London, 1950).

The post-war installation of the Museum under Leigh Ashton's inspiration had divided the display into 'Primary' galleries—a chronological arrangement of mixed media drawn from all departments—and 'Study' collections—in which displays remained by material. But it was only under Ashton's successor, Trenchard Cox (Director 1955–66), that a new home was found for the paintings. This was achieved by building over the south court and it was Reynolds's contribution to install the splendid display which opened in 1956. The new Paintings galleries (rooms 101–4) consisted of separate sections for Constable, eighteenth- to nineteenth-century British paintings, watercolours and the Constantine Alexander Ionides collection of old master paintings, which was shown as a separate unit in line with the terms of the bequest. Constable, of course, was everyone's favourite but, to a growing body of opinion, the early Victorian pictures—works by Mulready, Landseer, C. R. Leslie and William Collins, among others—after suffering decades of derision, were again seen as worthy of respect. Carel Weight, then Professor of Painting at the Royal College of Art, was said to have made a daily pilgrimage to the newly opened galleries, in particular to enjoy the nineteenth-century works.

With the retirement of James Laver in 1959, Reynolds was promoted Keeper of the Department of EID (changed to Prints & Drawings—P&D—in 1961) and Paintings, a post he held until the end of 1974. He had distinguished deputies in the two branches of the department—Brian Reade for P&D and Jonathan Mayne for Paintings—but it was Reynolds who provided the drive and the insistence on the maintenance of high standards of scholarship, curatorial practice and public service. Staff numbers were increased to allow for the cataloguing of some 2,000 new acquisitions a year, an essential task to give readers in the Print Room ready access to recently acquired material. The maintenance of the Print Room service was central to the department: entry was unrestricted and it served some 7,000 visitors a year.

Temporary exhibitions formed another key part of the departmental activity: the fragility of works on paper meant that these were newly installed three or four times a year. Reynolds himself was responsible for several of these, including those devoted to the work of two living artists, *The Engravings of S. W. Hayter* (London, 1967) and *The Etchings of Anthony Gross* (London,

1968), to which he wrote extensive monographs. Two departmental exhibitions in particular, both curated by Brian Reade, turned out to be trend setting for the taste of the 1960s: *Art Nouveau and Alphons Mucha* (1963) and *Aubrey Beardsley* (1966). Censorship was still in force and the Beardsley exhibition was vetted by the Metropolitan Police to ensure that no legal offence could be caused.

During the whole of his period as Keeper, Reynolds was assiduous in expanding the department's collections. Partly through the example of Daphne, herself a distinguished painter working in an abstract style in the 1960s, Graham evolved a lively interest in contemporary art and devoted his energies to making acquisitions in the fields of twentieth-century prints, drawings and watercolours. This became a commonplace in the 1970s but in the post-war period, when the Tate Gallery lacked a Print Room and the British Museum had little interest in contemporary material, only the V&A, among national museums, was active in this field. A modern print fund of £750 a year was set up for routine purchases; special funding had to be sought for acquisitions of prints by artists of the stature of Munch, Picasso and Matisse. Typical of many print lovers of his generation, he cared little for silkscreen prints and it was left to the Circulation Department to acquire most of these for the Museum in the 1960s. For watercolours and gouaches, the main acquisitions were of contemporary British artists from Nash and Burra to Hilton and Scott, while outstanding works by, for example, Nolde, Kokoschka and Klee were bought to provide an international context.

As Keeper of the department, Reynolds worked with great efficiency and dispatch. In his dealings with his staff, he maintained the fairly strict sense of hierarchy which he had inherited from the Civil Service tradition of his time. Members of grades junior to Assistant Keeper may have found him somewhat aloof, but this was due partly to his shyness and natural reserve and it was compensated by his absolute sense of fairness. There were definitely no favourites, and he was held in great respect by the whole department.

In 1967 he was invited by Robert L. Herbert to undertake a semester's teaching at Yale: a course on nineteenth-century British painting for undergraduates and a seminar on Constable for graduate students. It was not a happy experience: 'I have no talent for teaching and found the atmosphere at Yale stifling,' as he later said. The experience was made worse by the fact that Daphne took one look at New Haven and departed to Arizona and New Mexico to paint more exotic landscapes. Back at the V&A, Graham made another notable contribution to the Museum's major exhibitions: *Charles Dickens. An Exhibition to Commemorate the Centenary of his Death* (1970). It was centred on the bequest to the Museum in 1876 of John Forster, Dickens's friend and biographer, which included what is still the largest collection in the world of original Dickens

manuscripts. Dickens specialists, headed by Kathleen Tillotson, were called in to advise, but the exhibition remained Reynolds's brain child, born, as he said, during his stay at New Haven in 1967 when re-reading Dickens provided a much needed leisure activity. The exhibition and the extensive catalogue represented a joint venture by the Museum Library and the Prints and Drawings Department under Reynolds's supervision.

During these years, he established a reasonably good working relationship with the new director, John Pope-Hennessy. The two had been colleagues since 1938 and he never allowed himself to be bullied by Pope-Hennessy's imperious ways. Relations with Roy Strong, director from January 1974, were less harmonious and Reynolds retired at the end of that year, just ahead of his sixty-first birthday. After retirement, he took on numerous honorary posts including the chairmanship of Gainsborough's House Society (1977–9), membership of the Advisory Council of the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art (1977–84) and of the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art (1984–90), and the Hon. Keepership of Portrait Miniatures at the Fitzwilliam Museum (1994–2013). He organised Constable exhibitions in Australia and New Zealand (1973), New York (1984) and Tokyo (1986) and he was advisor to David Thomson in the establishment of his Constable Archive in the 1990s. He was awarded an OBE in 1984 in recognition of a Constable exhibition he had organised in New York, a CVO in 2000 for his work on the royal collection of portrait miniatures, and he was elected to a Senior Fellowship of the British Academy in 1993.

Graham Reynolds's expertise over the whole range of his department's holdings has not been remotely rivalled before or since. Retirement allowed him more time for research and writing and, as will be seen in the discussion of his publications, the number of books published in the 1980s and 1990s was truly astonishing. Graham and Daphne lived at 24 Cheyne Walk in the 1940s, at The Logs Cottage, Well Road, Hampstead in the 1950s, and from about 1968 in Airlie Gardens, Notting Hill Gate. Upon retirement, they moved to a beautiful, if rather isolated, new home in Bradfield St George, near Bury St Edmunds, where they had had a week-end retreat since 1964. For a time they also had a pied-à-terre in London so that the move only briefly interfered with their busy social life.

Graham's natural shyness and reserve, modified doubtless under Daphne's influence, in no way prevented him from being a popular figure among a wide circle of friends. Apart from his V&A colleagues, these included, to name only a few, Denys Sutton, long time editor of *Apollo*; Eric and Stella Newton; Anthony Gross and Birgit Skiold among print makers; the painters Vera Cuningham,

Edward Wolfe, Adrian Heath and Patrick Heron; and, among other museum colleagues, John Gere, Carlos van Hasselt and Christopher White. Friendships were also formed with literary figures, for example, Sonia Orwell and, in particular, with Angus Wilson and his partner Tony Garrett who were near neighbours in Suffolk. Partly, perhaps, because they had no children, the Reynolds socialised a great deal. And if Daphne was known for her outspoken jollity and peals of laughter, Graham could display a sharp wit with stories that were often hilariously and wickedly funny. For friends in need, they showed a warmly compassionate and active regard which was deeply appreciated by those concerned.

Publications

His publications began with a popular introduction to *Twentieth Century Drawings* (London, 1946) followed by the catalogue of the exhibition *Nicholas Hilliard and Isaac Oliver* (London, 1947, 2nd edn. 1971) which has remained a standard work on the subject. His interest in portrait miniatures was maintained throughout his life; his concise account of the subject *English Portrait Miniatures* (London, 1952) was republished in a revised edition in 1988, a clear indication of its lasting value as an account of the life and work of the principal practitioners. After his retirement there followed the *Catalogue of Miniatures, Wallace Collection* (London, 1980), *European Miniatures in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York, 1996), *British Portrait Miniatures, Fitzwilliam Museum* (Cambridge, 1998) and, finally, the catalogue of *The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Miniatures in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen* (London, 1999) on which he had worked intermittently since the 1950s. It describes 447 miniatures, each reproduced in colour, and provides a splendid overview of the subject. British artists and Continental artists working in England, including Horenbout, Holbein, Hilliard, Oliver, Hoskins and Cooper, are particularly well represented, and there are also over fifty enamels by Jean Petitot, providing the largest group of colour reproductions of his work.

During the late 1940s he was still producing short popular surveys: *Van Gogh* (London, 1947) and *Nineteenth Century Drawings 1850–1950* (London, 1949), but there was also a more detailed study of the wood engraver *Thomas Bewick. A Resumé of his Life and Work* (London, 1949) and an *Introduction to English Water-Colour Painting* (London, 1950, rev. edn. 1988), based on his Ferens Fine Art lecture at the University of Hull, which indicated his increasing specialisation on late-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British art. But it was his *Painters of the Victorian Scene* (London, 1953) which showed him to be a true pioneer. The revival of interest in Victorian painting may be traced back to

the Robin Ironside and John Gere study of the *Pre-Raphaelite Painters* (1948) and to the W. P. Frith exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery curated by Jonathan Mayne in 1951, but it did not take off until the V&A exhibition of Victorian art, organised by Peter Floud, Keeper of the Circulation Department, in 1959. At this early stage, Reynolds was at pains to explain that he was not writing a history of the subject. The purpose of the book, he explained, was 'to assemble and discuss a body of reproductions of pictures in which the contemporary Victorian scene is portrayed in recognizable exactness'. Among the social topics discussed were the depictions of order, self-control, material prosperity, graciousness and rigid class distinction.

This was followed by a fuller survey of the subject, *Victorian Painting* (London, 1966, 2nd edn. 1987). The general introduction was brief; the bulk of the text was contained in the detailed descriptive notes to the individual pictures reproduced. This survey of the different branches of Victorian art, principally genre and landscape, led to the conclusion that, at least before the last decades of the century, it was essentially insular, 'an indigenous, self propagating, ingrowing and original species'.

Reynolds continued to write widely on nineteenth-century British painting, with commissioned books on *Turner* (London, 1969) and a *Concise History of Watercolours* (London, 1971) which provided the subject with an international context; but it is for his work on Constable that his name will remain most closely associated. As with his other interests, the connection originated in the Museum's collection of paintings and drawings. This was founded by the gift of John Sheepshanks, who had known Constable from 1829, which included six paintings, most famously *Boat Building near Flatford Mill* (1815) and *Salisbury Cathedral from the Bishop's Grounds* (1823), and augmented by two key works, the full-scale sketches for the *Haywain* and the *Leaping Horse* from the collection of Henry Vaughan which were loaned in 1862 and bequeathed in 1900.

It was this core collection, together with her preference for rural South Kensington over the grime of Trafalgar Square, that persuaded Isabel Constable to make her munificent gift of the remaining contents of her father's studio to the Museum in 1888. It included oil paintings, sketches, watercolours, drawings and sketch books and accounted for 390 of the 418 entries in Graham Reynolds, *Victoria & Albert Museum, Catalogue of the Constable Collection* (London, 1960, 2nd edn. 1973). A model of museum cataloguing, this work formed the basis and set the standard of his future publications on the subject. It was followed by a narrative account *Constable the Natural Painter* (London, 1965) and it ultimately led to his contract with Yale University Press, acting for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, to write the second volume of the full oeuvre catalogue *The Later Paintings and Drawings of John Constable* (2 vols., New

Haven, CT, 1984) covering the years 1817 to 1837, for which he was awarded the Mitchell Prize. He acknowledged his debt to Leslie Parris, Ian Fleming-Williams and Conal Shields whose exhibition at the Tate Gallery celebrating the bicentenary of Constable's birth in 1976 was seen as the principal contribution to questions of attribution since his V&A catalogue. In particular, he mentioned their success in separating the works of his son Lionel from Constable's oeuvre. Volume I of the Yale catalogue was intended to be contributed by Charles Rhyne, professor at Reed College, Portland, Oregon. When he dropped out, Reynolds took on the task, aided by Rhyne's notes, and it was published as *The Earlier Paintings and Drawings of John Constable* (2 vols., New Haven, CT, 1996) covering the years 1790 to 1816.

These catalogues are awesome in their completeness. Close examination of the V&A collection had provided hitherto unnoticed dates which established a framework for the artist's career and a working method for the oeuvre catalogues. Exhaustive discussion of date, subject, versions, attribution and provenance, as well as links with Constable's correspondence and other contemporary sources, will render them standard works of reference for the foreseeable future. The editorial tasks for such a venture—the two catalogues had 1,087 and 1,465 illustrations respectively—were formidable and Reynolds always spoke warmly of the editorial team at the Yale Press, notably Faith Hart, Gillian Malpass and Guilland Sutherland. At the heart of these volumes was his own connoisseurial knowledge of the subject and his meticulous attention to detail in laying out the facts for his readers.

To quote from just one example, the entry for a small picture of Gillingham Mill, painted for John Fisher, Archdeacon of Salisbury, in the Fitzwilliam Museum (Vol. II, p. 135, No. 24.4), which is inscribed on the back, not in Constable's or Fisher's hand, 7 June 1824:

> In a letter which Constable received on 2 June 1824 Fisher told him that he planned to be in London on 14 June and would visit him. He accordingly determined to complete a small picture of Gillingham Mill for which Fisher had paid him when last in town (Corr., VI, p. 163). In spite of the date recorded on the back of No. 24.4 it was not entirely finished on 7 June, since Constable noted in his diary for 17 June: 'Came home and set to work on Fisher's picture—which I did very well' (Corr., VI, p. 165). It was ready the following Sunday when Constable wrote in his diary: 'Fisher took away his little picture of the Mill with a frame'. (Corr., VI, p. 166)

It is fair to say that, for good or ill, these great works do not take issue with the changing interests in the treatment of English landscape painting, particularly in the new emphasis on social concerns, which were coming to the fore in the 1970s to 1980s as Reynolds was writing his first volume. To take one example, Michael Rosenthal (*Constable: the Painter and his Landscape*, New Haven, CT,

1983) suggested that Constable's change of style in the mid-1820s was directly linked with his expressed concern at the riots of 1822 in East Anglia, caused by the continued agricultural depression. Reynolds could not have taken this on, as his book was published in the same year, but he remained adamant that there was insufficient evidence for such speculation: 'If Constable was influenced in his work by agricultural riots, he would have said so in his correspondence' was the curt end to any such discussion.

Yet Rosenthal was respected as a bona fide Constable specialist; Reynolds's real ire was reserved for the avowed practitioners of the 'new' art history. In his review of a book entitled *The New Art History*, edited by A. L. Rees and F. Borzello (*Apollo*, Oct. 1986, pp. 182–3), he turned savagely on those who claimed that 'words like connoisseurship, quality, style and genius have become taboo, utterable . . . only with scorn or mirth'. He took it as an attack on all that his work stood for, and he could not imagine that the subject could ultimately benefit from the questioning nature of these ideas. He was not alone in taking an uncompromising stand in the 1980s when the battle lines were firmly drawn; it was not until the following decade that there was more of an accommodation among the diverse practitioners of the subject.

Graham Reynolds was busy writing on portrait miniatures and on Constable well into his nineties. He contributed an essay for the catalogue of the exhibition of *Constable's Skies* in New York in 2004 and he remained an adviser to David Thomson both for his collection and his Constable Archive. His long term interest in both mathematics and English also survived into his last decade when he was writing, to quote his own words, 'fifty palindromes and fifty algorisms for my hundredth birthday'. In the event, a slim volume of his poems entitled *Symmetries* was published posthumously for private circulation in 2013. Meanwhile, both the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Royal Academy had been planning exhibitions of Constable's work in honour of Reynolds's centenary—a mark of distinction rarely achieved by a long retired museum curator. He died on 6 October 2013, just three months short of his hundredth birthday.

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Note. I am grateful to Christopher White for corrections and suggestions. For a recent interview with Graham Reynolds, see Felicity Owen, 'Art and Delight', *Apollo*, June 2005, pp. 78–81. Graham himself wrote an account of Daphne's work, *Daphne Reynolds. A Memoir* (Bradfield St George, 2007).