

Mapping Sculpture Seminar
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Neither use nor ornament: tracing the development of sculpture as a discrete discipline in British art education from the mid-nineteenth century

The place of sculpture in the shifting and contested system of art and design education in the nineteenth century was determined by complex and often contradictory forces. Certainly the practice of modelling had been embedded in the general curriculum of state-funded instruction since the establishment of the Government School of Design in 1837 and consolidated in the modelling stages of the National Course of Instruction from 1852. However, there is an important distinction to be made between the use of modelling as a means of transmitting the principles of design in three dimensions and the teaching of sculpture as an autonomous discipline. I would like to consider the liminal period between these two positions, without implying that this process of change was either uniform or spontaneous. The moment in question is the last quarter of the nineteenth century, concurrent with the emergence of the New Sculpture movement. The material held in the archive of the Henry Moore Institute, some of which is displayed in *The Developing Process* exhibition illustrates two significant interactions between sculptors and their students: Mark Rogers who partially studied under Aimé-Jules Dalou in the late 1870s and early 1880s and working under this inheritance, Thomas Mewburn Crook who studied under Edouard Lantéri in the early 1890s. In addition to setting this work in a more detailed context, this is also an opportunity to show a broader selection of archival material than was possible for the exhibition.

Alongside the branch schools at Manchester and Lambeth, the primary locus of this particular moment was the National Art Training School in South Kensington, renamed as such in 1864 on the occasion of its move into permanent, purpose-built accommodation designed by Francis Fowke. It seems important to begin with this spatial orientation to develop a sense of the material structures that organised the transmission of knowledge. Fowke described the rationale of the new space as follows:

The building to contain the male and female art schools being situated in the rear of other proposed buildings, has been kept of a perfectly plain exterior. It is three stories in height, and as the lower floor is most valuable for museum space, while a large amount of top lighted space is necessary for the art schools, it was manifestly an economy in erecting the school building to raise it up and leave a space under it which could eventually be employed as a museum, at a considerable saving of both space and cost [...] The building is constructed without interior walls, so as to allow the interior to be divided by screens at pleasure, and thus give the greatest freedom to the changing wants of the School.ⁱ

Although the design of the school appears to have been sensitive to its function and flexible enough to meet changing requirements, it was soon too small to accommodate increasing numbers of students and an expanding teaching collection. Furthermore, the arrangement of the schools, and was subject to criticism:

The advanced rooms are placed over the Barracks of the Engineers, whence comes the noise and crying of children and the smell of cooking food. On the same side is the road round the Museum; over this road the traffic is considerable [...] Coals are delivered under the windows, during which operation the idiomatic English of the men who deliver them [...] is not instructive to anyone and particularly offensive to the ladies in the schools. Immediately opposite the windows of the large classroom is a steam engine, and close at hand the machinery it moves, also a blacksmith's forge with anvil complete and a chimney or even two so arranged that dense smoke drives on to the windows with westerly winds and deposits of black are the inevitable consequence. These inconveniences are on the outside; on the court-yard face, the odours from the Refreshment room, kitchen and scullery arise so abundantly as to make it impossible to open the windows.ⁱⁱ

Although the crowded space of the school did little to foster the development of the teaching of sculpture, the *site* of school might be considered of much greater significance in this respect. The proximity of the school to the South Kensington Museum and their shared history as institutions gave the students of the National Art Training School access to a considerable range of sculpture housed principally in the North Court which opened in 1862 and the Architectural Courts in 1873.

The most pervasive narrative concerning the development of state-funded art and design education positions each successive director, principal or headmaster as the primary agent

of change, each bringing the promise of redemptive action and reform to a system that was considered to be in almost perpetual crisis both from the inside and outside. Although I am in danger of reinforcing this discourse by focussing upon the relation between individual teachers and their students, I hope to begin to set these interactions within a wider matrix of socio-cultural change. Perhaps the most significant shift in paradigm for the study of sculpture was concurrent with the appointment of the painter Edward Poynter to both the position of Director of Art and Principal of the National Art Training School in 1875. Poynter had studied in Rome and Paris, which had cemented his belief in the superiority of continental methods of art education and the primacy of drawing directly from the figure. These ideas informed his previous role as the first Slade Professor of Fine Art, a post he held from 1871 to 1875. Poynter also encouraged a method of drawing that began to move away from rigid technical draughtsmanship, Stuart Macdonald described the way in which, ‘cross-hatching and stippling enclosed by a hard outline was banished, but now, under Poynter, careful copies of classical casts and of the nude were carried out in powdered black or brown chalk worked with leather or paper stumps, and heightened with white chalk if on coloured paper’.ⁱⁱⁱ However, working from the living model remained the preserve of the advanced class, entry to which required the student to have completed a substantial course of study from the antique, broadly continuous with the existing National Course of Instruction instigated by Poynter’s predecessor, Richard Redgrave. The tension between the utilitarian, analytical pedagogy of the British system and other continental methods, most particularly the French model of fine art instruction, had been a persistent feature since the debates on the quality, status and function of arts and manufactures from the 1830s. Until this point, it

could be argued that the direction of influence was not reciprocal, however Christopher Frayling has suggested that, ‘it is one of the stranger paradoxes in art and design education at this time that as French educators came to admire the British system of design education more and more – because it was grounded in principles – British educators were turning, once again, to the French system of fine art education – because it wasn’t’.^{iv} This dialogue arguably informed the appointment of two successive teachers of modelling with particular significance to the development of sculpture in Britain, although the process of change might be considered uneven and discontinuous.

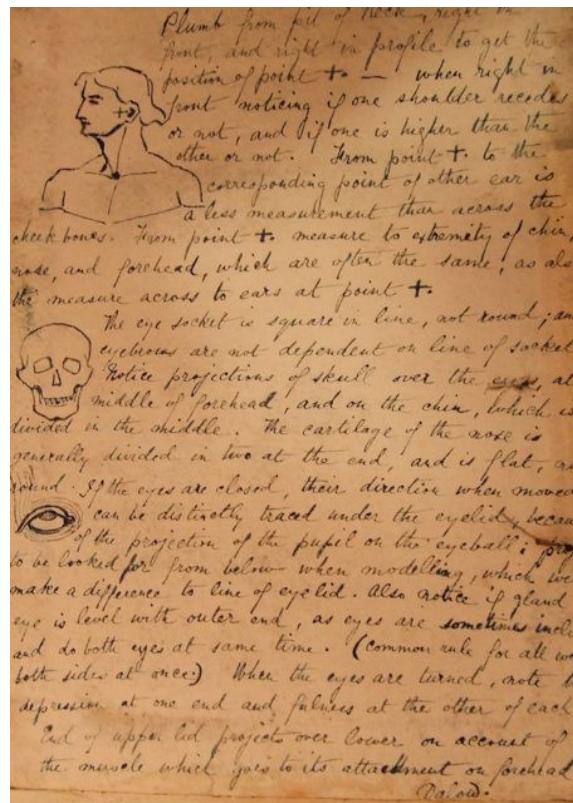
Dalou and Mark Rogers

Poynter inherited the elderly modelling master Felix Miller at the National Art Training School and Miller retained this title after the arrival of Dalou in 1877, who was officially appointed in a supplementary capacity, but was to extend his influence much further than this formal role would imply. Articulating the distinction between methods, Susan Beattie suggests that, ‘it is clear that what most excited Dalou’s students was the speed and vitality of his working method. His passionate involvement in the physical process of modelling and the building-up of sculptural forms and planes from the very heart of the clay taught them more about the nature of sculpture than they had ever learned in Miller’s class’.^v Poynter had been keen to increase the speed at which drawings were executed and imposed a limit of six days for the completion of a drawing from life. Although the drawing and modelling produced during this period remained highly finished, the rigidity of the National Course of Instruction was disrupted to some extent, if not wholly undermined. It is also interesting to note that the recollections of students and other

contemporaries on the teaching of Dalou emphasise the dynamism of his method and his ability to enthuse, but do not offer specific accounts of the ways in which technical processes were transmitted. For example, the critic of sculpture A.L. Baldry, a pupil at South Kensington between 1878 and 1879 recalled:

the effect of the intervention of a man of his vigorous personality and splendid powers in the rather conventional routine of English art teaching can well be imagined. He awoke in his pupils an amount of enthusiasm and a degree of keen interest in their work far beyond anything that the adherents to the older methods were capable of exciting. There was not only stimulating novelty in his manner of presenting the dry technical facts of the sculptor's craft, but there was, as well, in his belief in the mission and purpose of sculpture, a firmness of conviction that was eminently satisfying to youthful aspirants who were seeking the right direction for the future expression of their own ideas. They found themselves, for once, in the closest association with a master mind, in contact with an individuality which was unlike any to which they had hitherto been accustomed; and they were taught to see the traditions of their art in a new light [...] Dalou's training did not produce merely a school of copyists, nor did it lead to unintelligent repetition of certain processes of execution which he prescribed. He sought rather to induce each of his pupils to think out the problems of his art with real independence, and to realise how the vital principles which underlie all memorable accomplishment could best be applied.^{vi}

Mark Rogers studied at the Lambeth School of Art, a particularly successful branch school established in 1854. The archive here at the Institute holds two of Rogers' sketchbooks, one of which is on display in *The Developing Process*. There is a great deal of scope for further research on these objects and the conditions of their production. The subjects of many of the sketches might be considered consistent with the formal art education Rogers received, although there is also more esoteric material including the recording of inscriptions from tombs and gravestones which might suggest that these sketchbooks were used in a more singular and personal manner. Their fragility as objects meant that only this inside cover could be shown in the exhibition, so I would like to include a small selection of images to illustrate something of the variety of material they represent. There are studies from nature, the figure and fragments of architectural ornament which clearly demonstrate that Rogers had access to the nude model, which was possibly the most contested element of art and design education, but which was also the most crucial for the development of late nineteenth century sculpture.



Page from notebook of Mark Rogers (collection ref: 2005.30). Courtesy of Leeds Museums & Galleries (Henry Moore Institute Archive).

The history of the Lambeth School intersected with that of the National Art Training School in several different ways: in 1875, Poynter selected the former Headmaster John Charles Lewis Sparkes to the equivalent position at the National Art Training School, where Sparkes himself had trained to teach art between 1855 and 1859 after having attended the Royal Academy Schools. Sparkes retained his influence at Lambeth and in 1879 secured additional funding for the modelling, life drawing and design classes by overseeing their transference from the Lambeth School to the City and Guilds of London Institute for the Advancement of Technical Education, which acquired premises on Kennington Park Road under the name the South London Technical Art School. Susan

Beattie suggests that, ‘the removal of the life, design and modelling classes together with their pupils, including two prize medallists Mark Rogers and W.S. [William Silver] Frith, left the Lambeth School much the poorer’.^{vii} After leaving the National Art Training School, Sparkes brought Dalou to the South London Technical Art School to teach the drawing and modelling classes for a period of two or three months in 1880. As the first page of Mark Rogers’ sketchbook is dated 30 July 1877 and the latest prize label in the second sketchbook dates from 1883, it is possible to place Rogers in a position to have received direct instruction from Dalou. The most compelling evidence for this having been the case is a page of notes on the correct proportion of the head at the bottom of which is the name Dalou, perhaps attributing these principles to his teaching. The structure of the modelling class was documented in a Report to the Governors of the City and Guilds of London Institute dated 10 March 1880:

The modelling class is attended by 17 men and will consist of practice in modelling with the view of development into Technical Art in all or any of the following directions:

1. Modelling for Pottery
2. Modelling for Architectural Decorations in plaster form casts and drawings
3. Modelling in Silversmiths’ work
4. Carving in Wood, stone or marble
5. Bronze casting
6. Die sinking
7. Cameo cutting, either in shell or onyx
8. Fine Art Sculpture^{viii}

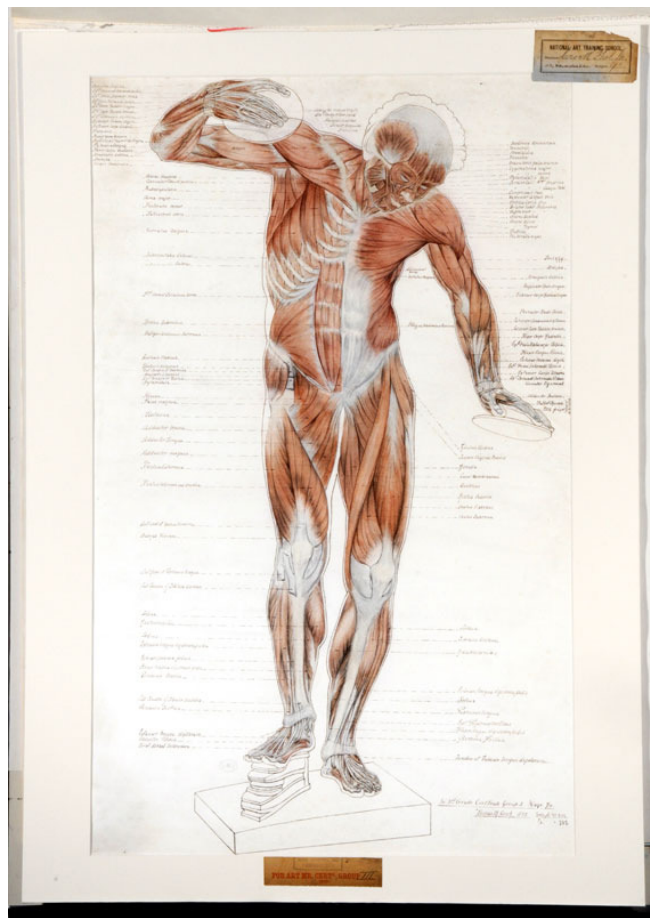
Edouard Lantéri, Dalou’s successor at the National Art Training School, noted the following:

What he [Dalou] did for this School is well known to all artists. He gave extraordinary impetus to sculpture during the two years he was there. By his sound method, his marvellous technique, and his lucid demonstrations he completely carried his students along with him. He knew how to inspire them? with the *desire* to work as well as the *love* of work, and succeeded in awaking an extraordinary enthusiasm where all before seemed dormant. It is no wonder he gained the admiration of his students – an admiration which extended to sculptors at large, and may, as I have reason to know, gladly acknowledge their indebtedness to him.^{ix}

Lantéri and Thomas Mewburn Crook

Edouard Lantéri had left France in 1872 after having been taught there by Dalou, who secured him a place in the studio of Edgar Boehm. When Dalou left the National Art Training School in 1880, he recommended that Lantéri be offered his former position.^x Thomas Mewburn Crook was born in Bolton in 1865, the son of a cotton dealer. After an elementary education Mewburn Crook was apprenticed to a house painter, during which time he began evening classes firstly at the Bolton School of Art and then at the Manchester School of Art where he was eventually allowed to enrol as a full time student studying under Richard Glazier. In 1890, Mewburn Crook fulfilled the requirements of the art master's certificate, after which he began a course of study at the National Art Training School lasting five years. This photograph shows Lantéri's modelling class. The archive of the work Mewburn Crook submitted for examination illustrates the seemingly haphazard completion of stages from the National Course of Instruction, for example the

advanced stage 22b, was submitted in 1888 while he was still studying in Manchester and the much earlier stage 8d was sent three years later in 1891, a work that was not accepted for certificate. The certificates awarded to Mewburn Crook held in the archive suggest that he completed the modelling stages 18 to 21 of the National Course of Instruction, which included: modelling from the cast, modelling from the life, modelling from the antique and modelling design.



Sketch by Thomas Mewburn Crook (collection ref: 2005.34). Courtesy of Leeds Museums & Galleries (Henry Moore Institute Archive).

Lantéri published *Modelling: A Guide for Teachers and Students* in 1902, in which he stipulated the appropriate tools, techniques and sculptural exemplars to use in the

instruction of modelling. Although systematic and cumulative in its approach, the guide was not intended to standardise the output of the schools in the same way as earlier publications such as William Dyce's *Drawing Book of the Government School of Design*, one volume of which is on display in *The Developing Process* exhibition. Instead, Lantéri advocated the development of an individual process guided by experience and exposure to canonical works. Lantéri stated that, 'I do not pretend to think that my method is only the right one – there is no such thing as an infallible method. Every teacher must be free to form his own, on the condition that he bases it on true principles'.^{xi} The conception of true and universal principles embodied in objects that could be drawn out through mimetic reproduction is broadly continuous with both the earlier project of the Government Schools of Design and the pedagogy of the Royal Academy Schools. This relationship might be described as a productive tension between precepts and practice; the expressive and fluid remained tempered by the rigid and accurate.

Lantéri's method began with studies in the flat, working from the interior anatomy to the exterior surface. We can see the relation between Mewburn Crook's diagrammatic rendering of the human skeleton and the illustration published by Lantéri, and similarly with the musculature of the figure labelled in detail. Although these drawings were schematic in their execution, for Lantéri they were a means toward projecting not only physiological accuracy but also psychological fidelity. He wrote, 'it should, however, not be imagined that the knowledge of Anatomy would suffice to make a work of art, far from it. It is the handmaiden of art; it is the means by which we understand the cause of form and shape, and it helps us to put clearness, strength and expression into our

studies'.^{xiii} The knowledge of the underlying structure of the body informed the task of representing the surface of the figure in both two and three dimensions, working initially from the cast as this shaded example on the left from the Mewburn Crook archive illustrates, before being applied to the living model. Plaster casts of this particular version of the discus thrower were widely used in schools of art, the source of which is a Roman copy of a Greek original held by the Louvre Museum. Although these exercises conformed to the curriculum of the National Course of Instruction and its framework of examinations, Lantéri arguably taught beyond the requirements of the existing modelling course, providing his students with a specifically sculptural education which enabled students like Mewburn Crook to establish themselves as successful sculptors in their own right.

Lantéri's approach can perhaps be summarised as the teaching of the relationship between the part and the whole. The student would begin by modelling the facial features in isolation: the mouth, nose, ears and eyes were sketched roughly in clay and then incrementally refined and adjusted. The student would then progress to the head and bust before attempting the complete figure. The process of constructing an armature is described in detail through Lantéri's publication, which goes on to illustrate the cumulative stages of modelling the figure from a generalised form to a particular representation. The construction of an *écorché* figure is also demonstrated in a similar manner, a cast of which was made available as part of a set that was promoted for use in the regional schools of art, in much the same way as casts from the antique had been distributed from the mid-nineteenth century.

On completion of the advanced design stages of the National Course of Instruction, Mewburn Crook spent a year as Lantéri's assistant, after which he was appointed to the position of modelling master and anatomy lecturer at Manchester School of Art in 1896, a position he held for almost a decade before returning to London to set up a working studio. In the same way that Lantéri had continued the methods established by Dalou, Mewburn Crook perpetuated many of the ideas and practices of Lantéri, advising his students at Manchester to,

study with deep and reverent admiration – and that admiration cannot be too deep or too reverent – the works of the great men who have gone before you; brace and fortify yourselves in the contemplation of their strength, catch what you can of the fire that was in them; walk in their light, enrich and enlarge your powers by the knowledge and understanding of the means by which they move us; but never forget that the common greatness of them all in sincerity, and it is only through sincerity that you can hope to emulate them even from afar.^{xiii}

In drawing too, we can see the same principals upheld from master to student, Lantéri proclaiming that, 'as *Drawing* is the principal foundation of *Sculpture*, and a good sculptural work depends largely on a good drawing, the student should draw as much as, if not more than, a student of painting'.^{xiv} And Mewburn Crook echoed to his own pupils:

From experience, I have always seen that students who know how to draw, make in two or three years of modelling, more progress than those who have worked double that time without having drawn previously in a serious manner, and their works have a feeling of delicacy and distinction that a pupil who does not know how to draw will never attain.^{xv}

Furthermore, the primacy of the hand to the practice of modelling was emphasised by both men, Lantéri privileged the sensitivity and subtlety possible through direct contact with the material:

Take care not to use the tool too much; it will prevent you from acquiring suppleness of the hand and from developing a fine touch. The human finger, more firm and secure than the wooden tool, will best transmit the intentions of the artist, and express them in varied degrees; the finger is an intelligent, energetic, I might almost say an intellectual, instrument.^{xvi}

And Mewburn Crook continued, ‘the hand that has gained the power of expressing swiftly and with certainty the object that is before the eye gains also the power of expressing what exists only in the mind’s eye the promptings of invention and imagination’.^{xvii}

The encouragement of this technique is in sharp contrast to the mechanical and systematic pedagogy associated with the teaching of modelling as a means towards

industrial design. The idea of the expressive or inventive might be thought of as facilitating a particularly sculptural conception of modelling for the first time in government funded art education. However, a residue of the function of the schools as a means of elevating the standard of the manufactured object persisted, for example Lantéri differentiated between those suited to the profession of sculpture and those without the necessary qualities to pursue this autonomous and distinguished career: ‘unfortunately it is not given to everyone to have a distinct personality or individuality; few have this supreme gift; and for the others, my advice is to seek in the branches of Industrial Art employment for which their studies have well qualified them’.^{xviii} This statement perhaps suggests that the separation of the work of genius from that which is ingenious was analogous to the distinction between art and design. Although it would be misleading to suggest that the last quarter of the nineteenth century saw a decisive and unanimous shift in the practice and philosophy of art education, this particular confluence of people, place and practice facilitated the emergence of sculpture as a discrete discipline within the context of a system that had previously militated against the development of the autonomous sculptor.

ⁱ Quoted in John Physick, *The Victoria and Albert Museum: the history of its building* (London: V&A Publications, 1982), pp. 102-103.

ⁱⁱ Quoted in Christopher Frayling, *The Royal College of Art: One Hundred and Fifty Years of Art and Design* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1987), p. 54.

ⁱⁱⁱ Stuart Macdonald, ‘The Swing to Fine Art’, in *The History and Philosophy of Art Education* (London: University of London Press, 1970), pp. 263-268 (p. 264).

^{iv} Christopher Frayling, *The Royal College of Art: One Hundred and Fifty Years of Art and Design* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1987), p. 52.

^v Susan Beattie, ‘Sculptors at School: The Liberation of the Clay-Modelling Class’, in *The New Sculpture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), pp. 9-36 (p. 16).

^{vi} A.L. Baldry, quoted in Susan Beattie, ‘Sculptors at School: The Liberation of the Clay-Modelling Class’, in *The New Sculpture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), pp. 9-36 (p. 19).

^{vii} Beattie, p. 21.

^{viii} Report to the Governors of the City and Guilds of London Institute, 10 March 1880, quoted in Susan Beattie, 'Sculptors at School: The Liberation of the Clay-Modelling Class', in *The New Sculpture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), pp. 9-36 (p. 23).

^{ix} Edouard Lanteri, quoted in Susan Beattie, 'Sculptors at School: The Liberation of the Clay-Modelling Class', in *The New Sculpture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), pp. 9-36 (p. 16).

^x Beattie, p. 16.

^{xi} Edouard Lanteri, *Modelling: A Guide for Teachers and Students* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1902), p. 1.

^{xii} Lanteri, pp. 113-114.

^{xiii} Thomas Mewburn Crook, quoted in Bernadette Mewburn Crook, *The Life and Works of Thomas Mewburn Crook* (unpublished MA Dissertation, Catholic University of America, Washington DC, 1963), pp. 26-27.

^{xiv} Lanteri, p. 4.

^{xv} Thomas Mewburn Crook, quoted in Bernadette Mewburn Crook, *The Life and Works of Thomas Mewburn Crook* (unpublished MA Dissertation, Catholic University of America, Washington DC, 1963), pp. 33-34.

^{xvi} Lanteri, p. 17.

^{xvii} Thomas Mewburn Crook, quoted in Bernadette Mewburn Crook, *The Life and Works of Thomas Mewburn Crook* (unpublished MA Dissertation, Catholic University of America, Washington DC, 1963), p. 30.

^{xviii} Lanteri, p. 42.