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et Isabelle Bonnard

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Collecting the body: William Hunter's collection of anatomical drawings and prints in University of Glasgow Library Special Collections

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Collecting the body: William Hunter's collection of anatomical drawings and prints in University of Glasgow Library Special Collections

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The collection of anatomical drawings and prints collected and commissioned by the eighteenth-century Scottish anatomist, physician and man-midwife, Dr. William Hunter (1718–1783) forms a comparatively small but highly significant portion of his larger collection of rare books, coins, natural history specimens, ethnographic objects, anatomical preparations, fine art and drawings and prints (Figure 1). On his death in 1783, Hunter gifted his collection to his alma mater, the University of Glasgow. The collection remains intact today and is held between The Hunterian and University of Glasgow Library Special Collections. Like the recently rediscovered drawings by Johannes van Horne and Marten Sagemolen in the Bibliothèque interuniversitaire de santé, Hunter's collection of anatomical drawings and prints offers significant insights into collaborative image-making practices between anatomists and artists in the early modern period.

This essay gives an overview of the formation of Hunter's collection of anatomical drawings and prints. It considers their provenance and reveals how the collection of drawings was formed through Hunter's own commissioning of images, but also through his collecting activities, which included purchases at auction, the receipt of gifts from his wider social network and the inheritance of material from his esteemed mentor, the polymath Dr. James Douglas (bap. 1675–1742). The original drawings for Hunter's celebrated illustrated book *Anatomia uteri humani gravidi tabulis illustrata* / *The anatomy of the human gravid uterus exhibited in figures* (Birmingham: Baskerville, 1774) sit at the centre of his collection of commissioned drawing. However, these drawings account

for less than a fifth of the commissioned drawings within the collection. Commissioning images was integral to Hunter's wider investigative research into anatomy and pathology (what Hunter termed the 'labyrinth' of nature).¹ Drawings and prints sat alongside anatomical models and artfully crafted anatomical preparations.² These objects were the material embodiments of scientific knowledge while also simultaneously being its objects of study.³ Together they served pedagogical and research functions, working, as Carin Berkowitz has characterised, as 'a constellation of interrelated tools.'⁴ Hunter's investigation of the 'labyrinth' of nature drove his commissioning of drawings and the creation of a paper museum of over 450 drawings, only 17% of which correspond to *Anatomia*. The anatomist depended on a circle of artists and engravers to visually translate and represent the subjects of his investigations. Despite his claims for ultimate authorship, the image-making process was one of collaboration and negotiation.⁵ This essay provides a new outline of the various facets of Hunter's collection and offers a close visual and material analysis of selected drawings. The material and graphic qualities of drawings are analysed alongside their anatomical content and subject. In doing so, this essay extends our understanding of Hunter's anatomical investigations,

1. HUNTER, William, *Two Introductory Lectures, Delivered by Dr. William Hunter, to His Last Course of Anatomical Lectures, at His Theatre in Windmill-Street*, London, 1784 (hereafter *TIL*), p. 4.

2. McCULLOCH, N. A., RUSSELL, D. and S. McDONALD, 'William Hunter's Casts of the Gravid Uterus at the University of Glasgow,' *Clinical Anatomy* 14 (2001): 210-217 and 'William Hunter's Gravid Uterus: The Specimens and Plates,' *Clinical Anatomy* 15 (2002): 253-262; CAMPBELL, Mungo, 'Pedagogy and Professional Practice,' *William Hunter and The Anatomy of the Modern Museum*, CAMPBELL, M. and N. FLIS (eds.), New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2018 (hereafter *WHTAMM*), pp. 196-98.

3. Although the term 'scientific' is anachronistic for this period, I use it here as a general term for 'natural knowledge,' which includes, among other domains, natural philosophy, anatomy, medicine, and mathematics. For this term in the Early Modern period, see, for example, SMITH, Pamela H., 'Science on the Move: Recent Trends in the History of Early Modern Science,' *Renaissance Quarterly* 62, no. 2 (2009): 345-75, n. 1.

4. BERKOWITZ, Carin, 'Systems of display: the making of anatomical knowledge in Enlightenment Britain,' *The British Journal for the History of Science* 46, no. 3 (2012): 1-29, 2; see also 'The Beauty of Anatomy: Visual Displays and Surgical Education in Early-Nineteenth Century London,' *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 85, no. 2 (2011): 248-278; CHAPLIN, Simon, 'Nature dissected, or dissection naturalized? The case of John Hunter's museum,' *Museum and Society* 6, no. 2 (2008): 135-151.

5. For a full examination of Hunter's authorship and authorial project, see HUGHES, Alicia, 'Creating and controlling a visual language: Authorial control and image-making in William Hunter's collection of anatomical drawings and prints' (PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2021). <https://doi.org/10.5525/gla.thesis.82239>



Figure 1.

Allan Ramsay, *William Hunter*, 1763–66, oil on canvas, GLAHA:44026.
The Hunterian, University of Glasgow
<http://collections.gla.ac.uk/#/details/ecatalogue/36443>

interrogates different modes of observing, recording and representing and assesses tensions and negotiations of authorial control and artistic agency in collaborative practices of image-making in the early modern period.

William Hunter (1718–1783)

Born in 1718 in East Kilbride, Scotland, Hunter studied theology at the University of Glasgow before abandoning his degree and pursuing a career in medicine, apprenticing with Dr William Cullen (1710–1790) in Hamilton between 1737 and 1739 and undertaking anatomy courses

with Professor Alexander Monro Primus at the University of Edinburgh in 1739. In 1740, he moved south to London and undertook apprenticeships in midwifery with William Smellie (1697–1763) and Dr James Douglas (bap. 1675–1742) while also studying surgery at St George's Hospital.⁶ During a brief stay in Paris in 1743, he continued his studies, attending the surgical lectures of Henri Francois Le Dran (1685–1770) and anatomy lessons of Antoine Ferrein (1693–1769). It was here that he first experienced the 'Paris manner' of anatomy teaching that he would later employ in his own private anatomy teaching: instead of only observing dissection, each pupil was allocated a cadaver to work on under supervision.⁷ In 1746, Hunter took advantage of the recent split of the Barber-Surgeons Company (a trade guild that was established in 1540 and had the legal right to control dissection of bodies in London). He advertised his first anatomy course and wrote and delivered a series of lectures to the Society of Naval Surgeons in Covent Garden.⁸ In 1747, he was admitted to the newly formed Company of Surgeons and this professional affiliation helped him secure approval to practice in London's hospitals: he was appointed man-midwife at the Middlesex Hospital in London in 1748 and Surgeon-Accoucheur at the newly founded British Lying-In Hospital in 1749.⁹ As W. F. Bynum has noted, hospital appointments were generally sought and made early in a career and were a means to professional success. Appointments meant contact with hospital governors (and their wives) which could help build a profitable private practice and which more generally gave medical men a way of being seen by the public to be charitable, increasing their social status.¹⁰ After Hunter was awarded his MD from University of Glasgow in October 1750, his professional identity started to shift from that of surgeon-man-midwife to physician-man-midwife. In 1754, Hunter became

6. BROCK, Helen, 'Hunter, William (1718–1783)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/14234>

7. For the application of the Paris manner in Hunter's teaching and in London more widely, see GELFAND, Toby, 'Invite the philosopher, as well as the charitable: Hospital teaching as private enterprise in Hunterian London,' *William Hunter and the Eighteenth-Century Medical World*, Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985, pp. 129–151.

8. BROCK, Helen C. (ed.), *William Hunter, 1718–1783: a memoir by Samuel Foart Simmons and John Hunter*, Glasgow: University of Glasgow Press, 1983, p. 6.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 7–8.

10. BYNUM, W. F., 'Physicians, hospitals and career structures,' *William Hunter and the Eighteenth-Century Medical World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 121. See also PORTER, Dorothy and Roy PORTER, *Patient's Progress: Doctors and Doctoring in Eighteenth-Century England*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989, pp. 16–29, 53–69, 117–32.

a member of the Society of London Physicians and two years later he broke with the Company of Surgeons and became a licentiate of Royal College of Physicians (RCP). His degree pedigree made him ineligible for full fellowship – only those with medical degrees from the English universities Oxford or Cambridge could become fellows.¹¹ The RCP was a powerful body in London and while licentiates could not hold office or vote in RCP affairs, association allowed members to legally practice as physicians in London and offered members and associates a desirable social status.¹²

Hunter's reputation as a man-midwife increased, and in 1764, he became Physician-Extraordinary to Queen Charlotte. He went on to become a fellow of the Royal Society and the Society of Antiquaries. Appointed the first Professor of Anatomy to the newly founded Royal Academy of Arts in 1768, Hunter was committed to ensuring that artists of the day had a foundational understanding of human anatomy. Hunter had vast experience of tailoring his delivery of anatomical information to artists as he had delivered lectures on anatomy to artists in the second St Martin's Lane Academy (SMLA) as early as 1750.¹³ Here, he became acquainted with William Hogarth (1697–1764) and collaborated with various artists to make *écorchés* from the bodies of executed convicts that would be used to instruct artists on the musculature of the human body (a process he later repeated for artists in the RA).¹⁴ Hunter's plaster models of dissections of pregnant women were also made during this period and required a similar collaborative approach.¹⁵

11. CLARK, George, *A History of the Royal College of Physicians of London*, 4 vols., Oxford: Clarendon Press for the Royal College of Physicians, 1964, II, pp. 567–569.

12. For discussion on the Licentiates between 1752–1791, see *ibid.*, pp. 552–574.

13. BROCK, Helen C. (ed.), *William Hunter, 1718–1783: a memoir by Samuel Foart Simmons and John Hunter*, Glasgow: University of Glasgow Press, 1983, p. 9; see also BIGNAMINI, Ilaria and Martin POSTLE (eds.), *The artist's model: its role in British art from Lely to Etty*, Nottingham: University Art Gallery, 1991, p. 26 and pp. 42–43.

14. DULAU-BEVERIDGE, Anne, 'The Anatomist and the Artists: Hunter's involvement,' *William Hunter's World: The Art and Science of Eighteenth-Century Collecting*, HANCOCK, E. G., PEARCE, N. and M. CAMPBELL (eds.), London: Routledge, 2018 (hereafter *WHW*), pp. 81–95; BLACK, Peter, 'William Hunter: A Brief Account of His Life as an Art Collector,' *My Highest Pleasures: William Hunter's Art Collection*, London: Paul Holberton Publishing, 2007 (hereafter *MHP*), pp. 19–62; McCORMACK, Helen, *William Hunter and his Eighteenth-Century Cultural Worlds: The Anatomist and the Fine Arts*, London: Routledge, 2021, pp. 147–149; GAMER, Meredith, 'The Smugglerius, Re-Viewed,' *The Sculpture Journal* 28, no. 3 (2019): 331–344.

15. GAMER, Meredith, 'Scalpel to Burin: A Material History of William Hunter's *Anatomy of the Human Gravid Uterus*,' *WHTAMM*, pp. 109–126, especially 116; and also, CAMPBELL,

Caroline Grigson has given a concise, chronological account of the artists involved in Hunter's *Anatomia* project, including those he likely met through his membership in the Society of the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacturing and Commerce (from 1758).¹⁶ Anne Dulau Beveridge has summarised Hunter's numerous connections, friendships and working relationships with contemporary artists in the eighteenth century, including (among others) Alexander Cozens (1717–1786)¹⁷ and recent research has shown that Hunter's circle of anatomical artists was more extensive than previously known.¹⁸ Hunter himself stated that by 1768, he was 'pretty much acquainted with most of [Britain's] best artists and live[d] in friendship with them.'¹⁹ Hunter's wider influence on the formation of a British School of artists in the eighteenth century cannot be overstated.²⁰ Helen McCormack has argued that just as Hunter's membership in the SEA and his direct commissions to artists signal his patronage of artists, so too do his teachings and his provision of his library resources point to a broader form of patronage during this period.²¹ Hunter was widely read in art and aesthetic theory and his library was an important resource for artists.²² Anatomical drawings, prints and rare books held an important place in Hunter's library, but they were not just containers of anatomical knowledge; they were the material remnants of past collaborative image-making practices between anatomists and artists.

Mungo, 'The Anatomy of the Human Gravid Uterus,' *WHTAMM*, pp. 248–273.

16. GRIGSON, Caroline, '"An universal language": William Hunter and the production of *The Anatomy of the Human Gravid Uterus*,' *WHW*, pp. 59–80.

17. DULAU-BEVERIDGE, Anne, 'The Anatomist and the Artists,' *WHW*, p. 69.

18. HUGHES, Alicia, 'William Hunter and his anatomical artists,' *The British Art Journal* (forthcoming autumn 2022).

19. William Hunter to William Cullen, 1768, in BROCK, Helen C. (ed.), *The Correspondence of Dr William Hunter 1740–1783*, 2 vols, London: Pickering & Chatto, 2008, I: 288, Letter 169.

20. KEMP, Martin (ed.), *Dr. William Hunter at the Royal Academy of Arts*, Glasgow: University of Glasgow Press, 1975; CAMPBELL, Mungo, 'London's Loss?,' *MHP*, pp. 10–18; MCCORMACK, Helen, 'Dr. William Hunter's Lectures on Anatomy to Students at the Royal Academy of Arts,' *MHP*, pp. 167–174; MCCORMACK, Helen, *William Hunter and his Eighteenth-Century Cultural Worlds*, especially chapters 4 and 5.

21. MCCORMACK, Helen, *William Hunter and his Eighteenth-Century Cultural Worlds*, pp. 75–97.

22. BLACK, Peter, 'Taste and the Anatomist,' *MHP*, pp. 63–100.

Collaborative anatomical image-making

Within medical history, Hunter is remembered for his discoveries related to the lymphatic system and the anatomy of the pregnant uterus.²³ He was an anatomy lecturer who influenced a new generation of man-midwives, and he produced a grand illustrated book entitled, *Anatomia uteri humani gravidi tabulis illustrata / The anatomy of the human gravid uterus exhibited in figures* (Figure 2). Work on the book began in 1750 but it was not published until 1774. The lavishly illustrated elephant folio contains thirty-four plates with life-size engravings that depict pregnant women who have been progressively dissected to reveal the anatomy of the pregnant uterus through the stages of foetal-gestation (which are shown in reverse from full-term to conception) (Figure 3). The seventy-nine drawings were primarily made by the Dutch artist Jan van Rymsdyk (d. 1790) but artists such as Alexander Cozens also made contributions (Figure 4). The drawings were reproduced in print by a team of engravers that included the Scottish artist Robert Strange (1721–1792). Recent examination of the material remnants of the book's production that were retained within Hunter's collection (including preparatory drawings, tracings and proof engravings) and which survive in the University of Glasgow Library Special Collections offer a rare glimpse into Hunter's collaborative image-making practices and process of designing the book.²⁴ Unlike the Van Horne/Sagemolen drawings, the original drawings for Hunter's *Anatomia* were not used in teaching; their pedagogical purpose was in their engraved reproductions.²⁵

23. See, for instance, EALES, N., 'The History of the Lymphatic System, with Special Reference to the Hunter Monro controversy,' *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 29 (1974): 280–94; OLLERENSHAW, Robert, 'Dr Hunter's "Gravid uterus" – a bi-centenary note,' *Medical and Biological Illustration* 24 (1974): 43–57; THORNTON, John L., 'William Hunter: The Anatomy of the Human Gravid Uterus 1774–1974,' *Obstetrical and Gynecological Survey* 29, no. 7 (1974): 447–49.

24. See Chapter 2 in HUGHES, Alicia, 'Creating and controlling a visual language: Authorial control and Image-making in William Hunter's collection of anatomical drawings' (PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2021).

25. Given that Van Horne's drawings were kept with his private collection and he also gave private lessons in his home, Tim Huisman suggests that the pedagogical use of the drawings is likely: 'Van Horne's collection – the anatomical plates, the models and the zoological and anatomical preparations – was probably also used in his *privatissima*.' See p. 70 and p. 75 in HUISMAN, Tim, *The Finger of God: Anatomical Practice in 17th Century Leiden*, Leiden: Primavera Pers, 2009.

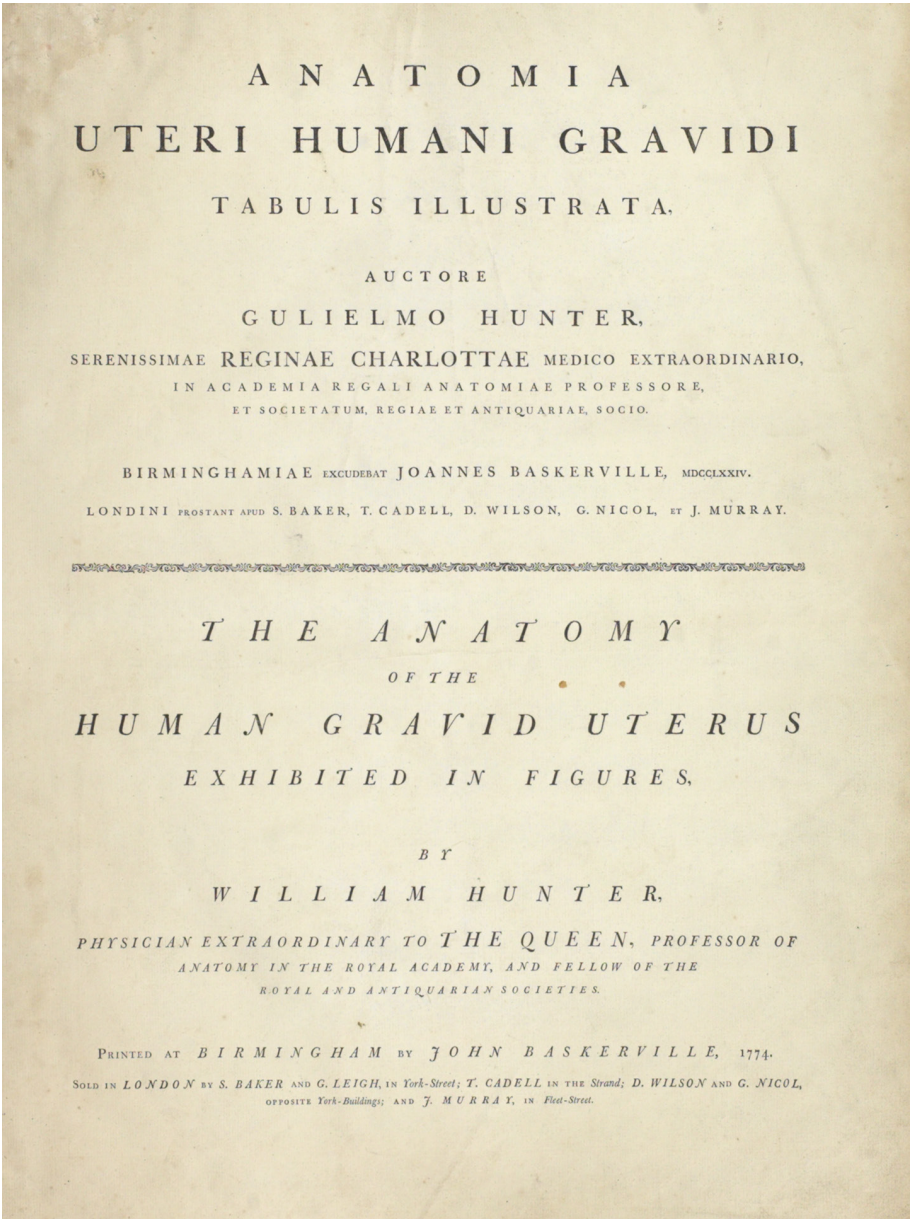


Figure 2.

Title page of William Hunter, *Anatomia uteri humani gravidi tabulis illustrata* / *The Anatomy of the Human Gravid Uterus, exhibited in figures* (Birmingham: Baskerville, 1774). Sp. Coll. Hunterian Az.5.3.
University of Glasgow Library, Archives and Special Collections



Figure 3.

Robert Strange (Scottish, 1721–1792) after Jan van Rymsdyk (Dutch, d. 1790),
Engraving for plate 6 in William Hunter, *Anatomia uteri humani gravidi ta-
bulis illustrata* / *The Anatomy of the Human Gravid Uterus, exhibited in figures*
(Birmingham, 1774), 1751. Engraving on paper sheet, 68 x 49.5 cm. Plate:
58.4 x 43.8 cm. Sp. Coll. Hunterian Az.5.3.

University of Glasgow Library, Archives and Special Collections



Figure 4.

Jan van Rymsdyk (Dutch, d. 1790), Drawing for plate 6 in William Hunter, *The Anatomy of the Human Gravid Uterus, exhibited in figures* (Birmingham, 1774) 1750. Red chalk and touches of black on paper, 48.2 x 46.7 cm. Inscribed: 'J. V. Rymsdyk Fec. 1750'. Sp. Coll. Hunterian Az.1.4.
University of Glasgow Library, Archives and Special Collections

Forming a collection

Despite the importance of the original drawings for *Anatomia*, they represent only a small portion of Hunter's larger collection of commissioned anatomical drawings and prints. The wider collection was formed through Hunter's professional practice as an anatomist (which included the making of anatomical preparations), and it developed in tandem with his collecting of rare fifteenth- to eighteenth-century anatomical drawings and prints. In a letter to the Swiss anatomist Albrecht von Haller (1708–1777) in 1773, Hunter outlined the highlights of his collection: in addition to drawings of anatomical *écorché* figures by Pietro da Cortona (1596–1669), one of the most important Baroque painters of the seventeenth century that he received as a gift from Sir William Hamilton, ambassador in Naples, he boasted of his collection of the 'original Drawings of Vesalius, of Cowper, of Douglas, & of Smellie' (emphasis original).²⁶ Here Hunter refers to the anatomists Andreas Vesalius (1514–1564), William Cowper (1666–1709), James Douglas (bap. 1675–1709), and William Smellie (1697–1763). In doing so, he pointed to important historical and contemporary anatomists whom he considered to have advanced the development of not only anatomy, but also (with the exception of Douglas) the naturalistic representation of the human body in anatomical art.

Hunter's professional and authorial practices were greatly informed by those of his mentor, Dr. James Douglas, whom he worked for in 1741–42. From his initial arrival in London in 1700, Douglas's primary profession was as a physician, anatomist, and a man-midwife and he pursued his interest in generation, what we would call reproduction, through a variety of research interests including anatomy, comparative anatomy and botany.²⁷

26. William Hunter to Albrecht von Haller, 31 August 1773, in BROCK, Helen, *The Correspondence of Dr. William Hunter*, London: Pickering & Chatto, 2007, II, p. 129, Letter 296. For the Cortona drawings, see KEMP, Martin, 'Dr. William Hunter on the Windsor Leonardos and his Volume of Drawings Attributed to Pietro da Cortona,' in *The Burlington Magazine* 118, no. 876 (Mar. 1976): 144–148.

27. For the terminological shift from 'generation' to 'reproduction', see HOPWOOD, Nick, 'The Keywords 'Generation' and 'Reproduction,'" *Reproduction: antiquity to the present day*, HOPWOOD, N., FLEMMING, R. and L. KASSELL (eds.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018, pp. 287–304. For Douglas's interest in comparative anatomy and osteology, see FLIS, Nathan, 'Skeletons in Hunter's Closet: James Douglas and the fashioning of William Hunter,' *WHTAMM*, pp. 49–71. Anita Guerrini has recently recovered Douglas's reputation as a pioneering anatomist and entrepreneurial lecturer. See 'Anatomists and Entrepreneurs in Early Eighteenth-Century London,' *Journal of History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 59, no. 2

He regularly delivered papers at the Royal Society (where he was a Fellow) that recounted his discoveries within a wide range of disciplines, including botany, zoology and the anatomy of the female body and the pregnant uterus. Douglas's archive of drawings and papers was the first significant body of material to enter Hunter's collection.²⁸ This body of material was effectively the foundation of Hunter's broader collection of objects and was, as Nathan Flis has recently characterised, the 'paper archive' that 'formed the nucleus of Hunter's museum and library.'²⁹ The exact circumstances of how Douglas's paper archive came to be in Hunter's collection remain unclear. As Hunter continued to live in the Douglas household after his mentor's death in 1742, C. Helen Brock speculated that they were sold to Hunter after Douglas's son William George abandoned medicine or were given to him in return for looking after Mrs Douglas's health.³⁰ While the exact nature of this inheritance is difficult to determine, the Douglas collection is the largest body of material in Hunter's collection and includes thousands of drawings and engravings on osteological subjects, female reproductive anatomy, Douglas's research on the peritoneum (for which he is mainly remembered), and many more subjects. Recent research has demonstrated that Hunter's access to Douglas's projected but never published illustrated book 'Gyneciorum Prodromus' on female reproductive anatomy uterus provided an important source of early eighteenth-century visual material on the anatomy of the pregnant uterus.³¹

(2004): 219–39. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jhmas/jrh067>

28. BROCK, C. H., *Dr. James Douglas's Papers and drawings in the Hunterian Collection, Glasgow University Library: a handlist*, Glasgow: Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine, University of Glasgow, 1994.

29. FLIS, Nathan, 'Skeletons in Hunter's Closet,' *WHTAMM*, p. 51.

30. BROCK, C. H., *Dr. James Douglas's Papers and drawings*, 2; see also 'James Douglas of the Pouch,' *Proceedings of the Scottish Society of the History of Medicine* (1974): 162–172.

31. See Chapter 1 in Alicia HUGHES, 'Creating and controlling a visual language: Authorial control and image-making in William Hunter's collection of anatomical drawings and prints' (PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2021).



Figure 5.

François Boitard (French c. 1670–1715), Drawing of anterior view of dissection of foetus in utero, for James Douglas's (Scottish, bap. 1675–1742) projected 'Gyneciorum prodromus'. c. 1715. Grey ink and wash on paper, 44.3 x 29.5 cm.
Ms Douglas DF86/15.

University of Glasgow Library, Archives and Special Collections

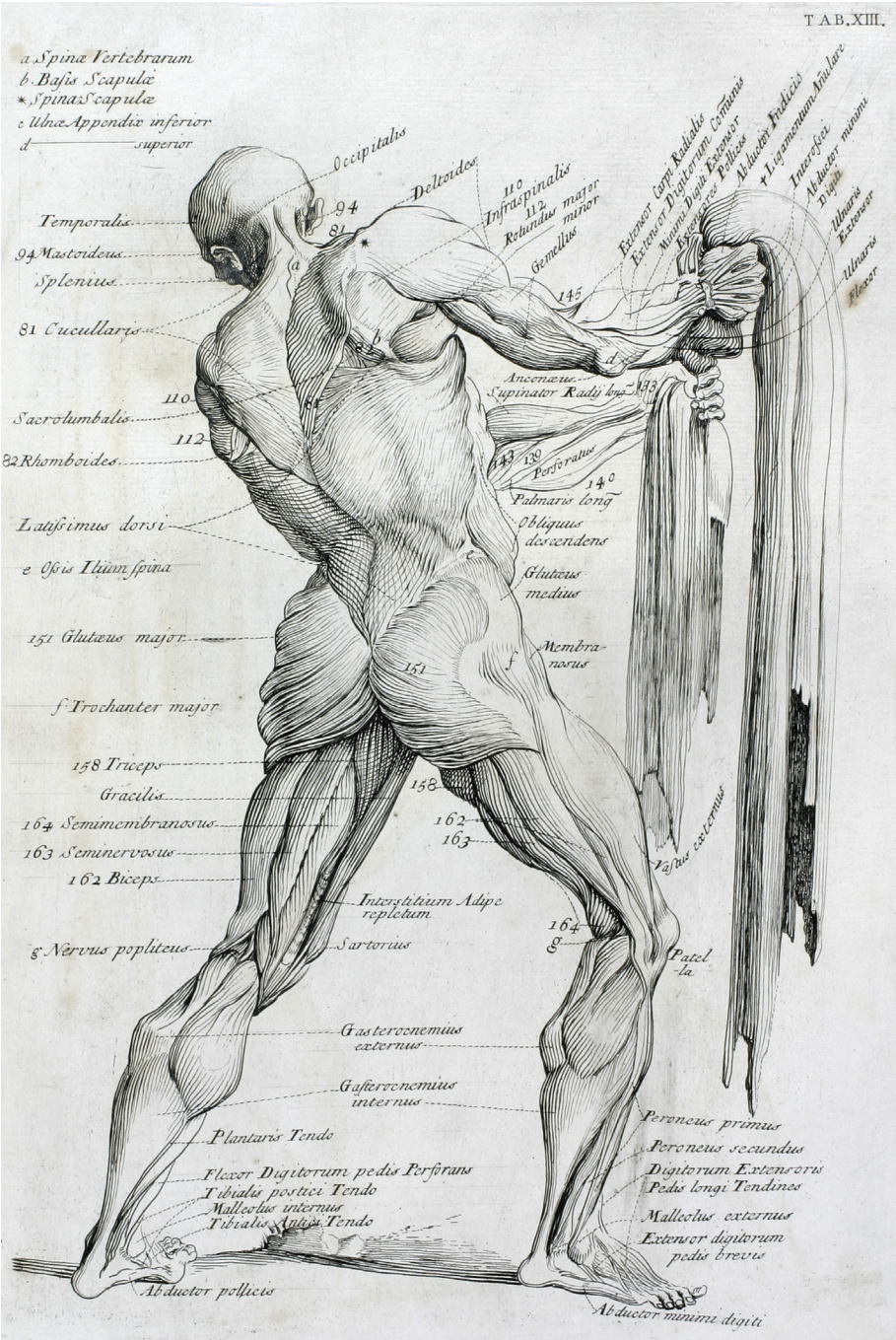


Figure 6.

Michael Vandergucht (Dutch 1660–1725) after William Cowper (English 1666–1709), Table 13 in William Cowper's *Myotomia Reformata* (London, 1724), c. 1698–1709. Sp. Coll. Hunterian Ay.2.3.
University of Glasgow Library, Archives and Special Collections

After Douglas's paper archive, the anatomical drawings and prints by the English anatomist-artist William Cowper was the largest body of material that Hunter acquired for his collection. Cowper was recognised as a fine anatomist and skilled artist during his lifetime, and he was Hunter's most distinguished predecessor as anatomist to artists in London.³² One only has to look to Cowper's student, the surgeon William Cheselden (1688-1752), and the artist William Hogarth to see Cowper's impact on eighteenth-century artists. After studying with Cowper, Cheselden went on to have a very successful practice, to publish his own illustrated anatomical book and to teach anatomy to artists at St Martin's Lane Academy (which was founded by Hogarth). Likewise, the second edition of Cowper's *Myotomia Reformata* (1724) (Figure 6) became an important book for artists; Hogarth famously included Cowper's plate showing dissections of a muscular leg in Plate 1 of his *Analysis of Beauty* (1753). Hunter acquired Cowper's drawings and prints (including preparatory and finished drawings for the famous plate with the progressively dissected leg) from the posthumous sale of the collection of the physician-collector Richard Mead (1673-1754) in 1755, five years after Hunter himself began teaching anatomy to artists in the St Martin's Lane Academy and around the same time that he completed the second phase of work on his dissections and images for his *Anatomia*.

The 'Cowper collection' is often referred to collectively but is actually formed of a bound manuscript volume with drawings pasted into it and two unbound bundles of loose drawings and prints. In total there are over 300 drawings and prints (Figure 7). Hunter paid £16.0.0 for the bound manuscript volume, which contained fifty-six drawings and £0.19.6 for the two bundles of loose prints and drawings.³³ One of the main reasons for the huge discrepancy in the price was the presentation of the drawings and the lack of attributed author for the loose drawings and prints. The drawings mainly relate to the second edition of *Myotomia Reformata* (1724), a book on

32. For Cowper's role as anatomist to artists, see BIGNAMINI, Ilaria, 'George Vertue, Art Historian and Art Institutions in London 1689-1768,' *The Volume of the Walpole Society*, 54 (1988): 33-34. For Hunter's relationships with artists, see BIGNAMINI, I. and M. POSTLE (eds.), *The artist's model: its role in British art from Lely to Etty*, pp. 42-43; DULAU-BEVERIDGE, Anne, 'The Anatomist and the Artists,' *WHW*, pp. 81-95. See also MCCORMACK, Helen, *William Hunter and his Eighteenth-Century Cultural Worlds*, chapters 4 and 5.

33. LANGFORD, Abraham, *A catalogue of the genuine, entire and curious collection of prints and drawings (bound and unbound) of the late Doctor Mead*, London, 1755. Annotated prices are taken from the copy of the catalogue in the British Library (BL C.28.g.15. (2.)) which is bound with Bibliotheca Meadiana.



Figure 7.

William Cowper (English, 1666 - 1709), Écorché figure, c. 1690-1709, gouache on paper. Ms Cowper 655.

University of Glasgow Library, Archives and Special Collections

the muscles in the human body, illustrated with engravings after drawings made by Cowper himself. In addition to the finished drawings for the project (many of which still have the chalk transfer on the recto), there are multiple proof prints, worked up with gouache. They reveal the many stages of collaborative anatomical image-making, from drawing to engraving to published print.³⁴

34. At present, Ms Hunter 655 is stored in seven boxes. Items are not yet catalogued individually. Cataloguing of individual items within Ms Hunter 655 would enable and encourage further research on this significant collection in the future.



Figure 8.

Jan van Rymsdyk (Dutch, d.1790), Drawing for Plate 16 in William Smellie's *A sett of anatomical tables, with explanations, and an abridgment, of the practice of midwifery* (London, 1754). Sp. Coll. Hunterian DI.1.27.
University of Glasgow Library, Archives and Special Collections

Hunter also collected drawings with which he had a personal connection, such as those by Jan van Rymsdyk for the man-midwife William Smellie (1697–1763) (Figure 8). Smellie was a former mentor and a professional rival to Hunter. Rymsdyk's drawings were published in Smellie's book, *A sett of anatomical tables, with explanations, and an abridgment, of the practice of midwifery* in 1754. The original drawings passed to Smellie's successor and son-in-law John Harvie, and Hunter acquired them when Harvie's effects were sold at auction in 1770. The drawings have a more schematic appearance than the hyper-detailed images for Hunter but are made in Rymsdyk's characteristic red chalk. Recent research has demonstrated that Smellie's book (and quite possibly Rymsdyk's original drawings) provided a catalyst for the commencement of Hunter's work on his own book in the winter of 1750.³⁵

Tensions in collaborative image-making

Hunter's commissioned drawings raise questions around authorship and artistic agency in collaborative image-making practices. Close visual and material analysis of one particularly perplexing drawing is revealing of the tensions within the professional relationship between anatomist and artist.

Between 1764 and 1766 Rymsdyk made a full-size red chalk drawing of a dissected pregnant woman for Hunter's *Anatomia*. The drawing shows the woman's abdominal walls dissected and reflected outwards to reveal her unopened pregnant uterus (Figure 9). In many regards, the life-size drawing is very similar to the first drawing Rymsdyk made for Hunter in 1750 which serves as the opening image to *Anatomia* (Figure 10). The composition is tightly cropped to focus the viewer's gaze inwards onto the woman's body and Rymsdyk's use of foreshortened perspective and careful shading creates the illusion of the woman's large, pregnant uterus protruding outwards into the viewer's space. As with Rymsdyk's earlier drawing, draped cloth is shown arranged around the thighs and the torso in the upper and lower parts of the drawing. The women's thighs are similarly shown spread open. However, while the earlier drawing gives us an intimate, unimpeded view of the woman's

35. For a full discussion of the process and significance of Hunter's acquisition of these drawings, see the Prelude in Alicia HUGHES, 'Creating and controlling a visual language' (PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2021).



Figure 9.

Jan van Rymsdyk (Dutch, d. 1790), Drawing for Plate 26 Figure 1 in William Hunter, *The Anatomy of the Human Gravid Uterus, exhibited in figures* (Birmingham, 1774) c. 1764–66. Red chalk and touches of black on paper.

Approximately 46.2 x 44.7 cm. Ms Hunter 658 (Az.1.4).

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vulva, the second drawing includes a small, bound book that has been positioned between this woman's thighs, covering that intimate part from our gaze.³⁶

The book has a tooled leather spine (with a fleur-de-lys design) that is positioned in line with the centre of the image. The bottom edge of the book is opened into a V-shape that mimics the spread thighs. The top edge of the book is in line with the edges of the dissected abdominal wall and mimics the base of the pregnant uterus. The pages of the book appear to leaf inwards. The presence and position of the book in this drawing is an anomaly among Rymsdyk's commissioned drawings for Hunter and his wider oeuvre and it is unclear where the impulse to include this object originated. As Lyle Massey remarks:

[I]t would be interesting to know who decided that a book should be placed in front of the pubis in this drawing, since it indicates some equivocation about how much the image should reveal. Given Hunter's own predilections and the character of Rymsdyk's other drawings, it seems unlikely that it was placed there simply to block a prurient gaze or to protect the viewer's more delicate sensibilities.³⁷

Massey suggests that the inclusion of the book may have been 'designed to distance the viewer and help dissipate the drawing's uncanny effects,' but also notes that Hunter shows no such sensitivity elsewhere in his commissioned drawings.³⁸ The inclusion and placement of this book is fundamentally at odds with the extensive and uncompromising exposure of women's bodies through dissection seen throughout the rest of the drawings for *Anatomia*.

This drawing presents a series of questions that go to the heart of the collaborative process of image-making and issues of authorial control. For instance, was the book real or imagined? Did Hunter himself position it in this intimate position for Rymsdyk to record? Anatomists such as Vesalius and Bidloo incorporated books into their anatomical images as symbols of learning and knowledge; is the book, in this intimate position (as fig leaves might shield Eve), symbolic of *Anatomia*'s disclosure of the secrets of female

36. Despite the fascinating questions that this drawings raises, literature on the drawings is scarce. See for example MASSEY, Lyle, 'Pregnancy and Pathology: Picturing Childbirth in Eighteenth-Century Obstetric Atlases,' *The Art Bulletin* 87, no. 1 (2005): 84-85; MATTHEWS, Tina, 'William Hunter and women,' *ACP news* (Spring 2005): 21-23.

37. MASSEY, L., 'Pregnancy and Pathology,' 84-85.

38. *Ibid*, 85.

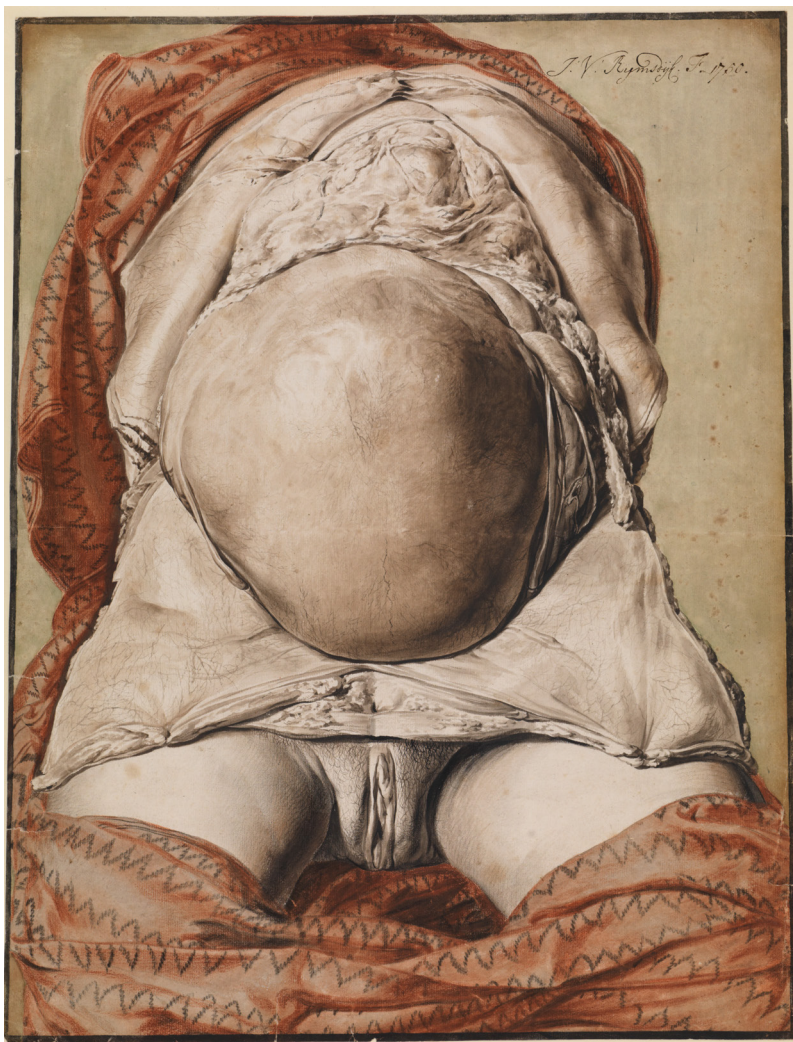


Figure 10.

Jan van Rymsdyk (Dutch, d. 1790), Drawing for Plate 1 in William Hunter, *The Anatomy of the Human Gravid Uterus, exhibited in figures* (Birmingham, 1774) 1750. Red and black chalk with brown wash on paper, 48.2 x 46.7 cm. Inscribed: 'J. V. Rymsdyk Fec. 1750.' Ms Hunter 658 (Az.1.4).

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anatomy and its ability to produce life? Or is it the product of a later (perhaps nineteenth-century) attempt at censorship? While there is a possibility that the drawing originally included the exposed vulva and the book was a later addition intended to censor the image, close examination of the drawing indicates that this is unlikely: there is no wear to the paper to indicate rubbing or removal of the vulva from the drawing and the book is executed in the same red-brown chalk as the rest of the drawing. The lack of wear, the similar medium and the effort that has been made to integrate the object with the subject by including the book's shadow onto the woman's thighs makes it unlikely that its inclusion was a later censorship. Furthermore, the book represented in the drawing (which appears to be an English octavo) may well relate to several in Hunter's own collection. The leather binding, the extra decoration on the boards and the filleting in the book's spine indicate lavishness and expense and several books from the mid-to late eighteenth century in Hunter's library use similar fleur-de-lys spine tools on the binding.³⁹ Thus, we can be relatively sure that the inclusion of the book within the drawing was made in the eighteenth century, and that Rymsdyk was the artist responsible for its inclusion.

Ascertaining that the rendering of the book was indeed made by Rymsdyk during the execution of the larger drawing raises our next question: was a book physically placed beside the body during the dissection or is it a product of the artist's observation that occurred out of sight of the dissected subject and was later imagined to be part of the original observation? Although the double fillet running the parameter of the book's boards is customary for the eighteenth-century, the board decoration has not been identified. This could suggest that Rymsdyk took a real fleur-de-lys design from the spine of a book on one of Hunter's bookshelves (it is an easy pattern to reproduce) but used his imagination for the rest of the binding. While Rymsdyk's careful shading gives some sense of the book as a three-dimensional object, closer inspection raises questions about the 'fit' of the object within the image. For example, if we look closely at the fall of light on the pregnant uterus and the book, the representation of the shadows cast by these two elements are inconsistent, suggesting light sources from different directions. Rymsdyk

39. Many thanks to Michelle Craig for sharing her knowledge of the physical attributes of books in Hunter's library via email correspondence on 3 February 2020. Covid-19 restrictions in 2020 prevented further research and cross-referencing of specific volumes, so I cannot give more information at this moment.

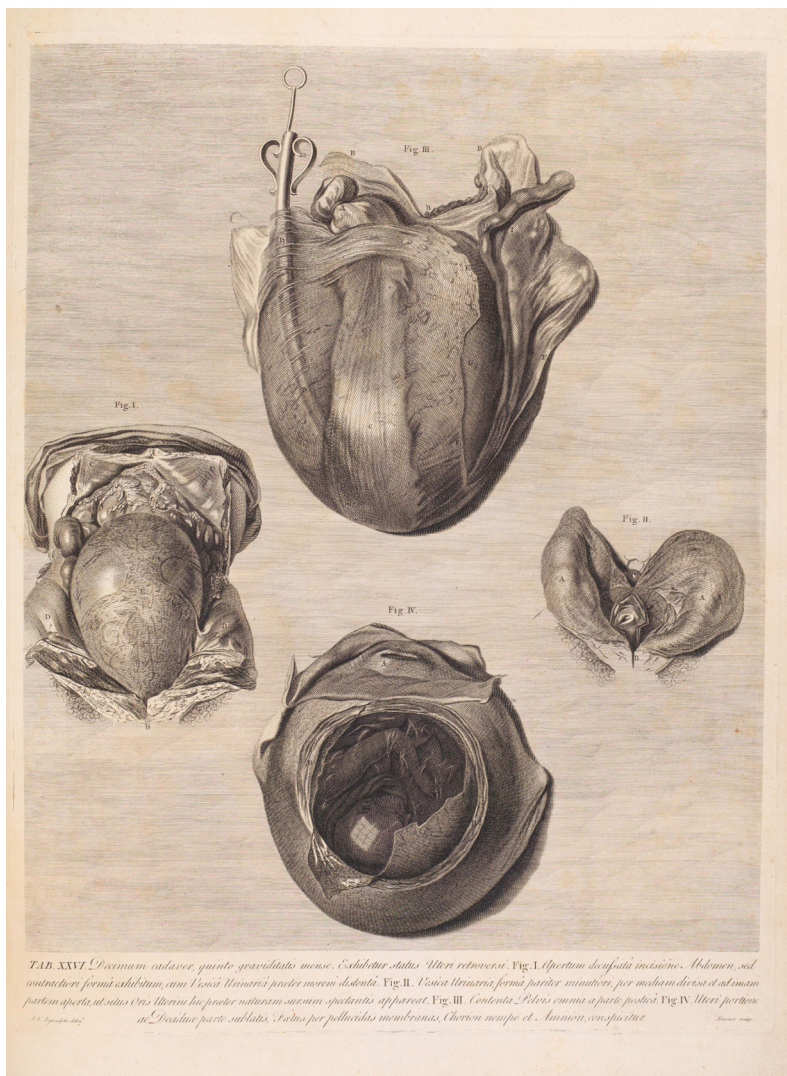


Figure 11.

François-Germain Aliamet (French, 1734–1790) after Jan van Rymsdyk (Dutch, d. 1790), Engraving for plate 26 in William Hunter, *The Anatomy of the Human Gravid Uterus, exhibited in figures* (Birmingham, 1774). Engraving on paper sheet, 68 x 49.5 cm. Plate: 58.4 x 43.8 cm. Sp. Coll. Hunterian Az.5.3. University of Glasgow Library, Archives and Special Collections

was certainly skilled enough to represent an open book naturalistically integrated with a dissected body if he had opportunity to observe such a subject first-hand, so this could confirm that he never in fact had this opportunity and the book was never physically placed beside the body of the woman at any stage of the dissection process. If we accept that the evidence thus far indicates that Rymsdyk added the book to the drawing in its final stages of completion (after prioritising and finalising the exposed pregnant uterus), this would then support the proposition that the book was not a component observed next to the body during the dissection process but an experimental and composite artistic element made from: the artist's separate observations of actual objects (the dissected woman and the spine of the book); imagination (the board decoration of the book); and artistic license (the placing of the book between the woman's thighs). While it is difficult to be definitively certain, this drawing appears to point to an occasion on which Rymsdyk resisted Hunter's authorial control and introduced a composite artistic experiment into the anatomist's programme of empirical observation.

Whatever the circumstances of the production of Rymsdyk's original drawing, its engraved reproduction in *Anatomia* tells us how Hunter reacted to Rymsdyk's artistic experiment: the image was significantly reduced, and the book has vanished (Figure 11).⁴⁰ Instead of being reproduced at its original life-size, the image was scaled down to fit alongside three other images on a plate. The reduction in the size of the image is one of the most obvious examples of the authorial control that Hunter wielded over the project; the disappearance of the book is very likely another. The inclusion of the book does not support Hunter's programme of epistemological naturalism. In fact, the book (an element not observed in the dissection room) actually undermined the empirical veracity of the rest of *Anatomia's* images. As such, it had to be edited out. Rymsdyk's assertion of his artistic agency occurred immediately following his return from Bristol after failing to achieve his aspiration to be a portrait painter and it points to a particularly tense moment in the anatomist-artist relationship. Broadly speaking, the making and reproduction of this extraordinary drawing is indicative of the complex negotiations and tensions within the collaborative relationship of anatomist and artist in the eighteenth century.

40. Massey previously noted that the book and the legs disappeared from the engraving but did not comment on the reduction in the scale of the image when it was translated from drawing to engraving. See 'Pregnancy and Pathology,' 85.

Conclusion

In outlining the formation of Hunter's collection and interrogating the tensions within anatomical drawings and prints present, this essay has offered a new understanding of Hunter's collecting activities and deepened our knowledge of collaborative image-making practices. This overview and analysis reveals opportunities for further research that will continue to develop our understanding of the interconnected relationship between art and science and knowledge production in the early modern period. In particular, the material that passed to Hunter via James Douglas speaks to how natural and scientific subjects and objects were investigated, published and consumed. The translation of these objects through visual and graphic representations was crucial, but our understanding of the different stages and nuances within the image-making and reproduction process remain unclear. Proofs of engravings made in the process of producing books during this period are key to understanding intellectual and artistic processes in collaborative image-making, but such proofs are extremely rare; Hunter's collection contains proof prints in different states and with workings and annotations of this type that can deepen our understanding of knowledge producing practices that were supported and facilitated through image-making, designing, editing and book production. The Cowper collection contains similar material along with original drawings, but its uncatalogued status is a significant barrier. Cataloguing and digitisation of this material would significantly increase access to the collection. Just as conservation scholars have demonstrated in the case of the Van Horne/Sagemolen drawings, close examination and analysis of drawings during conversation research can provide a wealth of new information about artistic practices during this period.⁴¹ Ultimately, an interdisciplinary approach, which allows for a close examination of physical objects while also placing their creation in an historical and cultural context and considering their provenance and longer institutional histories, will reveal much richer understandings of the significance of such objects and their histories.

41. See DAUGA, N., SILVIE, N., COURAL, N., EVENO, M., 'Le corpus de dessins de Marten Sagemolen: étude matérielle et interventions de conservation-restauration' and VINCENT, Jean-François, 'Les Ms 27 à 30 de la BIU Santé: une visite guidée' within this collection.