

# Rome in London: Richard Du Bourg, Cork Modelling, and the Virtual Grand Tour

Rees Arnott-Davies

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Article abstract

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## *Romanticism on the Net*

### **Rome in London: Richard Du Bourg, Cork Modelling, and the Virtual Grand Tour**

Rees Arnott-Davies  
Birkbeck College, University of London

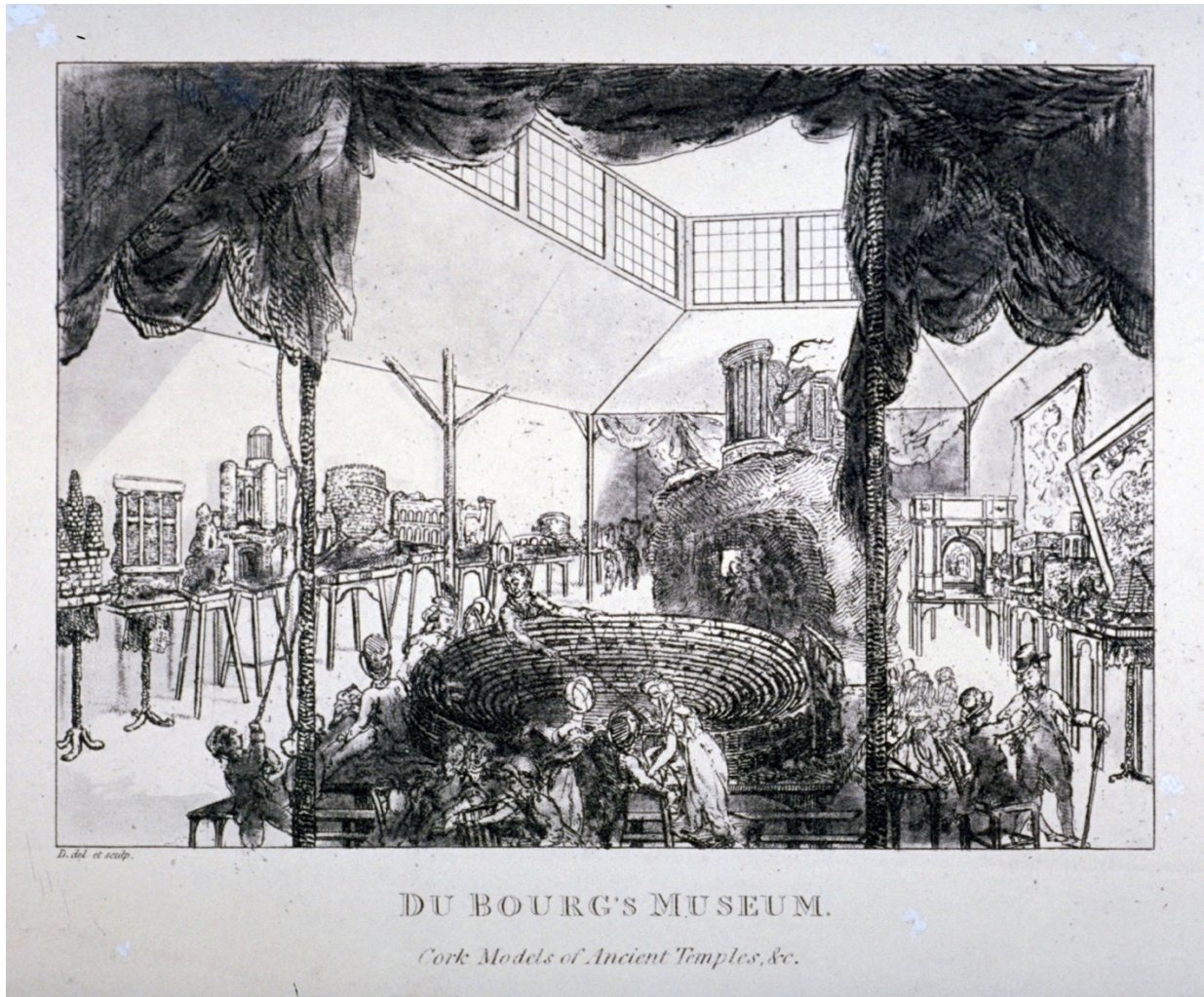
#### **Abstract**

Richard Du Bourg (1738-1826) is a neglected figure in accounts of British antiquarian museum culture. However, for nearly fifty years his 'museum', located in exhibition spaces across London, was a key site for public engagement with classical antiquity. Du Bourg's relief models in cork of Roman, Greek and British monuments and ruins attracted a heterogeneous audience including nobility, merchants, architects, artisans and children. This article focuses on the final iteration of the museum at Lower Grosvenor Street between 1802 and its sale at auction in 1819; shedding new light on the innovative modes of representation and display that were incorporated by Du Bourg into his modelling and exhibition practice, and the forms of sociability fostered by such modes. With a focus on the single surviving illustration of the museum, this article carefully unpacks the layers of historical and cultural meaning sedimented in such two-dimensional images, contributing to methodological debates on the writing of cultural histories through images of and from the past.

#### **Biographical Note**

Rees Arnott-Davies is a doctoral student at Birkbeck College, University of London. His work centres on the intersection of ekphrasis and other strategies for the representation of classical art and artefacts within the 'reproductive ecology' of the eighteenth-century Museum.

1. In an engraving from 1808-1809, the cork modeller Richard Du Bourg (1738-1826) represents his “Museum [of] Cork Models of Ancient Temples, &c.” as a complicated hub of intellectual activity, sociability, and classical architecture.



**Figure 1: Richard Du Bourg, *Du Bourg's Museum*, 1808-09**  
**London Metropolitan Archives, City of London**

The print was used as a handbill advertising the show, offering “an excellent sense of the exhibition space and the exhibits” and an emblematic image of the exhibitor and his audience (Gillespie 12). The exhibition room is presented through a curtain suggestive of a proscenium arch, with its dark folds raised by a young visitor, or perhaps an assistant to Du Bourg. Extending at eye-level along both walls of the interior are a series of models, mostly depicting Roman architectural ruins, and under each model a label with a number. A little behind the curtains in

the centre of the roof sit clerestory windows, pouring light from above on the tangle of monuments and spectators. The spectators themselves are a mix of ages and sexes: in the background a child is encouraged to study a model by a parent or tutor; at the centre of the image an elderly Du Bourg presides over a large model of the amphitheatre in Verona, with a stick in his hand used to indicate particular points of interest to a group of a dozen or so visitors. Many of these young men and women appear absorbed, however others to the right are distracted by the pleasures of conversation, a group of girls in the immediate foreground are enjoying a joke with one another, and a man in a top hat has turned his back on us, gazing at the model of the Tomb of Caecilia Metella on the Via Appia in Rome. Fantastically crowded into the print, on the right-hand wall of the exhibition room, is a map of Rome, while in the middle of the Room, behind Du Bourg himself looms a model of the Temple of Vesta at Tivoli resting on an artificial rock: the two combined are easily double the size of even the tallest visitor and offer an imposing focal point at the centre of the exhibition. Finally, at the back of the exhibition space is a curtained off section in relative darkness, a mirror of the similarly curtained space from which the view is taken.

2. The image is crowded, and an initial gesture towards coherent linear perspective in the layout of the space is quickly sacrificed for the sake of including more information; ink overwhelms much of the lower portion of the page as the audience jostles for position with furniture, models, or one another. However, rather than simply the product of an overambitious hand, or a naive eye, this print is the result of a pragmatic effort to best represent the museum and its—at times complicit, at others conflicted—relationship with English antiquarian and exhibition culture at the turn of the nineteenth century. Much like the contemporaneous graphic representations of Royal Academy Exhibitions analysed by C.S. Matheson, it served to disseminate “information about the physical arrangement of the gallery space, the art works which collectively form its display and, more obliquely, about the character, social location and deportment of spectators” (Matheson 39). Its visual density is a reflection of an intricate network of cultural, social and intellectual concerns. The exhibition—and Du Bourg’s modelling career between 1771 and 1819—was shaped by its response to these concerns, and it invites a number of questions that are integral to my argument. How could a few models, built of cork, glue and paint, legitimately claim to represent the monuments of antiquity? What epistemological and aesthetic claims was such a representational strategy predicated on? Who was the appropriate audience for such an exhibition—what gender, class, educational status? What was its relationship to the Grand Tour,

and the experience of travellers partaking in it? How did it contribute to or conflict with contemporary British culture(s) of classical antiquity? What social purpose could this culture serve in national life? What desires did it recruit or foment to this end?

3. Du Bourg—engraver, modeller and proprietor in one—had been highly attentive to the syntax and vocabulary informing the reproduction and display of classical antiquity in late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century London, and his exhibition was developed in dialogue with the wider field of antiquarian representations of Rome. Produced towards the end of his career, when the layout, contents, and location of the museum had become more or less fixed, the dense inking of this print appears an archaeological site in the midst of excavation, whose layers give clues to the history of the exhibition. In figuratively returning this flat image to its three-dimensional embodiment as an exhibition of architectural models, I hope to offer an account of how its development was informed by a relationship to the larger constellation of antiquarian representations, both visual and verbal, in circulation in Britain and Europe in this period. I also hope to contribute to methodological debates on the writing of cultural histories through images of and from the past, suggesting a strategy of interpretation that is dialogic and diachronic: pointing out the conversations and the histories that inform the image in the apparent singularity of its moment. A diverse combination of forms of sociability, modes of reproduction, and methods of display alive in London exhibition and antiquarian culture were strategically composed and recomposed in Du Bourg’s museum over the course of nearly half a century, collaborating in its exhibition of antiquarian models. Unpicking this combination will help us to come to a richer understanding of not only the exhibition culture that framed Du Bourg’s Museum, but also the wider antiquarian media ecology within which it operated and through which it circulated.

## **I. Du Bourg’s Museum of Cork Models, 1776-1819**

4. Baptised on the 4th of February 1738 (1739) in Saint Pancras Parish, the son of Henricus Dubourg, a French immigrant from Le Catelet in Normandy, and Sarah Lunn, an Englishwoman, Du Bourg’s early professional training came in drawing (London Metropolitan Archives; Catholic Family History Society).<sup>1</sup> In the mid-1750s he studied at the second St Martin’s Lane Academy founded by Hogarth in 1735, learning alongside “Messrs Griggs, Rowe, R. [...] J. Tayor, J.S. Dance, J. Seton, and T. Radcliffe” under the supervision of the painter and engraver

Francis Hayman. Decades later, one of those fellow students, John Taylor, would nostalgically remember them as “seven British worthies as good, if not so wise, as the seven of Greece” (*Somerset House Gazette and Literary Museum* 25 October 1823 347-348). In 1755 Du Bourg won fourth place and an award of two guineas for his submission of “a head of St. Paul” to a competition for drawings by artists between the age of fourteen and seventeen being administered by the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (Royal Society of Arts). After this Du Bourg must have travelled to Italy: in his published travels, Benjamin Silliman (1779-1864) reported that “this very ingenious man, Du Bourg, a Frenchman, from an actual residence of nine years in Italy, gained the information necessary for the execution of his wonderful work,” and “has contrived by the aid of cork alone, with a little cement and paint, to give perfect copies of some of the most admired ruins of antiquity” (I 246-247). Though Du Bourg is not listed in Richard Hayward’s (1728-1800) list of British travellers to Rome, this may be because, as demonstrated by Silliman, he was often identified as a Frenchman (Stainton). The residence must have concluded by 1771 when he first exhibited a model of the Temple of Fortuna Virilis in Rome at the annual exhibition of the Royal Society of Artists of Great Britain in Spring Gardens, giving his address as “Mr Rogers’s, ironmonger, in Bread-street, Cheapside” (*Catalogue of the Pictures* 1771, 16). He is listed again in their 1775 catalogue, this time exhibiting a “Model of the Amphitheatre of Vespasian, at Rome” (otherwise known as the Coliseum) (*Catalogue of the Pictures* 1775 8). During this time Du Bourg must have been rapidly building his collection, as the following year he began exhibiting on St Alban’s Street, before moving in 1778 to Savile Row, and in 1779 to 17 Duke Street (his home for the next twenty years) (*Morning Post and Daily Advertiser* 8 May 1776; *Gazetteer and Daily Advertiser* 2 June 1778; *General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer* 1 March 1779). By this time the collection comprised twenty-one models, sixteen of which were Roman.<sup>2</sup> The exhibition at Duke Street appears to have been a success, and by 1785 Du Bourg had moved his exhibition into the Great Room at Spring Gardens, perhaps the most popular private exhibition hall in eighteenth-century London, and formerly home to Cox’s Museum (*Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser* 28 February 1785). By now the collection was thirty-nine strong, with twenty-four Roman models, six Gothic and five Greek. This collection was unfortunately destroyed in a fire later that year, and it was only in 1799 that he reopened a second collection, this time back at his home on Duke Street. This renewed exhibition of twenty-eight models was almost entirely constituted by Roman architecture, with few Greek or Gothic models remaining. By 1801, with his exhibition increasingly successful — even prompting a royal visit — Du Bourg moved again to the



fashionable address of 67 Grosvenor Street, where the exhibition was maintained until its sale by auction in 1819 (*Morning Chronicle* 28 February 1801; *Morning Chronicle* 6 May 1819).

5. While isolated examples of architectural models exhibited in this period were far from unusual, Du Bourg’s exhibition was unique in its breadth, permanence, and precision. One might encounter a cut-paper model of the Holy Sepulchre in 1752, or the Radcliffe Camera at Richmond Gardens in 1753, but these models were not part of a larger collection, nor did they represent the attentive engagement with antiquarian and architectural culture found in Du Bourg’s exhibition (Altick 115). A more instructive indication of the range of attractions with which the exhibition competed is provided by guides to London from the period. In *Leigh’s New Picture of London* Du Bourg’s collection is listed alongside other “General Exhibitions, connected with the intellectual Improvement of the Metropolis,” including William Bullock’s London Museum, Stephani Polito’s menagerie at the Exeter Change, the panoramas of Leicester Square, and the popular exhibitions at Spring Gardens of which the exhibition at one time formed a part (Leigh 220-21). James Oakes’ (*d.* 1829) diary of a trip to London in the Spring of 1804 indicates how visitors to the city might navigate such a circuit of attractions. Intending to show his niece and daughter “all we could” of London, Oakes and his party visit:

St Paul’s, Guild Hall, Bank & Tower in the City, the Opera & Play Houses, Sadler’s Wells, Westminster Hall, House of Lords & Commons, Hyde Park, Kensington Gardens, the Green Park, Merlin’s, the Cork Exhibition &c &c (*Oakes* II 54).

While it could be mentioned in the same breath as the great parks and institutions of metropolitan life, it was undoubtedly with Cox and John Joseph Merlin’s exhibitions of automata that it shared the greatest affinity. The collection was therefore experienced as a site of “intellectual Improvement,” while also a place of undoubted curiosity and entertainment.

## **II. The mode of antiquarian representation**

6. It was during his time in Rome that Du Bourg first learnt the craft of cork modelling, almost certainly from one of the artists working in Rome at the time: Augusto Rosa (1738-1784), Giovanni Altieri (fl. 1767-1790), or Antonio Chichi (1743-1816). We can therefore learn a great deal about Du Bourg’s practice from an analysis of these modellers’ modes of production and handling of sources, using what we discover about this relationship to sources as a means of establishing a sense of Du Bourg’s pretensions to antiquarian instruction and elucidation.

7. Du Bourg’s Neapolitan and Roman contemporaries in cork modelling deployed a variety of sources in the production of their models. While typically working from the plans and views of others, either in print or in draft, it was also sometimes the case that they worked from their own drawings. Rosa departed from the norm when he accompanied Giambattista Piranesi (1720-1778) on a trip to Paestum in 1777 to prepare measurements and views for modelling (Wilton-Ely 20). In contrast, despite practicing in close proximity to his subjects, Chichi exclusively used the designs of others to compose his models. His principal source for Roman models was Andrea Palladio’s (1508-1580) *Quattro libri dell’Architettura* (1570); where Palladio didn’t provide designs, Chichi employed Antoine Babuty Desgodetz’s (1653-1728) *Les édifices antiques de Rome* (republished in Rome in 1771) for the Portico of Octavia, and the engravings of Piranesi for the aqueducts and the Pyramid of Cestius (even going as far as reproducing his errors) (Lecocq 232). This is all the more remarkable for the fact that Chichi was at this time working in Rome—depicting sites that were only a short walk from his studio.
8. While the Neapolitan Altieri also typically worked from prints, it was not unheard of for him to work from the drawings of his customers. In a letter to the Society of Antiquaries, painter and art dealer Thomas Jenkins explained in detail the process behind the production of Altieri’s model of the Temple of Vesta at Tivoli:

That a Man of very singular Talents having lately appeared at Rome, whose Merit consists in making Models of the Antiquities, it raised in Mr. Jenkins a Desire to have one of the most respectable ones executed by him; & chose that usually called the Sibyls Temple at Tivoli; being one of the most elegant & pittoresque Objects in that Country, as well as the most singular in point of Architecture. In order to render this Work as compleat as possible, Mr. Jenkins got the Assistance of Sign. Gio: Stern, an eminent Architect, to inspect the Proportions, & every singularity of the Building (Society of Antiquaries fol. 393).

The Roman architect Giovanni Stern (1734-1794) was commissioned by Jenkins to take plans and measurements of the building. Once completed these plans were given to Altieri to work up a model.

9. Such a collaborative method appears not to have been an exception. Over a decade later another British visitor to Rome, the young architect Thomas Hardwick, employed Altieri to produce a



model adapted from his own plans and elevations of the Colosseum. In a letter to the Society of Antiquaries in 1785 Hardwick explains the process behind the model while offering it as a gift:

As the Colosseum [sic] is one of the noblest remains of Roman grandeur, and as authors had differed in opinion on some essential points, I determined during my residence in Rome to get an exact and perfect model of it constructed from my own actual measurements and inspection. For this purpose I employed one Giovanni Altieri, an ingenious Neapolitan (the same who I was afterwards informed had executed a model of the Sibyls temple at Tivoli, now in the possession of the Society); and in order to have it more accurate than any I had seen, I obtained permission to remove so much of the ground which in a long series of years had accumulated from various causes against the building, as might furnish me with the means of discovering those parts of the edifice which had for centuries lain concealed (369-70).

Apparently unhappy with Desgodetz's account of the Colosseum in *Les Édifices*, Hardwick took his own measurements, excavating the site and finding that while Desgodetz "tells us that where he happened to dig the building was in so ruinous a state that he could only venture at conjectures as to its original form," his own "description" proved such "conjectures" to be "erroneous" (370). Consequently Hardwick began to take his own measurements and drawings. One of these still extant, from 1778, is of the consecutive orders on the Colosseum's façade, and includes instructions for "the Model to be made 1/10 of an Inch to a Foot" (1/120) (Kockel 18). Aware of the informational capacity of the model, Hardwick deployed it as an immediate confirmation of his own critique of Desgodetz, using it as evidence to verify his archaeological findings.

10. The career of these three artists goes some way to explaining the representational expectations associated with Du Bourg's exhibition. Models could be expected to provide an accurate record of their subjects. Hardwick in particular demonstrates the capacity of models to operate as immediate proof for—or against—the views, plans, elevations and sections of others. The exhibition of models, then, could function in certain contexts as a place of antiquarian learning and clarification.
11. With regards to Du Bourg's practice, a lot of weight was placed by advertisements on the nine years he spent in Rome, and this must have furnished him with ideas, drawings and measurements, as well as the usual picturesque *vedute* acquired by English travellers while in the city (*Morning Chronicle* 12 April 1802). He could have then produced his models back in London

from a combination of these papers. Such is the contemporary account given by Dossie in his *Memoirs of Agriculture*:

After some more exercise in designing, he made it his study particularly to delineate Buildings of remarkable Architecture; and during a residence of some years at Rome, he took such minutely accurate Plans, Elevations, and Sections of many venerable remains of Antiquity, as served for constructing, with a material so happily adapted to the purpose, as Cork, several Edifices and Ruins expressively resembling their originals (III 395).

Du Bourg’s modelling practice was thus seen to directly emerge from a capacity for architectural drawing that reduced the “venerable remains of Antiquity” to two dimensions on the page. His “minutely accurate Plans, Elevations, and Sections” provided the framework out of which the model was to be constructed. The theoretical and practical requirements for such two-dimensional reductions had already been established by authors such as Desdogetz, and James Dawkins (1722-1757) and Robert Wood (1717-1771), whose *Ruins of Palmyra* (1753) and *Ruins of Balbec* (1757) had set a new standard in antiquarian draughtsmanship. Though there is no record of Du Bourg having learnt architectural drawing and measurement, such lessons might have comprised the “exercise in designing” that Dossie notes, and Richard Gillespie has suggested that the gap in our record of Du Bourg’s life between 1755 and his trip to Rome could be explained by his having undertaken “training in an architectural practice, or picked up other work as a journeyman artist and engraver, designing advertising handbills, painting theatre scenery, carriages or signs, or finding work as a portrait painter for the urban middle class” (2). Du Bourg was certainly a competent draughtsman, and it is equally possible that, like the antiquarian James Stuart (1713-1788) he could have learnt these more technical skills while in Rome, either before training to become a cork modeller, or from the same master in Rome from whom he acquired this talent. One of his classmates at the St. Martin’s Lane Academy, Nathaniel Dance, was in Rome at the same time with his brother, the architect George Dance the Younger, and it is entirely possible that Du Bourg studied the ruins of Rome alongside either of them. Such a method—drawing the imagery for his models from plans, sections, and elevations taken in Rome—goes some way to explaining why his modelling career, which stretched well into the era of the Greek Revival, was largely restricted to Roman subjects, alongside French monuments typically found on the route of the Grand Tour, and English antiquities. Du Bourg felt most comfortable when working from designs that he had had the opportunity to personally verify, or that he could verify from memory.

12. However, while publicly claiming to rely on his own store of drawings and designs, Du Bourg could, like his Italian contemporaries, also employ the drawings and publications of others. The earliest examples of Greek architecture in Du Bourg’s first exhibition were two Doric temples from Paestum (Du Bourg 1805 7). Though isolated from Rome, Paestum would not have been an impossible voyage for the young artist to make: John Soane would make the same journey with Frederick Hervey, Bishop of Derry in March 1779 (Darley 38). However, the first record of Du Bourg’s Paestum models comes in 1784, at least thirteen years after his return to England, with a series of adverts published in the *Morning Herald* and the *Morning Post*. Such a chronology increases the likelihood of his having used antiquarian publications to either design or supplement his work. Though it is possible he had been saving drawings of these ruins for later modelling, it is equally likely that Du Bourg, with an entrepreneurial ear to the ground, understood the growing Greek Revival as a potential market, both shoring up his antiquarian credentials, and drawing in a new clientele. Interest in the ruins at Paestum had been steadily growing since their discovery in the 1740s, and by the 1770s they had begun to be incorporated into the larger circuit of the Grand Tour in Italy. By this point the early format and layout of Du Bourg’s exhibition had already been established, and it seems likely that these models, rather than the long-deferred adaptation of drawings from his time in Italy, were in fact new works, drawn from the increasing number of publications of the ruins at Paestum (Lang).
13. More definitive evidence of Du Bourg’s use of antiquarian publications in his modelling practice appears in the 1785 catalogue to his exhibition at Spring Gardens. Responding to the growing force of the Greek Revival, this catalogue lists five Attic models: the “Remains of the Portico of the Temple of Augustus,” “the Tower of the Winds,” “a Monument erected by Thrasyllus on a Victory he gained in the Athletic Games,” “the Remains of the Aqueduct of Adrian at Athens,” and “a Monument erected in Honour of Caius Julius Philopappus” (Du Bourg 1785). While all of these monuments appear in one of the first three volumes of Stuart and Revett’s *Antiquities of Athens*, only the first had appeared in print by 1785, so it is unlikely to be the source of Du Bourg’s models. More likely is that Du Bourg came to possess either an edition of Julien-David Le Roy’s (1724-1803) *Ruines des plus beaux Monuments de la Grece* (1758), or Robert Sayer’s *Ruins of Athens with remains and other valuable antiquities in Greece* (1759) and drew on it for the plans of his five Athenian models. This would account for the misidentification of the Choragic Monument of Thrasyllus as commemorating a victory in athletics. Three years after this model appeared in the exhibition, Stuart in the second volume of the *Antiquities* in 1788 would

explain that the identification proposed by Du Bourg was incorrect: “on the front of the building are three inscriptions, recording victories obtained either in the Odeum or in the theatre, which prove it to have been a Choragic monument” (Stuart and Revett 29). While it would seem more plausible that the Englishman Sayer would be Du Bourg’s source for this model, he identifies this building only as “the Monument of Thrasyllus” and is more circumspect, suggesting the monument might commemorate a “Game, or Play” (Sayer 29). In contrast, Le Roy’s identification closely mirrors the name given to the model in the catalogue, unambiguously supporting the theory of the building as an athletic monument: “un Monument élevé par Trasylus, en mémoire d’une Victoire qu’il remporta dans des Jeux Athlétiques” (Le Roy I 14). Du Bourg, a seasoned traveller and the son of a French immigrant, would have translated this with ease as “a Monument erected by Thrasyllus on a Victory he gained in the Athletic Games.” Shortly after this Greek experiment the first iteration of Du Bourg’s museum ended in an accidental fire, so it is unclear what happened to these Attic models: it is possible that they were sold, or they might have simply been consumed in the flames. Nonetheless, it appears that this foray into the Greek Revival did not justify the outlay, and in his second exhibition Du Bourg reduced the Greek contingent of models to only two: a Doric Temple from Paestum (Du Bourg 1808 5), and the Portico of the Temple of Augustus (Du Bourg 1808 40). The first of these is struck through in all extant catalogues, indicating that it was probably removed from the exhibition, or sold, while the latter, though located in Athens, was erected in honour of the goddess Rome and Octavian Augustus, and was therefore more in keeping with the Roman style that dominated the rest of the exhibition. Though always overwhelmingly Roman in its choice of subjects, by the end of its existence, the museum was also consciously so: Du Bourg had experimented with Greek and Gothic models, but finally returned to Rome as the guiding concern of his exhibition. What Stephen Cheeke has described as the “commonplaces through which all visitors to Rome must pass” were precisely those places that Du Bourg was most concerned with presenting to his spectators, and that gave his museum coherence as a virtual representation of a specifically Roman classical antiquity (523).

14. This goes some way to explaining the map of Rome forcing its way into the view of the museum at an unusual angle. The map is marked “ROMA” and, though roughly drawn, is nearly identical in design to the “pianta di Roma” in the second plate of the first volume of Piranesi’s *Antichità Romane* (1756), including the same large capitalised title. As if to emphasise this relationship with Piranesi, the print appears above Du Bourg’s model of the Pyramid of Cestius, the subject

of a particularly famous *veduta* in the *Antichità Romane*. By the time of the print, Piranesi’s place as the pre-eminent artist depicting Roman ruins had been well cemented. In his eighth lecture to the Royal Academy, first delivered on 23 February 1815, John Soane would describe him as “a man so justly celebrated for his knowledge and feeling of the antique,” and Soane himself owned a number of volumes and prints by Piranesi, going on to purchase and prominently display a series of sketches done by the artist for his final Paestum publication in 1817 (Soane 191). The particular map depicted in the Piranesi etching is also significant for what it says about the exhibition. It is the Forma Urbis Romae, a marble map of ancient Rome and its monuments, marked on fragments of stone, made around the start of the third century CE. By the time Piranesi had drawn it, it was in the collection of the Capitoline Museum in Rome. The public display of this map in the exhibition is an explicit attempt by Du Bourg to associate his models with a major centre of antiquarian study and with the institutions of Roman archaeological knowledge, indicating a continuity between the Piranesian *vedute* of architecture that transfixed British travellers to Rome, the antiquarian study and archaeological excavation of ruins, and Du Bourg’s own cork models of those monuments in miniature. Such was the extent to which the British public identified Rome with Piranesi, the print would have also served as a mark of quality assurance for the exhibition. Intriguingly, it may also have functioned as a guide from which visitors extrapolated their strategies of viewing and interpretation. Like the museum print itself, the map of Rome organised viewer responses and established the overall coherence of the assembled collection.

### **III. Methods of display**

15. While associating the museum with recognisable modes of antiquarian research, the Piranesi print arguably served another purpose more closely tied to the pleasures of the antique. The “pianta di Roma” also oriented visitors in their transition from model to model, indicating where each was likely to be found if visited *in situ* in Rome. Entry into the museum, in other words, could mark their departure on an alternative tour of the sites of Roman culture. Replicating Du Bourg’s own supposed tour across the continent, the museum offered access to monuments in France such as “a piece of Antiquity” at Autun, in Burgundy, the Tour Magne at Nîmes, a truncated Roman pyramid at Vienne, and a gothic church at Les Echelles in Savoy, before providing entry into Italy and access to the monuments of Verona, Rome and Naples. In this context, the museum became the site of a virtual Grand Tour for a temporarily desituated audience. Spectators could perform

their tour of sites of interest on the Italian peninsula, experiencing the exhibition as a suspended space capable of bridging London and Rome through the Eternal City’s three-dimensional re-embodiment in cork. The Grand Tour was a standard rite of passage for young gentlemen wishing to cultivate their taste for the arts and culture by the early nineteenth century, and the remains of antiquity formed a major part of its allure. In 1776 Samuel Johnson had remarked that “a man who has not been in Italy, is always conscious of an inferiority, from his not having seen what it is expected a man should see” (Boswell 61-62). Visitors to Du Bourg’s museum were thus offered a novel mode of access to “what it is expected a man should see,” without having to bear the financial and physical cost of an extended journey. This aspect of the museum was frequently referred to by visitors. A visitor to the exhibition in 1776 wrote to the editor of the *Morning Post* to inform him that:

Those who have seen the originals will review them with delight, those who have not and from various causes may not travel, can enjoy this at a trifling expence, and without the fatigue of a voyage (8 May 1776).

“M.N.” attending in 1778, confessed to being “agreeably surprized on seeing these models so perfectly well executed (the originals of which I had the pleasure of seeing but a few months past)” (*Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* 2 June 1778). “ROMULUS,” visiting the exhibition in 1779, remarked:

They are all executed in cork, stained and done in such an exact manner, as conveys to the beholder the most lively idea of the originals; the mouldering of the stones, the crevices in the walls, &c. are executed with the greatest nicety, the very moss on the buildings, and on the ruins which are scattered about them, are finished to the greatest minutiae of exactness [...] There was a very genteel company there; among whom was a Gentleman just come from Rome, who declared he thought it impossible for human art to copy so closely the originals (*Morning Post and Daily Advertiser* 5 May 1779).

“ROMULUS”’s explanation suggests a way of reading the visitor in Du Bourg’s print, dressed in a top hat, staring transfixed at the model of the Tomb of Caecilia Metella. This figure models a form of cultivated attention, perhaps recollecting originals of which he had “the pleasure of seeing but a few months past” and whose “lively” ideas he now witnesses “so closely” copied.

16. The visitor’s pose of quiet receptivity in the face of the tomb also models a particular mode of contemplation: the *picturesque*. As a term that principally meant to “look at the world as if it were a picture,” “the picturesque” became a central concept in eighteenth-century theories of

architecture and landscape gardening, developed by British authors such as William Gilpin, Uvedale Price, and Humphrey Repton (McArthur 1). Du Bourg adapts this way of seeing to the experience of the museum specimen. Exhibiting during the “apotheosis of the picturesque” between the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, he focused on producing and reproducing the picturesque in the model (McArthur 2). In his essay “On Picturesque Travel,” Gilpin characterised the “general intention of picturesque travel” as “searching after effects” (41). This meant searching for and experiencing the variety of scenery in the process of travel, the picturing forth of the landscape as it appeared to the traveller. Consequently Gilpin argued that “among all the objects of art, the picturesque eye is perhaps most inquisitive after the elegant relics of ancient architecture” (46). At Du Bourg’s exhibition room the visitor could experience such “effects” on a virtual tour indoors: the toplighting provided by the purpose-built clerestory window and the curvature of the ceiling, channelled the light falling on the models, bathing them in a clarifying glow, ensuring that the visitor was able to examine them with ease from a variety of angles over the course of their visit.

17. Du Bourg was also known for using other lighting “effects.” In Spring 1801 he began to advertise late-night spectacles declaring that his “ROOM, erected in a rural stile, will be brilliantly Illuminated TO-MORROW, April the 24th, from Eight in the Evening till Eleven” at a price of three shillings (two shillings more than the regular price) (*Morning Post and Gazetteer* 23 April 1801). A week later Du Bourg announced that the room would “be Illuminated Mondays and Fridays [evening] till further notice” (*Morning Post and Gazetteer* 30 April 1801). Soane, himself a collector of cork models, visited Du Bourg’s museum at least once in 1785, and may well have attended one of these later spectacles (Thornton and Dorey 67). He arranged a similar one over a period of three days in March 1825, with selected visitors treated to a view of his “Egyptian crypt” illuminated with candles and lanterns (Darley 274-76). This crypt, as well as containing the newly purchased sarcophagus of Seti I, also held a number of cork models of ancient sepulchres (Feinburg Millenson 103). It is possible that the idea for this illuminated spectacle might have originated in an experience of Du Bourg’s own modest affair, with its use of artificial light in aid of picturesque “effects.”
18. The need to conform to a picturesque mode of representation is evident in critiques of Du Bourg’s exhibition. An “admirer of Mr. Du Bourg’s ingenious Cork Models” in the *Morning Post* advised the author on how he could improve his models:



but particularly to the model of the Colosseum; the grandeur and simplicity of that immense building would be better understood; [...] The beautiful Grotto of Egeria might have the vestal Virgins with their elegant turned bases, fetching water; and Stonhenge[sic], a Shepherd, with his flock, &c.

The suggestion that figures should be added to the composition indicates that Du Bourg’s models were examined through the formal conventions of the picturesque view. An increasingly popular, even dominant, form of antiquarian representation, the view often deployed staffage (human and animal figures) in composing the image of the ruin. Such staffage was typically composed of rustic locals and cosmopolitan visitors, and had an explicitly picturesque purpose: giving both a sense of architectural scale in relation to the human figure, and inscribing within the picture the expected mode of spectatorial apprehension. In Piranesi’s *Vedute*, the scale of the Colosseum is indicated by the groups of foreigners and locals dwarfed by the amphitheatre. Likewise, in Piranesi’s representations of the Temple of Vesta at Tivoli staffage included cultivated travellers alongside shepherds and their flocks.

19. Indeed, the model of the Temple of Vesta at Tivoli, towering over the audience at the centre of the 1808-09 print, is the one object in the exhibition that Du Bourg specifically describes as “picturesque” in his advertisements (*General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer* 1 March 1779). As Thomas Jenkins had remarked only ten years before, the Temple of Vesta was considered “one of the most elegant & pittoresque Objects” on the Grand Tour. Du Bourg’s composition emphasized its “pittoresque” effect by placing it high on a model of the city’s acropolis. Further picturesque effects were obtained by the model’s imaginative association with other parts of the exhibition. At the back of the room, in the curtained off area, would have been what “ROMULUS” described as a:

view of the town of Tivoli, pleasingly situated about eighteen miles from Rome, where there is a very curious cascade; this is likewise done by machinery, and upon the whole surpasses every thing I ever saw exhibited either at the theatres, or elsewhere; the view of Tivoli is most romantic, and the Sybils Temple built on the tops of the rocks, which overhang the cascade, create in the minds of the spectators the most pleasing ideas (*Morning Post and Daily Advertiser* 5 May 1779).

The view of Tivoli, overlooking a mechanical representation of the cascade of the River Aniene as if in movement, was carefully lit in a niche that had been constructed to ensure that the “effect” of the lighting was exactly as Du Bourg intended. “ROMULUS,” finding the view “romantic” (a

term heavily identified with the picturesque in landscape), indicated that the whole created “pleasing ideas” in the minds of spectators, in an interpretation of the scene that resonates with Gilpin’s requirement that in the picturesque “the general idea of the scene makes an impression, before any appeal is made to the judgment [...] we rather feel, than survey it” (50).

20. At the other end of the museum, behind the curtains framing our view in the print, another niche produced markedly different effects, offering:

A Night View of a Current of Lava that ran from Mount Vesuvius, towards Resina, the 11th of May, 1771. It ran into the Valley between Somma and Vesuvius, disgorged itself into a hollow Way in its fluid State, and formed a most beautiful Cascade of Fire (Du Bourg 1808 52).

Whereas the former picturesque mechanical display had been experienced as a beautiful object encouraging relaxed contemplation of its “pleasing ideas,” the latter attracted the attention of visitors through a representation of the sublime:

a *View of Mount Vesuvius* in the time of an eruption, and the overflowing of the lava; this is done by machinery in a nick made on purpose in the wall, and afforded great satisfaction to all the company present; particularly to the Gentleman who had just come from abroad, who said he was at Naples at the last great eruption, and this recalled every circumstance so fresh in his memory, as made him shudder at the very thought of it (*Morning Post and Daily Advertiser* 5 May 1779).

The fearful sublimity of the Vesuvian model only increased when, on Saturday 2 April 1785, it apparently caused a fire that destroyed the exhibition in its entirety. Despite Du Bourg’s insistence that the fire had not been caused by the volcanic model, the idea took hold. One report, written by a spectator aware of the analogical relationship that the performance encouraged between three-dimensional model and volcano, noted:

It is remarkable that the model of *Vesuvius*, should have occasioned the late devastation at Spring Gardens; from the circumstance that the *Volcano* in question, has before now been the cause of the destruction of immense cities (*Morning Herald* 5 April 1785).

When Du Bourg returned with his second exhibition in 1799 so did the Vesuvian model, this time with numerous additions. Silliman dedicates a great deal of space to describing the revitalised performance:

We were conducted behind a curtain where all was dark, and through a door or window, opened for the purpose, we perceived Mount Vesuvius throwing out fire, red hot stones,

smoke and flame, attended with a roaring noise like thunder; the crater glowed with heat, and, near it, the lava had burst through the side of the mountain, and poured down a torrent of liquid fire, which was tending toward the town of Portici, at the foot of the mountain, and toward the sea, on the margin of which this town stands. The waves of the sea are in motion—the lava is a real flood of glowing and burning matter, which the ingenious artist contrives to manage in such a manner as not to set fire to his cork mountain. [...] He has not forgotten to appeal to the sense of smell as well as those of sight and hearing, for, the spectator is assailed by the odour of burning sulphur, and such other effluvia as volcanoes usually emit: I suppose they are set on fire by some one behind the scene, for the double purpose of producing the smell and fiery eruptions (Silliman I 248-249).

The experience of the model was now multi-sensory as well as multimedial: incorporating smell, heat, and sound in order to enhance “the awful view” of the mountain in eruption. Though matter-of-fact about his description of the spectacle, Silliman’s frames of reference for its description appear in keeping with the mechanics of the Burkean sublime, founded on “whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror” (Burke 58).

21. We might wonder at the specificity of date and location attached to this model: 11 May 1771; a valley between Somma and Vesuvius. By 1771, Du Bourg had returned to London, and could not himself have drawn this view; instead its source was mostly likely Pietro Fabris’s “A night view of a current of lava, that ran from Mount Vesuvius towards Resina, the 11th of May 1771” from William Hamilton’s *Campi Phlegraei* (1776).<sup>3</sup> The *Campi Phlegraei* was a prestigious work, published in English and French and elaborately illustrated with prints hand-coloured individually by the application of gouache. Du Bourg’s access to it, as well as indicating an interest in the sublime potential of mechanical displays, demonstrates a seriousness in his commitment to the educational or scientific capacity of the model exhibition, as well as a clear acquaintance with elite antiquarian culture and publications. Emphasising this familiarity, in later catalogues the view is accompanied by Hamilton’s descriptions of the site, its topography, and its culture (Du Bourg 1809 25-28).

#### IV. Forms of sociability

22. Du Bourg's exhibition was by 1808 a site of diverse modes of social engagement which exploited its space and attractions in several ways. With an entry price comparable to the Royal Academy exhibition at one shilling, it was accessible for a significant portion of the London crowd. On the other hand, its prestige was such that it could also entertain visits from "the Queen, the Princess Augusta, Princess Elizabeth, Princess Mary, Princess Sophia, and Princess Amelia" as well as other members of the Royal Family on separate occasions (*Morning Chronicle* 17 May 1802).

23. This social pluralism was explained as early as 1785 by a visitor to the exhibition:

Such a transcript of nature and art has seldom, he apprehends, if ever, before met the public eye. The virtuoso, the antiquarian, the gentleman, the mechanic, here meet with objects to engage their attention, and gratify their minds. The admirer of architecture sees here preserved to the most critical nicety, all those beautiful proportions that distinguish the masters of the art who flourished in the Augustan age (*Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser* 13 March 1785).

Du Bourg's exhibition appeared the result of a strategic composition of social and representational choices. Whether virtuoso or antiquarian, gentleman or mechanic, its models could plausibly engage the attention with its aesthetic energies, or gratify the mind with its educational value. One principle reason for this educational value, according to the *Morning Herald's* correspondent, was Du Bourg himself. Praising the "ingenuity and classical knowledge displayed by the artist" the visitor described how he 'so happily has blended instruction and amusement, adapted to all ranks and every capacity" (*Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser* 13 March 1785). As seen in the print, Du Bourg saw his role as being that of an educator, guiding visitors through the museum and explaining in copious detail its monuments and their significance.

24. These explanations were probably done in tandem with, and even taken from, the complimentary descriptive catalogue sold to visitors. By 1808 the catalogue had expanded to over fifty pages with extended descriptions given for most of its twenty-eight models. Under each model was a label corresponding to a numbered item in the catalogue, so that when Du Bourg could not guide visitors through the exhibition himself, they were still able to read descriptions of the model in front of them. These descriptions came without an attributed source, and were potentially

intended to be taken as Du Bourg’s own work. However, they were mostly the work of other antiquarians and historians. Some of Du Bourg’s comments on Roman history originated in Charles Rollin’s *The Roman History from the Foundation of Rome to the Battle of Actium* (1768), and his account of the construction and development of the amphitheatre was taken from *A Compleat History of the Ancient Amphitheatres* (1730), by Francisco Scipione, Marquis of Maffei. By far the most substantial sections of text, however, came from Andrew Lumisden’s (1720-1801) *Remarks on the Antiquities of Rome and Its Environs* (1797). Lumisden had been a Jacobite exile in Rome for much of his life and only received a full pardon, and the opportunity to return home, in 1778. The *Remarks* contained copious descriptions and engravings and were well received, going into a second edition by 1812. Du Bourg was to use a long list of Lumisden’s descriptions for his own catalogue: the Aruntia sepulchre, the Temple of Janus Quadrifrons, the Sepulchre of Scipio, Cestius’s Pyramid, the Colosseum (accompanying Du Bourg’s model of the Amphitheatre at Verona), the Sepulchre of Horatii and Curiatii, the Sepulchre of Caecillia Metella, the Ponte Lucano, and the Sepulchre of Plautius, the Fountain of Egeria, Tivoli, the Temple of Vesta, and the Catacombs. Far from remaining solely in print, these descriptions were also used by Du Bourg as he guided his visitors through the exhibition, taking on the role of a virtual *cicerone*. John Griscom, an American tourist visiting the exhibition on 27 June 1818 remarked that “whoever visits the collection without being conducted through it by the owner himself, will lose no inconsiderable part of the gratification” (I 127). The description of the Amphitheatre of Verona is over fifteen pages long (the longest in the catalogue), and Du Bourg appears to be pointing out to his visitors “the part broken down in the model, purposely done, to show the inside Galleries, which communicate with the stair-cases and Vomitories” (Du Bourg 1808 11). Given this level of detail in the catalogue it is unsurprising that Du Bourg would choose to represent himself in front of this model in his publicity material.

25. As well as being the scene of Du Bourg’s performance as antiquarian and virtual *cicerone*, the exhibition also prompted in visitors independent performances of erudition and cultivation. A visitor in 1779 recounted how a “well known hop-factor in the City,” accompanied by his fourteen-year-old son, on viewing the Colosseum exclaimed “where the devil was the stage?” The citizen’s ignorance prompted the room to laughter, however:

the son soon made up for the deficiency of the father, by not only setting him right, but in entertaining the whole company present with a very clear and distinct account of that

stupendous edifice, and the various feats performed there (*General Advertiser* 15 May 1779).

Shamed by his lack of a classical education as a bourgeois citizen-merchant, the father is ultimately saved by his son's learning. Samuel Galton, a manufacturer from Birmingham was another bourgeois citizen to visit the exhibition. He did so in 1807 with his twenty-three-year-old daughter Adele and his seventeen-year-old son Hubert. In a letter back to thirteen year old John Howard Galton, his maidservant L.A. Patterson remarked his interest in the "collection of Cork Models Collected and cut by a Mr Du Bourg" (Library of Birmingham). While on tour in Switzerland, the novelist Anna Eliza Bray (1790-1883) recollected her childhood, remarking that she first encountered aqueducts through "Mr Du Bourg's cork model of one that I had drawn when a girl, when I used to visit at that excellent man's house." Like the party gathered around the model of the Amphitheatre at Verona, Bray was enraptured, describing it as "the only thing that gave me any adequate idea of the beauty of such a structure" (II 94-95). The exhibition was a site of initiation for those previously excluded from the polite culture of the Grand Tour (many of whom were women, or younger and less genteel than the average Grand Tourist), providing verified access to its monuments in a way that lent itself to public demonstration.

26. The museum could also be the site of less educational, more pleasurable and sexually charged forms of sociability. Visiting at the same time as a "party of Ladies of the first distinction," another correspondent "had the gratification to hear one of the beautiful group quote to a gentleman near her, some passages from Dyer's poem, on the ruins of Rome, with graceful emphasis, and just application" (*Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser* 23 March 1785). The section recited by the lady narrated the decay of Rome:

behold the pride of pomp,  
The throne of nations fall'n; obscur'd in dust;  
E'en yet majestic: the solemn scene  
Elates the soul, while now the rising Sun  
Flames on the ruins in the purer air  
Towering aloft, upon the glittering plain,  
Like broken rocks, a vast circumference:  
Rent palaces, crush'd columns, rifled moles,  
Fanes roll'd on fanes, and tombs on buried tombs (Dyer ll.17-25).

The erotics of observation are activated in this scene, indicating a sociability that, while refined in taste, subtly elides the picturesque experience of the ruins of the eternal city with the approving contemplation of “the beautiful group.” The women, as much objects to be observed as the models themselves, initiate a kind of fantastic reverie in their male auditor, where the generative potential of sexual intercourse is contrasted with the present decay of “the throne of nations fall’n.” The extreme visibility of the “party of Ladies” is contrasted with the monuments “obscur’d in dust,” the ladies’ refinement contrasted with the “rent palaces, crush’d columns, rifled moles” of Rome. And yet, Rome is nonetheless newly visible in the exhibition: the poetic reverie of the “party of Ladies” serves to emphasise the picturesque as the principle mode of experience for visitors, its series of images echoing the series of views available in the exhibition itself.

27. Whether these recollected performances were real or not, they indicate that the modes of presentation employed by Du Bourg in his exhibition were understood and expected to elicit a reaction from spectators, to both draw and impose educational and picturesque responses. Much of the subtlety and flexibility of this practice has been lost in the subsequent critical denigration to which Du Bourg’s exhibition has been subjected. Edward Walford in *Old and New London* described the location of Du Bourg’s second exhibition in Lower Grosvenor Street as an “invasion” of “plebeian” culture (Walford IV 342). While it is true that Grosvenor Square was at this time one of the best addresses in London, and Du Bourg’s exhibition could attract a broad range of visitors, the exhibition was far from straightforwardly popular (*Survey of London* 87). While certainly attractive to classes more marginalised by antiquarian culture, it could also draw visits from foreign diplomats and members of the royal family, and consequently partook in a decidedly complex sociability.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, these visits in turn themselves served as advertisement strategies, securing the potentially fragile class position of the exhibition—making it a plausible destination for aristocrats and other elites—while further serving to draw the curiosity of the more popular and commercial elements of the expanding urban population whose custom was necessary to make the museum financially viable.

## **V. Conclusion**

28. The development of antiquarianism during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was closely tied to the ever-widening production and distribution of graphic representations of antiquities.



This translation of “three-dimensional antiquities into two-dimensional representations” served to teach “large and heterogeneous audiences to think about the past as a vast museum or collection of artefacts” (Boehm and Mills 233). Yet this proliferation of printed matter also nourished a countervailing tendency in antiquarian audiences: the desire to restore a lost third dimension to those flat images that had served as an introduction to the material culture of classical antiquity. This desire for an embodied antiquity was precisely the impetus behind the development and continuation of Du Bourg’s exhibition. In this article I have sought to describe how this desire to “see the originals” for the first time not only produced an increased emphasis on the Grand Tour as a formative component of classical education, but also provided for nearly half a century the ground on which Du Bourg built his own museum of “Cork Models of Ancient Temples, &c.” In this task Du Bourg resurrected in miniature the bodies of monuments previously entombed in two-dimensional prints and drawings. Attentive to developments in contemporary antiquarian and neo-classical culture, Du Bourg sought to integrate the production, arrangement, and presentation of his models into the constellation of antiquarian representations that framed visitor expectations. Publications, prints, and visual effects were all marshalled to guarantee the visitor experience. In the process Du Bourg sought to virtually reproduce the experience of the Grand Tour for his visitors, guiding them around a truncated version of Rome and providing them with an unparalleled experience of the extension in space of monuments whose “originals” were otherwise inaccessible to the vast majority. As antiquarian culture moved on, the museum changed repeatedly to keep pace with these advances: overwriting, rewriting, and effacing previous adaptations as and when necessary.

29. Like Du Bourg’s own practice with regards to two-dimensional representations of architectural remains, it is through carefully unpacking the 1808-09 engraving, and relating it to associated contemporary practices, that we can begin to understand the cultural significance of Du Bourg’s museum, and its relationship to the wider fields of antiquarianism and museum culture existing in the first decade of the nineteenth century. Through a process of excavation that reads the sedimentation of culture in the layers of an image, we are able to untangle the complicated ecologies of production, display, and representation that fostered a cultural interest in the antique that extended beyond those able to invest in specialist publications or expensive and lengthy travel. An interpretation of the movement of an image becomes an interpretation of movement in cultural history.

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<sup>1</sup> His parents had been married a year earlier on the 23rd of May 1737 at the Spanish Chapel in London. His father is listed in the marriage records as a Henricus Dubourg “of Catelet in Normandy,” his mother “Sarah Lunn of London non-Catholic.” This Catholic heritage goes some way to explaining his baptism in Saint Pancras parish, as at the time it was known for accepting Roman Catholic parishioners, its church-yard “a general burying place for persons of the Romish religion” (*The Ambulator* 135).

<sup>2</sup> While later on Du Bourg titled his collection a “Museum,” at this stage it was advertised as an “exhibition.” It is difficult to parse this shift in nomenclature with too much precision, however it appears plausible that it corresponded to the collection becoming an increasingly permanent feature of London’s cultural life and its location more fixed.

<sup>3</sup> While identifying Sir William Hamilton’s *Campi Phlegraei* as “a great influence in promoting the contemporary fashion for model volcanoes” such as Du Bourg’s, Jenkins and Sloan in *Vases & Volcanoes*, appear not to have picked up on this direct link between Fabris’s prints and Du Bourg’s model (145).

<sup>4</sup> Prince William Henry, Duke of Gloucester visited twice (1775 and 1800), and in 1802 the Queen accompanied by five of her daughters “expressed themselves highly gratified with the Models” (*Morning Post and Daily Advertiser* 8 May 1775; *Morning Chronicle* 2 June 1800; *Morning Chronicle* 17 May 1802).