

**Zeitschrift:** Zeitschrift für schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte =  
Revue suisse d'art et d'archéologie = Rivista svizzera d'arte e  
d'archeologia = Journal of Swiss archeology and art history

**Herausgeber:** Schweizerisches Nationalmuseum

**Band:** 56 (1999)

**Heft:** 1

**Artikel:** Henry Webber and Johann Friedrich Funk : observations on two  
portraits by John Webber

**Autor:** Hauptman, William

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-169563>

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 14.01.2026

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

# Henry Webber and Johann Friedrich Funk: Observations on Two Portraits by John Webber

by WILLIAM HAUPTMAN

*"[...] l'architecte pressa [John Webber] de faire le portrait de son frère Henri [...]. Le portrait fut envoyé à l'exposition et [...] quelques jours après vint à la maison le docteur Solander, demanda après le jeune artiste, qui avait fait ce portrait [...]."*<sup>1</sup>

In the more than two centuries since the death of the Anglo-Swiss painter John Webber (1751–1793), his international reputation has rested almost exclusively upon the plethora of scientific illustrations he was engaged to provide Captain James Cook for his third and last voyage around the world in 1776–1780.<sup>2</sup> As a result of the unmistakable prominence of this unusual corpus, one of the most imposing milestones of ethnographic representation, little research has been conducted on Webber's early artistic activities, and consequently relatively few examples are known to adequately chart his initial artistic direction.<sup>3</sup> While it is clear from various accounts that Webber's first interests centered mainly on topographical painting – as was expected of a pupil of Johann Ludwig Aberli in Bern (1767–1770) and Jean-Georges Wille in Paris (1770–1775) – it is equally evident that he also explored different painterly genres, including portraiture. It is indisputable from the surviving works that Webber was an accomplished if unheralded practitioner of the art, even though his talent in this domain has been wholly eclipsed by his numerous Pacific studies and the lesser-known pioneering English landscapes of the last years of his life.<sup>4</sup>

Historians have postulated that Webber's first effort in portrait painting, and the earliest surviving oil known by his hand, was the so-called "Portrait of a Sculptor" in Bern<sup>5</sup> (fig. 1). The painting bears his signature at the bottom right as "J. Weber px 177(?)" – the last determining digit is still illegible even after extensive cleaning. This manner of signing his work is the earliest he employed while he was still a student of the Académie Royale in Paris;<sup>6</sup> the second "b" would be added only after he emigrated to London in April, 1775, when he adopted the English form, "Webber", as a reminder perhaps of his birth in London. However, since the exact year the portrait was painted is uncertain, it has been assumed that Webber's employment of his signature in the French manner was the most revealing factor in assigning the painting to the period under Wille's Parisian tutelage. If this is the case, then the problem engendered by this representative early work, with its exceptionally relaxed intimacy, creates a substantial artistic paradox. Although the model has been customarily thought to represent Webber's younger brother, the sculptor Henry Webber<sup>7</sup> (1754–1826), the spelling of Webber's name sug-

gests that the work dates to before his London stay at which time he had no substantial contact with his brother. Henry Webber resided in London during the entirety of his



Fig. 1 Portrait of a Sculptor, by John Webber, c. 1775/76. Oil on canvas, 45 × 58 cm. Bern, Kunstmuseum.

brother's French sojourn and was not known to have traveled to Paris at that time, as indeed John Webber is not documented as having left Paris before his permanent establishment in London.

Since the Bern painting has been accepted for generations as a portrait of Henry Webber, some biographical details regarding this little-known artist are in order. In the still meager literature devoted to English sculpture of the eighteenth century, Henry Webber has generally remained an elusive figure who is remembered today chiefly through several relatively subsidiary works, most of them dating to the end of his life.<sup>8</sup> He apparently demonstrated an early aptitude for the plastic arts which had been fostered by his father, Abraham Wäber, himself an *émigré* decorative sculptor from Bern, who came to London sometimes in the 1740s.<sup>9</sup> Henry Webber continued his formal training at the Royal Academy school where he enrolled in 1772 when John Webber was firmly ensconced in Paris.<sup>10</sup> It is presumed that he followed the standard studio formation common to all students at the time,<sup>11</sup> but his precocious talent led him to already exhibit his works publicly while still undergoing his artistic training.<sup>12</sup> Henry Webber seemed to have advanced rapidly at the Academy so that two years later, he was awarded a silver medal for a “Basso-Relievo,” of which now there seems to be no trace, and in 1776 was distinguished with the top honor of gold medal for his strongly neo-classical work, “The Judgement of Midas”.<sup>13</sup> This relief is indicative of his early talent and facility, characterizing distinctly if not brilliantly, Webber’s stylistic and iconographic adherence to the conservative sculptural modes prevalent in contemporary London artistic circles.

When Henry Webber left his official studies – the specific date seems not to be recorded, but the habitual period of training at the Royal Academy was seven years – he then worked with the prominent sculptor John Bacon (1740–1799). Although a largely self-taught artist who never benefited from the traditional sojourn to Italy, Bacon was already known for his substantial efforts in monumental sculptural decoration. At the time when Henry Webber began working with him, Bacon was actively employed in Westminster Abbey on an important marble memorial to the Earl of Chatham for which Webber probably assisted.<sup>14</sup> By the late 1770s, Webber was becoming so distinguished in his own right that he could offer his services to the entrepreneur Josiah Wedgwood, procuring enthusiastic letters of recommendation from such celebrated figures as the architect Sir William Chambers<sup>15</sup> and Sir Joshua Reynolds,<sup>16</sup> then treasurer and president of the Royal Academy respectively. Wedgwood shared their excitement for Webber’s nascent talents and, surely in extravagant praise, referred to him as “esteemed the first in his profession in England.”<sup>17</sup> As a result of these highly placed endorsements, Webber was hired in 1782 as head of the ornamental department at Wedgwood’s Etruria factory in Staffordshire, the first sculptor in fact to take up a full-time appointment in a major ceramic enterprise.<sup>18</sup>

Henry Webber’s earliest designs with Wedgwood remain difficult to ascribe, as indeed the catalogue of his works for the firm is still an issue of debate.<sup>19</sup> However, in the course of his duties he was sent to Rome in 1787 to make drawings for future Wedgwood projects, copying important antique

works in the Capitoline Museum while at the same time supervising designs by other artists employed regularly by the company.<sup>20</sup> When he returned to Etruria two years later, Webber was responsible in part for various important projects, among which were Wedgwood’s version of the celebrated Portland Vase<sup>21</sup> and the so-called Sydney Cove medal, an Australian commemoration scene for which Webber may have sought eyewitness advice from his brother.<sup>22</sup> From 1792 onwards, when his contract with Wedgwood expired, Henry Webber worked for the enterprise only on a part-time basis.

The paucity of correspondence in John Webber’s hand makes it difficult to properly discern the dimensions of his early relationship with his English brother, as in fact no surviving letters from Henry are known to cast light on their life together in London before John Webber’s sudden departure in July, 1776 as Cook’s painter. Nevertheless, certain details emerge from notes Henry Webber provided in 1810 for Sigmund Wagner, John Webber’s first biographer,<sup>23</sup> that recounted their close association, including the fact that they shared common lodgings and a studio in Piccadilly while both artists pursued their separate studies and budding careers. Henry Webber in fact was so current in his knowledge of his brother’s painterly projects during his early London stay that he also informed Wagner that John Webber had augmented his Bernese stipend by painting mythological scenes as ceiling decorations for houses built on speculation.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, with first hand authority Henry Webber also related to Wagner the important detail that the unnamed architect for whom John Webber painted these ceilings had encouraged him to paint, in his own words, a “portrait de son frère Henri” which was then sent to be exhibited.<sup>25</sup>

During this early phase of John Webber’s career, despite having spent almost a decade as an apprentice and presumably an assistant to two major painters with albeit divergent pedagogical goals, his artistic objectives were still not definitively fixed. To establish his mark in London, he not only explored mythological subjects, as Henry Webber indicated, but in the eighteen months he was there before the voyage of discovery with Cook, he also experimented with various artistic genres, among which were history painting, book illustration, topographical studies, a single religious work, and apparently the portrait of his brother.<sup>26</sup> This natural interest in different artistic forms, including portraiture, is one of the reasons why it is supposed that Webber would have utilized his brother’s physical proximity to paint his likeness at this time. It may even be assumed that the easy access of Henry Webber must have stimulated him to prospect his own talents in this field which more than any other would have provided the surest basis for steady commissions in the highly competitive London art market, thus the focus of the unnamed architect’s suggestion.

It should not be thought negligible that although history painting was considered the highest form of painting in the accepted theoretical hierarchy of subjects, as Reynolds

and West had indeed professed, the economic situation of Georgian patronage forced painters to provide portrait likenesses for the appropriate social class, so that a large portion of the paintings actually exhibited in the early Royal Academy shows were portraits.<sup>27</sup> These were frequently surveyed by critics and future clients as the veritable barometer of prospective talent and served as the very platform for lucrative commissions and social acceptance. Portraiture in all its diverse forms – single and group figures, conversation pieces, formal depictions of known figures, etc. – more than any other aspect of the painter's iconographic possibilities was the obligatory genre by which the necessary doors for younger artists could be opened.<sup>28</sup> It is no wonder that in eighteenth-century London, portrait painters composed the overwhelming majority of working artists, who through the socio-economic realities of the period established the very artistic character of this typically English iconographic repertoire.<sup>29</sup>

Given this artist context and Henry Webber's own statement that his brother had actually painted his portrait, it is therefore all the more plausible to interpret the identity of the sculptor in the Bern canvas as that very work, painted therefore not in Paris, despite the evidence of the signatory form, but in London in 1775 or early 1776. Moreover, it is equally logical to suppose that this portrait of his brother was the one John Webber exhibited in the Royal Academy exhibition of 1776 with the less specific title "Portrait of an artist",<sup>30</sup> as Henry Webber informed Wagner more than thirty years later. Nonetheless, this reading of the figure has been challenged by the noted Cook scholars, Joppien and Smith, who suggest instead that the model for the Bern canvas was actually his cousin, Johann Friedrich Funk (1745–1811),<sup>31</sup> known as Funk II because he bore the same name as his father.<sup>32</sup> Their reasoning is based on two central points: the idiosyncratic nature of Webber's signature, and the crucial fact that Funk, himself a sculptor and thus consistent with the iconographic disposition of the picture, was known to have been a close childhood friend of the Webber family.

The connections between the Webber and Funk families were in fact well grounded and had remained active through almost half a century. Both Webber *père* and *fils* had specific familial links to the Funk family in Bern from at least 1725. Matthäus Funk, the celebrated Bernese *ébéniste*, had married Maria Magdalena Wäber, Abraham Wäber's sister; Wäber in turn also apprenticed with Matthäus Funk's brother, Johann Friedrich Funk I, before he resettled in London. John Webber benefitted immeasurably from these connections when he was in Bern studying with Aberli, particularly when his unwed aunt, Rosina Esther Wäber, took over the Funk household after the untimely death of Maria Magdalena in 1750. As a consequence of these mutual affiliations, Webber and Funk resided in the same house in Bern and surely developed their respective artistic views in common through a variety of artistic interchanges.

Moreover, their relationship undoubtedly ripened even further when both students decided to continue their artistic formation simultaneously in Paris: Webber, now known as the French "Weber," trained with Wille and attended the Académie Royale, while Funk studied with the sculptor Louis-Claude Vassé (1716–1772), assisting him in several important projects in Nancy and elsewhere,<sup>33</sup> but at the same supported himself as an independent drawing master.<sup>34</sup> These undeniable facts – the camaraderie between Webber and Funk, Funk's presence in Paris with Webber, and the Parisian form of Webber's signature – appear to corroborate the hypothesis of Joppien and Smith, all the more since there is no firm documentation to establish that the brothers saw each other until John Webber's decision to come to London. But outside of these circumstantial facts, no tangible pictorial confirmation is provided by Joppien and Smith to validate the identity of the sculptor in Webber's painting as Funk, and indeed the idea rests speculative, despite their assertion that Funk was the "probable" model of the Bern painting.

There are aspects of this supposition, as rational as it may seem from the surmised facts, that are nevertheless troublesome in both artistic and ideological areas. If the portrait was in fact painted by Webber in Paris, then it could only have been executed before Funk and Webber separated definitively. Funk returned to Bern in April 1775, to take over the studio of his father who had just died, and Webber in turn went to London to further enhance his studies at the Royal Academy where he enrolled in the same month.<sup>35</sup> This decision by Webber to now undertake a third training in London after those in Bern and Paris was hardly surprising. It may have been precipitated precisely because Henry Webber was already establishing his reputation there and could therefore more easily assure his brother the practical introductions obligatory for entering the closed restraints of London artistic cliques. It might indeed have been his brother's contacts and standing as a prize-winning artist already familiar with the internal workings of the exhibitions that induced John Webber to seek the rich pastures of artistic encouragement in London. And it seems likely that Henry Webber might well have been the intermediary that provided John Webber with the necessary connections to enable him to paint his first English works, including the mythological scenes for the anonymous architect and speculator. From the time of Webber's establishment in London until his return from the Pacific five years later, there is no indication of further interaction with Funk.<sup>36</sup>

But if Webber's painting is understood as a portrait of Funk when both were in close contact with Paris, then there is another inexplicable disparity that puts this idea further into disbelief. In the mid 1770s, Funk was already thirty years old, an age that appears visually incompatible with the distinctively juvenile appearance of the sculptor in the Bern painting. On the other hand, Henry Webber at this time was barely past adolescence, an age that agrees more sensibly with the physiognomic features of the portrait



which admittedly delineates a youth rather than a mature adult.

Yet another crucial element that brings further controversy into the argument is the comparative visual evidence of Funk's known physiognomic features. The only known likeness of him from these years is the profile portrait of the 1770s that was published by J. C. Füssli for his brief history of contemporary Swiss artists<sup>37</sup> (fig. 2). This portrait bears only a glancing resemblance to the model in Webber's painting, even while considering the liberty of natural artistic invention in a young painter whose experiences in portraiture were still limited. Although the Bern painting is a full-face portrait and the engraving depicts a generalized profile, it can hardly be claimed that Funk's features as represented in the illustration are visually close enough to warrant identification as the same figure.

These disturbing facts make the actual identity of the sculptor difficult to resolve. It should be recalled that the initial identification of Henry Webber as the model for the Bern painting, despite the fact that no authentic portrait of him with which to compare is known to exist,<sup>38</sup> had been suggested in a sense by default, although supported tentatively by the model's own statements to Wagner. In addition, it can be ascertained that the distinct physiognomy of the youthful sculptor does not correspond to any other artists known to have been associated with John Webber's wide circle of friends in Paris or London. It seems therefore a fundamental conclusion, weighed by the logical circumstances of the iconographic attribute and a common sense reading of the known facts, to uphold the attribution of the model as Henry Webber, depicted here in his youth when he no doubt shared a studio with his painter brother.

This situation can now be corroborated further as a result of another important early portrait by John Webber that has never been published although its existence was known for decades.<sup>39</sup> The painting is an incontestable portrait in full-face of Funk II signed by John Webber at the bottom right in his Paris fashion with one "b" and is dated 1773 (fig. 3). The painting, still in the possession of the Funk family heirs, is by virtue of its uncontested date the first known oil by the artist who was then only twenty-two years old. A comparison of the facial elements of this work with that of the Bern portrait is revealing: the thinner, longer, and more taut countenance of the twenty-eight year old Funk, with his rounded, deeply set eyes and smaller, more expressive lips, as well as distinctly shaped cheekbones, conforms precisely to the image published by Füssli. It leaves little doubt that Webber's later portrait of a sculptor in Bern can not depict the same individual.

There are no indications in the literature concerning the circumstances around which the 1773 Funk portrait was painted, or whether it was commissioned by the model or merely an exercise among student companions. The portrait, however, is a more manifestly formal offering than the Bern painting, despite its affable manner, which in its attitude and form consciously recalls the portrait style common in French painting in the last quarter of the eighteenth

century. The pose adopted by Funk, in which he is seen turning away toward the left of the composition, was a device frequently employed in Paris, which in itself reflects the prevailing Italian influences employed by such popular painters as Perroneau, Greuze, and Batoni,<sup>40</sup> to name but a few prototypical influences. This manner of depiction is a telling reminder of Parisian portraits of the period, especially of males, in which correct posture and attitude, as gallantly represented by Funk here, were as important in

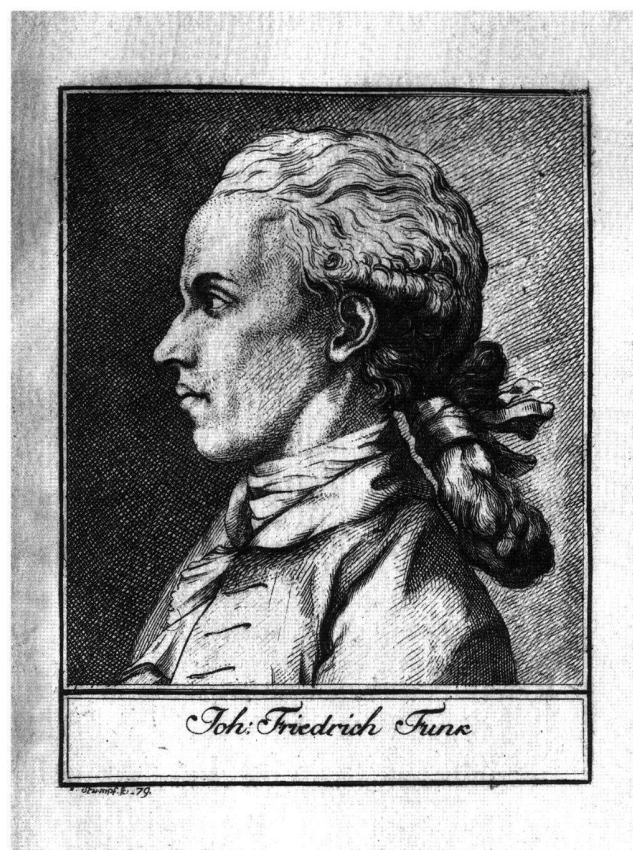


Fig. 2 Portrait of Johann Friedrich II Funk, by Johann Caspar Füssli. Etching, in: Johann Caspar Füssli, *Geschichte der besten Künstler in der Schweiz nebst ihren Bildnissen*, vol. V, Zürich 1779, p. 128.

determining gentility and grace – and therefore the public image the model wished to project – as the accepted furnishings of social standing and breeding. By adopting this painterly prescription, Webber seemed to consciously reflect the taste of his artistic environment which itself must have been fostered by the dictates of the model who was himself entrenched in French artistic habits.

Funk is shown, therefore, in a manner befitting his already nascent career in France in which not only his

attitude but the apparel he chose to wear for the portrait sittings equally indicates the success he was already beginning to achieve. He is depicted in a characteristic, casual suit, distinguished by the modest woollen frock coat with its turned-down collar and large buttons, a generally looser fitting and less structured garment than the more formal three-piece silk suit worn by older, distinguished gentlemen, who in posing in this manner desired to highlight and flatter their social standing; only the embroidered sleeve ruffles of Funk's right hand reveals a slight pretense for the refined.<sup>41</sup> On the whole, the portrait identifies a flourishing if unassuming artist, painted only a year after his teacher's death when Funk was no longer officially a student and already embarking on the road to becoming an independent artist. In this sense, the painting shows that Funk clearly preferred his portrait painted in this more polished mode, showing him posed and poised rather than improvised and natural, and decidedly emanating a transparent self-assuredness which defines his confidence of future artistic prospects.

The contrast with the painterly impression projected in the Bern canvas is therefore particularly striking. While the Funk portrait endows an almost polite distance and an *hauteur d'esprit* through the affected mien, pose, and gesture, as in fact was popular in France so as to pictorially delineate vogueish refinement, the Bern portrait reveals an invigorating informal directness, made all the more prominent by the officious gaze of the model toward the spectator, as though to indicate the interruption of spontaneous activity. It is no less noteworthy to consider that in the Bern portrait, despite the conventionality of the tasteful, but only faintly sketched curtain and column – traditional props in English portrait painting, disposed here almost ironically given the ingeniousness of the composition – the model is represented in a deceptively breezy, roughly bohemian manner *avant la lettre*, an attitude suitable to his youthful vigor. His work shirt and vest are accordingly unbuttoned and tucked into the pantaloons in an ungainly manner at the waist, a distinctive contrast to the protocol seen in Funk's apparel. The inference is that the sitter, unlike the manner seen in the portrait of Funk, gave little thought to his appearance in the intimacy of the studio during the modelling sessions, nor demanded the painter to incorporate the formulas of official painting generally accepted in higher artistic circles.

There are other aspects intrinsic in the iconography of the Bern canvas that help denote the identification of the sculptor as Henry Webber rather than Funk. The entire iconographical thrust of the painting, despite its effortless nature and casual application, is meant to underscore the principal profession of the model as a sculptor in his studio. This attribute applies particularly to Henry Webber in London in 1775 when he was forging his career in this domain, but not necessarily with Funk before he left Paris to assume control of his father's studio in Bern since he was equally known as a drawing master. Henry Webber is shown therefore with the distinguishing implements of his

trade as he pauses while working on a curiously large-sized bust of a child. This figure, which has never been traced but is stylistically reminiscent of Houdon's portraits of children,<sup>42</sup> appears to align itself with the forms Webber was fashioning at this time, and would continue to design in his Wedgwood years.



Fig. 3 Portrait of Johann Friedrich II Funk, by John Webber, 1773. Oil on canvas, 83 × 71 cm. Zürich, Private Collection.

The portrait of Funk, on the other hand, which probably displays one of his own neo-classical creations rather than an antique example, has another iconographic inclination. Funk is shown overtly accenting the element of drawing rather than sculpture, which apparently the model wished to stress since the former is seen directly in the foreground of the painting which thereby localizes the immediate visual focus. The incorporation of the dual arts in the case of Funk signifies no doubt that John Webber and Funk desired to punctuate the model's clear dexterity in both camps, while evidently weighing the primacy of drawing over the plastic arts as the main pivot of the portrait. The painting in this way becomes a kind of pictorial calling card, and indeed resembles one in light of the absence of a true studio setting, a painterly advertisement announcing the model's equal dexterity in the sister arts. This duality is the

precise iconographic trait that distinguishes Funk's status as a sculptor but also as a noted *Zeichenlehrer*.<sup>43</sup> This is surely why Webber represented him here with the conventional *porte crayon* as the chief personal attribute that markedly designates his immediate concern; sculpture in this instance, as an identifying emblem of the sitter's profession, takes on a secondary role, a consistent element respective of Funk's artistic position in the year the portrait was painted.



Fig. 4 Portrait of John Michael Rysbrack with his Terra-cotta Statue of Hercules, by Andrea Soldi, 1753. Oil on canvas, 114,3×91,1 cm. New Haven, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection.

There is another contextual visual component that should be examined in regard to the portrait of Henry Webber which intrinsically places it into a undeniable English context, rather than the Continental one of the Funk portrait. There was seemingly little demand on the part of eighteenth-century English painters to depict the portraits of contemporary sculptors, but from the relatively few examples available from the period, a certain convention, which had originated several decades earlier, can be observed. This form can be well exemplified by two portraits of sculptors by the transplanted painter Andrea

Soldi, both executed during the 1750s. The portrait of John Michael Rysbrack<sup>44</sup> (fig. 4), which in fact refers to the type of the late 1720s, recalls the basic pattern where the sculptor in the studio is positioned with the befitting calipers in his right hand, while the left hand is seen pointing to the completed statue of Hercules at the left. The attire worn by Rysbrack is again informal, with the collar and coat sleeves open, as is the model's willingness, contrary to French conventions, to have himself portrayed without the standard

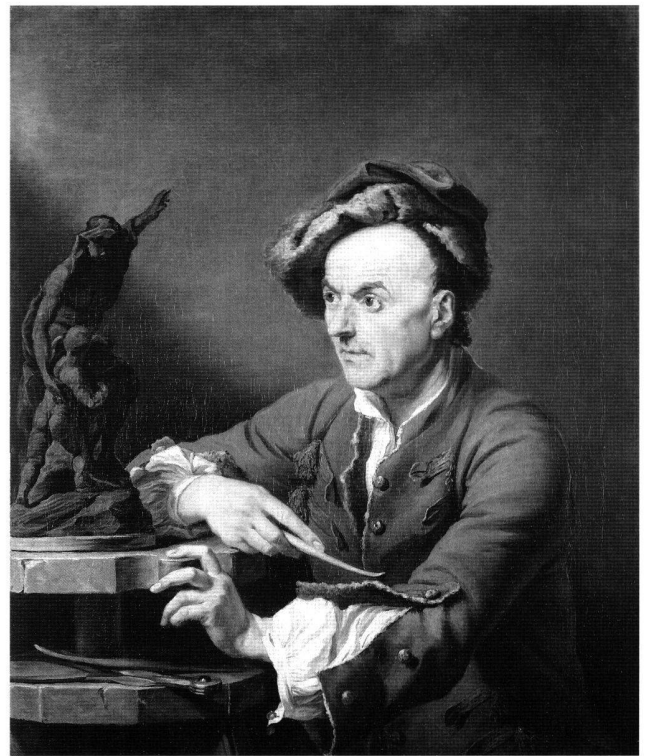


Fig. 5 Portrait of Louis François Roubiliac, by Andrea Soldi, c. 1751. Oil on canvas, 125,8×100,4 cm. London, Dulwich Picture Gallery.

wig, an allusion perhaps to the situation of the sculptor as an artist associated with a more physically arduous process.

This iconographic protocol is underscored as well in Soldi's portrait of one of the most outstanding English sculptors of the eighteenth century, Louis François Roubiliac<sup>45</sup> (fig. 5), here shown with even more informal intimacy. Once again the sculptor is seen in an almost impromptu fashion, with his collar open and sleeves rolled in the act of studying the plaster at the left. As in the portrait of Rysbrack, Roubiliac is shown wearing a turban *à la Hogarth* rather than a wig and likewise displays the charac-



teristic tools of his art. This approach, genre-like and without perceivable pretense for individual flattery, differs considerably from the more lofty style adapted at the time in France. We need only be reminded of Largillière's stiff portraits of sculptors, such as the one of Guillaume Coustou, to recall the contrast; he is shown in a more formal attire with an ornate wig and posed in almost regal fashion as he beckons the viewer with his left hand to examine a plaster group on the stand.<sup>46</sup>

Furthermore, even in regard to the representation of British sculptors by foreign painters, the same unconstrained formula common to English painting frequently persisted. The example of Stephano Tofanelli's 1784 portrait of the Irish sculptor Christopher Hewetson<sup>47</sup> (fig. 6) again stresses the decidedly unceremonious approach. The jaunty manner seen in the Soldi portraits, showing the sculptor relaxed and at ease at the right with his tools clearly visible before the work in progress at the left – in this case a bust of the painter and antiquarian, Gavin Hamilton – is repeated in much the same idea. The formal similarities of these various examples to the Bern painting, with its unaffected approach and unpretentious naturalism, reminds us that John Webber, perhaps conscious of his painterly models of an English context, was in fact adapting himself to an English custom in his portrait of his brother, well removed from Parisian models that served as an aesthetic base for the portrait of Funk, thus in effect establishing his and his brother's respective places within the English tradition.

If the assumption that the Bern portrait indeed represents Henry Webber, as it had been traditionally supposed and the evidence now warrants, then it should be ascribed chronologically in his London years and dated more specifically to immediately after Webber's arrival in 1775 when he shared quarters with his brother at 4, Down Street, Piccadilly. The French mode of the signature can be explained as no more than a natural, and perhaps unintentional, extension of his years in Paris where Webber signed his name as Weber.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, the identification of the model as examined here makes it even more likely that it was the Bern painting, rather than the one of Funk several years earlier – which the model evidently would have wanted to keep, and apparently did since it has always been in the family collection – that was actually exhibited at the Royal Academy between April and May 1776. The freely uninhibited aspect of Webber's style in the portrait of his

brother, decidedly less presumptuous than the decorous conventions so often seen in the exhibitions, was surely decisive in drawing the attention of the naturalist Daniel Carl Solander, an *habitué* of Cook's and later his librarian.

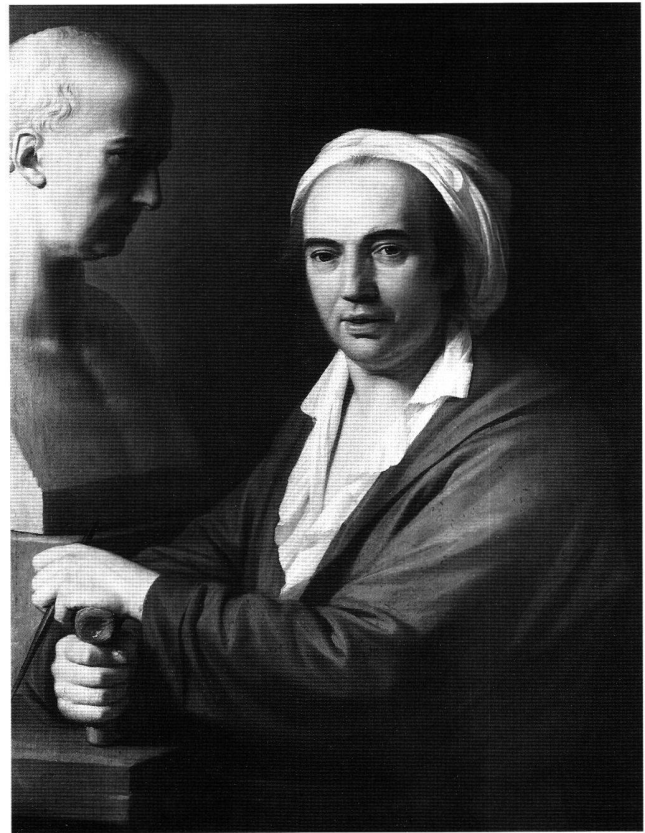


Fig. 6 Portrait of Christopher Hewetson with the Bust of Gavin Hamilton, by Stefano Tofanelli, c. 1775. Oil on canvas, 98,5 × 74,5 cm. Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz Museum.

It was as a result of Solander's personal visit to Webber's studio afterwards to make a cursory inspection of his capacities as a landscape artist and illustrator that ultimately led him to recommend the painter as the chief illustrator for the Cook ships.<sup>49</sup>

- <sup>1</sup> SIGMUND WAGNER, *Biographische Notizen zu Johann Wäber und Heinrich Wäber*, Bern, Staatsarchiv, Depositum Familienarchiv Dr. Rudolf von Fischer, Wagner 47.
- <sup>2</sup> All the literature devoted to Webber stresses this mainstay of his biography, but see especially RÜDIGER JOPPIEN / BERNARD SMITH, *The Art of Captain Cook's Voyages: The Voyage of the Resolution and Discovery 1776–1780*, New Haven/London 1988, who review the entire literature concerning Cook and Webber. For the latest study on Webber, which delves equally into Webber's art before and after the Cook expedition, see WILLIAM HAUPTMAN, *John Webber 1751–1793. Landschaftsmaler und Südseefahrer*, exh. cat., Bern (Kunstmuseum) 1996.
- <sup>3</sup> But see WILLIAM HAUPTMAN, *Webber before Cook: Two watercolours after Sterne*, in: *The Burlington Magazine* 136, April 1994, pp. 237–240, which discusses briefly certain early efforts, especially two significant watercolors in London, Sir John Soane's Museum, which illustrate correlated episodes from Laurence Sterne's novel of 1768, *A Sentimental Journey*.
- <sup>4</sup> Several publications, however, note his role as a major precursor in English landscape painting, particularly during the last decade of his life, as is the case in MARTIN HARDIE, *Watercolor Painting in Britain, vol. I: The Eighteenth Century*, ed. D. SNELGROVE / J. MAYNE / B. TAYLOR, London 1966, pp. 135–136. Here Webber's significance in the generation of landscapists before Girtin and Turner is affirmed.
- <sup>5</sup> The painting, inv. no. 1428, was acquired by the Kunstmuseum in 1935, but it is not noted from what source, nor has documentation survived to indicate its previous provenance. It is catalogued in SANDOR KUTHY, *Die Gemälde, Kunstmuseum Bern*, Bern 1983, no. 257.
- <sup>6</sup> Webber's enrollment in October 1770, as "Jean Weber de Berne," is listed in G. ROUCH's, *Documents figurant au fond d'archives de la Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Beaux-Arts*, in: *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de l'Art français*, Paris 1913, p. 52. Wille is noted as Webber's sponsor and mentor. On John Webber's years with Wille, see GEORGES DUPLESSIS (ed.), *Mémoires et Journal de J. G. Wille, graveur du Roi, publiés d'après les manuscrits autographes de la Bibliothèque Impériale*, vol. I, Paris 1867, pp. 555 and 577.
- <sup>7</sup> It is not certain from when or where the attribution derived, other than its logical inference because of its clear iconographic disposition and the statement in SIGMUND WAGNER's notes for his biography of both Webbers (cf. note 1).
- <sup>8</sup> There is very little literature available on Henry Webber's career, but see RUPPERT GUNNIS, *Dictionary of British Sculptors, 1660–1851*, revised edition, London n. d. [1980], pp. 417–418. – BRUCE TATTERSALL, *Henry Webber: Art at the Service of Industry*, in: *Apollo* 121, July 1985, pp. 36–42, on which the following material is based. – See too MARGARET WHINNEY, *Sculpture in Britain 1539 to 1830*, revised edition, London 1988, p. 316, in which Webber is dismissed in only half a paragraph as a marginal figure in English sculpture.
- <sup>9</sup> While nothing substantial is recorded on Abraham Wäber – his career is not noted in either the Swiss or British publications of the period – it is known nevertheless that he had immigrated to London before 1744, under curious and perhaps scandalous circumstances. See HARALD WÄBER, *Die Familie Wäber von Bern*, Bern (privately printed) 1979. On February 18, 1744, Wäber, now known as Weber, married Mary Quant of Saint-Martin-in-the-Field at St. George's Chapel, Hyde Park Corner. They would eventually have six children: Rudolph in 1747 (who was baptised the same day as his birth which probably means he was stillborn); John Webber in 1751, whose name, however, was spelled like his father's with one "b"; Henry Webber in 1754, whose name was recorded with two "b"s as were all of the following children; Benjamin in 1757; Rosetta in 1758; and Ann in 1761. This information is contained in the Webber file, Bern, Burgerbibliothek.
- <sup>10</sup> SIDNEY HUTCHISON, *The Royal Academy Schools, 1768–1830*, in: *The Walpole Society* 38, 1960–62, p. 138. Henry Webber enrolled officially on March 12, 1772, inscription no. 160. It might be added that among his contemporaries in the Academy sculpture courses was his Swiss colleague Alexander Trippel who had entered on October 25, 1771, inscription no. 143.
- <sup>11</sup> It is not certain with whom Henry Webber studied since the first official Professor of Sculpture was John Flaxman who was not engaged in that capacity until 1810. In 1772, beside the administrative staff and assorted Honorary Members, there was a Professor of Painting (Edward Penny), a Professor of Architecture (Thomas Sandby, Paul Sandby's brother), a Professor of Perspective (Samuel Wale), and a Professor of Anatomy (William Hunter). But, it may be assumed that Webber received instruction from the sculptors who were associates of the Academy, including Joseph Wilton, George Michael Moser, Richard Yeo, Agostino Carlini – all appointed in 1768 –, Edward Burch, and Joseph Nollekens, appointed in 1771 and 1772 respectively; see WILLIAM SANDBY, *The History of the Royal Academy of Arts*, vol. II, London 1862, pp. 393–394.
- <sup>12</sup> The earliest work Henry Webber exhibited was "An Old Man's head; a model in wax", shown at the Society of Artists exhibition of 1773, no. 369; see ALGERNON GRAVES, *The Society of Artists of Great Britain 1760–1791. The Free Society of Artists 1761–1783*, London 1907, p. 274. It might be mentioned that the list of exhibitors at the Society also notes another artist named Webber, with no first name indicated, who showed a painted portrait in 1771, no. 182. It is unlikely that this artist was Henry Webber, but DAPHNE FOSKETT, *A Dictionary of British Miniature Painters*, London 1972, I, p. 570, remarks that he could have been John Webber, an idea that must be discounted because the address given for this Webber was "Mr Baker's King Street, Covent Garden"; John Webber at the time was living in Paris.
- <sup>13</sup> The Royal Academy school provided one gold medal for sculpture each year, but encouraged students through silver medals, of which no more than nine in three categories (Historical Painting, Sculpture in Bas-relief, and Architecture) were awarded each year. Designs for the medals were prepared by Cipriani and Penny and engraved in high relief by Thomas Pingo. The Gold medal had an image of Minerva leading a youth onto a steep ascent to the temple of fame, marked with the inscription "HAUD FACILEM ESSE VIAM VOLUIT"; the obverse had a relief portrait of George III. The silver medal showed a torso based on Apollo Belvedere with the notation, "STUDY". See SYDNEY C. HUTCHISON, *The History of the Royal Academy 1768–1886*, 2nd ed., London 1986, p. 34. Webber's "The Judgement of Midas" survives in London, Sir John Soane's Museum, and is reproduced in BRUCE TATTERSALL (cf. note 8), p. 36. As to other works by Henry Webber, there is little data available. He exhibited several wax models in 1775 and seems to have made a relief of "Bacchus and Ariadne" in 1779, but few other examples are noted. The common references to later works are: the celebrated David Garrick Monument in Westminster in 1795–1797 – Webber was asked to do the work only when John Hickey, to whom the commission went, died suddenly – and the Henry Askew Monument in Newcastle-on-Tyne in 1801. See SAMUEL REDGRAVE, *A Dictio-*



- nary of Artists of the English School, London 1878, p. 462. – MAURICE HAROLD GRANT, *A Dictionary of British Sculptors*, London 1953, p. 257. The British Museum has an undated print after a medallion (inv. 1871.12.9.4698), bearing the inscription “H. Webber inv” with a note at the bottom “Copied from Capt. Phillips’ Voyage / to Botany Bay, by permission of the Proprietor.” This must surely be in reference to his work on the so-called Sydney Cove medallion, for which see note 22 below.
- <sup>14</sup> On Bacon’s life and career, see THE REV. RICHARD CECIL, *Memoirs of John Bacon, Esquire, R. A.*, London 1801, which emphasizes his work in the context of his strict Methodist background, and ANN COX-JOHNSON, *John Bacon R. A.*, in: *St Marylebone Society Publications* 4, 1961. – But for a more accessible discussion of his art, see RUPPERT GUNNIS (cf. note 8), pp. 24–28, and MARGARET WHINNEY (cf. note 8), pp. 303–313; the former provides a list of his work comprising almost a hundred monuments, the most important of which the marble Memorial to the Earl of Chatham in Westminster Abbey for which Bacon was paid the astounding sum of £ 6000. Henry Webber’s relationship to Bacon may have been difficult since the master was known to have a tempestuous temper and was said to be hardly likeable except to clients. Webber almost certainly assisted Bacon in the execution of the Chatham monument and would later be influenced by the main figure of Britannia in his designs for a Wedgwood candlestick which he fashioned before 1785. Although Bacon is little studied today, a part of his fame rests on his widely used invention of an improved pointing-machine which permitted greater facility in transferring plaster models to marble of any size; Houdon was an enthusiastic practitioner.
- <sup>15</sup> Chambers’ relationship with Henry Webber never seems to have been noted. It is likely that they met while the latter was at the Academy; Chambers was a founding member and appointed the first Treasurer by the King himself with whom he had a personal relationship. It could be added that Chambers too had dealings with Wedgwood as early as 1770, as noted in Bank Account, Archives Drummond Bank, Royal Bank of Scotland, for which see JOHN HARRIS, *Sir William Chambers. Knight of the Polar Star*, London 1970, p. 175. He assisted Wedgwood by lending models and counseling on such topics as the differences between vases and urns and other subjects. On Chambers’ role in the foundation of the Royal Academy, see SYDNEY C. HUTCHISON (cf. note 13), pp. 27, 45–48. – On his relationship to Wedgwood, see too ROBIN REILLY, *Wedgwood. The New Illustrated Dictionary*, London 1995, p. 101.
- <sup>16</sup> The nature of the association between Henry Webber and Reynolds is not known, but his recommendation, along with that of Chambers, is documented in ELIZA METEYARD, *The Life of Josiah Wedgwood*, vol. II, London 1866, p. 465. Reynolds, like Chambers, had dealings with Wedgwood and painted his portrait and another of his wife Sarah, both in 1782. Reynolds, however, would later prove to be an admirer of John Webber’s work, noting his approval in several letters; see JOSHUA REYNOLDS, *Letters of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, F. W. HILLES (ed.), Cambridge 1929, pp. 123, 126, 131.
- <sup>17</sup> The citation comes from a letter Wedgwood sent on June 24, 1786 to Sir William Hamilton, quoted in ROBIN REILLY, *Wedgwood*, vol. I, London 1989, p. 667; the letter is in the Wedgwood Archive, on deposit at Keele University, Staffordshire, inv. no. E18976–26. In another letter from Wedgwood to Hamilton of June 16, 1787, he explained further that Webber had been “the most promising pupil in the Royal Academy [schools],” which apparently was the gist of Chambers’ and Reynolds’ letters. See ANN FINER / GEORGE SAVAGE, *The Selected Letters of Josiah Wedgwood*, London 1968, p. 307. It might be added that
- Webber’s master, John Bacon, too had dealings with Wedgwood, having been employed in 1769, but there is no indication that he played a role in Webber’s appointment.
- <sup>18</sup> The Etruria works were established in 1769 as a factory for “Useful Wares” (that is, tableware), which were produced in a partnership between Josiah Wedgwood and his cousin Thomas, and “Ornamental Wares”, for which Webber was the chief “modeller”. Henry Webber’s work apparently met with satisfaction since he received a new seven year contract on January 17, 1785 at an annual salary of £ 252; see BRUCE TATTERSALL, *Flaxman and Wedgwood*, in: DAVID BINDMAN (ed.), *John Flaxman*, exh. cat., London (Royal Academy of Arts) 1979, p. 65. The contract, however, permitted Webber to pursue his own works should he so desire, with the proviso that his time engaged for personal work would be deducted from his salary.
- <sup>19</sup> In ROBIN REILLY / GEORGE SAVAGE, *The Dictionary of Wedgwood*, London 1980, p. 360, the authors note that “much of Webber’s work on vases and tableware must remain unrecognised”, but certain works seem to bear his stamp “or may be attributed to him with some confidence”; the authors list fourteen cameos, medallions and tablets, as well as five figures and vases. That number seems to have been reduced in the more recent account in ROBIN REILLY (cf. note 15), p. 459 where certain works, including the portrait of Sarah Wedgwood, are now considered even more doubtful. For works known to have been from Webber’s designs, see HILARY YOUNG (ed.), *The Genius of Wedgwood*, exh. cat., London (The Victoria and Albert Museum) 1995.
- <sup>20</sup> These are contained in a notebook, entitled “Extract of Memorandum by Mr. Webber to be presented to Mr. Wedgwood” and deposited in the Wedgwood Museum, Barlaston.
- <sup>21</sup> This was actually the Barberini Vase, a Roman glass original now in the British Museum, inv. no. BM Gem 4036, which had been sold in 1784 by William Hamilton, who had purchased it originally from the antiquarian James Byres, to the Dowager Duchess of Portland, thus the appellation. After her death in 1785, it was bought by her son, the third Duke of Portland, who eventually lent it for one year to Wedgwood for reproduction. Webber, who played an important role in the design, was assisted by Wedgwood’s other modellers, William Hackwood and William Wood. When the project was terminated after three years of experimenting – it was first exhibited in the Wedgwood showrooms in October, 1789 – Sir Joseph Banks gave a party to introduce Wedgwood’s creation in which Horace Walpole and Reynolds were present; the latter proclaiming it “a correct and faithful imitation”. On the latter anecdote, see WILLIAM T. WHITLEY, *Artists and Their Friends in England 1700–1799*, vol. II, London 1928, p. 125. – On the history of the Portland Vase, see WOLF MANKOWITZ, *The Portland Vase and the Wedgwood Copies*, London 1952, pp. 30–31, particularly for Webber’s contribution, as well as D. HAYNES, *The Portland Vase*, London 1964. Webber’s role is also discussed briefly in *The Age of Neo-Classicism*, exh. cat., London (The Royal Academy of Arts and the Victoria and Albert Museum) 1972, p. 879, no. 1842, here in reference to the copy owned by Charles Darwin who had inherited it from his father Erasmus, Wedgwood’s physician and later son-in-law. One of the first painterly images of the vase is in BENJAMIN WEST’S *British Manufacturing (Etruria)* of 1791; see GARDNER TEALL, *Benjamin West’s Etruria*, in: *International Studio* 89, 1928, pp. 45–46. – HELMUT VON ERFA / ALLEN STALEY, *The Paintings of Benjamin West*, New Haven and London 1986, pp. 411–412, no. 437.
- <sup>22</sup> The medallion, measuring 60 cm in diameter and issued in 1789, commemorated the arrival of 850 convicts and 200 naval

officers in Australia the year before under the command of Arthur Phillips, the governor of the penal colony. The image, showing the allegory of Hope encouraging Art and Labour under the influence of Peace, was made from Sydney cone clay that had been sent by Phillips to London for the purpose. There is a slight indication of landscape in the right background that Webber may have used on the basis of his brother's studies from the area a decade earlier. The design was first published as the frontispiece to the 1789 edition of ARTHUR PHILLIPS' *The Voyage of Governor Phillips to Botany Bay*, with the indication that it was drawn by Webber and engraved by Thomas Medland. Subsequent editions, however, eliminate Webber's name. On the history of the medallion, see BRUCE TATTERSALL (cf. note 18), p. 66, no. 55c. – ROBIN REILLY (cf. note 17), p. 127. As was mentioned in note 13 above, Webber apparently made a portrait of Arthur Phillips.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. note 1.

<sup>24</sup> Henry Webber told Wagner that "M. W[ebber] l'ainé peignit à Londres qqs plafonds à huile, sujets mythologie, pour un architecte qui batissait des maisons par speculation, qu'il vendit..." (fol. 42–43). This form of activity was hardly new in London at this time, but it was apparently rarely practiced. None of Webber's decorations seem to have survived and are not noted in the seminal literature on the subject, EDWARD CROFT-MURRAY, *Decorative Painting in England, 1537–1837*, London 1962.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. note 1 above. There has been speculation that the architect in question was in fact Chambers himself, since he had recommended Henry Webber to Wedgwood and therefore must have known his work. Unfortunately, there is no evidence to substantiate the idea. The literature on Chambers makes no mention of Webber, nor his activities at this time in building houses to be sold with ready-made decorations.

<sup>26</sup> One book illustration is known, a small drawing now in London, The British Museum, inv. no. 1943.11.13.135, although certainly others existed. For an indication of Webber's literary subjects, which may have served as a subject for the ceiling decorations, only one drawing has survived, a study from Tasso's writings, now in London, Victoria and Albert Museum, inv. no. D. 1337–98; and the only religious painting known is his "Abraham and the Three Angels", Münster, Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte, inv. no. WKV 240. All of these works are discussed in WILLIAM HAUPTMAN (cf. note 2), pp. 122–123.

<sup>27</sup> From the list of the first exhibition of the Royal Academy in 1769, it can be seen that of the 136 works exhibited, 40 were portraits, 48 landscapes, five animal and flower scenes, nine sculptures and medals, two engravings, ten architectural subjects, and only 22 works were loosely defined as historical and mythological subjects; see WILLIAM SANDBY (cf. note 11), vol. I, p. 131. The situation was similar in France, but more variable. In the Salons between 1775 and 1789, it has been estimated that portraits accounted for only about a quarter of the total number of paintings shown, while in the respective Salons of the Revolution and the Empire, that number changed to about 40%; see ANTOINE SCHNAPPER, *Painting During the Revolution 1789–1799*, in: *French Painting 1774–1830: The Age of Revolution*, exh. cat., Detroit (Institute of Art) 1975, p. 110.

<sup>28</sup> On the preeminence of portrait painting in England at this time, see, among many studies, the essay in PATRICK J. NOON, *English Portrait Drawings and Miniatures*, exh. cat., New Haven (Yale Center for British Art) 1979. – MARCIA POINTON, *Portrait Painting as a Business Enterprise in London in the 1780's*, in: *Art History* 7, June 1984, pp. 187–205.

<sup>29</sup> It was noted in the late 1750s that more than 2,000 portrait painters of some form were active in London alone, a figure

that Horace Walpole, in a letter to Sir David Dalrymple, thought exaggerated, but still not far from the mark; see W. S. LEWIS (ed.), *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, New Haven 1937 et seq., vol. XV, p. 47.

<sup>30</sup> ALGERNON GRAVES, *The Royal Academy of Arts, A Complete Dictionary of Contributors and their Work from its Foundation in 1769 to 1904*, vol. VIII, London 1906, p. 186. Webber's portrait was listed as no. 313. I am informed by A. W. Potter of the Royal Academy of Arts that their records do not contain the measurements of the exhibited Webber portrait which might further confirm that the Bern painting was the one exhibited in the Royal Academy at that time. Information in the archives is limited to title, author, and address with no measurements taken or preserved, unlike in the French salons where dimensions, usually with frames, were recorded as a matter of course when the picture was presented for exhibition. John Sutherland confirmed that the Royal Academy Index compiled by the Witt Library likewise has no information on the nature of the portrait shown by Webber in that exhibition. According to Dr. Brian Allen, this is also true for the press cuttings of reviews in the London papers of the period preserved in the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, London.

<sup>31</sup> RÜDIGER JOPPIEN / BERNARD SMITH (cf. note 2), vol. III/1, p. 179.

<sup>32</sup> The most complete study of the Funk family remains in HERMANN VON FISCHER, *Die Kunsthandwerker-Familie Funk im 18. Jahrhundert in Bern*, Bern 1961, which forms the basis for the information on Funk's activities.

<sup>33</sup> There is little available on Vassé, but the most complete biographical details are contained in FRANÇOIS SOUCHAL, *French Sculptors of the 17th and 18th Centuries*, vol. III, Oxford 1987, pp. 402–442. Vassé was appointed *professeur adjoint* in 1758 and *professeur* three years later. He was a *protégé* of the powerful Comte de Caylus and intimate with the Royal family from whom he received numerous commissions.

<sup>34</sup> The point is made in CARL BRUN, *Schweizerisches Künstler-Lexikon*, vol. I, Frauenfeld 1905, p. 533: "Im Zeichnen Unterricht gebend, stellte er sich auf eigene Füße." This direction may have been pushed by Vassé who also bore the title of "Dessinateur de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres."

<sup>35</sup> On Funk's return to Bern, see HERMANN VON FISCHER (cf. note 32), p. 32. Funk I died on April 1, 1775. Webber's enrollment in the Royal Academy school, inscription no. 252, is recorded on April 8, 1775, for which see SIDNEY HUTCHISON (cf. note 10), p. 141.

<sup>36</sup> The first indication of contact with Funk is contained in a letter of January 4, 1781 from John Webber to Funk II, a copy of which is preserved in the Bern archives. The letter notes that Henry Webber had written to Funk twice earlier, but no response was received. In this seven page letter, John Webber recounted his experiences with Cook.

<sup>37</sup> JOH. CASPAR FÜSSL, *Geschichte der besten Künstler in der Schweiz nebst ihren Bildnissen*, vol. V, Zürich 1779, p. 128.

<sup>38</sup> Research in the comprehensive photographic archives of the Witt Library and the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, both in London, have failed to unearth a portrait of Henry Webber. Similarly, I am informed by Paul Cox of the National Portrait Gallery, London, that they likewise do not possess a portrait of the sculptor, as is the case with the Wedgwood archives. As to John Webber, there are only two portraits of him known: he is supposedly included in de Loutherbourg's 1776 painting "A Winter Morning with a Skating Party" (Paris, Private Collection), and a posthumous portrait of 1812 by Johann Daniel Mottet (Bernisches Historisches Museum), painted from an unidentified miniature which has never been

- traced. Both works are reproduced in WILLIAM HAUPTMAN (cf. note 2), pp. 33 and 25 respectively.
- <sup>39</sup> I owe my knowledge of this portrait to the generosity of Hermann von Fischer who brought it to my attention. The painting is in Zürich, Private Collection.
- <sup>40</sup> It should be noted, however, that Batoni also had an enormous influence in English portrait style. Of the almost 265 portraits known to have been painted by him, about 75%, are of English sitters; see ANTHONY M. CLARK, *Pompeo Batoni*, Oxford 1985, particularly pp. 42–48 on his British patronage.
- <sup>41</sup> On fashions in England at the time and their echoes in portrait styles, see AILEEN RIBEIRO, *The Art of Dress. Fashion in England and France 1750 to 1820*, New Haven/London 1995.
- <sup>42</sup> The representation of children in eighteenth-century English sculpture was generally relegated to *putti* decoration for tombs or accompanying weeping figures, but rarely as individual portraits. The figure in the Bern canvas, however, bears none of the obvious characteristics of a tomb figures and appears closer to an actual portrait, resembling the *typos* Houdon developed in the late 1780s with the busts of his three daughters; see H. H. ARNASON, *The Sculpture of Houdon*, London 1975, figs. 93–94. – GEORGE T. M. SHACKELFORD / MARY TAVENER HOLMES, *A Magic Mirror. The Portrait in France 1700–1900*, exh. cat., Houston (The Museum of Fine Arts) 1986, p. 72, for the portrait of his daughter Anne-Ange.
- <sup>43</sup> The point is especially noted in THIEME-BECKER, vol. XII, p. 591 and CARL BRUN (cf. note 34), p. 533.
- <sup>44</sup> See *Selected Paintings Drawings & Books*, exh. cat., New Haven (Yale Center for British Art) 1977, p. 17. The painting, dated 1753, shows the sculptor with a model of his statue of Hercules that he carved for the Pantheon at Stourhead; Walpole praised it as “exquisite”. But Soldi’s portrait is clearly based on an earlier portrait of Rysbrack, attributed to John Vanderbank and dated c. 1728, which is in London, The National Portrait Gallery, inv. no. 1802; see JOHN KERSLAKE, *Early Georgian Portraits*, vol. II, London 1977, pl. 702. Soldi came to London in about 1738 and remained there until his death, achieving a formidable reputation as a portraitist. He was, however, vain and extravagant and went to debtor’s prison in 1744, but was released shortly afterwards through the help of friends. Nonetheless, he died a pauper, with the cost of his funeral paid for by Joshua Reynolds out of his own pocket; see WILLIAM T. WHITLEY (cf. note 21), vol. I, pp. 121–122.
- <sup>45</sup> The work dates to c. 1751. There are several studies of Roubiliac, all showing him at work in this manner, including an

even more informal portrait by Adrien Carpentiers, presently in London, National Portrait Gallery, inv. no. NPG 303, for which see JOHN KERSLAKE (cf. note 44), no. 699. In the example illustrated in the text, Roubiliac is seen with two figures, that could represent either Charity or Fame and are probably related to the monument to John Montagu (d. 1749); see DAVID BINDMAN / MALCOLM BAKER, *Roubiliac and the Eighteenth-Century Monument. Sculpture as Theatre*, New Haven/London 1995, p. 304.

- <sup>46</sup> See FRANÇOIS SOUCHAL, *Les frères Coustou*, Paris 1980, pl. 1d. Equally demonstrative is Duplessis’ portrait of the sculptor Christophe Gabriel Allegrain, shown in the Salon of 1775, and now in the Louvre, inv. no. 4305, which also shows the sculptor formally posed in his studio for the portrait, without the slightest hint of improvisation, and in this case represented in a particularly fine attire.

- <sup>47</sup> Hewetson (c. 1739–1798) is little studied today; he went to Rome in 1765 and worked there for the rest of his life. Known as “lo scultore irlandese,” he achieved great fame for his portrait busts, including those of Pope Clement XIV and Mengs, both of which had the honor of once being displayed in the Pantheon. He was a devoted friend of Gavin Hamilton whose bust is seen in the painting; the bust itself is in the University of Glasgow. Until 1960, this painting was attributed to Mengs; but see ANTHONY M. CLARK, *The Walraf-Richartz Portrait of Hewetson*, in: *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch* 22, 1960, pp. 197–200, who correctly attributes the work to Tofanelli. As for Tofanelli (1752–1812), he was a minor painter from Lucca who essentially worked for Princess Elisa Baciocchi, Grand Duchess of Tuscany; for the major works see TERENCE HODGKINSON, *Christopher Hewetson, an Irish Sculptor in Rome*, in: *The Walpole Society* 34, 1952–54, pp. 42–54, where the portrait of Hewetson is reproduced as the frontispiece but still as a painting by Mengs. – See too E. PIETRANGELI, *Un autoritratto di Stefano Tofanelli nel Museo di Roma*, in: *Bollettino dei Musei Comunali di Roma* 5, 1959, pp. 38–39. – MARGARET WHINNEY (cf. note 8), pp. 316–318.

- <sup>48</sup> There are several instances in which Webber later signed his name casually in the French manner, or inadvertently provided the simpler form, including a drawing of a salamander which Webber gave to Joseph Banks, now in London, The British Museum, inv. no. 1914.5.20.365, in which the signature in ink reads, “Jo Web 1777”.

- <sup>49</sup> DOUGLAS COLE, *John Webber: A sketch of Captain Cook’s Artist*, in: *B. C. Historical News* 12, 1979, pp. 19–20, among various other authors who relate the account.

#### PHOTO CREDITS

- Fig. 1: Kunstmuseum, Bern (Foto: Peter Lauri, Bern).  
 Fig. 2, 3: Archives of the author.  
 Fig. 4: Yale Center for British Art, New Haven.  
 Fig. 5: Dulwich Picture Gallery, London.  
 Fig. 6: Rheinisches Bildarchiv, Cologne.

## SUMMARY

The article examines one of the earliest paintings of Johann Wäber (later known as John Webber) before he left England together with Captain Cook in 1776. Because the painting, "Portrait of a Sculptor", acquired by the Kunstmuseum Bern in 1935 has an illegible date, it was thought, by the manner in which it is signed, to have been painted during his Parisian years. The portrait was long thought to be of the painter's brother, the sculptor Henry Webber, but doubts were cast on the identification in recent literature on Webber, based mainly on circumstantial evidence and identifying the sitter as his cousin, Johann Friedrich II Funk. From the evidence of a newly discovered portrait of Funk by Webber, here clearly dated 1773, it can be shown that this idea is untenable and that the original notion of a portrait of Henry Webber was correct. Furthermore, it was this painting that John Webber exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1776, admiration for which prompted Webber's engagement for the Cook journey around the world.

## RÉSUMÉ

L'auteur de l'article analyse un des premiers tableaux du peintre Johann Wäber (connu plus tard sous le nom de John Webber), que l'artiste réalisa avant de quitter l'Angleterre, en 1776, avec le capitaine Cook. Compte tenu de l'illisibilité de la date inscrite sur cette peinture, intitulée «Portrait d'un sculpteur» et acquise en 1935 par le Musée des Beaux-Arts de Berne, on a pensé que l'œuvre, d'après la façon dont elle avait été signée, avait été exécutée par Webber au cours de son séjour à Paris, et on en a déduit qu'elle figurait le frère du peintre, à savoir le sculpteur Henry Webber. Des études récentes ont contesté cette identification: d'après certaines argumentations circonstanciées, il semblerait plutôt que le personnage représenté dans le tableau fût le cousin de Webber, Johann Friedrich II Funk. Grâce à la découverte d'un autre portrait de Funk réalisé par Webber, et daté explicitement 1773, la deuxième hypothèse ne peut être retenue, ce qui porte à considérer valable la supposition formulée à l'origine, selon laquelle la peinture représenterait effectivement Henry Webber. Par ailleurs, ce portrait est celui que John Webber exposa en 1776 à la Royal Academy à Londres, et qui l'entraîna à participer avec le capitaine Cook à son périple maritime autour du monde.

## ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Der Autor untersucht eines der frühesten Gemälde des Malers Johann Wäber (später bekannt unter dem Namen John Webber), das gemalt worden war, bevor dieser im Jahr 1776 England zusammen mit Kapitän Cook verliess. Da das «Porträt eines Bildhauers», das 1935 vom Kunstmuseum Bern erworben wurde, ein unleserliches Datum aufweist, glaubte man, aufgrund der Schreibweise der Signatur, Webber habe es während seines Aufenthalts in Paris gemalt, und schloss daraus, dass es den Bruder des Malers, den Bildhauer Henry Webber, darstelle. Diese Identifizierung wurde in der neueren Literatur in Zweifel gezogen: Umständliche Beweisführungen führten zur Ansicht, beim Dargestellten handle es sich vielmehr um Webbers Cousin, Johann Friedrich II. Funk. Dank der Entdeckung eines weiteren von Webber gemalten Funk-Porträts, das eindeutig mit 1773 datiert ist, kann die erwähnte These nicht aufrecht erhalten werden. Entsprechend der ursprünglichen Annahme stellt das Bild tatsächlich Henry Webber dar. Überdies handelt es sich dabei um jenes Gemälde, das John Webber 1776 in der Royal Academy ausstellte und dessen Beachtung dem Maler letztlich die Teilnahme an Cooks Weltumsegelung eintrug.

## RIASSUNTO

L'autore esamina una delle prime opere del pittore Johann Wäber, conosciuto in seguito con il nome John Webber. L'opera è stata eseguita da Webber prima di lasciare l'Inghilterra insieme a James Cook, nel 1776. Data l'illeggibilità della data sul «Ritratto di uno scultore», acquistato dal Kunstmuseum di Berna nel 1935, si ritenne che l'opera (secondo il modo della firma) fosse stata eseguita da Webber durante il suo soggiorno a Parigi e che fosse il ritratto del fratello dell'autore, lo scultore Henry Webber. Recentemente, detta identificazione è stata contestata dagli storici dell'arte: basandosi su argomentazioni tortuose è stata avanzata l'ipotesi che il ritratto raffigurasse invece il cugino di Webber, Johann Friedrich II. Funk. Grazie alla scoperta di un ritratto di Funk, eseguito da Webber nel 1773, detta tesi è poi risultata infondata. Il ritratto è proprio quello di Henry Webber. Va inoltre detto che si tratta del dipinto esposto da John Webber nel 1776 presso la Royal Academy a Londra e il cui successo gli valse la partecipazione al giro del mondo insieme a Cook.