York School of Design 1842-c.1852:
A provincial School of Design and its contribution to Victorian Design Reform.

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Introduction

The School of Design at York was established in 1842 as one of the first provincial branches of the London-based Government School of Design. It first occupied modest premises on Little Blake Street –now Duncombe Place – before moving to Minster Yard in 1848 – what is now the Minster Song School – where it remained for much of the second half of the nineteenth-century until moving into the old 1879 Exhibition Building on Exhibition Square in 1890. This little-known school in York was the product of a now well-documented government-led initiative called Victorian Design Reform that reshaped the teaching of the conception and production of the decorative arts in Britain. The British Government's decision to institutionalise industrial and applied arts derived from observation of a successful programme that was in place in France that cultivated 'good taste' in every strata of society, from the fine artist to the mechanic or engineer.[1] From this was gained the impetus to nurture a comparable system that would provide the nation with the knowledge to design and manufacture applied arts in a superior modern style. However, some commentators noted the high standard of France's manufactures derived from the fact that the 'seat of manufactures' was in close proximity to the 'seat of art,' Paris.[2] With Britain's less contained and conjoined areas of manufacture a way of centralising the provision of art education was sought, and 'carefully drawn up regulations were made to control the growth and placement of provincial design schools to serve the needs of local manufacturers whilst following a prescribed national syllabus.' [3] This element of uncompromising control of the 'Central Council' is what has flavoured the scholarship that engages with the many provincial institutions that were established in the same decade as the York School of Design.

The years from York School of Design's establishment in 1842 to c.1852 represent the direction of the design school system under the influence of the Scottish artist William Dyce (1806-1864), and an ideology led by the Schools of Design that aimed to make teaching practices applicable to modern day industrial processes.[4] This essay argues that in this period the school at York

[1] Lara Kriegel, *Grand Designs: Labor, Empire, and the Museum in Victorian Culture*, (London: Duke University Press, 2007), 33.
[2] Gilbert R. Redgrave, *Manual of Design: Compiled from the writings and addresses of Richard Redgrave, R.A.*, (London: Chapman & Hall, 1890), 156-157.
[3] John Swift, 'Birmingham and its Art School: Changing Views 1800-1921,' in Mervyn Roman, ed., *Histories of Art and Design Education: Collected Essays*, (Bristol: Intellect, 2005), 70.
[4] Dyce's official tenure as superintendent finished in 1844 but his vision endured until the early 1850s.

enjoyed a prosperous relationship with the Central Council. This is reinforced by the statistics: York received an extensive and varied supply of teaching material, the student numbers steadily increased from an average of 41 to 108, a female class was established and both males and females collected prizes – in the form of money or useful books – for a multitude of different disciplines. This often preceded successful entrance into artisan or craft trades.[5] However, with York's ambiguous state as a 'pre-industrial' town, scholarship has skimmed over York, dismissing it as failed experiment of the design school system that neither deserved to have nor profited from the institution. This essay, themed by specific elements of the design school curriculum – drawing from outline, drawing from the round, or, drawing from three-dimensional objects, and drawing from the live model – offers a revised and more nuanced account of how York School of Design must be considered as a serious contributor to centralised Victorian Design Reform.

Drawing From Outline: William Dyce and William Etty in York

Dyce's thoughts on pattern drawing were founded in a strong belief in the need for a practical link between the arts of design and manufacturing industries. His convictions secured the endorsement of the Board of Trade and it was in this capacity that he was able to realise his own theories on the cultivation of good design through the establishment of a standardised drawing curriculum. To reinforce his pragmatic views, Dyce discouraged drawing from antique sculpture or the live model and instead posited the vocational benefits of flat pattern drawing, such as designing wallpaper.[6] Scholars dealing with the way in which the centralised drawing curriculum was received in branch and provincial schools have accepted the claim of writers such as Rafael Cardoso Denis, who state that drawing practices 'tended to remain at an agonizingly basic level.'[7] However, by looking at the relationship of Dyce to the York-born academic painter William Etty (1787-1849) and the York school, a less straightforward situation of subordination between York and London is revealed.

[5] Anon., 'York School of Design,' *Yorkshire Gazette*, 19th March, 1853, 7.
[6] Marcia Pointon, *William Dyce: A Critical Biography*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 45.
[7] Raphael Cardoso Denis, 'Teaching by Example: Education and the Formation of South Kensington's Museums', in Malcolm Baker, ed., *A Grand Design: The Art of the Victoria and Albert Museum*, (London: V&A Publications, 1997), 107-116. An example of an article which has added to the perpetuation of this short-sighted view is Caroline Jordan, 'The South Kensington Empire and the Idea of the Regional Art Gallery in Nineteenth-Century Victoria,' *Fabrications*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2011, 34-59.

For quickest passage of the newly educated designer into trade most branch Schools of Design were usually located within or close to a large industrial or manufacturing centre. York School of Design, established in a pre-industrial cathedral town was not considered of a fit to this model. Dyce is quoted as saying that 'York was to be connected with industry, even though it was not, itself, industrial. It was to be looked on as "a nursery for national taste."'[8]. To explore this idea further there is evidence of an address given by both William Dyce and William Etty at the Yorkshire Philosophical Society Museum in September 1842. The local press recounts Dyce's speech as making allusion to York as a centre of advancement of taste outside of industry. More like a decentred version of London – and a miniature version of the School of Design system – York is not subservient to its manufacturing classes but it nurtures advancement in taste in general and then transfers it to the surrounding areas. Dyce also refers to York Minster as a 'treasure house of ornamental design', reinforcing the identity of a centre as somewhere in close proximity to a source of artistic inspiration, like Paris or London. Further to this, Etty begins his address by acknowledging the emphasis on the artisan and the 'less ambitious' ends of the project, but is quickly caught up in how York 'is admirably adapted for the study of the more refined arts.'[9] The confusion of the rhetoric of both individuals, where they attribute to York qualities of both innovative capital and passive province reveals Etty and Dyce not as opposites in positing artistic ideals, but rather in a similar state of ambivalence as to York's status in the nurturing of the arts

Taking into account Etty's academic training, and the opposition that Dyce posed to the Royal Academy, it is the difference between 'ornamental arts' and the 'refined fine arts' where the confusion lies. The dissonance between the ideologies of Dyce and Etty is in the practicality of the ornamental arts, and their function with the countries capital. Within Dyce's iterations the implied linearity between taste, art, and trade contests with Etty's vision of the school as an outlet of the fine arts. Reading between the lines towards the close of his speech reinforces this view, with Etty recalling an earlier, unsuccessful attempt to establish a school of *art* in York. The opportunity to establish a branch of the Government School of Design in York obviously presented itself as one step nearer to the polite and refined art school that he envisioned.[10]

[8] Quentin Bell, *The Schools of Design*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), 125.
[9] Anon., 'York School of Design', *York Herald*, 17th September, 1842.
[10] Etty goes into this in much greater detail in an address given at the annual meeting of the School of Design in 1848, he recounts: 'it may be recollected, some years ago, when we were endeavouring to establish a School of Art

However, what upset Etty's ideology was the approach to design pedagogy the central schools adopted under Dyce, and its stringent measures of control within the curriculum.

1845 brought the end of the York school's three-year probationary period of Government funding. Earlier in the year the committee had received the news that the Central Council had approved the continuation of financial assistance to the York branch on the grounds that 'the council entertain no doubt as to the further extension and utility of the school and if their anticipations are realised, it will contribute to the advancement of ornamental and industrial arts beyond the limits of York, and reflect credit on the place in which it has been fostered.'[11] This assessment leaves no doubt that York is fulfilling the demands, however nebulous, of the Central Council. In their view the mission to pursue accomplishment in the practical arts was being satisfied. However, this tension between the Dyce-led centralised curriculum and Etty's expectation of York School of Design to operate more like an autonomous fine-art institution is seen close to breaking point in December of 1845, at one of the twice-yearly meetings of the committee. Mainly used as a forum to reassure the school's subscribers of its satisfactory progress in the eyes of the government, these meetings also acted as sizable exhibitions of the students' work alongside which prizes were distributed for various accomplishments in the design curriculum. Earlier in the year Etty had offered a monetary prize for the best painting of flowers from a hedge bottom and in response to this, the *Yorkshire Gazette*, reporting on the end of year exhibition recounts the following:[12]

> When Mr. Etty…came to inspect the specimens, he found that they were not exactly what he wished; that is, they were not deficient in merit, but they were not in the style which he had contemplated. He had therefore altered the prize, which would be competed for next year, the task assigned being the production of a combination of flowers the most pleasing to the eye, still resembling nature as closely as possible.[13]

For Etty, 'pleasing to the eye' might be the register of an artwork that shows fidelity to nature, this is supported by the way he alters the conditions for next year's prize in order to find a

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in the Hospitium of the Museum […] I was, however, obliged to go to London; and to brief, that attempt failed.' Anon. 'York School of Design', *Yorkshire Gazette*, 30th December, 1848, 8.

[11] York School of Design Minutes of Proceedings 1842-1855, 30th October 1845.

[12] York School of Design Minutes of Proceedings 1842-1855, 8th September 1845.

[13] Anonymous, 'York School of Design', *Yorkshire Gazette*, 20th December, 1845.

compromise between the artist's imagination and the designer's eye. The surprise in encountering the students' depictions must surely stem from the fact that the pressures of a strict utilitarian and practical curriculum have informed the representation of what, to Etty, would constitute an academic still life picture. To the students, the object of this work would have been the production of a pattern transferable to the loom or the printing press. This is made overt in the introduction to Dyce's famous drawing book and theoretical treatise, *The Drawing Book of the Government School of Design* (1842-3): 'Beauty with [the ornamentist] is a quality separable from natural objects; and he makes the separation in order to impress the cosmetic of nature on the productions of human industry.'[14] Some plates from Dyce's drawing manual serve as an idea of the kind of outline drawing the students were encouraged to undertake (figure 1). Here is evident the truly geometrical representation of nature which Dyce propounded. The apparent subordination of the students assumed from Etty's reaction would mean that, in York, ornamental art prevails over fine art.

Drawing From The Round: Local sources of design principles

Another fruitful avenue of exploration is the type of objects the students were copying from in the York School of Design classroom. In the first annual meeting of the committee at York, an inventory was drawn up of the principal casts and books supplied by the Government for the use of the institution in its drawing practices. Concluding the usual array of statues, busts and reliefs are: 'Numerous Anatomical casts of hands and feet, likewise grotesque heads, bosses and ornaments from the Minster and St. Mary's Abbey at York.'[15] It is unclear whether the York inclusions were stock supplies from the Central Council, made-to-order, special requests or just a decision on the part of committee in York, but the wording of the entry, as well as its position on the list is telling. Whether the committee considered the casts of the Minster and St. Mary's Abbey of high aesthetic merit and influence or not, they still feature as the last entries

[14] William Dyce, *The Drawing Book of the Government School of Design*, (London: Chapman and Hall, 1842-3), 1.

[15] York School of Design Minutes of Proceedings 1842-1855, 18th September, 1843: The entire (legible) list is as follows: Figures – Apollo Belvedere, Venus de Medici, Antinous, Apollo Sauroctonos, Fighting Gladiator, Venus de Milo, Discobolos & Boy Extracting a Thorn. Busts – Capitoline Jupiter, Lucius Verus, Ariadne, Demosthenes, Laocoon, Helen, Apollo & ? Vases – Larger Vase from British Museum and ten others from various collections. Reliefs – Numerous casts from antique friezes, Reliefs and ornaments from the temples of Jupiter Stator, Antoninus & Faustina & Jupiter Tonans etc. at Rome, Many specimens of ornaments, pilasters and patterns of the cinquecento period. A portion of the capital from the temple of the Sibyl at Tivoli near Rome. Large antique frieze from the Aldobrandini Palace at Rome. Numerous Anatomical casts of hands and feet, likewise grotesque heads, bosses and ornaments from the Minster and St. Mary's Abbey at York

on the list, and the use of the word 'likewise' is confusing. Perhaps like hands and feet, these casts represent the peripheries of mimetic knowledge. Considering the evident local admiration of these landmarks, a deeply ingrained sense of status must have been at work when fitting the casts of their decorative ornament into a framework that includes the specimens chosen by and sent from London.

However their inclusion harks back to Dyce calling the Minster a 'treasure-house of ornamental art' mentioned above, and also the flavour of many of the addresses of speakers at York's annual exhibitions is that of the Minster and St. Mary's Abbey as a provider of the refined artistic precedent of York. Many other local sources of drawing were evidently on offer to the students, and to provide a fuller account of the York school's governance away from London two contemporary student drawings of different subjects can be put side-by-side and compared. The first is a drawing of a head in profile in a classical style by Mark Hessey (figure 2), a student with a future as a moderately successful stone carver and sculptor, and the second is a lithograph of a fossilised specimen by the less-known student William Smith (figure 3). Hessey's sketch has no evident visual reference but the stylised facial hair and the strong chiaroscuro effect make this a typical example of a copy from the catalogue of cast reliefs sent from London that would have provided for a large part of the curriculum.[16] The drawing by Smith, on the other hand, is an accurate rendering of a Yorkshire that was on display in the Museum of the Yorkshire Philosophical Society (YPS) at the time (figure 4). There is a noticeable echo between the ribbed spiralling of the ammonites and the curved rim of the ear of the head or the tight coils of the stylised beard. As well the hair of the head follows the conventions of the serpentine 'line of beauty' that is evident in the splayed limbs of the starfish-type remain.[17] This drawing instinct is oppositional to the conventionalised natural forms spoken about above and laid out by Dyce in his manual in the way it reproduces faithfully the natural formations but its validity as teacher of 'good design' can be argued for. In isolation, the bottom right hand corner of each where the object recedes below an arched lip of stone and throws shadow on the surface relief provides an interesting point of comparison. For both this

[16] This assumption derives from looking through the 1889 *Catalogue of Casts for Schools* by Domenico Brucciani (accessed at www.archive.org) and also the plaster cast section of Beazley Archive (http://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/index.htm) and finding no discernible source for the image.
[17] This term is taken from William Hogarth's famous treatise 'The Analysis of Beauty' (1753), and offers another alternative to academic concepts that nineteenth-century designers might relate to, that of finding a 'central form' of ideal beauty through selective copying of nature. Stuart Macdonald, *History and Philosophy of Art Education*, 58.

area represents a threshold. The act of representational drawing stops here and this area represents less of a part of the design and more a study of materiality. In this case the focus would be on recreating the surface of the cast, or of the stone from which the cast was taken, and there is found the blurring of the lines between the aesthetic and archaeological. It becomes a 'study of form and proportion independent of representation.'[18] If the head is imagined as a component of an architectural relief, in true Design Reform style, where ornament is utilised within architecture and part of a larger overall schema, then it definitely possesses a not too distant relationship to the fossil *in situ* embedded in the cliff face at Staithes as well as a place within a system od design pattern dictated by universal principles.

In the broader context, the school had a relationship with the YPS's museum that enabled the students to go and copy from the collection and make casts from some of the more interesting specimens to supplement their own cast collection. This benevolent interaction between the two institutions suggests that it was certainly seen as a reservoir of instruction. The Keeper of the museum and patron of William Smith and his lithographs, Edward Charlesworth, even adopted the practice of mounting his fossils on wooden boards lined up in cases, a technique that was displayed at the Great Exhibition in 1851.[19] In the interest of design for industry this method certainly increases the imagery of them as apposite drawing subjects. Assembled and displayed they would surely have resembled an architectural frieze like those that were so often sent from London to be used in provincial Schools of Design.

Charlesworth published Smith's illustration in the London Geological Journal, a periodical set up to promote the advances of geological knowledge in the provinces. The title of the journal suggests that the network of geological research and advancement was centralised in metropolitan London but that it was an area of the popular imagination that had as much influence in the provinces as it did in the capital. Realistically it was traditional mining areas and areas of industrial production that were most prolific in their contributions to the discipline, as they were quite routinely unearthing good quality specimens from which to

[18] Barbara Whitney Keyser, 'Ornament as Idea,' Indirect Imitation of Nature in the Design Reform Movement.' *Journal of Design History*, vol. 11, no. 2, (1998), 127.
[19] Edward Charlesworth 'will show a series of objects illustrating a new process of mounting and preserving specimens of zoology.' Anon., 'The Exhibition of 1851: Contributions from York', *Yorkshire Gazette*, 1st February, 1851, 5. For an extensive account of Edward Charlesworth and his career at the YPS Museum and within Geology in general see Barbara J. Pyrah, *The History of the Yorkshire Museum, and its Geological Collections*, York: William Sessions, 1988, 52-65.

learn.[20] An editorial in the first publication states the wish to bring to light 'a multitude of interesting species […] lying in private cabinets or public museums, comparatively lost to science', and to do so, 'the talent of the best draughtsmen will be employed in delineating their forms with accuracy and artistic skill.'[21] A bridge is thrown down between the realms of science and art, and what links both the work by Hessey and Smith is an association of interest in the historical and antique that was mobilised in the provinces as much as the capital.

If a more stable framework needs to be assembled to argue for networks beyond the simple metropolitan and provincial divide in design pedagogy the use of lithography is an interesting example. Lithographic printing was part of the early teaching syllabus at the York school, which was not the case in many other provincial branches. The curator of Antiquities at the YPS's museum, Rev. Charles Wellbeloved, had the following to say:

> These may perhaps be thought not to come strictly within any of the classes of works expected to be produced by pupils in Schools of Design. They are not immediately connected with ornamental art or manufactures, and they may therefore be thought not likely to enter into pattern drawings for the use of any kind of manufactures, or to serve for any of the purposes of art. Nor is lithography included in the branch of instruction imparted in Schools of Design yet as a beautiful specimen of accuracy of copying, they show that one of the elementary studies enjoined in this school has been successfully pursued by these two young men. And I know not why a pattern drawer of taste and skill may not select interesting and even graceful objects from the remains of nature of the remotest ages as well as from weeds now growing in the hedge bottoms, or from any other portion of animated nature; and I might plead that lithographic copies of these or any other are not wholly foreign to manufactures. They form now an essential part in the manufacture of books – one of the most general of modern manufactures, and I cannot imagine that the founders and patrons of this school would think that their object would not be answered in those instances in

[20] John Bowes Morrell, 'Perpetual Excitement: The Heroic Age of British Geology,' *Geological Curator*, vol. 5, no. 8, (1994), 311.
[21] Barbara J. Pyrah, *The History of the Yorkshire Museum*, (York: William Sessions, 1988), 59-60.

which the pupils might devote their talents to the careful illustration of science in all its various branches.[22]

Accordingly, lithography was used in the 1840s as a template from which designs could be embroidered onto textiles, so occupies a liminal relationship to drawing and industry.[23] It could be considered as between the centre of true industrial manufacture and the peripheral rudimentary textile embroidery. Its status is apt for cultivation in an ambiguous industrial design state such as York; the core process of lithographic printing was supported in a stable ecosystem by the close proximity York has to quarries that yield limestone with the properties suitable for lithographic printing. A publication entitled *A Geological Survey of the Yorkshire Coast: Describing the strata and fossils occurring between the Humber and the Tees, from the German Ocean to the Plain of York* of 1828 even admits to the 'lithographic embellishments,' consisting of illustrations of geological formations, being carried out with the types of limestone the pages devote themselves to taxonomising through pictorial and written representation.[24] Further, and attesting to the equality of aesthetics and archaeology, both the author and artist of the lithographs are noted honorary members of the Yorkshire Philosophical Society. The process of lithography encapsulates a network of aesthetics, archaeology, patronage and manufacture that when inserted within the paradigm of Design Reform works to atomise the perceived relationships between central and peripheral units.

Drawing From Life: …Or not – copying from nature in the Victorian Design Reform.

The contested curriculum of the Schools of Design has been read to originate in the collision of the ideologies of William Dyce and the much more traditionally academic views of the British history painter Benjamin Robert Haydon (1786-1846).[25] Shown above is how Dyce promoted the workshop ideal of art applied to manufactures in a practical method. In polarity to this, Haydon believed the fundamental aspect of art education was the drawing of the human

[22] Anon., 'York School of Design: The Half-Yearly Exhibition,' *Yorkshire Gazette*, 27th June, 1846, 5.
[23] Toshimu Kusamitsu, 'British Industrialization and Design Before the Great Exhibition,' *Textile History*, vol. 12, no. 1, (1981), 80.
[24] Rev. George Young, *A Geological Survey of the Yorkshire Coast: Describing the strata and fossils occurring between the Humber and the Tees, from the Germand Ocean to the Plain of York*, (Whitby: R. Kirby, 1828), 77-78.
[25] Stuart Macdonald, *The History and Philosophy of Art Education*, (London: University of London Press), 1970, 116-128; Quentin Bell, *The Schools of Design*, 77-9; Lara Kriegel, *Grand Designs*, 23-31.

figure; first from the antique and then from the living model.[26] In this dichotomy is found the difference between the 'fine' and 'applied' arts, and the nailing of a branch institution's colours to either of these masts has orientated the compartmentalisation of the histories of the provincial schools throughout much of the scholarship. It is this influence of the 'fine' arts that have obscured the history of York School of Art so far, and this chapter sets the record straight.

Drawing from the figure and the reputation of York School of Design are, unhelpfully, seen as composite much more than usual due to its association with William Etty and his well-recounted academic principles. It has been conceded in this work that Etty's instrumental role in the establishment of the school is indisputable. However, the key writers on the histories of the design school projects have often spuriously used his Academic principles to characterise the teaching at the school at York. Robyn Asleson's book on the Aestheticist painter and student at York School of Design, Albert Moore (1841-1893) states: 'The curriculum bore the personal impress of the figure painter and Royal Academician William Etty' and 'The emphasis on life drawing at the York School of Design paved the way for students to pursue careers in fine art.'[27] Quentin Bell's work *The Schools of Design* (1963) is more diplomatic in bringing to the fore the friendship between Etty and Dyce, but he still concedes that it was in some way the fault of the central London council for firstly establishing a school in a non-industrial community, and secondly being pushed around by a stubborn council in York.[28] Stuart Macdonald's seminal work *The History and Philosophy of Art Education* (1970), contrarily, is overt in explicitly crediting Etty: 'Under his influence, the School developed into a drawing and painting school for aspiring artists and well-born young ladies.' Speaking of the first two Drawing Masters of the school, Macdonald states: 'On Lambert's death from typhus the following winter, J. Patterson was appointed, who was rather a crude draughtsman, but a competent flower painter. Many ladies came to copy flowers from French lithographs and from life, and the great Etty himself conducted the life class on occasion.'[29] This quotation, in its opening sentence, highlights perfectly how generalised and misleading this account of the York school is, and perhaps is perfect in capturing the lazy attitude towards provincial art schools that dominated scholarship for so long. The master J. Patterson was appointed to the post of Master at York in February of 1843, and it wasn't until November 1848 that a proposal for a life

[26] Stuart Macdonald, *The History and Philosophy of Art Education*, 116-117.
[27] Robyn Asleson, *Albert Moore*, (London: Phaidon Press, 2000), 11 & 13.
[28] Quentin Bell, *The Schools of Design*, 126-127.
[29] Stuart Macdonald, *The History and Philosophy of Art Education*, 103.

drawing class was carried by the committee.[30] Etty may have conducted this class from then until his death in November 1849, but shortly after he passed away, in March 1850, it was decided the life drawing class must be discontinued 'on account of expense.'[31] According to the report in early 1852, a 'living model class, and a draped model or rustic figure class' took place but the committee were quick to emphasise that these classes were not part of the standard curriculum and also not government endorsed.[32] It is also hard to measure the length of time this class took place, but presumably as there is no mention of it in the following years report, it was as short lived as the first attempt. What really must be reinforced is the way that Stuart Macdonald designates the York School of Design as a mere 'drawing and painting school' on the basis of two inconsecutive years within a 15-16 year history of centralised government control.

So with what do we fill this now vacant space left by the place of the life model at York? Above has shown that from the outset, Etty's fine art intervention in York was not necessarily orated through promotion of anthropocentrism, but the of the artistic richness of vegetable forms. In an address to the students of the York School of Design, he advises:

> Study with accuracy and care the objects of Art in the school, but *also*, the varied forms and Colour which Nature presents; the beauty of plumage in birds, the colours and shapes of shells, flowers, and plants, both wild and cultivated. Try to express these with a pure, accurate, and clear Outline; the *first* essential. *Without* this, the best Colouring is almost a nonentity. Add careful detail, and finish, on which, much of the beauty of Ornament depends.[33]

Recorded as taking place towards the end of 1844, Asleson uses parts of the same quotation to reinforce the point of York School of Design teaching the 'study of nature in general, as well as the human figure in particular.'[34] As has been established, this date is four years before the first life class was established, and further to this, careful reading of the quote doesn't necessarily

[30] York School of Design Minutes of Proceedings 1842-1855, 12th November, 1848.
[31] York School of Design Minutes of Proceedings 1842-1855, 11th March, 1850.
[32] The annual report of that year explains: 'These classes, although not forming part of the regular course of studies, are assisted by a small grant from the school funds, and by the use of the school, gas, &c., Artists and amateurs, not being students, may attend these classes, by payment of the school fee and a small additional contribution.' quoted in Anon, 'York School of Design', *Yorkshire Gazette*, March 20th, 1852, 7.
[33] Alexander Gilchrist, *Life of William Etty* (London: David Bogue, 1855), vol.2, 180.
[34] Robyn Asleson, *Albert Moore*, 12.

equate copying from nature as 'truth to nature,' but rather the use of nature adapted to suit ornamental means. The stress on outline certainly draws parallels to the methods of Dyce, and again confuses the Dyce/Etty dichotomy that was explored above. It has to be assumed that the complicated relationship between Etty and Dyce, and by extension the Academy and Design Reform, is not so clear-cut in York as previous scholarship has suggested.

Albert Moore is an interesting case study for exploring this notion closer. Already mentioned is the monumental work by Asleson that, in part, uncovers his early practices in relation to the York School of Design.[35] Moore's unique formalism has been described using terms such as 'abstract' and 'geometric,' and these are certainly not alien terms to the mid-century Victorian design school classroom, but to the present day Moore remains enclosed solely within Aestheticist discourses.[36] Albert Moore attended the York School of Design from at least 1852 to 1855, for in both years he won prizes, the former being for a chalk drawing of ornament from the flat and the latter being for a full-length skeleton figure.[37] To disassociate this latter work from any life-drawing tendencies of Moore, the article states in the same breath: 'anatomical studies, which are intended to induce a knowledge of the human body, by copying some well known antique statue, from which a correct outline can be made.' The same exercise was still in use up to the 1890s, illustrated by an anatomical drawing by the sculptor Thomas Mewburn Crook (1869-1949) done whilst at the Manchester School of Art, and based on the Hellenistic sculpture the Dancing Faun in the Uffizi Gallery (figure 5 & 6). Contemporary to Moore's prize-winning anatomical drawing, the Central Council were also awarding prizes for 'general paintings direct from nature, comprising studies from natural flowers,' showing that drawing and painting flowers was very much part of the curriculum when Moore was attending the school.[38]

[35] I have touched already on this topic as a part of an essay on Albert Moore and the domestic object ('An interpretation of Albert Moore's *A Venus* (1869) using theories of Victorian and Aestheticist domesticity'). I am careful here to not replicate information that I set out in that work, but rather focus more closely on Moore's early nature works and his conceptual relationship to Etty and the Design Reform and develop the weaker parts of my argument through this lens.

[36] This characterisation derives from two main sources: Robyn Asleson's *Albert Moore* and the chapter focusing on Albert Moore in Elizabeth Prettejohn, *Art for Art's Sake*, London: Yale University Press, 2007.

[37] Anon, 'York School of Design,' *Yorkshire Gazette*, 20th March, 1852. 7; Anon, 'Exhibition of Prize Drawings in York,' *Yorkshire Gazette*, 1st December, 1855. 11.

[38] Anon, 'Exhibition of Prize Drawings in York,' 11. For a comprehensive breakdown of the design school curriculum, implemented in 1851, see Appendix C in Stuart Macdonald, *History and Philosophy of Art Education*, 388-391. Albert Moore's anatomical sketch was for examination for Stage 9.

The introduction of Dyce's *Drawing Book of the Government School of Design* provides a detailed treatise on the difference between design and fine art in how each looks at the natural world. The designer 'refers to nature for the purpose of learning the contrivances by which she has adorned her works, that he may be able to apply the same forms and modes of beauty to man's handicraft.'[39] The opening pages of Alfred Lys Baldry's biography of Albert Moore lament the general perceived hierarchy of the visual arts placing the 'fine arts' above those of the decorative.[40] His ode to the designers of the past such as Michelangelo and Raphael make it overt that he considers Moore a designer, and his works as decorative schemes.[41] In the chapter entitled 'working principles,' he states: 'from flowers, feathers, shells, came the first hints for the delicate gradations which dominated his colour schemes; from the unconscious line agreement of natural came the method of composition which he followed […].'[42] The method of using biological instincts to compose pictures is one that was closely tied to industrial processes in the discourses of the Design Reform.[43] Indeed, Asleson has picked up on this undeniable universalising of Moore's pictures, describing how he 'shifts from forest glades to draped and papered rooms with no appreciable difference in effect; patterned wallpaper and carpet fulfil the same purely decorative function as foliage and lawn.'[44] Here this exploration has displayed Moore's work as linked through universal design principles, and shown him as a child of Design Reform, the provinces and even William Etty.

York a *Gentlemanly* place?: The Female Class

Returning to Macdonald's description of the York School of Design as for 'well-born young ladies' asks the question of the place of the female in the realm of industrial designing. Were female students considered as artisans? There is definitely evidence to suggest that higher-class females were looked down on the design school system. Bell describes them as having

[39] William Dyce, *The Drawing Book of the Government School of Design*, ii.
[40] Asleson is critical of the biography of Moore by Alfred Lys Baldry (1858-1939). A student of Moore in the 1880s his championing of Moore represents the close friendship and mentoring he received in this time, and to dismiss his word would be naïve. A return to Baldry is proposed. See Robyn Asleson, 'Nature and Abstraction in the Aesthetic Development of Albert Moore,' in Elizabeth Prettejohn ed., *After the Pre-Raphaelite: Art and Aestheticism in Victorian England*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999. 117.
[41] Alfred Lys Baldry, *Albert Moore: His Life and Works*, (London: George Bell & Sons, 1894), 4-5.
[42] Alfred Lys Baldry, *Albert Moore*, 71.
[43] This thinking derives mainly from the exploration of nature and industry in David Brett, 'Drawing and the Ideology of Industrialization.' *Design Issues*, vol. 3, no. 2 (1986): 59-72.
[44] Robyn Asleson, 'Nature and Abstraction in the Aesthetic Development of Albert Moore,' in Elizabeth Prettejohn, ed., *After the Pre-Raphaelites: Art and Aestheticism in Victorian England*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 117.

'invaded the classes intended for those female who were expected to do ornamental work in light industry.' [45] When the female class at York was established in 1845, the annual report for the year recorded the following opinion of the committee:

> There are many branches of ornamental art in which female taste and talent may be suitably employed; and no one can observe the hard lot of many females dependant upon their own labour for their daily bread without opening to such a field of employment less hazardous to their physical and moral condition that that in which they are compelled generally to engage.[46]

There was obviously consternation about the admittance of females, for in 1846 the Committee of the school wrote to the Central Council and received a reply from the then head of the Central Council Charles Heath Wilson (1809-1882) that expressed the opinion that running female classes would be against the intended function of the system to produce educated artisans that would contribute to trade.[47] However, female classes were established in London at this time, and York seemed to be placing no more emphasis on the fine arts within the training of females than the Female School of Design, for example.[48] In Elizabeth Tabor's *Hestor's Sacrifice*, a novel describing a fictionalised version of York School of Design as the Angusbury School of Art, the female protagonist laments the strict adherence to the curriculum the students must affect: '"I like this landscape drawing" she said "though I don't do much of it myself. At the School of Art we generally study from the antique, except a few pupils are learning flower painting"'.[49] Flower painting has already been established as part of the accepted standardised curriculum for males and females in the 1850s, but in the 1840s it was introduced to female classes to encourage '"applied" rather than "fine" art.[50] It seems unfair to label York School of Design as hosting only 'well-born young ladies' as it seemed that wherever there was a Government-led School of Design with a female class, middle-class ladies attended.[51]

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[45] Quentin Bell, *The Schools of Design*, 135.
[46] Anon., 'York Branch Government School of Design,' *Yorkshire Gazette*, 1st November, 1845, 6.
[47] York School of Design Minutes of Proceedings 1842-1855, 28th January, 1846.
[48] The best account of the Female School of Design is F. Graeme Chalmers, 'Fanny McIan and London's Female School of Design, 1842-57: "My Lords and Gentlemen, Your Obedient and Humble Servant"?,' *Woman's Art Journal*, vol. 16, no. 2, (1995-1996), 3-9.
[49] Elizabeth Tabor, *Hester's Sacrifice*, (London: Hurst & Beckett, 1866), 123.
[50] F. Graeme Chalmers, 'Fanny McIan and London's Female School of Design, 1842-57,' 6.
[51] Stuart Macdonald, *The History and Philosophy of Art Education*, 146-147.

Females occupy the extreme peripheries of the Design Reform. To recast their presence closer to the centre a closer look at their design practices is needed. In the annual report for the year 1847, one female student in particular, a Miss Ann Baines, is singled out for distinguishing herself as a modeller of flowers in wax.[52] The year previous Baines had won the prize for 'the best coloured drawing of flowers from nature,' and within the gendered domestic discourse of Victorian design history this is the dominant account of feminine accomplishment. Near contemporary manuals on wax flower modelling describe it as '"elegant art" that "requires but the fairy touch of a delicate hand to fill each available space in the chamber or drawing-room with the most perfect and beautiful imitations of the flower-garden".'[53] This passage ticks all the boxes of the feminine gendered domestic: interiority, leisure and entertainment, polite society and distinctly polar to the so-called mans world of work. Consider again the newspaper illustration. Effectively this is the definition that has posed problematic for the integration of the female class into the design school mission of the Central Council which favours useful labour. To contest this, wax flowers, in their encompassment of art, nature and science, are a fertile area of re-exploration within the world of the industrial arts. As has been shown in Ann B. Sheir's article '"Fac-Similies of Nature": Victorian Wax Flower Modelling', this much maligned, typically 'Victorian' craft, operates within much richer networks than the purely ostentatiously decorative. They proved a significant attraction at the Great Exhibition, and were listed under the rubric 'Miscellaneous Manufactures and Small Wares,' as well as being the product of 'manufacturers,' 'inventors' and 'designers.'[54] Already the status of modelled wax is called into question as, rather than being the product of upper-class leisure time it enters into a professional sphere and recasts the 'well born young lady' as the exertive designer.

Sheir's article draws wax flowers into the shadow caused by the overlapping of art and science in representing botanical subjects. She describes the cultural discourses of wax flower modelling as bringing together beauty, scientific knowledge and technological knowledge.[55] This triumvirate in itself is comparable to the discussion of York School of Design's involvement in the culture of natural history in chapter two. The relationship is further

[52] Anon., 'York School of Design: The Annual Meeting,' *Yorkshire Gazette*, 9th October, 1847, 6.
[53] Ann B. Sheir quoting Emma Peachey's *Royal Guide to Wax Flower Modelling* (1851), in '"Fac-Similies of Nature": Victorian Wax Flower Modelling,' *Victorian Literature and Culture*, vol. 35, (2007), 652.
[54] Ann B. Sheir, '"Fac-Similies of Nature": Victorian Wax Flower Modelling,' 655.
[55] Ann B. Sheir, '"Fac-Similies of Nature": Victorian Wax Flower Modelling,' 654.

reinforced by the significance of the 'designer' (now that her status has been established) in question, Ann Baines. Baines was the daughter of the YPS's Museum's sub-curator of Natural History Henry Baines who was well respected within the community for the reinvigorating of the museum's gardens (figure 7).[56] Baines also published a book entitled *Flora of Yorkshire* in 1847 that certainly implies that his daughter would have looked at flowers as associated with science and natural history. Sheir also remarks that wax flowers were also considered as forms of scientific modelling so it is possible that Ann Baines would have found a didactic purpose for them, and therefore a use.[57]

Considering that wax flower modelling required knowledge of nature, innate artistic talent – wax flower modelling was notoriously difficult to master – and, as shown by their inclusion at the Great Exhibition, a relationship to commerce, it is difficult to refute their inclusion within discussion of the Design Reform. Further, considering their position close to the pedagogical aspect of natural history that was so important to design in York, they are brought into an alternative network that reveals new relationships within Design Reform that extend beyond the established practices of the centre.

Conclusion

Having explored the aspects of the curriculum set in place by the Central Council to evolve a well-rounded and tasteful artisan, this essay has shown that York School of Design offered significant contributions to each. The influence of pattern-makers of the York School can be identified through the success of crafts such as stained glass painters, iron workers and stone carvers, which, having had the extra space, this article would have been severely tempted to explore in detail. Networks of alternative design influences have been explored such as the presence of the more common provincial antiquarian societies and also argued is the relevance of those traditionally seen outside of the industrial classes – the fine artists and the female artisans – to the bigger picture of Design Reform. All these seemingly disparate threads of inquiry coalesce within the history of York School of Design and call, ultimately, for a revised perspective of the institutional system of the Schools of Design that looks beyond just

[56] Barbara J. Pyrah, *The History of the Yorkshire Museum*, 50.
[57] Ann B. Sheir, '"Fac-Similies of Nature": Victorian Wax Flower Modelling,' 658.

metropolis to province, or London to York, to account for a more varied and non-linear history of design education.

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Figure 1 William Dyce, *Outline Ornament: Plate XXIII*, (142-43).

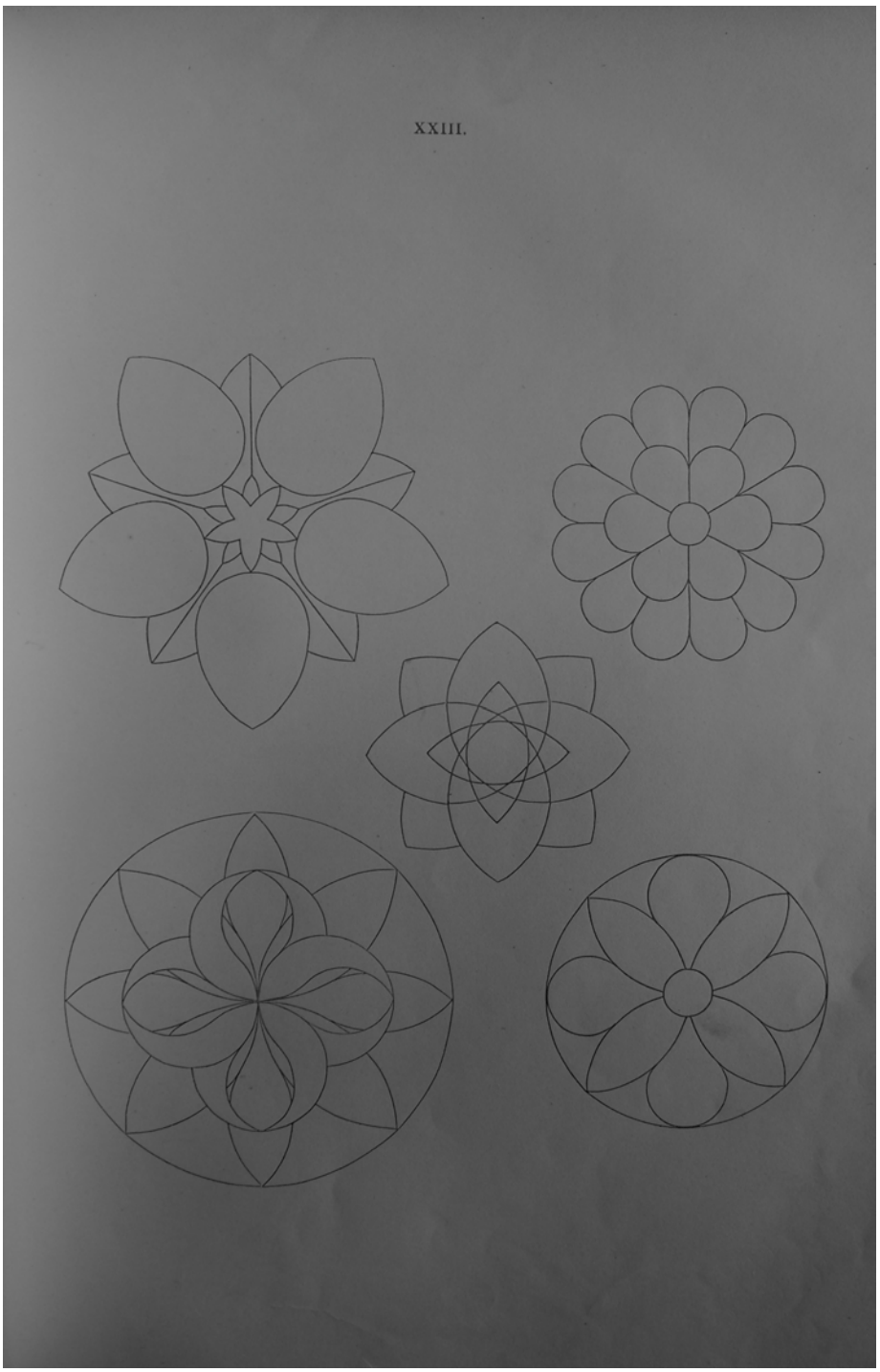

Figure 2 Mark Hessey, *Drawing of a Head*, (1846), pencil and crayon, 34.6x23.2 cm, York Art Gallery, ref. YORAG:R533.

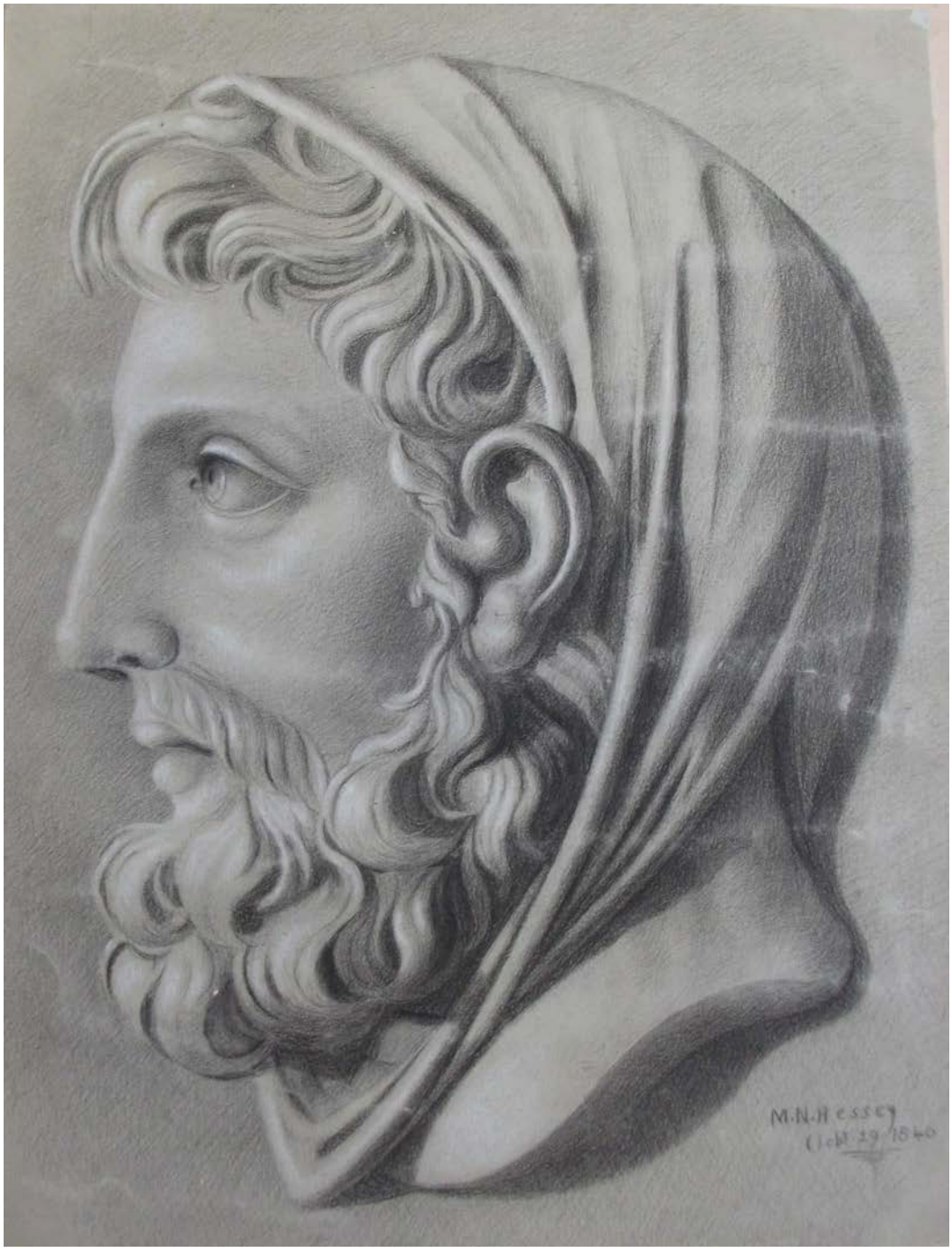

Figure 3 William Smith, *Lithograph of a Fossil*, (1846).

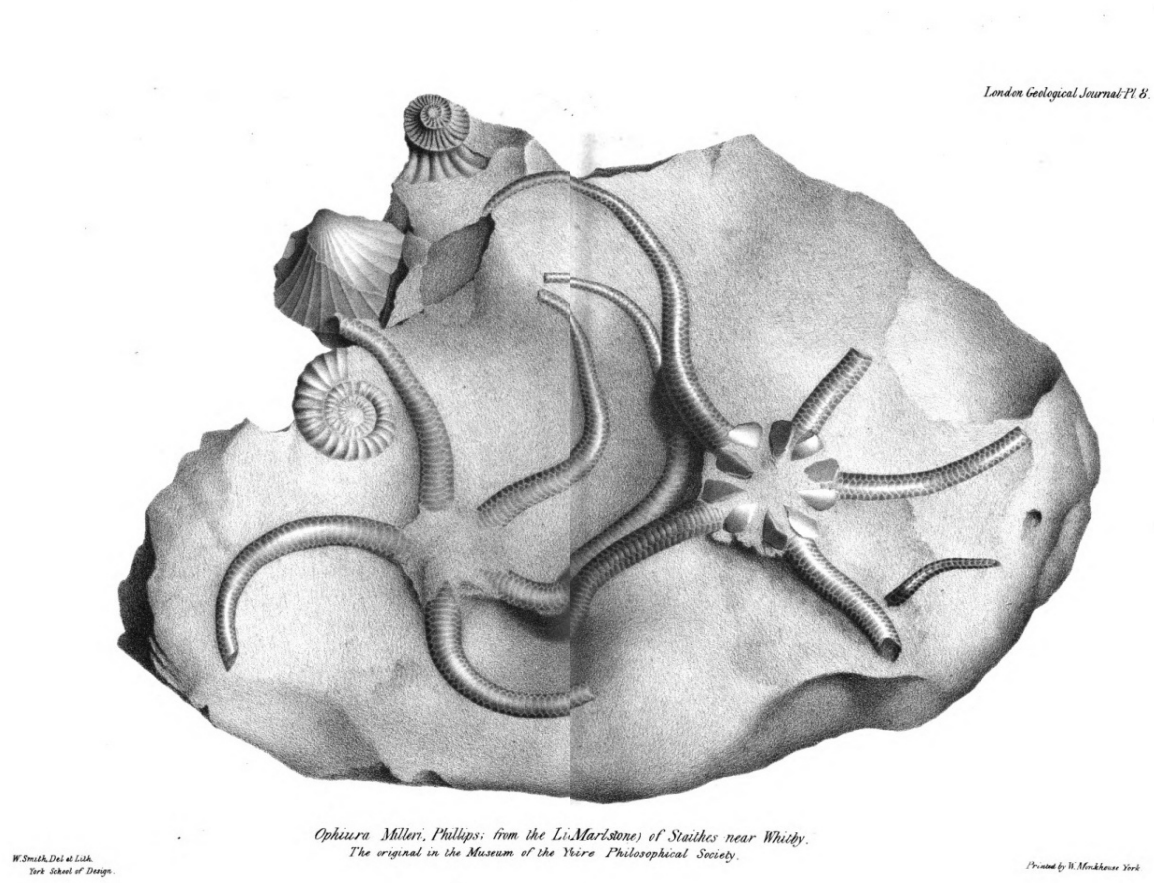

Figure 4 *Brittle Star Fossil*, in Yorkshire Museum collection, YORYM:YM53.

Figure 5 Thomas Mewburn Crook, *Anatomical Studies of the Human Figure from the Flat,* (1893), pencil, ink and watercolour on paper, 73x48.5 cm.

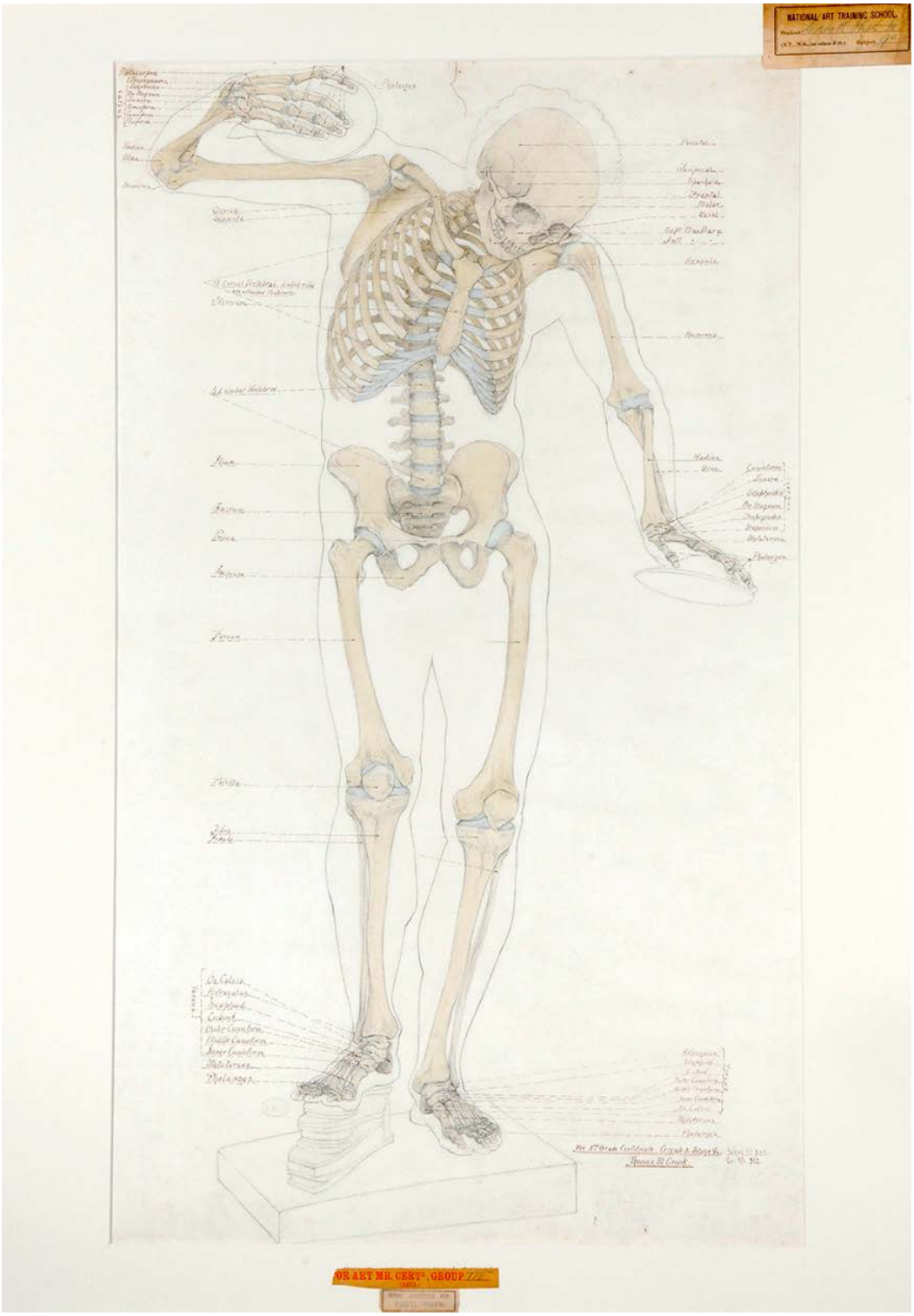

Figure 6 Unknown artist, *Dancing Faun*, (3rd Century B.C.), dimensions unknown, Uffizi Gallery, Florence.

Figuee 7 Thomas Banks, *Henry Baines, Botanist of York*, (1874), York Art Gallery, YORAG:1199.