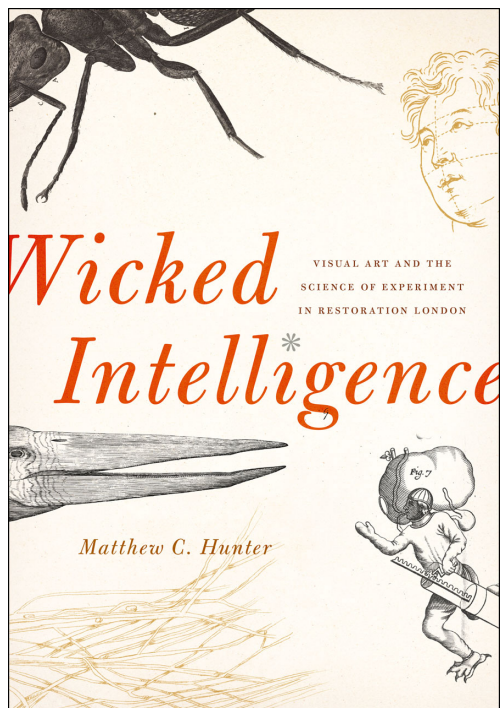


Wicked Intelligence: Visual Art and the Science of Experiment in Restoration London

by Matthew C. Hunter. University of Chicago Press, October 2013. 352p. ill. ISBN 9780226017297 (cl.), \$55.

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In *Wicked Intelligence: Visual Art and the Science of Experiment in Restoration London*, Matthew Hunter has taken a scholarly look at the rise of philosophy, science, and the scientific method during the Enlightenment. The author presents a well-researched history of the leading scientific developments of this time, and discusses the ways in which the techniques of different artists, especially Peter Lely, related to them.

Hunter minutely describes new scientific observational equipment and techniques and the printing methods developed to disseminate newly gained observations. Henry Oldenburg (the Secretary of the Royal Society) claimed that “The clarity and availability of copperplate engraving to illustrate scientific thought and observation could ensure that a reader of scientific documents could readily become an experimental contributor.” In fact, as Hunter tells us, the Royal Society exploited

copperplate engraving so effectively that the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London* is today thought to be the first internationally read scientific journal.

Throughout this work Hunter makes the case that artists and architects of the time were affected by scientific observations. He mentions that the Royal Society of London established a short-lived committee on art, and he discusses the fact that the work of artists often shared the same results as scientists, for example, Peter Lely’s portraits show the same languorousness in the eyes as scientific specimens show after anesthesia.

The book is illustrated throughout with black and white images of scientific specimens and equipment. Color illustrations are fewer in number, and include the model, design and floor

plan for St. Paul's Cathedral, which gives us a new insight into the work of Wren, as does the discussion of the problems he faced during construction.

A major difficulty is that the author's style at times obscures his meaning. For example, "In Restoration London, however, meditation on the eyes and other perceptual inlets through which human or animal makers engage the world offered experimentalists a powerful diagnosis of the material constraints underpinning cognition itself." Throughout, the reader must closely read and analyze the text in order to understand what the author is saying.

This book is meticulously researched and written; there are extensive notes, an exhaustive bibliography, and an index that works well, although an entry for "copperplate engraving" would have been welcome. Because of the difficulty in negotiating the text, however, this book is recommended for collections that cater to serious researchers in either art or science, but not for a general collection.