Art, Industry, and Education in Prang's Chromolithograph Company

MICHAEL CLAPPER

C HROMOLITHOGRAPHS are largely forgotten nowadays, but in the late nineteenth century they were a prominent part of visual culture.¹ The shortened term 'chromo' was coined by Louis Prang in 1865 as a name for his full-color facsimiles of paintings. The bulk of the images that Prang and other chromolithographic firms produced were not fine art reproductions, but product labels, posters, business cards, and advertise-

My thanks to Michael Leja and Amelia Rauser for their comments and criticisms. Thanks also to Georgia B. Barnhill and Caroline Sloat for their assistance in editing the manuscript. I am grateful to the American Antiquarian Society for a Kate B. and Hall J. Peterson Fellowship which aided my research, to the Society's exceptionally helpful staff, and to the organizers and supporters of the Society's 1993 conference on 'The Cultivation of Artists in Nineteenth-Century America' at which I presented an earlier version of this essay.

1. The most substantial scholarly treatment of chromolithographs remains Peter C. Marzio, *The Democratic Art; Pictures for a 19th-Century America* (Boston: David R. Godine, 1979). His work has been a catalyst for my own, and I recommend it to readers interested in a general discussion of chromolithographs. Marzio deals with Prang extensively in chapters 6 and 7, 94–115. Also see Katharine Morrison McClinton, *The Chromolithographs of Louis Prang* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1973).

2. In its early years L. Prang and Company (and Prang and Mayer before 1860) was primarily a commercial printing firm specializing in labels. See Mary Margaret Sittig, 'L. Prang & Company: Fine Art Publishing,' unpublished M.A. thesis, George Washington University, 1970, 29. The American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, Mass., has an extensive collection of examples. After 1875 Christmas cards were the staple of Prang's printing business ('Autobiography of Louis Prang,' in Sittig, 154).

MICHAEL CLAPPER is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Art History at Northwestern University. His dissertation, 'Poularizing Art in Boston, 1865–1910,' examines the Prang chromolithograph company and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, as early examples of institution's seeking to educate a broad audience to the material and spiritual benefits of art.

Copyright © 1995 by American Antiquarian Society



Fig. 1. A product label for Leckerli de Basle, manufactured by J. J. Blaser, Boston, is an example of Prang's early commercial work. American Antiquarian Society.

ments. Prang made his reputation on fine art reproductions and most of his money on less ambitious commercial work (fig. 1).² Chromolithography attracted the most media comment as a medium for reproducing fine art and, while many commentators were not convinced that chromolithographs were themselves art, the enthusiasm for these prints was plain. This enthusiasm was not limited to journalists; the public demand for chromos was tremendous.³ Louis Prang, who came to the United States as a skilled craftsman, succeeded in combining business and art by using industrialized production methods and mass marketing.

Prang was born in Europe and learned his skills, interests, and

^{3.} For a discussion of responses to and debates over chromos, see Michael Clapper, 'The Chromo and the Art Museum: Popular and Elite Art Institutions in Late Nineteenth-Century America,' in Christopher Reed, ed., *Domesticity and Modernism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996).

tastes there.⁴ When he emigrated to the United States in 1850 (forced to flee his involvement in the revolution of 1848), he subscribed to its democratic beliefs in two important respects. First, Prang came to believe that art could and should be democratized. This belief was based not only on the positive valuation of art as a product and sign of culture, but on a particularly American definition of its cultural infrastructure in contrast to the aristocratic institutions of Europe.⁵ Second, Prang shared the American faith in the 'self-made man,' the idea that virtuous, ambitious individuals could succeed economically and socially regardless of their beginnings.⁶ For Prang, these two beliefs taken together meant that public service and self-interest were not at odds with one another.

Prang arrived in the United States as a skilled laborer, not an entrepreneur, and much less a philanthropist. To make a living, he tried a number of ventures, first as a partner in a firm publishing architectural drawings, then in another partnership producing fine leatherwork, then for several years as a wood engraver, before forming a partnership in a lithographic business with Julius Mayer in 1856. This firm became L. Prang and Co. in 1860, when Prang bought out Mayer's interest.⁷ As one job or partnership af-

4. Sittig includes an unpublished manuscript autobiography by Prang as an appendix, 123–56, as well as providing her own version of Prang's biography based largely on Prang's manuscript. Though Sittig dates the manuscript to c. 1874 (Sittig, 123), internal evidence, as Marzio notes (246, note 7), dates the manuscript to the late 1880s or later, and structural similarities relate it to a biography of Prang printed in the *Lithographer's Journal* in January 1892. In the autobiography Prang refers to 'the X-mas card period' (which ran from the late 1870s through the 1880s) in the past tense and mentions the formation of the Prang Educational Company, which did not occur until 1882.

5. The tension between art and republicanism and the persistent fear that art was a luxury that could lead to moral corruption are discussed in Neil Harris, *The Artist in American Society; The Formative Years, 1790–1860* (New York: G. Braziller, 1966), 28–53.

6. On the self-made man, see John G. Cawelti, *Apostles of the Self-Made Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965) and Irvin G. Wyllie, *The Self-Made Man in America; the Myth of Rags to Riches* (New York: The Free Press, 1966). The concept of the 'self-made man' extolled the virtues of ambition, self-reliance, and determined action in the public realm of capitalist business. Given the strong masculine coding of these character traits in the nineteenth century, this ideal of personal advancement excluded women. In addition, expectations and regulations about women's social roles closed many opportunities for public advancement to them.

7. Sittig, 'L. Prang & Company,' 134-47.

ter another broke up, Prang got his education as a commercial artist and business person in a typical way-he learned by experience, within the unforgiving strictures of the market. His attempts to apply his craft skills honed his business skills.

The key to Prang's success was his ability to define and serve markets. For example, at the outset of the Civil War, Prang's and other printing firms struggled, often unsuccessfully, to survive. Out of work, Prang acted on a suggestion to print a detailed pictorial map of the Fort Sumter battle site just as the conflict unfolded. His first effort quickly sold 40,000 copies at twenty-five cents each. Recognizing success, Prang went on to produce other similar maps.⁸ He continued to develop new markets through hunches and trial and error.9

Louis Prang's company began to make chromolithographic reproductions of fine art oil paintings in 1866, and until the perfection of photomechanical printing in the 1800s chromolithography was the main means of making reproducible color images for artistic or commercial purposes. Between 1866 and 1876 Prang and other publishers sold hundreds of thousands of 'chromos' throughout the United States. Within five years, he lamented that the success of his chromos had led other publishers to call every colored lithograph a chromo and reasserted his own more rigorous definition: 'What a Chromo really ought to be, that is, an imitation of an oil painting so close as to require a careful examination to detect the difference."10

These high-quality reproductions opened up a vibrant new market that offered artists opportunities for employment and recognition. Machine production and capitalist marketing techniques when applied to the fine arts fundamentally changed the way art was made and used (fig. 2). Prang employed an existing pool of skilled labor, including immigrants who had learned their

^{8.} Ibid., 40-41.

^{9.} In the late 1870s a combination of cheaper competitors and a saturated market forced Prang to curtail production of chromos. He adapted chromolithography to a new purpose and pioneered the modern greeting card industry. 10. Sittig, 'L. Prang & Company,' 25–26; *Prang's Chromo* 2 (8) (Sept. 1870), 5.



Fig. 2. L. Prang & Co.'s Art Publishing House, the new factory built in 1868. American Antiquarian Society.

skills in Europe, and organized this labor force in a traditional workshop. Hand-craft skills and a judicious eye were required, despite the mechanized processes of industrial mass production.

The image of *The Lithographer* from Prang's series of prints of *Trades and Occupations* (1875) illustrates the steps in the process (fig. 3). Unlike painters, lithographers worked collaboratively. Even the most prominent chromolithographers might draw only some of the many stones or plates required to make the finished print, and several other individuals would be involved in the process of printing. The figure on the left prepares a lithographic stone by sliding it over another such stone, using progressively finer grit to 'grain' the stones. This procedure removed the thin layer of chemically altered stone which still held the last image printed, readying the valuable stones to accept a new image.¹¹

^{11.} By the time *The Lithographer* was published, this traditional method of working was being superseded. In the early 1870s the Prang company pioneered the use of thin, pregrained zinc plates instead of the more expensive and unwieldy limestone slabs.

American Antiquarian Society



Fig. 3. *The Lithographer*, plate 5, in L. Prang, *Trades and Occupations* (Boston: L. Prang & Company, 1875). American Antiquarian Society.

Arthur Tait's *Pointer and Quail* (fig. 4) and *Spaniel and Woodcock* are visible on the stone at the grainer's feet, now ready to be reused. The lithographic artist seated at center near a window is intent on drawing on his stone. The original oil painting that served as a model is propped against the partition, and above the painting is tacked a ghostly proof image showing the cumulative effect of the layers of transparent color already printed. On the other side of the partition a printer is applying ink to a stone resting on the bed of a manual press, having used the chemicals from the table behind him to prepare the stone to receive the ink.

Lithography was learned in the shop through apprenticeship. Young novices were paid very little while they learned the basics of the craft and performed menial labor; they gradually assumed professional responsibilities after a period of service. Work experience and demonstrated skill were the keys to better pay and more demanding jobs. In-house artists created original designs primarily for the commercial work, labels, posters, and other advertising pieces, as well as greeting cards and 'art studies' for am-



Fig. 4. Pointer and Quail after Arthur Tait, 1869. American Antiquarian Society.

ateurs to use as models. Prang offered these artists steady employment and promotion as their technical facility and invention developed. It was this team of craftsmen whose skills became outdated with the development of mechanical or photographic means to perform most of their tasks.¹²

Prang published roughly 160 of his top-of-the-line images, Prang's American Chromos, between 1866 and 1876. He usually acquired completed works for reproduction, rather than commissioning paintings or having lithographers in his employ create original designs. The painters whose pictures Prang reproduced

^{12.} Leeds Armstrong Wheeler, Armstrong & Company, Artistic Lithographers (Boston: Boston Public Library, 1982) gives rich, detailed insight into the organization, working habits, and sense of community of artists working in a lithographic company. See also Marzio, *The Democratic Art*, 149–153, for some specific figures on and images of work within lithographic shops.

were for the most part established artists and well known at the time, including Albert Bierstadt, Eastman Johnson, John George Brown, Arthur Tait, and Benjamin Champney. Most of them were members of the National Academy of Design or other leading artists' organizations.13 Prang also offered a few works by acclaimed European painters, providing an added air of sophistication. While the chromolithograph industry offered new opportunities and opened occupational niches for American artists, it did not necessarily provide solutions to an artist's chronic problem of finding sufficient financial and cultural support for his efforts.

Prang's involvement in image making was limited but significant. The chromolithographs that his company produced were not by his hand, nor specifically of his conception, but he played a decisive role by selecting the images and shaping their cultural significance. Nor was Prang directly involved in the formation or training of fine artists. He did not function as an art director might today, suggesting changes in an image in process. The painters were rarely chromolithographers themselves; only a few had more than a basic idea of what would reproduce well. In rare instances, a chromolithographer might paint the image to be reproduced. William Harring, who was one of Prang's chief lithographers, painted Kitchen Bouquet (a still life with tomatoes) and some of Prang's smaller images, but this was exceptional. At most, an artist whose work had been successful as a chromolithograph might be asked to produce more works in a similar vein. Arthur Tait is a good example. After the success of his Group of Chickens in 1866, he painted and Prang issued Group of Ducklings (1866) and Group of Quail (1867). Related works were produced in later years.14

Prang would purchase one or more pictures from an artist and suggest that their reputation would be enhanced and patronage increased. He wrote, 'One good chromo after a popular picture

^{13.} Sittig, 'L. Prang & Company,' 57. This study lists artists whose work Prang published between 1866 and 1876 on pages 60–67. 14. Sittig lists Prang's pre-1876 chromos after Tait, 66. Also see my note 18 below.

will do more to give fame to an artist than a dozen pictures hidden away in private galleries. And yet, where an unknown artist will sell one picture to a collector, an artist whose name has become famous will sell six. So the way to the private gallery lies through the chromo.'15 Prang's claim that chromolithographs would foster an artist's career, even indirectly, was not validated by many artists' experience. In an unpublished autobiography Prang remarked that 'Up to this day there are a number of artists whose work I cannot obtain for reproduction, they fearing the influence upon their sales.' As it turned out, their fear that the availability of reproductions-which many buyers enjoyed nearly if not fully as much as paintings which cost roughly ten to one hundred times as much-could slow some artists' sales noticeably was justified. Arthur Tait told Prang that 'I find more and more that I must go into them [chromos], largely to repay me for the losses they have caused me in destroying the sales of my specialities [sic], as they have done completely.' Prang preferred to think that the sale of chromos based on an artist's work would aid sales of oil paintings, but Tait spoke from experience.16

Even artists whose works enjoyed great popularity as chromos could deplore their dealings with Prang. The artist Benjamin Stone, whose paintings led to some of Prang's early successes, claimed that, in its first year alone, *Harvest* had netted Prang \$21,000 at \$5.00 per chromo. Stone received none of this money, having sold the painting (and the right to reproduce it) to Prang outright for \$50.00.¹⁷ This arrangement, with no royalties for the artist, was common practice for Prang.

In a less typical case Prang offered Tait, one of his most popu-

^{15.} Prang's Chromo 2 (8) (Sept. 1870), 4.

^{16. &#}x27;Autobiography of Louis Prang' in Sittig, 'L. Prang & Company,' 152; Warder H. Cadbury, Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait: Artist in the Adirondacks (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1986), 84.

^{17.} Catherine Campbell, 'Benjamin Bellows Grant Stone: A Forgotten American Artist,' *New York Historical Society Quarterly* (January 1978), 62: 22–42. Campbell quotes Stone's notes: '*Harvest* painted Nov. 1867—published 1869... Sold at auction 1879 for \$125... Most popular chromo ever published. Sales the first year amounted to \$21,000. Average sales from 1869 to 1878 \$12,000 per year' (38). Even if Stone exaggerated, it is clear that Prang dealt with artists to his own advantage.

lar artists, a royalty of ten percent of gross sales of *Group of Chickens*, an offer Prang considered 'generous.' This royalty was to be paid only for the first two years the print was on sale, though Prang kept some prints in stock for decades. Tait advised Prang not to refer to such a proposition as generous if he wished their professional relationship to continue to be congenial.¹⁸

To appreciate the cultural significance of chromolithography in the popularization of art, it is necessary to set it in the context of an ongoing national interest in art and efforts to create art institutions and encourage American artists. As art institutions struggled to move beyond simply existing to making substantive contributions to an artistic community, funding was a nagging problem. Government aid, though hoped for, didn't materialize, so it wasn't possible to establish academies for training artists.¹⁹ The tiny circle of persons who were wealthy and interested in art did not provide enough of an economic base to support sustained artistic production. The question those who wished to promote art would have to face was how to interest a broad audience and get them to participate.

Prang's enterprise brought art and business together on a grand scale. There were changes in the ways artists acquired their skills, and in the ways those skills were put to use by Prang and other art entrepreneurs. As a result, labor within this new 'art business' became more specialized on an individual level and more integrated on a corporate level. He and other chromolithograph publishers made art much more widely available while redefining 'art.'

18. Cadbury, Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait, 78. For details about the Chickens arrangements, see Sittig, 'L. Prang & Company,' 70–71. Sittig notes that 'Many of [Prang's chromos] listed in the 1870 catalogue were still available in 1894' (59). Cadbury gives further information on Prang's dealings with Tait, 77–85, and includes a checklist based on Tait's notebooks by Henry F. Marsh. It also provides helpful information, including Tait's notes on the terms of the sale of his *Ducklings* (1866) and *Quails* to Prang: 'L. Prang. (Boston) for publication. I am to receive 10 per cent of the gross receipts of all sales of the prints' (193).

19. Lillian B. Miller, *Patron and Patriotism*; the Encouragement of the Fine Arts in the United States, 1790–1860 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 33–84, discusses artists' hopes and disappointments in seeking support for their efforts from the federal government.

Collaborative mass production, rather than individual crafting of unique objects, became the dominant form. This of course was not a change that Prang brought about single-handedly or completely, but it is an example of how commercial mass culture emerged. (By 'commercial' I mean that monetary gain was the primary motivation; by 'mass' I am indicating industrial production of identical objects in large quantities for widespread distribution and consumption.) The Prang company (and chromolithographic publishing in general) brought about a dramatic increase in the number of people who had daily experience with art, and a notable broadening of the range of objects considered art to include multiples reproduced by machine as well as unique handcrafted objects.²⁰

L. Prang and Co.'s promotion of the arts came from a particular perspective that differed from other art institutions. Prang was not primarily interested in securing patronage or markets for artists' works. He was concerned with serving the art-consuming public. Toward the end of his career Prang congratulated himself: 'I have succeeded to raise the standard of popular production to the highest point possible to our art and to elevate thereby public taste and public appreciation for the beautiful.'²¹ Successful in achieving his goal of disseminating art, Prang's wealth increased, since he made money rather than spending it as an art promoter/businessman.

Through chromolithography, paintings became a reproducible commodity, while expanding their cultural power as an educative force. By then, the means and purposes of art education through art had shifted. John Gadsby Chapman's *The American Drawing Book*, a drawing manual popular for decades after its first publication in 1847, outlined a program for self-education in basic art

^{20.} This process had begun at least as early as the widespread distribution of woodcuts and engravings in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Chromolithography, however, added greatly to the technical sophistication, cheapness, and sheer number of images that could be reproduced.

^{21. &#}x27;Autobiography of Louis Prang' in Sittig, 'L. Prang & Company,' 154.

American Antiquarian Society



Fig. 5. Examples from John Gadsby Chapman's *The Amercian Drawing Book* (New York: J. S. Redfield, 1847), 185. American Antiquarian Society.

skills through diligent practice in drawing from nature (fig. 5). Prang and his supporters advocated a more passive form of art education—art to be looked at, chromolithographs. The benefits art brought also changed. Rather than teaching a skill which could help one on the way to becoming a professional artist or at least a

more refined and appreciative amateur, Prang's prints taught domestic and civic virtues through didactic images. As the Beecher sisters declared in 1869: 'The educating influence of these works of art can hardly be over-estimated. Surrounded by such suggestions of the beautiful, and such reminders of history and art, children are constantly trained to correctness of taste and refinement of thought.'²² Art here imparts moral lessons to casual observers, especially children, rather than emphasizing the development of artistic skills by diligent students.

In addition to making art reproductions, Prang also contributed to practical training in the arts. After the Civil War there were new needs in art education, including a pressing demand for designers and skilled mechanics in industry.²³ A large percentage of the value of furniture, building components, ceramics, and other common goods was added by the artistry of their design. Because of the shortage of skilled designers and workers many manufactured items had to be imported, chiefly from Europe. This not only hurt the domestic economy, it was a disappointing indication to cultural nationalists that the United States was not yet free of its apprenticeship to European standards and abilities.²⁴

Prang was a resident of Massachusetts, a state which was a national leader in public education. In 1870 the legislature pushed a

23. On the need for a new sort of art education, see Diana Korzenik, *Drawn to Art; A Nineteenth-Century American Dream* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1985), 22–25 and 218–20. Korzenik explains that the new form of art education aimed at creating 'skilled art labor' (23) for industrial production. She also discusses the motivations which drove people to acquire such skills. Because of the cultural link forged between art and industry, art skills, particularly drawing, promised employment as well as more elusive satisfactions.

24. In addition to being elaborated by Smith, these difficulties and imperatives were noted at length in governmental considerations and reports such as Isaac Edwards Clarke, *Art and Industry. Education in the Industrial and Fine Arts in the United States. Part 1; Drawing in Public Schools* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1885). The 1876 Centennial in Philadelphia was a crucial motivator for both individuals and government agencies. As Clarke stated: 'The great awakening of the people to the value of taste as an element of manufactures and to a knowledge of the many possible applications of art to industrial products, which came from a sight of the displays made of foreign wares and tissues at the Centennial Exposition, has led to general interest in all forms of art training which promise practical results in similar productions in our own country' (5).

^{22.} Catharine E. Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The American Woman's Home* (New York: J. B. Ford and Company, 1869), 93-94.

American Antiquarian Society



Fig. 6. Louis Prang, *Slate Pictures; A Drawing School for Beginners* (1863), 4-5. American Antiquarian Society.

step further by requiring all public schools to teach drawing and all towns of over 10,000 inhabitants to offer free evening classes in industrial drawing for adults. The state also aimed to set up a system of normal schools to train art teachers. All of this activity was under the direction of the state director of art education, Walter Smith, a man recruited from England for the job. He had had experience in the successful British system of industrial art schools, whose main facility was at South Kensington. Smith was a strong believer in the practical and economic value of artworks and art skills, tying art training directly to increased worker productivity.²⁵

25. Walter Smith was a convincing spokesman and prolific writer on behalf of his ideas about the importance of art education. See, for example, his *Art Education, Scholastic and Industrial* (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1873). On Smith and his appointment, see Korzenik, *Drawn to Art*, 153–59.



Fig. 7. Walter Smith, American Text Books of Art Education, Intermediate Course, Number 3, 'Exercise XI-Chair, Box, and Table.' American Antiquarian Society.

Prang had long been interested in practical art education. As early as 1863 he published an exercise book called *Slate Pictures*; *Drawing School for Beginners*. This was a series of white line drawings on a black ground imitating chalk drawings on a blackboard (thus the title) to be used as models by students (fig. 6). Among the projects Prang executed in association with Smith were the so-called 'Smith Books.'²⁶ This was a series of graduated lessons designed to allow teachers to impart mastery of the fundamentals of drawing in three year-long courses (fig. 7). The Smith books continued to uphold Chapman's celebrated claim that 'Any one who can learn to write can learn to draw,' but they emphasized the application of drawing skills in industry and trades rather than preparation for continued training as a fine artist. In terms of

^{26.} American Text Books of Art Education (Boston: James R. Osgood, 1873, 1874, and Louis Prang and Co., 1875). Korzenik discusses the mutually beneficial cooperation between Smith and Prang, Drawn to Art, 160–65 and 196–97.

moral lessons too, the goals of art education shifted to address a different class of people and different social requirements, shifted from refinement and development of artistic genius to self-discipline and useful skills. The subject matter and methods emphasized suggest the nature of the change. Whereas Chapman had focused on drawing from nature, with rendering of the human figure as a goal, *Slate Pictures* and the Smith books were based on copying examples from books, usually schematic images of regular, manufactured objects or abstractions from natural forms which could serve as decoration for commercial wares.²⁷

Prang took part in two quite different kinds of art education. On the one hand, his interest in edifying a large audience by placing art reproductions within their reach made Prang a leader in the movement to popularize art. Prang's audience consisted mostly of members of the middle class who, whatever their knowledge of art, were aware of the enlightened and enlightening cachet of art. This large audience was not composed primarily of artists, even amateur artists, or of knowledgeable connoisseurs. On the other hand, Prang was heavily involved in a more active, participatory kind of art education, training in basic art skills that could be applied to a variety of occupations besides that of artist.

This division of art education was a departure from more integrated notions of art education such as those Chapman presented in *The American Drawing Book*. Whereas Chapman offered the same program and purposes to amateurs and to artists working in fine and applied arts, Prang served three distinct groups, each in a different way. For a wide audience of buyers, he produced relatively inexpensive art reproductions. For aspiring students and industrial workers, he published reference books and instructional manuals. To the practicing fine artist, he gave modest patronage.

A major effect of the movement towards mass culture in which Prang participated was the integration of art into mainstream American culture and into the daily experience of a broad public.

27. On drawing manuals, see Peter C. Marzio, *The Art Crusade: An Analysis of American Drawing Manuals*, 1820–1860 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1976).

This integration was accomplished only when older ideas of art's educating, refining, uplifting function were melded with industrial capabilities and objectives. This was not a straightforward triumph for the fine arts, but instead the creation of a new hybrid between commercial art and popular culture whose development continues even now.²⁸

Art entrepreneurs like Prang entered a whole new realm of opportunities. Mass production and the ability to buy art services as labor created immense profit potential. Prang's company was one model of a reorganization of the art market, relying on the specialization of labor, collaborative creative efforts, corporate business structure, and mass marketing. By using these tools, Prang moved toward making art a reproducible commodity in an industrialized marketplace. In the process, he helped to change prevailing understandings of both what art was and what role art could play in shaping productive and creative capacities.²⁹

Artists, however, were not demonstrably better off with the coming of the mass reproduction of artworks. Rather than solving the nagging question of how artists could gain adequate support and encouragement, mass reproduction provided a hugely successful alternative to museum and gallery venues. Fine artists saw little of the profits of this achievement, and would have cause to complain of general neglect well into the twentieth century. Commercial artists faced an unstable future as technical innovations threatened to make their skills obsolete.³⁰ Commercial mass culture created many new opportunities, but business people, not artists, were the major beneficiaries.

28. In the upper strata of the art market, the trend after the Civil War was away from support of American artists toward an interest in the more polished, expensive, and traditionally prestigious productions of European salons. On these developments, see Linda Henefield Skalet, 'The Market for American Painting in New York, 1870–1915' (Ph.D. diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1980).

29. Michele H. Bogart describes a later stage in the use of artistic talent within commercial mass culture and the opportunities and dilemmas it created for artists in 'Artistic Ideals and Commercial Practices: The Problem of Status for American Illustrators,' *Prospects* 15 (1990): 225–81.

30. Korzenik, Drawn to Art, 247–55, discusses the disappointment and disillusionment at the end of the nineteenth century of a generation of artists who had been attracted to commercial art as a lucrative and rewarding career.

Copyright of Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society is the property of American Antiquarian Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.