Kunst in reproductie. De reproductie van kunst in de negentiende eeuw en in het bijzonder van Ary Scheffer (1795-1858), Jozef Israels (1824-1911) en Lourens Alma-Tadema (1836-1912)

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Summary

Reproduction of art in the nineteenth century

In the course of history works of art have been reproduced in many ways. During the nineteenth century art reproduction accelerated immensely because of several important developments. From a technological point of view, traditional manual graphic reproduction gradually passed into mechanical photographic reproduction powered by steam and electricity. From a legal perspective, the old system of privileges changed into modern laws of intellectual property reflecting a new vision on authorship, the art work and its reproductions. Economically viewed, the market of art dealing and publishing expanded rapidly. Small-scale print publishers transformed their businesses into large international companies for professional production and distribution of works of arts and reproductions. This resulted in a wide and diverse supply of prints and photographs of works of art, sold individually or published in new products like illustrated magazines, catalogues and glossy artbooks. From a sociological point of view, the art public increased tremendously due to the influence of cultural societies, exhibitions, illustrated magazines and museums. All these trends strongly affected the production, distribution and consumption of art during the nineteenth century. In this dissertation all these forms and effects of nineteenth century print culture are investigated. The central question that inspired this research is: how important was art reproduction in the nineteenth century art world? Firstly, how was the production, distribution and consumption of reproduction of modern art organised, especially in France, England and the Netherlands? And secondly, what was the relation of modern artists - in particular Ary Scheffer, Jozef Israëls and Lourens Alma-Tadema - to this phenomenon?

What do we actually mean by a reproduction of a work of art? In the first chapter Pinxit et Sculpsit, this question is answered in a systematic way. The first step of the process of art reproduction is the imitation of the original composition into the printing plate or photographic negative. By this means, the image can be multiplied in the next step to several ‘identical’ prints; this distinguishes the reproduction from the drawn or painted copies, reductions and replicates. The special interaction between the original image and its interpretation, results in the special quality of reproductions. This special interaction has also been related to the question of the ‘author of a reproduction’. Firstly, the author of the original work had a special ‘mental’ relation with his work, which expands to its reproductions. This special bond between the original author, his work and its reproduction became the essence of the modern copyright law protection. Secondly, the interpreter of the image, the engraver or photographer, is the actual author of the reproduction. The use of technical means doesn’t prevent the photographer’s personal relation to his (re)productions. Because of this, both the original painter and the interpreter can be viewed as the author of the reproduction. The interaction of the original composition with its interpretation, of the painter’s part and the engraver’s or photographer’s part, gives the reproduction its special quality in the field of visual arts, slightly comparable with translations of literature or transcriptions of music and plays.

In the second chapter, Van gravure tot fotografie, I roughly sketch the most important changes in the field of reproductive techniques during the nineteenth century. What was possible in respect to art reproduction, and when? The traditional line engraving and mezzotint still existed, but they were accompanied by new techniques since the end of the eighteenth century. The need for facsimiles of works of art, especially of drawings, acted as a flywheel for the invention of new technology for graphic reproduction, resulting in aquatint, crayonmanner and stipple engraving. Therefore, the traditional line engraving no longer monopolised the art reproduction at the beginning of the nineteenth century. New methods like lithography and photography were constantly added to the means of multiplying works of art. In a few decades these techniques developed from exclusive, expensive methods to effective mass media for reproduction. In the meantime, engravers and photographers were trying to solve the complex problem of the reproduction of colour. Although photography was constantly improved, lithography remained the best way for the graphic multiplication of colours. By the 1860s, photography was widely used for reproducing art. From now on the survival of the manual lithography and traditional line engraving seemed no longer self-evident.
Soon photography included a variety of photographic pictures, like exclusive photo engravings, beautiful carbon prints and mass-produced ‘carte-de-visites’ photographs. The commercial success of photography even relieved lithography from its image of a mass medium for reproduction. The man-made lithographic prints were appreciated for their intrinsic qualities comparable to traditional engravings and etchings. By 1900, photography monopolised the field of art reproduction. The transformation of manual graphic reproduction of art into mechanical photographic techniques had now been completed.

The actual production and distribution of art reproductions occurred between these lines of technological innovation. Inspired by Robert Darnton's approach of the history of books I analyse ‘the lifecycle of the reproduction’. However, I take a more functional approach of the participants and processes involved in the reproduction of works of art. I divided the lifecycle of an art reproduction into five stages: the initiative, the organisation, the production, the distribution and, finally, the reception of the reproduction of a work of art.

In the chapter *Van origineel tot reproductie* I present the first, second and third stage of the lifecycle of the reproduction. Firstly, artists, engravers, photographers, societies and even the French State took the initiative to start the reproduction process. For example, the painter Constable proposed his plan to his engraver Lucas, the painter Mesdag to his publisher Buffa in Amsterdam, and the photographic company Braun informed the director of the Rijksmuseum. However, in most cases publishers took the first step to reproducing artworks. Nevertheless, reproducing art was always a matter of co-operation with other parties. The publisher needed the engraver and the painter needed a publisher for the multiplication of art.

In the second stage of the lifecycle of the reproduction, the participants had to organise the reproduction process. The production of a reproduction presupposed the right to do so. Instead of asking the representatives of the state or church for their consent to make a print after a certain work of art, in the eighteenth and nineteenth century one needed permission of the author himself. This shift had been caused by a legal system of intellectual property that focused entirely on the individual author and his special relation to his work and the reproductions of it, as William Hogarth already claimed. This legal change caused important effects in the Western cultural society and resulted in different legal traditions like the Anglo-American approach of the ‘copyright-ideology’ on the one hand and the Continental approach dominated by the ‘droit moral’ in France and Germany on the other. Once the international copyright system emerged, these national differences slowly faded away. As a result of these legal changes the ‘copyright’, the ‘droit de reproduction’ and the ‘reproductierecht’ became more and more of importance in the process of reproduction.

The legal emancipation of the artists did concern the other parties involved - the collector for example. Without proper agreements between artist, dealer and collector the copyright could seriously effect the regular property rights of the owner. Therefore modern copyright changed the position of the author in relation to print-publishers, collectors, museums, exhibitions and illustrated magazines. The development of copyright resulted into a ‘legalisation’ of art itself. In fact, the work of art hides a cluster of rights below the surface of the painted canvas: the copyright, the exhibition right, the property right and even the right to rent the painting. The artist could exploit these individual rights separately by reproduction, exhibition or selling the property of his work of art. This made it even more necessary to make clear agreements with other parties involved. Apart from the copyright, parties had to agree on the availability of the original work or alternative images, the reproduction technique, the engraver, the size, the number of prints, the deadline and costs of the reproduction process.

Only after this legal agreement, the actual making of the print could start, which formed the third stage in the lifecycle of the reproduction. Printmakers and photographers used the original work for reproduction, or alternative visual material. As the original work wasn’t always available for reproduction, they often used replicates, reductions, watercolours, drawings or photographs instead. In order to control and correct the reproduction process, proofs were made, especially in the case of manual engravings. Such proofs were not only used by the engravers, but by the artists and publishers as well to keep in touch with the reproduction process. After the first proofs, the prints were printed in different states, on different kinds of paper and were if necessary signed by the original artist and the interpreter. Finally the reproduction was included in the publisher’s catalogue, like the mentioned lists of the Goupil firm.
The completed reproductions were, in the fourth stage, distributed to the public, as explained in chapter 4, *Voor kennis en liefhebbers*. Publicity through large exhibitions, art criticism or exposure in shop windows brought the new reproductions to the attention of the public. A wide and complex system of publishing and distribution connected towns, nations and even continents. As publishers stated, to find a special print was as easy as to find the nearest bookshop in town. The possibilities of distributing prints seemed almost endless. In 1832 the London publisher Knight typically promised that anyone in the United Kingdom could receive his Penny Magazine 'as if everyone lives in London'. Reproductions were published as traditional separate prints or in illustrated publications. Illustrated magazines were an important new and very popular medium, largely because of the reproductions of works of art they contained.

After the distribution of reproductions to the public we reach the fifth - and final - stage in the 'lifecycle of the reproduction': the reception of the reproduction. Generally the public for reproductions consisted of people of the middle class of society. They had a growing interest in art and earned enough money to read books and magazines, to play music and to visit museums and theatres. The original oil painting was still too expensive, but the printed reproduction was an affordable and attractive alternative. Apart from the social middle class the wealthy elite had its special preference for the exclusive and expensive engravings. Some built huge traditional Atlas-collections, while others were constantly looking for the best prints, made by the best engravers and only available in very small limited editions. Therefore reproductions were not only cheap substitutes for the original paintings, but sometimes also very popular works of art in themselves, valued for their intrinsic qualities. In the course of time, these beautiful private printcollections were often donated to the print rooms of libraries, academies and museums. These institutions mainly used their print collections for educational purposes. Academies used prints to instruct of their pupils and museums used them as an important reference to their own collection of paintings and for connoisseurs and art dealers. Private collectors kept their reproductions in special portfolios or framed them to display them on the wall. The reviews in magazines showed a complex appreciation of reproductions. Where one critic mainly valued the composition of the original work of art, another could appreciate the special interpretation by the printmaker. The subject, the imitation of the original composition or the personal translation of colours to black and white by the interpreter were just a few important topics in the critical reception of the reproduction. The many reviews of prints appeared to be a very diverse and heterogenous discourse, in which the awareness for the details of the original work, the personal interpretation of the printmaker and the remarkable results of technological innovation played an important role.

*Ary Scheffer, Jozef Israëls and Lourens Alma-Tadema*

After this general discussion of art reproduction in the nineteenth century, I focus on three particular artists – Ary Scheffer (1795-1858), Jozef Israëls (1824-1911) and Lourens Alma-Tadema (1836-1912) - and their relation to the reproductions after their works of art. Scheffer witnessed the flowering of modern engraving in France during the first decades of the nineteenth century. He saw his literary and religious works like the Mignons, *The Christ Consolator* and *Francesca di Rimini* multiplied in numerous engravings by the best engravers of his time, like Henriquel-Dupont. Apart from being translated into traditional engravings, his work was soon reproduced by lithography from the early exclusive examples to regular mass-produced prints in magazines. He never saw the large commercial success of photography. After his death, though, he became one of the first artists who was memorised by an expensive beautiful photographic album. It was made by the photographer Bingham and published by Goupil, like many other reproductions after Scheffer's works. The firm had even made him 'the most framed artist of the century'. The artist surely took advantage of the efforts of the famous Goupil. However, the interests of Scheffer and the publisher didn't always correspond, as was proved by the lawsuit between Goupil and Cornelia Scheffer about the copyrights of Scheffer's work.

Inspired by Scheffer's work, Jozef Israëls became a successful painter in the Netherlands. Like Scheffer his paintings were reproduced a lot during his artistic career. The pupils of A.B.B. Taurel, including his son C.Ed. Taurel and Rennefeld, mostly engraved his sentimental compositions of daily life of fishermen and farmers. The famous French lithographer Moulleron made remarkable prints after *Eerste Liefde* and Allebé reproduced *Adagio con Espressione*. The many prints of Zilcken, Steelink and Graadt van Roggen of Israëls' work reflected the popularity of reproductive etching in those days. His work was engraved, etched and lithographed, and mostly published by the publisher
Buffa in Amsterdam, the most important firm in business in the Netherlands. The firm Schalkamp as well published numerous photographs of Israëls' work. During his life his paintings were reproduced a lot and published in illustrated yearbooks, magazines and special glossy monographic albums like Kinderen der Zee.

Meanwhile, the painter Alma-Tadema had been actively involved in the reproduction of his Merovingian, Egyptian and Graeco-Roman works. The famous Victorian art dealer/publisher Ernest Gambart played an important role. As Scheffter was connected to the Goupil firm during his life, Alma-Tadema was for decades closely related to Gambart. He commissioned many paintings to the young Dutch artist, like The Vintage Festival and The Dedication of Bacchus, which were often immediately reproduced. The well-known French engraver Blanchard made several engravings and the etchers Rajon and Lownestam in particular produced several etchings after Alma-Tadema's work during the 1870s and 1880s. During the 1890s many popular photo engravings where published by Arthur Tooth and the Berlin Photographic Company. Alma-Tadema's works were also published in several illustrated magazines, like The Art Journal, The Illustrated London News, the French L'Art and the Dutch Kunstkrant. In 1886 the art critic Hellen Zimmern devoted an interesting monograph to Alma-Tadema's life and work, beautifully illustrated with several reproductions.

Despite the different prints and photographs after the works of these three artists, we can discern a similar pattern in the way the reproduction of their work was managed. Firstly, all three were aware of copyright and the special relation between their work and its reproductions. They were actively involved in matters of copyright. Often they sold paintings explicitly with or without the copyrights. In other instances publishers asked them for permission to reproduce one of their paintings. Israëls' and Alma-Tadema's interest in copyrights went even further than their own compositions, as was shown by their active role in the improvement of copyright law in general. All three artists must have been familiar with the basics of intellectual property and its essential principle: the special relation between the author, his works and their reproductions.

In connection with this legal relationship there was, secondly, an economical relation between the artist and the reproductions after his works. In the 1820s Scheffter already made money from selling copyrights and Alma-Tadema too was very interested in the money deriving from royalties. It also seems likely that Jozef Israëls took financial profit from the prints after his works during his life. Although clear financial figures and facts are hard to find, there are reasons enough to accept the financial importance of reproductions. The reproduction of art was, like Alma-Tadema stated, a kind of 'business' to the modern artist.

Thirdly, we can recognise an artistic relation between the artist and the reproductions of his works. Especially the annotated proofs are a typical example of the artistic involvement of the original artist in the reproduction of his paintings. Alma-Tadema and Israëls were both very demanding in their collaboration with printmakers. Recognizing that the reproduction of art was a job for specialists, painters had to depend on the goodwill, effort and qualities of the individual printmaker or photographer. The tension between the artist's artistic involvement on the one hand and his dependence on the printmaker on the other hand could cause serious problems. The conflict of Alma-Tadema with his etcher Lüwenstam, as described in this thesis, is therefore typical for the artist's 'power' and 'powerlessness' in the reproduction of his work. After the print was finished, the painter (and the interpreter) often signed it. Of course, this autograph resulted in a higher prize for the print, but it was not only of financial importance. The signature was also a sign of approval by the artist and an explicit indication of the artistic relation between the original artist and the reproduction after his work.

These legal, economical and artistic engagements resulted in a special bond between the artist and the reproduction of his work. Commissioned paintings for dealers were often directly used for reproductions published by the same firms. Sometimes pictures were painted explicitly pictures for the purpose of reproduction, like Scheffter's Christ Remunerator. Although the painter didn't make the reproductions himself, the original was still his and lived on through its print or photo. The other form, technique and interpretation took nothing away from this. Therefore the reproduction was closely related to the original work of the artist and was even representational of his personally made work. Characteristically, Scheffter, Israëls and Alma-Tadema decorated their homes with reproductions of...
their works and handed them out to their business relations, family and friends, representing their work.

The engravings, litho's, etchings and photo's after their works reached a wide international public. A lot of people became familiar with the works of these artists, even when they had never seen one original painting, not to mention being able to afford one. The Belgian King possessed Alma-Tadema's painting The Education of the Children of Clovis and the man in the street the engraving after it. Reproductions scattered the name and fame of these artists all over the world. Scheffer's fame in England was largely built on the distribution of reproductions. His composition Christ Consolator ended in the Fodor collection in Amsterdam, but was, owing to its prints, also known in the United States of America. Löwenstam's etchings after Alma-Tadema's work were, as the publisher Pilgeram & Lefevre stated, available at 'the leading Publishers and Print sellers in all countries' and even reached Australia. Reproductions didn't affect the authenticity, or 'aura', of the original painting. On the contrary, prints and photographs were an important stimulus for the name and fame of the original work, extending its uniqueness, and even adding new 'authentic' interpretations.

Scheffer, Israëls and Alma-Tadema revealed a special relation with their work; after a painting was completed, signed and dried, their personal involvement wasn't finished. At the most, a first stage was completed, after which the next stage followed immediately: the exploitation of the work. Alma-Tadema stated it clearly: 'So long I paint my picture, I work 'ard, I work slow to get 'im right. If 'e is not right, I paint 'im out, once, twice. But when 'e is finished, I am not an artist no more. I am a tradesman.' The painting wasn't just a unique artistic object, since it represented at the same time a cluster of rights, which could be separately exploited. This exploitation included the exploitation of the object itself and its image. The painting could be exhibited: not only at the famous Salon in Paris but also in an exclusive art gallery, or even be sent away on a commercial tour along numerous places in the world. In addition to this, if necessary at the same time, the image could be multiplied and published in all kinds of prints, illustrated magazines or glossy artbooks. Therefore it was possible to make a lot of money out of a painting without selling it. Of course one could always sell the painting and also the replica, watercolour or annotated proof that had especially been made for reproduction. Nevertheless it was advisable to keep a couple of reproductions behind to maintain warm relations with publishers, critics, family and friends. By means of this exploitation of their work, the artists were able to present their work to an enormous international public and to continue their name and fame.

1 Alma-Tadema geciteerd in: Barrow 2001, p.127.