

Seeing satire in  
the eighteenth century

Ed. ELIZABETH C. MANSFIELD  
and KELLY MALONE



VOLTAIRE FOUNDATION  
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

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A moment in history when verbal satire, caricature, and comic performance exerted unprecedented influence on society, the Enlightenment sustained a complex, though now practically invisible, culture of visual humor. In *Seeing satire in the eighteenth century* contributors recapture the unique energy of comic images in the works of key artists and authors whose satirical intentions have been obscured by time.

From a decoding of Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin's *Livre de caricatures* as a titillating jibe at royal and courtly figures, a reinterpretation of the man's muff as an emblem of foreignness, foppishness and impotence, a reappraisal of F. X. Messerschmidt's sculpted heads as comic critiques of Lavater's theories of physiognomy, to the press denigration of William Wilberforce's abolitionist efforts, visual satire is shown to extend to all areas of society and culture across Europe and North America. By analysing the hidden meaning of these key works, contributors reveal how visual comedy both mediates and intensifies more serious social critique. The power of satire's appeal to the eye was as clearly understood, and as widely exploited in the Enlightenment as it is today.

Elizabeth C. Mansfield and Kelly Malone,  
Introduction: seeing satire in the Age of Reason

Emmanuel Schwartz, 1. Satire unmasked by reading

Eric Rosenberg, 2. The impossibility of painting: the satiric inevitability of John Singleton Copley's *Boy with a squirrel*

Julie-Anne Plax, 3. Watteau's witticisms: visual humor and sociability

Emily Richardson, 4. 'Tu n'as pas tout vü!': seeing satire in the Saint-Aubin *Livre de caricatures*

Melissa Lee Hyde, 5. Needling: embroidery and satire in the hands of Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin

Kimberly Chrisman-Campbell, 6. 'He is not dressed without a muff': muffs, masculinity, and *la mode* in English satire

Trevor Burnard, 7. 'A compound mongrel mixture': racially coded humor, satire, and the denigration of white Creoles in the British Empire 1784-1834

Reva Wolf, 8. Seeing satire in the peepshow

Steven Minuk, 9. Swift's satire of vision

Michael Yonan, 10. Messerschmidt, the Hogarth of sculpture

Katherine Mannheimer, 11. Anatomizing print's perils: Augustan satire's textual bodies

Marcus C. Levitt, 12. 'Women's wiles' in Mikhail Chulkov's *The Comely cook*

List of illustrations

Summaries

Bibliography

Index

**Elizabeth C. Mansfield's** research encompasses modern and early modern European art. Her publications include an award-winning book on the classical legend of Zeuxis 'Selecting Models'. She is currently Vice-President of Scholarly Programs at the National Humanities Center.

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