

**Thomas Cook after William Hogarth, *An Election Entertainment*, 1800, engraving on paper, 401 x 537 mm (image, plate trimmed), 437 x 568 mm (sheet), inscribed recto above right "Pl. I", and below „Designed by W. Hogarth“, AN ELECTION ENTERTAINMENT.“ and „Engraved by T. Cook“, unframed. Condition: good, but with various mold stains on the front and back sides.**

The picture was provided – in museum quality – with a new passe-partout (65 x 80 cm) of the company HALBE. A fitting frame – in museum quality – with museum glass (anti-reflective, very high UV protection, anti-static, abrasion resistant) of the company HALBE can be provided on request.

William Hogarth (London 1697 – 1764 London) was, alongside Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788) and Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792), the most important English artist of the 18th century. Coming from an impoverished background, he differed from both of them in that, as a painter and graphic artist, he often held up a mirror to the customs and traditions and protagonists of his time with biting irony in his satirical picture series and as a precursor to later caricaturists. Nevertheless, Hogarth was extremely successful as an artist, so much so that his famous series of paintings—such as the conversation pieces and *A Rake's Progress*—and individual engravings such as *Beer Street* were so widely forged or pirated during his lifetime that he felt compelled to take action against it. In 1735, he obtained the introduction of a copyright law in court, which is still associated with his name today as the *Hogarth Act*. It was not until late in his life (1757) that he was appointed court painter by King George II (1683–1760), but under his successor, George III (1738–1820), he no longer played a role at court.

In the series *Four Prints of An Election* from 1755 to 1758, Hogarth satirically depicts the four phases of a chaotic and riot-filled by-election in Oxfordshire in 1754. The Duke of Marlborough, a prominent politician in the Whig Party, challenged an established Tory seat. Each of the four prints shows politicians from both parties treating the electorate with contempt and exploiting their gullibility with bribery and underhanded tricks to win their votes. The result in the fourth print is ultimately irrelevant: it is the incredibly corrupt and debauched process by which this result was achieved that makes this wonderfully entertaining series of prints so appealing. The latter is based on a series of paintings by Hogarth, now housed in Sir John Soane's Museum in London, and has been reprinted several times, including by Thomas Cook for the publisher G. & J. Robinson from 1800 onwards.

The first sheet in the copperplate engraving series, *An Election Entertainment* (1800), depicts a dinner organized by Whig candidates in a tavern, while the Tories protest outside. The Tories hold up a sign reading “No Jews,” a reference to the Naturalization of Jews Act of 1753, which was passed by the Whig government shortly before Hogarth's painting was created. On the floor of the tavern lies a Tory banner reading “Give us our Eleven Days,” a protest against the *Calendar Act* of 1750. On the left, the two Whig candidates fawn over their supporters. One candidate kisses a stereotypically unattractive woman while a girl tries to steal his ring, and the other listens to a drunken bore.

At the other end of the table, the mayor collapses after excessive consumption of oysters, while the election worker is incapacitated by a brick thrown through the window by the Tory mob. Other supporters pelt the Tories with furniture. In the corner is a banner reading “Liberty and Loyalty,” while outside the window, the Tories carry a banner reading “Liberty and Property.” In reference to the *Clandestine Marriages Act* of 1753, the words “Marry and

multiply in spite of the Devil and the..." were added to the second banner. In the foreground, a mutilated soldier sits on the floor while a guest pours gin into his head wound. Sir John Parnell, 1st Baronet of Rathleague (c. 1720–1782), an Irish politician, sits under the window and uses his hand and a napkin as a puppet.

The composition of the scene parodies well-known depictions of the Last Supper and other biblical feasts. The general disorder of the Whigs' election celebration—the Tories pass by outside the window—is exacerbated by the abundance of alcohol, which, as in other works by Hogarth, is seen as a destabilizing element and harbinger of chaos.

Thomas Cook (1744–1818) was an outstanding engraver of caricatures and portraits of his contemporaries. He studied under the French engraver Simon François Ravenet (1706–c. 1774), who had been one of Hogarth's assistants, and was employed by John Boydell (1720–1804), one of the most important engravers, etchers, and publishers of the 18th century, who had also worked closely with Hogarth. Based on this influence, Cook masterfully succeeded in reproducing and capturing the original engravings from Hogarth's series. His series of engravings therefore lose none of the wit and detail of Hogarth's original plates.