

Benjamin Smith after William Hogarth, Self-portrait, 1795, stipple engraving on paper, 363 x 278 mm (image), 399 x 307 mm (plate), 529 x 416 mm (sheet), inscribed below left „Painted by W. Hogarth“, middle „WILLIAM HOGARTH.“ and right „Engraved by Benj Smith“, below „From the Original Picture in the Collection of John & Josiah Boydell / Published June 4. 1795, by J. & J. Boydell, No., 90. Cheapside; & at the Shakspeare Gallery, Pall Mall.“, unframed. Condition: still quite good, but with various mold stains on the front and back sides; image itself not affected by this.

The picture was provided – in museum quality – with a new passe-partout (60 x 45 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 1745, Hogarth completed work on his painted self-portrait, which he had begun about 10 years earlier. It is considered one of his most famous works and is now housed in the Tate Britain in London under the title “The Painter and his Pug.” He had originally planned a more conventional look for the self-portrait, with a formal coat and wig. Later, however, he painted over these elements and changed them to more informal clothing. The montero cap, originally from Spain and commonly used for hunting, was a fashion trend among artists and intellectuals of the time.

Hogarth shows self-irony by reflecting his somewhat coarse facial features—especially around the eyes—in those of his pug named Trump, who ostentatiously looks in another direction with his tongue half sticking out. The latter may be an ironic allusion to his quarrelsome character. The oval self-portrait, typical of the period, appears as a picture within a picture against a backdrop of precious green silk fabric, placed on books by the great English and Irish authors William Shakespeare (1564–1616), John Milton (1608–1674), and Jonathan Swift (1667–1745). The quotation “The Line of Beauty and Grace” on the palette in the foreground refers to Hogarth's approaches to art theory.

In 1795, Benjamin Smith (1744–1818) reproduced the painting as the copperplate engraving offered here, which was widely distributed and is now a must-have in all major graphic art collections. Smith had taken lessons from Francesco Bartolozzi (1727–1815), one of the most famous engravers of the 18th century, who had his most productive phase during his time in

London. During the years Smith worked for the most important English publisher of prints, John Boydell (1720–1804), he became one of the most important engravers in London. Even today, his name is associated with some of the most famous reproductions of English art, such as portraits and historical paintings by William Hogarth (1697–1764), George Romney (1734–1802), John Singleton Copley (1738–1815), and Benjamin West (1738–1820). Smith died in Somers Town in 1833. Several important students continued his artistic legacy.