

William Nutter after William Hogarth, Portrait of Captain Thomas Coram, 1796, stipple engraving on paper, 508 x 342 mm (image), 581 x 405 mm (plate), 629 x 464 mm (sheet), inscribed below left „W. Hogarth Pinxt“, middle „London, Published Dec. 1. 1796, by R. Cribb No 288 Holborn“ and right „W. Nutter sculpt“, below left and right of a vignette „CAPT.N THO.S CORAM / who after 17 years unwearied application, obtained the CHARTER of the FOUNDLING HOSPITAL, / To the GOVERNORS & GUARDIANS of the Hospital, this Print is humbly dedicated / by their obedient humble Servt / R. Cribb“, unframed. Condition: still quite good, but with various mold stains on the front and back sides; image itself barely affected by this.

The picture was provided – in museum quality – with a new passe-partout (80 x 60 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 1740, Hogarth painted the portrait of Thomas Coram (1668–1751), an English sea captain, businessman, and philanthropist who founded the London Foundling Hospital to care for the large number of foundlings. The struggle to obtain the king's protection lasted almost 20 years, with King George II finally signing the founding charter in 1739. The Foundling Hospital was built in Bloomsbury between 1742 and 1745. It was the world's first charitable foundation. Hogarth, a friend of Coram's, donated several paintings that were exhibited in the hospital – the first freely accessible art gallery in Great Britain and the nucleus of what later became the Royal Academy of Arts. George Frideric Handel (1685–1759) donated the proceeds from performances of *Messiah* in the hospital chapel.

The portrait of Thomas Coram was the first of three paintings that Hogarth donated to the hospital—it is still there today—and is the only known full-length portrait of the painter, who was at the height of his artistic powers at the time. The subject is seated on a pedestal, behind him a classical column and a fabric curtain. It is striking that Coram is shown with his own hair instead of a wig and in informal, simple clothing – this is a portrait of a sea captain and businessman, not a nobleman. He is surrounded by attributes that reflect his activities: in his right hand he holds the seal of the Foundling Hospital's charter; the globe shows England and New England; the hat was given to him by the hatmakers of London, whom he had helped in a trade dispute; the allegorical figure of Caritas (charity) can be seen behind him on the wall.

The view of the sea in the left background of the painting alludes to his work as a captain and the source of his wealth (trade with the colonies).

In 1796, William Nutter (c. 1759–1802) reproduced the very large painting in monumental format as the copperplate engraving offered here, which was widely distributed and is now a must-have in all major graphic art collections. Nutter was a pupil of the prominent artist John Raphael Smith (1751–1812), who was best known for his outstanding mezzotints. Nutter, on the other hand, worked almost exclusively in the stipple technique and was influenced in this by the famous engraver Francesco Bartolozzi (1727–1815). He exhibited repeatedly at the Royal Academy. He died in the London borough of Somers Town. The outstanding copperplate engraving of Captain Coram was published by the London frame maker, print dealer, and publisher Robert Cribb (1755–1827).