

Digitising Ruskin Collection (Ashmolean Oxford)

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Subject: Digitising Ruskin

Digitising the Ruskin Teaching Collection at the
Ashmolean Museum

Work has begun at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, on the digitisation of the Ruskin Teaching Collection. During his time as Slade Professor of Fine Art at the University of Oxford (1869-79 and 1883-5), John Ruskin assembled a collection of exemplary works to use as aids to the teaching of drawing in the classes he established at the University. The Ruskin Teaching Collection comprises watercolours, drawings, prints and photographs by old masters, Ruskin himself, his assistants and his friends and contemporaries, and is currently preserved in the Ashmolean Museum. The collection, organised into different series according to the objects' roles in Ruskin's schemes of instruction, was described by Ruskin himself in several published and manuscript catalogues produced whilst he was Slade Professor. The different editions of the catalogues reflect the arrangement of the collection - which was continuously changing - at certain fixed points.

Funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Board's Resource Enhancement Scheme has allowed work to begin on digitising the collection, Ruskin's catalogues, and the Ashmolean's catalogue information on the objects. This material will be made available on the web using an interface which allows it to be browsed and searched. A copy of the images and data will also be deposited with the Visual Arts Data Service. The opportunities provided by digital technology should allow for the collection to be reconstructed virtually according to the different catalogues - something that has not been possible until now.

Work is now underway on the collation of Ruskin's catalogues with the collection as it now stands. Once this is complete, a pilot phase of the project will take a trial set of objects, digitise them and their accompanying information, and use this material to create a prototype system; the lessons learnt from the pilot phase will inform the

digitisation of the main body of material. We expect the pilot phase to be completed by the end of summer 2003; the project as a whole will be completed by the end of October 2004.

The project represents a collaboration between the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford University Computing Service's Learning Technologies Group, and the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art. It is advised by a steering committee representing the interested parties and notable Ruskin scholars.

For further details of the project, please consult the project's homepage at <http://www.ashmol.ox.ac.uk/ash/amulets/ruskin/>, or contact the project manager, Dr Rupert Shepherd, at: Department of Western Art Ashmolean Museum Beaumont Street Oxford OX1 2PH U.K.

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Reference:

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