

training came in handy when he had to fill his Pacific landscapes with the peoples of Tonga, Tahiti or Nootka Sound.

In Paris, Webber also attended classes at the *École des Beaux Arts*, learned to paint in oils and probably took lessons in the life class. The 'Portrait of a Sculptor' (Kunstmuseum, Bern) possibly Friedrich Funk, his cousin, was probably painted during his student days in Paris. After four years in Paris he returned to his family in London and was admitted as a student at the Royal Academy classes. He also did some work for a London architect, mythological scenes for interiors. They were probably similar to those overdoor panels one sees in Adam houses. He may also have painted the religious painting 'Abraham and the Three Angels' (Landesmuseum, Munster) after his return to London. It is the only attempt, we know of, of a major figure composition completed before he embarked with Cook.

Webber exhibited a portrait of an artist and two Parisian views at the 1776 Royal Academy exhibition. Attracted by the quality of the portrait, which has never come to light, Solander recommended to Cook that Webber should accompany him on his third voyage. It seems to have been all somewhat last minute.

Indeed one gains the impression that the Admiralty was not greatly interested in the appointment of professional artists to its ships. Had it not been for the continuing influence of men like Banks and Solander, professionals like Hodges and Webber might never have been appointed. Webber's appointment was expressed in words identical to those used in the appointment of Hodges:

Whereas we have engaged Mr John Webber Draughtsman and Landskip painter to proceed in His Majesty's Sloop under your Command on her present intended Voyage, in order to make Drawings and Paintings of such places in the Countries you may touch at in the course of the said Voyage as may be proper to give a more perfect Idea thereof than can be formed by written descriptions only; You are hereby required and directed to receive the said Mr John Webber on board giving him all proper assistance, Victualling him as the Sloop's company, and taking care that he does diligently employ himself in making Drawings and Paintings of such places as you may touch at, that may be worthy of notice, in the course of your Voyage, as also of such other objects and things as may fall within the compass of His abilities.⁴

There is some uncertainty as to the length of time Webber had to prepare for the voyage. The Academy exhibition opened on 24 April 1776 and Solander is said to have gone to Webber's rooms with the invitation to join the voyage two days later. But Webber in a letter to his cousin states that the decision for him to go was not made until 'eight days before my departure'. Doubtless he did not get the official Admiralty letter until eight days prior to leaving. He also told his cousin why he had decided to go.

This idea my dear Cousin, no doubt will seem rather strange to you, but to me it was enough to see that the offer was advantageous and besides, contained the matter