



Canvases

and Careers:

Institutional Change in the
French Painting World

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TO JAMES FOWLE

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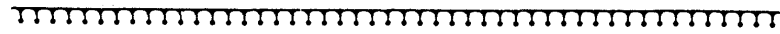
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MANY alternative institutional systems could have been the endpoint of change in the late nineteenth-century French art world. As it happened, the Impressionist “movement” became a dramatic focus and exemplification of change, and we shall describe this in detail in Chapter 4. But first we analyze the background and general characteristics of the new system that did emerge.

CHANGE IN SOCIAL CONTEXT

We approach with caution the topic of links between changes in the art world and broad changes in French society. In our opinion, too much with too little basis has been written in this vein. It is difficult enough to identify changes in the specific institutional system within which painters worked, to trace their interconnections and to form some crude estimate of their effects on painting.

Least ambiguous of the broader changes was the emergence of France—that is, of Paris—as the world cultural center. In painting, some evidence of the change was clear:

1. Concentration of dealers with an international clientele.
2. International scope in recruitment of art students.
3. Higher prices of contemporary French painting, as compared to the contemporary painting of other countries.
4. Dominance of France in forming the language and criteria of art journalism.

What are the implications of such international dominance? It

was important, as we shall see, to the emergence of the dealer-critic system. Without the conditions just mentioned, the new movements in art appearing on the fringes of the Academic system probably could not have survived the denials of their validity by that system.

It is said that the nineteenth century witnessed the rise of the bourgeoisie to material and cultural predominance within France. If so, the revolutionary era around 1848 was crucial. Wealth and governmental power had been concentrated in the hands of an elite which combined resuscitated, prerevolutionary aristocratic lines and the new men who had risen during the early years of the century. Then came bad harvests and the migration to cities of a pool of labor too large for slowly growing industries, which were hampered by tight money. This led to an explosion in favor of electoral reform, led by middle-class elements. After Napoleon III restored confidence through a new government open to new men of talent, the economy boomed in a social framework more open for middle-class initiative. Railroad construction, new exports, colonial investment, effects of the Suez Canal project and of California gold reflected and stimulated the boom.¹

It is not clear that these nineteenth-century developments were a radical change for French society from our point of view. Under the *ancien régime* there was continual creation of new commercial fortunes, large and small, which often led to legitimated higher status as *noblesse de robe* or *de cloche*, through the purchase of office in law *parlements* or certain town governments. For example, of 943 *parlementaires* received in 1774–1789 and still in office in 1790, 394 were *roturiers* (commoners) who became noble by virtue of their new office.² The French nobility, in numbers roughly 400,000 or 2 per cent of the population, was neither a closed nor an undifferentiated caste. They were congeries of often-warring factions, each with more-or-less clear legal—and often salable—rights which were only partly based on feudal traditions. Many of the hereditary *noblesse d'épée* were poor as church mice, the objects of condescension by *noblesse de robe*, who had built a secure financial base of urban property as well as rights of office and feudal land tenures from their bourgeois resources. Other wealthy bourgeois did not even trouble to buy office.

Social mobility may have been greater in the nineteenth century

and the middle class larger and more powerful than earlier, but the basic processes of mobility were not so different. Nor had the Frenchman's love of elaborate hierarchies, titles, and special legal statuses abated to a noticeable extent. The French economy did not change from a commercial and agricultural to an industrial base to the same extent as elsewhere, and never did the mercantilist tradition of government involvement in the economy become completely attenuated.

Crucial questions, for our purposes, are whether any such internal social changes may have led to fundamental changes in taste of government or private buyers. The evidence for such fundamental changes is not convincing. In the eighteenth century too the government fostered grandeur and Academic purity in its public and official art. The private buyer, more often than not a wealthy bourgeois, inclined toward genre and landscape and yet bowed to the Academic accreditation of his painters.³

Unquestionably, the growth in wealth and size of the middle class created a larger internal market for paintings in France in the nineteenth century, particularly during the Second Empire. Probably there *were* fewer great collector-connoisseurs, able and willing to subsidize painters. In spite of extensive programs for the decoration of civic buildings in Paris and the provinces, there was less work of decoration on the grand scale as by Lebrun two centuries before, and fewer commissions than during Revolutionary and Napoleonic times. But more art was sold. We quote from the prospectus of a weekly art journal of midcentury, the *Moniteur des Arts*:

The taste for objects of art grows continually . . . one should not be surprised, then, at the immense development, in recent years, of public sales and art commerce. Paris, much more than London, is considered the price-regulator . . . However . . . this other *Bourse*, the Hôtel Drouot, where, annually, more than twenty million francs changes hands, is but a stepchild of investments and railroads when it comes to publicity.

Its news, so interesting, both from the point of view of art and of speculation, lacks a special organ which could . . . keep its readers *au courant* the commercial value of art objects.

A lower social and economic level became interested in serious art at the same time that the market in private sales to the well-

to-do increased. Even in the eighteenth century we were told of attendance at Salons by footmen and servants as well as petite bourgeoisie. And from 1810 comes this description of a Salon: "What an abominable crowd! Porters, street-hawkers, valets! A swarm of children, jostling, crying, stepping on one's toes!" From these early, rather raucous "people's salons," the exhibition developed into the massive popular exposition, where the main impressions were a dull roar and fatigue.

In the nineteenth century a widespread practice grew up of renting paintings by the night or week. Most of the small merchants involved—stationers, antique dealers, canvas and color dealers—found that renting pictures could be their major source of profit. Whether as backdrop for the social occasion in the customer's home or for copying by young ladies in "How to paint in six lessons" courses, rented paintings were in great demand.⁴

CHANGING TECHNIQUES AND THE ARTIST'S ROLE

Lithography, invented at the beginning of the nineteenth century, helped to spread a real involvement with art. It was the first of the major technical innovations that helped to shape nineteenth-century painting. An artist could draw directly on the lithographic stone the picture to be printed. Cheap enough for mass-circulation newspapers, it generated new types of specialists. Caricature blossomed and became the core of *Le Charivari* and other influential—and often suppressed—journals. Ill-paid hacks reproduced popular Salon paintings for all to see in the innumerable journals of the day. The painter could make something extra on the side—he need not even know the details of the lithographic process, but could simply make his drawing on special paper from which it could then be transferred to the stone by the printer.⁵ Some argued that sales of paintings were hurt by the popularity of lithographs (pirating of works was common in the absence of copyrights); but more likely lithography simply widened horizons.

An excellent study by Jean Adhémar⁶ describes and documents how lithography, subject matter, specialization in artists' careers, and marketing innovations coalesced in the creation and produc-

tion of “*vues pittoresques*.” The period from 1810–1850 marked the rise and decline of these landscape lithographic series. Artists, traveling on foot or by *diligence*, were familiar figures. (The image of the outdoor landscapist with his paraphernalia probably dates from this time.) Several influences triggered the development: official military traveling artists depicting the conquests of Revolutionary and Napoleonic France; Napoleonic projects for cataloguing French assets; romantic literary descriptions and the new guidebooks for foreign travelers (especially the British). There was growing public interest; it was fashionable to “lithograph a few things.” There was the publication of “drawing lessons by Famous Artists”: copies of landscapes simplified and vulgarized for easy imitation.

Publishers employed painters and lithographers to supervise their flocks of traveling sketchers. These men in the field seldom did the final lithograph. A professional lithographer added details to make the final version more striking. There was specialization: some artists did trees, some, rocks; some were the “makers of little men” who added the small human figures which were indispensable to the public taste. (Victor Adam was the most famous of these. His tiny “*bonshommes*” had a caricaturist touch.)

Publicity techniques combined old and new. A first step was exhibition at the Salon of several selected plates, framed together. Newspaper publicity followed. Often the series was dedicated to a Personage. In 1828 the *Voyage Pittoresque de Dauphiné*, published by Dagnan, was dedicated to the Duchess of Berry. As a result she ordered two easel pictures, scenes of Dauphine. This move being well publicized, subscription for the series opened. It sold well. Riding on this publicity, Dagnan announced his next series, the Loire Region. Thus the patron was used for prestige purposes to sell to a “mass” market.

Who were the buyers? Series dealing with a specific region always had more buyers there than in Paris. *L'Angers Pittoresque* (1843) had many subscribers from the ordinary middle class: bankers, a druggist, a cordwainer, a professor of music, some *graveurs*. Booksellers of Nantes and Paris and *amateurs* of Montpellier and Figeac also ordered sets. Among the subscribers for the *Voyage Pittoresque en Touraine* (1824) were the archbishop and his coadjutors, the

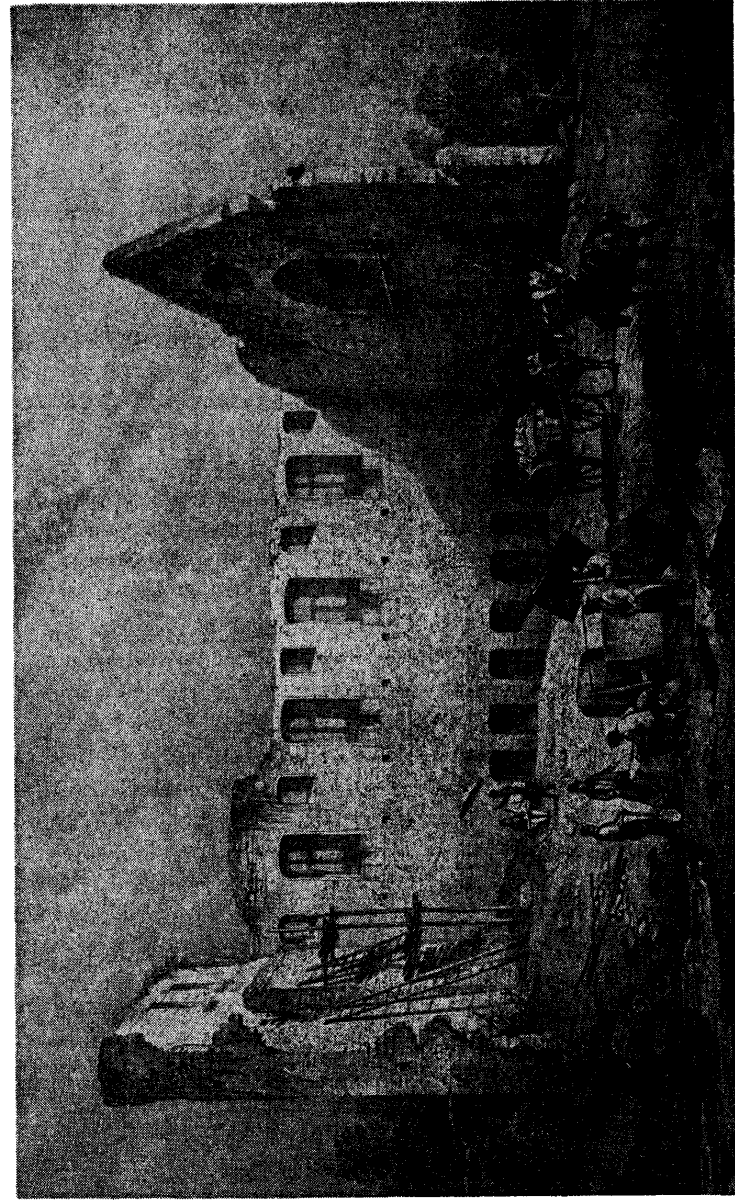


Figure 9 Victor Adam and Lecamus: *Intérieur des ruines du Château de Vergy, à Autrey*; lithograph (Plate 148) from Baron Taylor's *Voyages Pittoresques et Romantiques—Franche Comté*, published in 1825. An example of collaboration by probably three artists, the third being the traveling sketchmaker. Adam's figures do lend interest to a rather ordinary ruin. Two traveling artists with drawing boards and sunshade appear in the background. (Courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.)

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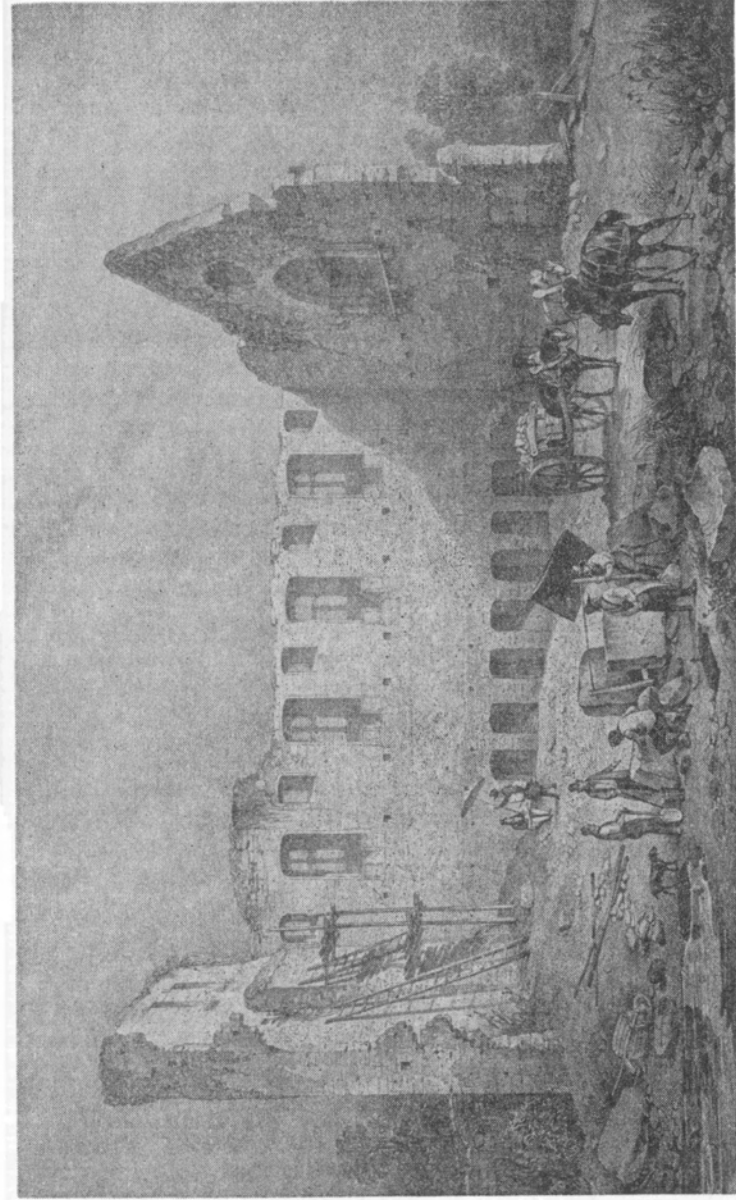


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principal of a *collège*, some businessmen, and several *graveurs*, as well as some of the notable families. Other frequent subscribers were the prefects of *départements*, retired military officers, the proprietors of *châteaux* pictured and the owners of mills or other business concerns pictured. Prices were lower in the provinces: they came to about 40 sous a plate there, whereas in Paris the price was about 1 franc per plate (higher for editions on "china" paper). Publishers often sold elaborate bindings to contain a whole collection of albums—another subscription gimmick not unfamiliar to the present day.

As Adhémar pointed out, this whole development, although cut short by photography and photolithographic techniques, had an undoubted effect of expanding the taste for local French landscape. The composed "historical" landscape gave way to "views"—then to ordinary landscape-for-its-own-sake.

The popular illustrated press also helped to create the image of a new kind of painter, the *plein-air* landscapist. Daumier's caricatures of the slightly seedy and uncomfortable painter, with his peasant blouse, his straw hat, white umbrella, and cumbrous paraphernalia are the kindest of the many popular representations. The widespread caricaturing of "artistic types" must have been a reflection of real public interest in the definition of the artist's role and profession. A comparative case is the burgeoning of "beatnik" cartoons in the United States during the last decade.

Changing public views of the painter can be seen in the lithographs of the day as well as in vaudeville and satirical revues.⁷ In the early nineteenth century, the figure of the painter as a social exception became more prevalent: the art student or "dauber" (*rapin*) became a stock character of comedy and the hero of melodrama, as later in Balzac, the Goncourts, and Zola. In the 1830's the romanticist artist symbolized his new role with a costume of flowing sleeves, large tie, and pointed beard. The Parisian painting world was no longer the loose collegium of the old Royal Academy, nor did it develop into an orderly and contented hierarchy. Many painters became, in their own and other eyes, isolated figures oppressed by the heavy-handed Academy. Monkeys, donkeys, and blind men served on the Salon jury and in the Academy as early as 1840—in the pages of *Le Charivari* and *La Caricature*. As the new

conception of the artist became firmly rooted, perhaps it was natural for the butt of ridicule to shift from the rejected artist to the "bourgeois stupidity" of the Salon visitor, the buyer, and the Academy.

Changes in roles and technology had direct connections. The tin paint tube, for example, invented in the 1830's and marketed by English firms in the early 1840's, had a whole chain of consequences.⁸ No longer was the artist constrained to stay indoors in studio light and paint from sketches and models. No longer was paint preparation a major chore. He could travel on the new railway system to paint the outdoors, as did the pioneer landscapists of the Barbizon School. He would no longer be tied to a fixed location as were the middle classes of the normal, work-a-day world.

Amateur painting blossomed. Through the growing industrial technology new chemical bases were developed and a whole range of new colors appeared on the market (many since found to be unstable). Prepared canvases became available around 1841. The need for some of the artisan skills in preparing painting materials was eliminated by these short cuts. The amateur now was separated from the professional by a line of social definition, not a chasm of artisan know-how. At the same time, demand for teachers for the growing army of amateurs increased.

A GLUT IN SEARCH OF A MARKET

At least 200,000 reputable canvases must have been produced in each decade after midcentury by professional French painters. This is the single dominant fact in our account, an index of the problems confronting the Academic system. Our minimum estimates derived earlier are (around 1863) 3000 recognized male painters in the Parisian system and another 1000 men in provincial orbits. We omit consideration of women painters, occasional painters, and professional artists in other fields who did some painting. Major painters, we know from detailed *oeuvre* catalogues, often turned out fifty or more salable oil paintings in a

year. More often than not, the typical painter entered two or three pictures in a given Salon, and these were usually but a selection of his most promising works on hand.

The days of "*les grandes machines*," the enormous neoclassical painting or the panoramic battle scene, were numbered. As early as 1837 the reviewer for *Le Moniteur Universel* noted their scarcity, commenting that there was no longer room to hang them. This was an element: a painter had a better chance of being accepted with small pictures which were not such a problem to display. The greatest influence, however, was the demand for small genre painting and landscape, an increasing trend with buyers.⁹ A painter finished many of these in the year it would have taken him to complete one large work.

Besides the prolific major painter and the steady, mature workhorse, of course, there were in the group of 4000 professionals the older, inactive man, the painter in a fallow period, the young man still experimenting, and the teacher who had given up pretensions of full-scale activity as a painter. Fifteen years is a reasonable estimate, from our earlier data analysis (see Table 5), for the span of years over which the average painter of the combined group of 4000 professionals exhibited in public. It seems likely that a painter maintained productivity over about half the period of roughly forty years we count as his career.

Most painters had no regular teaching post; few had posts in the government-run art industries of the Sèvres and the Gobelins works. Even for painters supplementing their incomes with jobs outside the painting world, ten paintings a year seems a modest estimate of average production. Assuming half the 4000 men were active in a given year, we arrive at the estimate of 200,000 salable paintings per decade by male French painters.

We have no detailed catalogues for the works of most of even the major Academic painters for the period 1850–1870, primarily because of the twentieth-century reaction against this type of painting. It is impossible ever to establish conclusively our estimate of 200,000 finished paintings per decade. We do have complete catalogues, however, of the works of four Impressionists: Manet, Degas, Pissarro, and Sisley. (There is a catalogue for Cézanne too, but its datings have since been questioned by a

number of art historians.¹⁰ The catalogue for Monet is still in preparation. There is as yet no catalogue for Renoir, and Bazille died too early for his catalogue to be of interest here.)

From these four available Impressionist catalogues we have compiled the numbers of paintings produced, shown in Tables 6, 7, and 8 by successively shorter intervals. On the average, 18 paintings were finished by an individual each year over a span of 40 years, as shown in Table 6. Furthermore, the rate of production was remarkably stable from year to year, as shown in Table 8. In deriving our estimate of 200,000 paintings per decade, we assumed production by the average professional painter of only 10 paintings per year during 20 years. Even Manet, who died at 51, who had an independent income, and who was never highly prolific, produced nearly 10 paintings a year over 30 years. (Pissarro and Sisley produced far more works over shorter careers than Degas; the former were primarily *plein-air* landscapists.)

Table 6 Production of Paintings* by Four Impressionists over Total Careers

Painter	Years of Active Production	Total Number of Paintings	Number of Paintings per Year
Degas (oils and pastels)	51	439	8.6
Pissarro (oils)	48	1267	26.4
Sisley (oils)	33	884	26.8
Manet (oils)	29	286	9.9
Average	40	719	18

* Sketches, drawings, studies, and water colors are excluded. The Degas pastels, being large-scale and of a finished quality, may be regarded as major works. With this exception, only finished oil paintings are included.

SOURCES: *Catalogues Raisonnés*: P. A. Lemoisne, *Degas et son oeuvre*, Paris, 1946–1949; L. R. Pissarro and L. Venturi, *Camille Pissarro*, Paris, 1939; Jamot, Wildenstein, and Bataille, *Manet*, Paris, 1932; F. Daulte, *Alfred Sisley*, Lausanne, 1959.

Table 7 Productivity of Impressionists by Five-Year Periods*

Five-Year Intervals	1851–1855	1856–1860	1861–1865	1866–1870	1871–1875	1876–1880	1881–1885	1886–1890	1891–1895	1896–1900	1901–1905
Degas † (oils)	(6)	12	17	20	34	38	26	22	15	15	...
Degas (pastels)	...	...	...	...	(2)	53	62	47	25	37	(8)
Pissarro ‡ (oils)	...	11	27	59	203	190	152	68 §	170	228	(159)
Sisley || (oils)	...	...	(2)	15	175	216	222	123	93	(38)	...
Manet ** (oils)	(1)	16	43	44	61	80	(41)	...	...	...	...

* Parentheses indicate a painter was not producing during all of that five-year period. See Table 6, notes for sources and for types of work included.

† Born 1834.

‡ Born 1830.

§ Pissarro shifted to the Seurat and Signac *pointillisme* style about 1885 and stuck to it about four years.

|| Born 1840.

** Born 1832.

Table 8 Year-by-Year Count of Impressionist Paintings*

Year	1853	'54	'55	'56	'57	'58	'59	'60	'61	'62	'63	'64	'65	'66	'67	'68	'69	
Degas (oils)	1	2	3	3	5	2	1	1	...	6	3	3	5	2	5	5	6	
Pissarro (oils)				6	1	1	2	1	1	3	9	7	7	1	8	10	3	
Sisley (oils)													2	2	5	2	1	
Manet (oils)			1	1	...	...	1	14	2	14	3	19	5	13	4	6	14	
Year	1870	'71	'72	'73	'74	'75	'76	'77	'78	'79	'80	'81	'82	'83	'84	'85	'86	'87
Degas (oils)	2	1	10	11	4	8	8	9	6	7	8	2	5	1	7	11	4	3
Degas (pastels)						2	1	6	15	14	17	7	5	12	11	27	11	4
Pissarro (oils)	37	16 †	52	40	60	35	43	52	39	33	23	22	27	38	32	33	18	10
Sisley (oils)	5	1 ‡	36	52	45	41	58	28	22	48	60	42	24	30	54	72	19	6
Manet (oils)	7	11	9	21	11	10	6	11	20	15	28	15	22	4	(Died 1883)			
Year	1888	'89	'90	'91	'92	'93	'94	'95	'96	'97	'98	'99	1900	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05
Degas (oils)	1	1	13	4	4	1	...	6	3	2	4	3	3					§
Degas (pastels)	6	8	18	2	2	4	8	9	6	6	16	5	4	2	3	3	(Died 1917)	
Pissarro (oils)	9	10	21	13	46	39	36	36	46	42	47	45	48	50	52	57	(Died 1903)	
Sisley (oils)	41	24	33	33	30	6	18	6	18	20	(Died 1899)							

* See notes to Table 6 for sources and for types of work included.

† Does not include paintings destroyed at Louveciennes during his exile.

‡ Sisley had to support himself after 1871, when his father suffered heavy financial losses.

§ Degas' eyesight failed in the last years of his life so that he was limited to sculpture.

CANVASES VS. CAREERS

Four thousand is not a staggering number of professionals to encompass in a decentralized institutional system. But in this case 3000 men were in one lump, in the core of the Academic institutional system centered on Paris, and few leaders of this system recognized a responsibility to organize and support such a large group. The other major difficulty was that the focus of the Academic system was not men, not a set of careers, but rather the river of canvases. By the system's own definition, moreover, each canvas led an independent existence as a separate entity with its own reputation and history. Yet the system never developed, within its own confines, the capacity to place this hoard of unique objects for pay. Not all paintings had to be placed, of course, nor were they placed by the alternative system of dealers and critics that was evolving. But enough of them had to be placed to give the artist some semblance of the regular income necessitated by his own middle-class view of himself. It was a view derived, in many cases, from his own family background and enforced by the official ideology of the Academic system, an ideology of the respectability of the artist as a learned professional.

It was the picture, not the artist, around which the official ideology centered. A certain static grandeur was associated with each individual work.¹¹ The figure of the artist had an analogous static quality. The Academic aim had been to place him in the empyrean, a grand figure of learning.

Under Chennevières, a director of fine arts during the Second Empire and the Third Republic, suggestions were advanced and attempts were made to reestablish an official concern with the evolution of the artist's career, but the effort was too fragmentary and too late. Also, the system of making awards to the successful was rationalized, but this contributed little to developing meaningful career lines for the mass of professional painters.

It is exceedingly difficult to evaluate and process a large number of objects, using a single centralized organization, when the objects are defined as being unique. Fatigue bore upon the jury of the



Figure 10 Honoré Daumier (1808–1879): *Abusing the Permission Obtained by Artists This Year to Exhibit More than Three Works . . .*; lithograph from *Le Charivari*, 1857. (Courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.)

single yearly Salon, as they stumbled, almost unseeing, amid the thousands of paintings submitted. At these times, reality compelled attention to artists as individuals in a social context; thus for some of the jury log-rolling of the crassest kind dominated their deliberations, rather than concern with the type and quality of each painting.

The rule of *hors concours*, formulated in 1849, could have been the beginning of a new concern with the artist's career. As mentioned earlier, a limited number of paintings by an artist who had received a substantial award in an earlier Salon (the exact criteria varied from year to year) was exempt from the judging. Yet the motivation behind and the perception of the *hors concours* rule were not appropriate to the creation of a new view. The rule

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eliminated the embarrassment the jury felt in confronting a poor work by a member or his disciple; the jury had early abandoned a rule of the anonymity of works to avoid repeating some awkward rejections made in former years. The rule was there, also, to save the jury time. As much as anything, *hors concours* had the effect of increasing the value of a first-class Salon award by guaranteeing future admittance. Thus a powerful control mechanism over the aspiring painter was added to the armory of the Academy.

SUBJECT MATTER, STYLES, AND MARKETS

The official ideology persisted in spite of many corruptions, and it led to sporadic harshness toward paintings not in keeping with “the great tradition.” To understand the staying power of this ideology, one must consider the way in which it bound social and psychological ideas about the artist to specific types of painting. Let us return, for a moment, to the Academic theoreticians of 150 years earlier:¹²

Thus, he who paints landscapes perfectly is above the one who makes only [pictures of] fruits, flowers or shells. He who paints living animals is more estimable than those who represent only things that are dead and motionless and since the figure of man is the most perfect earthly work of God, it is certain also that he who gives himself to the imitation of God in painting human figures is more excellent than all others. . . . There are different workers who apply themselves to different subjects. It is an established fact that to the degree in which they occupy themselves with more difficult and noble things, they separate themselves from that which is lowest and most commonplace.

Very obviously, these notions are linked to a social hierarchy within the artistic profession:

Thus, genius has several degrees, and nature has endowed some with one ability, others with another; not only in the diversity of professions but still more among the different parts of the same art or the same science. In painting, for example, one may have a talent for landscape, for animals or for flowers.

These words, so tied up, as we have seen, with changes in the artist's social status, come echoing down to the nineteenth century. Even as late as 1863, the droves of still lifes submitted to the Salon were rejected wholesale. Academic conservatism is not merely a tired carryover from the past; at its stubborn roots are vital social meanings.

The central struggle, as seen by the art world of the time, was at first between elevated history painting and saccharine genre.¹³ Genre painting won. Meissonier, delineator of highly finished genre scenes in wondrously small sizes, was elected to the Academy in 1861. Three hundred provincial museums there might be, government commissions for public works there might be, but the only possible paid destinations for the rising flood of canvases were the homes of the bourgeoisie. History painting had not and never would rest comfortably in the middle-class parlor. “Lesser” forms of image art—genre, landscape, still life—did.

History painting of a debased sort, scenes of brutality and terror purporting to illustrate episodes from Roman and Moorish history, were Salon sensations. On the overcrowded walls of the exhibition galleries, the paintings that shouted loudest got the attention. The state even bought some of these popular horrors,¹⁴ but although they were good entertainment for a Sunday afternoon, no bourgeois family would ever want one in the home. Genre painting, painting that shows a story, was a development related to the increasingly anecdotal character of contemporary history painting. From the era of the First Empire, genre painting began to crowd the walls of the Salons. In these early years of the century, a scene of everyday life was often related to contemporary national events. There are titles like: *Soldier's Departure*, *Young Woman Weeping Over a Letter*, and *Abandoned Innocence*. Troubadour subjects, romantic little scenes of the middle ages, appeared early under the guise of “historical anecdote.” And military history painting focused more and more on incidental action rather than on formally arranged central figures. Many history paintings took on the size of an easel picture and, conversely, in the transitions of style, genre subjects were presented in large dimensions. Prosper Mérimée commented, in a Salon review in the *Moniteur Universel* (May 17, 1853): “More than one painter

gives to familiar (intimate) compositions dimensions which would render them impossible anywhere except in a cathedral. Let them take care. If tragedy often bores, melodrama fatigues even more quickly."

In the trend toward genre painting there was also an attempt to solve the problem of finding a secure career in painting. More and more genre painters specialized, taking a particular subject and making a career of it. Animal painting was a very popular field. There were painters of farm horses and cattle, like the fabulously successful Rosa Bonheur, and the Barbizon painter Troyon, who was at one point so pressed for his paintings of cows that he hired Boudin to brush in the landscape backgrounds in a hurry.¹⁵ One Troyon cow was very much like another, so no particular painting was singled out; instead the buyer was attracted to any Troyon rural scene—if he liked cows! There were the painters of picturesque military scenes, like Ziem. Others specialized in cutting the heroic orientalism of Delacroix down to genre size.

The development of landscape painting through the Impressionist period and beyond could similarly be regarded as an adaption to the potential market: it was a revolution complementary to the one in genre. The official system had to gird its loins in defense of "high" image art just because landscape as well as genre could tap a large enough potential market to absorb the increased production. Elaborate and permanent decorative design and ornament, such as the extensive projects of the Academy's founder Lebrun, suited a palace or a millionaire's villa, just as history painting did. But movable decoration, that is, decorative canvases, fitted into the style, mobility, and time span of a bourgeois family. The Impressionists were of the movement that began to tap this social market of movable decorations for the middle class. In terms of the institutional system of the art world, then, the Impressionists and this whole movement were kith and kin to the worst genre painters of the Academic era; and they evolved out of earlier developments in genre and landscape painting. The most intelligent and far-sighted dealers, the Durand-Ruels, moved from success in support of the Barbizon landscapists to a support of Impressionism. It was left to later dealers to recognize the potential of the more abstract movements that followed. A new era in decorative art was coming to fruition.



Figure 11 Ernest Meissonier (1815–1891): *The Swordsman*; pen and brush drawing on brown paper, heightened with white, 1882. A fine example of Meissonier's meticulous technique. Probably the most successful French artist in his lifetime and perhaps in the century, Meissonier made his reputation at the Universal Exposition of 1855. In his early days, after studying with Coignet, he did a good deal of hack work: from cheap copies, mass-production devotional paintings, and decorated fans, he graduated to book illustrating. Among works he illustrated were *Paul et Virginie* and *Chants et Chansons Populaires de France*. Meissonier was an official military artist for the Second Empire. (Courtesy of Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Gift of Grenville L. Winthrop.)

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THE DEALER-CRITIC SYSTEM

A much larger market for paintings was needed and could be mobilized in the nineteenth century. The dealers recognized, encouraged, and catered to new social markets, which, although diverse in artistic focus, when cumulated could expand greatly the total market. We use the term "social market" because the existence of a demand for current artistic production of a given type depended more on the existence of a favorable climate of opinion than on prices. The demand for an individual painter's works depended, similarly, on the several circles of art opinion. The Salon and official recognition of other kinds were crucial elements in establishing creative renown, but it was the critics in conjunction with the dealers who accomplished the detailed task of building up an artist in a specific circle of patrons.¹⁶ Dealers and critics, once subsidiaries to the Academic system, grew in numbers and independence. This growth was a response to the very success of the official system in recruitment of painters, and to the increased public interest which had been generated by the publicity and attention given to art by the state.

Dispersion of buying power was a central reality of the new situation to which the dealer-critic system could adapt much more effectively than the centralized official machine. There was no question of a mass market in the modern American sense, but neither was the total requisite support attainable from a series of major private patrons plus a central government apparatus for awarding commissions. There were enough, and sufficiently varied, potential buyers so that one had to think in terms of markets rather than individuals. As Charles Blanc put it, under a despotic state art flourishes because of the immense concentration of wealth, whereas in a democratic state "To link together men, to group together wealth, to reunite so many dispersed resources—these are the future conditions for the prosperity of art and its expansion."¹⁷

One basic need of the emerging system based on dealers and critics was to create an ideology and an organization which would jibe with the accepted "pure" painter role, while allowing an alliance with painters who needed the financial framework dealers

could provide. Naturally, the dealers' primary purpose was to find a way to profit from the larger market that could be opened up, and the critic was interested in establishing his reputation as an influential intellectual.

The dealer who bought or exhibited some works of a young, unknown painter was speculating for his own profit; but he was at the same time awarding a prize akin to a "medal of encouragement" or honorable mention. The dealer who supported a painter with a monthly "salary" in return for promised works was emulating the old patronage system, as well as Academic fellowships like the *Prix de Rome*. The critics' development of the "unknown genius" ideology was an ingenious variation of, but in harmony with, the "pure" painter, man-of-learning theme of the Academy. It was also a natural outgrowth of the changes in roles that we noted as emerging early in the nineteenth century, principally during the Romantic Period.

Those who state that the decline of the aristocratic patronage system and its heir, the Academic system, led to the alienation of the artist from the modern world are only half right. The old system of financial support did become inadequate, but a new system took over much of the load. This new system had a clear ideological basis, partly derived from the old Academic one. The apparent alienation of the artist from society is really the appearance of a new social framework to provide for him. As with "off-Broadway" theater in the contemporary United States, what appears to be nonstructured is really only a new and unfamiliar social framework.

Critics were a heterogeneous lot in nineteenth-century France. J. C. Sloane gives brief biographies of 94 prominent art critics in his work on French art in the 1800's.¹⁸ A little less than half had two occupations, besides the "occupation" of critic, 6 per cent had three other occupations, and one had four other occupations. Altogether there were 151 mentions of occupations for these 94 critics. Only 14 per cent of the 151 mentions of occupations were of practicing artist—painter, sculptor, engraver—whereas 11 per cent were of jobs in the government bureaucracy regulating art. (Less than a quarter of the 21 artist-critics also held government art jobs.) Professional journalist was the designation of 20 per cent of the mentions, and professional man-of-letters (novelist and/or

essayist) in 28 per cent. (Less than a quarter of the 43 men-of-letters also were journalists.) A further 13 per cent of the mentions were of historians, political scientists, and philosophers, 10 per cent were of government jobs not concerned with current art, and 2 per cent were of other types of professions. The distribution among occupations of the critics born after 1830 is similar to that of the 74 born before or during 1830. There does seem to be a tendency for fewer of the artist-critics born later to be Academicians, which would reflect a withdrawal of the Academic elite from participation in publicity and taste-making. Also, more of the critics born later who were journalists and men-of-letters had no other occupations, which perhaps indicates the tendency toward professionalism in art criticism.

A fifth of the jobs held by these 94 critics were government jobs. Few even of the other critics would have regarded themselves as participants in a new dealer-critic system that was to control the art world. As Sloane emphasized, there were several schools of critics espousing different ideologies, which often had little relation to the actual developments in French painting. Nonetheless, in our view the critics did function as part of a new system, willy-nilly. Only 14 per cent were painters (less than half Academicians) and at most a further 10 per cent, those in government jobs dealing with current art, could be regarded as an integral part of the Academic institutional system. The critics wrote about Salons and the *Prix de Rome* competitors, the official occasions of recognition, but they also wrote throughout the year about sales, group shows, dealer shows, and so on. Whether they praised or castigated, the critics publicized the calendar of events, the dealers, painters, and the works of art, informing a large readership of this extra-Academic activity. In Chapter 4 we shall discuss in more detail the developing roles of critics in conjunction with the emergence of the Impressionists, and the variations in critical positions among publications of different types and circulations.

There is to our knowledge no detailed study of nineteenth-century French dealers comparable to Sloane's book on critics. Scattered pieces of information on dealers' transactions that were available to us are hard to interpret. It is difficult to distinguish first sales from later sales, but this distinction is essential if we are to clarify the processes that led to changes in the evaluation of

painters. Figures on gross sales by dealers are almost useless, since most dealers handled works of dead masters, which then, as now, fetched enormous prices. We must rely heavily on the detailed account in the next chapter of the roles of several dealers in the success of the Impressionists to lend credence to our account of the function of dealers in general in a new institutional system for painting.

It is possible, however, to get a notion of the numbers and ecology of dealers' establishments from a listing of Parisian dealers in the year 1861. According to this source,¹⁹ there were 104 Paris dealers. With their addresses and the aid of an 1861 map, we found that about half the establishments were grouped in a semi-circle from the right bank of the Seine near the Louvre and Tuilleries to the section north around the Opéra. A fair number were located on the left bank, especially on the quais close to the river near the *Institut*. Other locations where dealers clustered were to the north, Montmartre and La Chapelle, and to the south in the area around the Luxembourg.

Even more difficult to make is an accurate survey of buyers of nineteenth-century French paintings. The descriptions given later of some early buyers of Impressionist works indicate the variety of backgrounds consonant with active and perspicacious collecting—industrialists, bankers, nobility, free professionals, other artists, government officials, minor functionaries, *rentiers*.

At the end of our detailed analysis of the emergence of the Impressionists in Chapter 4, we shall summarize what it tells us about the workings of a new dealer-critic system. The latter-day dealer, Daniel-Henri Kahnweiler, makes some comments which seem to express well the ideology developing for late nineteenth-century dealers:²⁰

[Speaking of another dealer] . . . he was the sort of picture dealer who furnishes his buyers with the merchandise they want. Myself, I wanted to be a picture dealer who would offer for the public's admiration . . . painters absolutely unknown to the public and to whom the path must be marked out.

. . . The idea came to me that there are, basically, great painters who create the great dealers. Each epoque of great painting has had its dealer. . . .

I actually had written contracts with painters at that time [from about

1910–1920], something I don't do nowadays. Now, when I do business with painters, it is complete good faith that counts—on both sides (and indeed, I've never been deceived).

INDIVIDUAL CAREERS AND THE NEW SYSTEM

It was artists, not paintings, who were the focus of the dealer-critic institutional system. The new system triumphed in part because it could and did command a bigger market than the academic-governmental structure. Equally important, however, it dealt with an artist more in terms of his production over a career and thus provided a rational alternative to the chaos of the academic focus on paintings by themselves.

Dealers and critics were not selfless in their relations with artists. Rather, their own interests required them to look at artists more than at individual paintings. A current painting as an isolated item in trade is simply too fugitive to focus a publicity system upon. One does not buy a copy of a recognized painting; the next best thing for inspiring the warmth of confidence in the breast of the shrewd but nervous buyer is a younger sibling of the recognized painting. Independent merit of a painting in and of itself was a principle directly hostile to the institutional imperatives of the dealer-critic system, and to the social and financial needs of the artist.

Good prices for individual paintings did not satisfy a painter if they were realized at erratically spaced times. Committed to a middle-class way of life by the whole ethos of the Academic system, he wanted above all a predictable income, the hallmark of the middle-class concept of a career. This was the carrot Durand-Ruel wielded with such success that other dealers followed. In the 1600's Hermann Becker in the Netherlands had developed the same scheme of buying the output of painters—among them, Rembrandt—for what amounted to a salary. The need was not idiosyncratic to nineteenth-century French artists.²¹ From all points of view then it was the career of an artist that had to be the focus of the system.

Speculation became an important ingredient of the new system. Famous paintings of past centuries had long been recognized as

a safe investment with growth potential, suitable for international exchange. But changes in value were usually too slow to warrant the term "speculation." In any case, the dealers and buyers for such paintings operated at a higher financial and social level than most buyers of contemporary paintings. Initial prices for current Academic favorites were also so high that they could hardly be looked to for large windfalls.

The new dealer-critic system had a built-in motive for encouraging innovative work: tapping the fever for speculation which possessed much of the nineteenth-century French middle class. The financial speculation in art found its cultural counterpart in the speculation in taste. As critics and dealers were wont to say to the "discerning buyer": "In twenty years he will be considered a master—and his painting will be worth a fortune!"

But speculation is doubly dangerous when the supply of objects is elastic. Monopoly of an artist's production was important in making speculation rational; Durand-Ruel in his first daring coup bought up almost the entire production of several Barbizon painters. The speculative motive reinforced the concern of the dealer with the total career of the painter.

The Durand-Ruels, father and son, were superb judges of painting: as their clients developed a faith in this judgment, speculation came to seem prudence. They were also superb businessmen who saw how to reap ransoms as well as commissions by patiently holding some as well as placing other works of potential claimants to the throne of painting.

"Master and pupils" had been the natural guild grouping for the evaluation of art. This had been carried over into the Academic view as a focus on "schools," and initially the "school" view was applied within the dealer-critic system. This carryover of the "schools" concept—which could apply equally well to paintings and painters—did not survive long in the dealer-critic system (although it has remained a central concept in art history). The Impressionist group shows, for example, soon withered in favor of one-man shows. Dealers early favored the latter scheme, for just as individual paintings did not fit the exigencies of selling, neither did groups of always-diverging careers. The group show was used later, by young painters, as a publicity method, but only until each was settled with a good dealer.

DECAY OF THE ACADEMIC SYSTEM

Internal structural flaws accentuated the inadequacy of the Academic system to cope with external social realities faced by painters. Internal communication channels were hopelessly inadequate. Even during the socialization of the typical young aspirant in the *Ecole*, he received little direct molding from the top official painters in the chaotic and overcrowded schools. He was simultaneously exposed to strong cross-pressures from friends he might know who either wholly or in part trained at the *Académie Suisse* or other independent places of practice and teaching. The Salon jury was an ordeal, not an opportunity for the elite to monitor the new production. In the end it was the critics, a component of the opposing new system, plus uncontrolled interaction in cafés which provided most of the communication the Academic system depended on for coherence.

A fatal price was paid by the Academy for the growth in number of painters it unwittingly encouraged: one usually had to be famous externally—in the critic-dealer, buyer, and free café circles—to achieve renown inside its institutional system proper. No system can maintain independent, much less dominant, power when its communication as much as its major rewards are monitored by independent systems. Science continued to develop in a framework like the Academic system not only because it provided secure careers by controlling jobs serving secondary aims of science, but also because to this day inside communication and fame suffice. External anonymity, internal fame, and participants' acceptance of an institutional system's validity go together. The guild was closer than the Academy to scientific institutions in its pattern of recognition and reward.

All institutions die hard. Several other weaknesses contributed to the unusually sudden decline of the institutional system of art centered on the Academy. Flexibility and specialized clienteles were a chief strength of the dealer-critic system, but inchoateness and lack of formal structure were weaknesses. Yet the Academy maintained a focus on Paris as the heart of all aspects of French painting. It did not breathe life into the paper structure of decen-

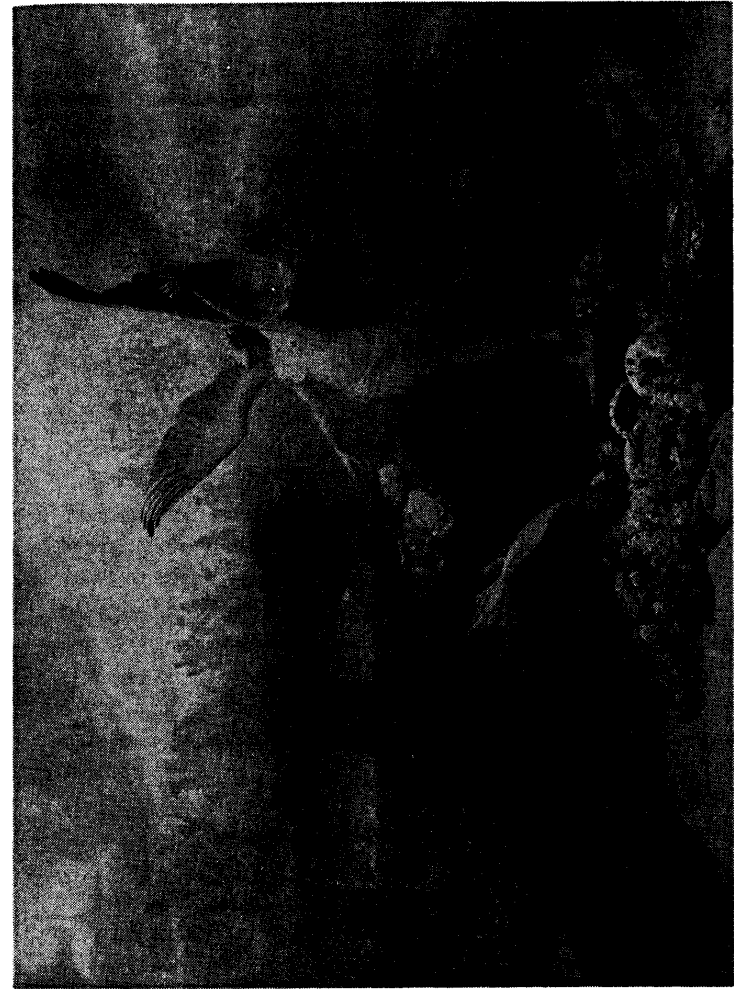


Figure 12 Jehan George Vibert (1840–1902): *Apotheosis of Adolphe Thiers*; oil painting in grisaille, 1878. A contemporary “history painting” of the Impressionist era. Rendering of detail is quite photographic in this entirely black-and-white painting. It seems unlikely that Vibert ever intended to add color, for the tones are too sharply defined and finished. (Courtesy of Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Gift of Benjamin S. Bell.)

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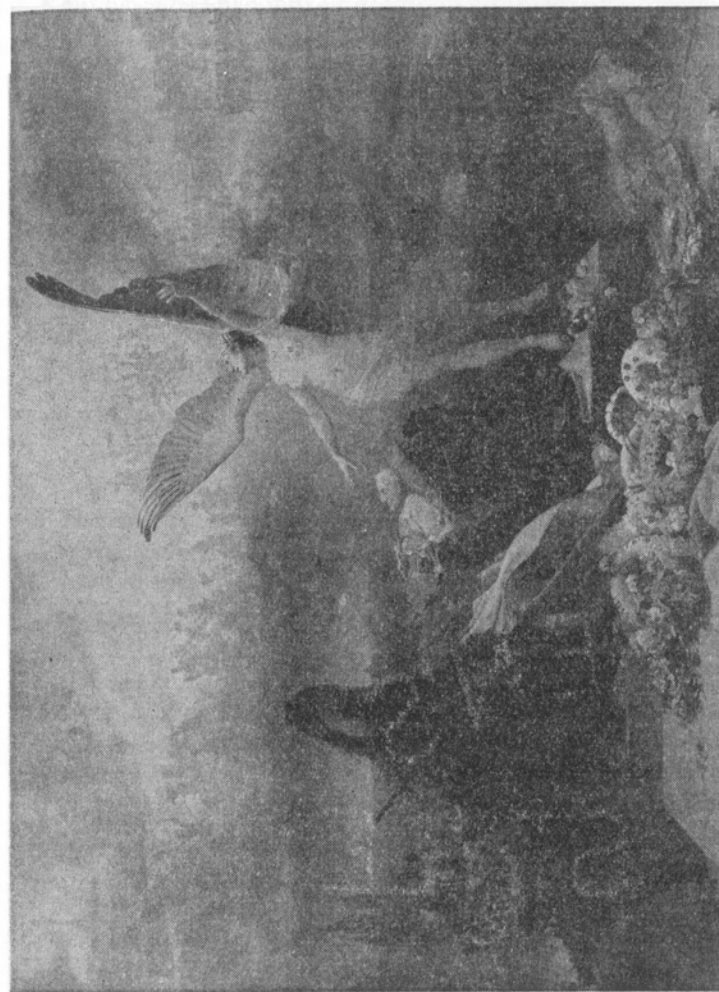


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tralized museums and exhibitions; it did not use the earnestly struggling provincial *sociétés des amis de l'art*. Because all centered in Paris, a skeletonless system like that of dealers and critics could hope to compete with the Academic machine that had eschewed the systematic control of meaningful provincial centers.

It was while France and Paris were satellites in the international world of art that the Academic system worked effectively. The success of the Academic system in recruiting artists, increasing production, and raising standards contributed to the international dominance of Paris. This brought not only artists to Paris to swell still more the pool of painters—unhampered by ungentlemanly guild rules against aliens—but also brought a rich and varied cosmopolitan clientele under the immediate or potential influence of Paris. Just such deepening and widening of clienteles was important in letting the dealer-critic system escape domination by the Academy.

MIGHT-HAVE-BEENS

Recruitment continued throughout the century as the jewel in the crown of Academy achievements. Till the end of time backwards lads may seek out the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts* as the premier source of training. Its success in this respect was the main undoing of the Academic system.

Even those rejected as obviously unfit tended somehow to drift back into the fringes of the pool of painters. A crucial problem was the disposal of those regarded officially as mediocrities, the not-quite-good-enough painters who filled the Salon each year. Here was another cost of the Academic drive for scholarly respectability through rejection of the artisan. If industrial art had been raised in status over the years, training for pure and applied art could have been merged, at least in part, for the early years. Then the talent-judged borderline could have been smoothly eased into industrial art in much the same way that borderline ability in science is gently but firmly led into industry.

In addition, pure painters could have been the teachers in industrial arts schools. This would have yielded a number of respectable posts for pure painters. More important, through Academic control of at least initial placement of students and the

award of teaching posts, the painter judged mediocre and shunted to the industrial arts would still be under the control and ideology of the Academic system. Long-term control in any institutional system requires control over marginal as well as respected members of the system. This is particularly true when change and innovation are part of the system, as they will be when the products must be individualized and when authoritative recognition is chancy.

Science was taught as an accepted part not only of engineering training but also of more general education in French *lycées* and universities. Numbers of productive scientists were supported in this way, and they remained within the institutional structure of the world of active science. There was little parallel in art. Academic ideology was never accepted fully enough. No longer an artisan or the higher type of servant, the artist, though respectable, was apparently not taken sufficiently seriously in his role as learned man. Yet it was to legitimate that role that he differentiated himself so sharply from the applied artist.

Able men concerned with the Academic system recognized at the time many of its problems. In the Second Empire and Third Republic a variety of reforms of the internal structure of the Academic system were initiated, as we have already indicated.²² Many of these reforms were attempts to move back toward the Royal Academy system²³ in which the body of painters was an informal association of colleagues rather than several fragmented groups of specialists dominated by a small oligarchy. But three thousand painters could not fit in a system appropriate to three hundred. No major attempt was made to decentralize the structure of the system geographically or by specialty, and the concept of a single annual Salon was not challenged by the reformers. Unfaithfulness to Academic ideals in style and content was excoriated and mediocrity in the service of the ideals deplored, but the ideals were not criticized from within the system in an organized way. Much of the art criticism in the journals, which did draw various publics into an interest in painting, was reviled; but suppression rather than replacement by an alternative communication network was the desire. Rich spoils from the state were available only to those painters evaluated highly in the system, and reformers did not recognize a need for a varied structure which could be related effectively to different publics of different kinds of painting.

Intelligent reformers were also concerned with the state of art in industry: the breakdown of the apprentice system and the gap between pure and applied art.²⁴ Thoughtful reports from commissions of inquiry were submitted by Henri Delaborde in 1856, by the director of primary education in Paris in 1871, and by Antonin Proust (Minister of Fine Arts) in 1884.²⁵ Rapid development of applied art training in Germany, England, and Russia after 1850 provided further evidence of the desirability of reform.

Hausman, Prefect of Paris, in 1865 placed all drawing courses in primary schools, apprentice classes, and "adult schools" under a municipal commission to examine and certify teachers and give advice on program and methods. Academic doctrine had been well absorbed, however, so that implementation was slow, for "anyone" could carry out mere applied art work. By 1875 well-attended schools were scattered through the city, but Academic practice in teaching drawing had been supplanted by a more flexible approach which held that drawing was based on geometry and was applicable to far more than the representation of beautiful forms. Finally in 1882 free professional schools in applied art with a three-year program were set up, but again accepted Academic ideology was too little relevant to serve as a common element binding pure and applied art training.²⁶

Fresh thought on the place of art and its teachers in higher education was not to be found in Academic circles. An excessively learned and dull report was submitted in 1854 by a national commission on the teaching of drawing in the *lycées*, the state-supported secondary schools. The membership was distinguished: besides four government officials (a minister of public instruction, two inspectors general for higher schools, the director of the *Ecole des Arts Décoratifs*), it included three members of the Academy (Ingres, Picot, Simart) and three other famous painters (Delacroix, Flandrin, and Meissonier; the latter and Ingres did not take an active part because of ill health). Yet the bulk of the discussion reads as if cribbed from an Academic ideologue of two centuries earlier; no attempt was made to adapt such ideology to the concrete challenge of establishing art as a component of liberal education. The practical proposals were two: give the drawing master, who was to inculcate copying of the great masters, the title of *Professeur*

just like other *lycée* teachers; appoint men to these posts only through examination by a special official rather than leaving hiring to the pleasure of the headmaster. Both proposals were adopted by the Ministry of Public Instruction, which accepted the rigid ideas of the Academy about the proper form of art training but treated the result as a minor adjunct to the liberal curriculum. Through forms 6 to 2 there were to be lessons, it is true, but little more than an hour a week, and those a deadly series of copying from prints and photos of slightly more subtle subjects each year.²⁷

If reforms in education for applied art had come sooner, when there were fewer painters and less pressure, if the Academic system had been less ossified in ideology, many problems of the institutional system in pure art might have been eased. The Academic system might have survived in a modified form as the dominant force in the French painting world.

FRANÇOIS BONVIN: BETWEEN TWO SYSTEMS

The career of this genre painter²⁸ shows concretely the mid-century context: a mixed and changing institutional structure.

Bonvin was born in 1817, in Vaugirard on the outskirts of Paris. His father was a police constable. The son's education and early art training were fragmentary. François was sent to the parish school and served as choirboy in a nearby abbey under the auspices of a rich merchant's wife (a friend of his stepmother's). When he was 10, he entered the Paris *Ecole de Dessin* (later the *Ecole des Arts Décoratifs*). He was encouraged in this by the secretary to the mayor, who paid for the necessary drawing materials. From 1827–1830 he was a pupil there, receiving instruction in "figures and animals," "flowers and ornaments," and "mathematics and architecture." It was strict training, although not of sufficiently high level at that time to much encourage a painting career. Most of Bonvin's fellow pupils went into a "*carrière industrielle de dernier ordre*." Bonvin won a prize at the annual contest in 1830. He then left school and was put to work as an office boy in the mayor's office. In 1832 he was apprenticed to a Paris printer.

Then there is a gap of eight or so years when Bonvin seemed to

be going nowhere as far as an artistic career was concerned. By the 1840's, however, he had begun to move again. He returned to part-time study at the *Ecole des Arts Décoratifs*, now being renewed under the direction of Belloc, Lecoq de Boisbaudran, and Viollet-le-Duc. He went on to study evenings at the Gobelins drawing school. He practiced at the *Académie Suisse*. Someone introduced him to the Academic painter Granet, who encouraged him with money and informal advice.

With four years of strict and solid training in drawing, Bonvin was probably at this point as competent technically as anyone who had taken the high road of the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts*. Lacking the entree to the world of painting that might have been afforded by study in the atelier of an Academic artist, he sought it through informal contacts. The *Académie Suisse* and the cafés were part of the network. He met Gustave Courbet. He became friends with the writers Théophile Gautier and Gérard de Nerval and with Octave Feuillet. They saw to it that his pictures were exhibited in the foyer of the Odéon Theatre.

Bonvin's first sales were of drawings. Around 1844 he began exhibiting them on the quais under the arcades of the Institut—a place where *amateurs* were most likely to pass. His price at the stalls of the *marchands de gravures*, small dealers like Painel and the Danlos family, was 12 francs for 8 watercolor drawings. (The dealers usually got 3 francs a drawing from buyers.) Painel had a steady customer for Bonvin's work, a mysterious *amateur* whose name he refused to divulge (for fear, of course, that a middleman would no longer be needed). Finally Bonvin managed to meet M. Laperlier. To that gentleman, Bonvin had been, all the while, "a mysterious painter living in England." Laperlier was a functionary in the War Department, connected with procurement—hence, perhaps, his extra money for picture collecting! For a time, Bonvin became his "expert," ferreting out Chardin still lifes which were Laperlier's special interest.

As a painter Bonvin progressed to bigger dealers. In the late 1850's and the 1860's he exhibited at Martinet's "galleries" on the Boulevard des Italiens. "Mon cher Martinet," he wrote in 1861,

Yet another good mark for the idea you have had of holding a permanent exhibition! That picture I brought you eight days ago has just brought

me to the notice of the ministry. Placed in a big exhibition, this canvas would not, perhaps, have been noticed. "*La peinture intime*," large or small, needs a setting like yours. . . . Thanks to your enlightenment, my dear Martinet, I foresee . . . a future less difficult than the last ten years.

Here one notes that not only could a dealer help a painter form a circle of buyers, but also upon occasion bring him official notice.

Bonvin's career continually moved back and forth between the official governmental system and the looser structure of dealers, critics, and buyers.

His Salon debut was in 1847, with a portrait of the historian, Augustin Challamel. Portraits seem often to have been the choice for a first Salon offering. It is likely that a portrait, especially one of a fairly prominent sitter, had the best chance of being accepted. And there was a guaranteed audience, family and friends of the sitter who would surely go to the Salon and notice and talk about the work.

In 1848 Bonvin exhibited a portrait and two genre pictures (this was a "free" Salon). He won a Third Class Medal in 1849—and an article by Champfleury in the periodical *L'Artiste*. Also in 1849, he obtained a state commission to do a genre painting, *The Orphan's School*, for 1800 francs. This painting, in the mode which could be called contemporary religious or pious genre, went to a provincial museum at Langres. Many of Bonvin's Salon pictures and most of his state-purchased or commissioned works are in this same "religious genre." However, his association with Laperlier and his study of Chardin had made still-life painting his other specialty. In this he found greatest acclaim from the critics, especially during the 1860's. Although for a certain period religious genre was a guaranteed seller with the state, still-life painting had a more guaranteed attraction for private buyers. Like many others, Bonvin made an identity for himself by specializing.

He exhibited six works in the 1850 Salon, won a Second Class Medal and became *hors concours*. In 1851 came another state commission for a picture entitled *La Charité*. This was exhibited in 1852 before being sent to another provincial museum. It was well enough known at the Salon to become the subject of a caricature by Nadar in the *Journal pour Rire*.

Bonvin exhibited at Salons throughout the 1850's, 1860's, and 1870's. His recorded state purchases and commissions were as follows:

- 1849: 1 painting; to provincial museum; 1800 francs.
 1851: 1 painting; " " "
 1852: 1 painting; commissioned by Napoleon III; 600 francs.
 1854: 1 painting; to provincial museum.
 1857: 1 painting; " " "
 1859: 1 painting; " " "
 1861: 1 painting; " " "
 1862: 1 painting; " " "

By the late 1860's Bonvin had at least two frequent buyers. The pianist Marmontel and an industrialist, Mosselmann, were mentioned. He was associated for a time with Brame, a new young dealer. On the strength of this association, Bonvin gave up his job with the prefecture of police. Durand-Ruel was listed as his dealer in 1868, through an agreement with Brame.

Unfortunately, the specialty of religious genre painting was less popular with the government of the 1870's. Bonvin blames his lack of state purchases on anticlericalism. He was by this time a chevalier of the Legion of Honor. But, though he exhibited frequently, his pictures were poorly hung and got little attention. He complained that all his pictures were moldering away in provincial museums; there were none in the Luxembourg. (A year after his death, the state did buy two from private collections and placed them in the Luxembourg.)

About 1880 Bonvin signed a contract with the dealer Gustave Tempelaere, Brame's brother-in-law. Apparently prices were to be agreed upon beforehand, but if the dealer got more than he expected the painter received part of the bonus. Bonvin ceased exhibiting at the Salon from then on. He died in 1887, having painted until the previous year, when blindness stopped him.

Bonvin, trained as an applied artist, a draftsman, became a painter through the marginal opportunities for (largely self-directed) study. The informal network of people who talked about, wrote about, and sold paintings helped to make him known to the official system. Pressures to remain in public and official notice forced him into specialization as to subject matter, yet this specialization later backfired. But even during the twelve years or

so when Bonvin was enjoying almost annual state purchases and commissions, it is clear that he was not being provided with a sufficient and secure livelihood. His "moonlighting" job as a civil inspector continued throughout this period.

François Bonvin was fairly successful at taking advantage of the varied institutions of the art world, making a career for himself by a rather zigzag course. For a later generation of painters, there is a clearer coalescence of careers and the newly forming institutional system.

NOTES

1. This interpretation is taken from A. Cobban, *A History of Modern France*, Vol. 2, Baltimore, Penguin, 1961.
2. F. L. Ford, *Robe and Sword*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1953, p. 145. The other facts and interpretations in this paragraph are based on this and D. Greer, *The Incidence of the Terror*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1935.
3. Diderot's critical writings exhibit—and helped to form—the eighteenth century's popular taste for "idealized genre" painting, as in the pictures by the very popular Greuze. Insightful commentary as well as interesting documents on eighteenth-century taste are found in E. and J. de Goncourt, *French Eighteenth Century Painters* (a translation by R. Ironside), London, Phaidon, 1948.
4. A. Tabarant, *La Vie Artistique au Temps de Baudelaire*, Paris, Mercure de France, 1942.
5. A good, brief description of the lithographic process, with illustrations, is found in W. Ivins, Jr., *How Prints Look*, Boston, Beacon, 1958.
6. J. Adhémar, "Les Lithographes de Paysage en France à l'Epoque Romantique" in *Archives de l'Art Français: Nouvelle Période*, Vol. 19, Paris, Armand Colin, 1938.
7. P. Dorbec, "La Peinture au Temps du Romantisme, jugée par le Factum, La Chanson et La Caricature," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, July–September 1918; P. Dorbec, "La Peinture Française sous le Second Empire, jugée par le Factum, La Chanson et La Caricature," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, October–December 1918.
8. For a discussion of this and the following technological innovations and some stimulating ideas about their effects on painting, see M. Grosser, *The Painter's Eye*, New York, Mentor, 1955, Chs. 5 and 6.
9. See, for example, the detailed guide to collecting by F. X. Burtin, *Traité Théorique et Pratique des Connaissances*, Valenciennes, Lemaitre, 1846. The taste for Dutch genre painting which this guide reflects was an important influence. See also Tables 1 through 4 in "The Prestige of French Painting" section in Chapter 2.

10. Consult Rewald, *op. cit.*, p. 621, bibliography (Cézanne) Nos. 1, 45, and 46.
11. As, for instance, in the notes and statements of Ingres: W. Pach, *Ingres*, New York, Harper, 1939. (Excerpts in R. Goldwater and N. Treves, *Artists on Art*, New York, Pantheon, 1945.)
12. We are greatly indebted for these quotations to an article by J. W. McCoubrey: "The Revival of Chardin in French Still-Life Painting," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 46, No. 1, March 1964. The first quote is from Felibien, *Conférences de l'Académie Royale de Peinture et Sculpture*, London, 1705; the second from Du Fresnoy, *Cours de la Peinture*, Paris, 1708. The translations of both quotations are ours.
13. Consult J. Sloane, *French Painting Between the Past and the Present*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1951, Ch. 2, "Conservatives and Government." For a witty criticism of contemporary genre painting from the radical viewpoint, see C. Baudelaire, *The Mirror of Art*, (trans., ed., J. Mayne) New York, Anchor, 1956: "Salon of 1846: The Apes of Sentiment."
14. Thomas Couture's *Roman Orgy* (1847) was the sensation of the year and was purchased by the state. A later example is Regnault's *Exécution sans jugement sous les rois maures* (1870). Black and white reproductions of these and other favorites are found in Sloane, *op. cit.*
15. Rewald, *op. cit.*, p. 61.
16. See *ibid.*, pp. 78-79, for a contemporary painter's report of such a buildup.
17. Charles Blanc, *La Réforme*, March 16, 1845: quoted in L. Rosenthal, *Du Romantisme au Réalisme*, Paris, Laurens, 1914, p. 25. Blanc intended to draw a partisan political moral, but we believe his analysis of the problem is correct.
18. Sloane, *op. cit.*, Appendix.
19. P. Lacroix, *Annuaire des Artistes et des Amateurs*, Paris, 1861.
20. D. H. Kahnweiler, *Mes Galleries et mes Peintres: Entretiens avec F. Crémiux*, Paris, Gallimard, 1961, pp. 29, 30, 35, 40.
21. F. H. Taylor, *The Taste of Angels*, Boston, Little, Brown, 1947.
22. See Stranahan, *op. cit.*, *passim*. Scattered throughout the memoirs of Chennevières are suggestions for reform, often copies of memoranda he had submitted. Ph. De Chennevières-Pointel, *Souvenirs d'un Directeur des Beaux-Arts*, Paris, Bureaux de l'artiste, 1883-1889.
23. L. Vitet, in *Etude Historique: L'Académie Royale*, Paris, Lévy, 1861, pp. 191-192, proposes a cure for the nineteenth-century system based on a return to certain features of both the Royal Academy and the guild system.
24. Vitet, *ibid.*, and H. Delaborde, *De l'union des arts et de l'industrie*, Paris, 1856.
25. See G. Cugny, *L'Enseignement Professionnel des Beaux-Arts dans les Ecoles de la Ville de Paris*, Paris, 1888, Introduction.
26. *Ibid.*, Chs. 1 and 5.
27. Cf. *Le Moniteur Universel*, January 18, 1854.
28. The following biographical material is taken from E. Moreau-Nélaton, *Bonvin*, Paris, Laurens, 1927.