

THE GOLDEN AGE OF FRENCH ACADEMIC
PAINTING IN AMERICA, 1867-1893

by

Leanne M. Zalewski

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art History in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
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Abstract

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Advisor: Professor Patricia Mainardi

The aim of this dissertation is to present a more accurate assessment of nineteenth-century French academic art and its place not only in European art history but also in the history of American culture in the early Gilded Age. I focus on the phenomenally successful American careers of its four leading artists: William Bouguereau (1825-1905), Alexandre Cabanel (1823-1889), Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904), and Ernest Meissonier (1815-1891).

Several exhibitions and monographs have been devoted to these individual artists in the past three decades; however, these artists have been studied individually and largely within a European art framework, rather than collectively as a phenomenon in the context of the American art world of the early Gilded Age. Lacking is a thorough examination and comparative study of these artists' meteoric rise to prominence, their impact on the art scene in the United States, and their eventual eclipse. My study is the first to take a comprehensive approach to this collecting phenomenon through an analysis of contemporary accounts in journals, periodicals, art histories, and dealers' stock books.

The early Gilded Age in the United States was a golden era for these four artists. Two international expositions—the 1867 Universal Exposition held in Paris and the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition held in Chicago—bracketed the golden age of French academic painting. This study explores the trajectory of their careers during this twenty-five year span by means of an analysis of multiple factors that led to their striking success in the United States. Among the most significant factors were the art dealers: Goupil & cie. and George Lucas in Paris, and Samuel P. Avery and Michael Knoedler in New York. These dealers brought French pictures to the United States following the four French artists’ success at the 1867 Exposition, where American art was broadly perceived to be a failure. Aided by dealers, prominent American collectors quickly amassed collections comprised primarily of French academic art, and paintings by this quartet of French artists were among the most expensive on the market. American critics kept the artists in the spotlight, American writers canonized them in their first histories of French art, and collectors placed their pictures in newly-formed art museums. However, by the time the World’s Columbian Exposition took place, the four artists’ work had begun to seem outdated. The 1893 Exposition ushered in a new era, as contemporary American and French Impressionist art had quickly begun to replace French academic art in American collections.

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation focuses on the phenomenally successful American careers of William Bouguereau (1825-1905), Alexandre Cabanel (1823-1889), Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904), and Ernest Meissonier (1815-1891). The early Gilded Age in the United States was a golden era for these four artists; they had become household names as the leading French academic artists in the United States. Their golden age was bracketed by two international expositions, the Universal Exposition held in Paris in 1867 and the World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893.

The works of these four artists have come to symbolize French academic art. "Academic art" is an umbrella term used to describe European art from the second half of the nineteenth century through the end of the century whose subjects were typically taken from classical mythology, the Bible, and ancient history. Later on genre and historical genre subjects became popular. Academic art is also characterized by the *fini*, an invisible brushstroke that disguises the artist's hand and results in a precise finish. Americans considered this style highly realistic, akin to photographic accuracy. Most academic artists studied at the *École des beaux-arts* in Paris and exhibited in the Paris Salon.

Bouguereau, Cabanel, and Gérôme studied at the *École des beaux-arts* and retained the *fini* throughout their lengthy careers. These three began their careers in Paris as history painters, but all four later painted genre pictures, which were generally preferred by Americans. Paintings by Gérôme and

Meissonier were generally small-scale, and those by Cabanel and Bouguereau were larger. All four won prestigious awards for their works at the Paris Salons, and were heavily involved in arts administration in Paris. In addition, Gérôme, Cabanel, and Bouguereau became influential instructors at the *École des beaux-arts* and teachers of many European and American artists. Because of their similar successes, the four were often discussed together in the late nineteenth century, and their fame continued into the early twentieth century.

Fortunately for the four artists, the timing of the American desire for a new identity and direction in art following the Civil War coincided with the prime of these artists' careers in France, as well as the rise of the art market. Their stellar reputations in France led to their success in the United States. Americans paid close attention to French exhibitions and criticism and quickly learned which artists were the most successful. There was no need for debut exhibitions in the United States for any of these four artists as there was for Édouard Manet (1832-1883) and the Impressionists. In addition, American artists and critics encouraged appreciation of French academic art in a collective effort to improve art at home. These factors taken together extended the success of each of the four artists. Their expensive artworks were quickly snapped up by the wealthiest American collectors, which in turn made each of the four artists wealthy.

Several other academic artists who were popular in the United States include Jehan-George Vibert (1840-1902), Jean-Joseph Benjamin-Constant (1845-1902), Édouard Detaille (1848-1912), Alphonse de Neuville (1835-1885), Édouard Dubufe (1819-1883), Édouard Frère (1819-1886), Jean-Jacques

Henner (1829-1905), and Hugues Merle (1823-1881); however, they did not achieve the same degree of acclaim or prominence, nor did they have lengthy careers in both France and the United States as did the four artists. Other younger academicians such as Léon Bonnat (1833-1922), Carolus-Duran (1838-1917), and Jules-Joseph Lefebvre (1836-1912) are well-known today because of their roles as teachers of American art students, but they had become successful in both countries slightly later than had Bouguereau, Cabanel, Gérôme, and Meissonier.¹

Two key events, the Universal Exposition in 1867 and the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893, were major events that indelibly affected the art scene in the United States. In the eyes of Americans, the French had far surpassed them in the fine arts in 1867.² Afterwards, Americans looked to France and its top artists for guidance. The technical finesse of Meissonier, Gérôme, Bouguereau, and Cabanel impressed Americans. The rigorous course of study at the *École des beaux-arts* and regular Salon exhibitions, system of awards, and museums in France were all things that were lacking in the United States. A shift then occurred among American collectors from American art and art of the Düsseldorf school to contemporary European art, particularly French. Major dealers, especially Samuel P. Avery, who was actively involved in the 1867

¹ For Bonnat, see Alisa Luxenberg, "Léon Bonnat (1833-1922)" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1991), 390. Carolus-Duran's popularity in the United States was explored in Monique Nonne, "Carolus Duran et les États-Unis," in *Carolus-Duran, 1837-1917* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2003), 37-41. See also the chapters on these artists in H. Barbara Weinberg, *The Lure of Paris: Nineteenth-Century American Painters and Their French Teachers* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1991). For Vibert, see Eric M. Zafran, *Cavaliers and Cardinals: Nineteenth-Century French Anecdotal Paintings* (Cincinnati: Taft Museum, 1992), 13-22. There are no specific studies for Lefebvre, Benjamin-Constant, Detaille, de Neuville, Dubufe, Frère, or Merle.

² Carol Troyen, "Innocents Abroad: American Painters at the 1867 Exposition Universelle, Paris," *American Art Journal* 16, no. 4 (Autumn 1984): 4.

Exposition, had previously handled American art, but switched to contemporary European art, particularly French, after the exposition.³ Other American collectors who had also been involved with the exposition followed suit and began collecting European art. These collectors became the chief promoters of the artists back home. As a result, Bouguereau, Cabanel, Gérôme, and Meissonier experienced a meteoric rise to fame in the United States.

The rise in art journals and art criticism also aided the popularity of these artists. Major newspapers such as the *New York Times* and *New York Tribune* and art journals such as the *Art Amateur* and *Art Journal*, had foreign correspondents stationed in Paris to keep collectors abreast of the latest French news. Other journals such as the *Studio* and *Collector* reported on the Paris Salons and sales as well as art news at home. The four artists were frequently mentioned in these journals as well as in the pages of the *Galaxy* (New York), *Appleton's Journal* (New York), *Century Magazine* (New York), *Harper's Weekly* (New York) and the *Atlantic Monthly* (Boston).

Influential critical voices such as James Jackson Jarves, Clarence Cook, William A. Coffin, Henry T. Tuckerman, and Ripley Hitchcock wrote in favor of French academic art. Several of the artists' former students also wrote about them. Gérôme's former student, Earl Shinn, who published under the pseudonym Edward Strahan, authored several lavish publications, including one on Gérôme. Henry Bacon, a former student of Cabanel, wrote about his teacher as well as the art scene in Paris in the early 1880s. By the late 1880s and early

³ Madeleine Fidell-Beaufort, Herbert L. Kleinfield, and Jeanne K. Welcher, "Introduction," in *The Diaries 1871-1882 of Samuel P. Avery* (New York: Arno Press, 1979), xxi-xxiv.

1890s, the four artists were included in art histories published in the United States. They had been placed at the top of the canon. No history of contemporary art could exclude them, but the time had come for a change.

The critical success of American art at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 helped dissolve the grip of French academic art. Some critics considered all four artists—and even contemporary French art in general—to be passé. In a lavish volume published on the World's Columbian Exposition, it was reported that, although still important, the art of Bouguereau, Cabanel, and Gérôme had become almost “old-fashioned.”⁴ Ripley Hitchcock announced, in his introduction to another lavish publication on the fine arts at the World's Columbian Exposition, that American art had come into its own, and that French art had nothing more to teach the Americans.⁵ By this time, a generation of American artists who had been taught by French artists had returned home and had gained a foothold in the United States. The four artists also faced competition from other French artists. A newer style, Impressionism, was gaining ground in the United States. In addition, American artists and collectors were eager for diversity, which included collecting Dutch, Flemish, and Italian masters.⁶ The golden age of French academic art in the United States had ended, and French art nearly lost its grip on the American art world. It was still collected, to be sure, but interests had expanded to other styles, subjects, countries, and time periods.

⁴ William Walton, *World's Columbian Exposition: The Art and Architecture* (Philadelphia: George Barrie, 1893), 1: 27.

⁵ Ripley Hitchcock, *Art of the World* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1894), 1: vi.

⁶ See Nancy T. Minty, “Dutch and Flemish Seventeenth-Century Art in America, 1800-1940: Collections, Connoisseurship and Perceptions” (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2003).

Literature

Largely ignored by scholars until the last three decades, these four artists have emerged in art historical scholarship once academic art was reevaluated to provide a more inclusive history of nineteenth-century French art. This interest was led by the art market and museums, with exhibitions and monographs devoted to Bouguereau, Gérôme, Cabanel, and Meissonier.⁷ Cabanel and Gérôme have also been studied through their American students, and Bouguereau was recently the focus of an exhibition of the work of his American students.⁸ His teaching role at the Académie Julian was explored tangentially in another exhibition.⁹ Meissonier never headed an atelier, although he did work

⁷ Robert Isaacson, *William-Adolphe Bouguereau* (New York: New York Cultural Center, 1974); *William Bouguereau 1825-1905* (Montreal: Montreal Museum of Arts, 1984); Jean Nougaret, *Alexandre Cabanel* (Montpellier: Musée Fabre, 1975) and idem, *Dessins d'Alexandre Cabanel, 1823-1889* (Montpellier: Musée Fabre, 1989); Gerald Ackerman, *Jean-Léon Gérôme* (Dayton, OH: Dayton Art Institute, 1972); J. L. Gérôme, *1824-1904: Sculpteur et peintre de "L'art officiel"* (Paris: Galerie Tanagra, 1974); *Gérôme: Jean-Léon Gérôme, 1824-1904: Peintre, sculpteur et graveur ses oeuvres conservées dans les collections française publique et privées* (Vésoul: La Ville de Vésoul, 1981); *Gérôme and Goupil: Art and Enterprise* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux; New York: Dahesh Museum of Art, 2000); *Ernest Meissonier: Rétrospective* (Lyon: Musée des beaux-arts, 1993). Monographs include Gerald Ackerman, *Jean-Léon Gérôme: monographie révisée, catalogue raisonné mis à jour* (Courbevoie, France: ACR, 2000); idem *The Life and Work of Jean-Léon Gérôme with a Catalogue Raisonné* (New York: Sotheby's Publications, 1986); Hélène Lafont-Couturier, *Gérôme* (Paris: Éditions Herscher, 1998), and Constance Cain Hungerford, *Ernest Meissonier: Master in His Genre* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Damien Bartoli is preparing a catalogue raisonné of Bouguereau's oeuvre. As of 2009, retrospective exhibitions were being planned for Gérôme at the Musée d'Orsay in Paris, and a retrospective is also planned for Cabanel at the Musée Fabre in Montpellier.

⁸ Weinberg, *Lure of Paris*, 83-129, 131-153; idem, "Nineteenth-Century American Painters at the École des Beaux-Arts," *American Art Journal* 13, no. 4 (Autumn 1981): 66-84; and James F. Peck, *In the Studios of Paris: William Bouguereau and His American Students* (Tulsa, OK: Philbrook Museum of Art; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

⁹ *Overcoming All Obstacles: The Women of the Académie Julian*, ed. Gabriel P. Weisberg and Jane R. Becker (New York: Dahesh Museum; New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999). See also Shepherd Gallery, *The Julian Academy, Paris, 1868-1939* (New York: Shepherd Gallery, 1989).

with a few students in Poissy, including one American artist, Daniel Ridgway Knight (1839-1924).¹⁰

The art market in New York was active before the Civil War, but increased even more afterwards; French academic art collecting peaked in the 1870s and 1880s. Although there are studies on American art and the art market in the United States during this period, the reception of French academic art of this period in America has not been specifically examined.¹¹ Some brief general studies have been published on the American success of Gérôme and Bouguereau and on one of Meissonier's paintings, *1806, Jena*.¹² I wrote my Master's thesis on Cabanel's reception in the United States.¹³

More work has been done on the interconnections between French and American art by scholars such as H. Barbara Weinberg, Laura Meixner, Lois Marie Fink, Madeleine Fidell-Beaufort, Annette Blaugrund, H. Wayne Morgan,

¹⁰ Pamela Beecher, *A Pastoral Legacy: Paintings and Drawings by the American Artists Ridgway Knight and Aston Knight* (Ithaca, NY: Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, 1989). Knight began in Cabanel's atelier at the École des beaux-arts.

¹¹ For some key studies on American art, see Sarah Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996); David Huntington and Kathleen Pyne, *Quest for Unity: American Art Between World's Fairs 1876-1893* (Detroit: Detroit Institute of Arts, 1983); Lillian B. Miller, *Patrons and Patriotism: The Encouragement of the Fine Arts in the United States 1790-1860* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982); and Linda Henefield Skalet, "The Market for American Painting in New York: 1870-1915" (Ph.D. diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1980).

¹² Constance Cain Hungerford, "Meissonier's *1806, Jena*," in *Collecting in the Gilded Age: Art Patronage in Pittsburgh, 1890-1910*, ed. Gabriel Weisberg, DeCoursey E. McIntosh, and Alison McQueen (Pittsburgh: Frick Art and Historical Center; Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1997), 299-311; Robert Isaacson, "Collecting Bouguereau in England and America," in *William Bouguereau, 1825-1905* (Montreal: Montreal Museum of Art, 1984), 104-13; DeCoursey E. McIntosh, "Goupil and the American Triumph of Jean-Léon Gérôme," in *Gérôme & Goupil: Art and Enterprise* (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux; New York: Dahesh Museum of Art, 2000), 31-43; and Eric M. Zafran, "William Bouguereau in America: A Roller-Coaster Reputation," in *In the Studios of Paris: William Bouguereau and His American Students*, ed. James F. Peck (Tulsa, OK: Philbrook Museum of Art; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 17-44.

¹³ Leanne Zalewski, "Alexandre Cabanel's Popularity in Gilded Age America" (Master's thesis, Hunter College, City University of New York, 2002).

and Maureen O'Brien.¹⁴ There are some very useful general studies on art collecting in the United States.¹⁵ Several older studies of French art collecting in the United States that are still relevant are by Constable, Brimo, and Réault.¹⁶ On specific dealers, the Gérôme and Goupil exhibition catalog and the George Lucas and Samuel P. Avery diaries are indispensable resources.¹⁷

The revisionist literature from the 1970s and 1980s focuses on the Salons, institutions, and art markets. Examinations of European artists' careers in the United States who attracted attention slightly later than the four artists in the present study have been published on the Impressionists, Edgar Degas (1834-

¹⁴ Annette Blaugrund, *Paris 1889: American Artists at the Universal Exposition* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts; New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1989); Madeleine Fidell-Beaufort, "The American Art Trade and French Painting at the End of the Nineteenth Century," *Van Gogh Museum Journal* (2000): 101-107; idem, "Art Collecting in the United States After the Civil War: Civic Pride, Competition, and Personal Gains," in *Artwork Through the Market: The Past and the Present*, ed. Ján Bakos (Bratislava: 2004), 125-36; idem, "A Measure of Taste: Samuel P. Avery's Art Auctions, 1864-1880," *Gazette des beaux-arts* 100 (September 1982): 87-89; Madeleine Fidell-Beaufort and Jeanne K. Welcher, "Some Views of Art Buying in New York in the 1870s and 1880s," *Oxford Art Journal* 5, no. 1 (1982): 48-55; Laura L. Meixner, *French Realist Painting and the Critique of American Society, 1865-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); H. Wayne Morgan, *New Muses: Art in American Culture 1865-1920* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978); Maureen O'Brien, *In Support of Liberty: European Paintings at the 1883 Pedestal Fund Art Loan Exhibition* (Southampton, NY: Parrish Art Museum, 1986); and Weinberg, *Lure of Paris*.

¹⁵ Malcolm Goldstein, *Landscape with Figures: A History of Art Dealing in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Nicholas Green, "Circuits of Production, Circuits of Consumption: The Case of Mid-Nineteenth-Century French Art Dealing," *Art Journal* 48, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 29-34; Morgan, *New Muses*; Gabriel P. Weisberg, DeCourcy E. McIntosh, and Alison McQueen, *Collecting in the Gilded Age: Art Patronage in Pittsburgh, 1890-1910* (Pittsburgh: Frick Art and Historical Center, 1997).

¹⁶ René Brimo, *L'Évolution du goût aux États-unis d'après l'histoire des collections* (Paris: James Fortune, 1938); W. G. Constable, *Art Collecting in the United States of America: An Outline of a History* (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1964); Louis Réau, *L'Art français aux États-unis* (Paris: H. Laurens, 1926).

¹⁷ Samuel P. Avery, *The Diaries 1871-1882 of Samuel P. Avery*, ed. Madeleine Fidell-Beaufort, Herbert L. Kleinfield, and Jeanne K. Welcher (New York: Arno Press, 1979); *Gérôme and Goupil: Art and Enterprise*, trans. Isabel Ollivier (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux; New York: Dahesh Museum of Art, 2000); and George A. Lucas, *Diary of George A. Lucas: An American Art Agent in Paris, 1857-1909*, ed. Lilian M. C. Randall, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

1917), Paul Cézanne (1839-1906), Manet, and old masters.¹⁸ Although much literature is available regarding early collections of Impressionist art in the United States, less attention has been paid to the period prior to the Louisine and Henry O. Havemeyer collection of Impressionist works, when American railroad tycoons, industrialists, and merchants were collecting European academic and Barbizon art.¹⁹ Although these studies present a fuller picture of the late nineteenth-century academic system, more work still needs to be done. Lacking is a thorough, comparative study of the phenomenal success of French academic art—the art of Bouguereau, Cabanel, Gérôme, and Meissonier—in the United States and their impact on the American art scene. This dissertation fills that lacuna in the literature.

Contemporary European Art in the United States before 1867

Prior to the Civil War, there were few European Salon pictures available in America. Most collections were comprised of American art, particularly Hudson River school landscapes as well as genre pictures. Few Americans at that point were interested in looking beyond their borders and local scenery. But by 1867, Hudson River school painting seemed old-fashioned when compared to European art.

¹⁸ Nancy Mishoe Brennecke, “‘The Painter in Chief of Ugliness’: Edouard Manet and Nineteenth-Century America” (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 2001); Ann Dumas and David A. Brenneman, *Degas and America: The Early Collectors* (Atlanta: High Museum of Art, 2000); and John Rewald, *Cézanne and America: Dealers, Collectors, Artists and Critics, 1891-1921* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989). For old masters in American collections, see Minty.

¹⁹ Louisine Elder Havemeyer and Henry O. Havemeyer were credited with assembling the first great collection of Impressionist art in the United States. See Frances Weitzenhoffer, *The Havemeyers: Impressionism Comes to America* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1986).

Because there were not yet permanent museums dedicated to art, the mainstay of the American art world was the National Academy of Design, founded in 1825 as a small art school. The National Academy moved to a larger, permanent new building in 1865, and hosted regular exhibitions every spring and fall that were well attended.²⁰ The New-York Historical Society, founded in 1804, contained a collection of portraits and American paintings, as did the Boston Athenaeum, whose art gallery opened in 1827. But these institutions lacked substantial permanent collections, nor did they possess any significant contemporary European art.

The role of the dealer in the United States was extremely important in the absence of major museums. The dealers put on exhibitions, which served to educate the public. Moreover, dealers over a hundred years ago served the same purpose as today; they acted as mediators between artist and patron and served as experts on the artworks they sold. In France contemporary art was exhibited at the well-established Paris Salon and the Luxembourg Museum, and could be found in public buildings, whereas in the United States, European art was largely linked to the art market. Americans traveling abroad could see contemporary art at the Salon and the Luxembourg Museum, but back home, Americans' main exposure to French academic art was through dealers. In addition, several collectors, such as August Belmont and John Taylor Johnston occasionally opened their personal galleries to the public.²¹

²⁰ Miller, 101.

²¹ Henry J. Duffy, "New York City Collections 1865-1895" (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers, 2001), 11-12. See also "August Belmont's Gallery," *New York Times*, 24 May 1877, 8.

During the 1870s and 1880s, several major museums opened across the United States. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, although founded in 1870, was not firmly established until the late 1880s, when the fledgling museum finally had a permanent core collection. By the time of the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876, museums also had opened in Boston, Washington, D.C., Chicago, and Philadelphia. By 1885, there were museums in smaller cities as well, such as St. Louis, Cincinnati, and Detroit. French academic art was a staple in these early collections. Unlike French museums, which were founded and run by the government, American museums were founded by philanthropists. In New York, the nucleus of the permanent European painting collection was donated to the museum by Catharine Lorillard Wolfe in 1887, and central to this collection were paintings by Bouguereau, Cabanel, Gérôme, and Meissonier.

How did Americans initially become aware of contemporary foreign artists in the United States? Dealers and American artists who had been abroad were largely responsible. The first concentrated collections of European art were comprised of art of the Düsseldorf school and art of the Barbizon painters. The burgeoning interest in collecting European art was noted by an anonymous writer in the *Crayon*, who, instead of the twentieth-century phrase, “keeping up with the Jones’s,” used the name “Croesus” to illustrate his point: “Mr. Croesus goes to Europe, determined to adorn his mansion with finer pictures than his neighbors have to boast of.”²² This writer forecast the collecting boom that was to come.

²² "Picture-Buying," *Crayon* 1, no. 7 (14 February 1855): 100.

In 1848, dealer Johann Gottfried Böcker brought contemporary German art to New York by opening the Düsseldorf Gallery, one of the first galleries to exhibit a collection to the public. It was open six days a week for twenty-five cents admission. Artists and collectors became acquainted with German school landscape, history, and genre scenes, including those by Oswald and Andreas Achenbach, Johann Wilhelm Preyer, Johan Peter Hasenclever, and Carl Ferdinand Sohn.²³ Emmanuel Leutze (1816-1868), an American artist who studied in Düsseldorf and the only American artist with works on exhibit in the Düsseldorf Gallery, was credited with encouraging interest in this school of artists back home. Though the collection was sold to the Cosmopolitan Art Association of Sandusky, Ohio, the works remained on exhibit until 1862, when difficulties resulting from the Civil War forced the owners to sell their 107 works at auction.²⁴

Another American artist, William Morris Hunt (1824-1879), was largely responsible for introducing Barbizon painting to American collectors.²⁵ Hunt went to Europe in 1844 and initially studied in Düsseldorf, then in Paris with Thomas Couture for five years. He was identified with the Barbizon painters, particularly Jean-François Millet (1814-1875), who was his close friend, and he exhibited with the Barbizon artists in the Salons of 1852 and 1853.²⁶ When Hunt returned from Europe in 1855, he advised New England collectors to purchase works by the Barbizon artists, and thus promoted French art in the United States.²⁷

²³ See William H. Gerds, "'Good Tidings' to the Lovers of the Beautiful": New York's Düsseldorf Gallery, 1849-1862," *American Art Journal* 30, nos. 1-2 (1999): 50-81.

²⁴ Gerds: 60-61.

²⁵ Constable, 72.

²⁶ For a discussion of this relationship, see Sally Webster, *William Morris Hunt, 1824-1879* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 27-38.

²⁷ Morgan, 70.

Initially, Boston collectors were the main purchasers, but then the craze for Barbizon works spread across the country, and continued until the turn of the century.²⁸

Lois Fink rightly identified the dealers Adolphe Goupil and Ernest Gambart as the men largely responsible for introducing contemporary French art to America.²⁹ In 1846, Goupil sent Michael Knoedler (1823-1878) to New York to set up a picture shop. Included at Goupil's shop were works by such artists as Ary Scheffer (1795-1858), Horace Vernet (1789-1863), and Gérôme's teacher, Paul Delaroche (1797-1856). Goupil offered prints and paintings for sale and changed the exhibitions often. Michael Knoedler took over the shop in 1857 and changed the name to M. Knoedler & Company, successors to Goupil & Co., and specialized in contemporary French painters.

Gambart, a dealer from London who did not open a shop in New York, brought European works into New York via exhibitions with dealers and organizations in New York. In 1857, he was responsible for exhibiting Rosa Bonheur's famous *Horse Fair* in the United States, where it caused a

²⁸A writer for the *Studio*, however, credited Durand-Ruel with instilling appreciation in the United States for Millet, Narcisse-Virgile Diaz de la Peña (1808-1876), Théodore Rousseau (1812-1867), and Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot (1796-1875) since his gallery was a stop for Americans traveling to Paris, but this occurred later. See "The Impressionist Pictures," *Studio*, n.s., no. 21 (17 April 1886): 246.

²⁹Lois Marie Fink, "French Art in the United States, 1850-1870: Three Dealers and Collectors," *Gazette des beaux-arts* 92 (September 1978): 87-100. Fink also includes the French dealer, Cadart, who held an exhibition in New York of French works in 1866. This exhibition included many prints and paintings by artists such as Corot, Claude Monet (1840-1926), Eugène Boudin (1824-1898), and Gustave Courbet (1819-1877). Sculptors represented were Albert-Ernest Carrier-Belleuse (1824-1887), Antoine-Louis Barye (1796-1875), and Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi (1834-1904). I am not including Cadart as a major influence because the artists associated with him were not heavily collected here, with the exception of Corot and Barye.

sensation.³⁰ Looking back, John Durand, who was editor of the *Crayon*, stated that this work was the beginning of the upswing in collecting European paintings in the United States, followed by Gérôme's *Duel after the Ball*.³¹ The Bonheur exhibit was the most sensational of the six exhibitions of contemporary European art Gambart held between 1857 and 1867. It was shown at the National Academy of Design, the Goupil gallery, and the Tenth Street Studio Building, and Americans responded favorably. The *Crayon* noted in 1860 that Gambart brought pictures by popular French artists, such as Hugues Merle (1823-1881), to the United States and sold them for high prices.³² Gambart retired in 1867, but other dealers were poised to promote European art.

In addition to the dealers and American artists, the works of contemporary academic French artists also began to attract notice in the United States as a result of the Universal Exposition of 1855 held in Paris. A very small contingent of American artists living in France participated in this exposition.³³ At this early date, though, few contemporary French artists were familiar to an American audience, which paid only marginal attention to the French art world.³⁴ T. P. Rossiter, one of the American artists who participated in the exposition, remarked

³⁰ Jeremy Maas, *Gambart: Prince of the Victorian Art World* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1975), 70-77. A collector from Weehawken, New Jersey purchased the painting, but failed to pay so it was sold to Alexander T. Stewart. After Stewart died, it was bought by Cornelius Vanderbilt in 1887 for the fantastic sum of \$53,000 and donated to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

³¹ John Durand, *The Life and Times of A. B. Durand* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1894; reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), 193.

³² "Foreign Correspondence, Items, etc.," *Crayon* 7, no. 10 (October 1860): 296.

³³ Troyen: 4.

³⁴ T. P. Rossiter, "Correspondence: Notes on the Universal Exposition of Fine Arts in Paris," *Crayon* 2, no. 25 (19 December 1855): 390.

that although art from England and the Düsseldorf school was familiar to an American audience, French art was still unfamiliar.³⁵

The earliest mentions of Meissonier, Gérôme, and Cabanel in American newspapers or journals occurred as a result of the 1855 Exposition. A list of Medals of Honor given at the 1855 Universal Exposition to Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780-1867), Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863), and Horace Vernet, as well as first-class medals awarded to Meissonier and Cabanel was published in the *New York Times* in late 1855.³⁶ In his assessment of French art, Rossiter named Meissonier as the head of the French school, and considered Gérôme, along with Ary Scheffer and German artists Wilhelm von Kaulbach (1805-1874) and Peter von Cornelius (1783-1867), to be painters of “elevated” works, meaning history paintings.³⁷ Prominent French critic Paul Mantz also wrote a summary of award winners for the *Crayon*. He reported that Cabanel and Gérôme were among the twenty-four painters to receive the Cross of the Legion of Honor, Meissonier was among the ten artists to win a medal of honor, and Cabanel was one of forty-eight artists to receive a first-class medal.³⁸ Gérôme and Meissonier, among a handful of other French artists, were later briefly profiled in the *Crayon*.³⁹ Widespread success, however, was still to come.

The four artists’ popularity in the United States peaked in the 1870s and 1880s. As vast industrial and railroad fortunes were being accumulated in the wake of the Civil War, social and cultural roles were being forged to match that

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Malakoff, "Affairs in France: the Exhibition and the Awards," *New York Times*, 26 November 1855.

³⁷ Rossiter: 390.

³⁸ Paul Mantz, "Correspondence," *Crayon* 2, no. 26 (26 December 1855): 404.

³⁹ "Artist Biography: French," *Crayon* 7, no. 6 (June 1860): 166-68.

wealth. Disillusioned Americans turned to Europe for examples of culture, particularly its arts. Art played an important part in creating the appropriate image of money and power.⁴⁰ Art collecting expanded after the Civil War economic boom, and by 1880 there were many contemporary paintings from Europe available and collected in America.⁴¹ American artists and collectors also traveled abroad en masse and some kept homes in Paris.

Organization of the Dissertation

This study, which covers the period from 1867 through 1893, is organized by topics and is treated chronologically within each chapter. Although other cities are occasionally mentioned, New York was the center of the American art world at the time and is the focus of this study. The major sources for this dissertation are articles and reviews from contemporary criticism in periodicals, diaries, sales catalogs, and contemporaneous monographs and art histories. Of particular importance regarding the art market are the Lucas and Avery diaries and Goupil stock books.

The four artists' successful careers in Paris are only mentioned when directly relevant to their American reception. I do, however, note French criticism and opinions that influenced American criticism and opinions. For this study, I consider art works that were produced by Bouguereau, Cabanel, Gérôme, and Meissonier for the American market or purchased by Americans. In some cases, paintings that one or more of the four artists exhibited in the Paris Salons were

⁴⁰ Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 142-43.

⁴¹ Fidell-Beaufort and Welcher, "Some Views of Art Buying," 48.

purchased, or reductions (smaller copies of original paintings) were commissioned for American collectors, and they are also considered here.

Chapter One, "Attracting Attention: The Universal Exposition of 1867," is an examination of the impact the Paris exposition had on American fine arts. Under the first subheading is a discussion of the group of dealers, collectors, and writers responsible for selecting the works for the American fine arts display. Following is an analysis of the American and French critics' reactions to the American art shown there, as well as the American critics' reaction to French art at the exposition. Critical disappointment in American art and reverence for French art led to American collectors' abandonment of American paintings in favor of contemporary French paintings in the wake of the Civil War.

As winners of the Grand Medal of Honor, Gérôme, Meissonier, and Cabanel were at the forefront of contemporary French art in 1867. The status of each of the four artists at this time in France is introduced in further detail. Because the four artists were already famous, their reputations transferred to the United States with impressive credentials, such as honors and awards, intact. Samuel P. Avery, closely connected to the American fine arts section, began dealing in French art soon after the exposition.

"Dealers, Collectors, and Auctions," the topic of Chapter Two, is a discussion of the major dealers, Goupil & Co. and George A. Lucas in Paris, and Samuel P. Avery and Michael Knoedler in New York, who were responsible for keeping a steady flow of artworks by the four artists available to American collectors. I discuss the first works by each of the artists in New York collections,

and profile a few of the major collectors of the artists, including Catharine Lorillard Wolfe and John Taylor Johnston. Although dealers often bought directly from the artists and sold the works to the collectors, auctions were another major aspect of the art scene. I chart the sales of the artists represented in several key sales: those of John Wolfe in 1863 and 1882, John Taylor Johnston in 1876, George Seney in 1885 and 1891, Mary Jane Morgan in 1886, and A. T. Stewart in 1887. These sales were seen as market indicators for the artworks.

In Chapter Three, “Critical Assessments,” I discuss another aspect of the success of the artists. The writings of conservative American critics, such as Theodore Child, who wrote reviews of the Paris Salon for the *Art Amateur*, and Clarence Cook, editor of the *Studio* and contributor to the *New York Tribune*, were ambivalent but nonetheless kept the artists in the spotlight. Lucy Hooper, a journalist from Philadelphia who had moved to Paris, wrote enthusiastic reviews of academic art in Paris for the *Art Journal*. Contemporaneous monographs were published in New York, and American artists praised them in publications such as *Art Treasures of America* edited by Edward Strahan, art critic for the *Nation* and former student of Gérôme, and *A Parisian Year* by Henry Bacon, a former student of Cabanel.⁴² In addition, biographies of Gérôme and Meissonier were published in the United States.⁴³ The reputations of Bouguereau, Cabanel, Gérôme, and Meissonier were solid by the 1880s, and they were included as the main French academic artists in all the art histories of the time.

⁴² Edward Strahan [Earl Shinn], *Art Treasures of America*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: Gebbie and Barrie, 1879); and Henry Bacon, *A Parisian Year* (Boston: Roberts Bros., 1882).

⁴³ Edward Strahan [Earl Shinn], ed., *Gérôme. A Collection of the Works of J. L. Gérôme* (New York: S. L. Hall, 1881); Fanny Field Hering, *Gérôme: The Life and Works of Jean Léon Gérôme*, with an introduction by Augustus St. Gaudens (New York: Cassell Publishing Company, 1892); and *The Complete Works of E. Meissonier, with Biography* (New York: J. W. Bouton, [1884?]).

In Chapter Four, "Entering the Museums," I discuss the four artists' first works to enter the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1887. Paintings by each of the artists were donated to the new institution by collectors; the most significant was the bequest of Catharine Lorillard Wolfe, followed by Judge Henry Hilton's donation of Meissonier's *1807, Friedland*. The placement of their paintings on permanent public view reinforced the canonical status of the artists.

The last chapter is "Declining Attention: The World's Columbian Exposition of 1893." By 1893, Cabanel and Meissonier had died, and although Bouguereau and Gérôme were still a presence, their works had begun to seem outdated. Because of the perceived success of American art, and particularly French Impressionist art at the World's Columbian Exposition, American collectors and philanthropists began looking beyond the old, established French academic artists. Younger artists and new styles, especially French Impressionism began attracting widespread notice, particularly the work of Claude Monet as well as to American artists who had studied in France. I conclude with observations on the waning reputations of the artists and critics' ambivalence in the wake of the World's Columbian Exposition.

CHAPTER 1
ATTRACTING ATTENTION:
THE UNIVERSAL EXPOSITION OF 1867

The Universal Exposition in Paris was the largest international exhibition up to 1867 and the crowning jewel of the Second Empire under Napoleon III (1808-1873).¹ People from all nations flocked to the French capital to see the wondrous displays. International fairs were competitive exhibitions for all aspects of arts and industry, with each country presumably represented by its finest artists. Participation in these fairs exposed strengths and deficiencies on the international stage.

Having just emerged from the devastating Civil War, the United States was anxious to be competitive at the exposition. In the industrial exhibit, the young nation excelled, whereas in the art exhibit, the United States was stung by its poor display. The United States was mainly represented by landscapes from the Hudson River School artists, who were still among the most popular and established painters in 1867, whereas France was represented by genre, figure, history, and landscape painting.

A small group of dealers, collectors, and writers chose the art works that represented the United States in Paris and, because of the exposure to French art, were largely responsible for spearheading the change in taste. At the forefront of this group was art dealer Samuel P. Avery (1822-1904), who was in

¹ The Universal Exposition in Paris was open from April 1 through October 31, 1867.

charge of preparing and hanging the art works for the American fine arts section in Paris.²

American art at the exposition was not well-received. American critics complained about the poor quality of the fine arts of the United States, and French critics paid little attention to American art.³ The disappointment caused by the weak reception of American art at the exposition led to the American dealers' and collectors' abandonment of American paintings for contemporary French paintings. To whom did American dealers and collectors turn to update their collections? The stars of the fine arts in the Universal Exposition were the medal winners. Genre painters Gérôme and Meissonier and history painter Cabanel were each awarded a Grand Medal of Honor.⁴ Bouguereau, a history painter, won a third-class medal. Although prominent in France, these artists, with the exception of Gérôme, were little known in the United States before the exposition; however, their high status and impressive awards left an indelible impression on Americans soon afterwards.

Because the four artists were already well-established and honored in France, they were perfect models for young American artists and eager collectors. As the products of an established government-run system of exhibitions, art schools and awards, they represented to Americans what the culturally underdeveloped United States lacked. Samuel P. Avery began selling

² Malakoff, "The Paris Exposition," *New York Times*, 16 May 1867, 1; and "Our Artists at the Paris Exposition," *New York Tribune*, 23 January 1867, 2.

³ G. A. T., "The Paris Exhibition," *New York Tribune*, 2 May 1867, 1, 5; Malakoff, "Foreign Correspondence: Affairs in France," *New York Times*, 10 October 1867, 8; and O. B. S., "The French Exhibition," *New York Times*, 8 July 1867, 2. See also Carol Troyen's assessment of the reception of American art in "Innocents Abroad: American Painters at the 1867 Exposition Universelle, Paris," *American Art Journal* 16, no. 4 (Autumn 1984): 2-29.

⁴ Charles Blanc, "Exposition universelle. Beaux-arts—peinture," *Le Temps*, 5 June 1867, 1-2.

works by these French artists in his New York picture shop immediately following his return from Paris.⁵

The American Committee

At the time of the exposition, the American art world was controlled by a tightly connected group of people who were largely associated with the National Academy of Design. Three members of the National Academy, genre painter Edwin White (1817-1877) and landscape painters Frederic Edwin Church (1826-1900) and Jasper Cropsey (1823-1900), met to discuss the organization of the American fine arts section for the Universal Exposition. Rather than serve on the committee themselves, however, they advised the formation of a selection committee.⁶

The fifteen members chosen for the committee were responsible for selecting the works on which America's international reputation would rest.⁷ No artists were on the committee, presumably because they did not want to judge each others' works; however, each member was involved in the New York art world to varying degrees.⁸ Dramatist William J. Hoppin (1813-1895) served as

⁵ S. S. Conant, "Fine Arts," *Putnam's Monthly* 11, no. 3 (March 1868): 385.

⁶ For a list of the selection committee members, lenders, and names of artists and artworks lent to the Universal Exposition, see "Our Artists at the Paris Exposition," *New York Tribune*, 23 January 1867, 2. A more readable list of the American artists who participated, along with the titles of artworks and names of lenders can also be found in the appendix of Troyen, "Innocents Abroad," 24-27. I thank Kimberly Orcutt and Zachary Ross for bringing this article to my attention.

⁷ "The Paris Exposition," *New York Times*, 5 April 1867, 5.

⁸ "Our Artists at the Paris Exposition," 2. Most of the committee members were affiliated with the Century Club, an exclusive organization for writers, collectors, artists, and art amateurs. Knoedler was the first dealer to belong to this organization. For a contemporary history of the Century Club, see A. R. Macdonough, "The Century Club," *Century* 41, no. 5 (March 1891): 673-89. Art exhibitions of members' works were held at the Century Club. Some of the committee members had also served together in other capacities aside from the National Academy and the Century Club. Knoedler, Blodgett, Cozzens, Sturges and Roberts had served together on a committee for

chairman of the committee, and the art dealers Samuel P. Avery and Michael Knoedler assisted him.⁹ In Paris, Hoppin was the only American to serve on the international fine arts jury of the Universal Exposition. This jury was responsible for awarding medals to deserving artists whose works were on display. Henry T. Tuckerman (1813-1871), a writer and critic, also served on the committee, along with wealthy businessmen and collectors Robert M. Olyphant (1824-1917), Marshall O. Roberts (1814-1880), Abraham M. Cozzens (d.1868), John Taylor Johnston (1820-1893), Robert L. Stuart (1806-1882), William T. Blodgett (d. 1875) and Jonathan Sturges (1802-1874).¹⁰ At a time when there were few professional critics and no major art museums yet in existence in the United States, collectors and dealers were the most qualified individuals in art matters.¹¹

Although all the committee members served to some degree, four of them—art critic Tuckerman, collector Johnston, and art dealers Knoedler and

a prestigious exhibition at the Metropolitan Fair in 1864. Several artists who sent works to the exposition also served on this committee: Eastman Johnson (1824-1906), Emmanuel Leutze (1816-1868), Worthington Whittredge (1820-1910), and Daniel Huntington (1816-1906). John F. Kensett (1816-1872) and Mrs. Jonathan Sturges served as chairs. See *Catalogue of the Art Exhibition at the Metropolitan Fair in Aid of the U.S. Sanitary Commission* (New York: Metropolitan Fair, 1864). John Taylor Johnston may have purchased several works from the sale; his name is penciled in next to entries in a priced catalog at the Thomas J. Watson Library, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. See *Catalogue of Oil Paintings, Water Colors, Drawings, &c. &c. Contributed to the Metropolitan Fair* (New York: Metropolitan Fair, 1864), 7.

⁹ Hoppin, a diplomat and playwright, was instrumental in establishing the Century Club in 1846. His status at the club was probably a factor in this appointment as chairman of the selection committee for the Universal Exposition. William Seward, United States Secretary of State and friend of Hoppin, appointed him to the post. Hoppin was an officer of the American Art-Union and editor of its *Bulletin*, which lasted from 1848 to 1851. He would write articles on art for European and American journals in the 1870s. Hoppin had a connection to French art through his younger brother, Thomas F. Hoppin (1816-1872), who studied first in Philadelphia, then in Paris under Paul Delaroche (1797-1856) in 1837. (Delaroche was made an Honorary Member of the National Academy of Design in 1845.) After his return to the United States, Thomas Hoppin designed the figures of Saints Paul and Peter for Trinity Church in New York City. See Henry T. Tuckerman, *Book of the Artists*, 2nd ed. (New York: G. P. Putnam & Son, 1867), 485.

¹⁰ "Our Artists at the Paris Exposition," 2.

¹¹ The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia and the National Academy of Design in New York had been founded in the early part of the century, 1805 and 1825, respectively, but these organizations were run by the artists themselves.

Avery—were the most significant. Each of these men was a key figure in the American art world. Tuckerman had written several books on American artists, including *Sketches of American Painters* (1847).¹² Out of this book evolved the *Book of the Artists* (1867), a major history of American art and artists.¹³

Tuckerman provided biographies in *Book of the Artists* for nearly all the American artists who participated in the exposition. In addition, the appendix listed the main collectors of American art at the time; seven out of the ten New York collectors listed were on the selection committee.¹⁴

Johnston was among the most important collectors listed in Tuckerman's appendix. He made his fortune in railroads, and his brother, financier James Boorman Johnston (1822-1887), was responsible for the conception and construction of the well-known Tenth Street Studio Building, which opened in 1857. The building provided work and exhibition space for American artists such as Worthington Whittredge (1820-1910), Albert Bierstadt (1830-1902), Frederic Edwin Church, and Sanford Gifford (1823-1880), who had studios in the building

¹² Henry T. Tuckerman, *Artist-Life, or, Sketches of American Painters* (New York and Philadelphia: Appleton, 1847).

¹³ Tuckerman, *Book of the Artists*. The first and second editions of *Book of the Artists* were published the same year as the Universal Exposition of 1867. The first edition was published in two illustrated volumes, and the second edition, condensed to one volume, was not illustrated. Although he did not explicitly state in his introduction that his book was purposely published at the time of the exposition, it was probably not a coincidence. He took the opportunity to make general comments on the state of the fine arts in the United States in comparison to Europe.

¹⁴ These seven were Robert M. Olyphant, Marshall O. Roberts, Abraham Cozzens, John Taylor Johnston, Robert L. Stuart, Jonathan Sturges, and William T. Blodgett. The other three were Cyrus Butler, Robert Hoe, and James Lenox. Tuckerman also included a handful of collections in Baltimore, Boston, New Haven, Washington D.C., and Philadelphia. In his introduction, Tuckerman mentioned Cozzens, Roberts, Stuart, Olyphant, Belmont, Aspinwall, Johnston, and Blodgett, among others, as having the most notable collections of American art in New York. See *Ibid.*, 19.

in the 1860s.¹⁵ John Taylor Johnston housed his own collection of pictures in art galleries that were part of his home on Fifth Avenue.¹⁶ Included in his collection were Church's *Niagara* (fig. 1.1) and *Twilight in the Wilderness*, Thomas Cole's (1801-1848) *Voyage of Life and Mountain Ford*, and Winslow Homer's (1836-1910) *Prisoners from the Front* (fig. 1.2). Johnston would later become a founding member and the first president of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The dealers Michael Knoedler and Samuel P. Avery both promoted American art as well as some European art prior to the exposition. German-born dealer Michael Knoedler had moved to New York from Paris in 1846 as an employee of the prominent French firm Goupil, Vibert & Co.¹⁷ The New York branch, which opened in 1848, mainly sold prints after paintings by contemporary French artists and American genre painters. In 1857, Knoedler bought the New York branch from Goupil. By 1867, his firm Knoedler & Co., successors to Goupil & Co., was well established. Knoedler had also started the short-lived International Art-Union (1848-1851) to introduce European art to the American public, but it had little impact as it lasted only four years. He was the only member of the committee who had actively dealt with contemporary French art before 1867, although his efforts were not successful.¹⁸ French art was not yet

¹⁵ Annette Blaugrund, *The Tenth Street Studio Building* (Southampton, NY: Parrish Art Museum, 1997), 133.

¹⁶ Tuckerman, *Book of the Artists*, 624.

¹⁷ For some basic biographical information on Knoedler, see DeCourcy E. McIntosh, "Goupil and the American Triumph of Jean-Léon Gérôme," in *Gérôme & Goupil: Art and Enterprise* (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux; New York: Dahesh Museum of Art, 2000), 31-33. See also the short essay written by Knoedler's grandson, Charles Henschel, "A Personal History of Knoedler," in *The Rise of the Art World in America: Knoedler at 150* (New York: Knoedler & Company, 1996), 9-15.

¹⁸ "The Late Mr. Knoedler," *World* (New York), 18 April 1878, 5.

selling well in the United States. At the same time, he sold and encouraged the production of American art.

The most active committee member was Avery. As Commissioner of the Fine Arts Division for the United States, he supervised the shipping and installation of American art works at the Universal Exposition in Paris.¹⁹ Avery had been active in the American art world for almost three decades prior to the 1867 Exposition. In the 1840s, he made wood engravings for magazines such as *Harper's Monthly* and the *Crayon*, as well as for other publications until the early 1850s.²⁰ Through his engraving business, he met and cultivated relationships with many American artists. At some point in the 1850s, Avery probably began buying art directly from artists, such as Thomas Cole, Frederic Edwin Church, and Asher B. Durand (1796-1886), in order to make engravings after them, which he sold individually or to publishers of books or journals.²¹ By the early 1850s, Avery had begun collecting paintings, which he initially hung in his home in Brooklyn.²²

In the early 1860s, Avery began dealing in art with the assistance of his friend, Baltimore businessman William T. Walters (1820-1894).²³ By the late 1850s, Walters had formed a collection of American art in Baltimore and met

¹⁹ "Our Artists at the Paris Exposition," 2.

²⁰ For biographical information on Avery, see Madeleine Fidell-Beaufort, Herbert L. Kleinfield, and Jeanne K. Welcher, "Introduction," in *The Diaries 1871-1882 of Samuel P. Avery* (New York: Arno Press, 1979); and Ruth Sieben-Morgen, "Samuel Putnam Avery (1822-1904), Engraver on Wood; a Bio-Bibliographical Study" (Master's thesis, Columbia University, 1942).

²¹ Fidell-Beaufort, Kleinfield, and Welcher, xiv-xv, xix. According to Fidell-Beaufort, no records exist for Avery's art gallery prior to 1871.

²² *Ibid.*, xii.

²³ William R. Johnston, *William and Henry Walters, the Reticent Collectors* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 39-40. Walters made his fortune in liquors and railroads. He founded the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore in 1875.

artists in New York through Avery.²⁴ Before the outbreak of the Civil War, Walters moved to Paris because of his Southern sympathies and business relations. Walters' move to Paris turned out to be fortuitous for Avery. The two men kept in contact, and with Walters' assistance, Avery opened his picture gallery in New York in 1864. In April of the same year, Avery held his first auction at the old Düsseldorf Gallery, selling works by French and other European works consigned by Walters.²⁵ Among Avery's early clients were committee members Stuart, Knoedler, Olyphant, and Johnston, who each bought paintings from this sale.²⁶

Avery and the other committee members assembled seventy-five paintings for the exposition, including what are today considered major American works such as James Abbot McNeil Whistler's (1834-1903) *White Girl*, Albert Bierstadt's *Rocky Mountains*, and Eastman Johnson's (1824-1906) *Old Kentucky Home*.²⁷ Many of the works were owned by members of the committee themselves. Eleven of the fifteen committee members lent about a third of the total number of works in the exposition. Olyphant, Roberts, Cozzens, Johnston,

²⁴ Fidell-Beaufort, Kleinfield, and Welcher, xv. See also Johnston, 13, 16-18.

²⁵ *Catalog of Paintings Never Before Exhibited* (New York: Henry H. Leeds & Co., 1864). Artists included Constant Troyon (1810-1865), Edouard Frère (1819-1886), Hugues Merle (1823-1881), Charles Jalabert (1819-1901), Ludwig Knaus (1829-1910), and Eugène Verboeckhoven (1798-1881).

²⁶ Johnston bought pictures by Edouard Frère, Eugène Lepoittevin (1806-1870), Edmond Castan, and Albert Anker (1831-1910). Others bought pictures by artists unfamiliar today. For example, Olyphant bought pictures by Lemmens and Couturier, Knoedler bought a picture by Dansart, and Stuart bought a picture by Pecrus that was exhibited in the Paris Salon of 1863. Because these were foreign pictures, they were not listed in Tuckerman's appendix. However, Johnston, Stuart, and Olyphant had large collections of American paintings, but their collection of European works was limited.

²⁷ The final total was eighty-two paintings, because William Morris Hunt (1824-1879) added pictures to his entry in Paris. Hunt added seven portraits in Paris, bringing his total to twelve. See Troyon, 28, n. 6. Six of Hunt's pictures are listed in the original catalog, *Exposition universelle de 1867 à Paris, catalogue général publié par la commission impériale: oeuvres d'art* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1867), 202.

Stuart, and Sturges all possessed large collections of American art ranging from forty-one to just over a hundred works each.²⁸ Each of these men lent one or more paintings to the Universal Exposition. William T. Blodgett had a small collection of paintings, and lent one work to the exposition.²⁹ Avery and Knoedler each lent one painting.

Among the Hudson River School landscapes lent by committee members were Church's *Niagara* and *Rainy Season in the Tropics* and John Frederick Kensett's *Autumn Afternoon on Lake George*. In addition to Hudson River School landscapes, there were a handful of genre scenes, such as Homer's *Prisoners from the Front* and Eastman Johnson's *Fiddling His Way*. Other collectors, who were not on the committee, lent history paintings by Daniel Huntington (1816-1906) and portraits by G. P. A. Healy (1813-1894). A few works were lent by the artists themselves, including pictures by William Morris Hunt and James Abbott McNeil Whistler (1834-1903). These pictures were

²⁸ For a list of the collections, see Tuckerman, *Book of the Artists*, 621-33.

²⁹ According to Tuckerman, Blodgett owned only sixteen pictures, which included Church's *Heart of the Andes*. The remainder of the selection committee members included Jonathan Sturges (1802-1874), Charles Lewis Tiffany (1812-1902), George Whitney (1819-1878), who lent two works, Shepherd Gandy, who also lent two works, and William P. Wright and Joseph Harrison, Jr. See "The Paris Exposition," 5.

Information on Gandy, Wright and Harrison was not available in any of the major biographical dictionaries. Short biographies of the other members are as follows: Marshall O. Roberts, a friend of Abraham Lincoln, made his fortune in steamship lines and railroads. He occasionally opened his private art gallery to the public at no charge. Robert L. Stuart inherited his father's candy manufacturing business, and was the first to use a sugar refining process which greatly increased production. From 1856 on, his company, R. L. & A. Stuart was solely a sugar refining business. He owned forty-one American pictures and patronized Knoedler. Jonathan Sturges was a merchant, philanthropist, and active member of the Century Club. He made his fortune in the tea and coffee trade, and would retire the year after the exposition. In addition, he had active interests in several railroad lines and was one of the founders and directors of the Bank of Commerce in New York. George J. Whitney was a railway manager and director of the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad. Whitney was a close friend of collector William H. Vanderbilt. Charles Lewis Tiffany, father of Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848-1933), was a successful jewelry and silver merchant with stores in New York and in Paris at the time of the exposition; he contributed several silver entries to the exposition. Tiffany helped to found the New York Society of Fine Arts and would later serve as a patron of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

among those that represented the best art the newly unified United States had to offer in an international exhibition.

American and French Reactions to American Art at the Universal Exposition

The Universal Exposition in Paris was broadly reported back home in books, journals, and newspapers. The most extensive commentaries were by publisher and art critic Frank Leslie, Henry T. Tuckerman, and James Jackson Jarves, arguably the most influential American critic up to this time. As United States Commissioner to the Paris Universal Exposition of 1867, Leslie commented on the fine arts in his official publication, *Report on the Fine Arts*.³⁰ The criticism of Tuckerman and Jarves was published in books.³¹ In addition, various correspondents reported on the event for major newspapers.

American critics such as Leslie, Tuckerman, and Jarves supported American art but were disappointed by the display. Leslie noted with regret that the United States won only one award in the fine arts: Church's second-class medal for *Niagara*.³² Yet with the exception of Tuckerman, who extolled Church's originality, American critics complained about *Niagara*.³³ Most comments concerned the degree of realism in the picture. A reviewer for the *New York Times* expressed dissatisfaction with Church's "hard and

³⁰ Frank Leslie, *Report on the Fine Arts* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1868), 6-21.

³¹ Tuckerman, *Book of the Artists*; and James Jackson Jarves, *Art Thoughts: The Experiences and Observations of an American Amateur in Europe* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1869).

³² Leslie, 12.

³³ Tuckerman, *Book of the Artists*, 18. Tuckerman echoed Malakoff's comment on Church's originality. See Malakoff, "The Paris Exposition," *New York Times*, 16 May 1867, 1.

unsatisfactory” technical skill.³⁴ To Jarves, *Niagara* appeared to be only a mere depiction of flowing water.³⁵ Yet another American reviewer was just plain tired of seeing the picture, which he felt had only been given an award because of its reputation, rather than its merit.³⁶ Aside from *Niagara*, few other pictures were commented on at length, although American critics made comments about the showing overall.

Not surprisingly, Tuckerman was generally optimistic about the pictures in the American section. He was on the selection committee and had written flattering biographies of the artists represented in the exposition. His *Book of the Artists* also included carefully selected positive comments by French and American reviewers of the exposition.³⁷ Tuckerman quoted in full an “intelligent” critic from the *New York Times*, identified only as “Malakoff,” who said:

The American collection, as a whole, attracts attention, and has been very highly praised by the first artists of France. . . . It is hardly possible to visit it without encountering some celebrity, and it is amusing to hear the surprise which is expressed at the progress which America is supposed to have made during the past two or three years—or since they knew there was such a country.³⁸

The pro-American basis for this quotation is rather tenuous. The “first artists of France” were not identified by Malakoff, and in the last sentence of the quotation, he said Europeans viewed the United States fine arts section as a curiosity, not

³⁴ Malakoff, 1.

³⁵ Jarves, *Art Thoughts*, 298.

³⁶ O. B. S., “The French Exhibition,” *New York Times*, 8 July 1867, 2. *Niagara* brought fame to Church in the United States. It was initially exhibited in New York as a one-picture show at the gallery of Williams, Stevens, Williams and Company. The picture was sent on tour in England in 1857 and again in 1858 to acclaim. See Franklin Kelly, “A Passion for Landscape: The Paintings of Frederic Edwin Church,” in *Frederic Edwin Church*, ed. Franklin Kelly (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1989), 50-52.

³⁷ Tuckerman, *Book of the Artists*, 450. French critics remarked on the realism of Church’s *Niagara* and on the sentiment of George Lambdin’s (1830-1896) *Last Sleep*.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 18. Tuckerman did not identify the source of the quotation in *Book of the Artists*, but he quoted the passage, almost verbatim, from Malakoff, 1.

to be taken seriously. Tuckerman quoted the same reviewer who noted that Whistler's etchings attracted favorable attention at the exposition.³⁹ Although Tuckerman commended American artists, he admitted that American art suffered from serious educational and institutional obstacles.⁴⁰

Unlike Tuckerman or the *New York Times* correspondent, Frank Leslie did not have a single word of praise for American art. In its subheading, "The Fine Art Department Not Competitive," his official report summed up his assessment of American art.⁴¹ Leslie complained about the poor showing of American art, and claimed that at least a third of the pictures in the exhibit were not even worthy of being there.⁴² William Morris Hunt, who exhibited the most paintings in the American section, was scorned by Leslie. He stated that Hunt's paintings "scarcely rose to the level of caricature in drawing, or the dignity of daub in color."⁴³ Leslie's assessments of other American artists were hardly more favorable. His overall observation was that American artists were particularly deficient in figure and history painting, which were the strength of the French school, and, with the possible exception of Church, Bierstadt, Gifford, and Régis Gignoux (1816-1882), deficient in landscape as well.⁴⁴ In other words, not even landscape painting—the pride of the American school—could compare with French painting.

³⁹ Tuckerman, *Book of the Artists*, 486. For the original comments on Whistler, see Malakoff, 1.

⁴⁰ Tuckerman, 23.

⁴¹ Leslie, 7. From 1855-1891 Leslie published *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, a popular weekly with news, art reviews, and sports.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 9.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

Jarves, like Leslie, found American landscape painting inadequate and cold, and few American artists who exhibited in 1867 escaped his criticism. In his most biting comment, Jarves declared that the Universal Exposition “taught us a salutary lesson by placing the average American sculpture and painting in direct comparison with the European, thereby proving our actual mediocrity.”⁴⁵ In phrases like this, Jarves harshly verbalized the sentiment of most critics. In addition, Jarves stated that the average American artist and patron was “uninformed and uncultured” and in need of guidance.⁴⁶ That guidance would come from France and its artists and institutions.

Various prominent French critics also reviewed the American fine arts display at the exposition in journals and books.⁴⁷ Their commentary on the small American section was brief, limited to a page at most in their otherwise extensive reviews. Although less outrightly harsh than American critics, the French critics were more dismissive. A common observation was that the American School did not have its own style, but was simply an extension of the English School.⁴⁸ The comparison was made easier because the United States gallery was located within the space occupied by the British gallery at the exposition. Other French critics also gave unflattering mention to the American section. Conservative critic Paul Mantz introduced his brief commentary on the American section by noting

⁴⁵ Jarves, 298.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 293.

⁴⁷ See reviews of the Universal Exposition in Ernest Chesneau, *Les Nations rivales dans l'art* (Paris: Didier, 1868), 161-62; Paul Mantz, “Les Beaux-arts à l'exposition universelle,” *Gazette des beaux-arts* 23 (1 September 1867): 229-30; and Théophile Thoré, *Salons de W. Bürger, 1861 à 1868* (Paris: Renouard, 1870), 2: 413.

⁴⁸ Chesneau, 161; Mantz: 230; and Thoré, 2: 413.

that the gallery was grim, poorly lit, and attracted few visitors.⁴⁹ In his widely published review, French commissioner Eugene Rimmel asserted that America's greatness lay in the land and numerous ports along the sea.⁵⁰ In other words, America's industry was far more important and impressive than its arts.

Though negative comments like this were typical, French critics did write favorably about a few American paintings—Church's *Niagara*, Lambdin's *Last Sleep*, Homer's *Prisoners at the Front*, and Whistler's *White Girl*.⁵¹ Paul Mantz admired the paintings by Lambdin, Church, and Homer, and favorably compared the precision of Homer's brush in *The Bright Side* to that of Gérôme's.⁵² Théophile Thoré, who supported the realism of Gustave Courbet and Jean-François Millet, singled out Hunt's portrait of Lincoln and Homer's *Prisoners at the Front* for mild praise.⁵³ Although conservative critic Ernest Chesneau also found paintings by Homer, Johnson, and Lambdin at least deserving of mention, he complimented Whistler at length.⁵⁴ Chesneau's sympathetic comments on Church, Bierstadt, and Whistler were translated and reprinted in the *New York Times*, undoubtedly to increase morale at home.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ Mantz: 229.

⁵⁰ Eugene Rimmel, *Recollections of the Paris Exhibition of 1867* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1868), 266. This book was originally published simultaneously in England and in France as *Souvenirs de l'Exposition universelle, Paris, 1867* (Paris: E. Dentu; London: Chapman & Hall, 1867).

⁵¹ French critics noted that Whistler's *Little White Girl* had been exhibited at the Salon des refusés in 1863. Whistler had requested to exhibit in the American section, rather than the British section. See Lilian M. C. Randall, "Introduction," in *Diary of George A. Lucas: An American Art Agent in Paris, 1857-1909*, ed. Lilian M. C. Randall (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 26.

⁵² Mantz, 230.

⁵³ Thoré, 2: 314, 413.

⁵⁴ Chesneau, 161-62.

⁵⁵ Malakoff, "Foreign Correspondence: Affairs in France," *New York Times*, 10 October 1867, 8. Malakoff stated that he translated Chesneau's comments "in full" because of the general lack of attention paid to American art by foreign art critics. However, the *Times* did not reprint

A few French critics, including Mantz and Thoré, remarked on the potential of American art to eventually equal European art. In general, Mantz thought American artists lacked originality, but expressed hope and confidence that the United States, already admired for its literature, would soon have worthy artists.⁵⁶ Thoré also saw promise for American art.⁵⁷ These critics, however, were thinking only of the future of American art; the present was still inadequate.

The American Reaction to French Art at the Universal Exposition

The French noted, with some optimism in their sparse comments, the works of American artists, but the Americans were painfully aware of their own artistic shortcomings and paid close attention to French art.⁵⁸ At the 1867 Exposition, French artists were amply rewarded for their skillful painting. They won thirty-two medals, including four of the eight Grand Medals of Honor, which were awarded to Meissonier, Cabanel, Gérôme, and Théodore Rousseau (1812-1867).⁵⁹ Meissonier and Gérôme mainly exhibited genre pictures, Cabanel exhibited portraits and history paintings, and Rousseau exhibited landscapes. In addition, four of the other French jury members received first prizes. In spite of

Chesneau's comment that the landscapes of Church and Bierstadt were bold, but other American landscapes were conventional. See Chesneau, 161.

⁵⁶ Mantz, 230.

⁵⁷ Thoré, 2: 413.

⁵⁸ Americans were largely ignorant of the politics of the art world in France and likely saw the fair as an accurate snapshot of the state of the arts in France. For an in-depth analysis of the French political scene underpinning the Universal Exposition of 1867, see Patricia Mainardi, *Art and Politics of the Second Empire: The Universal Expositions of 1855 and 1867* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), 123-97. Although Edouard Manet's (1832-1883) exposition of fifty pictures, separate from the Universal Exposition, was listed in the official catalog, American critics ignored it; they paid attention only to the works in the exposition proper.

⁵⁹ Leslie, 41-42. Of the twenty-five jurors serving on the international jury, Leslie noted that twelve of them were French, and all four French winners of the Medal of Honor were on the painting jury. Hoppin was the only American juror. See Leslie, 6. Although Rousseau, a landscape artist, also won a Medal of Honor, he received little attention in the American press.

acknowledged favoritism on the part of the French jury, the French artists deserved all the awards they received, pronounced an anonymous reviewer for the *New York Times*.⁶⁰

Leslie and Jarves, as well as reviewers who wrote for popular journals and newspapers, examined French art and found it technically superior to American art. Leslie, who had derided his own countrymen's productions, instead wholeheartedly approved of the French paintings in the Universal Exposition: "Gérôme had thirteen pictures, all highly dramatic and powerful; Bouguereau had ten; Meissonier fourteen, etc. Those thus honored were of course the leading artists of France, and the selections were made from their best works."⁶¹ Among the pictures Leslie most admired were two of Gérôme's paintings, *Phryne before the Aeropagus* (fig. 1.3) and *Duel after the Ball* (fig. 1.4), two of Meissonier's pictures, *1814, The Campaign of France* and *Information: General Desaix with the Army of the Rhine and Moselle*, and a few other pictures by artists such as Tony Robert-Fleury (1837-1911), Gustave Brion (1824-1877), Charles Jalabert (1819-1901), and Jules Breton (1827-1906).⁶²

Leslie commended Gérôme and Meissonier on their extraordinary paintings. According to him, it would be nearly impossible for any artist to paint better than Meissonier.⁶³ He reported that "popular with the great public jury, were the celebrated *genre* pictures of Meissonier, and the groups of Gérôme—exquisite in every way, perfect in drawing, fine in color, and most carefully

⁶⁰ "The Paris Exposition: Napoleon's Industrial Triumph," *New York Times*, 9 June 1867, 4.

⁶¹ Leslie, 16. In contrast, American artists exhibited only a few paintings each. Hunt was the only American who had more than four paintings on exhibit. Whistler exhibited more works than Hunt, but mainly etchings rather than paintings.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 18.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 14.

manipulated."⁶⁴ Along with his own glowing praise of Gérôme and Meissonier, Leslie confirmed the popularity in France of pictures by these two artists.

For the *New York Tribune*, the art at the Universal Exposition was front page news. The correspondent introduced his discussion of the medal winners by stating that the “French school of painting is so far superior of all others, that not even rival patriotism questions it.”⁶⁵ He then went into raptures over the genre pictures by Gérôme and Meissonier. Just seeing Gérôme’s *Duel after the Ball* in color rather than in a black and white reproduction, according to the reviewer, was alone worth the long, expensive voyage to Paris. He marveled at Meissonier’s ability to portray every detail of a scene on such small canvases. The two artists’ depictions of their figural subjects, as well as their skill in drawing, particularly fascinated the reviewer. He also praised Cabanel, whose portraits, according to the correspondent, were “the best in contemporary art,” and claimed that his treatment of the goddess in his *Birth of Venus* (fig. 1.5) matched that of the revered old Venetian master, Titian.⁶⁶

Leslie and the correspondent were unconditional in their praise of French art, but Jarves was more ambivalent. Jarves, who had amassed a collection of mainly Italian art of the trecento and quattrocento, felt that subjects of Italian Renaissance paintings were debased but found French paintings even more debased. He approved of their skill but was vehemently opposed to the immorality he perceived in their subjects. Jarves disdained the French school—Gérôme, Cabanel, and Paul Baudry (1828-1886) in particular—for what he

⁶⁴ Ibid., 18.

⁶⁵ G. A. T., “The Paris Exhibition,” *New York Tribune*, 2 May 1867, 1.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

considered their unchaste nudes and immoral depictions of religious paintings.⁶⁷ He was particularly offended by Cabanel's *Paradise Lost* (fig. 1.6) and asserted that the painter's "ruffianly figures and sugary, meretricious painting, although done with masterly dash, are a sardonic grimace at things sacred," and considered French art in general "spiritually calloused."⁶⁸

Jarves wrote somewhat less harshly when the subjects were not nudes. He identified Gérôme and Meissonier as historical genre painters, artists who painted entertaining "spectacles" rather than lofty "ideas" or "emotions" as in history painting.⁶⁹ As genre painters, he preferred Gérôme to Meissonier and had lengthy commentary on the two. And though he admired the technical finesse of Gérôme's large contemporary history picture, *Reception of the Siamese Ambassadors at Fontainebleau*, Jarves did not consider it on par with paintings by old masters like by Albrecht Dürer or Hans Holbein.⁷⁰

Although Jarves decried the baseness of French academic art, he admired the French artists for their principles of teaching truth and beauty.⁷¹ He admitted that Meissonier, Gérôme, and Cabanel were technically skillful painters, and particularly admired Gérôme's ability to recreate history on canvas through costume, architecture, and scenery.⁷² In spite of his reservations about French art, Jarves unequivocally acknowledged that American artists after the Universal Exposition now rightly viewed it as a model for their own art.⁷³

⁶⁷ Jarves, 261. Jarves' collection is now at the Yale University Art Gallery.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 268-69.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 258.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 259.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 297.

Unlike Jarves, M. D. Conway, a critic for the popular journal, *Harper's New Monthly*, thought that the nudity Americans found so pervasive in French art was generally not vulgar—except for Cabanel's depictions. To Conway, Cabanel's *Paradise Lost* and *Birth of Venus* were not innocent depictions of nude figures, but rather images of overly sensual figures.⁷⁴ His harsh criticism of Cabanel echoed the sentiment of a contemporary French critic, Émile Zola, who detested academic art.⁷⁵ Conway added that Meissonier was an example of the “*blasé* state of French art.”⁷⁶ Although he disdained the art of Cabanel and Meissonier, Conway lauded Gérôme as “the only French artist of both genius and culture,” finding no fault whatsoever in Gérôme's nudes, history, or genre pictures.⁷⁷ Regardless of issues of morality, American critics recognized that French art was technically superior, even if more conservative writers like Jarves were shocked by the subject matter.

French superiority was evident even in the exposition catalog. From it, visitors could infer the Americans' lesser status. Five sparse pages were needed to list all the American art works on exhibit, compared to forty-three dense pages for the French paintings alone. American artists were listed by their name, city of residence (most lived in New York), the title of the work, and the name of the lender, as with most other countries. In contrast, French artists were listed by name, place of birth, and names of instructors followed by awards they had won

⁷⁴ M. D. Conway, "The Great Show at Paris," *Harper's New Monthly* 35, no. 206 (July 1867): 252. Moncure Daniel Conway (1832-1907) was a novelist and historian.

⁷⁵ M. D. Conway, "The Great Show At Paris Again," *Harper's New Monthly* 35, no. 210 (November 1867): 781. Conway's opinions echo those of Émile Zola in his essay, "Nos peintres au Champ-de-mars," originally published in *La Situation*, 21 July 1867, and reprinted in Émile Zola, *Écrits sur l'art* (Paris: Gallimard, 2003), 181, 183.

⁷⁶ Conway, "The Great Show At Paris Again," 781.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* Among French artists, Conway preferred Edouard Frère.

and their current address. In addition, the listings included the year in which the painting had originally been exhibited in the Paris Salon, followed by the name of the lender. Awards were listed for a few other countries, such as Great Britain and the Netherlands, but none of the lists were as long as they were for French artists.

One example makes the comparison clear. William Morris Hunt's entry read only: "Hunt (W.-M.), from Boston, 'Portrait,'" which appeared insignificant in comparison to a distinguished French artist like Cabanel.⁷⁸ Cabanel's entry was much longer, noting that he had won the coveted prix de Rome in 1845, received a second-class medal in 1852, and a first-class medal and the Cross of the Legion of Honor in 1855. In addition, he had become a member of the Académie des beaux-arts (one of the five bodies of the prestigious Institut de France) in 1863, was promoted to Officer of the Legion of Honor in 1864, and received a Grand Medal of Honor in the Salon of 1865.⁷⁹ This list of honors must have seemed extremely impressive to contemporary readers.

In addition to the catalog's many details on the French artists' accomplishments, information on the paintings' owners was also given. This is significant because the status of the owner reflected upon the importance of the artist and of the painting. Continuing with Hunt's entry as an example, none of his pictures were lent by American collectors. Lenders' names were noted for other American artists' entries, but the lack of lenders' names indicated that the pictures were still unsold and in the artist's possession. However, with the

⁷⁸ *Exposition universelle de 1867 à Paris*, 202.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

exception of two works, American businessmen were the lenders of the majority of American art at the exposition.⁸⁰ Embarrassed by the lack of public collections in the United States, Leslie noted with regret that by comparison almost half of the French entries were contributed by the state.⁸¹

American visitors could not have failed to notice the illustrious owners of paintings by French artists. Many French pictures were lent by museums, aristocrats, or world leaders. For example, three of Cabanel's entries, *Nymph Abducted by a Faun*, *Birth of Venus*, and his portrait of the emperor (fig. 1.7) were in the collection of Emperor Napoleon III, and the King of Bavaria owned *Paradise Lost*. Meissonier's *Emperor at Solferino* was borrowed from the Luxembourg Museum, the prestigious public museum in Paris that exhibited works by contemporary living artists, and four other pictures were owned by aristocrats.⁸² Various collectors lent Gérôme's works, including *The Prisoner* from the Musée des beaux-arts in Nantes. Two of Bouguereau's pictures were borrowed from the Musée des beaux-arts in Bordeaux, and his *Holy Family* was in the collection of Emperor Napoleon III. There was no American equivalent for these prominent lenders and institutions.

Abandonment of American Art for French Art

With American artists' inadequacies highlighted at the exposition and in the exposition catalog, it is not surprising that French art quickly displaced

⁸⁰ These two were Eastman Johnson's painting, *Wounded Drummer Boy*, lent by the Century Club, and J. Q. A. Ward's sculpture, *The Indian Hunter and His Dog*, lent by the Central Park Museum.

⁸¹ Leslie, 18.

⁸² Geneviève Lacambre, *Le Musée du Luxembourg en 1874* (Paris: Éditions des musées nationaux, 1974), 136.

American art in collections in the United States. For American collectors and critics alike, the Hudson River School paintings represented the art of the past, and French academic art the art of the future.⁸³ According to Tuckerman, American collectors, that is, “men of wealth, observation, and travel, who aim at a collection of fine pictures,” had an eye on foreign art by 1867, with the exception of portraits.⁸⁴ Tuckerman noted that pictures by artists such as Bouguereau, Gérôme, and Meissonier had been imported for sale by Goupil & Co. in the United States since 1866.⁸⁵ Several of Gérôme’s paintings were actually lent to the Universal Exposition by American collectors.⁸⁶ The high honors accorded these artists at the exposition indicated that their pictures would be good cultural and monetary investments.

The practice of collecting art as a monetary investment was blatantly alluded to by Tuckerman: “the most patriotic critic must admit that they [American collectors] often have ample reason for the preference [for European art], both as a matter of taste and as a judicious investment.”⁸⁷ Even though he considered

⁸³ Laura Meixner suggested that the Hudson River School of painting pictured pre-Civil War America as an Eden, but after the demoralizing war, there was a shift in self-identity towards a sense of disunity in America. French pictures would provide a comforting distance from troubles at home. See Laura L. Meixner, *French Realist Painting and the Critique of American Society, 1865-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 2, 11.

⁸⁴ Tuckerman, *Book of the Artists*, 36.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 21. These pictures were *Heads of the Rebel Beys at the Mosque El Assaneyn*, lent to the Universal Exposition by W. H. Stewart, and *Dance of the Almeh* and *Turkish Butcher Boy in Jerusalem*, lent by John Hoey.

⁸⁶ *Exposition universelle de 1867 à Paris*, 25. In the catalog, Hoey is incorrectly listed as “Hoeg.” See also Gerald Ackerman, *The Life and Work of Jean-Léon Gérôme: With a Catalogue Raisonné* (New York: Sotheby’s Publications, 1986), 218. Other collectors owned pictures by French artists. For example, by 1864, Marshall O. Roberts owned one painting each by Bouguereau, Meissonier and Gérôme. Roberts lent Bouguereau’s *Idylle* (no. 17), Gérôme’s *Egyptian Conscripts* (no. 34), and Meissonier’s *The Trooper* (no. 76), to the Metropolitan Fair exhibition; see *Catalogue of the Art Exhibition at the Metropolitan Fair in Aid of the U.S. Sanitary Commission*, 6-8. In 1865, Knoedler bought two pictures by Gérôme: *Dance of the Almeh* and *Prayer in the Desert*. John Hoey then bought *Dance of the Almeh*; see “The Late Mr. Knoedler,” 5.

⁸⁷ Tuckerman, *Book of the Artists*, 36.

himself “a patriotic critic,” Tuckerman had to admit that European art was superior to—worth more culturally and monetarily than—American art. As astute businessmen, collectors such as John Taylor Johnston would naturally be aware of the market value of their collections.

Perhaps collectors were concerned with cultural and monetary investments, but American critics clamored for permanent exhibition venues, such as museums, which were sadly lacking in 1867. Tuckerman lamented the lack of government patronage of the arts.⁸⁸ He said: "In Europe we encounter at every step the artistic organization; here [in the United States] it is exceptional."⁸⁹ Bouguereau, Cabanel, Gérôme, and Meissonier represented the various aspects of artistic organization: honors, awards, art instruction, a government-run academy, and museum representation. These artists would not only satisfy the desire of American collectors to overhaul their collections with contemporary French art, but they would also satisfy the critics' desire to provide models for American artists and arts organizations.

A summary of the four artists' status in France in 1867 will show how well they suited the Americans' need for updated collections. Meissonier, the most established of the four artists, was considered a master in France. He had been exhibiting in the Paris Salons since 1834, was awarded the Grand Medal of Honor at the Universal Exposition of 1855 and again at the Universal Exposition in 1867. Meissonier was also promoted to Commander of the Legion of Honor in

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.

1867.⁹⁰ In addition to receiving Salon medals, Cabanel, Gérôme, and Meissonier were elected members of the Académie des beaux-arts, the Institut de France, by 1867. Gérôme was elevated to Officer of the Legion of Honor in 1867. Bouguereau, who won the prix de Rome in 1850 and was made Chevalier of the Legion of Honor in 1859, received a third-class medal in the 1867 Exposition. Cabanel's many awards were already listed earlier in this chapter.

Cabanel and Gérôme had been professors at the premier art school in France, the École des beaux-arts in Paris, since its curriculum was reorganized in 1863. This reorganization resulted in the creation of three ateliers led by Gérôme, Cabanel, and Isidore Pils and in the admittance of foreign students.⁹¹ By 1867, there were already a handful of American students enrolled in Gérôme's and Cabanel's studios.⁹² Many more would follow in the next few decades.

Paintings by each of the artists could also be seen in Paris in public venues other than the Universal Exposition. By 1867, three of the four artists

⁹⁰ The Legion of Honor was ranked as follows, from lowest to highest: Cross of the Legion of Honor, Officer of the Legion, Commander of the Legion of Honor, and Grand Cross of the Legion of Honor. In 1889, Meissonier became the first artist to receive the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honor, an honor rarely awarded to artists. Gérôme would receive it in 1900 and Bouguereau in 1903.

⁹¹ Isidore Pils (1813/15-1875). For more information on the reforms, see Albert Boime, "The Teaching Reforms of 1863 and the Origins of Modernism in France," *Art Quarterly* n.s. 1, no. 1 (Autumn 1977): 1-39.

⁹² Four students, Lemuel Wilmarth (1835-1918), Thomas Eakins (1844-1916), Harry Moore (1844-1926), and Earl Shinn (1838-1886) were enrolled in Gérôme's studio in 1866, and three students, Frederick Bridgman (1847-1928), Ernest Tuckerman, and Jean Nimeyer, were enrolled in 1867. Augustus George Heaton (1844-1930) was enrolled in Cabanel's atelier in 1866, and probably Henry Bacon (1866-1924) as well, although his matriculation date is unknown. There were no American students in Pils' studio prior to the exposition. See H. Barbara Weinberg, "Nineteenth-Century American Painters at the École des Beaux-Arts," *American Art Journal* 13, no. 4 (Autumn 1981): 76, 78, 80-81.

had paintings on view at the Luxembourg Museum.⁹³ Gérôme and Bouguereau had both decorated Parisian churches: Gérôme, the Chapel of Saint Jérôme in Saint-Séverin; and Bouguereau, Saint-Augustin and the Chapel of Saint Louis in Sainte-Clotilde. Cabanel painted twelve panels depicting allegories of the months for the Salon of the Caryatids in the Hôtel de Ville and a panel for the Palais du Sénat in the Luxembourg Palace. Prominent Parisian businessmen commissioned Bouguereau, Gérôme, and Cabanel for private decorative paintings, which were well-known although not on public view.⁹⁴ Thus, the artists' works were broadly represented in various prominent French public and private collections.

Samuel P. Avery's Gallery after the 1867 Exposition

A heretofore solid champion of American art, Avery was poised to abandon American art for that of Europe by 1867. He had already begun his foray into contemporary European art with his sale of contemporary French and German paintings held in 1864. The pictures were consigned by William T. Walters; most of the paintings sold poorly at less than a few hundred dollars each.⁹⁵ Two years later, Avery sold Walters' collection of American paintings.⁹⁶

⁹³ Visitors to Paris at the time of the Universal Exposition could visit the Luxembourg Museum. The paintings on view included Bouguereau's two large pictures, *Triumph of the Martyr* and *Philomela and Procne*. There were two small paintings by Meissonier, *Emperor at Solferino* and *Napoleon III Surrounded by His General Staff*. Cabanel was represented by his large history painting, *Glorification of St. Louis*. There were no paintings by Gérôme at the museum in 1867.

⁹⁴ Gérôme contributed decorative panels for Prince Napoleon's Pompeian palace. Bouguereau and Cabanel decorated the residence of the prominent banker, Émile Pereire. Cabanel also painted decorative works for the hôtel of banker Constant Say, and Bouguereau painted decorations for the hôtel of businessman, Etienne Bartholoni.

⁹⁵ The pictures had been collected over a period of three years and were consigned to Avery by William T. Walters; see *Catalog of Paintings Never Before Exhibited*, cover page.

Unlike the European pictures, most of the American pictures sold for less than just a hundred dollars. Avery and Walters actually bought back the majority of them, presumably to prevent the pictures from selling for next to nothing.⁹⁷ In spite of the poor results of Walters' sale, Avery sold his own collection of American paintings and the contents of his sizable library—books, furniture and all—a month later.⁹⁸ Avery had formed his art collection over a period of fifteen years, and potential buyers were informed that the reason for the sale was to provide funds for Avery's upcoming trip abroad.⁹⁹ Avery used the proceeds of these sales to buy French works during his trip abroad.¹⁰⁰

While in Paris for the Universal Exposition, Avery met an important dealer, George A. Lucas (1824-1909), an American who had been in Paris since 1857 and had acted as Walters' agent.¹⁰¹ Through Lucas, Avery met many of the European artists exhibiting at the exposition, including Bouguereau and Cabanel among others.¹⁰² This was Avery's first opportunity to commission European

⁹⁶ *Catalogue of a Remarkably Fine Collection of Oil Paintings by the Best American Artists* (New York: Henry H. Leeds & Miner, 1866). Henry H. Leeds & Miner were an auction establishment for all manner of goods. They held their own picture sales, as well as sales of things such as carriages and horses. See "Sales at Auction," *New York Herald*, 18 January 1867, 2.

⁹⁷ Olyphant bought a picture, and William H. Vanderbilt, who would become one of the most important collectors of the Gilded Age, purchased four pictures.

⁹⁸ *Collection of Oil Paintings by American Artists* (New York: Henry H. Leeds & Miner, 1867); and *Catalogue of the Entire Art Library of Mr. S. P. Avery* (New York: Bangs, Merwin & Co., 1867). There were 693 lots of books alone on a wide variety of subjects, including history, literature, and natural history as well as art. His art interests ranged from ancient Greek and Egyptian art, to Italian Renaissance, American, English, and French art. He sold his copies of James Jackson Jarves' *Art Hints* (lot 459) and Henry Tuckerman's *Artist-Life* (lot 518). A number of art journals in his collection provide evidence of his efforts to stay abreast of current events in the art world. These included the *Bulletin* of the American Art-Union, *Fine Arts Quarterly Review*, and a complete set of the *Art Journal* (London) (lot numbers 446 and 667, 438, and 436, respectively).

⁹⁹ *Collection of Oil Paintings by American Artists*, cover page.

¹⁰⁰ Fidell-Beaufort, Kleinfeld, and Welcher, xxii.

¹⁰¹ Walters also sold his American works to purchase European works.

¹⁰² Randall, 18.

works for American collectors such as John Taylor Johnston and William H. Vanderbilt (1821-1885).¹⁰³

With two sales held shortly after the 1867 Exposition, Avery began actively dealing in French art. Avery was hopeful that the pictures he acquired in Paris would sell better than the works he had shown before.¹⁰⁴ Some works Avery purchased directly from the exposition, including *Death of Caesar* (fig. 1.8) by Gérôme and *The Reading* (fig. 1.9) by Meissonier, some from the Salon of the same year, and others he commissioned from the artists.¹⁰⁵ The first sale of his new purchases was held in April 1868.

Two months prior to the sale, Avery advertised the sale in the *New York Times*. The advertisement promoted the pictures by Gérôme and Meissonier from the Universal Exposition, and Bouguereau was also mentioned.¹⁰⁶ Including these prominent French artists in his advertisement bestowed a sophisticated air to the sale. In addition, the advertisement called attention to Avery's prestigious service as commissioner in the 1867 Exposition and his

¹⁰³ Fidell-Beaufort, Kleinfield, and Welcher, xxii; and Madeleine Fidell-Beaufort and Jeanne K. Welcher, "Some Views of Art Buying in New York in the 1870s and 1880s," *Oxford Art Journal* 5, no. 1 (1982): 49.

¹⁰⁴ See Adolphe Goupil to Samuel P. Avery, 17 January 1868, Samuel P. Avery Papers, MS Box 7, Folder 31, Thomas J. Watson Library, Metropolitan Museum, New York. Knoedler informed Goupil that picture sales in the United States had not been doing well for awhile, but Goupil was hopeful. He commended Avery on the pictures he acquired in Paris during the exposition, and said that if Avery would not succeed in the sale of these pictures in New York, "it should be disgusting for all of us [dealers]."

¹⁰⁵ "Fine Arts," *New York Times*, 7 February 1868. *Death of Caesar* was listed in the Universal Exposition catalog as belonging to J. Allard, and *The Reading* was listed as belonging to a "Monsieur X"; see *Exposition universelle de 1867 à Paris*, 25, 35.

¹⁰⁶ "Fine Arts," 7.

return to his role as art agent.¹⁰⁷ His service on behalf of the United States at the exposition enhanced his reputation.

As with his newspaper advertisements, Avery's catalog for this new European sale featured his European acquisitions.¹⁰⁸ It was longer than his usual catalogs and printed on a heavier, more attractive paper. Meissonier and Bouguereau topped the list of artists' names on the cover page of the catalog. Other artists included Barend Cornelis Koek-Koek (1803-1862), Hughes Merle (1823-1881), Charles-François Jalabert (1819-1901), and Auguste Toulmouche (1829-1890). Inside the catalog, the artists' individual entries included their honors and awards, as they had been listed in the catalog for the Universal Exposition. The works of artists who received awards from the Paris Salon were more valuable in the eyes of American collectors, since there was no comparably prestigious, internationally recognized system in place in the United States to award such distinctions to American artists.¹⁰⁹

The importance of the sale was also indicated by a two-page introduction to the sale catalog. Six quotations from various newspapers praised the quality of the collection. The *Home Journal* mentioned Meissonier by name:

Here are masterpieces by Meissonier and other eminent artists that would grace the most *recherché* gallery in the world. . . . The prices may seem high—four thousand *gold*, for instance, for a Meissonier that a man might

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. The pictures were on view, free and open to the public, in Avery's gallery at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Fourteenth Street. The exhibition was open from 9:00 a.m. until dark and on Monday evenings until 10:00 p.m.

¹⁰⁸ *Catalogue of French Paintings and Other Works of Art Selected by S. P. Avery* (New York: Somerville Art Gallery, 1868), 1.

¹⁰⁹ Fidell-Beaufort, Kleinfield, and Welcher, "Introduction," xxxi. The National Academy of Design did award its students, but it was less hierarchical than the French. For example, there was no American equivalent for the *prix de Rome* which allowed French students four or five years of study in Rome at the expense of the government.

cover with his two hands—still judged by any other rule than that of size of canvas, they are not excessive.¹¹⁰

The potential buyer was thus warned that he would have to pay more than just a few hundred dollars for this new small treasure, not much larger than the size of the sale catalog itself. The writer also used a French term, “recherché,” to appeal to collectors’ desire to have the most exquisite art collection. Use of a French term also lent an air of sophistication and recalled the recent exposition in Paris.

The sale went as well as expected. Bouguereau’s *Happy Mother* sold for \$1,000, and *Fraternal Love* sold for \$1,500.¹¹¹ This is a significant difference from the \$300 and less that Avery received for most of the American paintings he sold before the exposition. Unfortunately, the price paid for *The Reading* will remain a mystery, because the sale price was not recorded.¹¹² Gérôme’s *Death of Caesar* was excluded from the sales catalog since Avery had already bought the painting for John Taylor Johnston.¹¹³

Later in the same month, Avery held a more modest sale of drawings and watercolors that he commissioned from artists or purchased at the Universal Exposition. Bouguereau, Cabanel, and Hippolyte Flandrin (1809-1864) topped the list of these names.¹¹⁴ Of the four artists, Cabanel was the least known in the United States at the time of the exposition. Cabanel’s introduction to the

¹¹⁰ *Catalogue of French Paintings and Other Works of Art Selected by S. P. Avery*, 2.

¹¹¹ *Fraternal Love* was exhibited in the Universal Exposition of 1855. All of Bouguereau’s paintings in the 1867 Exposition were already in public or private collections.

¹¹² *Catalogue of French Paintings and Other Works of Art Selected by S. P. Avery*, 25. The prices for most of the works in this catalog are noted in the margins of an annotated copy of the catalog in the Thomas J. Watson Library, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

¹¹³ S. S. Conant, “Fine Arts,” *Putnam’s Monthly* 11, no. 3 (March 1868): 385. Conant did not mention Johnston by name; see Ackerman, *Life and Work of Jean-Léon Gérôme*, 220.

¹¹⁴ “Fine Arts,” 7.

American art market was thus through a drawing, rather than a painting, but this drawing was the first documented work sold by Cabanel in the United States.

Two studies by Cabanel sold for eighteen dollars each, and one by Bouguereau sold for eighty dollars.

A reviewer praised these new works Avery had assembled, asserting that Avery's collections were even more interesting now than they had been before the exposition.¹¹⁵ Concluding his review, he enthusiastically appealed to wealthy collectors to purchase the European works for permanent display in order to educate the public.¹¹⁶ His request would soon be heeded, though not with this particular sale.

Conclusion

The impact of the Universal Exposition of 1867 on the fine arts in the United States should not be underestimated. Americans naively entering into this celebration of French art and industry on French soil could not help but feel overwhelmed and embarrassed. The American reaction to both American and French art at the Universal Exposition set the tone for attitudes towards art in the United States for the next two decades. Most critics found little to praise in the American fine arts section. American critics were thoroughly disappointed in the American art on display, whereas they praised French art, and French critics' praise of American artworks was faint at best. Influential critics like Tuckerman and Jarves urgently called for support for the fine arts in order to become a truly

¹¹⁵ Conant, 385.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

cultured nation equal to the European nations, particularly France. The combination of harsh words from American critics and only mild encouragement from major French critics led Americans to make drastic changes in regards to the arts.

Dealers, collectors, critics, and artists alike were affected. Each group had its own concerns, but common to all was a strong desire to improve the situation of the fine arts in the United States. The way to achieve progress, they felt, was through emulation of the fine arts in France. John Taylor Johnston, who owned Church's *Niagara* and Homer's *Prisoners from the Front*, was the only collector whose good taste in American art was affirmed by an international jury and critics, but the rest of the collectors were disappointed in the reception of their works.¹¹⁷ Collectors such as Johnston, Roberts, and Stuart, who had assembled large collections of American art prior to 1867, became major collectors of European art after the Universal Exposition. These collectors and other savvy businessmen developed a taste for European art as investment as well as evidence of cultural sophistication.¹¹⁸ American collectors were among the most prominent and wealthy citizens in the United States and thus formed an emerging American "aristocracy." Their collections were to reflect their status. If the wealthy class of Americans could own paintings from the same artists—

¹¹⁷ Troyen, 19. French landscapists fared well in 1867: Théodore Rousseau won a Medal of Honor; Jean-François Millet, Jules Breton and Charles Daubigny (1817-1878) won First Class Medals, and Rosa Bonheur (1822-1899), Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot (1796-1875) and Jules Dupré (1811-1889) won Second Class Medals. Thus, Church ranked on par with Bonheur, Corot, and Dupré. Marshall O. Roberts lent Church's other picture, which did not receive an award. Roberts was involved, though, in backing Cyrus Field's transatlantic cable which won a prize for industry.

¹¹⁸ H. Barbara Weinberg, introduction to *Art Treasures of America*, by Edward Strahan [Earl Shinn] (New York: Garland Publishing, 1977), 1: 1.

Bouguereau, Cabanel, Gérôme, and Meissonier—whose works were in the collections of the French nobility, the thinking went that they would be their peers.

The view that art was a necessity for individuals as well as for the country coincided with the prosperity that followed the war and allowed for increased picture buying.¹¹⁹ By selling more French pictures and fewer American pictures, dealers like Avery profited from the changing ideals and fortunes that emerged after the Civil War, and from the humiliation the new nation suffered at the international exposition. The names of the four major French academic artists, Bouguereau, Cabanel, Gérôme, and Meissonier, along with other lesser known contemporaries, began to appear regularly in Avery's sales catalogs in New York after the exposition. As popular genre painters, Gérôme and Meissonier initially received the most critical attention, but the other two would soon become as well known. The timing could not have been more advantageous, for they were at the height of their success in France, and their illustrious reputations impressed Americans. Their works would serve as models for American artists, and as teachers Bouguereau, Cabanel, and Gérôme would extend their reach even further.

Over the next two decades, Americans would address the weaknesses of the fine arts in the United States exposed by the Universal Exposition: the dearth of examples of good art, the absence of public collections, and the lack of an art aesthetic. Several of the members of the fine arts selection committee, Avery, Knoedler, and Johnston in particular, would direct the course of the fine arts in the United States after the 1867 Exposition. French art would provide a

¹¹⁹ "The Late Mr. Knoedler," 5.

benchmark against which American art could be measured, and the sales of the French artists' paintings would become indicators of how well the art market was doing. The web of dealers, collectors and artists that made the influx of French academic art possible over the two decades following the Universal Exposition of 1867 in Paris is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2

DEALERS, COLLECTORS, AND AUCTIONS

Following the Universal Exposition of 1867, the art market for contemporary French art in the United States changed rapidly. What had been in the mid-1860s only a budding interest in contemporary French art blossomed after the exposition into the golden age of French academic art in the United States.¹ The works of Bouguereau, Cabanel, Gérôme, and Meissonier were at the forefront of this interest in French art because of the high prices commanded by their paintings and the prevalence of their works in the most prominent collections in the nearly three decades after the exposition.

Whereas in Paris the works of Bouguereau, Cabanel, Gérôme, and Meissonier were displayed in multiple venues, such as the Salon, the Luxembourg Museum, and public buildings, in the United States, private collections were the only destination for their artworks. Their works were available at the dealers' galleries, at loan exhibitions, and at auctions. In addition, prints and photographic reproductions of their paintings were widely circulated, increasing the renown of both the artists and the paintings. These expensive and well-known paintings served as status symbols for wealthy Gilded Age collectors.

¹ For general examinations of the post-Civil War collecting phenomenon, see Madeleine Fidell-Beaufort, "The American Art Trade and French Painting at the End of the Nineteenth Century," *Van Gogh Museum Journal* (2000): 101-107; idem, "Art Collecting in the United States After the Civil War: Civic Pride, Competition, and Personal Gains," in *Artwork Through the Market: The Past and the Present*, ed. Ján Bakos (Bratislava: VEDA, 2004), 125-36; idem, "A Measure of Taste: Samuel P. Avery's Art Auctions, 1864-1880," *Gazette des beaux-arts* 100 (September 1982): 87-89; and Madeleine Fidell-Beaufort and Jeanne K. Welcher, "Some Views of Art Buying in New York in the 1870s and 1880s," *Oxford Art Journal* 5, no. 1 (1982): 48-55.

Although in Paris, the center of the European market, this coterie of French artists was actively involved in the art world—Salons, Salon juries, the École des beaux-arts, and other high-profile art administrative capacities—they were not personally involved in any aspect of the art world in New York, the center of the American market. Lacking direct involvement in the American art network, they and other European academic artists were almost exclusively discussed in an art market context—the world of dealers, collectors, and auctions. In the art market in both Paris and New York, the prices for the pictures of this quartet of academic artists remained high throughout the 1870s and 1880s. Just prior to the 1867 Exposition, critic Clarence Cook had noted somewhat despairingly that artists and the public alike equated expensive art with good art.² Interpreted in this way, the high prices paid for the artists' works assured dealers and collectors that their art was indeed among the best available.

Because the four artists' reputations in the United States were linked to the art market, this chapter is roughly divided into three major sections involving the market: the first introduces the main dealers and the high-priced works they sold; the second touches on the collections formed which included works by

² Cook's article was in response to an appeal by American artists to Congress to increase the import tariff on foreign pictures. The purpose of the tax was to keep "bad"—that is, inexpensive—foreign pictures out of the country; see Clarence Cook, "The Cry from the Studios," *Galaxy* 3, no. 4 (15 February 1867): 439; and "Letter from an Artist," *New York Tribune*, 23 January 1867, 2. At the time, there was just a straight ten percent duty, but the "artist" called for \$100 tax on all pictures that cost \$1,000 or less and a tax of ten percent on any amount in excess of \$1,000. In short, the duty would be less as the cost of the picture increased. Foreign pictures that sold for over \$1,000 (about 5,000 francs) would be subject to a lower tariff. In essence, the American artists wished to discourage collectors from buying inexpensive foreign pictures and encourage collectors to buy expensive foreign pictures. For more about the tariff, see Kimberly Orcutt, "Buy American? The Debate over the Art Tariff," *American Art* 16, no. 3 (Autumn 2002): 82-91.

Bouguereau, Cabanel, Gérôme, and Meissonier; and the last highlights selected auction sales in which several key collections were dispersed within the two-and-a-half decades after the exposition. This chapter shows how widely collected these artists' pictures had become within a few short years, and that their art remained highly sought after in the United States for over two decades.

The Dealers: Goupil, Avery, Lucas, and Knoedler

Within a decade of the 1867 Exposition, American collections were entirely transformed. Four of the American committee members (discussed in the first chapter) involved in the 1867 Exposition were among the leading figures who transformed the New York art world afterwards. American dealers Michael Knoedler, of M. Knoedler & Co., successor to Goupil & Co. (fig. 2.1), and Samuel P. Avery, both of whom had picture shops in New York, acted as liaisons between the artists and American buyers such as John Taylor Johnston and William T. Blodgett. In addition, two dealers in Paris, Adolphe Goupil of Goupil & cie. and George A. Lucas, an independent American dealer, played a central role in promoting the art of Bouguereau, Cabanel, Gérôme, and Meissonier in the United States.

Paintings by the four French men became *de rigueur* in American collections through the efforts of Goupil, Lucas, Avery, and Knoedler, whose clients included leading collectors such as William T. Walters, dry goods merchant Alexander T. Stewart (1803-1876), and railroad men John Taylor

Johnston and William H. Vanderbilt.³ Lucas and Avery worked closely with each other and occasionally bought from Goupil in Paris, and Knoedler frequently bought from Goupil in order to sell the works in his New York picture shop. Although there were other dealers in New York, such as Schaus, Cottier, and Reichardt, who sold French academic art, Goupil and Lucas in Paris and Knoedler and Avery in New York were largely responsible for promoting the art of the four French artists.⁴

For a more complete understanding of the market for French art in the United States, it is necessary to provide background information on these four key dealers. A large portion of this chapter relies on their diaries, stock books, and some surviving letters which attest to the successful network these dealers established.⁵ These documents show how the dealers were essential to getting works into the American market. The close relationships of this network of

³ Railroad men such as H. Vanderbilt, William T. Walters, Jay Gould, William H. Aspinwall, and John Taylor Johnston, and financiers such as August Belmont, J. P. Morgan, and Alexander T. Stewart had each formed their collections by the 1870s; see Albert Boime, "America's Purchasing Power and the Evolution of European Art in the Late Nineteenth Century," in *Saloni, gallerie, musei e loro influenza sullo sviluppo dell'arte dei secoli XIX e XX*, ed. Francis Haskell (Bologna, CLUEB: 1979), 124.

⁴ Albert Boime and Malcolm Goldstein examined the importance of dealers' roles in promoting artistic styles in nineteenth-century France. Boime analyzed European business entrepreneurs as trendsetters in collecting, and Goldstein provided an overview of collecting after the Civil War and introduced some of the major dealers of European and American art at the time. See Albert Boime, "Entrepreneurial Patronage in Nineteenth-Century France," in *Enterprise and Entrepreneurs in 19th and 20th Century France*, ed. Edward C. Carter, Robert Forster, and Joseph N. Moody (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1976), 137-207; and Malcolm Goldstein, *Landscape with Figures: A History of Art Dealing in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 15-57.

⁵ Samuel P. Avery, *The Diaries 1871-1882 of Samuel P. Avery*, ed. Madeleine Fidell-Beaufort, Herbert L. Kleinfield, and Jeanne K. Welcher (New York: Arno Press, 1979); and George A. Lucas, *Diary of George A. Lucas: An American Art Agent in Paris, 1857-1909*, ed. Lilian M. C. Randall, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979). The thirteen Paris Goupil et cie. stock books are available at the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. The Knoedler stock books are kept in the archives of Knoedler & Co. in New York, but are inaccessible.

dealers enabled the swift ascendance of sale prices paid for French academic art and the entry of the pictures into American collections.

The Paris picture shop of Goupil served as a wholesale dealer for other dealers such as Knoedler, Lucas, Avery, and Schaus. Gérôme's name first appeared in the Paris Goupil stock books in 1859, Meissonier's in 1860, and Cabanel's and Bouguereau's in 1861.⁶ Europeans bought these first paintings, but American dealers and private collectors soon joined them as buyers. Goupil was especially important to Bouguereau and Gérôme, who both had exclusive contracts with that dealer for more than twenty years.⁷ Gérôme's connection to the dealer was especially solidified when he married Adolphe Goupil's daughter, Marie Goupil, in 1863. Meissonier and Cabanel figure less in the Goupil stock books because they did not have contracts with the dealer. Meissonier was represented by Galerie Georges Petit (whose records are not extant), and Cabanel dealt mainly with Lucas. Goupil in Paris sold actively to American

⁶ See Goupil & cie. and Boussod, Valadon & cie., 1846-1919, book 1: 75 for Cabanel; 100, 105-7, 110, 112, 120-22, 125 for Gérôme; 124, 130-31 for Meissonier; and 145 for Bouguereau. The stock books include the name of the artist, the title or description of the work, the purchase price, sale price, buyer's name, sale and purchase dates, and notes. Not all entries are complete: some works that were purchased have no sale date, and neither original creation dates nor dimensions were given for most of the works. From 1850 until 1884, the firm operated as Goupil & cie., and from 1884 as Boussod, Valadon & cie., successeurs de Goupil & cie. References to the stock books hereafter will be "Goupil" for books through 1884, and "Boussod" from 1884 on, followed by the book number and page number(s) of the ledger on which the entry or entries can be found.

⁷ Goupil's contract with Bouguereau lasted from 1865 through 1887; see Louise d'Argencourt "Bouguereau and the Art Market in France," in *William Bouguereau, 1825-1905* (Montreal: Montreal Museum of Art, 1984), 102-3. Because of his family connections, Gérôme's relationship with Goupil lasted from 1859 until his death; see Hélène Lafont-Couturier, "Mr. Gérôme Works for Goupil," in *Gérôme and Goupil: Art and Enterprise* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux; New York: Dahesh Museum of Art, 2000), 13, 16-17.

dealers, particularly Knoedler, and less frequently to Avery, Lucas, and Schaus, as well as to some private individuals.⁸

Knoedler was the New York agent for Goupil & Co., but bought the firm in 1857. After changing the firm's name to M. Knoedler & Co., successors to Goupil & Co., the gallery continued to be referred to as Goupil. For example, the *Atlantic Monthly* called Goupil the "leading picture shop" in New York as late as 1878 and beyond, noting that there were pictures by Gérôme, Bouguereau, and Cabanel available for viewing.⁹ Tuckerman also referred to M. Knoedler & Co. as Goupil and credited him with the sale of expensive pictures: "during the past year, 1866-7, Goupil & Co. disposed of pictures by such artists as Auchenbach [sic], Bouguereau, Frere [sic], Fichel, Gerome [sic], Meissonier, Merle, Troyon, Willems, etc., amounting in the aggregate to three thousand dollars."¹⁰

Samuel P. Avery, another leading dealer in New York, traveled to Paris regularly to buy French paintings. However, Avery's introduction to the art of Cabanel and of Gérôme was through Goupil.¹¹ Purchases prior to 1871, when Avery began recording business transactions in his journal (rather than in proper ledgers), are documented in the Goupil stock books. After 1871, his purchases were recorded in his journal. Avery usually wrote down the purchase price of the works, though he frequently did not give the title of the work, and only rarely gave

⁸ The extent of New York dealer William Schaus's role in promoting the work of the four artists cannot be fully ascertained, because his stock books are no longer extant. His activities can only be gleaned from mentions in other dealers' stock books and diaries and from contemporary periodicals. Schaus was sent to New York in 1847 as an agent of Goupil and later became independent. For a summary of Schaus' activities, see Goldstein, 38-40.

⁹ Raymond Westbrook, "Open Letters from New York," *Atlantic Monthly* 41, no. 243 (January 1878): 95.

¹⁰ Henry T. Tuckerman, *Book of the Artists*, 2nd ed. (New York: G. P. Putnam & Son, 1867), 21.

¹¹ Both dealers' diaries are less complete than the Goupil ledgers and therefore less informative and reliable.

the name of the buyer or the sales prices; therefore, the information is incomplete.

Like Avery, Lucas, who lived and worked in Paris from 1857 until his death in 1909, kept a diary of his art market transactions. His entries do not resemble a ledger and are sometimes vague and incomplete. He only occasionally mentioned titles of artworks, names of buyers, final sales prices, and certain financial transactions, but he did record his visits to artists' studios and to dealers' shops, as well as his meetings and dealings with Avery. Like Avery, Lucas became acquainted with the art of Cabanel and of Gérôme through Goupil. Lucas' and Avery's diaries link the two dealers to each other and show their many activities with both Goupil and the French artists. Even with documentation such as the Goupil stock books and dealers' diaries, though, not all pictures can be traced. In the following sections I have focused on selected pictures whose origins can clearly be traced. The French names of the pictures from the stock books are given with the English translations in brackets.

Forming the Collections: Dealers' and Collectors' Purchases Following the 1867 Exposition

Although the 1867 Universal Exposition was a watershed moment in the collection of French academic art, there was some notable activity prior to the exposition. This section is an examination of the dealers' records for purchases of the French artists' pictures. The prices for paintings by Gérôme and by Meissonier in particular were already quite high, at 10,000 francs or more, when

most art works in the Goupil Paris stock books for any artist in the 1860s sold for considerably less than 10,000 francs.¹² To get a sense of the value of these pictures, records show that Lucas paid his housekeeper 40 francs per month, and he paid about 800 francs per year for his Paris apartment.¹³ Yet in 1863, Lucas paid over twice his annual rent, 1,950 francs, for Bouguereau's *Idyle* [*Idyll*].¹⁴ Knoedler bought most of these pictures by Bouguereau, Gérôme, and Meissonier that were sold by Goupil, including Gérôme's *Danseuse* [*Dance of the Almeh*] (fig. 2.2) in 1863 for 20,000 francs, and Meissonier's *Un Fumeur* [*A Smoker*] for 8,000 francs a year later.¹⁵ The price for the *Dance of the Almeh* was the highest price recorded in the Goupil stock books for a Gérôme painting sold to an American that year.¹⁶

Though Goupil and Knoedler were the most significant buyers of the French artists' paintings in the 1860s, a handful of private collectors also started buying pictures as early as 1865, including William T. Blodgett, who would serve as one of the 1867 Exposition American committee members. Blodgett bought a reduction of Bouguereau's *Jeune fille portant un enfant* [*Young Girl Carrying a*

¹² The exchange rate at the time was roughly five francs to the dollar, so, for example, 10,000 francs would have been about \$2,000 and 100,000 francs would have been about \$20,000.

¹³ See Lilian M. C. Randall, "Introduction," in *Diary of George A. Lucas: An American Art Agent in Paris, 1857-1909*, ed. Lilian M. C. Randall (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 1: 8.

¹⁴ Goupil, book 2: 100. For the titles of Meissonier's works, I referred to Constance Cain Hungerford, *Ernest Meissonier: Master in His Genre* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999). For Gérôme's works, I referred to Gerald Ackerman, *The Life and Work of Jean-Léon Gérôme: With a Catalogue Raisonné* (New York: Sotheby's Publications, 1986); and *Gérôme and Goupil: Art and Enterprise*, trans. Isabel Ollivier (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux; New York: Dahesh Museum of Art, 2000). For Bouguereau's works, I referred to *William Bouguereau, 1825-1905* (Montreal: Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 1984). For Cabanel, I used the titles given by museums that own his works, and in other cases at my own discretion since no definitive monograph is available. Dates are given when known. Lastly, if the works mentioned are not listed in the above books, I supply a translated title where necessary.

¹⁵ Goupil, book 2: 87, 101.

¹⁶ Goupil, book 2: 87, 101. The highest price was 25,000 francs for *Louis XIV et Molière* [*Louis XIV and Molière*], sold to a Mr. Delahante in Paris; see Goupil, book 2: 79.

Child] for 3,000 francs, and Gérôme's *Enfant en prière dans une mosquée* [*Child in Prayer in a Mosque*] for 10,000 francs.¹⁷ Merchant prince A. T. Stewart bought Meissonier's *La Querelle de jeu* [*The Gambling Quarrel*] for 15,000 francs.¹⁸ Although not as high as the price for Gérôme's *Dance of the Almeh*, these prices were among the highest of any artists in the stock books.

Exposure to French art at the Universal Exposition markedly increased buying activity. In the years 1866 and 1867, American buyers already accounted for a third of Bouguereau's sales, a quarter of Gérôme's, both of Cabanel's (there were only two), and half of the handful of Meissonier's works sold by Goupil. The year after his 1865 purchase, A. T. Stewart bought again from Goupil. This time he paid 12,000 francs for Gérôme's *La Mosquée El Assaneyn* [*The El Assaneyn Mosque*].¹⁹ The highest price paid in 1866 for a Gérôme painting was 31,775 francs for *Louis XIV et Molière* [*Louis XIV and Molière*] sold to Edward Matthews of New York.²⁰ Knoedler was an especially active buyer of pictures sold by Goupil around the time of the exposition. In 1866, Knoedler paid 17,000 francs each for three pictures by Meissonier.²¹ Knoedler continued to pay Goupil high prices, ranging from about 3,000 to 8,000 francs each, for works by Bouguereau

¹⁷ Goupil, book 2: 182, 191. Throughout the Goupil stock books are notations of reductions of paintings. For more on the topic of copies of original works, see Patricia Mainardi, "Copies, Variations, Replicas: Nineteenth-Century Studio Practice," *Visual Resources* 15, no. 2 (1999): 134. Reductions are also discussed in Gerald Ackerman, "The Bague-Gérôme *Cours de dessin*: Goupil & Cie Attacks a National Problem," in *Gérôme and Goupil: Art and Enterprise* (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 2000), 59-60; and Stephen Bann, "Reassessing Repetition in Nineteenth-Century Academic Painting: Delaroche, Gérôme, Ingres," in *The Repeating Image: Multiples in French Painting from David to Matisse*, ed. Eik Kahng (Baltimore: Walters Art Museum, 2007), 28, 41-43.

¹⁸ Goupil, book 2: 200.

¹⁹ Goupil, book 2: 200.

²⁰ Goupil, book 3: 109. *Louis XIV and Molière* initially sold for 25,000 francs in 1863 to a European buyer (Goupil, book 2: 79) and then reappeared in the stock books in 1866. London dealer Gambart purchased a repetition of the picture for 20,000 francs in 1867.

²¹ Goupil, book 3: 46, 100. The pictures were *Hallebardier*, *Antichambre*, and *Hommes d'armes*.

in 1867. The most expensive Bouguereau painting sold by Goupil in 1867 was *Far from Home*, for which Knoedler paid 13,000 francs.²²

Most of these paintings were made for the market and not exhibited, and popular Salon works were not always available for purchase. Instead, American and European collectors could buy reductions of them as Blodgett had of Bouguereau's *Young Girl Carrying a Child*. For example, Knoedler bought reductions of admired Salon paintings by Cabanel for Israel Corse of New York: a reduction of the *Le Poëte florentin* [*Florentine Poet*] (Salon of 1861) (fig. 2.3) for 10,000 francs in 1866 and *Aglaé* [*Aglaia*] (Salon of 1857) for 10,000 francs in 1867.²³ Avery also bought reductions of a few pictures in 1867, including a reduction of Bouguereau's *Le Catechisme* [*Catechism*] from Goupil for 1,400 francs, a few days after Knoedler purchased the original for 3,000 francs.²⁴ In 1868 Knoedler paid 20,000 francs for Bouguereau's *Enfants endormis* [*Sleeping Infants*] (Salon of 1868).²⁵

Knoedler was still the major buyer of French paintings, but because of the attention the artists received in 1867 as a result of the Universal Exposition, an increasing number of private American collectors began to purchase pictures directly from Goupil. William T. Walters bought a reduction of Bouguereau's *Invocation à la vierge* [*Invocation to the Virgin*] for 4,000 francs, Robert Hoe purchased Bouguereau's *L'Enfant perdu* [*Lost Child*] for 7,000 francs, and Henry

²² Goupil, book 3: 145. The title *Far from Home* was written in English in the stock book.

²³ Goupil, book 3: 92, 179. The original *Aglaia* was in the Salon of 1857 and the original *Florentine Poet* was a sensation in the Salon of 1861.

²⁴ Goupil, book 3: 127, 139. Dealers who bought reductions often intended to have engravings made after these works before selling the painting. Avery also bought a reduction of Bouguereau's *Les balles du savon* [*Balls of Soap*] for 1,500 francs in 1867; see Goupil, book 3: 147.

²⁵ *Sleeping infants* was originally exhibited in the Salon of 1866; see Goupil, book 4: 52.

Probasco bought Gérôme's *Bergère Syrien* [*Syrian Shepherd*] for 15,000 francs.²⁶ These prices were in the mid- to high-price range.

The Goupil stock books record that American dealers and collectors continued to pay the highest prices for paintings by Bouguereau, Gérôme, and Meissonier in 1869. Some notable examples include Knoedler's purchase of Bouguereau's *Pastorale* [*Pastoral Scene*] for 11,875 francs, Blodgett's purchase of Meissonier's *Les Bons amis* [*Three Friends*] for 37,700 francs and Gérôme's *Calque sur la mer rouge* [*The Red Sea (?)*] for 30,000 francs, and A. T. Stewart purchase of Gérôme's *Marchand d'habits* [*Clothes Merchant*] for 21,000 francs.²⁷ Probasco's purchase of Gérôme's *Le Générale Bonaparte* [*General Bonaparte*] for 30,000 francs was the highest price paid for a Gérôme painting sold by Goupil in 1867.²⁸

Knoedler and several prominent American collectors readily purchased works from Goupil, but Lucas began cautiously. He first bought less expensive drawings by the four artists and etchings after their paintings and made several inquiries about pictures without purchasing them.²⁹ But by the time of the 1867 Exposition, Lucas had frequent contact with Bouguereau regarding two painting commissions for Americans at 12,000 francs each: *Art and Literature*, an allegory depicting female figures, for Colonel J. Stricker Jenkins of Baltimore and a

²⁶ Goupil, book 3: 151. For an analysis of Gérôme's works sold through Goupil, see DeCourcy E. McIntosh, "Goupil and the American Triumph of Jean-Léon Gérôme," in *Gérôme and Goupil: Art and Enterprise* (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux; New York: Dahesh Museum of Art, 2000), 31-43.

²⁷ Goupil, book 4: 54, 174, 122, 117.

²⁸ Goupil, book 4: 102.

²⁹ Meissonier was first mentioned in Lucas' diary in 1859, Gérôme in 1861, Bouguereau in 1864, and Cabanel in 1866; see George A. Lucas, *Diary of George A. Lucas: An American Art Agent in Paris, 1857-1909*, ed. Lilian M. C. Randall (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 2: 88, 124, 189, 225.

portrait of John Taylor Johnston's children.³⁰ *Art and Literature* was arranged through Avery and was completed at the end of 1867.³¹ Many of Lucas' visits to Bouguereau's studio in 1867 and 1868 were related to the commission for Johnston, who was in Paris for the Universal Exposition and who visited Bouguereau's studio with Lucas. Bouguereau painted the portrait from photographs and at least one sitting, and completed it in 1869.³²

With some of these major purchases in the late 1860s, Americans had rapidly begun forming collections of French academic art. Goupil was the major supplier, particularly for paintings by Bouguereau and Gérôme. Because of Goupil, Bouguereau's and Gérôme's pictures entered American collections more rapidly than those by Cabanel or Meissonier. Knoedler bought many artworks from Goupil, which he in turn would sell in his New York picture shop, and the roles of Lucas and Avery as intermediaries grew in importance, as more Americans desired pictures by the artists.

Buying Activities in the 1870s

By 1870, dealers and collectors were clearly on a path to buying more paintings by the four artists and paying increasingly higher prices for them.³³ In

³⁰ Ibid., 214. The commission for *Art and Literature* is also discussed in Strahan, *Art Treasures*, 3: 76-77; and Eric M. Zafran, "William Bouguereau in America: A Roller-Coaster Reputation," in *In the Studios of Paris: William Bouguereau and His American Students*, ed. James F. Peck (Tulsa, OK: Philbrook Museum of Art; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 18.

³¹ Lucas, *Lucas Diary*, 2: 256.

³² Ibid., 284-85, 298, 302, 305.

³³ For a general and brief analysis of the entrée of French academic and Barbizon art into selected American collections via three dealers, see Lois Marie Fink, "French Art in the United States, 1850-1870: Three Dealers and Collectors," *Gazette des beaux-arts* 92 (September 1978): 87-100. For an extensive study of the sale of Barbizon pictures, see Anne Reverdy, *L'École de Barbizon: évolution du prix des tableaux de 1850 à 1960* (Paris: Mouton, 1973). An indispensable study on the evolution of the art market in France is Harrison C. White and Cynthia

the Goupil ledgers, the 1870s was the strongest decade overall for sales of works by all four artists. For example, Goupil sold only thirty works by Bouguereau to Americans in the 1860s, but the firm sold eighty-one in the 1870s. The numbers of Gérôme's works sold to Americans also increased substantially, from eighteen works in the 1860s to forty-six works in the 1870s.

Average sale prices from the time the four artists first appeared in the stock books through 1870 were about 9,200 francs (\$1,840) for Gérôme's works, 12,100 francs (\$2,420) for Meissonier's works, and 4,600 francs (\$920) for Bouguereau's works.³⁴ These were close to the prices received at Avery's 1868 sale. But these averages nearly doubled for paintings by Bouguereau and Gérôme from the 1860s to the 1870s and almost tripled for paintings by Meissonier in the same period. The average sale price for Bouguereau's works in the stock books in the 1870s rose from 4,600 francs to over 10,000 francs. Although Goupil bought and sold fewer works by Gérôme than by Bouguereau in the 1870s, Gérôme's average sale price in the stock books for this decade was about 20,000 francs, almost twice as high as Bouguereau's prices. In comparison, the average for the few Cabanel paintings sold was about 10,000 francs.³⁵ This rapid increase in prices did not go unnoticed. Even Avery commented in 1872 that "prices asked for all kinds of painting are getting to be simply ridiculous."³⁶ The prices would climb even higher.

A. White, *Canvases and Careers: Institutional Change in the French Painting World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

³⁴ These averages are based on all the works sold to Europeans or Americans in the Goupil books.

³⁵ Goupil sold only seven works total by Cabanel in the 1870s, three of those to Americans.

³⁶ Samuel P. Avery to John Taylor Johnston, 31 July 1872, transcribed and published in Fidell-Beaufort and Welcher, "Some Views of Art Buying," 54.

In this period, Knoedler was still the major buyer of paintings by Bouguereau and Gérôme, although Avery, Lucas, and private collectors also occasionally bought from Goupil. Most of the works by Bouguereau that Goupil bought were sold to Knoedler. Knoedler bought forty-one paintings by Bouguereau between 1870 and 1879, compared to fifteen by Gérôme, one by Cabanel, and two by Meissonier. A handful of Bouguereau's paintings were sold to other dealers, such as Avery in New York, Wallis and Company in London and van Gogh in Amsterdam, while others sold directly to individual buyers of various nationalities, including several pictures to A. T. Stewart.³⁷ Stewart paid Goupil 45,000 francs in 1878 for Bouguereau's *La Retour des champs* [*Return from the Harvest*] (fig. 2.4a and 2.4b), the highest sale price for a work by Bouguereau in this time period in the stock books.³⁸

American buyers also kept the average high, especially for paintings by Gérôme and by Meissonier. Stewart paid the highest price paid for a work by Gérôme in this period—an astonishing 125,000 francs for *Course en char* [(*Chariot Race*) *Circus Maximus*] (fig. 2.5)—in 1876.³⁹ Two years later Gérôme's *Louis XIV and the Grand Condé* (fig. 2.6a and 2.6b) sold to William H. Vanderbilt for 100,000 francs, far above average sales prices.⁴⁰ As two of the wealthiest men in the United States, they wanted the best and most expensive works for their collections, and could afford them with their large fortunes.

³⁷ For example, A. T. Stewart bought Bouguereau's *Homer and His Guide* from Goupil in 1874. See Goupil, book 7: 124.

³⁸ Goupil, book 9: 191.

³⁹ Goupil, book 8: 143. Gérôme wrote a letter to Stewart in 1876 describing the details and accuracy of the picture; see *Catalogue of the A. T. Stewart Collection of Paintings, Sculptures, and Other Objects of Art* (New York: American Art Association, 1887), 58.

⁴⁰ Goupil, book 9: 163.

As mentioned above, Meissonier's works sold through Galerie Georges Petit, and Goupil dealt with far fewer paintings by Meissonier. Nevertheless, Goupil sold some of Meissonier's works to Americans. The average sale price of Meissonier's works in this period to all buyers was about 34,000 francs, well above the average prices of Bouguereau, Gérôme, or Cabanel. But Americans still paid prices higher than the average. They wanted—and could afford—the most valuable paintings. For example, Stewart paid 94,500 francs in 1873 for Meissonier's *Hussards dans une cour* [*Hussars in a Courtyard*].⁴¹ Knoedler paid a whopping 120,000 francs for *Innocents et malins* [*Innocents and Sly Ones (The Game of Picquet)*] in 1878.⁴²

Goupil rarely handled pictures by Cabanel, but Lucas had extensive contact with the artist. Cabanel's relatively close association with Lucas, an American agent, indicates that Cabanel's main market consisted of American collectors. Stunningly high prices like those occasionally paid for paintings were not common for Cabanel, but the prices for his works were stable. Lucas first expressed interest in Cabanel in 1866, when he bought a reduction of Cabanel's famous *Birth of Venus* (fig. 1.5) from Goupil for 20,000 francs and had an engraving made after it.⁴³ Lucas visited Cabanel's studio at least once a month from 1872 through 1879, and paid him about 179,000 francs over these eight years. Cabanel painted several works ordered by Lucas, mainly solitary female figures from literature, including *Hero*, *Pandora*, and the *Daughter of Jephtha*, as

⁴¹ Goupil, book 6: 232.

⁴² Goupil, book 7: 85; book 9: 158. Goupil purchased *Innocents and Sly Ones* from Oppenheim's widow for 100,000 francs, and then sold it to Knoedler.

⁴³ Lucas, *Lucas Diary*, 2: 225-26.

well as other works described only as “head,” for which Lucas generally paid about 10,000 francs each.⁴⁴

In the 1870s, Avery, like Lucas, dealt mainly with works by Bouguereau and Cabanel, and to a lesser extent, Gérôme and Meissonier. He tended to pay between 5,000 and 12,000 francs for Bouguereau’s works and about the same range for Cabanel. The prices paid for their pictures were steady. Avery made only a handful of purchases of Gérôme’s and of Meissonier’s works, and for these Avery tended to pay less than 10,000 francs. Like Lucas, Avery commissioned a number of works from Cabanel, such as *Ariadne* for 11,000 francs.⁴⁵

Americans purchased many of these female figures from Cabanel, but more often they preferred to commission portraits.⁴⁶ However, because so few transactions regarding portraits were recorded in the diaries or stock books, it appears that Cabanel dealt with his clients directly.⁴⁷ In a letter to John Taylor Johnston written in 1872, Avery mentioned that Cabanel was busy painting portraits of American women.⁴⁸ Most of these paintings were not considered part of a “collection” of paintings, since they generally remained in the family, and were not sold when the collection was dispersed at auction.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Ibid., 384, 388, 402, 412, 459, 484, 489.

⁴⁵ Avery, *Avery Diaries*, 154.

⁴⁶ Leanne Zalewski, “Alexandre Cabanel’s Portraits of the American ‘Aristocracy’ of the Early Gilded Age.” *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 4, no. 1 (Spring 2005), http://19thc-artworldwide.org/spring_05/articles/zale.html (accessed February 15, 2005).

⁴⁷ Cabanel kept accounts of the portraits that he sold; these documents are in a private collection.

⁴⁸ Samuel P. Avery to John Taylor Johnston, 31 July 1872, transcribed and published in Fidell-Beaufort and Welcher, “Some Views of Art Buying,” 54.

⁴⁹ One notable exception is a portrait of Catharine Lorillard Wolfe, which Cabanel painted in 1876 while Wolfe was in Paris. Though not sold at auction, her portrait was included in her collection as a bequest to the Metropolitan Museum of Art; see Zalewski, 2005; and idem, “Alexandre Cabanel’s Popularity in Gilded Age America” (Master’s thesis, Hunter College, City University of

Avery and Lucas often collaborated on commissions and purchases; their business relationship is evident from their diaries. For example, both dealers were involved in William H. Vanderbilt's commission for *A Venetian Painter* by Meissonier. Avery commissioned the painting from Meissonier in 1878 on behalf of Vanderbilt, and Lucas arranged to pay the artist 85,000 francs for it.⁵⁰ Lucas and Avery also worked together regarding purchases from Cabanel and Bouguereau. Avery wrote to Lucas in 1878 to purchase Cabanel's *Daughter of Jephtha* for 8,000 francs as well as to order a smaller copy at 5,000 or 6,000 francs, most likely to be engraved.⁵¹ Avery bought most works from Bouguereau for less than 10,000 francs. Lucas paid Bouguereau 76,000 francs total for just three years (1871, 1872 and 1874), and he paid 11,300 francs to Goupil for purchases of Bouguereau's works. Almost half of this sum was paid for *Charity* (fig. 2.7), which Lucas commissioned from Bouguereau on behalf of Avery, and for which he paid 32,000 francs in 1872.⁵²

Private Collections: The Sale of the John Taylor Johnston Collection

Although the four dealers were essential in the formation of private American collections in the 1870s, auctions became the fashionable means of dispersing the collections, especially in the 1880s. Auctions were another way in which the artists' works circulated within the art market in New York, where most

New York, 2002), 74-75. It is difficult to locate and date these portraits. Since completing this thesis, I have been able to firmly date four portraits of American sitters in the 1860s, fifteen in the 1870s, and seventeen in the 1880s. There are at least twenty-three more portraits of Americans whose dates are unknown, and more that were unrecorded.

⁵⁰ Avery, 463; Lucas, *Lucas Diary*, 2: 466.

⁵¹ Avery, 500.

⁵² Lucas, *Lucas Diary*, 2: 356. Lucas (2: 394) also arranged for Bouguereau to paint a portrait of Mary Buckler from Baltimore for 15,000 francs in 1874.

major auctions took place. Auctions and sales results were widely reported in contemporary periodicals, and sales catalogs were produced for all the major auctions.⁵³ The high prices the four artists' works received at the auctions made headlines, and served as indicators of this stock market of art. Then as now, record prices aroused the public's interest and increased the reputations of artists. Meissonier was accepted as the most popular and expensive contemporary artist, and the exorbitant sums of money paid for his pictures made headlines in many publications.

Largely with the aid of dealers Lucas, Avery, Knoedler, and Goupil in particular, major collections of European art were rapidly formed in the United States. That these collections began to be profiled and chronicled by 1870, just a few years after the exposition, indicated the pride Americans felt in these new collections of European academic art. Newspapers such as the *New York Times* ran features on collectors. One article highlighted the H. W. Derby collection, "one of the largest and most important collections of foreign pictures ever," whose collection included a painting by Bouguereau and a reduction of Cabanel's *Birth of Venus*.⁵⁴

Art journals also extensively covered this new phase of collecting. In 1870, American artist and critic Eugene Benson wrote a series of articles on European art in American collections. Benson, a friend of Winslow Homer, the consummate American artist, promoted American art, and particularly approved

⁵³ The major auction venues were the Somerville Art Gallery (Robert Somerville, auctioneer), Leavitt Art Galleries, and in the 1880s, the American Art Association (Thomas Kirby, auctioneer); see Henry J. Duffy, "New York City Collections 1865-1895" (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers, 2001), 15, 18, 20.

⁵⁴ "Fine Arts," *New York Times*, 4 December 1870, 3.

of artists such as Homer whose work did not betray foreign influences; however, he also praised French art. He wrote essays on the collections of Marshall O. Roberts, William T. Blodgett, August Belmont, and John Taylor Johnston for *Putnam's Monthly*.⁵⁵ Benson credited these collectors, as well as the dealers Knoedler and Schaus, with acquainting the American public with the works of Gérôme and Meissonier in particular.⁵⁶ Benson also claimed that Gérôme was "the most successful artist now living in France."⁵⁷ He considered an early Gérôme, *Egyptian Recruits Crossing the Desert* (1857), as a masterpiece; this painting was owned by Roberts and had been exhibited at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.⁵⁸ Roberts also owned Meissonier's *The Smoker* (1862) and *Chess Players* (1836), a picture which, according to Benson, had made Meissonier famous.⁵⁹ Benson declared that Blodgett's collection "contained the best foreign art in New York," and reported that Belmont owned two works by Bouguereau, two "admirable" works by Meissonier, and a picture by Gérôme.⁶⁰

Although Benson admired the aforementioned collections, he wrote that the collection of John Taylor Johnston was "wholly modern" and "second to no

⁵⁵ Eugene Benson, "Pictures in the Private Galleries of New York: Gallery of John Taylor Johnston," *Putnam's Monthly* 16, no. 31 (July 1870): 81-87; idem, "Pictures in the Private Galleries of New York: Galleries of Belmont and Blodgett," *Putnam's Monthly* 15, no. 29 (May 1870): 534-41; and idem, "Pictures in Private Galleries of New York: Gallery of Marshall O. Roberts," *Putnam's Monthly* 16, no. 34 (October 1870): 376-81. Recall that Johnston, Belmont, Blodgett, and Roberts were American committee members at the Universal Exposition of 1867.

⁵⁶ Benson, "Pictures: Belmont and Blodgett," 534.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 539.

⁵⁸ Benson, "Pictures: Roberts," 380. This painting was already well-known, since it was shown in the Pennsylvania Academy's annual exhibitions held in 1860, 1861, and 1862; see H. Barbara Weinberg, *The Lure of Paris: Nineteenth-Century American Painters and Their French Teachers* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1991), 94.

⁵⁹ Benson, "Pictures: Roberts," 381-82.

⁶⁰ Benson, "Pictures: Belmont and Blodgett," 537, 540.

gallery in New York."⁶¹ Again, he felt that one of the best pictures in the Johnston collection was by Gérôme, the *Death of Caesar* (fig. 1.8).⁶² Also among the best were Bouguereau's *Going to the Bath* (fig. 2.8) "a beautiful and celebrated picture," and two works by Meissonier, *Soldier at Cards*, dated 1860, and *Marshall Saxe and Staff*, dated 1866.⁶³ Johnston allowed visitors into his personal gallery built over a stable at the back of his marble mansion, itself a tourist attraction, every Thursday afternoon.⁶⁴

Lucas and Avery worked with Johnston to form his collection, which he unfortunately could not enjoy for long. Johnston, who was president of the Lehigh, Susquehanna, and Central New Jersey railroads, was adversely affected by the general economic downturn that occurred in the United States from 1873 to 1878. Impending financial trouble with his railroads forced him to sell his collection in 1876, soon after he formed it. Yet, despite the circumstances of the sale, his was the first fashionable auction held after the 1867 Exposition. The pictures went on exhibit at the National Academy of Design three weeks prior to the sale. Auction events like his were highly publicized and well attended by other dealers and collectors, with dealers often purchasing on behalf of prominent collectors. Auction prices for this famous collection were closely watched and reported in the papers and in magazines geared towards collectors,

⁶¹ Benson, "Pictures: Johnston," 81.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 86; and *The Collection of Paintings, Drawings and Statuary: The Property of John Taylor Johnston, Esq.* (New York: Somerville Art Gallery, 1876), 58.

⁶³ Benson, "Pictures: Johnston," 86.

⁶⁴ "Notes," *Art Journal* (New York) n.s., 3, no. 2 (1877): 63.

such as *Art Amateur*.⁶⁵ The magazine published both the purchase price and the purchaser's name, making it easy to follow the market.

Avery directed the Johnston sale and wrote the notice in the catalog, praising the collection as one of the best, "if not *the* finest, most varied, and complete collection ever brought together on this continent."⁶⁶ To note the significance of the works and increase the sales price, pedigree was given in the catalog for the paintings. These included Gérôme's *Death of Caesar*, purchased at the 1867 Exposition, and Meissonier's *Soldier at Cards*, originally in the well-known collection of the Russian aristocrat, Prince Demidoff.⁶⁷ The pictures by the French artists were among the few pictures in the sale that sold for over \$5,000 each.⁶⁸ *Death of Caesar* brought \$8,000; Bouguereau's *Going to the Bath* sold for \$6,000; and *Soldier at Cards* realized \$11,500.⁶⁹ These high prices, brought during a recession no less, indicated to collectors of contemporary European works that these artists' pictures were among the best

⁶⁵ *Art Amateur* was published from 1879 to 1903. Montague Marks, who wrote under the pseudonym "Montezuma," served as editor and publisher of *Art Amateur* from 1879 to 1897. The auction results were also reported in the aptly named *Collector* magazine, which was first published in 1889.

⁶⁶ Samuel P. Avery, "Notice," *The Collection of Paintings, Drawings and Statuary, Property of John Taylor Johnston, Esq.* . . . (New York, 1876), n. p.

⁶⁷ Prince Anatole Demidoff was the ex-husband of Princess Mathilde, the cousin of Emperor Napoleon III.

⁶⁸ Surprisingly, an American landscape grabbed the honors of most expensive painting of the evening: Frederick Edwin Church's *Niagara Falls* sold to the Corcoran Gallery in Washington D.C. for \$12,500, reported to be the highest price reached for a work at auction. This picture, though, had an impressive pedigree: it was originally in the collection of William T. Blodgett, who bought it in 1859 for \$10,000, and it won a silver medal at the 1867 Universal Exposition in Paris.

⁶⁹ There were other pictures by the three artists, although the origins of the pictures were not noted. The pictures were Gérôme's *Bashi-Bazouk*, which sold for \$1,200; Bouguereau's *Blowing Bubbles*, which sold for \$1,225; and Meissonier's *Marshall Saxe and Staff*, dated 1866, which sold for \$8,600.

and safest investments.⁷⁰ A reviewer remarked after the sale that Johnston's "collection was the largest and most valuable ever sold in the United States."⁷¹

Reporting on the Collections: Edward Strahan's *Art Treasures of America*

Just a few years after the Johnston collection sale, Edward Strahan, a pseudonym for Earl Shinn, recorded the major American collections of European art in his three-volume deluxe illustrated work, *Art Treasures of America*.⁷² Strahan, one of Gérôme's former students, shared the conviction of other American critics who felt that examples of European art were essential for the improvement of American art. Where Tuckerman's *Book of the Artists* had thinly documented the significant collections of American art at the time of the 1867 Exposition, Strahan extensively documented the important American collections of European art over a decade later. Significantly, some collectors, such as Johnston, figured in both publications, first as collectors of American art, then of European, mainly French art.⁷³ The publication of *Art Treasures* signaled the apogee of collection formation.

⁷⁰ Fidell-Beaufort believed that this sale marked a real turning point in collecting, but collectors had already begun collecting French art by the time of the exposition; see Fidell-Beaufort and Welcher, "Some Views of Art Buying," 52.

⁷¹ "Notes," 63.

⁷² Edward Strahan [Earl Shinn], *Art Treasures of America*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: George Barrie, 1879-1882). This luxury set was sold by subscription only to one thousand people, and many of the collectors' names can be found in the list of subscribers published in the first volume. For more information on Strahan, see Daniel Timothy Lenehan, "Fashioning Taste: Earl Shinn, Art Criticism, and National Identity in Gilded Age America" (Master's thesis, Haverford College, 2005).

⁷³ Tuckerman, 623-33. Some of the collections documented by Tuckerman and then by Strahan were those of Belmont, Blodgett, Corcoran, Stewart, and Roberts. Strahan's book was far more extensive than Tuckerman's and also included collections of William T. Walters, John Wolfe, and Catharine Lorillard Wolfe among others.

The most important collections profiled by Strahan included works by some or all four of the artists. Because he had studied under Gérôme in 1866, Strahan, not surprisingly, commented more on Gérôme than on the other artists, although there were far more pictures by Bouguereau than by the other three artists in American collections.⁷⁴ However, this does not include Cabanel's portraits, only a few of which are listed, and so the total number cannot be accurately ascertained. In American collections all across the country were fifty-seven pictures by Bouguereau, twenty-seven pictures by Cabanel, forty-three pictures by Gérôme, and thirty-seven pictures by Meissonier. Illustrations, engravings, or photogravures after works by the four artists were liberally reproduced throughout the three volumes. Strahan described most of these pictures and often indicated the origin or cost of each work.

Works from the earlier careers of the four artists found their way into American collections. Most notably, Cabanel's early important painting, *Death of Moses*, exhibited in the Universal Exposition of 1855, was on view by 1874 at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. (of which William T. Walters was a trustee).⁷⁵ Meissonier's *L'Ordonnance* [*The Orderly*], which belonged to a European collector at the time of the 1867 Exposition, was in the collection of W. H. Vanderbilt by the time *Art Treasures* was published.

Many of the works in these collections were purchased from dealers after the 1867 Exposition. For example, A. T. Stewart's widow owned Gérôme's

⁷⁴ H. Barbara Weinberg, "Nineteenth-Century American Painters at the École des Beaux-Arts," *American Art Journal* 13, no. 4 (Autumn 1981): 81.

⁷⁵ The picture was purchased from Cabanel through Lucas in 1874 for 25,000 francs; see Lucas, *Lucas Diary*, 2: 389.

Chariot Race (Circus Maximus); Stewart bought the picture from Schaus, who had bought it from Goupil.⁷⁶ On the center wall of the Stewart gallery hung Bouguereau's *Return from the Harvest*, with Meissonier's *1807, Friedland* (fig. 2.9) facing it on the opposite wall.⁷⁷ Strahan described *1807, Friedland* at length, and noted that it had arrived in New York in 1876, after having been exhibited at the Vienna Exposition of 1873 and in Paris at the Cercle de l'Union Artistique, known as the Mirlitons, in 1875. He made a point of mentioning the astonishing price: \$60,000 for the picture alone, and \$80,000 including the tariff.⁷⁸

Not surprisingly, numerous pictures in the American collections profiled in *Art Treasures* had been exhibited at the Paris Salon. This connection clearly contributed to the paintings' significance (and by association the collector's status). As a *Studio* correspondent noted in 1883, Americans relied on Paris for cultural guidance: "the eyes of the world still turn to Paris for its standard of taste, and look to its Salon as, in a certain sense, the stock market of art."⁷⁹ By owning and lending Salon works, American collectors could consider themselves as cultured as European collectors. Some pictures were exhibited at the Salon first and then bought by Americans. These included Bouguereau's *Nymphs and Satyr* (fig. 2.10) from the Salon of 1873, in John Wolfe's collection, and Bouguereau's *Homer and His Guide* (fig. 2.11), which was exhibited in the Salon of 1874 before entering the Stewart collection.

⁷⁶ Goupil, book 11: 73.

⁷⁷ Strahan, *Art Treasures*, 1: 23.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 1: 27.

⁷⁹ Charles W. Larned, "French Art," *Studio* 2, no. 46 (17 November 1883): 223.

Of course, Salon paintings were limited in number; however, collectors bought reductions of well-known Salon pictures when the originals were unavailable for purchase. For example, Joseph Drexel owned a reduction of Bouguereau's *Charity*, and a reduction of Gérôme's celebrated painting, *Duel after the Ball* (fig. 1.4), was in the collection of William T. Walters.⁸⁰ The original, exhibited in the Salon of 1857, was again shown at the Universal Exposition of 1867. Another picture by Gérôme, *Dead Caesar*, exhibited at the Salon of 1859 and again in New York at Knoedler (Goupil & Co.) the same year, was in the Johnston collection.⁸¹

Many reductions of Cabanel's paintings entered American collections. Henry Gibson and John Wolfe each owned reductions of his famous *Birth of Venus*, a prominent work from the Universal Exposition of 1867. The success of the original *Birth of Venus*, which hung in the Luxembourg Museum, spread across the Atlantic, and it was well-known from its engraving by Alphonse François.⁸² Reductions of the painting were purchased by H. W. Derby in 1870—later sold to Gibson—and in 1875 by Wolfe.⁸³ Mrs. A. E. Kidd owned a reduction of Cabanel's *Death of Francesca da Rimini and Paolo Malatesta* (fig. 2.12), exhibited at the Salon of 1870 and again at the Paris Universal Exposition

⁸⁰ Strahan, *Art Treasures*, 1: 87. For a discussion of the many reproductions available for this painting, see Régine Bigorne, "A Publishing Policy," in *Gérôme and Goupil: Art and Enterprise* (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 2000), 80-89.

⁸¹ W., "Sketchings," *Crayon* 7, no. 12 (December 1859): 378.

⁸² Edward Strahan [Earl Shinn], "Art at the Seventh Regiment Fair," *Art Amateur* 2, no. 1 (1879): 4. It is unclear which etching he refers to; see Charles Henry Hart, "The Public and Private Collections of the United States: The Collection of Mr. Henry C. Gibson, Philadelphia," *American Art Review* 1 (1880): 233.

⁸³ Goupil, book 5: 32. This reduction was once a gem in the Derby collection; see "Fine Arts," 3. The *Birth of Venus*, which purportedly belonged to the Empress Eugénie at one time, was the star of Gibson's collection; see Strahan, *Art Treasures*, 1: 67. This painting is now in the collection of the Dahesh Museum of Art.

of 1878; the original painting hung in the Luxembourg Museum in Paris. Israel Corse of New York owned reductions of Cabanel's *Aglaia* and *Florentine Poet*, and J. H. Warren owned a reduction of *Florentine Poet*.⁸⁴ The original painting was in a private Dutch collection and was sold in Europe in 1876 for 56,000 francs, the highest price paid for a painting by Cabanel.⁸⁵

Collectors could also enhance their collection's status by lending paintings to the Paris Salon. One incentive was that their names would then be included in the salon catalogs as lenders. For example, James Stebbins lent a "famous Gérôme," *L'Éminence grise* (fig. 2.13) to the Salon of 1874, where it was awarded a medal of honor, and again to the Universal Exposition of 1878, only increasing its fame and the owner's prestige.⁸⁶ A. T. Stewart lent Gérôme's *Collaboration (Corneille and Molière)* (fig. 2.4b), to the Salon of 1874 and Meissonier's *Petit poste de grand'garde [Outpost of the Grand Guard]* to the Universal Exposition of 1878.⁸⁷ Catharine Lorillard Wolfe lent Cabanel's *Shulamite* to the Salon of 1876.⁸⁸ Lending to the Salon by American dealers and collectors continued into the early 1880s, when collectors' names were still noted

⁸⁴ Corse's pictures were purchased from Goupil; see Goupil, book 3: 92, 179.

⁸⁵ "Sale of Paintings in Paris," *New York Times*, 16 May 1876, 8.

⁸⁶ Strahan, *Art Treasures*, 1: 99. The jury of the Salon of 1874, which included Cabanel, Meissonier, and Bouguereau, among others, awarded the Medal of Honor to Gérôme for his genre picture, *L'Éminence grise*. However, because Medals of Honor were generally awarded to history pictures, there was some controversy surrounding the award. Gérôme tried to return the medal, but the jury refused to accept it. See Ackerman, *Life and Work of Jean-Léon Gérôme*, 96. According to records from the École des beaux-arts, Gérôme gave the medal, worth \$4,000, to a student fund at the École des beaux-arts; conseil supérieur de l'École des beaux-arts, procès-verbaux, 16 October 1874, Archives nationales, Paris, AJ 52 16. See also conseil supérieur de l'École des beaux-arts, procès-verbaux, 23 October 1882, no. 14, AJ 52 461, confirming the return of Gérôme's medal.

⁸⁷ Strahan, *Art Treasures*, 1: 24.

⁸⁸ Although the *Shulamite* was presumably painted to order for Catharine Wolfe in 1875, Lucy Hooper wrote that the *Shulamite* was begun ten years earlier at the request of the Empress Eugénie. According to Hooper, Cabanel could not find a suitable model, so he did not finish the painting. Then he took it up again for Wolfe; see Lucy H. Hooper, "Art in Paris," *Art Journal* 2, no. 3 (1876): 90.

in the Salon catalogs. Both of Bouguereau's submissions to the Salon of 1881 were lent by American dealers: Schaus lent *La Vierge aux anges* [*Virgin with Angels* or *Song of the Angels*] (fig. 2.14) and Avery lent *L'Aurore* [*Dawn*]. Cabanel's *Portrait de Mlle E.M...* [*Portrait of Evelyne/Eva Mackay*] was also lent by the sitter, an American socialite, to the Salon of 1881.⁸⁹

William H. Vanderbilt's Model Collection

Although the collections mentioned in *Art Treasures* were similar in content, the collection of William H. Vanderbilt rose above the others in quality and quantity.⁹⁰ According to contemporaries, Vanderbilt's collection was considered to be the most important American collection. Avery commented in 1884 that Vanderbilt had the most extensive and worthy American art collection in the United States (which Avery and Lucas had helped form).⁹¹ Several small catalogs of the collection were published, and the *New York Times* and the *Collector* also listed the contents of the collection.⁹² Vanderbilt's collection was still touted as comprising "artistic landmarks of the world" as late as 1890.⁹³

⁸⁹ This portrait was again exhibited in 1883 at the Exposition nationale held at Galerie Georges Petit in Paris.

⁹⁰ See Duffy, "New York City Collections, 1865-1895" 10-13.

⁹¹ Samuel P. Avery, "Some Notes on the History of Fine Arts in New York City during the Past Fifty Years [1883]," in *History of New York City, Embracing an Outline Sketch of Events from 1609 to 1830, and a Full Account of Its Development from 1830 to 1884*, ed. Benson John Lossing (New York: Perine Company, 1884), 843.

⁹² Various catalogs of his collection were published between 1879 and the late 1880s; see *The Private Collection of W. H. Vanderbilt, 459 Fifth Avenue, New York* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1879); *Collection of W. H. Vanderbilt, 640 Fifth Avenue, New York* (New York: Putnam, 1882); *Collection of W. H. Vanderbilt, 640 Fifth Avenue, New York* (New York: n.p., 1884); and *Catalogue of the W. H. Vanderbilt Collection of Paintings* (New York: De Vinne Press, 1886). See also "Mr. Vanderbilt's Gallery," *New York Times*, 10 December 1885, 2; and "William H. Vanderbilt Collection," *Collector* 1, no. 11 (1 April 1890): 81-87.

⁹³ "William H. Vanderbilt Collection," 81.

An entire chapter in the third volume of *Art Treasures* was devoted to Vanderbilt's extensive collection, with a note that the catalog raisonné of his collection was in progress.⁹⁴ This catalog was soon available in the form of multi-volume luxury illustrated tomes written by Strahan himself and published in 1883 and 1884.⁹⁵ Significant works by the French artists—two paintings by Bouguereau, one by Cabanel, four by Gérôme, and four by Meissonier—belonged to Vanderbilt and were discussed at length by Strahan.

Even though *Mr. Vanderbilt's House and Collection* was essentially intended as homage to the collection, Strahan was not entirely flattering. Rather than praising Bouguereau's pictures, *Going to the Bath*, dated 1865 (formerly in the Johnston collection), and *Italian Boy, or Pifferaro*, dated 1874, Strahan remarked somewhat scornfully on Bouguereau's official success and Raphaelesque style. He called Bouguereau "A finished draughtsman, serene, elegant, and faultily faultless . . . [whose] hold on the public is so strong that art publishers call him a 'porte-bonheur,' or [good luck] charm, for their illustrated works."⁹⁶ Strahan extolled Bouguereau's technical skill and acknowledged his widespread appeal while at the same time deriding him as "faultily faultless,"—his technique was perfect to a fault.

In contrast to Strahan's assessment of Bouguereau's pleasing but too flawless genre pictures, Cabanel's dramatic *Pia de Tolomei* (fig. 2.15) lent itself

⁹⁴ Strahan, *Art Treasures*, 3: 95.

⁹⁵ See Edward Strahan [Earl Shinn], *Mr. Vanderbilt's House and Collection*, 4 vols. (Boston: G. Barrie, 1883-1884); and idem, *William Vanderbilt's House and Collection*, 2 vols. (Boston: George Barrie, 1883-1884). A two-volume set and a four-volume set were published simultaneously. References are to the four-volume deluxe set printed on Japan paper. Volume two of each set contains reproductions and descriptions of the art collection.

⁹⁶ Strahan, *Mr. Vanderbilt's House and Collection*, 2: 17.

to a literary description. The innocent Pia de Tolomei, a figure from Dante's *Divine Comedy* (and later taken up by Henry Longfellow and Nathaniel Hawthorne), was locked up in a castle by her suspicious husband and left to die from breathing poisonous air. Strahan reprinted a letter from Cabanel to Vanderbilt, in which the painter commented on the literary aspect of the subject and assured the new owner that this was one of his best paintings:

Alfieri has written a fine tragedy, and many poets have sung the beauty and the sad fate of Pia dei Tolomei. . . . My artist friends, and those in whom I place great confidence, have praised the picture very highly; and, for my own part, I am well pleased that this picture is to go to you, for I consider it not only one of my very best works, but also one of the most affecting that I have painted.⁹⁷

The pathos of the subject seems to have appealed to Strahan and to Vanderbilt as much as to Cabanel.

Gérôme's subjects differed from the other two artists and thus were treated differently by Strahan. Vanderbilt owned three pictures with orientalist subjects: two paintings, *Bashi-Bazouk* and *Sabre Dance before the Pasha* (fig. 2.16a and b), and a watercolor, *Asking Alms in a Mosque*. The subject of the fourth picture was *Louis XIV and the Grand Condé* (fig. 2.6a and b). Strahan's usual praise for Gérôme's modeling and composition and ethnographic studies, apparent in *Art Treasures*, was continued in this volume. Strahan lavished praise on the *Sabre Dance before the Pasha*, and called Gérôme, "the most erudite living observer of the East," whose close observation of costume, decorative art,

⁹⁷ Ibid., 2: 19. Living artists often wrote notes to the purchasers regarding the work purchased. See Madeleine Fidell-Beaufort, Herbert L. Kleinfield, and Jeanne K. Welcher, "Introduction," in *The Diaries 1871-1882 of Samuel P. Avery* (New York: Arno Press, 1979), xxx. Cabanel wrote his letter describing *Pia de' Tolomei* to Samuel P. Avery, who then must have forwarded it to Vanderbilt; see Cabanel to Avery, 10 December 1876, "Autograph Letters: European," no. 46, Thomas J. Watson Library, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

architecture, and physical types lent his orientalist pictures an authentic air.⁹⁸ Though Gérôme's ethnographic pictures lent themselves to physical description as well as formal analysis, *Louis XIV and the Grand Condé* lent itself to lengthier description. First, as with the *Pia de Tolomei*, the author quoted a literary source, Pierre Corneille, who said: "Do not hurry, my cousin; when a man is so burdened with laurels as you are it is hard to advance swiftly."⁹⁹ Strahan likened this quotation to the painting, in which the king formally received the old victorious general, Condé, on the landing of a flower-strewn staircase at the palace of Versailles. Alongside hang the flags of conquered areas and, underneath the flags, an appreciative audience awaits. Strahan finished his discussion by stating that the strong and successful overall composition of the picture would have pleased the venerable old master, Paolo Veronese.¹⁰⁰

Strahan complimented Vanderbilt's collection of pictures by Meissonier, which was, in his opinion, "the finest group of pictures by Meissonier belonging to any one owner."¹⁰¹ The seven paintings in the Vanderbilt collection spanned the artist's career from the 1850s through the 1880s: *Artist at Work* (1855), *Man Reading* (1856), *The Orderly* (1866), *Information: General Desaix with the Army of the Rhine and Moselle* (1867), *An Artist and His Wife* (1878) and the most recent, *Portrait of William H. Vanderbilt* (1880) and *The Arrival of the Guests at*

⁹⁸ Strahan, *Mr. Vanderbilt's House and Collection*, 2: 34. Vanderbilt also owned two small sculptures of belly dancers, the *Almeh*, sculpted by Antonin Mercié after the painting of the same title by Gérôme, and the sword dancer in the *Sabre Dance before the Pasha* (called *Sword-Dance at the Pasha's* by Strahan), also sculpted by Mercié. These two sculptures ornamented the chimneypiece of Vanderbilt's bedroom; see Strahan, *Mr. Vanderbilt's House and Collection*, 2: opp. p. 106.

⁹⁹ Strahan, *Mr. Vanderbilt's House and Collection*, 2: 34.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 2: 33.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 4: 48.

the Chateau (1883). Each picture was lovingly described by Strahan, who also commented on Meissonier's universal appeal: his unique ability to lend magnitude to every aspect of his tiny pictures.¹⁰²

Strahan equated Vanderbilt's patronage of the arts with the Medici's patronage during the Renaissance.¹⁰³ Strahan believed the collection instructed and benefited the public. Avery thought the same and assumed that Vanderbilt's collection would remain in its entirety after his death and be left for the benefit of the public. Instead a portion of the Vanderbilt collection was sold in 1884, two years prior to Vanderbilt's death. The bulk of the painting collection, though, including works by Bouguereau, Cabanel, Gérôme, and Meissonier, were inherited by William H. Vanderbilt's youngest child, George W. Vanderbilt, then by Brigadier General Cornelius Vanderbilt, George W. Vanderbilt's nephew, before being finally dispersed at auction in 1945.¹⁰⁴

Buying Activities in the 1880s

In the 1870s several important collections, mainly comprised of French art, were built, culminating in collections such as those of Johnston, Stewart, and Vanderbilt. Eugene Benson's articles on private collections and publications, such as *Art Treasures of America* and *Mr. Vanderbilt's House and Collection*, reflected pride in ownership of these new collections. In contrast, artworks

¹⁰² Ibid., 4: 48-49.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 1: vi.

¹⁰⁴ *The William H. Vanderbilt Collection of Distinguished Barbizon and Genre Paintings ... sold by order of Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt* (New York: Parke-Bernet Galleries, 1945). George Washington Vanderbilt II (1862-1914) commissioned Biltmore, which would be the largest Vanderbilt estate, to be built near Asheville, NC. Brigadier General Cornelius Vanderbilt III (1873-1942) was the great-grandson of Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt, founder of the Vanderbilt fortune.

changed hands more often in the 1880s as collections were dismantled. Some key collectors, such as businessmen John Wolfe and George Seney, like Johnston, sold collections due to financial reversals of fortunes, and others bought and sold to make a profit. A writer for the *Studio* reminded his readers that “As a rule men buy pictures for the enjoyment they expect to have from their possession, and not for any anticipated profit on their investment.”¹⁰⁵ The model collector, William H. Vanderbilt, conformed to this description; however, increasingly many collectors, including Vanderbilt’s heirs, did not.

In the early 1880s, the art-loving public viewed speculation in a negative light. An 1884 editorial in the *Nation* bluntly pointed out the fact that speculation, which remained politely hidden elsewhere, existed in art: “the millionaire: he wants to add to his collection and wait for a rise.”¹⁰⁶ Several years later an *Art Review* columnist remarked scornfully that some even collected art “due to vanity, to mere rivalry, to a desire for notoriety and a yearning to demonstrate the size of the buyer’s bank account.”¹⁰⁷ Instead, writers felt that art was meant to improve American culture, not to increase fortunes—but it did both.

Regardless, or perhaps because of attitudes such as those of the above writers, Goupil, Lucas, Knoedler, and Avery steadily continued to sell pictures into the 1880s. Gérôme’s solid relationship with Goupil ensured continued promotion of his work; however, his popularity with American buyers was on the wane by the end of the decade. Americans bought slightly fewer works by

¹⁰⁵ “A Wealthy, Shrewd Business Man,” *Studio* 2, nos. 27-30 (July 1883): 31.

¹⁰⁶ C. W. S., “Protection of American Art,” *Nation* 38, no. 984 (8 May 1884): 405. The writer implicated dealers in the downfall of American art in favor of European art.

¹⁰⁷ “Art Notes,” *Art Review* 1, no. 4 (February 1887): 18.

Gérôme from Goupil in the 1880s than they had in the 1870s: forty-six in the 1870s versus thirty-four in the 1880s. Likewise, Goupil sold half as many Bouguereau paintings in the 1880s as he had in the previous decade, forty-three as compared to eighty-one. In the early 1880s, Knoedler was still the major buyer of Gérôme's and Bouguereau's works, however, Knoedler bought less frequently by the end of the decade. Goupil sold only three of Meissonier's works in the 1880s, and none by Cabanel.

Reflecting this downward trend in buying, the artists' works similarly received their highest prices in the first half of the decade. The majority of artworks by any artist in the Goupil books sold for less than 30,000 francs each, but occasionally a popular or outstanding painting would top this amount. Schaus paid above the average price for several of Bouguereau's and Gérôme's paintings that he bought from Goupil. For example, he purchased Bouguereau's *Song of the Angels* and Gérôme's *La Folie tulipienne* [*Tulip Folly*] for 50,000 francs each and paid 85,000 francs for Gérôme's *Le cirque* [*The Circus*] (1876).¹⁰⁸ A painting by Meissonier sold for a price reminiscent of the 1870s: *L'Auberge* [*Halt at an Inn*] sold to a private American buyer in 1888 for 114,400 francs.¹⁰⁹ These amounts, however, were exceptions and mostly paid in the early 1880s; they were not as high as those reached in the 1870s, in spite of the economic hard times experienced in that earlier decade.

Buying activity by Avery slowed as well, but cannot be accurately assessed beyond 1882, the year of his last visit to Paris and the end of his diary

¹⁰⁸ Goupil, book 11: 73.

¹⁰⁹ Boussod, book 12: 65.

entries.¹¹⁰ He retired in 1885, and his son took over. Most of his entries regarding Gérôme and Meissonier involved the purchase of works from Goupil. An exception is the portrait of William H. Vanderbilt; Avery and Lucas worked together with Meissonier and Vanderbilt and paid Meissonier 25,000 francs.¹¹¹ Lucas arranged the commission from Meissonier for Vanderbilt's portrait and accompanied Vanderbilt to the artist's studio for twelve sittings.¹¹²

Lucas maintained his strong relationships with Bouguereau and Cabanel into the 1880s. As he had in the 1870s, Lucas continued to commission from Cabanel single female figures such as Desdemona, Flora, Hebe, Psyche, Rebecca, and Rachel.¹¹³ Lucas still usually paid 10,000 francs for each of these types of pictures.¹¹⁴ He also arranged to have several portraits of Americans painted by Cabanel in the 1880s; these typically cost 20,000 francs.¹¹⁵ Towards the end of the decade, Lucas visited Cabanel only a few times; he attended Cabanel's funeral in January 1889.

Lucas worked little with Gérôme and Meissonier. He infrequently visited Gérôme's studio in the late 1880s. There are a few entries regarding purchases of the artist's works, but no direct payments were recorded. Only two major transactions involved Meissonier in the 1880s: William H. Vanderbilt's portrait, mentioned above, and a second on behalf of William T. Walters. Vanderbilt's portrait was completed in 1880, and that same year, on behalf of Vanderbilt, Lucas purchased Meissonier's painting, *Information: General Desaix with the*

¹¹⁰ See Randall, 1: 20.

¹¹¹ Avery, *Avery Diaries*, 574.

¹¹² Lucas, *Lucas Diary*, 497-99.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 492, 499, 517, 528-29, 577, 582.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 499, 519, 531, 582. Desdemona cost 4,000 francs (492).

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 536, 559, 609, 620, 624.

Army of the Rhine and Moselle, which had been exhibited at the Universal Exposition of 1867.¹¹⁶ There was little activity between Lucas and Meissonier until 1888, when Lucas obtained a reduction of Meissonier's *1814* for Walters, although no price was recorded.¹¹⁷

Dispersing More Collections: The Wolfe, Morgan, Stewart, and Seney Sales

The William H. Vanderbilt collection remained intact into the twentieth century, but other prominent collections were dispersed due to financial misfortune and death. Though the Johnston sale was considered a success in the 1870s, the auctions in the later 1880s and beyond generally signaled a decline in prices. A brief analysis of four important sales will show the ups and downs of the market in the 1880s: the sales of collections of John Wolfe, a prominent businessman, in 1882; Mary Jane Morgan (1852-1885), née Sexton, former French and mathematics teacher and widow of a wealthy shipping and railroad owner, Charles Morgan (no relation to J. Pierpont Morgan), in 1886; A. T. Stewart in 1887; and George Ingraham Seney (1826-1893), a banker, particularly involved in financing railroads, in 1891. These closely-watched sales served as litmus tests for the art market in Gilded Age New York.

The Wolfe collection was viewed as one of the greatest collections of modern masters of his time, not just in America, but in Europe as well.¹¹⁸ Wolfe bought works with an eye towards selling the collection at a profit. Several of the

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 499.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 670.

¹¹⁸ Cicerone, "Collection of Mr. John Wolfe," *Art Amateur* 3, no. 3 (August 1880): 54.

paintings in his collection were already known through engravings.¹¹⁹ His collection was hung Salon style, floor to ceiling, throughout his home, and it was remarked that his collection resembled that of a European museum, albeit one that was not open to the public until the auction preview.¹²⁰

Most of the advertising for the sale naturally painted a positive picture. Several ads proclaimed that the collection included “acknowledged masterpieces of the greatest living European artists.”¹²¹ The twenty-five cent fee charged to view the collection before the sale was “worth it” because the collection included a reduction of Cabanel’s *Birth of Venus* (1875), Gérôme’s *Veiled Circassian Lady* (c. 1876), and Bouguereau’s *Nymphs and Satyr* (1873).¹²² The introductory page of the sale catalog, addressed “To the Art Public,” read:

The reputation of this gallery is world-wide—known by connoisseurs to be one of the finest and most costly collections in this country—all painted to the order of Mr. Wolfe or selected by him from the studios and exhibitions in Europe—consisting of masterpieces and gems of modern art.¹²³

Statements such as this, full of key words such as “connoisseurs,” “costly,” “painted to order,” “masterpieces,” and “gems” assured potential buyers that they would be buying the best paintings available, and allowed them to purchase with confidence.

Promptly after the auction, sales results were reported as usual. Wolfe’s

¹¹⁹ Montezuma [Montague Marks], “My Note Book,” *Art Amateur* 6, no. 5 (April 1882): 93.

¹²⁰ Cicerone, “American Art Galleries: Collection of Mr. John Wolfe,” *Art Amateur* 3, no. 1 (June 1880): 5. The exhibit lasted longer than the usual few days and potential buyers had to pay twenty-five cents admission.

¹²¹ “Grand Exhibition of Paintings,” *New York Times*, 18 March 1882, 7; and “Grand Exhibition of Paintings,” *New York Times*, 19 March 1882, 15.

¹²² Montezuma [Montague Marks], “My Note Book,” *Art Amateur* 6, no. 5 (April 1882): 93.

¹²³ *Catalogue of Mr. John Wolfe's Gallery of Valuable Paintings* (New York: G. A. Leavitt & Co., 1882).

sale brought unexpectedly high prices.¹²⁴ As reported in the *Art Amateur*, the sale “showed no fall in the prevailing high prices which rule the market for foreign pictures in this country,” and brought a tidy profit for Wolfe.¹²⁵ Among the highest prices brought at the sale were \$5,300 for a Cabanel painting and \$3,800 for a Gérôme. Other pictures that sold well included a painting by Léon Bonnat for \$6,000, one by Édouard Détaillé for \$2,700, and one by Jules Breton for \$3,225. Bouguereau’s *Nymphs and Satyr*, however, brought the highest price of the sale at \$10,010.¹²⁶ These prices were significantly higher than the prices from Avery’s 1868 sale.

Wolfe assembled collections to sell, but Mary Jane Morgan seems to have had no interest at all in speculating for a profit. For her it may have been pure enjoyment.¹²⁷ Her husband left her an enormous fortune after his death in 1878, which she commenced to spend soon after. Unfortunately, she soon followed him to the grave in 1886, and jockeying among auctioneers began for the rights to disperse her collection. Though it was said to be “the greatest art event of the century,” a critic for the *Art Amateur* downplayed the excessive hype, but did say that auction sales were the only worthy art events, and admitted that there were

¹²⁴ “Art Notes,” *Art Journal* (New York) 8, no.17 (1882): 160. Wolfe was already praised in 1856 as one of the major collectors in New York. In his first sale, held in 1863, his 138 pictures were divided into American, English, German, Belgian and Dutch, and French schools; French paintings comprised the largest part of the collection. The highest price of the sale, \$4,750, was paid for a genre scene, Thomas Couture’s *Day Dream*. Taking in the noteworthy sum of \$114,660, Wolfe’s first sale, which included a picture by Meissonier, was considered to be the best sale in America to date; see Tuckerman, 21. John Wolfe’s sale of ninety-six pictures held in April 1882 brought the impressive sum of \$131,865.

¹²⁵ Montezuma [Montague Marks], “My Note Book,” *Art Amateur* 6, no. 6 (May 1882): 115.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* There is a discrepancy in information, since Wolfe gave his *Birth of Venus* to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in an 1893 bequest. According to the Museum’s provenance, the painting was in his collection from 1873-1893, although Montezuma reported in the *Art Amateur* that William Ward was the purchaser at the 1882 sale. Ward must have returned the painting.

¹²⁷ “My Note Book,” *Art Amateur* 14, no. 4 (March 1886): 76.

some fine canvases in her collection.¹²⁸ The clamor surrounding the sale was due in part to the fact that the Morgan built her collection covertly—she had sworn the dealers to secrecy—within the short space of three years.¹²⁹ Five dealers, Knoedler, Avery, Schaus, Cottier, and Reichardt, helped her form the collection.¹³⁰ This sale would be a true test of the art market.

Morgan's entire collection was comprised of Barbizon and European academic paintings. She acquired three pictures by Meissonier: *Vedette, 1812* [*The Sentry, 1812*] (1883), *Reader, or In the Library* (1876), and the "superb" *Standard Bearer* (1857).¹³¹ Morgan also owned Bouguereau's *Madonna, Infant, Saviour and St. John* (1882), which was compared to the Madonnas of the great Italian masters, but his had a modern face, like the women's faces in paintings by Cabanel.¹³² In addition, she owned Bouguereau's *Nut Gatherers* (1882), *Italian Mother and Child* (?), and *Cupid* (?), Gérôme's *Tulip Folly* (1882), *Coffee House, Cairo* (c. 1883), and *Vase Seller, Cairo* (?), and Cabanel's *Desdemona* (1880).

Private collectors purchased most of the works in the sale, often for prices lower than what Morgan had paid for them. Morgan kept her receipts, so both the prices she paid and the selling prices were listed in the *Art Amateur*, which, according to the journal, revealed how much she had actually overpaid for most

¹²⁸ "The Sale of the Morgan Pictures," *Art Amateur* 14, no. 5 (April 1886): 98.

¹²⁹ There was a deluxe catalog of the Morgan collection with photogravures, which sold for \$23.50; see Montezuma [Montague Marks], "My Note Book," *Art Amateur* 14, no. 5 (April 1886): 100.

¹³⁰ "The Morgan Picture Sale," *Art Amateur* 14, no. 5 (April 1886): 117.

¹³¹ In 1880, "a capital Meissonier," *Standard-Bearer*, dated 1857, became available in Schaus' gallery for twice the price of a Corot, although the high price was not listed. It surfaced in the sale of Mary Jane Morgan's collection; see "Choice Imported Pictures," *New York Times*, 27 April 1880, 5.

¹³² "Mrs. Morgan's Paintings," *New York Times*, 14 February 1886, 6.

of them.¹³³ Although reporters generally agreed that Morgan probably paid inflated prices for the works in her collection, they were concerned that so many works sold considerably below the purchase price.¹³⁴ Of Gérôme's works, Morgan had purchased the *Vase Seller, Cairo* from Knoedler for \$5,400, but it sold for \$4,600; she purchased Bouguereau's *Madonna, Infant, Saviour and St. John* from Schaus for \$11,000 and it sold for \$9,000. Some even sold for about half of what they cost Morgan: *Tulip Folly* was purchased from Schaus for \$15,000 and sold for \$6,000; and *Coffee House, Cairo* was purchased from Knoedler for \$8,500 and sold for \$4,800.¹³⁵ All three of the pictures by Meissonier were bought back by the dealers, who perhaps thought they could sell them again later at a profit, or to protect them from selling too low.¹³⁶ Morgan purchased *In the Library* from Knoedler for \$20,000 and Knoedler bought it back at the sale for \$16,525. Avery sold *The Sentry, 1812* to Morgan for \$17,800 and bought it back for \$15,000. *Standard Bearer* was purchased from Schaus for \$20,000 and sold to Knoedler for \$15,000. Finally, Cabanel's *Desdemona* was purchased from Avery for \$1,550 and sold for \$1,400.

Bouguereau was the only one of the four whose works sold for more than what Morgan had paid for them. Of the paintings by Bouguereau that Morgan acquired, *Cupid*, which she purchased from Knoedler for \$3,800, sold for \$6,500; *Nut Gatherers*, which she bought from Avery for \$6,000, sold for \$7,250; and

¹³³ "The Morgan Picture Sale," 117; and "My Note Book," (March 1886), 76-77.

¹³⁴ "Bringing Lower Figures," *New York Times*, 29 March 1888, 2.

¹³⁵ Schaus purchased the *Tulip Folly* from Goupil for 50,000 francs (\$10,000) in 1882. He made a tidy profit from Morgan, but the value of it dramatically decreased in a matter of a few years. See Boussod, book 11, 56. For prices, see *Priced Catalogue of the Art Collection formed by the late Mrs. Mary J. Morgan* (New York: American Art Galleries, 1886).

¹³⁶ "The Sale of the Morgan Pictures," 99.

Italian Mother and Child, purchased from Avery for \$2,500, sold for \$3,050.

Less than a year later, one of the most famous art collections, that of the department store magnate, A. T. Stewart, was dispersed at the auction block after his childless widow's death in 1887. There was some speculation that the total of the Stewart sale would bring more than that of the Morgan sale (it did not), but with the caveat that "the ways of New York picture buyers are uncertain."¹³⁷ This reporter noted that prices were unstable and even prices for works by the best known artists could not be counted upon to rise at each auction sale.

The catalog for the sale was impressive, and included substantial biographies of the artists, listing their many awards and honors. Several of the lots included translations of letters written by the artists to Stewart about particular paintings. In one letter regarding the *Chariot Race (Circus Maximus)*, Gérôme academically described the various settings and sources that lent authenticity to his painting.¹³⁸ Meissonier also wrote a letter to Stewart, regarding his *1807, Friedland*, in an emotional, moving tone that contrasted with Gérôme's factual description of his picture. With feeling, Meissonier said of *1807, Friedland*:

. . . however great may be my satisfaction to know you [Stewart] are to be its possessor, I can only part with it with pain—a picture which has been for so long a time the life and joy of my studio.

Le voila [sic], that which will soon be in your possession, be good enough to receive as a friend; not as one that pleases at the first contact, and is then soon forgotten, but as one of those who, by intimate acquaintance, is loved more and more. Permit me to believe that when

¹³⁷ "Art Notes," *Art Review* 1, no. 5 (March 1887): 17. The Stewart sale of 217 pictures brought \$513,750 and the Morgan sale of 240 pictures brought \$885,300.

¹³⁸ *Catalogue of the A. T. Stewart Collection*, 58.

you are looking at this picture—on which I have bestowed all the science and experience I have been able to acquire in my art—your pleasure will constantly grow greater.

I have the conviction—which I do not express without a certain pride—that the value of this work will increase with time. What may or can be said of it will pass away, but the picture will remain, to be an honor to both of us¹³⁹

This impassioned statement by Meissonier, which appealed to Stewart's as well as to his own vanity, was then followed by his description of the painting.

Meissonier's engaging letter, as well as a self-portrait included in the lot, most likely aided in the sale of his work: *1807, Friedland*, originally purchased for \$60,000, sold for \$66,000.¹⁴⁰ Most of the pictures, however, were sold at a loss, and overall the sale was not considered a success.¹⁴¹ As usual, both purchase price and selling price of the pictures were reported. Meissonier's *1807, Friedland* brought a profit, but Stewart's other two Meissoniers were sold at large losses: *At the Barracks* cost Stewart \$21,000 and sold for \$16,000, and *Charity* cost \$24,000 and sold for \$10,500. Although small gains were made on two of Bouguereau's paintings, the best-known pictures by Bouguereau and Gérôme were both sold at significant losses over the purchase prices.¹⁴² Bouguereau's *Return from the Harvest* cost \$11,500 and sold for \$8,000.¹⁴³ In spite of his reprinted letter, Gérôme's *Chariot Race (Circus Maximus)* cost \$33,000 and sold for a disappointing \$7,100; *Collaboration* cost \$17,500 and sold for \$8,100; and *Pollice verso* (fig. 2.17) cost \$20,000 and sold for only \$11,000. This sale did

¹³⁹ Ibid., 101.

¹⁴⁰ "The A. T. Stewart Picture Sale," *Art Amateur* 16, no. 6 (May 1887): 145.

¹⁴¹ Montezuma [Montague Marks], "My Note Book," *Art Amateur* 16, no. 6 (May 1887): 122.

¹⁴² Bouguereau's *Homer and His Guide* was bought for \$5,000 sold for \$5,200 and his *Newborn Lamb* was bought for \$4,500 sold for \$5,100. See "Art Notes," *Art Review* 1, no. 5 (March 1887): 23.

¹⁴³ Montezuma [Montague Marks], "My Note Book," (May 1887), 122.

signal that prices were inflated since, at the Johnston sale in 1876, prices between \$5,000 and \$11,000 were considered outstanding, whereas here they were disappointing.

In spite of, or perhaps because of, the high cost of Meissonier's *1807, Friedland*, there was some controversy surrounding the painting. Avery, in a summary of the brisk art market in New York published in 1883, noted that *1807, Friedland*, was the most expensive picture imported to the United States to date.¹⁴⁴ At the Stewart sale, the picture was said to be in poor condition, which likely affected the price, but it still sold for a high sum. A reviewer conjectured that Knoedler would try to send the picture back to Meissonier to be retouched.¹⁴⁵

Upon learning that Meissonier was to make a replica of his famously expensive picture to be engraved, a reporter, quoted by Montague Marks in the *Art Amateur*, was appalled that this costly masterpiece, *1807, Friedland*, would no longer be an original painting.¹⁴⁶ Avery defended this practice saying "It is not an uncommon thing for famous artists to repeat their most successful works, and it has not been considered a heinous offence to do so."¹⁴⁷ Avery further explained that Meissonier was working only on a reduction of the painting, not a replica, and in watercolor rather than in oil.¹⁴⁸

By the early 1890s, disappointing prices were the general rule. One

¹⁴⁴ Avery noted the sum in dollars: \$60,000, or \$67,000 including the duty on the picture and related expenses; see Avery, "Some Notes," 842.

¹⁴⁵ Montezuma [Montague Marks], "My Note Book," (May 1887), 123.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.* Avery's comments were reported by Montague Marks, who summarized the debate about the originality of *1807, Friedland*, in light of the news regarding Meissonier's watercolor of the same work to be engraved. Meissonier completed the watercolor in 1888. For a history of the watercolor, see Constance Cain Hungerford, "*1807, Friedland*," in *Ernest Meissonier Rétrospective* (Lyon: Musée des beaux-arts, 1993), 220-35.

¹⁴⁸ Montezuma [Montague Marks], "My Note Book," (May 1887), 123.

example is the George Seney sale, which realized less profit than expected, in spite of efforts to create interest. The sale of his collection in 1891 was strategically timed with the exhibition of Jean-François Millet's *Angelus* (1858), which had caused a sensation at the Secrétan sale in Paris two years earlier.¹⁴⁹ Following the sale, it went on a triumphant exhibition tour in the United States. One stop was the American Art Galleries, where Seney's second sale (the first was in 1885) was to take place in 1891. The two-week long exhibition of George Seney's collection, composed mainly of French art, immediately followed the legendary *Angelus* exhibition. This connection undoubtedly helped increase interest in Seney's sale, but it served to bring a sensational price only for his Millet painting; the other pictures sold only reasonably well.

Seney's sale received as much press as the Morgan sale. Whether Seney was a "real collector or a collector for revenue only" was questioned in the *Collector*.¹⁵⁰ Seney's purchase prices were not listed in any of the usual venues such as *Art Amateur*, *Collector*, or the *New York Times*. Without the cost and sale price comparison, reporters were left to guess if the artworks made a profit. Montague Marks, in the *Art Amateur*, called Seney "an incurable speculator in pictures," and guessed that Seney had made a respectable profit from this last sale.¹⁵¹ Most reporters, though, figured that Seney's pictures sold at a loss; one

¹⁴⁹ The *Angelus* had been sold to James Sutton, the president of the American Art Association, for the unprecedented sum of \$110,000. See Laura L. Meixner, "Jean-François Millet's *Angelus* in America," *American Art Journal* 12, no. 4 (Autumn 1980): 78-84. A Paris correspondent for the *New York World* interviewed Gérôme in the artist's studio, and Gérôme's comments on the *Angelus* were published in a Boston newspaper. He considered the price outrageous; see "Gérôme's Opinion of the *Angelus*," *Boston Evening Transcript*, 2 August 1889, 6.

¹⁵⁰ "Notes and Novelties," *Collector* 2, no. 9 (1 March 1891): 108.

¹⁵¹ Montezuma [Montague Marks], "My Note Book," *Art Amateur* 30, no. 4 (March 1894): 98.

even estimated that the paintings sold for only half what Seney had paid.¹⁵²

Regardless of the gossip about the sales results, the four artists' works did sell for respectable prices; however, buyer confidence was shaken because they could no longer confidently expect prices to keep rising. Nonetheless, Meissonier's *Boules Players in the Moat of Antibes* (1885) and his *Deliberation* sold for \$15,000 and \$7,600, respectively. *Boules Players* brought the highest price of the second day's sale, but was far surpassed the next day by Millet's *Waiting*, which sold for \$40,500. The price for Seney's Millet painting is not surprising, given the hype for Millet's *Angelus* in the same year, still, *Boules Players* received "a round of applause . . . when the curtains were pulled aside and disclosed this rare work of art."¹⁵³ Cabanel's *Rebecca* (1886), "one of his older and better works in technique and feeling," sold for only \$1,000, and Bouguereau's *Night*, "well known through an engraving," sold for \$8,600; Gérôme's *First Kiss of the Sun* sold for \$6,000.¹⁵⁴ The *New York Times*, although initially alarmed by the low sale prices, reported that Seney was satisfied with the results, and that this sale was more successful than most others had been for several years.¹⁵⁵ Results like those for the Morgan, Stewart, and Seney sales demonstrated that prices for pictures by the four artists at the auctions, though still high, were falling. Even the solidly popular pictures by Meissonier were sold at losses in the Morgan and Stewart sales in the 1880s.

¹⁵² "Selling for Half Cost," *New York Times*, 12 February 1891, 3.

¹⁵³ "High Bids for Painting," *New York Times*, 13 February 1891, 2.

¹⁵⁴ *Collection of George I. Seney* (New York: J. J. Little & Co., 1891); and "Mr. Seney's Picture Sale," *Art Amateur* 24, no. 3 (February 1891): 65. Prices were also listed in the *New York Times* 12-14 February 1891 after each day of the sale,.

¹⁵⁵ "The Seney Sale is Ended," *New York Times*, 14 February 1891, 5.

One can speculate that the fervor with which the wealthiest collectors, some of whom had died, bought their works was subsiding.

Deaths, Declining Prices, and Shifting Preferences

The Seney sale, although a strong sale in relative terms, signaled a trend in declining sale prices overall. But for over two decades, the four academic artists had been at the top in the United States art market through the efforts of dealers, particularly Goupil who promoted Bouguereau and Gérôme and sold many works to Knoedler who brought the pictures back to his New York gallery. Goupil was also responsible for introducing the artists to Lucas and Avery, who in turn worked closely with Bouguereau and Cabanel, and Petit was behind Meissonier.

Warnings were scattered throughout the press that picture values were turning downwards. For example, one report subtitled: "Several Pictures Sell for Less Than Their Former Price," sounded the warning that prices were on the decline.¹⁵⁶ Few paintings reached the \$10,000 (50,000 franc) mark of the 1870s. Disappointing figures were reported in this article for the less publicized Jordan L. Mott and Edward Kearney sales held in 1888. Bouguereau's *Resting* (1879) sold for \$4,600; Gérôme's *Sale of the Circassian Slave* sold for \$4,800. These prices were not the lowest, but they were clearly in decline. Moreover, some pictures in the Mott and Kearney sale that had been acquired a few years earlier in the Mary Jane Morgan and George I. Seney sales, now sold for even less.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ "Bringing Lower Figures," 2.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

Artists and dealers, in turn, received negative press in the United States by the early 1880s. Reporters and critics complained about the stark commercialism of the art market. They said that artists were becoming too rich, asking and expecting too much for their pictures, and placed some of the blame on collectors. Agents and art dealers were also held responsible for shaping the collectors' taste for certain types of pictures.¹⁵⁸ The *Art Amateur* complained of the "absurdly high prices" for works by French artists who have nothing more going for them than a famous name.¹⁵⁹ Summing up this viewpoint, a few scathing articles written for the *Art Review* complained of collections formed without thought, and purchases spurred on by the dealers, who deliberately advertised and created hype around the artworks of living artists, such as the "anaemic" work of Cabanel and Bouguereau.¹⁶⁰ There was even notice from abroad. French critic Octave Mirbeau wrote a caustic rant against the Salon and its artists in *Le Figaro* in 1887, and sarcastically noted that prices for artists such as Bouguereau, Cabanel, Meissonier, and Vibert were going down, in part because A. T. Stewart was dead, and Vanderbilt was no longer paying high prices (he was also dead), suggesting that these two major collectors had kept prices artificially high.¹⁶¹ This was very likely true, as their collections were among the most publicized.

¹⁵⁸ "Painting as a Profession," *New York Times*, 14 May 1882, 3.

¹⁵⁹ Montezuma [Montague Marks], "My Note Book," *Art Amateur* 2, no. 1 (1879): 5.

¹⁶⁰ "Art Notes," *Art Review* 1, no. 6 (April 1887): 17; and "Art Notes," *Art Review* 1, no. 3 (January 1887): 11.

¹⁶¹ Octave Mirbeau, "Nos bons artistes 1887," in *Esquisses en vue d'une histoire du Salon*, ed. Gérard-Georges Lemaire (Paris: Henri Veyrier, 1986), 272. This essay was originally published in *Le Figaro*, 23 December 1887.

Not all reports were bad, however. Although he acknowledged the negative press the artists received, one *New York Times* writer defended the artists' talents and ability to command large sums of money for their works. The American correspondent asserted that:

Vibert is hauled over the coals because he sells his works to the tune of 100,000f, as if any one would buy them if they were not worth it. Cabanel, Henner, Bouguereau, and even the idealized Meissonier come in for their own share of the vituperation, and it never strikes the Nihilistic, Socialistic, and artistic malcontents that the best way to hurl despair into the very hearts of their more successful rivals would be to get to work and do something for themselves.¹⁶²

Although he exaggerated the typical prices of Vibert's work, the writer clearly defended the right of the artist to make as much money as he could. He equated earning power with successful art, and scolded those artists who complained for not working hard enough.

By the end of the 1880s, prices clearly were declining for many of the academics, not just because of the deaths of A. T. Stewart and William H. Vanderbilt. Evidence suggests that the waning popularity of the four French artists' works in the United States was due in part to the retirement of two major supporters, Avery and Schaus, and to changing preferences. When Avery's son took over in 1885, although he also worked with Lucas, he did not continue to purchase from the same artists as his father had. Similarly, when Schaus retired in 1886, and sold the gallery to his nephew, Hermann Schaus and his brother-in-law, Augustus W. Conover, the new owners primarily sold old masters. Lucas and Goupil stayed in business, but their inventory had changed. Lucas' diary is peppered with entries involving the quartet of French artists in the 1870s, but

¹⁶² "Art News from Paris," *New York Times*, 25 December 1887, 1.

trails off by the mid 1880s. At that time, Lucas bought a few Impressionist works for little money on behalf of Avery, Jr., but was largely involved with exhibitions of Antoine-Louis Barye's bronzes and assembling a collection of graphic works.¹⁶³ The deaths of Cabanel (1889) and Meissonier (1891) necessarily ended their relationships with the dealers.¹⁶⁴ Bouguereau's contract with Goupil ended in 1887. Gérôme's relationship with Goupil continued mainly because of his family connections, and this relationship did not go unnoticed. While admitting that Gérôme's popularity was waning, a writer in 1890 still called Gérôme "the most popular of living French painters with American collectors" and attributed his widespread popularity directly to Goupil.¹⁶⁵

The collections so eagerly formed in the 1870s were as quickly dismantled and sold in the 1880s. Reflecting this growing trend, savvy dealers and collectors sensed that a change was needed. Already in the early 1880s, there were indications that collectors were ready to shift to new preferences. An announcement for the John Wolfe 1882 sale in the *New York Times* called Cabanel's *Venus* "light biscuit work," Bouguereau's *Nymphs and Satyr*, "very inferior," and Gérôme's *Veiled Circassian Lady* "hard and clever."¹⁶⁶ The author did not fault John Wolfe's taste, but rather placed the blame on greedy dealers

¹⁶³ Lucas, *Lucas Diary 2*: 601, 620. Lucas went to see Impressionist work with his close friend, Theodore Child, in 1885 and shortly after purchased a work each by Pissarro and Sisley from Durand-Ruel for only 300 francs each. Their relationship was so close that in 1892, Lucas settled Child's estate.

¹⁶⁴ The dealers' relationships with the artists were such that Lucas attended the funerals of Cabanel in 1889 and of Meissonier in 1891, and forwarded the funeral notices to Avery.

¹⁶⁵ "J. L. Gérôme in American Collections," *Collector*, no. 18 (1 September 1890): 150. This article listed sixty-four paintings and one drawing by Gérôme in American collections, and figured that this reflected only about half the actual number in collections.

¹⁶⁶ "Art Notes," *New York Times*, 13 March 1882, 2.

having too much influence on purchasers.¹⁶⁷ No such complaints had been made of John Taylor Johnston's collection less than a decade earlier. Similarly, in 1883 the *Art Amateur* stated that "pictures, new to this city, by Gérôme [sic], Cabanel and Bouguereau [sic], now at the same galleries [Knoedler, Schaus] . . . are not as good as the pictures [by François Flameng, and Barbizon artists Dupré, Rousseau, and Diaz]."¹⁶⁸ The implication is that the paintings of Bouguereau, Cabanel, and Gérôme, staples of collections, were becoming passé, while the art of younger French artists were overtaking the older ones; the popularity of Barbizon landscape artists remained firm.

Another indication that a gradual change was occurring was the important Pedestal Loan Exhibition, held in 1883 at the National Academy of Design to raise funds for a base for the Statue of Liberty. Of the four French artists, only Meissonier's pictures were included in the exhibit: Catharine Lorillard Wolfe lent Meissonier's *A General and His Aide-de-Camp* (1869) (fig. 2.18), and Robert L. Stuart lent a watercolor, *The Cavalier* (1872), a self-portrait of the artist. A reviewer complained that works by Bouguereau and Cabanel, though "tremendously popular, and nowhere more so than in New-York," were excluded, even though these artists "live on American orders."¹⁶⁹ The author pleaded for the inclusion of more popular paintings, based on American buyers' and admirers' choices, not on French or American critics' influence, or on the opinions

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ "French Paintings in New York," *Art Amateur* 8, no. 5 (April 1883): 100.

¹⁶⁹ "The Pedestal Art Loan," *New York Times*, 16 December 1883, 5.

of artists abroad, because the exhibit was meant to raise funds rather than introduce new art.¹⁷⁰

The absence of artists such as Bouguereau, Cabanel, and Gérôme in favor of works by Millet, Courbet, Degas, Manet, Corot, Jules Bastien-Lepage (1848-1884), and Adolphe Monticelli (1824-1886), among others, foreshadowed a shift in collecting preferences.¹⁷¹ (This shift is examined in Chapter Five.) However, it seemed that American critics were not yet ready for avant-garde French art; giving only mixed reviews to the Manet and Degas paintings in the show.¹⁷² Gérôme and Cabanel were included, however, in another version of the Pedestal Loan Fund Exhibition held in Brooklyn. Among Brooklyn collectors George Seney lent Cabanel's *Carrier Dove*, A. Augustus Healy, founder of the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences, lent Gérôme's *Treading out the Grain*, an Egyptian scene, and Henry T. Cox lent *A Bachi-Bouzouch*.¹⁷³

Yet clearly the era of French academic art was nearing its end. The art no longer brought the high prices they had received in the peak years. By the early 1890s, the United States was on the cusp of a deep economic depression and dealers began looking for new styles of art to buy and sell. Lucas appeared to be exploring other options. He attended the eighth Impressionist Exhibition, held

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Maureen O'Brien, *In Support of Liberty: European Paintings at the 1883 Pedestal Fund Art Loan Exhibition* (Southampton, NY: Parrish Art Museum, 1986), 36.

¹⁷² See, for example, "The Pedestal Art Loan" *New York Times*, 2 December 1883, 2; and 16 December 1883, 5.

¹⁷³ "Pedestal Fund Loan Exhibition," *New York Times*, 20 May 1883, 2. Honorary vice-presidents of the Pedestal Fund Loan Exhibition included collectors John Wolfe, John Taylor Johnston, August Belmont, Henry T. Cox, Cornelius Vanderbilt, Robert Graves, Theodore Havemeyer, J. P. Morgan, and George Seney. See also "The Bartholdi Statue," *New York Times*, 13 January 1884, 6; and Brooklyn Art Association, *Catalogue of Oil Paintings Loaned for Exhibition in Aid of the Bartholdi Statue Pedestal Fund* (New York: T. L. DeVinne, 1884), 92-94.

in 1886, and began modestly in the Impressionist field, as he had a few decades earlier with the academics: by buying prints directly from Mary Cassatt in 1888 and prints by Manet from a dealer in 1887 for little money.¹⁷⁴ Knoedler's purchases from Goupil of paintings by Bouguereau and by Gérôme trailed off to just a handful by the late 1880s, and Goupil began buying works by Claude Monet after the eighth Impressionist Exhibition.¹⁷⁵ After their introduction to the American public in the late 1880s, Impressionist paintings gradually gained a foothold with collectors. But Impressionism would not gain widespread attention and critical approval in the United States until the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893.

Though support for the artists and sales of their works eventually declined, the artworks that had become well-known kept the public's attention, and by the late 1880s, they were immortalized in writing as well as in museums. New contemporary art histories such as Clarence Cook's *Art and Artists of Our Time* and C. H. Stranahan's *A History of French Painting* were published, and the four artists were naturally included in the late nineteenth-century canon.¹⁷⁶ Their place in contemporary art history was also established when collectors, such as Catharine Lorillard Wolfe donated pictures to public institutions (in her case, to the newly formed Metropolitan Museum of Art). Instead of being sold, the paintings by the four French artists remained on public display. Other collectors donated important individual works, including Meissonier's *1807, Friedland*, one

¹⁷⁴ Lucas, *Lucas Diary*, 659, 662, 669, 704, 727.

¹⁷⁵ Boussod, book 11: 198, 200, 204. Goupil paid 1,800 to 2,800 francs in 1887 for landscapes by Monet.

¹⁷⁶ Clarence Cook, *Art and Artists of Our Time*, 3 vols. (New York: Selmar Hess, 1888); and C. H. Stranahan, *A History of French Painting* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1888).

of the most expensive paintings of the time, to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.¹⁷⁷

The “canonization” of the four artists in art histories and in museums is the subject of the next two chapters.

¹⁷⁷ "What Cost the Most," *New York Times*, 21 May 1888, 2. The painting was acquired by Henry Hilton at the A. T. Stewart sale.

CHAPTER 3

CRITICAL ASSESSMENTS

Chapter Two focused on the essential role dealers and collectors played in bringing the art of Bouguereau, Cabanel, Gérôme, and Meissonier to the United States. Chapter Three examines another aspect that made the two-and-a-half decades following the Universal Exposition of 1867 the golden age of French academic art in America: contemporary art criticism and art histories. These largely revolved around American collections of French art assembled in the 1870s. The extensive coverage of the four artists in contemporary publications helped broaden and document their fame and made them virtual celebrities in the United States, acknowledged as the best in their field.

Art criticism in the United States was a growing field in the second half of the nineteenth century, and critics favored a democratic approach to criticism: they aimed to be objective rather than subjective when discussing art, whether European or American.¹ Their analyses in popular journals, newspapers, and books served to reflect contemporaries' feelings about the artists' work and to promote the art they considered the best in order to educate the public. The best type of art was realist art. The contemporaneous definition of realism was fluid and encompassed a variety of artists, subjects, and styles. It was not simply associated with Gustave Courbet's realism. Critics and public alike favored realism and drama in art, and the four French artists each exemplified different

¹ See John Peter Simoni, "Art Critics and Criticism in Nineteenth-Century America" (Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1952), vii-viii.

types of realism fervently admired by nineteenth century viewers. Simply put, realism referred to the convincing portrayal of life, whether past or present, in every aspect of the painting. Viewers paid keen attention to setting, costume, gestures, and sentiment.

American art critics also shared a deep concern with the development of aesthetic taste and American art in the United States. During this time, American critics had supported American artists, particularly Winslow Homer and George Inness (1825-1894), but it was not until the early 1890s that the critics felt their own artists had finally formed an American school. Lacking a strong and distinct American school, they had stressed French art as a model to achieve this aim since the 1867 Exposition.

The French artists' continued popularity led to their prominent placement in the first canons of nineteenth-century art published in the United States. Edward Strahan and various other authors attempted to classify the styles of the artists, identify masterpieces, and determine the artists' general contribution to art history. This had been done for American artists by Henry T. Tuckerman in his *Book of the Artists*, and would now be done for French artists.

This chapter is divided into three sections of significant contemporary writings: journals and newspapers, Strahan's extensive writings, and contemporary art histories. The journals and newspapers provided general readers with diverse and frequent information on auctions, art exhibitions, new art works in New York and in Paris, the Paris Salons, and the composition of the Salon juries. Strahan's deluxe books provided reproductions of the artists'

works, analyses of their paintings in American collections, and commentary on their works in the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition of 1876 and in the Paris Universal Exposition of 1878. Finally, the French artists' towering role in the history of art was recorded in the first contemporary art histories published in the United States by Clara H. Stranahan and notable critics such as Clarence Cook and William C. Brownell.

Assessments in Journals and Newspapers

Brief mentions of the artists began peppering American journals as early as 1855. At the Universal Exposition in Paris held that year Meissonier received the Grand Medal of Honor and was named Officer of the Legion of Honor, Gérôme was awarded the Cross of the Legion of Honor, Cabanel received a first-class medal and was decorated with the Cross of the Legion of Honor, and Bouguereau received a second-class medal.² These awards would later draw admiration for them in the United States, but for the moment, this information was little more than a notice in the *Crayon*. Within a few years, though, their work began attracting more substantial attention.

Initially, Gérôme and Meissonier received more critical attention in the United States than did Bouguereau or Cabanel. Brief biographies of the former two had already been published in the *Crayon* by 1860.³ A major American critic, James Jackson Jarves (1818-1888), also wrote brief assessments of Gérôme

² Paul Mantz, "Correspondence," *Crayon* 2, no. 26 (26 December 1855): 404; and T. P. Rossiter, "Correspondence: Notes on the Universal Exposition of Fine Arts in Paris," *Crayon* 2, no. 25 (19 December 1855): 390. Paul Mantz (1821-1895) was a well-known conservative French critic. Thomas P. Rossiter (1818-1871) was an American artist. Because there were numerous second-class medal winners, Bouguereau was not mentioned in either of these articles.

³ "Artist Biography: French," *Crayon* 7, no. 6 (June 1860): 167.

and Meissonier in the early 1860s.⁴ Jarves lived in Paris in the early 1850s and amassed a collection of Italian art. Impressed by the art he saw in his travels, he promoted European art in the United States as a way to develop American taste. Significantly, he devoted a few pages of his book on American art, *The Art-Idea*, to Gérôme and to Meissonier, both of whom he considered important contemporary artists.⁵ His inclusion of these French artists in a book on American art indicated the nascent change in taste from American and English art to French art. Jarves found Gérôme's art superior to both American and English art in his technical skill and broad conceptions, and was impressed by his realism.⁶ His praise for Meissonier was more direct: "[Meissonier's] vigorous design, tasteful composition, exquisite finish, minuteness without littleness, manual skill, his force and spirit . . . almost elevate him to the level of a great master."⁷ Jarves' views would be echoed for the next several decades by other American writers and critics.

Two years later, in 1866, American artist Eugene Benson (1839-1908) wrote at length about Gérôme in the *Galaxy*. This was written around the time Benson had gone to Paris for about a year.⁸ By the time of his trip, Benson had become better known as an art critic than as an artist. Although he had not studied with Gérôme on his trip, Benson was impressed by his work. He praised

⁴ James Jackson Jarves, *The Art-Idea*, ed. Benjamin Rowland, Jr. (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1864; reprint, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), 146.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ H. Barbara Weinberg, *The Lure of Paris: Nineteenth-Century American Painters and Their French Teachers* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1991), 88. Benson (1839-1908) is not listed as a matriculant at the École des beaux-arts in Weinberg's "Nineteenth-Century American Painters at the École des Beaux-Arts," *American Art Journal* 13, no. 4 (Autumn 1981): 66-84.

Gérôme's learned painting as reflective of the contemporary interest in scientific investigation, travel, and intellectual pursuits and, in fact, named Gérôme as the artist who best reflected the moral and intellectual climate of his time.⁹ Gérôme was a model to emulate. Benson remarked that the artist "wished to photograph Greek and Roman life."¹⁰ His reference to photography was complimentary, as it was considered the ultimate realism against which painting would be measured. Through his meticulous painting, Gérôme rendered history as though he were present as a witness, an ability highly valued at the time.

Benson had already identified Gérôme's masterpieces which would continue to be discussed by other writers into the following two decades. These were Gérôme's most sensational and dramatic works: *Duel after the Ball* (fig. 1.4), *Ave Caesar, morituri te salutant (The Gladiators) (Ave Caesar, Imperator)* (fig. 3.1), and *Death of Caesar* (fig. 1.8).¹¹ These paintings were from the 1850s and could be found in contemporary American collections.

Each of the three paintings related to a grim death, the chill of which Benson found striking. In the *Duel after the Ball*, men dressed as Pierrot and Harlequin had left a masked ball to duel in the Bois de Boulogne on a wintry morning. The Duke de Guise supports Pierrot, who is mortally wounded, while a man dressed as a Venetian doge grasps Pierrot's bloodied white costume. The victors, in American Indian and Harlequin costumes, walk away from the gruesome scene. *Ave Caesar, morituri te salutant* from the Salon of 1859, is set

⁹ Eugene Benson, "Jean Léon Gérôme," *Galaxy* 1, no. 7 (1 August 1866): 582.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ William T. Walters bought a reduction of *Duel after the Ball* in 1859. *Ave Caesar* was owned by an American, C. P. Matthews, who lent the painting to the 1867 Paris Exposition. John Taylor Johnston owned *Death of Caesar* at the time of Benson's article.

in the Roman Colosseum. In the center, a group of gladiators salute Caesar, while around them workers drag away the bodies of dead gladiators and throw fresh sand over the bloodied spots. The *Death of Caesar* depicts the moment after Julius Caesar's assassination in Pompey's theater. Caesar's masterfully foreshortened corpse lies in the lower left foreground. The drama and accuracy of *Death of Caesar* prompted Benson to declare Gérôme "the greatest living painter of history in the world."¹² Although he felt that Gérôme's skills were not suited to portrayals of the nude, he did think that the *Phryne before the Areopagus* (fig. 1.3) (well-known, he added, by Goupil's engravings of this and other works), was his best nude, and *Dance of the Almeh* (fig. 2.2), was his worst, but only because it was indecent. In other words, the subject was uncomfortably seductive for its time.

Although this article concerned Gérôme, Benson also mentioned Cabanel as a colorist in the same breath as great Italian master colorists. Benson, commenting on Gérôme's relative weakness as a colorist said: "The moment you lose the touch, the sweep, the dash of the brush, and the glory of color in the works of Veronese, of Titian, of Rubens, of Delacroix, of Cabanel, you lose the work itself; it is no more the same thing."¹³ Cabanel's matter-of-fact inclusion in this list of great artists indicates the reverence which Benson held for Cabanel as a colorist, which was later seconded several years later by a reviewer for the *New York Times*. An entry was devoted to "one of the most striking" works recently imported to the United States, Cabanel's *Trysting Place of the Soul*.

¹² Benson, "Jean Léon Gérôme," 584.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 586. Benson did not mention which of Cabanel's works merited his esteem.

This painting illustrated a passage from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer's Night Dream*, in which a woman representing a soul returned to earth to talk to the man she had loved while she was alive.¹⁴ The reporter observed that Cabanel was a master of composition, color, and execution, and ventured to guess that no one could look upon the picture "without experiencing the emotions that a great picture, by a great artist, should call forth."¹⁵

After these early notices, broad coverage of all four French men's artworks became more extensive and pervasive. By the 1870s, art lovers could stay abreast of the activities of the artists and of the art market in New York and abroad, especially Paris. In fact, the French men's paintings brought over by Goupil or exhibited in the Paris Salon were the topic of regular reports in journals and in newspapers. Readers could also find reports on Salon news, such as the composition of the Salon juries, over which Cabanel and Bouguereau often presided.¹⁶ This information would have been particularly useful to American students who studied with these artists and participated in the Salons.

Additionally, many columns featured information on sales and the art market in New York, which often involved discussions of the artworks themselves. Interestingly, when reporting involved pictures that arrived from Paris to the New York art market, the reviews were usually flattering. Undoubtedly, the positive press was at least in part to increase interest in the sale. For example, the Chicago Relief Fund exhibition held in 1872 and

¹⁴ "Fine Arts: The Avery Collection," *New York Times*, 12 January 1874, 2.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ See for example, "Art Notes," *New York Times*, 24 April 1882, 3; and "Fresh Notes about Art," *New York Times*, 2 May 1880, 4.

orchestrated by the Goupil gallery in New York included works by Bouguereau, Cabanel, Gérôme, and Meissonier, all of which were praised by the reviewer.¹⁷ According to the reviewer, Cabanel ranked “second to none”; an “exquisite specimen” in watercolor by Meissonier, *Soldier of the Time of Louis XIII*, was “one of the finest works of this artist ever sent to this country.”¹⁸ Other notices were peppered with comments about the established great French painters, particularly Gérôme.¹⁹ A lengthy commentary on Cabanel's *Margaret*, made to order for dealer William Schaus, began by stating that Cabanel held “so high a rank in the art world that any work of his must prove of interest.”²⁰

In addition to coverage of exhibitions and auction events during these years, there were general articles to satisfy curiosity about the artists' personalities and homes. None of the four men had ever traveled to the United States; thus, for the curious who had not been to their Paris studios, these articles filled in a few personal anecdotes and treated the artists as celebrities. Albert Rhodes, in an 1873 article in the *Galaxy*, attempted to match the French artists' personalities and appearances with their paintings' style and subject matter. Rhodes found three of the four artists' personalities to be different from what their artworks called to mind. For instance, Gérôme's paintings, *Death of Caesar*, *Cleopatra before Caesar*, *Phryne before the Areopagus*, *Ave Caesar*,

¹⁷ "Art Abroad," *New York Times*, 14 April 1872, 12.

¹⁸ "Fine Arts," *New York Times*, 5 May 1872, 4. Though the praise was high, the prices realized for the Chicago Relief Fund sale were unexpectedly low. The reporter blamed the poor prices on bad timing. Bouguereau's *Happy Wife* sold for \$600, Cabanel's *Italian Girl* for \$800, Gérôme's *Souvenir of Mt. Sinai* for \$1,350, and Meissonier's *Soldier of the Time of Louis XIII*, for \$2,275; see "Fine Arts," 19 May 1872, 3.

¹⁹ "Fine Arts: New Pictures and New Artists," *New York Times*, 19 December 1874, 4.

²⁰ *Ibid.* Cabanel's painting, *Margaret*, was sold at Schaus' gallery in December 1874, and a photograph or photographs of it were available for sale a year later at Schaus' gallery; see "Fine Arts," *New York Times*, 15 November 1875, 4.

morituri te salutant, and *Duel after the Ball* suggested to Rhodes that Gérôme would be a relaxed, sensual “Parisianized Oriental”; instead, he found Gérôme to be a hard-working thin man with melancholy eyes.²¹ Likewise, Rhodes surmised that Meissonier, by examining works such as *Expectation*, *Reading at Diderot’s*, *The Captain (Louis XIII Cavalier)*, and *The Guardroom*, disliked the bourgeoisie and shut himself off in the past, but contrary to his supposition, he found Meissonier’s appearance and manner struck the very image of a bourgeois.²² Bouguereau’s works seemed to reflect a man with a “poetical sadness,” when he, too, was the opposite in life, a jolly man. Rhodes found only Cabanel’s appearance and style to match that of his portraits and his *Birth of Venus* (fig. 1.5)—elegant.²³

When Lucy Hooper, who had been assistant editor of *Lippincott’s Magazine*, moved to Paris in the early 1870s with her husband, the United States vice-consul-general in Paris, she became an American correspondent for various journals. While living in Paris, she wrote enthusiastically about Cabanel and Meissonier for the *Art Journal*. She often reported firsthand on Salon works as well as on works not yet on public view, in essence providing public access to privately owned paintings. Prompted by a visit to Cabanel’s studio, she commented on *Pia de Tolomei* (fig. 2.15), which was about to be shipped to

²¹ Albert Rhodes, “Views Abroad: A Day with the French Painters,” *Galaxy* 16, no. 1 (July 1873): 6.

²² *Ibid.* These four paintings by Meissonier were exhibited at the Paris Universal Exposition in 1867.

²³ *Ibid.* This commentary was reprinted in the *New York Times*; see “Meissonier, Bouguereau, Boulanger, Lefebvre, and Cabanel,” *New York Times*, 11 July 1875, 4.

William H. Vanderbilt.²⁴ She found the painting “singularly poetic and expressive” because of its pathos.²⁵ In 1876, Hooper wrote that Cabanel’s pictures were “usually purchased before they leave the easel, or, indeed, before they are half finished,” which highlighted his connection to the art market.²⁶ Hooper even had the opportunity to see Cabanel’s entries for the Salon of 1875 before they were completed. She was of the opinion that the *Tamar and Absalom* (fig. 3.2) was one of Cabanel’s best works, and nearly foretold its purchase by the French state for the Luxembourg Museum. She was particularly moved by the misery expressed in Tamar’s face and collapsed figure.²⁷

According to Hooper, Meissonier was “the king of French art.”²⁸ However, his style was so well-known that she felt it was no longer necessary to comment at length on his pictures. Instead, she discussed the high prices paid for his paintings, such as *1807, Friedland* (fig. 2.9), noting that the prices were still rising, even though French critics, she reported, apparently thought Meissonier’s career had peaked in 1855.²⁹

Among other writers who assessed the artists in the late 1870s was Samuel Green Wheeler Benjamin (1837-1914), an artist, critic, and prolific writer on contemporary European and American art; he extolled the technical abilities

²⁴ Lucy H. Hooper, "Art in Paris," *Art Journal* (New York) n.s., 2, no. 3 (1876): 91. Hooper (1835-1893) also noted that two other works in Cabanel’s studio were ready for shipment to the New York, the *Shulamite* for Catharine Lorillard Wolfe and *Pia de Tolomei* for William H. Vanderbilt.

²⁵ Lucy H. Hooper, "Contemporary French Artists: Meissonier and Cabanel," *Art Journal* (New York) n.s., 5, no. 9 (1879): 286.

²⁶ Hooper, "Art in Paris," 90.

²⁷ Lucy H. Hooper, "Among the Studios of Paris," *Art Journal* (New York) n.s., 1, no. 7 (1875): 61.

²⁸ Hooper, "Contemporary French Artists: Meissonier and Cabanel," 285.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 286.

of all four artists in an article on French art in *Harper's New Monthly*.³⁰ This article included portraits of the artists as well as illustrations of some of their paintings: Bouguereau's *Oranges*, Cabanel's *Death of Francesca da Rimini and Paolo Malatesta* (fig. 2.12), Gérôme's *L'Éminence grise* (fig. 2.13), and Meissonier's *La Vedette [The Sentry]*. Revered American artist George Inness commented at length on Meissonier, also in *Harper's New Monthly*, and marveled at Meissonier's realism and his attention to detail.³¹ However, Inness found Meissonier's paintings analytical and empirical rather than poetic and spiritual.³²

Exhibition reviews continued steadily throughout the 1880s and any new works and exhibitions in which the artists participated were reported. For example, in 1884 the *New York Times* described a retrospective for Meissonier's works held at Galerie Georges Petit in Paris to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of his career.³³ Two years later, in an extensive article on the Salon of 1886, the Paris correspondent for the *New York Times* opened with praise for Gérôme, who was deemed a master whose fame was long-lasting.³⁴ Bouguereau's *Return of Spring* was also lauded for its "delicacy of design and texture" which the correspondent found to be "superb."³⁵ In another Salon review the same year, Gérôme and Cabanel were the focus of encomiums. The writer

³⁰ S. G. W. Benjamin, "Contemporary Art in France," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 54, no. 322 (March 1877): 481-503. His essays were compiled and published in 1877 as *Contemporary Art in Europe*.

³¹ George Inness, "A Painter on Painting," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 56, no. 333 (February 1878): 458-59.

³² *Ibid.*, 458.

³³ "Meissonier's Life Work," *New York Times*, 9 June 1884, 2.

³⁴ "Pictures for the Salon," *New York Times*, 24 April 1886, 1.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

commended Gérôme's *General Bonaparte before the Sphinx* as one of the best works of his later years, and compared it favorably to Meissonier's earlier work.³⁶ Cabanel's portraits of the founders of the Little Sisters of the Poor were the "great masterpieces of the year," for their "truthful and transcendent strength."³⁷ Echoing these comments, Theodore Child, an important American critic who lived in Paris and a close friend of the dealer George A. Lucas, deemed Meissonier to be the premier artist and positioned Bouguereau and Cabanel among the "shining and acknowledged lights" of the art world.³⁸

Opinions regarding the artists' paintings were generally positive, such as those cited above, but Bouguereau was the exception. Although the public was unanimously in favor of his pictures, the critics and reviewers were frequently ambivalent. One admired his "careful drawing" and "pure sentiment," but a typical complaint was his lack of imagination and his slick surfaces.³⁹ For example, in a notice for Samuel P. Avery's collection of artworks, a reviewer complained that Bouguereau did not possess enough "genius" to represent the allegory, *Art and Literature*.⁴⁰ He felt the artist lacked imagination for any other subject besides children. According to another American critic, this time a reviewer of the Paris Salon of 1882, Bouguereau's *Twilight* "exhibits the same mannered, polished, mechanical form which is characteristic of his works

³⁶ L. K., "Art this Year in France," *New York Times*, 19 June 1886, 3.

³⁷ *Ibid.* The location of these portraits is unknown.

³⁸ Theodore Child, "The Paris Centennial Exposition," *Art Amateur* 21, no. 2 (July 1889): 28. Several of Child's most important critical works, on the topics of American art, French painting and sculpture, French Impressionist painting, and essays on individual artists, Sandro Botticelli, Jean-François Millet, Mihaly Munkácsy, Antoine-Louis Barye, and Auguste Rodin, were assembled and published as *Art and Criticism: Monographs and Studies* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1892).

³⁹ "Art Notes," *Appleton's Journal of Literature, Science, and Art* 2, no. 32 (6 November 1869): 379.

⁴⁰ "Fine Arts," *New York Times*, 19 April 1873, 4.

generally. It is evident that he does not care to spend much time in modeling."⁴¹

Writer Henry James summed up the ambivalence towards Bouguereau's painting: "It is a standing wonder that a man can paint at once so finely and so perversely."⁴² Again, his flawless draughtsmanship was admired while his fine, porcelain-like finish was scorned.

Regardless of comments like James', Bouguereau's popularity was firm, and the other three artists benefited from nearly unanimous praise. Whether this praise was objective or subjective is arguable, but critics such as Jarves wrote with the best of intentions. Anonymous exhibition reviewers for papers such as the *New York Times* were more subjective. The goal of reviews of works brought over by Goupil was to promote the art, but both critics and reviewers achieved the same end in the case of the four leading French artists. This same goal of advancing aesthetics as well as praising the best artists was carried over into the books written by Edward Strahan.

The Writings of Edward Strahan

One of the most prolific writers on contemporary French art was Edward Strahan. Over nearly a decade he authored several important deluxe publications: *Masterpieces of the Centennial International Exhibition* (1876-1878), *The Chefs-d'oeuvre d'art of the International Exhibition, 1878* (1878-1880), *Art Treasures of America* (1879-1881), *Gérome. A collection of the works*

⁴¹ J. D., "Art in This Year's Salon," *New York Times*, 26 June 1882, 2.

⁴² Henry James, *Parisian Sketches: Letters to the New York Tribune 1875-1876*, ed. Leon Edel and Ilse Duso Lind (New York: New York University Press, 1957), 152. From 1875 to 1876, Henry James (1843-1916) replaced French critic Arsène Houssaye (1815-1896) as a Paris correspondent for the *New York Tribune*. Houssaye's brief columns in the 1870s mainly covered the general goings-on in Paris, rather than art world events.

of J. L. Gérôme (1881), *Études in Modern French Art* (first published in 1882, and again in 1888 as *Modern French Art*), and *Mr. Vanderbilt's House and Collection* (1883-1884).⁴³

The four French artists were significant figures in Strahan's writings, and although each of his books covered a different topic, each included evaluations of the artists' works. *Art Treasures of America* and *Mr. Vanderbilt's House and Collection* were discussed in the previous chapter in the context of collections and the art market. Many reproductions of paintings by Bouguereau, Cabanel, Gérôme, and Meissonier were scattered throughout the three volumes of *Art Treasures of America*. The Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia was the most important art exhibition of the decade held in the United States, and Strahan served as critic and writer for the first volume of a three-volume illustrated set of books commemorating the exhibition. This volume was dedicated to the fine arts and included commentary on all four men, even though Cabanel was the only one of them represented in the exhibition. Strahan again wrote about the French artists at length in an illustrated catalog of the 1878 Universal Exposition held in Paris, where Bouguereau, Cabanel, Gérôme, and Meissonier each received a Grand Medal of Honor. The book on Gérôme consisted of quality reproductions

⁴³ Edward Strahan [Earl Shinn], *Masterpieces of the Centennial International Exhibition*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Gebbie & Barrie, 1876-78; reprint, New York: Garland Publishing, 1977); idem, *The Chefs-d'oeuvre d'art of the International Exhibition, 1878* (Philadelphia: Gebbie & Barrie, 1878-80); idem, *Art Treasures of America*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: George Barrie, 1879-82); idem, ed., *A Collection of the Works of J. L. Gérôme* (New York: S. L. Hall, 1881); idem, *Études in Modern French Art* (New York: Richard Worthington, 1882); idem, *Modern French Art* (New York: A. W. Lovering, 1888); and idem, *Mr. Vanderbilt's House and Collection*, 4 vols. (Boston: G. Barrie, 1883-1884). Deluxe books such as these were published with photogravures and engravings printed on high quality papers. A limited number of copies, usually 1,000, were printed and sold by subscription, which limited the readership to interested parties, primarily collectors. The cost of the books, some around ten dollars per volume, was too much for the average person, whose monthly rent was about the same amount.

of works by the artist with a brief introduction by Strahan. *Modern French Art*, his last major publication, was an evaluation of contemporary French art.

In his publications, Strahan covered three significant areas: masterpieces, critical assessments—mainly his own, but also others—and classification of the artists' works into the major trends in contemporary art. An important aspect of placing an artist in a broader art historical context is recognition of masterpieces. Regardless of his personal opinions, Strahan identified each artist's masterpieces, both his own selections and the public's choices. As the books' titles indicated, the paintings highlighted by Strahan in his books on the Centennial Exhibition and the Universal Exposition were the masterpieces. Most of these paintings, or reductions of them, were in American collections. In his books, he also gave a brief biographical background of each artist, introduced selected French criticism, and in the case of Bouguereau, defended his work against oft-repeated criticisms. Finally, he attempted to categorize the artists' works and place their contributions within the broader context of art history.

Strahan personally ranked Cabanel and Bouguereau below Gérôme and Meissonier, who were at the top of their field, the "two tallest and noblest easels in France."⁴⁴ Strahan showed a decided bias towards his former teacher, noting that Gérôme's studio at the *École des beaux-arts* was the favorite with Americans and claiming that Gérôme was at the height of his talent and reputation.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Strahan, *Chefs-d'oeuvre d'art 1878*, 22. This sentiment was echoed by a writer for the *New York Times*; see Gar, "The Successor of Teniers," *New York Times*, 1 July 1878, 1.

⁴⁵ Strahan, *Chefs-d'oeuvre d'art 1878*, 22.

Not surprisingly, Strahan devoted lengthy sections in each of his books to his former master's works, and listed more masterpieces for him than for the other three artists. Strahan particularly admired the drama and studied accuracy of Gérôme's reconstructions of ancient scenes, and often praised his ability to render history with such immediacy. Strahan singled out *Death of Caesar*, *Pollice verso*, *Ave Caesar, morituri te salutant*, and *Chariot Race (Circus Maximus)* (fig. 2.5) for special attention, particularly in *Art Treasures of America*, and added that *Pollice Verso* (fig. 2.17) and *Ave Caesar, morituri te salutant* were Gérôme's own selections as his best works.⁴⁶ Of these, the author devoted an effusive two pages to the *Death of Caesar*, which he called a "masterly composition."⁴⁷ According to Strahan, every aspect of the painting needed to be studied, and every detail of the scene enhanced the overall effect of the tragedy.⁴⁸ Strahan also pointed out the drama of the dead body in the foreground, which he felt was the best foreshortened figure in the history of art, and had the "most ghastly and thrilling result on the nerves."⁴⁹ He was struck by the dramatic disparity between the slain, defeated hero and the symbols of his past triumphs surrounding him.

Strahan pointed out similar "splendid contrasts" in another of Gérôme's paintings, *Pollice verso*.⁵⁰ In this picture, Gérôme vividly contrasted the presumably chaste Vestal Virgins with the bloody, murderous gladiatorial combat. Strahan felt that Gérôme was the only artist who painted pictures with

⁴⁶ Strahan, *Études in Modern French Art*, 9.

⁴⁷ Strahan, *Art Treasures*, 1: 12; 2: 3-5. *Death of Caesar* was in the collection of John Jacob Astor.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 2: 3-5.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 2: 4.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 1: 24. Strahan considered *Pollice verso* pendant to *Ave Caesar, morituri te salutant*.

the same dramatic feeling evoked by playwrights in theatrical performances.⁵¹ He said: “The works of this single painter embrace more of these magnificent ‘situations’ than the works of any epic poet, any novelist, and any dramaturgist, who lives among us. He meets the literary producer on his own ground, and distances him.”⁵² Gérôme’s paintings excited and entertained viewers in the manner of a theatrical performance.

Although Strahan noted other paintings, such as Gérôme’s “celebrated” picture *Louis XIV and Molière*, and “another famous Gérôme,” *L’Éminence grise*, these merited only straightforward descriptions from Strahan in *Art Treasures of America*.⁵³ Strahan even praised paintings by Gérôme that he did not necessarily like, including *Chariot Race (Circus Maximus)*, which he had seen in its early stages in Gérôme’s studio in 1866, when he was still a student in Gérôme’s atelier.⁵⁴ He praised Gérôme’s erudition and the “encyclopaedic” quality of every detail of the painting.⁵⁵ According to Strahan, Gérôme’s “most famous picture,” though, was his *Duel after the Ball*, which featured another of the magnificent contrasts Strahan was so fond of. He said: “It is an appalling story of anguish and crime, made infinitely more thrilling by the contrast of its masquerade of levity.”⁵⁶ Through one still image Gérôme conveyed an entire drama that had captured the attention of both critics and public.

Even though Strahan preferred Gérôme’s theatrical historically reconstructed scenes, he did highlight a few of Gérôme’s most celebrated

⁵¹ Ibid., 2: 140.

⁵² Ibid., 1: 24.

⁵³ Ibid., 1: 99.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 1: 24.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 1: 25.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 1: 88.

Orientalist or “ethnographic,” paintings. These paintings were the *Turkish Butcher Boy in Jerusalem* (fig. 3.3) and *Dance of the Almeh* (fig. 2.2). *Turkish Butcher Boy in Jerusalem* alarmed the viewer, according to Strahan, for its frank, “impartial realism,” the heightened realism that had impressed Jarves over a decade before. In this painting, the gruesome, bloody heads form a disturbing foil to the bored butcher boy who is not at all daunted by the gore. Another provocative painting was *Dance of the Almeh*, which Eugene Benson had also mentioned. The semi-nude dancer gyrating before a rapt male audience shocked Parisians and New Yorkers alike.⁵⁷ In defense of Gérôme’s lewd subject, Strahan surmised that the artist’s intention was to show “Oriental manners [in this case, Turkish],” with a “didactic purpose of condemnation,” which rendered the subject palatable.⁵⁸ These two paintings led Strahan to conclude that Gérôme was a truly great artist because his paintings were “disquieting” and provoked conversation.⁵⁹ The remarkable light and atmosphere, rather than the provocative nature of another Orientalist painting, *Egyptian Conscripts Crossing the Desert*, finally inspired Strahan to say with feigned exasperation: “It would be as tiresome as injudicious to go on selecting one of this master’s pictures after another as the best.”⁶⁰ For Strahan, there were already many pictures worth calling masterpieces.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 2: 80.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 2: 48.

This was not the case with Meissonier, the “dreadfully expensive artist,” for whom Strahan chose only one painting, *1807, Friedland*, as a masterpiece.⁶¹ This history picture depicted the victorious, calm Napoleon reviewing his enthusiastic troops. The painting had already become as legendary as the artist himself almost a decade before Strahan had written about it. Its fame arose from the phenomenally high sale price, which had made headlines, and in 1871, curiosity about the picture had led a correspondent for the *New York Times* to visit Meissonier in his Poissy studio.⁶² The correspondent described Meissonier’s hospitality, his studio and its contents, including costumes of all kinds, in detail. He stressed the admirably staid, work-like atmosphere of the studio and noticed the many paintings and wax models of horses Meissonier had painstakingly created with equal care as studies for *1807, Friedland*. The correspondent also remarked on Meissonier’s uncanny resemblance to Napoleon I before describing the great painting as if it were a page in a history book.⁶³ Henry James also ruminated on the worth of Meissonier’s *1807, Friedland*.⁶⁴ He determined that the picture involved a great deal of labor and skill, and was proud that the United States was able to acquire one of “the highest prizes of the game of civilization.”⁶⁵ The painting, according to James, deserved close and careful analysis, and the parts were even more interesting than the whole.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Strahan, *Chefs-d’œuvre d’art 1878*, 118; idem, *Art Treasures*, 1: 30. Strahan declared that art-loving Americans who admired Meissonier’s genius invaded his privacy at his home in Poissy.

⁶² “The Art World,” *New York Times*, 23 December 1871, 2.

⁶³ James, *Parisian Sketches*, 33-39, 98-99. *1807, Friedland* is called *The Charge of the Cavalry* in this article. At the time, the painting was purchased for 200,000 francs by Sir Richard Wallace, but instead sold to A. T. Stewart.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 34-36.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁶⁶ Strahan, *Chefs-d’œuvre d’art 1878*, 13.

In the late 1870s, the momentum regarding the importance of the painting was continued by Strahan. His enthusiasm for the picture was evident; he exclaimed that one could almost hear the troops cry “Long live the Emperor!”⁶⁷ He declared that Meissonier achieved a striking yet harmonious contrast between the palpable energy of the excited soldiers and the calm demeanor of their composed leader.⁶⁸ For him, the clear depiction of camaraderie between the contemplative general and his triumphant troops made this painting a masterpiece. Strahan identified the Emperor’s *État-major* and marshals, and marveled at their individuality and at the realistic and emotional attitudes of the men and of the accurate anatomy of the horses. Even the landscape elicited admiration from Strahan, who said that there was a lesson for painters in the “eddies of tossed wheat”; the sense of movement Meissonier had achieved in the wheat indicated that another charge had already moved through the landscape. Meissonier supposedly spent fifteen laborious years on this magnificent painting, and Americans were impressed by the hard work.⁶⁹ With this painting, Strahan echoed James’ sentiment that “America has secured an artistic trophy.”⁷⁰

Of all Meissonier’s “faultless works” Strahan thought that contemporary artists would select *La Rixe [A Brawl]* (fig. 3.4), which was a gift from Emperor Napoleon III of France to the Prince Consort of England in 1855.⁷¹ Strahan said that Meissonier painted his figures “in the most profound truth of nature—admirable in color, strictly harmonized with their accessories and backgrounds,

⁶⁷ Strahan, *Art Treasures*, 1: 28.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 1: 27.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 1: 30.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Strahan, *Chefs-d’oeuvre d’art 1878*, 117.

placed in the breathable air of a room or in the free sunshine of outdoor nature."⁷² In other words, Meissonier's pictures were utterly life-like and exhibited the ultra realism so admired by contemporary American viewers. Few other paintings were highlighted in *Chefs-d'oeuvre d'art*, and of those Strahan echoed much of the usual praise of the French critics regarding Meissonier's other paintings: his ability to depict scenes with an extreme degree of realism in the style of the Dutch genre masters, and his ability to treat his tiny pictures as great works.⁷³

In *Art Treasures of America*, Strahan singled out Meissonier's *Chess Players* (1853) (fig. 3.5). This painting was one of Meissonier's typical interior period scenes, painted with his characteristic high quality in the rich use of color, the interior light and the "breadth of style" that in a small canvas "make the painter-spectator sigh with baffled envy."⁷⁴ These comments were repeated for nearly all Meissonier's paintings in Strahan's books.

In contrast, Strahan thought that Cabanel had already passed his prime and the quality of his paintings was on the wane. He preferred the earlier works, but at the same time, he recognized the steady popular appeal of Cabanel's paintings. Strahan admired the compelling contrasts of Gérôme's theatrical paintings and the intense realism of Meissonier's paintings, but of Cabanel's paintings, he most admired his religious subjects, *Ruth and Boaz* (fig. 3.6) and *Tamar and Absalom*, and literary subjects, *Death of Francesca da Rimini* and

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Strahan, *Art Treasures*, 1: 107-8.

Paolo Malatesta and Lucretia and Tarquin (fig. 3.7). He also admired Cabanel's portrait of Catharine Lorillard Wolfe (fig. 3.8).

In *Art Treasures of America*, Strahan was the most enthusiastic about Cabanel's *Ruth and Boaz*, from the Old Testament (Ruth 3:7). In his lengthy description, Strahan admired the realism and Eastern flavor of the scene. It was "excellent for depth, tone, purity, unison and tenderness. It is profoundly biblical, and the reader can hardly perceive, by mere description, its breath of aromatic Eastern inspiration. The curtain of three thousand years seems to roll upward."⁷⁵ In addition, Strahan admired the foreshortening, attitudes, and postures of the figures, and described both figures in loving detail. Then he added:

We owe some debt of gratitude to an artist who can not only paint with tender grace, but can reanimate history with a conception so sane and true. . . . not in an archaeological feeling [as in Gérôme's works], but with a sentiment that matches its innate poetry and tenderness. . . . our country is to be congratulated on securing perhaps the happiest of Cabanel's experiments in sacred art.⁷⁶

For Strahan, Cabanel made biblical history come alive in this painting.

Reductions of Cabanel's *Florentine Poet* (fig. 2.3), *Birth of Venus*, *Death of Francesca da Rimini and Paolo Malatesta*, and *Aglaia* were in American collections and thence among the best-known by the American public.⁷⁷

However, two of these paintings, *Birth of Venus* and *Florentine Poet* received only brief comment from Strahan. According to Strahan, the merit of the former in the John Wolfe collection lay in the remarkable modeling of the figure in high

⁷⁵ Ibid., 2: 26.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 2: 27.

⁷⁷ Strahan, *Modern French Art*, 45.

values where even the darkest shadow is light.⁷⁸ The subject, though, he thought to be a frivolous theme akin to eighteenth-century Rococo paintings by Boucher or Fragonard.⁷⁹ His remarks about another reduction of the *Birth of Venus*, this one in the Henry Gibson collection, were caustic. In this later description, Strahan deemed the subject “foolish” and “nonsensical.”⁸⁰

Strahan only briefly discussed the *Florentine Poet*, even though he thought it to be “the masterpiece of Cabanel’s life.”⁸¹ This historical genre scene was originally exhibited in the Salon of 1861 and was widely admired for the costumes, actions, and expressions of the figures. In the painting two lovers listen fervently to a Florentine poet, Sordello, who marks the rhythm of his voice with his hands while two other young men listen and seem to be equally intoxicated by the poet’s words. In an outburst of admiration, Strahan effused: “the sentiment is so just and true, the culture so pronounced, [and] the taste of the thing [is] so perfect.”⁸² Strahan summed up the general feeling towards *Florentine Poet* in *Études in Modern French Art*, calling it Cabanel’s “most completely beautiful and satisfactory composition” which displayed his “matchless grace and robust poetic creativeness.”⁸³

Strahan treated Cabanel’s *Death of Francesca da Rimini and Paolo Malatesta* at length in *Masterpieces of the Centennial International Exhibition* (1876-1878), because an American collector lent a reduction of the painting to

⁷⁸ Strahan, *Art Treasures*, 1: 56.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 1: 67.

⁸¹ Ibid., 3: 116.

⁸² Ibid. A reduction of the *Florentine Poet*, which pleased Strahan in spite of its reduced dimensions, is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

⁸³ Strahan, *Études in Modern French Art*, 45. *Masterpieces of the Centennial*, 1: 148-49.

the exhibition. The original painting was exhibited in the Salon of 1870. It illustrated an episode from Canto V of the “Inferno” in Dante’s *Divine Comedy*. Francesca da Rimini and her lover Paolo were slain by Francesca’s jealous, ill-tempered, and hideously disfigured husband Galeotto, who happened to be Paolo’s brother. Fallen from Francesca’s limp, freshly deceased hand is the book relating the romance of Lancelot and Guinevere, a romance she and Paolo were destined not to repeat. According to Strahan, Cabanel painted the scene with “pathos and eloquence,” Francesca’s body limp and Paolo sinking to the floor.⁸⁴

Two other history paintings by Cabanel received attention from Strahan, *Lucretia and Tarquin* and *Tamar and Absalom*. The former, lent by an American collector to the Paris Salon of 1877, inspired Strahan to place Cabanel’s painted depiction of the heroine above Shakespeare’s poetic description, a high compliment indeed. He said: “the painter, by imagining an oracular foreboding in Lucretia’s eyes, may be thought to have improved on the young Shakespeare.”⁸⁵ This comment was preceded by the lines from William Shakespeare’s poem, “The Rape of Lucretia,” which itself was inspired by a classical source, Livy. As with Gérôme’s paintings, Strahan admired the picture’s dramatic content.

⁸⁴ Strahan, *Chefs-d’oeuvre d’art 1878*, 121-22. Strahan added that a young American artist familiar with the work questioned the authenticity of the work on view in the exhibition, a reduction lent by Mrs. A. E. Kidd. The painting in the Centennial, however, was not the original Salon painting but a reduction lent by an American collector. It was included in the United States section in the “Loan Collection of Oil Paintings,” rather than in the separate French section. Strahan assessed that the reduction was not Cabanel’s best style, because, he said, French artists who duplicated their best works for sale at a distance, such as the United States, a major market for these reductions and repetitions, were not always careful to do their best work. Even if not as well-done as the original, though, Strahan still felt that it was a work by the same artist who painted the famous *Birth of Venus* and *Florentine Poet*. The location of this reduction is unknown.

⁸⁵ Strahan, *Art Treasures*, 2: 28.

Cabanel's *Tamar and Absalom*, which had been bought by the French state from the Salon of 1875 for the Luxembourg Museum and exhibited in the Universal Exposition of 1878, elicited Strahan's strong admiration. He felt it was Cabanel's most important biblical work since *Ruth and Boaz*, and wrote about it at length.⁸⁶ Above all he was struck by the "sultry atmosphere brooding over the figures," that hinted at the future fratricide.

Although Strahan admired Cabanel's portraits, only one was illustrated in his books. (Most portraits were not considered part of a collection, and therefore not reproduced in books.) Only portraits that were publicly exhibited were singled out for praise, and although Cabanel painted many portraits of American sitters, few of these paintings were available for public viewing. Strahan was so impressed with the portrait of Catharine Lorillard Wolfe, that he declared that it belonged in a museum as an example of "the national character of a period."⁸⁷ The combination of technical skill and representation of character in this portrait, according to Strahan, deserved to be seen outside of the family. He felt that the graceful hand gestures alone were worthy of forming a separate painting.⁸⁸

Such glowing comments as these were not accorded to most of Bouguereau's paintings, although his works were more numerous in American collections than were paintings by Gérôme, Meissonier, or Cabanel. The greatest difference between popular opinion and Strahan's personal view regarded Bouguereau. According to Strahan, Bouguereau's immense popularity

⁸⁶ Strahan, *Chefs-d'oeuvre d'art 1878*, 27-28. There was no reduction of *Tamar and Absalom*, and the painting was never in an American collection.

⁸⁷ Strahan, *Art Treasures*, 1: 120.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

with the public was unmerited.⁸⁹ Of the four, he received the least favorable commentary. Strahan was generally averse to Bouguereau's paintings because of their polished finish, and he was dismayed by the public's infatuation with them.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, he highlighted a few pictures.

Bouguereau's religious and mythological paintings in the 1878 Universal Exposition elicited Strahan's most positive and extensive comments. He admired the piety, sincerity, and profiles of the two Breton women in Bouguereau's *Vow of Saint Anne* and the grace and composition of a ceiling painting for the Concert Hall in Bordeaux called *Apollo and the Muses* (fig. 3.9), exhibited in the Salon of 1869.⁹¹ All of Bouguereau's superior technical and compositional abilities peaked in *Apollo and the Muses*, according to Strahan, although technically, he thought *Nymphs and Satyr* (fig. 2.10) from the Salon of 1873 was the best Bouguereau ever executed.⁹² The subjects' charm and grace attracted Strahan, although he found it a bit comical, as he had Cabanel's *Birth of Venus*.⁹³ In contrast to this light-hearted theme was Bouguereau's *Virgin of Consolation*, originally exhibited in the Salon of 1877, which Strahan considered his most religious work.⁹⁴

In *Art Treasures of America*, Strahan selected four of Bouguereau's paintings as his best. These were *Nymphs and Satyr* in the John Wolfe collection, and *Return from the Harvest* (fig. 2.4a), *Newborn Lamb* (fig. 3.10), and

⁸⁹ Ibid., 27, 28; idem, *Art Treasures*, 2: 120.

⁹⁰ Strahan, *Chefs-d'oeuvre d'art*, 27; idem, *Art Treasures*, 2: 120.

⁹¹ Strahan, *Chefs-d'oeuvre d'art*, 27.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid. He may have borrowed this criticism from an earlier commentary. See Ernest Duvergier de Hauranne, "Le Salon de 1873," *Revue des deux mondes* 150 (1 June 1873): 635.

⁹⁴ Strahan, *Chefs-d'oeuvre d'art*, 114. Almost as a footnote, Strahan added that *Virgin of Consolation* was a tribute to the deaths of Bouguereau's own wife and child.

Homer and His Guide (fig. 2.11) in the A. T. Stewart collection. Strahan no longer found *Nymphs and Satyr* as silly as he had at the Universal Exposition of 1878. Instead, he now praised it for the skillful treatment of the movement and modeling of the forms.⁹⁵ The overall affect was striking, even though to him the female figures appeared to be contemporary French women rather than timeless nymphs.

Strahan reserved his highest praise for the Bouguereau paintings in the Stewart collection: *Return from the Harvest*, *Newborn Lamb*, and *Homer and His Guide*, two rustic subjects and a history picture. These pictures were only described briefly, in spite of Strahan's assertions that they were among Bouguereau's best paintings. In the Stewart gallery, Bouguereau's *Return from the Harvest* hung conspicuously in the center of the south wall opposite Meissonier's *1807, Friedland* on the north wall (fig. 2.9).⁹⁶ Stewart commissioned *Return from the Harvest* in 1874, and specifically requested that the picture be Bouguereau's "greatest work."⁹⁷ Adding to its significance, according to Strahan, was its large size.

Strahan admired Bouguereau's two other paintings for two different reasons. The learned aspect of the subject of *Homer and His Guide* attracted comment, whereas what appealed to him in *Newborn Lamb* was the technical quality.⁹⁸ In spite of Strahan's overall aversion to Bouguereau's painting, he had to admit that he genuinely admired *Newborn Lamb*: "we may well drop the last

⁹⁵ Strahan, *Art Treasures*, 1: 54.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1: 23.

⁹⁷ *Catalogue of the A. T. Stewart Collection of Paintings, Sculptures, and Other Objects of Art* (New York: American Art Association, 1887), 104.

⁹⁸ Strahan, *Art Treasures*, 1: 43.

remnant of [critical] hostility, and echo the tribute that has sounded from Diderot's age to ours,--'delicious! delicious!'"⁹⁹ Beyond these few paintings, Strahan mentioned only briefly other paintings by Bouguereau, because he believed that lengthy descriptions of paintings by such a famous painter were superfluous.¹⁰⁰

In spite of his usual opposition to the public's admiration for Bouguereau's paintings, Strahan vehemently defended the painter from negative French criticism on one occasion. Strahan quoted French critic Edmond Duranty as representative of the negative criticism often leveled against Bouguereau's art.¹⁰¹ Using an analogy, Strahan said that if a painting by Italian Renaissance master Raphael were just discovered in the nineteenth century, it would have been criticized for the same polish and beauty of figure of a painting by Bouguereau, but since Raphael painted during the Renaissance, his work was considered elegant, whereas Bouguereau's nineteenth-century classicism was considered a defect.¹⁰²

Strahan's definition of classicism was "the representation of beautiful human figures with correctness of design and in noble attitudes."¹⁰³ Bouguereau, according to Strahan, was "pseudo-classic" in his use of elegant forms, but with a "waxy smoothness" to his pictures, inspired by prix de Rome winners who had, in turn, been inspired by Raphael.¹⁰⁴ For Strahan, Gérôme and Cabanel ranked above Bouguereau as classicists, although he distinguished among their types of

⁹⁹ Ibid., 1: 44 ; idem, *Chefs-d'oeuvre d'art*, 28.

¹⁰⁰ Strahan, *Art Treasures*, 1: 44.

¹⁰¹ Strahan, *Chefs-d'oeuvre d'art*, 114. See also Edmond Duranty, "Réflexions d'un bourgeois sur le Salon de peinture," *Gazette des beaux-arts* 16 (July 1877): 76.

¹⁰² Strahan, *Chefs-d'oeuvre d'art*, 114.

¹⁰³ Strahan, *Masterpieces of the Centennial*, 1: 6.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 1: 15.

classicism. Gérôme the “most eminent living classicist,” descended from the classicism of Jacques-Louis David; he echoed David’s sculptural forms and noble themes, particularly in the following works: *Death of Caesar*, *Ave Caesar, morituri te salutant*, *Alcibiades*, and *King Candaules*.¹⁰⁵ Strahan also included Cabanel in this category, though he considered his style of classicism more graceful, and called the *Florentine Poet*, *Nymph and Faun*, and *Aglaia* “exquisitely beautiful.”¹⁰⁶ Gérôme’s style of classicism was sculptural and didactic, whereas Cabanel’s was elegant and pleasing.

In his last major publication, *Études in Modern Art* (1882, reprinted 1888), Strahan’s opinions about the artists changed only marginally. He again attempted to categorize the artists, though his classifications had changed. In this study, Strahan devoted a chapter to Gérôme and his school, which he now considered unable to be classified, and another to Meissonier, whom he still called a “realist,” but not in the same sense as Gustave Courbet was a realist. The difference, he explained, was that Courbet saw his subjects from ten feet away while Meissonier saw his subjects empirically at close range.

Strahan termed both Bouguereau and Cabanel “idealists” rather than classicists, as he had earlier.¹⁰⁷ He asserted that Bouguereau was a forceful artist and still the head of a school, despite negative criticism. He considered Cabanel as past his prime, due to his advanced age (he was about sixty years old), and to the declining quality of his work, but Strahan held out hope that Cabanel might yet again be as inventive as he was in his youth. Strahan

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Strahan, *Études in Modern French Art*, 37.

confirmed his earlier choices as the artists' masterpieces, but added *1814* to Meissonier's masterpieces.¹⁰⁸ He reiterated his feelings about works by Gérôme, his favorite. *Florentine Poet* was still Cabanel's masterpiece, but he found later works like *Tamar and Absalom*, which he had admired a few years prior, weaker than the earlier paintings.¹⁰⁹

Overall, Strahan revealed his bias towards his former teacher Gérôme and lavished praise upon nearly all his paintings, concluding that Gérôme was indeed a great artist and would be so to posterity. Although Strahan admitted that all four artists' works were popular, he did not admire their works unflinchingly. Strahan offered mainly laudatory remarks regarding paintings by Gérôme and by Meissonier. He defended Bouguereau at the same time as he complained about his flawless surfaces. With Cabanel he was more ambivalent and sometimes contradictory in his comments about the works in the collections. Strahan occasionally contradicted his own opinions. Although he praised the artists' masterpieces, he complained about other pictures, leading him to say that Meissonier was old-fashioned, Cabanel was on the decline, and Bouguereau was outdated.

Art Histories Published in the United States

Strahan's assessments of the four French artists and his selection of masterpieces were largely corroborated by writers of art histories, mostly published after Strahan's books. Most contemporary writers generally agreed on

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 16.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 45.

the great contribution the artists had made to fine art, and emphasized their most important works. Nearly every history mentioned prominent collectors, such as John Taylor Johnston, William H. Vanderbilt, and A. T. Stewart. Stewart's name was forever connected to Meissonier's *1807, Friedland* (even after it passed into the hands of Judge Hilton, who paid even more for it). Attempts to classify the works of the artists, though, challenged the writers, whose opinions on the artists' styles differed. In spite of the differences, however, all critics unequivocally placed the four artists' works at the head of the stylistic canon of contemporary French academic art.

American writers were aware of French assessments and criticisms of the artists; some were published and translated before American writers published their own art histories. A reviewer for the *New York Daily Tribune* considered Charles Blanc the foremost living French critic, and applauded his book, *Les Artistes de mon temps*, published in 1876.¹¹⁰ However, the reviewer opposed Blanc's marginalization of the four artists, and asserted that "any study of contemporary art professing to be complete" had to include Cabanel, Gérôme, and Meissonier.¹¹¹ Blanc's book was not translated into English. Yet, French publications like these provided models for American critics, and translations of French art criticism compiled into art histories began to be published by the late

¹¹⁰ G. W. S., "European Art," *New York Daily Tribune*, 25 January 1877, 8.

¹¹¹ Ibid. Blanc (1813-1882) wrote about Cabanel, Gérôme, and Meissonier in the context of the Universal Exposition of 1867, and did not mention Bouguereau at all; see Charles Blanc, *Les Artistes de mon temps* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1876), 416, 427. Blanc preferred the public works of the artists. He opined that only Cabanel was still attached to the tradition of history painting, but only thinly; he disparagingly likened his *Nymph Abducted by a Faun* and his *Paradis perdu* to the frivolity of eighteenth-century French painting. Blanc (421, 432) praised Gérôme only as an ethnographic painter, and admired Meissonier's paintings, particularly the *La Halte [Halt at an Inn]*.

1870s and became more numerous in the 1880s. These translations included *Masterpieces of French Art* by Louis Viardot, *Illustrated Biographies of Modern Artists* edited by F.-G. Dumas, and *Great Modern Painters* published by Goupil in Paris, all of which praised the four French artists.¹¹² These French writers conveyed to American readers across the United States that the four men were among the greatest contemporary artists.¹¹³

Viardot's book illustrated selected paintings accompanied by a page of text, and then included separate biographical entries on each artist, dictionary-style. His assessments of the work of Meissonier, Gérôme, and Cabanel were lengthier than those written for other artists because they had each received a Medal of Honor at the Paris Universal Exposition of 1878; Bouguereau, as another medal winner, received less attention. Viardot attributed Meissonier's success to his conscientious paint handling and named *A Brawl* his masterpiece; he mentioned as most writers did, the exorbitant cost of *1807, Friedland*. Gérôme's most popular work, according to Viardot, was *Duel after the Ball*, but *Ave Caesar, morituri te salutant* was his best. Cabanel's appeal was due to his

¹¹² Louis Viardot, *Masterpieces of French Art*, ed. William A. Armstrong, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Gebbie & Co., 1881). *Masterpieces of French Art* was originally published in Paris in 1868, was translated into English for an 1870 London publication, and then printed in Philadelphia in 1881-1883. *Illustrated Biographies of Modern Artists* was published simultaneously by Paris and London publishers, both in English; see F.-G. Dumas, ed., *Illustrated Biographies of Modern Artists* 2 vols. (Paris: Ludovic Baschet, 1882); and idem, *Illustrated Biographies of Modern Artists* 2 vols. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1882). (References made are to the Paris publication.) *The Great Modern Painters: English, French, German, etc., Medallists of Successive Universal Expositions*, trans. Henry Bacon, 2 vols. (Paris: Goupil, 1884-1886) was translated by one of Cabanel's prominent American students, Henry Bacon (1839-1912). Cabanel was not included in this biography, probably because he had so few interactions with Goupil, the publisher. Although published in Paris, this book seems to have been geared to English-speaking collectors. Two editions—a Bibliophiles' edition, and an Amateurs' edition—were published simultaneously. A shortened version of this book was published a few years later in the United States; see Clara Erskine Clement Waters, *The Goupil Gallery of Photogravures from Great Modern Painters, with Biographical and Descriptive Text* (Boston: Estes and Lauriat, 1888).

¹¹³ The one thousand subscribers who received *Masterpieces of French Art*, for example, stretched from coast to coast.

high personal standards and Bouguereau's appeal to the refined treatment of the peasants he portrayed.¹¹⁴

Illustrated Biographies of Modern Artists, a compilation of essays written by various conservative French critics, included lengthier and more personal and in-depth biographies than Viardot's *Masterpieces*.¹¹⁵ Cabanel's and Meissonier's grand homes and well-appointed studios were illustrated and discussed, which gave readers a glimpse into the two artists' elegant Paris lifestyle and best-known works of art. Both artists were vigorously praised, Cabanel by Henry de Chennevières and Meissonier by Philippe Burty.¹¹⁶

Chennevières began his encomium of Cabanel by calling the artist "one of the glorious French masters of modern art," and among the "first rank" of history painting and portraiture, "stamping all his work with the seal of his brilliant individuality."¹¹⁷ Chennevières extolled Cabanel's "poetry" and his ability to elevate the mind of the viewer with his paintings while at the same time pleasing the eye.¹¹⁸ He reserved much praise for Cabanel's portrait of Napoleon III (fig. 1.7) and for his decorative work in the Tuileries, Panthéon, Hôtel de Ville, and private mansions in Paris. Cabanel's American patrons of his portraits as well as of history paintings such as *Pia de Tolomei* and the *Shulamite* (fig. 3.11) were noted by Chennevières, who said that "every American of any pretensions

¹¹⁴ Viardot, *Masterpieces in French Art*, 2: 8.

¹¹⁵ F.-G. Dumas, ed., *Illustrated Biographies of Modern Artists* 2 vols. (Paris: Ludovic Baschet, 1882).

¹¹⁶ Henry de Chennevières was the son of Philippe de Chennevières, who commissioned Cabanel, Gérôme, and Meissonier to paint the murals in the Pantheon. Philippe Burty regularly reviewed the Salons and wrote several articles on Meissonier.

¹¹⁷ Henry de Chennevières, "Alexandre Cabanel," in *Illustrated Biographies of Modern Artists*, 243.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

rushes to Cabanel's studio."¹¹⁹ He concluded by stating that posterity would judge Cabanel to be one of the masters of French painting of the latter half of the nineteenth century.¹²⁰

Philippe Burty gave a lengthy background on Meissonier's training and early work as a wood engraver deliberately to give a more interesting account of the artist's humble and lesser-known beginnings as an illustrator before he gained widespread fame as a painter. Burty's comments were general. He singled out *The Smoker* as representative of his best works, but only briefly mentioned the American favorite, *1807, Friedland*.¹²¹ Burty praised the artist's "power of subtle expression and intense mental drama" and noted that dealers and collectors flocked to his studio.¹²² As a draughtsman, according to Burty, Meissonier ranked among the best artists from any era of art.¹²³ The artist's paintings were well-known from photographs after them, and Burty stressed the hard work that Meissonier put into every single painting.¹²⁴

As with *Illustrated Biographies*, each artist biography in *Great Modern Painters* was written by a noted French critic: Jules Claretie on Gérôme, Eugène Montrosier on Meissonier, and René Ménard on Bouguereau. Each of these critics extolled the talents of their subjects. Favorable commentary by French critics reinforced American commentary. Claretie discussed only the works he had seen in person and remarked that each of Gérôme's works was thoroughly

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 260. *Pia de Tolomei* was in the William H. Vanderbilt collection and the *Shulamite* was in the collection of Catharine Lorillard Wolfe.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 264.

¹²¹ Philippe Burty, "Jean Louis Ernest Meissonier," in *Illustrated Biographies of Modern Artists*, 276.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid., 288.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 273.

and carefully researched and executed.¹²⁵ This included the original *Duel after the Ball*, in the collection of the duc d'Aumale at Chantilly. He conjectured that the 20,000 francs that this poignant and superbly executed picture sold for then would now bring 200,000 francs.¹²⁶ Gérôme breathed life into his antique subjects, according to Claretie, and made them not pedantic but full of vigor. Claretie ended his assessment by calling Gérôme a “noble example of . . . a master-painter.”¹²⁷

Montrosier began his assessment of Meissonier, “a painter of genius,” by summarizing the artist’s appeal: “observation, intelligence and emotion enclosed in a panel the size of a hand.”¹²⁸ Montrosier echoed Burty’s comments on Meissonier’s humble beginnings and consistently hard work.¹²⁹ The critic admired Meissonier’s high standards for his own works; each painting carefully executed without regard to creating lesser quality paintings which he could surely have sold for high prices. Montrosier also acknowledged but deflected one of the main French critics’ complaints about Meissonier’s paintings—his seventeenth- and eighteenth-century subject matter—by expressing his deep admiration for the artist’s ability to show past times and to lend “the sensation of real life” to each of his paintings.¹³⁰ Like Burty, Montrosier mentioned the American favorite, *1807, Friedland*, only in passing; it was not a French favorite.

Along the same lines as Montrosier, Ménard stressed Bouguereau's hard work and defended his flawless facture against the French critics whose main

¹²⁵ Jules Claretie, "J.-L. Gérôme," in *Great Modern Painters*, 1: 152.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 1: 151.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 1: 150.

¹²⁸ Eugène Montrosier, "E. Meissonier," in *Great Modern Painters*, 2: 290-91.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 2: 292-93.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 2: 291, 294.

complaint was that this polished finish made his pictures look cold. However, his facture lent spirituality rather than coldness to religious paintings. Ménard asserted that Bouguereau's method of smoothing out surface imperfections in the paint lent an ethereal quality particularly pertinent to religious paintings.¹³¹ Bouguereau's high place in art, according to Ménard, was due to his superior treatment of the human figure and to his broad knowledge.¹³² These French critics defended the artists against the major French criticisms leveled against them and naturally focused on works located in French private and public collections.

One of the first new art histories published in the United States, *Artists of the Nineteenth Century and Their Works* (1879) relied heavily on French criticism.¹³³ This ambitious general dictionary focused more on works in American collections and was broader in scope than Viardot's deluxe illustrated book, but included translations of various blocks of commentary from French critics. Criticism from René Ménard, Paul Mantz, and Théophile Gautier who wrote in respected French art journals such as *L'Art* and *Gazette des beaux-arts* appeared in the brief entries on major European artists.¹³⁴ The entries for the four French artists were substantial, but the authors purposely offered little

¹³¹ René Ménard, "W. Bouguereau," in *Great Modern Painters*, 1: 12.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 1: 15.

¹³³ Clara Erskine Clement and Laurence Hutton, *Artists of the Nineteenth Century and Their Works*, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton, Osgood, and Co., 1879). Subsequent editions, relatively unchanged, were published in 1885 and 1894.

¹³⁴ These two periodicals were respected publications in the United States. *L'Art* was profiled in "L'Art," *Atlantic Monthly* 57, no. 339 (January 1886): 133-36. These authoritative journals were also discussed in Strahan, *Masterpieces of the Centennial*, 1: 358; and in "Notes," *Nation* 28, no. 729 (19 June 1879): 419.

commentary aside from translated French criticism, awards, and some prices realized for the artists' works so that readers could form their own judgments.

Judgments were already formed in two deluxe tomes published in English that included masterpieces in both European and American collections: J. E. Reed's *One Hundred Crowned Masterpieces of Modern Painting* (1888) and George Smith's similarly titled, *One Hundred Crowned and Laurelled Masterpieces of Modern Painting* (1889).¹³⁵ Smith's two-volume set was similar to Reed's but included additional works from the Paris Universal Exposition of 1889. According to Reed, Cabanel, Meissonier, and Gérôme were the three greatest painters of France.¹³⁶ The "crowned masterpieces" selected for this deluxe illustrated book were based on popular opinion, high praise from art critics, auction prices, and the medals and prizes won at exhibitions and at Salons.¹³⁷ Each painting was reproduced in a fine photogravure with a one-page description. The goal of the entire collection was to instruct as well as to appeal to all readers.

Included in Reed's top one hundred were recent paintings: Cabanel's *Tamar and Absalom* (Salon of 1875, Luxembourg Museum), admired for its ethnographic treatment, and *Cleopatra Experimenting with Poisons* (Salon of 1887), "impressive for its coldness and imperial grace."¹³⁸ Cleopatra's regal posture and chilly disregard for the death of a prisoner struck Reed. He added that Cabanel would have won the Medal of Honor in the Salon if he had not

¹³⁵ J. E. Reed, *One Hundred Crowned Masterpieces of Modern Painting*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Gebbie & Co., 1888 [?]); and George A. Smith, *One Hundred Crowned and Laurelled Masterpieces of Modern Painting*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Gebbie & Co., [1889 ?]).

¹³⁶ Reed, 2: n. p.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

already been *hors concours*. Meissonier, “perhaps, the most popular artist of his time,” was again identified with his masterpiece, *1807, Friedland* (1875), and its high purchase price paid by A. T. Stewart was again mentioned. Other pictures by Meissonier included *The Sign Painter* (1872) and *Sergeant’s Portrait* (1874), both admired for their truth to nature. But, as with most texts, Meissonier’s name was closely connected to the American art market. Reed unequivocally assured collectors of Meissonier’s paintings that the value of the work would not depreciate. Gérôme’s *Christian Martyrs* (1883) was chosen and admired for its presumed historical accuracy. Several of the works chosen in Reed’s book, Cabanel’s *Cleopatra Experimenting with Poisons*, Gérôme’s *Christian Martyrs*, and Meissonier’s *1807 Friedland*, *The Sign Painter*, and *Sergeant’s Portrait*—and the accompanying text—were repeated in Smith’s book.¹³⁹ With a few exceptions, though, these choices differed from those in subsequent general art histories.

Shortly after *Artists of the Nineteenth Century and Their Works* and Reed’s book on masterpieces were published, the first detailed history, Stranahan’s *A History of French Painting* (1888), was published in the United States.¹⁴⁰ This book was Stranahan’s best-known work as an author. It covered the end of the fifteenth century to the present, and was neither a straightforward dictionary nor a deluxe picture book. With her study, she intended to benefit

¹³⁹ Additional masterpieces in Smith’s book included Bouguereau’s *A Song of Springtime* (*Spring Songs*, c. 1889); Gérôme’s *Rex Tibicien* (1874) and *Poet Inspired by the Muse* (1888); and Meissonier’s *1814, Campaign of France* (1864).

¹⁴⁰ C. H. Stranahan, *A History of French Painting* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1888). Stranahan, along with Samuel P. Avery, sculptor Emma Stebbins, and other prominent citizens, was also a founding trustee of Barnard College for women.

American art students rather than connoisseurs.¹⁴¹ Most of the book covered nineteenth-century art, as well as the French Academy, Salon, and École des beaux-arts. Stranahan devoted the largest section to living French artists because of their prominence in the United States. She also felt that brief articles were incomplete and illustrated books sold by subscription (such as those authored by Viardot, Strahan, Reed, and Smith) were too expensive.

This book was the most ambitious attempt up to that time to place French artists in a canon, and she relied on earlier sources such as Strahan and Dumas. She acknowledged and deflected the major criticisms of each, as the French critics had done. Stranahan provided lengthy lists of works by Meissonier and Gérôme in American collections, although not for Cabanel or Bouguereau. This omission is puzzling, as their works were well-known and had been documented by Strahan in *Art Treasures of America*, which Stranahan referenced. Each biographical sketch began with the background of each artist and the early works that led to their reputations in France.

In her history, Stranahan placed Gérôme and Meissonier at the head of the “realistic genre,” and Bouguereau and Cabanel at the head of “modern academic painting.”¹⁴² Meissonier and Gérôme, “allied in the elevated rank they hold,” were the first two names listed under “Genre Painters.”¹⁴³ Stranahan devoted more attention to Gérôme than to most artists, due in part to the breadth of his skill as an orientalist, historical genre painter, and learned classicist, who

¹⁴¹ Ibid., vii.

¹⁴² Ibid., 402. Among other artists in Stranahan’s realistic genre were Vibert and Carolus-Duran; other modern academic painters included Henner and Lefebvre.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 335.

“gives a lesson whenever he paints a picture.”¹⁴⁴ His didacticism appealed to the American desire to educate the public in the arts, although Gérôme’s knowledge, she felt, sometimes overpowered his artistic skill, which was so refined that the surface of his pictures sometimes seemed too finished. She observed that his first overly finished work was his *Dance of the Almeh*.¹⁴⁵ Although she felt that his subjects sometimes lacked feeling, she admired Gérôme’s dramatic portrayal of grim, cold death in the often-mentioned *Duel after the Ball*.¹⁴⁶

Gérôme’s other masterpieces were his major ancient themes: *Christian Martyrs*, *Death of Caesar*, *Pollice Verso*, and *Ave Caesar, morituri te salutant*.¹⁴⁷ Stranahan referred the reader to Strahan’s descriptions of these works in *Art Treasures of America* and echoed Strahan’s choice of Gérôme’s *Death of Caesar* as his “grandest” work, a perfect combination of conception, execution, and erudition. Other examples of Gérôme’s skill of presenting one “dominating emotion” were *L’Éminence grise*, *Jerusalem*, and his ancient scenes of Rome. In addition, Gérôme’s *First Kiss of the Sun* and his paintings of Anacreon and Cupid, according to Stranahan, were “full of poetry.”¹⁴⁸ She concluded her assessment of Gérôme with a list of awards and honors the artist received (and a footnote that his father-in-law Goupil “aided greatly in popularizing his talent”),

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 311.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 309.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 312.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 313. She noted the names of collectors, such as William T. Walters who owned *Christian Martyrs*; she reprinted a letter from Gérôme to Walters, in which Gérôme described the pictures setting and source. *Death of Caesar* was in the collection of John Taylor Johnston.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 316.

with an aside about Gérôme's demeanor and his travels by French critic Jules Claretie (from *Great Modern Painters*).¹⁴⁹

Whereas Gérôme painted history and the Orient, Meissonier, according to Stranahan, was a "naturalist" in the sense that his depictions were highly realistic scenes from everyday life, albeit not the present time. Stranahan credited Meissonier with making "genre painting the predominating art of France."¹⁵⁰ Meissonier had reached his prime in 1867, she said, but was still a powerful and admirable artist and the viewer delighted in the human nature of each of the characters Meissonier depicted. Stranahan attributed Meissonier's predilection for eighteenth-century figures to the picturesque quality of the costume, lacking in nineteenth-century men's costume.¹⁵¹

Stranahan stated that Meissonier had been the most eminent French painter for many years, but reported that his stature had lessened. His popularity, though, had not yet declined and his paintings still fetched "fabulous prices."¹⁵² Stranahan attributed this phenomenon to his perfection in drawing, color, composition, light, conception, and labor; labor and cost were particularly admired by Americans.¹⁵³ Echoing Montrosier, she said that even the demand for Meissonier's work would not force him to create substandard paintings.¹⁵⁴ Although she stated that each of Meissonier's Napoleonic pictures deserved a separate chapter, she wrote of them only briefly and asserted that his best-

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 317.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 335.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 338.

¹⁵² Ibid., 336.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. In a footnote, Stranahan mentioned some of the highest prices received for some of Meissonier's pictures, included *1807, Friedland* for A. T. Stewart, and William H. Vanderbilt's *General Desaix* "for a sum relatively as large."

known pictures were his small-scale genre works.¹⁵⁵ At the end of the ten-page section on Meissonier was a list of over fifty works in American collections, including those that had been in the prominent sales of A. T. Stewart, John Taylor Johnston, Mary Jane Morgan, and George Seney.¹⁵⁶ The number of his works in American collections had increased almost twofold over that reported by Strahan in *Art Treasures* less than a decade earlier.

Stranahan wrote more succinctly about Cabanel and Bouguereau, both of whom she felt excelled at painting women, in contrast to Gérôme and Meissonier whose subjects were usually men.¹⁵⁷ Although she considered Cabanel's many students his greatest legacy, she categorized Cabanel's works by subject: portraits, "light classic subjects," and "dignified historic" paintings.¹⁵⁸ Cabanel was a first-rate portraitist with "an illustrious list of sitters, including Emperor Napoleon III."¹⁵⁹ His portraits of women, particularly American women, she wrote, were elegant, graceful, and refined.¹⁶⁰ His classical masterpiece was the *Birth of Venus*, and aside from a few mentions of other important pictures, like the *Florentine Poet* and *Phaedra*, Stranahan considered *Pia de Tolomei*, from the William H. Vanderbilt collection, to be one of Cabanel's most important paintings. His best "dignified historic works" were large-scale decorative paintings for the Panthéon and the Tuileries in Paris.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 342.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 344. By comparison, thirty-seven works by Meissonier were listed in the three volumes of Strahan's *Art Treasures*.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 402.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 399.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 398.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 399.

¹⁶¹ Stranahan borrowed freely from Chennevières; see Stranahan, 399, and Chennevières, 258.

Although Stranahan did not single out any of Bouguereau's works as a masterpiece as she had for the other three artists, she called attention to *Nymphs and Satyr* and in general to his figures of the Virgin dating from 1875 through 1881 (noting that *Song of the Angels* [fig. 2.14] was in the George Seney collection). Bouguereau, Stranahan explained, was the preeminent painter of the flesh, so smooth that the flesh seemed almost like wax or enamel. She quoted Strahan's phrases to describe Bouguereau's works: "faultily faultless" and "despairingly perfect."¹⁶² But overall, his assets were his "knowledge, taste and refinement" with which he achieved his "serene elegance of manner."¹⁶³ She aptly noted, as Viardot had, that he achieved his fame with the public through his elegant idealized peasants.¹⁶⁴ She considered Bouguereau's continued success an indication of an appreciation for academic art in the face of a growing interest in Impressionism and Courbet-style realism. The trend, she explained, was towards realism, but this was not the realism that is associated with Courbet today; rather, the "realism" she identified was individual. For example, Gérôme's realism was "clear and acute," while Meissonier's was "true and exact," and Cabanel's realism was "irrepressibly graceful."¹⁶⁵ Stranahan's realism related to the treatment of subject matter, whether or not the subjects were contemporary, and to line rather than to facture.

At the end of her history, she included a section on current trends in French art. The main new trend—already established, according to Stranahan—

¹⁶² Strahan, *Mr. Vanderbilt's House and Collection*, 2: 16; and Stranahan, 403.

¹⁶³ Stranahan, 402. See also Ménard, 14.

¹⁶⁴ Stranahan, 403.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 477-78. She also included Gustave Courbet, Jean-François Millet, and Jules Breton as realists, but noted each artist's differences: Courbet's realism was "solid," Millet's "spiritualized," and Jules Breton's "cheery and sunny."

was Impressionism, represented by Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro (1831-1903), Degas, Bastien-Lepage, Henri Gervex (1852-1929), and Jean Béraud (1849-1935), with Manet its precursor. She characterized it as a “close study of nature and external phenomena” and saw it as evolving out of Barbizon landscape painting.¹⁶⁶ Impressionism too, for Stranahan, was another form of realism because it captured fleeting aspects of nature.

Aside from Stranahan, two respected art critics, Clarence Cook and William Crary Brownell, wrote art histories. Clarence Cook was a well-known author and prolific conservative American critic.¹⁶⁷ He was known for his caustic criticism of American art, especially art that betrayed foreign influences, and more often than not he chose biting criticism over praise. From the 1850s through the 1890s he had contributed criticism to the *New York Daily Tribune*, and briefly served as its Paris correspondent. He also contributed art criticism to the *Atlantic Monthly* and *Art Amateur* and became the longtime editor of the *Studio*.

Cook’s most significant contribution to the history of art was his deluxe three-volume *Art and Artists of Our Time* (1888), published in the same year as Stranahan’s *History of French Art*.¹⁶⁸ Cook acknowledged that French art was

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 459.

¹⁶⁷ For a detailed discussion of Cook’s contribution to art criticism in America, see Simoni, “Art Critics and Criticism,” 120-348. Cook owned an extensive collection of prints, mainly by or after old masters and contemporary European artists. Included in his collection were original etchings by Meissonier and etchings after Gérôme’s *Moorish Bath* and Bouguereau’s *Pet Lamb* (this was probably *Newborn Lamb* from the Stewart Collection). He also had etchings after Barbizon artists, Jean-François Millet, Josef Israels, Benjamin-Constant, Henner, and Bonnat; see *Painter-Etchings, Engravings and Objects of Art...of the Late Clarence Cook* (New York: Anderson Art Galleries, 1909).

¹⁶⁸ Clarence Cook, *Art and Artists of Our Time*, 3 vols. (New York: Selmar Hess, 1888). The first volume is devoted to French art, the second to German art, and the third to American, English,

more advanced than the arts of other countries, and devoted the first of his three volumes to modern French painters. He excluded artists who are today considered Realists such as Gustave Courbet, or Impressionists such as Claude Monet or Édouard Manet, despite his favorable reviews of the Impressionist exhibition in New York organized by Durand-Ruel two years earlier.¹⁶⁹ The only mention Cook allowed in *Art and Artists* was an acknowledgment in his introduction that Courbet and the Impressionists revolted against the Paris Salon by holding their own exhibits.¹⁷⁰ Aside from that comment, Cook ignored them.

Cook considered all influential French artists descendants of either Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825) or Antoine-Jean Gros (1771-1835), but he also included Barbizon artists, whom he liked, in his history. The four artists were naturally among the artists Cook included, as well as others such as Paul Baudry, Puvis de Chavannes (1824-1898), Édouard Detaille, Pascal-Adolphe-Jean Dagnan-Bouveret (1852-1929), Léon-François Comerre (1850-1916), François Flameng (1856-1923), Jules Bastien-Lepage, whom he praised highly, and other academic artists less well-known today.

Considering Cook's critical temperament, he wrote surprisingly well of Gérôme and Meissonier, but was more characteristically unenthusiastic in his comments on Bouguereau and Cabanel. Regardless, he acknowledged the popularity of all four artists. In addition to brief descriptions of major artworks, Cook related Bouguereau, Gérôme, and Meissonier to the art market and their

Belgian, Italian, Spanish, Russian, and Polish art. His assessment of American art was unflattering.

¹⁶⁹ [Clarence Cook], "The Impressionist Pictures," *Studio* n.s., no. 21 (17 April 1886): 245-46.

¹⁷⁰ Cook, *Art and Artists*, 1: xxvii.

fame to high priced works and the wide distribution of engravings and photographs after their paintings, more so than Stranahan did. With the exception of Gérôme, Cook did not single out masterpieces; rather, he focused on their universally admired skills, even though their lack of contemporary subject matter and emotion did not please him.

Like Stranahan, Cook noted that most of Gérôme's best works were in American collections, including one version of *Duel after the Ball*, which Cook considered one of Gérôme's best, and remarked that it was well-known in the United States from its many reproductions in photographs and engravings.¹⁷¹ Cook considered three other pictures, each painted in 1859, to be Gérôme's next best pictures: *King Candaules*, *Ave Caesar, morituri te salutant* and *Death of Caesar*, and he also added a later painting, *Pollice verso* (fig. 2.17), well-known in the United States because it was in the A. T. Stewart sale.¹⁷² Like Stranahan and other critics, Cook admired the foreshortening of the figure of Caesar in *Death of Caesar* and the seemingly historically accurate representation of all of Gérôme's ancient scenes. Cook was less impressed by the orientalist works, but nevertheless devoted a paragraph to a few selected pictures, including *Sabre Dance before the Pasha* (figs. 2.7a and 2.7b) from the William H. Vanderbilt collection.

According to Cook, Gérôme's appeal was that he was one of the best storytellers of the time, although he considered Gérôme inferior to Meissonier as a painter. Cook thought that Gérôme's pictures possessed a dramatic narrative

¹⁷¹ Cook, *Art and Artists*, 1: 30. Cook noted that *Duel after the Ball* was in the collection of William T. Walters, but did not mention that it was a reduction.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 1: 31.

appeal that Meissonier's lacked. This meant that Meissonier's pictures appealed more to other artists than to the public; however, Cook said, younger painters were "indifferent" to paintings by Meissonier because his pictures were too small and young artists were looking elsewhere for models.¹⁷³ Regardless, Gérôme's paintings were better-known than Meissonier's, according to Cook, because several of them had captured the attention of the public, whereas only one of Meissonier's works, *1807, Friedland* drew widespread comment. Cook actually considered *1807, Friedland* one of Meissonier's worst paintings, and he attributed the fame of this picture only to its price.¹⁷⁴ Nonetheless, he thought that Meissonier's paintings would continue to bring high prices because of their rare high quality.

Cook felt that Meissonier's reputation was based on a general impression rather than on one or more masterpieces.¹⁷⁵ Meissonier's best works, according to Cook, were his small-scale single figures, although they were all painted with such equal care that none stood out. Each of Meissonier's paintings was "perfect in composition, in expression, in drawing, and yet absolutely wanting in that human character, that feeling of individual life which makes the Dutch pictures so eternally interesting to people of all ages, of all classes and conditions."¹⁷⁶ Nevertheless, Cook selected a few of these pictures to mention as examples, *The Reader*, *The Smoker*, *Chess Players*, and a picture from the

¹⁷³ Ibid., 1: 69.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 1: 67.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 1: 68.

Catharine Lorillard Wolfe collection, *Painting Collector Visiting a Painter* (1856) (fig. 3.12).

Cook wrote less about Bouguereau and Cabanel. He presented an unflattering assessment of Cabanel's talent in *Art and Artists*, which was published less than a year before Cabanel's death. That Cabanel was a superb draughtsman was unquestioned, but Cook complained of Cabanel's lack of "earnestness" and feeling which, he felt, rendered his works unmoving.¹⁷⁷ Cook found Cabanel's *Tamar and Absalom* and the *Death of Francesca da Rimini and Paolo Malatesta*, two paintings in the Luxembourg Museum, "unimpressive" despite their dramatic content.¹⁷⁸ Since the subjects were not from contemporary times, Cook surmised, viewers could not relate to the figures, especially since there appeared to be no moral to the stories.¹⁷⁹ Regardless of his complaints, Cook admired two of Cabanel's paintings in New York, a portrait of Catharine Lorillard Wolfe, and the *Shulamite* (Salon of 1876), in Wolfe's collection. This was perhaps in deference to Wolfe and her generous bequest to the Metropolitan Museum of Art which had just taken place. Cook also mentioned the success of the *Birth of Venus*, "popularized by engravings and photographs" and stated that although Cabanel was long admired for his elegant portraits of women, both French and American, his best "public" portrait was that of Napoleon III.¹⁸⁰

Bouguereau's work remained steady and unchanging throughout his career, according to Cook, but still captured the attention of the public. He

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 1: 72.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 1: 73.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 1: 75.

acknowledged that among modern French painters, Bouguereau was “widely popular” in the United States and was certain that Bouguereau kept wealthy patrons’ drawing rooms in mind when he painted.¹⁸¹ Cook followed this observation with two others: Bouguereau’s pictures brought high prices, and exhibitions of his work drew admiring crowds.¹⁸² Three words, “knowledge, taste, refinement,” borrowed from French critic René Ménard, which Stranahan also quoted, summed up the artist’s widespread appeal.¹⁸³ However, for Cook, none of Bouguereau’s paintings stood out sufficiently to be called masterpieces. Cook merely referred to the paintings illustrated in *Art and Artists—Charity* (fig. 2.7), *Breton Brother and Sister* (fig. 3.13), from the Catharine Lorillard Wolfe collection, and *Good Night*—as typical examples of Bouguereau’s works.

The American public’s interest in French academic art remained strong in the 1890s, and the most significant art history published during that time was William Crary Brownell’s *French Art: Classic and Contemporary Painting and Sculpture* (1892).¹⁸⁴ Brownell had lived in Paris and was an art and literary critic for *Scribner’s*. American literary figures such as Edith Wharton and Henry James were more his forte than were artists, but he was an astute art critic nonetheless. Although he acknowledged popular opinion regarding the four artists, he was more sympathetic than Cook to current trends in French art. Brownell particularly admired older artists, Courbet, Millet, Corot, Delacroix, and Alexandre-Gabriel

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 1: 86.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*; Stranahan, 402. See also René Ménard, *French Artists of the Present Day: Notices of Some Contemporary Painters* (London: Seeley, Jackson, and Halliday, 1876), 11.

¹⁸⁴ W. C. Brownell, *French Art: Classic and Contemporary Painting and Sculpture* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1892). William Crary Brownell (1867-1936) was a regular contributor to *Scribner’s Magazine*. Meissonier and Cabanel were included in his book, though both had recently died.

Decamps (1803-1860), and, for him, Puvis de Chavannes, Bastien-Lepage, and Jean-Charles Cazin (1841-1901) were foremost among contemporary artists.

Brownell was more ambivalent than Cook, but he also expressed the same displeasure with the subject matter in the academic artists' paintings. He implied that the popularity of paintings by the four French artists, "direct descendants of the classic period of French painting" was overtaken by a preference for Barbizon landscape paintings, and explained: "Their legitimate attachment to art, instead of the Fontainebleau absorption in nature, has given them a false reputation of artificiality."¹⁸⁵ The four French men were preoccupied with art rather than with nature, which, Brownell felt, rendered their work cold, rather than poetic.¹⁸⁶ In other words, the academic artists' adherence to traditional subjects and tight facture seemed cold and artificial when compared to the Barbizon's "poetic" landscapes painted with a looser facture. Also for Brownell, landscape subjects were "poetic," whereas figural subjects, particularly didactic or historical genre figures, were not.

In spite of the differences Brownell observed between Barbizon and academic art, he categorized both under the larger category of "Romantic Painting." (He placed the early nineteenth-century artists, David and Ingres, under the term, "Classic.") Brownell linked Gérôme's "classic temperament" to David and Ingres, although his subjects, which reflected a romantic influence, differed. Brownell surmised that if David painted the same subjects as Gérôme, they would have looked "much the same," and Ingres would have admired the

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 68.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 63.

“noble dramatic power” of Gérôme’s ancient subjects, *Cleopatra before Caesar* and *Ave, Caesar, morituri te salutant*.¹⁸⁷ Brownell asserted that “Gérôme painted historical pictures with a realism unknown before his day.”¹⁸⁸ For Brownell, Gérôme’s high degree of realism combined with his “classic temperament” and orientalist subjects reflected the romantic spirit of his time.

Brownell admired Bouguereau and Cabanel with hesitation, and followed his comments with a two-page, convoluted discussion of the necessity for critics not to follow their own preferences, but to write objectively.¹⁸⁹ Because of the artists’ popular appeal, Brownell apologized for his criticism of Bouguereau and Cabanel. In defense of his opinion, he said, “It is temptingly simple to deny all importance to painters who are not poetic painters.”¹⁹⁰ This was his way of apologizing and accounting for not considering Bouguereau and Cabanel “poetic” painters. Brownell said that his contemporaries did not “insist” that poets be poetic, and implied that it was not necessary for painters to be poetic either.

Both artists, Brownell felt, were technically perfect, but he described the subject matter of their paintings as “futile.”¹⁹¹ The subject matter in the paintings by academic artists appealed to a bourgeois ideal of beauty, and their flawless surfaces were as appealing as the beautiful figures they painted. This opinion, that the subject matter of each artist was less than desirable for contemporary times, was first proposed by Stranahan and Cook and persisted throughout the

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 64.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 63.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 66.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 67.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 64.

late nineteenth century. Bouguereau's Madonnas and shepherdesses were not poetic, nor was Cabanel's *Birth of Venus*, in spite of its technical perfection.¹⁹² Brownell admired the artists, acknowledged their popularity, but still felt compelled to criticize their outdated subjects. They were learned, intellectual artists who cared for form and perfection rather than for emotion and contemporary subject matter.¹⁹³ He ended his ambivalent assessment on a positive note, however, by saying: "To be blind to their successful handling of line and mass and movement, is to neglect a source of refined pleasure. To lament their lack of poetry is to miss their admirable rhetoric; to regret their imperfect feeling for decorativeness is to miss their delightful decorum."¹⁹⁴ Nonetheless, Brownell did not consider them the equal of "pure romanticists, the truly poetic painters," such as Delacroix, Millet, and Corot.¹⁹⁵ After this lengthy defense of critics, such as Brownell himself, who disagreed with public opinion, he discussed Meissonier and said that ". . . nothing could be less critical than to deny Meissonier's importance and the legitimate interest he has for every educated and intelligent person, in spite of his literalness and his insensitiveness to the element of beauty" found in works by artists such as Corot and Troyon.¹⁹⁶

Brownell preferred the landscape art of the Barbizon artists and the Impressionists, and he called Manet "one of the most noteworthy painters that France or any other country has produced."¹⁹⁷ To illustrate Manet's innovative use of light, Brownell contrasted Gérôme's use of light in his masterpiece,

¹⁹² Ibid., 65.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 68.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 69.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 62, 65.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 67.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 100.

L'Éminence grise. Gérôme's composition and values of light to dark in his painting were perfect in his indoor scene, according to Brownell, but, he pondered, what would happen to that picture if outdoor light were to illuminate the scene instead? His palette would have had to change to the less modulated palette of Manet.¹⁹⁸ Brownell then focused on Monet, whose contribution was his focus on sunlight in his *plein air* paintings. Brownell credited Monet with popularizing Impressionist art, but in spite of its popularity and of Brownell's lengthy description of Monet's innovations, he felt that Impressionist art was rather frivolous, and would not last long.¹⁹⁹ Impressionist painting, according to Brownell, lacked seriousness and appeared technically monotonous.

The Deaths of Cabanel and Meissonier

Shortly after paintings by the four French academic artists appeared at the forefront of art histories published in the United States, two of the main French academic artists died: Cabanel in 1889 and Meissonier in 1891. Journals and dailies paid indulgent tribute to Cabanel and to Meissonier in obituaries. In one, Cabanel was called the "most distinguished painter" of the "grand style," who, along with Bouguereau and Lefebvre, stressed draughtsmanship over color and graceful compositions over naturalness.²⁰⁰ Roger Riordan, critic for the *Art Amateur*, summarized Cabanel's popular appeal: his reputation, draughtsmanship, and reliable quality.²⁰¹ However, several writers commented

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 101-104.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 109-113.

²⁰⁰ "The Fine Arts: Alexandre Cabanel," *Critic*, no. 266 (2 February 1889): 56.

²⁰¹ Roger Riordan, "Alexandre Cabanel," *Art Amateur* 20 (March 1889): 79.

that Cabanel's earlier work was more vigorous than the later work, but all commented on Cabanel's liberal teaching, citing Jules Bastien-Lepage and Henri Gervex as examples of well-known artists whose styles differed markedly from their teacher's.²⁰² The *Critic* listed just a fraction of the number of Cabanel's paintings in American collections, fifteen, as well as citing about twenty-nine portraits of American women he painted; a writer for the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* guessed that there were as many portraits in the United States as in France.²⁰³ This partial list was close to double the number of his paintings in American collections a decade earlier. Cabanel died a wealthy man (a multimillionaire today), his estate valued upwards of \$400,000.²⁰⁴

Meissonier's death in January 1891, two years after Cabanel, received even more widespread coverage. Whereas opinions diverged somewhat for Cabanel's work, nearly all writers repeated that Meissonier was the most famous French artist, the head of his own school, and an indefatigable worker.²⁰⁵ One writer mused that Meissonier, who had so little formal education, became a master of technique.²⁰⁶ In their assessments, writers did not focus on the high prices of Meissonier's paintings, as was the norm before his death. At the time of his death, one journal reported that seventy-four pictures by Meissonier figured in

²⁰² Riordan: 79; "The Fine Arts: Alexandre Cabanel," 56; and Emma Bullet, "Cabanel: The Great Painter of the Modern French School," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 12 February 1889, 2.

²⁰³ "Cabanel's American Paintings," *Critic* 11 (9 February 1889): 69; Bullet, 2. By comparison, twenty-seven paintings (including only one portrait), were listed in Strahan's three volumes of *Art Treasures*.

²⁰⁴ As reported in "Notes," *Connoisseur* 3, no. 3 (Spring 1889): 155.

²⁰⁵ Mrs. C. R. Corson, "The Artist Meissonier," *Chautauquan* 13, no. 2 (May 1891): 214; "Meissonier," *Littell's Living Age* 188, no. 2436 (7 March 1891): 639; George Edgar Montgomery, "The Master of Genre," *Cosmopolitan* 10, no. 6 (April 1891): 667-68; "Meissonier's Wonder Year," *Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly* 31, no. 4 (April 1891): 421; and "Meissonier," *Art Amateur* 24, no. 4 (March 1891): 93.

²⁰⁶ Montgomery, "The Master of Genre," 670.

prominent American collections, including the paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.²⁰⁷ Just a few years earlier, Stranahan reported that there were around fifty of his works in American collections. At his death, his paintings were in more American collections than ever before. Regardless of the encomiums and widespread interest in the number of their pictures in American collections, both artists disappeared quickly from the American press after their deaths, but were not forgotten.

Conclusion

From the late 1860s through the 1870s, critical opinion was generally in line with public opinion, but after that, public and critical estimations began to diverge. Although the artists still enjoyed public favor through the early 1890s, critics began to express dissatisfaction both with the artists' unabated public appeal and with their lack of contemporary subject matter.

All of the writers, regardless of their personal views, accorded the four French artists significant places in art histories. For them, the success of all four men was tied to their careful, obviously laborious work and to their popular appeal. As they all agreed, public opinion was crucial to the success of the artists, and was reflected in contemporary writings. Gérôme was the recognized favorite, often accompanied by the open acknowledgment that he was promoted by his father-in-law, Goupil. Meissonier's name was consistently connected to the extraordinarily high price of his painting, *1807, Friedland*. Some critics, such as James and Cook discussed this famous painting, more out of perceived

²⁰⁷ "Meissoniers Owned by Americans," *Art Courier*, no. 1 (March 1891): 6.

necessity than because they liked it, although other writers such as Strahan clearly admired the painting.

The names of Bouguereau and Cabanel, though popular, were not connected to a single high-priced work or to aggressive promotion by a single powerful dealer, which may explain why English-language monographs were published by the 1890s for Gérôme and Meissonier, though not for Cabanel or Bouguereau.²⁰⁸ The allure of the latter two artists was based on their superior draughtsmanship and appealing subjects, whereas critics favored the drama of Gérôme's paintings and the hyperrealism of Meissonier's theatrical figures.

Writers identified more masterpieces by Gérôme and Cabanel than by Bouguereau or Meissonier. However, there was a consensus regarding masterpieces by each artist except for Bouguereau. Meissonier's *1807, Friedland* and Gérôme's *Death of Caesar*, *Duel after the Ball*, *Ave Caesar*, *morituri te salutant*, and *Pollice verso* were unanimously praised. Cabanel's masterpieces included the *Florentine Poet*, *Birth of Venus*, *Death of Francesca da Rimini* and *Paolo Malatesta*, *Pia de Tolomei*, *Tamar and Absalom*, *Portrait of Catharine Lorillard Wolfe*, and *Portrait of Napoleon III*. There was no unanimity on Bouguereau's masterpieces, although his *Nymphs and Satyr* and his Madonnas were most often mentioned.

Not surprisingly, all of these masterpieces or reductions of them were in American collections, and thus were more accessible to American writers. In the

²⁰⁸ For Gérôme, see Fanny Field Hering, *The Life and Works of Jean Léon Gérôme* (New York: Cassell, 1892). Hering published an article prior to her monograph; see Fanny Hering, "Gérôme," *Century Magazine* 37 (1889): 483-99. For Meissonier, see *The Complete Works of E. Meissonier: with Biography* (New York: J. W. Bouton, [1884?]). A later monograph, published in Paris and translated into English, is Vallery C. O. Gréard, *Meissonier: His Life and His Art*, trans. Lady Mary Loyd and Florence Simmonds (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1897).

case of *Duel after the Ball*, *Florentine Poet*, *Birth of Venus*, *Death of Francesca da Rimini* and *Paolo Malatesta*, and *Portrait of Napoleon III*, Americans owned reductions because the originals were in French collections, but this did not diminish their importance. Gérôme's masterpieces, except for *Pollice verso*, dated from the late 1850s, Cabanel's from the 1860s and 1870s, and Meissonier's and Bouguereau's paintings from the 1870s; thus, the art histories written in the 1880s focused on these artists' early works.

By the end of the 1880s, the four French painters were the key figures in their respective genres in contemporary art historical canons. The artists' high standing in the art world was summed up by one of Cabanel's former students, Henry Bacon, who considered Cabanel, Bouguereau, Meissonier, and Gérôme to be the torchbearers of tradition, "true to the great principles of art recognized in all ages."²⁰⁹ Attempts to categorize the artists' styles were not unified, but all agreed that this coterie of artists was among the best of their time, and certainly the best academic artists, whether categorized as realists or classicists.

Paradoxically, at the same time as the men became established in the canon, criticism of the outmoded subject matter of their paintings began to mount, as did complaints about a lack of feeling or "poetry" in the work. The intellectual and scientific appeal of their paintings was linked to the artists' careful observation and study of their subjects, yet public sentiment began to shift in the 1880s and early 1890s towards more emotionally-inspired "poetic" painting, by artists such as Corot and Millet. Inness, himself a "poetic" landscape painter,

²⁰⁹ Henry Bacon, *Parisian Art and Artists* (Boston: James R. Osgood & Company, 1883), 14. Bacon recollected his experience with Cabanel as his teacher in Henry Bacon, *A Parisian Year* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1882), 189-94.

had foreshadowed this shift already in 1878, when he distinguished between Meissonier's detailed observation of nature and Corot's "poetic," emotional treatment of nature.²¹⁰ The definition of this commonly used term, "poetic," differed for critics over time. Some critics, such as Stranahan and Strahan, found figural subjects inspired from literary sources poetic. For example, several of Gérôme's paintings of antiquity were poetic for Stranahan, and Cabanel's *Florentine Poet* inspired the same feeling in Strahan. In spite of the criticism, though, popular opinion loomed large. Critics, such as Strahan, deferred to public opinion, and others, such as Brownell, apologized or tried to legitimize their own derogatory comments when their opinions differed from those of the public.

Common to all the critics was an attempt at an even-handed approach to art criticism. They eschewed providing personal preferences, and instead approached art as objectively as they could. The academic artists were appreciated and given their due, and the newer styles, such as Impressionism, were introduced and analyzed rather than pitted in opposition to academic art. Differing styles were considered the natural course of artistic progress. Another part of progress was to place examples of the best art on view in a public venue. The next chapter examines the formation of the first public art museum in New York, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the transition of the four French artists' works from private to permanent public collections.

²¹⁰ Inness, "A Painter on Painting," 458-61.

CHAPTER 4

ENTERING THE MUSEUMS

In previous chapters, I examined the roles of art dealers, collectors, critics, and amateur art historians in the canonization of Bouguereau, Cabanel, Gérôme, and Meissonier in the United States. Dealers and collectors in particular were the leading promoters of French academic art. This chapter examines the final reason the four artists' careers peaked in this period: the placement of their works on permanent public view. French art collected in the United States during the 1860s and 1870s was kept in private collections or with dealers, and thus was not yet on extended public view. But concurrent with the rapid rise in collecting was the critics', dealers', and collectors' desire to form a museum to house some of these newly acquired works. A few paintings ceased changing hands and became lasting features in New York, the leading city in the United States. Then as now, the final seal of approval came upon the works' display in a museum, when the works became important enough to move from the private sphere to a permanent public venue. This change reinforced the canonical status of the artists.

Before the works of the French artists could be on permanent display in New York, though, a museum needed to be formed; this event did not occur until 1870. For years, the lack of an art museum in the art market capital of the United States had been lamented by esteemed critics as well as by dealers and

collectors. The latter group would soon form the Metropolitan Museum of Art.¹ The seeds for the new museum had been sown at the Paris Universal Exposition of 1867 by several men who were on the American committee for the exposition, including John Taylor Johnston and Samuel P. Avery. These men, who favored French academic art, were heavily involved in the formation and administration of the new Metropolitan Museum of Art. They met in the late 1860s to form the museum, which was subsequently incorporated in 1870.² With no public funding or federal or state support, however, the fledgling museum relied on philanthropists for the formation of its collections. In particular, Catharine Lorillard Wolfe formed the core of the permanent modern European art collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art with her 1887 bequest. Because paintings by Bouguereau, Cabanel, Gérôme, and Meissonier were central to her collection, their paintings were at the forefront of the first contemporary art collection in the new public museum.

Other museums in major cities were founded around the same time as the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The nation's oldest art museum, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts founded in 1805, focused on American art. The Museum of Fine Arts was founded in Boston in 1870, and the Chicago Academy of the Fine Arts, which later became the Art Institute of Chicago, was chartered in 1878. None of these museums had substantial contemporary European art collections early on. The Corcoran Gallery of Art opened in Washington, D.C., in

¹ For histories of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, see Félix Bé, "Le Fondateur du musée de New York," *L'Art* 4, no. 3 (16 January 1876): 77-82; Winifred E. Howe, *A History of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1913; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1974); and Calvin Tomkins, *Merchants and Masterpieces: The Story of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1989).

² Tomkins, 28-32.

1874, with notable early works by Cabanel and by Gérôme in the collection.³ These paintings were Cabanel's *Death of Moses* and Gérôme's *Dead Caesar*, both purchased by William T. Walters on behalf of Corcoran just a year prior to the museum's opening.⁴ Walters later formed his own museum in Baltimore. In 1874, he opened his private art gallery to the public, and then intermittently afterwards until it finally opened in 1934 as a public museum.

A Brief History of the Metropolitan Museum of Art

American critics, collectors, and dealers recognized that the lack of a permanent venue to view art in New York, the center of the American art world, was a detriment to the city's culture. In particular, James Jackson Jarves and Henry T. Tuckerman strongly believed that museums were the most important venue for improving the public's taste for beauty and aesthetics in the United States. In the 1860s, both men wrote in favor of the formation of an art museum.⁵ Jarves advocated free public museums to provide artistic models for

³ For a brief history of the Corcoran Gallery of Art, see Strahan, *Art Treasures*, 1: 3-22; and Alan Wallach, *Exhibiting Contradiction: Essays on the Art Museum in the United States* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 22-37.

⁴ See William R. Johnston, *William and Henry Walters, the Reticent Collectors* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 65. Gérôme's *Dead Caesar*, originally exhibited in the Salon of 1859, was purchased for the Corcoran in 1873 for 20,000 francs. See Gerald Ackerman, *The Life and Work of Jean-Léon Gérôme: With a Catalogue Raisonné* (New York: Sotheby's Publications, 1986), 204. Ackerman stated that the painting was purchased for the Corcoran from the artist for 20,000 francs, although this price was not recorded in the journals of Avery or Lucas, or in the Goupil stock books. Cabanel's *Death of Moses*, a scene from the Old Testament (Deut. 34: 1-5), was praised when it was exhibited in Paris in the Salon of 1852 and at the Universal Exposition in 1855, but despite the acclaim it received, it remained unsold in his studio until 1874 when it was purchased for 25,000 francs for the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington D.C. See George A. Lucas, *Diary of George A. Lucas: An American Art Agent in Paris, 1857-1909*, ed. Lilian M. C. Randall (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 2: 377, 384, 389, 399. Lucas tried to negotiate a lower price, 20,000 francs, but Cabanel refused to sell for less than 25,000 francs.

⁵ Benjamin Rowlands, Jr., Introduction to *Art-Idea* (New York: Hurd & Houghton, 1864; reprint, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), xiii.

young artists.⁶ Similarly, Tuckerman complained of New York's lack of "a permanent free Gallery of Art," an institution that had long existed in Europe.⁷ Such a prominent city as New York, according to Tuckerman, should not be without a "promoter of high civilization."⁸ Public art museums in Europe were funded by the state, but there was no such governmental support in New York or in the nation. Without state or federal support, who would be responsible for creating these organizations in the United States?

Before and after the Civil War, Americans generally believed that cultural enterprises, such as art museums, would benefit the public and that wealthy philanthropic citizens were responsible for their creation.⁹ The idea to form an art museum in New York germinated at the time of the 1867 Exposition. John Jay, a notable lawyer, suggested that Avery and other men then present in Paris should carry out the plan.¹⁰ Back in New York, Avery, Johnston, Blodgett, and several American artists, among other prominent citizens, formed an Art Committee that met at the politically active Union League Club.¹¹

Though funding for the new museum was slim from the outset, collectors Johnston, Blodgett, and A. T. Stewart contributed the most money to the subscription for the new museum, and they were directly involved in the founding

⁶ James Jackson Jarves, "Fostering the Fine Arts," *New York Times*, 5 July 1880, 5.

⁷ Henry T. Tuckerman, *Book of the Artists*, 2nd ed. (New York: G. P. Putnam & Son, 1867), 11, 29.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁹ Lillian B. Miller, *Patrons and Patriotism: The Encouragement of the Fine Arts in the United States 1790-1860* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), 89.

¹⁰ Tomkins, 28.

¹¹ Several leading American artists were also involved, including J. Q. A. Ward, Frederic Edwin Church, Richard Morris Hunt, Daniel Huntington, John Frederick Kensett, Worthington Whittredge, and George A. Baker, Vincent Colyer. Another member was George P. Putnam, the founder of G. P. Putnam & Sons; see Howe, 101. The Union League Club originally formed in 1863 to help save the Union, but later became involved in other politically relevant activities. It was not an art club, although many artists and collectors were members.

and administration of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.¹² Johnston became the first president of the museum and remained so until 1890, when he was named Honorary President for Life. Blodgett, Stewart, and Marshall O. Roberts were among the first vice-presidents and trustees of the museum in the early 1870s. William J. Hoppin, who was a member of the International Painting jury of the 1867 Exposition, served on the Board of Trustees, the Executive Committee, and as secretary in the 1870s. Avery served on the Board of Trustees and the Executive Committee for many years. Several other American committee members from the 1867 Universal Exposition—Hoppin, Sheppard Gandy, and Michael Knoedler—became Fellows in Perpetuity in 1876, the first year members' names were listed in the museum's annual reports.¹³ Dealers were also some of the major supporters of the museum. Avery, William Schaus, and the prominent auctioneer James Somerville became Fellows for Life in 1876.¹⁴ These men, who had promoted French academic art since the 1867 Exposition, were now active in establishing New York's premier art museum.

Initially without a collection, the Metropolitan Museum of Art managed to form a core permanent collection in the early 1870s, in spite of an approaching depression. First were collections of Old Master paintings and Cypriot antiquities. In Paris, Blodgett purchased a collection of 174 paintings, mainly seventeenth-century Dutch and Flemish pictures, for which Johnston paid half.

¹² Tomkins, 36; and Howe, 133. Johnston gave \$10,000, and Blodgett and Stewart each gave \$5,000.

¹³ Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Annual Reports of the Trustees of the Association, from 1871 to 1902* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1902), 88.

¹⁴ Fellows in Perpetuity and other designations related to donations. See Tomkins, 35. The designations related to contributions for the subscription campaign to raise funds: Patron, \$1,000; Fellow in Perpetuity, \$500; and Fellow for Life, \$200.

They then sold the pictures to the museum at cost.¹⁵ The museum first opened in temporary quarters at 681 Fifth Avenue in 1872 to exhibit the Old Master collection and few paintings and sculptures lent by Blodgett, Johnston, and other collectors. The acquisition of the Cesnola collection of antiquities—over 6,000 objects—excavated by the American consul in Cyprus, General Luigi Palma di Cesnola, necessitated another move to a larger space at 128 West Fourteenth Street, which opened to the public in May 1873.¹⁶

At that time, however, contemporary French academic art was still in private hands. Until a permanent collection of contemporary European paintings was finally established, loan exhibitions were the only means by which the public could see the French artists' paintings at the museum. These exhibits lasted from one to several months each and were held throughout the year from 1873 through the late 1880s.¹⁷ The first loan exhibition was held in fall 1873 and comprised mainly contemporary European paintings owned by the city's main collectors.¹⁸ Old master paintings, sculptures, and some American paintings were also included in the loan exhibitions. These exhibitions brought increased attention to the leading French artists, whose works were shown regularly in the loan exhibitions.

¹⁵ See Howe, 136; and Tomkins, 37.

¹⁶ Tomkins, 43-45.

¹⁷ Catalogs accompanied each of these loan exhibits.

¹⁸ Similar loan exhibitions including the four artists' works were held in the late 1860s through the 1880s first at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, and later the Brooklyn Art Association, which opened in 1872; see Clark S. Marlor, *A History of the Brooklyn Art Association with an Index of Exhibitions* (New York: James F. Carr, 1970), 128, 141, 199, 274. Few contemporary European pictures were on view at the National Academy of Design, or in venues in other cities such as Boston or Philadelphia.

By 1880, when the museum opened its permanent quarters in Central Park, contemporary French paintings had been regularly exhibited there and admired for the past seven years. They also provided standards of comparison for the few American pictures on view. For example, in an 1880 exhibition, a reviewer who supported American art was delighted to see juxtapositions of paintings by the popular French artists with those of contemporary American artists. A painting by Gérôme hung next to one by Eastman Johnson and another American painting hung next to *Breton Brother and Sister* (fig. 3.13) by "the ever-popular Bouguereau."¹⁹ According to reviews of the 1881 and 1882 loan exhibitions, Cabanel's *Phaedra*, a reduction of the artist's Salon picture of 1880, and *Joan of Arc*, by his student, Bastien-Lepage, attracted the most notice at the exhibition.²⁰

In spite of their obvious popularity, work by the four French artists was not yet on permanent view. Several of the founders lent, but did not donate pictures in the earliest years. Avery lent paintings by Bouguereau, Cabanel, and Gérôme in the loan exhibition held September 1874.²¹ Later that year, for the December 1874 show, Blodgett lent paintings by Gérôme and Meissonier; however, those other men who spearheaded the formation of the museum—Johnston and Stewart—did not donate their well-known private collections to the new

¹⁹ "The New Museum," *Evening Post*, 29 March 1880, 4.

²⁰ "The Metropolitan Museum," *New York Times*, 3 May 1882, 8. *Phaedra* was mistakenly titled *The Awakening* in the article. Levi Leiter, of the firm Field, Leiter & Co. in Chicago lent the picture. Bastien-Lepage's *Joan of Arc* was purchased for an American collector through American artist, J. Alden Weir; see "Meissonier and Bonnat," *New York Times*, 1 September 1880, 5.

²¹ Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Catalogue of the Loan Exhibition of Paintings at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 128 West 14th Street, September 1874* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1874), 3, 6, 8. The pictures were Bouguereau's *Head of a Girl* and *Savoyard Girl*, Cabanel's *Ophelia*, and Gérôme's *Keeper of the Hounds*.

museum.²² Rather, Johnston and Stewart occasionally opened their private galleries to the public.²³

Johnston, who housed his art collection in special gallery built over the stable of his marble mansion at Fifth Avenue and Eighth Street, allowed visitors on Thursday afternoons.²⁴ One reporter called Johnston's collection "the most important private collection of Art-works in the United States"; it was opened to the broader public a few days a week in winter.²⁵ Additionally, Johnston invited American painters living in New York to his home once a year to see the paintings.²⁶

In spite of his dedication to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, however, Johnston was forced to his collection in 1876, due to troubled finances resulting from the Panic of 1873 and the subsequent recession (as discussed in Chapter Two). In the preface to the sale catalog, Samuel P. Avery praised the collection as one of the finest in the United States, and expressed regret that it was to be dispersed.²⁷ Johnston's collection at this time contained Meissonier's *Soldier at Cards*; Gérôme's masterpiece, *Death of Caesar* (fig. 1.8), and two others, *Bashi-Bazouk* and *Call to Prayer, Cairo*; and Bouguereau's *Blowing Bubbles* and *Going to the Bath* (fig. 2.8).²⁸ Johnston had owned works by these artists for less than

²² Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Catalogue of the Loan Exhibition of Paintings and Statuary at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, No. 128 West 14th Street, December 1874* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1874), 3, 7, 10. Israel Corse lent Cabanel's *Aglaia* to this exhibit.

²³ Henry J. Duffy, "New York City Collections, 1865-1895" (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers, 2001), 11.

²⁴ Tomkins, 34.

²⁵ "Notes," *Art Journal* (New York) n.s., 3, no. 2 (1877): 63. Johnston judiciously sold the collection in 1876, following the close of this loan exhibition.

²⁶ Tomkins, 34.

²⁷ See *The Collection of Paintings, Drawings and Statuary, The Property of John Taylor Johnston, Esq.* (New York: Somerville Art Gallery, 1876).

²⁸ "Notes," 63.

a decade.²⁹ If circumstances had been different, Johnston might have bequeathed his collection to the institution.

Stewart's pictures were also occasionally on view in his special gallery at the rear of his mansion on the northwest corner of Thirty-Fourth Street and Fifth Avenue. His most important pictures, most agreed, were Rosa Bonheur's *Horse Fair* and Meissonier's *1807, Friedland*.³⁰ Jarves reported a rumor that Stewart would give his collection to New York City as a gift.³¹ But rather than leave his collection to the museum or to form a separate gallery at his death, Stewart left his collection to his wife, Cornelia. After her death in 1886, newspaper accounts speculated that she intended to give it to the museum, but instead it was sold soon after.³² A possible explanation is that, as a religious woman, she opposed the controversial Sunday opening of the museum.³³ The real reason, however, is unknown. Three important Bouguereau paintings were in the Stewart collection: *Return from the Harvest* (fig. 2.4a), *Newborn Lamb* (fig. 3.10), and *Homer and His Guide* (fig. 2.11); as well as Gérôme's famous *Pollice Verso* (fig. 2.17) and *Chariot Race (Circus Maximus)* (fig. 2.5).

²⁹ Eugene Benson, "Pictures in the Private Galleries of New York: Gallery of John Taylor Johnston," *Putnam's Monthly* 16, no. 31 (July 1870): 86.

³⁰ "The Stewart Art Gallery," *Harper's Weekly* 23, no. 1166 (3 May 1879): 350.

³¹ James Jackson Jarves, "Museums of Art, Artists, and Amateurs in America," *Galaxy* 10, no. 1 (July 1870): 57-58.

³² See Sophia Antoinette Walker, "Fine Arts: The Painting Master in the Wolfe Collection," *Independent* 46, no. 2383 (2 August 1894): 12; "Mrs. A. T. Stewart Dead," *New York Times*, 26 October 1886, 1; and "Mrs. Stewart's Funeral," *New York Times*, 27 October 1886, 5; and "Mrs. Stewart's Millions," *New York Times*, 2 November 1886, 5.

³³ The museum first opened to the public on Sundays in 1891, though the idea had sparked controversy as early as 1871. Religious individuals thought that Sunday openings were sacrilegious and would interfere with morals, while trustees were concerned about the practical matter of additional funding needed to staff the museum on Sunday. The widow of Robert L. Stuart withheld a large gift to the museum because of the Sunday openings. See Tomkins, 45, 78; "Still Undecided," *New York Times*, 26 April 1885, 4; "Sunday Opening of Museums," *New York Times*, 15 December 1885, 8; "The Trustees Perplexed," *New York Times*, 29 December 1886, 8; and "Sunday Opening Deferred," *New York Times*, 28 December 1888, 4.

Critics believed that William H. Vanderbilt would found a public gallery for his collection that would instruct and benefit the public.³⁴ Avery said as much in his history of collecting in 1884, but his prediction that Vanderbilt's collection would remain intact and be left to New York City did not come true.³⁵ Vanderbilt left the sizeable sum of \$100,000 to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, but not his art collection.³⁶ Instead, upon his death in 1886, the richest man in the United States left his picture collection to his youngest child, George W. Vanderbilt. Like Stewart, Vanderbilt's blood ties were stronger than his civic ties. Even after Vanderbilt's death, his name was still attached to the collection, which was called one of the "artistic landmarks of the world."³⁷ There was general disappointment that he had not left his exemplary modern art collection to form a gallery, but many hoped that the next generation of the family might do so.³⁸

Vanderbilt's collection included two paintings by Bouguereau, one by Cabanel, and four each by Gérôme and Meissonier. Among his most important pictures were Cabanel's *Pia de Tolomei* (fig. 2.15); Gérôme's *Sabre Dance before the Pasha* (fig. 2.16a and b) and *Louis XIV and the Grand Condé* (fig. 2.6a and b); Meissonier's *Man Reading*, *The Orderly*, and *Information: General*

³⁴ See, for example Montezuma [Montague Marks], "My Note Book," *Art Amateur* 9, no. 5 (October 1883): 91.

³⁵ Samuel P. Avery, "Some Notes on the History of Fine Arts in New York City during the Past Fifty Years [1883]," in *History of New York City, Embracing an Outline Sketch of Events from 1609 to 1830, and a Full Account of Its Development from 1830 to 1884*, ed. Benson John Lossing (New York: Perine Company, 1884), 843.

³⁶ Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Annual Reports*, 327.

³⁷ "William H. Vanderbilt Collection," *Collector* 1, no. 11 (1 April 1890): 81.

³⁸ Montezuma [Montague Marks], "My Note Book," *Art Amateur* 14, no. 3 (February 1886): 55.

Desaix with the Army of the Rhine and Moselle; and Bouguereau's *Going to the Bath* (formerly in John Taylor Johnston's collection).³⁹

Other advocates of the museum, Jarves and Avery, left decorative objects rather than valuable paintings to the museum.⁴⁰ Jarves attempted to leave his collection of trecento and quattrocento paintings to Boston and New York prior to the founding of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, but permanent homes could not be found.⁴¹ Yale University purchased the collection in 1871.

One can only speculate why some of these men, whose civic-mindedness led them to form a museum, did not fill it with their most important paintings. Perhaps during this period, the art market for paintings by the French artists and other contemporary European artists was too brisk and profitable to pull the paintings out of the market. These businessmen were still businessmen, and their valuable paintings were either sold or kept in the family. It would fall to a single wealthy woman, Catharine Lorillard Wolfe (fig. 3.8), who lent Bouguereau's *Breton Brother and Sister* to the museum's loan exhibit in 1880, to be the first to donate her entire art collection.⁴²

³⁹ Brigadier General Cornelius Vanderbilt inherited the collection from his uncle in 1914, and it was dispersed at auction in 1945; see *The William H. Vanderbilt Collection of Distinguished Barbizon and Genre Paintings ... sold by order of Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt* (New York: Parke-Bernet Galleries, 1945). Some paintings in the original collection were, however, would be exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

⁴⁰ Tomkins, 70. Jarves donated his collection of Venetian glass to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1881.

⁴¹ Jarves' collection was exhibited at the New-York Historical Society, then at Yale in 1868. See Constable, 34-35; Rowlands, xii-xiii; and Russell Sturgis, Jr., *Manual of the Jarves Collection of Early Italian Pictures* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1868).

⁴² For a discussion of philanthropic expectations from women, see Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 144-47. See also Dianne Sachko Macleod, *Enchanted Lives, Enchanted Objects: American Women Collectors and the Making of Culture, 1800-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 61-71 (for Catharine Lorillard Wolfe).

Catharine Lorillard Wolfe's Bequest

Paintings by each of the four artists were finally placed on permanent view at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1887 because of Catharine Lorillard Wolfe's bequest. Of the many charitable donations that benefited from her will, her bequest to the Metropolitan Museum of Art attracted the most attention. Wolfe was the sole heir of her parents' fortunes. Her father, John David Wolfe, made his fortune in hardware and real estate and her mother, Dorothea Ann Lorillard, came from a wealthy tobacco family. In addition to wealth, Wolfe inherited her father's philanthropic spirit. The Wolfe family were devout Episcopalians and various religious organizations were foremost among their charities, but they also were civic-minded. Her father was a founder of the American Museum of Natural History and was actively involved with the New-York Historical Society.

Wolfe donated her entire collection of 142 paintings and watercolors to the Metropolitan Museum of Art along with a \$200,000 endowment for the maintenance of her collection and for future purchases.⁴³ Her endowment was double the amount William H. Vanderbilt had left to the museum a year earlier. Wolfe's connection to the Metropolitan Museum of Art began at its foundation, when she was the only female of 106 subscribers. A friend of Blodgett and Johnston, she was a perennial patron of the museum until her death and a frequent lender to its exhibits.⁴⁴ Johnston, who was president of the museum, received the notice of her bequest.

⁴³ Walter Rowlands, "The Miss Wolfe Collection," *Art Journal* (London) 44, no. 3 (January 1889): 12. Her will is reprinted in Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Annual Reports*, 383.

⁴⁴ Wolfe pledged \$2,500, which was a sizeable amount considering that only three people, Johnston, Blodgett, and Stewart, gave \$5,000 or more.

Wolfe bought with an aim to keeping her collection together to donate in its entirety.⁴⁵ As a collector, she was assisted by her cousin John Wolfe, a banker and a prominent collector, who owned Bouguereau's *Nymphs and Satyr* (fig. 2.10) and a reduction of Cabanel's *Birth of Venus*.⁴⁶ Catharine Lorillard Wolfe's collection had been documented and praised in Strahan's *Art Treasures of America* and profiled in the *Art Amateur*.⁴⁷ Her collection, comprised of French academic, Barbizon, and contemporary German art, was similar to that of other wealthy collectors of the time, such as Vanderbilt, Walters, and Stewart among others. Unlike these men, though, Wolfe did not build a separate art gallery to house her collection, nor did she invite outsiders to view it, but, significantly, she was the only collector in New York to leave her entire collection to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Wolfe was widely praised for her munificence and for her foresight in leaving an endowment for the collection's care and enhancement.⁴⁸

Wolfe's magnanimous, unprecedented gesture resulted from a philanthropic effort to educate the public and improve taste, and this was how her large gift was perceived.⁴⁹ One reviewer boasted that she had one of the finest collections in the country with representations of works by the best modern

⁴⁵ Rebecca A. Rabinow, "Catharine Lorillard Wolfe: The First Woman Benefactor of The Metropolitan Museum of Art," *Apollo*, 50, no. 433 (March 1998): 51.

⁴⁶ John Wolfe had worked in the family hardware business until the Civil War ended and then began to collect European painting in earnest.

⁴⁷ Cicero, "Private Galleries: Collection of Miss Catharine L. Wolfe," *Art Amateur* 2, no. 4 (March 1880): 75-76. Some of the wording in this article is very similar to that in *Art Treasures*.

⁴⁸ "Catharine Lorillard Wolfe: Etched by Robert Blum," *Studio* n.s., 2, no. 12 (June 1887); and "Miss Wolfe's Grand Gift," *New York Times*, 8 April 1887, 1.

⁴⁹ "The Metropolitan Museum," *New York Times*, 18 December 1888, 5. In her will she stated directly that she bequeathed her collection "with a view to the education and cultivation of the public taste for the fine arts."

artists.⁵⁰ A writer for the *New York Times* stated that her collection would benefit even the poorest.⁵¹ Her collection, according to another American reviewer, would “delight” and educate “the people,” which was especially important because the government did not patronize the fine arts.⁵² Her bequest greatly enlarged the museum’s permanent collection and, as a result, the museum became the major institution the founders had hoped it would be.⁵³

Her bequest formed the basis of the European Paintings Department at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.⁵⁴ French academic art was central to the collection, and Wolfe owned at least one painting by each of the four most prominent living French artists, Bouguereau, Cabanel, Gérôme, and Meissonier. She bequeathed Meissonier’s *A General and His Aide-de-Camp* (fig. 2.18); *Painting Collector Visiting a Painter* (fig. 3.12); and *The Sign Painter*, a watercolor dated 1872. She also bequeathed Bouguereau’s *Breton Brother and Sister* which she had purchased from Knoedler. Gérôme was represented in her collection by *An Arab Boy Prayer* and by *Prayer in the Mosque* (fig. 4.1), which she had also purchased from Knoedler. Cabanel was represented by the *Shulamite* (fig. 3.11) and by his portrait of Wolfe (fig. 3.8). The paintings by the four French men were considered the best in her collection, and of these the *New York Times* listed the best as Cabanel’s *Shulamite*, Gérôme’s *Prayer in the*

⁵⁰ "Miss Wolfe's Grand Gift," 1.

⁵¹ "Miss Wolfe's Bequest," *New York Times*, 9 April 1887, 4. Although the museum charged admission, there were free nights.

⁵² Rowlands, 15.

⁵³ Jenny June, "The Fashions: A Monthly Resume of Practical Matters Relating to Dress and Social Events," *Godey's Lady's Book* 116, no. 691 (January 1888): 55; and "The Metropolitan Museum," 5.

⁵⁴ Her collection is no longer housed together in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and some of it has been deaccessioned, including Cabanel’s *Shulamite*, Ludwig Knaus’s *Holy Family*, and Meissonier’s *Painting Collector Visiting a Painter*, three of her most highly praised works.

Mosque, Bouguereau's *Breton Brother and Sister*, and Meissonier's *A General and His Aide-de-Camp*.⁵⁵

The Wolfe collection, displayed as a whole, was viewed by many as "a collection of great merit and value," and attracted much public notice.⁵⁶ Most of the pictures, though, were ignored by the press, excepting those by the four French artists and a few others such as *The Holy Family* by Ludwig Knaus. The collection occupied two galleries, named the Catharine Lorillard Wolfe Gallery (figs. 4.3 and 4.4). It opened in November 1887, accompanied by a handbook written by Samuel P. Avery, and was called "the most notable exhibition of the season."⁵⁷ A few months later, the Metropolitan Museum of Art built new fireproof galleries as per Wolfe's bequest, and reopened the two galleries on the second floor of the museum.⁵⁸

Wolfe's portrait by Cabanel was perhaps the most remarkable painting in the collection, both for its historical and artistic value. In *Art Treasures*, Strahan had lauded Wolfe's portrait by Cabanel and had said that it should be part of a museum collection rather than languish in private as a family portrait.⁵⁹ One can speculate whether she took his advice—after all, she owned a copy of *Art Treasures*—because she specified in her will that her portrait by Cabanel and

⁵⁵ "Charity Losing a Helper," *New York Times*, 5 April 1887, 8. Cabanel's *Shulamite* was listed in the article as *Turkish Dancing Girl* and Meissonier's *General and His Aide-de-Camp* was listed as *Horsemen*. The other best pictures were *Mont de Piété (The Pawnbroker's Shop [?])* by Munkácsy and *Weaning the Calves* by Rosa Bonheur.

⁵⁶ "The Wolfe Collection," *New York Times*, 3 November 1887, 8.

⁵⁷ "Art Notes," *Art Review* 2, no. 1-3 (September-November 1887): 49; and Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Part I. The Catharine Lorillard Wolfe Collection; Part II. Pictures by Old Masters, in the East Galleries* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1887). See also Rabinow: 53. Although the catalog is not signed by Avery, it is most likely written by him; Rebecca Rabinow to author, e-mail, April 23, 2008.

⁵⁸ "The Re-opening of the Metropolitan Museum of Art," *Studio* 4, no. 1 (December 1888): 9.

⁵⁹ Strahan, *Art Treasures*, 1: 120.

that of her father by Daniel Huntington be included in her bequest as part of her painting collection.⁶⁰ No other works were explicitly named.

In the Catharine Lorillard Wolfe Gallery, her portrait hung at the head of the collection, and Huntington's portrait of her father hung at the other end. Because of the positioning of the portraits, one reviewer commented that Wolfe, a noted socialite and philanthropist, seemed to be holding a reception at the museum for her collection of masters.⁶¹

Considered a masterpiece, Wolfe's portrait drew admiration for its likeness, costume, and for the comely hand gestures.⁶² One writer confirmed that it was the best of Cabanel's portraits.⁶³ Another reviewer said that "Cabanel is a born courtier and while retaining a likeness to a surprising degree has lent to the traits of our late fellow townswoman an aristocratic look . . . given to her hands and figure the distinction that few ladies inherit and painted an elaborate costume with a brilliant brush."⁶⁴ Only Clarence Cook, who admired the portrait, still felt that Cabanel's portrait of what he called a true aristocrat, Napoleon III (fig. 1.7), was superior to that of Wolfe.⁶⁵

To the left of Wolfe's portrait hung Meissonier's *A General and His Aide-de-Camp*, which was deemed "remarkable for the fine outdoor effects."⁶⁶ Meissonier's *Painting Collector Visiting a Painter*, widely admired as a typical

⁶⁰ Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Annual Reports*, 383. The names of the 1,000 subscribers are listed at the beginning of volume 1 of *Art Treasures*; Wolfe owned copy number 487.

⁶¹ June: 54.

⁶² "Heaping Gifts on Gifts," *New York Times*, 9 April 1887, 1; and Rowlands: 14.

⁶³ "The Fine Arts: Recent Gifts to the Metropolitan Museum," *The Critic*, no. 172 (16 April 1887): 193.

⁶⁴ "The Wolfe Pictures," *New York Times*, 7 November 1887, 4.

⁶⁵ Cook, *Art and Artists*, 1: 71.

⁶⁶ "The Wolfe Pictures," 4.

example of his excellent small works, received more attention.⁶⁷ Writers seldom failed to mention the events behind this painting's Paris sale, where Wolfe had acquired it for \$11,420.⁶⁸ "So perfect an example of Meissonier's skill would surely bring a much larger price if offered for sale to-day," wrote one reviewer.⁶⁹ *Painting Collector Visiting a Painter* was called "another little jewel," "a gem," and "one of his most highly esteemed paintings."⁷⁰ Clarence Cook considered it one of the most important contemporary European paintings at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.⁷¹ Others found it even more artistically valuable than Meissonier's masterpiece *1807, Friedland*.⁷²

Although considered important and representative works, other paintings incited fewer comments. There were somewhat mixed reviews regarding Cabanel's *Shulamite*, a life-size orientalist work painted to order for Wolfe in 1875 and exhibited in the Paris Salon of 1876. The subject was the bride of Solomon from the Old Testament (Song of Songs 2:8-13), and reproductions of the painting were often accompanied by the verses from the Bible.⁷³ Wolfe

⁶⁷ At the time this painting was called *Two van de Veldes* because it was believed to depict two Dutch artist brothers, William Van de Velde (seated) and Adrien Van de Velde (standing); see Zafran, *Cavaliers and Cardinals*, 66; and Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, *French Realism and the Dutch Masters* (Utrecht: Haentjens Dekker & Gumbert, 1974), 36.

⁶⁸ "Pictures from the Collection of the Late Catharine Lorillard Wolfe," *Studio* n.s., 2, no. 2 (May 1887): 187. *Painting Collector Visiting a Painter* was formerly in the Laurent-Richard collection in Paris, and the sale of his collection was held in 1878.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ "Fine Arts: Recent Gifts," 193; "The Metropolitan Museum of Art," *Art Amateur* 18, no. 1 (December 1887): 7; "Pictures from the Collection," 187; and "The Wolfe Pictures," 4.

⁷¹ Cook, 1: 71. Cook noted that engravings after *Painting Collector Visiting a Painter* are sometimes called *The Critic*. He repeated his assessment of Meissonier in Clarence Cook, "The Art Year," *Chautauquan* 8, no. 7 (April 1888): 416.

⁷² "Fine Arts: Recent Gifts," 193. This writer noted that *Painting Collector Visiting a Painter*, brought to New York by dealer William Schaus, was sold to Wolfe so quickly that the public had not seen it. See also "Pictures from the Collection," 187.

⁷³ "Pictures from the Collection," 188.

treasured the work, and gave it a favored spot in her home.⁷⁴ One critic felt that the *Shulamite* was one of Cabanel's best paintings, and observed that Cabanel was among Wolfe's favorite painters.⁷⁵ Another found it one of the most notable paintings in the collection.⁷⁶ However, others were less enthusiastic, viewing the subject as overly sentimental and outdated.⁷⁷

Though reviewers devoted more commentary to the pictures by Cabanel and Meissonier, they certainly remarked on the paintings by Gérôme and Bouguereau. Critics praised Gérôme's *Prayer in the Mosque* for its archaeological detail and ethnological representation of Egyptians.⁷⁸ The painting exhibited Gérôme's customary technical and ethnographic skill. One critic called it "one of the best Gérômes in the country."⁷⁹ This assessment was seconded by another, who admitted at the same time that the picture was "not of a popular nature," meaning not one of his historical reconstructions of antiquity.⁸⁰ Most contemporary writers considered Gérôme's antique scenes to be more significant than his orientalist paintings.

The subjects of Bouguereau's pictures, by contrast, were not as distinctive as those in Gérôme's pictures. Bouguereau's *Breton Brother and Sister* was acknowledged as a good example of his work, but he did not receive as much

⁷⁴ Though the *Shulamite* was presumably painted to order for Wolfe in 1875, Lucy Hooper wrote that the *Shulamite* was begun ten years earlier at the request of the Empress Eugénie. According to Hooper, Cabanel could not find a suitable model, so he did not finish the painting. Then he took it up again for Wolfe. See Lucy H. Hooper, "Art in Paris," *Art Journal* (New York) n.s., 2, no. 3 (1876): 90.

⁷⁵ "Pictures from the Collection," 188. This unsigned article may have been written by Clarence Cook, who edited the *Studio*.

⁷⁶ Montezuma [Montague Marks], "My Note Book," *Art Amateur* 16, no. 6 (May 1887): 122.

⁷⁷ "The Metropolitan Museum of Art," 7; and "The Wolfe Pictures," 4. See also Strahan's earlier assessment in *Art Treasures* 1: 120.

⁷⁸ "Pictures from the Collection," 187.

⁷⁹ "The Metropolitan Museum of Art," 7.

⁸⁰ Cicero, 76.

critical attention as the other three French artists.⁸¹ In his history of contemporary French art, Cook referred to the picture in the Wolfe collection as solidly characteristic of the artist's paintings.⁸²

Despite mixed reviews of some famous works, the general excitement caused by the Wolfe bequest was mainly because of its size and the quality of the paintings by the major French academic artists. Noteworthy was that representative examples of paintings by the four French artists were finally on permanent view for the New York public because of her bequest.

Meissonier's 1807, *Friedland*

1887 was a banner year for donations of contemporary European art to the young Metropolitan Museum of Art. Collector George I. Seney and dealer William Schaus donated several contemporary European and American paintings.⁸³ These paintings, along with Rosa Bonheur's famous *Horse Fair*, were donated shortly after the Wolfe bequest. In addition to the Wolfe bequest, one of the most spectacular additional donations to the museum was Meissonier's widely acknowledged masterpiece, *1807, Friedland* (fig. 2.9) (treated at length in the previous chapter).⁸⁴ Both *1807, Friedland* and Bonheur's *Horse Fair* had been purchased from the A. T. Stewart sale held in March 1887.

⁸¹ "Fine Arts: Recent Gifts," 193.

⁸² Cook, *Art and Artists*, 1: 88.

⁸³ Seney donated several French academic, European, and American paintings, though not works by any of the four French men, and Schaus donated a painting by Léon Lhermitte; see "George I. Seney's Gifts," *New York Times*, 7 April 1887, 8; "The New Pictures at the Metropolitan Museum," *Harper's Weekly* 31, no. 1586 (14 May 1887): 350.

⁸⁴ For a history of the picture, as well as the watercolor of it, which Meissonier was working on in 1887, see Constance Cain Hungerford, "1807, *Friedland*," in *Ernest Meissonier retrospective* (Lyon: Musée des beaux-arts, 1993), 220-35. See also "Meissonier Talks about Himself," *New York Times*, 13 February 1887, 2.

Cornelius Vanderbilt purchased Bonheur's *Horse Fair*, and Judge Henry Hilton, a carpet manufacturer who was Stewart's personal attorney and trustee of his estate, purchased *1807, Friedland*. Both men promptly donated the paintings to the museum. From his own collection, Hilton also gave a well-known painting, *Defense of Champigny*, by Meissonier's student Édouard Detaille.

In a letter to John Taylor Johnston, president of the museum, Hilton said he gave Meissonier's painting to the museum in Stewart's memory "to the end that it might permanently belong to and be enjoyed by the public."⁸⁵ Hilton's donation of this famous painting from the Stewart collection also indicated its significance. Samuel P. Avery, who was on the Board of Trustees and acted as agent for Hilton at the Stewart sale, received the painting on behalf of the museum, and Johnston expressed gratitude for the generous gifts.⁸⁶ That *1807, Friedland* was "one of the most celebrated works" by Meissonier was acknowledged in the museum's 1887 report that Johnston wrote.⁸⁷

Writers unanimously applauded the addition of *1807, Friedland* to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. As it had made headlines when Stewart purchased it for \$60,000, the painting made headlines again for its costliness, now \$66,000, although now writers focused more on its destination.⁸⁸ Even a reviewer who claimed the masterpiece had actually been "greatly overpraised" was extremely pleased and grateful that this painting, exceptional in the artist's oeuvre, was now

⁸⁵ "Another Princely Gift: Meissonier's Masterpiece Now the City's," *New York Times*, 3 May 1887, 1.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Annual Reports*, 381.

⁸⁸ "Further Gifts to the Metropolitan Museum," *Critic*, no. 175 (7 May 1887): 232; and "What Cost the Most," *New York Times*, 21 May 1888, 2.

on public view.⁸⁹ With these donations and other recent gifts, according to another reviewer, "New-York will now have an art collection of which it may justly be proud, and which is worthy of this great city."⁹⁰ The new contemporary European art collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, wrote a critic, was "one of the most important collections of modern pictures," not just in New York, but "anywhere."⁹¹ Their pride in this acquisition was palpable.

The Four Artists in Museums after the Wolfe Bequest

The timing of the four French artists' paintings' entry into the museum because of the Wolfe bequest coincided with their canonization in contemporary art histories such as those by Clarence Cook and C. H. Stranahan, both published in 1888. It also followed on the heels of some of the major sales of private collections, Mary Jane Morgan's in 1886 and A. T. Stewart's in 1887. Most of the artists' paintings, though, were still in private collections or being bought on the art market, but the establishment of a permanent art gallery and the significance of the Wolfe bequest set the Metropolitan Museum of Art on course for acquiring contemporary European academic painting.

Momentum in donations of contemporary paintings slowed considerably, however, after 1887. Through the early twentieth century few bequests or donations of contemporary European or American paintings entered the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Instead, collectors mainly donated decorative arts,

⁸⁹ Mrs. Schuyler van Rensselaer, "Fine Arts: The Metropolitan Museum," *Independent*, no. 39 (12 May 1887): 6.

⁹⁰ "Miss Wolfe's Grand Gift," 1.

⁹¹ "American Public Spirit," *New York Times*, 4 May 1887, 4.

musical instruments, antiquities, or occasionally paintings, with the exception of a large collection of old master paintings donated by Henry Marquand, then president of the museum. Samuel P. Avery frequently donated decorative art, prints, letters, or books to the museum, but no contemporary paintings. George Lucas occasionally donated works to the Metropolitan Museum, but not paintings; however, in 1893 he donated a bronze bust of John the Baptist by Auguste Rodin.

The most significant contemporary paintings to enter the museum through donations or bequests in the late nineteenth century included three paintings, *Joan of Arc* by Bastien-Lepage, and *Boy with a Sword* and *Woman with a Parrot* by Édouard Manet, donated by Erwin Davis in 1889, and *Mary Magdalene* by Jean-Jacques Henner, donated by Sarah M. Hitchcock in 1891. In 1899, a coastal landscape by Gustave Courbet, a landscape by Charles Jacque, and *After the Ball* by Alfred Stevens entered the collection.⁹² In addition, the museum purchased a few pictures with the funds left for that purpose by Catharine Lorillard Wolfe. Among those purchases were paintings by J. M. W. Turner, Théodore Rousseau, and Frederick Leighton.⁹³

Only one additional acknowledged masterpiece by one of the four French painters became part of the Metropolitan Museum's permanent collection before the turn of the century. John Wolfe donated Cabanel's *Birth of Venus* (1875) in 1893, and the acquisition occurred without fanfare. Other masterpieces were loaned, but ultimately never became part of the permanent collection. Israel

⁹² Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Annual Reports*, 784-85. The museum also purchased antiquities that year.

⁹³ These purchases were made in 1896; *Ibid.*, 685.

Corse lent Cabanel's *Aglaia* in 1895 but the painting remained in the museum only until 1906.⁹⁴ A reduction of Cabanel's *Florentine Poet* (fig. 2.3) was later donated to the museum, but not until 1923, nearly five decades after it had attained popularity in the United States.

The most important loan was the collection of William H. Vanderbilt. George W. Vanderbilt, who inherited the paintings, lent the works to the Metropolitan Museum of Art at the behest of Avery. Though the contemporaneous public did not benefit from the collection, paintings in the original collection were exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum of Art from 1902 until 1920. For eighteen years, the William H. Vanderbilt Loan Collection of Modern Paintings occupied a gallery near the Wolfe collection, but it never became part of the permanent collection. It included Cabanel's *Pia de Tolomei*, Bouguereau's *Going to the Bath*, Gérôme's *Sword Dance* and *Louis XIV and the Grand Condé*, and seven paintings by Meissonier. Although not lent until 1902, the Vanderbilt collection was still very popular. The first year it was on display, the painting curator received numerous applications from art students requesting permission to copy the works.⁹⁵

Later donations were also made after French academic art had declined in favor, and some did not remain in the collection or on view for long. Works that were donated were returned, sold, or kept in storage. For example, Cabanel's *Queen Vashti* was given to the Metropolitan Museum in the bequest of Mrs.

⁹⁴ Mrs. Leonard Harris to Jean Nougaret, 3 July 1962, "Alexandre Cabanel," Artist File, Archives, European Paintings Department, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

⁹⁵ Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Thirty-third Annual Report of the Trustees of the Association [1902]* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1903), 17.

Elizabeth U. Coles in 1892 but returned to her family in 1917.⁹⁶ Cabanel's *Mary at the Tomb*, a bequest of Collis P. Huntington in 1925, was sold by the Museum in 1928. Furthermore, most of these pictures were not considered to be masterpieces. These included Meissonier's *The Card Players* (1863) from the Collis Potter Huntington bequest of 1900, and *Soldier Playing the Theorbo* (1865) a bequest of Martha T. Fiske Collord, in memory of her first husband, Josiah M. Fiske, in 1908. Gérôme's *Cafe House, Cairo (Casting Bullets)*, entered the museum from the bequest of Henry H. Cook in 1905.

One chance factor that very likely led to a decline in donations of French academic art to the Metropolitan Museum of Art was the museum's administration. Louis P. Cesnola became the first director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1879, and by the late 1880s and early 1890s (when John Taylor Johnston left his post as president) Cesnola had alienated the staff and trustees who had supported the acquisition of French art. These trustees included Samuel P. Avery and American sculptor J. Q. A. Ward.⁹⁷ Cesnola was more interested in antiquities—his collection of Cypriot antiquities was acquired by the museum—than in contemporary art; thus he was at odds with the dealers and collectors of the time, whose collections still comprised largely contemporary art.

Lack of donations of French academic art to the museum was just one result of a gradual change of taste that took place in the 1890s. By 1890, Henry O. Havemeyer's wife, Louisine, led him to change his collection from Barbizon

⁹⁶ *Queen Vashti* was sold through Sotheby's, New York, 3 May 2000, lot 63.

⁹⁷ Tomkins, 48, 78-83.

and academic art to Impressionist art, and others would follow their lead.⁹⁸ The interest in Impressionism is evidenced by the museums purchase of Impressionist paintings with money from the Wolfe Fund. For example, in 1907, the museum purchased a painting by Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841-1919) and two by Adolphe Monticelli. Its collection of French Impressionist paintings grew substantially as a result of the large Havemeyer bequest in 1929. This bequest was the most significant for the contemporary European painting collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in the early twentieth century, just as the Wolfe bequest had been in the late nineteenth century.

Most of the paintings by the four artists were still on view at the museum in the early twentieth century, evidenced by a 1909 handbook to the collections.⁹⁹ In fact, even more of their pictures were on view, despite a noticeable change of attitude. The author of the handbook, David C. Preyer, admired Cabanel's portrait of Catharine Lorillard Wolfe for its "aristocratic allure" and the *Shulamite* for its tone and color, although he found the *Birth of Venus*, *Queen Vashti* and *Pia de Tolomei* lacking in the emotional appeal that it had for nineteenth-century viewers.¹⁰⁰ He identified only two of Gérôme's "three or four oriental subjects" on view, as well as the richly colored historical genre painting, *Louis XVI and the Grand Condé* (fig. 2.6a) from the William H. Vanderbilt collection, but added that it was not as famous as *L'Éminence grise*.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Ibid., 207; Avery, "Some Notes," 843; and Weitzenhoffer, 95. Henry O. Havemeyer's brother, Theodore A. Havemeyer (1839-1897), had a collection of Barbizon and contemporary academic art.

⁹⁹ David C. Preyer, *Art of the Metropolitan Museum of New York* (Boston: L. C. Page & Co., 1909).

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 233.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 230.

Although Preyer found aspects of Cabanel's and Gérôme's paintings appealing, he was less favorably inclined towards Bouguereau and Meissonier. He acknowledged Bouguereau's popularity but disliked his paintings, finding all of them, such as *Breton Brother and Sister* from the Wolfe collection and *Going to the Bath* from the Vanderbilt collection, too linear and "faultily faultless," as Strahan had decades prior.¹⁰² Surprisingly, like Stranahan, he considered both Meissonier and Monet as realists, albeit from different viewpoints; Courbet's realism was "brutal" without the "photographic cleanliness" of a painting by Meissonier.¹⁰³ Perhaps most surprising was his attitude towards *1807, Friedland*. Meissonier's small pictures, such as *Painting Collector Visiting a Painter*, were still truly remarkable, but the once-famous *1807, Friedland* seemed to him tedious and overly theatrical.¹⁰⁴

Some of the artists' masterpieces became part of the permanent collections of other museums in the United States. But again, most of them entered public collections in the twentieth century after French academic art had fallen out of favor. Only two paintings entered museums during the artists' heyday. Frederick Layton of Milwaukee bought Bouguereau's *Homer and His Guide* from the A. T. Stewart sale and donated it to the Layton Art Gallery (now the Milwaukee Art Museum) for its opening in 1888. Henry C. Gibson's reduction of Cabanel's *Birth of Venus* entered the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia in his bequest of 1892.

¹⁰² Ibid., 231.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 225-26.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 225.

Other masterpieces, such as Bouguereau's *Return from the Harvest*, entered American museums in the twentieth century. Gérôme's *L'Éminence grise* (fig. 2.13) entered Boston's Museum of Fine Arts in 1903, through the efforts of Samuel P. Avery. The Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore included reductions of two masterpieces: Gérôme's *Duel after the Ball* (fig. 1.4) and Cabanel's *Portrait of Napoleon III*, but the museum did not open to the public until 1909.¹⁰⁵ Henry Walters, William T. Walters' son, purchased Gérôme's masterpiece, *Death of Caesar*, for the museum in 1917, long after it had ceased to fire the imaginations of viewers.¹⁰⁶ Bouguereau's *Newborn Lamb* is now in the Berkshire Museum, and his famous *Nymphs and Satyr* is now in the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute.¹⁰⁷ Three of Gérôme's masterpieces can be found in American collections. Two depict ancient times: *Pollice verso* (fig. 2.17) at the Phoenix Art Museum, and *Ave Caesar, morituri te salutant* (fig. 3.1), at the Yale University Art Gallery. His controversial orientalist painting, *Dance of the Almeh* (fig. 2.2), circulated on the art market until it was donated to the Dayton Art Institute in 1951 by a private collector.¹⁰⁸

Finally, some pictures have remained in private collections throughout the years and occasionally turn up on the art market. These are Cabanel's *Ruth and Boaz* (fig. 3.6), a reduction of Cabanel's *Death of Francesca da Rimini and Paolo Malatesta* (fig. 2.12); and Gérôme's *Sabre Dance Before the Pasha* (fig. 2.16a)

¹⁰⁵ Prior to opening the Walters Art Gallery as a museum, Walters opened his collection to benefit the Poor Association; Johnston, *Reluctant Collectors*, 176-77.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 188. See also Ackerman, *Life and Work of Jean-Léon Gérôme*, 220, no. 168.

¹⁰⁷ Robert Sterling Clark purchased *Nymphs and Satyr* in 1942. See David S. Brooke, *Biography of Bouguereau's Nymphs and Satyr* (Williamstown, MA: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, n. d.), n. p.

¹⁰⁸ Ackerman, 214, no. 144; 232, no. 219.

and *Turkish Butcher Boy in Jerusalem* (fig. 3.3).¹⁰⁹ Their current locations are unknown. Cabanel's *Shulamite* (fig. 3.11) and Meissonier's *Painting Collector Visiting a Painter* (fig. 3.12) were deaccessioned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art.¹¹⁰ The location of the former is unknown and the latter is in a private collection. Although some of the masterpieces remained on the art market, in private collections, or were deaccessioned, many of them were on view in American museum collections. But the majority of the works entered public collections after the artists' popularity had declined.

A significant turning point in the declining taste for French academic art and its foremost practitioners was the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. Although French academic art was represented at the exposition, Impressionist and American art became the focus of attention. These major factors that led to the decline in taste for French academic art are the topic of the next chapter.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 214, no. 145.

¹¹⁰ Cabanel's *Shulamite* was deaccessioned in 1956 (Plaza Art Galleries, New York, 7 June 1956, lot no. 87) and Meissonier's *Painting Collector Visiting a Painter* was deaccessioned in 1981 (Christie's, New York, 29 May 1981, lot no. 12).

CHAPTER 5
DECLINING ATTENTION:
THE WORLD'S COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION OF 1893

Although I touched on the eventual waning popularity in the sales, collection, and criticism of the four French artists in previous chapters, this chapter focuses on the one key event that signaled their declining status: the World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893.¹ Aside from the earlier Centennial Exhibition, this was the first major international exposition hosted in the United States. Nearly three decades had passed since the influential Paris Universal Exposition of 1867, which had led American collectors to abandon their American pictures in favor of European academic painting, and in turn had contributed to the soaring popularity of the works of Bouguereau, Cabanel, Gérôme, and Meissonier in the United States. The fine arts exhibit at the World's Columbian Exposition irrevocably influenced the art world in the United States. Significantly, this exposition heralded the end of the golden age of French academic art in the United States. Two major factors led to the decline. The primary reason was the lively interest aroused by the French Impressionist artists, particularly Claude Monet, who exhibited at the fair, and the second was the overwhelming critical success of American art as a result of its impressive display in Chicago.

Works by the four French academic artists had been prominent in the American art world since the 1867 Universal Exposition, but by 1893 Cabanel

¹ The World's Columbian Exposition opened in Chicago May 1st and closed October 31st, 1893.

and Meissonier had both died, and Bouguereau and Gérôme were sexagenarians though still actively working. Cabanel, who was not represented at the World's Columbian Exposition, was mentioned only in passing by John C. Van Dyke, a reviewer of the fine arts at the fair, as characteristic of traditional academic art stretching back to David and Ingres.² Gérôme's and Meissonier's works were included in both the United States loan collection, an assembly of works owned by American collectors, and the French fine arts exhibits of the fair. Despite his continued popularity with American collectors, Bouguereau's paintings were in the French art section only. Their works, however, were no longer representative of current trends. The inclusion of their well-known works, particularly in the United States loan collection, afforded ready comparisons with current styles—this made academic art and its traditional, laborious, highly finished style and historical subject matter that Americans had so appreciated appear outdated.

The French Fine Arts Section

French art at the World's Columbian Exposition was displayed in two adjacent sections: the French fine arts section and the United States loan collection, identified in the official catalog as "Foreign Masterpieces Owned in the United States."³ Such a large collection of a broad range of artistic styles represented by "masterpieces" in one exhibit allowed critics to assess the state of

² John C. Van Dyke, "Painting at the Fair," *Century Illustrated Magazine* 48, no. 3 (July 1894): 440.

³ Halsey Cooley Ives and Moses P. Handy, *World's Columbian Exposition, 1893: Official Catalogue. Part X. Department K: Fine Arts* (Chicago: W. B. Conkey Co., 1893).

the fine arts in general. Regular and frequent reviews of the fair's fine arts exhibition appeared in the major art journals and newspapers of the times.

Most American critics and reviewers felt that the French fine arts section represented art of the past rather than current trends, and commented that because of this perceived incompleteness, the French made a poor showing. The display excluded works by major living artists such as Claude Monet, Auguste Renoir, Edgar Degas, Jean-Charles Cazin, Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, and Dagnan-Bouveret, who represented various styles.⁴ A *New York Times* reviewer noted that although some current art was represented, it was "in company with previous fashions, which are no longer fashionable," meaning French academic art.⁵

This sentiment was echoed by other critics such as John C. Van Dyke. Van Dyke was an art history professor at Rutgers College and wrote about art as well as nature. His love of nature and fascination with Impressionism guided his preference for landscape painting and informed his negative impression of the French fine arts section at the fair. The selection of French art, Van Dyke said, showed "the capricious, or mannered, efforts of her studios instead of the heart of her people."⁶ The "mannered" style referred to academic art and the "heart" of French art in this case referred to the art of the younger artists. Van Dyke felt that the French painting section was backward-looking, and found a legacy of "academic emptiness" stemming from Jacques-Louis David and Jean-Auguste-

⁴ William A. Coffin, "The Columbian Exposition I," *Nation* 57, no. 1466 (3 August 1893): 80; Lucy Monroe, "Chicago Letter," *Critic* 19, no. 587 (20 May 1893): 329; "Schools of Art Show Their Best," *New York Herald*, 7 May 1893, 18; and Van Dyke, "Painting at the Fair," 440.

⁵ "France at the World's Fair," *New York Times*, 9 July 1893, 15.

⁶ Van Dyke, 440.

Dominique Ingres to Cabanel. However, of these three artists, only Ingres was represented in the French section.⁷ Van Dyke asserted derogatorily that everyone was already familiar with “the inanities of the Bouguereaus, the sterility of the Gérômes . . . [and] the littleness of the Meissoniers.”⁸ The work of Gérôme and of Meissonier, another reporter said, represented their well-known and long-appreciated scientific exactitude of technique, but lacked feeling.⁹ Their scientific exactitude, though, had by now largely fallen out of favor.

American critic and painter William Coffin, who reviewed the fine arts at the World’s Columbian Exposition at length for the *Nation*, offered some suggestions for the old-fashioned air of the French exhibit. He said that it seemed as if “Old Salon men” had assembled the collection.¹⁰ The “Old Salon” referred to the conservative Salon, led by Bouguereau. By 1890, there was no longer an official Salon.¹¹ It had split into a conservative Salon, essentially run the same as the official Salon had been since its inception, and a more progressive Salon, led briefly by Meissonier before his death; Puvis de Chavannes succeeded him.¹² Coffin’s comment was accurate. In 1893, Gérôme

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ J. C. V. D. [John C. Van Dyke], “Art at the Fair: Italian, Spanish, and French Painting,” *New York Evening Post*, 8 August 1893, 5.

⁹ “Schools of Art Show Their Best,” 18.

¹⁰ William A. Coffin, “The Columbian Exposition V,” *Nation* 57, no. 1470 (31 August 1893): 150-51. Coffin had spent three years in Paris in Léon Bonnat’s atelier and exhibited in the Paris Salons of 1879, 1880, and 1882.

¹¹ The decline of the traditional Salon is the subject of Patricia Mainardi, *End of the Salon: Art and the State in the Early Third Republic* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

¹² In 1890, the longstanding and powerful official Paris Salon split into two factions. The Société des artistes français remained similar to the traditional Paris Salon, and the Société nationale des beaux-arts was more progressive. Cabanel and Bouguereau had often served as jurors and Gérôme and Meissonier occasionally served as jurors in the old Salon. Bouguereau became president of the Société des artistes français, but Meissonier became the first president of the Société nationale des beaux-arts. Some of its founding members included Dagnan-Bouveret, Puvis de Chavannes, Henri Gervex, Albert Besnard (1849-1934), and Carolus-Duran. See

was president of the French admissions jury for paintings and drawings, and Bouguereau was among the members of the jury that also included two of Cabanel's most prominent former students, Jean-Joseph Benjamin-Constant and Henri Gervex. Roger Ballu, conservative editor of the prominent French journal, *L'Art*, served as Art Commissioner for the French fine arts section. He had replaced Antonin Proust, a friend of Édouard Manet, as Art Commissioner after Proust stepped down from his position prematurely due to his connection to a scandal. Had Proust carried through as commissioner, the selection probably would have been more broadly representative of the current state of French art. Coffin blamed this late change of guard for the sense of incompleteness and focus on academic art in the French section.¹³

In a lengthy assessment of French displays at the fair, a reviewer for the *New York Times* echoed Coffin's sentiment. The writer attributed the general disappointment in the French fine art display to its air of obsolescence.¹⁴ Although no names were specified, the implication was that the "obsolescence" was due to the presence of familiar names of French academic art, such as Bouguereau's. Although American critics were disappointed with the selection of works in the French fine arts section, it is important to note that they did not denigrate French academic art; rather, they simply found it outdated. Gérôme was still revered and considered by at least one reviewer as contemporary, but

Constance Cain Hungerford, "Meissonier and the Founding of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts," *Art Journal* 48, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 71-77. This split, widely reported in the American press, affected American artists wishing to exhibit at the Paris Salon. See, for example, Georges Lafenestre, "The Salons of Paris," *Chautauquan* 11, no. 5 (August 1890): 591-95; Susan Hayes Ward, "Fine Arts: The Two Salons," *Independent* 42, no. 2156 (27 March 1890): 7-8; and Clarence Wason, "The 'Meissonier' Salon," *Art Amateur* 23, no. 2 (July 1890): 23-24.

¹³ Coffin, "The Columbian Exposition V," 151.

¹⁴ "France at the World's Fair," 15.

Bouguereau was considered outdated by all.¹⁵ One critic flatly stated that Bouguereau's "scepter has departed."¹⁶

Bouguereau's paintings of shepherdesses and children populated American art collections, but he was represented in the French fine arts exhibit at the fair by two religious paintings, *The Holy Women at the Sepulchre* (fig. 5.1) and *Our Lady of the Angels* (fig. 5.2), and one typical painting, *The Wasp's Nest*. The religious subjects garnered some positive though unenthusiastic attention, while *The Wasp's Nest* was ignored. *Holy Women at the Sepulchre* received appreciative, if lukewarm, commentary from the *Art Amateur*.¹⁷ Echoing the sentiments of French critic René Ménard, other American reviewers found Bouguereau's smooth, familiar style well-suited to religious subjects.¹⁸ Aside from these few reviews of Bouguereau's works, though, his entries attracted little notice. This was a definite change, since Bouguereau's art, even if maligned or defended was still acknowledged, but now it was nearly ignored. Similarly, Gérôme's one painting, *Oedipus*, in the French exhibit was neglected, and several sculptures by Meissonier inspired little comment.¹⁹

¹⁵ Sophia Antoinette Walker, "Fine Arts: French Lights on American Pictures at Chicago," *Independent* 45, no. 2333 (17 August 1893): 7.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ "French Painting," *Art Amateur* 29, no. 6 (November 1893): 138; and Montague Marks, "My Note Book," *Art Amateur* 29, no. 6 (November 1893): 132. The *Art Amateur* was the only art journal to win a medal at the World's Columbian Exposition.

¹⁸ *Famous Paintings of the World: A Collection of Photographic Reproductions of Great Modern Masterpieces* (New York: Fine Art Publishing Co., 1894), 239; and Lucy Monroe, "Chicago Letter," *Critic* 19, no. 590 (10 June 1893): 391. See also René Ménard, "W. Bouguereau," in *Great Modern Painters* (Paris: Goupil & Co., 1884), 1: 12.

¹⁹ Meissonier had created these sculptures as models to assist him with his painting, not as works unto themselves, but they were exhibited regardless of their initial function; see William Walton, *World's Columbian Exposition: The Art and Architecture* (Philadelphia: George Barrie, 1893), 1: 36-37.

The United States Loan Collection and French Impressionism

In contrast to the disappointing display in the French section, the broad variety of French art in the United States loan collection received widespread attention. Over one-hundred twenty pictures, nearly all French, comprised the loan collection, and the three rooms where these pictures hung bridged the French and American fine art exhibits.²⁰ The Assistant Chief of the Department of Fine Arts, Sarah Tyson Hallowell, selected and secured the loans from American collectors across the United States. She actively promoted modern French art in Chicago and acted as advisor to the city's most prominent collectors, Bertha and Potter Palmer.²¹

The perceived imbalance of the French section was redressed in the United States loan collection, comprised mainly of contemporary French art.²² The selection consisted of a broad cross-section of French art styles, mainly from the second half of the nineteenth century. These included two paintings by Meissonier, and two paintings and a sculpture by Gérôme, as well as Barbizon painters, Naturalists, and Impressionists. If the absence of works by Puvis de Chavannes, Jehan-Georges Vibert, Cazin, Monet, Renoir, Alfred Sisley (1839-1899), Luc-Olivier Merson (1846-1920), Degas, and Dagnan-Bouveret weakened the French section, their presence only strengthened the United States loan collection.²³ The variety and quality of the French paintings in the loan collection

²⁰ Lucy Monroe, "Chicago Letter," *Critic* 20, no. 594 (8 July 1893): 30.

²¹ Willis John Abbot, "Art at the World's Fair," *Christian Union* 47, no. 17 (29 April 1893): 808; and Carolyn Kinder Carr, "Prejudice and Pride: Presenting American Art at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition," in *Revisiting the White City: American Art at the 1893 World's Fair* (Washington, D. C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1993), 65-66, 71.

²² Monroe, "Chicago Letter," *Critic* 19, no. 587 (20 May 1893): 329.

²³ Walker, "Fine Arts," 7.

led the *Critic's* world's fair reporter, Lucy Monroe, to remark that it was the display's "special glory."²⁴ The only dissenting voice regarding the quality of the loan exhibition was William Coffin. He acknowledged the widespread attention the loan collection received, but he felt that most of the pictures were not masterpieces, as the title of the exhibit advertised, with the exception of Millet's *Peasant Leaning on His Hoe* and Manet's "unique" *Dead Toreador* (fig. 5.3).²⁵

Critics were pleased that modern French artists were represented in the loan collection, but the inclusion of older French academic pictures in the exhibit represented a "vanishing school."²⁶ One critic commented that America's private galleries contained the "best paintings of the modern French school," but the French academic artists such as Gérôme, Lefebvre, Bouguereau, and Cabanel were becoming "old-fashioned."²⁷ Comments such as this signaled that these artists, who had been the mainstay of American art collections for over two decades, were no longer current. Inevitably, the "modern" French school, increasingly defined by younger artists, was changing.

Critics continued to speak well of the older artists, Gérôme in particular, but their comments were nostalgic. For example, of the almost five-hundred works in the French galleries at the World's Columbian, according to William Walton, none of them equaled Gérôme's "two once very famous" paintings, *L'Éminence grise* (fig. 2.13) and *The Snake Charmer* (fig. 5.4), in the United

²⁴ Monroe, "Chicago Letter," *Critic* 20, no. 594 (8 July 1893): 30.

²⁵ Coffin, "The Columbian Exposition V," 152.

²⁶ William Walton, *Art and Architecture: The Art* (Philadelphia: G. Barrie, 1893), 1: 28.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 1: 27-28.

States loan collection, or paintings by Couture, Ingres, or Meissonier.²⁸ Ripley Hitchcock, a well-known art critic and author of works on American etchings, called Gérôme “the most famous of living French masters since the death of Meissonier,” and commented on his well-known dramatic contrasts in past paintings such as *Ave Caesar, morituri te saluant* (fig. 3.1), *L'Éminence grise*, and *Duel after the Ball* (fig. 1.4).²⁹ Another critic waxed poetic on Gérôme's *L'Éminence grise* and *The Snake Charmer*, but *L'Éminence grise* merited only a short straightforward description from another critic.³⁰ Hitchcock also stated that Gérôme's public paintings in Paris, and his more recent sculptures, one of which, *Pygmalion and Galatea* (1892) (fig. 5.5), was in the loan collection, altogether “have proved the versatility of his talents.”³¹ William Coffin, who liked *Pygmalion and Galatea*, suggested that the placement of this sculpture in the loan collection was “a delicate compliment” to the many American artists who studied with him.³² The story of the sculptor creating an ideal figure that comes to life paralleled Gérôme's role as a teacher forming his students. Regardless of praise such as this, Gérôme's well-known works were mainly spoken of in the past tense.

Gérôme and Meissonier were mentioned together in another review of the loan collection, which described them as “realistic” painters who focused on picturesque costumes and archaeological accuracy rather than “passion and motion.”³³ This lack of “passion and motion” in academic work led to its falling out of favor. Another critic voiced a similar sentiment about Meissonier's

²⁸ Walton, 1: 27.

²⁹ Ripley Hitchcock, *Art of the World* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1894), 1: 3.

³⁰ Walton, 1: 28; and “The Loan Collection,” *Art Amateur* 29, no. 2 (July 1893): 36.

³¹ Hitchcock, 1: 3.

³² Coffin, “The Columbian Exposition I,” 80.

³³ “The Loan Collection,” 36.

detailed, accurate work.³⁴ Meissonier's two paintings, *A View near Poissy* and *A Reconnaissance*, received only brief mention as typical of his grand manner on a small scale.³⁵

In spite of the critical malaise the old French academic artists inspired, there were indications that the public was not yet tired of their work. Hitchcock attested to the artist's enduring popularity with the public when he reported that Gérôme's *Serpent Charmer* was one of the main attractions and most popular works in the loan exhibition.³⁶ Van Dyke remarked with mild irritation that "a popular ballot for the best painters would probably place Gérôme and Meissonier in the front rank and relegate Ingres, Millet, and Courbet to obscurity."³⁷ Remarks such as these gave voice to popular opinion, which still evidently enjoyed the French academic artists' work.

Although critics remarked on the works of Gérôme and of Meissonier in the loan collection, most instead focused on the decorative art of Puvis de Chavannes and on the portraits by Léon Bonnat, Carolus-Duran, and by Cabanel's former students, Théobald Chartran (1846-1907) and Henri Gervex.³⁸ Puvis de Chavannes, creator of the "finest decorative work of our time" received the commission to adorn the main staircase of the Boston Public Library with several paintings shortly after the fair's closing.³⁹ The realism and brilliant color

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., 36-37.

³⁶ Hitchcock, 2: 195.

³⁷ J. C. V. D., 5.

³⁸ Coffin, "The Columbian Exposition V," 151; and E. S. C., "Art at Chicago: Impressions of an Art Student at the World's Fair," *New York Times*, 23 June 1893, 9.

³⁹ Lucy Monroe, "Chicago Letter," *Critic* 20, no. 597 (29 July 1893): 76.

of the French portrait painters struck critics.⁴⁰ Other younger artists who attracted notice were Cazin, Bastien-Lepage, a former student of Cabanel, and Dagnan-Bouveret, a former student of Gérôme. Cazin's widely admired landscapes, according to the *Art Amateur*, bridged the gap between Barbizon and Impressionist landscape paintings.⁴¹ Paintings by Bastien-Lepage also appeared to descend from the adored Barbizon painters.⁴² Dagnan-Bouveret's peasant pictures charmed critics.⁴³

Likewise, Manet and Degas, both considered Impressionist artists, garnered much notice. Reviewers acknowledged Manet, although long deceased, as the leader of French Impressionism.⁴⁴ His painting, *Dead Toreador*, attracted much attention.⁴⁵ One reviewer's comment that the *Dead Toreador* was "superbly handled with admirable simplicity and directness" summed up the general admiration for the picture.⁴⁶ The "artistic realism" of Degas' ballet dancers, as well as the "fascinating combination of ugliness and beauty" impressed critics.⁴⁷

Of the French Impressionist artists, Monet in particular was enthusiastically praised, and one reviewer proclaimed that Impressionism was

⁴⁰ E. S. C., 23; Lucy Monroe, "Chicago Letter," *Critic* 19, no. 590 (10 June 1893): 391; and idem, "Chicago Letter," *Critic* 19, no. 588 (27 May 1893): 351.

⁴¹ Roger Riordan, "The World's Fair Loan Collection: Contemporary Painting," *Art Amateur* 30, no. 5 (April 1894): 130.

⁴² "The World's Fair Loan Collection: Naturalism, the Barbizon School, Corot," *Art Amateur* 30, no. 3 (February 1894): 76.

⁴³ Coffin, "The Columbian Exposition V," 150; and Lucy Monroe, "Chicago Letter," *Critic* 20, no. 597 (29 July 1893): 76.

⁴⁴ Walker, 7.

⁴⁵ Coffin, "The Columbian Exposition V," 152; J. C. V. D. [John C. Van Dyke], "Art at the Fair: The American Pictures," *New York Evening Post*, 31 July 1893, 5; and "Loan Exhibition at the Fair," *New York Herald*, 7 May 1893, 152.

⁴⁶ Lucy Monroe, "Chicago Letter," *Critic* 20, no. 597 (29 July 1893): 76. Monroe mistakenly attributed Manet's *Dead Toreador* to Monet.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* See also Walker, 7.

the art of the future.⁴⁸ This comment is extremely significant because Impressionist art had clearly received the acclaim once reserved for French academic art in American collections. Monet's paintings were lent by American collectors (among them Mary Cassatt's brother, Alexander Cassatt), and the fact that his paintings were already part of several American collections indicated changing tastes.⁴⁹ Another collector, Albert Spencer, had a collection of academic art including a painting by Gérôme, but he had begun buying Impressionist art in the mid-1880s.

Regarding Monet, critics generally did not focus on specific paintings, but instead spoke of his work as a whole or of Monet as the leader of a new school.⁵⁰ In her "Chicago Letter," Lucy Monroe offered glowing praise in her assessments of Monet and the French Impressionist work on display in the loan collection. By way of introduction, she informed readers that Monet's important widespread influence on contemporary artists could not be ignored and that all but the most conservative viewer would appreciate the beauty of his paintings.⁵¹ For example, she was astounded by the "truth" of the "exquisitely delicate, exquisitely suggestive" pale colors of *Pourville in the Morning, Misty Weather* (fig. 5.6).⁵² Roger Riordan of the *Art Amateur* summed up the enthusiastic critical comments about Monet's colorful paintings: Monet was in a class by himself because of his

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ives and Handy, 63. Lenders' names were listed after the title of each art work.

⁵⁰ See for example, Walker, 7.

⁵¹ Lucy Monroe, "Chicago Letter," *Critic* 20, no. 597 (29 July 1893): 76.

⁵² Ibid. *Pourville in the Morning, Misty Weather* was called *Morning Fog* in the catalog; see Ives and Handy, 63, no. 2954.

vivid, innovative use of color and his truthful hues, visible only when his pictures were seen from a distance.⁵³

Although it may have seemed rather sudden, the interest in French Impressionist art in the United States had been growing since the mid-1880s. The first significant show of Impressionist pictures in the United States occurred at the American Art Association in New York in 1886.⁵⁴ Favorable reception of this Impressionist show led to another the following year. In 1887, influential critic Theodore Child positively reviewed the French Impressionists and urged viewers to be open-minded about this new style of art, astutely adding that art initially considered reactionary eventually becomes conventional.⁵⁵ Child was referring to the controversy Impressionist painting had sparked in France; in the United States, Impressionism was simply a new style that required some background information. He identified the characteristics of the Impressionist painter as "spontaneity, absolute originality, and marked personality."⁵⁶ Child found Degas to be the greatest of this group of artists, and he especially admired Degas' ballet dancers and other work up to 1880.

Child did not, however, praise Impressionist art at the expense of academic art. For him, there was room for more than one style of art. In 1890, he reiterated this even-handed approach to art. He contrasted the art of Bouguereau and Cabanel, who each "created a wholly imaginary objective world"

⁵³ Riordan, 130.

⁵⁴ Hans Huth argued that the 1886 show was a decisive event in the introduction of French Impressionist art in the United States; see Hans Huth, "Impressionism Comes to America," *Gazette des beaux-arts* 29 (April 1946): 225-56.

⁵⁵ Theodore Child, "A Note on Impressionist Painting," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 74, no. 440 (January 1887): 315.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 313.

through their realistic style, with Degas and Manet, who sought "to reproduce. . . the subjective appearance of things."⁵⁷ Although Child predicted that Bouguereau's art would rank alongside classical masters in his opinion, it was time for the art world to move on.⁵⁸ For him, the new heads of modern French art were Puvis de Chavannes, Cazin, Manet, and Bastien-Lepage.⁵⁹

Positive attention by key critics such as Child and other explanatory articles on Impressionist art paved the way for the excitement about Impressionism at the World's Columbian Exposition.⁶⁰ The year 1893 was crucial for French Impressionism, as Frances Weitzenhoffer has shown.⁶¹ Just prior to the World's Columbian Exposition, two exhibitions of Impressionist paintings took place in New York art galleries, Boussod, Valadon (formerly Goupil) and Durand-Ruel. Concurrent with the Chicago fair, paintings by Monet and other French Impressionist paintings were shown at the Vanderbilt Gallery of the American Fine Arts Society in New York. With these exhibitions and with the overwhelmingly positive interest in French Impressionist art in the United States loan collection at the World's Columbian Exposition, French Impressionism gained a firm foothold in the United States.⁶² Shortly before the close of the fair, a review in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* emphatically stated in its heading that

⁵⁷ Theodore Child, "Some Modern French Painters," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 80, no. 480 (May 1890): 838.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ W. H. W., "What is Impressionism?" *Art Amateur* 28, no. 1 (December 1892): 5.

⁶¹ Frances Weitzenhoffer, *The Havemeyers: Impressionism Comes to America* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1986), 82-95.

⁶² Mishoe Brennecke showed that the rise in acceptance of works by Manet was replaced by interest in Monet by the early 1890s. See Nancy Mishoe Brennecke, "'The Painter in Chief of Ugliness': Edouard Manet and Nineteenth-Century America" (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 2001), 266.

Monet, a trailblazer, was “Now in Favor in America.”⁶³ The overwhelmingly positive press Monet and Impressionist artists received as a result of the fair affirmed their rising popularity.

The Promise of American Art

Critics established that the French fine arts display appeared outdated, and that modern French art at the United States loan collection was the art of the future, but how was American art perceived at its own fair? French art was the benchmark against which art from other nations was compared, but the American fine arts display greatly impressed reviewers.⁶⁴ Lucy Monroe summed up the general feeling that American art had progressed rapidly over the past few years. The French influence on American artists who studied in France, bemoaned by some critics, had lessened after the artists returned home.⁶⁵

Monroe concluded that “careful study of the French and American sections of the Exposition art department only serves to confirm the first impression that the latter is the stronger of the two.”⁶⁶ Only several years prior to the fair, she continued, her assessment would have been unthinkable, but she assured her readers that after viewing the remarkable showing at the exposition, it was true nonetheless.⁶⁷ One news headline, “French Art Jealousy,” asserted that the French were actually worried that foreign art would surpass their own

⁶³ Emma Bullet, “Followed No Master: Monet, the French Painter, Now in Favor in America,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 24 September 1893, 8.

⁶⁴ Van Dyke, 439.

⁶⁵ William A. Coffin, “The Columbian Exposition II,” *Nation* 57, no. 1467 (10 August 1893): 96-97.

⁶⁶ Lucy Monroe, “Chicago Letter,” *Critic* 19, no. 588 (27 May 1893): 351.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

country's art.⁶⁸ This line of thinking, exemplified by this bold headline and by Monroe's reviews, indicated that the tide was turning away from the primacy of French academic art in the United States. Van Dyke also acknowledged that other writers felt that the French grip on the art world was fading, and that the future of modern art looked towards the United States.⁶⁹ Hitchcock too found the American school "fresh."⁷⁰ Theodore Child had already praised the American artists at the Paris Universal Exposition of 1889, identifying John Singer Sargent (1856-1925), James McNeill Whistler, William Turner Dannat (1853-1929), and Edwin Austin Abbey (1852-1911) as the best American artists, on par with non-French artists such as Giovanni Boldini (1842-1931), Mihaly Munkácsy (1844-1900), and Alfred Stevens (1823-1906)—although at that time, he still acknowledged French art as top rank.⁷¹ This attitude was now changing.

American critics and reviewers in 1893 were particularly proud of several established American artists.⁷² Among the most discussed American painters were the expatriates Sargent and Whistler. Sargent had studied at the *École des beaux-arts* and under Carolus-Duran in Paris, and his portraits in the American exhibit were widely praised. His technical skill was unquestioned, and Coffin admired the combination of grandeur and simplicity he achieved in his portraits, exemplified by *Portrait of Mrs. Edward L. Davis and Her Son, Livingston Davis* (fig. 5.7) and by his half-length portrait of Mrs. Inches. Whistler's portraits also

⁶⁸ N. N., "French Art Jealousy," *New York Evening Post*, 29 July 1893, 11.

⁶⁹ Van Dyke, 439.

⁷⁰ Hitchcock, 1: vi.

⁷¹ Theodore Child, "American Artists at the Paris Exhibition" *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 79, no. 472 (September 1889): 489.

⁷² For a lengthy assessment of the American fine arts at the World's Columbian Exposition, see Carr, 62-123.

attracted attention. Coffin called Whistler “the cleverest of living painters,” and singled out Whistler’s *Lady with the Yellow Buskin* (fig. 5.8) for its sophisticated, harmonious arrangement of browns, grays, and blacks, with a note of yellow.⁷³ Sargent and Whistler, though, according to some, could not truly be claimed as “American,” or any nationality because they had spent the larger part of their careers away from the United States.⁷⁴

Of the homegrown American artists, most critics found the art of Winslow Homer and landscape painter George Inness strongly and fully American.⁷⁵ Although he had been to France, Homer did not formally study there. He belonged to no school, according to Coffin, who said Homer was “a law unto himself in technical methods and individuality of expression.”⁷⁶ If Homer’s American subjects and style were unlike any other, the true strength of the American school for most critics and the closest it had to an authentic “American” art was landscape painting.⁷⁷ The reason for this, according to Coffin, was precisely because American landscape painting had largely escaped foreign influences, and the subject matter focused on American, rather than French, land and sea.⁷⁸ The leading American landscape painter was still George Inness. Critics repeatedly praised Inness, and one critic dubbed Inness “the successor of

⁷³ Coffin, “The Columbian Exposition II,” 97.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Lucy Monroe, “Chicago Letter,” *Critic* 20, no. 598 (5 August 1893): 92.

⁷⁶ Coffin, “The Columbian Exposition II,” 97.

⁷⁷ William A. Coffin, “The Columbian Exposition III,” *Nation* 57, no. 1468 (17 August 1893): 115; Lucy Monroe, “Chicago Letter,” *Critic* 20, no. 598 (5 August 1893): 92; and Van Dyke: 446.

⁷⁸ Coffin, “The Columbian Exposition III,” 115.

the Barbizon school."⁷⁹ This was meant as a high compliment, since Barbizon art remained popular and admired.

Sargent, Whistler, Homer, and Inness were not the only cause for American pride. Reviewers found the work of younger American artists promising and original, in spite of the acknowledged foreign, mainly French, influences.⁸⁰ Van Dyke summed up the optimism writers felt about American art. He said, as Monroe had, that just a short time before the World's Columbian Exposition, the United States had had little quality painting of its own, but now: "we have a painting full of much skill, energy, and sentiment, with considerable originality."⁸¹ Van Dyke concluded his enthusiastic assessment of the American fine arts display with his prophecy that "the book of our [American] art has just been opened, and no one knows what bright deeds of beauty may be written upon its pages in the years to come."⁸²

The Art Market in the 1890s

Although critics were clearly ready for change and enthusiastic about American and French Impressionist art, most collectors were slower to change. The fair's lack of art sales, which one reviewer realistically blamed on the poor economy, was disappointing.⁸³ The United States was sliding into a deep depression that lasted from 1893 to 1897. According to statistics reported in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, only thirty-five American artworks were sold. Those

⁷⁹ Walker, 7.

⁸⁰ Van Dyke, 446.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 444.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 446.

⁸³ "Sales from the Art Gallery," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 1 November 1893, 13.

works that did sell well, such as pictures from Dutch and Austrian artists, largely sold to foreign collectors.⁸⁴ Prices for American paintings immediately following the World's Columbian Exposition were still comparatively low, despite the critical hope and zeal generated by the fair. The results of the George I. Seney sale of 1894 for pictures by the darlings of the fair, George Inness and Winslow Homer, were telling. Several of Inness' works sold for little more than three hundred dollars, the cost of prints after Meissonier's *A Brawl*, and the Homers sold for even less.⁸⁵ On the other hand, a few other Inness pictures notably sold for one to three thousand dollars each, signaling a growing interest in this artist by collectors in spite of the poor economy. In addition, the fact that George Seney, who had collected French academic art a decade earlier, possessed American and Impressionist paintings indicated an increasing interest in different artistic styles by prominent collectors.⁸⁶

Collectors were also showing interest in French Impressionist art, in part because of aggressive dealers. A writer for the *New York Times* credited Durand-Ruel, the major promoter of French Impressionist art in New York, with keeping "the extreme open-air impressionists [such as Monet, Renoir, and Degas] . . . before the American public."⁸⁷ Durand-Ruel had served for the French Impressionist artists as Goupil had for Gérôme. Emma Bullet, a reporter for the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, wrote that "Parisian dealers have set about teaching Americans to admire and buy Monet" and that his works garnered high

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ "The Seney Sale," *Collector* 5, no. 8 (15 February 1894): 124.

⁸⁶ For an extensive study of American art collecting during this period, see Linda Henefield Skalet, "The Market for American Painting in New York, 1870-1915" (Ph.D. diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1980).

⁸⁷ "Art Notes," *New York Times*, 23 January 1893, 4.

prices.⁸⁸ She continued that artists and connoisseurs now admired “trailblazers in art,” as opposed to the traditional Paris Salon artists, such as Bouguereau, and that it was indeed “fashionable to admire and understand Monet.”⁸⁹

In spite of the positive press and aggressive promotion of French Impressionism in the American art market, prices did not compare to the stellar prices still garnered for works by the French academic artists. However, auction sales in New York did begin to include Monet’s paintings, an indication that Americans had begun to collect his paintings. While the World’s Columbian Exposition was still open, a sale of works by M. Knoedler & Co. included some canvases by Monet that sold for about \$1,000 each, but these paintings were purchased by Durand-Ruel rather than by prominent private collectors.⁹⁰ Durand-Ruel may have purchased the paintings to make sure that the pictures appeared desirable, since auction sales results were reported in newspapers and journals such as the *Collector*, which reported that two pictures by Monet in the George Seney auction sold for \$775 and \$1,300 each.⁹¹

Other dealers also sold Impressionist paintings. Pictures by Monet and by Renoir were occasionally on the stock books of the Paris gallery, Boussod, Valadon, et cie (formerly Goupil), who still actively sold works by Bouguereau, Gérôme, and Meissonier to Americans. For example, Louisine and Henry O. Havemeyer bought a painting by Monet in 1897 for \$4,800 from Boussod, and a

⁸⁸ Bullet, 8.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ "The Knoedler Sale," *Collector* 4, no. 12 (15 April 1893): 188-89.

⁹¹ "The Seney Sale," *Collector* 5, no. 8 (15 February 1894): 125.

snow scene the following year for just under \$2,000.⁹² Both of these figures were more than double the price of the paintings sold at auction in New York just a few years earlier, which signaled the increasing value of Monet's paintings.

The art market in New York had indeed opened to other styles, but there was little immediate loss of stature for works by Bouguereau, Gérôme, and Meissonier as a result of the World's Columbian Exposition. In the late 1890s, Boussod (Paris), for example, still sold works by these three French academic artists to American buyers for \$10,000 or more.⁹³ As late as 1895, paintings by Bouguereau, "the earliest of the French painters of the figure to find favor with New Yorkers," still cost between \$3,000 and \$20,000, yet there were now fewer works changing hands.⁹⁴

Although \$10,000 was still a significant sum of money, the truly remarkable prices for paintings such as Meissonier's *1807, Friedland* (fig. 2.9), that sold for \$60,000 and later for \$66,000 and captured headlines for over a decade, had ceased by the 1890s. Regardless, there was still speculation about picture prices for art by the coterie of French painters. For example, a reviewer in an 1890 article for the *Art Amateur* speculated about how much a famous painting such as Meissonier's *A Brawl* (fig. 3.4) would bring in the current art market. He guessed that "a few inches from the hand of Meissonier is worth a room full of his contemporaries," and speculated that small paintings such as

⁹² Boussod, book 14: 31, 148.

⁹³ See, for example, Boussod, book 14: 59, 100, 109, 124, 131, 137, 167.

⁹⁴ "Bouguereau at His Home," *Current Literature* 18, no. 6 (December 1895): 485.

those by Gérôme and by Meissonier were more valuable than large pictures by other artists.⁹⁵

Proof that the French academic artists were still valued is evident from several articles that came out just after the close of the World's Columbian Exposition. One highlighted the laborious working practices of Gérôme and Bouguereau. According to the writer, Gérôme was "the foremost historical painter," and Bouguereau, "the most popular painter in the world."⁹⁶ Gérôme's careful, methodical practice of making many preparatory sketches formed a striking contrast to the presumably fast-working colorful Impressionists.⁹⁷ In another article, Gérôme's career was summarized and set forth as a model for younger students.⁹⁸ Bouguereau was admired for his focus on achieving ideal beauty, rather than painting for money or popularity.⁹⁹ His noble goal was another worthy example for young artists.

Notably, the influential *Collector* magazine still considered Bouguereau and Gérôme, along with Monet, as current artists.¹⁰⁰ An 1895 article focusing on Bouguereau's Paris studio reported that "Americans own nearly one-half—and New Yorkers fully one-third—of the pictures that Bouguereau has painted . . . no collector who pays more than \$1,000 for a picture considers his gallery at all

⁹⁵ W. J. Loftie, "Art at Home," *Art Amateur* 23, no. 5 (October 1890): 94-95.

⁹⁶ Wallace Wood, "Chats with Famous Painters," *Century Illustrated Magazine* 47, no. 2 (December 1893): 186, 190.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 188. Wood compared Gérôme's careful preparatory drawings directly to the rapid oil sketches of another well-known painter, Jean-Paul Laurens, who is today considered academic. The contrast between the drawing and color of Gérôme's and Laurens' works, although less drastic than the contrast between Gérôme's and Monet's use of color and drawing, was nevertheless likened to that of the line versus color debate—the line of Ingres versus the color of Delacroix—from earlier in the nineteenth century.

⁹⁸ Arthur Hoeber, "A Famous French Painter," *St. Nicholas* 23, no. 1 (November 1895): 13.

⁹⁹ Wood, 192.

¹⁰⁰ "Artists of To-Day," *Collector* 5, no. 5 (1 January 1894): 78-79.

satisfactory until it contains a Bouguereau."¹⁰¹ It continued that "everyone" was familiar with several of Bouguereau's paintings on view to the public. These included *Breton Brother and Sister* in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, *La Tricoteuse* from the John Jacob Astor gallery then on view in the Astor Library, and the well-known *Nymphs and Satyr* in the Hoffman House bar.¹⁰² "Why should Americans be so enamored of this academic Frenchman?" He asked.¹⁰³ Because Bouguereau was "the greatest draughtsman of the age" and had a peculiar style and a smooth, nearly perfect technique.¹⁰⁴ This article also listed Bouguereau's pictures and their owners' names.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, other articles listed works by Meissonier and by Gérôme in private collections, proof that these three artists were still of interest.¹⁰⁶

Although the French academic artists were still attracting notice, the changing interest in subject matter became noticeably important for the art market. Figure and genre painting, the core subjects of French academic art, represented past preferences. An 1892 article surveying the New York art market acknowledged the variety of styles available in contemporary painting. Bouguereau was an example of a figure painter, and Cabanel and Meissonier

¹⁰¹ "Bouguereau at His Home," 484.

¹⁰² Ibid., 485. The reviewer referred to *Breton Brother and Sister* as *Mother's Treasure* in this article. For more on *Nymphs and Satyr* in the Hoffman House bar, see David Scobey, "Nymphs and Satyrs: Sex and the Bourgeois Public Sphere in Victorian New York," *Winterthur Portfolio* 37, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 43-66.

¹⁰³ "Bouguereau at His Home," 485.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ "J. L. Gérôme in American Collections," *Collector*, no. 18 (1 September 1890): 150; "Meissonier in America," *Collector*, no. 16 (1 July 1890): 129; and "Meissonier in Boston," *Collector*, no. 17 (1 August 1890): 139.

were examples of artists who combined figures and landscape.¹⁰⁷ In contrast, landscape painting, said the writer, was “essentially a modern art.”¹⁰⁸ Although this remark was geared towards the Impressionist artists, French academic artists were not yet being ignored.

Regardless, the 1890s was a transitional period for critical and commercial interest in the four French academic artists. Although Bouguereau and Gérôme both lived into the early twentieth century, and even though their art was still admired, their prime had past. Perhaps it was inevitable that after the inclusion of Bouguereau, Cabanel, Gérôme, and Meissonier in art histories in the late 1880s and early 1890s, there was no more room for their popularity to go further or increase. Historians felt that the French men’s place in art history was secure, but their time in the spotlight had passed to make room for younger artists and fresher styles. The World’s Columbian Exposition and the critical attention it inspired, as well as the rise of new art dealers, led to the changing taste in modern art. French academic art was appreciated, acknowledged, and still popular among the public, but new styles, French Impressionism in particular, were welcome additions. The World’s Columbian Exposition served as the catalyst for this transition away from French academic art. Already works by Gérôme and by Meissonier in the United States loan collection at the fair received far less critical attention than works by Monet and the Impressionists. The French academic artists were not forgotten, but their traditional styles

¹⁰⁷ Champion Bissell, "Modern Pictures and the New York Market," *Belford's Monthly and Democratic Review* 8, no. 45 (February 1892): 678.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

seemed outmoded when compared to younger contemporary artists, and attention in the journals and newspapers gradually lessened.

Changing tastes were also becoming evident in art histories and museums. This was evident in a few of the art histories that began to include Impressionist artists. In her history of French painting, C. H. Stranahan opined that Cabanel, Gérôme, and Bouguereau had descended from David and Ingres, and Meissonier from seventeenth-century Dutch masters, but the Impressionists descended from landscape painters Corot, Courbet, and the Barbizon artists—a more recent pedigree.¹⁰⁹ She identified Manet as the precursor of Impressionism, and felt that Cabanel's foremost student, Bastien-Lepage, the “glorious master,” enjoyed short-lived adoration as a descendant of Impressionism.¹¹⁰ In his 1892 history of French art, William C. Brownell devoted considerable attention to artists such as Manet and Monet, whose works he categorized as “realistic” painting.¹¹¹ He too, identified Manet as the trailblazer of a new style, and Bastien-Lepage as the artist who benefited.¹¹² Although Brownell acknowledged Monet's important contribution to art, he erroneously predicted that Monet's art was not the art of the future.¹¹³

By the mid-1890s, the paintings by the four artists in the Metropolitan Museum of Art were less appreciated than they had been at the time of their widely-esteemed bequest less than a decade earlier. For example, in an 1896

¹⁰⁹ C. H. Stranahan, *A History of French Painting* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1888), 459, 462.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 463-66. Today Bastien-Lepage is identified as a Naturalist, and he had already died in 1884, before these histories were published.

¹¹¹ W. C. Brownell, *French Art: Classic and Contemporary Painting and Sculpture*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1892), 100-115.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 100.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 113.

article on the museum, Cabanel's *Birth of Venus* (fig. 1.5), donated by John Wolfe three years earlier, received only passing mention as a poor replica of his original in Paris.¹¹⁴ Meissonier's masterpiece, 1807, *Friedland* (fig. 2.9), was called "overrated," although the reviewer still admired *Painting Collector Visiting a Painter* (fig. 3.12).¹¹⁵ That same anonymous critic reported that Samuel P. Avery complained that the Metropolitan Museum of Art did not buy American art.¹¹⁶ This was surprising, given that Avery was a key promoter of French academic art who less than three decades earlier had sold his American art to buy European academic art. Regardless, figure painting by artists such as Cabanel and Bastien-Lepage, along with landscapes by the Barbizon artists, provided the amateur art lover with "a liberal education," according to one critic.¹¹⁷ The four French academic artists had become firmly established in contemporary art history.

¹¹⁴ "A Day at the Metropolitan Museum," *Art Amateur* 35, no. 1 (June 1896): 4.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Bissell, 678.

CONCLUSION

A confluence of events and attitudes in the United States led to the golden age of French academic art, exemplified in this study by its primary practitioners, Bouguereau, Cabanel, Gérôme, and Meissonier. Two key events marked the beginning and end of their golden age: the Universal Exposition of 1867 and the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. Although several international exhibitions took place between those years, these two expositions determined the course of French academic art in the United States. The 1867 Exposition spurred a rapid move toward voraciously collecting contemporary European—primarily French—academic art, and the 1893 Exposition signaled the end of the primacy of French academic painting in the United States. Between these expositions, works by the coterie of French artists were widely collected, documented, and placed in the fledgling Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Since the four French artists were at the top of the artistic hierarchy in France, their art in particular fulfilled Americans' need for a new cultural paradigm following the debilitating Civil War and humiliating American arts display at the 1867 Universal Exposition. Most major American dealers, collectors, critics, and artists had spent a significant amount of time in Europe—some were also in Paris for the exposition—and were in a position to promote French art and attitudes in the United States. Dealers Avery, Knoedler, and Lucas, and collectors John Taylor Johnston, A. T. Stewart, and William H. Vanderbilt led the New York art

market, and prominent critics regularly reviewed the sales, exhibitions, and collections.

They worked feverishly in those decades to bring contemporary European art to New York and thus establish it as an internationally recognized cultural capital. The 1870s was a strong decade for sales and for the formation of collections. By the late 1880s, the French artists' paintings from various American collections had become canonical and the Catharine Lorillard Wolfe bequest, which included significant paintings by the four French artists, established the European Painting Department at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Each artist had filled a niche that appealed to Americans. Although their methods were alike, each treated different subjects: Meissonier and Gérôme mainly painted male figures, and Bouguereau and Cabanel painted female figures. Gérôme painted archaeologically accurate historical genre and orientalist reportage, and Meissonier, tiny cabinet pictures of period male figures and larger-scale heroic Napoleonic subjects. Bouguereau's subjects were clean, sentimental peasants and pious Madonnas, and Cabanel's, literary female figures and flattering, elegant portraits. Gérôme was considered the intellectual painter; Meissonier the meticulous portrayer of figure, costume, setting, and expression; Bouguereau the painter of idealized peasants and figures; and Cabanel the portraitist and history painter. Foremost among their masterpieces in American collections were Meissonier's *1807, Friedland*, Gérôme's *Death of Caesar*, *Duel after the Ball*, *Pollice verso*, and *Ave Caesar, morituri te salutant*,

Cabanel's *Birth of Venus*, *Florentine Poet*, *Portrait of Catharine Lorillard Wolfe*, and *Pia de Tolomei*, and Bouguereau's *Nymphs and Satyr*. Cabanel adhered most closely to academic tradition, whereas Gérôme, Meissonier, and Bouguereau ventured into non-academic subjects; Meissonier even loosened his facture for *1807, Friedland*.

Throughout these decades, key American art critics promoted French art in hopes of strengthening their own artists. They unanimously acknowledged Bouguereau, Cabanel, Gérôme, and Meissonier as the leading artists in their styles and admired the impressive realism of their works. James Jackson Jarves was among the first influential critics to champion the technical superiority of French art, despite his reservations about the morality of some of the subjects. Edward Strahan, Gérôme's former student, authored several key volumes on contemporary European art, which did much to keep the artists in the foreground of the American art world. Others such as Eugene Benson and S. G. W. Benjamin extolled the talents of the artists in popular journals, and Clara Stranahan and Clarence Cook canonized them in their art histories. American artists such as George Inness and Frank Fowler also assessed the artists. In addition, the four artists were supported by French critics such as Henry de Chennevières, Philippe Burty, Jules Claretie, Eugène Montrosier, and René Ménard, whose writings were translated into English for an American audience. In the early 1890s, critics such as Theodore Child, John C. Van Dyke, Ripley Hitchcock, and William C. Brownell still acknowledged the skill and popularity of the artists, even though they preferred landscape painting, younger artists such

as Bastien-Lepage and Dagnan-Bouveret, Impressionists, and Puvis de Chavannes.

The four artists, however, were not wholly ignored after the World's Columbian Exposition. Bouguereau and Gérôme both lived into the first years of the twentieth century, but their art was no longer needed in the United States either as models or as status symbols. In 1896 Bouguereau married an American artist, Elizabeth Gardner, a commercially successful imitator of her husband's work, and Gérôme still occasionally received commissions from prominent Americans, such as industrialist Charles Schwab, for whom Gérôme sculpted two figures in 1902.¹ Although there were far fewer paintings by Bouguereau, Gérôme, and Meissonier on the Goupil stock books at the turn of the century, some still sold for four or five figures to American buyers. Additionally, American critics and the public now appreciated a variety of styles. For instance, the modern art galleries in the Metropolitan Museum of Art mingled American and European art at the turn of the century. Paintings by Eakins, Inness, Hovenden, and Manet hung in the same room as Meissonier's *1807*, *Friedland* and Cabanel's *Birth of Venus*.²

The four artists figured prominently in art histories from the 1880s and early 90s, and later art historical surveys still included Gérôme and Meissonier in particular as great painters. Their reputations held into the first years of the

¹ See Madeleine Fidell-Beaufort, "Elizabeth Jane Gardner Bouguereau: A Parisian Artist from New Hampshire," *Archives of American Art Journal* 24, no. 2 (1984): 2-9; and Suzanne G. Lindsay, *Monuments for a Steel King* (Allentown, PA: Allentown Art Museum, [2002]). The Schwab commission was noted in the press, see "Models for Schwab Statues: Two Figures, Representing 'Labor' and 'Metallurgical Science,' Completed in Paris," *New York Times*, 31 December 1902, 9.

² *Catalogue of the Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1902), 240-50.

twentieth century alongside those of Manet and Monet. For a short time, academic and Impressionist art was appreciated by authors of art histories. Notably, John C. Van Dyke included and positively assessed Gérôme and Meissonier—as well as Manet and Monet—in his book, *Modern French Masters* (1896), which was a compilation of essays on French artists written by American artists.³ Bouguereau and Cabanel, however, were excluded. D. Cady Eaton, a former student of Gérôme, praised the coterie of French academic artists as well as Manet and Monet in *A Handbook of Modern French Painting* (1909).⁴ The future division between academic and “modern” was evident, though, in *The Story of French Painting* (1915) by Charles Caffin, author of several art history studies. In less than two pages, Caffin denigrated Bouguereau, Cabanel, and Gérôme as “painters-in-ordinary to rich Americans,” and he predicted that the high prices fetched by Meissonier’s tiny panels would never be as high again.⁵ He had little regard for their art or for the taste of nineteenth-century collectors. In contrast to his cursory and dismissive treatment of the academic painters, Caffin devoted lengthy chapters to the Impressionist and Post-Impressionist artists that he favored. Caffin’s attitude towards academic art would be typical of much of the twentieth century.

One aspect of the artists’ careers infrequently mentioned in these later art histories was their teaching, which had a lasting impact on American art.⁶ Both

³ John Charles Van Dyke, ed., *Modern French Masters* (New York: De Vinne Press, 1896; reprint, New York: Garland, 1976).

⁴ D. Cady Eaton, *A Handbook of Modern French Painting* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1909).

⁵ Charles H. Caffin, *The Story of French Painting* (New York: Century Co., 1915), 123.

⁶ See Kathleen Adler, Erica E. Hirschler, and H. Barbara Weinberg, eds., *Americans in Paris 1860-1900* (London: National Gallery, 2006); James F. Peck, *In the Studios of Paris: William*

Cabanel and Gérôme taught at the École des beaux-arts in Paris until their deaths. Bouguereau taught at the Académie Julian, and in 1888, he was appointed a professor at the École des beaux-arts. Theodore Child remarked that Cabanel and Gérôme had taught more artists than any of their contemporaries.⁷ Edgar Melville Ward (1839-1915), a former student of Cabanel and of Gérôme, seconded this observation and credited Cabanel with educating “at least two artistic generations.”⁸

Several of their students became prominent instructors after they returned home. Ward taught and later became director at the National Academy of Design in New York, Frederic Crowninshield (1845-1918) taught in Boston, and Thomas Hovenden (1840-1895) taught in Philadelphia. Kenyon Cox (1856-1919), who studied under both Cabanel and Gérôme, became a teacher at both the National Academy of Design and the Art Students' League after he returned to the United States. He was a lifelong defender of traditional painting methods and wrote several books on the subject: *Old Masters and New* (1905), *The Classic Point of View* (1911), *Artist and Public* (1914) and *Concerning Painting* (1917). Gérôme's first American student, Lemuel Everett Wilmarth (1835-1918), taught at the National Academy, and his best known student, Thomas Eakins (1844-1916), taught at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. One of Bouguereau's most notable students, Robert Henri (1865-1929), taught in

Bouguereau and His American Students (Tulsa, OK: Philbrook Museum of Art; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006); H. Barbara Weinberg, *The Lure of Paris: Nineteenth-Century American Painters and Their French Teachers* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1991); and idem, "Nineteenth-Century American Painters at the École des Beaux-Arts," *American Art Journal* 13, no. 4 (Autumn 1981): 66-84.

⁷ Theodore Child, "The Exposition Nationale at Paris," *Art Amateur* 10, no. 1 (December 1883): 9.

⁸ Edgar Melville Ward, "Modern Schools of Painting. II. Classical Painting in France," *Monthly Illustrator and Home and Country* 12, no. 3 (April 1896): 249.

Philadelphia and later in New York. Although all of these American artists moved beyond the French academic styles of their teachers to varying degrees, they still retained and transmitted academic principles.

By the World's Columbian Exposition, however, the new generation had come to the fore; French academic art had largely served its purpose as a model for American art and culture. American critics had supported the influx of European art to achieve a strong American art, but once this aim had been achieved, they turned to their own art and to new styles, particularly Impressionism. The deaths of Cabanel and Meissonier and of the dealers, wealthy collectors, and that coterie who had so energetically promoted French academic art in the United States since the late 1860s coincided with this transition to the primacy of new styles and younger artists.

For two and a half decades, though, the four French artists were seen as the leading lights of modern French art in the United States. American artists had asserted themselves artistically at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, and French Impressionism had gained a firm foothold thanks to the positive press it received as well as aggressive promotion by the dealer Durand-Ruel. Manet, Monet, Bastien-Lepage and the Impressionists had replaced academic artists as the leaders of the modern French school. Their fresh, bright colors, loose brushwork, and contemporary subjects replaced the French academic artists' laborious finish and historical figures, period costumes, and dramas so beloved in prior decades. Many Americans were no longer interested in scientific accuracy and drama. Tastes had changed, as the scholarly art of

academics, once considered “poetic” by critics such as Stranahan and Strahan, now appeared too dry, scientific, and intellectual, and instead critics found poetry and emotional appeal in contemporary subject matter and in landscape.

Although American artists, critics, and the public still admired traditional French academic art, the World's Columbian Exposition ushered in a new golden age of French art in the United States: Impressionism.

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