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MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY

~~/~~The Autonomy of the Artist/~~/~~The Road to Artistic Independence

By

Mary Amacher

A Master's Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

Montclair State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

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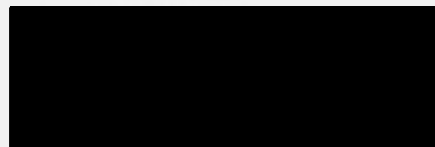
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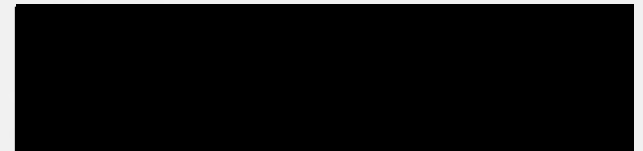
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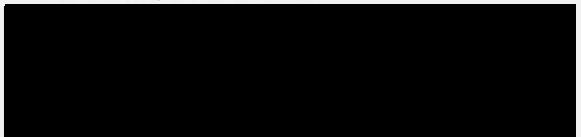
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ABSTRACT

In the Renaissance, art was a highly regulated profession anchored within the framework of the guilds. It was integrated into the labor and business aspect of craft-making, and the artist was not viewed as an independent originator separate from society, but a contractor/craftsman. Nevertheless, there were individual craftsmen whose work stood out above the common masses of master craftsmen. Generally, these new, rather autonomous painters, received some guidance in the planning of their iconographical program with many of their commissions utilizing the assistance of their workshop. This marks the beginning of the conceptual autonomy of the artist, but does not require much of his own manual involvement beyond creating the *disegno* – he still enjoyed the assistance of journeymen and apprentices in his studio.

At what point did it become important to the painter to feel the necessity to assume full control of the manual aspect of his work without assistance of the studio? And to what extent was this influenced by external factors? It seems that eventual societal and economic change, change in patronage, criticism, as well as theory, contributed to the shift in the perception that the painter should be fully responsible for his work. The need for artists to be seen as intellectuals prompted the rise of the academies in France and England. While in the workshops artists copied designs and styles of one master, the academies allowed artists to study many different styles from classical canons. Over time, the economic and political conditions of the time created a new class of patrons who began to purchase art with themes they could understand. This

in conjunction with the criticism that artists' creativity was being stifled by the strict hierarchy of rules and themes dictated by the academies, enabled artists to become more independent. In addition, the writings of the Enlightenment promoting the idea of original genius and imagination coupled with the Romantic notion of artists being emotional beings from which ideas flow spontaneously led to a dissociation from classical history painting.

While there is little evidence to prove that artists neglected the entire studio process, the shift of the public view of the artist as one being inspired independently does allow us to believe that artists did begin to work with less aid if any from assistants. The rapidly changing social strata of the Industrial Revolution, the radical ideas of the French Revolution, and the new views of the Romantic writers all collided at the same time in history. They brought with them a crisis in the art world by highlighting how it should be organized, how artists should be trained, and how ultimately they functioned and worked in a rapidly modernizing society. The artist becomes more of an independent entity, relying less on the production assistance of studio hands and classical themes and compositions, and ultimately utilizes imagination and creativity in the making of art.

THE AUTONOMY OF THE ARTIST: THE ROAD TO ARTISTIC INDEPENDENCE

A THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Master of Arts

by

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Introduction

The historical journey of the autonomy of the painter is a vast topic that covers several centuries. It is a topic that has yet to be fully researched. It is an ambitious topic that is not possible to be examined in depth in regard to all of its aspects in a master's thesis. However, individual facets of this topic have been subjected to study. While the literature of the emergence of the artist as humanist during the Renaissance fills libraries, the transition of the artist/craftsman anchored in the guild system to the artist/scholar of the academy has escaped notice. One of the few studies in this direction is Jules Guiffrey's "Histoire de l'Académie de Saint Luc"¹ - but there is little examination of the conflict between the Guild of Saint Luc in Paris and the Académie Royale. However, the history of the academies and their changing role in artist education has been subjected to much more scrutiny.² There are also individual studies of artist education and workshop practice, but these focus on specific aspects in various countries.³ The very multifaceted interrelationships between patron, artist, and the emerging critic have hardly been inspected in regard to their role in respect to the creative independence of the artist.

¹Guiffrey, Jules, "Histoire de l'Académie de Saint Luc," *Archives de l'Art Français*, Vol. IX, Nouvelle Période, 1915.

² An exhausting study was conducted by: N. Pevsner, *Academies of Art Past and Present*, New York: Da Capo Press, 1973.

³ Some of these include:

Ames-Lewis, Francis. "Drapery 'Pattern'- Drawings in Ghirlandaio's Workshop and Ghirlandaio's Early Apprenticeship," *The Art Bulletin* 63, no. 1, (Mar. 1981): 49-62.

Cavazzini, Patricia. "Claude's Apprenticeship in Rome: The Market for Copies and the Intervention of the Liberveritatis," *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift* 73, no. 3, (2004): 133-406.

Wackernagel, Martin. *The World of the Florentine Renaissance Artist: Projects and Patrons, Workshops and Art Market*. Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press. 1981.

Neither have the economic changes.⁴ Geraldine Pelles, Francis Haskell, and Bram Kempers concentrate on patron-artist relationships.⁵ Finally, ideological shifts during the Romantic period have hardly been examined in this light.⁶

What follows will give the reader a glimpse into the historical and economical factors that helped the painter become more and more independent of the guild system until he emancipated himself.

⁴ They have been touched upon by

Wackernagel, Martin. *The World of the Florentine Renaissance Artist: Projects and Patrons, Workshops and Art Market*. Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press. 1981.

Solkin, David, H. *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth Century England*. New Haven, London: Yale University Press. 1992.

⁵ Pelles, Geraldine. *Art, Artist, and Society: Origins of a Modern Dilemma, Painting in England and France*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1963.

Haskell, Francis. *Patrons and Painters: A Study in the Relations Between Italian art and Society in the Age of Baroque*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1963.

⁶ Romantic references include:

Abrams, M.H. *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*. London, Oxford, and New York: Oxford University Press. 1953.

Clark, Kenneth. *The Romantic Rebellion: Romantic Verses Classic Art*. New York: Harper and Row. 1973.

Kris, Ernst, and Otto Kurz. *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. 1979.

In the Renaissance, art was a highly regulated profession anchored within the framework of the guilds. It was integrated into the labor and business aspect of craft-making, and the artist was not viewed as an independent originator separate from society, but a contractor/craftsman. Nevertheless, there were individual craftsmen whose work stood out above the work of the majority of master craftsmen. They received admiration, even fame, and were not only aware of their elevated social status but their superior talents. During the Renaissance, the self-perception of these leading artists, Verrocchio, Leonardo, Raphael, and Dürer, for example, changed. These highly educated artists saw themselves as humanists, intellectual men who were not only able to execute a commission but also able to develop the iconography of the themes themselves. That had been, until then, the domain of theologians and scholars. Generally, these new, rather autonomous painters⁷ utilized the assistance of their workshop, and they also received some guidance in the planning of their iconographical program. This marks the beginning of the conceptual autonomy of the artist, but does not require much of his own manual

⁷ Manca, Joseph, "The Gothic Leonardo: Towards a Reassessment of the Renaissance," *Artibus & Historiae*, 17, no. 34 (1996): 123.

involvement beyond creating the *disegno* – he still enjoyed the assistance of journeymen and apprentices in his studio.⁸

At what point did it become important to the painter to feel the necessity to assume full control of the manual aspect of his work without assistance of the studio? And to what extent was this influenced by external factors? It seems that slowly societal and economic change, change in patronage, the emerging form of art criticism published in newspapers and magazines, as well as a debate between classical and romantic theory, slowly contributed to the shift in the perception that the painter should be fully responsible for his work. The gradual separation between the fine arts and the crafts facilitated this artistic independence. Eventually the patron, too, started to demand that commissions and the works he bought on the open market be rendered entirely by the master artist from conception to completion. But above all, it seems that inner necessity drove the artist to execute his work himself without the help of studio assistants. In addition, a change in the perception of the creative process necessitated that the artist himself be the sole author of his work. This process developed in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and accelerated in the eighteenth century. I will be looking at the complex conditions and changes between this time period and the rise of bohemianism in the early Romantic era in the late eighteenth century that led to the departure from earlier studio practice.

The production of art changed throughout history to meet the demands and needs of the intended market. The perception of the artist shifted from contractor/craftsman to

⁸ Jack, Mary Ann. "The Accademia del Disegno in Late Renaissance Florence," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 7, no. 2 (Oct. 1976): 4.

creator/inventor, beginning with the appearance of Humanism during the Renaissance. Prior to that, art was not viewed as an individual endeavor but seen as a craft, a practice undertaken as a communal project by teams of apprentices and journeymen with a master artist as overseer. He was not seen and did not regard himself as an individual creative force.⁹ He was part of a system nurtured by the values and traditions of the society of his time and he abided by the rules set by his crafts organization, or his guilds. These governed every aspect of his output in regard to aesthetics and proficiency, and regulated education and the organization of labor in the workshop. It is important to discuss the organization and transformation of the workshop system in order to fully understand the evolving push to autonomy.

The Renaissance painting workshop was a collaborative enterprise in which the manual and conceptual work was performed by an assembly line of people. This tradition is a long one able to exist as a sizable industry that was a collective economic enterprise. Each workshop had a master, who was an experienced artist-businessman. He arranged for the rent of the shop, obtained commissions, negotiated contracts, and proposed designs for the commissions.¹⁰ It was his reputation and quality of execution that enabled him to attract patrons and keep his workshop profitable. Under him there were many people all working on different tasks for maximum efficiency.

Each workshop was somewhat different in size and organization. Generally a workshop was headed by one master. Sometimes, with the approval of the guilds, there were two masters starting a workshop together until business was strong enough to be

⁹ Rader, Melvin. "The Artist as Outsider," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 16, no. 3 (Mar. 1958): 307.

¹⁰ Cole, Bruce. *The Renaissance Artist at Work: From Pisano to Titian* (New York: Harper and Row, 1983), 15.

able to support two separate venues. More often, artist families created a family business in which fathers and sons and uncles and cousins worked together.¹¹ In addition, each shop expanded and contracted according to the amount of work that needed to be completed. For example, when the shop was working on large scale commissions, such as a fresco or a cycle of paintings, more employees were taken on. It is important to note that no matter how many people worked on a specific commission, the master artist was the one who got the credit for the piece, often making attribution of the whole or part of a painting difficult. Attribution to one or more workshop hands in one painting became important only when artists were expected to be fully responsible for the intellectual as well as manual aspects of their work. During the Renaissance and early Baroque periods, studio assistance was taken for granted and had little impact on authorship.

The guild-controlled training of the artist began with apprenticeship which benefited the student who learned his trade, as well as the master, who was paid to teach and received free labor.¹² Apprenticeships were set up through various avenues, and the arrangements varied from master to master and city to city. Entry into workshops was a privilege that usually had to be acquired through connections, whether through family or friends. Some boys had their fate chosen for them by parents; whereas others had a predisposition to the arts they pursued themselves.¹³ In Florence, apprentice contracts were formal in nature with fees paid to the master or the master agreeing to house and feed the boy in return for his services for a stipulated number of years. In Rome, on the other hand, the arrangements were more informal. Apprentices could work with the same

¹¹ Wackernagel, 310.

¹² Cole, *Renaissance*, 16.

¹³ *Ibid*, 16.

master for many years or often could enter a workshop, then leave for a while and return freely.¹⁴ Often the boy offered his services to a painter, grinding colors, carrying cartoons for frescos, cleaning palettes and brushes, and even did housework such as making beds, cleaning the house, grocery shopping, and anything else the master asked.¹⁵ At the end of his apprenticeship, the young man became a journeyman and would have to travel to gain additional experience as an artist.

Each master had somewhat different methods for instructing their apprentices and journeymen, but all based their education on drawing, copying works of art, and replicating drawings and designs from the master's own portfolio of models. Many masters were specific as to how an artist should be trained in their studio. In the Renaissance the first tractates on how to create a perfect work of art were written. Cennino Cennini and Leonardo da Vinci both wrote manuals instructing would-be artists how to go about learning to become an artist, and both utilized copy-drawing as an important tool.¹⁶ In *Il Libro dell'Arte*, The Craftsman's Handbook, Cennini writes that aspiring artists should, "...take pains and pleasure in constantly copying the best things which you can find done by the hand of great masters...take care to select the best one every time, and the one who has the greatest reputation."¹⁷ This book also instructed on the use of other techniques including, but not limited to, mixing pigments, painting fresco, and oil painting. Leonardo emphasized the use of copy drawing, but wanted apprentices to move on from that to create their own style. He advises that, "...the painter ought first to train his own hand by copying drawings from the hands of good

¹⁴ Cavazzini, 133.

¹⁵ Ibid, 133.

¹⁶ Ames-Lewis, "Drapery," 49.

¹⁷ Ibid, 49.

masters, and when this has been done under the guidance of his teacher, he should represent objects well in relief...,” which is how he learned in Verrocchio’s workshop.¹⁸

In one of the busiest workshops in Rome in the early 1600s, Agostino Tassi also encouraged copying as the best method of instruction, not allowing students to touch paint and brushes for years, and even then copying brush stroke technique.¹⁹

In the Renaissance, it was still important for apprentices and journeymen to maintain stylistic consistency in the work produced by the master’s *bottega*, and to increase the output, and in turn, the revenues of a shop.²⁰ To this end it was very common for masters to keep records of drawings and compositions for future inclusion in paintings.²¹ In Domenico Ghirlandaio’s workshop, apprentices copied their master’s stock drawings as patterns for details in future pieces. As an apprentice of Ghirlandaio, Michelangelo studied drapery from a pattern book and the similarities are evidenced in the early drawing exhibited in the Albertina (Plate 1) when compared with a Ghirlandaio workshop drapery study (Plate 2). Although Michelangelo’s drawing is more advanced, we can see similarities in the cross-hatching in pen and ink that Ghirlandaio developed as a model of his *bottega* style.²² Drawings from these stock portfolios were also used to create new motifs while not having to study from nature. In two ink drawings rendered in the second quarter of the fifteenth century (Plate 3 and Plate 4), we see two studio nudes bearing much similarity in the feet and ankles.²³ As the rest of the body is

¹⁸ Ames-Lewis, “Drapery,” 49.

¹⁹ Cavazzini, 135.

²⁰ Ames-Lewis, “Drapery,” 49.

²¹ Cavazzini, 137.

²² Ames-Lewis, “Drapery,” 50.

²³ Cole, Michael, and Pardo, Mary. *Inventions of the Studio: Renaissance to Romanticism* (Chapel Hill, London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 55.

different, it seems as though one drawing was rendered from another drawing, a Renaissance version of cutting and pasting an image or using stock imagery. Drawing and copying from masters' portfolios went beyond educational use and stylistic consistency within the studio. During his years as itinerant journeyman, it expanded and enriched the artist's personal repertoire of images and decorative patterns.

Without a steady flow of commissions the financial stability of the workshop as a business deteriorated. There were no art galleries where patrons shopped for finished work. Instead all art was made to order, usually according to very precise specifications laid down in a contract.²⁴ The contract drawn up included the subject, the measurements of the piece, materials, the date of completion, and the price.²⁵ Each contract was negotiated individually. Ghiberti's contract for the first set of bronze doors of the Baptistery in Florence, for example, contained provisions for the large staff of the atelier and the wage allotments for all the assistants.²⁶

With the development of the academies in the 17th century the nature of the master-apprentice-journeyman relationship changed, although the guilds continued to regulate the workshops, and with the annual academy exhibitions, so did the artist-patron relationship and contracts became less and less important. However even after the arrival of the painter/intellectual, artists were often required to present drawings or models at different stages of the work for pre-approval of the patron. In 1600 Caravaggio agreed to "submit specimens and designs of the figures and other subjects with which according to his invention and genius he intends to beautify the said mystery and

²⁴ Cole, *Inventions*, 51.

²⁵ Haskell, 13.

²⁶ Wackernagel, 310.

martyrdom' ” in the contract for *The Conversion of St. Paul* and *The Martyrdom of St. Peter*. By this time clauses like this were the norm.²⁷

The guilds regulated the crafts in the cities: they set minimum standards for the quality of the products, oversaw training of apprentices and assessed their competence to become journeymen or masters, set the maximum number of workshops and the price-range to avoid undue competition between individual masters, and mediated and decided disputes between masters.²⁸ The first work organizations established in the developing cities around the time of the Crusades and specific organizations were formed during the early Gothic period. These guilds organized the work of the construction of the great cathedrals.²⁹ The separation of an artist from a craftsman during that time is hard to establish mainly because guild records are hard to trace. There were no separate artist's guilds before the establishment of the Guild of St. Luke founded in the 15th century in the cities of the Low Countries. But even here painters and related crafts collaborated.³⁰ Elsewhere Renaissance artists were incorporated into guilds for other areas of craft making, such as woodworking decoration or stone.³¹

In the Medieval period crafts guild members were organized into three professional status levels: apprentice, journeyman, and master, and these groupings remained throughout the Renaissance and beyond. *The Livré des Métiers* (Book of Crafts) was drafted in 1268 by Louis IX to outline the practices, customs and traditions of

²⁷ Haskell, 11.

²⁸ Katz, Melissa R. "Architectural Polychromy and the Painter's Trade in Medieval Spain," *Gesta* 41, no. 1 (2002): 7.

²⁹ Icher, Francois. *The Artisans and Guilds of France: Beautiful Craftsmanship Through the Centuries* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994), 29.

³⁰ Schwartz, Gary. "Town and Country," CODART, \ <<http://www.codart.nl/publications/show/chapter/10/>>, 1986.

³¹ Martindale, Andrew. *The Rise of the Artist in the Middle Ages and the Early Renaissance* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1972), 15.

medieval guilds because he was concerned about professional ability of organizations to cause trouble.³² It is stated in the book that, "It is henceforth forbidden for any worker to leave his master without approval."³³ Because some crafts had more than one affiliation a journeyman could decide on organizational affiliation but more often than not stayed within the guild of his master. In many instances the affiliation was based on family ties, as the apprentice's father made the arrangements for his sons' apprenticeships.³⁴ At the culmination of his training the apprentice spent several months creating a work called a *maquette* to display his skills. After approval from his master and the guild he could pursue his journey from city to city to find employment at different masters.³⁵ When traveling each journeyman was lodged, fed, and trained in chapterhouses of his guild, unless he was employed when his master provided lodging and food. The purpose of the journeyman's travels to perfect his craft was stated in an ordinance issued in 1420 by King Charles VI concerning cobblers, but also applies to painters. It states that, "...several journeymen and workers of the said craft, of various languages and nations, came and went from town to town to work, learn, experience, see, and know one another."³⁶ Indeed, this was the purpose of any journeyman's travels, and artists often traveled to the workshops of famous masters. While the rules governing the guilds varied from city to city, the major guidelines were mostly the same.

The tour of a journeyman lasted between three and seven years. Depending on circumstances, the availability of a workshop (through marriage to a master's widow or

³² Icher, 29.

³³ Ibid, 29.

³⁴ Ibid, 154.

³⁵ Ibid, 155.

³⁶ Ibid, 71.

his daughter) or permission by the guild to open a new workshop, he was required to obtain a master's degree by creating a "masterpiece."³⁷ This piece became the epitome of his experiences and of the many hours of individual training done on his own time. The "masterpiece" was submitted to the local chapter of the guild and evaluated by a group of masters selected by the president of the chapter who assessed the candidate's worthiness to become a master.³⁸ The masterpiece was a diploma of sorts that not only graduated the journeyman to master, but also ensured by the guild that the artist was accomplished enough to create the level of work that was prized by this organization.

To us today, it is strange to think that the great works of the Renaissance were not created solely by the individual master artists that we have come to hold in such high esteem, but as an operation involving many hands. However, art as a collaborative form has many positive aspects, such as exchange of innovations and ideas by fellow craftsmen and the ability to produce art in considerably larger quantities and more intricate pieces with the help of journeymen and apprentices. The workshop was not only a place of business, but a school, a studio, and a home for apprentices and journeymen. With the emergence of the artist-scholar in the Renaissance, and the court artist in the following century, as well as the development of an autonomous art market in the Netherlands, the guilds slowly declined.

While the Medieval artist was steeped in spiritual values, the Renaissance artist evolved as more of a commercial being.³⁹ During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the artist's creative autonomy was not only limited by function and religion, but by

³⁷ Icher, 155.

³⁸ Ibid, 165.

³⁹ Rader, 301.

contract and patron taste. This began to change when elite artists such as Michelangelo, da Vinci, Dürer, and others demanded to assume responsibility for the iconographical program of some of their works. However, this was not representative of the mainstream. Most artists could not truly be individualistic in their output during the Renaissance because of the relationship of the artist to his patron.⁴⁰

L'Académie Royale: France

With the founding of the Académie de Peinture et de Sculpture in 1648 in Paris the nature of artist-patron relationship changed in that acceptable iconography and composition were not necessarily dictated by patron taste, but by standards that were set by the Academy and by extension the King.⁴¹ The Académie Royale was based on earlier academies established in Europe, most notably the Accademia di San Luca which was founded in 1577 by Federicco Zuccari in Italy. But Paris also had its own Académie de Saint-Luc, a public school for artists established in 1391 which was, however, associated with the painter's guilds in the rest of Europe. The rather tradition-bound Académie de Saint-Luc was unable to assert itself against Louis XIV's Académie Royale whose goal was to raise artistic professionalism in France, and Louis' minister Colbert closed the Académie de Saint-Luc in 1661.⁴² The Académie Royale elevated painting and sculpture to the subjects or skills that in classical antiquity were considered essential

⁴⁰ Haskell, 13.

⁴¹ Pevsner, *Academies*, 94-95.

⁴² Guiffrey, Band IX.

for an educated person, i.e. history painting and sculpture. It became a model for art academies that were established in the rest of Europe.

Only an affiliation with the Académie Royale guaranteed status as an artist. To become a member a candidate must have had the support of two full members and had to deliver a 'morceau d'agrément,' an 'application piece.' If the secret ballot of the full members was positive, he became an 'agrée,' a temporary member. Many artists were content with this status because it placed them outside guild-regulations. If the members of the Académie accepted his 'morceau de réception,' a work with a historical subject provided by an Académie member, he advanced to full membership, i.e., became a professor. It did not take long, however, until candidates had to submit sketches to their professors while they were working on the moreceau de réception to eliminate cheating.⁴³

The Académie's monthly 'conférences,' presentations, and theoretical discussions, often in front of a painting or sculpture, were meant to elevate painting and sculpture to the intellectual level that writing enjoyed, particularly when based on morally heroic or uplifting subjects. Discussions centered on and defined 'bienséance,' the appropriateness of composition or representation of human emotion, proportion, proper usage of color, shadow and light. Art became an academic endeavor while the technical instruction continued simultaneously in a master craftsman's workshop.⁴⁴ Academic training became the responsibility of the École Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture which was affiliated with the Académie Royale. Students followed a strictly delineated curriculum of drawing beginning with copying from Old Masters and plaster

⁴³ Pevsner, *Academies*, passim.

⁴⁴ Efland, Arthur. "School Art and Its Social Origins," *Studies in Art Education* 24, no. 3 (1983): 149.

copies of ancient sculptures. Geometry and perspective were mandatory subjects and in the eighteenth century history, mythology, and geography were added. The technical aspects of painting and the workshops providing this training receded more and more into the background.⁴⁵ The separation between high art and decorative arts and craft-making was complete. In France, the Académie and École Royale siphoned off those individuals from traditional workshops who wanted to pursue a career in the high arts. By the time of the Industrial Revolution, the academies had established a system to teach fine artists the technical methods previously taught in the workshop.⁴⁶

The administrators of the academy were appointed royal officials who governed most areas of artistic output. Royal minister to Louis XIV, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, gave instructions for the academy to create rules of art known as *preceptes positifs*.⁴⁷ These were specific rules set by the academy that forced the artist to create work that met the standards of the academy, and often the academy dictated the iconography and composition. The academy was charged with the training of artists in accordance with an established canon of classical values and remained impervious to change in their ways of teaching until challenged in the late eighteenth century.⁴⁸ Pevsner details in his *Academies of Art Past and Present* (1973) the way in which artists were taught to paint to the specific ideals of the Academy.⁴⁹ The instruction centered on life drawing, copying, and imitation of old masters, as well as correct proportions of anatomy, perspective, and

⁴⁵ Pevsner, *Academies*, passim.

⁴⁶ Efland, 149.

⁴⁷ Pevsner, *Academies*, 93.

⁴⁸ Harrison, Charles; Wood, Paul; and Gaiger, Jason. *Art in Theory 1815-1900: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 1 47.}

⁴⁹ Pevsner, *Academies*, 94-95.

composition- the gamut of traditional classical canons.⁵⁰ Instead of copying one master's style as exhibited in the master-apprentice relationship, aspiring artists could copy many academy- approved styles. In addition, academy instruction was not a collaborative effort as in the workshops. The artist-student would learn by working independently on drawings rather than by working on a master's commissions, thus changing the relationship of the master to the apprentice to that from professor to student. It seems that the artist was not encouraged to deviate from academic norms, and that he did not see the need to rebel against this new institution and its normative powers.

Membership in the academy was not taken lightly and was a coveted and often grueling endeavor. Many artists tried year after year to gain access to no avail. Membership was not only a symbol of prestige, but almost a career necessity to be included in this elite association. Academy membership brought with it familiarity and expertise in painting the *grand genre*, the accepted and prestigious subject of history painting, and they also enjoyed a plethora of royal commissions as well as free access to the salon.⁵¹ The Salon, held every two years from the 1740s, was the official exhibition of academy work. It was difficult for an artist to get an artwork into the Salon, even if he was an academy member, but the display of an artist's work in this exhibition was the single best way for that artist to get commissions to make a living.⁵² The Salon, one of the biggest cultural events of the year, was attended by thousands of people, sold thousands of artworks, disseminated catalogues, and inspired a deluge of criticism in the

⁵⁰ Efland, 149.

⁵¹ *French Painting 1774-1830: The Age of Revolution* (Detroit, New York, and Paris: Founders Society: The Detroit Institute of Art; The Metropolitan Museum of Art; Reunion des Musées Nationaux, Paris, 1975), 102.

⁵² *Ibid*, 102.

form of newspaper articles, brochures, and pamphlets.⁵³ The consequential publicity, good and bad, could make or break an artist's career.

The Royal Academy: England

In England, economic conditions as well as a lack of state sponsorship, led to the professional artists' formation of their own academy, modeled on the one in France, almost a century later. Artists wishing to elevate the status of painters eventually separated themselves from the guilds and created a club to discuss both the political and commercial aspects of fine arts and eventually led to the formation of the Royal Academy in 1768. Membership was viewed as "a patent of nobility."⁵⁴ While the academy in France had royal sponsorship, the Royal Academy in England was a private institution not sponsored by the Crown.⁵⁵ The Royal Academy, taking its cue from the French Academy, shunned modern themes thinking them vulgar, and established a hierarchy of themes with history painting foremost, portraiture, genre, animal, still life and landscape following respectively. However, whereas French painters enjoyed government commissions of historical subjects, while English painters had to rely on private commissions and market demand. This led to a conflict in theory and design earlier than in France.⁵⁶

It is ironic that such a disdain for modernization was supported in the Royal Academy when London became the first city in which a truly urban society developed.

⁵³ *French Painting*, 102.

⁵⁴ Vaughan, William. *British Painting: The Golden Age* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999), 13.

⁵⁵ Efland, 151.

⁵⁶ Vaughan, *British Painting*, 106.

The establishment of a constitutional monarchy after the Revolution of 1688 led to less government interference in the markets which in turn led to entrepreneurial success.⁵⁷ Through use of their naval strength and stronger economic development in mines and factories, Britain was able to triumph over France in the Seven Years War (1756-63).⁵⁸ All this financial success created a new social class, the *parvenus*, whose new 'rich' status enabled them to become a growing force in the art market, and they formed the basis for the new contemporary culture.⁵⁹ While the same developments occurred in France, it happened later than in Britain due to the political and industrial differences of the two countries. In England the creation of a new class created conflict, not only as concerns the criticism of art, but also its production. Noble aristocrats promoted an intellectual art based on classical canons and Old Masters, while the bourgeoisie tended to want to buy modern genre or landscape paintings that they could enjoy and understand.

With the emergence of a new wealthy class of art patrons, a conflict developed for the artist: paint historical subjects to appease the nobility or paint modern life subjects to earn the new money of the middle class. While there were some artists who were able to walk the fine line between both sets of patrons, creating history paintings with new modern twists, most artists had to make a choice in subject matter and patronage. Hogarth and Turner were among the few who were able to keep their reputation with both types of buyers by painting modern subjects with the "...ambition of old master painting."⁶⁰ In addition, artists who captured the entrepreneurial spirit of the time realized that developing a recognizable style was more easily accomplished without the

⁵⁷ Vaughan, *British Painting*, 11.

⁵⁸ Harrison, Wood, and Gaiger, *Art in Theory*), 421.

⁵⁹ Vaughan, *British Painting*, 8.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 12.

help of manual assistance from workshop staff. A personal style benefited them because it distinguished them from mediocre artists who imitated their work. Artists increasingly turned to painting modern themes, and because these themes did not require education in the classics, they reached a wider public. As a result, the artist painted when and what he wanted rather than wait for a contract for a commission as his Renaissance counterpart had had to.

Connecting Painter and Patron:

Exhibitions of the Salon and the Royal Academy

How did the artist get his name known in this whirlwind of artistic competition? Both the Royal Academy and the *Académie de Peinture et de Sculpture* had exhibitions of their members' work regularly. While the French exhibitions were called Salons and were among the most significant events of the country, the Royal Academy exhibitions were not as integral to the cultural structure of the people.⁶¹ However, both events were vital in establishing an artist's reputation, both positively and negatively. Although criticized for its selectiveness since 1789,⁶² the Salon was a crucial venue to artists to present his work to the public in order to earn new commissions, and in order to do so, artists ensured that the work exhibited in the Salon was what they considered to be their best work.⁶³ Because the selection of paintings displayed was made by a jury of

⁶¹ Harrison, Wood, and Gaiger, *Art in Theory*, 311.

⁶² *Ibid*, 704.

⁶³ *French Painting*, 13.

members from each association, each promoting “high class” classical painting, the exhibitions were very restrictive in what was chosen. Indeed, they often snubbed the most ambitious and imaginative work being created.⁶⁴ Another art society in England, the Society of Artists, was less restrictive in the selection of members and in what it chose for exhibition. Artists that were snubbed by the academy would often turn to the exhibitions of the Society of artists for exposure.⁶⁵ While artist submissions to the Salon were also restricted by a jury, political upheaval led to unrestricted access to exhibit in the Salon in 1791. As a result the number of exhibitors nearly tripled.⁶⁶

The Royal Academy, lacking the government’s financial support that French exhibitions enjoyed, charged entry fees for viewers to the exhibition for two reasons: it helped support them financially, and it ensured that ‘undesirables,’ poor people lacking sufficient funds, were not allowed in.⁶⁷ However, those who could afford entry but not afford a painting could still enjoy the art and maybe later buy an engraving of a piece of work that they had seen first-hand. Other buyers, such as the *parvenus*, could be sure that they were buying a piece of artwork whose standards were tested and approved of by the jury of academicians instead of buying a sculpture or painting from a dealer. In this way they tried to avoid being embarrassed later that their choice did not meet high-culture standards. The academy strove to elevate the taste of the less sophisticated patron by choosing which art was acceptable for display and purchase in the salon. By extension, it defined the criteria the public used to evaluate art. In addition, the exhibitions gave non-

⁶⁴ Vaughan, *British Painting*, 99.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 107.

⁶⁶ *French Painting*, 110.

⁶⁷ Vaughan, *British Painting*, 107.

academy trained artists a glimpse of the copies the buying public would purchase outside of the exhibitions from them.

The Role of Art Criticism

The viewing of both the French Salons and Royal Academy exhibitions by varied classes of people, from the nobility to the bourgeoisie, brought on the development of literary criticism that started to shape the subjects and styles of art seen at the salon and purchased in the art market, thus creating a shift in what artists painted. The “enlightened public,” the nobility, dwindled in importance.⁶⁸ A new class of affluent commoners entered the art market, seeking to elevate their social status by surrounding themselves with the status symbols of the nobility. These *parvenus* familiarized themselves with the art reviews of the exhibitions in the daily and weekly newspapers, magazines, and brochures, so as to appear art-literate. Many artists were conflicted between painting what the academies promoted or painting what the public wanted, and feared the unfavorable response of the critic as much as they trembled being measured against the ideals established by the academies.

Previous to the annual Royal Academy exhibit of 1769, the usual literary form of art criticism was the exhibition review pamphlet.⁶⁹ However, reviews published in newspapers began to undermine the importance of these pamphlets, because they expressed a wider scope of views. Henry Bate, the editor of *The Morning Post* and its

⁶⁸ Crow, Thomas E. *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth Century Paris* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 13.

⁶⁹ Brenneman, David A. "Self Promotion and the Sublime: Fuleli's Dido on the Funeral Pyre," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 62, no. 1/2 (1999): 70.

art critic, was the first to realize the potential of including art reviews in the daily newspaper as a form of entertainment for readers.⁷⁰ The rise of literacy in the middle class in conjunction with the abundance and wider readership of newspaper reviews led to more discussion and debate over the views expressed by the Academy. This gave the Academy less control over how their choices were viewed by the buying public. In London, the annual collective circulation of newspapers reached about fifteen million readers and the accessibility of same day publication enabled immediate criticism of the exhibitions.⁷¹ Here art journalists saw an opportunity to establish themselves as independent critics by publishing sensational views opposing the Academy.⁷² Writers by and large expressed the views of the majority of the public when faced with writing about exhibitions, however there were many that utilized their reviews as a forum to promote their own “personal and political agendas,” and they thrived on the controversy that ensued.⁷³

In many instances the artists themselves contributed to the controversy by forming alliances with critics who would vow to praise one artist’s work while defaming the work of another. Thomas Gainsborough formed such a pact with Henry Bate.⁷⁴ Other artists and critics also pushed their own agendas through a process termed “puffing” in which paid advertisements disguised as information were written by a supporter of the artist or the artist himself. In response to a review of Reynolds’s work

⁷⁰ Werkmeister, Lucyle. *The London Daily Press: 1772-1792* (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska, 1963), 5.

⁷¹ Brenneman, 70.

⁷² Crow, 13.

⁷³ Brenneman, 71.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 71.

included in The Society of Artists exhibition of 1760, a critic claimed that it, "...must have been written in connivance with the painter."⁷⁵

Artists, becoming increasingly aware of the power art critics, learned to tip the scales in their favor, but they also understood that negative publicity also had its advantages. In a letter from writer William Hayley to Thomas Greene, Hayley indicates that an artist's reputation could be enhanced by the sympathy one gains as the subject of abuse:

Every Man who is a Candidate for Public Praise must expect & ought perhaps to rejoice in his share of public abuse, as nothing endears a Man more to those who know his real Merit, than to see it malevolently insulted-as to any real mischief such Insults can do our too feeling Friend if he will only cease to read & think of newspapers, I would state my Life on his never losing a Grain of his professional Emoluments or of true Glory by such despicable attacks on his Genius.⁷⁶

Thus, the artist's dependence on the common buying public, and the opinions formed with the aid of art reviews, accelerated the decline of the popularity in art championed by the Academy, such as history painting.⁷⁷

Factors in the Decline of the Academies

Negative publicity generated by the literary community was not the only factor that aided in the decline of the authority of the academies and assisted artists gaining

⁷⁵ Brennemen, 72.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 73.

⁷⁷ Crow, 14.

autonomy. There was wide-spread belief that the academies were too exclusive and too set in the old traditions, thus blocking the evolving creative genius of the time. Jacques Louis David, an avid campaigner against the Academy, described the characteristic member as an "old academician who had gone through all the innumerable dignities of the academy and who had by his unflinching and lethargic attendance worn out all the seats, from the stool to the great armchair."⁷⁸ David also maintained that the academies did "employ cruel means to smother budding talents."⁷⁹ The arguments that most had with the academies can be placed into two categories. One belief was that the social and economic benefits afforded to its members in conjunction with their strict hierarchical structure were not in keeping with the democratic reforms of the time. The other was the Romantic view that the traditional teaching methods did not promote an artist's creativity and independence.⁸⁰

Hierarchic rigidity and special privileges of its officers were prevalent in both the Royal and French Academies. Some of these privileges included free access to salons, inclusion in special election committees who could choose and reject for any reason what work went on display, and the officers' exclusive right to select new members.⁸¹ In addition, the only members of the academies who could become professors were almost always those that excelled at history painting and whose work was commensurate with academic standards.⁸² These appeared to be very undemocratic practices at a time when

⁷⁸ *French Painting*, 104.

⁷⁹ Efland, 150.

⁸⁰ McClellan, Andrew. "The Musée de Louvre as Revolutionary Metaphor During the Terror," *Art Bulletin* 70, no. 2 (June 1988): 10.

⁸¹ *French Painting*, 102.

⁸² Hargrove, June. *The French Academy: Classicism and Its Antagonists* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1990), 208.

the general rights of the working class were not only being promoted, but put into practice. In addition, the elite of the academies frequently denied membership applications even though they were vetted by less connected associates. Joseph Ducreux, a portrait artist, was rejected by the French academy three times in spite of support from some members.⁸³ Other artists rejected at the time immediately preceding the Revolution were portrait artist Jacques Bertau, and landscape artists Pierre-Alexandre Pau de Saint-Martin and Louis-Gabriël Moreau the Elder. Others, such as Louis-Richard Trinquesse, withdrew their applications after suffering the humiliation of being rejected on multiple occasions.⁸⁴

The Push for Independence

The ideas of the Enlightenment brought with them the major theoretical challenges to the teachings of the academies which stifled artistic genius and independence. To the critics, the rigid master-pupil relationship was one that perpetuated the mediocrity of the artists produced by the academy. An impressionable young student was sent to the studio of a master at a young age to learn the art and style of that master. This young artist did not get the benefit of being exposed to many different styles and subjects of painting and therefore could do nothing but imitate his master. In this way the master's style, with all its shortcomings, would be transferred to the next generation of pupils and would be passed on to the next generation in a continuing straight line.⁸⁵

⁸³ *French Painting*, 103.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 103.

⁸⁵ McClellan, "The Musée de Louvre as Revolutionary Metaphor During the Terror," 11.

There was little room to express one's own individuality and hence, this practice smothered any forms of creative genius. The old traditional academic artist saw himself confronted with the new artist nourished by "personal artistic freedom and sensibility."⁸⁶ It became evident that there needed to be other schools and salons in which artists could be free of the musty academic chains.

Beginning in the 1750's, there was an increasing trend by art critics in the French gazettes to poke fun at artworks displayed in the official salons.⁸⁷ Bernadette Fort points out that "conventionalized 'popular' theatrical discourse and carnivalistic literature in prerevolutionary Salon criticism is to ruin the image of the Salon as a glorious and imposing display of the nation's artistic genius and to expose it as one of the bankrupt monarchical institutions. The Salon is now represented as a pageant of fallen talents, as a *Grand Guignol* in which painted figures loudly proclaim their creators artistic ability..."⁸⁸ It is interesting to note that the art dealer Gersaint created a "conflation of shop and private cabinet of merchant and *honnête home*," a hybrid exhibition/sales space allowing him to exhibit and offer works by artists who were not associated with the academy, but also members of the Académie Royal who were not permitted to sell their works through commercial venues. This indicates a desire and need to create exhibition opportunities for artists who did not meet the rigid standards of the Académie, as well as members who wished to escape its regulations.⁸⁹ In 1777, for example, the *Journal de*

⁸⁶ Hargrove, 208.

⁸⁷ Fort, Bernadette. "Voice of the Public: The Carnivalization of Art in Prerevolutionary Pamphlets," *Eighteenth Century Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Spring, 1989), Johns Hopkins University Press, ASECS, 368-394.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 389.

⁸⁹ McClellan, Andrew. "Watteau's Dealer: Gersaint and the Marketing of the Art in the Eighteenth-Century Paris," *The Art Bulletin*. Vol. 78. No. 3 (Sep., 1996): 443.

Paris published, “a plan for an establishment to provide young artists with facilities for exhibiting their works to the public,” and right before the beginning of the Revolution in 1789, art dealer Lebrun created a new salon for young artists in his house on Rue de Cléry.⁹⁰ By October of 1789, the dispute between the Academicians and those who rejected their old stodgy ways became more pointed when a faction in the Academy called “young Turks,” led by David and Jean-Bernard Restout, demanded that student work be exhibited in the Salon.⁹¹ David led this group of similarly minded artists to form the Commune des Arts in 1790 and asserted in their first pamphlet, which was submitted to the National Assembly, that the independent study of Old Masters would improve the education of young artists:

It is patently obvious that this method of instruction (i.e. Academic Training)...is ill-suited to the formation of artists...Give us one that is worthy of liberty...one that no longer indentures students to servitude and condemns them to a narrow and impoverished outlook; give them instead a greater sense of the true goal they must aim for; evoke the spirits of the great masters; may their learned and immortal masterpieces speak powerfully and incessantly to the artist inflamed with the love of his art, that he may become their disciple or successor. It is clear that we are calling for the foundation of the national museum.⁹²

David and his supporters eventually won over the Convention with his passionate speeches, and in 1793 the Louvre began using the new training model for artists.⁹³ The confining master-pupil form of education gave way to one in which artistic freedom became tantamount, the freedom to study what the individual artist wanted.

⁹⁰ Hargrove, 103.

⁹¹ Ibid, 104.

⁹² McClellan, "The Musée de Louvre as Revolutionary Metaphor During the Terror," 11.

⁹³ Ibid, 10.

While the Royal Academy was established later, it was not immune to the same kinds of criticisms as its counterpart in France. The major criticism was that it stifled artistic genius and perpetuated mediocrity. The students' new course of study was achieved under these guidelines:

Each student, who offers himself for Admission into the Royal Schools, shall present a Drawing or Model from some Plaster Cast to the Keeper, and if he thinks him properly qualified, he shall be permitted to make a Drawing or Model from some Cast in the Royal Academy, which if approved of by the Keeper and Visitor for the time being, shall be laid before the Council for their confirmation, which obtained he shall receive his Letter of Admission as a Student in the Royal Academy Where he shall continue to draw after the Plaster, till the Keeper and Visitor for the time being, judge him qualified to draw after the Living Models, when they shall have power to admit him.⁹⁴

The first president of the Royal Academy, Sir Joshua Reynolds, was opposed to unstructured originality, believing genius was "the child of imitation." He believed that the brain needed stimulation from outside influences by tracing, "...the art back to its fountainhead – the monuments of pure antiquity. All the inventions and thoughts of the ancients, whether conveyed to us in statues, bas-reliefs, intaglios, cameos, or coins, are to be sought after and carefully studied; the genius that hovers over these venerable relics, may be called the father of modern art."⁹⁵

In studying a painting by Joseph Wright entitled *An Academy by Lamplight* (Plate 5) painted in 1786, we gain a vivid image of what art students encountered during their

⁹⁴ "An Academy by Lamplight, Joseph Wright of Derby," Andrew Graham- Dixon, <<http://www.andrewgrahamdixon.com/archive/readArticle/100>>, 06/03 2001.

⁹⁵ "An Academy by Lamplight, Joseph Wright of Derby," 1.

studies. Painted in the year that the Royal Academy was established, we see a group of young artists gathered around a classical statue in various poses set in an arched area. One in front is immersed in his drawing with his back towards the viewer while another is standing leaning on the pedestal of the statue staring at it in contemplation. Another student looks away from the statue but holds his sketchbook in his hand, while other young men are gathered around the back of the statue. All are clouded in varied forms of darkness while the statue alone is illuminated by a harsh glowing light.

While *An Academy by Lamplight* could not have been modeled on the Royal Academy because the painting was conceived before it was established, we can get a general idea of how academy classes were conducted. As the students were apprenticed by day, the painting accurately depicts classes by lamplight in the evening.⁹⁶ Indeed, lamps were used at various locations to allow students to learn different lighting effects. In his book *British Painting: The Golden Age*, William Vaughan maintains *An Academy by Lamplight* may have incorporated a subtle criticism of the academies in that it shows students involved in unstructured study without being rigidly instructed by a master. Wright, as one of the opponents of the Royal Academy, reaffirms what the opponents of the French academy claimed, "...that it imposed method rather than inspiring imagination."⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Vaughan, *British Painting*, 10.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 104.

Originality and Imagination

The idea of imagination and sensation was not original to the thinkers of the late 18th century, but became a matter for argument when the writings of the Enlightenment became more widely read and discussed. In John Locke's "Of the Association of Ideas" from *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* in 1690, importance is given to sensation as being a primary unit of human knowledge. This realization not only played a part in a renewed interest in the workings of the human mind, but also had an impact on aesthetics. Beauty becomes, "...not a quality of objects, but a feeling in the perceiver's mind..." creating a "...connection between ideas and experience."⁹⁸ In the same essay, Locke states that:

Ideas...some of them are truly Natural, depend upon our original Constitution, and are born with us; but a great part of those which are counted Natural, would have to be known to be from unheeded, ...Early Impressions...⁹⁹

In England's advanced industrial economy, the idea of original genius flourished as a counterpart to entrepreneurial spirit.¹⁰⁰ This idea, again introduced through the literary journals, promoted self-sufficiency, but also a contemplative rivalry among inventors. Locke's ideas as well as the ideas of other writers spread by an ever increasing volume of literature on the arts became easily accessible to academy members and non-

⁹⁸ Harrison, Wood, and Gaiger, *Art in Theory*, 364.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 365.

¹⁰⁰ Vaughan, *British Painting*, 126.

members alike. The leading politician of the 17th century and student of Locke, the Earl of Shaftesbury, drew upon Locke's ideas in his philosophical writings *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, and Times*, published in 1718. In it he discusses his belief that a "...man's taste, therefore his innate moral sense would be improved by exposure to a world of beautiful forms and appearances..."¹⁰¹ This belief reinforces Locke's idea of the mind as a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate on which impressions of the world were made. In addition Joseph Addison wrote an essay in The Spectator in 1711 in which he discussed the difference between 'innate' genius and 'rule-obeying' genius, the latter being the kind of genius promoted by the Academy.¹⁰² Later in 1721 another essay written by Addison, "On the Pleasures of the Imagination," became one of the most influential pieces of cultural journalism. In it Addison states that sight is the "greatest stimulus of the imagination" and makes a distinction between the pleasures of the imagination from more of understanding.¹⁰³ He states:

We cannot indeed have a single image in the fancy that did not make its first entrance through the sight; but we have the power of retaining, altering, and compounding those images which we have once received, into all the varieties of picture and vision that are most agreeable to the imagination...¹⁰⁴

The impact of the ideas of these writers started to be seen in the visual arts around the 1770's.

¹⁰¹ Solkin, David, H. *Painting for Money; The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth Century England*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), 26.

¹⁰² Ibid, 126.

¹⁰³ Harrison, Wood, and Gaiger, *Art in Theory*, 382.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 382.

The shift in the emphasis on imitation as the premier form of painting to that of original genius can be seen in Joshua Reynolds' *Discourses*. Reynolds was elected as the first president of the Royal Academy and between 1769 and 1772 he presented annual lectures to the members of the Academy. Principal themes addressed in his *Discourses* were the *grand style* and ideal beauty. However, in his *Discourse XI* there is a push for genius as being more important than imitation. In it he states:

It is not properly in the learning, the taste, and the dignity of the ideas that Genius appears as belonging to a Painter. There is a Genius particular and appropriated to his own trade (as I may call it,) distinguished from all others. For that power, which enables the artist to conceive his subject with dignity, may be said to belong to general education; and is as much the Genius of a Poet, or the professor of any other liberal Art...¹⁰⁵

Another factor that contributes to a departure from the standards of the Academy is the Romantic artist's rejection to the cause-effect logic of the Enlightenment that required subject matter to be rational. The Romantic artist investigated the illogical emotional part of the external as well as his inner world. As an emotional being ideas flow out from him spontaneously.¹⁰⁶ While it is important to note that German philosophy initiates the Romantic Movement it does not affect German painting immediately, but it did in England and France.¹⁰⁷ In the decades before 1789, a weakness in state patronage in England forced artists to find alternatives to portraiture

¹⁰⁵ Harrison, Wood, and Gaiger, *Art in Theory*, 659.

¹⁰⁶ Pelles, Geraldine. "The Image of the Artist," *The Journal Of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 21, no. 2 (Winter 1962): 121.

¹⁰⁷ Pelles, Geraldine. *Art, Artist, and Society: Origins of a Modern Dilemma, Painting in England and France* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963), 12.

and history painting that was associated with the Academy in France, allowing artists to delve into Romantic subject matter earlier than in France, where it was also stifled by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic era and its focus on neo-classical art.¹⁰⁸ Without the references to the democratic and governmental reforms of the French Revolution, the English artists in rebelling against the classical canons were able to utilize their imaginations, as exhibited in the art of Fuseli and Blake.

Imagination in Art

While most artists managed to walk the fine line between the sharp pen of the critics and the demands of the Academy in England, there were those such as Blake and Füssli, who openly rebelled against the traditional ideas of the Academy and painted from the imagination.¹⁰⁹ These artists condemned the painting of natural beauty and instead pushed for the artist to look within. In Blake's view, "...the artistic process is a perfect combination...of conception and execution, content and form."¹¹⁰ The Renaissance notion of good painting reflecting what is seen in the looking glass, now morphs to the idea that the looking glass should reflect what is seen within the artist, thus changing the subject matter of painting away from natural, external beauty to inner soul.¹¹¹ These painters also took a stand against the rationality that manifested itself in the Industrial

¹⁰⁸ Pelles, *Art, Artist, and Society*, 47.

¹⁰⁹ Brenneman, 79.

¹¹⁰ Eaves, Morris. "Blake and the Artistic Machine: An Essay in Decorum and Technology," *PMLA* 92, no. 5 (Oct. 1977): 909.

¹¹¹ Abrams, M.H. *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (London, Oxford, and New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), 32.

Revolution: its production processes and machines: the loss of the connection between the producer and the product, the loss of the intimate personal connection between the artist and the physical rendering of his work, and consequently the personal connection to his public.¹¹²

It was the Swiss-born painter Johann Heinrich Füssli who gained the most credibility in bringing the ideas of the German Romantic Movement to England. Expelled from Switzerland at age 22 for protesting a corrupt government, Füssli spent time in Germany with the German Romantics before moving to England and later became associated with the Sturm und Drang movement.¹¹³ The German Romantic Movement was preceded by Sturm und Drang (Storm and Stress), notably Goethe and Schiller, whose dramatic work was influenced by Shakespeare. But both, Goethe, the main proponent of Sturm und Drang, and Herder, a founder of the Romantic Movement, were inspired by English nature poets to follow their emotion in their work in such a way that it conflicted with the order of contemporary German society. While incorporating emotion, Goethe cannot be called a Romantic by any means. Herder, however, leaves the classic literary form behind that Goethe is known for and therefore is a true Romantic.¹¹⁴ As a writer, Füssli associated with both of them as well as poets and philosophers of the German Romantic Movement. Like other Romantics, he found himself clashing with his government, prompting him to move to England in 1764.¹¹⁵

¹¹² Eaves, 903-06.

¹¹³ Vaughan, William. *German Romantic Painting* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1980), 29.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, 29.

¹¹⁵ Bindman, David. *William Blake: His Art and Times* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1982), 60.

Although he was primarily a writer, it was Sir Joshua Reynolds that convinced Füssli to concentrate on painting instead of words, and in 1769 he set off for Rome where he trained as an artist.¹¹⁶ Later he returned to England with the skill of a traditionally trained artist, but the sensibility of a Romantic displaying an erotic, irrational style that can be seen in his first public success *The Nightmare* (Plate 6) exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1782. In it Füssli depicts a woman in a thin nightgown splayed out on a bed or chaise on her back with her head and arms tilted back and hanging lifelessly off the bed. Crouched on her belly, an incubus, or demon, puts pressure on her, trapping her, as she sleeps and a possessed looking horse head stares at her from behind. The incubus, horse's head, and distorted pose of the woman all have a disturbing effect on the viewer and are a far cry from the classicism and history painting promoted by the Academy. *The Nightmare* suggests the violent, yet erotic desires of the unconscious, "moving away from the world of public heroism to one of inner disturbance."¹¹⁷

Füssli was influenced by the writings of Dante, Shakespeare, and Milton, and he utilized the fear that these writers expressed to create the frightful imagery that was unique at that time.¹¹⁸ Many of his most notable pieces are drenched in allusions to sex and fear, and we see sleeping women stirring under the influence of disturbing erotic dreams. While there is little evidence to prove that he was well known before the exhibit of *The Nightmare*, Füssli did display himself immediately as an individualist to be reckoned with as verified by a review in the Public Advertiser in 1780. In an article on a less known painting the reviewer praised the artist as a "Man of real genius and elevated

¹¹⁶ Clark, Kenneth. *The Romantic Rebellion: Romantic Verses Classic Art* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 61.

¹¹⁷ Vaughan, *British Painting: The Golden Age*, 129.

¹¹⁸ Clark, 62.

ideas,” but also expressed his distaste for his style by writing, “It were to be wished that this very ingenious artist would endeavor to appear less learned and more natural.”¹¹⁹

Füssli may have been the first artist to have displayed the deep, mysterious, and horrifying emotion and freedom of spirit embodied by the Romantic writers in England.

This new imaginative freedom spread to another member of the Royal Academy, a notable artist who also desired independence from the status quo encouraged by Sir Joshua Reynolds. William Blake certainly knew Füssli, who was elected to the Royal Academy in 1790 and became master of painting in 1799, and Blake was influenced by the expressiveness of his art.¹²⁰ Although Blake chose less erotic and more moral subjects, Blake’s work was original, expressive, and filled with unearthly forms as was Füssli’s. Regardless of these parallels between the works of these two artists, Füssli did not appreciate the moral, visionary side of Blake’s work, alleging that “...the whole of his aim is to produce singular shapes and odd combinations.”¹²¹ However, Füssli did believe that he had a “fancy” and real “imagination” and was encouraging of Blake’s efforts to get his illustrated poems published.¹²² A new understanding of creativity was emerging - the view of the artist was changing from that of a man harvesting the fruit of studious learning to that of a man of original genius, whose works were unique independent god-given gifts.

Blake was truly unique in that he did not take his subject matter from nature or from literary sources, but from his own visions. He had visions since he was a child and believed that they were messages from a higher power. Blake believed that his visions

¹¹⁹ Brenneman, 75.

¹²⁰ Bindman, 28.

¹²¹ Ibid, 13.

¹²² Ibid, 28.

were "...clearer and more vivid than his optical perception of the world around him."¹²³ Blake took the term "inner vision" literally, believing that the idea and the form it took were created together in his mind and believed that he could "see" his ideas exactly as they should be rendered. To change the form in his mind "...would be to tamper with the content."¹²⁴ These visions were what Blake identified as the "Imagination." There are two ways in which Blake's visions can be viewed. Some may regard them as a natural event seen through the supernatural as Blake describes in his *A Descriptive Catalogue of Pictures* (1809), a descriptive catalogue of his watercolors: "It will be questioned when the sun rises do you not see a round disc of fire somewhat like a guinea - Oh no, no, I see an innumerable company of the heavenly host crying 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty.'"¹²⁵ In *Descriptive Catalogue* Blake wished to make it clear that each painting was "the embodiment of spiritual meaning."¹²⁶ While others may see his visions as hallucinations as John Varley, watercolorist and friend of Blake, seems to express when he watched Blake draw one of his 'Visionary Heads', 'Ghost of a Flea'(Plate7). Varley stated that "...I felt convinced by his mode of proceeding that he had the real image before him, for he left off, and began on another part of the paper to make a separate drawing of the mouth of the flea..."¹²⁷

Where did Blake's visions come from? In a letter to John Flaxman dated September 21, 1800 Blake wrote, "In my brain are studies and chambers filled with books and pictures of old which I wrote and painted in ages of eternity before my mortal

¹²³ Clark, 147.

¹²⁴ Taylor, Joshua. *Nineteenth Century Theories of Art* (Berkley, Los Angeles, London: University of California press, 1987), 140.

¹²⁵ Clark, 149.

¹²⁶ Taylor, 141.

¹²⁷ Clark, 149.

life...”¹²⁸ His visions may have indeed come from memory. Being a print dealer as well as a print maker, Blake would have had plenty of material and images pass through his shop, some of which included, but was not limited to, illustrated books on Eastern religions and Medieval manuscripts, all of which would have influenced his work and visions.¹²⁹

Between 1787 and 1788 Blake developed an engraving process in which text could be combined with visual imagery which liberated him in that he could unite his poetry and images.¹³⁰ Blake was not very successful at illustrating on order and because he had very few commissions, utilized his visions to illuminate his own poems. One of these early endeavors was a bound book of poems entitled *Songs of Innocence* (1789) followed later by *Songs of Experience* (1794). In the books each poem has a vision that is depicted with it. One poem, “The Sick Rose” (Plate 8) in *Songs of Experience* is a typical example of the way in which Blake integrated his words with his imagery. In it we can see an elongated stem of a rose with larger than life thorns, swooping around the borders of the page. Lying and kneeling on the stems are small female bodies in pink, the same color as the rose at the end of the stem. The bodies look as though they are stuck onto the thorns of the rose. The body at the top right of the picture looks as though it has become unraveled by the thorn, while another body emerges from the center of the rose as though had been dissolved into it. The heads of the two bodies stuck on the thorns are face downwards with their blond hair covering their face, hiding their misery. In this piece, Blake wonders about the existence of evil and misery in a beautiful divine

¹²⁸ Bindman, 22.

¹²⁹ Clark, 151.

¹³⁰ Bindman, 14.

world.¹³¹ While some thought his work that of a disturbed mind, he may have been offering insight into his beliefs of human conduct and this did have an emotional impact on the viewer. Blake was a supporter of the Revolution in France and it may have been the terror promulgated by the massacres of September 1792 that encouraged his disillusionment with the human world.¹³²

Conclusion

In France, artists reacted to the political upheavals of their country and rebelled against the traditions of painting. They combined emotional and psychologically charged subject matter with social criticism. Artists of the Bohème made use of the “intuitive genius” that flows through the tortured soul of the artist.¹³³ The rebellion of artists against the austere logic and materialism of society seems to run parallel to a shift in patronage: the burgeoning middle class made wealthy in the Industrial Revolution.¹³⁴

It is interesting to note that the development of Romantic art in England and France parallels the emergence of a new class of patrons as well as a new view of the artist as an independent free-thinker. This phenomenon also led to a change in studio practice. The development of the Academies gradually changed not only the way in which artists were instructed, but also the view of the artist as an academic rather than simply a craftsman. Moreover, once the academies had become anemic, their stodgy,

¹³¹ Vaughan, *British Painting: The Golden Age*, 132.

¹³² Clark, 161.

¹³³ Snyderman George S, and Josephs, William. "The Underworld of Art," *Social Forces* 18, no. 2 (Dec. 1939): 1888.

¹³⁴ Zucker, Wolfgang. "The Artist as a Rebel," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 27, no. 4 (Summer 1969): 393.

freedom-inhibiting teachings were overthrown to be replaced by an independently minded, “genius-driven” art. This new art world was accommodating to the artist who conceived and created on his own. While this change was not fully completed during the time of the French Revolution, it was this period of instability and inquisitiveness that sparked the emergence of an artist who was independently inspired and allowed to express his ideas.

The demands of a class of patrons, who wanted their money’s worth for an artwork, implied that the work was conceived and executed by the master himself. This helped the artists pushing for recognition of their own genius and individuality. The patron pool became bigger, more discerning, and art literate, making it easier for artists to avoid painting on commission, allowing them instead to sell their work on the anonymous art market, so that they no longer had to sign a costly contract with a patron for specifically plotted out compositions. This allowed artists to paint what they thought would sell or what they wanted rather than to submit to the specifications of the Academy or a patron.

Does this go hand in hand with the new ideology of the painter’s poetic inspiration: the artist’s urge to retain his internal vision which is impossible to bring to bear with the help of assisting hands? While there is little evidence to prove that artists neglected the entire studio process. The shift in the public’s perception of the artist as one being inspired independently led painters to begin to work with less aid if any, from assistants. In the case of Blake, one would hardly believe that he would detail his visions to an assistant every time they came to him. Artists such as Blake and Füssli give birth to the “slouch-hatted bohemian living out his conception of genius” moving to “the social

periphery.”¹³⁵ The rapidly changing social strata of the Industrial Revolution, the radical ideas of the French Revolution, the new views of the Romantic writers all appeared at the same time in history. These changes brought with them a crisis in the art world by questioning how the art world should organize itself, how artists should be trained, and ultimately how they functioned and defined themselves in a rapidly modernizing society.

¹³⁵ Kris, Ernst; and Kurz, Otto. *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), 7.

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PLATES



PLATE 1
Michelangelo, *Three Standing Figures*.
Pen and Ink, Vienna, Albertina, S.R. 1492-96.



PLATE 2
Ghirlandaio Workshop, *Drapery Study*. Pen and Ink, Lille, Musée des Beaux-Arts. ca 1491.

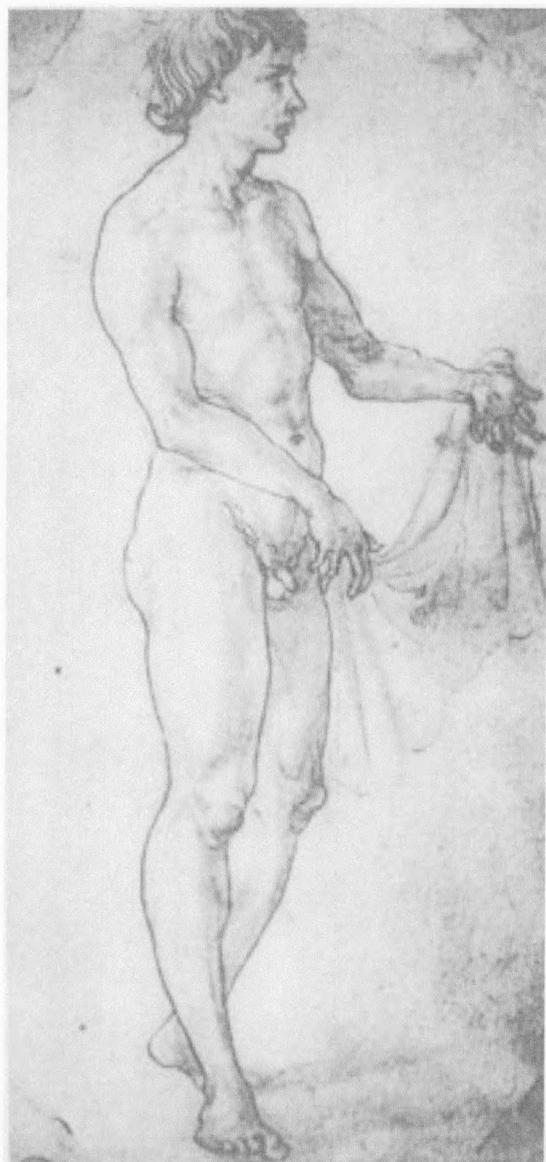


PLATE 3
Florentine, *Male Nude*. Pen and Ink,
second quarter of the fifteenth century.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.

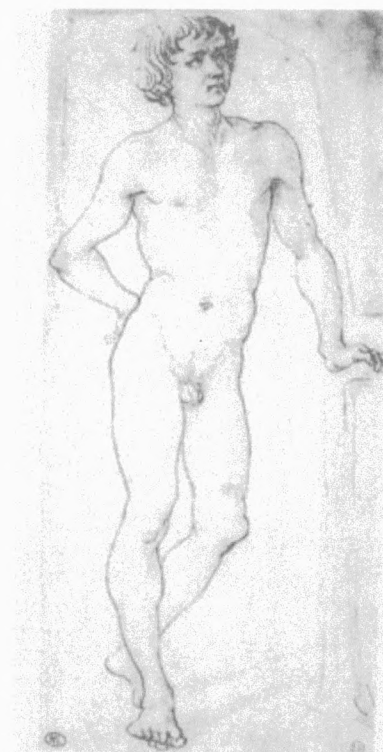


PLATE 4
Florentine, *Male Nude*, Pen
and Ink, second quarter of the
fifteenth century. Musée du
Louvre, Paris.

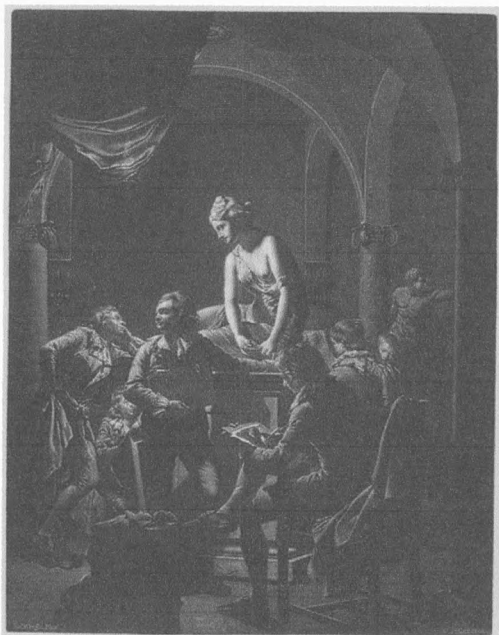


PLATE 5

Joseph Wright of Derby. *An Academy by Lamplight*. exhibited 1769. Oil on canvas. 127 x 101.2. Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT, USA

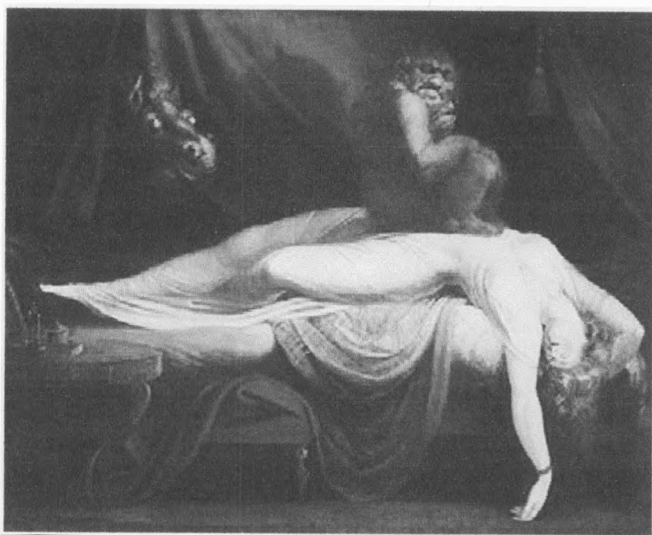


PLATE 6

Henri Fuseli. **The Nightmare**, 1781. Oil on canvas. 101.6 cm × 127 cm (40 in × 50 in)
Detroit Institute of Art, Detroit, MI.



PLATE 7

Blake's *The Head of the Ghost of a Flea*, (Verso: *A Profile and a Reduced Drawing of Milton's First Wife circa 1819*). Pencil on paper, 189 mm x 153 mm, c.1819. Tate, London

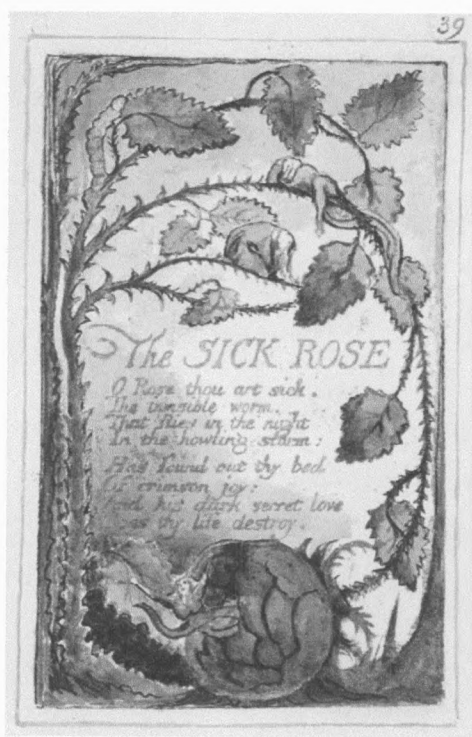


PLATE 8

Blake. *The Sick Rose*. Hand-colored print, issued c.1826. A copy held by the Fitzwilliam Museum, London.

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