

Rachel Ruysch was born in 1664 to Frederick Ruysch, a professor of anatomy and botany in Amsterdam, and Maria Post, the daughter of an architect. Encouraged in her love of nature by her father's vast collection of minerals, animal skeletons, and rare snails, she was apprenticed at the age of fifteen to the celebrated flower painter, van Aelst, the originator of the asymmetrical spiralling composition which became Ruysch's hallmark. Compositions like *Flowers in a Vase* balance a swirl of twisting blossoms along a diagonal axis. The variety of blooms and colors, and the painter's subtle touch and impeccable surface treatment distinguish her work. In 1701, Ruysch and her husband, the portrait painter Juriaen Pool, became members of the painters' guild in The Hague. Between 1708 and 1713, she was court painter in Düsseldorf, but on the death of her patron, the Elector Palatine Johann Wilhelm, she returned to Amsterdam where she worked until her death in 1750 at the age of eighty-six.

Ruysch's status and undeniable achievement encouraged many other Dutch women to become painters. Among those who went as painters to the courts of Germany in the eighteenth century were Katherina Treu (c. 1743–1811), Gertrued Metz (1746–after 1793), and Maria Helena Byss (1670–1726). Other women, like Catherina Backer (1689–1766), famous in her time as a painter of flower and fruit pieces, and Margaretha Haverman, a Dutch flower painter who enjoyed great success in Paris and who was unanimously elected to the Académie Royale in 1722, were instrumental in the spread of flower painting among women and a testament to the expanding roles for women in seventeenth-century Holland.

### Amateurs and Academics: A New Ideology of Femininity in France and England

If we are to believe the Goncourt brothers' account of life in eighteenth-century France, written a century later, "woman was the governing principle, the directing reason and the commanding voice of the eighteenth century." Never before in Western Europe had so many women achieved public prominence in the arts and intellectual life of a restricted aristocratic culture. Never had a culture been so immersed in the pursuit of qualities later derided as "feminine," namely artifice, sensation, and pleasure. It is not surprising that the fortunes of the best-known women artists of the century, among them Rosalba Carriera, Elisabeth-Louise Vigée-Lebrun, Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, and Angelica Kauffmann, are inextricably bound up in the changing ideologies of representation and sexual difference that accompany the shift from a courtly aristocratic culture to that of prosperous middle-class capitalist society.

The emergence of professional women painters of the stature of Kauffmann in England, and Vigée-Lebrun, Labille-Guiard, and Anna Vallayer-Coster in France during the second half of the century is astonishing given the increasingly rigid construction of sexual difference that circumscribed women's access to public activity. Neither their position as exceptions nor later dismissals of them as pandering to the most insipid demands of their age for sentimental paintings account for their phenomenal success or their official status as court painters. They were able to negotiate between the taste of their aristocratic clients and the influence of Enlightenment ideas about woman's "natural" place in the bourgeois social order, and this fact deserves much closer attention than it has received.

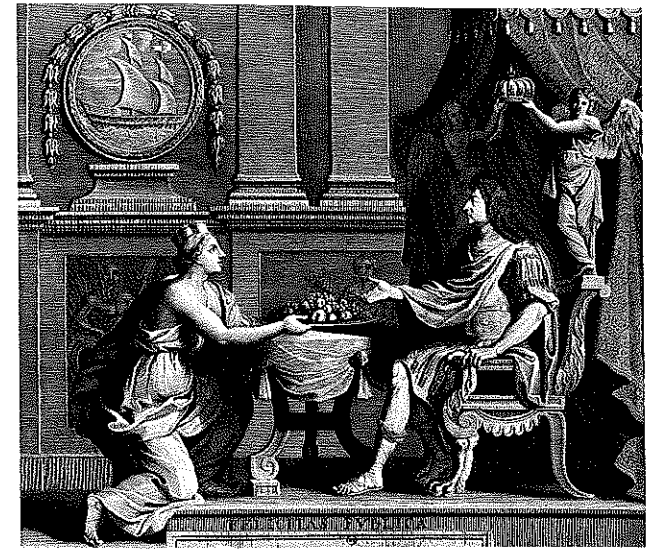
As long as the woman artist presented a self-image emphasizing beauty, gracefulness, and modesty, and as long as her paintings appeared to confirm this construction, she could, albeit with difficulty, negotiate a role for herself in the world of public art. In this chapter, I will show, firstly, that the reasons for the success of female Academicians in their own day became the cause of their dismissal by subsequent generations of art historians; secondly, that the ability of

these artists to absorb into their persons the qualities which critics sought in representations of women became the most pervasive standard against which to judge their work; and finally, that women artists, professionals and amateurs, played a not insignificant role in constructing, manipulating, and reproducing new ideologies of femininity in representation.

In the course of the eighteenth century, the court art of French monarchs from Louis XIV, the "Sun King," to Louis XVI was supplanted. This was at first due to the artistic tastes of a wealthy urban elite identified with the interests of the king, but also determined to use the visual arts to legitimize their own aristocratic pretensions and subsequently, consolidated by the republican demands of a growing, progressive middle class. In his *Painters and Public Life*, Thomas Crow has shown that the revolutionary political discourse that emerged in France during the second half of the century originated in the bourgeois public sphere of the city. Oriented around language and speech, it evolved out of a complex dialogue with the discourse of an earlier, absolutist public sphere—that of the court of Louis XIV at Versailles with its resplendent visual imagery centered on the bodily image of the father/king.

During the rule of Louis XIV (1643–1715), coins of the realm and engravings carried representations of the king as *pater familias*. Murals at Versailles, painted during his reign, incorporate symbolic images of his ministers as naked children, *putti* in extravagant painted scenarios confirming the divine right of French kings. The Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture, founded in 1648 under royal auspices as a way of avoiding guild control over the visual arts, stressed the role of the academicians as learned theorists rather than craftsmen or amateur practitioners. Assuming control of artistic education, it controlled style. Establishing a hierarchy of genres with history painting at the top—followed by portraiture, genre, still-life, and landscape—it determined prestige. At the core of the Academy program was the course of instruction in life drawing. Closed to women, it provided the training for the multifigured historical and mythological paintings so important in reinforcing and reproducing the power of the court.

Vast processions and theatrical court spectacles in Louis XIV's time reproduced an exclusively masculine dynamic of power in which the elevation of the king to divine status constructed a hierarchy under which all his subjects, male and female, were subordinated. "Domesticated" and "unmanned" were the charges later leveled by Enlightenment authors who came to despise the "effeminized" status



64 Engraving with Louis XIV as *pater familias*, late seventeenth century

of non-royal men under the absolutism of the *ancien régime*. In this hierarchical social structure, class was a more powerful determinant of status than gender; upper-class women were more closely identified with men of their class than with women of the lower classes and paintings emphasize and reinforce these class distinctions.

When the Venetian artist Rosalba Carriera (1675–1757), invited by the financier and art collector Pierre Crozat, arrived in Paris in 1720—with her mother, sister, and brother-in-law, the painter Gian Antonio Pellegrini (1675–1741)—Louis XIV had been dead for five years. Under his successor, the boy king Louis XV (1715–74), the court was removed to Paris, where it remained for seven years. It was the artists of the Crozat circle (which briefly included Carriera as well as Antoine Watteau) who provided the new ruler with a visual imagery that completed the transition from the previous century's iconography of power to an aristocratic decorative style with international appeal.

The return of a circle of wealthy aristocrats from Versailles to Paris led to a great demand for paintings to decorate elegant townhouses. Instead of an art revolving exclusively around the court, the decorative style later known as Rococo also incorporated the interests of the urban nobility, as well as important commercial groups. The sumptuous, pleasure-loving art which resulted—with its curvilinear surface patterns, lavish gilding, dainty decorations of flowers and garlands, elaborate costumes, and stylized manners—gave visual form to feeling

and sensation. Although the court returned to Versailles in 1722, Paris remained a major artistic center. Large commissions resulted in handsome incomes for favored painters. The Rococo style belonged to a world in which birth determined social status, adultery was accepted as a necessary antidote to loveless, arranged marriages, and servants and wet-nurses relieved upper-class women of many of the burdens of keeping house and nursing infants.

Carriera stayed in Paris for only one year, as part of an international group of artists drawn to the city by wealthy patrons like Crozat. Yet in that short time her work contributed to forming the new, aristocratic taste which adapted the conventions of an earlier court art to a world in which visual display was no longer exclusively in the service of monarchical need. No woman painter of the century enjoyed as great a success, nor had as much influence on the art of her contemporaries, as Carriera. She was the first artist of the century to explore fully the possibilities of pastel as a medium uniquely suited to the early eighteenth-century search for an art of surface elegance and sensation. She and Pellegrini (who had been commissioned to paint a huge allegorical ceiling in the Banque de France) played a key role in popularizing the Rococo manner in France and later England, where George III was a major collector of her work.

The daughter of a minor Venetian public official and a lacemaker, for whose lace she drew the patterns as a child, Carriera began her artistic career decorating snuff boxes and painting miniature portraits on ivory. Exactly how she came to pastels we do not know. It appears that by the early 1700s a friend of the Carriera family was sending the chalk sticks to her from Rome. Changes in the technology of binding colored chalks into sticks, leading to the development of a much wider range of prepared colors, expanded the availability and usefulness of this medium, but it seems to have been Carriera who introduced a taste for the soft fabricated chalks into France. The dry chalk pigments were similar to those used in women's make-up; and theater, masquerade, make-up, and pastel portraiture formulated an aesthetic of artifice in early eighteenth-century France, at whose center was a woman artist: all these factors indicate important directions for future research.

Carriera's loose, painterly technique with its subtle surface tonalities and dancing lights revolutionized the medium of pastel. Dragging the side of a piece of white chalk across an under drawing in darker tones, she was able to capture the shimmering textures of lace and satin, and highlight facial features and soft cascades of powdered hair.

The first of her many commissions in Paris was to paint the ten-year-old monarch, Louis XV. He cannot have been an easy subject for she confided to her diary after one sitting that, "his gun fell over, his parrot died, and his little dog fell ill." Despite the flattering depiction of the young monarch, the artist's careful posing of her sitter highlights his regal bearing and inaccessibility. Only in her own self-portraits is the superficial flattery demanded by her aristocratic clientele abandoned in favor of a probing realism.

The triumphant year in Paris included several meetings with Antoine Watteau, the most prominent early eighteenth-century French painter. Watteau, responsible for the pictorial development of the *fête galante*, with its sources in the imagery of the theatrical *commedia dell'arte* and its complete freedom of subject-matter, also struck a new balance in his work between nature and artifice. He demonstrated his enthusiasm for Carriera's work by asking for one of her works in exchange for one of his and made at least one drawing of her while she was in Paris. Crozat, in turn, commissioned a portrait of Watteau from her in 1721. Far more psychologically intense than her depiction of Louis XV and members of the French and Austrian courts, the pastel's strong highlights and deep shadow illuminate his complex personality.

Carriera's successes in France culminated in her unanimous election to the Académie Royale in October 1720. By 1682 seven women, most of them miniaturists or flower painters, had been admitted. They included Sophie Chéron, the daughter of the miniaturist Henri Chéron and a painter, enamellist, engraver, poet and translator of the Psalms, who was unanimously elected in 1672 with a reception piece judged "powerfully original, exceeding even the ordinary proficiency of her sex." With that accolade, the doors banged shut, the Académie revised its original policy and ceased admitting women. Carriera's admission coincided with a brief period when the freedom, colorfulness and charm of the Rococo manner dominated the arts. Only when allure took precedence over instruction did artists in France experience some freedom from academic learning. Watteau himself benefited from the short time of liberality in the arts at the end of Louis XIV's reign; both he and Carriera, who had the additional advantage of being a foreigner, were able to circumvent earlier theoretical and academic requirements.

At the time of Carriera's year in Paris, learned women were becoming increasingly conspicuous in the public life of the new urban intelligentsia. It was as leaders of salons, a social institution begun in

the seventeenth century, that a few women were able to satisfy their public ambitions and become purveyors of culture; the Salons of Julie de Lespinasse, Germaine Necker de Stael, Madame du Deffand, Madame de La Fayette, Madame de Sevigné, Madame du Châtelet, and others became famous as sites of artistic, philosophical and intellectual discourse. The salons flourished during a period of delicate equilibrium between the competing claims of public and private life; the famous *salonières* of the period succeeded in establishing themselves in an intermediary arena between the private sphere of bourgeois family life and the official public sphere of the court. In this unique social space, in gatherings attended primarily by men, certain women spoke with great authority in support of the new Enlightenment literature, science, and philosophy. For artists like Carriera and, later in the century, Vigée-Lebrun, the salons provided a context in which class distinctions were somewhat relaxed and artists from middle-class backgrounds (Vigée-Lebrun's father was a minor painter, her mother a hairdresser) could meet upper-class patrons on more or less equal footing.

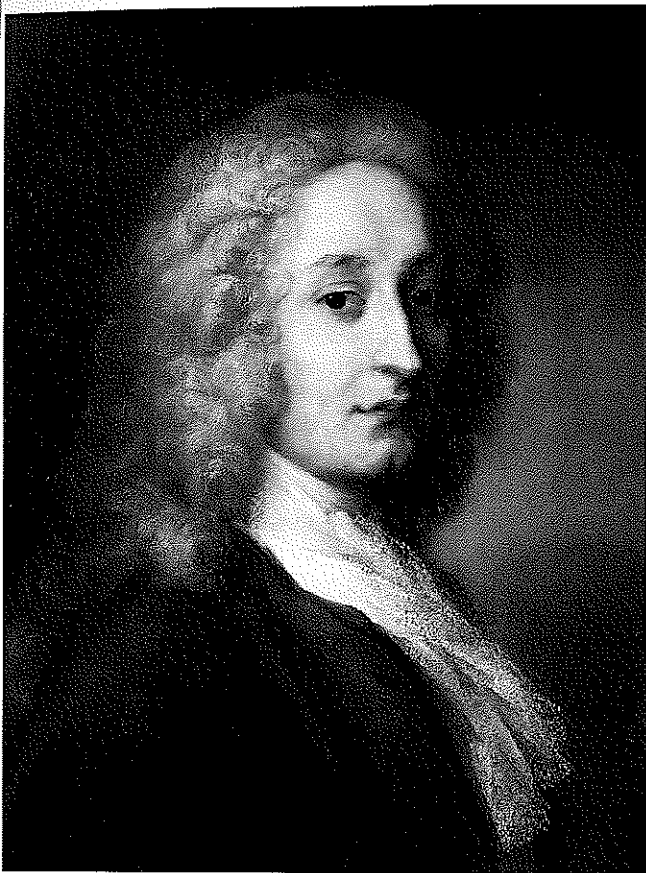
66 Marie Loir's *Portrait of Gabrielle-Emilie le Tonnelier de Breteuil, Marquise du Châtelet*. (1745-49) is one of a number of paintings by women artists of *salonières* and other women intellectuals, evidence of a tradition in which women often represented women. Loir, a member of an artistic family active in Paris as silversmiths since the seventeenth century, was a pupil of Jean François de Troy. In 1762, she was elected to the Académie of Marseilles, one of a number of provincial academies established to encourage regional artists. Unlike the Académie Royale in Paris, they admitted amateurs of both sexes and did not exclude women from prizes or exhibitions. Loir's painting depicts the Marquise du Châtelet, a prodigy who read Locke in the original at seventeen, who became a respected mathematician, physicist and philosopher, and a famous hostess. Her lovers included two of the most prominent intellectuals of the day—Voltaire and Pierre-Louis Moreau de Maupertuis, essayist, scientist, and mathematician. Although perhaps based on Jean Marc Nattier's portrait of the Marquise exhibited in the Salon of 1745, Loir's composition is more straightforward and less dramatically idealized than many contemporary portraits. The marquise is shown against a wall of books. Her dark eyes are bright with intelligence and the iconography of the painting makes reference to her scientific and mathematical interests. She holds a pair of dividers and a carnation, symbol of love.

This work belongs to a time when the mannerisms, artifices, and

intellectual focus of salon society were repeated in the stylistic innovations of the official art of the period. The decade in which Loir produced her portrait also saw Boucher decorating a love nest for the wealthy Madame de Pompadour. Many of Boucher's mythological and pastoral scenes of the 1740s were commissioned by this woman, whose role in shaping the official art of her time deserves reexamination. Art historians have tended either to underrate her, perhaps because the art of her period—architecture, interiors, tapestries, porcelains, and painted decorations—is an art of collaboration rather than individual achievement, and blurs the distinctions between “fine” and “minor” arts, or they have over-attributed the development of a “feminine” sensibility in the arts to her influence. In fact, the “feminizing” language of artistic production in early eighteenth-century France predates her by years and must be explored in relation to the construction of gender as part of the ideology of monarchical power at the end of Louis XIV's time. The actual role of women in the formation of this aesthetic is still buried under layers of cultural prejudice and art historical bias.

Boucher's paintings are exemplary of the new aristocratic art which emphasized ornament, tactile sensation and mutual pleasure rather than ideologies of power defined in terms of gender. They belong to the intimate world of the boudoir; the palette is light, the flesh tints pearly. While his female nudes correspond to the voluptuous conventions of the Rubenesque tradition, his male figures are notably languid, attentive, and sensual, passive inhabitants of an aristocratic Arcadia whose resources had, in fact, been sucked dry by oppressive taxation under Louis XIV.

By the middle of the century, the brief power of the *salonières* was being challenged by intellectuals. The public response to the dissolute power of the aristocracy, and the women who were associated with it, had far-reaching implications. Although primarily attended by men, the salons signified “femininity”; first, because of the influence wielded by the women who ran them and, second, because of their identification with an aristocratic aesthetic tied to a century-old opposition in French painting between classicism and preciosity. The “feminine” power now attributed to the *salonières* was also linked to earlier, and widely distrusted, court traditions dominated by the image of the father/king. Preciosity, identified with the Rococo style and the decadence of the court, was redefined by Enlightenment thinkers as a feminine counterpart to a new, masculine ideal of *honnêteté*, or virtue. It is not surprising that writers like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who gave



65 (left) Rosalba Carriera  
Antoine Watteau 1721

66 (opposite) Marie Loir  
Portrait of Gabrielle-Emilie  
le Tonnelier de Breteuil,  
Marquise du Châtelet  
1745-49



clearest expression to middle-class values at mid-century, specifically contested this sphere of female influence.

Rousseau viewed the *salonnière* as a threat to the “natural” dominance of men, the salon as a “prison” in which men were subjected to the rule of women. His writings, many of them aimed at formulating a “natural” sphere of influence for women, are shaped by his rejection of a public role for women as speakers, using and in control of language. The fiction of a “natural language” which Rousseau promotes in his novel *Emile* (1762) rests on a strong connection between natural language and politics by caricaturing female citizenship as a monstrous aberration. It is the *salonnière’s* crime to usurp authority, to speak the language of authority, of citizenship, instead of the “natural” language of family duty. “From the lofty elevation of her genius,” Rousseau

notes, “she despises all the duties of a woman and always begins to play the man. . . . [She] has left her natural state.”

Rousseau’s attack on the theater in his *Lettre à d’Alembert* (1759) included the remark that when the mistress of the house goes wandering in public, “her home is like a lifeless body which is soon corrupted.” Rousseau’s identification of the female body with the home is apt in an age of rapidly changing class structure. The body is a primary site of class conflict, manifested in customs, styles, and manners. While the hierarchical structures of the monarchy and aristocracy favored superior/inferior relationships, as well as complementary relationships among men and women of the same social class, the new bourgeois ideology depended for its success on the location of affection and sexuality in the family. Containing the female body within the private

domestic sphere, as Rousseau advocates, served as a means of controlling female sexuality in an age obsessed with establishing paternity because of the high illegitimacy rate. And it freed men to pursue occupations outside the home.

The ideal of femininity produced through activities like needlework and drawing contributed directly to the consolidation of a bourgeois identity in which women had the leisure to cultivate artistic “accomplishments.” Love of needlework was, Rousseau asserts in *Emile*, entirely “natural” to women; “Dressmaking, embroidery, lace making come by themselves. Tapestry making is less to the young woman’s liking because furniture is too distant from their persons. . . . This spontaneous development extends easily to drawing, because the latter art is not difficult—simply a matter of taste; but at no cost would I want them to learn landscape, even less the human figure.” Although the actual circumstances of middle-class women’s lives varied widely, the ideology of femininity which Rousseau and others rationalized as “natural” to women was a unifying force in making a class identity. The artistic activities of growing numbers of women amateurs working in media like needlework, pastel, and watercolor, and executing highly detailed works on a small scale, confirmed Enlightenment views that women have an intellect different from and inferior to that of men, that they lack the capacity for abstract reasoning and creativity, but are better suited for detail work. Such activities, however, should not be understood as having been exclusively imposed on women, for many women found both pleasure and fulfilment in these arts. Professional women painters also helped to construct such a femininity.

Catherine Read’s *Lady Anne Lee Embroidering* (1764), Angelica Kauffmann’s *Grecian Lady at Work* (1773), Françoise Duparc’s *Woman Knitting*, and Marguerite Gérard’s *Young Woman Embroidering* (1780s) are four among many paintings executed by women artists who worked professionally during the second half of the century which depict women engaged in the “amateur” traditions. They cannot be read as simple reflections of existing reality, however, for Fanny Burney relates that Read, who produced a number of images of women sewing, was incapable of altering a dress. Comparing Kauffmann’s *Grecian Lady at Work* and a drawing of the artist herself with an embroidery hoop reveals sharp distinctions between the image of the embroiderer used to impose a contemporary ideal of femininity on the classical past, and the awkward gestures that often accompany needlework in reality.



67 (above) Catherine Read  
*Lady Anne Lee Embroidering* 1764

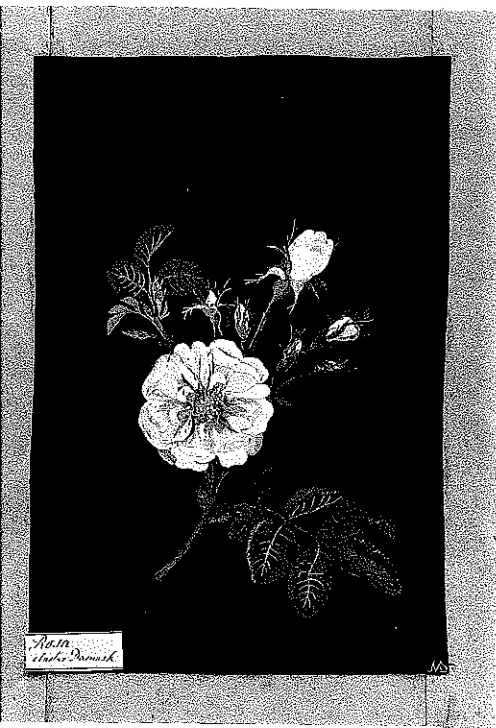
68 (right) Françoise Duparc  
*Woman Knitting* late eighteenth century



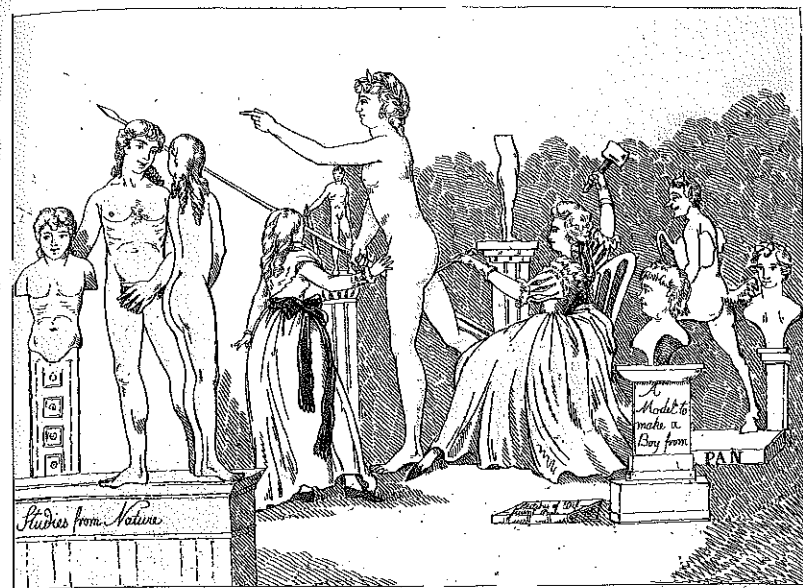
In England, as in France, painters had to negotiate between aristocratic and middle-class taste, and between amateur and professional classifications. Although there was a strong amateur tradition for both sexes, women continually found their artistic activities equated with their femininity. For women aspiring to history painting and Academy membership, “unnatural” ambition had to be mediated by strict conformity to the social ideology of femininity.

English painting in the second quarter of the eighteenth century reveals both the influence of France and the close relationship between English and French intellectuals. Boarding schools, staffed by impoverished gentlewomen, taught drawing and watercolor to the daughters of the upper and middle classes. The publication of drawing manuals, the availability of prints for study, the existence of clean, ready-to-use watercolors, and the taste for picturesque scenery, all contributed to the growing numbers of middle- and upper-class women in England taking up drawing as a fashionable activity.

o Mary Delaney, flower collage, 1774–88



70 Anne Seymour Damer *The Countess of Derby* c. 1789



71 *The Damerian Apollo* 1789

Mary Delaney (1700–88) was seventy years old when she began to produce collages of cut paper flowers mounted on sheets of paper colored black with India ink. The collages, botanically accurate and life-size, drew high praise from botanists and from artists; Joshua Reynolds claimed never to have seen such “perfection and outline, delicacy of cutting, accuracy of shading and perspective, harmony and brilliance of colours.” Hugh Walpole wrote rapturously of his cousin Anne Seymour Damer (1748–1828), the only woman sculptor of note in England before the twentieth century; “Mrs. Damer’s busts from life are not inferior to the antique. Her shock dog, large as life and only not alive, rivals the marble one of Bernini in the Royal Collections.” But Damer, a wealthy upper-class woman, was considered an eccentric by her friends and was lampooned in the public press for her effrontery in aspiring to carve academic nude figures. In a satiric engraving published in 1789 she is shown wearing gloves as she chisels away at the nude backside of a standing Apollo.

Women’s artistic endeavors were more readily accepted when confined to “feminine” media and executed in their own homes, even

if the magnitude of their productions challenged what was considered appropriate as feminine "accomplishment." A diary entry by Sir Walter Calverly in 1716 noted that, "My wife finished the sewed work in the drawing room, it having been three and a half years in the doing. The greatest part has been done with her own hands. It consists of ten panels." Among Lady (Julia) Calverly's "sewed work" recorded in contemporary account books was a six-leaf screen stitched with scenes from Virgil's *Eclogues* and *Georgics* (1727). Each of the leaves is 5 feet 9 inches high, and 20½ inches wide, but this prodigious effort remains outside the categories on which all but feminist art historians have focused their attention.

Angelica Kauffmann (1741–1807), on the other hand, was a professional woman in the age of the amateur, and the first woman painter



72 (left) Lady Calverly, embroidered screen, 1727

73 (opposite) Angelica Kauffmann *Zeuxis Selecting Models for His Picture of Helen of Troy* c. 1764



to challenge the masculine monopoly over history painting exercised by the Academicians. The daughter of a minor Swiss ecclesiastical painter, Kauffmann spent her youth traveling with her father. In Italy in the 1760s, she copied the paintings of Correggio in Parma, the Carracci in Bologna, and numerous Renaissance works in the galleries of the Uffizi in Florence. Her time there coincided with the full flowering of the English passion for work in the Grand Manner, a heady mix of classicizing and Neoclassical tendencies introduced the previous decade by English artists and designers such as Robert Adam, Richard Wilson, and Joshua Reynolds, whose years of study in Rome eventually revolutionized British taste.

In Italy, Kauffmann met the American painter Benjamin West and became part of a group of English painters that included Gavin Hamilton and Nathaniel Dance. Her meeting with Winckelmann in Rome in 1763 proved decisive. She began to derive a Neoclassical manner from his ideal of noble restraint, basing her style on the frescoes at Herculaneum and the romantic classicism of the German painter Raphael Mengs. Her *Zeuxis Selecting Models for His Picture of*





74 Angelica Kauffman, design in the ceiling of the central hall of the Royal Academy, London, 1778

*Helen of Troy*, based on a Roman copy of a Greek *Venus Kallipygos* in the Museo Nazionale in Naples, which she probably copied during her stay there in 1764, suggests both an early awareness of what were then the most popular antique themes among English painters and a keen attentiveness to prevailing societal constructions of women and femininity.

Kauffman's determination to execute large-scale historical works, despite no access to training from the nude model on which the conventions of history painting were based, is a mark of her ambition. As early as 1752, the Abbé Grant had lamented the obstacles that lay



75 Elisabeth-Louise Vigée-Lebrun *Portrait of Marie Antoinette with Her Children* 1787

between another woman artist and history painting. "At the rate she goes on," he noted of Catherine Read, the pastel artist sometimes called the "English Rosalba," who had settled in Rome to complete her artistic training in 1751, "I am truly hopeful she'll equal if not excel the most celebrated of her profession in Great Britain . . . were it not for the restrictions her sex obliges her to be under, I dare safely say she would shine wonderfully in history painting too, but as it is impossible for her to attend public academies or even design and draw from nature, she is determined to confine herself to portraits."

Kauffmann arrived in London in 1765 or 1766. She met Reynolds shortly thereafter; within a year she had earned enough money painting portraits of aristocratic men and women to buy a house. Her success enabled her to begin the historical works for which her years in Rome had prepared her and which at the time represented the only route to consideration as a serious artist in England. The first opportunity to exhibit them came in 1768 on the occasion of a visit from King Christian VII of Denmark. She sent a *Venus Appearing to Aeneas*, *Penelope With the Bow of Ulysses*, and *Hector Taking Leave of Andromache*. The display of these paintings the following year at the Royal Academy exhibition, along with Benjamin West's *Farewell of Regulus and Venus* and *Venus Mourning the Death of Adonis*, identified Kauffmann and West as the initiators of the Neoclassical style in England. James Northcote, in a biography of Reynolds, commends her history paintings as second only to two canvases submitted by West. Subsequent exhibitions confirmed the originality of her work with its transparent brushwork and rich color, its elegant restatement of its classical sources, and its innovative use of subjects drawn from medieval English history as well as from the antique. The fact that Reynolds persuaded John Parker of Saltram, later Lord Morley, to purchase all of Kauffmann's works in addition to his thirteen portraits probably enabled her to persist as a history painter.

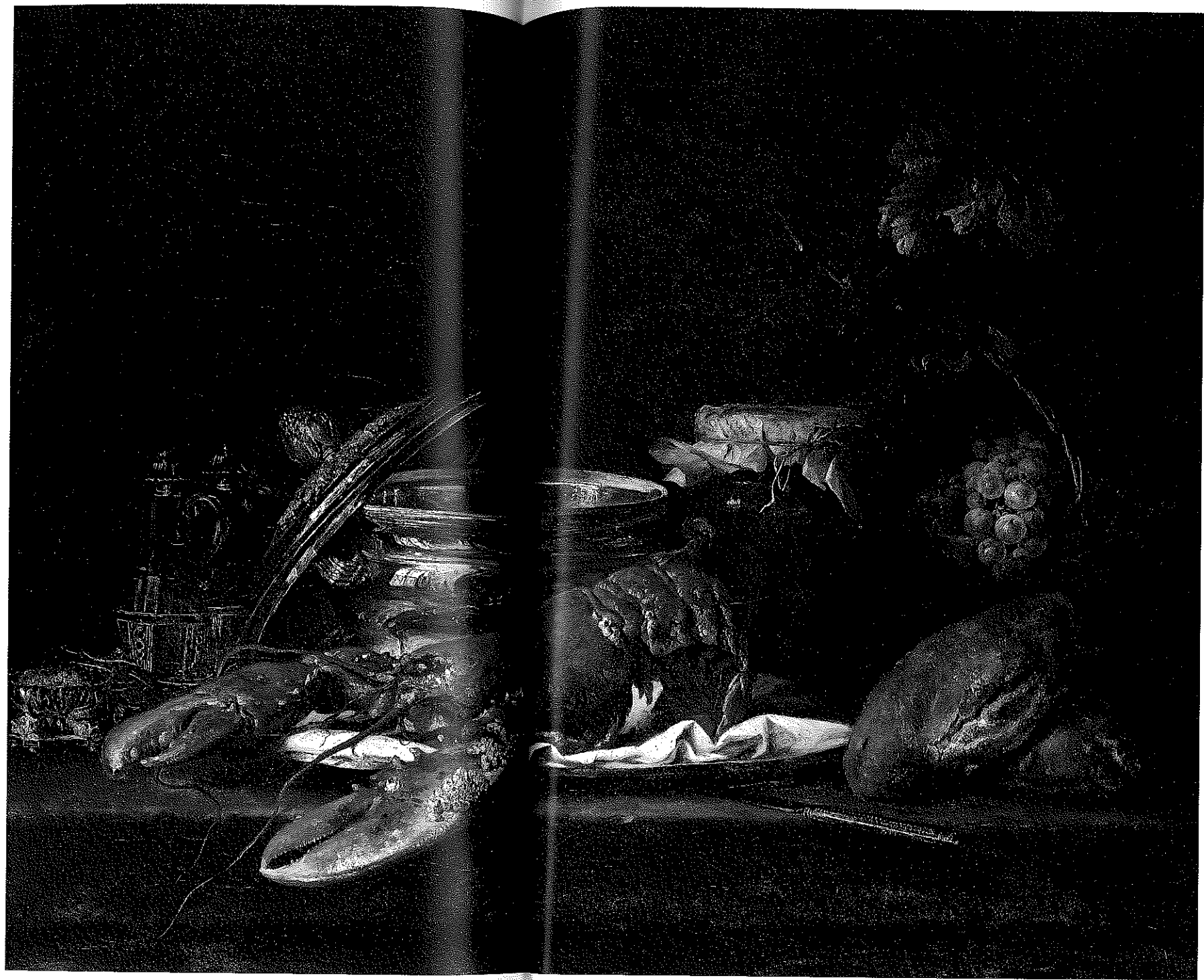
Kauffmann's academic success can be attributed to her association with the foremost history painters of her day, and to the fact that she arrived in London, after the study in Italy expected of all serious painters in oils, at a propitious moment. The reasons for her enormous popular and professional following are more complex. By the 1770s, her works, widely known through engravings by William Ryland, had not only inspired other painters but had also reached a much broader audience, often through designs for the decorative arts, such as a china service with classical motifs, based on her paintings. She is associated with Robert Adam, the most fashionable Neoclassical architect of the



76 Vase (after Angelica Kauffmann) c. 1820

time. She provided allegorical figures of Composition, Invention, Design, and Coloring for the ceiling of the Academy in its new location at Somerset House (later removed to the entrance hall of Burlington House) and throughout the 1780s, when she traveled abroad with her second husband, the painter Zucchi, she continued to send major historical canvases back to London.

The 1968 exhibition, "Angelica Kauffmann and Her Contemporaries," offered a major reevaluation of Kauffmann's relationship to other history painters and her profound influence on her contemporaries. Twentieth-century art historians have often disregarded the plurality of attitudes to classical art which Robert Rosenblum identifies as central to Neoclassicism. Dismissing the romantic and decorative aspects of the movement, they have favored the severe, heroic classicism most fully expressed in David's work at the end of the century and which profoundly influenced the development of nineteenth-century painting. Kauffmann has been dismissed for her inability to "achieve much



J. Vallayer-Coster  
*Life* 1767

Roman gravity" and the works of her contemporaries praised for being "fill-blooded" in comparison. Kauffmann's relative lack of training in drawing, over which she had little control, has been used to prove the inferiority of her work to that of her male contemporaries, while her role in the development of an aesthetic of "sentiment" has been largely ignored. The romanticizing of Kauffmann that spread her legend to a general population through engravings also no doubt encouraged later writers to dismiss her as charming but inconsequential, but, ironically, it was her public status and historical commissions that were the focus of eighteenth-century attacks.

Much of the satire directed against women artists at the time coincided with their efforts to enter the field of history painting and Peter Pindar's pointed commentary, in his "Odes to the Royal Academicians," singled out Kauffmann's inability to work from the nude:

Angelica my plaudits gains,  
Her art so sweetly canvas stains  
Her dames so gracious, give me such delight  
But were she married to such gentle males  
As figured in her painted tales,  
I fear she'd find a stupid Wedding Night

Throughout this doggerel, despite its element of truth, runs a familiar refrain—the woman artist should confine herself to painting "sweet," "gracious," and "delightful" representations of women, representations which reinforce descriptions of the artist herself as "charming," "graceful," and "modest." By the time Angelica Kauffmann arrived in London, commentators were generally agreed that female "nature" was produced through qualities like joyousness, delicacy, vivacity, and excitability. These qualities were often opposed to the sense of gravity which was believed to define masculine pursuits. According to the ideologies of an expanding middle class, women were assigned to the domestic sphere and labeled as being inclined toward irrationality. Confronting such definitions directly risked marginalization. Attacks such as those on Kauffmann mount in direct proportion to the public stature of the woman artist and cannot be separated from the charge that by taking up a public activity woman either unsexes herself or, in this case, unsexes men.

Similar problems confronted academic women painters in France. The portraits of Vigée-Lebrun and Labille-Guiard reveal that both painters sometimes manipulated their brushstrokes to emphasize gender differences. The brusque, taut surfaces and intense gazes of the

male sitters in Vigée-Lebrun's portraits of the painters Joseph Vernet (1778) and Hubert Robert (1788) are almost entirely missing from her portraits of women. The focused mental energy of these figures (Robert's hair springs from his head as if electrified) are in sharp contrast to the many portraits of women with their softened contours and misted surfaces. Such flaccid surfaces (later criticized as "weak") cannot continue to be used to prove artistic inferiority given the differing stylistic conventions evident in the male portraits. That these distinctions did not escape Lebrun's critics is evident from a poem of 1789 which the artist included in her memoirs:

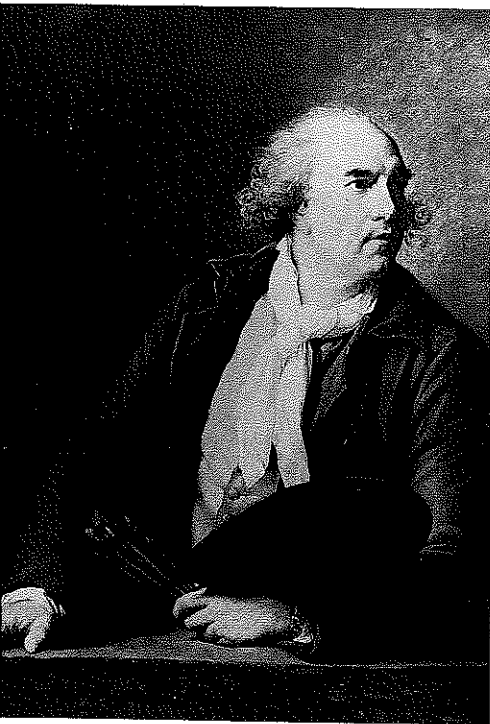
Who more than you has been so unjustly plagued?  
A manly brush adorns your paintings  
Thou art not praised for thy womanhood  
Yet their just envy,  
Its unrelenting cries  
And the serpents unleashed against you,  
Proclaim better than our tongues  
How great a man you are.

Like Kauffmann in England, the three women painters working under royal patronage in France during the 1770s and 1780s—Vigée-Lebrun (1755–1842), Labille-Guiard (1749–1803), and Vallayer-Coster (1744–1818)—were never far from critical responses conflating the woman and the work. All except Labille-Guiard were royalists at heart, but the paintings they executed in the years before the French Revolution—ranging from the still-lives of Vallayer-Coster to the portraits of Vigée-Lebrun and Labille-Guiard—reveal the awkwardness of negotiating between the competing ideologies of increasingly antithetical groups: the royal family with its aristocratic followers and expectations that art should flatter, and the middle class with its growing demand for paintings of moral virtue. In the years just before the French Revolution Vigée-Lebrun and, to a lesser extent perhaps, Labille-Guiard were significant in introducing the imagery of the "natural" into the iconography of the aristocracy. Vigée-Lebrun's many portraits of herself and other women dressed in the simple Grecian gowns of the Neoclassical revival helped to disseminate an image of the unencumbered "natural" female body and the new image of motherhood associated with it.

The Paris in which these women worked was that of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. The prestige of the Académie Royale had been undermined at mid-century by the founding of the Académie de

Saint-Luc in 1751 as a belated attempt to reassert guild control over the arts. The Académie de Saint-Luc, with irregularly scheduled exhibitions and no fixed residence, was nevertheless not insignificant in fostering the careers of women artists. Its broad membership included frame-makers, gilders, varnishers, women apprentices, and husband and wife teams, in addition to painters. Both Vigée-Lebrun and Labille-Guiard began their professional lives in its exhibitions and Harris reports that about three percent of its members during the second half of the century were women, most of them portraitists working in oils, pastels, and miniatures. The resolution limiting membership in the Académie Royale to four women after the election of Vallayer-Coster and Marie Giroust-Roslin in 1770 may have been prompted by this rapidly expanding population of female amateurs seeking places to exhibit.

During the 1760s, the competing exhibitions sponsored by the Académie de Saint-Luc drew large groups and vociferous public response. Increasingly, middle-class audiences demanded an art of moralizing sentiment rather than the grand public narrative and historical paintings that had characterized earlier Salons. Thomas Crow has traced the development of the cult of *sensibilité* in French painting to Jean-Baptiste Greuze's (1725–1805) ability to endow the more



78 Elisabeth-Louise Vigée-Lebrun  
Hubert Robert 1788



79  
Adélaïde Labille-Guiard  
Portrait of Marie-Gabrielle  
Capet 1798

intimate domestic scenes, popularized by a large market for engravings of Flemish domestic paintings, with the kind of nobility originally associated with history painting.

The desire for an art that confirmed contemporary moral values dominates criticism at mid-century. Diderot's praise of Greuze and Chardin during the 1760s for the dignity and virtue of their representations opposes them to Boucher, of whom he wrote after the Salon of 1765: "I do not know what to say of this man. Degradation of taste, of color, of composition, of character, follow upon deprivation of morals. What can there be in the imagination of a man who passes his life with loose women of the lowest classes?"

Anna Vallayer-Coster, like Chardin before her, was patronized both by the court and by wealthy bankers and merchants drawn to the modest themes and carefully crafted surfaces of her still-lives, painted

in the realist tradition of Chardin. Her patrons included the Marquis de Marigny, whose position was close to that of minister of arts under Louis XV, and her marriage to a wealthy lawyer and member of parliament in 1781 ensured her social standing.

Vallayer-Coster was trained by her father, who was the king's goldsmith and a tapestry designer before establishing his own studio in Paris in 1754. She submitted an *Allegory of the Visual Arts* and an *Allegory of Music* to the Académie Royale as reception pieces in 1770. Both works were included in the Salon of 1771 and immediately drew comparisons to Chardin's work. But although close in spirit to Chardin, she was no mere imitator. Her works, models of simplicity, order, and crisp realism, make only a few concessions to a middle-class taste increasingly drawn to Chardin's rustic kitchen interiors with their copper and enamel wares.

In addition to paintings by Vallayer-Coster, the Salon of the Académie de Saint-Luc in 1774 also included the work of Labille-Guiard, Vigée-Lebrun and Anne-Rosalie Boquet. All three women worked in pastel as well as oil. Labille-Guiard's *Portrait of a Woman in Miniature*, an oval miniature on ivory which was in fact a self-portrait, was accompanied by a pastel *Portrait of a Magistrate* and a *Sacrifice of Love*. Although she had not yet completed her apprenticeship (and was at the time a pupil of Quentin de la Tour), one critic noted that these small works showed great promise. Vigée-Lebrun had submitted as reception pieces a *Portrait of Monsieur Dumesnil*, Rector of the Académie, as well as several pastels and oils, among them three works representing painting, poetry, and music.

Unlike Labille-Guiard, who studied both with La Tour and François-Elie Vincent, Vigée-Lebrun acquired almost all her artistic training independently. Largely self-taught, her early success was a result of ambition, determination, and hard work. She copied numerous works by old and modern masters in private collections, artists' studios, and salon exhibitions but, like other women of the day, she was barred from study of the live nude model. Her first portraits were members of her own family, but her marriage to Jean-Baptiste-Pierre Lebrun—artist, restorer, critic, and dealer—established her as a major figure in the social life of aristocratic urban Paris.

From the first exhibition of the works of Labille-Guiard and Vigée-Lebrun, it is possible to observe the development of the often noted "rivalry" by means of which critics opposed one woman to the other, a "rivalry" to which we shall return as it served ends other than that of establishing the relative merits of their work.

The Salon de la Correspondance, founded in 1779, held its first exhibition in 1782. Labille-Guiard submitted several pastels and drew the first unsubstantiated charges that her teacher, Vincent, who also exhibited, had touched up her works. In response to these accusations, she invited prominent academicians to sit for her, a wise decision for, in addition to stilling her critics, it also gained her access to politically powerful male painters of a kind normally reserved for the young men who had trained under them.

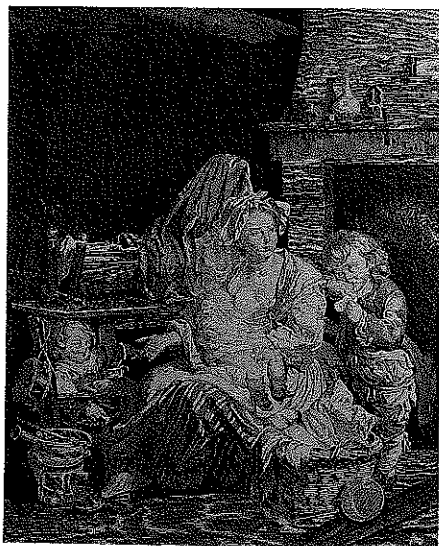
Again in 1782, critics made pointed references to the two women proposed for Académie Royale membership the following year. Labille-Guiard's portraits of 1782, in addition to *The Count of Clermont-Tonnerre*, the son of the *maréchal* of Clermont-Tonnerre and a precocious military leader, included those of distinguished academic painters. Her *Portrait of the Painter Beaufort* was submitted to the Académie as a reception piece and she was admitted under the category "painter of portraits" at the same meeting that admitted Vigée-Lebrun. The latter, however, determined to be admitted as a history painter rather than the lower ranked portraitist, had produced five history paintings within the previous three years. Despite a carefully calculated reception piece entitled *Peace Bringing Abundance*, she was admitted without specific category and only on the intervention of Marie Antoinette, whose portrait painter she had become in 1778. Royal intervention was necessary to overcome the Director's opposition, Jean-Baptiste-Marie Pierre, on the grounds that Vigée-Lebrun's husband was a picture dealer and election was forbidden to anyone in direct contact with the art trade.

Vigée-Lebrun and Labille-Guiard's first appearance together as academicians took place in the Salon of the Académie Royale in 1783. It was then that the critics, previously content to vacillate between the two women, unequivocally took sides. The critic in the *Impartialité au Salon* identified them as "rivaux de leurs gloires" (glorious rivals). Bauchaumont was friendly toward Labille-Guiard but clearly preferred Vigée-Lebrun; the critic of *Le Véridique au Salon* compared their talents.

Some sort of rivalry between the two painters was no doubt inevitable. Vigée-Lebrun, industrious, beautiful, and socially in demand, was the Queen's favorite painter. Labille-Guiard, sober and hard-working, had been appointed official painter to the Mesdames of France, the King's aunts, in 1785 and worked diligently for success which seemed to the public almost thrust on Vigée-Lebrun. No record remains of Labille-Guiard's feelings about Vigée-Lebrun; the

latter's memoirs, notable for their self-absorption, dismiss Labille-Guiard in a few curt passages. The artificial "rivalry" thrust on them enabled critics to give voice to accusations that reminded audiences that famous, or infamous, public women such as these had exceeded their "natural" domain. The price they paid was accusations of sexual misconduct; Vigée-Lebrun was accused by one critic of having "intimate" knowledge of her sitters. Even more important perhaps is the fact that the "rivalry" preserved the separation of men and women. By comparing two successful women artists almost exclusively to one another, it became unnecessary to evaluate their work in relation to that of their male contemporaries, or to abandon rigid identifications between female painters and their imagery.

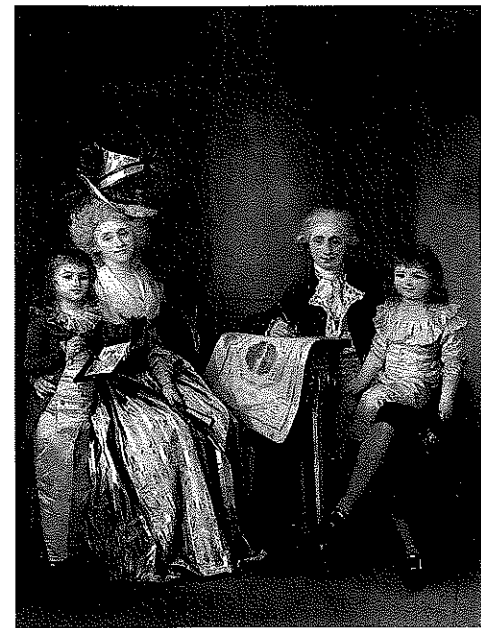
In the second half of the century there was a wide range of new family images. Greuze's *The Good Mother*, the popular attraction at the Salon of 1765, was praised by Diderot: "It preaches population, and portrays with profound feeling the happiness and inestimable rewards of domestic tranquillity. It says to all men of feeling and sensibility: 'Keep your family comfortable, give your wife children; give her as many as you can; give them only to her and be assured of being happy at home.'" Carol Duncan has demonstrated how, as the iconography of painting transformed the sensual libertine of the early eighteenth century into a tender mother by the end of it, authors following Rousseau's example argued that wet-nursing was against nature and that only animals and primitive mothers were so little emotionally bonded to their offspring that they could allow others to assume this



80 Laurent Cars *The Good Mother* after Greuze, 1765



81 Adélaïde Labille-Guiard *Portrait of Madame Mitoire and Her Children* 1783



82 Marguerite Gérard *Portrait of the Architect Ledoux and his Family* c. 1787-90

function. A similar argument against swaddling, that it artificially constricted the infant, was also a sign of the middle-class origins of these new attitudes, for only women whose labor was entirely domestic could attend to the needs of the liberated baby; among rural women who needed their hands free to work in the fields swaddling persisted well into the nineteenth century. Labille-Guiard's pastel *Portrait of Madame Mitoire and Her Children* (1783) is the first of her works reflecting the new ideology of the bourgeois family. The painting, showing Mme. Mitoire holding a baby to her breast while another child gazes adoringly at her from the side, combines the voluptuousness of Flemish painting and the adornments of French aristocratic style with allusions to nature in the flowers woven into the mother's elaborate hairstyle. The middle-class counterpart of dedicated motherhood in Labille-Guiard's work can be found in *Homework*, a small oval painting in which a young mother, very simply attired, instructs the female child who crouches at her knee. The work, whose attribution to Labille-Guiard has recently been challenged, has the modest appeal

of a northern domestic painting, but the message comes straight from Rousseau who, in *Emile*, advises women to educate girl children at home, and from Chardin who, at mid-century, introduced themes of middle-class domesticity into French painting.

82 The cult of blissful motherhood was one of the most obvious expressions in representation of the new and evolving ideology of the family. No longer was the family viewed as simply a lineage; instead, it began to be conceived as a social unit in which individuals could find happiness as husbands and wives, fathers and mothers. Marguerite Gérard, a student and sister-in-law of the painter Jean-Honoré Fragonard, collaborated with him in developing the themes of maternal tenderness and loving families. Although not a member of the Académie Royale (she was prevented from membership by the decree limiting the number of women to four), she exhibited widely, particularly after the French Revolution when the Salon was opened to women.

The ideology of the happy family was, however, riddled with contradictions. Laws depriving women of all rights over property and person accompanied the eulogizing of marriage as a loving partnership. Attitudes toward children also shifted dramatically in the course of the century as earlier neglect gave way to a growing belief that the true wealth of the country lay in its population. As the birthrate dropped in the eighteenth century with the first widespread use of birth control (the average family size of 6.5 children in the seventeenth century dropping to 2 in the eighteenth), children became more precious and campaigns to change child-rearing practices began. Paintings like 81 Labille-Guiard's *Madame Mitoire* recapitulate the iconography of the opulent nude, but place her in a new, maternal role surrounded by adored and adoring children.

The Salon of 1785 was a key exhibition for both Labille-Guiard and Vigée-Lebrun. The former's portraits consolidated her reputation and the critical competition between the two women painters turned toward her. As a result of her success in this Salon, Vigée-Lebrun 75 received the commission for her *Portrait of Marie Antoinette with Her Children*, a monumental work of political propaganda which has been called one of the great works of eighteenth-century political painting and the last serious attempt to revive the Queen's reputation.

Vigée-Lebrun had been painting Marie Antoinette since 1778. Her many portraits of the Queen—whose marriage represented a political alliance between the royal families of France and Austria and who was by 1778 already widely distrusted by the French citizenry—reveal her

ability to transform the far from beautiful queen into a memorable likeness through the power of her idealizing abstraction.

By 1784, after the birth of her third child, Marie Antoinette had realized the extent to which she had alienated the population, as well as powerful factions in the court, with her frivolity and profligacy. Widely held in contempt as queen and as the mother of future kings, Marie Antoinette had withdrawn into a small circle of family and friends. Her claim that "I wish to live as a mother, to feed my child and devote myself to its upbringing" convinced no one in the face of widely circulated attacks on her virtue in clandestine publications with titles like *The Scandalous Life of Marie Antoinette* and *The Royal Bordello*, the latter a pornographic tract ascribing depraved tastes to her and treating her children as bastards.

This spectacle of the Queen as a courtesan led Louis XVI's ministers to a decision to counter the bad press by projecting a positive and wholesome image of her with her children at the next Salon. The result, a painting by the young Swedish artist Adolphe-Ulrich Wertmuller, pleased no one. Exhibited at the Salon of 1785, the painting was widely denounced for depicting "an ugly queen frivolously dressed and gamboling in front of the Temple of Love at Versailles with her two children." Two critics, however, called for a painting which would present the Queen as a mother "showing her children to the nation, thus calling forth the attention and the hearts of all, and binding more strongly than ever, by these precious tokens, the union between France and Austria."

A new painting was commissioned from Vigée-Lebrun before the Salon of 1785 had closed its doors. The political importance of it was indicated by the fact that it issued from the office of the King's Director of Buildings and that Vigée-Lebrun was paid the colossal price of 18,000 livres, more than was paid for the most important historical paintings and far more than the 4,000 livres that Wertmuller had received for his painting.

Following David's advice, Vigée-Lebrun based her pyramidal composition on the triangular configurations of certain High Renaissance Holy Families. The painting depicts Marie Antoinette dressed in a simple robe and sitting in the Salon de la Paix at Versailles surrounded by her children. The play of light and shadow across the figures blends their individuality into personages who transcend their historical context. The monumental and imposing image of the *mater familias* is softened by the presence of the children grouped around her, her son pointing at the empty cradle which commemorates a recently





83  
 Elisabeth-Louise Vigée-Lebrun  
*Portrait of the Artist with Her  
 Daughter* 1789

deceased daughter, her older daughter leaning affectionately against the royal arm. The grouping of the children around Marie Antoinette emphasizes the central role of women in the generational reproduction of class power at the same time that it points toward the new ideology of the loving family.

By the time the 1787 Salon opened, the political situation had deteriorated. The work was hung only after the official opening from fear of a hostile public reaction. Critical ambivalence about the work, however, centered around the impossibility of resolving two different ethos: the divine right of kings transferred from the image of the *pater familias* to the figure of Marie Antoinette as queen, and the new bourgeois ideal of happy motherhood. This iconographic confusion was widely noted and contrasted with the universally popular image of motherhood presented in the same Salon in Vigée-Lebrun's self-portrait with her daughter Julie. This touching image of young motherhood perfectly illustrates the contradictions between idealized representation and lived experience. Not only was Vigée-Lebrun herself sent away to a wet nurse as a child, but she remarks in her memoirs

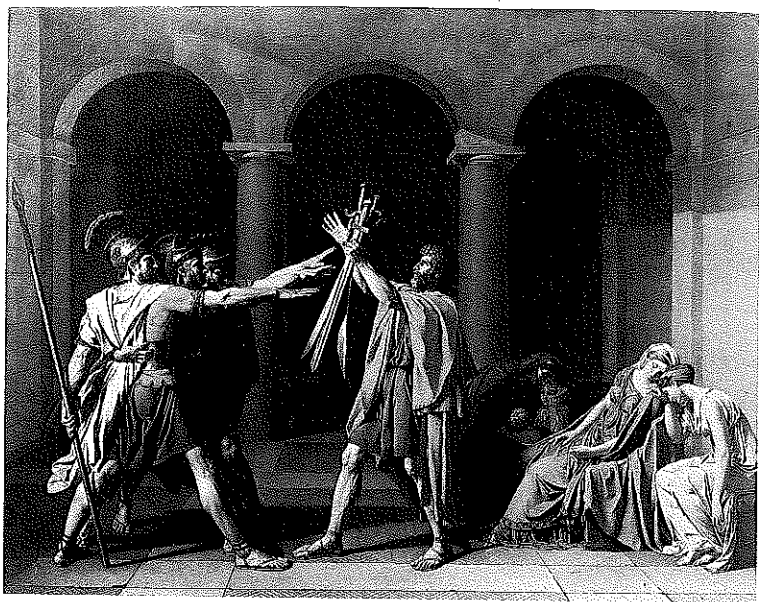
that the day she went into labor with her daughter, she took pride in not allowing incipient motherhood to interrupt her at her professional activity and continued to paint between labor pains.

Vigée-Lebrun's *Portrait of Marie Antoinette with Her Children* (1787) was hung almost beside, and on the same level, as Labille-Guiard's *Portrait of Madame Adélaïde*. The fact that the paintings were of identical size further called attention to them as studies in royal opposites: Vigée-Lebrun's an attempt to resuscitate a vilified queen, Labille-Guiard's a portrait of one of Louis XVI's aunts representing the virtues of the old court.

The Salon of 1785 also included David's *The Oath of the Horatii*. The severity and rationality of David's Neoclassicism, and his themes of patriotic virtue and male heroism, are important forerunners of the political and social upheavals of the next decade. The presentation of a world in which sexual difference is carefully affirmed is fully realized here. Not only are clear distinctions drawn between the male figures who, erect and with muscles tensed, swear allegiance with drawn swords, and the female figures who swoon and weep, but the entire composition reinforces the work's separation into male and female spheres. The arcade that compresses the figures into a shallow frieze-like space also contains the women's bodies within a single arch. Their



84 Adélaïde Labille-Guiard  
*Portrait of Madame Adélaïde*  
 1787



85 Jacques-Louis David *The Oath of the Horatii* 1785

passive compliant forms echo the poses and gestures of Kauffmann's female figures, but here the sexual division into separate and unequal parts, which is intimated in so many earlier works, is given the absolute definition soon to be institutionalized in revolutionary France.

By 1789, the conflict between radical republicanism and social conservatism in France was fully evident. Although Vigée-Lebrun enjoyed unanimous critical acclaim in the Salon of that year with her portraits of the Duchess of Orleans, Hubert Robert, Alexandrine Emilie Brongniart, the wife of the architect Rousseau, and her daughter, her personal reputation had been destroyed by malicious rumors about her alleged affair with the exiled finance minister Calonne, whose portrait she had painted in 1785. Attacks against the Queen also continued, many denouncing her as an inversion of everything women were supposed to be: an animal rather than a civilized being, a prostitute rather than a wife, a monster giving birth to deformed creatures rather than children. On October 6, following the march on

Versailles by women of the market protesting against the bread shortage, Vigée-Lebrun left France with her daughter for what became a twelve-year exile.

The attacks on prominent public women revealed the fears of the revolutionaries that women, if allowed to enter the public realm, would become not women but hideous perversions of female sexuality. "Remember that virago," the republican Chaumette warned French women, "that woman-man the impudent Olympe de Gouge, who abandoned all the cares of her household because she wanted to engage in politics and commit crimes. This forgetfulness of the virtues of her sex led to the scaffold." Debates over the political rights of women raged during these early years of social unrest. Many *cahiers*, or notebooks, of 1789 remind their readers that women are excluded from representation in the Estates-General; publications by Condorcet, Olympe de Gouge, and others argue the issue of women's role in a revolutionary society. During the next two years the situation of women artists changed dramatically.

On September 23, 1790, Labille-Guiard addressed a meeting of the Académie Royale on the subject of the admission of women (still limited to four). While proving to the satisfaction of the academicians that the only acceptable limit was no limit, she at the same time voted

86 *Amazone, Françaises Devenues Libres* c. 1791



against women as professors or administrators. The reorganization of the Académie Royale won for women the right to exhibit at the Salon, but the free art training offered at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts remained closed to them, as did the right to compete for the prestigious Prix de Rome. The Salon of 1791 was chosen by a jury of forty, only half of them academicians. The paintings numbered 794; 190 of them by non-academicians and 21 of them by women. The opening of the Salon to women proved decisive and in the years after the Revolution large numbers of women exhibited. In 1791 Labille-Guiard, who supported the new regime, exhibited eight portraits of deputies of the National Assembly.

It is David's heroic brotherhood, however, that came to emblemize the new Republic. Images of brotherhood displaced earlier representations of fatherhood. Mothers, except very young ones, are also largely absent. The image of the goddess of Liberty created in November 1793 drew heavily on Rousseau's ideal of the pregnant and nursing mother to personify the regeneration of France. That year also witnessed the repression of all women's political societies by the Jacobins who argued that women were intellectually and morally incapacitated for political life.

Despite attempts to restrain the activities of women, women artists made progress in the years after the Revolution. Although denied admission to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and the prestigious Class of Fine Arts of the Institute until almost the end of the nineteenth century, less restricted access to the Salon, and a loosening of the dominance of historical and mythological painting, led to increasing representation of women in Salon exhibitions. In the Salon of 1801 14.6% of the artists were women; by 1835 the percentage of women exhibiting had grown to 22.2%. Women excelled at portraiture and sentimental genre; Marguerite Gérard, Pauline Auzou, Constance Mayer, Mme. Servières, Jeanne-Elisabeth Chaudet, and Antoinette Haudebourt-Lescot were all singled out for critical notice. The most ambitious painter of historical subjects was Angélique Mongez, a pupil of David and Regnault, whose *Alexander Mourning the Death of Darius's Wife* was awarded a gold medal in the Salon of 1804. Themes of women in history, myth, and love predominated in the work of Henriette Lorimier, Auzou, Nanine Vallain, Servières, and Mayer. David's role as a teacher of women painters during this critical period calls for further study, as do the circumstances in which these and other women painters worked after the Revolution.

## Sex, Class, and Power in Victorian England

Modern feminist campaigns emerged out of a complex of nineteenth-century reform movements in Western Europe and America. A commitment to the emancipation of women was characteristic of reformers from Charles Fourier and Saint Simon in France to John Stuart Mill, Harriet Taylor, and Robert Owen and the Chartists in England, as well as the American Fourierites and Transcendentalists. In America, the Abolition, Temperance, and Suffrage movements profoundly influenced the lives of middle- and upper-class women aspiring to professional careers in the arts.

Nineteenth-century reform movements were part of a growing middle-class response to widespread social and economic changes following the Industrial Revolution. As aristocratic and mercantile capitalism evolved into industrial capitalism, the middle class emerged as the dominant political and social force. Novels, plays, paintings, sculpture, and popular prints contributed to forging a coherent middle-class identity out of the diverse incomes, occupations, and values that made up the class in reality.

Anatomy, physiology, and Biblical authority were repeatedly invoked to prove that the ideal of modest and pure womanhood that evolved during Queen Victoria's reign (1837-1901) was based on sound physiological principles. Even after the loosening of restrictions on professional training, women faced obstacles in obtaining art training equal to that of male students. Not only was it widely believed that too much book learning decreased femininity, exposure to the nude model was thought to inflame the passions and disturb the control of female sexuality that lay at the heart of Victorian moral injunctions. "Does it pay," wrote an irate member of the public to the Board of Directors of the Pennsylvania Academy in 1883, "for a young lady of a refined, godly household to be urged as the only way of obtaining a knowledge of true art, to enter a class where every feeling of maidenly delicacy is violated, where she becomes so hardened to indelicate sights and words, so familiar with the persons of degraded women and the sight of nude males, that no possible art can restore her lost