

**Review of Darius Spieth, Revolutionary Paris and the market for Netherlandish art, Leiden (Brill) 2017**

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**Publication date**  
2019

**Published in**  
Simiolus: Netherlands quarterly for the history of art

**Citation (APA)**  
Korthals Altes, E. (2019). Review of Darius Spieth, Revolutionary Paris and the market for Netherlandish art, Leiden (Brill) 2017. Simiolus: Netherlands quarterly for the history of art, 40(4), 325. [6].

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**Darius Spieth, *Revolutionary Paris and the market for Netherlandish art*, Leiden (Brill) 2017\***

In 1756, long before the turbulent years of the French Revolution, there was an auction in Paris of one of the most prestigious collections of the day, that of Marie-Joseph d'Hostun, duc de Tallard (1683–1755). Its distinction was summed up as follows in the foreword to the sale catalogue. “The pictures by the great Italian masters have always been regarded as the masterpieces of the art of painting. They are the only ones that can gain the collector the esteem of true connoisseurs. The collection of the late duc de Tallard was thus rightly ranked above all others in France, save for those of the king and the duc d’Orléans.”<sup>1</sup>

The writer of the catalogue, the art dealer Pierre Rémy, made it quite clear that he fully agreed with Tallard’s preference for Italian paintings. The duke had only bought the art of other countries like the Netherlands if the artists had worked “in the noble and sublime genre.” They included Peter Paul Rubens, Anthony van Dyck, and those Flemish masters “who merit appearing alongside the works by the most important masters through the nobleness of their scenes & the admirable harmony of their brilliant colors.” According to Rémy, although most Dutch and Flemish paintings were “admirably true to life through their delicacy of touch & graceful color, the mind finds nothing in the scene that can seriously engage it. They provide merely superficial and short-lived beauty.”

Although Tallard and Rémy were not the only ones who held that opinion — it was the traditional French criticism of the art of the Low Countries — most collectors thought otherwise, as Rémy also had to acknowledge, albeit through clenched teeth. “Almost all our cabinets are nowadays simply filled with these small Flemish and Dutch pictures.... But let us not fear that this fashion will put out strong roots; it will pass and make way for a surer and purer taste.”<sup>2</sup>

The prediction that the fashion would prove to be fleeting, however, could not have been wider of the mark. Not even the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars put an end to it, as is clear from Darius Spieth’s most recent publication, in which he examines the periods before, during and after the French Revolution. The book centers around two extensive and

remarkably detailed case studies about the art dealer Lebrun and the collection of the dukes of Orléans. There are also three chapters of a more general nature. Among others things, they examine how, when and why Flemish and Dutch painting became so popular in France, and how and why the prices for that art reached record heights in the dying days of the *ancien régime* but then tumbled for years after the revolution and only clambered back to the pre-revolutionary level deep into the nineteenth century.

LEBRUN The Parisian painter, art dealer and auctioneer Jean-Baptiste Pierre Lebrun (1748–1813) was the supreme connoisseur of Netherlandish painting in the late eighteenth century. Due to the nimble way he managed to survive the regime changes during the revolutionary period he is usually characterized as a chameleonic figure. After becoming one of the most successful art dealers and advisers to a group of extremely rich collectors that included many aristocrats as well as the king, he had no other choice in the 1790s than to cultivate a new clientele, namely the middle class. Instead of resisting the revolution he decided to lend it his active support. The key to his success, Spieth says, was his ability to manipulate the influential painter Jacques-Louis David, a fervent adherent of the revolutionary cause.<sup>3</sup> Lebrun shifted his activities from dealing in Old Masters to organizing exhibitions of contemporary French painting, with which he created a new platform for young talent. That was precisely what David wanted, because in that way artists could circumvent the Académie royale and the Salon, the most powerful institutions in the realm of art in the days of the *ancien régime*.

In a short space of time Lebrun succeeded in transforming himself from a purveyor to the royal household and curator of the collections of the comte d’Artois and the duc d’Orléans, who were the brother and cousin of King Louis XVI respectively, into a semi-official civil servant of the First French Republic. He played a leading role in the creation of the national museum in the Louvre, which opened in 1793, above all because of his advice to expand the collection with paintings that had belonged to *émigrés et condamnés* or could be confiscated in the Low Countries and Germany.<sup>4</sup> His influence grew as the 1790s

\* The translation from the Dutch is by Michael Hoyle.

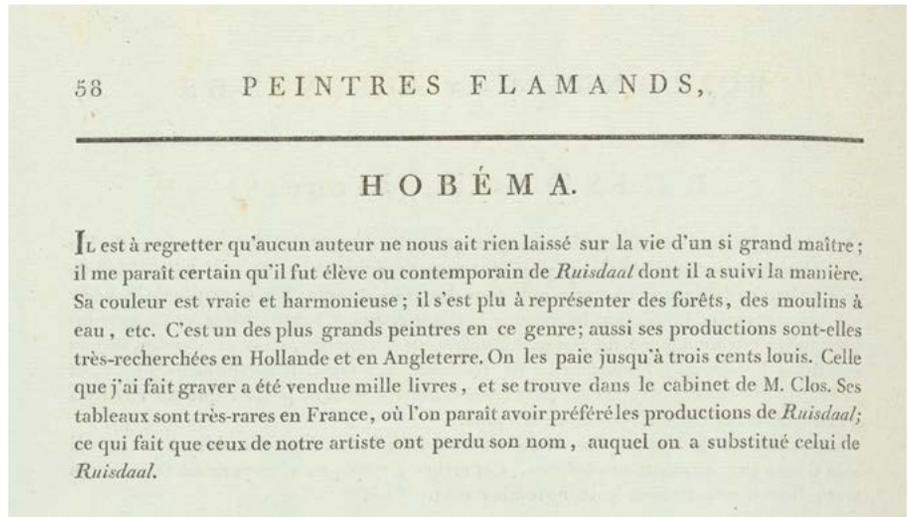
1 P. Rémy and J.-B. Glomy, *Catalogue raisonné des tableaux, sculptures... qui composent le cabinet de feu Monsieur le Duc de Tallard*, sale Paris, 22 March–13 May 1756 (Lugt 910), pp. 1–2: “Les Tableaux des grands Maîtres d’Italie ont toujours été regardés comme les Chefs-d’oeuvres de l’Art de la Peinture: ils sont les seuls qui puissent acquérir à un Cabinet l’estime des vrais Connoisseurs. C’est donc avec justice que la collection de feu Monsieur le Duc de Tallard tenoit le premier rang en France, après celles du Roi & de Monseigneur le Duc d’Orléans.”

2 Ibid., pp. 2–4: “Si les Peintres des autres Ecoles y ont trouvé accès, ce n’est qu’autant qu’ils ont travaillé dans le genre noble & sublime. C’est à ce titre qu’ont été admis dans ce Cabinet, les Tableaux de

Rubens, de Vandyck, & d’autres Maîtres Flamands, qui par la noblesse de leurs compositions, & l’accord admirable de leur brillant coloris, méritent de figurer à côté des Ouvrages des premiers Maîtres de l’Art.... Presque tous nos Cabinets ne sont présentement remplis que de ces petits Tableaux Flamands & Hollandois, admirables à la vérité par la finesse de l’exécution, & le gracieux du coloris, mais dans la composition desquels l’esprit ne trouve point à s’occuper solidement, ils ne lui présentent que des beautés superficielles & momentanées. Mais ne craignons pas que ce goût de mode jette de plus fortes racines; il passera & fera place à un goût plus sur & plus épuré.”

3 D. Spieth, *Revolutionary Paris and the market for Netherlandish art*, Leiden 2017, pp. 183–86.

1 Jean-Baptiste Pierre Lebrun's entry on Meindert Hobbema in *Galerie des peintres flamands, hollandais et allemands*, Paris 1792, vol. 1, p. 58



passed. His approval was required for even the minutest change in the presentation of the paintings in the museum, and he inspected every art shipment and restoration project. However, Napoleon's appointment of Dominique Vivant Denon as director in 1802 put an end to his supremacy. He then returned to the art trade and auctioneering, but with far less success than before the revolution. It turned out that he was vulnerable to the deep crisis in which the French art market now found itself.

Spieth describes Lebrun's fascinating life story with relish, and by making intensive use of the *Papiers de J.B.P. Lebrun* in the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris he has also managed to add new details to the facts already known. Bette Oliver's 2018 publication on Lebrun is less attractive and also less ambitious.<sup>5</sup>

Lebrun's lifelong interest in and great knowledge of Dutch and Flemish painting is demonstrated not only by the huge number of auction catalogues he wrote but above all by the *Galerie des peintres flamands, hollandais et allemands*, which was published between 1792 and 1796.<sup>6</sup> Its purpose, Lebrun wrote in the introduction, was to enable collectors to recognize for themselves the talent, style and subject matter of a select num-

ber of artists and to persuade them to buy their work. Insofar as it was possible he also listed several prices per artist of pictures that had recently been sold on the art market so that the collectors would be better informed about the value of what they bought.<sup>7</sup> Needless to say, Lebrun not only wanted others to profit from his experience but also had a commercial interest of his own in the publication.

In Spieth's words, the *Galerie des peintres* was "the central intellectual accomplishment in Lebrun's life," but surprisingly enough he devotes relatively little space to it.<sup>8</sup> In a concise and rather superficial analysis of the art literature that has contributed to the growing knowledge of art of the Low Countries in France, Spieth tries to indicate the extent to which Lebrun was innovative or traditional compared to artists' biographers like Roger de Piles, Antoine-Joseph Dezallier d'Argenville and Jean-Baptiste Descamps.<sup>9</sup> I will mention the innovations noted by Spieth, but also want to take the opportunity to make a few additions and marginal comments of my own.

Of all the eighteenth-century biographers of artists Lebrun had the greatest respect for Descamps.<sup>10</sup> His writings, and es-

4 Lebrun's role in the "artistic conquests" recently came up for discussion again in the symposium titled *Nouveaux regards sur les saisies patrimoniales en Europe à l'époque de la Révolution française*, Brussels (Institut Royal du Patrimoine Artistique), 30–31 May 2018. For the influence that Descamps' writings had on Lebrun's selection of art to be confiscated in the southern Netherlands see G. Maës, *De l'expertise artistique à la vulgarisation au siècle des Lumières: Jean-Baptiste Descamps (1715–91) et la peinture flamande, hollandaise et allemande*, Turnhout 2016, pp. 338–42 and 509–14. See also Gaëtane Maës's new edition of Jean-Baptiste Descamps, *Le Voyage pittoresque de la Flandre et du Brabant*, Turnhout 2018.

5 B.W. Oliver, *Jean-Baptiste-Pierre LeBrun: in pursuit of art (1748–1813)*, Lanham & London 2018.

6 J.-B.P. Lebrun, *Galerie des peintres flamands, hollandais et allemands*, 3 vols., Paris & Amsterdam 1792–96.

7 N. de Marchi and H.J. van Miegroet, "The rise of dealer-auctioneers: information and transparency in markets for Netherlandish paintings," in K. Jonckheere and A. Tummars (eds.), *Art market and connoisseurship in the Dutch Golden Age*, Amsterdam 2008, pp. 149–74, esp. p. 154.

8 Spieth, op. cit. (note 3), p. 131.

9 Ibid., pp. 30–40. Roger de Piles, *Abrégé de la vie des peintres, avec des réflexions sur leurs ouvrages*, Paris 1715; A.J. Dezallier d'Argenville, *Abrégé de la vie des plus fameux peintres*, 3 vols., Paris 1745–52; J.-B. Descamps, *La vie des peintres flamands, allemands et hollandais*, 4 vols., Paris 1753–63.

10 Lebrun, op. cit. (note 6), vol. 1, p. 1, "L'estimable ouvrage de



2 Carl Wilhelm Weisbrod after Meindert Hobbema (attributed to), *Trees lining a river*, in *Galerie des peintres flamands, hollandais et allemands*, Paris 1792, vol. 1, facing p. 58

pecially *La vie des peintres flamands, allemands et hollandais*, must have been Lebrun's main source of inspiration.<sup>11</sup> One important difference is that Lebrun restricted himself to far fewer painters — 165 against almost 800 in Descamps.

At first sight Lebrun's selection and quality criteria appear to coincide more or less with the taste of most collectors of his day. He mainly discusses those artists whose work was regularly sold on the Paris art market. However, he was one of the first to break with the custom of attributing as many pictures as possible to great, established names, singling out instead the value of rarity and of the very lack of a famous name. It is therefore notable that he was the first to recognize the qualities of a series of painters who were virtually unknown in France. Francis Haskell analyzed this phenomenon in his pioneering *Rediscoveries in art: some aspects of taste, fashion and collecting in England and France*,<sup>12</sup> in which he drew attention to Lebrun's 'discovery'

Descamps est, selon moi, le seul où l'on puisse trouver ce que l'on chercherait vainement dans les autres."

11 Maës, *De l'expertise*, cit. (note 4). See also A. Prigot, "Un modèle pour collection idéale: la *Galerie des peintres flamands, hollandais et allemands* de Jean-Baptiste Pierre Le Brun," *Histoire de l'Art* 62 (2008), pp. 29–41.

12 F. Haskell, *Rediscoveries in art: some aspects of taste, fashion and collecting in England and France*, Oxford 1976, esp. pp. 25–38. Lebrun, op. cit. (note 6), vol. 1, p. iii: "Plusieurs peintres ont été découverts ainsi: que l'on me passe cette expression."

13 Lebrun, op. cit. (note 6), vol. 1, pp. 58 (Hobbema) and 68 (de Bray). See C. Hofstede de Groot, *Beschreibendes und kritisches Verzeichnis der Werke der hervorragendsten holländischen Maler des XVII. Jahrhunderts*,



3 François Hubert after Salomon de Bray (now regarded as by Jan de Bray), *The Holy Family*, in *Galerie des peintres flamands, hollandais et allemands*, Paris 1792, vol. 1, facing p. 68

of Johannes Vermeer and Pieter Saenredam. Interestingly, the Paris connoisseur also introduced the work of other good but unknown painters in France, such as Meindert Hobbema (figs. 1, 2) and Salomon de Bray and his sons (fig. 3).<sup>13</sup>

Works by Rembrandt's pupils were regularly attributed to their teacher in the eighteenth century in order to boost their value, but Lebrun disapproved of that practice, pointing out that each one had his own merits. For example, he wrote of Gerbrand van den Eeckhout that "many of his works have lost his

10 vols., Esslingen & Paris 1907–28, vol. 4, pp. 459–60, nr. 275; J. Giltaij, *Jan de Braij (1626/1627–1697): schilder en architect*, Zwolle 2017, pp. 141–42, cat. nr. 48, and p. 345, nr. PNS3. On Lebrun's 'discoveries' see M. Aelberts et al. exhib. cat. *Oude meesters gespiegeld: de keuze van een Parijse kunsthandelaar*, Groningen (Rijksuniversiteit Groningen) 1993; Prigot, op. cit. (note 11), and P. Wester's web pages on Lebrun, [www.essential-vermeer.com/history/le\\_brun\\_biography.html#.XGU4x6JKjX4](http://www.essential-vermeer.com/history/le_brun_biography.html#.XGU4x6JKjX4) (2015). The 'discovery' of Nicolaes Maës is particularly interesting. Descamps had already written about his life and work, but then Lebrun sowed confusion by wrongly asserting that there was not one painter called Maës but two. One was the genre painter Nicolaes Maës, the other the portraitist "C. Maës" or "Maas," who was totally unknown in France. See Lebrun, op. cit. (note 6), vol. 2, pp. 12 and 86.



4 François Hubert after Frans Hals (attributed to), *Rommel-pot player*, in *Galerie des peintres flamands, hollandais et allemands*, Paris 1792, vol. 1, facing p. 71

name and acquired Rembrandt's, because people thought it was more befitting. Yet his tone is more golden and yellowish than Rembrandt's."<sup>14</sup>

Lebrun was well-known for his strong views. The fact that he called Salomon van Ruysdael's style dry and unnatural shows that he could be cutting and critical. He complained that the leaves on van Ruysdael's trees were flatly painted and looked like fried parsley.<sup>15</sup> It is true that he considered Frans Hals a

<sup>14</sup> Lebrun, op. cit. (note 6), vol. 2, p. 10: "Vanden Eeckhout a été longtemps inconnu en France.... Beaucoup de ses ouvrages ont perdu son nom pour recevoir celui de Rembrandt qu'on a jugé plus à propos de lui donner. Néanmoins son ton est plus doré et plus jaunâtre que celui de ce dernier." See V.L. Atwater, *Catalogue and analysis of eighteenth-century French prints after Netherlandish Baroque paintings*, 2 vols. London 1988, vol. 1, pp. 50–51, for Lebrun's attribution in vol. 1, p. III, and vol. 2, p. 2, of a painting of *Vertumnus and Pomona* (possibly identical with the one now in the Národní Galerie in Prague) to Arent de Gelder instead of Rembrandt.

<sup>15</sup> Lebrun, op. cit. (note 6), vol. 1, p. 56: "Son feuillé est égal et ressemble au persil frit." See also L. de Vries, "Yellow Pages or *Guide Bleu?*," *Simiolus* 26 (1998), pp. 213–24, esp. p. 216.

<sup>16</sup> Lebrun, op. cit. (note 6), vol. 1, p. 71, "Ses productions se seraient vendues plus cher, s'il n'avait pas tant produit, ni peint si vite." See F.S.

great painter, but "his works would sell for higher prices had he not produced so much, or painted so quickly" (fig. 4).<sup>16</sup>

In the *Galerie des peintres* Lebrun took the year of a painter's birth as the basis for a more or less chronological sequence in his series of artists, but he was not very consistent. He regularly saw reasons for departing from his system in order to discuss a master, his pupils and followers as a group, such as Rembrandt and his circle, or Gerard Dou and the Leiden *fijnschilders*. This made it easier for him to stress the stylistic and iconographical similarities within the group. It was a progressive approach, but it did make the book a little unhandy for its use as an encyclopedic work of reference. It was perhaps in order to compensate for this drawback that he added an alphabetical index at the back of the publication listing no fewer than 1,350 Dutch, Flemish and German artists, together with a few basic facts about their lives and work.

Undoubtedly the most important innovation of the *Galerie des peintres* was to combine an artist's biography, a critical analysis of his oeuvre and a reproductive print after one or more of his typical paintings. Lebrun believed that engravings could give a far better idea of an artist's style, and that differences from other artists were more clearly distinguishable in that way. For the sake of completeness he regularly added artists' signatures and monograms in his descriptions. Unfortunately, Spieth does not discuss the importance of the *Galeriewerke* tradition, which undoubtedly inspired Lebrun to combine text and image.<sup>17</sup>

Lebrun included 200 prints in all. He could permit himself so many expensive illustrations because as an art dealer from 1777 to 1790 he had commissioned engravings of almost every important picture that passed through his hands and had then sold the impressions as loose prints. He was later able to draw on this stock of illustrations for his *Galerie des peintres*.<sup>18</sup> Aude Prigot recently drew attention to the great contribution that the Amsterdam art dealer Pieter Fouquet (1729–1800) made to the project, both financially and organizationally.<sup>19</sup> A considerable number of the prints in Lebrun's publication are of paintings

Jowell, "The rediscovery of Frans Hals," in S. Slive (ed.), exhib. cat. *Frans Hals*, Washington (National Gallery of Art), London (Royal Academy of Art) & Haarlem (Frans Halsmuseum) 1990, pp. 61–86, esp. p. 63, note 25. The print depicts a variant of Hals's *Rommel-pot player* in the Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth.

<sup>17</sup> A. Bähr, *Repräsentieren, bewahren, belehren: Galeriewerke (1660–1800), von der Darstellung herrschaftlicher Gemäldesammlungen zum populären Bildband*, Hildesheim 2009, p. 259.

<sup>18</sup> Atwater, op. cit. (note 14), vol. 1, pp. 199–210. See also Prigot, op. cit. (note 11), p. 35.

<sup>19</sup> A. Prigot, "Une entreprise franco-hollandaise: la galerie des peintres flamands, hollandais et allemands de Jean-Baptiste-Pierre Lebrun, 1792–1796," in G. Maës and J. Blanc, *Les échanges artistiques entre les anciens Pays-Bas et la France 1482–1814*, Turnhout 2010, pp. 215–22.

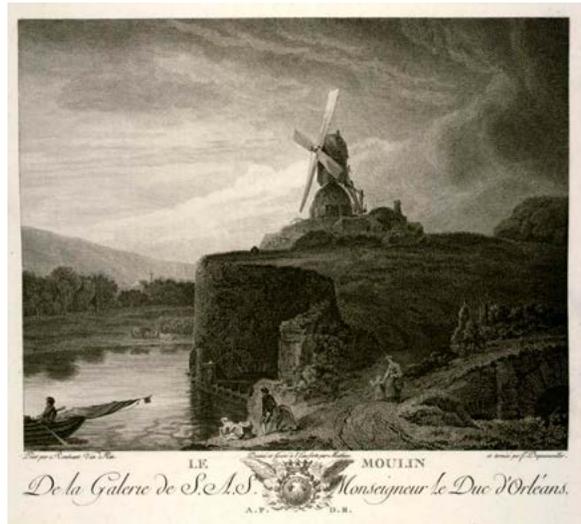
that were in Dutch collections at the time or were with Dutch dealers. Fouquet must have been the connecting link. It is noteworthy that they included works that Fouquet owned himself, if only briefly, such as Vermeer's *Astronomer*, which is now in the Louvre. There is every indication that Lebrun and Fouquet worked together very closely indeed. They were art dealers who operated on an international scale, and would regularly have done business together. They both played a crucial role in the imports of paintings from the Netherlands to Paris, and it is a shame that Spieth says nothing at all about their collaboration.

**THE COLLECTION OF THE DUKES OF ORLÉANS** On 6 November 1793 Louis-Philippe-Joseph, duc d'Orléans (1747–93), one of the richest noblemen in France, was executed. The fact that he had actively supported the revolution, had changed his name to Philippe Égalité, and had even voted for the death of his own cousin, King Louis XVI, could not save him from the guillotine. Only seven years before his grisly end he had inherited from his father the famous and extremely valuable art collection that was on display in the Palais-Royal in Paris. He almost immediately appointed Lebrun as curator, with instructions to make preparations for the sale of the paintings on the London art market. In the end that was not done until 1791–92, when the duke found himself in dire financial straits in the wake of the revolution.

Spieth not only traces the later fate of the collection but also its creation and composition. The bulk of Louis-Philippe-Joseph's paintings were originally acquired by Philippe II, duc d'Orléans (1674–1723), and a small portion by the latter's father, Philippe I (1640–1701). By French standards they had assembled a remarkably large and good collection of Dutch and Flemish art that made up roughly a third of all their pictures and included work by Rembrandt, Peter Paul Rubens, Anthony van Dyck, Gerard Dou, Frans van Mieris, Caspar Netscher, Cornelis van Poelenburch and Philips Wouwerman. Many of

<sup>20</sup> On Jacques Couché and Jacques Bouillard (eds.), *Galerie du Palais Royal*, 3 vols., 1786–1808, see Atwater, op. cit. (note 14), vol. 1, pp. 216–23; Bähr, op. cit. (note 17), pp. 357–80, esp. p. 359, in which Lebrun is named as the possible instigator of this project. Prigot, op. cit. (note 11), p. 30, suspects that Lebrun's ideas for the *Galerie des peintres* were influenced by the publication of the first volume of the *Galerie du Palais Royal* in 1786.

<sup>21</sup> V.I. Schmidt and J.I. Armstrong-Totten, exhib. cat. *The Orléans Collection*, New Orleans (New Orleans Museum of Art) 2018. I have just a couple of things to say about this exhibition catalogue. The painting by Willem van Mieris in the Louvre, cat. nr. 25, reproduced on pp. 153 and 266, never belonged to Philippe d'Orléans; and inv. nrs. 1551 and 1552 have been switched around. A more important criticism applies to the essay by Françoise Mardrus. "Philippe II d'Orléans's collecting," pp. 51–76, esp. p. 73, where she makes a comparison between the collections of Louis XIV and Philippe II of Orléans and states that the 1683 inventory of the royal collection only lists two Dutch paintings. How-



5 François Dequevauviller and Jean Mathieu after Rembrandt van Rijn, "Le moulin," in *Galerie du Palais Royal*, Paris 1808, vol. 3, pl. 12

those paintings appeared in print between 1786 and 1808 in a voluminous collection catalogue titled *Galerie du Palais Royal*, notably in the very period when the collection was broken up and dispersed (fig. 5).<sup>20</sup>

Compared to the authors of the excellent 2018 exhibition catalogue, *The Orléans Collection*, Spieth has less interest in identifying the paintings.<sup>21</sup> It is also a pity that he makes a contrived attempt to link the collectors' preference for certain subjects with their lifestyle. The large number of pictures in which eroticism, drink and food predominate "seems like a visual reincarnation of the unruly passions [of the dukes of Orléans]" (fig. 6).<sup>22</sup> However, Spieth's emphasis on such a relationship oversimplifies a more complex reality. When selecting a paint-

ever, she fails to mention that the inventory of 1709/10 records far more pictures by German, Flemish and Dutch masters, 179 in all, including 20 Dutch works by artists like Gerard Dou, Cornelis van Poelenburch, Pieter van Laer, Bartholomeus Breenbergh and Jan Davidsz de Heem. For Dutch paintings belonging to Louis XIV and Philippe II of Orléans see E. Korthals Altes "Félibien, de Piles and Dutch seventeenth-century paintings in France," *Simiolus* 34 (2009–10), pp. 194–211.

<sup>22</sup> Spieth, op. cit. (note 3), p. 283. The print by Jean-Louis Delignon that Spieth reproduces on p. 287, fig. 115, is not of a painting by Jan Baptist Weenix but by Nicolaes Knüpfer (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum). The subject is nowadays identified as *Scene from the marriage of Messalina and Gaius Silius*, possibly an episode from a play. Spieth implies that it was acquired by Philippe I or II of Orléans, but that is far from certain. To the best of my knowledge it is not mentioned in the earliest inventories or collection catalogues, such as Louis-François Dubois de Saint Gelais, *Description des tableaux du Palais-Royal*, Paris 1727. See also C. Stryiński, *La Galerie du Régent Philippe Duc d'Orléans*, Paris 1913, p. 109, where



6 Jean-Louis Delignon after Jan Baptist Weenix (now recognized as by Nicolaes Knüpfer), “Gaieté Bachique,” in *Galerie du Palais Royal*, Paris 1808, vol. 3, pl. 28

ing to add to their collection, style and technique almost always played a crucial role in addition to the subject, as did the artist’s reputation and the familiarity of his name. Moreover, the taste of Philippe I and II was far from being as exceptional or personal as Spieth suggests, but in fact more or less matched that of their agents and advisers, or other wealthy collectors of Dutch and Flemish art at that time.<sup>23</sup>

**PRICE RESEARCH** As with real estate, many French art collections changed hands after 1789. Prices fell in response to the oversupply in the market, but that also created opportunities for speculators. So the real question is how good was an investment in art, and Dutch and Flemish painting in particular, before, during and after the French Revolution? Spieth presents quantitative research that he carried out on the basis of Paris auction results. Throughout the 1790s Dutch and Flemish art

lost an average of a little more than half the value it had had at the time of the *ancien régime* (minus 55%). There was a slight revival in the 1800s and 1810s, but in the 1820s the value slipped again with an average loss of 26%. It was only during the July Monarchy of 1830–48 that it regained the ground that it had before the revolution.<sup>24</sup>

Whereas the French Revolution had an obvious impact on the prices of almost every kind of painting, during the Napoleonic and Restoration period the prices paid for paintings from the middle and bottom segments fared better than for the top segment. The most exclusive objects recovered their old value more slowly. Spieth gives the following, fairly obvious explanation for these results. The socio-demographic composition of the art-buying public changed radically after 1789. There was a sharp fall in the number of aristocratic buyers, with their predilection for luxury consumption, and a strong upturn in middle-class customers, who had a more controlled and rational pattern of expenditure.<sup>25</sup>

The situation in Great Britain was very different, of course. Even before the revolution, members of the French aristocracy had been moving their art there for safekeeping. During and in the years following the revolution art dealers regularly made huge profits by persuading British collectors, in particular, to buy paintings from France, which were relatively cheap at the time.

Spieth’s stimulating quantitative study of the Paris art market raises new questions for research. For example, I wonder whether the supply of Dutch and Flemish art from the Low Countries to Paris was fairly constant in the period 1750–1850, or were there fluctuations that influenced the price movements? And what share did wealthy Russian, German and British art lovers have in the price movements of Dutch and Flemish art in Paris before, during and after the French Revolution? And finally, a more specific question: in how many of those transnational transactions did Jean-Baptiste Pierre Lebrun play a part?

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it is assumed that it was bought by Louis Philippe d’Orléans (1725–85).

<sup>23</sup> For a comparison of Philippe II’s collection of paintings with those of other early eighteenth-century French collectors like Pierre Crozat, see the recent study, not mentioned by Spieth, R. Ziskin, *Sheltering art: collecting and social identity in early eighteenth-century Paris*,

University Park 2012. The symposium *The Orléans Collection: tastemaking, networks and legacy* was held in the New Orleans Museum of Art on 11–13 January 2019.

<sup>24</sup> Spieth, *op. cit.* (note 3), p. 391.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 392.