

FRANCE MAKES HISTORY:  
THE *EXPOSITION DES PRIMITIFS FRANÇAIS* AND THE THIRD REPUBLIC

by

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## ABSTRACT

The *Exposition des Primitifs français* opened in the Pavillon de Marsan at the Louvre in 1904, with over 700 paintings, drawings, enamels, sculptures and manuscripts assembled there from French and international collections, both private and public. The exhibition, organized by the most prominent curators, academics and administrators in the Beaux-Arts community, attempted to rewrite French art historical canon by arguing that a heretofore overlooked School of French Primitive art, particularly paintings, had spanned the gap between the acknowledged highpoints of High Gothic sculptural and architectural production and the emergence of the so-called Golden Age of French art in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Organized partly in response to claims of Flemish artistic supremacy at the 1902 *Exposition des Primitifs flamands* at Bruges, the French primitifs were positioned in their 'genius' as parallel to and contemporary with Flemish and Italian early renaissance developments and as a national school equally deserving of academic, aesthetic and historical consideration.

This exhibition, however, must be considered in the context of shifting discourses and contemporary events. The exhibition's *Catalogue Définitif* provides a field for diverse readings of these events and strategies and forms a central part of the analysis and argument. Through an examination of the language choices and focus of the Catalogue's rhetoric, as well as the structure of its argument, this thesis links the exhibition's claims to the contemporary political environment, specifically around Republican issues of a national identity defined in terms of language and culture, as well as issues of immigration and perceived threats to national integrity; Republican attempts to reestablish a distinct

political position between the emerging Left and Right; and a reappropriation of the '*primitif*' from competing national claims and emerging avantgardist definitions.



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## INTRODUCTION

The national culture is a repository, *inter alia*, of classificatory systems. It allows "us" to define ourselves against "them" understood as those beyond the boundaries of the nations. It may also reproduce distinctions between "us" and "them" at the intra-national level, in line with the *internal* structure of social divisions and relations of power and domination. The elaboration of national identity is a chronic process. Of considerable importance is the relationship between the present of a national collectivity and its past. That relationship should be understood, at least in part, as an imaginary one, mediated by the continual, selective reconstitution of "traditions" and of "social memory". These categories direct our attention to the role of cultural institutions and practices through which the chain of identity between past and present is forged. It also requires us to consider the special role of cultural producers as active constructors of national identity.<sup>1</sup>

At 9:30 a.m. on the morning of April 12, 1904, M. Henri Marcel, the Director of Fine Arts, acting on behalf of the Minister of Public Education, opened the *Exposition des Primitifs français* in the Pavillon de Marsan wing of the Musée du Louvre and its companion exhibit at the Bibliothèque Nationale. This grandly staged exhibition of over 700 works was meant to display an ongoing legacy of great French art in the era from the late fourteenth to the mid-sixteenth century. It was scheduled to run for three months, closing on the highly symbolic date of July 14, 1904<sup>2</sup>, just before the Pavillon and the adjacent wing were to be reopened as the Musée des Arts décoratifs in 1905<sup>3</sup>. This exhibition focused primarily on paintings and drawings, but also included sculpture, tapestries and other

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<sup>1</sup>Philip Schlesinger, "On national identity: some conceptions and misconceptions criticized," *Social Science* 26,2 (1987): 264. Emphasis in original.

<sup>2</sup>*Journal des Débats*, Thursday, April 7, 1904: 2.

<sup>3</sup>Yvan Christ, *Le Louvre et les Tuileries: Histoire Architecturale d'un double Palais* (Paris: Les Éditions «Tel», 1949): 130; and Jacques Hillairet [Auguste André Coussillan], *Le Palais des Tuileries: Le Palais Royal et Impérial et Son Jardin* ([Paris]: Les Éditions de Minuit, [1965]): 100.

objects as 'supporting documentation'.<sup>4</sup> Emphasizing primarily portraiture (or works claimed as portraiture) this exhibition promoted a school of French art that spanned the period between the great architectural achievements of the thirteenth century when France was renowned as the centre of the International Gothic style and the so-called classical period of French art beginning with the sixteenth century School of Fontainebleau. Those intervening centuries had long been perceived as a lacuna in the French art production, a gap which this exhibition intended to fill.

In just two years Henri Bouchot, Conservateur du Département des Estampes at the Bibliothèque Nationale, together with six prominent curators and specialists from the Institut Français, the Musée du Louvre and other prestigious institutions, had assembled works from private and public collections in France and from as far away as Berlin and Glasgow. They even went to great lengths to 'harvest' regional museums, distant churches and monasteries, and even government offices for little-known works to support the exhibition's claims.<sup>5</sup>

Organizers prepared at least two catalogues to accompany the exhibition: the *Catalogue Définitif* and a special edition Catalogue; both contained an introductory essay by Georges Lafenestre, the Conservateur des Peintures at the Louvre, and descriptive entries for all pieces exhibited, edited by Henri Bouchot, Conservateur du Département des Estampes at the Bibliothèque Nationale. The exhibition and its catalogues made

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<sup>4</sup>*Les Primitifs Français exposés au Pavillon de Marsan et à la Bibliothèque Nationale, Catalogue définitif* (Paris: La Comité de l'Exposition des Primitifs français): 107. Hereinafter referred to as *Catalogue Définitif*.

<sup>5</sup>Henri Bouchot, "L'exposition des primitifs français: Avant-propos," *Gazette des beaux-arts* Série 3, 31, 562 (April 1904): 267. Hereinafter referred to as Bouchot, "...Avant-propos."

specific and overt claims that these art works in the period from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century comprised a significant, singularly French artistic production, an important part of the evolution of an original national 'genius', later overcome and subsumed by the influence of Italianate schools in the mid-sixteenth century. Thus it was positioned in opposition to traditional assertions of the supremacy of the Netherlandish and Italian schools of the same period. The exhibition and its catalogues asserted unequivocally that these heretofore ignored French Primitives had in fact influenced Flemish artistic developments of the fifteenth century, rather than the reverse and more commonly held belief that the Flemish themselves had originated the northern stylistic tradition. In fact, the exhibition dared to suggest that there had been a French Renaissance (or, as Bouchot and Lafenestre preferred to describe it, a continuing development) parallel to, or even preceding the classical revivals of the Italian Renaissance.

The concept of a linear development of artistic practice was a given in academic and connoisseurship discussions of this period. Long before the science of evolution had circulated during the mid-nineteenth century, the ideas of a linkage between artistic movements and of progressive artistic development from pre-historical to modern times had become part of art historical practice and the conceptualization of the art historical canon; scholars sought in contemporary objects their roots in the past acknowledged 'masters'. Deviations in style were accounted for by theories about the melding of disparate traditions, or in the 'overpowering' of one tradition by another. From at least the mid-eighteenth century, the Renaissance (Italian, that is) had been epitomised as the

beginning of the modern period's reclamation of classical knowledge superseding the 'ignorance' of the so-called Dark and Middle Ages when perspective and anatomy had been forgotten. And from that point on, cultural evolution had been seen as an unchallenged straight line forward to the present day. In the later eighteenth century a rival school of thought extolled the virtues of an indigenous Northern European style, suggesting that, during the late fifteenth century, the independent development of a rival mode of expression from Netherlandish sources had blended a Northern sense of immediacy, naturalism and realism with an Italian sense of perspective and proportion to produce the great developments of the sixteenth and later centuries, epitomised by artists such as Jan van Eyck. Paralleling the growth of nationalistic ideologies in the last half of the nineteenth century, however, was a further fractioning of this Northern stream into German, Flemish and Netherlandish styles, just as the overall 'Italian' sobriquet had been divided into Florentine, Venetian, Roman, etc. The Northern sub-styles overlapped and re-divided into multiple style groups geographically based around cities or under specific ruling groups. At the start of the twentieth century, these dual streams of Italian and Netherlandish art were accepted by scholars, collectors and artists alike as the basis and origin of all contemporary European art and historical analysis.

The *Exposition des Primitifs français*, however, broke from this seamless history. Georges Lafenestre and Henri Bouchot presented a new theory: namely that, from Roman architectural sources through to the images produced in the so-called Dark Ages and the later magnificence of Gothic cathedrals and manuscript illuminations flowed a single (French) line of evolution and creative development leading up to "a more natural and free



Renaissance..., a Renaissance above all more national, more spontaneous, and which bloomed effortlessly, joyously, as a wildflower, naive and fresh and in its own time, from the strong stem of secular tradition."<sup>6</sup> In their argument, Flemish art and its related schools in Germany were viewed as merely offshoots of the central French stalk of artistic development. In comparison with French originality, the Italian Renaissance was simply "a sizable imitation of antiquity badly translated by the decadent Italians"<sup>7</sup>. The French, they claimed, thus had preeminence over the Italians, Belgians, and Germans, for in French art there had been no 'dark ages,' but a subtle and steadfast continuation of the Golden Age of Greece tied directly through to the Golden Age of France.

Importantly, this French 'Renaissance' was not rooted in the Church - the emphasis on 'secular' in the above quotation cannot be clearer. In discussing this revisionist history, Lafenestre set up a series of polarities, such as court and nation; aristocratic and popular; forced and natural, which delineated France's art production in the formative years of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as a national, secular, popular (i.e., non-aristocratic) and naturalistically based art, exactly the kind of art production which the governing Republicans were themselves promoting in 1904.

The *Exposition des primitifs français*, then, asserted the supremacy and continuity of French art production by extending its authority back from the Classical period of the seventeenth century to the end of the High Gothic to bridge a gap in the French art

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<sup>6</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, XXI: "...Renaissance plus naturelle et plus libre..., Renaissance plus nationale surtout, plus spontanée, et s'épanouissant sans efforts, joyeusement, comme une fleur de terroir, naive et fraîche, sortie, en sa juste saison, de la tige robuste des traditions séculaires."

<sup>7</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, XXI: "...fondée sur une imitation matérielle de l'antiquité mal traduite par les décadents italiens...."

historical continuum. What my thesis also argues is that this exhibition was a product of and produced within a framework of other discourses which concerned issues such as the identity of France, the reassertion of a Republicanism situated between polarizing political positions, and the reappropriation of the '*primitif*' from both an emerging avant-garde definition and alternative national interpretations. Central to this positioning was the articulation of a particular 'Frenchness', both in national and international terms. Through the medium of art and art historical discussion a specific formulation of 'France' was written for a bourgeois, 'French' viewing public.

In completing this analysis I work primarily with the text of the principal catalogue to show how the arguments presented in its introductory essay and the entries worked in conjunction with the images to reconstitute the art historical canon. The paintings and drawings, individually and collectively, were arranged in a particular order and the text re-framed them with particular inferences arising from that imposed order. In the context of this exhibition they worked together: the text inscribed meaning in conjunction with these images, largely unfamiliar to the exhibition's public; however, the text conveyed the exhibition's 'message', even without the supporting documentation provided by the images themselves. In other words, the images were in some senses secondary to and supportive of the textual construction surrounding them; the text had (and has) a separate and independent circulation that constructed meanings outside the experience and physical boundaries of the exhibition.

An examination of this exhibition, its construction, representation and milieu provokes a series of questions: Why was this exhibition held? What differentiates this

exhibition from others in this period? What is worth noting about this particular collection exhibited at this time? Why were the fundamental claims about the primacy of French cultural production made in this exhibition being asserted (or reasserted) in 1904? What was the climate which supported collecting so many works of art into one location? To what end and to whose benefit was this event contemplated? The position and function of this thesis then is to deconstruct the events surrounding the exhibition to reveal the structures and forces implicated in the creation of the exhibition and to discover why this event was so thoroughly discussed, debated and yet is now comparatively unmentioned. The very few works that have discussed this exhibition have approached it primarily as a French response to the rising and conflicting claims of nationalism being made in Europe in the later years of the nineteenth century and the pre-World War I period.<sup>8</sup> Analysis of the *Exposition des Primitifs français* can move beyond the purely nationalistic and externally focused enterprise it has been made out to be by these historians only by investigating the wider and more complexly defined milieu surrounding the exhibition. In addition, it is also valuable to consider some of the contradictory and complementary issues surrounding the idea of 'the exhibition', the 'history' it was trying to re/write, and the function of the written documentation as accompaniment to and residue of an

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<sup>8</sup>Charles Rosen and Henri Zerner, "The Recovery of the Past and the Modern Tradition," *Romanticism and Realism: The Mythology of Nineteenth Century Art* (London and Boston: Faber and Faber Limited, 1984); and Francis Haskell, *History and its Images: Art and the Interpretation of the Past* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993) are the only two works I have discovered in the course of my research which discuss this exhibition in any detail. Haskell in particular frames his argument around the discussion of the claims of a 1902 Belgian exhibition, the *Exposition des Primitifs flamands*, and posits the Paris exhibition as a response to those claims and other comments about French stewardship of their own national, cultural heritage. While this is certainly a worthwhile element to this discussion, more layers than these need to be explored.

ephemeral and temporally located event, occurring in a specific place and at a specific time.

This thesis, then, offers the following arguments. First, the exhibition itself was positioned within an ongoing series of 'nationalistic' art exhibitions occurring from the mid-nineteenth century on, but extended the genre of retrospective and stand-alone exhibitions even further with its claims of national excellence. It attempted to rewrite what was previously accepted; in other words, the didactic content of exhibitions had shifted from supporting the 'known' to claiming the 'unknown'. Second, the exhibition occurred within and was framed around specific contemporary events and opinions. By deconstructing the rhetorical devices and allusions used in the texts, word and image, which comprised the discourses surrounding the exhibition, I assert that, through the medium of the exhibition and its catalogue, the curators were in fact discussing contemporary political events, both internal and external to France, and the exhibition's stance for this school of French art formed both a retrospective redressing and correction of an art history perceived as faulty and as a commentary on present political situations and issues. The impact of Flemish immigration on the northwest borders and ongoing tension with Italy over French efforts to secularize the educational system, for example, are implicated in the arguments presented in the discourse constructed by *Exposition des Primitifs français* to devalue, or rather diminish the Italian and Flemish claims to a 'primitif' and Renaissance art production. The exhibition thus couched contemporary situations and beliefs in a Republican interpretation of historical images.

My third argument considers how the art historical contentions of the *Exposition des Primitifs français* can be seen as a Janus-faced and paradoxical attempt, on the one hand to reassert a centrality and supremacy of established art historical institutions amid a perceived dispersal and therefore weakening of the authoritative voice of the Paris/Louvre/ institutional paradigm, while on the other to propose an ultimately radical theory of French art production in the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries. The art historical and curatorial endeavour of the *Exposition des Primitifs français* extended beyond the exhibition to affect the entire conception of European art history -- simultaneously radicalizing its content by advancing a French *primitif* in opposition to accepted Italian and Flemish genealogies, while at the same time reinforcing the centrality of French academic and museum institutions. The focus of this thesis, therefore, is not to re-argue the merits, or lack thereof, of the theories presented in favour of and against the 'rehabilitation' of a school of French Primitives. Rather, it is to examine why such arguments occurred at that specific time and the reasons for the vehemence and incidence of them. Why, in other words, did this exhibition occur when and how it did? To what end was it organized and what was the outcome or result or effect of the claims made there?

To this end it is important to note that Henri Bouchot, Georges Lafenestre and their colleagues intended the *Exposition des Primitifs français* as a reply to a Bruges exhibition of 1902, the *Exposition des Primitifs flamands*.<sup>9</sup> The official catalogue of the Belgian

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<sup>9</sup>The exhibition title is variously recorded (as is the *Exposition des Primitifs français*), but for consistency I will stay with *Exposition des Primitifs flamands*, as it was referred to in the French press. The exhibition ran for three and half months (from June to September 1902, extended by two weeks due to demand) and attracted some 35,000 visitors and a wide response in journals and newspapers, according to Weale's article (W.H. James Weale, "The Early Painters of the Netherlands as illustrated by the Bruges Exhibition of 1902 [2 parts]," *Burlington Magazine* 1, 1 and 2 (March and April 1902): 41-52 and 202-217). Regrettably, I have

exhibition, authored by the English scholar, W.H. James Weale, extolled the virtues of the Flemish works as a means of recouping an ignored Belgian heritage. An alternative *Catalogue Critique* written by a young scholar, Georges Hulin de Loo<sup>10</sup>, while proclaiming that he had 'solved' some of the mysteries of Northern European art history, pointedly asserted at the same time that the French should emulate the Belgians in salvaging their own past. Hulin de Loo directly challenged the French art establishment; he argued that the French public was unfamiliar with much fifteenth and sixteenth century French art simply because it was not hung in the public galleries and, when examples were displayed, they were mis-attributed by French curators and academics to German, Flemish or Dutch painters. To add further injury, he asked disingenuously:

Is it by ignorance or thoughtlessness that [France] neglects its treasures? Is [France] waiting until a foreigner, some patient German scholar, applies himself to researching the few works, to their reproduction and their study, and, by means of his approach, work and persistence, succeeds in demonstrating to the eyes of France and of the world what had been, before the Italian hybridization, the French national art?<sup>11</sup>

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been unable to locate the original Weale catalogue, *Exposition des Primitifs flamand et de l'art ancien* (Bruges, 1902), for comparison and have had to rely on secondhand quotations and references in Weale's article.

Francis Haskell, in *History and its Images*, places the exhibition firmly within the so-called Flemish Renaissance movement of the period. I agree that it is part of the cultural movement of the time; he does not, however, expand the discussion to more complex political, economic and ideological territory which would have made the event's timing and relevance even more compelling.

<sup>10</sup>Georges Hulin de Loo, *Bruges 1902: Exposition de Tableaux Flamandes des XIV<sup>e</sup>, XV<sup>e</sup> et XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles - Catalogue Critique* (Gand: A. Siffer, Libraire-Éditeur, 1902).

<sup>11</sup>Hulin de Loo, *Bruges 1902:...*, LVIII:

Est-ce par inconscience ou par insouciance qu'elle laisse les trésors dans l'oubli? - Attend-elle qu'un étranger, l'un ou l'autre patient érudit Allemand; s'attache à la recherche des oeuvres éparses, à leur reproduction et à leur étude, et qu'à force de démarches, de labeur et d'obstination, il arrive enfin à montrer aux yeux de la France et du monde quel a été, avant l'hybridation italienne, l'art national français?

Such a telling insult prompted a swift response. By January 1903, an article by Henri Bouchot in the French periodical, *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, announced a retaliatory exhibition, albeit in an editor's footnote:

It was last August, in returning from the *Exposition des primitifs flamands de Bruges*, that M. Henri Bouchot launched, in the journal, *L'Éclair*, an *Exposition des Primitifs français* project. His rallying cry has everywhere found a reply; numerous and delighted supporters have contacted the scholarly curator at the Cabinet des Estampes, which permit him to consider henceforth the realization of his idea.<sup>12</sup>

A comparatively brief fourteen months later, the *Exposition des Primitifs français* was opened.

Georges Lafenestre, too, in his opening essay to the *Exposition des Primitifs français's Catalogue Définitif*, confirmed that the Flemish show had been the main impetus to the creation of the Paris event when he writes "[t]he invitation, furnished by the *Exposition des Primitifs flamands*, at Bruges, in 1902, for a methodical and scientific comparison of two contemporary arts, fraternal and alike, was too seductive to avoid."<sup>13</sup> The direct link between the events is clearly recognized and acknowledged. But is that

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The reference to a German scholar 'discovering' French artistic roots must have especially rankled French readers.

<sup>12</sup>Henri Bouchot, "L'exposition des primitifs français: de quelques portraits de peintre Jean Fouquet aujourd'hui perdus," *La Revue de l'art ancien et moderne* 13, 70 (Janvier 1903): 1:

C'est en août dernier, au retour de l'*Exposition des primitifs flamands de Bruges*, que M. Henri Bouchot avait lancé, dans le journal *l'Éclair*, le projet d'une *Exposition des primitifs français*. Son appel a partout trouvé de l'écho de nombreuses et flatteuses adhésions sont parvenues au savant conservateur du Cabinet des Estampes, qui lui permettent de considérer désormais comme certaine la réalisation de son idée.

<sup>13</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, XXX: "L'invitation, fournie par l'admirable *Exposition des Primitifs flamands*, à Bruges, en 1902, à une comparaison méthodique et scientifique de deux arts contemporains, fraternels et jumeaux, était trop séduisantes pour qu'on s'y dérobat."

all? Even though the academic sensibilities of the Louvre and the French art establishment had undoubtedly been stung by Hulin de Loo's observations, the launching of an enterprise such as the *Exposition des Primitifs français* must have been predicated on a political and cultural climate that encouraged what seems to have been a rapid (and reactive) organization of this event<sup>14</sup> Other factors, attitudes and influences must have been at play to support such an expenditure of time, effort and the relatively scarce funding for fine arts.<sup>15</sup>

Republican ideology that was elucidated in public policies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and as viewed through this reading of the *Exposition des Primitifs français* can be described as centrist and moderating, or, as historian François Furet phrases it, "a conservative authority governing in the name of revolutionary values"<sup>16</sup> From the first years of the Third Republic, the liberal bourgeois government had gradually moved to a more centrist position, so that by 1904, the middle year of the Waldeck-

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<sup>14</sup>Although I have found no evidence specifically supporting this notion, it is quite possible that the idea of an *Exposition des Primitifs français* had been considered for a considerable time prior to the actual announcement, possibly in response to early publicity about the Bruges exhibit which was probably evident as early as 1901.

<sup>15</sup>An avenue of investigation unavailable to me during the course of my research is an examination of contemporary fiscal records of the Ministry of Education and Fine Arts. A profitable and enlightening endeavour would be to explore the costs incurred by the *Exposition des Primitifs français* and to determine from which ministry this funding was derived. Surely the costs would have been quite large - too large for the standard budget of the Beaux-Arts section of the Ministry to cover without special funding being allocated. The patriotism of French patrons and lenders might account for some of the expenses; however, one cannot presume that all lenders, especially foreign ones, absorbed the full cost of transportation, insurance, etc.

<sup>16</sup>François Furet, "The Birth of History in France," *In the Workshop of History*, trans. Jonathan Mandelbaum (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1984): 92.



Rousseau government<sup>17</sup>, the Bloc Républicain comprised a mixture of political stripes including the Socialist, Millerand, as well as more centrist conservatives moving away from the right wing. Memories of the Communards and the turbulent Boulangist years of the later 1880's produced a more conservative Republicanism.<sup>18</sup> Judith Stone's analysis of the ruling Republicans in this period indicates that, as the Radicals consolidated their position within government, their political tendencies edged toward the centre of the spectrum; this was a means of preserving the power they had thus far achieved by stripping away the more Jacobinist elements.<sup>19</sup> The ruling Bloc supported pragmatic values of stability and consistency which focused on the individual; these included both free enterprise and notions of public service and duty to the state as one of the privileges and rights of the citizen.<sup>20</sup> The individual could act and think as an individual while maintaining "society as a the collectivity of individuals".<sup>21</sup>

The place of art and its institutional manifestations within this Republican ideological framework has been discussed in great detail by a range of historians, such as Miriam

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<sup>17</sup>Under President Ernest Combes, it was in power from 1902-1906. R.D. Anderson, *France 1870-1914: Politics and Society* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977): 77-78.

<sup>18</sup>Anderson, 18; André Roussel and Jean Sgard, *Histoire de France à travers les journaux du temps passée*, Vol. 3: La Belle Époque (1898-1914) (Paris: A l'Enseigne de l'arbre verdoyant, A. Colin, 1982): 78.

<sup>19</sup>Judith F. Stone, "The Radicals and the Interventionist State: Attitudes, Ambiguities and Transformations, 1880-1910," *French History* 2, 2 (1988): 185.

<sup>20</sup>Miriam Levin, *Republican Art and Ideology in Late Nineteenth Century France* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1986): 68.

<sup>21</sup>Levin, 19.

Levin and Daniel J. Sherman<sup>22</sup>; these authors, however, have focused predominately on the contemporary production of art in analyzing, for example, the Salons, the *envoi* method of distributing annual Salon purchases to provincial centres, and the development and fostering of an 'official' art style. The *Exposition des Primitifs français*, as I will show, represents the culmination of a parallel but very different tactic of using art within that Republican ideological structure. Contemporary production exemplified the nation's present level of achievement and projected the future development of the French state and its citizens under Republican rule. The historical exhibition as it had evolved from the *Rétrospectives* at the *Expositions Universelles*<sup>23</sup> demonstrated both the custodial role of the Third Republic in preserving the national patrimony as well as the multifaceted artistic roots of contemporary technological and artistic expertise. Republican art policies at the end of the nineteenth century proclaimed artistic practice as an intrinsic part of the liberal democratic state. As cultural historian Nicholas Green has described, the levels and depths of Republican governmental involvement in French cultural affairs were not simply the totalising imposition of government on the governed, but rather a constant and often unsuccessful negotiation with the existing structures of civil society. Moreover, as he

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<sup>22</sup>Miriam Levin, previously cited and Daniel J. Sherman in "The Bourgeoisie, Cultural Appropriation, and the Art Museum in Nineteenth-Century France" (*Radical History Review* 38 (1987): 38-58) and *Worthy Monuments: Art, Museums and the Politics of Culture in Nineteenth Century France* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

<sup>23</sup>Often, these exhibitions were limited to a consideration of relatively short periods of artistic production (i.e., ten, twenty or one hundred years) and were often linked with symbolic dates (for example, the Retrospective for the 1889 Exposition Universelle commemorated the centennial of the Revolution). See Richard D. Mandrell, *Paris 1900: The Great World's Fair* (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1967) and Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988) for general discussions of the World's Fair phenomenon.

argues, state intellectuals and administrators were not the source and origin of such initiatives; their decisions and directives were always framed by a deeper level of economic, political and intellectual structuration. Nevertheless, focusing on the precise history of official policy and departments does provide one crucial point of access to the reworked definition of art and its role under the Republican hegemony.<sup>24</sup>

The theoretical principles outlined by Green and others<sup>25</sup> to address the manufacture of art during the Third Republic can also be applied to the *Exposition des Primitifs français* because the exhibition discourse incorporates many of the same principles in recouping the art production of an earlier historical period into the ideological framework of the contemporary one. Thus, while the elements described in both Levin and Sherman were applied to production in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, I have used their work to inform my analysis of the display of historical works from a much earlier period at the *Primitifs* exhibition. The production values of the official art of the time were under question -- seen as formulaic and sterile -- and the *Exposition des Primitifs français* provided a new milieu in which to make similar claims without incurring the bored response the Salons had inspired in recent years.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Nicholas Green, "'All the Flowers of the Field': the State, Liberalism and Art in France under the early Third Republic," *The Oxford Art Journal* 10, 1 (1987): 73.

<sup>25</sup>See note 21, above.

<sup>26</sup>French historian and reviewer André Michel apologized to his readers for not having reviewed the 1904 Salon, but "this exhibition [i.e., the *Exposition des Primitifs français*] is so interesting and so exceptional...that perhaps you will permit me perhaps to delay still longer" ("cette exposition est si interressante et si exceptionnelle...qu'on me permettra peut'etre de m'y attarder encore"). André Michel, "Causerie Artistique V: L'Exposition des Primitifs français," *Journal des Débats* (29 April 1904): 1.

The Third Republic, like its predecessors in the Second Empire and Restoration periods, was well aware that the institutions of the fine arts were important purveyors of a cultural atmosphere that could be harnessed to inculcate the nation with ideological tenets central to and supportive of the current regime. From this perspective, the successive governments of the Third Republic utilized the Louvre, the Salon system and other cultural events such as the *Exposition Universelles* as conduits for France's self-imaging as a modern nation concerned with an ever-more enlightened future. Recent retrospective analyses have revealed the subtexts of political posturing and national self-assertion interwoven through the apparent motivations of institutional display and commerce. In the *Exposition des Primitifs français*, too, there are subtexts which implicate a wider political agenda within the construction of its art historical claims. Historian Miriam Levin recognized that Republican aesthetics served ideological goals both by developing an 'official' style of art designed to "manipulate human psychology and social behaviour" and by regarding historical works as "so many insights into the sensibilities and production systems of older societies,...turn[ing] the past into a point of reference for determining the character their own [Republican] society's products ought to have."<sup>27</sup> The ostensible democratization of art through public museums and the Salons went against the mostly elitist tendencies of the *fonctionnaires* in charge of the art institutions like the Louvre, the *École des Beaux-Arts*, and the *Institut Français*. The positions of these *fonctionnaires* endured from one regime to another with the goal of keeping things

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<sup>27</sup>Levin, 13.

the same and not risking change or the threat of the new.<sup>28</sup> Their role was to protect and preserve the national patrimony, inherited via the Revolution from the Ancien Regime, for the benefit and general use of the Nation.<sup>29</sup> With this in mind then, the question becomes: how did the claims of the *Exposition des Primitifs français* operate outside the professed arguments made in the *Catalogue Définitif*? As I will argue, the *Exposition des Primitifs français* can be constituted as a textual and visual metaphor for the contemporary French and European environment as perceived by the Republican government and ruling elite. The *Exposition des Primitifs français* proposed a smooth historical continuum, but underlying and threatening that seamless historical scenario of a once unified, francophone, artistically autonomous and centralized nation was the implication of a France beleaguered by Italian, ultramontane and papally-linked artists invading from the south at the same time that the northwest provinces were falling under the pervasive influence of a Flemish internationalist presence. And while medieval Paris was struggling to remain the central controlling force for the nation, a dispersal of talent and power to provincial capitals was weakening the continuity and consistency of French (artistic) production and authority in the face of immigrant workers taking the place of the French-born.

The foregoing outline provides almost too neat an analogy for the fears of the Paris-based Republicans at the turn of the twentieth century. External forces of the

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<sup>28</sup>Jeanne Laurent, *Arts et pouvoir en France de 1793 à 1981: Histoire d'une démission artistique*, Universitaire de Saint-Étienne, Travaux 34 (Saint-Étienne: Centre Interdisciplinaire d'Études et de Recherches sur l'Expression Contemporaine, 1981): 10.

<sup>29</sup>Jean-Pierre Babelon and André Chastel, "La notion de patrimoine," *Revue de l'Art* 49 (1980): 19.

ultramontane Catholic conservatives were gathering momentum in the wake of the Dreyfus Affair while, at the same time, leftist groups were breaking away from the Republican centrist position to ally themselves with more Radical elements espousing internationalism of a different kind: socialism. Political leadership on the right, typified by Barrès, called for a return to dispersed democracy. An influx of Belgian and Italian workers into the border provinces in the northwest and southeast were displacing French workers, a situation that fostered local and national distrust of such temporary populations who with little or no stake in France carried their French wages back across international borders.<sup>30</sup>

To elaborate on these issues, this thesis considers the question of the wider application of the visual argument of the *Exposition des Primitifs français* in four chapters, each dealing with specific issues. First, I examine the exhibition itself: where it was held, its contents and their arrangement, as well as the milieu of exhibitions of which the *Exposition des Primitifs français* was but one part. This examination demonstrates how the *Exposition des Primitifs français* constructed the viewing of its contents and how that viewing reinforced the ideological messages of the exhibition. In the second chapter, I investigate how the catalogues, and particularly the *Catalogue Définitif*, formed the textual argument, first as supplement to the visual experience of the *Exposition des Primitifs français* and second as a separate construction of the overall exhibition argument; the use of language, the formulation of the argument and the circulation of the catalogues all

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<sup>30</sup>Firmin Lientacker, "La Situation des travailleurs belges en France de 1871 à 1914," *Les Relations franco-belges de 1830 à 1934*, Actes de Colloque de Metz November 15-16, 1974 (Metz: Centre de recherches relations Internationales de l'Université de Metz, 1975): 175.

are considered as elements of the textual argument. Then, in Chapter Three, I consider the political and artistic climate and community within and outside France during the period leading up to and surrounding the exhibition in an attempt to unravel different readings of the *Catalogue Définitif* and the complex agenda of alternate meanings that can be derived from it; this chapter also locates the term '*primitif*' within contemporary usage and practice and discusses how the *Exposition des Primitifs français* and the Musée du Louvre, the institutional body supporting the exhibition, reappropriated this term in order to defuse the radical overtones of other usage. And in the fourth chapter, I place the arguments surrounding the exhibition's avowed intent within a framework of responses by major periodicals and journals of the time, both domestic and foreign, using the *Catalogue Définitif* and the position taken by the curators as a counterpoint to the support, or lack of it, for that position. The Conclusion includes a brief review of subsequent accounts of French art history to investigate what the long range impact of the *Exposition des Primitifs français* was on the 'rewriting' of that history.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE 'EVENT'

The museum's primary function is ideological. It is meant to impress upon those who use or pass through it society's most revered beliefs and values.<sup>31</sup>

Analysis of a long-past event is an inherently conjectural process. Temporality and ephemerality are the essence of an experience and to re-create that experience is impossible. This chapter attempts, however, to reconstruct the *Exposition des Primitifs français* to some extent, first, by delving into written descriptions of the exhibition to understand how the physical layout and siting of the exhibition became an important part of the discourse of the exhibition; second, by examining this exhibition as part of a continuum of exhibition practices occurring throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth as a forum for nationalistic expressions voiced in cultural terminology and settings; and third, by discussing the 1902 *Exposition des Primitifs flamands* held in Bruges, Belgium, as the direct precursor to and professed impetus for the *Exposition des Primitifs français* held two years later.

The French exhibition which M. Marcel so eagerly opened had been constructed for the maximum effect on the public viewership it was trying to attract. Four analytical elements, those of content, site, timing, and organization, provide a framework for 're-visualizing' the *Exposition des Primitifs français*.

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<sup>31</sup>Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach, "The Universal Survey Museum", *Art History* 3, 4 (December 1980): 449.



In purely numerical terms<sup>32</sup>, out of the 701 objects the exhibition displayed, there were 459 paintings, drawings and mural copies, as well as 23 tapestries, 25 enamels and 58 sculptures at the Pavillon de Marsan; and 242 manuscripts and miniatures at the Bibliothèque Nationale several blocks away. The visual preponderance of paintings and drawings (64% of the objects shown) was reinforced by curator Paul Vitry's introduction to the Sculptures section of the *Catalogue Définitif* in which he clearly placed all other genres of objects in the exhibition in a secondary and supporting role:

The few pieces here described which make no pretence of constituting a complete presentation show the development and essential works of French sculpture in the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries. They are reunited here simply to add to the decoration of the Exposition rooms and to offer at the same time some characteristic examples for comparison of the evolution of French painting and those of sculpture. They have been borrowed almost in their entirety from Parisian collections.<sup>33</sup>

This is an important emphasis: although not specifically entitled *L'Exposition des Peintures primitifs français*, the weight and focus of the discourse surrounding the claims of the *Exposition des Primitifs français* was on the painted and drawn works it contained. The qualities and levels of production exemplified in the enamels, tapestries, and especially the sculptures and manuscripts were apparently unchallenged or unchallenging; thus the field of combat lay in the drawn and painted images. It was here that Henri Bouchot,

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<sup>32</sup>Refer to appendix 1 for a detailed breakdown of the exhibition by type of work, content and lender.

<sup>33</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, 107:

Les quelques pièces dont suit l'indication n'ont pas la prétention de constituer une série complète, montrant le développement et les oeuvres essentielles de la sculpture française aux XIV<sup>e</sup>, XV<sup>e</sup> et XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles. Elles ont été réunies simplement pour contribuer à la décoration des salles de l'Exposition et pour offrir en même temps quelques termes de comparaison caractéristiques entre l'évolution de la peinture française et celle de la sculpture. Elles ont été empruntées presque uniquement à des collections parisiennes.

chief curator of the *Exposition des Primitifs français*, and Georges Lafenestre, the author of the Introduction, contended that French creative superiority in painting and drawing had been continuous and particular.

Analysis of the ownership of the objects according to nationality of lenders and city of origin shows that the majority of lenders unsurprisingly were, first, French or domiciled in France and, second, private owners. Educated, and numbering among them current and past government ministers and bureaucrats, as well as members of the Institut Français and the art-historical establishment, the Paris-centred owners loaned their works to the Louvre, in a sense, in order to show their own art to themselves and each other. Each had an interest, whether political, personal or economic, in promoting the re-interpreted content of the works and, by displaying their possessions in the central national cultural institution, they were also establishing their status as owners of recouped, and therefore more valuable, 'masterworks'.<sup>34</sup> It is interesting and ironic to note that, of the 25 works borrowed from non-Parisian institutions (though comprising only 13% of the total show), four of the five highlights of the exhibition<sup>35</sup> were from institutions and sites outside the Ile-de-France/Paris hub. Their 'freshness' to the critics might have contributed to this response, but it points to the frailty of the Louvre's position as the repository of all of France's greatest treasures.

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<sup>34</sup>See appendix 1 for detailed information.

<sup>35</sup>By this, I mean the greatest number of mentions in the extensive periodical coverage of the *Exposition des Primitifs français*. These were: the *Buisson Ardent* (fig. 16) from Aix; the *Triomphe de la Vierge Marie* (fig. 17) and the *Pietà* (fig. 18), both from Villeneuve-lès-Avignon; the Melun Diptych, the two wings reunited here from their galleries in Antwerp and Berlin (fig. 15 and 24); and the *Portrait de Jean le Bon* (fig. 26), which, though local, was hidden from general view in the Bibliothèque Nationale.

Site is the second important element in analyzing the exhibition's discourse surrounding the claims for a French *primitif* by the curators. The *Exposition des Primitifs français* was housed in the Pavillon de Marsan (fig. 1), a section with considerable Republican resonance. Severely damaged during the Commune uprising in 1871, along with most of the Aile Nord and the Bibliothèque du Louvre, its ruins had been used in the early days of the Republic as a symbol of the valour of the true Republican hero battling to save that icon of France, the Louvre, from the depredations of the Communards.<sup>36</sup> Rebuilt after 1872, its west-facing facade (fig. 2) had been harmonized architecturally with that of the Pavillon de Flore on the south wing in the much older style of Henri IV, whose reign (1595-1610) was symbolic of the beginnings of France's Golden Age of the seventeenth century.<sup>37</sup>

The Louvre was the ideal institution in which to hold an exhibition claiming French artistic supremacy. Previously a royal palace, it had been turned into a public national museum (and later an art school) after the French Revolution and had long since attained standing as the fulcrum of French artistic production. Here were housed the proofs of French greatness as well as the booty of past conquests; here too was centred the arbiters of taste and 'quality' in current artistic production. As a social space, the Louvre drew its specific audience for various purposes: pretence and erudition, entertainment and excellence. Under Republican auspices, the Louvre performed the dual functions as the central democratic site, accessible by all, where a national 'taste' was housed and as a

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<sup>36</sup>Christiane Aulanier, *Histoire du Palais et du Musée du Louvre*, Vol. IV, *Le nouveau Louvre de Napoleon III* (Paris: Éditions des Musées Nationaux, 1961): 19.

<sup>37</sup>Christ, 130.

complement to contemporary art production in state art schools and in the salons administered by them.<sup>38</sup> This siting of the *Exposition des Primitifs français* then reinforced the state involvement and support for the nationalist arguments for a French *primitif*.

On the other hand, the *Exposition des Primitifs français*, though organized under the auspices of the Musée du Louvre, had been located in the most remote wing of Louvre, perhaps simply because of the sheer size of the show. The site of the exhibition was thus physically distant, marginalized from the central 'body' of the Louvre, and perhaps marginalized too from all it represented. Located in the northern wing, it was thus more associated with the *Musée des Arts décoratifs*, scheduled for opening in 1905<sup>39</sup>, than with the edifice of academic and institutionalized art historical practices represented by the main buildings and collections of the Louvre. The contents of the exhibition were similarly fraught with ambivalence from the beginning: the curators were asserting both an inclusionary status to the works they presented, while at the same time they placed them outside the body of the very edifice of which they are supposedly a part. These seeming paradoxes reinforce my contention that this endeavour was simultaneously a radicalizing and a conservatizing act -- adding to, yet critical, of the canonical assumptions which had excluded French influence on the sixteenth century Renaissance.

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<sup>38</sup>Levin, 108.

<sup>39</sup>Hillairet, 100; Christ, 130. In the review by Camille Benoit ("Les primitifs français: La peinture du XVe siècle," *La Revue de Paris* 11, 5 (May 1904): 189), the wing is already referred to as the *Musée des Arts décoratifs*.

The timing of this exhibition is a third element permitting further understanding of the *Exposition des Primitifs français*. First of all, I am taking the notion of timing to refer also to access to the exhibition. The audience experience is constructed at various stages in the process of experiencing the 'event'. By imposing an entry fee of 1 franc per person and setting exhibition hours between 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., access to the exhibition was restricted to, or perhaps more accurately focused on, a specific group. No free days were mentioned in any of the literature, nor did regular admission to the Musée du Louvre include entry to the Pavillon de Marsan, or *vice versa*, both of which were standard practices of the day.<sup>40</sup> Whole segments of the population, the working class and the lower middle class most particularly, were thus excluded from experiencing the exhibition. The leisured classes, and that important and influential segment of the population, the *fonctionnaires*, or civil service, could thus both afford the entry fee and, perhaps more importantly, have the leisure time required to attend the exhibition.<sup>41</sup> As Daniel Sherman has argued, admission fees to art museums were customarily a means to limit access to a specific and desirable public, as well as ensure that due reverence and propriety were maintained:

...the museum of the late nineteenth century constituted itself in the image of class elite, which it then invoked as its public. Beginning with the rhetoric of museum administrators, this invocation operated on a number of levels: the arrangement of collections, the framing of regulation, the ordering of the visit. Often solidly founded in the pragmatic needs of the institution, these practices nevertheless also worked as signifiers, shaping the institutional

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<sup>40</sup>*Journal des Débats* 7 April 1904, 2.

<sup>41</sup>Sherman, 235.

character and identity in ways that not only invoked one public but largely excluded another.<sup>42</sup>

The practices he describes for provincial museums were also the case for the Louvre and the *Exposition des Primitifs français*.

An important facet of the experience of the exhibition linked to these ideas of access and exclusion is the notion of the 'promenade'<sup>43</sup>, described by social historian David Scobey as a 'performative utterance' of social values and rules. Applying Scobey's analysis to museums one can see that walking through the exhibition, guided by pamphlet guidebooks, constructed the audience at the same time as they constructed what they were seeing. The exhibition's contents presented a self-reflective image mirroring back specifically targeted values important to contemporary Republican bourgeoisie and buttressed either simultaneously or afterward by the essay and catalogue entries in the *Catalogue Définitif*. The codes recognized by the viewers were part of the 'secret' knowledge allowing and restricting entry into the 'ruling' classes. There are two different transactions and recognitions occurring in this procession through the exhibition: between the works and the viewer and between one viewer and another. In the first transaction, the works, as described in the Catalogue, reflected both 'mastery' that is unarticulated, but no less claimed through selection and presentation by an institution such as the Louvre, and 'order' in which identification and lineage are emphasized in the *Catalogue*

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<sup>42</sup>Sherman, 211.

<sup>43</sup>I owe entry into the topic of the 'promenade' to David Scobey. His article ("Anatomy of the promenade: The politics of bourgeois sociability in nineteenth-century New York," *Social History* 17, 2 (May 1992), 203-227) dissects the social function of seeing and being seen as a means of creating and reinforcing codes of behaviour and class. This approach is valid here, I believe, because the *Exposition des Primitifs français* was targeting a specifically constituted Republican audience.

*Définitif's* descriptive passages about each work deemed important. The works were arranged and presented in a way which reinforced the authoritative voice of the Louvre's control of the art historical forum. The second transaction concerns the identificatory activity of the viewer(s) being seen together with other individuals recognizably a part of the legitimate (and thus legitimated) audience for such an event because their behaviours, dress, and even the fact of their attendance at such an event classified them as being 'like' oneself. Accustomed as the bourgeoisie were to attending the Salons each year, this event was yet another formalized exhibition of 'culture' and of class self-recognition organized through the official channels of the Beaux-Arts hierarchy.

A second timing issue relates to the duration and dates of the exhibition. Its three month schedule was bracketed by two highly significant and resonant dates. It was opened on the Tuesday after Easter<sup>44</sup>, the week after the most sacred feast day in the Christian calendar, and was scheduled to close on July 14th, the secular 'high holiday' of the Republic. The implied progression from religious to secular 'religion' is no coincidence. As French historians Mayeur and Rebérioux characterize it<sup>45</sup>, the Fête de la République had become a secular holiday representing not so much the Bastille's fall, a singularly anarchistic act from which the present-day constitutionally-based Republican

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<sup>44</sup>A preview was held at 6:00 p.m. on Monday, April 11th. The entry fee was 10 francs, reduced to 2 francs for members of the *Société des Amis du Louvre* upon presentation of their membership cards. Twenty-five percent of the proceeds of this event were to be donated for the aid of Russians wounded in the Russo-Japanese War; France supported the Russian side in this conflict. *Journal des Débats* 7 April 1904: 2.

<sup>45</sup>Jean-Marie Mayeur and Madeleine Rebérioux, *The Third Republic from its Origins to the Great War, 1871-1914*, trans. J.R. Foster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Paris: Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, 1984): 118. See also Jean-Pierre Bois, *Histoire des 14 Juillet 1789-1919*, Collection «De mémoire d'homme: l'histoire», ed. Lucien Bély (Rennes: Éditions Ouest-France, 1991) for a detailed history of how July 14th evolved from a revolutionary's Bastille Day to a Republican *fête nationale*.

government wanted and needed to distance itself, but the patriotic festival in which the Republican government succeeded in blending together the Revolution with the constitution<sup>46</sup>. This legitimized the extremes of uprising and legislation into a continuous link "between the monarchical past and the Republican future" and focused disparate political and social public opinions on a common civic celebration, not one of religious or customary origin.<sup>47</sup> The exhibition then was situated between the monarchical, religious festival of Easter and the secular, reconstituted *Fête Nationale*, republicanized to elide differences of political spectre and to present a representation of the French nation as seamless whole, unified under the constitutionality and fraternity of its governmental structures.

A fourth element necessary for an understanding the *Exposition des Primitifs français* is organization. This blending and eliding of the monarchical past with a Republican present and future as part of the French national identity was reinforced by the very arrangement of the art works in the exhibition. Articles written by critics and the intelligentsia provide a number of important details on how the exhibition was experienced. Two painted stone sculptures of Charles V and Jeanne de Bourbon, reigning monarchs in the second half of the fourteenth century, were placed at the threshold to "welcome visitors"<sup>48</sup>; their presence marked symbolically the beginning of

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<sup>46</sup>Bois, 9.

<sup>47</sup>Bois, 9-11.

<sup>48</sup>André Michel, "Causerie Artistique I. L'Exposition des Primitifs français," *Journal des Débats*, April 12, 1904: 1. These two pieces are listed together as #307 in the sculpture section of *Catalogue Définitif*, 113-4. These two sculptures are linked directly with drawings of the same monarchs on the *Parement de Narbonne*, an altar hanging depicting the Passion, drawn on white silk. One of the first pieces in the catalogue (#3), the *Parement* is cited in both the Introduction and in the catalogue entries as one of the most important



the period in which the earliest of the works displayed in the exhibition were created.<sup>49</sup> Separate rooms on at least two floors of the Pavillon<sup>50</sup> contained schools of art works grouped by date order and by locality, school and/or attributed artist<sup>51</sup> (such as the separate rooms set aside for Corneille de Lyons and the Loire school<sup>52</sup>). Critic Camille Benoit, for example, referred to a main picture hall with separate rooms for the Avignon School and another for works from the fourteenth century.<sup>53</sup> Sculptures were scattered throughout the exhibition and "afforded a welcome relief to the wealth of colours displayed upon the walls"<sup>54</sup>. The resulting impression of the exhibition was one of small rooms organized around a central space and arranged in groupings organized by date, artist and/or school, thus providing a comprehensive account of art production of the French nation.

The manuscripts were exhibited separately at the Bibliothèque Nationale. As described in *Catalogue Définitif*, they were presented a noticeably different arrangement to those at the Pavillon de Marsan. Not only were they physically separated from the

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transitional pieces between gothic architecture of the cathedrals, manuscript illumination and the fledgling painting genre (*Catalogue Définitif*, XVIII-XIX and 2-3).

<sup>49</sup>Charles V ruled until 1380. His role in the Great Schism may also have influenced this placement; he supported the Anti-Pope Clement (and thus split Rome's powerbase) and he forbade allegiance to any faction in the debate that would not be to the benefit of France.

<sup>50</sup>Louis-Frederic Sauvage, "Les Primitifs français," *La Nouvelle revue* (Paris) 25 (May 15, 1904): 209; Benoit, 210; and *Catalogue Définitif*, XXVI.

<sup>51</sup>Sauvage, 209.

<sup>52</sup>Henri Bouchot, "L'Exposition des Primitifs français," *Revue des deux mondes* 20 (March 15, 1904): 441-2.

<sup>53</sup>Benoit, 210.

<sup>54</sup>Lionel Elliot, "The Primitive French Exhibition at Paris," *The Connoisseur* 10, 37 (September 1904): 44.

paintings, but there was a separate entries section in the *Catalogue Définitif* (as will be discussed in Chapter 2). Nevertheless, immediately on entering the Bibliothèque Nationale a viewer would also have been struck by contrasts of size and tone -- from the large and age-darkened panel paintings in the Pavillon de Marsan to the tiny, jewel-toned miniatures on display at the Bibliothèque Nationale. All of the pieces were laid out in glass-topped cases in one large room, in strict sequential order: "all the manuscripts, and several of those which one finds in facsimile on the vestibule walls on the main floor, are listed in the Catalogue in the place that they would by rights occupy in the chronology."<sup>55</sup>

The separation of the manuscripts from the main exhibition presents an important facet of the organization of this section of the display.<sup>56</sup> Surely in an exhibition which founded many of its claims on the parallel and overlapping developments in representation between manuscript illumination and the development of a uniquely French art production, such an argument would have been more convincingly supported by arranging objects to provide more direct opportunities to compare and contrast these related elements. The exhibition's reliance on the audience's memory to carry over from one site to the next seems at this distance an undue impediment to the professed task

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<sup>55</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, Manuscript section, 1-2: "...[T]ous les manuscrits, et plusieurs de ceux dont on trouvera en fac-similé sur les murs du vestibule au rez-de-chaussée placé qu'il avaient droit d'occuper dans la série chronologique."

<sup>56</sup>This was particularly noted by Camille Benoit ("Les primitifs français: La peinture du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle," 189). Jean Guiffrey ("L'Exposition des Primitifs Français à Paris," *Rassegna d'Arte* 4, 6 (June 1904): 81) commented that the Bibliothèque Nationale was located "far, unfortunately, from the pictures shown at the Louvre, in the Pavillon de Marsan [loin, malheureusement, des tableaux exposées au Louvre, au Pavillon de Marsan]". Even Henri Bouchot, Secrétaire-général of the exhibition and co-writer/editor of the *Catalogue Définitif* as well as prolific contributor to the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, commented that the distant location "will spoil the quick comparisons" ["nuira aux contestations rapides"], "...Avant-propos," 268.

of convincing the exhibition-goer of the strength of the curatorial argument<sup>57</sup>. It is possible that there were spacing constrictions as the reason for the dual venues, but one might speculate that there was a jurisdictional dispute arising from the *Portrait de Jean le Bon* being removed from the Bibliothèque Nationale's domain; however, it might also indicate a certain intellectual hesitancy, a reluctance to support fully the revisionist art historical argument being made. While some manuscript pages were indeed mounted near to paintings in the Pavillon de Marsan to facilitate such comparisons<sup>58</sup>, the number of these juxtapositions is unspecified and, according to reviewers' complaints, seemingly insufficient.<sup>59</sup>

This analysis of the format of the *Exposition des Primitifs français* reveals that by controlling the environment and the way in which the works were shown, Republican ideology can be seen to be embodied in the temporal and spatial arrangement supportive of the overall assertions of the *Exposition des Primitifs français*. Only elite segments of the social sphere were allowed in to see the works by virtue of the opening hours and admission costs; in addition, the milieu of the Louvre placed social restrictions on behaviour which included 'polite society' and excluded all others. Reinforcement of the Parisian and institutional centrality added to the construction of a specific Republican and cultural unity.

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<sup>57</sup>Bouchot, "...Avant-propos," 265.

<sup>58</sup>Paul Vitry, "The Exhibition of French Primitives at Paris," *Burlington Magazine* 5, 13 (April 1904): 90. This article was more of a press release or "coming attractions" article previewing what was intended to be displayed at the *Exposition des Primitifs français*.

<sup>59</sup>Benoit, 189; Guiffrey, "L'Exposition des Primitifs français à Paris," 81; and Michel, "Causerie Artistique I," 1.

It is important to recognize that this exhibition was not an isolated phenomenon, but only the most recent manifestation of European exhibiting practices which had developed throughout the nineteenth century. As various studies have disclosed<sup>60</sup>, from the middle of the nineteenth century, the Great Exhibitions, or *Expositions Universelles*, had established a pattern of national self-assertion through the display of cultural objects and manufactured goods. Although these events focused on both contemporary production of goods and art objects as well as technological excellences of each participant, by the time of the *Exposition Universelle* of 1878, staging a *Rétrospective* had become an intrinsic part of national self-presentation, both as a means of confirming the existence of a glorious past and also as a way of linking historic excellence and creativity to present and future achievements of the contemporary nation-state. Indeed, the *Expositions Universelles* can be seen as direct precursors of the *Exposition des Primitifs français*. Assertions of French cultural hegemony in the present and projected into the future were 'retrofitted' to the past. In the construction of these events, contemporary artistic production exemplifying national achievement and progress was thus shown to be only the most recent evidence of a long-standing national character redolent with cultural accomplishment and creativity. The ethos of unifying the nation under a singularly national banner of industrial and aesthetic achievement was carried over through the

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<sup>60</sup>These include Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988); Richard D. Mandrell, *Paris 1900: The Great World's Fair* (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1967); Pascal Ory, *Les Expositions universelles de Paris. Panorama raisonné, avec des aperçus nouveaux des illustrations par les meilleurs auteurs* ([Paris]: Éditions Ramsay «Image», 1982); and Frank Anderson Trapp, "The World's Fairs: From Bazaar to Utopian Vision" and Pierre Vaisse, "Salons, Expositions et Sociétés d'artistes en France 1871-1914," both from *Saloni, Gallerie, Musei e loro Influenza sullo Sviluppo dell'Arte die secoli XIX e XX*, ed. Francis Haskell, Section 7, *Atti del XXIV Congresso Internazionale de Storia dell'Arte* (Bologna: Cooperativa Libreria Universitaria, 1979).

publicity surrounding the *Exposition des Primitifs français*. Notions of progress and of technological advances were thus viewed in retrospect as a means of identifying the historical origins of present-day greatness. The double levels of education (that is, exposing heretofore privileged works of art to the view of the general public, in particular the bourgeoisie and lower classes) and erudition (that is, displaying examples of the intellectual achievement of the academy for the delectation of the intelligentsia) were thus fulfilled and elision of the cultural differences within France achieved.

During the thirty-year period between 1875 and 1904 at least 40 European exhibitions presented 'old' art produced in the centuries prior to the eighteenth century.<sup>61</sup> There were three main types of exhibitions held during this period. The *Expositions rétrospectives*, the first type, were actually held from the 1850's on as an adjunct to *Expositions Universelles* or *Expositions Internationales*, cultural events for the edification of the fair-going public. Displaying almost exclusively decorative art objects rather than paintings and sculpture, they were devised more as a backward glance to earlier forms of manufacture in contrast with contemporary 'products' in the nearby Palaces of Industry; the intent, quite simply put, was to illustrate the progress achieved by the country, as well as to demonstrate the artistic sensibilities of the nation. Current artistic production, usually high art paintings and sculpture, was displayed in separate Fine Arts Pavilions. The 1878 *Exposition Universelle* offers an excellent example. Housed in the right wing of the Trocadero, this *Rétrospective* was situated opposite the 'primitive'

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<sup>61</sup>See appendix 2 for a list of exhibitions from 1877 to 1904 and their content and focus, compiled from a review of the *Burlington Magazine*, *La Revue de l'art ancien et moderne*, *Gazette des beaux-arts*, *Revue de l'Art chrétien*, and other contemporary journals.

art from non-European cultures in the Trocadero's left wing<sup>62</sup>; both artistic and utilitarian objects from France's past were displayed in strict chronological order.<sup>63</sup> This positioning and arrangement is not accidental: the relative sophistication of the 'European' (and more particularly, French) past was contrasted with the 'exoticism' of the non-European and colonized present; in addition, the materiel-organized exhibits paralleled the contemporary arrangements in the Palais d'Industrie further down the promenade, reinforcing and linking a pre-industrialized culture with industrial and artistic production in the modern era. Thus the motive for showcasing French artistic production in these exhibitions was an established tradition.

Toward the end of the century, however, 'stand-alone' historic art exhibitions began to develop; affiliated with neither industrial nor national exhibitions, they instead displayed chronological surveys of artworks under a generalized title such as 'Maitres Anciens' or 'Arts Anciens', or were limited to a single 'Old Master' or a particular type of art production. Painting and sculpture were included only infrequently; for example, Budapest's 1884 retrospective exhibition of gold and silver plate was focused narrowly on secular and religious objects from the twelfth to eighteenth centuries, while a Van Dyck exhibition, held first in Antwerp (1899) and then in London (1900), focused only on one artist and his production. These exhibitions contained little or no overt emphasis on the art works country of origin and often assembled works based entirely on local ownership

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<sup>62</sup>See Marilyn Wan, *Naturalized Seeing/Colonial Vision: Interrogating the Display of Races in Late 19th Century France*, unpublished MA thesis (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1991), for a detailed investigation of the construction of the 'other' in this and other Expositions Universelles.

<sup>63</sup>A.-R. de Liéville, "L'Exposition Historique de l'art ancien: Coup d'oeil general," *Gazette des Beaux-arts* Séries 2, 18 (July 1878): 6.

and availability. Here the claims were not so much for the nationality of the artist(s) *per se*, but for the ownership of the works themselves, the collection and the possession of the objects being displayed as evidence of curatorial perspicacity.<sup>64</sup>

In the 1890's a third kind of exhibition emerged, combining the nationalistic aspects of the *Rétrospectives* with the focused content of the historical exhibitions. The assertions of a national stylistic predominated in this third type, with claims for national artistic origins and characteristics often allied with a recouping of a formerly disparaged or overlooked artist, group of artists, or movement. The 1898 Basel exhibition of Swiss and German Masters was one of the first to introduce the element of a national mastery into the historical exhibition. The Madrid Velasquez exhibit of the same year, focused only on a single artist, but also promoted a particular national style and body of work, this time allied to the works of Diego Velasquez. Both Sienna and Dusseldorf held exhibitions of 'maitres anciens' in 1904 in competition with the *Exposition des Primitifs français* show.

The 1902 *Exposition des Primitifs flamands* held in Bruges was the immediate precursor to the *Exposition des Primitifs français* and thus merits special analysis because of the latter's explicit self-positioning as a response to the former's claims and posture. The Bruges show took the historical exhibition to new levels of nationalism and art historical assertions. Tied closely to a contemporary Flemish Renaissance which was promoting a Flemish-speaking Belgian culture distinct from both Dutch and French cultural implications, the Bruges exhibition focused entirely on the 'national' school of

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<sup>64</sup>It is important to note that several of this kind of exhibition were held at private institutions, such as the New Gallery and the Burlington Fine Arts Club, and the Galerie d'Altenburg. The relation of the exhibitions to the art market is thus a prominent factor in their occurrence.

Flemish painting in the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries. It argued for a coherent, chronological unity of fifteenth century Flemish art production and reaffirmed Flemish-speaking Belgium's role as one of the two 'founders' of later eighteenth century art developments, the other being the Italian Renaissance.

The Bruges exhibition had arisen from the growth of Belgian nationalism.<sup>65</sup> Throughout the 1890's Belgium had begun to distinguish its own cultural heritage from the umbrella of 'The Lowlands' sobriquet and as part of a reassertion of Flemish achievements separate from both Dutch and French historical hegemonies. The anti-academic Symbolist group, called Les XX, had examined their Flemish nationalist roots and evolved their own contemporary style in opposition to Neo-Impressionist and Symbolist connections with France<sup>66</sup>; subsequently the conception and eventual staging of the Bruges exhibition helped to crystallize an historical Flemish presence distinct from the French and Netherlandish. These nationalist impulses had, according to Francis Haskell, resulted in the *Exposition des Primitifs flamands*. The exhibition, he notes, was "inspired by a series of nationally motivated exhibitions that had been held in many parts of Europe over the last few years, above all those devoted to Rembrandt and Rubens in

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<sup>65</sup>The main description of the *Exposition des Primitifs flamands* has been obtained from "Johannes Huizinga and the Flemish Renaissance," a chapter in Francis Haskell's *History and Its Images*. In addition, contemporary journals and periodical accounts of the exhibition have contributed greatly to my understanding of the exhibition as it was presented and received, particularly: Étienne Bricon, "Bruges et l'art primitif flamands," *La Grande revue* (September 1902): 689-705; H. Fiérans-Gevaert, "L'Exposition des primitifs flamands à Bruges [three parts]," *La revue de l'art ancien et moderne* 12 (Août, Septembre and Décembre 1902): 105-116, 173-182, and 435-444; and Weale, previously cited.

<sup>66</sup>Jean Cassou, Emile Langui and Nikolaus Pevsner, *Gateway to the Twentieth Century: Art and Culture in a Changing World* (New York, Toronto and London: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1962): 54; Donald D. Egbert, *Social Radicalism and the Arts: Western Europe* (New York: Knopf, 1970): 605, 612.



Amsterdam and Antwerp" and had "the aim of commemorating the integrity of a vigorous national culture"<sup>67</sup>.

Of particular importance in understanding the vehement claims of the *Exposition des Primitifs français* is the editorializing commentary by the catalogue's writer, Georges Hulin de Loo, cited in the Introduction to this thesis. Hulin de Loo, a young Belgian scholar, was just beginning to make a name for himself and sought to differentiate his research from that outlined in the more neutral catalogue of W.H. James Weale by inciting controversy. Hulin de Loo's commentary extensively critiqued French acquisition policies and, in one instance, disparaged the French Republican government's neglect of cultural issues for the more prosaic concerns of re-election:

Could it be true that the French government, ordinarily so prodigious with frivolous expenditures, at a time when it can wait for a repercussion from the polls, appears to be stingy concerning its national collections, even concerning the Louvre? This incomparable and marvellous treasure, with which the abolished monarchs enriched France, does it have nothing to look forward to from democracy?

...Without doubt, French parliamentary politicians and the transitory governments that are burdened with service to their passions and interests, are exclusively absorbed in the questions that *divide* the nation. They have neither the leisure nor the concern to occupy themselves with elevated goals and important enterprises with a view to which they should unite their efforts -- when it is matter of the outward prestige of France or the internal integrity of their great ethics.<sup>68</sup> [emphasis in original]

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<sup>67</sup>Haskell, *History and Its Images*, 445 and 449.

<sup>68</sup>Hulin de Loo, *Bruges 1902...*, LXI-LXII:

Serait-il vrai que le gouvernement français, d'ordinaire si prodigue de dépenses vaines, du moment qu'il peut en attendre une répercussion sur les votes, se montre parcimonieux envers ses collections nationales, même envers le Louvre? Cet incomparable et merveilleux trésor, dont les monarchies abolies ont enrichi la France, n'a-t-il rien à attendre de la démocratie?

...Sans doute, les politiciens parlementaires français et les gouvernements éphémères qu'ils chargent du service de leurs passions et de leurs intérêts, sont

Hulin de Loo's attacks on France and its cultural policies were specifically cited in the *Exposition des Primitifs français* catalogue as a prime motivation for the scheduling of the French exhibition and the vehemence of the counterclaims made by Georges Lafenestre and Henri Bouchot. As Lafenestre proclaimed, rather facetiously, near the end of his Introduction to the *Catalogue Définitif*, it was now time for French curators to build on the work of the Bruges exhibition in the cause of scientific truth, to continue the arduous task of bringing the greatness of French Renaissance art to the public's attention.<sup>69</sup>

Thus, the challenge was taken up, the fulfilment of a long 'crusade' to persuade the now more receptive public of the 'truth' of the French curators' endeavour. The *Exposition des Primitifs français* therefore cannot be seen as an isolated instance, but an event that negotiated the ideas and concepts of previous exhibitions. Above all, the *Exposition des Primitifs français* voiced an institutional response to the 1902 Bruges exhibition, the *Expositions des Primitifs flamands*, in an art historical and nationalistic dialogue.

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exclusivement absorbés par les questions que *divisent* la nation. Ils n'ont ni le loisir ni le souci de s'occuper des buts élevés et des hautes entreprises en vue desquels elle devrait unir ses efforts -- qu'ils s'agisse du prestige extérieur de la France, ou de l'intégrité interne de sa grandeur morale.

Hulin de Loo was referring here to the national elections held earlier in 1902 when the *Bloc Républicain*, a coalition of moderate elements among the varieties of Republicans, was elected in a majority under the presidency of Ernest Combes (Watson, 73; Anderson, 24). Their preoccupation with political issues had, according to Hulin de Loo, distracted them from culturally important matters. This is but one part of a four-page essay attached to a discussion of Jehan de Perréal of Paris, a French painter whom Hulin de Loo claims to be the Maitre de Moulins, one of several controversial attribution claims he made in his catalogue.

<sup>69</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, XXX-XXXI.

## CHAPTER TWO

### CATALOGUE AS 'REPRESENTATION'

A catalogue is a special type of book that assumes much of the structure of an exhibition (for which, as ever, it serves as guide, even when too bulky to carry); hence, in many ways, it corresponds to the museum. It translates the brute facts of the exhibited art objects into commentary that resembles a continuous narrative simply because it is a book that has a sequence of pages (just as the exhibition will usually have a numbered sequence of rooms and objects, its own on-the-spot catalogue).<sup>70</sup>

The 'event' of the *Exposition des Primitifs français* presented an experiential construction of the *Catalogue Définitif's* argument by placing the exhibition within an environment supportive of and encapsulating specific Republican government stances at the end of the nineteenth century on the use of artistic media as ideological tools. The 'event' cannot stand alone, however; only when the ephemerality of viewing is considered together with the *Catalogue Définitif* and other discourses surrounding and, to a large degree, creating it can the full scope of the exhibition claims be understood. The texts of the catalogues, reviews and articles are what remain to the current reader; the event, ephemeral and temporally located, cannot be 're-experienced'<sup>71</sup> and the 'words' remain as bare bones, a kind of archaeological evidence to be reassembled to attempt to

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<sup>70</sup>Richard Shiff, "Art History and the Nineteenth Century: Realism and Resistance," *The Art Bulletin* LXX, 1 (March 1988): 33.

<sup>71</sup>In fact, it is difficult even to reconstruct the exact contents of the *Exposition des Primitifs français* due to curatorial and owner penchants for re-naming works or using local or abbreviated titles for the works. In some cases, the use of generic titles (for example, 'Pietà') has made it difficult to locate which item is being discussed. Sales and donations of various works to local, national or international museums or collectors has also inhibited the tracing of exhibited works. In order to formulate a precise understanding of the exhibition, I have pieced together its contents from references made in the many reviews and articles discussing the event, although the number of works recognizable through this process is far short of the 701 works listed in the *Catalogue Définitif*.

understand what meaning was constructed around the exhibition as well as the meaning it was intended to call up to the varied 'readers' of the discourse of the exhibition's visual texts.

A catalogue represents an exhibition in several senses. First, it re-presents the experience of the exhibition for contemplation at another time and in another place, with emphases, viewpoints and elisions not necessarily part of that experience. Second, the catalogue stands in for, or represents, a lived experience because it substitutes for the actual viewing of the works in the exhibition halls. Third, it acts as an embodiment of the exhibition, a textual synthesis and summary of all of the claims made visually. And, last, it leads the viewer to see objects in certain ways, constructing a form of viewing supportive of the exhibition's overall theme and stance.

The *Catalogue Définitif* of the *Exposition des Primitifs français* as a primary textual source defining the goals of the exhibition comprises a unified argument with separate component parts providing particular kinds of information, tone and rhetorical elements to the whole.<sup>72</sup> The two catalogues examined<sup>73</sup>, the *Catalogue Définitif*<sup>74</sup> and the

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<sup>72</sup>It must be stated that the structure of this catalogue is similar to others of the period: the rosters of dignitaries, academics, patrons and committee members, the introductory essay, and the numbered catalogue entries section interspersed with plates are all standard catalogue features.

<sup>73</sup>A third version of the catalogue could not be located, despite the best efforts of the University's Interlibrary Loan Department. Information available from periodicals and other sources indicates it was small, sketchily written pamphlet probably only listing the title, artist, date and location for each of the works shown; much cheaper to purchase, it was likely used as a reference sheet for the exhibition visitor. Inspection of this format might have provided additional information for this analysis, but it seems probable that the listings followed the same format as those in the other two catalogues.

<sup>74</sup>This is available on microfiche at the University of British Columbia Fine Arts Library (AW5 P2708 P75). I was unable to obtain access to an original.

special edition *Catalogue*<sup>75</sup>, though similar in content and form, differ in several important aspects. The *Catalogue Définitif* was less ostentatiously printed and available at the exhibition itself for "deux francs net"<sup>76</sup>. The numbered, limited edition of the *Catalogue* printed on high quality vellum, its text reset in a more formal typeface, was available commercially outside the museum and exhibition; because of its more costly materials, it was more expensive than the *Catalogue Définitif* and intended for a wealthier audience, whether or not they had attended the *Exposition des Primitifs français*.

In addition, the introductory essay in the *Catalogue Définitif* was abridged in the special edition catalogue<sup>77</sup>. Two major omissions from the special edition are noteworthy. The first omission eliminated the history of previous attempts, beginning in 1878 and continuing to the present day, to bring these works to the attention of the French public and it lulled the reader/viewer with self-congratulatory praise of its perspicacity and empathy to the art historical cause:

Was it not time to renew, with more chance of success in the eyes of a better educated and more sympathetic international public, the task of **rehabilitation** already boldly attempted in 1878 by the Marquis de Chennevières, Director of Fine Arts, at the exhibition of National Portraits, taken up again, from a more general point of view, by M. Emile Molinier in

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<sup>75</sup>This version was available in the original, but rebound form in the University of British Columbia Fine Arts Library.

<sup>76</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, cover. This price placed it outside the reach of many visitors who, even if they could afford the entry fee, might have thought twice about purchasing a catalogue too. Unfortunately, the cover was too poorly reproduced on the microfiche at the U.B.C. Fine Arts Library to be included as an illustration in this thesis.

<sup>77</sup>I have found no information to show where this editorial decision was made or by whom.

1900 at the Petit Palais, and so valiantly prepared in the interim by the ringing words of Courajod at the École du Louvre.<sup>78</sup> [emphasis added]

For the specific audience purchasing the more expensive Catalogue, the *Exposition des Primitifs français* was thus characterized by this omission as the first, if not the only, attempt to recoup this particular French past, enhancing the curators' daring and romanticized endeavour. The *Catalogue Définitif* was, in fact, a direct rebuttal of the slanderous assertions made by Hulin de Loo; Lafenestre had clearly declared that the French art of this period had already been presented to the world by previous curators, but had been ignored; now the "international public" was ready to recognize the validity of his and his predecessors' claims in this splendid exhibition.<sup>79</sup>

The second omission from the special edition catalogue dealt with issues of the comparison objects and the remote location of the manuscripts section and also Lafenestre's attempts to forestall any criticism of curatorial jingoism. Readers of the special edition were spared the justification of the distant location of the manuscripts

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<sup>78</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, XXX-XXXI:

N'était-il pas temps de renouveler, avec plus de chances de réussite, aux yeux d'un public international, mieux instruit et plus sympathique, l'entreprise de réhabilitation déjà hardiment tentée, en 1878, par le Marquis de Chennevières, Directeur des Beaux-Arts, à l'Exposition des Portraits Nationaux, reprise, sous un point de vue plus général, par M. Em. Molinier, en 1900, au Petit Palais, et si vaillamment préparé, dans l'intervalle, par la parole éclatante de Courajod à l'École du Louvre.

The 'Exhibition of National Portraits' refers to a show at the Exposition Universelle of 1878 and '1900' to the Exposition Rétrospective at the Exposition Universelle of 1900. Louis Courajod was noted for his crowd-pleasing lectures on early French art and is cited in the *Catalogue Définitif* as a pioneer of the daring approach fulfilled by the *Exposition des Primitifs français*. He believed that it was "in France, and above all, in Flanders that the origins of the Renaissance were to be sought - although he rather distrusted the word because of its implication of 'rebirth' rather than of a new development" (Haskell, *History and its Images*, 442-3). See also Udo Kulturmann, *The History of Art History* (New York: Abaris Books, Inc., 1993): 196.

<sup>79</sup>Perhaps the assumption was that the well-travelled and -read connoisseur would be aware of the history of French attempts to establish the French *primitifs* in the art historical canon.

section of the exhibition because these paragraphs were less relevant to a reader who had not experienced the physical separation of the two parts of the exhibition. In fact, this catalogue omits the entire Bibliothèque Nationale section of the exhibition all together, effacing the role of the manuscripts as a counterpoint to and supportive display for stylistic linkages to the paintings at the Pavillon de Marsan. Equally as important for the purposes of this thesis was the claim that truth, and not 'patriotic vanity', was the sole motivation for the exhibition. Lafenestre's protestations of impartiality were thus assimilated into the 'fact' of the exhibition's occurrence; the physical presence of the catalogue was a permanent textual record of a truly scholarly endeavour, the contents of which merely presented the reader with self-evident and obvious facts:

As was already done in 1878 and 1900, it was, in fact, necessary to supply, by means of several specimens of other contemporary art forms (sculpture, tapestries, miniatures, enamels, etc.) some explanatory and supporting terms of comparison without which the evolution of painting could be understood only with difficulty. As for the miniatures, the abundance of them was such that it was impossible, as it was at Bruges, to show them in the same location. Fortunately, the Bibliothèque Nationale is not far from the Pavillon de Marsan and it does not take long to go there to admire the collection of miniatures that the special commission, under the direction of M. Omont with the enthusiastic assistance of the respected and tireless M. Léopold Delisle, has been able to reunite there.

We desire, and this goes without saying, that this international gathering of experts validates the honour of the French masters; we have no intention to impose in advance even the most obvious conclusions on the enlightened souls and impartial judges. Above all, we are intent on refraining from the foolish exaggerations of patriotic vanity which are the most deplorable cause of errors and disagreements at a time when they are creeping into questions of art, history and science. Following the example of the old artists that we admire and love, we seek the truth, we desire only the truth.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, XXXII:

Because of the omissions in the special edition catalogue, the analysis of the *Exposition des Primitifs français* presented in this thesis will focus on the *Catalogue Définitif* (fig. 3 - 14) because it contains the unabridged introductory essay and the entire manuscript section. In addition, the *Catalogue Définitif* would have circulated more widely. Available as it was at the exhibition itself, it would have reinforced the show's immediate impact on the viewer if the catalogue entries were used to explain what the viewer was seeing while seeing it. The *Catalogue Définitif* could also be experienced following the exhibition when the essay and entries could be read at leisure and the experience remembered and reinforced by this activity. A third factor, the *Catalogue Définitif's* lower cost in comparison to the special edition, would also have permitted a somewhat wider circulation. It was therefore a primary textual device through which the meaning of the exhibition was constructed for a Republican bourgeoisie.

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Comme on l'avait déjà fait en 1878 et 1900, il était, en effet, nécessaire de fournir, par quelques spécimens des autres formes de l'art contemporain, (Sculpture, Tapisserie, Miniature, Émaux, etc.) des termes de comparaison explicatifs et justificatifs sans lesquels les évolutions de la peinture se comprendraient difficilement. Pour les miniatures, l'abondance était telle qu'il n'était pas possible, no plus qu'à Bruges, de les exposer dans le même local. Heureusement, la Bibliothèque Nationale n'est pas éloignée du Pavillon de Marsan, et le voyage ne sera pas trop long pour y admirer la collection d'enluminures que la commission spéciale, sous la présidence de M. Omont avec le concours, toujours ardent du vénérable et infatigable, M. Léopold Delisle, a pu y réunir.

Nous désirons, cela va sans dire, que cette consultation internationale tourne à l'honneur des maîtres français; nous n'avons nulle prétention d'en imposer, d'avance, les conclusions, même les plus probables, aux esprits éclairés et aux juges impartiaux. Nous tenons, avant tout, à nous garder de ces sottises exagérées de vanité patriotique qui sont la cause la plus fâcheuse des erreurs et des querelles, lorsqu'elles se glissent dans les questions d'art, d'histoire et de science. A l'exemple des vieux artistes que nous admirons et aimons, nous recherchons la vérité, nous ne désirons que la vérité.



The *Catalogue Définitif* comprised four main sections<sup>81</sup>, the administration pages, the introductory essay, the catalogue entries for the Pavillon de Marsan objects, and the section for the Bibliothèque Nationale's exhibition of manuscripts and miniatures. Additional pages both at the beginning and as endpapers contained advertisements for the Librairie Centrale des Beaux-Arts (fig. 4) and for various art galleries, print sellers and publishing houses in Paris (fig. 5), often citing specific publications "related to the history of the French Primitives"<sup>82</sup>.

The first section of the *Catalogue Définitif* contains listings of the various organizing committees, members of which were drawn from the hierarchical machinery of the Louvre and those government departments responsible for the public and national representations of 'France' in cultural contexts. Consideration of those listed is informative. M. Edouard Aynard, a sitting member of the Chambre des Députés, was prominently listed as the President of the exhibition's administrative board (fig. 6). Represented here, too, were administrators from the major beaux-arts institutions of France, for example, Georges Berger, President of the Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs and Vice-President of the Société des Amis du Louvre, a recently organized acquisitions committee; and M. Kaempfen, the Directeur des Musées Nationaux and one of the main administrators of the exhibition. The Comités d'Organisation (fig. 7) were staffed with a variety of representatives from both the intelligentsia and the art historical publishing sphere. For example, Charles Ephrussi, director of the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, and

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<sup>81</sup>See appendix 3 for a further analysis of these sections.

<sup>82</sup>*Catalogue Définitif* endpaper, unpaginated: "...relatifs à l'histoire des Primitifs Français".

André Hallays, a writer for the *Journal des Débats*<sup>83</sup>, were both listed on the Paintings and Drawings Committee. Similarly, the Manuscript Committee boasted both rising and established art historians such as Emile Mâle and Paul Durrieu (also a Comte and collector of note), while the Tapestries and Enamels Committees claimed such noted members as Paul Vitry and Albert Maignan, both collectors and scholars.<sup>84</sup> The Comité de Patronage, the Membres Protecteurs, and the Commissions Supérieures (one each for French and foreign members) were composed of a cross-section of Europe's intellectual, political, administrative and social elite. Representatives of French society included M. Deville, President of the Conseil municipal of Paris; ex-President Sadi-Carnot as well as future president Georges Clémenceau; Emile Molinier, past-curator of the Musée du Louvre and organizer of the *Rétrospectives* at the *Exposition Universelle* of 1900; and Antonin Proust, the Ministre des Beaux-Arts in the short-lived Gambetta government (1881-82) and one of the architects of state-defined fine arts policies. In addition, non-French representation on the exhibition's boards included S.A.S. le Prince de Liechtenstein; Henry Hymans, Curator of the Belgian Royal Library in Brussels; and Count Wilczek from Vienna<sup>85</sup>. Other, perhaps surprising, inclusions among the non-French participants on the Commission Supérieure were H. Kervyn de Lettenhove, the

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<sup>83</sup>Though neither of these individuals actually wrote reviews, these journals were prolific in their coverage of the *Exposition des Primitifs français*. The *Gazette des Beaux-arts* printed a total of 16 articles before and during the exhibition, most of them authored by Bouchot (6) and Lafenestre (4), while the *Journal des Débats* published a series of 10 review articles by André Michel. Other journals such as *Les Arts* were also represented by members on one or more committee.

<sup>84</sup>Maignan and Vitry were also lenders to the exhibition, as were Aynard and several other members of the Committees.

<sup>85</sup>Both the Prince de Liechtenstein and Count Wilczek also loaned works to the exhibition.

chief organizer of the 1902 Bruges *Exposition des Primitifs flamand*, and Georges Hulin de Loo, that outspoken critic of the *Exposition des Primitifs flamands* catalogue who was so prominently cited as the cause of the *Exposition des Primitifs français*.<sup>86</sup>

What can be made of this assortment of individuals? First, all of these committee members had a vested interest in the success of, or at least controversy arising from the *Exposition des Primitifs français*. Whether the exploitation of the event promoted increased the value of privately owned works, or reinforced or established an academic career, either by supporting or contesting the claims of the exhibition, most of these individuals were already part of the established order, the ruling group whose values were contained within the exhibition's values. A second consideration is that the Third Republic's moderate Republicans governed in the belief that good citizens performed their civic duty in all social matters, including monitoring and directing the cultural aspects, or, as historians Chastel and Babelon phrase it, "the intervention of the State seems to have habituated the collective and the particular to consider that the authorities should assume the responsibilities of the [nation's] patrimony in defining it and in bringing it to the public's notice."<sup>87</sup> Another view points to an effort to unify and integrate two segments from within the elite: the older school of the connoisseur and the aristocrat mingled here with a newer class of scholars, university educated 'scientific' art specialists.<sup>88</sup> These

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<sup>86</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, VIII.

<sup>87</sup>Jean-Pierre Babelon and André Chastel, "La notion de patrimoine," *Revue de l'Art* 49 (1980): 24: "L'intervention de l'État semble avoir habitués collectif et particulier à considérer que les autorités doivent assumer la responsabilité du patrimoine dans sa définition et dans sa mise en valeur."

<sup>88</sup>Marie-Claude Genet-Delacroix, "Esthétique officielle et art national sous la Troisième République," *Annales: Économies Société Civilisations* 39, 5 (September-October 1984): 114-5

observations together speak also to the audience the *Exposition des Primitifs français* hoped to attract: the educated citizen, cognisant of the responsibilities that citizenship bestows and appreciative of the newly reformed and expanded patrimony on display in the Pavillon de Marsan and the Bibliothèque Nationale.

The second major section of the *Catalogue Définitif* is a 22-page essay, the Introduction (fig. 9). Its author, Georges Lafenestre, was a staunch Republican, a poet and Curator of Paintings at the Musée du Louvre. Lafenestre ostensibly described in text the pictorial argument of the exhibit itself, contextualizing the works within a specifically constructed representation of a French political and cultural history. To do this, Lafenestre's essay argued that realistic portraiture and an awareness of the human figure evident in the sculptural programs of High Gothic architecture were absorbed into the lively anecdotal style of the Parisian/Ile de France school of manuscript illumination. From this resulted a style of panel painting, especially portraiture, different from all other art being produced elsewhere at that time in its "fresh *truthfulness* of its attitude, the clear *vivacity* of movement and gesture, the *appropriate expression* of the physiognomy in *peaceful or moving deed*"<sup>89</sup> [emphasis added], all highly prized characteristics of a good Republican citizen. Lafenestre asserted that the Ile de France school spread to all courts and cities ruled by or allied to France, contrary to the claims made by many academics, and explicitly those of the 1902 Bruges exhibition of Flemish primitives, that the Flemish had originated this new realistic style. The disarray of the Hundred Years War and the consequent collapse of centralized rulership had prevented the continued artistic cohesion

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<sup>89</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, XIX: "...la vérité franche de l'attitude, la vivacité claire du mouvement et du geste, l'expression opportune de la physiognomie dans l'action paisible ou pathétique."

of the now dispersed Parisian school. Although, Lafenestre assured his readers, it never completely lost "notre esprit français,"<sup>90</sup> the national style was eventually diluted by foreign influences, notably Northern 'stiffness' and a Southern (read 'Italian') internationalism, into the so-called 'decadent' École Fontainebleau.<sup>91</sup>

The Introduction provided historical background for the period covered, described current attribution debates, and directed the viewer to particular objects or artists within the show. Most notable among these were newly designated 'masterpieces' such as the paintings of *Étienne Chevalier* by Jean Fouquet (fig. 24), the *Buisson Ardent* by Nicolas Froment (fig. 16), the *Vierge Glorieux* by Enguerrand Charonton (fig. 17), and the anonymous *Pietà* of Villeneuve-lès-Avignon (fig. 18), all of which had been little known outside their original regional sites. The Introduction's impassioned language and persuasive rhetorical devices, however, exceeded its purely informational goals and were specifically aimed at convincing a identifiably French audience or reader of the validity of the presented argument and of the catalogue's construction of 'France', French art, and the French character. The frequent use of phrases such as "la vieille famille française", "les Gaulois, nos ancêtres", "cette entreprise française"<sup>92</sup>, illustrate the fervour of the presentation, a rallying cry "to make amends as far as possible for the injustices of a long

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<sup>90</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, XIV.

<sup>91</sup>Haskell (in *History and Its Images*, 442) quotes academic and lecturer Louis Courajod's 1899-1903 work, *Les Origines de la Renaissance en France* (Volume II, 12), in which Courajod called Italy "the last born child of the Renaissance" ("le dernier-né fils de la Renaissance"), relegating Italy to a tertiary status after the Lowlands and France. In the *Exposition des Primitifs français*, Bouchot and Lafenestre attempted to move France in front of the Lowlands as inheritor of the premier place in European art development.

<sup>92</sup>Phrases selected from the *Catalogue Définitif*, XXVIII, XI, and XXIV.

oversight concerning our venerable painters".<sup>93</sup> The 'story' was structured in a strictly linear fashion and combined logically organized information with the vocabulary and passion of the melodramatic and romantic literature of the period and emphasizing the heroic aspects of this struggle. Lafenestre characterized both France's vulnerable geography (an allusion to the sensitive issue of the invasion of France and the nation's territorial losses during the Franco-Prussian War) and the complex and accepting nature of the French to welcome outside influences as reasons that explained why the French *primitifs* had not been more widely accepted as renaissance masterpieces. It would only be through the persistent and dedicated efforts of learned and enlightened scholars, Lafenestre declaimed, that such obvious proof of French genius could now be presented to public and international scrutiny. The roll call he recited was indeed prestigious:

What courageous and lengthy efforts had to be made by so many scholars, archaeologists, and poets in order to triumph over obscurity during the nineteenth century: Chateaubriand, Emeric David, Victor Hugo, de Caumont, Vitet, Merimée, Viollet-le-Duc, Lassus, Quicherat, Courajod, etc.! What patience and good will was necessary in the associations founded or inspired by them...to save, not without difficulty, the few relics, always threatened, of the most magnificent patrimony of art that an ancient people, working tirelessly, have ever bequeathed to its children.

Blessed are these dead, seeing that they have accomplished their task!<sup>94</sup>.

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<sup>93</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, XIII: "...de réparer dans la mesure possible, les injustices d'un long oubli à l'égard de nos vieux peintres."

<sup>94</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, XII-XIII:

Quels courageux et longs efforts, pour triompher de ces ténèbres on dû faire au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle tat d'érudits, d'archéologues, de poètes, d'artistes: Chateaubriand, Emeric David, Victor Hugo, de Caumont, Vitet, Merimée, Violet-le Duc, Lassus, Quicherat, Courajod, etc! Que de patience et de volonté il a fallu encore aux associations fondées ou inspirées par eux,...pour sauver, non sans peine, quelques reliques, toujours menacées, du plus magnifique patrimoine d'art que jamais un vieux peuple, infatigablement laborieux, ait jamais légué à ses enfants!

Lafenestre's highly emotive language, certainly typical of much writing of this period, constructed the recognition of a 'true' French art, understood as a kind of national 'Holy Grail', that is, as a long and unheralded quest finally and successfully completed.

The third large section of the *Catalogue Définitif*, the catalogue entries themselves presented yet another construction: a listing of each work in the exhibition, not necessarily in the order in which they were viewed. Edited by Henri Bouchot<sup>95</sup> with contributions by individual curators in catalogue sections other than Paintings and Drawings, the entries contained different kinds of contextualizing information, the purpose for which was the simultaneous construction of a contemporary viewership as well as a retrospective representation of an earlier citizenry whose attributes predicted the current apex of French development -- the Third Republic. This end was achieved through several techniques. The language of this section changed its tone and quality as a counterpoint to the Introduction's hyperbole and passion. Here language is logical, orderly, linear and descriptive: the language of historical positivism, of evidence being presented to a knowledgeable viewer. The intention was not to persuade, but to prove the claims that had been made more floridly in the Introduction. Citations of lineage, academic authorities, provenance and stylistic analysis replaced the descriptive and emotive. The catalogue entries in this section vary considerably in length and complexity of argument, but the tone never does. Several excerpts can serve to illustrate this point. Bouchot used academic tactics such as identifying iconographical elements and historical events

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Bénis soient ces morts, puisqu'ils ont accompli leur oeuvre!

<sup>95</sup>Bouchot, an art historian and a long-time Bibliothèque Nationale curator nearing the end of his career, was elected to the Académie the same year as the *Exposition des Primitifs français*.

to construct a body of evidence supporting the essay's more evocatively phrased claims of both attribution and artistic and aesthetic excellence. For example, an extensive entry for the painting of *Saint Victor et donateur* by the Maitre de Moulins, c. 1480 (fig. 19), compared the armorial emblems in the former with those previously documented in a known and attributed work, the painting of *Étienne Chevalier* (fig. 24), thereby verifying its authorship and identifying the figure portrayed as an eminent personage associated with the rulership of France. Bouchot emphasized the obviousness of such a conclusion:

One cannot stop oneself from thinking of the correlation between the picture we are describing and that of Étienne Chevalier of the Berlin Museum....The canon is a prince of the house of France, the fleur de lys on the armour seems to indicate it. This figure has been read as King René, but M. le comte Durrieu suggests Charles III of Anjou, nephew of King René, in the garb of an 'avoué' of St. Victor of Marseille [i.e., a knight of the Church].<sup>96</sup>

In Bouchot's commentary on another exhibited work (fig. 20), Jean Fouquet's *Portrait de Charles VII* (c. 1445), the catalogue entry cited the painting's legend in order to connect the subject to a known miniature and to relevant historical events as a means of establishing an unmistakable lineage:

The name of the person depicted is supplied to us by the frame on which a legend in special script invented by Jean Fouquet and found in a large number of the miniatures of the *Livre d'Heures* conserved at Chantilly: THE MOST VICTORIOUS KING OF FRANCE CHARLES THE VII BY NAME....For one to dare to give that name to him, it was necessary that the prince earn the title of Victorious; it was not difficult that after the battle of Formigny, on April 15th, 1450 and above all after the conquest of Guyenne in 1453, for

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<sup>96</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, 49 (#106):

On ne peut s'empêcher de penser à la corrélation entre le tableau que nous décrivons et l'Étienne Chevalier du Musée du Berlin..Le chanoine est un prince de la maison de France, la fleur de lys de la cuirasse du saint le semble indiquer....On a vu dans le personnage le roi René lui-même, mais M. le Comte Durrieu propose Charles III d'Anjou, neveu du roi René, en costume d'avoué de Saint-Victor de Marseille.



him to lay claim to it. But the king seems to have been about 40 years of age; in 1453, he was 50 years old. Someone therefore has not waited for the later victories and one is obliged to distinguish the title of Victorious from the time of the conference at Arras (1444).<sup>97</sup>

The rigorous and logical analysis and so-called conclusive proof offered in these and other entries are presented in measured, generally non-emotive vocabulary. Such entries, combining documentary information with speculation in a relatively seamless presentation, involved the reader and viewer in a supportive, consensual agreement with the evidence presented. At the same time, Bouchot emphasized historical information that called attention to victories by the state of France, easing recollections of more recent French defeats.

Bouchot also reclassified many works within the established hierarchy of academic genres. Appendix 1 shows that over half of the exhibited works (53%) are on overtly religious themes; Bouchot's entries for such works continued his emphasis on chronicling the history of the French state. He thus re-presented them within the discourse of history paintings by describing the public role of each identifiable personage in the painting, and at the same time effacing the religious meaning and associations of the subject matter. These works are thereby resituated as documents of French history worthy of study by

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<sup>97</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, 16 (#38):

Le nom du personnage représenté nous est fourni par le cadre, dans une légende en caractères spéciaux imaginés par Jean Fouquet et retrouvés dans la plupart des miniatures du *Livre d'Heures* conservé à Chantilly: LE TRÉS VICTORIEUX ROY DE FRANCE CHARLES SEPTIESME DE CE NOM.... Pour qu'on osât lui donner ce nom il fallait que le pince méritât le titre de Victorieux; ce ne fut guère qu'après la bataille de Formigny, le 15 avril 1450, et surtout après la conquête de la Guyenne en 1453, qu'il eut pu le revendiquer. Mais le roi paraît âgé ici d'une quarantaine d'années; en 1453, il eut eu cinquante ans. On n'avait donc pas attendu les victoires finales et on avait du lui décerner le titre de Victorieux dès la conférence d'Arras (1444).

serious academics, rather than as objects intended for religious veneration. For example, the description of the painting, *Miracle d'un saint portant sa tête dans ses mains, en présence des donateurs*, school of Nicolas Froment, c.1480 (fig. 21), recounts how Saint Mitre, a 5th century Greek convert to Christianity, proved his sanctity by walking from the scaffold to the cathedral carrying his head under his arm. The factual terms of the account evacuated the miraculous aspect of the original legend, removing all sense of religious wonder typically associated with the depiction. Instead, the donors, Jacques de la Roque and his unnamed wife, became more central players in the historical drama, both visually with their painted figures flanking that of the headless saint in the centre of the panel and textually with the entry emphasizing how they fulfilled their socially and politically prominent roles as founders of the hospital at Aix. Originally foregrounded in their religious duties, their roles were now de-sacralized in the catalogue to be more identifiably civic in orientation. The scene thus was represented more as an episode in French history than as an event inspiring religious devotion.<sup>98</sup> This biographical emphasis in the *Catalogue Définitif* is consistent with the style of French historical scholarship in this period in which the personalities of the past were used as metonyms for the period in which they lived.<sup>99</sup> Heavily based in archival texts as well as the positivism of Auguste Comte<sup>100</sup>, studies of the portrait were one manifestation of these trends; here the frequent references to the personalities and achievements of donors

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<sup>98</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, 38 (#80).

<sup>99</sup>Green, 77. See also François Furet, "The Birth of History in France," *In the Workshop of History*, trans. Jonathan Mandelbaum (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1984).

<sup>100</sup>Kulturmann, 104.

represented in these works paralleled the general predominance of portraiture and can be seen as a link to the Bloc Républicain's valuing of individual accomplishments of citizens in modern French society.

An interesting counterpoint to the Introduction and the catalogue entries for the Paintings and drawings section of the *Catalogue Définitif* is the fourth section devoted to the Manuscripts at the Bibliothèque Nationale. The title, "Manuscrits à Peintures" (fig. 13), restated the continuity argument of Lafenestre's introductory essay, linking artistic stylistics of manuscript production with the development of French *primitif* painting. This section, however, shows a marked difference to the integrated and mutually supportive arguments of the earlier introductory essay, the catalogue entries for the paintings and drawings for the exhibit at the Pavillon de Marsan. The separate physical layout of the display of the manuscripts at the Bibliothèque Nationale, already discussed in Chapter 1, was reinforced by a separate introduction, under the title, "Avis"<sup>101</sup>. This new section, seemingly produced independent of the rest of the exhibition by the Bibliothèque Nationale, explained how the curator(s) had arranged the displayed objects in chronological order from the 13th to the 16th century. In addition, the objects were meticulously displayed: for example, "three cases, marked with the letters A, B, C,...dedicated to twenty-seven manuscripts from the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal and case

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<sup>101</sup>According to *The Concise Oxford French Dictionary* (Second edition, 1980), this word can be variously defined as 'statement of opinion,' 'announcement,' and 'judgement'. All of these elements could be used in reference to the content and, to the reader, its use sets this section apart from the rest of the catalogue.

XX to nine manuscripts from the famous collection of Mr. Henry Yates Thompson".<sup>102</sup> The manuscript section of the *Catalogue Définitif* gave explicit instructions to the visitor to move down the aisles in a specific sequence from right to left from the front of the room to the back. Each item displayed was listed in the catalogue, specified by case (e.g., Vitrine IV) or site (e.g., Vestibule)<sup>103</sup>; for example, the page in figure 15 clearly shows that the *Bréviaire de Paris* manuscript (#12) can be viewed in Case IV.<sup>104</sup>

The experience of the visitor at the Bibliothèque Nationale was thus more controlled and delineated in the manuscript section of the *Catalogue Définitif* than in the section discussing the paintings and drawings shown at the Pavillon de Marsan. The curators orchestrated the movements of the viewer and more precisely related the manuscript catalogue entries to the particular location at which it could be seen. In textual terms, the Bibliothèque Nationale portion of the exhibition can be read as an extensive footnote to the main part of the *Exposition des Primitifs français*, a 'proof' to the curators' claims of the formal linkage between manuscript production and the school of French primitives. In addition, the status of manuscripts as part of a complex library cataloguing system also differentiated these works from the paintings; for example, the entry for item #9, the manuscript *Les Grandes Chroniques de France* (fig. 14) was annotated with a unique

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<sup>102</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, 1: "...trois vitrines, marquées des lettres A, B, C, ont été consacrées à vingt-sept manuscrits de la Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal et la vitrine XX à neuf manuscrits de la célèbre collection de M. Henry Yates Thompson." Please note that page numbering restarts in this section of the catalogue, another indication of the separate treatment in the two parts of the *Catalogue Définitif*.

<sup>103</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, 2.

<sup>104</sup>There is no indication of a reverse cross-reference so that an object seen in a particular case can be easily identified in the catalogue. Note that, in fig. 14, the objects are numbered sequentially, but not in parallel sequence by case numbers and location. The *Catalogue Définitif*'s text can be seen as in conflict with and dominant over the experiential elements of the *Exposition des Primitifs français*.

identifier, "Sainte Geneviève, n° 782," indicating that this exhibit item is part of the Bibliothèque Sainte-Genevieve on loan to the exhibition. No such ordered and organized thinking similarly catalogued the paintings of the other great institution represented at the *Exposition des Primitifs français*: the Louvre.

Neither the Introduction nor the catalogue entries for the paintings and drawings, although numerically and chronologically sequenced, gave the visitor any such instructions on how to view the works displayed; only the numerical sequence of the catalogue entries provided any semblance of structured viewing. In fact, the part of the *Catalogue Définitif* dealing with the Pavillon de Marsan was not intended to provide guidance on how to experience the visual display. Georges Lafenestre and Henri Bouchot had created an interrelated dialogic text of the Introduction and the Catalogue entries, exclusive of the manuscript section. The *Catalogue Définitif* was created as a 'unit of discourse': the linear, syntagmatic construction of the Introduction was bound together with the associative references of the Catalogue entries to create a mutually reinforcing argument for the establishment of a French *primitifs*. The poetic troping of the logic and rhetoric of the Introduction combined with the themes of portraiture, civic and secular duty to the state, and the qualities of realism, 'truth' and Frenchness, and were repeated throughout the catalogue entries in order to produce the specific ideological message of the *Catalogue Définitif*. By not referring to the experiential qualities of a stipulated viewing structure for the *Exposition des Primitifs français*, the *Catalogue Définitif*

thus ruled over that experience and re/presented a textual manifestation of the visual argumentation of the exhibition.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>105</sup>Stephen Bann, *The Clothing of Clio* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984): 35-36; and Hayden White, "The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory," *History and Theory* 23, 1 (1984): 17. See also Hans Kellner, *Language and Historical Representation: Getting the Story Crooked* (Madison, WI and London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).

## CHAPTER THREE

### REPRESENTATION AS 'CATALOGUE'

...French art is dedicated to the immortality of the race, of the people or of the French nation, the "genius of France", sublimating and transcending all divisions, all dramas, all the incidents of the history of man, of class and of parties, into a system of aesthetic values and unified historical accounts, which embody, represent and enliven national sentiments, in a French society likewise convinced of its power and its cultural and artistic superiority.<sup>106</sup>

The *Exposition des Primitifs français*, as event and catalogue together, presented a unified, art-historical argument seeking to expand the academic spectrum to include notions of a French renaissance equal to and parallel with the paradigm of the Italian Renaissance and as counterpoint to the Flemish claims for equal recognition. But what else was this exhibition saying about the state of France, its people and the nation's current position within both the European and international spheres? Were there other issues imbedded within the rhetoric of historical development and lineage, within the impassioned call to arms to right a wrong, that go beyond the ostensible claims for academic and connoisseur acceptance? In this chapter the arguments presented in the *Catalogue Définitif* are read differently to provide an alternate and expanded interpretation of the relevance of the *Exposition des Primitifs français* far more resonant in the

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<sup>106</sup>Marie-Claude Genet-Delacroix, "Esthétique officielle et art national sous la Troisième République," *Annales: Économies Société Civilisations* 39, 5 (Sept.-Oct. 1984): 117-118:

...[L]'art français consacre-t-il l'immortalité de la race, du peuple ou de la nation française, le «génie de la France», sublimant et transcendant toutes les divisions, tous les drames, tous les accidents de l'histoire des hommes, des classes et des partis, dans un système de valeurs esthétique et historique unifiée, qui incarne, représente et vivifie le sentiment national, dans une société française ainsi convaincue de sa puissance et de sa supériorité culturelle et artistique.

contemporary milieu of early twentieth century France than its seemingly limited sphere of art. In another sense then, the exhibition can be seen as 'cataloguing' a set of political and social issues and concerns of the country from the point of view of the governing Republicans.

The *Catalogue Définitif* presents three interrelated areas of argumentation to claim a French *primitif* equal to that of the Italian and Flemish: linguistic and cultural homogeneity, anti-clericalism, and stylistic proselytization. These arguments relate, however, to larger French and international milieus and it is apparent that the content, style and tone of the *Catalogue Définitif* is intertwined with both internal and external issues and debates on Republicanism and national identity which, in early twentieth century France, were fraught with gradations of meaning. The catalogue is positioned within these debates to support what were specifically Republican ideas of the 'Nation' as bourgeois, stable, and unified.

### **Cultural and Linguistic Homogeneity**

The first area of argumentation in the catalogue's claim for an *École des Primitifs française* centred on specific notions of linguistic, geographic and cultural homogeneity. Throughout the *Catalogue Définitif*, both the Introduction and the catalogue entries made claims that artists who were French-speaking, artists who worked at French courts, and even artists with francophone names, all became French artists. These disparate individuals were assimilated and gallicized ("assimiler,...franciser", according to



Lafenestre).<sup>107</sup> For example, in discussing the international character of the Paris ateliers, Lafenestre in his essay claims "[a]lmost all, apprentices as much as masters, came from Artois, Hainaut, Brabant, southern Flanders, all provinces with a French language and culture, governed by vassal princes and relatives of the French king."<sup>108</sup> Several pages later, Lafenestre reiterated this point even more strongly, claiming now that even the great 'Flemish' painters Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden were French because their souls were able to deal so openly with the simplicity of nature and realistic portrayals that were, according to Lafenestre, so French in character. Even the Italians recognized this, claimed Lafenestre, because they gave the epithet of 'Gallicus' to both artists:

Nevertheless, the base itself, the soul, remains a natural development of French art, with a more experimental return to the simplicity strong among the sculptors of the thirteenth century and a more expansive awareness of outer nature and of proximate realities. The day when one wants to understand this art completely, one must bring together the works from Artois with all those, at least, of old Hainaut. Rogier de la Pasture (van der Weyden) «Rogerus Gallicus» to the Italians, like Jan van Eyck is «Johannes Gallicus», and his compatriots from Tournai, with language and instincts so French, would truly have the right to take part in this collaboration.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>107</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, XVIII.

<sup>108</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, XVII: "Presque tous, apprentis plus que maîtres, arrivaient de l'Artois, du Hainaut, du Brabant, des Flandres méridionales, toutes provinces de langue et de culture française, gouvernées par les princes vassaux et parents du roi de France."

<sup>109</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, XXIV:

Toutefois, le fond même, l'esprit, reste un développement naturel de l'art français, avec un retour plus expérimenté vers la simplicité forte des sculpteurs du XIII<sup>e</sup> et une intelligence plus étendue de la nature extérieure et des réalités prochaines. Le jour où l'on voudra connaître cet art d'une façon complète, il faudra joindre aux oeuvres de l'Artois toutes celles, au moins, de l'ancien Hainaut. Rogier de la Pasture (van der Weyden) «Rogerus Gallicus» pour les Italiens, comme Jan van Eyck est «Johannes Gallicus», Rogier et ses compatriotes les Tournaisiens, de langue et de sentiments si français, auraient bien le droit de prendre part à ces concours.

In this way, Lafenestre's argument contested Flemish claims to the production of specific artists by reinscribing their nationality as French or French-related. If a Flemish painter worked within the geographical boundaries of France, he therefore became French. The catalogue entry for item #16, a painting dated to c. 1400 (fig. 22), thus claimed that "[t]he *Le Martyre de Saint Denis* is considered to be the work of Jean Maelwael called Malouel, a Gueldrois painter settled at Dijon around 1398, and who became French just like the German Memling, established in Flanders, became Flemish."<sup>110</sup>

This line of argumentation was especially strongly stated when Lafenestre described the earlier stages of French artistic autonomy in the fourteenth century when he asserted that French painters had differentiated their style from that in Flemish work. Lafenestre's arguments in this area were supported by Bouchot's catalogue entries which developed, or rather identified, geographical and physiological 'Frenchness' in the works displayed. For example, in the description of a School of Touraine panel from c. 1480 (item #64, *La Vierge et sainte Anne sur un trône avec Dieu le Père, deux anges et deux saints*), Bouchot insisted that "[t]he two women, the Virgin and Saint Anne, have very French facial characteristics, without any rapport, even vaguely, with the Virgins of Flanders. The angels are also very close to the French angels in the manuscripts."<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>110</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, 8: "Le *Martyre de saint Denis* est considéré comme l'oeuvre de Jean Maelwael dit Malouel, peintre Gueldrois établi à Dijon vers 1398, et qui devint un Français comme l'allemand Memling, établi en Flandre, devint un Flamand."

<sup>111</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, 28 (#64): "Les deux femmes, la Vierge et sainte Anne ont les physionomies très françaises, sans rapports, même lointaine, avec les Vierges des Flandres. Les anges sont aussi très proches des anges français des manuscrits." The *Catalogue Définitif* entries are full of such references to the manuscripts section, which further emphasized the separate location of the Bibliothèque Nationale portion of the *Exposition des Primitifs français*. Regrettably, I was unable to locate this painting for inclusion in this thesis.

And again, for catalogue item #109, the *La Vierge et l'Enfant Jésus avec quatre anges* (fig. 23), attributed to the Maitre de Moulins (c. 1490), Bouchot explained that "the Virgin is an undisputed Frenchwoman; the type shown here has been preserved as a further example of one."<sup>112</sup> Geographical references to French locations abound in the catalogue entries, further buttressing the essential Frenchness identified by Bouchot. The following excerpt concerning a School of Paris work (c. 1490) entitled *Le Christ descendu de la croix en présence d'un religieux* stands as an example:

The calvary, considering the background which represents Saint-Germain-des-Pres, the Seine, the Louvre and Montmartre, seems to be located not far from Montparnasse....The interest in this picture, which has a beautiful appearance of art, resides in the representation of the abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Pres, the Louvre and Montmartre.<sup>113</sup>

Thus again, the painting of religious devotion has been 're-inscribed' by Bouchot into an historical travelogue of fifteenth century France. These arguments are coherent with other analyses of late nineteenth-century Republican support for notions of the homogenized linguistic, geographic and cultural unity. Étienne Balibar points out that France had long regarded linguistic uniformity as a political necessity essential to the country's nationhood:

The French 'revolutionary nation' accorded a privileged place to the symbol of language in its own initial process of formation; it bound political unity closely to linguistic uniformity, the democratization of the state to the

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<sup>112</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, 51: "...la Vierge est un indiscutable française; le type qu'elle nous montre s'est conservé encore à peu près tel."

<sup>113</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, 43 (#92):

Le calvaire, étant donnés les fonds qui représentent Saint-Germain-des-Pres, la Seine, le Louvre et Montmartre, paraît être placé non loin de Montparnasse....L'intérêt de ce tableau, qui a une belle tenue d'art, réside surtout dans la représentation de l'abbaye de Sainte-Germain-des-Pres, du Louvre et de Montmartre.

Unfortunately I was unable to locate the painting based on the information contained in this entry.

coercive repression of cultural 'particularisms', local *patois* being the object on which it became fixated....'Nativism' had always been implicit in the history of French national ideology until, at the end of the nineteenth century, colonization on the one hand, and an intensification of the importation of labour and the segregation of manual workers by means of their ethnic origin on the other, led to the constitution of the phantasm of the 'French race'.<sup>114</sup>

There were two main tactics by which the Republicans had fostered this ideology of unification. One was by legislating the standardization of French language use and education throughout the country, and the second was by promoting the French state as a long-standing legal and historic entity. Balibar has also noted that the act of imagining a collective national identity permitted the elision of internal differences and helped to focus potentially divisive internal tensions towards externally identifiable 'others':

By constituting the people as a fictively ethnic unity against the background of a universalistic representation which attributed to each individual one - and only one - ethnic identity and which thus divides up the whole of humanity between different ethnic groups corresponding potentially to so many nations, national ideology does much more than justify the strategies employed by the state to control populations. It inscribes their demands in advance in a sense of belonging in the double sense of the term - both what it is that makes one belong to oneself and also what makes one belong to other fellow human beings. Which means that one can be interpellated, as an individual, *in the name of* the collectivity whose name one bears. The naturalization of belonging and the sublimation of the ideal nation are two aspects of the same process. [emphasis in original]<sup>115</sup>

The principle of a French-speaking 'nation' had first arisen in the revolutionary era of the 1790's when the use of regional languages continued to be linked with the power

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<sup>114</sup>Etienne Balibar, "The Nation Form: History and Ideology," *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, trans. Chris Turner, ed. Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein (London and New York: Verso, 1991): 104.

<sup>115</sup>Balibar, 96.

of the Catholic Church and the Ancien Régime.<sup>116</sup> The homogenization of the French had accelerated particularly since the 1890's with the passage of legislation standardizing the use of French language and laicizing the educational system.<sup>117</sup> As recently as 1903, the use of Breton, Basque, Provençal and Flemish had been abolished in all religious instruction, effectively undermining local clerical influence.<sup>118</sup> Such linguistic policies effectively annexed non-French-speaking regions into a Republican-defined, French-speaking, national entity to privilege centrist needs over regional ones. Regional *patois* were thus devalued and defined as the languages of the uneducated and powerless.<sup>119</sup>

This concern for cultural and linguistic homogeneity can also be extended to encompass other considerations. The late nineteenth century was a time of shifting demographics: French population growth had stabilized in the last decades of the nineteenth century, forcing recourse to immigration to fill the employment needs of the

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<sup>116</sup>Even before the Revolution, the Ancien Régime had sought to impose a unifying linguistic principle to France. According to both Pierre Achard ("History and the Politics of Language in France," *History Workshop* 10 (Autumn 1980):175-176) and Caroline C. Ford ("Which Nation? Language, Identity and Republican Politics in Post-revolutionary France," *History of European Ideas* 17, 1 (1993): 32-35), the 1539 Villers-Cotterêts decree during the reign of Francis I attempted to use language to centralize authority in Paris by legislating that all proclamations and laws would be in French only. Both authors agree that "linguistic uniformity did not become a political and cultural goal until the Revolution and, more specifically, until the establishment of the first French Republic" (Ford, 33). Others (including Mayeur and Rebérioux) suggest that concerted efforts to legislate language uniformity did not occur until the middle of the Third Republic.

<sup>117</sup>For a full discussion of this topic, see Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France 1870-1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976).

<sup>118</sup>Achard, 180; Ford, 37.

<sup>119</sup>Fred Orton and Griselda Pollock, "Les Données Bretonnantes: La Prairie de représentation," *Art History* 3, 3 (September 1980): 329; Ernest Gellner, *Culture, Identity, and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987): 17; and Achard, 177.

burgeoning industrial corridors of the northwest. Immigration of foreign workers to fill this need came primarily from Belgium and Italy, the two countries specifically targeted in the *Exposition des Primitifs français* in its re-writing of the European Renaissance. This meant that, by 1905, 5% of the population, or over a million non-French born individuals, could be identified in the census.<sup>120</sup> However, despite, or perhaps because of this dependence on foreign workers, many of whom took low-paying industrial work that the French-born would not, there was a distrust of 'foreigners' who took French wages back to their own countries and did not participate in the French economy or commit to the Nation by becoming citizens.<sup>121</sup> And the Republicans, having built on Renan-esque theories of consensual nationhood, were seeking a "common, organic, trans-historical national community", an Enlightenment conception of community in which "...the universalism of Jacobinism is presented in *opposition to* the particularism of regional, cultural, ethnic and other minorities"<sup>122</sup> at the same time as industrial sectors of the

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<sup>120</sup>Philip E. Ogden, "International migration in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries," *Migrants in Modern France: Population Mobility in the Later Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Philip E. Ogden and Paul E. White (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989): 40-45; and Olivier Milza, *Les Français devant l'immigration, Questions au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Brussels: Éditions Complexe, 1988): 21. Not only were Belgian and Italian immigrants (approximately 310,000 and 350,000 respectively) settling in northwest and southeast border regions, there was also in-migration to the Paris basin and other large towns throughout the country. In fact, Paris had approximately 16% of the entire country's foreign population, higher than any comparable centre in Europe (43).

<sup>121</sup>Lientacker, 180. Only approximately 375,000 of the over one million became naturalized citizens in this period (Ogden, 40).

<sup>122</sup>Maxim Silverman, *Deconstructing the nation: Immigration, racism and citizenship in modern France*, *Critical Studies in Racism and Migration*, ed. Robert Miles (London and New York: Routledge, 1992): 23-25. Emphasis in original.

country were eager for an influx of workers<sup>123</sup>. This resulted in tensions between creating the sense of the political and inviolable whole and supporting politically influential economic forces in the regions, between the need for an assimilationist agenda creating the nation-state and the exclusionary tendencies in the face of regional inflows, and between the ideal 'France' of Republican ideology and the practical needs of industrialists in the northwest and southeast.<sup>124</sup> When the reader or viewer studied the *Catalogue Définitif*, the notions of French language, French geographical integrity, and French political history were all re-created into French cohesiveness, despite the contemporary evidence to the contrary.

### **Anti-clericalism/Anti-papalism**

The second main argument in the *Catalogue Définitif* incorporates notions of anti-clerical and anti-papal constructs into its art historical claims. Long demonized as anti-democratic and as diverting citizen loyalties to an external authority, Roman Catholicism had been a point of attack in Republican thought and policies since 1879 when government legislation first began to exclude clerical teachers from the school system.<sup>125</sup> Allusions to anti-papal politics were somewhat veiled, but remained identifiable. The *Catalogue Définitif* essay went out of its way to emphasize the lay spirit underlying the paintings in the

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<sup>123</sup>Philip Nord, "Social defence and conservative regeneration: the national revival, 1900-14," *Nationhood and Nationalism in France: From Boulangism to the Great War, 1889-1918*, ed. Robert Tombs (London and New York: Harper Collins Academic, 1991): 214-5.

<sup>124</sup>Silverman, 17.

<sup>125</sup>Anderson, 23, 92; Mayeur and Rebérioux, 150-1.

Pavillon de Marsan. For example, it referred to the changing stylistic in manuscript illuminations as "the rapid emancipation, under the influence of lay scholars, of the observing spirit and human sensibilities".<sup>126</sup> Lafenestre also made reference to the importation of numerous Italian painters, including Simone Martini, to the (French) papal court in Avignon in 1309<sup>127</sup>, but hastened to add that "nevertheless the Parisians were not at all corroded by these influences, too transient or too far away, of an art in development like their own."<sup>128</sup> Nevertheless, the implication that a Papal court was encouraging foreign influences was very clearly stated.

The language and focus of the catalogue overtly emphasized secular stylistic sources for the displayed art, thereby confounding the conflation of clerical and monarchical which was present throughout the *Catalogue Définitif*. At one level the aestheticization of religious imagery served to titillate the viewer's eye and not the viewer's religious belief. In turn, by making the objects 'French' and 'Republican' the religious associations of the images were correspondingly elided. This goal had already been partially accomplished with the removal of the art works from their original and functional settings in churches, chapels, or monasteries, and placing them within the state's secular equivalent, the museum which served as the repository of the national patrimony and as

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<sup>126</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, XVI: "la rapide émancipation, sous l'influence des lettrés laïque, de l'esprit observateur et de la sensibilité humaine."

<sup>127</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, XVIII.

<sup>128</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, XVII: "Néanmoins, les Parisiens ne se laissent point encore entamer par ces influences, trop passagères ou trop lointaines, d'un art en formation comme leur." Note the term Parisian even though Lafenestre is writing about southern France.



a new-found cult object.<sup>129</sup> An extreme example from the catalogue entries, items #40-42, the *Melun Diptych* by Jean Fouquet, dating from c. 1450, serves well here. The right wing of the diptych (fig. 15) depicts the Virgin Mary, but is allegedly a portrait of Agnes Sorel, the mistress of Charles VII. As such, it was read as a display of the individualistic and realistic attributes of portraiture as opposed to a more formulaic Madonna. Étienne Chevalier, the painting's donor and Treasurer of France, is shown on the left wing of the diptych (fig. 24). In the 2-1/2 page catalogue entry for this work<sup>130</sup>, Bouchot reported the gossip surrounding the famous Agnes Sorel and her patronage of Chevalier, effectively intermixing the latter's service to the court and his role in government with scandalous details of their supposed liaison. Bouchot thereby completely eliminated any possible consideration of the work in religious terms, despite its title, and dwelled on its worldly connections:

At Melun, where the work was hung on the wall of the cathedral, it was located in the exact place of the tomb of Étienne Chevalier and his wife Catherine Budé, dead in 1452 and represented with her husband on a brass tomb plate. A very old legend has it that the Virgin of the diptych has the traits of Agnes Sorel, mistress of King Charles VII and protector of Master Étienne Chevalier, one is astonished that Catherine Budé does not appear in the composition and it was thought that the alleged Agnes Sorel was really the wife of the Treasurer....As we have stated, Agnes Sorel had named him executor of her will and the slightly scandalous, and improbable, story

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<sup>129</sup>There has been a considerable amount of work on the topic of museums and their role in constructing meaning. The most useful for my purposes have been: Carol Duncan, "Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship," *Exhibiting Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, ed. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991); Duncan and Wallach, "The Universal Survey Museum,"; Sherman, "The Bourgeoisie, Cultural Appropriation, and the Art Museum in Nineteenth-Century France,"; and Sherman, *Worthy Monuments*.

<sup>130</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, 17-20.

imputes to a great shared passion the absence of Catherine Budé from the diptych.<sup>131</sup>

Analysis of the exhibition contents (see appendix 1) presents another aspect of this tendency. From the predominate category of objects, that is painting, the breakdown of subject matter between secular and religious is close to 50-50, or more exactly, 32% secular and 31.5% religious, with overall totals of 47% secular and 53% religious subjects for the entire *Exposition des Primitifs français*. Yet, in relating these relationships back to the actual descriptive passages about the individual works, it becomes immediately apparent that the religious content of the paintings was used only as an identificatory label or as a stylistic marker. Thus, in one instance, an analysis of the Virgin Mary was used only to make a comparison with another known painting. This is the case with the painting of the *L'Adoration des Bergers* of c. 1430 (fig. 27), which was attributed in the catalogue to the École de l'Artois (Le Maître de Flémalle). Here Bouchot wrote: "Among the figures, the type of Virgin, with her hair tucked behind her ears, is that of Eve in the earthly paradise in the *Très Riches Heures*, etc.; her white mantle studded with stars is

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<sup>131</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, 17-19:

A Melun, où l'oeuvre était attachée à la muraille de la cathédrale, elle surmontait l'endroit précis de la sépulture d'Étienne Chevalier et de sa femme Catherine Budé, morte en 1452 et représentée avec son mari sur une plate tombe de cuivre. Comme une légende fort ancienne voulait que la Vierge du diptyque fut représentée sous les traits d'Agnès Sorel, maîtresse du roi Charles VII et protectrice de maître Étienne Chevalier, on s'étonnait que Catherine Budé ne parut pas dans la composition, et on pensait que la prétendue Agnès Sorel était vraisemblablement la femme du trésorier... Comme nous l'avons dit, Agnès Sorel l'avait nommé son exécuteur testamentaire, et la chronique un peu scandaleuse, mal invraisemblable, attribuait à une passion partagée l'absence de Catherine Budé dans le diptyque.

similar to that in the *Adorations des bergers* of the manuscript."<sup>132</sup> The irony of comparing Eve with the Virgin is apparently not taken up in the text. Religious content of the images then was not discussed according to the discourses of the actual historical period in which the work was originally viewed, nor in terms of style.

A second form of this anti-clerical aspect employs a trope for anti-papal attitudes held by the governing centrist Republicans by using a kind of battle jargon, for example, terms such as "invasions," "resistance," "overthrown," "victim," "fatalities," "defeat," "confusion,"<sup>133</sup> to describe the impact of Italianate artistic influences in the sixteenth century. A passage documenting the first incursions of the new, 'foreign' influences in terms suitable to epic poetry is an example:

In the *disarray* when the School of Paris and those of the provinces *fell prey to foreign invasion*, none of the successive centres which developed here and there under the *protection* of a few enlightened princes in Burgundy, bordering on and in Berri, then on the banks of the Loire, in Provence, in the Lyons and Bourbonnais districts, became dominant or prosperous enough so that they developed in continuity and practice a strong enough scholarly tradition to group together once more so many incongruous elements....The few powerful personalities who went there to train would remain too isolated to rally for a time a *large enough army of good Frenchmen* [sic] capable of *resisting*, by their sheer size, *the foreign invasion*.<sup>134</sup> [emphasis added]

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<sup>132</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, 14 (#32): "Dans les figures, le type de la Vierge, avec les cheveux rejetés derrière les oreilles, est celui des *Très riches Heures* pour Eve dans le Paradis terrestre, etc.; son manteau blanc étoilé est semblable à celui de l'*Adoration des bergers* du manuscrit."

<sup>133</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, XXII-XXIII.

<sup>134</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, XXII:

Dans le désarroi où les événements ont jeté l'école de Paris et celles des provinces en proie à l'invasion étrangère, aucun des centres successifs qui se forment, çà et là, sous les protections de quelques princes éclairés, en Bourgogne, d'abord et dans le Berri, puis sur les bords de la Loire, en Provence, dans le Lyonnais et le Bourbonnais, ne devient assez prépondérant et prospère pour qu'il s'y développe, avec suite et méthode, une tradition scolaire [sic] assez forte pour grouper de nouveau tant d'éléments hétérogènes....Les

Such metaphorical language was commonly used in other contemporaneous discourses, such as the popular press, to describe Republican perceptions of the external threat of the Papacy (for example, the Pope's 1892 encyclical, *Au Milieu des Sollicitudes*, which in essence 'endorsed' the French Republican governments, though not if they persisted in their anti-religious legislation<sup>135</sup>) and internal Catholic and conservative support for papal influence and interference, for example, in maintaining *Roman* Catholic influences in education. At the same time, such invasion vocabulary would be highly charged for citizens with the still sensitive memories of the 1871 defeat in the Franco-Prussian War and France's loss of Alsace-Lorraine. The language choices, therefore, linked defeat and humiliation in historical times, both in war and significantly in art, to the new contemporary threat of a Catholicism being described and demonized in the popular press as a pervasive and looming menace to the peace, prosperity and independence of the successive and successful Republican governments.

### **Stylistic Proselytization**

The third argument presented in the *Catalogue Définitif* posits what I call a theory of stylistic proselytization. For example, Lafenestre's Introduction states that the development of linearity, realism and naturalism centred on the Ile de France and in Paris, signifying as a result a truly French aesthetic and approach to painting. This style was

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quelques puissantes personnalités qui s'y vont former resteront trop isolées pour rallier à temps une assez grosse armée de bons Français capables de résister, par leur masse, l'envahissement extérieur.

<sup>135</sup>Mayeur and Rebérioux, 153.

then described as being disseminated not only throughout France, where it blended with the best qualities of independently developed local schools, but also into Flanders where, according to Lafenestre, under Burgundian rulers "[a]ll the franco-flemish art, until the rise of van Eyck, proceeded from the Parisian art of the preceding generation."<sup>136</sup> This construct of a French-centred origin of Northern realism directly opposed the commonly-held theory, first proposed in the late 1790's by the German art historian, August Wilhelm von Schlegel, and supported throughout the nineteenth century by Gustav Friedrich Waagen and others,<sup>137</sup> that Flemish art style had spread southward into France.

Significantly, the principles of the governing Republicans of the late nineteenth century emphasized cultural unity and elided cultural pluralism through language and education policies, bolstering the idea of a Republican 'nation'. The Louvre itself had long been positioned as the centralized repository of all national culture -- from its role as a pre-Revolution royal residence embodying the legitimacy of the Ancien Regime and the king to its position as a state institution "in theory belonging to the people."<sup>138</sup> In contemporary terms, the official Salon system located in Paris acted as a regulating agency for the art production of the nation. Salon taste, academic taste was therefore equated with French taste. In 1895, art official Gustave Larroumet, a moderate Republican, had deplored this centralist inclination, and the unwritten policy, that permitted the Louvre to denude the rest of the country for its own benefit:

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<sup>136</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, XXIII: "Tout cet art franco-flamand, jusqu'à l'apparition de van Eyck, procède de l'art parisien à la mode sous la génération précédente."

<sup>137</sup>Kultermann, 78-79 and 91.

<sup>138</sup>Duncan and Wallach, 454.

[t]he national museums located in Paris should not enrich themselves by despoiling the nation to the profit of the capital. Above all they should not monopolize works which in their original place, are living and, moved elsewhere, are dead. The Louvre should not imagine that it can deal with France to the profit of Paris, the same way that Lord Elgin used the Parthenon to the profit of England.<sup>139</sup>

However, as a corollary to the *envoi* system (that is, the distribution of salon art from the centre out to the provinces), the *Exposition des Primitifs français* had harvested in regional treasures to fulfil the goals of a Parisian, and thus national, centre<sup>140</sup> by bringing together works from sites as diverse as regional museums in Lyons and Troyes, as well as monasteries and churches from as far away as Moulins and Aix.<sup>141</sup> Indeed, Charles Blanc, Director of Fine Arts from 1870-1873 "[regarded] provincial museums as

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<sup>139</sup>Gustave Larroumet, *L'art et l'état en France* (Paris: Librairie Hachette et cie., 1895): 251-252: "Les musées nationaux installées à Paris ne doivent pas s'enrichir en dépouillant la nation au profit de sa capitale. Surtout, ils ne doivent pas accaparer des oeuvres qui, à leur place originelle, sont vivantes et, partout ailleurs, sont mortes. Le Louvre ne saurait traiter en Franc, au profit de Paris, comme Lord Elgin a faite du Parthénon au profit de l'Angleterre."

<sup>140</sup>Still the best sources for information on the relationship between provincial museums and Paris are Daniel Sherman's works, *Worthy Monuments* and the earlier "The Bourgeoisie, Cultural Appropriation, and the Art Museum in Nineteenth-Century France," both previously cited. Gustave Larroumet discussed this relationship in *L'art et l'état en France*. Though published a decade before the *Exposition des Primitifs français*, it still provided a valuable, near-contemporary view of the inner workings of the Fine Arts Administration. A footnote in Sherman's *Worthy Monuments* [no. 62, page 35] supports my contention of the provinces being stripped of treasures for the *Exposition des Primitifs français*:

In the parliamentary discussion of the fine arts budget for 1903, Roger Ballu, a deputy and former Inspecteur des Beaux-Arts (his direct responsibilities had not included provincial museums) charged that the Fine Arts Administration was engaged in the practice of systematically transferring masterpieces from the collections of provincial museums to the Louvre: ACD/DP, 1903(1), 3 Feb 1903.510. He cited no definitive evidence to support this charge, and I have found none in the archives; the minister, Jacques Chaumié, while responding to most of Roger Ballu's comments, did not bother to reply to this charge.

<sup>141</sup>Appendix 1 shows that, in all, there were 23 French cities and towns that sent works to the *Exposition des Primitifs français*. I have found no evidence to suggest or refute the possibility either that the works were simply commandeered or that they were willingly offered. At best, reviews, books and articles at the time mentioned the 'home' of the visiting works infrequently and then only in passing. Bouchot does call them lenders, but then he would hardly admit to commandeering artworks ("...Avant-propos," 265).

repositories from which the state could pick and choose at will".<sup>142</sup> In uniting regional treasures in Paris, the *Exposition des Primitifs français* restated and reinforced that city's centrality, not only in contemporary political and cultural matters, but also in historical and artistic terms. Art historian Daniel Sherman's arguments on nineteenth century museum policy correspond to this analysis; he suggests that centres outside Paris and the Ile de France hub were "usually left out of the familiar dichotomy that treats Paris as the only true city and equates the provinces with rural France."<sup>143</sup> Provincial museums from the 1840's and 1850's had developed active local fine arts societies whose monetary support enabled them to acquire works independent of the *envoi* system. Despite this growing independence, however, Paul Greenhalgh points out that "[f]rom the Revolution onwards, the hegemony of Paris over the rest of France became a recognized part of French cultural strategy, Paris was to be built up into the centre of European and hence world civilization."<sup>144</sup>

It is important to note that in nineteenth century France there had been a long history of resistance to the centralization of culture and international interest. The *Expositions Universelles* were instances that had provoked strong provincial resistance to the harvesting of local treasures for the glorification of Paris. A pamphlet called *Pas d'Exposition en 1900*, written by Léon Goulette, editor of *L'Est républicain*, a newspaper from Nancy, had challenged centralized cultural supremacy and expressed strong feelings

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<sup>142</sup>Sherman, *Worthy Monuments*, 33.

<sup>143</sup>Sherman, "Bourgeoisie, Cultural Appropriations...", 43.

<sup>144</sup>Greenhalgh, 118.

of "provincial pride and hatred of the political and economic power of Paris"<sup>145</sup>. Not only did such expositions strip the provincial centres of their best works, as was also the case with the *Exposition des Primitifs français*, but they also drew an inflow of capital from visitors with their hard-earned money who were attracted to the capital city by such extravaganzas. The centralization of artistic development in Paris as argued in the *Exposition des Primitifs français* was thus paralleled by physically relocating notable works to Paris and by bolstering the still resonant claim that the Musée du Louvre performed the crucial role of formulating cultural and aesthetic standards for the nation.

It is into this third strand of argumentation that the other two strands can be woven. If the premise of the *Exposition des Primitifs français* was to foster notions of a centralized, single-minded Nation in historical, artistic and aesthetic terms, then language and political loyalty must all be focused on the secular and centralized authority and be consistent throughout the country. No regional, patois-driven polities could be sustained or condoned in such a Nation; nor could any externally focused loyalty to a papal throne be tolerated if the Republican belief in unity and consensus was to be supported. There is thus an immediate and undeniable linkage between anticlericalism and the linguistic policies. All stripes of liberal and Republican citizens could unite in their support for a national, secular and unified school system with the promulgation of standardized French as a replacement for patois and local usages.<sup>146</sup> The separation of Church and State had come to the fore as an issue as early as 1873, two years after the founding of the

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<sup>145</sup>Cited in Mandrell, 41.

<sup>146</sup>Achard, 179.



Third Republic and, at the turn of the century, the *Bloc Républicain* as a political and governing group had in fact arisen primarily through the identification of a common enemy: the Church. Historian Claude Langlois has observed in a recent study that the stand against the Roman Catholic church became a rallying point for a spectrum of Republicans with discordant opinions:

A single point of view united the adversaries [among the Republicans] profoundly separated by the proposed political solutions, the politics of religion: the authoritarian Empire had ostensibly supported Catholicism; the government of moral order, in the absence of a king to hand over to France, went one step further in this matter. The enemy, therefore, was clericalism.<sup>147</sup>

As historian Maurice Crubellier has expressed it, the Republican government's agenda was to replace the catechism with the Declaration of the Rights of Man and therefore to replace the familial relationship to the Mother Church by an analogous relationship to *la patrie* (from the Latin, *pater* or father), an essential ingredient in the development of a solidly secular nation.<sup>148</sup>

Thus, by writing issues of anti-clericalism, centralization, cultural homogeneity and the promotion of the French language into the text of the catalogue, the Republican position was embedded in highly politicized terms in an art historical argument surrounding the claims of the *Exposition des Primitif français*. At this point, the field of

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<sup>147</sup>Claude Langlois, "Catholiques et laïcs," *Les Lieux de mémoire*, ed. Pierre Nora, Vol. III, *Les France* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1992): 152:

Un seul point unit des adversaires profondément séparés par les solutions politiques proposées, la politique religieuse: l'Empire autoritaire a ostensiblement soutenu le catholicisme; le gouvernement d'Ordre moral, à défaut de donner un roi à la France, a renchéri encore sur ce point. L'ennemi, le voila bien, le cléricisme.

<sup>148</sup>Crubellier, 232.

inquiry must be viewed in the light of emerging Rightist and Leftist philosophies being formulated in both municipal and national political arenas. After the dissolution of conservative Boulangism in the 1880's, the Right, and especially ultra-conservative factions, had supported the army and the judiciary during the years of the Dreyfus Affair. The Right, strongly conservative and Catholic, identified 'the Nation' with a seemingly paradoxical blend of nationalism and regionalism, arguing that the 'true' Revolution had been decentralist and federalist and had supported regional self-determination in opposition to the autocratic centralist government of the Ancien Régime. On the other hand, socialist support for unionization, especially in Paris and regional centres such as Lyon, was putting pressure on the Republican government's slow-but-steady pace of social reform. A growing Republican fear of a Leftist presence in France was thus linked with the spectre of internationalism, previously associated only with the Catholic Church. The Republican politic, tending to hold somewhat Rightist beliefs in institutional conservatism, property and profit which they had assumed virtually unchanged from previous regimes regardless of their political bent, abhorred the spectre of collectivism, unionization and socialist agendas epitomized in the potent memory of the worst excesses of the 1872 Commune.<sup>149</sup>

Municipal and national elections illustrate the political vacillations of this period. For example, Paris municipal representation, radical since 1871, shifted to a Rightist alignment from 1896 on, largely due to anti-Dreyfusard feelings; however, in reaction to growing

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<sup>149</sup>D.R. Watson, "The Nationalist Movement in Paris, 1900-1906," *The Right in France, 1890-1919: Three Studies*, ed. David Shapiro, St. Antony's Papers, Number 13 (London: Chatto & Windus, 1962): 57, 63; Nord, 212.

syndicalism and labour unrest, it reverted in 1904 to a socialist minority. National elections show a corresponding shift in the other direction: the centrist Bloc of Radicals and Republicans had enlisted Socialist support to defeat conservative elements in 1900, but, by the federal election of 1906, disaffection with socialists urging accelerated changes to current social policies resulted in a return to a more Rightist bent. The 1904 Republicans, then, found themselves between the two polarities of the political spectrum at a time when popular support for centrist ideologies seemed to be fluctuating. Both poles were increasingly powerful and espoused nationalistic aspects to their philosophy: the Right advocated the regional and anti-collectivist stance it saw as the legacy of 1789, while the Left invoked egalitarianist ideals of the Revolution. The Republicans found themselves as neither: they remained centrist in alignment, supporting the principles of continuity, stability, anti-clericalism, homogeneity and a specific national identity.<sup>150</sup>

And what can we therefore infer were the notions surrounding national identity catalogued through the *Exposition des Primitifs français* and its discourses? The educational objectives of Republican beaux-art policies are apparent throughout the *Catalogue Définitif*. Lafenestre's consistent subtext in his Introduction was that to see these works was to learn much that had been hidden about France's greatness. This approach was used in the creation (or reinforcement) of a stronger, more nationalist, rather than localized, sense of 'France'.<sup>151</sup> By extending historian Miriam Levin's analysis of Republican art policy, the *Exposition des Primitifs français* can be categorized

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<sup>150</sup>Watson, 82; Stone, 185.

<sup>151</sup>Green, 78-9.

as a 'normative approach', that is, one where the values and codes of conduct to which a citizen should aspire can be seen as mirrored in the *facture* and style of art:

Order, harmony, balance, a logical and controlled working method were qualities that bespoke the personality of the artist. They were communicated through the work of art to the viewer to accept as guidelines for his own moral character. Art in fact, had its source in the artist's need for discipline....[T]he achievement of moral perfection, whether through the process of making the work of art or by using it as a guide for one's actions, ended in a sense of pleasurable calm....It was a theory that valued rigor, diligence, and devotion to duty as a social obligation.<sup>152</sup>

These are the very qualities that are extolled in the *Catalogue Définitif* and that are advocated as the values ordering the proper conduct and attitude of a true Republican - one who espoused neither extreme of the political spectrum and who assiduously fulfilled the duties of a citizen, a "civisme républicain," according to Crubellier.<sup>153</sup> Consider the following catalogue entry for the exhibition's portrait of Jean le Bon (fig. 26), which is cited as the exemplar for unflattering portraits<sup>154</sup>. Yet, according to Bouchot, the face of the King, despite the painting's unfinished roughness, revealed stalwart and unpretentious qualities:

In this crude profile, thick and fleshy, of King John, what ancestral size in the nose! What thickness of lips! What dull and serious rusticity in this despondent face, in this neglected clothing and hair! But also what a tone of heartrending sincerity, what power of unpitying truth! This single work suffices to tell us, by the manly daring and the free breadth of its rendition, that there was thus in Paris painters, true painters, in the complete sense of

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<sup>152</sup>Levin, 154. Though Levin's analysis is specifically applied to art production in the period of the late Third Republic, the same approach can also be used for an historical exhibition.

<sup>153</sup>Crubellier, 232.

<sup>154</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, 1 (#11), attributed to Girard d'Orleans, c. 1359.

the work, already different from the miniaturists and tapestry makers, and capable of painting great works, vigorous and simple....<sup>155</sup>

In other words, this king was represented in the *Catalogue Définitif* as having the attributes of a stolid, sincere, unpretentious, bourgeois: a good Republican citizen rendered by painters of similar character.

The catalogue's Introduction also overtly highlighted portraiture throughout the *Exposition des Primitifs français* and linked the qualities identified there to the history of the nation: Lafenestre, the moderate Republican and a curator at the Louvre, wrote in the Introduction to the *Catalogue Définitif*, "[h]istory and portraits, it is the same taste for life and for truth, in the present or in the past, a noble taste that we preserve today."<sup>156</sup> Qualities identified in these works, such as truth, honesty, and unflinching self-regard, were seen as combined with lively and virile rendering of images<sup>157</sup>. The sitter's characteristics were associated with a sense of duty which in turn was supported by the litany of government jobs and duties fulfilled by the persons portrayed. The physiognomy of recognizable individuals, as well as saints and other figures, was repeatedly foregrounded to fashion a composite portrait, as it were, of an 'Ideal Citizen' formed in

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<sup>155</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, XX:

Dans ce rude profile, épais et charnu, du roi Jean, quelle ancestrale grosseur du nez! quelle épaisseur de lèvres! Quelle rusticité lourde et sérieuse dans cette mine abattue, dans cette négligence des vêtements et de la chevelure! Mais aussi que accent de sincérité navrante, quelle puissance de vérité impitoyable! Cette seule pièce suffirait à nous dire, par la hardiesse virile et la largueur libre de sa facture, qu'il y avait alors à Paris des peintres, de vrais peintres, dans le sens complet du mot, déjà différents des miniaturistes et brodeurs, et capable de brosser de grands ouvrages, vigoureux et simples...

<sup>156</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, XIX: "Histoire et portraits, c'est le même goût pour la vie et pour la vérité, dans le présent ou dans le passé, un noble goût que nous conserveron toujours."

<sup>157</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, XXIII.

the historical roots of pre-Revolutionary France and promoted and attained in the contemporary Republic.

### **The 'Primitif'**

Attachment of the term '*primitif*' to the very title of this exhibition also had significant cultural and political impact in 1904. The claims made by the *Exposition des Primitifs français* revolved around a new application of a term which was considered both avant-garde and radical and which had contested meanings and history.<sup>158</sup> Used widely and variously throughout the nineteenth century for widely differing reasons, the term '*primitif*' was co-opted by Lafenestre and Bouchot for the *Exposition des Primitifs français* in order to counteract both the radical historic resonances inherent in many past applications of the term and the newer claims being made by contemporaneous Belgian and French avant-gardes to legitimize its use in new artistic contexts and associations.

Reference to the *Nouveau Larousse Illustrée*, a popular illustrated encyclopedia published between 1897-1904<sup>159</sup>, provides access to contemporary usage of the term *primitif*. Of the sixteen different definitions of the word, ranging from mathematical to geological, several dominant notions catalogue and illuminate how the word was understood in this period and in the context of art production and history. The "Beaux-Arts" definition, "[t]he primitives - artists, painters or sculptors who preceded the masters

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<sup>158</sup>The controversy continues today, especially in the context of centre/periphery dynamics and post-/neo-colonial analysis of cultural institutions. See, for example, *"Primitivism" in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, ed. William Rubin (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1984) for an example of an exhibition pilloried by critics and cultural historians for its approach.

<sup>159</sup>*Nouveau Larousse Illustrée* (Paris, 1897-1904 ed.). S.v. "Primitif".

of the Grande Époque,"<sup>160</sup> states the accepted point of view against which the *Exposition des Primitifs français* was positioned. Certainly, in French academic circles, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had long been enshrined as the era in which the foundations of French academic style had been established, a belief that persisted even into the concurrent Salon exhibition.<sup>161</sup> It is in this sense, together with the basic *Larousse* definition, "that which exists from the beginning,"<sup>162</sup> that the curators of the *Exposition des Primitifs français* appear to have used the term '*primitif*.' They argued that a school of French painting had existed from the beginning (interpreted as the beginning of French artistic history); thus, the goal of the exhibition organizers was to push back the origins of French artistic production from the 'grande époque' to the middle ages, linking gothic sculpture, manuscript illumination and ecclesiastical architecture with the achievements of the traditionally defined golden era in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as part of a continuum of French excellence.

This was not a new project for historians of art in eighteenth and nineteenth century France. As early as the 1770's, Seroux d'Agincourt had attempted to construct a seamless lineage of European artistic production from the fourth to the sixteenth centuries, from what had been considered as the decline of classical greatness to the

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<sup>160</sup>"Les primitifs - artistes, peintres ou sculpteurs qui ont précédées les maîtres de la Grande Époque". The Grande Époque refers to the period of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries when French art reached what was considered in the canon to be its illustrious peak, epitomised by such artists as Poussin, Fragonard and Watteau.

<sup>161</sup>The Salon opened at the Grand Palais on April 16, 1904, four days after the *Exposition des Primitifs français* (André Michel, "Promenades aux salons," *Journal des Débats*, 29 May 1904, 1).

<sup>162</sup>"Quelque chose qui existe dès l'origine."

'rebirth' in the Italian Renaissance.<sup>163</sup> The need to prove conclusively that superior French art production had been continuous from the beginning of European artistic production and ongoing throughout the Middle Ages became the goal of much of the art historical and historical investigations of the latter half of the century. At length and in broad, heroic terms the *Catalogue Définitif*, as has been noted earlier, characterized the search as a nation-wide quest, enumerating the roll call of historians, archaeologists, and art enthusiasts who had sought evidence of French artistic development stretching backwards in time to the beginning of all European art practices, in other words, to a French '*primitif*' that presaged later artistic superiority:

The terrain, nevertheless, for the last 25 years, has been well worked, well cultivated. Following after the late and determined explorers who were the first to excavate in forgotten fields, Emeric David, P. Merimée, Didron, Viollet-le-Duc, Leon de Laborde, Ph. de Chennevières, A. de Montaiglon, Paul Mantz, Dussieux, E. Soulié, etc., new scholars, conscientious and patient, new critics, passionate and perspicacious, did not cease, in recent times, in their documentary publications or their learned studies to bring to light nearly every day some newly uncovered corner. The scholarly works of Léopold Delisle, Jules Guiffrey, Bernard Prost, Abbé Requin, Paul Durrieu, R. de Lasteyrie, E. Mâle, P. Vitry, Dimier, Salomon Reinach, etc., the discerning and cordial studies of A. Gruyer, André Michel, L. Gonse, P. Leprieur, C. Benoit, André Hallays, L. de Fourcaud, etc., and the many other contributions carried on by the tireless and modest workers at the *Archives des Monuments Historiques*, the *Mémoires de la Société des Antiquaires de France*, the *Bulletin Monumental*, the *Comptes rendus des réunions annuelles des Sociétés des Beaux-Arts*, the *Archives de l'Art Français*, on the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, the *Revue de l'Art ancien et moderne*, and the many collections of the provincial academies and Societies, offer henceforth

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<sup>163</sup>M. Lamy, "Le Découvert des Primitif italiens au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle: Seroux d'Agincourt (1730-1874) et son influence sur les collectionneurs, critiques et artistes français [two parts]," *La Revue de l'art ancien et moderne* 39 (March 1921) and 40 (Sept-Oct. 1921): 169-181 and 182-190; and Henri Loyrette, "Seroux d'Agincourt et les origines de l'histoire de l'art médiéval," *Revue de l'Art* 48 (1980): 40-56; and Kulturmann, 82.



a huge body of work, to those who are interested, of the history of our revered painters.<sup>164</sup>

This lengthy quote also serves to point out the rather incestuous nature of the *Exposition des Primitifs français*. Noticeably, of all the living contributors to this 'righting the wrong,' only a few were not participants on one or more of the organizing committees for the exhibition, collectors of note, or affiliated with the Musée du Louvre, art journals or other government-sponsored institutions of the time.

Significantly, alternative usages of the *primitif* abounded throughout the nineteenth century, all of which located the term in an oppositional posture to contemporary classicist and academic tastes. From the 1800's on the term had been taken up and used in reference to the German Nazarenes, French Barbis and English Pre-Raphaelites, each group emulating the simplicity of form, linearity and clarity of colour of Masaccio, Giotto and Fra Angelico in their styles and themes in order to exemplify a return to the

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<sup>164</sup>*Catalogue Définitif*, XXXI-XXXII:

Le terrain, d'ailleurs, depuis vingt-cinq ans, avait été bien travaillé, bien cultivé. A la suite des anciens et hardis explorateurs qui, les premiers, avaient fouillé dans ces champs oubliés, Eméric David, P. Merimée, Didron, Viollet-le-Duc, Léon de Laborde, Ph. de Chennevières, A. de Montaiglon, Paul Mantz, Dussieux, E. Soulié, etc..., de nouveaux érudits, consciencieux et patients, de nouveaux critiques, passionnés et perspicaces, n'avaient cessé, en ces derniers temps, par leurs publications documentaires ou leurs études sagaces, presque chaque jour, d'en remettre en lumière quelque coin mieux déviche. Les savants travaux de MM. Léopold Delisle, Jules Guiffrey, Bernard Prost, l'abbé Requin, Paul Durrieu, R. de Lasteyrie, E. Mâle, P. Vitry, Dimier, Salomon Reinach, etc., les études judicieuses et chaleureuses de MM. A. Gruyer, André Michel, L. Gonse, P. Leprieur, C. Benoit, André Hallays, L. de Fourcaud, etc., bien d'autres contributions apportées par les travailleurs infatigables et modestes aux *Archives des Monuments Historiques*, aux *Mémoires de la Société des Antiquaires de France*, au *Bulletin Monumental*, aux *Comptes rendus des réunions annuelles des Sociétés des Beaux-Arts*, aux *Archives de l'Art Français*, à la *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, à la *Revue de l'Art ancien et moderne*, aux nombreux recueils des Académies et Sociétés de Province, offrent désormais une vaste carrière, pour leurs études, à ceux qu'intéresse l'histoire de notre vieille peinture.

origins of artistic production.<sup>165</sup> Each of these groups "abandoned later technical inventions and formal complications in order to return to what they considered a severe and noble style."<sup>166</sup> As Robert Goldwater has argued, these were avant-gardist movements seeking a purer means of expression which pre-dated their contemporaries whose style and tastes had, they believed, degenerated into the formulaic and overworked.<sup>167</sup> For the later Symbolists at the end of the nineteenth century, the notion of *primitif* was understood to be a recollection of less adulterated forms of expression, "a return to the purer and more fundamental and thus implicitly better, more profound, and simpler approaches to art,"<sup>168</sup> a form that avoided the pitfalls of realism and idealism. For the politically conservative Symbolists, their individualized expression used this 'primitive,' that is, non-academic, style in combination with their personal symbology and themes from early Christian and romantic medievalism to express a metaphysical and religious philosophy.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>165</sup>Robert Goldwater, *Primitivism in Modern Art*, enlarged edition (Cambridge, MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1986): 54; Jean Cassou, Emile Langui and Nikolaus Pevsner, *Gateway to the Twentieth Century: Art and Culture in a Changing World* (New York, Toronto and London: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1962): 105; and Michael Kotzin, "Pre-Raphaelitism, Ruskinism, and French Symbolism," *Art Journal* 25, 5 (Summer 1966): 347.

<sup>166</sup>Goldwater, *Primitivism*, 54.

<sup>167</sup>Goldwater, *Primitivism*, 253-4.

<sup>168</sup>Patricia Townley Mathews, *Aurier's Symbolist Art Criticism and Theory*, Studies in the Fine Arts: Criticism, No. 18 (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1986): 75-6; Philippe Jullian, "Introduction," *French Symbolist Painters: Moreau, Puvis de Chavannes, Redon and their Followers* (London: Hayward Gallery and Arts Council of Great Britain, 1972): 166.

<sup>169</sup>Gill Perry, "Primitivism and the Modern," *Primitivism, Cubism, Abstraction: The Early Twentieth Century*, ed. Charles Harrison, Francis Francina and Gill Perry (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press in association with the Open University, 1993): 14; and Robert Goldwater, *Symbolism*, Icon Editions (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1979): 196. Encompassing literary, theatrical, musical and visual proponents, the so-called Symbolists recognized the value of primitivistic simplification of style and

At the end of the nineteenth century, other avant-gardist groups adopted a range of 'primitivistic' expressions that critiqued the realist and illusionist formulas of academic and Salon art. This means, generally speaking, the use of flattened planes, a linearity, a use of strong colour blocs and, above all, simplicity. Gauguin and the 'Pont-Aven/Synthetists', for example, used romanticized themes taken from what they considered primitive, that is, peasant, provincial and tribal cultures, to construct an oppositional stance against the restrictive urban bourgeois society of the late nineteenth century.<sup>170</sup> Art historians Fred Orton and Griselda Pollock have argued that, within the geographical entity of 'France' itself, Gauguin and his followers found a culture that was perceived to be as exotic as the Far East, yet accessible to the Paris art world:

Brittany represented as remote, savage, primitive, rustic, superstitious or simple signifies within specific historical conditions a nexus of town and country, uneven developments, regional variations, and centralization, the history of the dominance of the town and its bourgeois social forms and norms.<sup>171</sup>

In the early years of the twentieth century, the Fauves in France, and later Die Brücke in Germany, took a reductionist approach to the 'primitive', that is, constructing the '*primitif*'

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amalgamated the personal with metaphysical and romantic content to create what Symbolist painter and philosopher of the movement, Maurice Denis, called in his article, "De la Gaucherie des Primitifs" written after visiting the 1904 exhibition, "the most delicate sentiments of the human soul" ("les sentiments les plus délicats de l'ame humaine"), *Theories, 1890-1910* (Paris: Bibliothèque de L'Occident, 1913: 173).

<sup>170</sup>Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Going Native," *Art in America* (July 1989): 121; Kenneth Coutts-Smith, "Some general observations on the problem of cultural colonialism," *The Myth of Primitivism: Perspectives on Art*, ed. and compiled by Susan Hiller (London and New York: Routledge, 1991): 28.

<sup>171</sup>Orton and Pollock, 329.

as unfettered and essential emotions, merging figure and landscape in an anti-analytical, anti-realist and symbolic union.<sup>172</sup>

A dichotomy exists within this understanding of the retrospection inherent in the so-called Symbolist, Pont-Avenist, and other schools of contemporary and avant-gardist art production. In the rejection of current art production these groups implied a corresponding rejection of current meanings and interpretations of progress. They all rejected where the world was 'now' and sought a nostalgic return to a life and set of beliefs simpler than the current ones.<sup>173</sup> However, the *primitif* espoused by the *Exposition des Primitifs français* and the *Catalogue Définitif* was a retrospection based in the linear conception of progress and evolution leading up to and resulting in the modern state. The *primitif* of the 1904 Exhibition asserted a forward-moving, historical oeuvre rather than nostalgic contemporary art production and theories, thus placing itself in opposition to these emerging avant-gardist movements. The exhibition forcefully disassociated the *primitif* from those anti-institutional, anti-academic, and individualistic critiques of academic art and bourgeois culture circulating within the contemporary art world by reinstalling the 'primitive' within the institutional setting and linear traditions of the Louvre as representative of a French national school.

It is important to remember that the year is 1904 with its full outpouring of artistic production drawing on themes of non-western, so-called 'primitive' cultures represented

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<sup>172</sup>Perry, 46, 62; Goldwater, *Primitivism*, 105.

<sup>173</sup>Patricia Leighton, "The White Peril and *L'Art nègre*: Picasso, Primitivism, and Anti-colonialism," *The Art Bulletin* 72, 4 (December 1990): 630; Solomon-Godeau, 122.

by artists in France, such as the Fauves and Picasso, *et al.*, just beginning.<sup>174</sup> Recognition of the aesthetic qualities of the artistic production of non-western cultures had, however, begun many years before. Ethnological museums and displays at Expositions Universelles had provided exposure to such cultures, contributing to an alternative aesthetic framework on which the later movements were based. Art historian Patricia Leighton has argued that this new group of avant-garde artists were more concerned with undercutting the social structures they felt had produced a watering-down of 'true' artistic expression than with truly exploring the aesthetic qualities and cultural content of the artifacts they drew upon:

For the modernists, primitivism became a method for revolutionizing style; more, this formal radicalism often served, depending on the attitude of the artist, to present an alternative - mingling concepts of authenticity, spontaneity, freedom from the repression of bourgeois constraints, and *amour libre* - to currently entrenched social and aesthetic forms. The primitivism of Picasso and Derain most notably, like that of Gauguin before them, gestured toward cultures whose transformative powers they admiringly offered as escape routes from the stultification of French culture and academic art.<sup>175</sup>

These motivations strayed far from the insertion of the *Exposition des Primitifs français's* definition of the *primitif* into the art historical canon.

It is interesting to note that the word *primitif* occurs only once in the entire *Catalogue Définitif*, and significantly so -- in its title. What does this textual absence signify for the *Exposition des Primitifs français*? The preceding discussion of the term, its

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<sup>174</sup>The date of Vlaminck's 'discovery' and purchase of African works has been variously cited as sometime between 1904 and 1907. The importance is not the 'when' this occurred, but that the exposure to 'non-traditional' works is relatively concurrent to the *Exposition des Primitifs français*.

<sup>175</sup>Leighton, 622.

usage and the political resonance imbued in that usage permits some speculation. It could be argued that the *primitifs* of the title is a 'hook', a popular term in its various permutations, thus familiar to a large potential audience. Here its use was denuded of those specific ramifications inherent in it. The argument presented by the catalogue essay and entries, though skirting the term itself, effectively reasserted lineage and uniqueness of the artistic school. At the same time as the French *primitifs* were being positioned as part of the art historical *oeuvre*, that label was being rejected because of its Italian pre-Renaissance as well as contemporary affiliations.

The *Exposition des Primitifs français* then sought to assert the primacy of France amid other competing claims to a national *primitif*. The *Exposition des Primitifs français* and its *Catalogue Définitif* removed the notion of the *primitif* from other cultural milieus: the Tahitian, the peasant, the Italian, the German and the Flemish, using the term in a particularly French, Republican, realistic, non-Catholic way to identify an originating art based on the earliest times and the intrinsic 'genius' of the French people. The *Exposition des Primitifs français* did not, like contemporary avant-garde movements, draw on past models for present day production; instead the exhibition and its catalogue turned a radical critique of the centralized state and academic art practices into an assertion of an historical lineage, one which confirmed France's place on an equal, if not higher, footing with other European nations.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PERCEPTION AND RECEPTION: RESPONSES TO THE *EXPOSITION DES PRIMITIF FRANÇAIS*

When I tell you that I was equally bowled over, if not more so, by an art which is exactly the reverse of that [Monet's], you will recognize in me the eternal debate. I went this morning to the show of French Primitives....What a marvellous - and transporting art! The difficult problem of transposing the real on the imaginary is resolved here, and by such simple means: one of several *rappports* of happy and various tints in a beautiful unity suffices for the realization of the most sumptuous harmonies.

Letter by Henri-Edmond Cross to Charles Angrand, 1904.<sup>176</sup>

It is all very well to present an exhibition such as the *Exposition des Primitifs français* and its recuperative agenda to a public; it is a different matter to try to understand and track response to such an exhibition. Certainly Georges Lafenestre and Henri Bouchot were taking a daring stance against those supporting the notions of an Italian/Flemish Renaissance rather than a French-centred stylistic development independent of outside influences. But did the public at large share that opinion? How were the journals of the day aligned in response to the claims? Did the claims succeed in 're-writing' art history?

Just as reconstructing the experience of the *Exposition des Primitifs français* is a difficult one, so too is trying to determine how the public(s) and media understood the meaning and relevance of the event. The *Exposition des Primitifs français*, as has already been described, had been constructed to convey specific messages about the history of France, its historical and continued preeminence in the European artistic development and, more indirectly, the role of the Ideal Citizen in the Third Republic, considered by the

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<sup>176</sup>Quotation cited in Catherine C. Bock, *Henri Matisse and Neo-Impressionism 1898-1908* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Inc., 1981): 67. Cross was a Neo-Impressionist painter who visited the *Exposition des Primitifs français* in the summer of 1904.

French, at least to be the most evolved nation-state in Europe. These specific visual and textual messages must, however, be recognized and read by one or more audiences. Donald M. Lowe's analysis of bourgeois perception<sup>177</sup> provides a framework upon which to build an understanding of the audience's perception for the *Exposition des Primitifs français*. Lowe argues that printed media became, in the period from the end of the eighteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth, the predominate means by which the bourgeoisie understood events outside their everyday experience. Sight was, as a result, the privileged sense, enabling use of and access to these media; at the same time, "the order of development-in-time," as Lowe terms it, permitted an understanding of what was currently visible by connecting it to both past events and developments outside the realm of everyday experience.<sup>178</sup> Further, Lowe places this analysis into a social context in which new methods were being developed to assist bourgeois society to cope with the accelerated speed of innovation: these included

the changing meaning of 'revolution', traditionalism as the consciousness of a tradition what was not longer absolutely binding, nostalgia as longing for the past rather than another place, the historical novel as a popular genre, the extension of the temporal landscape, as well as the despatialization of historiography - all these developments were new efforts to recapture a past which had become more fleeting and distant, as bourgeois society experience a more mechanical, segmented present. Past and present needed to be consciously reconnected, now.<sup>179</sup>

As part of this need to feel more secure in the present by seeking out a past as described by Lowe, the *Exposition des Primitifs français* can be seen to provide a venue to make

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<sup>177</sup>Donald M. Lowe, *History of Bourgeois Perception* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982).

<sup>178</sup>Lowe, 18.

<sup>179</sup>Lowe, 43.



such a reconnection possible: by asserting simultaneously a "retrospective nationalism"<sup>180</sup> and an historical continuum, the exhibition made the present more solid and defined and the future less unsure by showing that contemporary society was produced out of this continuum. In the *Exposition des Primitifs français*, the visual images were recognizable and familiar, even though they were centuries old and infrequently or distantly displayed. Interpreted by the *Catalogue Définitif*, these art works reinforced basic assumptions about French artistic prowess rather than challenging them, and presented conventionalized styles as opposed to avant-garde explorations, which were often unfamiliar and discomfiting to the viewer, and perhaps loaded with unwelcome and unsettling political overtones. Thus, even though the curators of the exhibition were refuting and rewriting the canon of art history, they were also supporting the centrality and excellence of French achievements. As Daniel Sherman has noted, the art museum of the nineteenth century performed a profoundly important role as simultaneously a container and an embodiment of accepted values. The museum consequently stood as "[a] model of hierarchy, of order, of respect for art as something separate from the exigencies of daily life, as long as it laid claim to this special status in certain accepted and moderate ways,... thus [standing] in a virtually metonymical relationship to the system of values of the bourgeoisie elite as a whole."<sup>181</sup> Through experiencing the works in the setting of the Louvre, the modern viewer of 1904 then was guided to perceive the past

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<sup>180</sup>Herman Lebovics, *True France: The Wars over Cultural Identity, 1900-1945* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992): 4.

<sup>181</sup>Sherman, *Worthy Monuments*, 237. Jeanne Laurent also emphasizes the lack of risk-taking at fonctionnaire-filled institutions such as the Louvre (*Arts et pouvoir en France de 1793 à 1981*, 10+).

as a forerunner presaging the present Republican regime in a visual language, making the linkage that Lowe has theorized and achieving a synthesis of past and present and future into a single, inevitable, historical continuum.

In addition, the act of seeing an exhibition placed the viewer in the company of other viewers who shared in confronting an understandable presentation of one's own history, and in identifying with portraits of historical and unidealized figures who were presented as recognizably like oneself and set within landscapes that were recognizably French.<sup>182</sup> The process of shared experience elided political, social and economic variations within an already circumscribed viewership<sup>183</sup> and created 'un bon public' from the various publics congregating in the Pavillon de Marsan where the curators attempted to embody notions of a unilingual, unified, continuous French art history.<sup>184</sup>

Response also occurs outside and apart from direct experience of an exhibition, that is, among an audience that has never seen the exhibition itself and which extends across periods of time when the experience can only be imagined. Organizers can judiciously engineer newspapers, journals, friendly critics, and others to publicize positive reactions and opinions to the event for absorption by a public one step removed from the *Exposition des Primitifs français*; however, each newspaper and journal was positioned within a political spectrum. Their political affiliation affected how and what was reported as well as the audience to whom the exhibition was presented. Immediate and, perhaps

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<sup>182</sup>Levin, 48.

<sup>183</sup>As discussed in Chapter 1.

<sup>184</sup>Scobey, 224-5; Lebovics, 6 and 9.

more importantly, long-term repercussions of the event cannot be controlled as the reportage circulated among a wider group of people whose sole experience of the exhibition would rest vicariously on another's interpretation of the event. Despite the presentation through the textual and pictorial representations at and surrounding the exhibition, there could be no assurances that the desired impact on 'history' would actually prevail. Indeed, the exhibition could even be ignored or overshadowed by dissenting opinions or the weight of tradition.

The full impact of the *Exposition des Primitifs français* can be measured more precisely by asking to what extent its assertions were understood and if they changed minds and attitudes and revised the canon. This exhibition was very widely reviewed in journals, newspapers and popular magazines, from New York to London to St. Petersburg. Surprisingly, there was remarkably little divergence of opinion across the spectrum of reviews; generally the responses to the exhibition, evidenced in reviews and essays, supported the *Exposition des Primitifs français's* claims for a school of early French painting, rather than Italian or Flemish sources of European artistic development. The novelty of the *Exposition des Primitifs français* and its claims was clearly recognized and understood by many viewers and reviewers, though the wider ramifications often were not. In turn, these responses mirrored the ongoing political and aesthetic controversies of the day.<sup>185</sup> Conservative Republican journals such as the *Gazette des*

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<sup>185</sup>It is interesting to note that critiques of the *Exposition des Primitifs français* mention Bouchot much more frequently than Lafenestre as the 'author' of its contentions. The most ardent argument for a French *primitif* was Lafenestre's Introduction rather than the sections attributed to Bouchot, but since the first announcement in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* in January 1903, Bouchot's name was the most prominently featured.

*Beaux-Arts*, the *Revue de l'art ancien et moderne*, and the *Journal des Débats* all ran multi-part articles and promotional pieces, mostly written by members of the Beaux-Arts establishment. Henri Bouchot and Georges Lafenestre each wrote numerous and lengthy articles for the centrist *Gazette* and *Revue*, as well as for other journals.<sup>186</sup> All of these were constructed as supplementary material to the *Catalogue Définitif*, expanding the arguments of the catalogue entries into lengthy stylistic and archival examinations of the major (and often minor) works presented in the Pavillon's rooms. Foreign journals such as London's *Burlington Magazine*, and the Belgian *Le Revue de l'art chrétien* as well as North American journals such as *International Studio* from the United States, or even the distant *Le Journal de Saint-Petersburg* from Russia,<sup>187</sup> all carried reviews of the exhibition, again generally favourable even while loaded with minor quibbles about dating or site inadequacies.

Negative responses to the *Exposition des Primitifs français* in both the foreign and domestic press, emerged along some broad issue-based lines. Most obvious was the debate over the use of the term '*primitif*'. As discussed in Chapter 3, this term was one

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<sup>186</sup>For Henri Bouchot, these included: "L'exposition des primitifs français: Avant-propos," *Gazette des beaux-arts*, Série 3, 31, 562 (April 1904): 264-274; "L'exposition des primitifs français [four parts]," *Gazette des beaux-arts*, Série 3, 31, 563-566 (May, June, July and August 1904): 353-364, 451-467, 61-81, 113-139; "L'exposition des Primitifs français," *Revue des deux mondes* 20 (March 15, 1904): 420-443; "Les primitifs français: Un dernier mot," *La revue de l'art ancien et moderne* 16 (September 1904): 169-178; "Les primitifs français: Le 'Parement de Narbonne' au Louvre (1371): Le Peintre Jean d'Orléans à Paris," *Gazette des Beaux-arts*, Série 3, 31 (January 1904): 5-26; and "Un tableau capital de l'école française à retrouver: Appel aux amateurs et aux conservateurs de musées," *Gazette des beaux-arts*, Série 3, 31, 564 (June 1904): 441-450. As for Lafenestre, his articles included "L'Exposition des Primitifs français [4 parts]," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* Série 3, 31 and 32, 563-66 (May, June, July and August 1904): 353-364, 451-76, 61-81 and 113-139. Both Lafenestre and Bouchot's essays appear to be virtually interchangeable. Both use a painting-by-painting analysis of what available documents exist and are couched heavily in speculative theories of lineage and style.

<sup>187</sup>Despite the best efforts of the Interlibrary Loan department of the University of British Columbia, this last-named journal article could not be located.

fraught with gradations of meaning and reviewing the *Exposition des Primitifs français* provided a public forum to reawaken these debates and promote particular political and religious points of view. Pierre Suau, a journalist for *Études*, the Jesuit-published rightist journal, maintained that "strictly speaking one calls Primitifs the masters of the Middle Ages, the Trecentisti and the Quattrocentisti," a statement that evoked the history of Italian masters the exhibition was working against. M. Bouchot and other exhibition organizers, Suau claimed, were misleading readers and viewers by using the term '*primitif*'; one had only to look for the sublimity of spirit in the original *primitifs* to know how those exhibited were mislabelled<sup>188</sup>. Maurice Denis, a founding member and theorist for the *Nabis*, a group rejecting both realism and Impressionist naturalism for direct renditions of a sensed environment, declared that the term '*primitif*' should be applied exclusively to artists who "allied the most natural feeling of Beauty and the *sense of the objects* [emphasis in original]"<sup>189</sup>. Both Denis and Henri-Edmond Cross, a Neo-Impressionist painter, attended the exhibition; although there is no indication that other practising artists also attended the *Exposition des Primitifs français*, it seems likely others did so. Though practising very different styles, both were struck by the harmonious and 'truthful' representations of the 'real' that they saw.<sup>190</sup> Both Denis and Cross enthused over this departure from the Salon formulas and Impressionist style, to the point that their

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<sup>188</sup>"Les Primitifs français," *Études* 99, 26 (June 20, 1904): 815: "Rigoureusement parlant, on appelle *Primitifs* les maitres du moyen ages, les Trecentisti et les Quattrocentisti..."

<sup>189</sup>"De la Gaucherie des Primitifs [1904]," *Théories 1890-1910: Du symbolisme et de Gauguin vers un nouvel ordre classique*, 3<sup>e</sup> édition (Paris: Bibliothèque de L'Occident, 1913): 168: "...allier avec le plus de naturel le sentiment de la Beauté et le *sens des objet*." Originally published in a July 1904 issue of *Les Arts de la Vie*.

<sup>190</sup>See the epigraph at the beginning of this Chapter; also Denis, "De la Gaucherie...", 169.

responses indicate exactly how radical the show was to some eyes. It also clearly indicates that they saw in the paintings of the Pavillon de Marsan the style and 'difference' they valued and wished to see, and not the canonical challenge which was irrelevant to their positions outside Salon and academic circles.

Paul Durrieu, even though a member of the Paintings and Drawings committee for the *Exposition des Primitifs français* and a member of the *Académie*, also expressed reservations about the use of 'primitif,' stating that "the term French primitive still designates only something very vague by determination and above all quite restricted in all cases by the number of pieces to cite."<sup>191</sup> Art historian André Michel, in the first instalment of his ten-part series analyzing the *Exposition des Primitifs français* in the relatively middle of the road *Journal des Débats*, noted that the term was legitimate only in the sense that it referred to works pre-dating ultramontanist influences: at the same time, he also pointed out the irony of attending an exhibition under the auspices of the Académie des Beaux-Arts which traditionally and strenuously resisted the recognition of a French medieval art.<sup>192</sup>

A number of writers compared the Paris exhibition with that held earlier in Bruges and with the concurrent exhibitions at Dusseldorf and Sienna, to the generally favourable benefit of the French show. An anonymous article in the Belgian journal, *La Revue de l'art chrétien*, even praised the *Exposition des Primitifs français*, though somewhat half-

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<sup>191</sup>Paul Durrieu, "L'exposition des primitifs français," *La revue de l'art ancien et moderne* 15 (Mai 1904): 85: "...le terme de primitif français ne désigne encore que quelque chose de très vague comme détermination et surtout de bien restreint, en tout cas, comme nombre de pièces de citer."

<sup>192</sup>Michel, "Causerie Artistique III," 26 April 1904: 1.

heartedly, as "less prestigious, less dazzling than the one at Bruges, but more agreeably presented."<sup>193</sup> Other issues, such as the scandal surrounding the reluctant (and late) loan<sup>194</sup> of a retable from the Appeal Court of Paris<sup>195</sup>, occupied considerable space in such diverse journals as the Symbolist journal, *Nouvelle Revue*, which hinted that the court President Forichon had actually hidden the work to prevent its cooptation.<sup>196</sup> *Le Figaro* expressed concern about the lack of cooperation by the court by citing the loan of tapestries from the Bargello in Florence.<sup>197</sup>

Considerable time was spent in discussing the nationalism stirred up by the *Exposition des Primitifs français*. The curators had assiduously avoided using the term 'nationalism' because of its rightist associations linked back to the right-wing Boulangist unrest of the 1880's and the contemporaneous growth of rightist movements, but the public had not missed the allusions to a patriotism no less fervent. Maurice Denis, the Symbolist painter and writer, declaimed that art was international in scope while deploring the nationalism in this and other recent *primitif* exhibitions. He proclaimed that "each nation, each ethnic group wants to have their own [*primitifs*], discloses them with love,

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<sup>193</sup>"Primitifs français, flamands et allemands," *Revue de l'Art chrétien* Série 4, 15 (July 1904): 343: "...moins prestigieux, moins éblouissante que celle de Bruges, mais plus agréablement présenté."

<sup>194</sup>This work, item #355, *Le Calvaire*, was listed in the supplementary section of the *Catalogue Définitif*, indicating a late entry to the *Exposition des Primitifs français*. The curators apparently were in ongoing negotiation for items throughout the early days and weeks of the exhibition. By early May there seems to have been no further mention of this issue in either journals and newspapers, other than to deplore the circumstances.

<sup>195</sup>This work, apparently loaned to the Palais de Justice by the Musée du Louvre several years earlier, was in fact returned to permanent display immediately after the *Exposition des Primitifs français* ended, likely as a result of the controversy and the considerable attention the work had attracted.

<sup>196</sup>Sauvage, 212.

<sup>197</sup>Alexandre Arsène, "Les Primitifs français," *Le Figaro* (Paris), 13 April 1904: 4.

prefers them to those of a rival nation. Attributions are changed, paintings are re-christened, all in the guise of erudition, but in reality serving national pride."<sup>198</sup> André Michel's articles disparaged the kind of nationalist fervour that the *Exposition des Primitifs français* had engendered in some quarters (notably right wing ones), saying that, while reclaiming the *primitifs* is patriotic, the populace should not be lured into advocating nationalist positions against other countries.<sup>199</sup> The Louis-Frederic Sauvage article in *La Nouvelle revue* (Paris), even while taking pleasure in the retaliatory nature of the *Exposition des Primitifs français*, condemned the descent into nationalistic posturing in the fine arts field: "the organizers of the Louvre Exhibition have not been able to resist the desire to use retaliations, and under the rubric: *Primitifs français*, they have welcomed - oh! into open arms, you cannot doubt it - Flemish, Cologne, Italian masters which give us, also, the greatest honour." The writer ironically temporized by saying that the curators were "guilty of perhaps excessive hospitality."<sup>200</sup>

Most commentators, however, lauded the exposure given to this overlooked body of work and praised the courage and intellectual fortitude of Bouchot and his associates in recognizing their value and disinterring them from the forgotten vaults of the provinces. There were also those who took issue with the breadth of the exhibition's controversial

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<sup>198</sup>Denis, "De la Gaucherie...", 167: "Chaque nation, chaque groupe ethnique veut avoir les siens, les découvre avec amour, les préfère à ceux de la nation rivale. On change les attributions, on débaptise les tableaux, sous le couvert de l'érudition, en réalité pour servir l'orgueil national."

<sup>199</sup>Michel, "Causerie Artistique IV," 29 April 1904, 1.

<sup>200</sup>Sauvage, 208: "les organisateurs de l'Exposition du Louvre ne paraissent pas avoir su résister au désir d'user de représailles, et sous la rubrique: *Primitifs français*, ils ont accueilli, -- oh! à bras ouverts, vous n'en doutez pas, -- des maitres flamands, colonais, italiens, qui nous font, du reste, le plus grand honneur...une hospitalité peut-être excessive."



claims (or what Francis Haskell mildly calls Bouchot and Lafenestre's "overcompensation for this neglect"<sup>201</sup>). A review signed by L.C. in the Belgian journal *Revue de l'Art chrétien* pointed out that "the considerations that we derived from the professor from Ghent [namely, Georges Hulin de Loo] are harshly in contrast to the learned and enthralling essays in which Bouchot and Lafenestre have in some degree inaugurated the exposition at the Pavillon de Marsan. They will be without doubt strongly contested; in any case they will interest our readers."<sup>202</sup> This debate was welcomed more as a forum for informed and academic discussion than as an endorsement of either side of the argument; indeed, it could be read that the reviewer seemed pleased that the French were reacting to the Hulin de Loo claims so vociferously.

Disputing attributions, so integral to the claims made by Lafenestre and Bouchot, were of course the centrepiece of much of the academic response. A flurry of articles did indeed make claims and counterclaims. One example can illustrate this point very well. The *Saint Victor et donateur* (fig. 20) was attributed by H. Fiérans-Gevaert to Hugo van der Goes at the 1902 Bruges exhibit; at the *Exposition des Primitifs français* Bouchot and company identified it as the work of Le Peintre des Bourbons, dit Le Maître de Moulins. Lionel Elliot, however, in his article in *The Connoisseur* vacillates between an unknown

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<sup>201</sup>Haskell, *History and Its Images*, 446.

<sup>202</sup>"Primitifs français, flamands et allemands," 344: "Les considérations que nous venons d'emprunter au professeur gantois vont rudement à l'encontre des savantes et attachantes dissertations par lesquelles Bouchot et Lafenestre ont en quelque sorte inauguré l'exposition du pavillon de Marsan. Elles seront sans doute fortement combattues; elles intéresseront en tous cas vivement nos lecteurs." Georges Hulin de Loo, as discussed in the Introduction and Chapter 1 of this thesis, made the original challenge to the French art world in his *Exposition de Tableaux Flamandes des XIV<sup>e</sup>, XV<sup>e</sup> et XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles - Catalogue Critique* (Gand: A. Siffer, Libraire-éditeur, 1902).

German painter and, perhaps, even Jan van Eyck.<sup>203</sup> Similar examples abound in the plethora of articles published in the first months after the exhibition opened, all with nationalistic implications.

In the forefront of the most serious disputations were Louis Dimier, the French right-wing academic, and English author and art lecturer Roger Fry. Both Fry in the *Burlington Magazine*<sup>204</sup> and Dimier in articles and books published in France between 1904 and 1910<sup>205</sup> completely dismissed what they considered the extravagant claims of the Louvre and its curators that the paintings formed a distinct and rival '*primitif*' school, even while they acknowledged the value of studying these works. In his first of two review articles, Fry, in his Morellian analysis of form through comparison of drapery, colour, fold definition and anatomical detail,<sup>206</sup> restated his opinion that sculptural works were the real contribution of France in the period immediately preceding that of the *Exposition des Primitifs français* and asserted that all claims to a uniquely French art production ignored the multiple nationalities intermixing on the continent during the period of the Hundred Years War, the principal period for which Bouchot and Lafenestre claimed

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<sup>203</sup>Lionel Elliot, "The Primitive French Exhibition at Paris," *The Connoisseur* 10, 37 (September 1904): 36-44; H. Fiérans-Gevaert, "L'Exposition des primitifs flamands à Bruges," *La Revue de l'art ancien et moderne* 12 (August 1902): 116; and *Catalogue Définitif*, 49.

<sup>204</sup>Roger Fry, "The Exhibition of French Primitives I", *Burlington Magazine*, 5, 14 (May 1904), 89-96; and "The Exhibition of French Primitives II", *Burlington Magazine*, 5, 16 (June 1904), 279-298.

<sup>205</sup>Louis Dimier, "Les Origines de la Peinture française," *Les arts: Revue mensuelle de musées, collections, expositions* 37-42 (January - July 1905); *Le Portrait du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle aux Primitifs français. Notes et corrections au Catalogue officiel sur cette partie de l'Exposition d'Avril-Juillet 1904* (Paris: Jean Schemit, 1904); and *Les Primitifs Français. Biographie Critique* (Paris: Librairie Renouard, 1910).

<sup>206</sup>Jacqueline V. Falkenheim, *Roger Fry and the Beginnings of Formalist Art Criticism*, *Studies in the Fine Arts: Criticism*, No. 8 (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1980): 62. His early training and exposure to art was primarily Italian Renaissance, with an especial fondness for Giotto.

a 'primitif'.<sup>207</sup> Fry cited Jacques Bandol as typical of the Flemish artists who had worked in France and who had injected "a new vitality, a refreshing ugliness" into the exhausted and calligraphic images of the period.<sup>208</sup> Additionally, Fry claimed that "French painting, as seen at the Pavillon de Marsan, begins nearly a century later than this great English work [the Westminster Retable, c. 1275]"<sup>209</sup> as part of his own attempts to establish an early English painting tradition. Overall, he argued for a Flemish/Italian melding of realism and landscape adapted and adopted by the French. In other words, he supported the canonical interpretation of artistic dissemination; only with Van Eyck and van der Weyden, claimed Fry, did separate French and Flemish schools arise from the Franco-Flemish amalgam.<sup>210</sup>

Historian Louis Dimier was by far the most outspoken of the oppositional voices, French or foreign, reacting to the *Exposition des Primitifs français*. Staunchly right-wing, a political stance which generally promotes a nationalistic platform, "he was fiercely opposed to nationalism in intellectual matters" believing that "the very concept of 'French' art was vacuous, and that the real painting of France in the sixteenth century was created by Italians, Rosso and Primaticcio, and by Jean Clouet, a Fleming (as Dimier

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<sup>207</sup>Fry, "The Exhibition of French Primitives I," 279, 281.

<sup>208</sup>Fry, 281-2. Bandol was also called Jean de Bruges and was known to have drawn the cartoon for the Apocalypse tapestries on loan from Angers cathedral at the *Exposition des Primitifs français*. His style was a melding of French and Flemish influences that Fry said were inevitable in that turbulent period.

<sup>209</sup>Fry, 280.

<sup>210</sup>Fry, "The Exhibition of French Primitives II," 356.

mischievously emphasized in order to embarrass those scholars who wished to see Clouet as purely French)."<sup>211</sup>

Dimier wrote few journal articles critiquing the *Exposition des Primitifs français*, the exception being his six-part series appearing in *Les Arts* during 1905. In these he described the history of French art from the High Gothic to the seventeenth century and, although he did not deal extensively with the *Exposition des Primitifs français*, he did specifically dismiss the likelihood of a continuous unadulterated French artistic tradition with the blunt sentence: "With these two masters [i.e., Bourdichon and Perreal], one mediocre and the other with no known works, ended the history of 'ancienne' French painting."<sup>212</sup> His most vociferous critiques were confined primarily to small books,<sup>213</sup> in particular, *Le portrait du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle aux Primitifs français: Notes et corrections au Catalogue officiel sur cette partie de l'Exposition d'Avril-Juillet 1904*,<sup>214</sup> published in the same year as the exhibition, and *Les Primitifs Français: Biographie Critique*, published six years later. Both approached the claims of the exhibition in a point-by-point refutation of the *Exposition des Primitifs français* claims made particularly by Bouchot, who, though a worthy writer and scholar on other subjects in Dimier's eyes, had here erred in his analysis.<sup>215</sup> The 1904 book took a different tack in an addendum called "Difficulties of

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<sup>211</sup>Rosen and Zerner, 190-1.

<sup>212</sup>"Les Origines de la Peinture française," *Les Arts: Revue mensuelle de musées, collections, expositions* 38 (March 1905): 30.

<sup>213</sup>In fact, Bouchot's rebuttal (in "...Un dernier mot," 176) refers to Dimier's works as 'opuscules', or minor literary works.

<sup>214</sup>49 pages.

<sup>215</sup>125 pages.

an Uneducated Man on the *Exposition des Primitifs français*"<sup>216</sup>; Dimier framed his critique in a fictitious correspondence from an anonymous scholar from the provinces who was confused by the arguments made in the *Catalogue Définitif*. His intention in publishing this addendum, he wrote, was not to demean the wisdom of scholars whose efforts had produced such a great exhibition, but merely to act as conduit for truth:

They [the following comments] are not made in order to diminish in the eyes of those who read them the worthiness of the eminent men from whom the catalogue emanated. They are presented neither in the malign hope that they can remain uncontested, nor with the deplorable intention of deprecating an enterprise already crowned with public approval, but rather with the simple desire to acquire knowledge and in the love of truth.<sup>217</sup>

The subsequent eight sections counter-argued in definitely un-ignorant terms and in exhaustive detail the main *Catalogue Définitif* arguments. One noteworthy section, entitled "On the Merit of Jean Fouquet" ("Du Mérite de Jean Fouquet"), called into doubt the aesthetic value of one of the most highly praised and valued art works shown in the *Exposition des Primitifs français*: the Melun Diptych:

Here is reunited on one panel seven works in oil by this painter, certainly or sufficiently identified. I will indicate my naive impressions of them. It is an abominable collection. The colourings of them are ruddy and dark, of a dull crudity. The drawing is poor and shapeless. The face of Saint Étienne in the panel from Berlin [fig. 24], and its attempt at foreshortening, is one of the worst made things there is. The execution of all these pieces is of a ponderousness without equal. The Virgin from Antwerp [fig. 16] in this

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<sup>216</sup>"Difficultes d'un ignorant sur l'Exposition des Primitifs français," *Le Portrait du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle aux Primitifs français*: 49-57.

<sup>217</sup>Dimier, *Le Portrait*, 49:

Elles ne sont faites pour diminuer à rien aux yeux de ceux qui les liron, le mérite des hommes éminents dont émane le catalogue. On ne les a formées, ni dans l'espoir malin qu'elles pourraient rester sans réponse, ni dans le fâcheux dessein de rabaisser une entreprise déjà couronnée de l'approbation publique, mais dans le simple désir de s'instruire, et pour l'amour de la vérité.

respect is unbearably refined. The stiffness of the strained figure, the shameful botching of the draperies, the glossy red of the cherubs, which seem to be made out of badly carved wood, make it in all ways an object of ridicule.<sup>218</sup>

He ended by allowing that 'truth will out,' the very exhortation made by Lafenestre in his Introduction to the *Catalogue Définitif*. Dimier concluded:

Thus ends the notes from my correspondent. He hoped that I would insert this word at the end, remarking that he has not drawn any general conclusion from these comments with regard to the basic thesis which the catalogue defends (although that thesis values these remarks): proof of his absolute confidence. The reader, he says, will judge them.<sup>219</sup>

This addendum permitted Dimier to critique the *Exposition des Primitifs français* from a position that argued from a provincial, non-centralist point of view against the inflated opinions of academia and institutional bureaucrats, despite his protestations to the contrary. Dimier was not at all neutral on this subject, however; he had maintained throughout his career a rancorous relationship with the Académie des Beaux-Arts which, according to the *Dictionnaire de Biographie française*, had maintained a conspiracy of

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<sup>218</sup>Dimier, *Le Portrait*, 52:

On a réuni de ce peintre, sur un même panneau, sept ouvrages à l'huile, certains ou suffisamment présumés. J'en marquerai mon impression naïve. C'est un assemblage exécrable. Le coloris en est tantôt rougeaud et noir, tantôt d'une crudité blafarde. Le dessin est pauvre et informe. Le visage de saint Étienne dans le tableau de Berlin, et son essai de raccourci, est une des choses mal faites qu'il y ait. L'exécution de tous ces morceaux est d'une pesanteur sans pareille. La Vierge d'Anvers à cet égard raffine sur l'insupportable. La raideur de la taille tendue, l'indigne bousillage des draperies, le rouge poli des chérubins, qui semblent être de bois mal dégrossi, font de celle-là quelque chose de tout à fait ridicule.

<sup>219</sup>Dimier, *Le Portrait*, 57:

Là finissent les notes de mon correspondant. Il a souhaité que je mette ce mot de la fin, en faisant remarquer qu'il ne tirait de toutes ces remarques, quant au fond de la thèse que défend le catalogue (quoique cette thèse tienne à ses remarques), aucune conclusion générale: preuve de son absolue bonne foi. Le lecteur, dit-il, en jugera.

silence to marginalize him and which had offered him no official distinctions. He had also fought vigorously against Republican expulsion of clerics from educational institutions, a politically unpopular stand that had cost him his teaching position in Valenciennes.<sup>220</sup>

In the post-exhibition period immediately after the *Exposition des Primitifs français*, a number of books on the topic of the French *primitifs* were published. Many of them were actually collected and expanded versions of journal articles; for example, George Lafenestre's series of four articles on the *Exposition des Primitifs français* were combined with two concerning the Exposition Universelle of 1900 into a book entitled *Les Primitifs à Bruges et à Paris, 1900-1902-1904: Vieux Maîtres de France et des Pays-Bas*.<sup>221</sup> Henri Bouchot's 1904 book, revealingly titled *Les Primitifs français 1292-1500: Complément Documentaire au Catalogue Officiel de l'Exposition*,<sup>222</sup> a distillation of his *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* articles, further articulated the main points made in the *Catalogue Définitif*, and served to augment Bouchot's emphasis on the secularization of Ile-de-France art production. It is also worth noting that he proclaimed with renewed vigour that only France was entitled to use '*primitif*' in reference to its art because the nation had been the source of the art form; the Italians were actually only "direct descendants of the

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<sup>220</sup>*Dictionnaire de Biographie française* (Paris: Letouzey et Ane, 1933: 367).

<sup>221</sup>*Les Primitifs à Bruges et à Paris, 1900-1902-1904: Vieux Maîtres de France et des Pays-Bas* (Paris: Librairie de l'Art Ancien et Moderne, 1904) comprised the four-part "L'Exposition des Primitifs français" from the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* (Séries 31 and 32, 563-66 (May, June, July and August 1904): 353-364, 451-76, 61-81 and 113-139) and the two-part "Les arts à l'Exposition Universelle de 1900: La peinture ancienne" from the same journal, the *Gazette des Beaux-arts* (Séries 3, 24 (November and December 1900): 377-396 and 537-562).

<sup>222</sup>*Les Primitifs français 1292-1500: Complément Documentaire au Catalogue Officiel de l'Exposition*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Librairie de l'Art Ancien et Moderne, 1904).

Greeks of Constantinople" and therefore not originators of any new movement, but only copyists of previous traditions.<sup>223</sup>

Virtually coincidental with the *Exposition des Primitifs français*, Georges Hulin de Loo published a book entitled *L'Exposition des «Primitifs français» au point de vue de l'Influence des frères Van Eyck sur la peinture française et provençale*.<sup>224</sup> Although he was complimentary about the success of the Paris exhibition, he takes up again his stance from the Bruges catalogue, expanding it further to list a full slate of French institutional and national inadequacies, including especially a lack of methodical and scientific record-keeping and analysis, as well as unsubtle references to the intellectual laziness of French scholars interested in studying only texts and reluctant to stir outside their offices to examine the actual works of art:

The causes of the backward state of the history of French painting are many: the dispersal and relative rarity of the works, as a consequence of the numerous attacks of revolutionary and iconoclastic seizures which the country suffered; the fact that if there is in France an admirable international museum of masterpieces, the Louvre, there is nothing one could properly call an *historical* museum of painting which collecting as complete as possible a *series* of documents, allows for the study of the chronological sequence of events and the geographical distribution of artistic movements; the defective organization of acquisition committees; the lack of resources or competent direction in provincial museums; the spirit of classicism and orthodox aesthetics in all education; the absence of photographic records; the sedentary character of the nation which supports scholars who prefer

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<sup>223</sup>Bouchot, *Les Primitifs français 1292-1500*, 43: "...des descendants immédiats des grecs de Constantinople."

<sup>224</sup>Georges Hulin de Loo, *L'Exposition des «Primitifs français» au point de vue de l'influence des frères Van Eyck sur la peinture française et provençale* (Brussels and Paris: Société d'histoire et d'archéologie de Gand, 1904). Hereinafter called *L'Exposition des «Primitifs français» au point de vue...*



to study written texts in their offices, rather than going to see the works wherever they are, etc., etc.<sup>225</sup> [emphasis in original]

In addition to the systemic problems identified in this excerpt, Hulin de Loo issued warnings about the "more serious and more dangerous...tendency to naturalize as French certain Low Country painters by means of geographic annexation simply by moving the frontier".<sup>226</sup> As a tool of rebuttal, Hulin de Loo chose to trace the Van Eyckian influence on a number of the most prominently praised artists and works from the *Exposition des Primitifs français* and in the process, he effectively re-nationalized the overall style of the so-called French *primitifs* by reinserting the Flemish influence into the mix. For example, Jehan Fouquet was claimed as an intermixture of Italian and Flemish influences on a French base and Enguerran [sic] Charonton was characterized as truly French with Italian

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<sup>225</sup>Hulin de Loo, *L'Exposition des «Primitifs français» au point de vue...*, 8:

Les causes d'état arriéré de l'histoire de la peinture française sont multiple: la dispersion et la rareté relative des oeuvres, par suite des nombreuses attaques d'épilepsie révolutionnaire et iconoclastique qu'a subies le pays; le fait que, s'il y a en France un admirable musée international de chefs-d'oeuvre: le Louvre, il n'y a pas à proprement parler de musée *historique* de la peinture française, qui, recueillant des séries de documents aussi complètes que possible. permette d'étudier l'enchaînement chronologique et la répartition géographiques des mouvements artistiques; l'organisation défectueuses des commissions d'achat; le manque de ressources ou de direction compétente des musées de province; l'esprit de classicisme et d'orthodoxie esthétique dans tout l'enseignement; l'absence de photographies; le caractère sédentaire de la nation, qui porte même les savants à étudier de préférence dans leur cabinet des textes écrits, plutôt que de passer une partie de leur vie, à aller voir les oeuvres partout où elles sont, etc. etc.

Note the quotation marks in the title.

<sup>226</sup>Hulin de Loo, *L'Exposition des «Primitifs français» au point de vue...*, 11: "...plus grave et plus dangereuse, la tendance à naturaliser français, certains peintres des Pays-Bas, par la voie de l'annexion géographique, en déplaçant simplement la frontière."

influences mixed in with Flemish-Provencal<sup>227</sup>; in addition, Hulin de Loo claimed that the *Pieta de Villeneuve* "profited from the Eyckian conquest."<sup>228</sup>

Henri Bouchot, it is interesting to note, replied directly to Hulin de Loo in an article published in the *Revue de l'art ancien et moderne* in September 1904. With ill-disguised sarcasm, he defended France and the worthy claims made at the *Exposition des Primitifs français* as a nationalistic response to aggressive foreign nationalisms:

The legend of the Van Eycks had its advocate, just as the *Chanson de Roland* had Gaston Pâris. The old woman of the arts - of all the arts - Rome, who was not attacked, has found its champion. The rampart of the North and the rampart of the South have placed themselves in a position to square up against the 'nationalists' of French art, in the name of Flemish and Italian nationalisms.<sup>229</sup>

Identifying Georges Hulin de Loo and Louis Dimier as the 'champions' of the north and south, he first disputed the logic of the former ("Mr. Hulin chases after and seeks to demonstrate that all of France, a huge territory, was a tributary of the art of a tiny corner, or a mere *spot*..."<sup>230</sup> [emphasis in original]) and sarcastically used the very criticisms Hulin de Loo had voiced<sup>231</sup> to dispute the research techniques of the latter ("M. L.

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<sup>227</sup>Hulin de Loo, *L'Exposition des «Primitifs français» au point de vue...*, 25 and 45-46.

<sup>228</sup>Hulin de Loo, *L'Exposition des «Primitifs français» au point de vue...*, 49: "a profité des conquêtes Eyckiennes."

<sup>229</sup>Bouchot, "...Un Dernier Mot," 169:

La légende des Van Eyck a eu son avocat, comme la *Chanson de Roland* eut Gaston Pâris. La grand'mère des arts - de tous les arts! - Rome, qui n'était pas attaquée, a trouvé son champion. Le rempart du Nord et le rempart du Midi se sont mis en posture de régler leur compte aux «nationalistes» de l'art français, au nom des nationalismes flamand et italien.

<sup>230</sup>Bouchot, "...Un Dernier Mot," 173: "M. Hulin la poursuit et cherche à démontrer que toute la France, c'est-à-dire un territoire immense, fut tributaire en art d'un petit coin, d'un seul endroit...."

<sup>231</sup>Hulin de Loo, *L'Exposition des 'Primitifs français' au point de vue...*, 11.

Dimier goes, by preference, to copies or to derivative works to establish the bases of his arguments. This is why, although taking part in the Committee and having the power to make corrections to the successive editions of the official catalogue, he refrained from saying anything and preferred to operate separately<sup>232</sup>).

This brief survey of responses among the French and foreign press and publishers thus indicates that reception of the exhibition was varied and extensive. Much of the criticism generally fell into critiques of the way in which Bouchot and Lafenestre proved their argument, as well as disputes, though to a lesser degree, over the basic premise that a French *primitif* did indeed exist. In general this response to the show might be attributable to the fact that the 'message' was what many factions wanted to hear. Indeed, the presentation of Bouchot's and Lafenestre's theories in the *Catalogue Définitif* had been **intended** to soothe all sides. Journals of various political stripes and aesthetic positions could take what they wanted from the exhibition and, with relatively few exceptions, were generally supportive, or at least relatively uncritical, of the arguments put forward by the *Exposition des Primitifs français*. Where there was criticism it was focused much more on debates over details and definitions, rather than on the overall premise of the exhibition. With the exception of Georges Hulin de Loo, Louis Dimier, and Roger Fry, the other critics did not dispute or call into question the existence of a French *primitif*, or, when they did, their critiques were less pointed and more implicit which avoided placing the writers in opposition to an institution like the Louvre and performing the 'treasonable'

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<sup>232</sup>Bouchot, "...Un Dernier Mot," 177: "M. L. Dimier va, de préférence, aux copies ou aux oeuvre dérivées pour établir les bases de son argumentation. C'est pourquoi, faisant partie du Comité et pouvant proposer des corrections aux éditions successives du catalogue officiel, il s'est bien gardée de rien dire, et a mieux aimé opérer à part."

act of denying French excellence. After all, most of the owners of the journals as well as many of the writers reporting on the exhibition had a vested interest in supporting the *Exposition des Primitifs français* because of their involvement on its organizing committees and the sense of patriotism it fostered.

Another impact of the *Exposition des Primitifs français* was discernible in the art market and in the acquisition policies of the Musée du Louvre. While public interest in the 'primitifs' was at its height, private collectors, both big and small, became interested in buying such images for their own walls. Both Paul Durrieu and André Michel in their reviews of the *Exposition des Primitifs français* took pains to warn art buyers to beware of second class works flooding the market and claiming the right to be called 'primitive'. Paul Durrieu, one of the curators of the *Exposition des Primitifs français* as well as a noted collector, summed this up in his 1904 warning:

I should again point out that for this category of painting [manuscript miniatures] as for paintings, and even more than for paintings, there are a large quantity of fakes circulating, some of them very well executed. Several years ago, the Paris market was inundated with them. One particularly saw a whole invasion of fake portraits of Joan of Arc, arriving freshly hatched from foreign studios.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>233</sup>Durrieu, 178:

Je dois encore signaler que, pour cette catégorie [manuscript miniatures] comme pour les tableaux et même encore beaucoup plus que pour les tableaux, il circule quantité de faux, quelques exécutés très habilement. Il y a quelques années, le marché de Paris en était comme inonde. On vit notamment toute une invasion de prétendus portraits de Jeanne d'Arc, arrivant tout frais éclos d'un atelier de l'étranger.

The Musée du Louvre's acquisition policies had long been the focus of critical analysis,<sup>234</sup> but Georges Lafenestre, named Curator of Paintings and Drawings in 1900, had broadened their somewhat limited scope in order to "give to the supreme masters, to superior works, the primary place, but not to forget the Louvre's role as a great school, a systematic panorama of the phases of painting."<sup>235</sup> Critics of the exhibition had noted the paucity of early French works on the walls of the national museum's galleries as one reason the French *primitif* school had been so unknown to the public<sup>236</sup>; however, within a year of the *Exposition des Primitifs français*, the Louvre had acquired three notable works to fill the gaps in its collection: the *La Donatrice avec sainte Madeleine* (c. 1490) by the Maitre de Moulins<sup>237</sup>; the *Retable de Boulbon*<sup>238</sup>; and, most importantly, the *Pietà of Villeneuve-lès-Avignon*, purchased by the *Société des Amis du Louvre*.<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>234</sup>Larroumet's *L'art et l'état en France*, for example, contained a lengthy critique of the acquisition funds and organization of the entire beaux-arts machinery. He particularly deplored the cumbersome machinery of ministerial approvals required for each purchase and strongly advocated a kind of 'acquisition float', or endowment fund, to which certain curators would have discretionary access (249-50).

<sup>235</sup>Henri de Chennevières, "Les Récentes acquisitions du Département de la Peinture au Musée du Louvre, 1900-3," *Gazette des Beaux-arts*, Series 3, 30 (October 1903): 266: "Faire aux maîtres souverains, aux oeuvres supérieures, la part toujours première, mais ne pas oublier le rôle du large école que en Louvre doit tenir, panorama méthodique des phases de la peinture...." This was a broadening of previous policies which under previous administrations had aimed at acquiring only the greatest works which even then was a limited field and for which the Louvre had insufficient funds.

<sup>236</sup>Thiebault-Sisson, "L'Exposition des Primitifs français," *Le Temps* 12 April 1904: 3; Guiffrey, 81; and Sauvage, 207.

<sup>237</sup>Marcel Nicolle, "Les récentes acquisitions du Musée du Louvre," *Revue de l'art ancien et moderne* 16, 91 (October 1904): 308; and F. de Mely, "Une promenade aux primitifs," *La revue de l'art ancien et moderne* 15 (June 1904): 461. This was item #108 in the *Catalogue Définitif*. It had also been displayed at the Belgian pavilion at the 1900 Exposition Universelle as a Flemish work.

<sup>238</sup>Nicolle, 310.

<sup>239</sup>Michel Laclotte, et al., *Les Donateurs du Louvre* (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1989): 100 and 104. This is item #77 in the *Catalogue Définitif*. The municipal authorities in Villeneuve-Lès-Avignon were apparently under not a little duress, it seems, to relinquish the work. It is important to note that the

After this last purchase in 1906, as historian Michel Laclotte had noted, there was "a particular interest...in the origins of French art, that is, in the '*primitifs*'. After the *Pietà* of Villeneuve-lès-Avignon, a portrait of a child by the Maitre de Moulins (Jean Hey) and *La Bataille de Cannes* by Jean Fouquet were purchased. The choice of sculptures shows the same orientation."<sup>240</sup>

Despite this flurry of acquisitions, however, the main institutional and organizational problems described by Hulin de Loo were not addressed. The cumbersome structure lumbered on relatively unchanged for decades until one of many reorganization plans began in the 1970's.<sup>241</sup> Louvre acquisition policies also re-emphasized the periphery-centre dynamic by amassing important historical artworks in the centralized site of the Musée. Several of the works obtained, the *Pietà* most notably, had been elevated to international masterpiece status by the exhibition's promotional material and critical praise. By purchasing works such as this, the Louvre absorbed what had been considered regional masterpieces, elevating them to the French artistic pantheon by installing them in the 'national museum.' The Louvre's role as the sole repository of French artistic patrimony was reinforced and its curators more firmly established as the only suitable custodians. Such acquisitions were both a buttress to the centrality of Paris and the

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work was not purchased by the Musée du Louvre itself, but by the Société des Amis du Louvre, founded in 1897 by a group of politically influential and wealthy patrons (for example, Raymond Poincaré, Edouard Aynard and Baron Edmond de Rothchild) as well as members of the Ministry. These 'concerned citizens' raised funds privately (or through government grants) for the purchase of works outside the budgetary limits of the Departments of the museums. (98)

<sup>240</sup>Laclotte 104: "...un intérêt particulier...pour les origines de l'art français, pour les '*primitifs*', d'abord. Après la *Pietà* de Villeneuve-lès-Avignon, on achète un portrait d'enfant du Maitre de Moulins (Jean Hey) et la *Bataille de Cannes* de Jean Fouquet. Le choix des sculptures montre le même orientation."

<sup>241</sup>Laurent, particularly 165-174.

construction of a collection of an *École des Primitifs français* as a more permanent response to the accusations of neglect made by Georges Hulin de Loo in 1902 and 1904.

## CONCLUSION

The nation has now become both the subject and the object of this new cult, which has superimposed itself on the old one, no longer capable of catering for the whole of society. The nation gives perpetual homage to itself by celebrating every aspect of its past, each and every one of its social, geographical and professional groups which it believes has contributed to the general prosperity, and all the great men born on its soil and who have left lasting works in every domain imaginable.<sup>242</sup>

If one agrees with [Johannes] Huizinga that history is the way in which a culture deals with its own past, then historical understanding is a vital cultural enterprise, and the historical imagination an important, if neglected, human faculty. Because the sources of history include in a primary sense the fundamental human practice of rhetoric, we cannot forget that our ways of making sense of history must emphasise the making. To get the story crooked is to understand that the straightness of any story is a rhetorical invention and that the invention of stories is the most important part of human self-understanding and self-creation.<sup>243</sup>

The *Exposition des Primitifs français* closed on July 14th, 1904 and the works, most of them at least, were returned to their owners.<sup>244</sup> The publicity died away and the measure of the impact of the exhibition could be assessed. The reception and perceptions of the *Exposition des Primitifs français* and the subsequent effect on the art market and acquisitions by the Louvre does not, however, indicate what, if any, was the full impact of the exhibition on the canonical structures of art history. What was the lasting impact, if any, of this event and its circumstances? Did the *Exposition des Primitifs*

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<sup>242</sup>Krysztof Pomian, *Collectors and Curiosities: Paris and Venice, 1500 - 1800*, trans. Elizabeth Wiles-Portier [*Collectionneurs, amateurs et curieux* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1987)] (Cambridge and Oxford: Polity Press, 1990): 43-4.

<sup>243</sup>Hans Kellner, *Language and Historical Representation: Getting the Story Crooked* (Madison, WI and London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1989): 9.

<sup>244</sup>F. de Mely, "Seconde promenade aux primitifs." *La revue de l'art ancien et moderne* 15 (July 1904): 54.



*français* change or expand the way in which the term *primitif* was understood and applied to fifteenth century art production?

In the decades after the 'revelations' of 1904 a number of books dealt in varying degrees with the issue of the French primitives. For example, *Outlines of the History of Art* (Lubke's *History of Art*) of 1904 devoted only five pages to early French art (versus 72 pages for early German and Netherlandish schools) and began only with the Clouet's paintings from the 1550's.<sup>245</sup> Louis Hourticq's *La Peinture des Origines au XVI<sup>e</sup> Siècle* was published in its first edition in 1908; he stood by the North/South traditionalist schism, with a passing reference to the furore of the *Exposition des Primitifs français* and the issue of the *primitifs* contained in a footnote: "Hardly any critic or archaeologist has not written about French painters in imitation of the Italian, regarding the exhibition of 1904. On that occasion, the current opinions were very given a rough time and were, on the whole, little changed."<sup>246</sup>

In 1915, French art historian André Michel began to publish the *Histoire de l'Art depuis les premiers temps chrétiens jusqu'à nos jours*, a multiple-volume survey of French art history. He took a more ambiguous stance in the issue of the French '*primitif*'. In Volume II, published in 1907, he stated that there was a French school of painting from as early as 1350; a painter born in Bruges was no more a foreigner in Paris than one

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<sup>245</sup>Wilhelm Lubke, *Outlines of the History of Art* (Lubke's *History of Art*), 2 vol., ed. Russell Sturgis (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1904): 327.

<sup>246</sup>Louis Hourticq, *La Peinture des Origines au XVI<sup>e</sup> Siècle*, 2nd ed. [1st edition, 1908], *Manuels d'Histoire de l'Art* Series (Paris: Librairie Renouard, 1926): "Sur les peintres français à l'imitation italienne, il n'est guère de critique et d'archéologue qui n'ait écrit, à propos de l'exposition de 1904. A cette occasion, les opinions courantes ont été fort malmenées et, en somme, peu modifiées." This footnote may reflect the 1926 attitudes more than the 1908 ones.

born in Auxerres for if Flanders was "under the fleur-de-lys," it was therefore French.<sup>247</sup> However, by Volume V, issued in 1915, he had backtracked somewhat when he wrote that "the history of French painting begins in 1595, when great works were created to honour Henri IV."<sup>248</sup> By 1939, when Louis Réau published his *French Painting in the XIV<sup>th</sup>, XV<sup>th</sup> and XVI<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, the national theme of 1904 reemerged, but he tempered his by statements about the overly enthusiastic claims of 'Frenchness' at the 1904 exhibition with claims that the French were comprised of subjects of the King of France, Provençals, Burgundians and French-speaking Walloons, a broadly encompassing geography equal to the best imaginings of Henri Bouchot and Georges Lafenestre.<sup>249</sup> Both Michel and Réau, it must be remembered, were writing separately during the First and Second World Wars respectively, times of extreme national distress when exhortations of national superiority and continuity were needed for reasons other than academic pride.

At best, the *Exposition des Primitifs français* broadened the application of the term *primitifs* and placed heretofore little known or under-appreciated works into circulation and discussion. But did it change the canon? Slightly. In general, art historical works today regard the French Primitives primarily as an aside complementing the Italian Renaissance and to Netherlandish developments. As one example, *Gardner's Art through the Ages*,

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<sup>247</sup> André Michel, ed., *Histoire de l'Art depuis les premiers temps chrétiens jusqu'à nos jours*, vol. II (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1905-1915): 104.

<sup>248</sup> Michel, *Histoire de l'Art...*, 778.

<sup>249</sup> Louis Réau, *French Painting in the XIV<sup>th</sup>, XV<sup>th</sup> and XVI<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (London, Paris and New York: Hyperion Press, 1939): 7 and 9.

a popular survey textbook first written in 1926 and re-edited periodically into the 1980's, devotes only one column in its 975 pages of text to the French schools of the fifteenth century; the *Avignon Pietà* as they call it is cited as "an isolated masterpiece of great power", while the "only one really major figure" mentioned is Jean Fouquet.<sup>250</sup>

The *Exposition des Primitifs français* and its issues of the '*primitif*' were soon overtaken. In 1907 the first show of the group, now known as the Cubists, included Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. M.)* among other works, bringing a new '*primitif*' into the field through cross-cultural referencing. African artifacts were now re-categorized, not as ethnological artifacts, but as abstracted planes and angles breaking through the formalism of European aesthetics. Modern historian Patricia Leighton traces this 're-invention' of the *primitif* as founded in an anti-establishment stance:

For the modernists, primitivism became a method for a revolutionary style; more, this formal radicalism often served, depending on the attitude of the artist, to present an alternative - mingling concepts of authenticity, spontaneity, freedom from the repression of bourgeois constraints, and *amour libre* - to currently entrenched social and aesthetic forms. The primitivism of Picasso and Derain most notably, like that of Gauguin before them, gestured toward cultures whose transformative powers they admiringly offered as escape routes from the stultification of French culture and academic art.<sup>251</sup>

The avant-garde, it seems, had taken back and re-worked the '*primitif*' yet again.

The *Exposition des Primitifs français*, as this thesis has tried to show, was a locus of alternative readings, not only as a proposed revision of France's art historical lineage, but as an attempt to reappropriate the *primitif* from avantgardist and foreign definitions

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<sup>250</sup>Horst de la Croix and Richard G. Tansey, *Gardner's Art through the Ages*, 8th ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1986): 677-8.

<sup>251</sup>Leighton, 622.

and to construct a Republican sense of self-assertion amid shifting and polarizing meanings of 'France the Nation'.

Factionalization and polarization continued to plague the Republican centre although centrist governments managed to retain relatively undisturbed power for several more years.<sup>252</sup> There was, however, no immediate or essential change in the way in which the nation thought of itself or indeed had always thought of itself. What Lebovics calls the "tyranny of solidarity" continued to be an essential part of the French approach to national self-identification: the many were united as the one, at least at the theoretical and ideological level, if not as a reality.<sup>253</sup> The seemingly cohesive notion of 'France' as defined and elaborated upon in the *Catalogue Définitif* and the *Exposition des Primitifs français* remained only a construct.

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<sup>252</sup>Watson, 83; Nord, 222; and Anderson, 26.

<sup>253</sup>Lebovics, 9. According to Lebovics and others, Michelet in the 1820's was one of the first to begin the myth of a geographical (and hence, linguistic, cultural and historical) unity of a France existing before the recorded political and historical entity. Throughout the nineteenth century this kind of retroactive nationalism was a common theme for writers and philosophers such as Ernest Renan and Ernest Lavisse (3-4).





Fig. 2 Facade of the Pavillon de Marsan, northwest corner of the Musée du Louvre on the Rue de Rivoli. From Yvan Christ, *Le Louvre et les Tuileries: Histoire Architecturale d'un double Palais* (Paris: Les Éditions «Tel», 1949): 140.

EXPOSITION  
DES  
Primitifs Français

AU PALAIS DU LOUVRE  
(Pavillon de Marsan)

ET  
A LA BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE

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Catalogue

RÉDIGÉ PAR

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Avril 1904

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des  
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par

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Fig. 5 *Catalogue Définitif* - Endpaper, no page.

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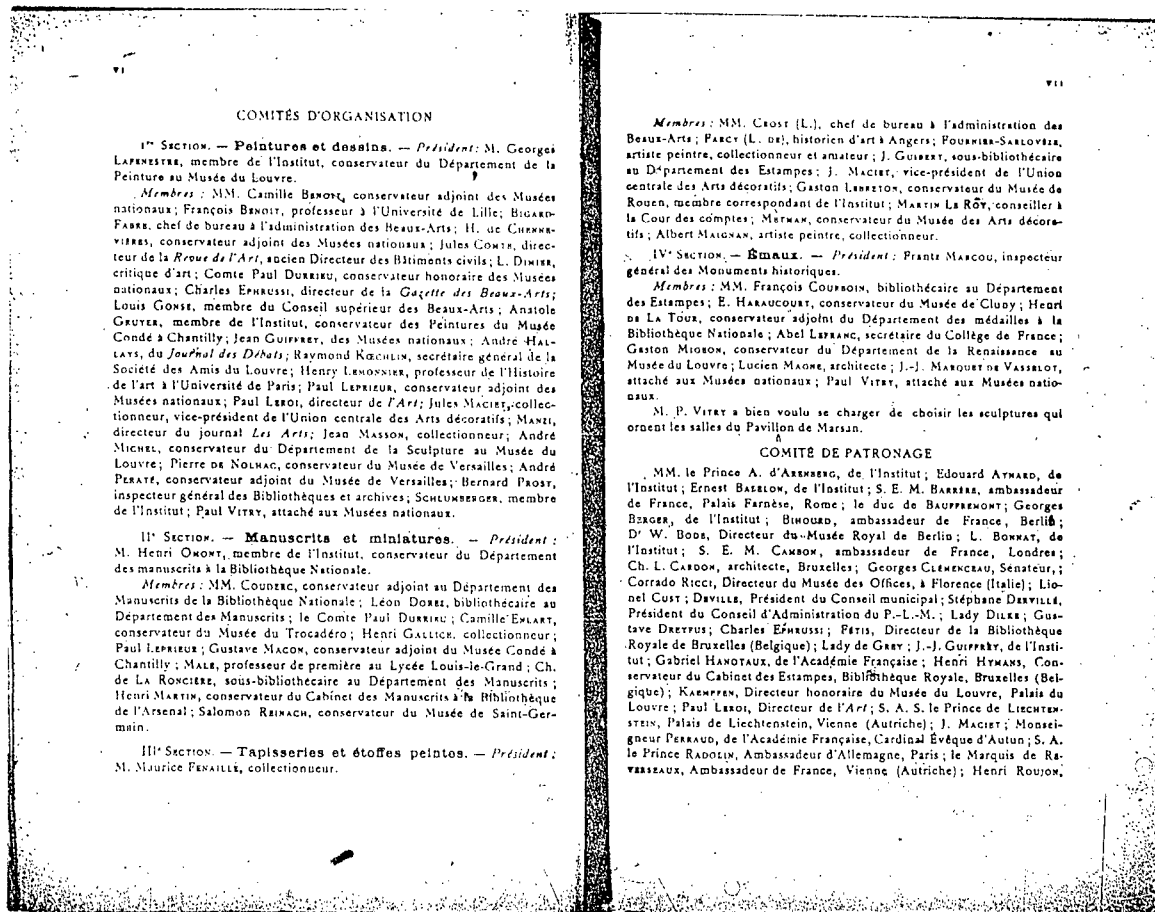
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Fig. 6 Catalogue Définitif - Administration, page V.



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Fig. 7 Catalogue Définitif - Administration, pages VI and VII.

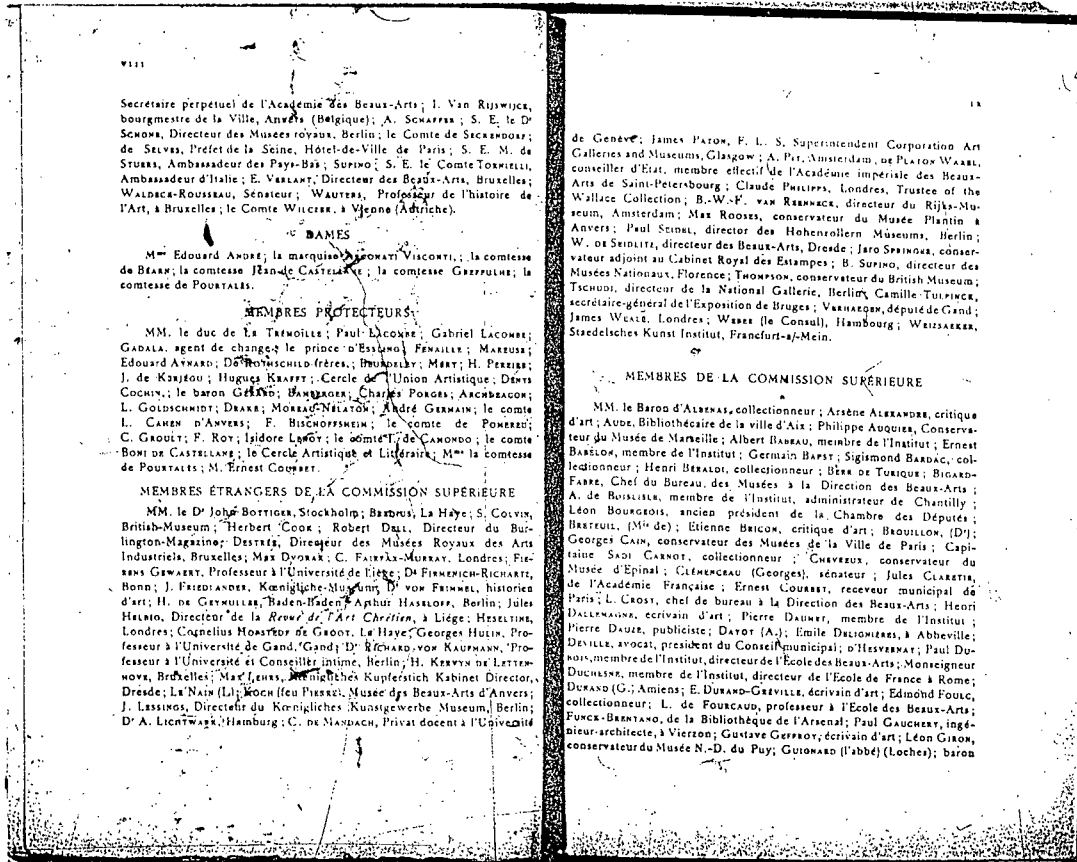


Fig. 8 Catalogue Définitif - Administration, pages VIII and IX.

## INTRODUCTION

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### I

Depuis que les Gaulois, nos ancêtres, amis des couleurs vives et des paroles sonores, furent initiés, par leurs conquérants, aux séductions de la culture gréco-romaine, la pratique des arts, plastiques ou littéraires, n'a guère été interrompue dans notre pays. L'art de la peinture, notamment, le plus souple de tous et le plus expressif, facile associé de la poésie, s'y est toujours montré l'interprète fidèle de nos croyances, de nos sentiments, de notre pensée. Même aux époques les plus troublées, à travers les longs flux et reflux des invasions barbares, sous les Mérovingiens et les Carolingiens, on couvre encore d'images colorées, (décor mural, mosaïques, tissus brodés), plus ou moins grossières, les basiliques et les palais, comme, autrefois chez les gallo-romains, les temples et les villas. Les scribes chrétiens s'efforcent aussi de répandre, à leur tour, sur les feuillets des Missels et des Psautiers une parure semblable à celle dont leurs prédécesseurs païens décoraient les rouleaux des Poètes et des Philosophes.

Les chroniques nous apprennent quelles légendes sacrées ou héroïques se déroulaient, en scènes parlantes, sur les murs des cathédrales et des résidences impériales. Quelques manuscrits précieux nous ont conservé, outre les noms de leurs illustres auteurs, des témoignages de la sincérité naïve, avec laquelle ces protégés de Charlemagne et de Charles le Chauve essayaient déjà d'exprimer, par une technique enfantine, la beauté du décor architectural qui les entourait, la vivacité, sauvage ou élégante, des personnages si mêlés qu'ils y voyaient se mouvoir.

Fig. 9 *Catalogue Définitif* - Introduction, page XI.

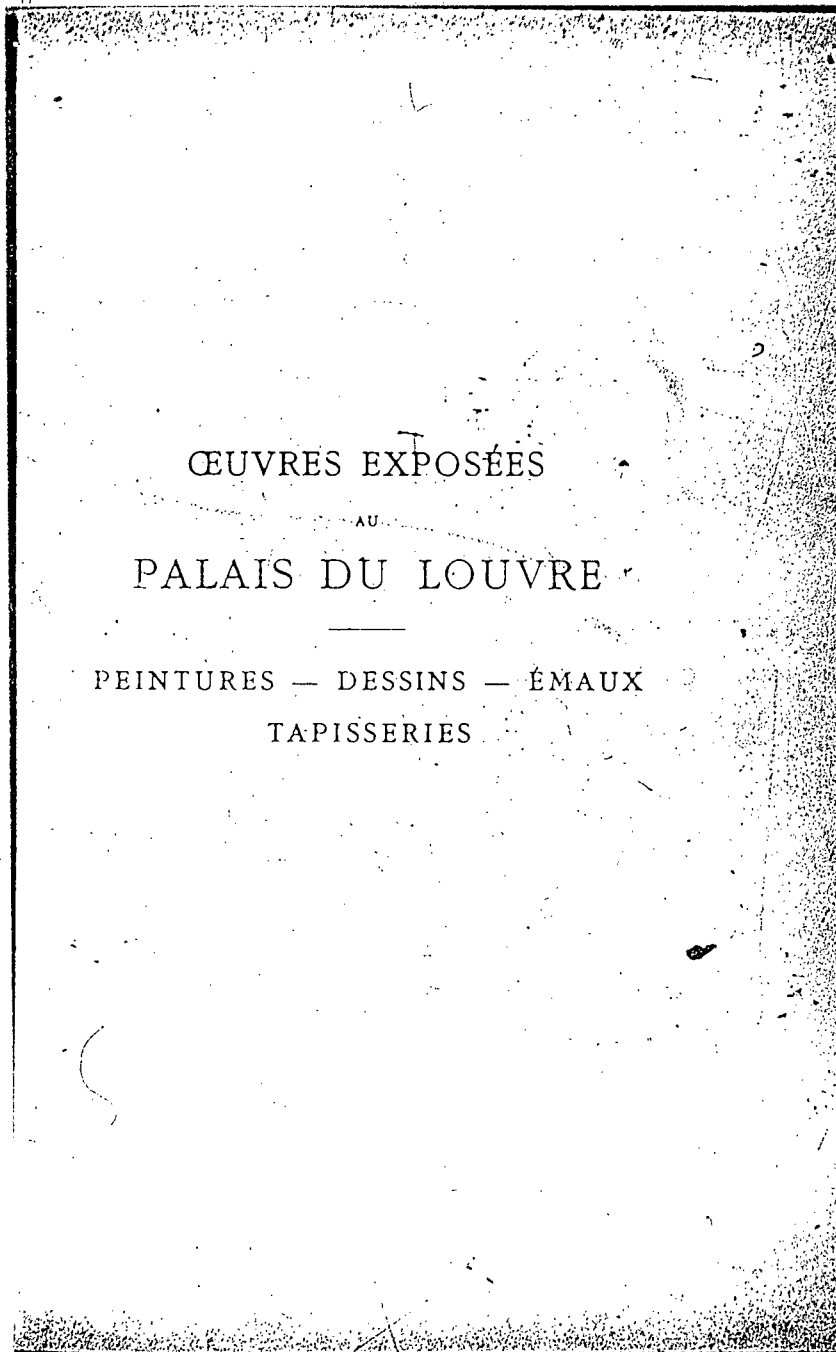


Fig. 10 *Catalogue Définitif* - Title Page of the *Oeuvres Exposées au Palais Du Louvre*, no page.

## PEINTURES ET DESSINS

### 1. GIRARD D'ORLÉANS?, vers 1359.

Portrait du roi de France Jean II, dit le Bon.

H. 0,91; L. 0,41.

Le roi, âgé d'environ quarante ans, est représenté de profil à gauche. Il porte la barbe rare, les cheveux coupés sur le front et tombant en mèches sur le col. Il est vêtu d'une robe bleue à garnaches et lécices de fourrure blanche. Le fond est d'or, appliqué sur plâtre et toile, la toile elle-même collée sur un panneau de bois. Une gaufrure, en dentelle au poinçon, est inscrite sur le pourtour du champ d'or. La peinture a pris un ton foncé que fait ressortir l'éclat du fond. Ce tableau paraît avoir été peint en Angleterre, pendant la captivité du roi, aux environs de 1359. Né en 1310, le roi Jean avait alors près de quarante ans. Nous savons, grâce à un compte publié par Mgr le duc d'Aumale, que le peintre Girard d'Orléans était, en qualité de valet de chambre, attaché à la personne du roi en Angleterre, et qu'il peignit, par son ordre, divers tableaux. Le présent portrait était autrefois dans les appartements du roi Charles V à l'hôtel Saint-Paul; et il faisait partie d'un quadriptyque fermant, contenant trois autres portraits, ceux d'Edouard III d'Angleterre, de Charles IV, Empereur d'Allemagne et « Roi des Romains » et de Charles V alors duc de Normandie. Une mention de l'inventaire du Roi Charles V publié par Labarte n° 2217 montre que Girard d'Orléans avait peint un quadriptyque de ce genre. Cette œuvre, d'un intérêt historique considérable, à peu près unique aujourd'hui en Europe, est la preuve la plus saisissante de l'activité et du talent naturaliste des artistes parisiens du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle. Dans le

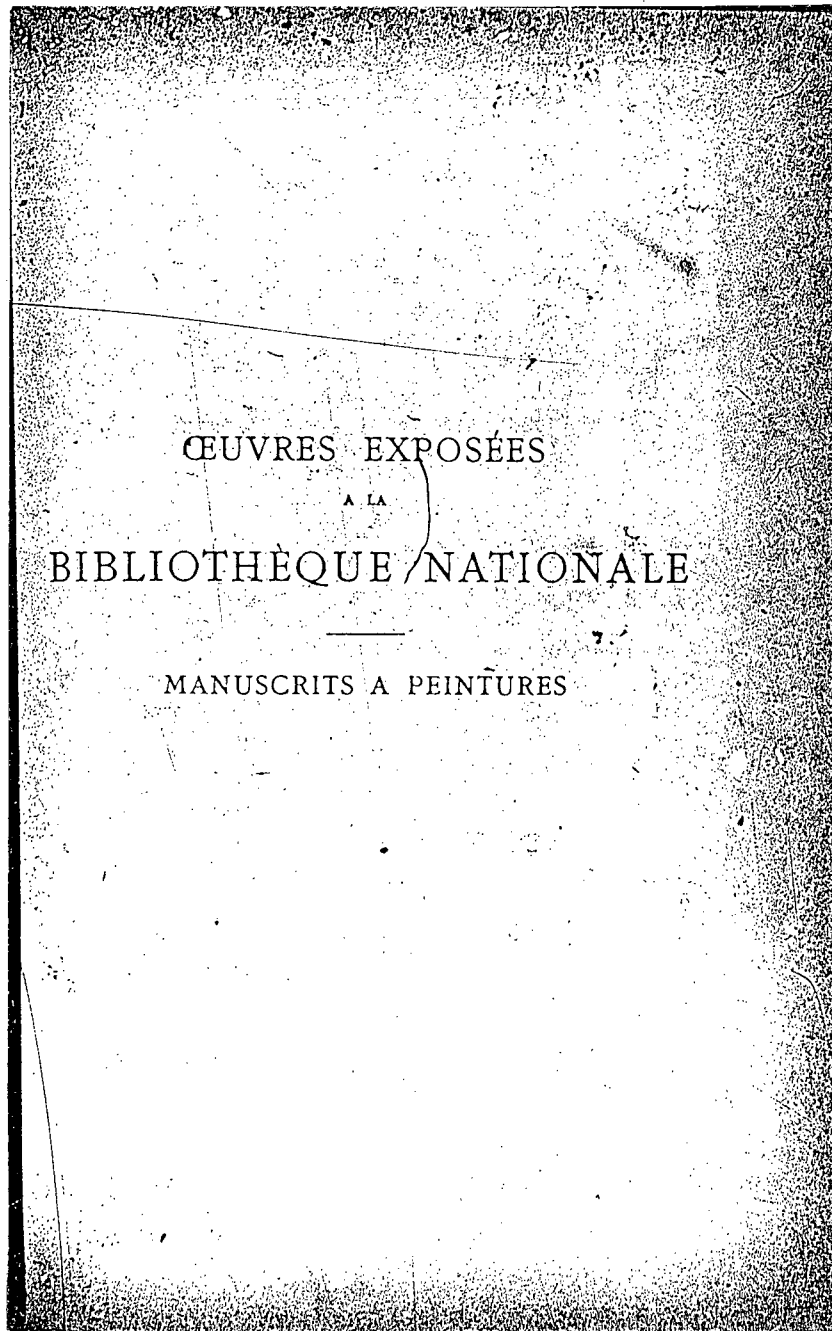


Fig. 12 *Catalogue Définitif* - Title Page of the *Oeuvres Exposées à la Bibliothèque Nationale*, no page.



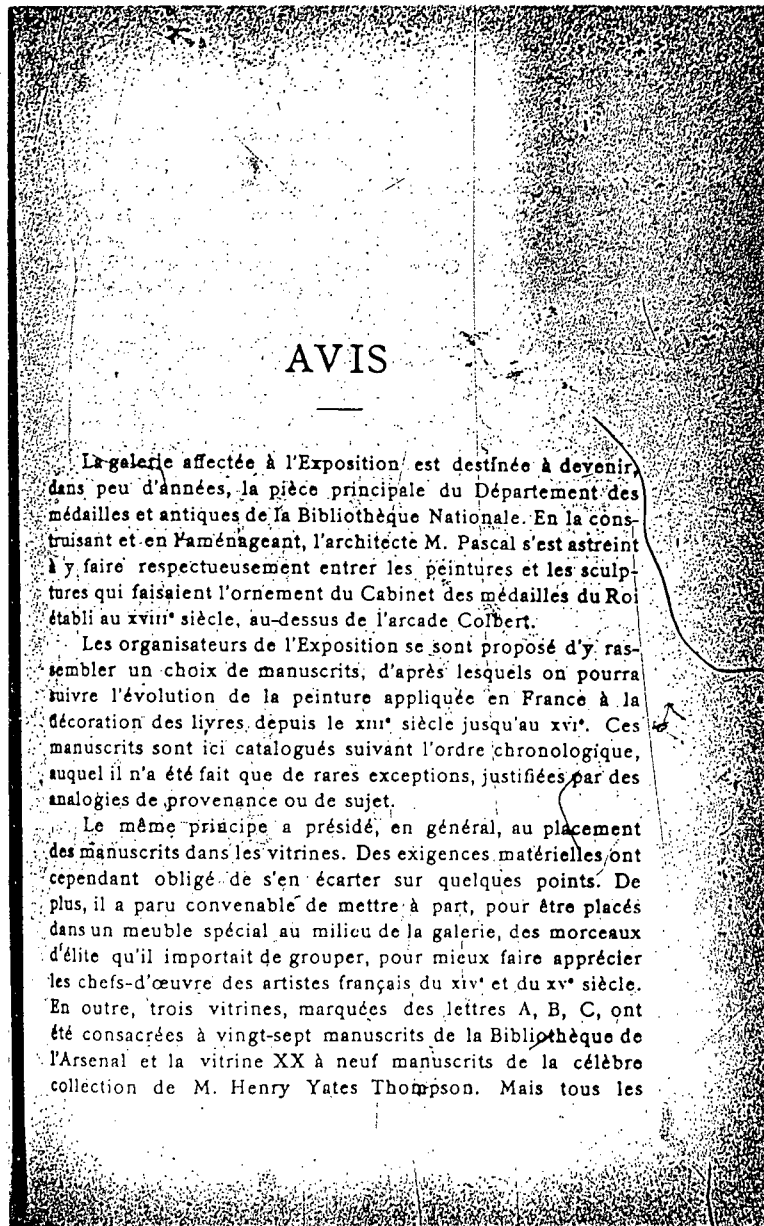


Fig. 13 *Catalogue Définitif - Avis to the Manuscrits à Peintures section, page 5*

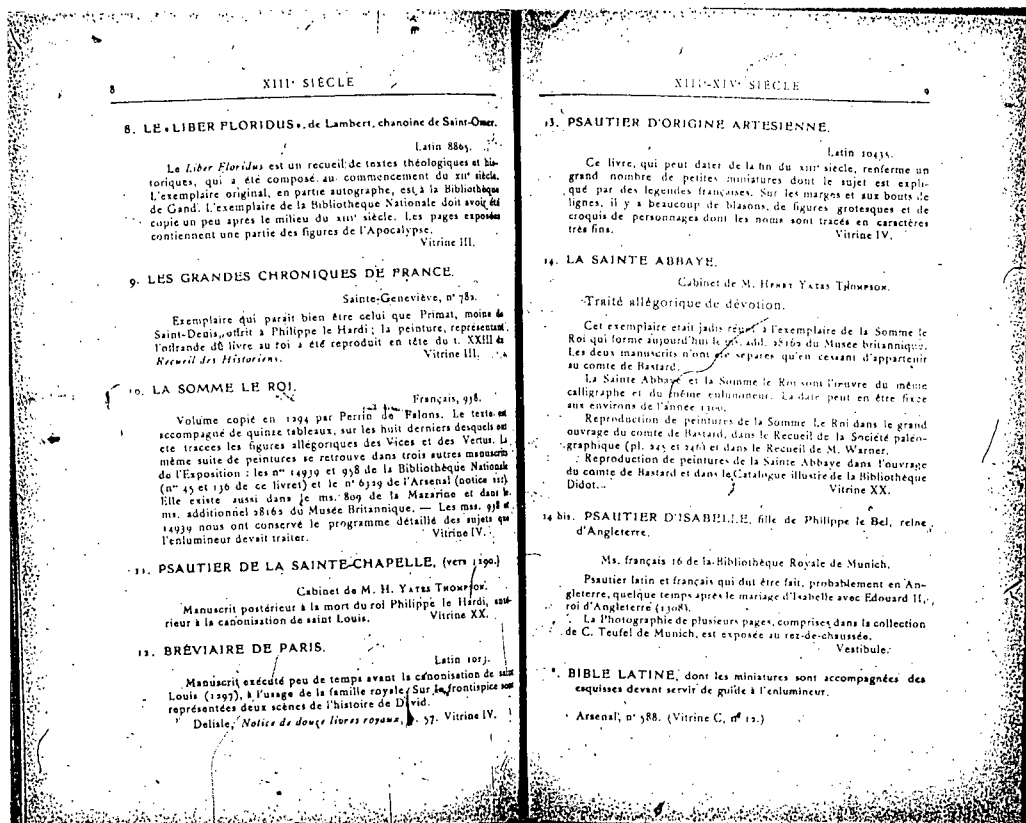


Fig. 14 Catalogue Définitif - Manuscrits à Peintures section, pages 8 and 9.

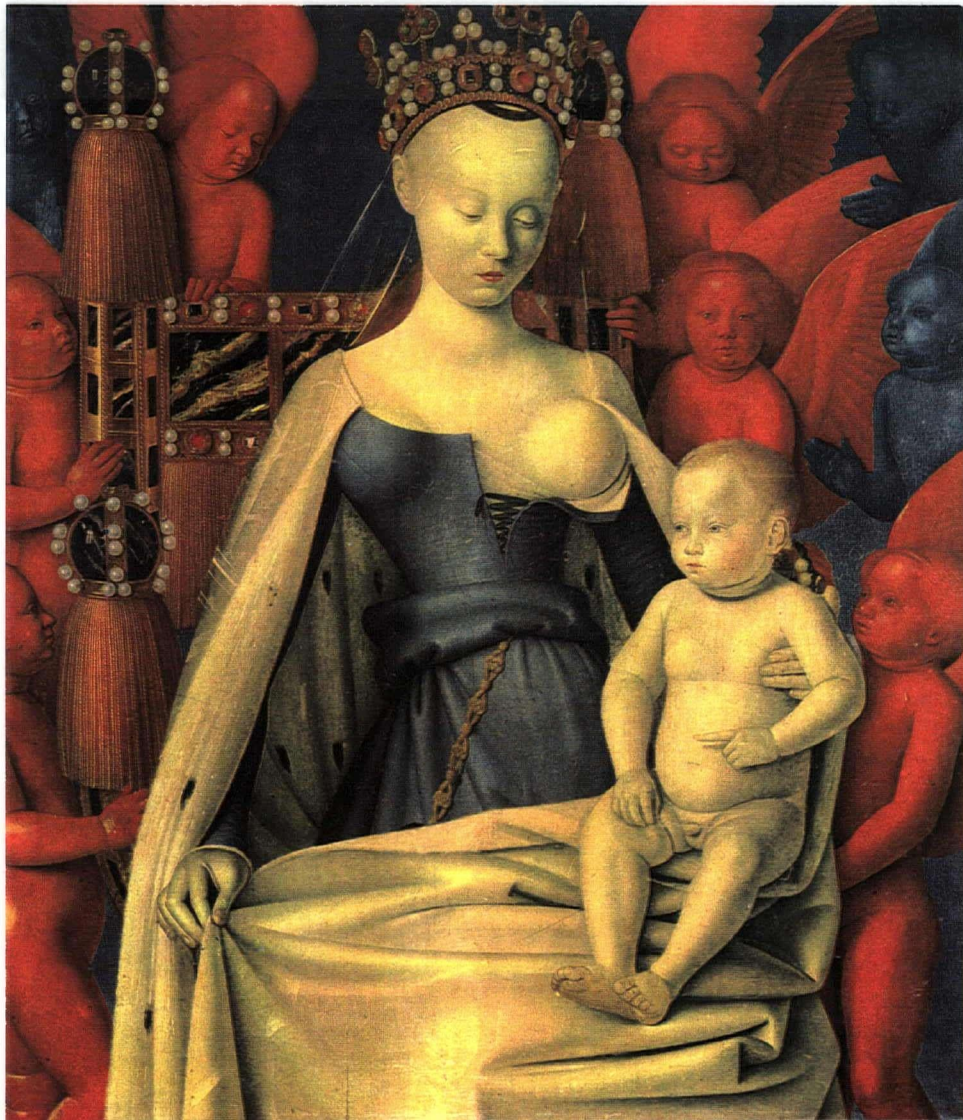


Fig. 15 Jean Fouquet, *The Melun Diptych*, right wing (*La Vierge et l'Enfant*), c. 1450. From Michel Laclotte, ed., *French Art from 1350 to 1850* (New York: Franklin Watts, Inc., 1965).



Fig. 16 Nicolas Froment, *Le Buisson Ardent*, 1475-76. From, Michel Laclotte, ed., *French Art from 1350 to 1850* (New York: Franklin Watts, Inc., 1965).





Fig. 17 Enguerrand Charonton, *La Triomphe de la Vierge Marie*, 1453. From Michel Laclotte, ed., *French Art from 1350 to 1850* (New York: Franklin Watts, Inc., 1965).



Fig. 18 *École de Nicolas Froment, Pietà, avec saint Jean, la Vierge, la Madeleine et un donateur, 1470?.* From Lawrence Gowing, *Paintings in the Louvre* (New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 1987).





Fig. 19 Le Peintre des Bourbons, dit Le Maître de Moulins, *Saint Victor et donateur*, c. 1480. From Grete Ring, *A Century of French Painting, 1400-1500* (London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1949).



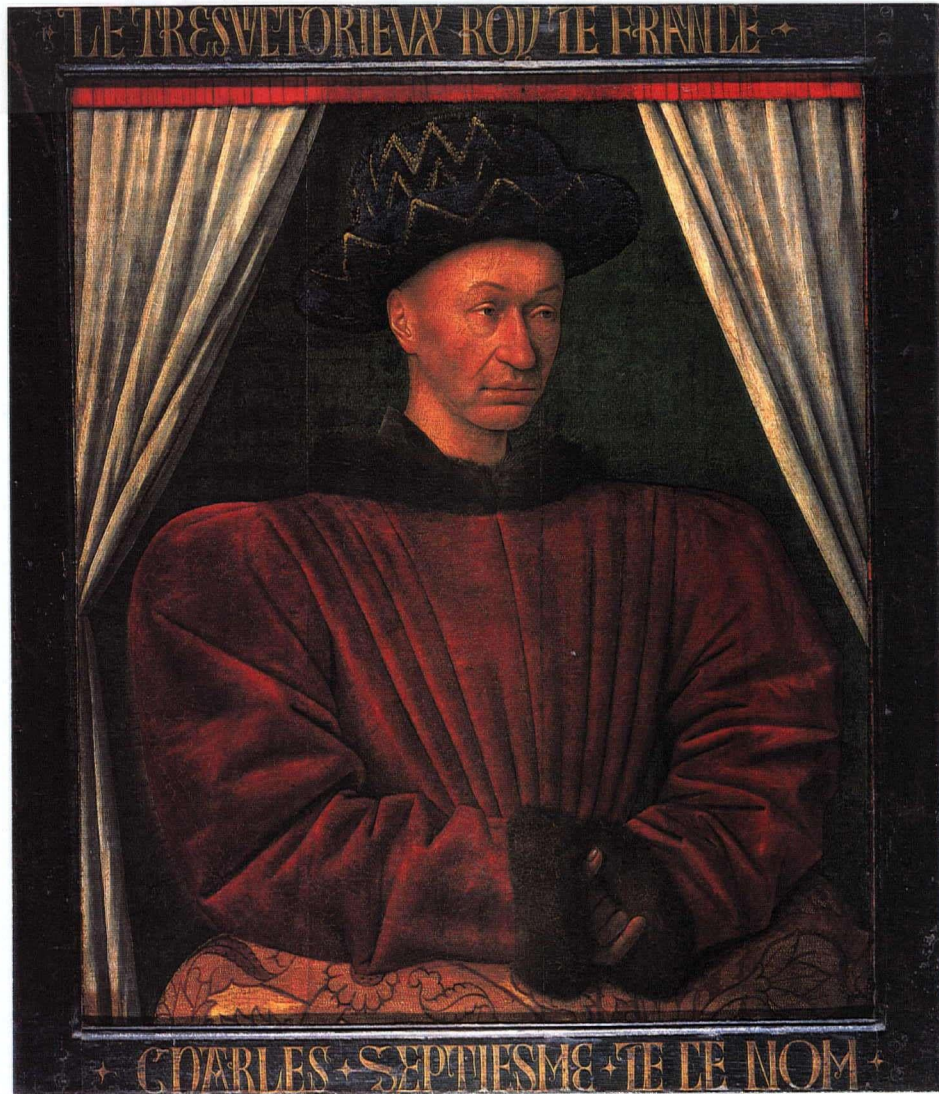


Fig. 20 Jean Fouquet, *Portrait de Charles VII*, c. 1445. From Lawrence Gowing, *Paintings in the Louvre* (New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 1987).



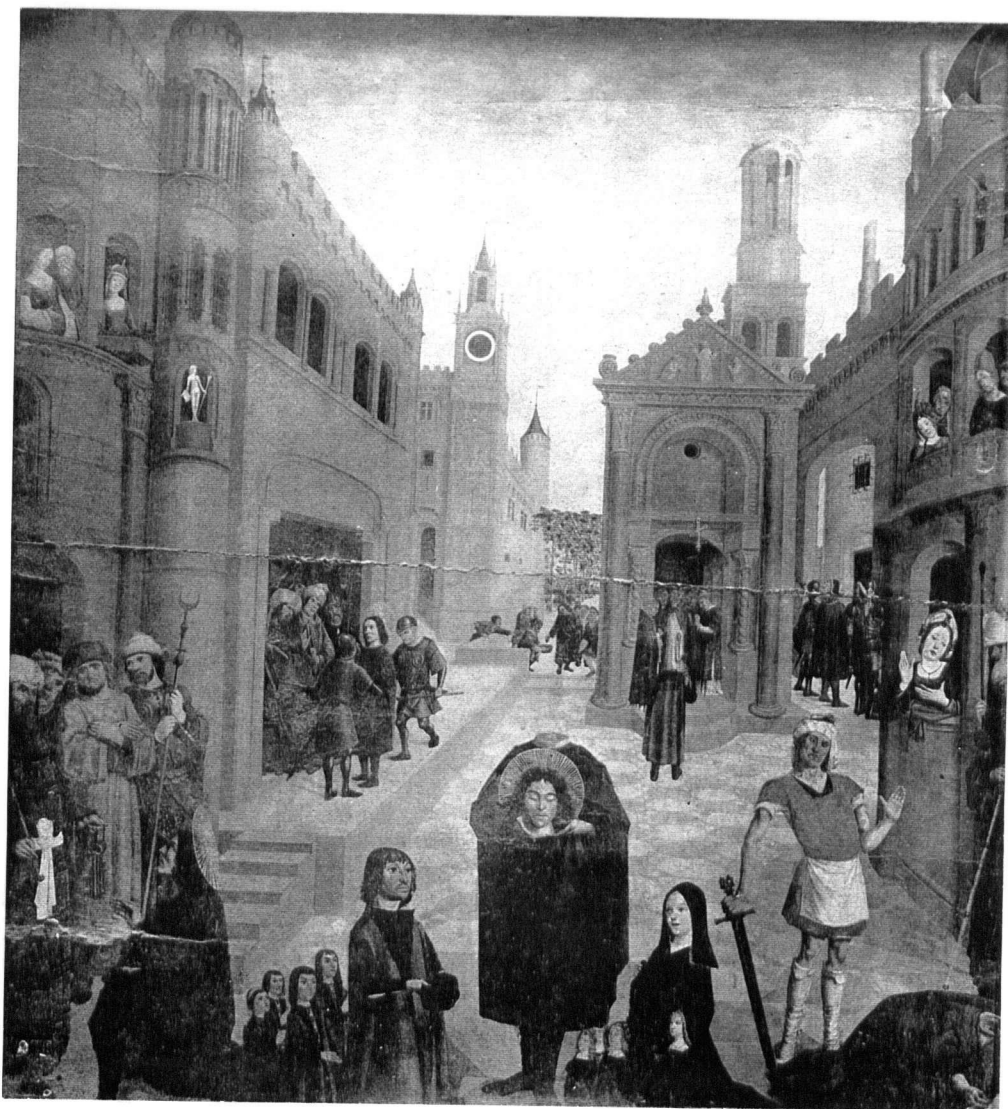


Fig. 21 École de Nicolas Froment, *Miracle d'un Saint portant sa tête dans ses mains en présence des donateurs*, c. 1480. From Grete Ring, *A Century of French Painting, 1400-1500* (London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1949).



Fig. 22 Jean Malouel, *Martyre de saint Denis*, c. 1400. From Lawrence Gowing, *Paintings in the Louvre* (New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 1987).



Fig. 23 Le Peintre de Bourbons, dit Le Maître de Moulins, *La Vierge et l'Enfant-Jesus avec quatre anges*, c. 1490. From Grete Ring, *A Century of French Painting, 1400-1500* (London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1949).



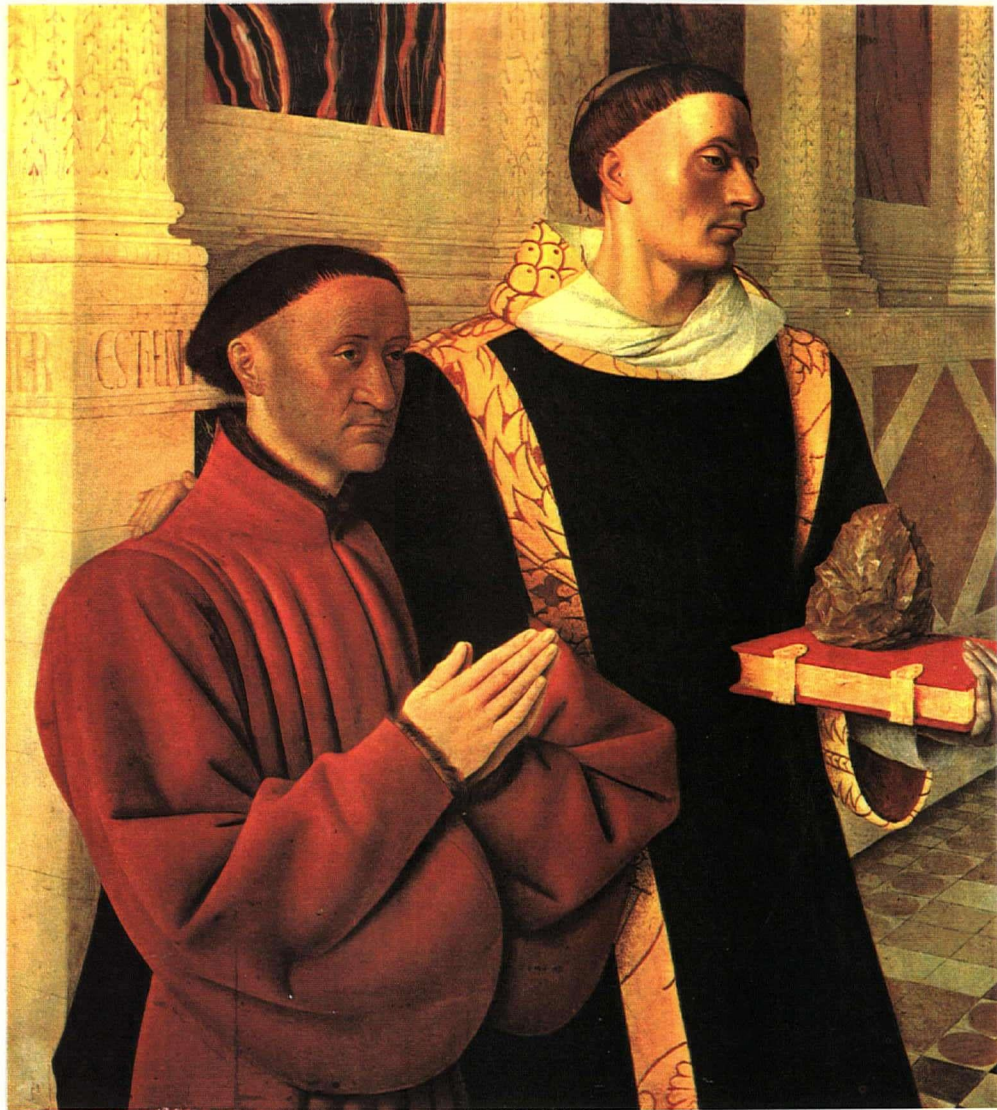


Fig. 24 Jean Fouquet, *The Melun Diptych*, left wing (*Étienne Chevalier*), c. 1450. From Michel Laclotte, ed., *French Art from 1350 to 1850* (New York: Franklin Watts, Inc., 1965).



Fig. 25 École de Paris, *Altarpiece of the Parlement de Paris* (called *Le Calvaire*), c. 1450. From Lawrence Gowing, *Paintings in the Louvre* (New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 1987).





Fig. 26 Girard d'Orléans, *Portrait de Jean le Bon*, c. 1380. From Lawrence Gowing, *Paintings in the Louvre* (New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 1987).





Fig. 27 École d'Artois (Le Maître de Flémalle), *L'Adoration des Bergers*, c. 1430. From Lawrence Gowing, *Paintings in the Louvre* (New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 1987).

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## APPENDIX 1

### Contents Analysis of the *Exposition des Primitifs français*

The following numerical analyses of the exhibition contents were derived from data provided in the Catalogue Définitif. Contemporary newspaper and journal reports indicate that there were new items being added to the exhibition throughout its 3 month run (witness the Supplément section in the Catalogue Critique itself) and so it is therefore possible that these figures are indeed not the final ones. However, since the Catalogue Critique can be considered an 'official' record of the event, I have used them for my analysis of content.

#### 1. OBJECTS ACCORDING TO MEDIUM

<u>Object</u>	<u>No. of Objects</u>	<u>% of Total Exhibition</u>	<u>% at Site</u>
<u>Pavillon de Marsan:</u>			
Paintings	294	42.0	64.0
Enamels	25	3.5	5.5
Tapestries	54	8.0	12.0
Sculptures	58	8.0	12.5
Mural copies	<u>29</u>	<u>4.0</u>	<u>6.0</u>
<u>Total:</u>	<u>459</u>	<u>65.5</u>	<u>100.0%</u>
<u>Bibliothèque Nationale:</u>			
Manuscripts	242	34.5	100.00%
<u>Total:</u>	<u>242</u>	<u>34.5</u>	<u>100.0%</u>
<u>Totals:</u>	<u>701</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	

#### 2. OBJECTS ACCORDING TO SUBJECT

This is a broad (and highly subjective) classification system which I have used simply to ascertain the relative split between secular and religious subjects. This is of course problematic when faced with objects in which the donor is prominently displayed in the company of his or her patron saint in an act of how prayer or other religious rite. Is this a religious painting because of the donor is depicted? Or is it a secular painting because of the portrait-like depiction of the donor? Where, in my

judgement, the donor image predominates over the religious content, I have classified it as secular. Where the reverse balance is evident, I have classified the work as religious. In both cases, I have used the scale of the respective depictions as one indicator of the applicable category.

<u>Object</u>	<u>Secular</u>	<u>% of Total</u>	<u>Religious</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
Paintings	149	32.0	145	31.5
Enamels	18	4.0	7	1.5
Tapestries	36	8.0	18	4.0
Sculptures	15	3.0	43	9.0
Mural copies	--	--	<u>29</u>	<u>6.0</u>
	<u>218</u>	<u>47.0%</u>	<u>242</u>	<u>53.0%*</u>

\* Discrepancy of total to individual percentages results from rounding.

### 3. OBJECTS BY LENDER

The following information is incomplete because, based on the Catalogue Critique alone, it is difficult to determine the exact number especially where the lender's city is not specified.<sup>254</sup> Even though incomplete, I think these figures do indicate an interesting relationship between the number of Parisian owners and the number of objects being loaned in comparison to the number of non-Parisian lenders.

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<sup>254</sup>This does not differentiate foreign (i.e., non-French) owners living in France or French owners living outside France. Because surname and city were used to make this distinction, a not infallible criterion to say the least, I have included such individuals in the most obvious category, that is, by city where cited, unless there is undoubted evidence to the contrary (e.g., M. Weber, Consul à Hambourg).

a. Pavillon de Marsan<sup>255</sup>:

		<u># of Lenders</u>	<u># of Items</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
Institutions	- Paris	8	132	29
	- Non-Paris French	25	58	13
	- Foreign	6	14	3
Private	- French <sup>256</sup>	98	213	40
	- Foreign	<u>28</u>	<u>42</u>	<u>9</u>
		<u>165</u>	<u>459</u>	<u>100</u>

Summary:

	<u>Lenders</u>		<u>Items</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>
Foreign Lenders:	4	20.5	56	12
French Lenders:	<u>131</u>	<u>79.5</u>	<u>403</u>	<u>88</u>
	<u>165</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>459</u>	<u>100%</u>

Bibliothèque Nationale (Manuscripts):

		<u># of Lenders</u>	<u># of Items</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
Institutions	- Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal	25	212	88
	- Other	10	10	4
Private (nationality unspecified)		<u>15</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>8</u>
		<u>50</u>	<u>242</u>	<u>100</u>

Note: Because the section in the Catalogue Définitif which deals with manuscripts was organized quite differently from the sections on painting, etc., it is very difficult to determine exactly which manuscripts were loaned by whom. The above figures are estimates.

<sup>255</sup>These figures include only paintings, sculptures, enamels and tapestries. See the following chart for lenders to the manuscript exhibition.

<sup>256</sup>City was only specified for non-French/foreign lenders; therefore this category cannot be more precisely expressed.

## APPENDIX 2

### Table of Exhibitions, 1878-1904

This information was obtained by surveying contemporary journals, especially the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* and *La Revue de l'art ancien et moderne*, *The Burlington Magazine* and the *Revue de l'Art chrétien*. The criteria are that these are exhibitions occurring between 1878 and 1904 and that their focus was on art production in Europe between approximately 1000 AD and the mid-seventeenth century.

Abbreviations: EU = Exposition Universelle  
 EI = Exposition Internationale  
 EN = Exposition Nationale

Date	Location	Title	Content/Comments
April 1904	Sienna	Exposition de l'ancien art siennois	Multimedia and multinational; sculpture, paintings predominantly
Jul?-Oct? 1904	Dusseldorf	Exposition des maitres ancien or Exposition des Primitif Allemands, depending on the journal	411 paintings, 170 manuscripts, 12 tapestries; multinational
Spring 1902	Bruges	Expositions des Primitifs flamands	Paintings by Flemish/Netherlandish artists only
Sept 1902	Dusseldorf	Exposition rétrospective d'art religieuse	Complement to the 1902 industrial exhibition; 13th-15th c. objects; no paintings
1900	Paris	Exposition des trésors d'églises françaises	In conjunction with EU 1900 Objects only
1900	Paris	Exposition rétrospective	In conjunction with EU 1900
1900	London	Van Dyck Exhibition	
1900	Florence	Exposition des Maitres Anciens	Very small show; from private collections



Date	Location	Title	Content/Comments
Aug 1899	Paris	Exposition de dessins	Cabinet des estampes - 15th - 18th centuries
Sept 1899	Dresden	Cranach Exhibition	
March 1899	London	Rembrandt Exhibition	Royal Academy
1899	Madrid	Velasquez Exhibition	
1899	Antwerp	Van Dyck Exhibition	
1899	London	Netherlandish School	165 works at the New Gallery
Aug 1898	Berlin	Exhibition of Art from the Middle ages and the Renaissance	Objects only; Italian and Flemish only
1898	London	Exhibition of School of Lombardy Masters	First 1/2 of 16th Century
1898	Amsterdam	Rembrandt Exhibition	
1898	?	Italian Masters	Galerie d'Altenburg and Galerie Lindenau (Commercial)
Jan? 1898	Basel	Swiss and German Masters	14-16th century
1897	Brussels	Exposition Rétrospective	In conjunction with EI 1897
1897	Geneva	Exposition des arts anciens	In conjunction with EN
Sept 1896	Orvieto	Exposition d'art religieuse	Objects only
July 1895	Utrecht	Exposition d'art ancien	15th-17th century
1893	Madrid	Exposition d'art rétrospectif	Multimedia; primarily nationalistic content; 13th century on
1892	London	Flemish School Exhibition	60 paintings at the Burlington Fine Arts Club
1890	Berlin	Dutch art exhibition	15th century on

Date	Location	Title	Content/Comments
1890	Tours	Exposition Rétrospective	Regional, multimedia, 1400's on
1889	Paris	Exposition Rétrospective	In conjunction with the EU 1889
1889	Ghent	Exposition Rétrospective de peinture	1400's on; some national focus
1887	London	Exposition Rétrospective	Royal Academy Early Renaissance; various schools
1887	Paris	Exposition de Tableau de Maitres	École des Beaux-Arts Several schools; 15th century on
1886	Limoges	Exposition d'art rétrospectif	Regional Exhibition Objects from 12th century on
1885	Nuremberg	Exposition Rétrospective	In conjunction with EN Multimedia from 14th century
1884	Budapest	Exposition Rétrospective d'orfèvrerie	Objects, 12th century on
1883	Berlin	Exposition des oeuvres de Maitres anciens	Early 16th Century on; local/private collections
1883	Amsterdam	Exposition Rétrospective	In conjunction with EU 1883; no paintings mentioned, objects only
1883	Paris	Exposition de Portraits du Siècle	400 works dating from David on
1882	Lisbon	Exposition Rétrospective	Objects primarily
1880	Dusseldorf	Exposition Rétrospective	In conjunction with EN Middle ages to Rococo
1880	Brussels	Exposition Rétrospective	In conjunction with EN 1880 Multimedia

Date	Location	Title	Content/Comments
1880	Le Mans	Regional exhibition	Objects only combined with contemporary works and industrial objects
1880	Turin	Exposition Rétrospective	Church art 2nd-16th century
July? 1879	Paris	Les Dessin des Maitres anciens	École des Beaux-Arts
1878	Paris	Exposition des portraits nationaux	In conjunction with EU 1878
1878	Paris	Exposition Rétrospective	In conjunction with EU 1878

### APPENDIX 3

#### COMPONENT PARTS OF THE CATALOGUE DÉFINITIF FOR THE *EXPOSITION DES PRIMITIFS FRANÇAIS*

The component parts of the *Catalogue Définitif* are as follows:

Title page	1
Committees and Patrons	6
Introduction	22
Pavillon de Marsan - Oeuvres Exposées	
Title Page	1
Catalogue Entries (including supplements)	154
Index	8
Bibliothèque Nationale - Oeuvres Exposées	
Title Page	1
Avis [Introduction]	3
Catalogue Entries	75
Index	6
Plates (32 in total)	
Paintings	23
Drawings	2
Tapestries	2
Sculptures	2
Manuscripts	3
Advertisements (both in the front and back of Catalogue Définitif)	8
Total Pages	285