

EDITORS' NOTE

In 1834, when discussing the replica of the *Halte des Moissonneurs dans les marais Pontins*, also known as *Les Moissonneurs*, by Léopold Robert (1794–1835), the French officer Charles Marcotte d'Argenteuil (1773–1864) appeared very enthusiastic about the Swiss painter's projects, and also very clear about how the artist should handle this work. It was not the first time Marcotte had counselled Robert: collector and patron, he had been the painter's close friend and, as the extensive correspondence between the two men shows, an advisor for the latter's many artistic undertakings.¹

The first contact between Marcotte and Léopold Robert dates to September 1824, when the French officer wrote to Robert to commission him to produce a canvas which should recall the ones exhibited that year at the Salon in Paris.² Robert had been since 1818 based in Rome and acquired impressive success through genre and religious scenes taking place in the roman countryside, spanning subjects such as pilgrims, travellers and bandits.³ Marcotte refers to these popular characters for his request, insisting that Robert should note the purchaser's name on the back of the canvas to somehow secure the subject, especially with regard to other collectors' commissions.⁴ This was the first letter of a correspondence which saw the two men become close friends, juggling private discussion and conversation on professional matters, including Léopold's works.

Marcotte explains his attitude as a collector by pointing out that he contacted Robert because he already owned a couple of paintings by other contemporary artists. Ten years later, when the friendship between the two men was consolidated, Léopold enthusiastically wrote to Marcotte to let him know that he had decided to work on a copy of one of his most famous paintings, the

¹ P. Gassier, and M. Schmidt-Surdez, eds., *Léopold Robert-Marcotte d'Argenteuil. Correspondance 1824–1835*, Neuchâtel 2011.

² Letter from Marcotte to Robert, 15 September 1824, in: Gassier and Schmidt-Surdez, eds., *Léopold Robert-Marcotte d'Argenteuil*, p. 1.

³ P. Gassier, *Léopold Robert*, Neuchâtel 1983.

⁴ Letter from Marcotte to Robert, 15 September 1824, in: Gassier and Schmidt-Surdez, eds., *Léopold Robert-Marcotte d'Argenteuil*, p. 1.

Moissonneurs.⁵ The first version of the picture became one of the revelations of the 1831 Paris Salon and was purchased for one of the most prestigious collections of the time, owned by the King of the French, Louis-Philippe (today housed in the Louvre). Robert explained that the recent project followed a request from Count Athanasius Raczyński (1788–1874), a wealthy nobleman, Prussian diplomat of Polish origin, and avid collector.⁶ Léopold grasped Raczyński's collecting attitude, claiming that the latter "genuinely loved what affects him."⁷ Léopold was correct in figuring out Raczyński's passion for contemporary artworks, and the latter's approach was, in this respect, quite like that of Marcotte. Furthermore, Raczyński represented the paradigmatic figure of an erudite collector, involved both in assembling works and writing about art with a precise goal: making his collection available to the wider public. Both being supportive of the Swiss painter, Marcotte and Raczyński show but two examples of the diversity of strategies that characterised the 19th-century European collecting landscape. These patterns particularly link northern Europe to a sense of cosmopolitanism, which increasingly becomes a constant value across the centuries.

The career and collecting interests of the Polish aristocrat contributed to this internationalism. This is visible through Raczyński's idea of a gallery open to the public in his home in Berlin, his quest for contemporary artists such as Robert, and his activity as a writer and critic. This link between writings, erudition and mobility is a major characteristic of northern European collecting practices and of the way these collections developed and were assembled. Raczyński took great care in documenting his collection by publishing its catalogues.⁸ More interestingly, among his numerous texts about art, the Polish collector wrote a history of contemporary German art for the French-speaking market.⁹ Promoting a unifying vision of German painting,

⁵ Letter from Léopold Robert to Marcotte, 4 May 1834, in: Gassier and Schmidt-Surdez, eds., *Léopold Robert-Marcotte d'Argenteuil*, pp. 434–435.

⁶ M. Mencfel, *Athanasius Raczyński (1788–1874). Aristocrat, Diplomat, and Patron of the Arts*, Leiden–Boston 2022.

⁷ "si véritablement amateur des choses qui le touchent". Letter from Léopold Robert to Marcotte, 4 May 1834, in: Gassier and Schmidt-Surdez, eds., *Léopold Robert-Marcotte d'Argenteuil*, p. 435.

⁸ *Katalog der Raczynskischen Bilder-Sammlung verfasst von G.A. Raczyński*, Berlin 1876 [1847].

⁹ *Histoire de l'art moderne en Allemagne par le comte Athanase Raczyński*, Paris 1836–1841, 3 vols. This edition was based on the German translation from Polish, published in the same years: *Geschichte der neueren deutschen Kunst*, transl. by Friedrich Heinrich von der Haagen, Berlin 1836–1841, 3 vols. See also Raczyński's *Les arts en Portugal. Lettres*

he structured his work around three major cities: Düsseldorf, Munich, and Berlin. He therefore put forward the aesthetic values of contemporary painting, applying them both to German and French art.¹⁰

When Léopold committed suicide on 20 March 1835, the replica of the *Moissonneurs* was left unfinished (ill. 1). From this moment onwards, a long series of exchanges began between Léopold's younger brother Aurèle, who was in charge of managing the late artist's reputation, and Raczyński, who pursued his goal of finalising the acquisition of the canvas.¹¹ Because the replica of the *Moissonneurs* was Léopold's last painting – the one, as Aurèle put it, “at which he worked till the last moment, before which I found him dead!” – the younger Robert tried to keep it in Switzerland, claiming its sentimental and patriotic value and its importance as a representative example of national art. He went on to treble the original price, going from roughly 5 000 to 15 000 francs, and hoped that this would definitely lead Raczyński to give up his idea of purchasing the work.¹² However, the Polish collector accepted the offer, and the canvas arrived in Berlin in autumn 1835.¹³ The debates around the acquisition of Léopold's last painting show the evolution of collecting practices with regard to numerous circumstances, such as the painter's suicide. They also highlight the scale of the emotional value the protagonists of this sale associated with the collectables. On the one hand, for the family, the painting became a precious memento, as it embodied a signature canvas witnessing Léopold's last brush strokes. On the other, at a regional and local level, it symbolised a sample of patriotic taste, paving the way to the creation of a “cult” of the Swiss painter. Thirdly, and more importantly, Raczyński saw in the canvas a material document of Léopold's pictorial skills and a proof of his creativity, integrating into his collection of contemporary art. In other

adressées à la Société artistique et scientifique de Berlin, et accompagnées de documens, Paris 1846; *Dictionnaire historico-artistique du Portugal pour faire suite à l'ouvrage ayant pour titre: Les arts en Portugal*, Paris 1847.

¹⁰ S. Rohner, *Léopold Robert. La réception de son oeuvre en Allemagne au XIXe siècle*, Neuchâtel 2008, pp. 48–49.

¹¹ Mencfel, *Athanasius Raczyński (1788–1874)*; M. Mencfel, and C. Murgia, “Reproduire, diffuser, traduire. Autour des *Moissonneurs* et d'autres répliques peintes.” In: A. Nessi and D. Lemaire, eds., *Léopold et Aurèle Robert. Ô saisons...* Exhibition catalogue, Neuchâtel 2023, pp. 33–46.

¹² The price of 5 000 francs was initially suggested by suggested by Marcotte to Léopold in one of the letters they exchanged on this project: Letter from Léopold Robert to Marcotte, 4 May 1834, in: Gassier and Schmidt-Surdez, eds., *Léopold Robert-Marcotte d'Argenteuil*, pp. 434–435.

¹³ Mencfel, and Murgia, “Reproduire, diffuser, traduire.”, p. 41.



1. Léopold Robert, *Halte des Moissonneurs dans les marais Pontins* (Summer Reapers Arriving in the Pontine Marshes), 1834–1835, The Raczyński Foundation at the National Museum in Poznań, inv. no. MNP FR 502

words, the canvas had already secured its place in Raczyński's collection well before his arrival.

His efforts to acquire Robert's last painting manifest Raczyński's vision of collecting, especially if we compare this with Marcotte's approach. While the latter's practice of collecting stems from personal relationships and networks, as witnessed by the friendship with Charles-Auguste Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), whom he met while sojourning in Rome between 1807 and 1812, Raczyński's documentary scope does not uniquely rely on erudition. It is in line with an awareness of preserving art for display. The number of museums that were founded across Europe, particularly in northern countries such as the British Isles and Germany, but also Denmark and the Low Countries, highlight this interest in making collections and private initiatives available to a large public.¹⁴ Through this passage of availability, collections were also

¹⁴ For an overview of the rise of museums and the issues of modernity, see: K. Pomian, *Le musée, une histoire mondiale*, Paris 2020–2023, 3 vols. On the specificity of

promoted to a higher rank, as their scope was expected to rise from individual to national. Here artworks' value goes beyond erudition: it becomes a representative of an aesthetic and scholarly vision of art, acting as a point of reference for political identities. Robert's last painting increasingly interested Raczyński for this symbolic value, rather than as a representative of Léopold's wide range of topics, as put forward by Marcotte.

Research has highlighted the importance of collecting networks with regard to geographical ensembles. For instance, The Getty Research Institute has endorsed several projects on various countries from the 16th to the 18th century.¹⁵ This attention paid to geography has evidently been supported by the studies on the art market, auctions, and sales, which inevitably need to rely on geography. The number of sales inventories is significant here for framing contexts, networks, and patterns of collecting.¹⁶ Tracing the itineraries of artworks led to investigations of specific geographical contexts and to the analysis of collecting dynamics. An example of this approach is given by *Collecting Italian Art North of the Alps 1700–1800*, a special issue of the *RIHA Journal* edited by Martin Olin in 2014. Transnationality and mobility are at the core of these mechanisms and show that further attention must be devoted to the multifaceted cultural entities of Northern Europe, their collecting practices and the references that are relevant to these processes.

Through the present volume, we intend to concentrate on northern Europe, from the British Isles to the Baltic region. The multicultural, economic, political, and geographical situation of these countries led to a series of aspects that are intertwined and provide grounds for examining new strategies, intricacies, and approaches to collecting. Both private and public ensembles respond to these mechanisms, offering a wealth of material which we aim to explore through the essays of this volume.

To show this diversity, the texts proposed here revolve around three main issues: references, networks, and dissemination. We explore the references and models that artists, collectors and agents used, questioned and appropri-

the British situation and the link between collections and art market, see: Ch. Gould and S. Mesplède, eds., *Marketing Art in the British Isles, 1700 to the Present. A Cultural History*, London 2017.

¹⁵ See, for instance: M.B. Burke and P. Cherry, *Collections of Paintings in Madrid, 1601–1755*, ed. M.L. Gilbert, Los Angeles, 1997; P. Biesboer, *Collections of Paintings in Haarlem, 1572–1745*, ed. C. Togneri, Los Angeles 2002.

¹⁶ See, for instance the publications of the Getty Provenance Index: B.B. Frederiksen, *Index of Paintings sold in the British Isles during the Nineteenth Century*, 4 vols., 1801–1820, Los Angeles 1988–1996; B.B. Frederiksen, B. Peronnet, J.I. Armstrong and A. Jacquinet, *Repertoire des tableaux vendus en France au XIX^e siècle*, Los Angeles 1998.

ated when dealing with artistic production but also artefacts of various genres. This touches upon scholarship and erudition and illustrates how the approach to knowledge developed through collecting and how the geopolitical situation of northern Europe impacted on these activities.

Within this context, Anna Sobecka focuses on the example of Gdańsk scholars in order to explore the collections of naturalia, with particular regard to amber. Sobecka examines how collections such as those of Jacob Theodor Klein, Christoph Gottwald, or Johann Philipp Breyne contributed to scientific research and played a pioneering role in the amber and gem trades. This importance is visible through the fact that some of the artefacts and naturalia from these collections served as models for the illustrations published in volumes such as Nathanael Sendel's *Historia Succinorum* (1742).

References, both textual and visual, are at the core of Urszula Dragońska's essay on the library of the Łódź manufacturer and print collector Henryk Grohman (1862–1939). The author explains how the book collection, constituted from around 1905 onwards, mirrored European collecting patterns and responded to the context of a growing interest in printed images, print collections and special attention paid to the quality of collected items – the “belle épreuve” known and strenuously sought after by French collectors. Reconstructing Grohman's library means investigating the models the industrialist relied on and materialising his approach to knowledge and research.

Knowledge and erudition evidently consist of connections, exchanges, and mobility. Northern Europe stands as an example of cosmopolitanism in this respect. A crossroad of cultures, trades, political and social traditions, northern Europe worked both as an economic platform and as a connecting agent in the construction of cultural networks, among other things. The essay by Charlotte Christensen precisely investigates these issues, calling into question the erudite model that collectors developed in Copenhagen in the first half of the 19th century. The scholar's discussion departs from the collecting strategies of Prince Christian Frederik (1786–1848), whose items represented the core of a national Danish collection. Then, Christensen considers the construction of two collections. First, that of portrait painter Christian Albrecht Jensen (1792–1870), showing the diversity of models and references employed. Jensen travelled extensively across Europe, and his collection notably reflects this taste for multiple visual sources, experimentations, and connections. Secondly, Christensen's analysis deals with the collection of politician Adam Gottlob Moltke, dating back to the 18th century, and with Niels Heinrich Weinich (1755–1829), who was its first curator and, as an art historian, brought an erudite dimension to this ensemble.

Ylva Haidenthaller further investigates the question of collections' building with regard to the Swedish scene and through the analysis of numismatics collections. Medallists, politicians and scholars are involved into this process. Such a variety of backgrounds shows the richness of collectors' backgrounds, trade strategies and mobility. Objects circulated within northern European countries and involved, at each passage, a transfer of context and typology of collection.

Denmark significantly framed collectors' mobility. Martyna Łukasiewicz and Thor J. Mednick research the exchanges that this mobility generated and discuss the construction of collecting 19th-century Danish art in Paris through the curatorship of Carlos van Hasselt (1929–2009), director of the Fondation Custodia/Collection Frits Lugt. The authors contend that van Hasselt's approach to collecting relied on the networks he was able to establish with dealers and scholars. In doing so, Łukasiewicz and Mednick trace the characteristics of what could be considered the "canon" of 19th-century Danish art. Spanning collecting strategies and patterns, van Hasselt's approach put forward an in-depth discussion of practices and models, examining their dissemination and the interactions they generated.

Networks as models of collecting also concern Maren-Sophie Funderich's research on the Nietzsche Archive in Weimar. Pioneering modernism around 1900, the collection evidently revolved around the figure of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) and was assembled in a Wilhelminian style villa just outside Weimar by the philosopher's sister, Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche (1846–1935). Funderich shows how commissioning furniture to the Belgian architect and designer Henry van de Velde (1863–1957) contributed to building a space devoted to a homage to Nietzsche. The space further resulted in a broader cultural project, showcasing innovation and standing as the result of the networks it was able to generate and disseminate.

Circulation and distribution are indeed at the core of the essays by Julie Codell, and by Ulrike Müller, Hélène Verreyke and Tine D'haeyere. The two articles explore two different aspects of dissemination.

Julie Codell examines the anthropological dimension through the analysis of a periodical, the 90+ *Athenaeum* series, entitled "The Private Collections of England." Edited by critic F.G. Stephens between 1873 and 1887, this series highlights middle-class collectors within a glorifying perspective. Codell surveys the geopolitical context of Victorian Britain and discusses collecting strategies according to the expanding industrialisation of the time. F.G. Stephens's vision is crucial because the critic brings to the fore the national character of collecting as a value, juggling between local markets and international trades, which inevitably affect collections developed. The dissemina-

tion of knowledge associated with the artists is here of great interest. Codell broadly discusses the series' structure and Stephens' choices, such as images' omission, explained by the fact that readers were already familiar with most artworks. The relationship with the public, i.e. middle-class public, enables a reflection on the role of these works and, more in general, on the scope of the collections.

Ulrike Müller, Hélène Verreyke and Tine D'haeyere further question the aims and perspectives of disseminating collections. Considering the case study of the Cast Collection of Antwerp's Royal Academy of Fine Arts, the scholars investigate the didactic function and the issues linked to the propagation of knowledge associated with a learning institution. The context of art academies contributed to defining the characteristics of a collection, whose scholarship relates to educational needs. Collecting strategies, therefore, echo the constitution of visual references and models, allowing students to build their knowledge and their artistic practice alike.

Through this volume, we have attempted to gather research and reflect on some aspects of northern European collecting and on its specificities. By focusing on the interactions between different protagonists of the art trade, we have intended to focus on the multiple and multifaceted aspects of collecting in northern Europe. The essays in this volume consider study cases, diverse materials and issues that enable a deep discussion on the criteria according to which these ensembles were constituted, displayed, and put into context.

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