

## ACADEMIES AND AMATEURS: PHILIP V'S COLLECTING, BETWEEN FRANCE AND SPAIN\*

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The foundational meeting of the French Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture took place in Paris in 1648. It was established to match the splendor of the Academy of Athens during the golden age of Alexander the Great (Pevsner 68-69).

Always obsessed by this mythical figure as a personal allegory, Louis XIV later commissioned Charles Le Brun to paint a whole series devoted to the heroic deeds of the Macedonian sovereign, which would be woven up to eight times by the Gobelins tapestry makers (Hartle 106-17). The historical and political interests of the king of France were faithfully assumed by his grandson Philippe d'Anjou. Yet, the Sun King was not only a model worthy of emulation for Philip V, but an exemplary art collector representative of late 17th-century French taste.

The picture galleries of Cardinal Mazarin, Fouquet and Jean-Baptiste Colbert were rich in early Italian Baroque paintings, especially by Guido Reni, Andrea Sacchi and even by the young Poussin (Haskell 185-94). Louis XIV's collection had its origin in the death of his uncle Gaston d'Orleans, who left him a large number of busts and statues from classical antiquity. A sequence of legacies and purchases would shortly enhance this seminal collection. From Mazarin's heirs, His Majesty obtained thirty canvases, as well as some ancient sculptures and tapestries. In 1662, he acquired the Jabach collection —composed mainly of Italian works and enlarged in 1671 with a second lot of 5.000 plus drawings— and by 1665, he bought the extraordinary picture gallery of Richelieu, famous for its masterpieces by Poussin. In 1693, the monarch received the bequest of André Le Nôtre, so lavish in Roman-Bolognese paintings that today the French national collections are the strongest in this school outside of Italy. Louis XIV, as it turned out, inherited his forerunners' taste for the style of Raphael and his followers and for the most strictly classicizing Baroque of Annibale Carracci, Domenichino and Pier Francesco Mola. Around 1685, however,

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his predilections shifted from the *grand goût* into a more intimate taste, and he looked to refurbish his country palaces, principally, Versailles, Marly and the Grand Trianon, with Flemish and Dutch paintings and French landscapes, still-lives and fable pictures (Schnapper 118-25).

The collections and commissions of Louis XIV involved one of the first positive receptions of French painting at the expense of the Italian School. Much of the *French* taste of Philip V—in the national sense of the term— was learned from what he could see during his youth in the apartments and gardens of Versailles. But the melancholic and troubled image of the king of Spain, so constructed by historians, seems insufficient to reveal the basis of his collecting of paintings and classical sculpture. And for this purpose, art theory comes to our aid.

We know from Pliny that Alexander the Great bestowed on painting the first place among the liberal arts, and he declared that highborn young men should learn to draw before any other thing. With this endorsement of drawing, the ruler intended to shape his people’s taste. Following the example set by Alexander and Louis XIV for the good of the state, the *Entretiens* of André Félibien encouraged monarchs to create academies and to establish factories so that the greatness and magnificence of their kingdoms would be remembered by posterity (I, 56-58). When Philip V instituted royal manufactures in Spain and when he promoted the preparatory junta that eventually became the Spanish Royal Academy of Fine Arts, he did not only seek an artistic renewal that could boost the financial reconstruction of the country and furnish his palaces, but also— under the guidance of Fénelon, his tutor— to control art production directly. Royal requirements could then be imposed more immediately on a well-defined group of painters and sculptors “of the King”, perhaps supplemented by renown foreign artists to give prestige to such appointments.

In accordance with the academic curriculum, the teaching of art was to be based on drawing. Philip V was an able draftsman himself; he made more than 280 landscape drawings, but only 60-odd survive today. No doubt he agreed with Félibien that *disegno* was the first and foremost part of painting, since no painter could represent an *istoria* with dignity if he did not resort to it (II, 271-74), an opinion at the very center of the *débats sur le coloris* that arose in the French Academy by 1671 (Teyssèdre 519-24). If drawing, for the king, constituted the most suitable pictorial means of depicting history, then the psychological interpretation of human expressions—that is, physiognomy— was the most apt method of conveying human drama, especially after the success of the *Lecture on Expression* delivered by Le Brun before the French Academy (Montagu 9-30). In Philip V’s collection, works done by painter-draftsmen concerned with the power of physiognomy for historical illustration certainly prevailed. Philip was also keen on books dedicated to the imperial history of the

Hispanic monarchy (Kamen 127-28). Could one conclude from what has been said that His Majesty was a staunch follower of the Academy and that, together with Félibien (II, 1-14), he regarded history and moralizing fables as ideal subjects? Not at all. Though versed in academic principles, as a good *amateur*, Philip distrusted the traditional hierarchy of pictorial genres. To him painting did not serve primarily as an intellectual or edifying meditation, but as a pleasurable sight.

Philip V can be seen as aesthetically liberal as his mentor Fénelon and the theorist Roger de Piles (Puttfarken 38-42). Like them, he recognized the importance of the Academy, the respect for Antiquity and the great masters, and did not object to the “grand taste”, whose noble simplicity — as indicated by Piles in 1699— was as applicable to allegorical painting and portraiture as to landscape or genre pictures (2-3). Fénelon, apart from composing *The Adventures of Telemachus* to educate the duke of Bourgogne, brother of Philip V, devoted two of his *Dialogues of the Dead* to describing and commenting on certain works by Poussin (Bottineau, *El arte* 114-28). In each dialogue the French author conversed, respectively, with Parrhasius and Leonardo da Vinci, who served as Fénelon’s mouthpieces to declare his personal interest in classical statuary, in physiognomy and in the controversy on the preeminence of the Italian or French Schools of painting (347-62).

Both Fénelon and the duke of Beauvilliers, tutor of Louis XIV’s grandchildren, had an influence on the austere and quiet religiosity of Philip V. This was partially due to the growing morality and introspection of spiritual guides, which bore fruit in the quietism of Madame Guyon. The publication of her *Moyen court et très facile pour l’oraison* in 1685 achieved such a widespread dissemination that it was acknowledged and admired by Fénelon and Beauvilliers themselves. It stated that a Christian should not toil or worry about anything, but abandon himself to the Lord. Through praying, the soul identified with God to the extent that it frees all activity and, consequently, all responsibility. These quietist sympathies, together with a thirst for spiritual retreat and a definite protection of Catholic orthodoxy, explain quite a few singularities of the private piety of Philip (Sancho 45), as well as of his political attitudes, that responded to the Law of God and to virtue more than to the needs of the State.

The king liked indeed to be compared to Hercules and Ferdinand the Catholic, victors over impiety (Rodríguez Cacho 632), and he was very devoted to the Virgin (Rodríguez G. de Ceballos 191-97). Almost a third of his paintings had a religious theme, with a twofold orientation part of which was consonant with his reclusive nature. On the one hand, he was very fond of subjects focused on Jesus’ infancy and public life; on the other, he venerated those of hermit saints such as Mary Magdalene, John the Baptist, Saint Francis and Saint Anthony the Abbot. This alone refutes the belief in a supposed “lay taste” of Philip V, described as an example of French

secularism in contrast to the "mysticism" of the Spanish culture. This imagined opposition between French and Spanish religiosity is clearly linked to a whole historiographic current that systematically has underestimated the voluntary processes of and shared characteristics between the *Frenchification* and *Hispanization* experienced, respectively, by the Spanish court and its king. Their mutual desires for renovation and regeneration did not just affect fashion or customs: it also concerned the Fine Arts.



David Teniers the Younger: "Temptation of St. Anthony the Abbot"  
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Most of the paintings that came to Philip's court in Madrid between 1701 and 1714 were portraits. Their function, nevertheless, went beyond private delectation; it entailed the public image and scrutiny of the sovereign and his family. Within the Alcázar, portraiture acted as a legitimizing instrument of the new Bourbon dynasty in relation to the Hapsburg past, mostly through intermarriage, going back to Louis XIII who married Anne of Austria, Philip IV's sister— and Louis XIV who wed Maria Theresa, daughter of Philip IV, who in turn married Isabella of Bourbon. Philip V's first wife, Maria Louisa Gabrielle of Savoy, was a direct descendent of Philip II (Belda Navarro 108-13). Whereas in Madrid the Bourbons' portraits, entrusted to French painters in Paris such as Hyacinthe Rigaud

and François de Troy (Luna 239-40), included lesser-known members of the Parisian court and were utilized for state functions, in La Granja de San Ildefonso, the portraits painted by Rigaud, Largillière, Jean Ranc and Molinaretto formed a strict family series.

Once the War of Spanish Succession was over, and the legitimization process of the king was guaranteed, the number of works acquired or commissioned with highly propagandistic purposes —portraits in particular— gradually began to drop compared to those of different subject matter, procured primarily for visual enjoyment. Ultimately, on Philip's death in 1746, 318 lots of drawings and paintings owned by him were inventoried in La Granja. With regard to the paintings he introduced to the Alcázar, 238 were salvaged from the fire of 1734, so it can be deduced that his collection exceeded 556 pictures.



Raphael: "The Holy Family of the Oak"  
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Philip V respected most of the original layout of the state apartments in the Alcázar. In fact, his art collections did not prevail over the preexisting ones of the Hapsburgs; on the contrary, these were hung together as mutually enhancing. The king reinstalled numerous works of art from the Pardo Palace, the Buen Retiro and the Alcázar. From the latter he removed a panel by Raphael, *The Holy Family of the Oak*, and installed it in his bedchamber at San Ildefonso, where *The Painter's Family* by Jacob Jordaens and the *Struggle for a Fortress* by Jacques Courtois also hung. Furthermore, the Buen Retiro was also decorated with pictures from the Alcázar. Incorporating Hapsburg taste into his own palaces' decoration was a further indication of the rightness of his rule.

Apart from the aforesaid paintings, those by Luca Giordano —perhaps the best known artist in Madrid at the beginning of the 18th century— found favor with Philip V, even after the painter's departure in 1702. Throughout the decade of 1703-1713, his canvases were reorganized in the Alcázar by order of His Majesty, with the addition of some works by the followers of Giordano confiscated from the marquis of San Pablo, ally of the Archduke. In earlier scholarship, this “aesthetic tyranny” of Luca Giordano has been elucidated as a manifest outcome of Charles II's rule, when the Spanish economy and painting supposedly hit rock bottom (Caveda y Nava I, 9-15). But such an assumption draws a direct relation between creative ability and material prosperity. Philip V, who also experienced financial crises during the early part of his reign, nevertheless had new palaces built and some old ones renovated. In doing so, he hired countless artists and promoted factory production, and he bought or commissioned large numbers of works of art (Tormo 73-74).

A significant share of the king's collections was obtained from the Archduke's aristocratic supporters via confiscation or through forced assignment or sale. The leading collector among the nobility was the duke of Medinaceli, who was charged with backing the Austrian pretender and who died in 1711 under suspicious circumstances. After his death, some of his 400 pictures passed on to the royal collections, either by direct cession of his inheritors, so as to regain the king's sympathies, or by sale (Lleó Cañal, “The art collection” 108-16). The most illustrious example from this cession was *The Spinners* by Diego Velázquez (Lleó Cañal, “Nuevos datos” 22-23); but other entries in the duke's inventories can be associated with certain paintings by Claude Lorrain, Poussin, David Teniers and even with the *Portrait of Francisco Pacheco* painted by Velázquez, all of which found their way into the collection of Philip V.

Besides these seizures and a handful of donations, His Majesty acquired most of his collection outside of Spain. Probably the first major acquisition came from the sale of the property of Jaques Meyers —a Rotterdam merchant, ship-owner and art dealer— in 1714 (Gelder 167-83). On this occasion, Philip V bought some masterpieces by Poussin as important as

*The Parnassus*, which Félibien had seen in Rome in 1647 (Delaporte 193-214). In France, too, Poussin's art was regarded as the embodiment of the *grand goût*. Félibien (I, 20-21) knew Poussin personally and dedicated a complete *Entretien* to him (IV, 1-162). Few baroque painters had devoted more attention to physiognomic issues and psychological interpretation than Poussin, and from then on, Piles and Fénelon understood Poussinism and expression as part of the French national spirit (Fontaine 142-43). And so would Philip V have interpreted them.

It was not until the 1720s that the monarch made his largest purchases, with a view to embellishing the newly built Palace of La Granja. In late 1722, he got hold of 124 paintings from the estate of Carlo Maratta, the most prestigious living Roman artist until his death in 1713. Maratta, who in 1676 was appointed "Painter of the King" by Louis XIV, amassed a splendid and valuable collection, considered one of the finest ever owned by an artist (Bershad 65-84). His gallery spanned from the Renaissance to Bolognese classicism, not just displaying his taste and influence, but also providing evidence of his complementary occupation as an art trader. Philip V spent more than 50.000 silver doubloons (around 17.000 Roman escudos), then a huge sum of money.

Nearly all of the paintings from the Maratta purchase can be positively identified in the king's inventories of La Granja. Firstly, we might well isolate a set of pictures by him and others by his master Sacchi and Domenichino. Some canvases by the Carracci, Reni or Mola, the most eminent painters of the Roman-Bolognese School, formed a substantial group as well. A final category can be established by landscape and genre paintings, with important works by Poussin and his brother-in-law, Gaspard Dughet, together with some *países* by Michelangelo Cerquozzi.

During his regime, Louis XIV's interest in securing works of antique sculpture developed from a collecting practice into sheer political action. This resulted in the establishment, in early 1666, of the French Academy in Rome. Set up with didactic and ornamental missions, this institute saw to the replicating of the chief classical Roman statues in marble or in plaster casts, to make them available to the students and members of the Academy in Paris and to decorate the vast gardens at Versailles (Haskell and Penny 54-59). Still, these reproductions could hardly meet the objectives of the Sun King, who hoped to take possession of the originals. To that end, he attempted to buy the famous gallery assembled by Christina of Sweden between 1667 and 1689, but the Pope did not allow its export and thus he was unable to acquire it (Luzón Nogué 209). In 1725, with more luck—and better agents—, his grandson Philip V brought the whole collection for La Granja (Riaza de los Mozos and Simal López 56-67). The total amount paid was over 50.000 escudos, a truly astonishing price (three times greater than that paid for Maratta's).

From this collection, well known to Poussin, the king of Spain chose 112 pieces, including statues, busts and heads, as well as bas-reliefs and columns, and some outstanding sculptures such as *Diadoumenos*, *Ariadne*, *Fortune*, *Hypnos*, *Heracles*, *Jupiter Bearer of the Aegis*, *Leda* and *Venus with a Dolphin* (a version of the *Medici Venus*). It consisted almost exclusively of classical works from excavations promoted by Queen Christina herself or from coeval purchases (Borsellino 4-10). Modern sculptures were unusual; some exceptions were a pair of figures in bronze and alabaster of *Augustus* and *Tiberius*, a *Meleager* and a portrait bust of *Christina of Sweden* (Coppel Aréizaga 35-36).

In 1728 Philip V supplemented this collection with that inherited by the duchess of Alba from his father, the marquis of Carpio (López Torrijos 17-36). Formed during his ambassadorship in Rome (1675-1682) —at the same time as Queen Christina built her collection—, this group of 197 sculptures passed to the king in its entirety. *Narcissus*, *Bacchus*, *Diana* and *Ganymede* numbered among the most notable statues. Unlike Christina, the marquis of Carpio —whose favorite painter was, significantly, Carlo Maratta— also bought some contemporary Italian works, especially female portrait busts (*Sappho*, *Venus*, *Juno*) and allegorical reliefs (Coppel Aréizaga 31-33).

Few people, according to Piles, were able to discern the special refinements of antique sculpture, since for that, one had to have a spirit in proportion to its creators, endowed with sublime judgment and a lively imagination (*Abregé* 25). In Piles’ opinion, appreciating the subtleties of Greco-Roman statuary put Philip V on a level with the ancient craftsmen. The mandatory appreciation of classical sculpture and painting from the High Renaissance and the Roman-Bolognese Baroque, so evident in Philip’s collection, characterized academic taste. In the French academy, the artist’s education was supposed to lead to the *beau idéal*. The ideal was superior to reality. In order to make something more beautiful than real things, Félibien advised artists to draw from life, whereupon the Academy would teach them how to amend nature through art, by studying antique statues and reliefs and consulting the greatest masters (II, 283-90). The Academy, in addition to training the artist, intended primarily to educate his mind and to shape his opinions. This implied sacrificing one’s independence or personal style for more universal ideals. The *grand goût*, the universal and anonymous ideal, was not seen as historically specific, just as classicizing painting or antique sculpture were considered timeless. The “grand taste”, in short, surpassed the “taste of the nations” (Barasch 347-52).

This clarifies Félibien’s view of Spanish painting. The fact that it showed a natural resemblance to reality led the theorist to claim that it lacked the *bel air* that defined classicism and drifted away from the “particular taste” of other schools (Thuillier 75-76). This ideal challenged the notions of individual genius and national styles (Dorival 526-28). In the light of Félibien’s remarks and their possible impact on Philip V, it would



be useful to reexamine the hypothetical aloofness of the Bourbons toward Spanish art (Bottineau, “La cour” 555-56). Far from being regarded as provincial and old-fashioned, I believe that the Spanish School and its perceived lack of classicism were deemed in French circles as emphatically local as were the stylistic and thematic idioms of the Low Countries or Germany.

Still, beauty was not a prerogative of history painting alone. In *The Lives of the Most Eminent Modern Painters*, Piles believed that there were “countless beautiful pictures” that depicted no history at all, “for instance allegorical paintings, landscapes and a lot more which are a result of the painter’s imagination” (*Abregé* 28-32). Years later, he proposed the possibility of ascribing the concept of *grand goût* to minor genres, since a painter could heighten a trivial subject with an exceptional treatment (*Cours* 70-71). Subsequently, at the beginning of the 18th century, the hierarchy of genres was facing significant challenges, from collectors, amateurs, and even within the French Academy (Pevsner 79-81). Half of the paintings in Philip V’s collection was composed of landscapes and genre scenes. Notwithstanding, the *bamboccianti* —artists such as Teniers, Peter Bout, Philips Wouvermans or Jan Fyt— neither entailed a complete innovation with respect to the Hapsburg collections nor a “popularization” of the royal taste. Rustic customs were to Fénelon as vulgar and barbarous as medieval buildings (Cherel 20), but that does not mean that he did not take great delight “in looking at a painting by Teniers to see some village festivities and peasant dances” (Fontaine 145).

In order to explain the king’s esteem for landscape painting, scholars often refer to his nostalgia for his distant youth spent outdoors in Versailles. There is no need to practice this sort of “historical psychology”, though. Roger de Piles found landscape the most creative of genres, because it embraced all kinds of subjects and demanded a universal knowledge of every aspect of painting (*Abregé* 47-48). We also owe to Piles the distinction between “heroic landscape,” dotted with ancient edifices and monuments, and rustic-looking “pastoral landscape” (*Cours* 201-04). The archetype of the former was, no doubt, Claude Lorrain. Fénelon, however, favored rugged landscapes, “with steep mountains and distant, faded panoramas” (Fontaine 144), such as those painted by Dughet or Brueghel (Piles, *Cours* 213).

Philip V’s taste has been discredited as an implantation alien to Spain, and even today the most reactionary and chauvinistic historiography regards it as an annoying intrusion of the Rococo, a foreign style that is seen as choking off the “traditional” character of Spanish art and tastes. Yet, as this essay hopes to have demonstrated, through his art collecting and palace decoration, he both perpetuated some of the tastes and beliefs of his French royal upbringing, as well as contributed other ones that may have

been inspired, at least in part, by the new conditions of his circumstances as king of Spain.

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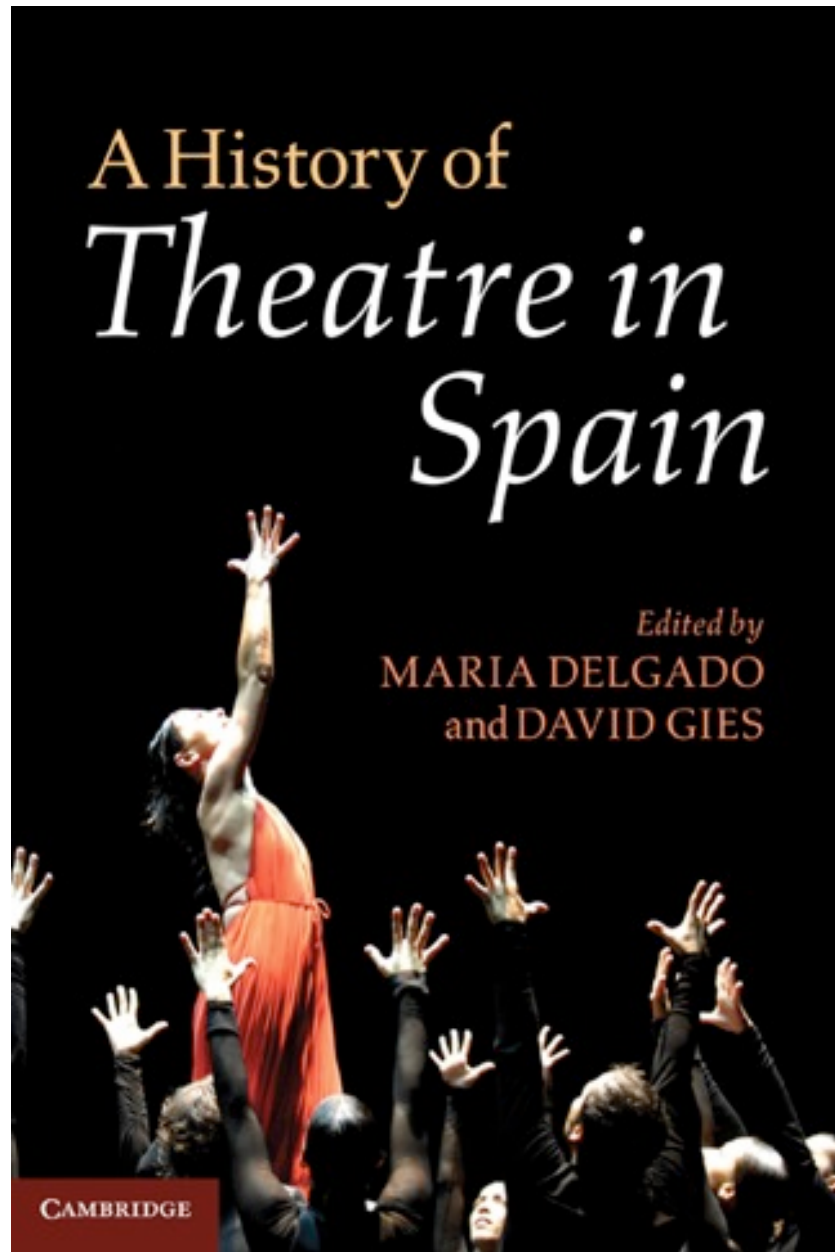
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