The Rise of Public Art: Exhibitions and Spectacles in the Late Eighteenth Century

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Lecture summary:

As we commence our journey from the Old Regime to Romanticism and beyond, this lecture reminds us of one of the most important of contexts for understanding art in the period. This was the growth of state-sponsored public exhibitions of contemporary art, which spurred the growth of new forms of writing about art as well as new habits of viewing. The lecture explores the impact of these new contexts and the idea of 'public art', art for the nation, which became a vital topic of debate as museums began to be formed and as large private and princely collections were confiscated or dispersed in the Revolutionary era.

Slide list:

1. Charles Le Brun and Jean Hardouin-Mansart, Galérie des glaces, Palace of Versailles, 1678-84
2. First Room, First Façade of the Düsseldorf Gallery, etching. Nicolas de Pigage and Christian von Mechel, La galerie électorale du Dusseldorf; ou, Catalogue raisonné et figuré de ses tableaux (Basel, 1778), pl. 1
4. Hypollite Destailleur, The Palais Royal and Gardens (Engraving, c.1750, BNF)
5. Anonymous, Camille Desmoulins at the Café de Foy, Palais Royal, 12 July 1789 (Engraving, Paris, BNF Estampes)
6. Denis Diderot et. al. Title Pages of the Encyclopédie, vol. 1, 1752 and 1772 Editions
7. Addison and Steele, Title Page and illustration, First Volume of The Spectator, (1 March 1711)
8. Thomas Rowlandson and Augustus Pugin, The Exhibition Room at Somerset House (Engraving, Plate 2, Microcosm of London, 1808)
10. Exhibition of Paintings and Sculpture by the Gentlemen of the Academy in the Gallery of the Louvre 1699 (anonymous etching: Paris, Bibliotheque Nationale de France, Cabinet des Estampes)
12. Gabriel de Saint-Aubin, View of the Salon at the Louvre in the Year 1753, Etching 1753: Paris, BNF
15. Gabriel de Saint Aubin, View of the Salon of 1779, 1779, Oil on canvas-backed paper, Paris: Louvre
17. Pietro Martini, View of the Salon of 1787, Engraving, 1787, Paris, BNF, Estampes
18.*Pietro Martini, The Exhibition of the Royal Academy 1787 (Engraving, 1787, London, V&A)
19 Pietro Martini, *Portraits of their Majesty's (sic) and the Royal Family viewing the Exhibition of the Royal Academy 1788* (Engraving, 1788, London, V&A)

20 François Boucher, *Are They Thinking about the Grape? (Pensent-ils au raisin?)*, 1747 Oil on Canvas, Art Institute of Chicago

21 François Boucher, *The Toilette of Venus*, Oil on Canvas, 1751, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art

22 François Boucher, *Diana at Her Bath*, 1742, Oil on Canvas, Paris, Louvre

23 Etienne La Font de Saint Yenne, “Reflections on some causes of the current state of painting in France” Title page, 1747

24 Jean Antoine Houdon, *Portrait Bust of Denis Diderot*, 1773, Marble, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art

25 Jean-Baptiste-Simeon Chardin, *Glass of Water and a Coffee Pot*, c.1760. Oil on canvas. 32.5 x 41 cm. Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA, USA.

26 *Jean-Baptiste Greuze, A Village Betrothal*, (1761, Oil on Canvas, Paris: Louvre)

27 Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *Coresus and Callirhoe* (1765, Oil on Canvas, Paris: Louvre)

28 *Jacques-Louis David, The Oath of the Horatii*, oil on canvas, 1784-5, Paris, Louvre

29 Jacques-Louis David, *The Lictors bringing home to Brutus the bodies of his dead sons*, 1789 Oil on Canvas, Paris, Louvre.

30 *John Henry Fuseli, The Nightmare* (1781 version) exh. 1782, Oil on Canvas, Detroit Institute of Arts

31 Thomas Rowlandson, *The Covent Garden Night Mare* (Print, 1784, London, British Museum)

Reference:


Diderot, Denis, and John Goodman, *Diderot on art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995)


Solkin, David H, *Art on the line: the Royal Academy exhibitions at Somerset House, 1780-1836* (New Haven, Conn.: Published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art and the Courtauld Institute Gallery by Yale University Press, 2001)

---, *Painting for money: the visual arts and the public sphere in eighteenth-century England* (New Haven: Published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art by Yale University Press, 1993)


Images:


Pietro Martini, The Exhibition of the Royal Academy 1787 (Engraving, 1787, London, V&A)
Jean-Baptiste Greuze, *A Village Betrothal*, (1761, Oil on Canvas, Paris: Louvre)

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