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**Where is the Orientalist Artist? On Gérôme's 1887 *Carpet Merchant***

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Nineteenth-century European artists who travelled to North Africa and the Middle East claimed to paint what they saw. And yet it seems they may have disguised as much as they revealed. Case in point: Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904), one of the most renowned and popular artists of his day and once hailed for the first hand, observational character of his naturalism. But as far as his Orientalist corpus is concerned, there is one observer who remains invisible, namely the artist himself. Like most other nineteenth century painter-travelers, Gérôme routinely edited out any trace of his own presence, not to mention any trace of his travel companions, or the tourist infrastructure that supported them. Some photographers, by contrast, took a different approach, for example Francis Frith, whose albumin prints of Egyptian monuments Gérôme knew (fig 1).



Figure 1: Francis Frith, *The Great Pyramid and the Great Sphinx*, 1858

Frith often included a sprinkling of European travelers or Egyptians posing against ruins or gathering nearby. But only in the rarest cases did painters follow suit -- and Gérôme, never. What does this absence signify?

Gérôme was certainly alert to some of the changes wrought by imperialism. The historian Frédéric Masson, who accompanied him to Egypt in 1868, spoke of Gérôme as preferring Cairo and Damascus most of all, “untouched” as they were “by Europe’s impure wind.”<sup>1</sup> Such attitudes among artists were not uncommon. They often bemoaned the fouling of monuments by tourists, the theft and sale of antiquities, and the impact on local cultures of European modernizing and commercial imperatives.<sup>2</sup> Some art critics even spoke of Gérôme as practicing a kind of salvage ethnography: his dispassionate, studious, seemingly observational practice helped document a disappearing way of life.<sup>3</sup> And yet nothing in his art seems to acknowledge, let alone try and reckon with, the constellation of forces that put Gérôme there in the first place.

In the modern literature on Orientalism, such absences are understood to do ideological work. The observer’s invisibility, as the argument goes, was fundamental to the construction of the Orient as an object, an othering dynamic in which its cultures and way of life were presented as timeless and unchanging.<sup>4</sup> Disguising their presence in the name of seeming realism, artists like Gérôme fictionalized reality while claiming merely to reproduce it. This “naturalizing” imperative stands in contrast to the reflexive practices of his avant-garde peers, who rarely undertook Orientalist subjects and who, across the board, seemed more likely to acknowledge their own presence, to acknowledge the forces of change, and to acknowledge the fictional and constructed character of their own representations.

The following remarks explore the logic, limitations, and ultimately the unravelling of this argument, which continues to circulate in the museum and the classroom. For a distilled example of how this dynamic works, and with the Pyramids still in mind, let us briefly consider Gérôme’s *First Kiss of the Sun*, which he completed in 1886, a year before the *Carpet Merchant* (fig. 2).

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<sup>1</sup> Masson, *L’Orient par J.L. Gérôme*, 1. Masson borrows from remarks published in the *Revue illustrée* in 1887.

<sup>2</sup> The invisibility of the European observer in the context of photography, see the influential analysis of Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt*, 23-28.

<sup>3</sup> Publisher and art critic Emile Galichon cited Gérôme a “painter-ethnographer” in Galichon, “Gérôme.” For Gérôme’s immersion within a racialized paradigm of scientific and ethnographic enquiry, see Çakmak, *Jean-Léon Gérôme*, 97-132; and Peltre, “Les “Géographies” de l’art.”

<sup>4</sup> The seminal account of such absences is Linda Nochlin’s “The Imaginary Orient,” first published in 1983 and reprinted in *The Politics of Vision*, 35-37. For naturalization and universality in theories of ideology, see Eagleton, *Ideology*, 1-63.



Figure 2: Jean-Léon Gérôme, *The First Kiss of the Sun*, 1886, private collection

As Gérôme scholar Emily Weeks has pointed out, the *First Kiss of the Sun* recalls a journey undertaken in 1868, when the artist voyaged to Egypt in the company, among others, of his pupil Paul Lenoir, who left a detailed record of their travels. Lenoir spoke of how the party camped out near the Pyramids with their camels, donkeys, and tents.<sup>5</sup> Does Gérôme's painting evoke this scene? A small sketch probably completed on site tells us that Gérôme was once there. Certainly the tents and other travel paraphernalia add a tantalizing sense of contemporaneity. It might even be the case that the travelers are foreign. But why do we not see them? -- "They are still asleep!" we might reply. After all, it is only dawn. And yet this also speaks to Gérôme's sleight of hand. Maybe time of day required Gérôme to keep the travelers in their tents. But maybe, from the point of view of the painting's ideological work, it was the other way around. Maybe Gérôme's choice of time of day was underwritten by a desire to keep the travelers invisible in the first place.

Does the caravan include Europeans at all? We see camels, not the donkeys evoked by Lenoir. But that would make the painting's naturalizing work more potent still. The sun rising over the Pyramids calls up the doxa of Oriental timelessness. And it also calls up another doxa – the idea of social structures held captive by the region's climate and geography: as "their masters still slept," opined an admirer in 1891, the camels raise their heads "in an instinctive accord at the coming of another day of toilsome servitude." Such remarks erase all trace of a contemporary presence in favor of a mythologized evocation of the Orient's timeless routines. And included among those routines is the camel's life of servitude, a figure that evokes the despotic, immobile culture of the Orient even as it inscribes that culture in the laws of nature itself.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Weeks, "Gérôme," 26-27.

<sup>6</sup> *Catalogue of Mr. George I. Seney's Important Collection*, 256.

The *Carpet Merchant*, to turn to the case at hand, also recalls a scene described by Lenoir (fig. 3).



Figure 3: Jean-Léon Gérôme, *The Carpet Merchant*, 1887, Minneapolis Institute of Art

And it puts in place, at first sight, a similar kind of erasure, founded as we shall see on a dynamic of disavowal that belongs front and center to Orientalist pictorial aesthetics. What is more, we can understand that dynamic as operating within the fin-de-siècle with unique historical force, a conclusion suggested by the circumstances surrounding the *Carpet Merchant's* genesis and circulation. But we shall also see that Gérôme is not as absent as might appear. For all its ready leveraging of Orientalist tropes, the *Carpet Merchant* was the site of a multifaceted interrogation of the viewer's role, including the role of its first viewer, Gérôme himself. In the end we are left with no clear ideological take-away. Such indeterminacy is perhaps exactly what we need as we seek out new strategies to interrogate Gérôme's art, which for many years has served as Exhibit A in a wide ranging of critique of Orientalist painting as mystification.

The scene is set in the central courtyard of the Cairo rug market. Lenoir recounts how the numerous stalls laden with goods made a powerful impression on the travelers. "It was a real orgy," he explained: the visitors set upon a trove of new merchandise as if they were importers in their own right, and limited only by the cost of shipping the goods home.<sup>7</sup> Fast-forward to Gérôme's painting, and we find nothing like the animated scene described by Lenoir. Far from depicting excited European tourists indulging in an 'orgy,' Gérôme presents a group of "wealthy Arabs" calmly "examining multi-colored fabrics," as a critic at the time put it.<sup>8</sup>

*The Carpet Merchant*, then, puts in place a key substitution. The European visitors are absent. Gérôme depicts an entirely different group of buyers, and certainly no orgy. But the scene described by Lenoir has not simply disappeared. On the contrary. Through an uncanny process of artistic sublimation, the painting offers an orgy of a different kind -- a coloristic kaleidoscope of textiles in an exotic, supercharged key. Salon critic Paul Mantz worried that the painting was a little out of control: in an effort to "sample" the rugs and costumes, Gérôme had failed to "reconcile" their divergent tones, preferring instead to "amuse himself" in "glorifying" their individuality.<sup>9</sup> As these remarks suggest, between the carpets and the luxurious textiles worn by the buyers themselves, the sumptuousness, even brashness, of the painting's colorism calls up a classic Orientalist poetics of visual stimulation and sensorial overload. This is Orientalist aesthetics 101: the region's textiles, costume, climate, and other elements were held to enlist artists in transgressive imitative practices that stimulated the senses and vision most of all, an unstable dynamic prone to excess and expressed in a painting's ability to seduce, drug, or sometimes blind its viewers. As artists explored experiences unavailable or outright forbidden at home, the Orient served them as a veritable "surrogate or underground self," to borrow Edward Said's phrase.<sup>10</sup> *The Carpet Merchant*, then, brings frenzy and pleasure back to life. But it also disavows that pleasure, or keeps it at a distance -- it survives as a property ascribed to the Orient itself.

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<sup>7</sup> Published by Lenoir in 1872 as *Le Fayoum le Sinâi et Pétra: Expedition dans la Moyenne Egypte et l'Arabie Pétrée, sous la direction de J. L. Gérôme*, major sections were reprinted in Hering, *Gérôme*, including his account of their visit to the rug market, 160-61.

<sup>8</sup> Jehan, "Correspondance de Paris," 437.

<sup>9</sup> Mantz, "Exposition du Cercle," Ackerman himself cited the colors as too loud, see *Gérôme*, 318; one scholar speculates that Gérôme might actually have been seen rugs manufactured with new chemical dyes. See Day, "The Artist's Eye" -- a point that underscores the realist premises that drive readings of the artist.

<sup>10</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 3. For the sublime metaphors of blinding and sensorial overload in Orientalist art and criticism, including such artists as Prosper Marilhat, Eugène Fromentin, Henri Regnault, and others, see my text *The Deaths of Henri Regnault*, 39-67.

Of course, the painting is not about sex but about shopping. Shopping in Cairo, to be sure, but more properly in the metropole and in a manner that implicates the artist himself. Relatively early in his career Gérôme gave up large scale mural painting and similar traditionally prestigious formats in favor of easel painting. Not just easel painting, but cabinet pictures on a relatively small scale, particularly in the case of his substantial Orientalist practice. Critics, for their part, were suspicious. Gérôme, they feared, had delivered his artistic gifts to a massively expanded bourgeois culture of consumption. Hence his appeal to wealthy American collectors seeking to validate their status by acquiring art as portable as it was easy to understand.

The *Carpet Merchant's* alliance to this modern culture of consumption has shaped its art historical reception. It was the only painting by Gérôme to feature in Meyer Shapiro's noted 1961 lectures on Impressionism. Shapiro compared the scene to the deliberations of Salon jury, which controlled admission to Europe's largest exhibiting institution and which, in the minds of many art critics at the time, had degenerated into a gigantic bazaar.<sup>11</sup> In 1983, Albert Boime spoke of Gérôme as taking the opportunity to highlight his own exotic carpets, which the artist had acquired ostensibly as props but in a manner typical of his bourgeois sensibilities.<sup>12</sup> In fact, the sixteenth-century Iranian carpet prominently featured hanging from the balcony has not been identified as belonging to Gérôme, or to his brother-in-law Albert Goupil, a pioneering collector of Islamic art. But specificity of mediation, as is often the case with Gérôme, takes second place to an instrumentalizing conception of his cultural imagery. The *Carpet Merchant's* shimmering colors, one scholar noted in 1996, promotes a sense of objectified, pictorial availability, as if the Orient was there "simply for the seeing — and the buying."<sup>13</sup>

In recent years, many scholars of Gérôme have pulled back from such totalizing conceptions, the present author among them. But let us not understate how profoundly the *Carpet Merchant* was enmeshed within an expanding commercial and cultural ecosystem sited in the metropole and beyond. Like other paintings by the artist, it circulated both as elite practice and on a mass scale. Indeed, it mapped these networks up and down with an effortlessness that for modernist critics embodied everything that was wrong with academic art. Some aspects of the *Carpet Merchant's* circulation were also unusual, however. And while the circumstances are impossible fully to reconstruct, they present us with an intriguing window onto the shifting terms of Gérôme's canonicity, and particularly his Orientalism, which in the present day has emerged as the best-known part of his corpus, thanks in part to the suspicions it now prompts. As it happens Gérôme's *Carpet Merchant* was never among his better-known paintings, and it attracted relatively little critical attention. It seems all the more striking that, following the turn of the century, novel technologies and marketing practices seized on the painting to give it new life (Figs 4-7).

Rather than show it at the Salon, Gérôme sent the painting at the *Cercle de l'Union de Artistique*, a high-level exhibiting society located on the Place Vendome. It then travelled the famous commercial pipeline between France and the United States established by the partnership of the

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<sup>11</sup> Shapiro, *Impressionism*, 83.

<sup>12</sup> Boime, "Gérôme," 73. For the carpets and related borrowings by artists, see Denny, "Quotations in and out of Context; Allan, *The Spectacular Art of Gérôme*, 254.

<sup>13</sup> Leppert, *Art and the Committed Eye*, 201.

Goupil family firm and Michael Knoedler, who sold the painting in March 1889 to banker Edwin Thorne for \$18,000. Thorne passed away the same year. When his collection was put up for sale three years later, one critic opined that the *Carpet Merchant* was the best of the lot, thanks in part to the “mosaic” character of its brilliant colorism.<sup>14</sup> It was acquired by former Goupil employee and now rival Williams Schaus, doubtless acting for California railroad executive Charles F. Crocker, who went on to exhibit it in San Francisco several times in the 1890s.<sup>15</sup>

This elite traffic constituted only one dimension of the painting’s circulation. Important new scholarship on the artist has explored the veritable tsunami of Goupil-sponsored reproductions that flooded international markets and made Gérôme the most recognized living artist on the planet.<sup>16</sup> The sheer array of photo-mechanical techniques developed in support of such reproductions underscores the immense inventive energy underwriting this publishing and marketing enterprise. Not all reproductions of Gérôme emanated from this source, however. The *Carpet Merchant*, for example, does not seem to have been reproduced by Goupil. Just why is uncertain, but perhaps this helped open the door to other reproductions under other auspices. In 1889, for example, shortly after the *Carpet Merchant* arrived in the United States, the Alsatian born Henry Wolf published a wood engraving of the painting in *The Century Magazine*. Wolf, according to Fanny Field Hering, had “begged the favor of reproducing the masterpieces of his illustrious countryman,” and Gérôme returned the favor by signing the engraving with a flourish. Wolf, who also engraved a particularly fine portrait of Gérôme, exhibited his version of the *Carpet Merchant* in New York and elsewhere in the United States on multiple occasions (fig. 4).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> “Art Notes of Real Interest,” 131-132.

<sup>15</sup> *The San Francisco Art Association, Loan Exhibition*, and Vickery, *Catalogue of Paintings Exhibited for the Benefit of the Maria Kip Orphanage*.

<sup>16</sup> For Goupil and Gérôme See Pénot, “The Perils and Perks of Trading Art Overseas.” And the studies gathered in *Gérôme & Goupil: Art and Enterprise*.

<sup>17</sup> Hering, *Gérôme*, 247. For Wolf’s engravings, see Smith, *Henry Wolf*, xxx.

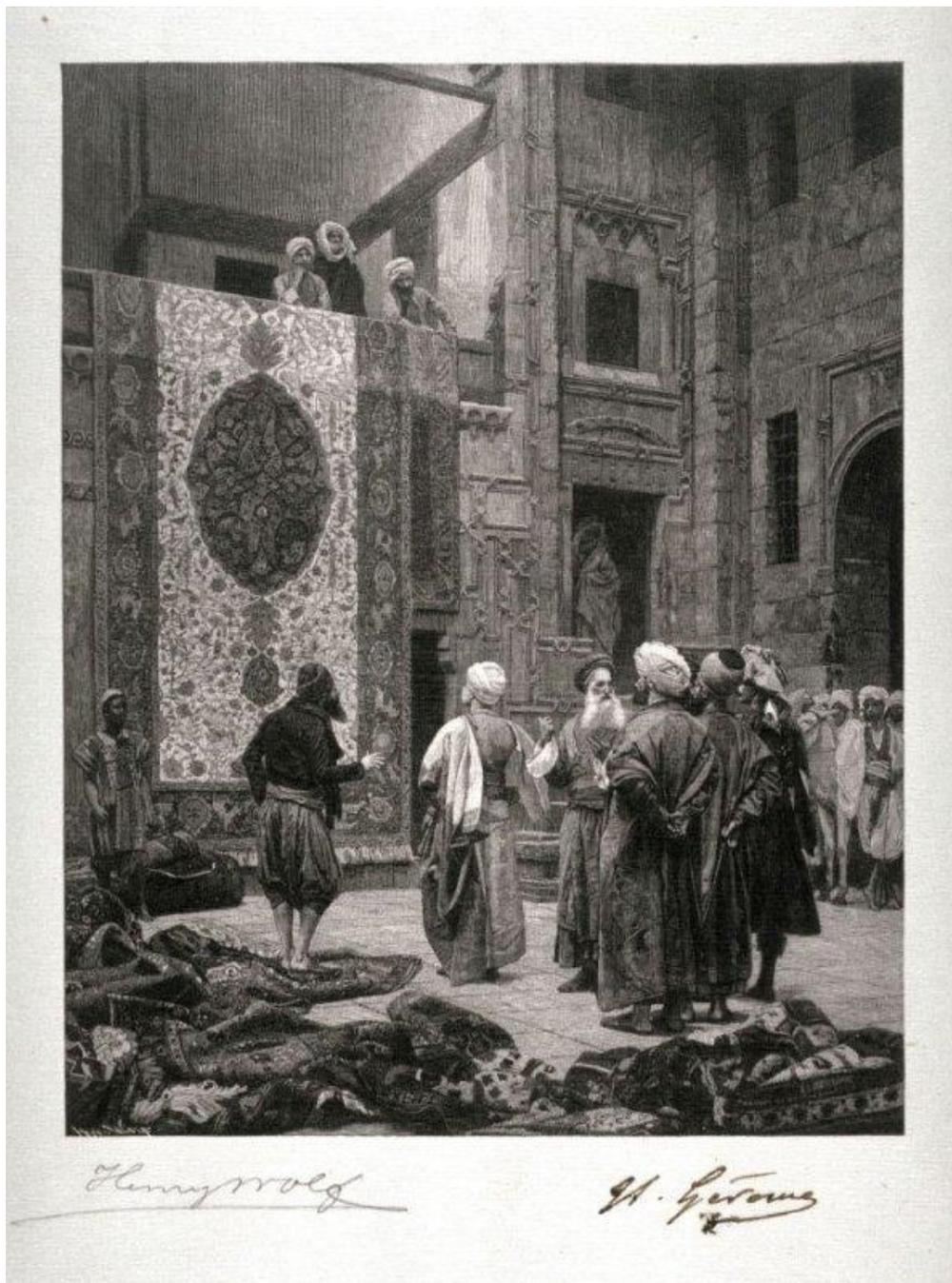


Figure 4: Henry Wolf, after Gérardôme, *The Carpet Merchant*

Wolf's superb engravings after Gérardôme were exhibited as artistically significant in their own right. But following the turn of the century, other media dedicated to straight-up reproduction assured for the *Carpet Merchant* much broader attention, including back in France. Gérardôme's setting of luxury goods for sale seemed adapted as if by nature to new publishing, commercial, and marketing instruments that leveraged his artistic renown on the consumer's behalf, particularly as print media began to introduce color reproduction on a mass scale. In July 1901,

for example, a large color plate of *The Carpet Merchant* featured on the cover of the weekly *Figaro Illustré*, accompanied by a text by Gérôme's friend, the historian Masson.

Ten years later, litterateur Albert Keim borrowed classic Orientalist conventions when he evoked the *Carpet Merchant's* "caressing beauty of shimmering carpets" and its "rippling sheen of silken textures." These remarks belong to a 1911 mass-produced, slim book on Gérôme that featured a color plate of the *Carpet Merchant* on the cover, and repeated among the volume's eight, tipped-in color plates<sup>18</sup> (figure 5).

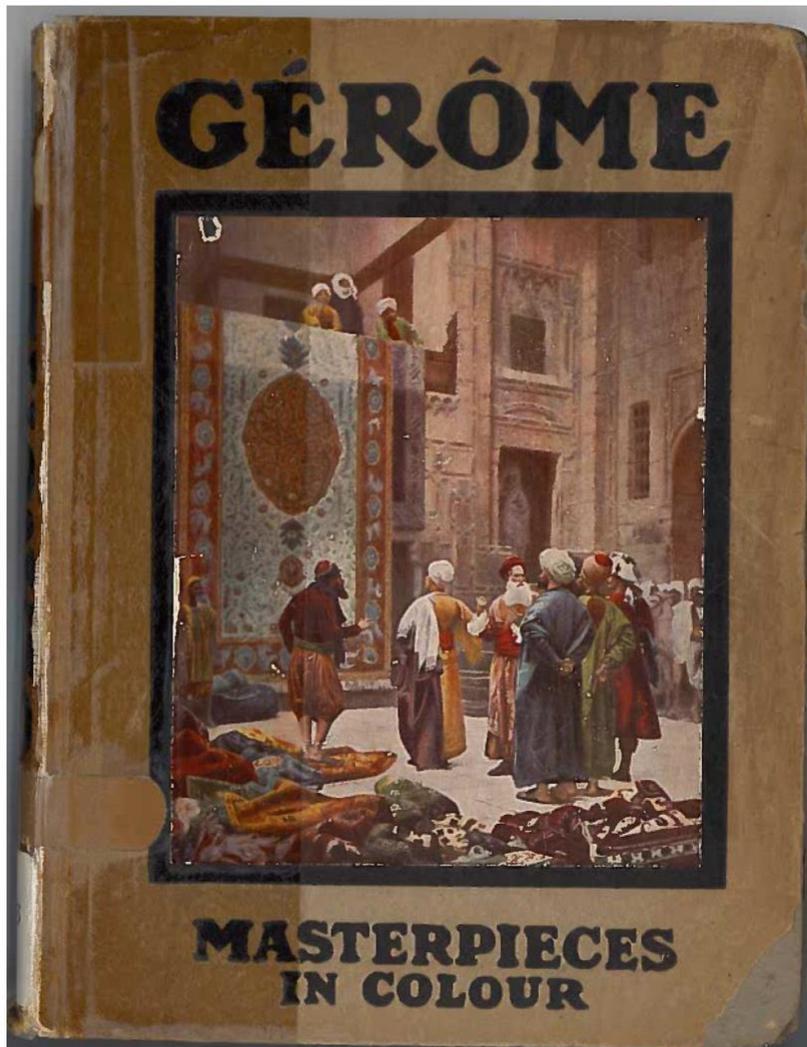


Figure 5: Keim, *Gérôme*, cover

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<sup>18</sup> Keim, *Gérôme*. The text formed part of *Masterpieces in Color*, under the auspices of academician Henry Roujon and an important chapter in the mass dissemination of illustrated books initiated by publisher Pierre Lafitte.

Keim's volume on Gérôme formed part of a series entitled *Masterpieces in Color*, initiated by publisher Pierre Lafitte and under the imprimatur of academician Henry Roujon. Released in several languages, the series marks important chapter in the dissemination of illustrated art monographs for popular consumption. Whether Goupil sold reproduction rights for the *Carpet Merchant* is at this moment uncertain. But the fact it featured on the book's cover touches on more than issues of copyright. Rather, an Orientalist subject could serve as a bravura demonstration of the medium's new power. Gérôme's Orientalism, we might say, found in the new medium a powerful advocate on a mass scale, with consequences for his reception into the present day.

Such illustrations also signal the wide purchase of an expanded visual economy of exoticism nourished less by collectors of paintings than purchasers of other kinds. Gérôme died in 1904. His reputation among critics and collectors was already in decline. But his work continued to fuel consumer desire in intriguing new ways. In 1910, visitors to the Salon were directed to the *Bon Marché* for an installation of Orientalist paintings by Gérôme next to rugs and other exotic goods in its renowned *Galerie des Tapis d'Orient* (figs 6-7).<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> See Miller, *The Bon Marché*, 168, 172-74; for artist studios and exotic goods, see Charpy, "Trading Places," including a reproduction of the Bon Marché's *Carpet Merchant*.



J.-L. GÉROME  
MARCHAND DE TAPIS

Figure 6: *The Carpet Merchant*, in *L'Orient* par J. L Gérôme, offert par les Grands Magasins du Bon Marché. Clark Art Institute

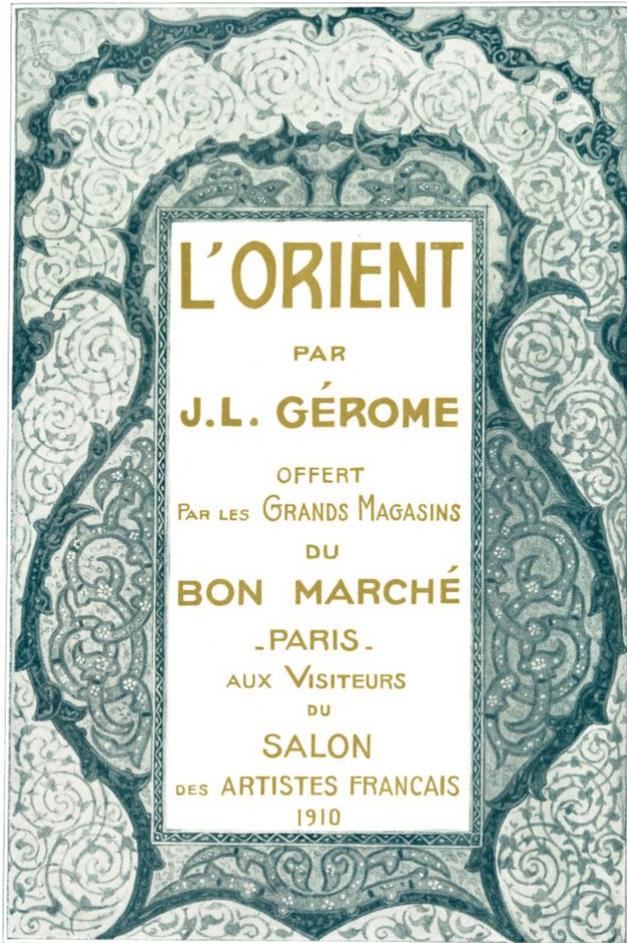


Figure 7: Cover, *L'Orient* par J.L. Gérôme, offert par les Grands Magasins du Bon Marché

It's hard to imagine a more revealing index of the alliance between the consumer revolution inaugurated by the modern department store and the legitimating endorsement of high art -- with Gérôme as the privileged term. The installation took the form of a luxurious pamphlet and was doubtless more aspirational than real. But in commerce, affiliation through aspiration is exactly the point. The pamphlet led off with a text by Masson, now at *L'Institut*, and featured a plate of the *Carpet Merchant* next to a Kerman rug from the store's own collections.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> See *L'Orient* par J. L. Gérôme.

Surely we may uncover other traces of the *Carpet Merchant*'s mass-market afterlife. But is Gérôme so absent? Up to this point in our analysis, and consistent with the view of Gérôme's art as married to a modern culture of consumption, we have essentially delivered his *Carpet Merchant* to art history's overall project of critique, to evoke a mode of interpretation that has powerfully shaped modern humanistic inquiry.<sup>21</sup> Few artists have seemed more available to this program of "suspicious reading" (or, better said, suspicious looking), than Gérôme. But we must also be wary of the almost obligatory character of such an analysis and the interpretive closure it can put in place. To consider more closely the artist himself – his agency, as we might say, less as an agent than as a person -- and to consider, too, the painting itself, a more complicated picture emerges.

Shapiro spoke of the *Carpet Merchant* as recalling the work of the Salon jury, a point that hints at its unexpectedly reflexive character. More recently Scott Allan makes the point that the painting ironizes Gérôme's status as producer of luxury commodities, with "well-heeled buyers bidding for a rare example." To be sure, we will never find Gérôme portraying himself standing in a mosque or next to a monument. Nevertheless, his Orientalist painting like the rest of his corpus is littered with references to his own practice. And as we shall see, that painting also calls attention to our role as observer, which is to say that neither the artist nor the viewer is as absent as might at first seem.

We can think of the *Carpet Merchant* as a mediated image of Gérôme's studio, resonant with affective connotations relevant to its genesis. It seems scarcely accidental that Gérôme's painting was exhibited three years after the death of his brother-in-law Goupil, and exactly contemporary with the dispersal of Goupil's collections of Islamic art at a series of sales that drew wide attention. The *Carpet Merchant*, in other words, was inscribed with the memory of his brother-in-law, whose pioneering acquisitions of Middle Eastern carpets and other collections had been catalyzed by his travel with Gérôme to Egypt in 1868.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> For compelling reappraisal, see Felski, *The Limits of Critique*.

<sup>22</sup> *Catalogue des objets d'art de l'orient et de l'occident*. And see Mary Roberts's new work on Goupil's Orientalist interior; also, *The Spectacular Art of Gérôme*, 254. The image of Gérôme in his studio has emerged as site of new scholarship, including Waller, "A Group of Self-Portraits." For Orientalizing studios, Wat, *Portraits d'ateliers*, features pertinent examples.

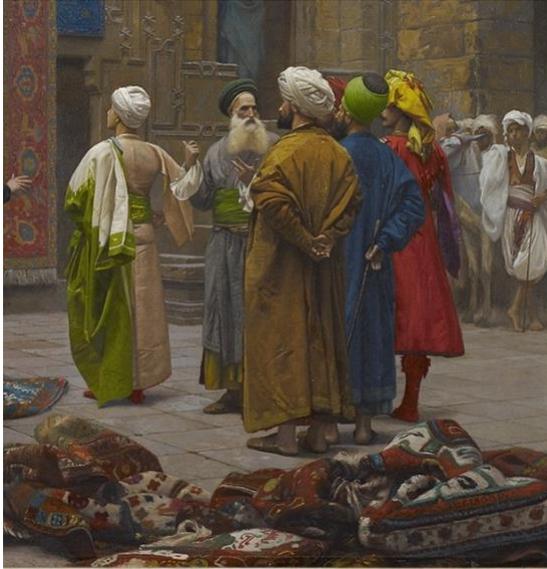


Figure 8: *The Carpet Merchant*, detail

As we look more closely at Gérôme's painting -- something up to this moment we have held at bay -- the question of his absence seems even less settled. A single figure stands in front of several rugs draped over the balcony above him. Clean shaven, younger, and more opulently dressed than his companions, he is being attended to by a merchant. Another salesman stands slightly behind to his right, engaged in conversation about the rug with the younger man's companions. Although these companions number four, one is almost completely obscured by the other three -- all we see is part of his head -- to the point we might wonder why he is even there. That this minuscule fragment of a person can so easily be overlooked is of course deliberate on Gérôme's part. These customers, he tells us, are not there for us to look at them. We have come upon them in passing, and the visual field exceeds our ability to grasp a *mise-en-scène* that has not been assembled simply for our benefit. Hence the sharply cropped right-hand framing edge, leaving us uncertain as to the number of attendants waiting underneath the darkened arch. The rugs piled up the left tell us the buyers have been shopping for some time, a further marker of the accidental character our presence. We don't know which rug they will buy, and we will leave before the sale is finalized.

This rhetoric of our incidental presence operates in deep support of Gérôme's vaunted fidelity. It's not that Gérôme remembers it this way. Rather, accidental or partial points of view promote the fiction of the painting's non-deliberative character, allowing us to imagine that we have come across this scene just as Gérôme, purportedly, did too. A similar imperative underwrites Gérôme's attention to ancillary figures who assist or simply stand by. Such figures distract us from the action at center, to the irritation of critics who worried about the tendency of Gérôme to digress. We note, for example, that on the shopkeeper's signal, one the rugs hanging from the balcony will be allowed to drop to the ground, exposing another rug underneath. The discarded rugs are gathered up and put aside. Two more rugs are rolled up next to the attendant against the wall, ready to be brought up to the balcony, where three waiting figures look down onto the courtyard below.

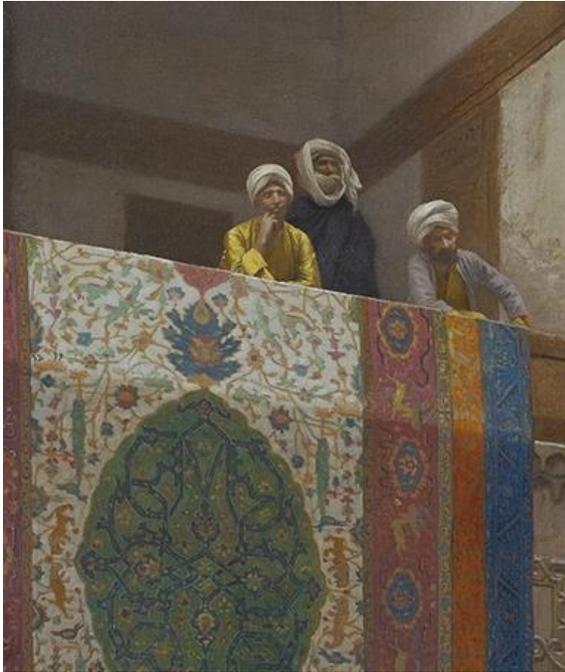


Figure 9: *The Carpet Merchant*, detail

Viewers then and now (including the present viewer) have long been fascinated by such routines and ancillary figures, which recur frequently in Gérôme's art and must be understood as more than makers of historical fidelity. Rather, although they belong to the scene, they are more truly there for us. We may think of them as putting in place a performance of fidelity: they prompt a temporal process of observation and notation, as if we, for all our invisibility, were nevertheless present at the scene.

As for Gérôme and his companions, are they really missing? In the painting's intimate play of allusion, they are not so much erased as existing under erasure, at once crossed out but still legible. The four customers serve as an unconscious echo of the artist and his group. Just who is looking at who is more complicated than first appears. The balcony figures look down and across as we look across and up. They view the purchasers face on, which is to say they have information about the scene which we don't. Indeed, if we adopt the perspective of the figures gazing from the balcony, the back of the picture becomes the front, as if the proper way to view the painting was from the inside looking out. If this is a surprising notion at first sight, it is just the kind of bravura multiplication, substitution, and redistribution of points of view that we find elsewhere in Gérôme's art, and in a manner profoundly to complicate the realist bias that still dogs readings of the artist, whether we refer to Gérôme's own realist claims [or?] our present tendency to treat such realism as fiction or disguise.

Reflexivity was not the exclusive province of Gérôme's avant-garde peers, whom he in fact loathed. Of course I do not mean to suggest that Gérôme and his rivals were one and the same. Nevertheless, for all its cultural and ideological work, *The Carpet Merchant* is in many ways about itself. By that I mean the mediated evocation of Gérôme's studio – not his actual studio but the imaginary site of vocational experience, from commercial exchange, the making of works of art, but also the work of memory and commemoration. What is more, for an artist said to have

delivered himself to the marketplace, *The Carpet Merchant* hints at Gérôme's dialogue with the art of the past – it lies along a mnemonic axis keyed to his own canonicity. And for an artist held to have left the observer out, it is precisely us whom, in some fashion, Gérôme is determined to address.



Figure 10: Eugène Delacroix, *Jewish Wedding in Morocco*, 1841

Consider that there is one person the men on the balcony do not see: the draped, female figure standing in the doorway to the right. Located discretely on account of her gender, she also constitutes artistic reference, recalling as she does the pair of female figures standing in the right-hand doorway in Delacroix's *Jewish Wedding* – a painting that also features balcony figures gazing below. The allusion to Delacroix enlists Gérôme's painting into an artistic and mnemonic series. At the very least, it further dismantles the fiction that Gérôme simply painted what he saw in favor the more unpredictable, psychological work of painting what he remembered, an unstable process that saw Delacroix, Gérôme's brother-in-law Albert Goupil, his pupil Lenoir – dead in Cairo in 1880, at the age of thirty-eight -- all jostle for place. As for the figure in the doorway, Gérôme seems almost to exaggerate the intensity of her gaze. If no one else pays her any notice we are asked to notice her, which is also to say that Gérôme inserts her for us to see and no one else.

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