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Jessica L. Fripp, Amandine Gorse, Nathalie Manceau, and Nina Struckmeyer, eds., preface by Étienne Jollet, *Artistes, savants et amateurs: art et sociabilité au XVIII^e siècle (1715-1815): actes du colloque international, organisé du 23 au 25 juin 2011 à l'INHA, Paris*. [Paris]: Mare et Martin, 2016. Pp. 296, 12 color, 3 black-and-white figures, bibliography, index. 35.00€. (pb). ISBN 979-1092054-42-2.

Review by Rochelle Ziskin, University of Missouri-Kansas City.

With a promising subject and intriguing title, the editors of this volume have assembled a variety of essays originally presented as colloquium papers. It begins with a thoughtful preface by Étienne Jollet, who discusses recent interest in the broader sociological role of “sociabilité,” especially in eighteenth-century French society and in art historical studies of the last three decades.

In the introduction, the editors focus on the etymological history of the term “sociabilité.” We learn that the 1694 dictionary of the Académie française did not include it, although there was an entry for “sociable.” They argue that “sociabilité” began to appear in its modern sense in an article in the *Encyclopédie*, but suggest the term was then linked with “droit naturel et la morale.” This would have been a perfect juncture to alert readers to Reed Benhamou’s essay, in which she stresses the evolution of the term’s use. Unfortunately, the introduction is largely divorced from what follows, except at the end, when the editors very briefly summarize the subject of each article.

The book is divided into five sections labeled as chapters. The first, “La société des artistes,” includes three essays. Elisabeth Martichou explores evolving notions in Britain about the utility of artists adopting gentlemanly models of sociability. The practice was promoted by Jonathan Richardson the Elder (1667-1745), also a collector and connoisseur, embraced by Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792), but later challenged by Irish-born James Barry (1741-1806). Unlike Richardson and especially Reynolds, Barry avoided and generally disdained the portrait, although he produced some moody and intriguing self-portraits. He insisted instead on engaging the far less profitable genre of history painting. Rousseau-like in his disdain for “society,” he believed portraiture detrimental to the creation of significant works of art, an outlook that was clearly a precursor to the Romantic notion of artistic creation.

Jean-François Bédard focuses on the fascinating friendship between painter Jean-Antoine Watteau (1684-1721) and architect Gilles-Marie Oppenord (1672-1742), through an examination of drawings Oppenord made atop loose prints among those that Jean de Jullienne bound into a *recueil* entitled *Figures de différents caractères*. Bédard includes a catalogue with titles and current locations of the works, which will be of interest to specialists. He does not much explore how this friendship was productive. Some scholars have examined Oppenord’s designs for fountains, which were used by Watteau (and Lancret) in some *fêtes galantes*.^[1] The two prints Bédard selected to illustrate do, however, suggest elite “sociability,” reproducing Watteau’s drawings of gallant figures, on each of which Oppenord drew a border with swirling palm fronds and decorative “clasps,” in a much larger scale. Bédard is interested in the “grotesque” aspect of the dual scale. This article would have greatly benefited from a more generous

allotment of illustrations. Some of the limitations of this volume emerge in the brevity of its treatment of Watteau, though he does reappear in Julie Anne Plax's essay (see below).

In an excellent essay on Charles-Antoine Coypel (1694-1752), Esther Bell examines the painter's plays intended for private performance ("le théâtre de société"). She convincingly argues that they fed his visual imagination and that some unpublished plays contain keys to interpreting some rather inscrutable paintings and pastels. She draws upon considerable new archival research associated with her dissertation.

"La communauté professionnelle" begins with Benhamou's account of the *École royale gratuite de dessin*, founded by painter Jean-Jacques Bachelier (1724-1806) to improve the quality of the decorative arts (and introduce discipline).^[2] Realizing his goal proved impossible without a well-connected backer with strong political and social ties to both court and capital, Bachelier found that sponsor in Antoine de Sartine, lieutenant-général de police in Paris, allowing bonds of sociability to be exploited for the public good.

Susanna Caviglia examines various kinds of "sociability" at the Académie de France à Rome during the directorship of Charles-Joseph Natoire (1752-1775). Ambassadors and important French visitors and patrons regularly visited and came to dine with the director at that site, and historians too seldom consider how sociability there impacted artistic culture. Natoire also encouraged interactions among French pensioners and young Italian and foreign students, although the prime site for such encounters seems to have been the atelier of Piranesi, a stone's throw from the Academy.

Caviglia especially explores "discipline" as an aspect of "sociability." In 1753, Natoire—urged by Vandières to reinstitute discipline—decided to enforce a long-ignored rule requiring all Catholics in Rome to fulfill "paschal duties," going to confession and receiving communion at Easter. Arguably, that enforcement itself may have forged bonds among students and between students and interested parties in Paris. Clearly, there were Jansenists (or sympathizers) among the pensioners, and many students refused to comply. Natoire first singled out for punishment an advanced student, architect Charles-Louis Clérisseau (1721-1820), whom he expelled (then readmitted, following an apology). More dramatic was the episode in 1767, when architect Pierre-Adrien Mouton (1741-1820), sculptor Martin-Claude Monnot, and painter Simon Julien refused to submit *billets de confession*. Mouton, apparently a Jansenist, insisted he had gone to confession, but he lacked the required evidence. The others promptly complied, but Mouton was more recalcitrant, and he was expelled. Upon his return to Paris, he brought a lawsuit against Natoire and won (with the support of Jansenist lawyers). By including this aspect of "sociability," Caviglia reminds us that political, social, and religious conflicts and factions in French society extended into the artistic community. Sympathetic to Natoire, she argues he was trying to protect the Académie, but apparently Roman authorities let it be known they would not enforce the rule for French students, and many students disliked Natoire and did not respect him.^[3]

Following Frauke Josenhans and Nina Struckmeyer's assessment of circles of German artists in Paris during the mid-to-late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (some of them taught by French court painters in Berlin and Dresden), Hannah Williams raises the question of how sociability within parish life might have had an impact on artistic culture and often-overlooked religious painting. She focuses on the parish of Saint-Merry, plotting the residences within it of royal academicians and master painters in the guild. Artists living in close proximity formed friendships, and they responded as a group to a traumatic theft from the church in 1722. Williams notes the two parishes that were most filled with artists: Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois, with its church facing the Louvre, and Saint-Hippolyte, which served a large and diverse artistic community associated with the Gobelins tapestry works, where Jullienne, Watteau's friend and promoter, was an unusually active benefactor in adorning the church. Geography clearly played an important, but often underappreciated, role in social life, with ramifications for the arts.

In “Les représentations de la sociabilité” Jessica Fripp returns to friendships among artists, focusing on bonds between Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne and Maurice Quentin de La Tour, using as evidence their portraits of one another displayed at the Salons. She concludes by studying Madame Geoffrin, who formed a variety of “friendships” with the artists from whom she commissioned work (including Carle Vanloo, whose painting for Geoffrin is on the cover of this volume). Lemoyne and La Tour became *habitués* of Geoffrin’s *lundis*, assemblies of artists, amateurs, and collectors that became a prime site for the broader “sociability” with which this volume is concerned.

Julie Anne Plax examines representations of the elaborate rituals of the royal hunt, the subject of a remarkable painted depiction she helps us decipher, and a new, informal genre depicting sociable hunt luncheons, akin in theme and expression to Jean-François de Troy’s *tableaux de mode*. Concluding with a reproductive print after Watteau’s portrait of Marie-Louise Sirois, the solidly bourgeois daughter of his first dealer and wife of his subsequent dealer Edme Gersaint (about whose friendship with Watteau she has previously published), Plax argues that Watteau subtly lampooned social hierarchies fundamental to that epitomally noble sport. Jörg Ebeling, who has published on de Troy’s *tableaux de mode*, here turns to the cool French reception of William Hogarth’s satirical paintings, arguing that French elites could enjoy subtle self-critique, but that Hogarth’s satires were too broad and obvious, with too clearly negative an appraisal of elite social life.

“Les lieux de la sociabilité” considers “place” in a broadly defined manner. Valérie Kobi scrutinizes the erudite correspondence of Pierre-Jean Mariette, focusing on frustrations among antiquarians in finding accurate graphic means to share images of works of art with correspondents in disparate locales.[4] Gaëtane Maës engages the growing popularity of dictionaries of visual arts, as a larger public needed specialized vocabulary and essential information in order to be able to converse intelligently about art. Stéphane Lojkin explores the commercial ramifications of the *Salon*, the venue of a royal academy founded to promote the glory of the Crown and to remove art from commerce. He demonstrates how it became an essential venue for artists, who sometimes displayed noncommissioned works (sold after the salon) and who needed that public exposure to win future commissions. Isabelle Pichet focuses on the challenges the *Salons* posed for the *tapissier* and the considerable power he wielded to place select works in favorable positions, with good light, and relegate others to dark, easily overlooked corners. In the last essay in this section, Noémie Étienne considers France’s seizure of art during the Napoleonic period and artistic associations that arose to challenge the annexation and treatment of those works and argue for their competent restoration.

In the final section, “Les modèles de la sociabilité,” Patrick Michel also examines private correspondence as an “instrument” of erudite sociability. Sharing the fruits of archival research at the Bibliothèque municipale of Avignon, he assesses letters exchanged by Charles-François de Calvière (1693-1777), *amateur honoraire* at the royal Academy, and Esprit Calvet (1728-1810), medical doctor and antiquarian, as well as a corresponding member of the royal Académie des Inscriptions. Boris Roman Gibhardt returns to exchanges between France and Germany at the end of the century.

Bernadette Fort concludes this volume on a very strong note, with a thoughtful reconsideration of the memoirs of Louise-Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun (1755-1842). She reclaims their historical significance, reminding us they were the first to be published by a female painter in France. That is a most welcome reflection, since the memoirs have been too easily disparaged, especially in recent scholarship, for the author’s having shaped her story in an overly self-flattering manner. Fort explores how Vigée-Le Brun borrowed literary tropes from a variety of sources, including Rousseau’s *Confessions*, *galante* literature emerging from seventeenth-century salons, and conventions of artistic biographies used by Vasari in the sixteenth century, Félibien in the late seventeenth century, and A.-J. Dézallier d’Argenville in the mid-eighteenth, and often present in lives of artists composed for the Academy. Vigée-Le Brun’s royalist sympathies, flight during the Revolution, and retrospective romanticizing of the Old Regime have made her personally less attractive to some recent scholars than her contemporary Adélaïde Labille-Guiard

(1749-1803). Nonetheless, Fort argues convincingly for the historical as well as art-historical importance of these memoirs and reminds of us of Vigée-Le Brun's considerable talent and contemporary fame. Her essay will likely inspire many to read these memoirs afresh.

The title of this edited volume, its paperback format, and reasonable cost make it potentially useful for college courses. The limits imposed by a symposium, however, mean most articles are short and focused in scope. It is a bit of a "tasting menu." Readers may find their appetites whetted for a more comprehensive exploration of how sociability operated within, and contributed to, the artistic realm. Specialists will certainly find many of these essays of interest, with some among them offering important new research and fresh insights.

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NOTES

[1] Jacques Mathey and C. Nordenfalk, “Watteau and Oppenort,” *Burlington Magazine* 97, no. 626 (1955): 132-39, and Martin P. Eidelberg, “Watteau, Lancret, and the Fountains of Oppenort,” *Burlington Magazine* 110, no. 785 (1968): 445-56. See too Marianne Roland Michel, *Watteau: An Artist of the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Alpine Fine Arts, 1984).

[2] See also Ulrich Leben, *Object Design in the Age of Enlightenment: The History of the Royal Free Drawing School in Paris* (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2004).

[3] See Reed Benhamou, *Charles-Joseph Natoire and the Académie de France in Rome: A Re-Evaluation* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2015), pp. 125-43, and Charles H. O’Brien, “New Light on the Mouton-Natoire Case (1768): Freedom of Conscience and the Role of the Jansenists,” *Journal of Church and State* 27 no. 1 (1985): 65-82.

[4] Kobi considerably expands her analysis of this erudite correspondence in *Dans l’œil du connaisseur: Pierre-Jean Mariette (1694-1774) et la construction des savoirs en histoire de l’art* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2017).

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