

H-France Review Vol. 18 (April 2018), No. 86

Emmanuelle Chapron, Isabelle Luciani, and Guy Le Thiec, eds., *Érudits, collectionneurs et amateurs: France méridionale et Italie XVIe-XIXe siècle*. Aix-en-Provence: Presses universitaires de Provence, 2017. 268 pp. Notes. €20.00 (pb). ISBN 979-1-0320-0113-4.

Review by Tom Stammers, University of Durham.

In the past three decades, there has been a remarkable upsurge of interest in the history of collecting, fueled by a confluence of institutional, intellectual, and commercial factors. On one side, museums have become far more self-conscious about their debt to their historic—and modern—donors, and far more explicit about the provenance of their holdings (spurred on by sensitive issues around cultural property). Among scholars, collections have been rediscovered as integral for understanding not just art history, but also the history of science. Instruments, models, and specimens have been accorded a starring role in new narratives about the development of experimental methods and the production of global knowledge.[1] At the same time, the range of actors under consideration has dramatically expanded. As Emmanuelle Chapron and Isabelle Luciani observe, attention has switched to “le rôle joué par des figures d’intermédiaires,” (p. 14) the networks of collaborators, native informants, and commercial dealers who enabled the formation of collections and shaped interpretations of their value.[2] Collecting has emerged as a crucial practice for explaining the origins of many different organizations and many different types of inquiry. In the judgement of Daniel Roche, collecting cannot be contained within the disciplinary constraints of history, or the arts or the sciences. Rather, “il s’inscrit au carrefour d’une histoire intellectuelle et sociale et la production des savoirs et de leur consommation” (p. 10).

Arising out a conference held in Montpellier in March 2003 organized by the Centre d’histoire moderne et contemporaine de l’Europe méditerranéenne et de ses périphéries, this edited volume testifies to the variety of approaches invited by the topic. These range from the biographical portrait of individual collectors to the study of a network of correspondents, from the analysis of single institutions to essays on methodology and the pitfalls of evidence. Holding these papers together is a common interest in how collecting intersects with identity; the subtitle of the Montpellier conference ran “De l’affirmation de soi à la découverte des identités collectives.” Beyond this, all the papers address either collecting in Italy, in the south of France (the region running from Toulouse to Monaco), or, most fruitfully, the interaction between the two cultures. The comparative focus on collecting in Paris and Venice structured the pioneering work of Krzysztof Pomian thirty years ago. With its historic links to Italian art and learning, the city of Montpellier provides an equally illuminating point of reference.[3]

The book is divided into three sections, loosely divided according to erudition, collecting, and “Le savoir au service du public.” The later essays in the volume hone in on the regional dimension and include profiles of local citizens who played an active role in fostering cultural initiatives. Pascale André-Pons details the career of Abraham Fontanel, the founder of the city’s Société des Beaux-Arts in 1779, who energetically combined the functions of bookseller, dealer in paintings and prints, curator, and collector (pp. 229-237). Meanwhile, Alain Chevalier introduces Joseph de Cadolle, an aristocratic Legitimist and admirer of Aléxis-François Rio, whose sponsorship of the Société de Saint-Jean allowed for the first inventory of paintings in churches throughout the diocese of Montpellier between 1876 and 1883 (pp. 157-168).

The shared geography of the book throws into relief the persistent enthusiasm for Italy as a source of artistic inspiration, although what inspiration Italy provided varied over time. For the seventeenth century, several contributions highlight the scholarship and opulence of the patricians of Florence, Venice, Bologna, and Rome. As Jean Boutier argues, affiliation with one of the academies in these cities was a coveted marker of prestige (pp. 41-61). In the eighteenth century, the enormous archaeological digs undertaken at Pompeii and Herculaneum lured Grand Tourists and trophy hunters from across the continent and turned the kingdom of Naples into “une sorte de musée en plein air,” in the words of Anna Maria Rao, “où tout le monde pouvait aller à la conquête du passé” (p. 176). In the early nineteenth-century, by contrast, Italy catered to those seeking the purity of the medieval *Primitifs*, so dear to Cadolle, but also hosted the cabinet of Gian Pietro Vieusseux in Florence, a select and prestigious literary community eagerly devouring the latest enlightened and liberal publications (pp. 199-220). Across these chapters, the allure of Italy proves as protean as the collecting practices it inspired.

The chronology of the volume is also ambitiously broad, running from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries (although with a predominance of post-1700 contributions). This helpfully problematizes the conventional periodization of the topic, which imagines a sharp rupture between the aristocratic cabinets of the ancien regime and the post-revolutionary museum age.^[4] The essays allow for a consideration of the evolving vocabularies and typologies surrounding collecting, depending on whether it was practiced by an *érudit*, an *amateur*, a *curieux*, a *connaisseur*, or (only really from the nineteenth century onwards) a *collectionneur*. Each of these usages denotes a slightly different sense of the genre of objects collected, and for what purpose. But rather than set these labels out in a progressive schema, the essays frequently draw attention to the overlap and co-existence of different modalities within the same period. The motives driving the acquisition and donation of artworks were rarely simple. In 1833, Xavier Atget donated an exceptional series of 1000 drawings and 5000 prints to his beloved Montpellier medical faculty in his will. As Héléne Lorblanchet speculates, this corpus of works on paper reflected not just his aim to educate young painters in the manner of the “masters,” but also his fascination with anatomy and physiognomy, his celebration of historic southern artists (such as Jean-François De Troy and Pierre Puget), as well as the quirks of his own taste (including a precocious admiration for the then-unfashionable Giovanni Battista Tiepolo and Jean-Honoré Fragonard) (pp. 225-228). Only very slowly and hesitantly were the idiosyncratic cabinets of the early modern period reformed in line with the expectations of the modern museum.

Across much of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, collecting was inseparable from the pursuit and advertisement of status. The rare books and fine paintings amassed by Lodovico Beccadelli were the “ornament indispensable d’une demeure nobiliaire,” according to Gigliola Fragnito, “autant de signes que sa famille aurait bientôt fait à nouveau partie des grandes familles

de la patrie bolonaise” (p. 38). Collecting was far less about personal expression than enshrining dynastic and corporate memory. As the intriguing example of Alessandro Gregorio Capponi attests, possessing an esteemed library or gallery of antiques could create relationships with men of learning and aristocratic rivals that were otherwise unavailable to those deficient in classical languages. It was in no small part due to his collections, not his erudition, that Capponi was named first keeper of the Capitoline museum in Rome in 1734, a post that allowed him freely to mix civic honors with his obsessive personal hunt for antiquities (pp. 77-81). The instrumental advantages of collecting did not preclude emotional investment in it, nor were these bids for esteem uniformly successful. The brilliant chapter by Thomas Fouilleron chronicles the efforts of the eighteenth-century princes of Monaco to integrate themselves into the royal families of Europe, where, due to a contested succession, their place was by no means assured. Starting in the 1730s, the duc de Valentinois, then residing in the hôtel de Matignon in Paris, commissioned engravings of select paintings in his possession, including works attributed to Carlo Maratta, David Teniers, and Joseph Vernet. This publicity exposed these canvases to the charge of being “médiocres” or “mauvaises,” and abbé Raynal judged that the duc de Valentinois was “plutôt un homme riche qu’un homme de goût” (p. 113). The unveiling of a private collection to public scrutiny was fraught with risk but was nonetheless indispensable for the Grimaldi to gain wider recognition for their princely credentials (pp. 120-121).

By the close of the eighteenth century, new mechanisms for legitimizing and organizing collecting on a wider scale become discernible. The earlier orientation towards a pan-European republic of letters was now complicated by the growing assertiveness of the nation-state, which conferred resources and favor on individual collectors acting on its behalf. One such figure was British envoy to Naples, William Hamilton, whose aggressive collecting was denounced in the 1770s as a kind of licensed plunder, which treated southern Italy like a colonial dependency (p. 179). Anna Maria Rao’s findings here, drawing on the remarkable correspondence of Pierre-Marie Hennin and François Cacault, parallels the recent arguments of British historians about the centrality of public-private partnerships to British cultural ambitions.^[5] Buying for an anticipated public audience also accelerated the process of specialization within donor collections, which were pruned back and re-ordered in favor of quality, precision, and utility. In turn, this propelled the formation of national institutions, summarized by Frédéric Barbier as “le glissement de l’utilité à l’identité, glissement caractéristique de la transition vers l’Europe moderne” (p. 205). Yet while the close of the eighteenth century saw the scales shifted from the “private” towards the “public,” the essays frequently point out the enduring fuzziness and complementarity of these terms.

Nowhere is this more vivid than at the Musée Fabre, the magnificent art gallery in Montpellier created by the painter Xavier-François Fabre. This student of David was a devoted monarchist who spent most his career in Florence and deplored the artistic experiments of his own age. Yet in 1825, he made his first donation of nearly 250 paintings to his birthplace, and in his will he added further paintings and a fund of 30,000 francs. This show of local patriotism won him the légion d’honneur and promotion to the rank of baron by Charles X. Fabre relished the chance to give tours of the establishment to illustrious visitors such as the duchesse de Berry and maréchal Soult. As Laure Péllicer’s penetrating essay reveals, Fabre was exceptionally proud of “his” museum, which also doubled as his home. He bequeathed his paintings and drawings to the citizens of Montpellier, but he did not relinquish any control over how they appeared. Fabre installed living quarters and a personal garden in the museum complex and took meticulous care in overseeing the decoration of the site and the display of its contents. He favored a mixed,

connoisseurial hang of paintings, rather than the arrangement into schools and periods, and he filled the galleries with busts and mementos of his closest friends, such as the poet Vittorio Alfieri and the comtesse d'Albany. He also ensured that the museum was open on Sundays and holidays from eleven until three o'clock but refused entry to anyone indecently dressed or bringing with them canes, parasols, dogs, or young children. After his first donation in 1825, Fabre continued to collect another ninety-three paintings that he opted to display on museum walls, although until his death they remained technically his private property. In Péllicer's analysis, such anomalies capture "le statut ambigu de l'établissement" (p. 252).

Érudits, collectionneurs et amateurs joins numerous other stimulating recent edited volumes on European collecting in a transnational perspective and its historiographical treatment.[6] While a common geography imparts a measure of unity across chapters, the methods employed are necessarily diverse. In his foreword, Daniel Roche invokes the concept of "biens symboliques," and while the vocabulary of Pierre Bourdieu returns in later essays, it does not provide any overarching theoretical framework (p. 12). Without this framework, the volume can feel like a mosaic and mélange of discrete contributions. Most of the time, this diversity is a great advantage, and the volume is enhanced by the sheer range of ways in which a "collection" can be interpreted. It encompasses not just a distinct series of physical objects, such as the plaster cast reproductions of ancient sculptures sent to the Palais des états in Dijon in the late eighteenth century (pp. 187-198). It also extends to collecting as a process or a taxonomic principle, as seen through the network of scholars around Esprit Calvet and their shared curiosity in coins, shells, plant samples, insects, and even the records of unusual events (pp. 133-141). It also interprets certain genres of urban writing as virtual collections, especially the documenting of monuments and cultural treasures in eighteenth-century Montpellier. Exhibiting an early form of historical consciousness, the antiquarians and artists analyzed by Régis Bertrand de-contextualized artworks in the process of describing them, anticipating the logics of the museum (pp. 155-156).

While showing the benefits of a *longue-durée* perspective, the shadow of the French Revolution nonetheless hangs over numerous essays, and this disruptive event merits more sustained attention in the introduction. It was the Revolution that allowed Fontanel to acquire two gilt bronze candelabras from the 1794 sale of Madame du Barry's chateau at Louveciennes (p. 235); it was dealers during the Revolution who created a sudden prestige around paintings with a *duc de Valentinois's* provenance (pp. 118-120); and it was the perceived vandalism of the Revolution that prompted Joseph-Martin Machand to sketch and mourn the ruins of the cloister of Saint-Victor in Montpellier (pp. 150-154). In myriad ways, 1789 affected both the material opportunities for collectors and the symbolic meaning of their activities.[7] In a letter on January 8, 1791, Pierre-Michel Hennin bemoaned the "choc" the Revolution had dealt to all secure fortunes and compared it to the "tremblement de terre de la Calabre" (p. 185). Yet, placing the Revolution within a broader time-frame allows for a more holistic view of the ways in which the stakes and geographies of collecting evolved. In the assessment of Anna Maria Rao, collecting represented at the same time "passion érudite et mécénat, ambitions économiques nationales et prestige personnel" (p. 184). This wide-ranging volume should further persuade modernists of what many early modernists have long known: namely, that collecting has significance not just for political, social, cultural, and intellectual history, but also, as an ideal and a practice, it eludes and troubles conventional disciplinary and chronological divides.

LIST OF ESSAYS

Daniel Roche, “Prologue. Érudits, collectionneurs, amateurs (XVIe-XIXe siècle)”

Emmnauelle Chapron and Isabelle Luciani, “Introduction”

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Jean Boutier, “À Florence, ‘lettrés’ et ‘académiciens.’ Sociabilités intellectuelles et identité urbaine au XVIIe siècle”

Maria Pia Donato, “L’affirmation d’un amateur aristocrate entre Rome et la République des Lettres. Alessandro Gregorio Capponi et ses collections”

Françoise Bayard, “Collections et collectionneurs en France à l’époque moderne. Problèmes et méthode”

Thomas Fouilleron, “Publier sa collection. Une stratégie de distinction des princes de Monaco au siècle des Lumières”

Madeleine Ferrières, “Les curiosités d’Esprit Calvet”

Régis Bertrand, “Les collectionneurs et érudits marseillais de la fin du XVIIIe siècle et la découverte du patrimoine de leur ville”

Alain Chevalier, “Joseph de Candolle (1812-1887). Itinéraire méconnu d’un amateur d’art montpelliérain du XIXe siècle”

Anna Maria Rao, “Collections d’antiquités, marché, identité nationale. Naples et la France à la fin du XVIIIe siècle”

Christine Lamarre, “Des usages d’une collection publique à la fin du XVIIIe siècle (Dijon, 1776-1791)”

Frédéric Barbier, “Collection et sociabilité à l’aube des nationalités. Les débuts du Cabinet Vieusseux à Florence”

Hélène Lorblanchet, “Un ‘amateur montpelliérain.’ Xavier Atget (1758-1833), du collectionneur au mécène”

Pascale André-Pons, “Les multiples talents de M. Fontanel”

Laure Pellicer, “Je vis M. Fabre au milieu de son musée...”

NOTES

[1] Ursula Klein and Emma Spary, eds., *Materials and Expertise in Early Modern Europe: Between Market and Laboratory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Adriana Craciun and Simon Schaffer, eds., *The Material Cultures of Enlightenment Arts and Sciences* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Yota Batsaki, Sarah Burke Cahalan, and Anatole Tschikine, eds., *The Botany of Empire in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2017).

[2] See the introduction in James Delbourgo and Nicholas Dew, eds., *Science and Empire in the Atlantic World* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008). For an exemplary recent application of this method, see Peter N. Miller, *Pereisc's Mediterranean World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2015).

[3] Krzysztof Pomian, *Collectionneurs, amateurs et curieux. Paris, Venise: XVIe-XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987).

[4] Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992); Susan Pearce, *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995).

[5] Holger Hoock, *Empires of the Imagination. Politics, War and the Arts in the British World, 1750-1850* (London: Profile Books, 2010).

[6] Véronique Gerard-Powell, ed., *Artistes, musées et collections. Un hommage à Antoine Schnapper* (Paris: Presses universitaires de Paris-Sorbonne, 2016); Andrea Meyer and Bénédicte Savoy, eds., *The Museum is Open. Towards a Transnational History of Museums* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014).

[7] Francis Haskell, *Rediscoveries in Art: Some Aspects of Taste, Fashion and Collecting in England and France* (London: Phaidon, 1976); Monica Preti-Hamard and Roberta Panzanelli, eds., *La circulation des œuvres d'art, 1789-1848* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2007).

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