

**FRENCH WOMEN ARTISTS OF THE NAPOLEONIC ERA  
(1799 –1815)**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis analyses the gendered power relations involved in art works that were created by women artists, during the Napoleonic era (1799 –1815). I explore how women artists use the female body as a signifier of wider gender debates. Unlike previous scholarship, I scrutinise the ways women asserted their engagement with the public sphere through their art works, how the historical context, for example, the establishment of the Napoleonic Civil Code, coupled with the ideology of separate spheres, and the opening of the Salon to all artists, effected the paintings women produced and exhibited.

In chapter 1, I analyse the self-portraits of Marie-Denis Villers (1774 –1821), Constance Mayer (1774-1821), and Marie-Gabrielle Capet (1761-1818). I study how these women asserted their status as professional artists, whilst still engaging with the contemporary discourses concerning female identity. The second chapter proposes new interpretations of Pauline Auzou's (1775-1835) representations of events celebrating the marriage of Marie-Louise and Napoleon Bonaparte. I scrutinise, how Auzou examines the Empress's unique position in contemporary French society, the importance of images of Marie-Louise as Napoleonic propaganda paintings in the Salon exhibitions, and the artist's portrayal of the significant, prescribed roles women played in the public sphere.

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# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	1
<b>Chapter 1: Women Artists' Self-Portraiture, Villers, Mayer, and Capet</b>	8
Introduction	8
Claiming Professional Artistic Status	8
Public and Private Spaces	12
Constance Mayer's Inclusion of Male Artistic Influence	19
Marie-Gabrielle Capet's Artist's Studio	25
Conclusion	32
<b>Chapter 2: Contemporary History Paintings, Pauline Auzou's</b>	
<b>Depictions of Empress Marie-Louise</b>	34
Introduction	34
Comparisons with Male Artists' Depictions of Marie-Louise	35
Festivals, The Public, Prescribed Engagement of Women	38
Propaganda and the Importance of the Salons	42
The Virtues of Marie-Louise	52
Conclusion	59
<b>Conclusion</b>	62
Bibliography	65
Illustrations	73

## List of Illustrations

### Figure

1: Marie-Denise Villers, *Young Woman Drawing*, 1801, oil on canvas, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

2: Marie-Denise Villers, *Study of a Young Woman Seated on a Window*, 1801, oil on canvas, Private collection.

3: Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, *Self-Portrait with Two Pupils, Mlle Marie Gabrielle Capet and Mlle Carreaux de Rosemond*, 1785, oil on canvas, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

4: Constance Mayer, *Self-Portrait of the Artist with her Father*, 1801, oil on canvas, Wadsworth Athenaeum, Hartford.

5: Jacques-Louis David, *Madame Seriziat*, 1795, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

6: Louis Léopold Boilly, *The Downpour*, 1804-1805, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

7: François Gérard, *Portrait of Madame Récamier*, 1805, oil on canvas, Musée Carnavalet, Paris.

8: Louis-Leopold Boilly, *Painter in Her Studio*, 1796, oil on canvas, Staatliches Museum, Schwerin.

9: François Gérard, *Portrait of Isabey and his Daughter*, 1795, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

10: Marie Victoire Lemoine, *Interior of the Atelier of a Woman Painter*, 1796, oil on canvas, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

11: Louis-Léopold Boilly, *The Geography Lesson*, 1812, oil on canvas, Kimbell Art Foundation, Texas, USA.

12: Marie-Gabrielle Capet, *Atelier of Madame Vincent around 1800*, 1808, oil on canvas, Neue Pinakothek, München.

13: Louis-Léopold Boilly, *Gathering of Artists in the Studio of Isabey*, 1798, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

14: Louis-Léopold Boilly, *Houdon's Studio*, 1804, oil on canvas, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris.

15: Louis-Léopold Boilly, *Houdon's Studio*, 1808, oil on canvas, Musée d'Art Thomas Henry, Cherbourg-Octeville.

16: Pauline Auzou, *The Arrival at Compiègne of Empress Marie-Louise*, 1810, oil on canvas, Musée national du Château, Versailles.

17: Pauline Auzou, *The Farewell of Marie-Louise to Her Family*, 1812, oil on canvas, Musée national du Château, Versailles.

18: Louis-Philippe Crépin, *Napoleon I and Marie-Louise Disembarking at Antwerp*, 1810, oil on canvas, Fondation Dosne-Thiers, Paris.

19: Georges Rouget, *Marriage of Napoleon I and Marie Louise of Austria*, 1810, oil on canvas, Musée national du Château, Versailles.

20: Jean-Baptiste Isabey, *The Arrival of Marie-Louise at Compiègne*, 1810, pen, black ink, grey wash and sepia, heightened with white on paper, mounted on canvas, Fondation Napoléon, Paris.

21: Jacques-Louis David, *Bonaparte at the St Bernard Pass*, 1801, oil on canvas, Château de Malmaison, Paris.

22: Antoine-Jean Gros, *Napoleon on the Battlefield of Eylau*, 1808, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

23: Antoine-Jean Gros, *Interview Between Napoleon and Francis II of Austria*, 1812, oil on canvas, Musée national du Château, Versailles.

24: Jean Baptiste Isabey, *Empress Marie-Louise*, 1810, Gouache on Ivory, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

25: Pauline Auzou, *The First Feeling of Coquetry*, 1804, oil on canvas, Paris, Collection Auzou Family.

26: François Gérard, *Marie-Louise and the King of Rome*, 1813, oil on canvas, Musée national du Château, Versailles.

27: Jean-Pierre Franque, *Allegory of the Condition of France before the Return from Egypt*, 1810, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

## Introduction

Gender is defined in feminist theory as the separation of roles in a society based on biological sex, which contributes to the creation of the notions of masculinity and femininity.<sup>1</sup> Feminist scholarship analyses the nature of patriarchy and gender discrimination, and argues that one's biological sex does not naturally assume innate traits, we perform the roles assigned to us.<sup>2</sup> Thus, gender identity, it is argued, is socially constructed, and by consulting texts that probe contemporary discourse concerning women's place in early nineteenth century French culture, I will study how the society in which they were made informed the art works women produced, and how women artists' depictions compare with those made by male artists dealing with similar themes.<sup>3</sup>

The Napoleonic era (1799 –1815) is a fruitful epoch to examine the art works created by women artists, due to their fluctuating position in contemporary society both as artists and as women. Joan B. Landes in *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (1988) argues that due to the French Revolution, there was great discussion regarding how women should be represented, which incited unease concerning women's behaviour and their visibility in the culture.<sup>4</sup> It is suggested that the French Revolution's discourses around the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* (1789) inspired women to become politically active in society and to advocate political equality for all, regardless of gender.<sup>5</sup> Women from very different backgrounds were involved, such as Olympe de Gouges who, in October 1789, suggested improvement plans to the National Assembly which contained legal

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Hatt and Charlotte Klonek, *Art History: A Critical Introduction to Its Methods*, Manchester, 2006, 149.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* For additional reading on the topic of the construction of women's identity in art, consult, Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology*, London, 1981. Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art*, London and New York, 1988. Margaret Olin, 'Gaze', Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff (eds.), *Critical Terms for Art History*, Chicago and London, 2003.

<sup>4</sup> Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution*, New York, 1988, 146.

<sup>5</sup> Lynn Abrams, *The Making of Modern Woman*, Great Britain, 2002, 2.



equality for women and women's admittance to all professions.<sup>6</sup> However, these figures were often marginalised, and their rhetoric sometimes asserted that women's domestic duties could have a 'civic purpose'; therefore, women could feel fulfilled in the private sphere.<sup>7</sup> Lynn Abrams argues in *The Making of Modern Woman* (2002), that the Revolution failed to fully examine and question gender dynamics.<sup>8</sup>

After the Revolution, new laws accentuated biological differences and gender developed into a 'socially relevant category' in a greater manner than it had previously been.<sup>9</sup> Landes argues that, although the Revolution did not sanction women's liberation, it granted them a 'moral identity' and a 'political constitution'.<sup>10</sup> The writer concludes that, during this era an individual's perception of their gender was inscribed in public life and effected the way people understood themselves.<sup>11</sup>

In dominant discourse among the upper classes of French society, femininity was manifested in the home; the private sphere was synonymous with womanliness and the public sphere was a man's domain.<sup>12</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau wrote, 'the genuine mother of a family is no woman of the world, she is almost as much of a recluse as the nun in her convent.'<sup>13</sup> Despite the ideology of separate spheres infusing society, particularly the upper echelons, Arlette Farge discusses in *Fragile Lives: Violence, Power and Solidarity in Eighteenth-*

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<sup>6</sup> Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution*, 124. Claire Goldberg Moses in *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1984, 10), discusses the contemporary feminist rhetoric that emerged, arguing that Etta Palm d'Aëlders, Théroigne de Méricourt, Condorcet and Gouges advocated the importance of women in public affairs, and spoke out for women's rights.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 129. Lynn Abrams, *The Making of Modern Woman*, 216.

<sup>8</sup> Lynn Abrams, *The Making of Modern Woman*, 218.

<sup>9</sup> Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution*, 170.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>12</sup> Lynn Abrams, *The Making of Modern Woman*, 3, 44, 48.

<sup>13</sup> This quotation is taken from *Émile* (1762), the educational treatise, described in the introduction by P.D. Jimack (on page xxxviii and xli) as an 'immediate success', particularly in France. It was widely read from the late eighteenth century and 'began to exercise a profound influence on both the theory and the practice of education in many different countries.' Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile*, Barbara Foxley (trans.), London, 1993, 419.

*Century Paris* (1993), the lack of separation between public and private life for poor Parisians, for example in the workshop.<sup>14</sup> However, the terms public and private sphere do not only refer to the physical space inhabited, but also to the ability for people to influence society. Abrams has argued that there was a psychological distancing of men and women during the Napoleonic era, between the domestic and the professional, and with women considered unable to form an important part of the public political rhetoric.<sup>15</sup> For example, women were deprived from engaging in political organisations in 1793.<sup>16</sup> Women's subordination continued with the Napoleonic Code that was finalised in 1804 and was, in part, drafted by Napoleon which contained assertions protecting the Revolutionary belief in the equality of men before the law, whilst also restricting the legal rights of women.<sup>17</sup> The Code, Claire Goldberg Moses argues, asserted the political importance of gender, promoted prejudice towards women and strengthened 'women's sense of sex identification.'<sup>18</sup>

A marked 'contradiction' existed between an artist's and a woman's identity in contemporary society.<sup>19</sup> The notion of *sensibilité* was important in this era, influencing French medical literature.<sup>20</sup> Women and children were believed to possess greater sensitivity, have weaker constitutions and nerves, and thus were perceived to lack the ability for reasoning to the same extent as men.<sup>21</sup> Linda Nochlin argues that ideology is able to shroud

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<sup>14</sup> Arlette Farge, *Fragile Lives: Violence, Power and Solidarity in Eighteenth-Century Paris*, Harvard, 1993, 112.

<sup>15</sup> Lynn Abrams, *The Making of Modern Woman*, 48, 218.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 218.

<sup>17</sup> Steven Englund, *Napoleon, A Political Life*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2004, 189. Darline Gay Levy and Harriet B. Applewhite, 'A Political Revolution for Women? The Case of Paris', Renate Bridenthal, Susan Mosher Stuard and Merry E. Wiesner (eds.), *Becoming Visible, Women in European History, Third Edition*, Boston and New York, 1998, 286-287. Linda L. Clark, *Women and Achievement in Nineteenth Century Europe*, Cambridge, 2008, 35.

<sup>18</sup> Claire Goldberg Moses, *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century*, New York, 1984, 18.

<sup>19</sup> Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art*, London and New York, 1988, 68.

<sup>20</sup> Mary D. Sheriff, 'The Woman-Artist Question', Jordana Pomeroy (ed.), *Royalists to Romantics, Women Artists from the Louvre, Versailles, and Other French National Collections*, exhibition catalogue, Washington D.C., National Museum of Women in the Arts, London, 2012, 43.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 43-45.

the blatant ‘power relations’ in a specific society by making them seem natural and logical.<sup>22</sup> Abrams states that in the early nineteenth century, model femininity consisted of: reserve, humility, selflessness, domesticity and dutiful motherhood, although, the adherence to these ideals is difficult to quantify.<sup>23</sup> These attributes were not conducive to the artist’s profession, especially for the creation of self-portraits, contemporary history paintings, or for the exhibition of their work in the Salon. In 1799, a critic bemoaning the number of women seeking artistic careers, stated, ‘in secret, I would love to see them paint / but I tell them, without mincing words / a woman must always be afraid / of displaying herself too much in public.’<sup>24</sup> By engaging in the creation and exhibition of art works, female artists were going against the dominant ideologies and prescribed roles for women in society. Abrams cites Vicomte de Bonald who asserted in 1802, in his essay examining the education of women, that women ‘belong to the family and not to political society, and nature created them for domestic cares and not for public functions.’<sup>25</sup> With regards specifically to the place of female artists in this society, the *Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture* closed in 1793 and architecture, painting and sculpture coalesced to become the Fine Arts section of the Institut of France, the new official body established in 1795.<sup>26</sup> In 1783 the maximum number of female academicians allowed admittance became four.<sup>27</sup> However, the *Académie* excluded all women from training in its classrooms.<sup>28</sup> The Fine Arts section of the new Institut barred

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<sup>22</sup> Linda Nochlin, ‘Women, Art and Power’, Linda Nochlin (ed.), *Women, Art and Power and Other Essays*, New York, 1988, 2. A seminal text in which she examines the defining characteristics attributed to women in art, and the circumstances of women’s engagement as artists in society.

<sup>23</sup> Lynn Abrams, *The Making of Modern Woman*, 40.

<sup>24</sup> Laura Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard: Artist in the Age of Revolution*, Los Angeles, 2009, 105.

<sup>25</sup> Lynn Abrams, *The Making of Modern Woman*, 48.

<sup>26</sup> Gen Doy ‘Hidden from histories: women history painters in early nineteenth-century France’, Rafael Cardoso Denis and Colin Trodd (eds), *Art & the Academy in the Nineteenth Century*, Manchester, 2000, 72.

<sup>27</sup> Jordana Pomeroy, ‘Introduction’, Jordana Pomeroy (ed.), *Royalists to Romantics, Women Artists from the Louvre, Versailles, and Other French National Collections*, exhibition catalogue, Washington D.C., National Museum of Women in the Arts, London, 2012, 15.

<sup>28</sup> Laura Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard: Artist in the Age of Revolution*, 12.

women from becoming members.<sup>29</sup> However, during this epoch, private studios, run by known artists, provided support and instruction for female painters.<sup>30</sup> The *Académie*, held regular free Salons biennially from 1737, at which initially only academicians and agrées could exhibit.<sup>31</sup> Thomas E. Crow describes the Salon as the ‘dominant public entertainment in the city’ that occurred for between three to six weeks, at which all classes were welcome, and exhibitors were encouraged by critics and reporters alike, to fulfil the wishes and requirements of the Salon ‘public’.<sup>32</sup> The Salon, held in the Salon Carré of the Louvre, involved the exhibition of contemporary art, and was created with the aim of inspiring aesthetic reactions in a large amount of people.<sup>33</sup> On 21 August 1791 the National Assembly opened the Salon to professional and amateur artists of both sexes, allowing large numbers of female artists to exhibit their work in the Louvre for the first time.<sup>34</sup> It is argued that their prohibition from the Institut of France was not as important for women as their ability to find patrons and to create a professional reputation relied more heavily on the open Salon.<sup>35</sup> Women created 11 to 13 percent of the art shown at the annual Salon from 1801 to 1840.<sup>36</sup> Laura Auricchio argues that, there was a paradox for women who were being allowed greater access to the public exhibition of their art, whilst also being banned from the Institut.<sup>37</sup>

The aim of my thesis, therefore, is to analyse specific art works created by female artists in the context of the era in which they were made and explore what can be elucidated

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<sup>29</sup> Linda L. Clark, *Women and Achievement in Nineteenth Century Europe*, 27. In *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard: Artist in the Age of Revolution*, Laura Auricchio (105) states that opposition to women artists also appeared in the public through newspapers.

<sup>30</sup> Linda L. Clark, *Women and Achievement in Nineteenth Century Europe*, 85.

<sup>31</sup> Thomas E. Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris*, New Haven and London, 1985, 1.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>34</sup> Laura Auricchio, ‘Revolutionary Paradoxes: 1789-94’, Jordana Pomeroy (ed.), *Royalists to Romantics, Women Artists from the Louvre, Versailles, and Other French National Collections*, exhibition catalogue, Washington D.C., National Museum of Women in the Arts, London, 2012, 24.

<sup>35</sup> Linda L. Clark, *Women and Achievement in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, 27.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>37</sup> Laura Auricchio, ‘Revolutionary Paradoxes: 1789-94’, 23.

about female artists' constructions of gendered identities. I will examine if, and how, the artists I have selected, asserted the ideological positions posited in dominant, contemporary discourses, and if their paintings show women contributing or counteracting the contemporary constructions of femininity.

The first chapter focusses on examining self-portraits created by female artists. I limit myself to analysing how Marie-Denis Villers, Constance Mayer, and Marie-Gabrielle Capet represented themselves. Texts such as Frances Borzello's *Seeing Ourselves, Women's Self-Portraits* (1998), Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin's *Women Artists: 1550-1950* (1984), Delia Gaze's *Concise Dictionary of Women Artists* (2001), and the exhibition catalogues, *The French Portrait: Revolution to Restoration* (2005) and *Royalists to Romantics, Women Artists from the Louvre, Versailles, and Other French National Collections* (2012), were all valuable for their examination of the contemporary contexts in which female portraiture was being created, for investigating the specific nature of self-portraiture and for the biographical information provided about the artists. However, their examination of the art works I focus on in this thesis is limited to brief discussions. I will scrutinise how these art works referenced the Napoleonic era's political and social debates regarding gender, as discussed in, for example, Abrams' *The Making of Modern Woman* (2002). I will consider how these women defined their femininity in their paintings, and also asserted their professional artistic status in comparison to male artists, such as Louis-Léopold Boilly's representations of women artists. Furthermore, I propose to analyse how the gendering of the public and private spheres was interpreted and characterised in these artists' portraits, and how the training and circumstances in which women could produce art were represented.

In chapter two, I analyse two oil paintings by the female artist Pauline Auzou that represent events celebrating the marriage of Marie-Louise and Napoleon Bonaparte. I

consulted texts (such as Steven Englund's *Napoleon, A Political Life* (2004) and R. S. Alexander's *Napoleon* (2001)) that discuss the discursive context in which the depicted events occurred. The exhibition catalogue entitled, *1810, La politique de l'amour, Napoleon Ier et Marie-Louise à Compiègne* (2010), contains an array of artworks that depict Marie-Louise and important biographical information about her and about the historical context of the 1810 Salon. The text, however, fails to analyse the way in which Auzou examined gender in comparison to male artists' representations of the Empress. Little scholarship about the Napoleonic era specifically scrutinises the significance of Empress Marie-Louise or Auzou's representations of her. Vivian P. Cameron (1997) and Albert Boime (1990), offer some insight into her depictions, but fail to analyse how Marie-Louise, and the other female figures represented by the artist, signify the limited but significant power that women had in the public sphere to create and maintain social order. Hence, unlike previous scholarship, I examine Auzou's representation of the Empress's unique position in contemporary society in relation to the Empress Josephine, and the importance that Auzou, as a female artist, placed on the figure of the Empress, enabling the paintings to function as propaganda for Napoleon's regime. I will also analyse the constraints faced by Auzou as a female artist operating during the Napoleonic era, and how they effected the art works she produced. I will explore women's contemporary engagement in the public sphere and how Auzou represents their involvement, comparing her art works to male artists' representations of similar scenes. My approach will produce a greater understanding of how Napoleonic era female artists shaped their artistic practice in a period when they were both facing a greater opportunity to exhibit their work in the Salon, whilst also dealing with the restrictions imposed on the ways they were able to engage in the public sphere.

## Chapter 1: Women Artists' Self-Portraiture, Villers, Mayer, and Capet

### Introduction

Ever since Nochlin's seminal essay *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?* (1971), which argued that the discipline of art history needed to revolutionise its approach and examine the historical context in which art is created and how professional artistic status is achieved, feminist art historians have researched the conditions in which female artists trained and worked, were received by contemporary audiences, and the impact upon women artists' oeuvres.<sup>38</sup> Shearer West and Richard Brilliant contend that portraits investigate identity and are responsive to the context in which they are made, including contemporary discourses on gender.<sup>39</sup> Brilliant describes a portrait as a 'visible identity sign'.<sup>40</sup> Thus, in this chapter, I examine women artists' self-portraits because these art works allow the artists to construct public perceptions of themselves. I demonstrate how early nineteenth-century notions regarding gender, women's position in society, and in the art world were connected to the self-portraits that they produced. I will discuss whether these self-portraits exemplify archetypes of femininity involved in self-censorship, or rebel against such socially imposed constructions of their identity. I examine three self-portraits in detail and scrutinise the artists' claims to professional status, and their positions in the public sphere.

### Claiming Professional Artistic Status

Marie-Denise Villers (née Lemoine) (1774 –1821) in *Young Woman Drawing* (1801) (figure 1) depicts herself engaged in artistic creation, confidently posed with a pencil in her right

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<sup>38</sup> Linda Nochlin, 'Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?', Linda Nochlin (ed.), *Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays*, New York, 1988, 145-78.

<sup>39</sup> Shearer West, *Portraiture*, Oxford, 2004, 11. Richard Brilliant, *Portraiture*, Cambridge, 1991, 14.

<sup>40</sup> Richard Brilliant, *Portraiture*, 14.

hand.<sup>41</sup> Her left hand holds her portfolio of papers, suggesting a body of work and hinting at, along with her self-assured posture, her professional status as an artist specialising in portraits.<sup>42</sup> The composition does not include a figure instructing her nor any allusion to her artistic training, although she came from an artistic family and trained as a pupil of Anne Louis Girodet-Trioson.<sup>43</sup> Yet, as I will demonstrate, female artists often alluded to their teachers (including Mayer, who I will discuss later). Such absences suggest she is confident in her ability to create art autonomously and to receive patronage following the painting's exhibition in the Salon of 1801.<sup>44</sup>

As well as her assertive pose, Villers depicts herself, pencil in hand, returning the viewer's gaze. The 1801 Salon visitor would have been implicated as the object of the artist's scrutiny. She proclaims her status as an artist examining the viewer. In Napoleonic society, a sustained penetrating look was considered immodest in women.<sup>45</sup> Villers' representation of her own penetrating look seems to challenge dominant discourses and associated power relations regarding the notion of the gaze. She is in possession of the gaze, when women would predominantly have been depicted with averted eyes and been the object of the male gaze.<sup>46</sup> Laura Mulvey argues that there are two options for the female viewer: to assume the male perspective or to consent to male generated passivity (which Nochlin argues is

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<sup>41</sup> Due to the similarities in features to a portrait created by her sister the attribution of the artist and sitter has been questioned. At one time this portrait was believed to be by Jacques-Louis David, but it is now thought to be by Villiers, as proposed by Margaret A. Oppenheimer. It was described on the Met's website as having been 'retitled Young Woman Drawing' because the identity of the sitter is unsure but, it 'may be a self-portrait'. Anonymous, *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, Young Woman Drawing, The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/17.120.204>, accessed 12 March 2013.

<sup>42</sup> Margaret A. Oppenheimer, *The French Portrait: Revolution to Restoration*, exhibition catalogue, Northampton, Massachusetts, Smith College Museum of Art, Massachusetts, 2005, 185.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Germaine Greer, *The Obstacle Race, The Fortunes of Women Painters and Their Work*, London, 2001, 142.

<sup>45</sup> Joanna Woodall, *Portraiture: Facing the Subject*, Manchester 1997, 147.

<sup>46</sup> Tamar Garb, 'The Forbidden Gaze, Women Artists and the Male Nude in Late Nineteenth-Century France', Nicholas Mirzoeff (ed.), *The Visual Culture Reader*, London and New York, 1998, 418.



analogous to the genuine status of women in the art world's power structure).<sup>47</sup> Yet, as the agent of the gaze in her self-portrait, Villers allows the female Salon spectator to assume the artist's powerful position as professional observer in the public exhibition of the Salon. However, her gaze is made acceptable because of the power structure related to the portrait painter; Villiers has a legitimate reason for meeting our gaze because of her profession, she can be interpreted as studying the viewer for her drawing and, thus, using this portrait to attract the Salon viewer to commission her to create portraits of them.

Nevertheless, the directness of her gaze, whilst alluding to her professional status as a portraitist, may also be her conceding to the contemporaneous criticism levelled at women artists that, due to their gender, they were thought to lack the ability as artists 'to abstract' and, therefore, needed to imitate a figure from life.<sup>48</sup> Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock describe the connotations of the masculine averted gaze in Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun's portrait of the painter *Hubert Robert* (1788).<sup>49</sup> They describe it as signifying for the observer the intangible foundation of his inspiration and also his philosophical fixations.<sup>50</sup> In contrast, Villers in her self-portrait asserts her ability to create portraits as being based on her direct observation of sitters. One can argue that she is conforming to the failings associated with her sex in contemporary society (creating portraits, a genre that was considered as mimetic, deficient in imagination and intellectual vigour) and, thereby, making the socially unacceptable directness of her gaze acceptable.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Linda Nochlin, 'Women, Art and Power', 30. Nochlin, also discusses in *Women, Art, and Power* (1988), the depiction of gender differences. She examines the representation of 'female passivity' in opposition to 'masculine strength' in Jacques-Louis David's *Oath of the Horatii*. Linda Nochlin, 'Women, Art and Power', 3-4.

<sup>48</sup> Joanna Woodall, *Portraiture, Facing the Subject*, 148. Antony Halliday's, *Facing the Public: Portraiture in the Aftermath of the French Revolution*, Manchester, 2000, also discusses self-portraits created during the Revolution, but fails to address the specific circumstances in which the female artists I have focussed this thesis on inhabited, or how this effected the art works they created.

<sup>49</sup> Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses, Women, Art and Ideology*, 96.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Joanna Woodall, *Portraiture, Facing the Subject*, 148.

It could also be argued that as Villers' gaze would in practice have been directed at a mirror, allowing her to create her self-portrait from the reflection; might she be implying that, by directing her gaze at the mirror/viewer, the Salon onlookers are a "mirror" through which she ascertains her own identity. Jacqueline Rose, discussing Jacques Lacan's notion of the mirror stage as an intermediate phase in the formation of identity, states that the mirror image represents the instant when the subject is positioned 'outside itself', and so begins to form their own individual identity.<sup>52</sup> Thus, Villers could be asserting that the construction of the self, and the perception of her as an artist, is greatly affected by the society she inhabits, embodied by the mirror. So, Villers in her self-portrait, and by its inclusion in the Salon, emphasises the importance of understanding the development of self-identity which is not entirely governed by her actions or under the female artist's control but is informed by women's engagement with the public sphere.

Furthermore, the implication that the female artist may be looking into a mirror also relates to the contemporary notion regarding the self-governing nature of the female gaze, scrutinising herself to adhere to society's social codes. Similarly, John Berger, in *Ways of Seeing* (1972), suggests that women observe themselves being watched.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, Lynda Nead argues that in the historical tradition of representing the female body in western art, women are both the object and the observing subject which leads them to regulate their image in accordance with dominant contemporary ideologies.<sup>54</sup> Vivienne Muller argues, that Lacan's mirror represents the prevailing effects of the theory which suggests that individuals are unable to see themselves apart from in the images reflected at them by society.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, Villers is perhaps signifying the stifling of women's ability to construct their own

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<sup>52</sup> Jacqueline Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, London, 2005, 54.

<sup>53</sup> John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, London, 1972, 47.

<sup>54</sup> Lynda Nead, *The Female Nude, Art, Obscenity and Sexuality*, London, 1992, 10.

<sup>55</sup> Vivienne Muller, 'The Dystopian Mirror and the Female Body', *Social Alternatives*, vol.28, no.3, 2009, 29.

identity in society and the limited notions of femininity that define their engagement in the public sphere and thus their identity. However, the necessity for Villers to look into a mirror to create her self-portrait and, therefore, to direct her gaze at herself, does not negate the power of her gaze on the visitor to the Salon. As the mirror is not referenced directly in the painting, the viewer is less likely to instantly make that connection with the creation of her painting.

### **Public and Private Spheres**

Contemporary ideas regarding the gender specificity of the public and private spheres, as discussed in the introduction, are called into question by Villers in *Young Woman Drawing*. Villiers as a woman is separated from, but also engaged with, the outside world. The fabric slung over the back of her chair suggests movement, as does the animation in her body. With her foot escaping the dress she appears poised to leave the interior. If one compares this self-portrait to another portrait of a woman by Villers, entitled *Study of a Young Woman Seated on a Window* (1801) (figure 2), which was also exhibited at the Salon of 1801, one is immediately aware of the vigour that is seen in her self-portrait.<sup>56</sup> Such vitality is missing from *Study of a Young Woman Seated on a Window*, in which the female figure appears almost as a mannequin, lacking any movement, her arm is slack, she has a relaxed posture and her gaze is averted. Additionally, there is a lack of furniture for Villers to rest her drawing upon in *Young Woman Drawing*, suggesting she might depart. In her self-portrait, Villers could be commenting on her specific circumstances as an artist but also more generally on the lack of time available to women to dedicate to art, suggesting a woman's obligations to invest their time within the domestic family interior.

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<sup>56</sup> Margaret A. Oppenheimer, *The French Portrait: Revolution to Restoration*, 185.

In *Young Woman Drawing*, the figure of a man and woman are seen in the background, through the window, on a parapet, walking arm in arm.<sup>57</sup> Germaine Greer suggests that these figures are exhibiting their prescribed gender roles.<sup>58</sup> The man is leading the female figure who is being obediently promenaded through the public sphere.<sup>59</sup> The separation that exists between these figures and Villiers in the foreground may suggest that, as an artist, she is detached from these societal norms in the context of her studio. Indeed, the female figure in the background might be the artist at a different time as the clothes appear comparable. Thus, Villiers represents herself in the foreground, having left her approved role of being supervised by a man in the public sphere, to create her art. However, her self-portrait seems to suggest this is only a brief respite, as in previous paragraphs I have asserted, she seems positioned to leave the studio. Moreover, the building shown through the window might reference her husband's profession (in 1794 she married the architect Michel-Jean-Maximilien Villiers), signifying her obligation to him and, like the figures also in the background, the constraints placed on her that curtail the time she can dedicate to her art.<sup>60</sup> Under the Napoleonic Code, married women such as Villiers were commanded to obey their husbands.<sup>61</sup> Wives had to seek their husband's consent to gain employment and their wages were their husband's property, although it has been argued that few exercised this right.<sup>62</sup> Therefore, the inclusion of the building, in *Young Woman Drawing*, might represent Villiers' dependence on her husband for her ability to continue to be a professional artist. Of course, the inclusion of the building in the background of the composition might, however, be a suggestion of marital harmony. Villiers depicts herself in the process of creating art and the

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<sup>57</sup> Germaine Greer, *The Obstacle Race, The Fortunes of Women Painters and Their Work*, 142.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Margaret A. Oppenheimer, *The French Portrait: Revolution to Restoration*, 185. Liana Cheney, Alicia Craig Faxon, Kathleen Lucey Russo, *Self-Portraits By Women Painters*, Aldershot, England, 2000, 128.

<sup>61</sup> James F. McMillan, *France and Women, 1789-1914: Gender, Society and Politics*, London and New York, 2000, 38.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

building represents her husband's architectural commissions. She might be making a case for equal access for both spouses to partake in a profession, whilst still prescribing to their gendered role in the public sphere, out on the parapet.

Gary Tinterow has argued that Villers creates the effect of dramatic backlighting in her self-portrait to demonstrate the influence of her tutor, Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson, or perhaps to display her skill as an artist.<sup>63</sup> However, I would argue it also functions to draw the eye to the artist's feminine curves. Villers' legs, torso, arm and hair are bathed in light and are made more striking by the dim grey colour of the wall behind her. The creases in her dress signify a vigour that the dress would not convey if it was merely draping down to the floor, the creases delineate her body. In *Young Woman Drawing*, Villers represents herself as idealised both, in her complexion and figure. West argues that the idealisation of women in portraits may negate their individuality which is given to men, representing women as generic female figures which, I would argue, is counteracted by the vitality in Villers' movement and her penetrating gaze.<sup>64</sup>

Greer disagrees and suggests that Villers' self-portrait does not 'seek to charm' but is a 'feminist portrait'.<sup>65</sup> Although I agree that the portrait could be considered 'feminist' due, for example, to my earlier arguments regarding her gaze and the claims that it is making regarding her professional artistic status, it is simplistic to suggest that her portrait does not also represent feminine beauty and, thereby, to some extent adhere to the role that women performed in Napoleonic society as visually pleasing objects to be observed, desired and coveted by men.<sup>66</sup> Villers displays her figure for the viewer's gaze, the sensuous curve of her

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<sup>63</sup> Gary Tinterow, *Masterpieces of European Painting, 1800-1920, in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, New York, 2007, 3.

<sup>64</sup> Shearer West, *Portraiture*, 157.

<sup>65</sup> Germaine Greer, *The Obstacle Race, The Fortunes of Women Painters and Their Work*, 142.

<sup>66</sup> Linda Nochlin, 'Women, Art and Power', 9.

body is reiterated by the arc of the chair and the drapery of her clothing. By highlighting her beauty, she appears to be appeasing the more subversive attributes of the painting that contradict the dominant discourse around femininity.

Physical appearance was an important site of identity. Prior to the Revolution, the fashionable style for women's hair was elaborate and ornate and involved the use of wigs and hats as represented in Adélaïde Labille-Guiard's *Self-Portrait with Two Pupils, Mademoiselle Marie Gabrielle Capet and Mademoiselle Carreaux de Rosemond* (1785) (figure 3).<sup>67</sup> During the *Ancien Régime*, 'the emblematic status of a hairstyle proclaimed one's adherence to an idea, a group, or a man.'<sup>68</sup> Moreover, in Napoleonic society, women were encouraged to represent themselves as desirable objects, in all their finery.<sup>69</sup> Therefore, due to the significance placed on hair as conveying one's principles, it is of note to state that Villers' lacks any accessories or jewellery; the only embellishment that belongs to her pictorially, in *Young Woman Drawing*, is a pencil in her hair which perhaps suggests her attention is given to her art and not to adorning herself.<sup>70</sup>

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), who wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1792, the year she went to Paris, was conscious of the relationship of women and fashion.<sup>71</sup> She advocated the rational education of women which she argued would cause their 'thoughts constantly directed to the most insignificant part of themselves' to leave them, namely their interest in their appearance would be diminished.<sup>72</sup> The link made between

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<sup>67</sup> Philippe Séguy, 'Costume in the Age of Napoleon', Katell Le Bourhis (ed.), *The Age of Napoleon: Costume from Revolution to Empire, 1789-1815*, New York, 1989, 34.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>70</sup> This is in comparison to Villers' *Study of a Young Woman Seated on a Window*, in which a young woman is depicted with two strands of pearls and a golden pin in her hair. Margaret A. Oppenheimer, *The French Portrait: Revolution to Restoration*, 186.

<sup>71</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men; A Vindication of the Rights of Woman; An Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution*, Janet Todd (ed.), Oxford, 2008, 112.

<sup>72</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft describes that women limited imagination due to their lack of education and intellectual engagement, lead to the imagination, 'the mind shapes itself to the body, and, roaming around its

focusing overly on one's outward appearance and a lack of reasoning and shallowness could perhaps be the reason for the simplicity of Villers' outfit, and the use of a pencil for adornment, desiring herself to be feminine but to also to make claims to being a rational, professional artist.

During the Directoire (1795-1799), the 'natural shape and comfort of the body' were considered as essential to fashion as health and attractiveness.<sup>73</sup> I mentioned previously that Villers appears quite animated in her self-portrait, her body is in movement. Wealthy women's outfits changed during the French Revolution, dresses became flowing and fell in a straight line.<sup>74</sup> Fashion was preoccupied with freedom of movement.<sup>75</sup> The Directoire style has been described as consisting of light fabrics which represented a 'libertarian spirit.'<sup>76</sup> This notion of freer movement in dress was directly linked to society's politics. Villers' dress could then be a signifier of greater freedom for women artists (for example, in the ability to exhibit in the Salon).

Villers' outfit in *Young Woman Drawing* although characteristic of the simple gowns of this era, still appears quite daring, utilising less material than dresses represented in other contemporary portraits. For example, in Constance Mayer, *Self-Portrait of the Artist with her Father* (figure 4), also painted in 1801, in the depiction of *Madame Seriziat*, by Jacques-Louis David (1795) (figure 5) and in another contemporary depiction of a similar dress by Louis-Léopold Boilly, *The Downpour*, (1804-1805) (figure 6), all of which depict a greater heaviness and wealth of material than in Villers' representation. The sensuality of the drape of the dress and the fineness and lightness of the material depicted, coupled with the large

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gilt cage, only seeks to adore its prison.' Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men; A Vindication of the Rights of Woman; An Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution*, 112.

<sup>73</sup> Philippe Séguy, 'Costume in the Age of Napoleon', 69.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

number of creases in Villers' dress, showcases her figure and can be compared to the sheer white muslin dresses and cashmere shawl depicted in *Portrait of Madame Récamier* (1805) (figure 7). Villers is adhering to the contemporary notion of women being represented as beautiful objects to be idealised and admired.<sup>77</sup> However, the languorous nature of Récamier's pose, with her dress almost falling off her shoulder, suggests a greater emphasis on sensuality than Villers. As I have argued previously, in *Young Woman Drawing*, Villers represents herself as a professional artist because the focus of the depiction is the act of her drawing, her movement and her penetrating gaze catch the viewer's eye and not any embellishments of fashion or hairstyle. However, the lack of any further allusion to her status in her self-portrait, through the incorporation of an abundance of artist's materials or an antique bust, might be her attempt to ensure that she is viewed as modest and humble. Parker and Pollock argue that respectability for a woman was only achievable if she conformed to the contemporary virtues of her gender not her profession; virtues which included modesty and humility.<sup>78</sup>

Greer describes Villers as seated so that the light falls on her drawing, and refers to the room as 'bare', but the scholar fails to examine the plight of female artists, suggested by these details.<sup>79</sup> In *Young Woman Drawing*, Villers depicts a sparse interior, modestly furnished, containing a female artist seated with a lack of illumination, by which to draw. Similarly, the lack of oil paint or canvas and the broken glass all allude to the plight of this artist. Villers depicts the restricted conditions in which female artists worked. Being trained, purchasing art materials, and affording the space and time in which to work were all vital for

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<sup>77</sup> Linda Nochlin, 'Women, Art and Power', 9. Joan B. Landes, *Visualizing the Nation: Gender, Representation, and Revolution in Eighteenth-Century France*, New York, 2001, 230.

<sup>78</sup> Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology*, 96.

<sup>79</sup> Germaine Greer, *The Obstacle Race, The Fortunes of Women Painters and Their Work*, 142.



cultivating artistic talent and women were more constrained than men in this regard due to the legal restrictions and lack of official Institute recognition available to them.<sup>80</sup>

The prominence of the smashed window in the composition with the jagged line of the broken pane, diagonally above the artist's left hand, might also be a comment on the dominant ideology of the separate spheres. In *Young Woman Drawing*, Villers might represent her literal breaking of a barrier through force to allude to the hardship of her having to force her way into the public sphere by becoming a professional artist exhibiting in the Salon. She has not opened the window, but has broken it. Or, it might not be her that has broken the window but could be interpreted as suggesting the forceful encroachment of the outside world on her artistic endeavours. The philosopher Rousseau contributed to the notion of the 'natural', virtuous woman who confines herself in the private sphere, in the character of Sophie in his novel *Émile* (1762).<sup>81</sup> Napoleon reiterated these notions, promoting the dominant discourse that women were dependent figures, principally restricted to the private sphere.<sup>82</sup> The broken window, in *Young Woman Drawing*, therefore, might be challenging the prescribed contemporary gender binary regarding the separation of the spheres. Villers breaks the barrier and does not confine herself, a female artist, to the private sphere.

The sparse interior of Villers' studio is in stark contrast to the working conditions of the female artist in Louis-Leopold Boilly's *Painter in Her Studio* (1796) (figure 8). In Boilly's depiction the female artist's working space is a comfortable domestic interior with children, comfortable seating, curtains, antique busts, art works and artistic material. Boilly's studio lacks any reference to the restrictions placed on female artists, which Villers, as a

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<sup>80</sup> Linda L. Clark, *Women and Achievement in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, 83.

<sup>81</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile*, Barbara Foxley (trans.), London, 1993.

<sup>82</sup> Susan Kingsley Kent, 'Gender Rules: Law and Politics', Teresa A. Meade and Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks (eds.), *A Companion to Gender History*, Oxford, 2004, 101. James F McMillan, *France and Women, 1789-1914: Gender, Society and Politics*, 31.

female artist, emphasises in *Young Woman Drawing*. Although Villers is enclosed within a room, the bare interior she occupies is not codified as a domestic space, lacking furnishings and appearing uncomfortable. The domestic interior, a signifier of women's position as dependent, was supposed to contain soft furnishings, it was a place for a man to retreat to, mirroring soft feminine flesh.<sup>83</sup> Villers, by comparison, creates a stark room in opposition to her idealised soft figure to clearly eradicate a domestic interpretation of the scene, to separate the female figure from the domestic environment and, instead, place her within a studio setting, synonymous with artistic exertion. Thus, Villers highlighted for the Salon viewer her professional status. Therefore, I would argue that Villers is both trying to appeal to the contemporary audience's expectations of feminine virtue, whilst also self-assuredly asserting her status as an artist and representing the plight of female artists. Brilliant's description of portraiture's two contrasting aims is apt for this depiction, for Villers is trying to both represent her form and personality, and also to produce an 'acceptable' artwork.<sup>84</sup>

### **Constance Mayer's Inclusion of Male Artistic Influence**

In contrast to Villers' depiction, Constance Mayer (1774-1821) incorporated a male figure into the foreground of *Self-Portrait of the Artist with Her Father* (1801). Mayer is depicted with her father, a customs official, who encouraged his daughter in her artistic study.<sup>85</sup> The inclusion of his figure in the composition may therefore allude to this familial support, which was vital to many female artists, and so reference the restricted circumstances under which women could train to be artists. As a woman, Mayer would have been limited in her ability to join the Académie and was denied admission to the Fine Arts section of the new Institut de France established in 1795.<sup>86</sup> Artistic training in private studios was limited to affluent

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<sup>83</sup> Lynn Abrams, *The Making of Modern Woman*, 130.

<sup>84</sup> Richard Brilliant, *Portraiture*, 14.

<sup>85</sup> Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin, *Women Artists: 1550-1950*, New York, 1984, 213.

<sup>86</sup> Linda L. Clark, *Women and Achievement in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, 27.

women with familial influence.<sup>87</sup> Mayer trained in the studios of the male artists Jean Baptiste Greuze, Joseph-Benoît Suvée and Pierre-Paul Prud'hon.<sup>88</sup>

It is interesting to note that Mayer's father was not an artist and he would not, therefore, have been able to aid his daughter in her artistic endeavours, although in this image Mayer has depicted her father as an authority and the main subject of the painting, as I will argue below.<sup>89</sup> His figure seems more comfortable within the studio environment that would have actually been more familiar to Mayer, reiterating his authority. Her father exemplifies the notion of male authority as 'commanding'.<sup>90</sup> Helen Weston argues that the painting is about the artist's role as an obedient daughter and pupil.<sup>91</sup> Mayer's father has a book, a sign of knowledge, and is depicted as an animated figure pointing to a bust of Raphael, presenting him as a model for his daughter and with Mayer shown as listening passively.<sup>92</sup> To represent his superiority, Mayer presents herself as inferior.

Her father, I would argue, represents not only his authority as a father but his figure on the canvas embodies the men involved in her career, teachers who instructed Mayer. For example, she submitted this artwork in the Salon as a pupil of Suvée and Greuze.<sup>93</sup> Therefore, her claim to authorship and artistic independence would not be overt.<sup>94</sup> Harris and Nochlin state that, according to Mayer's friend Madame Tastu, she was dependent on her father and her tutors.<sup>95</sup> Fathers were crucially important for daughters to become artists, many women

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<sup>87</sup> Nancy Mowll Mathews, 'France, Nineteenth Century', Delia Gaze (ed.), *Dictionary of Women Artists*, Chicago and London, 1997, (vol. 1), 89.

<sup>88</sup> Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin, *Women Artists: 1550-1950*, 213.

<sup>89</sup> Helen Weston, 'The Case for Constance Mayer', *Oxford Art Journal*, 3:1, April 1980, 15.

<sup>90</sup> Anthea Callen, 'Ideal Masculinities: The Case of Albinus', Nicholas Mirzoeff (ed.), *The Visual Culture Reader*, London and New York, 1998, 410.

<sup>91</sup> Helen Weston, 'The Case for Constance Mayer', 15.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>93</sup> Helen Weston 'Constance Mayer', Delia Gaze (ed.), *Concise Dictionary of Women Artists*, London, 2001, 477.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin, *Women Artists: 1550-1950*, 213.

artists secured access to training through their fathers.<sup>96</sup> So, in *Self-Portrait of the Artist with Her Father*, Mayer may be referring more generally to the circumstances of women artists' training. Mayer asserts the importance of masculine training in guiding her career in the form of the figure of her father, something which Villers, by comparison, fails to manifest. In *Young Woman Drawing*, Villers' depiction is more subversive, not acknowledging male influence on her creation.

Although Mayer received private tuition, her depiction of a daughter being taught by her father may be engaging with the lack of institutional support available for women, during this era and in others.<sup>97</sup> Most pre-nineteenth-century women painters were related to male artists, perhaps due to the limitations placed on other women's access to practical opportunities for artistic training.<sup>98</sup> One can relate this to François Gérard's *Portrait of Isabey and his Daughter* (1795) (figure 9). The artist Isabey is shown providing his daughter with guidance, in a sense a similar idea is being represented by Mayer who is being led by her father in her artistic endeavours. By the end of the eighteenth century, the representation of a close, warm interaction between a parent and child became popular in portraits.<sup>99</sup> As in Gerard's depiction, Mayer, in *Self-Portrait of the Artist with Her Father*, is herself being introduced to the public by her father who is depicted as offering her instruction in painting which, itself, will allow her to enter the public space. This depiction by Mayer showcases an acceptable Napoleonic era interaction – a compliant daughter dependent on her father who instructs her.<sup>100</sup> This depiction is very much in opposition to the depiction by Marie Victoire Lemoine, in *Interior of the Atelier of a Woman Painter* (1796) (figure 10). Lemoine also

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<sup>96</sup> Delia Gaze, *Concise Dictionary of Women Artists*, London, 2001, xxiii.

<sup>97</sup> Linda Nochlin argues this in her essay Linda Nochlin, 'Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?', 163.

<sup>98</sup> Germaine Greer, *The Obstacle Race, The Fortunes of Women Painters and Their Work*, 13.

<sup>99</sup> Shearer West, *Portraiture*, 117.

<sup>100</sup> Delia Gaze (ed.), *Concise Dictionary of Women Artists*, xxiii.

incorporates a teacher and pupil dynamic in her painting but she depicts Vigée-Lebrun, a female artist, in the position of authority teaching her.<sup>101</sup>

Adélaïde Labille-Guiard's *Self-Portrait with Two Pupils, Mlle Marie Gabrielle Capet and Mlle Carreaux de Rosemond* (1785) (figure 3), incorporates a self-portrait of the female artist Labille-Guiard, representing herself as a teacher of the next generation of women artists, as Borzello argues.<sup>102</sup> Unlike in Mayer's self-portrait, in which her father is an important part of the composition, Labille-Guiard's acknowledgement of her father's importance to her career is confined to a bust in the background, and is the only male presence in this painting.<sup>103</sup> Therefore, her inclusion of her father in her self-portrait is markedly different to the importance Mayer ascribes to her father in her artistic output. Weston argues that Mayer, unlike Labille-Guiard, was obscuring her professional status by including her father.<sup>104</sup> However, she also suggests that Mayer's self-portrait represents the interest that developed among women in asserting their desire to train as artists, which I would argue was also one of the aims of Labille-Guiard's portrait.<sup>105</sup> In 1801, Mayer trained in Jacques-Louis David's studio. David expected his female students to incorporate copies after his work into their paintings to show their dependency, by evading this in *Self-Portrait of the Artist with Her Father*, and because she is shown with her own portfolio, Weston argues Mayer asserts her own identity as an artist.<sup>106</sup> However, this artistic identity is diminished due to the inclusion of her father's figure and is less convincing than Villers' self-portrait.

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<sup>101</sup> Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin, *Women Artists: 1550-1950*, 189.

<sup>102</sup> Frances Borzello, *Seeing Ourselves, Women's Self-Portraits*, London, 1998, 82.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> Helen Weston, 'Constance Mayer', 477. Germaine Greer argues that one of the ways to discredit a woman artist's work was to assert that she played a subservient part to her male peers and to discuss her individuality as an inability to imitate them correctly. Germaine Greer, *The Obstacle Race, The Fortunes of Women Painters and Their Work*, 145.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 478.

I disagree with Greer's assessment that Mayer's self-portrait depicts hers as an 'imposing' figure, focussed on the creation of art.<sup>107</sup> She could be interpreted as appearing far less animated than her father and not obviously committed to the pursuit of art. In *Self-Portrait of the Artist with Her Father*, her figure instead of being 'imposing', is reminiscent of a marble statue or an artist's model, an object to be observed, in comparison to the animated nature of Villers' self-portrait. Mayer's body occupies a larger area of canvas than her father's, her dress engulfs much of the right foreground of the painting. Her head, however, is proportionally small for her body, smaller than her father's head, and is dwarfed in size by the casts of heads within the studio. This preoccupation with the feminine body overwhelming and dominating the head and, therefore, it can be extrapolated, the female figure's mind, had been, Abrams argued, a 'historical constant'.<sup>108</sup> Sexual difference was used to legitimise an essentialist perception of masculine and feminine roles.<sup>109</sup> The body was seen as the basis for understanding gender in society.<sup>110</sup> The accepted contemporary belief was that women were subjugated to their bodies. The physical disparities observed between the sexes were described in dominant discourses as manifestations of the differences in mental ability.<sup>111</sup> For example, it was believed that women's smaller physiques made them more 'childlike' and their smaller heads and brains made them incompatible with mental application.<sup>112</sup> Nochlin argues that representations of women in art functioned to replicate the accepted assumptions held by society about men's superiority to, and control of, women.<sup>113</sup> These conventions are manifested in the composition of Mayer's self-portrait.

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<sup>107</sup> Germaine Greer, *The Obstacle Race, The Fortunes of Women Painters and Their Work*, 37.

<sup>108</sup> Lynn Abrams, *The Making of Modern Woman*, 21.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>113</sup> Linda Nochlin, 'Women, Art and Power', 2.

By representing herself with a smaller head, her body forming a larger proportion of her figure, Mayer seems to be conforming and complicit with contemporary notions regarding female instability and lack of mental prowess. However, the difference in form is not as pronounced as in the contemporary image, *The Geography Lesson* (1812), by Louis-Léopold Boilly (figure 11). In Boilly's painting, the female figure's head is dwarfed by the much larger and imposing head of the male figure whose head seems comparable in size to the globe depicted, whilst the female pupil's skull appears to be about the same size as the dog's.

In *Self-Portrait of the Artist with Her Father*, the vacant expression and lack of movement in Mayer's body except for her hands perhaps stresses the importance of the latter in her artistic creation. However, this would suggest that she is representing her artworks as the result of mechanical copying - a common criticism levelled at female artists during the time, which I also discussed with regards to Viller's self-portrait - more the work of the hands than of the mind.<sup>114</sup> However, the movement of her hands may suggest the plight of the artist, forced to monitor and control her behaviour and deportment, but whose hands are free to create and allow her to engage with the public sphere through her art. The portfolio, her hand is reaching for, like in Villers' image, also suggests her dedication to creating art and her oeuvre.

In Mayer's composition, the viewer's gaze seems to be drawn to her figure by her father's gaze. Mayer depicts her figure to its best advantage, like Villers in her self-portrait, so that the viewer can admire it in its entirety. Mayer, a woman, appears to be the focus of the gaze; her father is not being looked at by either figure, he is not scrutinised, whereas Constance who is not an agent of the gaze, unlike Villers in *Young Woman Drawing*, is being

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<sup>114</sup> Joanna Woodall, *Portraiture, Facing the Subject*, 148.

observed by her father and the bust of Raphael. Mayer, by painting this self-portrait, engages with the concept of self-surveillance (as described by Michel Foucault).<sup>115</sup> The act of creating self-portraiture, involves defining oneself, examining the impression that you make when being perceived by others and is, according to Foucault, the act of self-governing, conforming to the dominant ideologies of accepted behaviour because of the belief that one is being observed.<sup>116</sup> Although Foucault never specifically analyses the importance of gender within this power structure, he examines the nature of controlling one's image to represent established behaviours.<sup>117</sup> One could argue that Mayer, in *Self-Portrait of the Artist with Her Father*, is in fact reinforcing the dominant ideologies regarding the notion of the gaze and gender, the woman is being controlled, being observed by the man directing the gaze. Weston states that Mayer benefited from the new opportunities allowing her to exhibit in the Paris Salons, exhibiting at every Salon from 1796.<sup>118</sup> This suggests that Mayer would be aware that this self-portrait, which was exhibited at the Salon, would be observed by many viewers and, seeking patronage, she asserts her claims as an artist but ensures that she adheres to dominant contemporary notions of femininity.

### **Marie-Gabrielle Capet's Artist's Studio**

To further examine the interaction of men and women in self-portraits in the studios of artists, I have chosen Marie-Gabrielle Capet's (1761-1818), *Atelier of Madame Vincent around 1800*, (1808) (figure 12). This painting was exhibited at the Salon of 1808.<sup>119</sup> Capet celebrated her teacher Labille-Guiard by painting a posthumous portrait of her (she died in

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<sup>115</sup> Michel Foucault., 'Discipline and Punish, Panopticism', Alan Sheridan (ed.), *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, New York, 1977, 195-228.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Helen Weston, 'Constance Mayer', 477.

<sup>119</sup> Alexandra K. Wettlaufer, *Portraits of the Artist as a Young Woman: Painting and the Novel in France and Britain, 1800-1860*, Ohio, 2011, 43.



1803).<sup>120</sup> Labille-Guiard is depicted ‘active’ at her easel, assisted by Capet who changes her palette, while predominantly male artists, observe.<sup>121</sup> Labille-Guiard is shown painting a portrait of the artist Joseph-Marie Vien (as she had twenty-five years before), while her husband and teacher François-André Vincent observes along with other artists, including Pajou, François Picot, Jean Alaux and Charles Meynier, who had become when Capet created this portrait, some of the foremost academic painters.<sup>122</sup>

Alexandra K. Wettlaufer describes the women as being represented as powerful and engaged in occupation.<sup>123</sup> Capet, as a female artist, represents the signifiers of artistic activity in the possession of the female figures, including herself, in this painting. The hands of all three women are occupied with the materials of artistic production. In the far left foreground, Capet is holding a palette and a paint brush with a portfolio resting on the table. Labille-Guiard is involved with creating an art work, touching the canvas, and the female figure on the far right is pointing directly at a drawing which might be hers, showcasing her artistic talent or prompting discussion. The female figure on the right of the composition in the middle ground is, I would argue, the most arresting figure in *Atelier of Madame Vincent around 1800*. Her unique energy in the composition is heightened by the comparable lack of energy shown in the male figure to her right whose clothes appear to be engulfing his body entirely and completely hiding his neck from view. His ineffectual, limp hand is positioned on the back of the chair in front of him, in comparison to her confident pointing hand. This male figure’s hand resting on Vien’s chair is also contrasted to the energetic man on the left of the composition who is placing a hand on the chair of Labille-Guiard, but that hand appears to be gripping in a more animated manner and not resting. In *Atelier of Madame*

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<sup>120</sup> Germaine Greer, *The Obstacle Race, The Fortunes of Women Painters and Their Work*, 265.

<sup>121</sup> Alexandra K. Wettlaufer, *Portraits of the Artist as a Young Woman: Painting and the Novel in France and Britain, 1800-1860*, 43.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

*Vincent around 1800*, a parallel is created between the figure of the man on the left who is pointing at the female artist's drawing, guiding her perhaps, and the figure of the female on the far right of the composition who is also pointing. Their hands appear to be at the same height, although she appears more confident. Her finger is more forcibly pointing, whereas his hand is more open. It is interesting that her hand is represented in front of a group of white feathers that appears to imitate the formation of the *fleur-de-lis*, symbols of monarchy, wilted and ineffectual, perhaps referring to Labille-Guiard's sympathy with the Revolution and signifying the allowance of women to a greater voice during the Revolution and after (especially, the ability for women artists to exhibit in the Salon).

The female figure, in *Atelier of Madame Vincent around 1800*, who is forcibly pointing is also staring at the man next to her, imploring him to look at the drawing in the open portfolio, asking him to discuss it or examine it, whilst two male figures look on and show interest in her opinion. Capet's painting represents women intellectually engaging in discussion in a studio, commanding the attention of the male figures. Wettlaufer suggests that this portrait showcases women as part of the 'larger sphere of cultural production.'<sup>124</sup> Six of the male artists in Capet's composition appear to be observing the man instructing Labille-Guiard in the creation of her artwork on the easel. In comparison, only three male figures are engaging with the woman in the right mid-ground of the composition who is directing discussion. However, the three men that surround the pointing female figure appear to be far more engrossed and engaged listening to her thoughts, than the six men who are watching the instruction of Labille-Guiard. As such, this portrait can be regarded as demonstrating opposition to the national law enacted in 1793 which banned women from 'assembling and from deliberating on any subject.'<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Alexandra K. Wettlaufer, *Portraits of the Artist as a Young Woman: Painting and the Novel in France and Britain, 1800-1860*, 43.

<sup>125</sup> Laura Auricchio, 'Revolutionary Paradoxes: 1789-94', 27.

Capet appears to be depicting women as agents for change, suggesting that Capet, as a female artist, believed in the importance of women in enriching the art world and more generally society. *Atelier of Madame Vincent around 1800*, might be representing the progression of female artists in society as depicted in the pictorial field in a linear progression from left to right. The female artist on the far left of the composition has a palette and a closed portfolio and is looking out at, with her figure turned towards, the viewer - ready to be observed. The male figure behind her is turned away and she is isolated within the composition. To the right of these figures one sees a female artist drawing, being instructed and having the men in the room examine her creation. Then on the far right side of the composition a woman is discussing her work with male figures. This female figure is in control, she has a voice, she is no longer so isolated or merely a pupil to be instructed she is contributing her knowledge to the group of male artists. The female figure on the far right might therefore represent the direction Capet hopes women's engagement in the art world will further progress.

It is elucidating to compare Capet's depiction of a studio to Louis-Léopold Boilly's, *Gathering of Artists in the Studio of Isabey* (1798) (figure 13). Boilly created an imaginary group portrait of prominent contemporary artists, exhibiting far greater liveliness amongst the artists than Capet does.<sup>126</sup> In Capet's *Atelier of Madame Vincent around 1800*, however, the animation is gendered with the female figures having the greatest vitality. Boilly represents his artists in a much more sumptuous studio than Capet but with no women depicted. The central figures of both Boilly's and Capet's paintings are bathed in light with poses that are unique to the other figures in their compositions. Capet chose for the central figure of the composition to be Labille-Guiard who is shown at her easel creating art. In comparison, in

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<sup>126</sup> Anthony Halliday, *Facing the Public: Portraiture in the Aftermath of the French Revolution*, 140.

Boilly's composition, Isabey is not depicted engaging in artistic creation but is leaning over his sitting friend, whilst they are both scrutinising a picture on an easel.<sup>127</sup>

Ewa Lajer-Burcharth examines the issue of gender in Boilly's *Gathering of Artists in the Studio of Isabey*, arguing that Boilly asserts the contemporary notion that the artistic community was viewed as exclusively masculine, a place for artists, architects, intellectuals hence no women are represented.<sup>128</sup> Boilly initially contemplated depicting the women of Isabey's household (as evidenced in his preparatory drawings), but they were left out of the final composition.<sup>129</sup> Lajer-Burcharth states that the gender specificity is interesting due to the increased female attendance at the Salons and because established women artists were connected to the figures represented in this composition.<sup>130</sup> To not incorporate female figures suggests Boilly's resistance to showing women engaged in these intellectual groupings.

Boilly shows in the *Painter in Her Studio* that he was willing to create a composition with a woman artist depicted, but she is confined to the private, domestic interior, engaged with the mechanical creation of art works and not engaged with other adult figures in the discussion of ideas. As Halliday argues, Boilly depicts these men 'not as artisans, but as men of culture.'<sup>131</sup>

The only feminine figures depicted by Boilly in Isabey's studio are the bas-reliefs on the wall which comprise allegorical figures of the 'feminine personifications of Sculpture and Painting' with Minerva's (the patron of the arts) bust shown importantly in the centre of the composition.<sup>132</sup> Women feature only symbolically as uniting the male community.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, *Necklines: The Art of Jacques-Louis David after the Terror*, New Haven, 1999, 213.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.

<sup>131</sup> Anthony Halliday, *Facing the Public: Portraiture in the Aftermath of the French Revolution*, 140.

<sup>132</sup> Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, *Necklines: The Art of Jacques-Louis David after the Terror*, 214. It is interesting that Labille-Guiard in *Self-Portrait with two pupils, Mlle Marie Gabrielle Capet and Mlle Carreaux de Rosemond*, also choose to exclude artists of the opposite gender in her studio. However, she incorporates a bust of her father, an important figure in her artistic career, not allegorical figures as Boilly does.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

Homosocial intimacy represent Boilly's intellectual community.<sup>134</sup> Capet's painting of the atelier of Labille-Guiard, completed a decade later, seems incredibly significant and astounding in comparison to Boilly's. Capet's *Atelier of Madame Vincent around 1800* which uses the established forms of representation of artists in a studio but it incorporates women in such a central role; with women asserting their status as both artists and intellectuals. Wettlaufer argues that Capet's depiction represents the 'politics of art' in 1808.<sup>135</sup> It is significant to note that there were changes in the 1790's in the French art establishment. The National Assembly began to allow all artists to submit pieces for the Salon, in 1791, increasing the opportunities for women to exhibit their work and achieve public recognition.<sup>136</sup> Also, originally, the *Commune générale des arts de peinture, sculpture, architecture et gravure*, which had replaced the *Académie* in 1793, allowed women to join, although this acceptance was short-lived.<sup>137</sup> Perhaps Boilly was attempting to reassert the prescribed contemporary notions regarding masculine intellectual capability and the perceived superiority of male artists in comparison to the belief that women artists lacked imagination.

Boilly later included women in a studio setting, in *Houdon's Studio* (1804) (figure 14). He created two paintings that show Houdon, the eminent sculptor, working in his studio. In this painting the sculptor represents his claims to being a professional artist, depicting himself modelling a portrait with more of his works represented along the walls. Like Mayer, his family is also incorporated into his self-portrait; his wife and daughters are shown in his studio.<sup>138</sup> *Houdon's Studio* was originally imagined as a family portrait, but instead it served

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<sup>134</sup> Alexandra K. Wettlaufer, *Portraits of the Artist as a Young Woman: Painting and the Novel in France and Britain, 1800-1860*, 45.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>136</sup> Laura Auricchio, 'Revolutionary Paradoxes: 1789-94', 24.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> Susan L. Siegfried, *The Art of Louis-Léopold Boilly. Modern Life in Napoleonic France*, New Haven and London, 1995, 104.

to showcase Houdon's success when it was exhibited at the 1804 Salon.<sup>139</sup> No interaction is shown between Houdon and his female family members who are depicted separate from him and distant.

In a later painting created by Boilly, that also depicts *Houdon's Studio* (1808) (figure 15), women are absent entirely. Male artists are shown drawing from a male nude and observing Houdon's creation of a sculpture. It is interesting that in the earlier portrait the women appear much more detached from the artistic endeavour in comparison to the men in his later studio portrait. In the 1808 version the male figures are much closer to the sculptor in the composition but also psychologically; the male figures seem thoroughly engrossed in the studio environment, learning from Houdon. In comparison, the female members of Houdon's family seem disengaged, posed similarly to the gentleman that Houdon is creating his sculpture for. They seem to be represented as merely objects for the viewer to gaze at, represented only because of their connection to Houdon and to signify his achievements, his compassion, and the instruction he offers as a father (reminiscent of Gérard's depiction of Isabey and Mayer's depiction of her father). One of Houdon's daughters is shown pulling out a drawing from his portfolio, but this seems more as a tool to showcase Houdon's oeuvre, his working process, than to suggest her artistic engagement as she is not looking at the drawing. The female figures in Boilly's composition in comparison to Capet's appear lacking any interest in the studio setting and in artistic practice. One can, therefore, compare how a female artist depicts women's engagement in a studio, in the artistic community and the significance of their contribution, to Boilly who either fails to incorporate women or instead represents them as the audience of a male artist or as signifiers of his paternal guidance.

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined the specific genre of self-portraiture and how women artists used their artworks to construct their professional identity for the viewer; how they navigated the prescribed roles assigned to women in the Napoleonic society, whilst also embodying the attributes of professional artists, asserting their place in the art world. To begin, I analysed Marie-Denis Villers' *Young Woman Drawing*, scrutinising how she represented herself as a confident professional artist, as an observer, more so than as an object to be observed. Unlike previous scholarship, I analysed specific parts of her composition, including the broken window, in the context of contemporary debates regarding the separation of the spheres along gendered lines, and how Villers referenced the plight of women artists through the sparse interior. I argued that Villers managed to represent herself as a professional artist, whilst also adhering to the notions of femininity in the idealisation of her figure.

Comparing Villers' self-portrait to Constance Mayer's, I contended that Mayer's depiction appears far less radical than Villers. Mayer depicts herself as deferential to her father and to male artistic authority. Previous analysis of this painting failed to examine Mayer's depiction of the proportions of the bodies themselves and how Mayer appear to be contributing to contemporary notions regarding the inferiority of women. However, I argued that the movement in Mayer's figure was confined to her hands, and like Villers's portrait, and may be an assertion that her profession allows her to escape the confines of society enacted on women.

Finally, I decided to compare the representation of multiple figures engaging in the context of the artist's studio. I analysed Capet's depiction of the atelier of Madame Vincent and argued how highly original the artwork is, in part because the signifiers of artistic activity are in the possession of the female figures. I singled out one of the female figures who is shown confidently engaging intellectually with male figures who appear interested in her

opinion. I argued that Capet represents her belief in the importance of women's ideas and engagement as enriching the art world and, more generally, society. Capet's painting might suggest the ideal progress that she hopes as a female artist will occur, in which ideas are shared and philosophies discussed between the genders and the studio becomes not merely a site of male interactions (in contrast to Boilly's depiction of Isabey's studio). Finally, I compared Boilly's paintings that depict artist's studios and showed that the instances in which women are shown as being physically part of the studio are mainly when they are referenced as family members. I argued that the female figures present in *Houdon's Studio* (1804) are not female artists training, but members of the Houdon family who are seemingly uninterested in the process of creating art and are simply utilised to signify Houdon's fatherly instruction. In this chapter I have argued that whilst female artists adhere to certain social conventions regarding their gender in their self-portraits, unlike their male artist's counterparts they were striving to create a dialogue in the Salon that asserted their professional status and right to be involved in artistic creation, but also in public intellectual life and, due to the opening of the Salons, they had a greater opportunity to demonstrate their perspective.



## Chapter 2: Contemporary History Paintings, Pauline Auzou's Depictions of Empress Marie-Louise

### Introduction

In the previous chapter I examined how female artists represented themselves to appease dominant expectations of them and their gender, whilst reconciling this with their claims to professional statuses and their engagement with the public sphere. In this chapter I analyse two oil paintings by the artist Pauline Auzou (née Jeanne-Marie-Catherine Desmarquest) (1775-1835) depicting Marie-Louise (1791-1847) Archduchess of Austria and the second wife of Napoleon Bonaparte, just before and following her marriage to the French Emperor. She is represented participating in rituals that signify her new role as Empress. These two depictions of Marie-Louise were both displayed at the Salon and I examine how Auzou codifies the Empress's unique position in contemporary society and the importance of her image for Napoleonic propaganda. Furthermore, I study how she frames gender for the spectators at the Salon from her perspective as a female artist, scrutinising her portrayal of the role and relationship of the genders in contemporary paintings exhibited in a male-dominated public sphere, depicting ceremonies of matrimony and festival in which women had prescribed public roles. Auzou, like the self-portraits by women artists that I discussed previously, asserts women's roles and their importance in the public sphere, whilst still ensuring women adhere to their roles prescribed by dominant discourses.

The two paintings by Auzou I will analyse are entitled, *The Arrival at Compiègne of Empress Marie-Louise* (1810) (figure 16) and *The Farewell of Marie-Louise to Her Family*

(1812) (figure 17). They were exhibited at the Salons of 1810 and 1812 respectively.<sup>140</sup> In *The Arrival at Compiègne of Empress Marie-Louise*, Auzou depicts the newly married Napoleon and Marie-Louise, daughter of the Austrian Emperor, Francis I, after she has travelled from Vienna where their marriage occurred by proxy on 11 March 1810.<sup>141</sup> She was greeted in the Gallery of the Château of Compiègne on 28 March by young women who presented Marie-Louise with floral arrangements.<sup>142</sup> *The Farewell of Marie-Louise to Her Family* is described in the *Salon Livret* as representing Empress Marie-Louise, on 13 March 1810, distributing her diamonds to her mother and siblings in her room in Vienna, before departing for France.<sup>143</sup>

### Comparisons with Male Artists' Depictions of Marie-Louise

Nochlin argues that Auzou's paintings, 'made two of the most original contributions to the iconography of Marie-Louise and the Austrian marriage.'<sup>144</sup> She describes Auzou's ability to subdue and combine the 'pompous rhetoric of history painting with the intimacy of sentimental genre'.<sup>145</sup> I agree that in comparison to Louis-Philippe Crépin's *Napoleon I and Marie-Louise Disembarking at Antwerp* (1810) (figure 18) (which was shown at the Salon of 1810 with Auzou's *The Arrival at Compiègne of Empress Marie-Louise*, also depicting the

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<sup>140</sup> Jordana Pomeroy, Laura Auricchio and Yuriko Anne Jackall, 'Pauline Auzou', Jordana Pomeroy (ed.), *Royalists to Romantics, Women Artists from the Louvre, Versailles, and Other French National Collections*, exhibition catalogue, Washington D.C., National Museum of Women in the Arts, London, 2012, 53.

<sup>141</sup> Jean Tulard, 'Jeux diplomatiques et problème dynastique: le mariage de Napoléon et Marie-Louise', Bernard Chevallier, Anne Dion-Tenenbaum and Marc Desti et al. (eds), *1810, La politique de l'amour, Napoleon 1er et Marie-Louise à Compiègne*, exhibition catalogue, Compiègne, Musée national du Palais impérial de Compiègne, Paris, 2010, 18.

Steven Englund states that the formal marriage ceremony itself took place on 2 April at Notre-Dame. Steven Englund, *Napoleon, A Political Life*, 360.

<sup>142</sup> Vivian P. Cameron, 'Pauline Auzou', Delia Gaze (ed.), *Dictionary of Women Artists*, Chicago and London, 1997, (vol. 1), 201.

<sup>143</sup> Chantal Gastinel-Coural, David Mandrella and Hélène Meyer, 'Catalogue des oeuvres exposées', Bernard Chevallier, Anne Dion-Tenenbaum and Marc Desti et al. (eds), *1810, La politique de l'amour, Napoleon 1er et Marie-Louise à Compiègne*, exhibition catalogue, Compiègne, Musée national du Palais impérial de Compiègne, Paris, 2010, 173.

<sup>144</sup> Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin, *Women Artists: 1550-1950*, 49.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

Emperor and Empress), the fashion and stances of the figures in Auzou's painting are more informal and intimate; the number of figures in the composition is reduced.<sup>146</sup> In Crépin's composition a multitude of figures are depicted with the majority of the canvas reserved for the representation of France's supremacy as connoted by a profusion of military regalia, ships and flags. The importance of Marie-Louise's position as Empress and as a signifier of Napoleon's regime is thus diminished in Crépin's painting.

Another painting created in 1810, also by a male artist, Georges Rouget, represents a public event that involved Marie-Louise and Napoleon and is entitled, *Marriage of Napoleon I and Marie Louise of Austria* (figure 19). Rouget, like Crépin, represents distance in the compositional space between the viewer and the figures with a large area of empty floor space in the foreground. Rouget also includes a crowd of figures and men appear in both Rouget's and Crépin's paintings, framing both images' left and right foregrounds. The order of patriarchy dominates; women are restrained compositionally to small areas of these artists' compositions, surrounded by male figures, in contradistinction to Auzou's depiction.

Auzou's decision to represent Napoleon and Marie-Louise as being greeted only by female figures in *The Arrival at Compiègne of Empress Marie-Louise*, stresses the importance of gender in the encounter, in contrast to Jean-Baptiste Isabey's *The Arrival of Marie-Louise at Compiègne* (1810) (figure 20) in which male figures dominate. In Isabey's composition, Marie-Louise is shown meeting Napoleon surrounded by men, with a few women mainly relegated to the background. It is interesting that male artists who were either commissioned or chose to represent the arrival of Marie-Louise at Compiègne did not focus on the depiction of female figures and their involvement in society, despite their presence within the Salon audience. The focus on women's roles in Auzou's depiction of the arrival, is

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<sup>146</sup> Jean Tulard, 'Jeux diplomatiques et problème dynastique: le mariage de Napoléon et Marie-Louise', 22.

emphasised by the abundance of flowers that are present in the image as beautiful manifestations of nature, associated with femininity, coding this space as feminine. Auzou depicts Marie-Louise in settings containing limited male figures, in her foreground depiction of the arrival is the Empress's husband Napoleon and, in the farewell, are her male relations. Unlike the male artists' depictions, Auzou highlights the importance of the figure of the Empress and the group of young girls in the public sphere. In *The Arrival at Compiègne of Empress Marie-Louise*, Boime argues that Auzou did not focus her composition around the figure of Napoleon, unlike many contemporary paintings which reinforced Napoleonic propaganda and represented the 'overarching authority of the Emperor'.<sup>147</sup> Auzou instead relegated Napoleon to the role of an observer.<sup>148</sup>

Unlike Auzou's portrayal, Napoleon is shown in Isabey's, Rouget's and Crépin's paintings with his legs apart, suggesting movement, whilst Marie-Louise, especially in Rouget's image, is side-lined and unmoving behind Napoleon. However, Boime fails to discuss how the depiction of Napoleon by Auzou in *The Arrival at Compiègne of Empress Marie-Louise* conforms to dominant ideologies regarding the Emperor. The very pale skin of the female figures, accentuated by the white dresses they wear in Auzou's representation of the arrival scene, alludes to their confinement to the interior away from the rays of the sun. In contrast, Napoleon's tanned face suggests his vigorous outdoor life and military triumphs.

In the previous chapter I discussed the notion of the gendered gaze with men being prescribed as agents of the gaze and women being passively observed. Unlike Villers' portrait which appeared to be subverting this prevailing ideology, Napoleon, in Auzou's *The Arrival at Compiègne of Empress Marie-Louise*, is portrayed as asserting the male gaze on his wife,

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<sup>147</sup> Albert Boime, *Art in an Age of Bonapartism, 1800-1815, A Social History of Modern Art*, Chicago, 1990, (vol. 2), 209.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

watching and controlling her behaviour. Napoleon's eyes are the most striking in the painting and their whites are more easily differentiated from his face due to his tanned skin. Although Napoleon's figure does not dominate the pictorial field, his authoritarian gaze, in comparison to Marie-Louise's distant gaze that does not engage with any figure in the composition, refers perhaps to Napoleon's recent political engagement with the roles of women especially in society. The Emperor asserted his authority in, for example, the enactment of the Napoleonic Code which affirmed paternal authority and the subordination of women in the family structure.<sup>149</sup> Napoleon was also critical of women's engagement in public affairs (for example, of Germaine de Staël, who he exiled from Paris in 1803).<sup>150</sup> Thus, Auzou signifies Napoleon's authority in *The Arrival at Compiègne of Empress Marie-Louise*, through his dominant gaze which scrutinises Marie-Louise's behaviour. Additionally, it might be argued that the female figures depicted also adhere to the dominant discourses regarding the gaze, they are objects to be observed. Therefore, the female figures, engaged in public life, which were depicted by Auzou at the arrival of Marie-Louise, whilst dominating the composition, were it could be argued a spectacle of feminine kinship and virtue as prescribed by dominant contemporary ideologies; a woman was to be looked at and admired. However, although the female figures are not partaking in any specifically political acts that would assert their claim to autonomy, I intend to argue that Auzou represents the importance of Marie-Louise to Napoleon's legitimisation, her latent power and, the importance of women's involvement in public festivals.

### **Festivals, The Public, Prescribed Engagement of Women**

To understand how Auzou represents women's contemporary political engagement in *The Arrival at Compiègne of Empress Marie-Louise* it is necessary to examine the context of the

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<sup>149</sup> Steven Englund, *Napoleon, A Political Life*, 189.

<sup>150</sup> Albert Boime, *Art in an Age of Bonapartism, 1800-1815, A Social History of Modern Art*, (vol. 2), 206.

Napoleonic public festivals. Denise Z. Davidson examines the narratives represented by such festivals and the approach taken by the authorities to incorporate women in the events so as to contribute to the creation of a stable social order.<sup>151</sup> Festivals, she argues, from the Revolution onwards had continuity in their activities and shared the goal of bolstering senses of solidarity to strengthen the nation. Napoleon encouraged the arrangement of festivals as tools of propaganda.<sup>152</sup> Although Napoleon disputed the importance of women in public life, local authorities, following the orders of Napoleon's government, endeavoured to include women in such events.<sup>153</sup> One of the Napoleonic regime's approaches was to organise festivals in public places, such as a town square, with officials present and to represent the advantages gained for women from confining themselves to the private sphere, their families and motherly responsibilities.<sup>154</sup> These festivals reproduced the dominant contemporary ideologies surrounding femininity and women who, by being included in these festivals, were encouraged to be complicit in their subjugation.<sup>155</sup>

Whilst the aim of these festivals was to advocate women's confinement to the private domestic sphere, Davidson argues that their involvement in such events denoted the Napoleonic government's acknowledgement of the importance of women's roles in maintaining societal order.<sup>156</sup> Davidson says that although the predominant perception of the Napoleonic era was that women were incredibly limited in their public and political roles, this was mainly in legal discourses prescribed by the Napoleonic Code and that official festivals gave women access into the politicised public sphere.<sup>157</sup> I would argue that Auzou is

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<sup>151</sup> Denise Z. Davidson, 'Women at Napoleonic Festivals: Gender and the Public Sphere during the First Empire', *French History*, 16:3, 2002, 302.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 299.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 299.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 300.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 299.

evoking these festivals in her choice of representing the Emperor and Empress being welcomed by the young women to help legitimise the Napoleonic regime, showcasing the similarity of the function of contemporary history paintings and festivals, and the importance of female engagement to promote the ruler and the political system. Although Auzou's depiction of Marie-Louise being greeted by young girls with flowers can be understood as happening in a domestic space, it involves France's key public figures and is, in effect, being witnessed publically by other figures (and in turn, by the Salon audience).

Despite Napoleon advocating women's inferiority within the Civil Code, the involvement of women in the *journées* of the French Revolution could not have been absent from his thoughts. The Emperor needed them to have a role, but one that was carefully controlled to suit his objectives which the festivals, and Auzou's *The Arrival at Compiègne of Empress Marie-Louise*, it could be argued, provided. Auzou represents in her painting a way that women were able to engage with the public sphere, albeit in a controlled way. She emphasises the importance of women's involvement in the public sphere, whilst also adhering to their prescribed roles in festivals demanded by Napoleon. The most prominent example of female contributions at festivals was evident in publicly staged weddings, highlighting the importance of marriage in the Empire.<sup>158</sup> Auzou's *The Arrival at Compiègne of Empress Marie-Louise* could be seen as performing the same function. The artist depicts women engaged in a ceremony associated with matrimony in the public sphere, permitting the female Salon viewers to identify their importance in the public sphere whilst also engaging in support for Napoleon's reign and being confined to their approved parts. Crow describes the Salon as allowing the 'ordinary man or woman [...] to rehearse before works of

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

art the kinds of pleasure and discrimination that once had been the exclusive prerogative of the patron and his intimates.<sup>159</sup>

Napoleonic festivals had a standard national configuration with detailed instructions given to local officials. In May 1810, Napoleon and Marie-Louise toured Rouen, an important textile manufacturing town, and among the celebrations staged for their visit a gathering was held at the chamber of commerce.<sup>160</sup> During the festival, a group of thirty young girls all dressed in white entered the room and presented the Empress with a basket of manufactured pieces.<sup>161</sup> In *The Arrival at Compiègne of Empress Marie-Louise*, a comparable group of young girls is depicted presenting flowers to Marie-Louise, they were from Compiègne and the tallest, Adèle Pottier, was the niece of the mayor at the time.<sup>162</sup> She is depicted with her hand on her heart, complementing the new Empress.<sup>163</sup> In Auzou's painting the eye of the spectator is fixated on the animated movements and configuration of the group of youthful female figures. Consequently, I would argue that in *The Arrival at Compiègne of Empress Marie-Louise*, Auzou references these festivals and, thus, one of the few ways women could engage in public life. Auzou's painting of the greeting that Marie-Louise received after arriving at the palace represents a very similar moment to the festival at Rouen and, therefore, refers more broadly to the re-enactment of women's engagement in public life (albeit in a controlled and codified way, represented as beautiful figures bearing gifts, dressed in white, as the Empire preferred).

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<sup>159</sup> Thomas E. Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-century Paris*, 3.

<sup>160</sup> Denise Z. Davidson, 'Women at Napoleonic Festivals: Gender and the Public Sphere during the First Empire', 299.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 302.

<sup>162</sup> Chantal Gastinel-Coural, David Mandrella and Hélène Meyer, 'Catalogue des oeuvres exposées', 173. Albert Boime in *Art in an Age of Bonapartism, 1800-1815, A Social History of Modern Art*, (vol. 2), an earlier text, on page 208, refers to the group of girls as consisting of the 'Bonapartist princesses and ladies in waiting', however the princesses would be significantly older than the girls depicted and so I do not agree with Boime's interpretation.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*



Napoleon needed women's support to endorse and legitimise Marie-Louise's position as the new Empress, an aim which Auzou appears to be embracing in depicting the young female figures heartily welcoming Marie-Louise at Compiègne. Davidson argues that festivals were the events at which 'idealistic prescriptions' of women's behaviour could be encouraged among the population, they brought these approved ideals to life.<sup>164</sup> Napoleon realised that women helped to connect people to the state and would nurture devoted citizens.<sup>165</sup> In *The Arrival at Compiègne of Empress Marie-Louise* Auzou evokes national and local festivals, using the figure of the Empress and the young girls engaged in a celebration relating to matrimony. Christopher Prendergast argues that the moment depicted in Napoleonic contemporary history paintings was used to signify an 'ideal moment', divorced from any specific time, it stood for the 'universal'.<sup>166</sup> Therefore, I would argue that Auzou in this painting is not only representing the specifics of this event and the nature of festivals nationally, but is referring more universally to the importance of women's official roles in public life through the figure of the Empress and the female figures that greet her. As a female artist, Auzou would have had a heightened awareness of the limited role and identities women were able to occupy in public life. Her Salon paintings, like the festivals, allowed a woman (herself) to engage, albeit indirectly, in contemporary debates regarding gender in the public sphere.

### **Propaganda and the Importance of the Salons**

Auzou was privately trained by the history painter and academician Jean-Baptiste Regnault in the 1780s because, as discussed in the previous chapter, the number of women able to

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<sup>164</sup> Denise Z. Davidson, 'Women at Napoleonic Festivals: Gender and the Public Sphere during the First Empire', 302.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Christopher Prendergast, *Napoleon and History Painting, Antoine-Jean Gros's La Bataille d'Eylau*, Oxford, 1997, 50.

become academicians was four but they were not allowed to train at the official schools of the *Académie*.<sup>167</sup> Women were then not entitled to membership in the Fine Arts section of the new *Institut de France*.<sup>168</sup> This meant that many women who desired status in the Parisian art world had to have the money and connections to train in the private studios of highly esteemed artists, such as Regnault.<sup>169</sup> However, Linda L. Clark argues that female artists benefited from patronage that they secured by exhibiting at the open Salon.<sup>170</sup> After the opening of the Salon to all artists in 1791 by the *Académie* (prior to this it was only open to academicians), and its continuation after the closure of the *Académie*, Auzou seized the opportunity and exhibited there for around twenty-five years (1793-1817).<sup>171</sup>

During and after the Revolution, the arts and the government were defined as symbiotic guardians of public virtue.<sup>172</sup> Prendergast argues that the aim of the Salon was to provide educational opportunities for the population in the public sphere, creating honourable citizens.<sup>173</sup> The composition of the Jury du Salon and the bestowing of prizes fell under the power of the Institut.<sup>174</sup> However, the administration of the arts was fractured into numerous organisations and there was no comprehensible artistic strategy for defining precisely how to represent civic virtue.<sup>175</sup> Moreover, in 1802, Vivant Denon was appointed director of the Louvre (renamed the Musée Napoléon).<sup>176</sup> Denon was also a member of the Salon jury at the Institut and the ‘co-ordinator of state commissions’.<sup>177</sup> He was in charge of artistic production, ensuring art reflected Napoleon’s requirements, although he did not exert

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<sup>167</sup> Jordana Pomeroy, Laura Auricchio and Yuriko Anne Jackall, ‘Pauline Auzou’, 53.

<sup>168</sup> Linda L. Clark, *Women and Achievement in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, 27.

<sup>169</sup> Nancy Mowll Mathews, ‘France, Nineteenth Century’, 89.

<sup>170</sup> Linda L. Clark, *Women and Achievement in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, 27.

<sup>171</sup> Jordana Pomeroy, Laura Auricchio and Yuriko Anne Jackall, ‘Pauline Auzou’, 53.

<sup>172</sup> Christopher Prendergast, *Napoleon and History Painting, Antoine-Jean Gros’s La Bataille d’Eylau*, 118.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

particularly oppressive control.<sup>178</sup> Prendergast states that the Salon exhibition and the acquisition of pieces for the museum amounted to ‘eclectic’ ‘appropriation’.<sup>179</sup> Although the output from contemporary artists was controlled, subjects were recommended and there was guidance, there was not a rigid defined outline for artists such as Auzou and that allowed them greater scope to adapt the representation of the ruler and civic occasions - which I have argued Auzou utilised in the references to festivals.<sup>180</sup>

To examine the creation of Napoleonic propaganda, one needs to appreciate Napoleon’s attitude to the arts. It has been argued by Englund and Prendergast that the arts were tactically important for Napoleon and for France, politics and art were closely connected, art was ‘national and public’.<sup>181</sup> Alexander argues that due to the downfall of French aristocratic patronage, a ‘vacuum’ formed that allowed the state to monopolize cultural authority.<sup>182</sup> The extent of the Emperor’s personal involvement with the arts, not merely the influence his advisors asserted in advocating arts importance as a propagandistic tool to legitimise his rule, is debatable. Alexander and Clive Emsley describe Napoleon’s desire to shape his public image through art.<sup>183</sup> For example, at the beginning of 1812 Anne-Louis Girodet was commissioned to produce thirty-six identical, full-length portraits of the Emperor to be distributed among the imperial courts.<sup>184</sup> Conversely, Prendergast argues that Napoleon’s direct interferences in the creation of art works were limited.<sup>185</sup> His Minister of the Interior, Jean-Antoine Chaptal wrote, ‘Napoleon did not care for the arts probably because nature had denied him the sensibility to appreciate their merit [...] Nevertheless, [...]

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<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>181</sup> Steven Englund, *Napoleon, A Political Life*, 304-305. Christopher Prendergast, *Napoleon and History Painting, Antoine-Jean Gros’s La Bataille d’Eylau*, 118.

<sup>182</sup> R. S. Alexander, *Napoleon*, New York, 2001, 118.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 6. Clive Emsley, *Napoleon, Conquest, Reform and Reorganisation*, London, 2003, 26.

<sup>184</sup> Thomas E. Crow, *Emulation: David, Drouais, and Girodet in the Art of Revolutionary France*, New Haven, 2006, 261.

<sup>185</sup> Christopher Prendergast, *Napoleon and History Painting, Antoine-Jean Gros’s La Bataille d’Eylau*, 122.

he always appeared to interest himself in the arts. [...] He did this for political reasons in order to demonstrate his broadmindedness.<sup>186</sup> Napoleon visited the Salon and was given reports on it from Denon, but due to the many reports received by Napoleon one cannot assume that artistic matters seized much of the Emperor's attention.<sup>187</sup> Napoleon's belief in the importance of both literature and the press in influencing and engaging the public sphere for propaganda purposes (more so that art works) is evidenced by the strict censorship he imposed on them.<sup>188</sup> Nevertheless, there was government supervision in the creation and display of art works and police scrutiny of the public exhibition of paintings.<sup>189</sup> But art was less subject to formal censorship because Napoleon deemed it less of a threat than the written word and, therefore, less worthy of his attention.<sup>190</sup>

However, the Napoleonic regime understood that art could be used effectively for propaganda purposes.<sup>191</sup> Napoleon needed to assert power and to legitimise his unprecedented position in France.<sup>192</sup> The problem was that legitimacy was traditionally linked to monarchical leadership, but in post-revolutionary France that institution was also associated with tyranny by Republican supporters of the Revolution.<sup>193</sup> Propaganda was used by Napoleon's government to appease the factions of a society that had opposing loyalties, Republicans and Monarchists, in an attempt to get them to unite under the authority of the

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<sup>186</sup> Simon Lee, 'Napoleon Crossing the Alps at the Great Saint Bernard Pass', Christopher John Murray (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Romantic Era, 1760-1850*, London, 2004, (vol. 1), 786.

<sup>187</sup> Christopher Prendergast, *Napoleon and History Painting, Antoine-Jean Gros's La Bataille d'Eylau*, 122. For more information about Napoleon's involvement in the Salon and artistic production consult the chapter entitled 'Art and the State' in Christopher Prendergast's, *Napoleon and History Painting, Antoine-Jean Gros's La Bataille d'Eylau*, 117- 145.

<sup>188</sup> Christopher Prendergast, *Napoleon and History Painting, Antoine-Jean Gros's La Bataille d'Eylau*, 121. For further information regarding the literary and press censorship consult the section of Steven Englund 's *Napoleon, A Political Life*, entitled 'Glory's Price: Censorship, Police, Propaganda', 312- 316.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

Emperor.<sup>194</sup> Prendergast refers to Napoleon and his regime's opportunism in the creation of propaganda.<sup>195</sup> They appropriated monarchical and revolutionary symbols in often ambiguous ways, allowing artists greater scope for their compositions.<sup>196</sup> Prior to the Revolution, the *Académie* esteemed history paintings that represented scenes from classical and biblical history as the highest in the hierarchy of the genres.<sup>197</sup> Depictions of contemporary life were consigned to lower in the hierarchy.<sup>198</sup> However, after the commencement of the Revolution, artists such as Jacques-Louis David increasingly portrayed important contemporary figures and events, a trend which Napoleon endorsed.<sup>199</sup> The ideological restrictions that Denon imposed on behalf of the Napoleonic regime when commissioning art works included, prescribing subjects (predominantly depictions of contemporary military paintings) and attempting to ensure that all commissions served to engage with (more or less directly) national concerns as they were understood by the government.<sup>200</sup>

Cameron and Boime argue that because Auzou received the first class medal at the Salon of 1806 for her painting *Departure for the Duel* (untraced), she was commissioned by Napoleon's government to create paintings of the Empress for the Salon.<sup>201</sup> No information is provided regarding the specificity of this commission which one would assume was issued by Denon. Chantal Gastinel-Coural describes Auzou's paintings of Marie-Louise instead as having been bought by the government after the Salon.<sup>202</sup> If Auzou was

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<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>195</sup> Christopher Prendergast, *Napoleon and History Painting, Antoine-Jean Gros's La Bataille d'Eylau*, 24.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>197</sup> Thomas E. Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-century Paris*, 17.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>199</sup> Christopher Prendergast, *Napoleon and History Painting, Antoine-Jean Gros's La Bataille d'Eylau*, 48.

<sup>200</sup> Prendergast describes the commissioning process as exemplifying 'state artistic policy'. Christopher Prendergast, *Napoleon and History Painting, Antoine-Jean Gros's La Bataille d'Eylau*, 124.

<sup>201</sup> Albert Boime, *Art in an Age of Bonapartism, 1800-1815, A Social History of Modern Art*, (vol. 2), 207. Vivian P. Cameron, *Jeanne Marie Catherine Desmarquest, 2004, Société Internationale pour l'Etude des Femmes de l'Ancien Régime*, [www.siefar.org/dictionnaire/fr/Jeanne\\_Marie\\_Catherine\\_Desmarquest](http://www.siefar.org/dictionnaire/fr/Jeanne_Marie_Catherine_Desmarquest), accessed 21 February 2014.

<sup>202</sup> Chantal Gastinel-Coural, David Mandrella and Hélène Meyer, 'Catalogue des oeuvres exposées', 173.

commissioned to create the artworks of Marie-Louise, this provides evidence for my claim that Auzou's depictions of Marie-Louise were more than merely portraits, as Napoleon favoured the commissioning of contemporary history scenes.<sup>203</sup> In Denon's 1805 report to Napoleon on state commissions, he stated the procedure of commissioning as, 'to continue by the government to order the historical subjects which it must be dear to the nation to preserve the memories.'<sup>204</sup> Ergo, typical of artists during the Napoleonic era, to earn favour which could lead to commissions, Auzou came to create depictions of actual events from Napoleon's life. The administrative support evident in the government's purchase of Auzou's paintings of Marie-Louise, proposes the importance of these oil paintings and suggests they might have been thought to inhabit the highly esteemed category of contemporary history paintings. Indeed, their value to the Napoleonic regime is showcased by the fact that that they were purchased by the government to be displayed at the Musée Napoléon.

Certainly, Auzou earned a reputation as a history painter.<sup>205</sup> Mary D. Sherriff argues that history painting was believed to educate, to inspire virtue and, therefore, it was the reserve of male artists; women were encouraged to restrict themselves to creating art works that merely pleased the eye.<sup>206</sup> Thus, Auzou was engaging with genres of art that still were not commonly associated with female artists. The censure of women artists for extending themselves beyond the creation of portraiture or still life, and the criticism for their lack of aptitude, was summed up in *Le Pausanias Français* in response to Angelique Mongez's history painting *Theseus and Pirithous* at the Salon of 1806: 'Long ago, someone said: nobody has ever heard of a woman who succeeded in writing a tragedy or in painting a great

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<sup>203</sup> Christopher Prendergast, *Napoleon and History Painting, Antoine-Jean Gros's La Bataille d'Eylau*, 124.

<sup>204</sup> The original quote in French: 'de faire continuer d'ordonner par le gouvernement les sujets historiques dont il doit être cher à la nation de conserver la mémoire.' Christopher Prendergast, *Napoleon and History Painting, Antoine-Jean Gros's La Bataille d'Eylau* 124.

<sup>205</sup> Jordana Pomeroy, Laura Auricchio and Yuriko Anne Jackall, 'Pauline Auzou', 53.

<sup>206</sup> Mary D. Sheriff, 'France', Delia Gaze (ed.), *Dictionary of Women Artists*, Chicago and London, 1997, (vol. 1), 47.

history painting. Mme. Mongez will at least have the honour of having made the attempt [...] She was overcome by the grandeur of the task [...] When you follow the footsteps of men in an art like painting, and above all, those of history painter, where one must rise above all the petty details which can disturb talent and destroy the work, either you must abandon these great subjects to our sex, or content yourself with sweet, tender subjects'.<sup>207</sup> I think that Auzou intended *The Arrival at Compiègne of Empress Marie-Louise* and *The Farewell of Marie-Louise to Her Family* to be viewed as contemporary history paintings, to educate the public regarding the role of Empress, to engage them with notions of women's involvement in the public sphere, and to contribute to propaganda regarding the legitimisation of Napoleon's reign in ways that were acceptably subversive.

In the Salon of 1810, in which Auzou's *The Arrival at Compiègne of Empress Marie-Louise* was exhibited, the majority of history paintings represented the life of the Emperor, especially his military triumphs.<sup>208</sup> At the Salon of 1810, 226 history paintings including 76 representations of Napoleonic history were exhibited.<sup>209</sup> Examining the commissioning process and the negotiations regarding the subject matter of contemporary history paintings reveals that Napoleon insisted on a predominant focus on military subjects that celebrated militaristic and masculine depictions of his reign.<sup>210</sup> For example, Jacques-Louis David's *Bonaparte at the St Bernard Pass* (1801) (figure 21) and Gros's *Napoleon on the Battlefield of Eylau* (1808) (figure 22) depict the heroic authority of Napoleon. The Emperor is shown with great vitality and dynamic movements. He is the focus of the battle compositions. For Auzou the limitations of her gender restricted her access to the knowledge of, or first-hand

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<sup>207</sup> Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin, *Women Artists: 1550-1950*, 48.

<sup>208</sup> Christopher Prendergast, *Napoleon and History Painting, Antoine-Jean Gros's La Bataille d'Eylau*, 48.

<sup>209</sup> David Mandrella, 'Le Salon de 1810: l'apogée de l'Empire et les arts', Bernard Chevallier, Anne Dion-Tenenbaum and Marc Desti et al. (eds.), *1810, La politique de l'amour, Napoleon 1er et Marie-Louise à Compiègne*, exhibition catalogue, Compiègne, Musée national du Palais imperial de Compiègne, Paris, 2010, 137.

<sup>210</sup> Christopher Prendergast, *Napoleon and History Painting, Antoine-Jean Gros's La Bataille d'Eylau*, 124.

engagement with, contemporary battle scenes. Auzou did not have the advantages of, for example, Antoine-Jean Gros, the military painter Napoleon bestowed with the rank of *inspecteur aux revues*, and who was involved with Napoleon's campaigns.<sup>211</sup> Male artists such as Jacques-Louis David who lacked personal involvement in, or observance of, combat, created battle compositions from reports and news articles. However, due to the homocentric military subject matter, as a female artist Auzou's creation of battle compositions would have resulted in reproach from the Salon critics, she would have been encouraged to depict scenes considered to be suited to female artist's knowledge, as evidenced in the criticism given in *Le Pausanias Français* in an earlier paragraph. However, Auzou did receive a medal at the Salon for *Departure for the Duel* which highlights her ability to engage with issues relating to the masculine sphere of military life by depicting the consequences of such actions in the private sphere.

*Departure for the Duel* centres on a man glancing at his wife and daughter, whilst leaving to defend his honour.<sup>212</sup> Auzou chose to depict the scene in the domestic interior prior to the duel. Dueling during the Napoleonic era was linked to the practices of the military. Robert A. Nye describes 'affairs of honour' as being common amongst officers in the early nineteenth-century French army and as 'indistinguishable' from bravery exhibited on the battlefield.<sup>213</sup> Auzou's depiction refers to the masculine notions of honour and duelling, but restricts this to the private sphere. I would argue that, in both *Departure for the Duel* and *The Farewell of Marie-Louise to Her Family*, Auzou references such elements of the masculine military life, but restricts her depictions to the effects that these events will have in the domestic setting. In the *Departure for the Duel*, Boime describes Auzou as representing the

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<sup>211</sup> Jean Baptiste Delestre, *Gros: sa vie et ses ouvrages*, Paris, 1867, 47.

<sup>212</sup> Albert Boime, *Art in an Age of Bonapartism, 1800-1815, A Social History of Modern Art*, (vol. 2), 208.

<sup>213</sup> Robert A. Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France*, New York, 1998, 132.



dueller as ‘heading for certain death’ which will result in the family’s destitution.<sup>214</sup> In *The Farewell of Marie-Louise to Her Family*, the result of a conquest, how it affected Marie-Louise and her family, is also signified. In *The Farewell of Marie-Louise to Her Family*, Auzou depicts Marie-Louise in Vienna, giving her jewels to her Austrian family which had been defeated by Napoleon. Auzou references the contemporary etiquette of royal brides relinquishing their pre-marriage attire and nationality, in preparation to be clothed in the fashion of their adopted nation.<sup>215</sup> Auzou depicts Marie-Louise symbolically divesting herself of her former identity and her Austrian allegiances. This capitulation of national identity might be a veiled reference to the recent military conquest of Austria by Napoleon. In 1809, the War of the Fifth Coalition ignited, when the Austrian Empire went to war with the French Empire, and resulted in an Austrian defeat on 6 July 1809.<sup>216</sup> The war concluded with the Treaty of Schoenbrunn, in which large parts of Austrian territory was relinquished to France, population was lost and a mandated war indemnity was sought.<sup>217</sup> Later, Marie-Louise was taken on an Imperial tour of lands that had once been the possession of Austria.<sup>218</sup> Therefore, it could be argued that Auzou represents the figure of Marie-Louise, in *The Farewell of Marie-Louise to Her Family*, as an embodiment of Austria the nation, succumbing to Napoleon’s, and therefore France’s, greater power. Auzou utilised the figure of Marie-Louise to help legitimise France’s dominance in Europe. Therefore, although Auzou was restricted from painting battle scenes she was able to allude to the repercussions of combat, whether that be by referencing the consequences of duelling or the result of the capitulation of the Austrian army. Auzou’s iconography represents characteristics associated with Napoleon’s triumphs in contemporary military paintings, including honour and the dominance of France

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<sup>214</sup> Albert Boime, *Art in an Age of Bonapartism, 1800-1815, A Social History of Modern Art*, (vol. 2), 208.

<sup>215</sup> Chantal Gastinel-Coural, David Mandrella and Hélène Meyer, ‘Catalogue des oeuvres exposées’, 173. Marie-Antoinette also went through the same ritual.

<sup>216</sup> Steven Englund, *Napoleon: A Political Life*, 345-346.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, 347.

<sup>218</sup> Kate Williams, *Josephine*, London, 2013, 276.

in Europe, which were promoted by him and his reign but, she uses instead the site of the private sphere and, in the case of *The Farewell of Marie-Louise to Her Family* the female body, to form and strengthen this propaganda effectively.

Gros exhibited *Interview Between Napoleon and Francis II of Austria* (1812) (figure 23), depicting Marie-Louise's father capitulating to Napoleon at Austerlitz, at the Salon of 1812, the same Salon at which *The Farewell of Marie-Louise to Her Family* was exhibited. Therefore, an association might have been created in the minds of contemporary French Salon audiences between Gros's and Auzou's paintings, reinforcing for the observer Napoleon's domination when observing their artworks. Gros, nevertheless, represents Napoleon reaching out his hand in reconciliation.<sup>219</sup> Auzou, as well as referencing Austria's defeat, emphasises the distinguished lineage of Marie-Louise's family through the lavishness of the interior and the giving away of her jewels to her siblings. Like Gros, she diminishes, but does not seek to disgrace, Austria.<sup>220</sup> As one writer states, for Napoleon, marrying Marie-Louise was a 'traditional act of dynastic foreign relations.'<sup>221</sup> Marie-Louise's royal connections were asserted by Napoleon. For example, he chose the Château de Compiègne (depicted in Auzou's arrival composition) as the site of their first official first meeting as it was where Louis XVI had met Queen Marie-Antoinette (in spite of the negative connotations of monarchy for many French people).<sup>222</sup> Napoleon understood the Empress's importance in legitimising the Bonaparte family, by associating them with the Habsburgs, one of the oldest dynasties in Europe.<sup>223</sup> Auzou, therefore, shows her understanding of the importance of referring to Marie-Louise's heritage in her depiction of the opulent interior, appeasing Royalist sympathisers and signifying the Empress's importance internationally, so as to

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<sup>219</sup> David O'Brien, *After the Revolution: Painting and Propaganda under Napoleon*, Pennsylvania, 2004, 151.

<sup>220</sup> Jean Tulard, 'Jeux diplomatiques et problème dynastique: le mariage de Napoleon et Marie-Louise', 18.

<sup>221</sup> R. S. Alexander, *Napoleon*, 179.

<sup>222</sup> Kate Williams, *Josephine*, 272.

<sup>223</sup> Clive Emsley, *Napoleon, Conquest, Reform and Reorganisation*, 21.

strengthen Napoleon's legitimacy.<sup>224</sup> Unlike the number of history paintings at the 1810 Salon that constituted 'a veritable anthology of the noble gestures of Napoleon', Auzou uses events predominantly associated with Marie-Louise as the subject of her two compositions. Although Marie-Louise was being used by Napoleon, Auzou stresses the importance of her for Napoleon in maintaining his Empire.<sup>225</sup> In *The Arrival at Compiègne of Empress Marie-Louise*, Marie-Louise is depicted with her hand outstretched, suggesting her willingness to embrace her position as Empress of France. By referencing Marie-Louise's family in *The Farewell of Marie-Louise to Her Family*, Auzou ensures that the new Empress's lineage is emphasised, but so is her family's defeat by Napoleon and the dominance of France. Representing Marie-Louise giving up her former life and forming an allegiance with France would help persuade those spectators at the Salon that disliked her, due to her Austrian upbringing, that she could be trusted.

### **The Virtues of Marie-Louise**

Boime argues that in *The Arrival at Compiègne of Empress Marie-Louise* the Empress is made the 'dominant figure'.<sup>226</sup> Whilst I would agree that the depiction is centred on the arrival of Marie-Louise, I would argue that the spectator's eye is drawn to the figures of the energetic youthful girls through the interesting angles of their bodies, juxtaposed with the rigid straight stance of Napoleon and the vertical lines of the architectural features of the room.<sup>227</sup> The eye is especially captivated by the most energetic child in the right foreground,

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<sup>224</sup> Representing the regal heritage of Marie-Louise was also utilised in a portrait of Marie-Louise by Jean Baptiste Isabey (1810) (figure 24). However, it does not also convey the same intimate approachability as Auzou's representation.

<sup>225</sup> Translated from the original French, 'une véritable anthologie des gestes nobles de Napoléon'. Christopher Prendergast, *Napoleon and History Painting, Antoine-Jean Gros's La Bataille d'Eylau*, 48.

<sup>226</sup> Albert Boime, *Art in an Age of Bonapartism, 1800-1815, A Social History of Modern Art*, (vol. 2), 208.

<sup>227</sup> These figures embody the nineteenth century convention of the 'eloquent body' which identified the body's movements and postures, especially, the movement of arms and hands, as sites of the expression of a figure's character. Christopher Prendergast, *Napoleon and History Painting, Antoine-Jean Gros's La Bataille d'Eylau*, 157.

stooping forward, feet poised to move, with only the tip of her left foot residing on the floor, right arm outstretched, and scattering flowers. The red garland of flowers in the young girl's hair and around her neck create a comparison with Marie-Louise who is dressed in the same colour, but whose countenance and stance are more subdued. The contrast created between these two figures might have been created to highlight the controlled manner of Marie-Louise, a virtue considered highly important in a wife in the Napoleonic era. It was proposed in the eighteenth century by philosophers and scientists that women were ruled more by their emotions than by logic, instincts that they had to learn to control and contain.<sup>228</sup> As Henry Fouquet stated in his *Encyclopédie* entry regarding women, 'Women's passions are much livelier, in general than those of men.'<sup>229</sup> Consequently, it might be argued that Marie-Louise is depicted as a role model to the younger girls and a signifier of regal maturity which the younger female figures will learn to imitate. In Auzou's genre painting, *The First Feeling of Coquetry* (1804) (figure 25), Cameron argues that Auzou represents the transition from girlhood to adulthood which, I would argue, is being embodied by Marie-Louise.<sup>230</sup>

Auzou's depiction of the greeting of Marie-Louise in *The Arrival at Compiègne of Empress Marie-Louise*, perhaps inspires the viewer to imagine the subsequent interactions of the Empress. With her hand clasped in her husband's, the movement in Marie-Louise's body, and the figures who appear to be awaiting a reception in the background, all suggesting that she will be leaving this female dominated space to go with her husband into the more public masculine sphere. Despite the distinct separation between the foreground forms of Marie-Louise, Napoleon, and the young girls, and the figures consigned to the background, the inclusion of the motif of a doorway and a male figure on the precipice between the two

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<sup>228</sup> Mary D. Sheriff, 'The Woman-Artist Question', 43. For more in depth discussion of the dominant ideology regarding women and femininity and their position in society consult, Claire Goldberg Moses, *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* and, Joan B. Landes, *Women in the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution*.

<sup>229</sup> Mary D. Sheriff, 'The Woman-Artist Question', 43.

<sup>230</sup> Vivian P. Cameron, 'Pauline Auzou', 201.

groups seems to foreshadow Marie-Louise's meeting with more members of the public. Indeed, on the evening of 27 March, 1810, after the arrival of the couple at Compiègne, Marie-Louise was presented both to the Imperial family and the court.<sup>231</sup> The position of Marie-Louise in between the figures in the background and the young girls, therefore, also suggests her ascendance to adult status, her departure from girlhood to her position in society escorted by her husband. Her tranquillity reinforces her worthiness as Empress, embodying the prescribed docile and dutiful virtues of womanhood. However, this might also be a criticism in that Auzou emphasises the freer state of childhood which is lost as one grows older in society, under the watchful masculine gaze and influence.

Marie-Louise's transition to adult life, especially the fulfilment of her new role as Empress, is further emphasised elsewhere in *The Arrival at Compiègne of Empress Marie-Louise*. One of the female figures in the background holds her flower garland at the level of Marie-Louise's head in a pose reminiscent of the crowning of the Empress, perhaps foreshadowing the later event. The flowers strewn on the floor in the footprint of another figure may also suggest (being surrounded by youthful figures) the space for an heir with the basket depicted directly above, reminiscent of a crib. Later portraits of Marie-Louise emphasise the accomplishment of her role as wife, by including her son (for example in François Gérard's painting *Marie-Louise and the King of Rome* (1813) (figure 26)). In *The Arrival at Compiègne of Empress Marie-Louise*, the energetic young female figure, who I have referred to as the focus of the composition, is holding a cornucopia-like bunch of flowers in her left hand. Although the bunch of flowers does not have the cornucopia's horned shape, I would suggest that the overflowing flowers connotes abundance and, hence, the Empress's fecundity, in a similar manner to that established symbol. Evidence that the

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<sup>231</sup> Chantal Gastinel-Coural, David Mandrella and Hélène Meyer, 'Catalogue des oeuvres exposées', 173.

Salon audience would recognise this signifier as a cornucopia without the presence of the horned shape, can be seen in Jean-Pierre Franque's *Allegory of the Condition of France before the Return from Egypt* (1810) (figure 27) which was exhibited alongside Auzou's painting at the Salon of 1810. Franque's painting is described by Smith as containing the allegory of Plenty with her cornucopia.<sup>232</sup> Plenty is represented in the shadows in the far left middle ground with little of her body discernible apart from her face. The cornucopia is glinting in front of her figure, but the only part of it that the viewer can see to identify her is the fruit spilling forth out of the container. Franque's *Allegory of the Condition of France before the Return from Egypt* signifies, for the Salon audience, a cornucopia by the overflowing of fruit represented, without the need for the horn shape, which I would argue is also true for Auzou's painting. The allegory of abundance and the cornucopia were common motifs associated with fertility and femininity. In *The Arrival at Compiègne of Empress Marie-Louise*, the abundant flowering of nature connotes Marie-Louise's important duty as an Empress and a wife to produce an heir (a key reason for her marriage). Napoleon was preoccupied with having an heir and defined Marie-Louise as 'a womb'.<sup>233</sup> The apartment designed for Marie-Louise at Compiègne, by the architect Berthault, prominently featured a room with a bed decorated with large golden cornucopia.<sup>234</sup> Auzou represents the Napoleonic function of women in the body politic, as providers of children by referencing such symbolism. I would argue, therefore, that the foregrounding in Auzou's images of the cornucopia and Marie-Louise's controlled, virtuous, behaviour, suggests that the artist is not merely depicting Marie-Louise as a beautiful wife and daughter of an Emperor (leaders could no longer be legitimized predominantly by their heritage) but as the creator of an heir and as

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<sup>232</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *The Nation Made Real: Art and National Identity in Western Europe, 1600-1850*, Oxford, 2013, 69.

<sup>233</sup> Steven Englund, *Napoleon: A Political Life*, 360.

<sup>234</sup> Hélène Meyer (heritage curator at Palais Impérial de Compiègne), *Marie Louise Bedroom at Compiègne, 2012, National Gallery of Victoria*, <http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/napoleon/art-and-design/consular-and-empire-style>, accessed 20 May 2014.

a moral guardian.<sup>235</sup> *The Arrival at Compiègne of Empress Marie-Louise* seems in this respect to be simply playing along with dominant Napoleonic gender constructs.

Similar tendencies are also apparent in Auzou's depiction of *The Farewell of Marie-Louise to Her Family*. Nochlin argues that in this painting, the feminine virtue of Marie-Louise giving her jewels to her royal brothers and sisters represents the honourable qualities and intimate family feeling of the Empress.<sup>236</sup> I would argue, in accordance with *Le Moniteur Universel* (1813) which describes the figures in *The Farewell of Marie-Louise to Her Family* as 'affectionate' and 'domesticated', that they are tenderly and informally posed, asserting the closeness of the family and the warmth and dutiful nature of the bride.<sup>237</sup> Salon observers would be able to discern the familial feeling, providing a sense of familiarity and closeness for the viewer. Thus, once again, Auzou showcases the virtuous, nurturing qualities of Marie-Louise, important because in 1811 she had given birth to a son, Napoleon's and France's heir.

Auzou's depictions played an important role in helping to favourably define Marie-Louise as a holder of contemporary moral feminine virtues to counteract the uneasiness that her position provoked in the opinions of the people of France. Cameron describes Auzou's depictions of Marie-Louise as 'supporting Napoleon's second marriage'.<sup>238</sup> I would argue that Auzou represents Marie-Louise as the embodiment of the virtues the former Empress Josephine lacked. Josephine was not able to produce an heir and did not have royal family connections. The Napoleonic regime needed to rationalise the divorce and subsequent marriage to Marie-Louise and to weaken the fondness of the people for the Empress

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<sup>235</sup> In contemporary history painting, the function of battles scenes, Prendergast argues, was for Napoleon to legitimise himself through his military deeds. Christopher Prendergast, *Napoleon and History Painting, Antoine-Jean Gros's La Bataille d'Eylau*, 30.

<sup>236</sup> Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin, *Women Artists: 1550-1950*, 49.

<sup>237</sup> Vivian P. Cameron, 'Pauline Auzou', 201.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*

Josephine.<sup>239</sup> Moreover, the inclusion of many youthful female figures in *The Arrival at Compiègne of Empress Marie-Louise*, emphasises Marie-Louise's age, as an eighteen year old bride and thus indicates Marie-Louise's fertility and the likelihood that she would produce heirs, in comparison to Josephine, who was nearly thirty years older than her.<sup>240</sup> The events decreed by Napoleon for his marriage celebrations with Marie-Louise were, in part, to distract attention from Josephine who was followed by the newspapers and this was a purpose these paintings by Auzou also had.<sup>241</sup> Asserting Marie-Louise's superiority over Josephine was especially important, considering the unique and ambiguous position of Josephine as a divorced Empress. Napoleon fretted over her position, fruitlessly asking archivists to search the royal records regarding how a divorced Empress should be treated.<sup>242</sup>

Nochlin assert that it is thought-provoking that as a female artist Auzou was entrusted with ingratiating Marie-Louise to the people of France at the Salon.<sup>243</sup> The Salon was an important gathering place of people from all over Europe and, therefore, was part of the important construction of the identity of the new Empress for the people. The Salon of 1810, at which Auzou's representation of the arrival was exhibited, was open for over five months and was described as 'the most significant artistic event of the year'.<sup>244</sup> *Le Journal de Paris* reported, on 6 November 1810 that traversing the museum was challenging due to the vast number of visitors.<sup>245</sup> By exhibiting these art works at the Salon, Auzou was avowing Marie-Louise's virtues and position in the public sphere (as well as her own), especially important because Josephine, as a divorcée, was not allowed to go to the Salon, but Napoleon and

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<sup>239</sup> Albert Boime, *Bonapartism*, 209.

<sup>240</sup> Kate Williams, *Josephine*, 270.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, 271.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, 268.

<sup>243</sup> Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin, *Women Artists: 1550-1950*, 49.

<sup>244</sup> David Mandrella, 'Le Salon de 1810: l'apogée de l'Empire et les arts', 137.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*



Marie-Louise were.<sup>246</sup> Josephine could not physically inhabit the public space of the Salon and would not be depicted in the art works displayed in this public forum. Therefore, the exhibition of Auzou's painting stresses the importance of the Salon for disseminating Napoleonic propaganda relating to women, and especially Marie-Louise, in the public sphere. Art had been an important tool for Josephine to assert her position and Auzou's paintings demonstrate the importance of the painter's artworks in supporting Napoleon's matrimonial decision.<sup>247</sup> Additionally, the depiction of these rituals involved in the marriage between Napoleon and Marie-Louise highlights the unconventionality of Napoleon's previous marriage, discrediting Josephine and her wedding, which was widely described as 'practical' and quick, lacking the public spectacle of the celebrations of Marie-Louise's marriage to Napoleon.<sup>248</sup>

Boime argues that Auzou's decision to represent Marie-Louise in the context of her family, or within courtly circles, was due to these being sites in which she had the most influence.<sup>249</sup> Auzou might also, in *The Arrival at Compiègne of Empress Marie-Louise*, be alluding to the support Marie-Louise received from the Bonaparte family, in the depiction of the opened arm acceptance of her by the young female figures in this painting. The approval of Marie-Louise is also symbolised by the reverent look that Napoleon directs towards her and the entwining of their hands, suggesting the concordance of the union of the two families. Auzou suppresses the circumstances surrounding the marriage. The closeness represented contradicts the fact that a proxy marriage took place in Vienna, the spouses had only met just before the event depicted by Auzou took place.<sup>250</sup> Also, Marie-Louise's father worried the marriage was bigamous in the eyes of religion, since the Pope had not annulled Napoleon's

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<sup>246</sup> Kate Williams, *Josephine*, 285.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*, 81, 271.

<sup>249</sup> Albert Boime, *Art in an Age of Bonapartism, 1800-1815, A Social History of Modern Art*, (vol. 2), 209.

<sup>250</sup> Kate Williams, *Josephine*, 271.

marriage to Josephine.<sup>251</sup> Additionally, Marie-Louise had been told since childhood of Austria's enmity with France and, in 1805, after hearing about the French charge at the Austro-Russians at the village of Austerlitz and the decimation of the Austrian Imperial Guard, wrote that Napoleon was the 'Beast of the Apocalypse'.<sup>252</sup> Yet, at eighteen years old, Marie-Louise was told she was to be sacrificed for peace and married to Napoleon.<sup>253</sup> In her artworks Auzou helped to rationalise Napoleon's divorce and remarriage in the wake of the powerful presence of Josephine.

## Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I have examined the uniqueness of the representations of the Empress Marie-Louise by Pauline Auzou.<sup>254</sup> Unlike previous scholarship, I scrutinised the context in which these artworks were created and the gendered nature of the compositions. Whilst Auzou's female figures conform to the feminine duties associated with their gender (nurturing, controlled and fecund figures in intimate settings), she plots the private sphere out onto the public. In this chapter I have argued, unlike other art historians, that Auzou's perspective, with her insight as a female artist into the role of women in public life, used female figures in her compositions as 'the bearer of the meanings of the public sphere', the sphere from which the Napoleonic regime curtailed women from actively engaging.<sup>255</sup> I have compared Auzou's representations with the depiction of Marie-Louise in contemporary history paintings by male artists and shown that in comparison women were effectively excluded from representing important contemporary events. Hence, Auzou's depictions are

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<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, 270.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, 232.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, 270.

<sup>254</sup> Due to her association with the Napoleonic regime's propaganda program, Auzou, whilst still exhibiting at the Salon after the Napoleonic era, failed to gain government commissions during the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy. Nevertheless, she taught and encouraged female students for about twenty years in her studio. Jordana Pomeroy, Laura Auricchio and Yuriko Anne Jackall, 'Pauline Auzou', 53

<sup>255</sup> Nancy G. Heller, *Women Artists: An Illustrated History*, New York, 1987, 60.

preoccupied with the female figures and their importance in engaging with the political public sphere. That engagement has been explored in the context of the Civil Code and the curtailing of women's legal rights, and with reference to the festivals that women were actively encouraged to engage in, and their controlled access to the public sphere (which I argue Auzou directly references in *The Arrival at Compiègne of Empress Marie-Louise*). I have claimed that Auzou draws parallels with her own involvement in the public sphere through the exhibition of her creations at the Salon, emphasising the political importance of her position as a creator of Napoleonic propaganda.

Furthermore, I argued that by depicting Marie-Louise's family in *The Farewell of Marie-Louise to Her Family*, Auzou ensures that the positive associations of their lineage is highlighted but, so is Napoleon's military triumph over Austria, helping to legitimise the Emperor's power. Both of Auzou's depictions can be shown to be using the political propaganda seen in other contemporary military paintings in the Salon, asserting Napoleon's right to rule whilst still stressing the important political use some women can have in the public sphere (despite Napoleon's gendered confinement and separation of the sexes). I have also demonstrated the importance of the particular context in which Marie-Louise became Empress. I have emphasised the unprecedented position the Empress found herself in with the Empress Josephine and Auzou's understanding of the need to actively engage in promoting the specific virtues that Marie-Louise embodied so as to rationalise Napoleon's actions. Auzou appears to have been defining Marie-Louise in opposition to Josephine, as a young, fecund figure, stressing the importance of these attributes for women. Thus, Auzou highlighted the importance of the Empress as a legitimising figure and signifier of Napoleon's power, the importance of the body politic of the Empress, a subject not greatly explored by male contemporary artists. Other art historians examinations of Auzou's paintings of Marie-Louise fail to acknowledge that, even though Auzou's depictions were

used to legitimise Napoleon's regime, they also emphasised the limited but important power that women had in the public sphere to create and maintain social order, through the ceremonies of festivals, through their art works and their new ability to be able to exhibit at the Salon.

## Conclusion

In this thesis I have examined how women artists asserted their engagement with the public sphere through their art works and defined their own, and other women's identities. I chose, when examining the importance of gender in images produced during the Napoleonic era, to focus on the claims made by women artists regarding their professional status in self-portraits and their assertion of their significance in society, especially in their involvement in organised public events, including Salon exhibitions. I have explored how women artists used the female body as a site of meaning to connote wider, politicised, gender debates.

In the first chapter I examined the genre of self-portraiture and how women artists used their artworks to construct their identities for the viewer; how they navigated the prescribed roles assigned to women in the Napoleonic society, whilst also embodying the attributes of professional artists, asserting their credible place in the art world. Unlike other writers, I have demonstrated that the contemporary discussion around notions such as the gendered spheres and women's mental capabilities effected the art works that women artists produced in comparison to those created by male artists. I argued that, whilst female artists adhered to certain social conventions regarding their gender in their self-portraits, they were striving to create a dialogue in the Salon that asserted their skilled status and their right to be involved in artistic creation and also in public intellectual life.

The focus of the second chapter was the uniqueness of the representations of the Empress Marie-Louise by the female artist Pauline Auzou. Auzou chose to represent very specific events in the marriage celebration of Marie-Louise and Napoleon, largely ignored by other contemporary artists. Both of these events, although intimate in their depictions which included small number of figures and lacked the pomp of the more public aspects of the celebrations (such as the coronation), can be thought to connote broader debates about

women in the public sphere. Unlike previous scholars, I have argued that Auzou referenced women's controlled engagement with the public sphere, such as in the Napoleonic festivals, and that she stressed the importance of women's inclusion in public life, despite the Napoleonic regime's desire to curtail women from actively engaging with it. I compared Auzou's representations with the depiction of Marie-Louise in contemporary history paintings by male artists and showed that Auzou's depictions were preoccupied with female figures and their importance in engaging with contemporary debates regarding gender.

Furthermore, I have shown that Auzou's depictions were legible as being contemporary history paintings comparable to contemporary military history paintings, although Auzou chose to engage with this subject in the context of the Imperial marriage, stressing the important political use that women could have in the public sphere. I argued that Auzou's decision to depict Marie-Louise's family in *The Farewell of Marie-Louise to Her Family*, might have been to inspire support from the French people by both affirming her regal heritage and also referencing France's military might under Napoleon's leadership.

I have also asserted the importance of the particular context in which Marie-Louise became Empress. I emphasised the exceptional position the Empress found herself in with the Empress Josephine and Auzou's engagement with promoting the particular merits that Marie-Louise embodied to justify Napoleon's actions. Thus, Auzou drew attention to the importance of the Empress as a legitimising figure and a signifier of Napoleon's power. Furthermore, other art historians' examinations of Auzou's paintings of Marie-Louise fail to acknowledge that, although her depictions were used to legitimise Napoleon's regime, they also emphasised the limited but important power women had in the public sphere to create and maintain social order, through ceremonies, their art works and their new ability to be able to exhibit at the Salon. Greater study of the oeuvres of women during this era would help us to further understand women's engagements in public life and specifically in the Salon,

allowing for further elucidation regarding the aspirations, perspectives, limitations and concerns of women during the Napoleonic era, and how they manifested their identity and contributed to the contemporary construction of womanhood.

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## Illustrations



1: Marie-Denise Villers, *Young Woman Drawing*, 1801, oil on canvas, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



2: Marie-Denise Villers, *Study of a Young Woman Seated on a Window*, 1801, oil on canvas, private collection.





3: Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, *Self-Portrait with Two Pupils, Mlle Marie Gabrielle Capet and Mlle Carreaux de Rosemond*, 1785, oil on canvas, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



4: Constance Mayer, *Self-Portrait of the Artist with her Father*, 1801, oil on canvas, Wadsworth Athenaeum, Hartford.



5: Jacques-Louis David, *Madame Seriziat*, 1795, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris.



6: Louis Léopold Boilly, *The Downpour*, 1804-1805, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris.



7: François Gérard, *Portrait of Madame Récamier*, 1805, oil on canvas, Musée Carnavalet, Paris.



8: Louis-Leopold Boilly, *Painter in Her Studio*, 1796, oil on canvas, Staatliches Museum, Schwerin.



9: François Gérard, *Portrait of Isabey and his Daughter*, 1795, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris.



10: Marie Victoire Lemoine, *Interior of the Atelier of a Woman Painter*, 1796, oil on canvas, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



11: Louis-Léopold Boilly, *The Geography Lesson*, 1812, oil on canvas, Kimbell Art Foundation, Texas, USA.



12: Marie-Gabrielle Capet, *Atelier of Madame Vincent around 1800*, 1808, oil on canvas, Neue Pinakothek, München.



13: Louis-Léopold Boilly, *Gathering of Artists in the Studio of Isabey*, 1798, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris.



14: Louis-Léopold Boilly, *Houdon's Studio*, 1804, oil on canvas, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris.



15: Louis-Léopold Boilly, *Houdon's Studio*, 1808, oil on canvas, Musée d'Art Thomas Henry, Cherbourg-Octeville.



16: Pauline Auzou, *The Arrival at Compiègne of Empress Marie-Louise*, 1810, oil on canvas, Musée national du Château, Versailles.



17: Pauline Auzou, *The Farewell of Marie-Louise to Her Family*, 1812, oil on canvas, Musée national du Château, Versailles.



18: Louis-Philippe Crépin, *Napoleon I and Marie-Louise Disembarking at Antwerp*, 1810, oil on canvas, Fondation Dosne-Thiers, Paris.





19: Georges Rouget, *Marriage of Napoleon I and Marie Louise of Austria*, 1810, oil on canvas, Musée national du Château, Versailles.



20 : Jean-Baptiste Isabey, *The Arrival of Marie-Louise at Compiègne*, 1810, pen, black ink, grey wash and sepia, heightened with white on paper, mounted on canvas, Fondation Napoléon, Paris.



21: Jacques-Louis David, *Bonaparte at the St Bernard Pass*, 1801, oil on canvas, Château de Malmaison, Paris.



22: Antoine-Jean Gros, *Napoleon on the Battlefield of Eylau*, 1808, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris.



23: Antoine-Jean Gros, *Interview Between Napoleon and Francis II of Austria*, 1812, oil on canvas, Musée national du Château, Versailles.



24: Jean Baptiste Isabey, *Empress Marie-Louise*, 1810, Gouache on Ivory, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.



25: Pauline Auzou, *The First Feeling of Coquetry*, 1804, oil on canvas, Paris, Collection Auzou Family.



26: François Gérard, *Marie-Louise and the King of Rome*, 1813, oil on canvas, Musée national du Château, Versailles.



27: Jean-Pierre Franque, *Allegory of the Condition of France before the Return from Egypt*, 1810, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris.