

CREATING A FEMALE HISTORY PAINTER:

VIGÉE-LEBRUN, LABILLE-GUIARD, MONGEZ, AND THE FRENCH ACADEMY

by

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ABSTRACT

Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun (1755-1842), Adélaïde Labille-Guiard (1749-1803), and Angélique Mongez (1775-1855) were three highly successful and influential artists of the latter eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Previously, little attention has been paid, however, to the history paintings created by them and their respective presentation in the Salons of the *Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture* and, later, at the *Académie des Beaux-Arts*. This thesis offers the first sustained consideration of Vigée-Lebrun, Labille-Guiard, and Mongez as history painters, and the first discussion connecting the three women.

In three chapters, I consider the careers and *oeuvre* of the artists and their efforts to elevate themselves to the status of and define themselves as history painters, considered the most elite group within the French Academic system. In the process, I discuss Vigée-Lebrun's reception pieces for the *Académie Royale* in 1783; Labille-Guiard's commission for a painting illustrating a member of the royal family in 1788; and finally, Mongez, who was one of the first women to successfully present a history painting to the French Salon in 1802. I argue that these women presented themselves as history painters through strategic career moves, as women could not officially be designated as history painters through the Academic system. Examining each of their careers in turn, I chart a lineage from the achievements and failures of the three artists in their endeavors to identify themselves as painters of this elevated genre. This analysis offers new insights into what defined a history painter in the period, and how contemporary women were affected by it.

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iii
LIST OF TABLES.....	v
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vi
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER ONE. ÉLISABETH VIGÉE-LEBRUN.....	20
CHAPTER TWO. ADÉLAÏDE LABILLE-GUIARD.....	39
CHAPTER THREE. ANGÉLIQUE MONGEZ.....	60
CONCLUSIONS.....	78
REFERENCES.....	82
APPENDIX.....	88

LIST OF TABLES

1. Timeline of Events Referenced in Thesis.....	87
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LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Nicolas Poussin, <i>Et in Arcadia ego</i> , 1637-1638. Oil on canvas. 85 cm × 121 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.....	86
Figure 2. Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, <i>Life Study of Lady Hamilton as the Cumaean Sibyl</i> , 1792. Oil on canvas. 73 × 57.2 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.....	87
Figure 3. Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, <i>Allegory of Poetry</i> , 1774. Oil on canvas. 80 × 65 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.....	88
Figure 4. Rosalba Carriera, <i>Girl with a Dove (L'Innocenza)</i> , 1705. Watercolor on paper. 8.8 x 7.1 cm. Statens Museum fur Kunst, Copenhagen.....	89
Figure 5. Rosalba Carriera, <i>Nymph in Apollo's Retinue</i> , 1720-1721. Oil on canvas. 61.5 x 54.5 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.....	90
Figure 6. Anon., after Angelica Kauffman, <i>Hope</i> , c. 1800. Watercolor on ivory. 10.0 x 7.8 cm. Royal Collection Trust, London.....	91
Figure 7. Angelica Kauffman, <i>Composition</i> , 1778-1780. Oil on canvas. 12.6 x 14.85 m. Royal Academy of Arts, London.....	94
Figure 8. Angelica Kauffman, <i>Invention</i> , 1778-1780. Oil on canvas. 12.6 m x 14.85 m. Royal Academy of Arts, London.....	95
Figure 9. Angelica Kauffman, <i>Design</i> , 1778-1780. Oil on canvas. 12.6 m x 14.85 m. Royal Academy of Arts, London.....	96
Figure 10. Angelica Kauffman, <i>Colour</i> , 1778-1780. Oil on canvas. 12.6 m x 14.85 m. Royal Academy of Arts, London.....	97
Figure 11. Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, <i>Peace Bringing Back Abundance</i> , 1780. Oil on canvas. 1.03 × 1.33 m. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.....	98
Figure 12. Francesco Bartolozzis, after Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, <i>Innocence Taking Refuge in the Arms of Justice</i> , 1783. Etching on paper. 40.5 x 46.8 cm. British Museum of Art, London...98	98
Figure 13. Charles Chardon after Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, <i>Venus Tying the Wings of Cupid</i> , c. 1783. Engraving on paper. 37 x 37.4 cm. British Museum of Art, London.....	99
Figure 14. Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, <i>Juno Borrowing the Belt of Venus</i> , 1781. Oil on canvas. 1.47 x 1.13 m. Location unknown.....	100
Figure 15. François Boucher, <i>Rinaldo and Armida</i> , 1734. Oil on canvas. 1.35 m x 1.70 m. Musée du Louvre, Paris.....	101

Figure 16. Jacques-Louis David, <i>Andromache Mourning Hector</i> , 1783. Oil on canvas. 2.75 x 2.03 m. Musée du Louvre, Paris.....	102
Figure 17. Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, <i>Marie Antoinette en Chemise</i> , 1783. Oil on canvas. 89.8 x 72 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.....	103
Figure 18. Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, <i>Marie Antoinette and her Children</i> , 1787. Oil on canvas. 2.75 x 2.16 m. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.....	104
Figure 19. Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, <i>Self-Portrait with Two Pupils</i> , 1785. Oil on canvas. 2.10 x 1.51 m. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.....	105
Figure 20. Jean-Laurent Mosnier, <i>Portrait of Mosnier in his Study</i> , 1787. Oil on canvas. 2.3 x 1.75 m. Hermitage, St. Petersburg.....	106
Figure 21. Marie-Gabrielle Capet, <i>Studio Scene: Adélaïde Labille-Guiard Painting the Portrait of Joseph-Marie Vien</i> , 1808. Oil on canvas. 69 x 83.5 cm. Neue Pinakothek, Munich.....	106
Figure 22. Jean-Jacques Lavril, after Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, <i>The Actor Brizard in the Role of King Lear</i> , 1786. Engraving on paper. 38.1 x 29.1 cm. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.....	107
Figure 23. Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, <i>Self-Portrait</i> , 1774. Watercolor on ivory. Museo Lazaro Galdiano, Madrid.....	108
Figure 24. Augustin Pajou, <i>Bust of Claude-Edme Labille</i> , 1785. Marble. 62.5 x 21 x 27.5 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.....	109
Figure 25. Jean-Antoine Houdon, <i>Vestal Virgin</i> , c. 1767–68. Terracotta. 60.6 cm. Private collection.....	110
Figure 26. Benoît-Louis Prévost, after Charles-Nicolas Cochin the Younger, <i>The Three Stages in the Study of Drawing</i> , 1763. Etching and engraving. 10.6 x 20.7 cm. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia.....	111
Figure 27. Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, <i>Reception of a Chevalier de Saint-Lazare by Monsieur, Grand Master of the Order</i> , 1788. Oil on canvas. 36 x 81 cm. Musée national de la Légion d'Honneur, Paris.....	112
Figure 28. Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, <i>Portrait of the Comte de Provence</i> , 1788. Pastel on paper. 81.5 x 65 cm. Musée Antoine Lécuyer, Saint-Quentin.....	113
Figure 29. Jacques-Louis David, <i>Coronation of Napoleon</i> , 1805-1807. Oil on canvas. 6.21 x 9.79 m. Musée du Louvre, Paris.....	114
Figure 30. Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, <i>Portrait of Madame Adélaïde</i> , 1787. Oil on canvas. 2.73 x 1,87 m. Speed Art Museum, Louisville.....	115
Figure 31. Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, <i>Marie-Louise-Thérèse-Victoire de France called Madame Victoire</i> , 1787. 73.1 x 58.1 cm. Pastel on paper. Musée National des Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, Versailles.....	116

Figure 32. Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, <i>Madame Élisabeth de France</i> , 1787. Pastel on paper. 78.7 x 65.4 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.....	117
Figure 33. Jacques-Louis David, <i>Tennis Court Oath</i> , c. 1790-1794. Mixed media on paper. 4 x 6.6 m. Musée National des Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, Versailles.....	118
Figure 34. Jacques-Louis David, <i>Young Boy at a Table, Near Which a Man is Seated</i> , c. 1791-92. Graphite on paper. 18.2 x 11.3 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.....	119
Figure 35. Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, <i>Portrait of Marie-Gabrielle Capet</i> , 1798. Oil on canvas. 78.5 x 62.5 cm. Private collection.....	120
Figure 36. Engraving after Angélique Mongez, <i>Astyanax Snatched from His Mother</i> , 1802. in C.-P.Landon, <i>Annales du Musée</i> , vol. 4, 1803, pl. 36. Paris.....	121
Figure 37. Angélique Mongez, <i>Theseus and Pirithous Rescuing Two Women from Bandits</i> , 1806. Black, white, blue, ochre chalks. 59.44 x 74.93 cm. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis.....	121
Figure 38. Angélique Mongez, <i>Mars and Venus</i> , 1841. Oil on canvas. Musée d'Angers, Paris.....	122
Figure 39. Angélique Mongez, <i>The Seven Against Thebes</i> , 1827. Oil on canvas. 3.2 x 4.2 m. Image from Gen Doy, "Hidden from Histories: Women History Painters in Early Nineteenth-Century France." In <i>Art and the Academy in the Nineteenth Century</i> , edited by Rafael Cardoso and Colin Trodd, 81.....	123
Figure 40. Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, <i>Julie Lebrun as Flora</i> , c. 1799. Oil on canvas. 129.5 × 97.8 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.....	124
Figure 41. Jacques-Louis David, <i>Portrait of Madame de Verninac</i> , 1799. Oil on canvas. 145.5 x 112 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.....	125

INTRODUCTION

French history painters reached the height of their fame and importance in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; however, traditionally, women were excluded from this prestige. Here, I consider the careers of three artists, Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun (1755-1842), Adélaïde Labille-Guiard (1749-1803), and Angélique Mongez (1775-1855), and trace the trajectory of their careers. In past literature, historians have focused on the painters' biographies, teachers, and, specifically, the portrait paintings produced by the three artists. Little attention has been paid, however, to the history paintings created by them and their respective presentation in the Salons of the *Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture* and, later, at the *Académie des Beaux-Arts*. This thesis offers the first sustained consideration of Vigée-Lebrun, Labille-Guiard, and Mongez as history painters, and the first discussion connecting the three women.

In three chapters, I consider the careers and *oeuvre* of the artists and their efforts to elevate themselves to the status of and define themselves as history painters, considered the most elite group within the French Academic system. In the process, I discuss Vigée-Lebrun's reception piece for the *Académie Royale*; Labille-Guiard's commission for a painting illustrating a member of the royal family in 1788; and finally, Mongez, who was one of the first women to successfully present a history painting to the French Salon in 1802. I argue that these women presented themselves as history painters through strategic career moves, as women could not officially be designated as history painters through the official Academic system. Examining each of their careers in turn, I chart a lineage from the achievements and failures of the three

artists in their endeavors to identify themselves as painters of this elevated genre. This analysis offers new insights into what defined a history painter in the period, and how contemporary women were affected by it.

A Brief History of the French Academy

Before considering the careers of Vigée-Lebrun, Labille-Guiard, and Mongez, it is first essential to have a basic understanding of the *Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture* (hereafter referred to as the *Académie Royale*), the institution's relationship with women, and the body's efforts to promote the genre of history painting, particularly from the 1770s.¹ This project is particularly indebted to the leading *Académie Royale* historian Christian Michel (2012) in regards to my own understanding of the organization's history. However, it should be noted that Michel, whose concern lies with outlining the rules and customs of the *Académie Royale* were throughout its history, does not reference how the organization reacted to and treated its female members. He states explicitly that he believes that the fifteen female Academicians had no impact on the *Académie Royale's* functioning until 1790 when Labille-Guiard advocated for the rights of women.² As such, I look to the histories provided by Mary Sheriff (1996) who did include a broader look at the *Académie Royale's* relationship to its female members.³ Sheriff outlines how the ruling body of the *Académie Royale* consistently tried to exclude women from the organization, and how accepted female members were treated differently from the outset.

The *Académie Royale* was instituted in 1648 during the *Council de Régence*, which ruled during the childhood of Louis XIV (r.1643-1715), and it was dissolved in 1793, during the French Revolution, by the National Assembly. Before the creation of the *Académie Royale*, artists working in France, specifically in Paris, were required to be members of an artist's guild. The State-sponsored *Académie Royale* was created as a way to circumvent the traditional guild

system, to promote intellectualism within artistic practice, and to create art primarily patronized by the State instead of the Church.⁴ These earlier artistic guilds did not completely dissolve to make room for the new official artistic organization, instead, they transformed into the *Académie de St. Luc*.⁵ This particular organization played an integral role in facilitating the early careers of Vigée-Lebrun and Labille-Guiard, as it had a tendency to accept members, particularly women, who might have been shunned from the *Académie Royale*.⁶ Under the direction of the comte d'Angiviller, Charles-Claude Flahaut de la Billaderie, who was the *Directeur des Bâtiments* from 1775 until the dissolution of the *Académie Royale* after the French Revolution, the *Académie Royale* with the help of Louis XVI closed the *Académie de St. Luc* in 1776.⁷

Scholars, including Michel, typically rely upon several different primary sources when outlining the history of the *Académie Royale*. In 1648 Charles Le Brun (1619-1690), Chancellor of the *Académie Royale*, decided that there should be two official documents of the *Académie Royale*'s proceedings, describing these as, "one ordinary to serve as a journal, the other much bigger and more elegantly bound."⁸ These books, one that consists of minutes of *Académie Royale* meetings and another a more official logbook, were published in parts by Anatole de Montaiglon in 1875 and 1892. After 1705, official secretaries of the *Académie Royale* were tasked with recording its history. Today the histories of André Félibien, Georges Guillet, and Nicolas Guérin still exist. Michel has relied on these along with other seventeenth- and eighteenth-century memoirs to chart a history of the *Académie Royale*.⁹ The *Académie Royale* was an everchanging institution that went through multiple variations during its almost 150-year life. Michel argues that there were five underlying tenants that spanned the *Académie Royale*'s history: first, that the process of admittance was rigorous, to ensure that only the most talented artists would be accepted; second, there was a hierarchy among Academicians with elders at the

top to promote learning through emulation; third, paintings and painters typically took precedence over sculptors; fourth, history painting was respected over all other genres; and lastly, the *Académie Royale* accepted members from throughout France and Europe.¹⁰

The process of becoming a member of the *Académie Royale* changed over its history, but several key factors never wavered.¹¹ A prospective member first needed a current Academician, most likely their former teacher, to represent them and speak to their talent and virtues.¹² Typically, they were then assigned the subject of their *morceau de réception* or reception piece.¹³ Sketches or preparatory works were typically completed at the Louvre, and usually both emulated past masters and included representations of the male form, both of which were standard elements in history paintings.¹⁴ If the sketches were accepted, the painter was considered an *agrégé* or aspirant. Then, the *agrégé* would begin working on their full scale *morceau de réception*, and from 1777, they had a limit of three years to complete the work.¹⁵ A committee would then vote to decide if the aspirant could become a full member of the *Académie Royale*. The aspirant needed a two-thirds majority to be accepted.¹⁶ After 1777, the *agrégé* would also need official approval from the king to be considered an official Academician.¹⁷ To be identified as a history painter was a sought after distinction, and one that only the *Académie Royale* could grant artists. When an *agrégé* was officially admitted within the organization, there were given a genre specification. A designated history painter could paint and exhibit all other types of genres, but, officially, only history painters could present history paintings in the Salons.

As Academicians, artists had opportunities to receive education, prizes, funding, and lodgings through the *Académie Royale*. Education was integral to the *Académie Royale*'s doctrine, and life-drawing classes were at its heart.¹⁸ The professors for these mandatory classes were chosen from Academicians who were designated history painters and sculptors.¹⁹ Students

were allowed to apply for the *Prix de Rome*, along with other coveted prizes. These paid for students to travel, live, and study in the *Académie Royale*'s location in Rome.²⁰ The organization also offered members several different forms of funding, including allowing them to live and house their studios in the Louvre.²¹ Finally, *Académie Royale* history painters received specific patronage from the government to produce large works called *tableaux d'encouragement*.²²

The history of women in the *Académie Royale* has been a topic of consideration in the past three decades. When discussing female history painters, many historians describe the environment of the late eighteenth-century French Salon. Mary Sheriff (1997) offers the most in-depth discussion of the gender dynamics within the Salon during the 1780s, when both Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun and Adélaïde Labille-Guiard were accepted as Academicians. Specifically, Sheriff focuses on the comte d'Angiviller and the tactics he employed to keep women from joining the *Académie Royale*. Fifteen *Académie Royale* members were women out of a total of 450 artists throughout the *Académie Royale*'s history.²³ The *Académie Royale*'s male members published several rules to limit the number of positions available to women. The first instance occurred in 1706, after the members learned of women who intended to apply for membership. This statute was repealed in 1720 to allow the admittance of Rosalba Carriera, an Italian miniaturist. The same was true after the admittance of Vigée-Lebrun and Labille-Guiard in 1783; the *Académie Royale* passed a ruling that only four women could be members at a time.²⁴

On the rare occasions that the institute accepted women, the process was quite different than that of their male counterparts. Women did not go through the long process of rising through the ranks of an *agrégé* to a full member. Instead, they submitted several paintings at once to the *Académie Royale*, and the members would choose one of the proposed paintings to be the woman's *morceau de réception*.²⁵ The governing body would then inform the painter of their

acceptance through letter. Women in the eighteenth-century were only allowed to swear an oath at their wedding, and as such, could not officially be sworn into the *Académie Royale* in the same manner as men.²⁶ Further, women were barred from participating in the Grand Prix, becoming professors, receiving lodgings within the Louvre, voting within the body, and from becoming official history painters.

What constituted a “history painting” had many different definitions throughout the *Académie Royale*’s history and the history of art generally. Early discussions concerning history painting can be traced back to the Italian Renaissance and the first art Academies, and these understandings influenced seventeenth- through nineteenth-century ideas of the genre.²⁷ From the beginnings of the *Académie Royale*, there was an emphasis on the supremacy of the history genre.²⁸ Paul Duro (2012) argues that the importance of history painting was an essential aspect of artists separating and distancing themselves from the earlier French guild system.²⁹ To my knowledge, there were no set rules issued by the *Académie Royale* that listed the requirements for what a history painting should feature. Instead, the ideas of what a history painting should look like were disseminated through official *Académie Royale* lectures and through emulation of past masterpieces. Duro (2007) further argues that the *Académie Royale* relied on an understood and highly constructed visual canon to communicate what history paintings should look like. These norms shifted somewhat throughout its history due to modern tastes, but some artists were influential no matter the period. One example of this is the lasting and sustained influence of Raphael (1483-1520) through the nineteenth century.³⁰ Also, the French artist Nicolas Poussin’s (1594-1665) paintings and ideals concerning classicism, exemplified in the work *Et in Arcadia Ego* (fig. 1), arguably had the most dominating impact on later Academicians.³¹

The inherent fluidity in the understanding of this genre, by nature, makes it challenging to accurately and wholly define what was a history painting. From the beginnings of Vigée-Lebrun and Labille-Guiard's careers in the 1770s to Mongez's first Salon in 1802, some of the largest changes in the definition of history painting occurred. During the tenure of the comte d'Angiviller, he greatly promoted the supremacy of history painting, and through his efforts he shifted what the genre should exemplify.³² D'Angiviller, empowered by Louis XVI's willingness to enforce his ideals, was able to impose an official concept of what "great" art should look like.³³ D'Angiviller's view of what constituted a history painting included more masculine and moralizing aspects than earlier Academicians, meaning that, as Sheriff suggests, he strove to separate history paintings from that of the earlier, more "feminine" Rococo style towards a more sober "masculine" approach.³⁴ In 1775, d'Angiviller addressed the *Académie Royale*, stating that the King wished that "[Academic paintings] would revive the proper history painting traits of virtue and patriotic sentiments."³⁵ His emphases on the importance of the genre lead to an exceptional amount of history painter receptions in the 1780s.³⁶

As noted earlier, there was a push from Charles Le Brun and André Félibien to elevate history painting to be the highest of painting genres starting in the seventeenth century.³⁷ In this paper, I rely on the writing of André Félibien from his 1667 *Conferences*, where he importantly laid out the distinction between high and low genres, from still life to historical subjects:

He who paints landscapes perfectly is above the painter who only paints fruit, flowers, and seashells. He who paints living animals is more estimable than the painter who only paints things that are lifeless and without movement. And since mankind is the most perfect of God's works on Earth, it is certain that he who makes himself the imitator of God in painting the human figure is much more estimable than all others... A painter who paints only portraits has not achieved the highest perfection and cannot pretend to those honours that the most erudite receive. For that one must move from one figure to the representation of several together; one must depict history and fable and represent great deeds like historians, or charming subjects like poets; and climbing ever higher, one

must in allegorical compositions know how to cover under the veil of fable the virtues of great men, and the most exalted mysteries. We call a painter great who can perform such tasks well.³⁸

This text is important, because it is one of the earliest assertions that outlines how a history painting was superior to all other genres and lays out the hierarchy of genres that was ever-present in the Salons.

Throughout what follows, I will reference several different subcategories of history paintings. It is important to note that the *Académie Royale* did not define or categorize history paintings in this way, but modern scholars have done so. For instance, Melissa Hyde (2006) argues that François Boucher (1703-1770), who was admitted into the *Académie Royale* as a history painter in 1734, created a history genre subcategory she titled “gallant mythology.”³⁹ In this paper, I refer to history paintings in the Rococo style as well as in the Neoclassical style. Artists, theorists, and critics of this era created gendered identifications of these two painting styles, defining the Rococo as effeminate and the Neoclassical as masculine. This appears repeatedly in contemporary literature and up to modern research, and I will discuss these gendered notions and its use in relation to female artists in the chapters that follow.⁴⁰ Further, I will not discuss the role of historiated portraits, of which Vigée-Lebrun and Labille-Guiard created many, that were considered history paintings at critical points in the French Salon’s history.⁴¹ This category of history painting has been discussed at length previously by numerous historians, including Hyde (2003) and Andrew Hottle (2010).

Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun

Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun was celebrated, in both her life and in modern-day scholarship, for her many portraits, and she is arguably the most studied French female painter of the eighteenth-century.⁴² There have been five monographs, two major exhibitions, and a catalogue

raisonné dedicated to her *oeuvre*. These typically focus on the artist's maternal portraits, the ways her career clashed with contemporary gender norms, and her relationship with Marie Antoinette.⁴³ But, very little research has been dedicated to her numerous mythological and history paintings. In fact, a large part of Vigée-Lebrun's *oeuvre* is dedicated to mythological scenes, themes that would generally fall into the category of history paintings. Other historians have labeled Vigée-Lebrun a history painter, including Sheriff (1994, 1996), Joseph Baillio (1988), and Hottle (2010). Importantly, Hottle argues that Vigée-Lebrun considered her painting *Sibyl* (fig. 2) depicting Lady Emma Hamilton as a history painting because of language she used in her autobiography.⁴⁴ Still, no historian gives a thorough explanation as to why they award her this title, since she was not an official history painter within the *Académie Royale*. What has been missing from analytical conversations concerning the artist's *oeuvre* and her objectives, is whether Vigée-Lebrun considered herself foremost a portraitist, or if she wished instead to promote herself to the more prestigious status of history painter.

In Chapter One, I chart Vigée-Lebrun's attempts to promote herself to the level of history painter and discuss how she worked to claim the title for herself. I argue that she achieved this goal, although she never received an official designation through the *Académie Royale*, through the paintings she submitted to her inaugural Salons at the *Académie de St Luc* in 1774 and the *Académie Royale* in 1783. This evidence, as well, extends into the specific language she used when discussing her paintings in her autobiography, *Souvenirs*.

Adélaïde Labille-Guiard

In Chapter Two I discuss the *oeuvre* of Adélaïde Labille-Guiard and argue that she, too, made a sustained effort to promote herself as a history painter. Labille-Guiard was, along with Vigée-Lebrun, one of the last four female painters admitted to the French *Académie Royale*

before the Revolution. There is only one monograph and catalogue raisonné dedicated to the Labille-Guiard *oeuvre*, considerably less than the research dedicated to Vigée-Lebrun.⁴⁵

It should be noted that historians regularly compare Vigée-Lebrun and Labille-Guiard to one another, and sometimes this comparison is unfavorable for Labille-Guiard. A common statement is that Labille-Guiard simply did not have a large *oeuvre* and that is the reason why there is not more scholarship devoted to her.⁴⁶ Existing publications dedicated to Labille-Guiard tend to emphasize the importance of her *Self-Portrait with Two Pupils*, her struggle to find patrons, and her supposed rivalry with Vigée-Lebrun.⁴⁷ There are, however, some historians who discuss the artist's history paintings, notably Laura Auricchio (2009) and Hyde (2003). Labille-Guiard, unlike Vigée-Lebrun, did receive an official commission for a history painting from the royal court, *Reception of a Chevalier de Saint-Lazare by Monsieur, Grand Master of the Order* (fig. 27). The painting is mentioned frequently in existing literature, but there is a lack of research dedicated to Labille-Guiard's intentions regarding the painting and her rank as a portraitist.⁴⁸ The painting was destroyed in 1793 by Revolutionaries, and the only surviving physical evidence of the it are two preliminary sketches. The main argument regarding this painting is that Labille-Guiard was quite proud of the commission, and she lost her desire to paint after it was destroyed. There is no discussion, however, regarding how Labille-Guiard was able to receive this prestigious history commission despite being a designated portraitist in the *Académie Royale*.

Notably, Hyde argues that there are other paintings in Labille-Guiard's *oeuvre* that deserve the title of history painting. Specifically, she places Labille-Guiard's *Portrait of Madame Adélaïde* (fig. 30), which was shown in the Salon of 1787, in this category. Hyde explains the different aspects of this painting, including multiple portraits and allegory, that would make this

painting more than just a portrait.⁴⁹ This is one of the only instances where a historian argues that a work created by Labille-Guiard, other than *Reception of a Chevalier*, deserves the distinction of a history painting. Further, there is little research concerning Labille-Guiard's career after the French Revolution, past the destruction of this painting. Historians favor her earlier 1780s portraits similar to how Vigée-Lebrun's career at the same time is more regularly discussed.

In Chapter Two, I argue that Labille-Guiard was able to receive an official history commission, for the *Reception of a Chevalier*, based upon her success with *Self-Portrait with Two Pupils*, and through the patronage and friendship with the Mesdames, the sisters and aunt of Louis XVI. Further, critics used specific masculine signifiers when they described Labille-Guiard and her painting style. I examine how this also aided Labille-Guiard in acquiring this prestigious commission.

Angélique Mongez

Marie-Jeanne-Angélique Mongez (née Levol) is identified by Sheriff (2006) as the first female painter to exhibit a “true” history painting, *Astyanax Snatched from His Mother* (fig. 36), in a French Salon.⁵⁰ Unfortunately, research dedicated to Mongez is scant. To my knowledge, there have been no monographs, exhibition catalogues, or a catalogue raisonné dedicated specifically to her *oeuvre*. Those who study her discuss her first history painting, *Astyanax Snatched from His Mother*, consider her role as Jacques-Louis David's (1748-1825) student, and address her connection to other women artists.⁵¹

Mongez exhibited *Astyanax Snatched from His Mother* at the Salon of 1802, sponsored by the post-Revolutionary *Beaux-Arts*, which replaced the *Académie Royale* in 1795.⁵² During the 1802 Salon, several critics linked Mongez to her predecessors, Vigée-Lebrun and Labille-

Guiard.⁵³ They noted that what separated this newcomer from her predecessors was that Mongez presented herself solely as a history painter, while both Vigée-Lebrun and Labille-Guiard submitted almost exclusively portraits to the Salons.⁵⁴ *Astyanax Snatched from his Mother* was the first of many mythological paintings Mongez exhibited in Salons, including *Mars and Venus* (fig. 38). Indeed, from what I have been able to piece together regarding Mongez's *oeuvre*, the majority of her works were history paintings. Another key difference in Mongez's work is that she depicted the male body in her paintings.⁵⁵ This was something that Vigée-Lebrun never attempted in her mythological paintings, and it was considered a necessity by the *Académie Royale* for a painting to be deemed a part of the history genre. Labille-Guiard did include male figures in her large history painting, but they were shown fully clothed in contemporary dress.

Mongez is often discussed as part of David's female atelier, and occasionally, as part of the larger group of women artists that rose up in France during and after the Revolution. Typically, these discussions, including that of Mary Vidal (2003), work against the notion that David was operating in a strictly masculine artistic culture.⁵⁶ Most publications devoted to David's students, including by Thomas Crow (1995), do not mention Mongez or his other female students. Vidal and Margaret Oppenheimer (1996), among others, emphasize the importance of these women in David's life and the supposed equality found within his teaching studio.⁵⁷ Further, Oppenheimer and Gen Doy (2000) argue that there were societal and cultural changes that allowed for more space for women artists in this period.⁵⁸ Sheriff also argues that Mongez would be considered what we today call an "amateur" painter because she did not receive or work on commissions; her wealth and status allowed her the opportunity to paint and exhibit through her own means.⁵⁹ She was also not a member of the *Beaux-Arts*; however, it should be noted that none of David's female students were ever accepted into its ranks.⁶⁰

In Chapter Three, I discuss Mongez's career in relation to the changing art scene in France during the nineteenth century and how this both facilitated and inhibited her career. I argue that, just as Vigée-Lebrun and Labille-Guiard had, Mongez actively defined herself as a history painter through her career choices. Further, I afford Mongez agency within her career and painting style. I argue that while she was devoted and indebted to David's teachings and friendship, that she also was an accomplished painter in her own right who had a distinctive vision for herself. It was through her efforts that she was considered a history painter by the public.

Conclusion

Throughout my analyses, I discuss how Vigée-Lebrun, Labille-Guiard, and Mongez navigated the political and official channels of the French art world. Out of the three artists, Vigée-Lebrun is the only one to have left behind a formal autobiography.⁶¹ To my knowledge, there are no known expansive written documents from either Labille-Guiard's or Mongez's hand. Further, none of the artists left behind a plethora of letters, diaries, or other personal informal writings. As such it is difficult to pinpoint their exact intentions regarding their careers and definitions of themselves as they did not state them plainly in their own words. What is available for analysis is their strategic career moves that they each made consistently throughout their lives. The actions of these artists are not unique among them. In fact, they are a part of a broader cultural movement during this era that allowed women creators to interact and challenge preconceived gender norms. This phenomenon stretched beyond French women painters and included women practicing other forms of creative output including the English authors Ann Radcliffe and Jane Austen, the French author George Sand (Amantine Lucile Dupin), and the French theorist and patroness Germaine de Staël.⁶² It is inconceivable to believe that a woman in

ancien regime or post-revolutionary France would receive the title of history painter, obtain a history painting commission, or present a history painting in the official Salon by chance or accident. Vigée-Lebrun, Labille-Guiard, and Mongez had to position themselves and prove their talents were enough to warrant the title to their viewing public.

¹ To avoid confusion with other Academies referenced throughout this paper the French Academy Pre-Revolution will be referred to as the shortened version, *Académie Royale*. When discussing French Academies post-Revolution, their full names will be given except for the *Académie des Beaux-Arts* and the *École des Beaux-Arts*. These will be shortened to *Beaux-Arts* for convenience. For other cities' and countries' Academies that I reference, their location will be given to show distinction among them.

² Christian Michel, *The Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture: The Birth of the French School, 1648–1793*, trans. Chris Miller (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2018), xi.

³ See Mary Sheriff, *The Exceptional Woman: Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun and the Cultural Politics of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 73-142.

⁴ See Nicholas Mirzoeff, "Revolution, Representation, Equality: Gender, Genre, and Emulation in the Académie Royale de Peinture et Sculpture, 1785-93," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 31, no. 2 (1997/1998): 154; Paul Duro, "Academic Theory 1550-1800," in *A Companion to Art Theory*, eds. Paul Smith and Carolyn Wilde (Hoboken: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2012), 91; and Albert Boime, *The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Phaidon Press, 1971), 3.

⁵ Michel, *The Académie Royale*, 100, 307.

⁶ Howard V. Evans and Charlotte B. Evans, "Women Artists in Eighteenth-Century France," *Man and Nature/L'homme et la nature* 1, (1982): 201.

⁷ Sheriff, *Exceptional Woman*, 84.

⁸ See Michel, *The Académie Royale*, 1.

⁹ Michel, *The Académie Royale*, 1-3. For a more in-depth discussion of the many different primary resources discussing the history of the *Académie Royale* see Sharan L. Boedo, "Reception and Membership at the *Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture, 1648-1793*" (PhD diss., Cornell University, 2005), 4-11.

¹⁰ Michel, *The Académie Royale*, 12-13.

¹¹ See Boedo, "Reception and Membership," 72-115 for a broader discussion of the acceptance process, the standards and regulations for *morceau de réception pieces*, and exceptions within this system.

¹² Michel, *The Académie Royale*, 211.

¹³ This particular step in the *morceau de réception* process had varying popularity; some directors never gave out specified subjects to the applicants. See Michel, *The Académie Royale*, 211.

¹⁴ Mirzoeff, "Revolution, Representation, Equality," 156.

¹⁵ Michel, *The Académie Royale*, 211-212.

¹⁶ For information regarding the acceptance process into the *Académie Royale*, see Mirzoeff, "Revolution, Representation, Equality," 156.

¹⁷ Michel, *The Académie Royale*, 212

¹⁸ Carter E. Foster, “Jean-Bernard Restout's ‘Sleep: Figure Study’: Painting and Drawing from Life at the French Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture,” *Cleveland Studies in the History of Art* 3 (1998): 53.

¹⁹ For a description of the role professors played within the classroom see Foster, “Painting and Drawing,” 54, 59.

²⁰ For brief explanation of the *Grands Prix* see Foster, “Painting and Drawing,” 59; and Michel, *The Académie Royale*, 273.

²¹ Michel, *The Académie Royale*, 306.

²² Michel, *The Académie Royale*, 226.

²³ Sheriff, *The Exceptional Woman*, 79.

²⁴ For a discussion on rules created to limit the number of women in the *Académie Royale*, see Sheriff, *Exceptional Woman*, 78-80.

²⁵ For information regarding women’s acceptance into the *Académie Royale* see Sheriff, *Exceptional Woman*, 80-81.

²⁶ Sheriff, *Exceptional Woman*, 81-82.

²⁷ These ideas has ancient origins as well. See. Duro, “Academic Theory,” 94.

²⁸ Michel, *The Académie Royale*, 12.

²⁹ Duro, “Academic Theory,” 93.

³⁰ For example, Jean-August-Dominique Ingres said in 1825, “certainly I admire the Masters, I bow down before them...above all the greatest [Raphael]”; from Paul Duro, “Why Imitation, and Why Global?” in *Theorizing Imitation in the Visual Arts: Global Contexts*, ed. Paul Duro (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 26.

³¹ Michel, *The Académie Royale*, 132. The influence of Raphael and Poussin can be seen in André Félibien’s *Conférences*. Out of the seven volumes, he devoted two to both Raphael and Poussin each. See Duro, “Imitation and Authority,” 96.

³² Sheriff, *The Exceptional Woman*, 99.

³³ Michel, *The Académie Royale*, 107.

³⁴ Mary Sheriff, “Woman? Hermaphrodite? History Painter? On the Self-Imaging of Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun,” *The Eighteenth Century* 35, no. 1 (1994): 12.

³⁵ “*la plupart auroient pour sujet des traits d'histoire propres a ranimer la vertu et les sentiments patriotiques.*” From Anatole de Montaiglon, ed., *Procès-Verbaux de l'Académie Royale de Peinture et de*

Sculpture, 1684-1793, VIII (Paris, 1888), Letter of January 1775, 176-178. Translation my own. For a discussion of this quote and further implications see Francis H. Dowley, "D'Angiviller's Grands Hommes and the Significant Moment," *The Art Bulletin* 39, no. 4 (Dec., 1957): 259-260.

³⁶ See Bodeo, "Reception and Membership," 165-166.

³⁷ Charles Mitchell, "Benjamin West's "Death of General Wolfe" and the Popular History Piece," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 7 (1944): 22.

³⁸ *Ainfi celuy qui fait parfaitement des payages est au dessus d'un autre qui ne fait que fruits, des fleurs ou des coquilles. Celuy qui peint des animaux vivans est plus estimable que ceux qui ne representent que des choses mortes and fans mouvements; Et comme la figure de l'homme est le plus parfait ouvrage de Dieu sur la terre, Il est certain aussi que celuy qui se rent l'imitateur de Dieu en poignant des figures humaines, est beaucoup plus excellent que tous les autres... un Peinture qui ne fait que des portraits, n'as pas encore atteint cette haute perfection de l'Art, and ne peut petrendre à l'honneur que reçoivent les plus çavans. Il faut pour cela passer d'une feule figure à la representation de plusieurs ensemble; il faut traiter l'histoire and la fable; il faut représenter de grandes actions comme les Historiens ou des sujets agreables comme les Poëtes; Et montant encore plus haut, il faut par des compositions allegoriques, savoir couvrir sous le voile de la fable les vertus des grands hommes, and mysteres le plus relevez. L'on apelle un grand Peinture celuy qui s'aquite bien de semblables entreprises.*

From André Félibien, "Preface," in *Conférences de l'Académie Royale de peinture et de sculpture pendant l'année 1667* (Paris, 1669). Translation from Paul Duro, "Imitation and Authority: The Creation of the Academic Canon in French Art, 1648-1870," in *Partisan Canons*, ed. Anna Brzyski (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 96.

³⁹ Melissa Hyde, *Making Up the Rococo: François Boucher and His Critics*, (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2006), 1.

⁴⁰ Inherently, the Rococo and Neoclassical style are placed within a gendered dichotomy because of how they were originally viewed and discussed by contemporaries. By the late eighteenth-century, the Neoclassical style was seen as a reaction against and foil to what they deemed the more "feminine" Rococo. For a further discussion regarding these ideas and their implications to female painters see Sheriff, "Woman? Hermaphrodite? History Painter?" 10-11; and Sheriff, *The Exceptional Woman*, 59-60.

⁴¹ Andrew D. Hottle, "More Than 'A Preposterous Neo-Classic Rehash:' Elisabeth Vigée Le Brun's *Sibyl* and its Virgilian Connotations," *Aurora* 11 (2010): 122.

⁴² The many publications dedicated to Vigée-Lebrun includes W. H. Helm, *Vigée-Lebrun (1755-1842): Her Life, Works, and Friendships including a Catalogue Raisonné of the Artist's Pictures* (London, 1915); Joseph Baillio, *Elisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun, 1755-1842*, exh. cat. (Fort Worth: Kimbell Museum of Art, 1982); and Joseph Baillio, Katharine Baetjer, and Paul Lang, *Vigée Le Brun*, exh. cat. (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2016).

⁴³ For a discussion of Vigée-Lebrun's maternal portraits see Joseph Baillio, "Vigée Le Brun and the Classical Practice of Imitation," *Papers in Art History from the Pennsylvania State University* 4 (1988): 94-125; Paula Rea Radisich, "Que peut définir les femmes?: Vigée-Lebrun's Portraits of an Artist," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 25, no. 4 (1992): 441-467; and Christiane de Aldecoa "Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun: de l'Académie Royale de Paris, de Rouen, de Saint-Luc, de Rome et de Arcadie, de

Parme et de Bologne, de Saint-Pétersbourg, de Berlin, de Genève et Avignon Autoportrait, ou une vie pour la peinture,” *Les Cahiers d’Histoire de l’Art* 12 (2014): 52-59. On Vigée-Lebrun's relationship to Marie Antoinette, see Mary Sheriff, "The Cradle is Empty: Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, Marie-Antoinette, and the Problem of Intention," in *Women, Art and the Politics of Identity in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, eds. Melissa Hyde and Jennifer Milam (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2003); and Heidi A. Strobel “Royal ‘Matronage’ of Women Artists in the Late Eighteenth Century,” *Women’s Art Journal* 26, no. 2 (2005-2006): 3-9. There have been efforts by historians to distance Vigée-Lebrun and her *oeuvre* from sexist ideals of her time and more modern research. For instance, Baillio argues that Vigée-Lebrun was engaging with the respected practice of emulation, necessary for history painting, instead of “copying” in many of her compositions. Specifically, he argues that Vigée-Lebrun was looking to Raphael, Rubens, and Fragonard when she was designing her compositions. See Baillio, “Vigee Le Brun and the Classical Practice of Imitation,” 103.

⁴⁴ Hottle, “More Than ‘A Preposterous Neo-Classic Rehash,’” 137-139.

⁴⁵ The major publications dedicated to Labille-Guiard include A.M. Passez, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard: Biographie et Catalogue Raisonné* (Paris, Répertoire d'Art et d'Archéologie, 1973); and Laura Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard: Artists in the Age of Revolution* (Los Angeles: J. Getty Museum, 2009).

⁴⁶ Catherine R. Montfort, “Self-Portraits and Portraits of Self: Adélaïde Labille-Guiard and Elisabeth Vigée Lebrun, Women Artists of the Eighteenth Century,” *Pacific Coast Philology* 40, no. 1 (2005): 13. This paper discusses both artists, and as such I will have to compare them to one another. However, I have made every effort to not sensationalize the supposed rivalry between the two women, which has been a weakness of other scholarship. In other publications, there are comparisons between the looser brushstrokes of Vigée-Lebrun and the precise work of Labille-Guiard. The two artists were regularly compared by in contemporary critical writings (see Chapter Two for a further discussion). There is also a possibility that Vigée-Lebrun referred to Labille-Guiard as her rival in her *Souvenirs*, but this is only speculation because Vigée-Lebrun is vague in her wording. For examples of this type of conversation see Passez, *Biographie et Catalogue Raisonné*, 55-57 and Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard*, 2, 24-26, 61, 109. For a discussion of contemporaries identifying the two as rivals see Laura Auricchio, “Portraits of Impropriety: Adélaïde Labille-Guiard and the Careers of Professional Women Artists in Late Eighteenth-Century Paris,” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2000), 84.

⁴⁷ For a discussion of Labille-Guiard’s struggle to find patrons: Laura Auricchio, “Self-Promotion in Adélaïde Labille-Guiard’s 1785 ‘Self-Portrait with Two Students,’” *The Art Bulletin* 89, no. 1 (March 2007): 49.

⁴⁸ Auricchio discusses *The Chevalier de Saint-Lazare* and iconoclasm brought on by the Revolution at length; Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard*, 84-91; and Auricchio, “Portraits of Impropriety,” 168-183. There are mentions of the painting in other publications, including Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin, *Women Artists 1550-1950*, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1976), 195.

⁴⁹ Melissa Hyde, “Under the Sign of Minerva: Adélaïde Labille-Guiard’s ‘Portrait of Madame Adélaïde,’” in *Women, Art and the Politics of Identity in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, eds. Melissa Hyde and Jennifer Milam (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2003), 142-146.

⁵⁰ Mary Sheriff, “Jacques-Louis David and the Ladies,” in *Jacques-Louis David: New Perspectives*, ed. by Dorothy Johnson (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2006) 103-104.

⁵¹ For literature on David's relationship with his female students see Sheriff, "Jacques-Louis David and the Ladies," 90-107; Mary Vidal, "The 'Other Atelier': Jacques-Louis David's Female Students," in *Women, Art and the Politics of Identity in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, eds. Melissa Hyde and Jennifer Milam (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2003), 237-262; and Gen Doy, "Hidden from Histories: Women History Painter in Early Nineteenth-Century France," in *Art and the Academy in Nineteenth-Century France*, eds. Rafael Cardoso Denis and Colin Trodd (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 71-85.

⁵² For a more in-depth discussion of the French Academy in the early nineteenth century see Chapter Three.

⁵³ See Margaret F. Denton, "A Woman's Place: The Gendering of Genres in Post-revolutionary French Painting," *Art History* 21, no. 2 (1998): 222.

⁵⁴ Denton, "The Gendering of Genres," 222.

⁵⁵ Denton, "The Gendering of Genres," 222.

⁵⁶ Vidal, "The 'Other Atelier,'" 238-239.

⁵⁷ Vidal, "The 'Other Atelier,'" 240-241, 250-254; and Oppenheimer, "Women Artists in Paris," 38, 45.

⁵⁸ Oppenheimer, "Women Artists in Paris," 1-13; and Doy, "Hidden from Histories," 71-72, 74.

⁵⁹ Vidal, "The 'Other Atelier,'" 251.

⁶⁰ Vidal, "The 'Other Atelier,'" 238.

⁶¹ For a conversation discussing the validity and concerns of her autobiography see Chapter One.

⁶² For literature discussing the relationship of gender and the writings of Ann Radcliffe see Robert Miles, *Ann Radcliffe: The Great Enchantress* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); for Jane Austen see Claudia L. Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988); for George Sand see Françoise Massardier-Kenney, *Gender in the Fiction of George Sand* (Leiden: Brill Publishing, 1999); and for Germaine de Staël see Judith E. Martin, *Germaine de Staël in Germany: Gender and Literary Authority (1800-1850)* (Plymouth: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2011). It should also be noted that Vigée-Lebrun painted a portrait of Madame de Staël in 1807 while they were both in exile from Paris, but de Staël disliked how the artist represented her.

CHAPTER ONE

ÉLISABETH VIGÉE-LEBRUN

To label Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun solely as a portraitist is easy due to the number of portraits in her *oeuvre*, and the fact that she painted them steadily throughout her career. A crucial element that has been missing from the examination of the artist's career is Vigée-Lebrun's own view of herself. In this chapter, I argue that Vigée-Lebrun actively defined and promoted herself as a history painter rather than a portraitist. To support this argument, I first consider the reception pieces Vigée-Lebrun submitted at her acceptance to the *Académie de St. Luc* (1774) and the *Académie Royale* (1783), and then through specific anecdotes employed in her autobiographical publication, *Souvenirs* (1835-37). Her actions and choices, I argue, speak to her desire to be seen by others, including the public, critics, and the *Académie Royale*, as a history painter.

By any account, Vigée-Lebrun was one of the most prolific and successful painters of the eighteenth century. Her *oeuvre* was enhanced through her exceptional talent, and by the rich and famous patrons she was able to procure through social ingenuity. She spent her youth and some of her adult life in France, but also traveled widely. Her first introduction to the arts came from her father, Louis Vigée, a pastellist. Vigée-Lebrun was acquainted with and commissioned by many powerful and influential patrons even before she was officially accepted into the *Académie Royale*. Her first portrait of the French Queen, Marie Antoinette (1755-1793), was *Marie Antoinette in Court Dress* (1778). This initiated a long relationship between the two women, with Vigée-Lebrun painting thirty portraits of the Queen and her children by the French Revolution.

Vigée-Lebrun entered her first Academy, the *Académie de St Luc*, in 1774. As Sheriff (1996) explains, the artist was officially accepted into the *Académie Royale* in 1783 through extraordinary measures. Her first request for admission to the *Académie Royale* was rejected, supposedly due to the fact that her husband was an art dealer. It is unclear why exactly Louis XVI felt compelled to intervene, but by royal order Vigée-Lebrun was decreed a member of the *Académie Royale*. The artist never submitted a proper reception piece, and unlike other painters, the *Académie Royale* never defined her a specific genre.¹ During the Revolution, Vigée-Lebrun fled Paris because of her connections with the aristocracy and the crown. She spent the later part of her life traveling Europe, living in Italy, Russia, and Switzerland. The artist eventually returned to Paris in 1805, and in 1829 she began to write her memoirs, entitled *Souvenirs*.²

Reception Pieces

Vigée-Lebrun's *morceau de réception*, or reception piece, for both her admission into the *Académie de St. Luc* in 1774 and the *Académie Royale* in 1783 are the two most specific instances where the artist positioned herself as an aspiring painter of history subjects. After her official admittance to these Academies, Vigée-Lebrun had to submit several works to their Salons. Both groups of submitted images included mythological paintings in addition to her more traditional portraits.³ The images were Vigée-Lebrun's artistic introduction to the viewing public, and their purpose was to represent the genre with which the artist wanted to be identified. Vigée-Lebrun's acceptance into the *Académie Royale* was odd for a multitude of reasons, including the fact that she was never assigned a genre.⁴ This separated her not only from her fellow female Academicians, who were typically identified as portraitists or still-life painters, but also from her male contemporaries who were eligible to be considered history painters.⁵ Vigée-Lebrun's reception pieces differed in terms of subject matter from the entries of other female

members of the French Academies, including Labille-Guiard, who was initiated in the same year. Instead, the artworks Vigée-Lebrun presented fell more in line with other women artists, including Rosalba Carriera (1673-1757) and Angelica Kauffman (1741-1807), and male *Académie Royale* members, including François Boucher and Jacques-Louis David. I argue that Vigée-Lebrun intentionally placed herself within a lineage of known and revered female and male history painters by emulating their collective reception pieces with her two submissions.

Vigée-Lebrun's submission to the *Académie de St. Luc* in 1774 represented her first foray into the official art world of Paris. Before this, she was working and showing her artwork primarily from her own studio, a path that did not allow for a public reception on a larger scale.⁶ Vigée-Lebrun joined the *Académie de St. Luc* in the same year as Labille-Guiard, and they presented their reception pieces at the same Salon. Vigée-Lebrun's primary reception piece was a portrait, *Pierre Louis Dumesnil*, now lost.⁷ As her primary reception piece, the painting would have identified her firmly as a portraitist; however, she also submitted three allegorical paintings to complete the larger reception group. These were *Allegory of Music*, *Allegory of Poetry* (fig. 3), and the now-lost *Allegory of Painting*.⁸ These works fall more within the category of allegorical paintings than the stereotypical history paintings seen from this era. The individual works are smaller than a typical reception piece for a history painter, with *Poetry*, most likely the largest canvas, standing just over two feet in height.⁹ Also, individually they do not feature a multi-figural grouping, which through Félibien's definition, was considered essential to the genre. Nevertheless, these paintings do point towards Vigée-Lebrun's early interest and pursuit of the history genre. Perhaps the most telling aspect of the intention behind these paintings is that they did not represent likenesses of any specific individual, but were all intended as allegory.

Vigée-Lebrun's submission of allegorical paintings for reception pieces continued a tradition established by Rosalba Carriera, an Italian miniaturist, and Angelica Kauffman, a Swiss history painter. Those two artists both submitted allegorical paintings to the Italian academies, in 1704 and 1764 respectively. Carriera is known primarily as a pastel portraitist, but similar to Vigée-Lebrun, she also completed many mythological and allegorical paintings throughout her career.¹⁰ These include the painting *Girl with a Dove (L'Innocenza)* (fig. 4), which was her reception piece for the *Accademia di S Luca* in Rome, in 1705.¹¹ The French *Académie Royale* admitted Carriera to their ranks in 1720 as a portraitist.¹² Her admittance was exceptional, as was Vigée-Lebrun's later one, because the *Académie Royale* had to repeal an earlier statute, enacted in 1706, that prohibited women from joining.¹³ For Carriera's *morceau de reception* to the *Académie Royale*, she submitted *Nymph in Apollo's Retinue* (fig. 5).¹⁴ In an accompanying letter that addressed the *Académie Royale's* history painters directly, Kathleen Nicholson (2019) argues, Carriera offered a rebuke of the *Académie Royale's* "misogyny" for only allowing men to be ranked as history painters.¹⁵ Vigée-Lebrun evoked a similar style of depicting mythological women seen in Carriera's *Nymph in Apollo's Retinue* in her 1774 allegories and the later *Peace Bringing Back Abundance* (1780). Most striking is the similar bared breast and raised arm found in both Carriera's *Nymph* and in Vigée-Lebrun's *Allegory of Peace*. Carriera's reception piece was kept by the *Académie Royale* within the Louvre, as were most reception pieces, so it is likely that Vigée-Lebrun was aware of the pastel.¹⁶ Joseph Baillio (2016) argues that Vigée-Lebrun imitated other paintings of Carriera's as well, including her pastel *Peace and Justice* (1726). The two copies of this pastel were exhibited in Paris in 1780, the same year in which Vigée-Lebrun completed *Peace Bringing Back Abundance* and *Innocence Taking Refuge in the Arms of Justice*

(1783).¹⁷ Further, Vigée-Lebrun referenced Carriera in *Souvenirs*, and the artist recounted a critic who described Vigée-Lebrun as “Modern Rosalba, but more brilliant than she.”¹⁸

Carriera was not awarded the title of history painter by any Academy during her lifetime, but Angelica Kauffman was one of the first women to receive this honor.¹⁹ Kauffman was also a member of the *Accademia di S Luca* in Rome early in her career; her reception piece was the allegorical painting *La Speranza or Hope* (fig. 6), submitted in 1765.²⁰ Some scholars have argued that this painting is a self-portrait of Kauffman; however, Steffi Roettgen and Angela Rosenthal state that this instead represents an allegory instead.²¹ This miniature mimics the theme of Carriera’s Italian reception piece, and the two works were both created on oval canvases. Based on descriptions of Vigée-Lebrun’s *Allegory of Music* and *Allegory of Painting*, these were also created on smaller oval canvases. Kauffman’s *Hope* is the only Academic reception piece for the artist, as the English Royal Academy, where she became a founding member in 1768, did not require a reception piece in the same manner as the *Académie Royale*.²² A few years later Kauffman did present several ceremonial diploma works, i.e. paintings donated by members to the Academy that reflected their preferred genre, to the English Royal Academy. These were the four paintings, *Composition* (fig. 7), *Invention* (fig. 8), *Design* (fig. 9), and *Coloring* (fig. 10) that were installed on the Royal Academy’s ceiling.²³ As had Carriera, Kauffman turned to allegorical themes when presenting herself to an Academy.

The decisions of Vigée-Lebrun, following Carriera and Kauffman, to submit allegorical works to their first Academies most likely stemmed from common circumstances. All of these Academies barred women from studying and depicting the male nude.²⁴ The artists were, however, able to depict nude women, and allegorical figures traditionally take on the guise of women. The artists also typically created paintings and scenes that spoke to women’s lives and

stories, which might also have included allegory. It is highly probable that Vigée-Lebrun knew of both Carriera's and especially Kauffman's work, as Vigée-Lebrun followed her style and career closely. Kauffman's success with neoclassically-styled history paintings was well known to Vigée-Lebrun, and she probably considered Kauffman a rival.²⁵ Vigée-Lebrun was also influenced by Kauffman's style, especially while exiled in Rome during the French Revolution.²⁶

Lebrun's interest in mythological subjects was also manifested during her acceptance into the *Académie Royale* in 1783. As described in my Introduction chapter, her acceptance was far from the usual, mainly because of the crown's involvement. Because of this, Vigée-Lebrun did not present a traditional *morceau de réception*, like every other member in the *Académie Royale*'s history. Typically, historians designate the painting *Peace Bringing Back Abundance* (fig. 11) as her reception piece to the *Académie Royale*, and Vigée-Lebrun does identify the painting as her *morceau de réception* in *Souvenirs*.²⁷ She submitted the work to the Salon of 1783 alongside three other mythological paintings: *Innocence Taking Refuge in the Arms of Justice* (fig. 12), *Venus Tying the Wings of Cupid* (fig. 13), and *Juno Borrowing the Belt of Venus* (fig. 14).²⁸ These paintings were far grander than her earlier allegorical group for the *Académie de St Luc* in 1774. They all include multi-figure groups representing both allegory and mythology.

Importantly, Vigée-Lebrun's group of paintings closely resembled the reception piece submitted by Boucher in 1734, *Rinaldo and Armida* (fig. 15). Critically, *Rinaldo and Armida* established Boucher's official reputation and designation as a history painter within the *Académie Royale*. This painting also began Boucher's unique approach to history paintings, as defined in my Introduction. *Rinaldo and Armida* epitomizes the "gallant mythologies" type of history painting outlined by Melissa Hyde (2006). The painting emphasizes the female body over

the male, and there are several representations of children through depictions of Cupids. Vigée-Lebrun capitalized on Boucher's shift in the history painting genre, and elements of this style of history painting is present in her 1783 mythologies.²⁹ In each, there are depictions of the female nude and breasts, and in *Venus Tying the Wings of Cupid* and *Juno Borrowing the Belt of Venus* there are representations of children. There are also depictions of relationships, dependency, and intimacy found in both Vigée-Lebrun's and Boucher's paintings. These themes correlate with the Rococo style, and the paintings also reference classical antiquity through clothing choices. Vigée-Lebrun was indebted to the Rococo style throughout most of her early career, even though its popularity waned considerably after the death of Boucher in 1770.³⁰

The paintings Vigée-Lebrun submitted to the 1783 Salon also correlate to David's reception piece submitted in 1783, titled *Andromache Mourning Hector* (fig. 16).³¹ As with Boucher, the *Académie Royale* officially labeled David a history painter after the successful submission of this painting. What is significant about *Andromache* is that it hung in the same Salon as Vigée-Lebrun's four mythological paintings, and that both she and David became official Academicians in the same year. David's painting depicts the titular figures from Homer's *Iliad*. What is significant about *Andromache Mourning Hector* is that David gives most of the emotional weight of the image to the figure of Andromache, a woman. David's painting has much in common with Vigée-Lebrun's mythological paintings in that they each prominently feature women, and groups of two to three figures are set in shallow scenes. David is known for his belief in the power and supremacy of didactic messages within history paintings.³² Vigée-Lebrun also participated in this tradition, especially in the message behind *Peace Bringing Back Abundance*. In this painting, she is most likely commenting on and referencing how, in times of peace, there are more opportunities for abundant crops, and thus there is less hunger in the

country. This message would have been incredibly relevant in France, whose people were only five years away from the beginning of the Revolution. Vigée-Lebrun completed the paintings during France's involvement with the American War of Independence, and that peace treaty was signed in 1783 as well.³³ This element of forethought and concern for one's country is a staple of David's early history paintings.

Despite imitating the imagery and themes seen in the history paintings of Boucher and David, Vigée-Lebrun's unofficial *morceau de réception* did not result in her designation as a history painter in the *Académie Royale*. To my knowledge, there was no official rule that prohibited women from achieving this distinction, instead it was based on the customs and beliefs of the overwhelmingly male *Académie Royale* ruling body alone. However, Vigée-Lebrun's lack of official designation, as either a history painter or another genre, within the *Académie Royale* is particularly telling – as a member she existed within a liminal space. The absence of an official designation, in fact, allowed Vigée-Lebrun more freedom to exhibit paintings that might have been barred to official portraitists within the *Académie Royale*, as only history painters could present paintings of that genre to the Salons. Further, the *Académie Royale*'s silence on Vigée-Lebrun's status allowed the public and some critics to define Vigée-Lebrun as a history painter.³⁴ One such critic, in *Memoires Secrets* (1783), lamented the fact that no male artist's history painting exhibited in the 1783 Salon evoked the same praise and fervor Vigée-Lebrun received. He stated: “the scepter of Apollo had fallen to the distaff side and a woman had carried the palm.”³⁵

The Souvenirs

Vigée-Lebrun published her autobiography, *Souvenirs*, in her early 80s. This text is instrumental to the study of the artist because it is the only surviving documentation of her life

from her own hand. It is important to note that almost every historian who studies Vigée-Lebrun has questioned the validity of the autobiography.³⁶ The primary cause for concern is that there are many easily identifiable falsehoods throughout the work, including exaggerated situations. There is also a concern over how much involvement the artist truly had with the final product.³⁷ With this being said, Vigée-Lebrun's autobiography represents an invaluable part of her story, even if there are some inconsistencies. The artist used *Souvenirs* to tell the story of her life the way she wanted to be remembered, and one of the things she wanted to be recognized as was a history painter.

Vigée-Lebrun starts her story with her first art lessons under her father, Louis Vigée, who worked primarily in pastels, and ends with the death of her daughter after Vigée-Lebrun finally returned to Paris. Vigée-Lebrun asserts again and again throughout the autobiography that she is a painter, and she painstakingly mentions the many sitters that she depicted throughout her long career. Oddly though, Vigée-Lebrun dedicated most of the book to discussing and detailing her social engagements and friendships with what seemed to be every respectable person in the late eighteenth century, including Marie Antoinette, Catherine the Great, and Louis XVIII. In comparison, there is very little information in *Souvenirs* regarding Vigée-Lebrun's artistic practices and her personal thoughts about specific paintings. As such, the passages where the artist does describe or mention a painting are important because they stand out from the rest of the biography. I argue that there are three instances within *Souvenirs* that are critical to analyzing Vigée-Lebrun's vision of herself as a history painter. These are the story of her giving birth to her daughter in 1780; the instance where Marie Antoinette picked up the artist's paintbrushes; and a brief description of a lost painting depicting the then-deceased Marie Antoinette and her children.

Vigée-Lebrun's relationship with her daughter Jeanne Lucie Louise, nicknamed Julie, was incredibly important to the artist throughout her life.³⁸ Towards the beginning of *Souvenirs*, Vigée-Lebrun recounts that she was woefully unprepared for her infant daughter's arrival due to her own commitment to finishing *Venus Tying Cupid's Wings*, which she presented in the 1783 Salon:

These pleasures of pride... are quite far from comparable to the pleasure I experienced when, at the end of two years of marriage, I became pregnant. But here you will see how much this extreme love for my art made me impervious to the little details of life, because, as happy as I felt at the idea of becoming a mother, the nine months of my pregnancy passed without my having thought in the least to prepare for anything necessary for a delivery. The day of my daughter's birth I did not leave my studio, and I worked at my *Venus Tying the Wings of Cupid* in the intervals between my contractions.³⁹

When Vigée-Lebrun was pregnant with Julie in 1780, she was three years away from being admitted into the *Académie Royale*. Still, she claims through the later publication of *Souvenirs* that she was already talented and educated enough to take on the task of history painting. This story is most likely fabricated and is not the accurate retelling of Vigée-Lebrun in labor.

Venus Tying Cupid's Wings' status as one of Vigée-Lebrun's history paintings is noteworthy. This is the painting from her 1783 Salon exhibition that most readily showed Vigée-Lebrun's lineage and adherence to Boucher's unique style of history paintings. By the time of Vigée-Lebrun's *Souvenirs* publication, the style of history paintings had shifted away from the eighteenth-century trend that privileged depictions of women and children as worthy subjects. Just as Boucher's paintings before her, this composition existed as a history painting because of Felibien's inclusion of "fables" as worthy subjects in his 1667 remarks.

Sheriff argues that the purpose of Vigée-Lebrun's story is not to be truthful, and instead, through this passage Vigée-Lebrun asserts the ease with which she could paint even under

extreme duress.⁴⁰ The most obvious meaning of this story is a reference to Vigée-Lebrun's impending status as a mother. Here, the artist is not only giving birth to her daughter but also to a painting. Artists commonly referred to and spoke of their artistic practices as a metaphor for birth.⁴¹ Frederika Jacobs (1994) argues that through Ancient philosophy, Renaissance theory held that women, by nature, could not create something wholly unique.⁴² Instead, women were considered to be only capable of recreation, meaning that women only held the power of replication, as seen in portraiture, and not creation, which was needed for history paintings. Vigée-Lebrun's story further aided her argument that she was a history painter, as there was an eighteenth-century belief that depicting the history genre went against the nature of women. Women were believed to not be able to acquire the level of intellect or physicality needed for creation.⁴³ This theory is seen in the pamphlet *Les Triumvirat des Arts* (1783) written in reaction to Vigée-Lebrun presenting herself as a history painter:

No. The arms, the head, the heart of women lack the essential qualities to follow men into the lofty region of the fine arts. If nature could produce one of them capable of this great effort, it would be a monstrosity, the more shocking because there would be an inevitable opposition between her physical and mental/moral existence. A woman who would have all the passions of a man is really an impossible man.⁴⁴

This story allowed Vigée-Lebrun to argue that she could rise above the perceived constraints of her due to her sex, i.e. pregnancy and birth, and achieve her artistic goal in becoming a history painter.⁴⁵

Perhaps, in opposition to Sheriff's argument, Vigée-Lebrun was arguing through this passage that a woman who was embracing her gender, not trying to distance or elevate themselves away from their womanhood, could be a history painter. If Vigée-Lebrun included this passage merely to prove her prowess as a painter, then, presumably, any one of her paintings could have achieved this same goal. Instead, she chose a painting from her 1783 mythological

group instead of a portrait. She tells the story of herself in labor, an experience that defined womanhood, to give birth to her daughter. In the process, she is creating a history painting that represents motherhood, through the depiction of Venus and Cupid, in the manner of the more feminized Rococo style. At every turn, this passage reinforces and connects Vigée-Lebrun to her femininity, while also maintaining that she could create history paintings even though she was a woman.

Arguably the most prestigious title Vigée-Lebrun achieved in her career was painter to Marie Antoinette, and the portraits she created of the queen were the cause of the numerous inflammatory remarks by critics and the public. Two of Vigée-Lebrun's best known paintings are *Marie Antoinette en Chemise* (fig. 17) and *Marie Antoinette and Her Children* (fig. 18). In *Souvenirs*, Vigée-Lebrun describes several occasions where she had a sitting with the queen, including a most-likely fictionalized anecdote.⁴⁶ Vigée-Lebrun recounted how she missed a meeting between herself and Marie Antoinette due to illness, and as soon as Vigée-Lebrun recovered the following day, she hurried to apologize and explain her absence:

I remember that, in my confusion and my eagerness to make a fitting response to her kind words, I opened my paint-box so excitedly that I spilled my brushes on the floor. I stooped down to pick them up. 'Never mind, never mind,' said the Queen, and, for aught I could say, she insisted on gathering them up herself.⁴⁷

Sheriff (1996) argues that this story is most likely fiction, but it is an important fiction that mimics the stories of past great masters. Sheriff correlates this anecdote to the seventeenth-century painter Titian, famed for his history painting and portraits, who recalled the Emperor Charles V bending to pick up his paintbrushes, which itself received its origins from Pliny's account of Alexander the Great's relationship to his painter Apelles.⁴⁸ Thus, this story situates Vigée-Lebrun within a long line of great court painters, and it shows that she had a broader agenda concerning the narratives relating to her as a painter. Vigée-Lebrun does not pick at

random the past masters she wished to emulate. Titian was a past master that greatly influenced eighteenth-century artists, including Vigée-Lebrun.⁴⁹ His famous state portraits of nobility would have been familiar to Vigée-Lebrun. Not coincidentally, within the *Académie Royale*, only an Academician designated as a history painter could be *Premier peintre du Roi*. This artist would have completed the majority of the official portraits of the King, and Titian held a similar position as painter to Charles V. There was no official *Premier peintre* position available to artists working for the Queen of France, but Vigée-Lebrun held such an unofficial role for Marie Antoinette.

A final, particularly relevant passage, comes in the last chapter of *Souvenirs* in which Vigée-Lebrun reacts to a changed Paris and Versailles after her long sojourn during the Revolution. She writes about traveling to the palace once again to visit her portrait of *Marie Antoinette and her Children*. After her visit, she then describes a now-lost painting that also depicted the former monarchs: “I was keeping for myself another picture representing the Queen, done during the reign of Bonaparte. I had painted Marie Antoinette ascending to heaven; to her left, on some clouds, are Louis XVI and two angels, symbolizing the two children he had lost.”⁵⁰ There is no further mention or description of this now-lost painting, titled *Apotheoses of Marie Antoinette*, in *Souvenirs*.⁵¹ Still, from the two brief sentences, I argue that Vigée-Lebrun most likely intended for this painting to be considered within the history genre and not portraiture. If Vigée-Lebrun had merely only described who she represented in the portrait, with no mention of fantastical setting, metaphorical representation, or references to heroic deaths, then the work might be classified as another state portrait of the King and Queen. However, by including these other signifiers, Vigée-Lebrun squarely situates the painting within the historical genre. From the brief description, it is apparent that this painting met some of the essential characteristics of a

history painting as described by Félibien, including a multi-figural group and, presumably, representation of the “virtues of great men” through “allegorical composition.” Also, the description of the paintings aligns with her earlier mythological paintings exhibited in the 1783 Salon. All of these paintings feature nondescript backgrounds adorned with cloud-like masses accenting the plane. The *Apotheosis of Marie Antoinette* was placed in a religious building, the *Infirmierie de Marie-Therese*.⁵² A religious painting on this scale by definition was considered a history painting.

Conclusion

While Vigée-Lebrun traveled through Europe her paintings consisted almost entirely of portraits. Some historians believe that this might be the case because portraits allowed for an easier source of income to provide for herself and her daughter. As such, it is not likely that Vigée-Lebrun ceased production of mythological history paintings because she did not enjoy creating them or that she no longer wished to be seen as a history painter. The publication of her *Souvenirs* affirms that this concern lasted with her throughout her long career. Vigée-Lebrun’s intentionality behind how she showcased herself as an artist was not overlooked by the viewing public. Critics were aware that Vigée-Lebrun had intentions to become a history painter as early as her first Salon in the *Académie de St Luc*. An anonymous critic wrote, “this young virtuosa has...proven her talent for history subjects,” in regards to her three allegorical paintings from the 1774 *Académie de St Luc* Salon.⁵³ There was of course some negativity associated with a woman striving to become a history painter. In regards to *Peace Bringing Back Abundance*, one critic wrote, “if the Graces have learned to paint themselves, farewell to our rights.”⁵⁴ The lasting legacy of Vigée-Lebrun’s efforts is that she was able to convince the public that she was a history painter despite the fact that the *Académie Royale* would not officially grant this title to

female Academicians. This would be a necessary component to the future success of both Labille-Guiard and Mongez, who would attempt history paintings after Vigée-Lebrun inaugural exhibitions.

¹ For a further discussion regarding her acceptance, see Sheriff, *The Exceptional Woman*, 74-77. The circumstances surrounding Vigée-Lebrun's acceptance into the *Académie Royale* are uncertain. There are debates about the exact reason she was denied access to the *Académie Royale*, whether it was her husband's profession as an art dealer or misogyny from the comte d'Angiviller. There is also confusion surrounding the royal decree that was issued to grant her membership to the *Académie Royale*. It is not known if Louis XVI gave the royal decree on behalf of Marie Antoinette, who was already a patron of Vigée-Lebrun, or if it was from the king's own behest. For a discussion on other instances where the King used royal decrees to influence the *Académie Royale* see Boedo, "Reception and Membership," 80-85.

² The preceding biography relies upon Joseph Bailio, "The Artistic and Social Odyssey of Elisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun," in *Vigée Le Brun* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2016), 3-20.

³ Currently, the exact number of painting Vigée-Lebrun exhibited at either the 1774 or 1783 Salon is not known. The majority of Vigée-Lebrun's works submitted to the 1774 Académie de St Luc Salon have been lost. In that Salon's *livret* her entries are listed as numbers 169-175, but multiple works were labeled under single numbers. We know that this is the case for her three allegories referenced here, as they were all numbered 170. In the 1783 Salon she submitted at least fourteen paintings, but several were also submitted under a single number in the *livret* making it difficult have an exact number. Her paintings are numbers 110-121 of the *livret*, and we know that eight were portraits, one was a self-portrait, and four were mythological.

⁴ Mary Sheriff, *The Exceptional Woman: Elisabeth Vigee-Lebrun and the Cultural Politics of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 74.

⁵ Some female Academicians that were accepted into the *Académie Royale* as portraitists include Rosalba Carriera (admitted in 1720), Labille-Guiard (admitted 1783). Anne Vallayer-Coster (admitted in 1770), Margueritte Haverman (admitted in 1722) and Catherine Perrot (admitted in 1682) were all designated still-life painters.

⁶ Joseph Bailio, "The Artistic and Social Odyssey of Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun," in *Vigée-Lebrun*, ed. Joseph Bailio, Katharine Baetjer, and Paul Lang (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2016), 6.

⁷ Bailio, "The Artistic and Social Odyssey," 6.

⁸ Joseph Bailio attributed a painting that was formerly thought to be by François André Vincent as Vigée-Lebrun's *Music*. See Joseph Bailio, *Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun 1755-1842* exh. cat. (Fort Worth: Kimbell Art Museum, 1982), 17.

⁹ Michel, *The Académie Royale*, 226.

¹⁰ Biographical information concerning Rosalba Carriera comes from Bernardina Sani, *Rosalba Carriera* (London: Umberto Allemandi & Co, 2007), 27-32.

¹¹ Sani, *Rosalba Carriera*, 27.

¹² Kathleen Nicholson, "Having the Last Word: Rosalba Carriera and the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 52, no. 2 (2019): 173.

¹³ Sheriff, *Exceptional Woman*, 79.

¹⁴ Nicholson, “Having the Last Word,” 173-174.

¹⁵ Nicholson, “Having the Last Word,” 174. For Carriera’s full letter see Bernardina Sani, Rosalba Carriera. *Lettere, Diari, Frammenti* (Florence: Olschki, 1985), I:407, letter no. 339, October 10, 1721.

¹⁶ See Michel, *Académie Royale*, 15-16.

¹⁷ Baillio, *Vigée-Lebrun*, 75.

¹⁸ “Moderne Rosalba, mais plus brillante qu’elle.” Vigée-Lebrun, *Souvenirs*, 68. Translation from Sheriff, *Exceptional Woman*, 40.

¹⁹ In the beginning of the Academia di S Luca, the institution only accepted painters who worked in the “grand manner” or history painters. They had to lessen restrictions based on this rule in the eighteenth-century so that they could include more members. The stated reason for this change is that the Academia needed to accept members from “minor genres” so they could accept famous foreign artists including the landscape artist Joseph Vernet. At present, I cannot find where primary records or a historian has noted what genre of painter Rosalba Carriera was officially labeled. However, I believe it is safe to assume that she was given something other than a grand manner painter, perhaps labeled as a miniaturist or portraitist. My understanding of the Academia di S Luca comes from “Accademia di S Luca (Rome),” Oxford Art Online: Grove Art Online, last modified September 22, 2015, <https://doi.org.libdata.lib.ua.edu/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.article.T2287670>

²⁰ Angela Rosenthal, *Angelica Kauffman: Art and Sensibility* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 248-249.

²¹ See Rosenthal, *Angelica Kauffman*, 249-251.

²² For the English Royal Academy, a *morceau de réception* was called a “diploma work.” The original thirty-six members did not submit this work because the rules regulating it were not passed until 1770. See John Evan Hodgson and Frederick Alexis Eaton, *The Royal Academy and its members 1768-1830*, 370.

²³ Hodgson and Eaton, *The Royal Academy*, 370.

²⁴ Linda Nochlin, “Why Have There Been no Great Women Artists?” in *Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 158-161. Nochlin notes that even Kauffman, who was a founding member of the Royal English Academy, was not allowed to enter life drawing classrooms at the time.

²⁵ Vigée-Lebrun writes about meeting Kauffman in her *Souvenirs* and does not speak of her too favorably: “I saw Angelica Kauffman, whom I greatly wished to meet. I found her very interesting, aside from her fine talent, because of her wit and knowledge... She talked with me easily and at length during the two evenings that I spent with her. Her conversation is agreeable; she is tremendously educated, but lacking enthusiasm, which, in view of my limited knowledge, failed to excite me. Angelica possesses some paintings by the greatest masters and I saw several of her own works at her home; I liked her sketches more than her paintings because of their Titianesque colors.” See Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun,

Souvenirs de Madame Vigée Le Brun (Paris: Charpentier et cie, 1869), 157. Also see Hottle, “More Than ‘A preposterous neo-classic rehash,’” 129-130.

²⁶ Paul Lang, “Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun and the European Spirit,” in *Vigée-Lebrun*, ed. Joseph Baillio, Katharine Baetjer, and Paul Lang (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2016), 48.

²⁷ Vigée-Lebrun, *Souvenirs*, 59.

²⁸ Sheriff, *Exceptional Woman*, 120.

²⁹ Sheriff, *Exceptional Woman*, 120. Also see Candance Clements, “The Academy and the Other: Les Graces and Le Genre Galant,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 25 (Summer 1992): 469-94.

³⁰ Sheriff, *Exceptional Woman*, 120.

³¹ For a discussion of this painting and David’s inaugural Salon as an official Academician see Simon Lee, *David* (London: Phaidon, 1999), 74-79.

³² Anita Brookner, *Jaques -David* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 69.

³³ Baillio, *Vigée Le Brun*, 74.

³⁴ Sheriff, *Exceptional Woman*, 103-104.

³⁵ Louis Petit de Bachumont, *Mémoires secrets pour servir é l’histoire de la république des lettres en France depuis MDCCLXII jusqu’à nos jours, ou Journal d’un observateur* (36 vols., London: J. Adamson, 1780-1789) 24: 3. Quoted and translated by Sheriff, *Exceptional Woman*, 104.

³⁶ See Mary Sheriff “Portrait de l’artiste en historienne de l’art: à propos des Souvenirs de Mme Vigée-Lebrun,” in *Plumes et Pinceaux: Discours de femmes sur l’art en Europe (1750-1850)*, ed. Mechthild Fend, Melissa Hyde and Anne Lafont (Dijon: Les Presses du Réel, 2012), 53.

³⁷ Vigée-Lebrun writes in the foreword that she initially began to write the book due to urgings from her friend, the Princess Dolgoruki. Sheriff (1996) also questions if Vigée-Lebrun’s niece or her editor contributed heavily to the finished product as well. See Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, *Memoirs of Madame Vigée Le Brun*, trans. Lionel Strachey (New York: George Braziller Inc, 1989), v; and Sheriff, *Exceptional Woman*, 8.

³⁸ For a discussion concerning the artist’s relationship with her daughter see Katharine Ann Jensen, “Mirrors, Marriage, and Nostalgia: Mother-Daughter Relations in Writings by Isabelle de Charrière and Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun,” *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 19, no. 2 (Autumn, 2000), 285-308.

³⁹ Vigée-Lebrun, *Souvenirs*, 39. Translation by Mary Sheriff.

⁴⁰ Sheriff, *Exceptional Woman*, 42.

⁴¹ Frederika H. Jacobs, “Woman’s Capacity to Create: The Unusual Case of Sofonisba Anguissola,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 47, no. 1 (Spring, 1994): 81.

⁴² Jacobs, “Women’s Capacity to Create,” 78-80.

⁴³ Sheriff, “Woman? Hermaphrodite? History Painter?,” 8-9.

⁴⁴ *Non. Les bras, la tête, la Coeur des femmes sont privés des qualités essentielles pour suivre les hommes dans la haute region des beaux-arts/ Si la nature en produisoit une capable de ce grand effort, ce seroit une monstruosité d’autant plus choquante, qu’il se trouveroit une opposition nécessaire entre son existence physique et on existence morale. Une femme qui auroit toutes les passions d’un homme, est réellement un homme impossible.*

From *Triumvirat des Arts ou Dialogue entre un Peintre, un Musicien & un Poète sur les Tableaux exposés au Louvre, année 1783, pour servir de continuation au Coup de Patte & à la Patte de velours* in *Collection Deloynes* 305, 27. Translation from Sheriff, “Woman? Hermaphrodite? History Painter?,” 8.

⁴⁵ Sheriff, *Exceptional Woman*, 42.

⁴⁶ Sheriff, *Exceptional Woman*, 39.

⁴⁷ Vigée-Lebrun, *Souvenirs*, 48.

⁴⁸ Sheriff, *Exceptional Woman*, 39.

⁴⁹ Joseph Baillio, “Vigée Le Brun and the Classical Practice of Imitation,” *Papers in Art History from the Pennsylvania State University* 4 (1988): 103.

⁵⁰ Vigée-Lebrun, *Souvenirs*, 210.

⁵¹ See Margaret Oppenheimer, “Women Artists in Paris,” 278.

⁵² This institution was founded by Celeste de Chateaubriand. Its function was to house and take care of sick or elderly priests following the Revolution. It is still in operation today as an elderly home.

⁵³ From *Collection Deloynes* 51, 297-298. Cited and translated by Baillio, *Vigée Le Brun*, 67.

⁵⁴ Cited in and translated by Sheriff, *Exceptional Woman*, 123.

CHAPTER TWO

ADÉLAÏDE LABILLE-GUIARD

In this chapter, I argue that Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, like Vigée-Lebrun, positioned herself as a history painter throughout her career. The two artists followed similar paths, something noticed by their contemporaries as well as modern-day historians.¹ Labille-Guiard was admitted to the *Académie de St Luc* (1774) and the *Académie Royale* (1783), in the same years as Vigée-Lebrun, and their works were compared regularly at the same Salons. While I argue that Labille-Guiard and Vigée-Lebrun had a shared goal of surpassing the preconceived role of women as portraitists in the *Académie Royale*, the two pursued this aim through different methods. To support my thesis, I look to Labille-Guiard's efforts to secure a teaching studio in the Louvre, her position as *premier Peintre des Mesdames* (1787), and the language contemporary critics used to discuss her painting style. These milestones in her career situated Labille-Guiard to receive a large-scale history painting commission, *Reception of a Chevalier de Saint-Lazare by Monsieur, Grand Master of the Order* (1788), created to honor Louis XV's brother, the comte de Provence.

Labille-Guiard studied with the miniaturist Francois Elie Vincent, the pastel artist Maurice Quentin de la Tour, and finally with her second husband, Francois Andre Vincent. She joined the *Académie Royale*, along with Vigée-Lebrun, in 1783. Unlike Vigée-Lebrun, Labille-Guiard was assigned an official genre, in the same manner as her male counterparts, and she was designated as a portrait painter. She presented her most famous work, *Self-Portrait with Two*

Pupils (fig. 19), in the Salon 1785, and from there her fame grew. By all accounts, she was incredibly devoted to her students, and advocated for a teaching space within the Louvre throughout her time in the *Académie Royale*. However, she was not granted the space until after the Revolution. She did have a thriving artist's atelier where she taught many young female artists that went on to have successful careers.² Her passion for her students led her to advocate for women's rights within the *Académie Royale* in the 1790s. The artist spent the majority of her later life dedicated to her role as a professor before she died from an unknown illness in 1803.³

Labille-Guiard as Professor

In 1785 Labille-Guiard requested official lodgings within the Louvre, a reward that, at the time, had never been granted to a female Academician. In this section I argue that this key moment in Labille-Guiard's career, where she claimed that her painting abilities and membership within the *Académie Royale* afforded her the same rights and benefits of male members, was a first step towards recognition as a history painter. Since the *Académie Royale's* inception, rooms at the Louvre palace had been reserved for lodgings, studio space, and an artist's atelier for *Académie Royale* members.⁴ In 1765, there were almost thirty spaces designated for Academicians within the Louvre; notably these were primarily given to young history painters.⁵ By the time Labille-Guiard was granted membership in the *Académie Royale*, a large part of the Academicians living in Paris listed the Louvre as their primary address.⁶ It has been argued, most notably by Laura Auricchio, that Labille-Guiard's petition for space at the Louvre was encouraged by the critical success of her *Self-Portrait with Two Pupils*, exhibited in the Salon of 1785.⁷ I, however, will argue that Labille-Guiard intentionally set her *Self-Portrait* in an artist's atelier to promote her talents as a professor. As such, it served as a visual confirmation that she was an accomplished enough teacher to warrant lodgings in the Louvre, and by that logic, that

her talents were on par with those of her male contemporaries within the *Académie Royale*. This was an essential comparison because male Academicians and the public majority, as we have seen, did not believe women were capable of creating history paintings.

To better analyze the painting and her request, it is essential to first view this painting within the broader context of female self-portraiture and Labille-Guiard's first *Académie Royale* Salon of 1783. *Self-Portrait with Two Pupils* was undoubtedly a critical success, and it influenced other self-portraits submitted at subsequent Salons including Jean-Laurent Mosnier's *Portrait of the Artist in his Studio with His Daughters* (1787, fig. 20) and her student Gabrielle Capet's *Portrait of the late Madame Vincent (Studio Scene)* (1801, fig. 21).⁸ After the Salon, one critic described Labille-Guiard's *Self-Portrait* as a "portrait, composed like a history painting."⁹ This painting falls within the broader tradition of female painters depicting themselves in the act of painting, something that Vigée-Lebrun also attempted in the 1783 Salon.¹⁰ Self-Portrait in the act of painting had been utilized by women artists throughout history from Marcia or Iaia of Cyzicus to Sofonisba Anguissola, and perhaps this type was used by these women to assert their own capabilities as artists.¹¹ Laura Auricchio discusses how Labille-Guiard employed the 1785 *Self-Portrait* as a means to create positive press concerning her talents, and to gain more clients by salvaging her tainted reputation after a scandal from the 1783 Salon.¹² Labille-Guiard had submitted several portraits, including two that depicted an actor and a playwright in 1783.¹³ Her breakout painting from the exhibition was the portrait *The Actor Brizard in the Role of King Lear* (fig. 22), commissioned by the wife of comte d'Angiviller.¹⁴ The success of *The Actor Brizard* positioned Labille-Guiard to have a successful first Salon. However, an anonymous pamphlet, *Suite de Malborough au Salon 1783*, published after the exhibition, insinuated that the work was painted by Labille-Guiard's assumed lovers.¹⁵ Labille-Guiard responded by asking for help from

her influential patrons and friends, including the comtesse d'Angiviller, and took legal action against supposed authors of the pamphlet.¹⁶ Auricchio believes that with the 1783 scandal looming over her, it is likely that Labille-Guiard wanted to create a conversation point that diverted critics away from the libelous pamphlet.¹⁷

The 1785 *Self-Portrait* was not the artist's first attempt at self-representation. She exhibited *Self-Portrait* (fig. 23) when she was a member of the *Académie de St Luc* in 1774. The earlier painting shows Labille-Guiard similarly dressed, in a fine silk dress, sitting in a studio in front of a canvas. The artist depicts herself holding the instruments of her trade, including paintbrushes and a palette. The most significant difference between the *Self-Portrait* and *Self-Portrait with Two Pupils* is the different moment Labille-Guiard chose to represent while painting. In the 1785 *Self-Portrait*, Labille-Guiard depicted herself actively holding and using a paintbrush, while in the 1774 *Self-Portrait*, the brushes are held passively in the artist's lap.¹⁸ Further, in the 1785 painting, Labille-Guiard does not actively use the maulstick, an instrument used to steady the arm. Montfort (2005) argues that this was intended to signal Labille-Guiard's ability and talent, as she did not need such assistance.¹⁹ To be sure, Labille-Guiard's competency, as demonstrated in 1785 *Self-Portrait* may have been intended to dispel the rumors that her teacher François-André Vincent, among others, was painting for her.

What is missing from consideration of the 1785 *Self-Portrait* is how these themes, both her technical competence and her role as an instructor, were also essential to the artist's argument, made in the same year, that she deserved lodgings within the Louvre. By the end of her career, Labille-Guiard's role as a dedicated professor was well-known.²⁰ The role of an art professor is one that has been important throughout art history, especially within the older guild system that had a master/apprentice method of teaching. As explained previously, the *Académie*

Royale prided itself on being a place of intense interdisciplinary study for students, and drawing classes were the center of that pedagogical system.²¹

The two figures depicted behind Labille-Guiard are her students Carreaux de Rosemond (died 1788) and Marie Gabrielle Capet (1761-1818), with Capet being the artist's most prolific student. Labille-Guiard's relationships with her students seems to have been incredibly close, and some scholars have likened these to mother/daughter relationships.²² This method of viewing her relationship with her students is somewhat challenging and reductive, particularly as male professors' relationships with their students are rarely, if ever, referred to as parental in nature. I mention this argument here because it is critical to understanding how important the definition of teacher was to Labille-Guiard's understanding of herself and to the public. Today, with our understanding of gendered language, the inherent sexism in connoting Labille-Guiard's official and professional position as a professor to the relationship based in emotion of a mother and daughter can be understood. However, eighteenth-century people did not have the knowledge, language, or experience of contemporary feminist issues. Further, there were no other relationship ideals to describe an older woman teaching a younger woman than that of a mother and daughter. Also, becoming a mother was something that was seen as a natural and was the role women were expected to assume in adulthood.²³ These period expectations aid in understanding how Labille-Guiard and the public saw her role as a professor: something that was a natural extension of her role as an artist and a woman.

Behind the three figures in the 1785 *Self-Portrait* are two marble busts, common tools used for teaching. One depicts the artist's father, created by fellow Academician Augustin Pajou (fig. 24); the other is Jean-Antoine Houdon's *Vestal Virgin* (fig. 25).²⁴ Auricchio (2009) argues that Labille-Guiard included representations of these specific sculptures because of their

associations to familial piety and morality.²⁵ They were reactions against the claims made in the slanderous 1783 pamphlet. Similar busts and sculptures used as models in a Louvre atelier can be seen in Benoît-Louis Prévost's print of Charles-Nicolas Cochin the Younger's *The Three Stages in the Study of Drawing* (fig. 26).²⁶ Louis XIV donated the majority of the sculpture casts that decorated the life-drawing classrooms in the Louvre.²⁷ The particular busts that Labille-Guiard depicts in the *Self-Portrait* have a double significance, as, I argue, they confirm both her own artistic lineage along with their moralizing qualities. The representation of her father by Pajou may also signify that Labille-Guiard believed that her talent was inherent to herself and was not "gifted" to her by her father, who was we will recall, not an artist. Indeed, Labille-Guiard's early training is significant as neither her father nor another male family member was an artist, as was typically the case for female artists. This bust stands behind Labille-Guiard gazing over her shoulder, in the same manner as her two students. As is it is a bust, there are no representations of his arms or hands, thus distancing Labille-Guiard's father, and any male figure, from the ability and agency she is arguing she has through the use of her own hands in *Self-Portrait*. This separation between Labille-Guiard and men in her life would have been a primary concern of hers specifically because of the 1783 pamphlet.

The bust of Labille-Guiard's father, the one she depicted in the *Self-Portrait*, was exhibited at the same Salon of 1785 as her painting. The bust's likeness to the Ancient Roman bust of Cicero did not go unnoticed by the viewing public.²⁸ This sculpture type stems from the more life-like sculpture of the Patrician period of Roman history, where age denotations, such as wrinkles, were not shied away from in representation. This more "truthful" aspect of representation was typically a virtue bestowed on perceived masculine artistic styles, a theme that I will discuss further below.²⁹ This, along with the full body representation of a Vestal

Virgin, demonstrates that Labille-Guiard was knowledgeable about Ancient Roman figures and mythology, essential knowledge for contemporary history painters as this was an area ripe for Neoclassical emulation.³⁰

This method of learning through emulation depicted in the painting was central to the *Académie Royale's* beliefs, and it was also integral to the creation of history paintings.³¹ Rosemond and Capet are actively engaged in Labille-Guiard's practice within the scene, denoting that they are learning through viewing, and ultimately by emulating, their teacher at work. This scene may also imply that the two students were advanced and trusted enough to assist Labille-Guiard with her larger commissions, a coveted spot in any atelier.³² The inclusion of sculptures in the *Self-Portrait* is also important because, along with history painters, sculptors were the only Academicians who could teach the life-drawing classes held daily in the Louvre.³³ The *Académie Royale* considered these two categories of artists as the only two that accurately and wholly understood how to represent the human form.³⁴ Through this painting, Labille-Guiard positioned herself as a talented painter, whose knowledge and ability were on par with the fellow male Academicians represented in the work. As such, she believed that she was due the honor of receiving lodgings within the Louvre.

Labille-Guiard sent her request to d'Angiviller to acquire lodgings within the Louvre to house her classes after the success of *Self-Portrait with Two Pupils*.³⁵ The *Académie Royale* promptly denied her request, but d'Angiviller was concerned that Louis XVI would intercede on behalf of Labille-Guiard as he had done two years prior with Vigée-Lebrun's admission request. This concern most likely stemmed from the fact that Labille-Guiard had recently gained the coveted patronage of the King's two aunts and sister, Madames Adélaïde, Victoire, and Élisabeth, known collectively as the *Mesdames*.³⁶ D'Angiviller wrote to the King to explain his

reasons for refusing Labille-Guiard's request stating that it would be indecent for students of opposite sexes to roam the halls of the Louvre unsupervised, that it would cause a "confusion of young artists."³⁷ He wrote: "a school for young students of her sex; that all the artists lodged in the Louvre similarly have students of their [sex], and that one only reaches all of these lodgings via vast, often dark corridors."³⁸

D'Angiviller's stated excuse for refusing the request is most likely not the only reason he denied Labille-Guiard. Being a professor within the Louvre would have forced the *Académie Royale* to redefine and change their rules and traditions for Academicians and the *agrégé*. The only members not allowed to potentially receive an atelier within the Louvre in 1785 were the four female members. Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin (1976) argue that Labille-Guiard promoted the belief that more women belonged within the academic system through her *Self-Portrait*.³⁹ If Labille-Guiard were to have a classroom in the Louvre, she would have brought her current students, all young women.⁴⁰ For a student to enter the process of becoming an *Académie Royale* member, they had to have a current member present and speak for them to the governing body. If her students were learning from an Academician in the Louvre, then perhaps they would feel brave enough to position themselves for a membership. Also, a majority of the ateliers were gifted to burgeoning history painters.⁴¹ If Labille-Guiard was awarded the space, it may well have signaled that she possessed the abilities of a history painter, and perhaps indicate that her students might as well. Nevertheless, Labille-Guiard was not deterred by d'Angiviller's refusal, and she continued to push for equality within the *Académie Royale* until it dissolved. When the *Académie Royale* was replaced by the *Académie des Beaux-Arts* under the Revolutionary governments, Labille-Guiard was finally allowed an atelier in the Louvre that was more than adequate after her original request, in 1795.⁴²

Emboldened by Revolutionary rhetoric, Labille-Guiard fought once again for the equality of female Academicians in 1790. The only documentation of this event comes from the memoirs of Jean-Georges Wille (1795), who describes Labille-Guiard advocating that the statute of limiting the membership of women be revoked. She also wanted female members to be eligible for certain honors.⁴³ There is no description of what these honors might have been, but Labille-Guiard might have advocated for women to be eligible for the *Grand Prix* or even the distinction of history painters. The entry from these proceedings in the *Procès-verbaux* does document several Officers calling to vote on the new proposed statutes without the female members present because “it being only a question of redrafting the Statues, which do not concern them at all since they have not submitted to them, never having taken the oath to obey them.”⁴⁴ Written plainly, as the women were barred from taking oaths by French law, female members of the *Académie Royale* could not be officially sworn in as members.⁴⁵ This separation thus prevented female Academicians from participating in voting for changes within the body. That brought an end to the discussion of female members until the *Académie Royale* was dissolved following the Revolution in 1792.

The *Mesdames* and a History Commission

In this section, I examine Labille-Guiard’s position as *Peintre de Mesdames* and the sphere of influential female patrons who were essential to the artist’s commission to create a large-scale history painting depicting the comte de Provence, the brother of Louis XV, in a place of honor. In 1788, Labille-Guiard received the commission for the painting, titled *Reception of a Chevalier de Saint-Lazare by Monsieur, Grand Master of the Order* (fig. 27), from the Chevalier order. The unfinished work was most likely destroyed by fire in 1793 during the Revolution. As such, it was never properly exhibited in a Salon, and Labille-Guiard did not receive treatment as

a history painter within the *Académie Royale*. If she had been able to do so, Labille-Guiard would have been the first French woman to present a “true” history painting in an *Académie Royale Salon*.

The *Reception of a Chevalier* exists today only through a large-scale preliminary oil sketch (fig. 27) and a pastel portrait, *Portrait of Comte de Provence* (fig. 28), most likely a head study for the main figure.⁴⁶ The painting was the largest commission the artist had received by far; its size alone forced Labille-Guiard to acquire a new studio space to meet the demands of the project.⁴⁷ The painting was, in essence, a large-scale group portrait, which included more than a dozen individual portraits. The image was to particularly emphasize the grand building in the scene as it had been a gift to the order from Louis XV.⁴⁸ The building depicted in the painting, originally designed for the *École militaire*, was in the Neoclassical style, which is highlighted by the tall columns in the sketch. This large interior setting populated by a crowd of figures recalls the composition of David’s *Coronation of Napoleon* (fig. 29), which is a later example of a multi-figural portrait history painting. Auricchio (2009) estimates that by the time of the painting’s destruction in 1793, Labille-Guiard had spent thirty months and about 8,000 livres on the project.⁴⁹ The painting and a signed copy, along with an unknown number of Labille-Guiard’s other paintings, were most likely destroyed in August of 1793 by Revolutionaries.⁵⁰ In May 1795 the author Pierre-Louis Ginguené recounted the events as follows: “the Directory of the Department of Paris...forced *citoyenne* Guiard to deliver to the district attorney the large and small portraits of the former prince and all the studies related to these works, to be devoured by flames.”⁵¹

I argue that one of the primary reasons Labille-Guiard was positioned to receive this commission is because she had the support and patronage of Louis XVI’s sister and aunts, the

Mesdames. Labille-Guiard first announced herself as *Peintre de Mesdames* in the Salon of 1787's *livret*.⁵² That was the first Salon in which she presented large scale portraits depicting members of the royal family, including the *Portrait of Madame Adélaïde* (fig. 30), the King's aunt; *Madame Victoire* (fig. 31), another aunt; and *Madame Élisabeth* (fig. 32), the King's sister. The *Madame Adélaïde* portrait has received the majority of scholarly attention among this group, and for good reason. As Melissa Hyde (2003) argues, this large painting was treated differently from a typical portrait at the Salon; the discussion and description of the painting was similar in length to those provided for history paintings in the 1787 Salon *livret* entry.⁵³ The portrait also showcased that Labille-Guiard was able to depict a complex architectural setting due to the detailed columns, Corinthian capitals, and frieze scenes included in the background.⁵⁴ Hyde argues that through these elements, this painting was treated more as a history painting rather than a portrait. Labille-Guiard demonstrated her skill at depicting the ornate and luxurious trappings of court dress and furnishings through this painting as well. Madame Adélaïde is shown wearing the very formal "sack dress" that would only be appropriate at court.⁵⁵

Collectively, the *Mesdames* extended their favor to Labille-Guiard for several years through a variety of means. This influential and wealthy group of female patrons could only be rivaled by the aristocratic female patrons loyal to Vigée-Lebrun. In an example of the *Mesdames* favor, Madame Victoire secured a student, Mademoiselle Pomponne Hubert, for Labille-Guiard's atelier.⁵⁶ The *Mesdames'* patronage was most useful in facilitating Labille-Guiard's commission for the painting *Reception of a Chevalier*. When the artist was denied lodgings in the Louvre, d'Angiviller was concerned that the King would step in to override his decision at the *Mesdames* request. In fact, after Labille-Guiard's request was denied, the *Mesdames* secured the artist a new studio in the *Bibliothèque de Roi* so she could properly work on the *Reception of a*

Chevalier.⁵⁷ So, when the *Académie Royale* blocked Labille-Guiard access to the Louvre, the *Mesdames* placed her nearby, only a block north, in another important royal building. Labille-Guiard maintained a studio space there until she was awarded an official space in the Louvre in 1795.

Style, Gender, and History Painting

Through the favor of the *Mesdames*, Labille-Guiard had the connections she needed to receive prestigious commissions. Their patronage alone, however, cannot account for Labille-Guiard receiving the commission for a grand-scale history painting like the *Reception of a Chevalier*, as they never explicitly commissioned a history painting from the artist. As I discussed in the previous chapter, the only aspect of Vigée-Lebrun's career that is missing is that she did not receive a commission on this scale. Vigée-Lebrun did receive plenty of commissions that depicted the royal family, including many state portraits of Marie Antoinette. Yet, Vigée-Lebrun did not have a painting in her *oeuvre* that equaled the size and complexity of the *Reception of a Chevalier*. If connections alone afforded Labille-Guiard the commission, then it would seem that Vigée-Lebrun would have received the same or a similar commission to Labille-Guiard as they both had connections within the royal family. The key difference may well rest in public and critical reception, which viewed their two painterly styles as opposites. Throughout their careers and into modern-day literature, historians have situated the artists within a gendered dichotomy.⁵⁸ Vigée-Lebrun was known for painting in the increasingly antiquated style of the Rococo, and Labille-Guiard utilized the more popular Neoclassical style. These two styles have historically been associated with femininity and masculinity, respectively, meaning that by necessity, Vigée-Lebrun and Labille-Guiard would have also been likened to these differing genders. It is hardly surprising, then, that contemporary critics compared Labille-

Guiard's style to that of a man throughout her career. Critics more regularly likened her to the painting style of men, including one who described her *Self-Portrait with Two Pupils* as “male.”⁵⁹

To be sure, it was not uncommon for eighteenth-century critics to call or compare female painters to the traits and talent of men.⁶⁰ Even Anne Vallayer-Coster and Vigée-Lebrun's paintings were called “masculine” at several points in their career. For example in 1783, one critic wrote “it is as if it is a man's work, it is so skillfully done,” in reference to Vallayer-Coster.⁶¹ But, the language used to discuss Labille-Guiard's paintings and style are specific and unique when compared to that used for other women at the time.⁶² Critics did not always directly call Labille-Guiard a man; instead, they would imbue her with typically masculine qualities. For example, Sheriff and Auricchio have both argued that critics contrasted the male “vigor” of Labille-Guiard's paintings to the more “feminine” painterly aspects of Vigée-Lebrun's.⁶³ Multiple critics describe the “vigor” and “hardness” of Labille-Guiard's technique and brushstrokes. The pamphlet *Momus au Salon* published in 1785 wrote, “What vigor! What! The portraits are a woman's? What vigor! She works with passion.”⁶⁴ Other critics described her as “rising above her sex” as seen in the *Apelle au Salon* publication of 1783, which noted “[she is] worthy of appearing among our most celebrated artists by a handsome tone of color, correct drawing, and good taste that is firm and bold which seems to be above her sex.”⁶⁵ One critic, speaking of Labille-Guiard in 1785, went so far as to say:

She is a man, that woman, I heard it said unceasingly in my ear. What firmness in her execution, what decision in her color, what knowledge of effects, of perspective of the forms, of the play of groups, and ultimately of all parts of her art. She's a man, there's something superior, she's a man.⁶⁶

As I have demonstrated, the *Académie Royale* barred women from all aspects of history paintings based on the belief that their “weaker” sex and minds could not handle the effort it required.⁶⁷ I argue that through the continued use of male signifiers employed by various critics throughout Labille-Guiard’s career, the *Mesdames*, the Chevalier order, and her other patrons were able to separate the artist from her femininity to a certain degree. If she possessed the same qualities as a man, then, in essence, she would be able to complete a history painting. This separation was also necessary in order for Labille-Guiard to receive the *Reception of a Chevalier* commission which called for several full-body depictions of men. They were all clothed, this was not an allegorical or mythological theme, but the practice of the time was to first sketch and render nude bodies before painting clothes over the forms. This was the case, for example, with David’s unfinished *Tennis Court Oath* (fig. 33). There is no evidence that this was the technique of Labille-Guiard, but no matter how she created the scene, she still had to have knowledge of the male form to create believable and truthful depictions of the figures. The male body is a major component absent in all of Vigée-Lebrun’s paintings discussed in the previous chapter. Her mythological paintings were created in the Rococo style that allowed for an abundant appreciation for the female form, and she never depicted the male form outside of a true portrait. But, the *Reception of a Chevalier*, features only male figures. This, along with the size and purpose, to commemorate a royal family member, solidifies the *Reception of a Chevalier* as a history painting commission.

Another instance in which Labille-Guiard’s talents were treated as equal to those of a man occurred in 1791, when she was commissioned to paint a portrait of Louis XVI. This was during a time in the early Revolutionary period where there was still hope that the monarchy could be written into the new constitution and government.⁶⁸ Auricchio speculates that Labille-

Guiard received this commission because of her connections with the affluent Feulliants who were behind this scheme, as she had painted their portraits previously.⁶⁹ This would have come about in a very similar way to the *Reception of a Chevalier* commission due to connections to the *Mesdames*. There are no surviving remnants of the Louis XVI portrait, but there is a surviving sketch by David (fig. 34). He received the same commission, but Labille-Guiard was named first on the commission documents, making her the primary artist.⁷⁰ The critical point here is this: painting state portraits of the king was an honor typically bestowed on the official court painter, who, by law, had to be a designated history painter within the *Académie Royale*. The plans for these portraits fell apart quickly as the Revolution progressed and Louis XVI, renamed Citizen Capet, was guillotined on September 21, 1792. If Labille-Guiard had been able to finish both her painting the *Reception of a Chevalier* and her state portrait of the king, she would have had the necessary paintings in her *oeuvre* to be officially designated a history painter within the *Académie Royale*.

Conclusions

Labille-Guiard created no more large-scale paintings after the destruction of the *Reception of a Chevalier*. She was fortunate to survive the Revolution given her many royal and aristocratic connections, perhaps due to her savvy development of relationships with high-ranking Revolutionary patrons.⁷¹ This did not mean that she did not face hardships; her career suffered greatly especially after the *Reception of a Chevalier* was destroyed. Some historians, including Nochlin, Sutherland Harris, and Auricchio have theorized that Labille-Guiard's passion for her craft diminished significantly after that.⁷² This may be true, but Labille-Guiard remained very active as a teacher. One of her last known works is the 1798 *Portrait of Marie-Gabrielle Capet* (fig. 35). The artist also married her former professor, François Andre Vincent

in 1800. She died in 1803 at the age of 54, but her legacy lived on through her efforts, and those other Revolutionaries, to reform the *Académie Royale*. Through her efforts, Labille-Guiard tried to raise the female members of the *Académie Royale* to the same status as the male members. She also solidified that male patrons could see a female painter as an adequate choice for a history painting by receiving the commission for the *Reception of a Chevalier*. Vigée-Lebrun and Labille-Guiard's combined efforts paved the way for Angélique Mongez to present a "true" history painting in the 1802 Salon.

¹ A.M. Passez has an entire section of the catalogue raisonné dedicated to Elisabeth Vigée Lebrun, and Auricchio references Lebrun's career many times throughout her three publications: Passez, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard*, 55-57; Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard*, 2, 24-26, 61, 109.

² What is significant about Labille-Guiard's students is that she accepted women from all social classes into her studio, and she did not let money be a hinderance to their education. She went as far as adopting several students into her household, including Marie-Gabrielle Capet and Mile d'Avril. Margaret Oppenheimer, "Women Artists in Paris, 1791-1814" (PhD diss., New York University, 1996), 9, 23.

³ Biographical information regarding Labille-Guiard's life relies upon Passez, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard*.

⁴ Michel, *The Académie Royale*, 306.

⁵ Michel, *The Académie Royale*, 306.

⁶ See Michel, *The Académie Royale*, 306. Michel states that in 1774 thirty-eight of the seventy-four Academicians living in Paris lived within the Louvre. It is reasonable to believe that this practice continued into the 1780s.

⁷ See Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard*, 40-42.

⁸ Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard*, 43.

⁹ "portrait, compose dans le genre de l'histoire," from *Observations sur les Tableaux du Sallon, de l'Année 1785: Pour servir de suite au Discours sur la Peinture*, in *Collection Deloynes* 14, no. 326 (Paris, 1785), 19. Quoted and translated in Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard*, 40.

¹⁰ Along with her mythological paintings, Vigée-Lebrun also submitted her *Self-Portrait in a Straw Hat* (1782). For a discussion concerning this portrait and Vigée-Lebrun's influence from Rubens see Montfort, "Self-Portraits and Portraits of Self," 10-11.

¹¹ Michael Cole, *Sofonisba's Lesson: A Renaissance Artist and her Work* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 59-61; and Liana de Girolami Cheney, Alicia Craig Faxon, and Kathleen Lucey Russo, *Self-Portraits by Women Painters* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2000): 10-13.

¹² See Auricchio, "Self-Promotion," 47-48.

¹³ We do not know the exact amount of paintings submitted to the 1783 Salon, but we do know that she submitted seven portraits of Academicians, two of playwrights, a breastfeeding mother, and a pendant portrait.

¹⁴ Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard*, 34. The Comtesse d'Angiviller's maiden name was Élisabeth-Josephe de la Borde, and her wealthy family were the King's tax collectors; for this see Yves Durand, "Mémoires: de Jean-Joseph de LaBorde fermier général et banquier de la cour," *Annuaire-Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire de France, nuair-Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire de France* (1968-1969): 1-4.

¹⁵ See Auricchio, "Self-Promotion," 47-48.

¹⁶ Auricchio, "Self-Promotion," 48.

- ¹⁷ Auricchio, "Self-Promotion," 49.
- ¹⁸ First noted by Auricchio, "Portraits of Impropriety," 13.
- ¹⁹ Montfort, "Self-Portraits," 14.
- ²⁰ See Mirzoeff, "Revolution, Representation, Equality," 167-168.
- ²¹ Foster, "Painting and Drawing From Life," 53.
- ²² Cheney, Faxon, Russo, *Self-Portraits*, 125. Also see Auricchio, "Self-Promotion," 55. This idea most likely stems from a quote from the artist's friend Joachim LeBreton, where he compared Labille-Guiard's relationship to her students to that of a mother's; see Joachim Lebreton, *Necrologie: Notice sur Madame Vincent, nee Labille, peintre* (Paris, 1893).
- ²³ During this period the ideas of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, along with other cultural shifts, were changing the public perception of what a mother should be and what her role included. In short, the importance of a "republican mother" was increasingly important. For brief discussion see Wendy Gunther-Canada, "Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Mary Wollstonecraft on the Sexual Politics of Republican Motherhood," *Southeastern Political Review* 27, no. 3 (1999): 472-475.
- ²⁴ Montfort, "Self-Portraits," 14.
- ²⁵ Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard*, 47.
- ²⁶ For a discussion of the importance of busts and plaster models in emulation and life-drawing classes see Foster, "Painting and Drawing from Life," 55-57.
- ²⁷ Michel, *The Académie Royale*, 101.
- ²⁸ Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard*, 47.
- ²⁹ Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard*, 47.
- ³⁰ Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard*, 47.
- ³¹ See Foster, "Painting and Drawing from Life," 54; and Joseph Baillio, "Vigée Le Brun," 95.
- ³² See Oppenheimer, "Women Artists in Paris," 68.
- ³³ Michel, *The Académie Royale*, 345.
- ³⁴ Michel, *The Académie Royale*, 253.
- ³⁵ Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard*, 49.
- ³⁶ Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard*, 50.

³⁷ Translation from Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard*, 50.

³⁸ Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard*, 50.

³⁹ Sutherland Harris and Nochlin, *Women Artists*, 195.

⁴⁰ It should also be noted that Jacques-Louis David was reprimanded by the comte d'Angiviller for allowing female students within his Louvre atelier in 1787. See Denton, "The Gendering of Genres," 220.

⁴¹ Michel, *The Académie Royale*, 306.

⁴² Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard*, 92-93. Labille-Guiard was not the only woman during the Revolutionary period to receive lodgings; Anne Vallayer-Coster and Marie-Guillemine Benoist also received rooms in the Louvre in the 1790s. However, it should be noted that they did not keep their spaces for long. By 1806, all artists in residence in the Louvre were asked to leave. See Oppenheimer, "Women Artists in Paris," 68-73.

⁴³ The exact role Labille-Guiard played during the reformation of the *Académie Royale* is not completely clear. Some bias from her contemporary male counterparts, and a lack of substantial primary documents from her speeches, makes it difficult to gain a full picture. For a discussion of her involvement see Oppenheimer, "Women Artists in Paris," 12; and Mirzoeff, "Representation, Revolution, Equality," 161-162, 164.

⁴⁴ "n'étant question que de régiger des Statuts, qui ne les regardant point du tout puisqu'elles n'y sont pas spumises, n'ayant jamais fait serment d'y obéir," Quoted in Anatole Montaiglon, ed., *Procès-verbaux de l'Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture* (11 vols, Paris: Charavay Frères, 1889) 10, 80-81. Translation from Sheriff, *Exceptional Woman*, 82.

⁴⁵ Sheriff, *Exceptional Woman*, 81-82.

⁴⁶ For a further discussion of these sketches, see Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard*, 85-86.

⁴⁷ Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard*, 85.

⁴⁸ Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard*, 84.

⁴⁹ Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard*, 84.

⁵⁰ Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard*, 87. For a longer discussion of iconoclasm and its impact on Labille-Guiard's *oeuvre* brought upon by the Revolution see Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard*, 87-91.

⁵¹ Pierre Louis Ginguené, "Rapport au Comité d'instruction publique," 13 Floréal an III (May 2, 1795). Translation by Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard*, 87.

⁵² Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard*, 50. It is worth noting that both Madame Élisabeth and Madame Adélaïde were sisters to the comte de Provence, the central figure in the *Reception of a Chevalier*. There is no evidence that either of them were directly involved with choosing Labille-Guiard as the painter for this commission, however, their relationship to the painter would have been known to the Chevalier order and to the comte de Provence.

⁵³ Melissa Hyde, “Under the Sign of Minerva: Adélaïde Labille-Guiard’s *Portrait of Madame Adélaïde*,” in *Women, Art and the Politics of Identity in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, ed. Melissa Hyde and Jennifer Milam (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2003), 141.

⁵⁴ See Hyde, “Under the Sign of Minerva,” 142-146.

⁵⁵ Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard*, 55.

⁵⁶ Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard*, 57.

⁵⁷ Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard*, 84. This building was important during the eighteenth century, particularly because there was an increase in the nobility’s desire to amass large collections of books.⁵⁷ In 1788, this library had grown exponentially and was located across the Jardin du Palais Royal, just north of the Louvre.⁵⁷ See Paul M. Priebe, “From Bibliothèque du Roi to Bibliothèque Nationale: The Creation of a State Library, 1789-1793” *The Journal of Library History (1974-1987)* 17, no. 4 (Fall, 1982): 389-390.

⁵⁸ Sheriff, *Exceptional Woman*, 186-189.

⁵⁹ *Les Peintres Volants*, 14.

⁶⁰ Auricchio, “Portraits of Impropriety,” 115.

⁶¹ “*on dirait que c’est l’ouvrage d’un homme tant il est savamment fait*,” from Auricchio, “Portraits of Impropriety,” 115. Translation my own.

⁶² Auricchio, “Portraits of Impropriety,” 116.

⁶³ One notable critic, Pahin, contrasted the two artist’s styles during the 1783 Salon in reaction to their two self-portraits. Pahin de Champlain de la Blancherie, *Prospectus: Nouvelles de la République des Lettres et des Arts*, June 19, 1782, 180. Also see Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard*, 24.

⁶⁴ “*Quelle vigueur! Quoi! ces Portraits sont d’une femme? Quelle vigueur! Elle travaille avec ardeur*,” from *Momus au Sallon* in *Collection Deloynes* 292, 29. Translation my own.

⁶⁵ “... *digne de paraltre au milieu de nos plus celebres Artistes par un beau ton de couleur, un dessin correct, et de bon gout autant que par une touche ferme et hardie qui paralte etre au-dessus de son sexe*,” from *Apelle au Sallon* (1783) in *Collection Deloynes* 295, 23. Translation my own.

⁶⁶ *C’est un homme que cette femme-là, entends-je dire sans cesse à mon Oreille. Quelle fermeté dans son faire, quelle decision dans son ton, and quelle connoissances des effets, de la perspective des corps, du jeu des groupes and enfin de toutes les parties de son art. C’est un homme, il y a quelque chose là-dessous; c’est un homme.*

From *Avis important d’une femme sur le Sallon de 1785, par madame E.A.R.T.L.A.D.C.S. Dédié aux femmes* (1785) in *Collection Deloynes* 344, 28. Translated by Sheriff, *Exceptional Woman*, 187-188.

⁶⁷ Sheriff, *Exceptional Woman*, 105-106.

⁶⁸ *Procès-verbaux de l'Assemblée Nationale* (Paris, 1791), 73, 331; see Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard*, 82.

⁶⁹ Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard*, 82.

⁷⁰ See Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard*, 82-83.

⁷¹ For a description of Labille-Guiard's role and career during the Revolutionary period see Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard*, 91-97.

⁷² See Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard*, 91.

CHAPTER THREE

ANGÉLIQUE MONGEZ

Vigée-Lebrun and Labille-Guiard were both still very much active as painters into the early nineteenth century. However, neither artist fully returned to their earlier success or, as I have argued, their progress towards creating and presenting history paintings in the Salons after the Revolution. Instead, Vigée-Lebrun focused more on portraiture while she traveled abroad and Labille-Guiard became even more active in her role as a professor. But, a new generation of young women artists was emerging in France, and they had a new artistic organization and French culture with which to contend. In this chapter I discuss the career of Angélique Mongez, one of these artists who, I argue, as had Vigée-Lebrun and Labille-Guiard before, actively defined herself as a history painter through her works and choices. This is distinct from previous arguments that Mongez was emboldened by a freer French artistic culture in the nineteenth century and that she was only an “amateur” painter.¹ To support my thesis, I trace the difficulties Mongez faced from the official governing artistic bodies of the nineteenth century. Further, I illuminate how her disciplined approach to her career demonstrates the seriousness with which she approached her art, thereby refuting previous claims that she was not a professional artist.

In 1793, Mongez began her painting education in the atelier of Jean-Baptiste Regnault, however, her second professor, Jacques-Louis David, had a far greater impact on her career. She exhibited consistently in the open Salons juried by the *Académie des Beaux-Arts* (hereafter referred to as *Beaux-Arts*) from 1802-1827. In 1804, she won that year’s only gold medal for her

now-lost painting *Alexander Mourning the Death of Darius's Wife*. There are no known works in her *oeuvre* that were commissioned, but she did sell some to wealthy patrons after their work's completion, including *Theseus and Pirithous Rescuing Two Women from Bandits* (1806) to a Russian prince.² One of the only documented portraits she completed was a now-lost likeness of Napoleon for the city of Avignon in 1813. After 1827, it appears that Mongez ceased submitting works to the Salons, but she still painted throughout her life, including the later now-lost *Christ en Croix* (1854). Her situation in life allowed her to have three studio spaces by the time of her death, including a large two-room atelier in the State-established Mint.³ This placement was similar to Labille-Guiard's earlier atelier in the *Bibliothèque de Roi*, in that it was an "unofficial" state sanctioned space given to the two artists because of their individual connections.

The Academy after Revolution

Mongez exhibited at her first Salon, sponsored by the *Académie des Beaux-Arts*, in 1802 with her painting *Astyanax Snatched from His Mother*. She then exhibited at least nine history paintings at the Salons between 1804-1827, a point I will return to in the next section. To understand the significance of these numbers, we should consider the history of official art organizations in France from the 1790s to the Bourbon restoration (1814-1830), including the *Académie des Beaux-Arts* and their treatment of women, areas that have previously not been studied in-depth. Gen Doy (2000) and Margaret Oppenheimer (1996) have argued that women enjoyed an exceptional amount of freedom after the fall of the *Académie Royale* in 1793.⁴ Oppenheimer and Doy claim that a combination of the newly opened Salon paired with confusion due to political upheaval, offered women a brief period of liberty in the early nineteenth-century. To be sure, these situations did afford women new opportunities to pursue art as a career without needing the protection or validation from the official *Académie Royale*, a

departure from the careers of earlier artists, including Vigée-Lebrun and Labille-Guiard. However, I argue that this did not create a wholly new and more equal artistic scene within France that afforded Mongez more opportunities than her predecessors. Rather, it was more likely Mongez's independent wealth and influential connections that offered her the opportunity to create and exhibit multiple large-scale history paintings such as *Astyanax Snatched from his Mother*. But first, it is essential to fully understand the cultural climate of the early nineteenth-century art scene, where Mongez presented at her first Salon; to do so, one must trace how the *Académie Royale* transformed during the Revolutionary period and how women were treated by the Academic iterations that followed.

The French National Assembly officially dissolved the *Académie Royale* in 1793 and replaced it with the *Société Populaire et Républicaine des Arts*, which was then transformed into the *Académie des Beaux-Arts* in 1795. The *Académie Royale*'s demise, however, started as early as 1790 when a group of discontented non-Academic artists created the Commune des Arts to work against the *Académie Royale*.⁵ This group specifically demanded that the privileges held by the *Académie Royale*'s officers, who were primarily designated history painters, be revoked. Eventually, they worked towards suppressing the *Académie Royale* as a whole.⁶ At the same time, the *Académie Royale* was also battling against reform from its own members. A group of Academicians argued for changes inside its body. Importantly for this discussion, Labille-Guiard was at the center of this group.⁷ She successfully argued that the *Académie Royale* should have no limits on the number of women accepted within its ranks. This statute passed, but it was quickly overruled in 1790 without creating any lasting changes.⁸ One of the greatest achievements for women during this time was that the National Assembly opened the Salon to

all artists on August 21, 1791.⁹ From this point on, the number of women artists who exhibited in the public Salon grew exponentially.¹⁰

The *Commune des Arts* was renamed the *Commune Generale des Arts*, and it accepted twenty-two female members by October 1793.¹¹ But, this organization was disbanded by the National Convention because it was considered “aristocratic” by the end of 1793.¹² The *Société Populaire et Républicaine des Arts* was then created to replace the *Académie Royale* and the *Commune des Generale Arts*. In the beginning, it did not accept women because, according to the National Assembly “republican women must give up work intended for men.”¹³ Eventually, in May of 1794, women were officially allowed membership.¹⁴ It should be noted that there is no further mention or evidence of specific female members of this organization.¹⁵ As such, it is hard to discern if their acceptance of women was only on paper or if they actually accepted a female members.¹⁶

Finally, the *Académie des Beaux-Arts*, hereafter referred to as the *Beaux-Arts*, was created in 1795 to replace the *Société Populaire et Républicaine des Arts*. This organization was wide-reaching, and it essentially fulfilled the same functions of the former *Académie Royale*.¹⁷ It decided the winners of the Grand Prix, members formed the Salon jury, and it had influence over the *École des Beaux-Arts*, which was responsible for the education of young painters. The *Beaux-Arts* stayed in power until the Bourbon Restoration in 1814 when the organization was once again renamed the *Académie Royale* by the monarchy.¹⁸

These organizations’ relationship with women, specifically whether women were officially accepted into their ranks or not, shifted throughout their histories in the same fashion as had that of the *Académie Royale*. Mongez was never an official member of any French academy, nor, to my knowledge, was any other woman during the nineteenth century.¹⁹ The historian

Jacques Thuillier (1984) argued that the new *Beaux-Arts* was democratic in its selection process for new members, and that talent was the only quality measured by its governing body.²⁰ However, as Doy (2000) asserts, this does not account for the total lack of female members from the organization during the nineteenth century.²¹ Margaret Denton (1998) further contends that the exclusion of women from the *Beaux-Arts* was “masked” through their perceived concerns for women’s health.²² In 1803, there were twenty-eight members of the painting sector of the *Beaux-Arts*, and all were male. The *Beaux-Arts* did not accept a female member until 1897.

There are several further significant similarities between how the *Académie Royale* and the *Beaux-Arts* excluded women from important functions of education and prestige. In the nineteenth century, women were barred from studying in the official *Ecole des Beaux-Arts*, and the competitors for the *Prix de Rome* had to be men under the age of thirty.²³ Importantly, women could not become members of this organization. This separated women artists from the prestige and protection that the *Beaux-Arts* could offer its artists. Without the aid of the *Grand Prix*, which paid for winners to live and study at the French Academy in Rome for four years, very few women from this period could travel to Europe to study classical art in person.²⁴ Further, women were not allowed access to the new official *École des Beaux-Arts*’ program of study and learning. This was an area that saw some of the most significant changes when compared to the *Académie Royale*.²⁵ Perhaps the most critical separation women experienced is that they were not eligible for government financial support provided through the *Beaux-Arts*.²⁶ This fact, in part, explains the reason why so many women from this period practiced portraiture and other “lesser” genres as they were far more profitable to patrons.²⁷ The largest difference between the lives of women artists before and after the Revolution is that women in the nineteenth century were given access to public recognition on a scale that had never been

afforded to women before because of the open Salon starting in 1791. In 1783, there were only four women in France who had the right to exhibit their works at the most critical exhibition within the country.²⁸ In 1791, twenty-two women exhibited, and by 1810, fifty women exhibited.²⁹ However, there was still an evident and important hierarchy of genres enforced by the *Beaux-Arts* Salon jury.

As we have seen, history paintings were actively promoted as the most important genre by *Académie Royale* officials, most importantly, the comte d'Angiviller in the late eighteenth-century. There may be an assumption that once the *Académie Royale* was disbanded due to its affiliations with the aristocracy and the monarchy, that the historic promotion of history painting would dim the opinion of the genre with post-Revolutionaries.³⁰ However, as Stephen Bann (2005) argues, the genre of history painting was defended throughout the nineteenth century by the *Beaux-Arts*-appointed Salon jurors.³¹ Juries continued to value paintings that depicted religious scenes or scenes taken from history over other genres.³² The Salon was not the only area where history painters reigned supreme. Patricia Mainardi (1993) argues that members of the *Beaux-Arts* continued to rank the status of history painter above practitioners of any other genre.³³ Further, the importance of emulation, an element that was critical to the understanding of *ancien regime* history painting, was an essential to the new art academies from the inception of the *Beaux-Arts*.³⁴ The continued popularity of history painting and its elite status perhaps explains in part why Mongez consistently presented paintings with this subject matter to the Salons.

As I have outlined here, the similarities between the *ancien regime Académie Royale* and the post-Revolutionary *Beaux-Arts*, meant that Mongez worked in an artistic culture more similar to that experienced by Vigée-Lebrun or Labille-Guiard than has been traditionally recognized.

Of course, there were some notable differences in what was considered acceptable for a woman artist to do. Most importantly, beginning in the early nineteenth century, women were at times able to study the male nude in life drawing classes.³⁵ This was not popular with all female artists, and it is not certain if Mongez was one of the few female artists to partake in this newfound training.³⁶ There was also a higher percentage of female students in ateliers with male teachers.³⁷ Jacques-Louis David and Henri Regnault, who both taught Mongez, as well as several of David's male students, accepted female students into their studios.³⁸ However, there is still the question of how much more freedom Mongez and other women had in regard to the upward mobility of their painting careers. They were still blocked from achieving the highest honors at the time because they were not members of the *Beaux-Arts*.

A History Painter

As we have seen, Mongez lived in an era when history painters occupied one of the most prestigious positions within the French artistic community, and women were not allowed to join their ranks. However, Mongez, just as Vigée-Lebrun and Labille-Guiard before her, was referred to as a history painter by contemporary critics.³⁹ In this section, I examine what Mongez did to promote herself to a history painter, and how these sustained and intentional choices distanced herself from the concept of "amateur" painter and more towards a professional history painter.

The consistency with which Mongez submitted history paintings should not be underexaggerated. While her known *oeuvre* is minuscule in comparison to Vigée-Lebrun and Labille-Guiard's, this is perhaps due to a lack of research by historians.⁴⁰ However, most of the paintings that are securely attributed to Mongez are history paintings. A list of her known Salon exhibited works includes: *Astyanax Snatched from His Mother* (Salon of 1802, fig. 36); *Alexander Mourning the Death of the Wife of Darius* (Salon of 1804); *Theseus and Pirithous*

Rescuing Two Women from Bandits (Salon of 1806, fig. 37); *Orpheus in Hell* (Salon of 1808); *The Death of Adonis* (Salon of 1810); *Perseus and Andromeda* (Salon of 1812); *Mars and Venus* (Salon of 1814, fig. 38); *Saint Martin Sharing his Coat with a Poor Man* (Salon of 1819); and finally *Seven Chiefs of Thebes* (Salon of 1827, fig. 39).⁴¹ There is also one known important portrait, and it is a copy after a portrait of Napoleon by David.⁴² During the French Revolution and its immediate aftermath, there was a dearth in demand for history paintings. This was due in part to political upheaval, and also the fact that major patrons for history paintings, the *ancien regime* government and monarchy, were gone. Not only was it difficult for women in general to create history paintings, but it was also difficult for male painters at the time. As such, many female painters during this period typically turned to portraiture. This happened for a multitude of reasons, including the fact that many female artists used their talents to support their families, and portraits provided a more secure source of income and patronage.⁴³ Even Vigée-Lebrun, as we have seen, ceased production on her larger mythological paintings, and instead sought portrait commissions to support herself and her daughter while she was exiled from France.⁴⁴

Mongez was by no means the only woman at the time submitting large-scale history paintings to the French Salons, but she was the only female artist to do so regularly. Other female painters who created similar paintings were Nanine Vallain (1767-1815), Marie-Guillemine Benoist (1768-1826), and Antoinette Bafort (active 1810-1819).⁴⁵ However, these women did not submit history paintings with the same consistency as Mongez. Of the painting *Astyanax Snatched from his Mother*, one critic wrote in 1803, "No woman artist, before Mme. Mongez, had yet offered to the public a painting of such large dimensions, and treated with complete historical dignity."⁴⁶ A few years later, a critic in 1806 encouraged all women artists to follow Mongez's model and submit history paintings to the Salons.⁴⁷ Many of Mongez's later

paintings continued to follow the pattern established in her early works, including multiple and in-depth references to classical literature and mythology, as seen in *Perseus and Andromeda* (1812) and *The Seven Against Thebes* (1827). What is significant about Mongez's paintings is that she included both clothed and nude depictions of the male body.⁴⁸ This was an element that, as I discussed earlier, was noticeably missing from Vigée-Lebrun's mythological paintings two decades prior. Through her combined use of the Neoclassical style, knowledge of ancient history, and an understanding of the human form, Mongez was able to present paintings to the Salons that more closely resembled what contemporary history paintings by artists, including David and Ingres, looked like.

A Professional Artist and Artistic Lineage

Despite her success, Mongez has been referred to or described as an “amateur” artist by art historians.⁴⁹ This title stems from the fact that Mongez rarely took or sought commissions as she was fortunate enough to be independently wealthy. The dichotomy between amateur and professional artists is one that feminist art historians have grappled with in regards to early modern women artists. Elizabeth Honig (2001) examines how women, particularly those who came from upper social classes, were more often called “amateur” artists than their contemporary male counterparts.⁵⁰ It should be noted that for many women, including Mongez, the path to professionalism was blocked due to the fact that the official art societies either rarely or sporadically accepted female members. If Mongez was not allowed to be a member of the *Beaux-Arts*, which was arguably the only path to true professionalism in Paris, then how could she have been anything other than an amateur artist? A similar argument is made by Linda Nochlin (1988) when she asked the imperative question, “Why have there been no great women artists?” Through her analysis, she argues that there were no great women artists because they

were barred from receiving the necessary tools needed to be deemed a great artist of their time.⁵¹ Finally, the term amateur connotes a degree of ineptitude in relation to the work a person produces. This assertion is easily refuted through observing the highly positive critical reception Mongez received, and the fact that she was trained by one of the most popular painters of the era, David.

Further, having financial independence does not wholly explain a desire to create history paintings. If she was “merely” a hobbyist or amateur painter then, arguably, she could have specialized in any genre. Yet, she chose to consistently and almost solely present herself as a history painter. An argument could be made that, perhaps, Mongez completed history paintings simply because she was interested in Neoclassicism and classical literature. Records show that the artist possessed an expansive library dedicated to ancient history, suggesting a personal interest in the topic.⁵² But, of course, historical subjects were not the only ones that allowed artists to explore classical themes within their paintings. Vigée-Lebrun created dozens of portraits inspired by mythological subjects after leaving Paris in 1790, including *Lady Hamilton as a Cumaean Sybil* (1790, fig. 2) and *Julie as Flora* (1799, fig. 40). Even Mongez’s teacher, David, submitted portraits and classically-inspired likenesses to the Salons; these included, for example, his portrait of *Henriette de Verniac* (1798, fig. 41). Mongez, however, did not ever submit similar imagery to the Salons to my knowledge. Her lack of portrait submissions to her multiple Salon exhibitions suggests a single-mindedness concerning her career and self-definition. It also leads to the assumption that there was a seriousness behind her definition of herself as a painter. Her submissions left little, if any, room for the viewing public to see her as anything other than a history painter.

As we have seen, this trajectory began with Mongez's first Salon exhibition in 1802 with *Astyanax Snatched from his Mother*. She was not a member of the *Beaux-Arts*, so she did not have a formal reception piece like Vigée-Lebrun or Labille-Guiard. However, I argue that her first painting fulfilled a similar role to an official reception piece.⁵³ I discussed in Chapter One how, through her reception piece *Peace Bringing Back Abundance* (fig. 11), Vigée-Lebrun identified herself with a long lineage of history painters; Mongez seems to have intended *Astyanax Snatched from his Mother* to accomplish the same goal. *Astyanax* depicts a scene from the play *The Trojan Woman* (415 BC) by Euripides.⁵⁴ Mongez's image corresponds with the verse in which Ulysses orders that Hector's son, Astyanax, be thrown from the walls after the Trojan War. In the painting, a fierce Andromache desperately tries to fight off Ulysses' soldiers. There may be some similarity between Vigée-Lebrun and Mongez's compositions in the figural groupings of people, and especially, in the placement of Andromache's face. But, the most important similarity between these two works is their function as a statement of artist ability and knowledge. We should recall that neither woman received a genre specification for their submissions; Vigée-Lebrun did not because of her unorthodox entry process into the *Académie Royale*, and Mongez did not because she was not able to seek admission into the *Beaux-Arts*. As such, both women pronounced themselves history painters through their works. Both did this through subjects and the use of emulation of prior artists famed for producing history paintings.

The reception piece that most inspired Mongez was that of her own professor, David, who submitted *Andromache Mourning Hector* (fig. 16), for his own entry in *Académie Royale* in 1783. Mongez followed David's style closely in her own works, so it was fitting that her first submitted work to a Salon was inspired by a later portion of the same story David looked to for his *Andromache Mourning Hector*. In David's painting, Andromache cries over Hector's lifeless

corpse while her young son, Astyanax, reaches towards her face. Mongez mimics the way in which David posed the figures of Andromache and Astyanax; in both compositions Andromache is depicted with an outstretched hand and Astyanax is clutched close to her chest. What is different between Mongez's and David's painting is that Mongez gives an agency and power to her Andromache that David did not. Historians have discussed this power imbalance between women and men in each of these artists' paintings, and many argue that Mongez favored stories of strong women because she was a woman herself.⁵⁵ Mongez's attribution of agency might also be viewed as a metaphor for herself, in a similar vein to Labille-Guiard's assertions of ability through her *Self-Portrait with two Pupils*. In *Astyanax*, Mongez depicts Andromache with the most emotion and movement of all the figures. The talent to portray emotion was something that was seen as essential to earlier modes of history painting, especially in the seventeenth century under Charles Le Brun. Perhaps by giving Andromache power and strength, Mongez was also inserting herself into this story.

Although not Mongez's first teacher, David was by far the most influential to her style and life. He had quite a few female students, and there is some evidence to suggest that he was fairly liberal in his ideas on how women should be taught. Some historians, including Mary Vidal, believe that David did not separate his female students into different studios apart from male students.⁵⁶ David and Mongez were apparently close friends, as evidenced by a complaint from one of David's students that his master had canceled drawing lessons for the evening to visit with the Mongezes in their Parisian home.⁵⁷ Mongez parlayed David's connections and prestige to advantage her career. Mongez listed herself as one of David's students in the Salon of 1802-1806, and this benefitted her in a number of ways.⁵⁸ A possible reason that she named

herself his student for so many years is it could have reminded the Salon attendees that she was talented and accomplished enough to be exhibited at the Salon, in part, because of his tutelage.

The connection to David also placed Mongez within a distinguished artistic lineage.⁵⁹ It is well known that several of David's male students went on to have extremely successful and prolific careers, including the history painters Antoine-Jean Gros (1771-1835) and Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780-1867).⁶⁰ Mongez submitted paintings to the Salons in what might be categorized as a distinctly Davidian style of Neoclassicism. There were, of course, some drawbacks to listing herself as one of David's students in the *livrets*. The most obvious is that critics and attendees assumed that David painted all or parts of Mongez's canvases.⁶¹ Oppenheimer has argued that David could be heavy-handed in his teaching style, meaning that his unique interpretation of the Neoclassical style was routinely seen in his students' works. It did not help that David painted on his female student's canvases when assisting them.⁶² Similar to Vigée-Lebrun, Mongez's use of emulation, an essential element of the history painting tradition, was seen as a lesser form of copying or plagiarism by critics. There have been extensive conversations reevaluating and validating Vigée-Lebrun's employment of emulation as within this vein, but historians have not accorded this same privilege to Mongez. Here, I argue that Mongez's use of Davidian motifs was more than just evidence of the instructor's influential style of teaching, but instead manifests Mongez's continuity with the practice of emulation that was essential to history painting. She was not able to travel extensively throughout Europe, so she could not imitate past great masters through direct observation. Instead, she could emulate her professor, who had been to Rome and throughout Italy. Through a degree of separation, then, Mongez called upon Renaissance masters as well as great contemporary masters of Neoclassical history painting.

Conclusion

Mongez died without ever receiving membership into the *Beaux-Arts* or any other French art society. Just as Vigée-Lebrun and Labille-Guiard had, Mongez lived and worked in an artistic community where she was barred from receiving the title of history painter through official avenues. The *Beaux-Arts*, in the same manner as the *ancien regime Académie Royale*, would not grant the title of history painter to women. Through Mongez's sustained Salon submissions of paintings in the history genre, the artist stood out among her other contemporary female and male students. Further, she did not practice her art in an "amateur" style. Her consistency and intense study allowed Mongez to complete canvases on the scale that she did.

¹Vidal, "The 'Other Atelier,'" 251.

² Bibliographic information relies upon Oppenheimer, "Women Artists in Paris," 238-242.

³ Mongez's husband was director of the Mint. See Doy, "Women History Painters," 75.

⁴ See Doy, "Women History Painter," 74. I am particularly indebted to Margaret Oppenheimer's foundational research, in her 1996 dissertation, concerning women's roles in the French Academy during and after the Revolution in regard to my understanding of this period. Oppenheimer, "Women Artists in Paris," 1-56. I also relied on the research by Boime, *The Academy and French Painting*, 1-21. for a broader look at this period and how the Beaux-Arts specifically functioned. However, there is a lack of discussion of women artists in Boime's text. For a more in-depth look at what specific artists and factions advocated for and against within the changing organizations see Mirzoeff, "Revolution, Representation, Equality," 156-169.

⁵ Oppenheimer, "Women Artists in Paris," 12. For a broader discussion concerning what this group specifically wanted changed within the *Académie Royale* see Mirzoeff, "Revolution, Representation, Equality," 156-160.

⁶ Information regarding the previous two sentences relied upon Oppenheimer, "Women Artists in Paris," 12.

⁷ Oppenheimer, "Women Artists in Paris," 12.

⁸ Passez, *Adelaide Labille-Guiard*, 33-34.

⁹ See Oppenheimer, "Women Artists in Paris," 13.

¹⁰ Oppenheimer, "Women Artists in Paris," 2.

¹¹ For a list of the 22 women artists submitted, see Oppenheimer, "Women Artists in Paris," 14. These women were first recorded in Henry Lapauze, *Proces-verbaux de la Commune generale des arts...et de la Societe populaire et republicaine des arts* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1903), 61, 64, 73, 77, 81, 86, 121, 139, 146, 151, 156.

¹² Oppenheimer, "Women Artists in Paris," 14.

¹³ "...republicains les femmes doivent absolument renoncer aux travaux destines aux hommes," Henry Lapauze, *Proces-verbaux*, 183-184. Translation my own. For a further discussion of this quote and its implications see Oppenheimer, "Women Artists in Paris," 15.

¹⁴ See Elke Harten and Hans-Christian Harten, *Femmes, Culture, et Révolution* (Paris: Des Femmes, 1989), 72; and Doy "Women History Painters in France," 72.

¹⁵ Oppenheimer, "Women Artists in Paris," 15-16.

¹⁶ First argued by Oppenheimer, "Women Artists in Paris," 16.

¹⁷ Boime, *The Academy and French Painting*, 5-6.

- ¹⁸ Boime, *The Academy and French Painting*, 6.
- ¹⁹ Doy, "Women History Painters," 72.
- ²⁰ Jacques Thuillier, "The Beaux-Arts Institution," in *The Grand Prix de Rome : paintings from the École des beaux-arts, 1797-1863*, ed. Philippe Grunchev (Washington D.C.: Intl Exhibitions Foundation, 1984), 20.
- ²¹ Doy, "Women History Painters," 73.
- ²² Denton, "The Gendering of Genres," 221.
- ²³ Doy, "Women History Painters," 71.
- ²⁴ Oppenheimer, "Women Artists in Paris," 53. On Vigée-Lebrun's extensive travels in the early nineteenth century as an outlier to the traditional woman artist of the time see Doy, "Women History Painters," 73; and Oppenheimer, "Woman Artists in Paris," 53-55.
- ²⁵ Mirzoeff, "Representation, Revolution, Equality," 163.
- ²⁶ Doy, "Women History Painters," 73.
- ²⁷ Oppenheimer, "Woman Artists in Paris," 91.
- ²⁸ It should be noted that there were other venues of exhibition to which women could submit their works, however; they did not afford artists the same prestige and notice as the official Salons. As such, the women who submitted to these exhibitions only did not reach the same notoriety or milestones in their careers as Vigée-Lebrun or Labille-Guiard. See Oppenheimer, "Woman Artists in Paris," 6-12.
- ²⁹ In 1791, 22 women exhibited out of 258 artists, and in 1810 50 women exhibited out of 350 artists. These numbers were calculated by Oppenheimer, "Woman Artists in Paris," 13.
- ³⁰ See Paul Duro, "Giving Up on History? Challenges to the Hierarchy of the Genres in Early Nineteenth-Century France," *Art History* 28, no. 5 (2005): 691-692. For more on this argument and the statement that history paintings were "conceptually inseparable from the Academy," see Patricia Mainardi, *The End of the Salon: Art and the State in the Early Third Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 12.
- ³¹ Stephen Bann, "Questions of Genre in Early Nineteenth-Century French Painting," *New Literary History* 34, no. 3 (2003): 501.
- ³² Bann, "Questions of Genre," 501.
- ³³ Mainardi, *The End of the Salon*, 12.
- ³⁴ Mirzoeff, "Representation, Revolution, Equality," 162.
- ³⁵ Doy, "Women History Painters," 73.

³⁶ Oppenheimer, "Women Artists in Paris," 45-46.

³⁷ Oppenheimer, "Women Artists in Paris," 35-36.

³⁸ Oppenheimer, "Women Artists in Paris," 33-34.

³⁹ See Denton, "The Gendering of Genres," 222.

⁴⁰ Denton, "The Gendering of Genres," 221.

⁴¹ As Mongez does not have a catalogue raisonné or a solo exhibition, this is far from a complete representation of her works. Further, many of these paintings are known only through copies or descriptions, and the originals are lost. However, by placing them together in this way the large number of works Mongez was able to accomplish in her career becomes apparent. Mongez's history paintings have not been fully discussed as a group in any of the publications I have researched for this paper. Margaret Denton discusses Mongez's exhibitions in the 1802, 1804, and 1806 Salons, but does not discuss any of her later paintings fully; Denton "The Gendering of Genres," 222-233, 237-239. Margaret Oppenheimer discusses Mongez's career as a whole, but she includes discussions of the few other genres Mongez worked in as well; Oppenheimer, "Women Artists in Paris," 238-242. Doy and Vidal both discuss Mongez's history paintings, but the purpose of their works, to look at the culture of contemporary female painters as a whole, differs from my own goal within this paper; Doy, "Women History Painters," 75-78; and Vidal, "The 'Other Atelier,'" 250-254.

⁴² Oppenheimer, "Women Artists in Paris," 239.

⁴³ Oppenheimer, "Women Artists in Paris," 297.

⁴⁴ Doy, "Women History Painters," 73.

⁴⁵ For a brief discussion of Nanine Vallain see Oppenheimer, "Women Artists in Paris," 270-271; for Marie-Guillemine Benoist, see Idem, 110-114; and for Antoinette Befort see Idem, 109-110.

⁴⁶ "*Aucune femme artiste, avant Madame Mongez, n'avait encore offert un tableau d'une aussi grande dimension, et traite avec toute la dignité historique,*" Quoted from *Annales du musée et de l'école moderne des beaux-arts* 4 (Paris: Pillet Aîné, 1803), 80.

⁴⁷ M. Ponce, "Salon de 1806," *Le Courrier français*, no. 2498, 4 October 1806, 2. Cited in Denton, "The Gendering of Genres," 241.

⁴⁸ Denton, "The Gendering of Genres," 228.

⁴⁹ Vidal, "The 'Other Atelier,'" 251.

⁵⁰ Elizabeth Alice Honig, "The Art of Being 'Artistic': Dutch Women's Creative Practices in the 17th Century," *Woman's Art Journal* 22, no. 2 (2001-2002): 31.

⁵¹ Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?," 157-158.

⁵² See Oppenheimer, “Women Artists in Paris,” 52. Oppenheimer cites A.N., Minutier Central, ET LIV, 1491: Inventory of March 21, 1855 for this information.

⁵³ From my understanding the *École des Beaux-Arts* did not require reception pieces in the same manner as the *Académie Royale*.

⁵⁴ Denton, “The Gendering of Genres,” 223.

⁵⁵ Denton, “The Gendering of Genres,” 225-227.

⁵⁶ Vidal, “The Other Atelier,” 240-241.

⁵⁷ Antoine Louis, et al., *Jacques Louis David 1748-1825* (Paris: Eds. de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1989), 619.

⁵⁸ See Doy, “Women History Painters,” 76 and Denton, “The Gendering of Genres,” 237.

⁵⁹ Denton, “The Gendering of Genres,” 224.

⁶⁰ For discussions on the history paintings of Gros see Christopher Prendergast, *Napoleon and History Painting: Antoine-Jean Gros's la Bataille d'Eylau* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); for Ingres see Susan L. Siegfried, *Ingres: Painting Reimagined* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

⁶¹ See Oppenheimer, “Women Artists in Paris,” 40.

⁶² Oppenheimer, “Women Artists in Paris,” 39.

CONCLUSIONS

There were barriers to women artists from becoming not only history painters but also professional artists in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Vigée-Lebrun, Labille-Guiard, and Mongez created paintings that, I argue, could not be construed as anything other than history paintings, which is monumental to the study of women artists from this era. These works include Vigée-Lebrun's mythological paintings submitted to the 1783 Salon exhibition, Labille-Guiard's *Reception of a Chevalier*, and Mongez's many works like *Astyanax Snatched from His Mother*. Though they each had different methods of achieving their goals, all three women were able to create and be called history painters by the public within their lifetimes. Through this discussion, I have shown that this title was not easily granted to any of the women. They each had to make concerted efforts to present themselves as painters of this elevated genre in their respective Salons.

When analyzing the careers of these artists together, certain trends begin to emerge. Perhaps the most important is the issue of education and training. Mongez's position within David's atelier cannot be underestimated when considering her success at creating history paintings. Through his teachings, Mongez had a connection to the leading artist of the Neoclassical movement and one of the most sought after history painters at the time. Her specific knowledge of the human form, how to compose large canvases, and knowledge of ancient texts is something that neither Vigée-Lebrun or Labille-Guiard had access to on the same scale. Vigée-Lebrun and Labille-Guiard were both trained primarily as portraitists and miniaturists in

their early careers, and perhaps, their lack of a similar education to Mongez made it even more difficult for the two artists to create history paintings on the same level. The question of training also comes into play when discussing the ateliers of Vigée-Lebrun and Labille-Guiard.¹ Both women trained other female artists, who went on to become highly successful artists in their own rights. Their influence on a burgeoning artist generation, including Mongez, has not been adequately considered. It is my belief that the actions of Vigée-Lebrun and Labille-Guiard directly impacted the later career of Mongez, and that their efforts would have opened doors for other women artists as well.

This discussion of influence should also be further discussed in regard to Mongez. Throughout the research dedicated to her, the importance of David to Mongez's career is repeated. However, there has not been a discussion concerning Mongez's unique style and perhaps influence on Neoclassicism. There are few female artists, including Angelica Kauffman, that are discussed when considering this style, and the conceived masculinity that is associated with it.² My belief is that Mongez produced works in an independent style that was inspired by a multitude of sources, not just her male teachers. By including her and other women artists practicing creating in the Neoclassical style, the assumptions of its inherent masculinity can be further complicated.

My hope is that this thesis can expand our current idea of what defined a history painter during this era, and the importance of agency in regard to female artists. None of the three artists discussed were ever officially deemed history painters within the French Academies, however they each performed the basic tasks expected of one identified as such. This research is testament to the importance of artist's intentions. Public reception is a vital component to understanding the broader cultural context of a period. Yet, when the actions and decisions made by artists are

not also considered, then a full understanding of how artists navigated that same culture cannot be reached. This understanding is necessary for the study of women artists because they had to, by necessity, work around the official rules set by their artistic organization, as they were never allowed true equality

¹ There is little documentation discussing the atelier of Vigée-Lebrun. However, she did train Marie-Guillemine Benoist before she was taught by David. Benoist, like Mongez, was one of the first women artists to present a history painting to a Salon. Also, Ann Sutherland-Harris in *Women Artists: 1550-1950* argues that the painting *Interior of the Atelier of a Woman Painter* by Marie Victoire Lemoine depicts the atelier of Vigée-Lebrun. See Harris, *Women Artists*, 188-189; Christine Havice, "In a Class by Herself: 19th Century Images of the Woman Artist as Student," *Woman's Art Journal* 2, no. 1 (1981): 40; and Oppenheimer, *Women Artists in Paris*, 22.

² An example of this type of discussion can be seen in Wendy W. Roworth, "Anatomy is Destiny: Regarding the Body in the Art of Angelica Kauffman," in *Femininity and Masculinity in Eighteenth-century Art and Culture*, eds. Gillian Perry and Michael Rossington (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 41-62.

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APPENDIX

TABLES

Table 1: Timeline of Events Referenced in Thesis

1648	<i>Council de Régence</i> creates the <i>Académie Royale</i>
1667	André Félibien publishes his <i>Conferences</i>
1706	First statute prohibiting admission of female Academicians enacted
1720	1706 statute repealed, and Rosalba Carriera is admitted as an Academician
1774	Vigée-Lebrun and Labille-Guiard are admitted into the <i>Académie de St. Luc</i>
1775	The comte d'Angiviller is promoted to <i>Directeur des Bâtiments</i>
1780	History painting reception pieces are created much larger starting in this decade.
1783	Vigée-Lebrun and Labille-Guiard are accepted into the <i>Académie Royale</i> . Vigée-Lebrun presents her 1783 mythologies
1785	Labille-Guiard exhibits <i>Self-Portrait with Two Pupils</i> .
1787	Labille-Guiard presents herself for the first time as <i>premier Peintre des Mesdames</i> .
1788	Labille-Guiard receives commission for <i>Reception of a Chevalier</i>
1789	Vigée-Lebrun flees Paris due to the Revolution.
1790	Labille-Guiard advocates for the rights of female Academicians, and wins unlimited seats for female members. This is repealed a few days later.

- 1791 Salon opens to all artists instead of only Academicians.
- 1792 Louis XVI is guillotined
- 1793 *Académie Royale* is dissolved by National Assembly.
Commune General des Arts replaces the *Académie Royale*, and accepts 22 female members in October.
The *Société Populaire et Républicaine des Arts* replaces the *Commune General des Arts* in November.
- 1794 *Société Populaire et Républicaine des Arts* officially accepts female members.
- 1795 The *Académie des Beaux-Arts* and the *École des Beaux-Arts* are created to replace the ancient regime *Académie Royale*.
- 1802 Mongez exhibits *Astyanax Snatched from his Mother* at her first Salon.
- 1803 Labille-Guiard dies.
- 1804 Mongez receives a gold medal for her painting *Alexander Mourning the Death of Darius's Wife*
- 1805 Vigée-Lebrun returns to Paris.
- 1827 Mongez exhibits at her last Salon.
- 1829 Vigée-Lebrun begins to write her *Souvenirs*.
- 1842 Vigée-Lebrun dies.
- 1855 Mongez dies.
- 1897 *École des Beaux-Arts* accepts first female member.

FIGURES



Figure 1. Nicolas Poussin, *Et in Arcadia ego*, 1637-1638. Oil on canvas. 85 cm × 121 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.



Figure 2. Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, *Life Study of Lady Hamilton as the Cumaean Sibyl*, 1792. Oil on canvas. 73 × 57.2 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.



Figure 3. Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, *Allegory of Poetry*, 1774. Oil on canvas. 80 × 65 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.



Figure 4. Rosalba Carriera, *Girl with a Dove (L'Innocenza)*, 1705. Watercolor on paper. 8.8 x 7.1 cm. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen



Figure 5. Rosalba Carriera, *Nymph in Apollo's Retinue*, 1720-1721. Oil on canvas. 61.5 x 54.5 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.



Figure 6. Anon. after Angelica Kauffman, *Hope*, c. 1800. Watercolor on ivory. 10.0 x 7.8 cm. Royal Collection Trust, London.



Figure 7. Angelica Kauffman, *Composition*, 1778-1780. Oil on canvas. 12.6 x 14.85 m. Royal Academy of Arts, London.



Figure 8. Angelica Kauffman, *Invention*, 1778-1780. Oil on canvas. 12.6 m x 14.85 m. Royal Academy of Arts, London.



Figure 9. Angelica Kauffman, *Design*, 1778-1780. Oil on canvas. 12.6 m x 14.85 m. Royal Academy of Arts, London.



Figure 10. Angelica Kauffman, *Colour*, 1778-1780. Oil on canvas. 12.6 m x 14.85 m. Royal Academy of Arts, London.



Figure 11. Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, *Peace Bringing Back Abundance*, 1780. Oil on canvas. 1.03 × 1.33 m. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.



Figure 12. Francesco Bartolozzis after Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, *Innocence Taking Refuge in the Arms of Justice*, 1783. Etching on paper. 40.5 x 46.8 cm. British Museum of Art, London.



Figure 13. Charles Chardon after Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, *Venus Tying the Wings of Cupid*, c. 1783. Engraving on paper. 37 x 37.4 cm. British Museum of Art, London.



Figure 14. Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, *Juno Borrowing the Belt of Venus*, 1781. Oil on canvas. 1.47 x 1.13 m. Location unknown.



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Figure 15. François Boucher, *Rinaldo and Armida*, 1734. Oil on canvas. 1.35 m x 1.70 m. Musée du Louvre, Paris.



Figure 16. Jacques-Louis David, *Andromache Mourning Hector*, 1783. Oil on canvas. 2.75 x 2.03 m. Musée du Louvre, Paris.



Figure 17. Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, *Marie Antoinette en Chemise*, 1783. Oil on canvas. 89.8 × 72 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.



Figure 18. Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, *Marie Antoinette and her Children*, 1787. Oil on canvas. 2.75 × 2.16 m. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.



Figure 19. Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, *Self-Portrait with Two Pupils*, 1785. Oil on canvas. 2.10 x 1.51 m. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.



Figure 20. Jean-Laurent Mosnier, *Portrait of Mosnier in his Study*, 1787. Oil on canvas. 2.3 x 1.75 m. Hermitage, St. Petersburg.



Figure 21. Marie-Gabrielle Capet, *Studio Scene: Adélaïde Labille-Guiard Painting the Portrait of Joseph-Marie Vien*, 1808. Oil on canvas. 69 x 83.5 cm. Neue Pinakothek, Munich



Figure 22. Jean-Jaques Lavril after Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, *The Actor Brizard in the Role of King Lear*, 1786. Engraving on paper. 38.1 x 29.1 cm. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.



Figure 23. Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, *Self-Portrait*, 1774. Watercolor on ivory. Museo Lazaro Galdiano, Madrid.

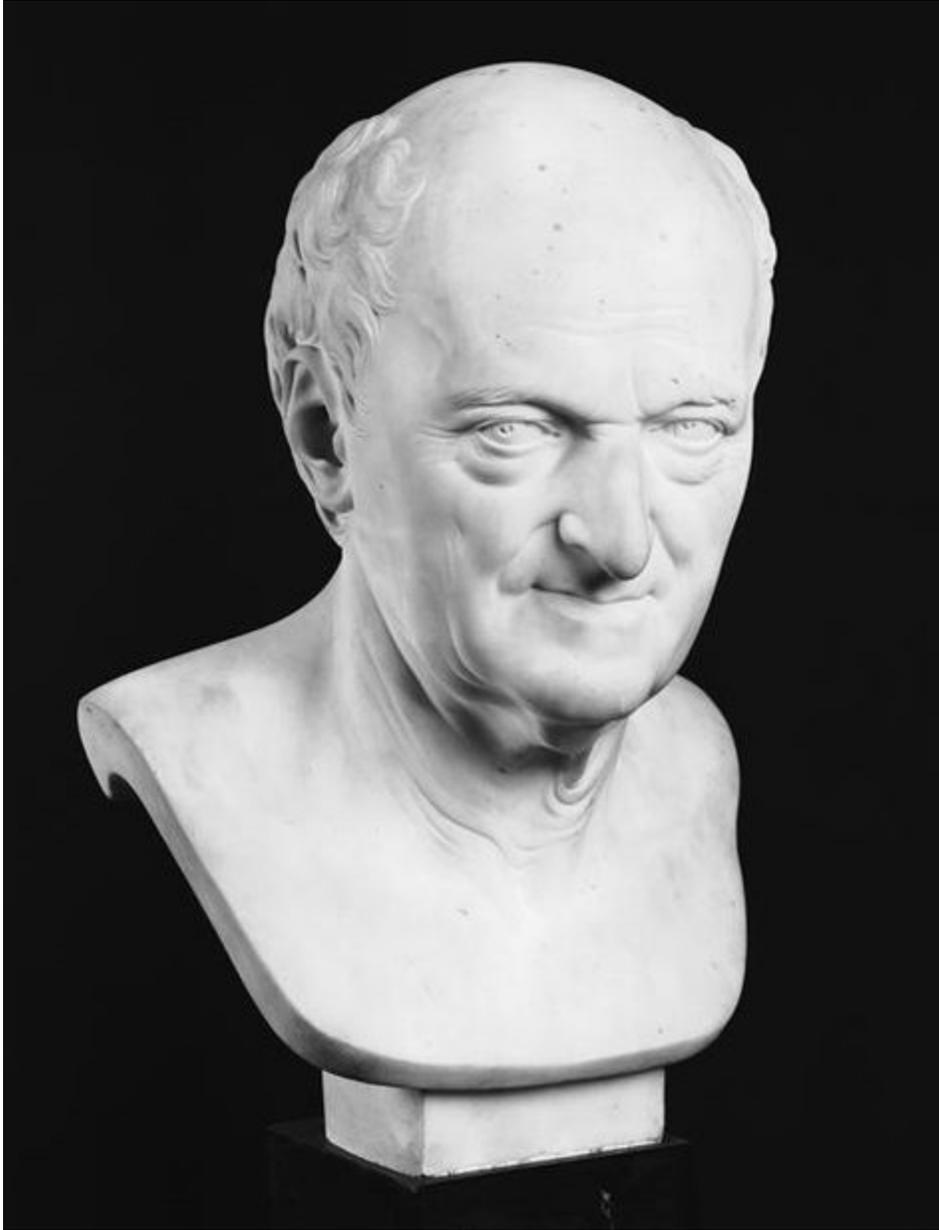


Figure 24. Augustin Pajou, *Bust of Claude-Edme Labille*, 1785. Marble. 62.5 x 21 x 27.5 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.



Figure 25. Jean-Antoine Houdon, *Vestal Virgin*, c. 1767–68. Terracotta. 60.6 cm. Private collection.



Figure 26. Benoît-Louis Prévost after Charles-Nicolas Cochin the Younger, *The Three Stages in the Study of Drawing*, 1763. Etching and engraving. 10.6 x 20.7 cm. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia.



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Figure 27. Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, *Reception of a Chevalier de Saint-Lazare by Monsieur, Grand Master of the Order*, 1788. Oil on canvas. 36 x 81 cm. Musée national de la Légion d'Honneur, Paris.



Figure 28. Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, *Portrait of the Comte de Provence*, 1788. Pastel on paper. 81.5 x 65 cm. Musée Antoine Lécuyer, Saint-Quentin.



Figure 29. Jacques-Louis David, *Coronation of Napoleon*, 1805-1807. Oil on canvas. 6.21 x 9.79 m. Musée du Louvre, Paris.



Figure 30. Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, *Portrait of Madame Adélaïde*, 1787. Oil on canvas. 2.73 x 1.87 m. Speed Art Museum, Louisville.



Figure 31. Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, *Marie-Louise-Thérèse-Victoire de France called Madame Victoire*, 1787. 73.1 x 58.1 cm. Pastel on paper. Musée National des Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, Versailles.



Figure 32. Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, *Madame Élisabeth de France*, 1787. Pastel on paper. 78.7 x 65.4 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.



Figure 33. Jacques-Louis David, *Tennis Court Oath*, c. 1790-1794. Mixed media on paper. 4 x 6.6 m. Musée National des Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, Versailles.



Figure 34. Jacques-Louis David, *Young Boy at a Table, Near Which a Man is Seated*. C. 1791-92. Graphite on paper. 18.2 x 11.3 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.



Figure 35. Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, *Portrait of Marie-Gabrielle Capet*, 1798. Oil on canvas. 78.5 x 62.5 cm. Private collection.



Figure 36. Engraving after Angélique Mongez, *Astyanax Snatched from His Mother*, 1802. in C.-P. Landon, *Annales du Musée*, vol. 4, 1803, pl. 36. Paris.



Figure 37. Angélique Mongez, *Theseus and Pirithous Rescuing Two Women from Bandits*, 1806. Black, white, blue, ochre chalks. 59.44 x 74.93 cm. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis.



Figure 38. Angélique Mongez, *Mars and Venus*, 1841. Oil on canvas. Musée d'Angers, Paris.



Figure 39. Angélique Mongez, *The Seven Against Thebes*, 1827. Oil on canvas. 3.2 x 4.2 m. Image from Gen Doy, "Hidden from Histories: Women History Painters in Early Nineteenth-Century France." In *Art and the Academy in the Nineteenth Century*, edited by Rafael Cardoso and Colin Trodd, 81



Figure 40. Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, *Julie Lebrun as Flora*, c. 1799. Oil on canvas. 129.5 × 97.8 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.



Figure 41. Jacques-Louis David, *Portrait of Madame de Verninac*, 1799. Oil on canvas. 145.5 x 112 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.