

# Art historical explanations for the circulation of art: Europe in the 18th century

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What was 'circulation' in the early modern era?

How and why did art circulate?

How did the Enlightenment change existing concepts or patterns of 'circulation' by making it more responsive to a 'public', to pedagogical aims, and to a pronounced resistance to an understanding of art as a commodity of exchange between individuals?

## **Models of circulation explored:**

**Model of conformity:** guild structures, corporate restrictions

**Model of international circulation:** journeymen, agents at fairs, court artists

**Model of artist as cultural currency:** exchange between courts

**Model of patronage as circulation:** sign of personal favour in present and record of personal or family power for posterity

**Model of gift economy:** art circulated between individuals, courts and states to signal personal, family or political ties; something through which noble behaviour and status is confirmed (by extension, art is commodity that is given or risked as sign of munificence and disinterestedness—now conceived as philanthropy)

**Models of anonymous consumption:** collectors, dealers, 'public' audiences for exhibitions at Salons, academies and museums

**Model of circulation as 'conservation':** art objects confiscated from private collections to put on public display and transported from conquered cities as war booty to 'preserve' for humanity

## **Annotated bibliography:**

Colin Bailey, *Patriotic Taste. Collecting Modern Art in Pre-Revolutionary Paris* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002).

A series of interesting case studies of individual collectors in eighteenth-century France, with a consideration of the cultural values expressed by the pronounced taste for 'modern' art of the French school.

R. W. Berger, *Public Access to Art in Paris: A Documentary History from the Middle Ages to 1800* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999).

Sound translations of and reflection upon documents relevant to the display and public consumption of art in Paris during the early modern period.

Thomas Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985).

A history of the Salon in *ancien regime* Paris. Useful for circulation in its analysis of the social and political agendas of various groups who sought to negotiate and/or manipulate this newly created public space for the viewing of art.

Francis Haskell, *The Ephemeral Museum. Old Master Paintings and the Rise of the art Exhibition* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000).

A series of lectures published posthumously. Traces the history of the modern 'blockbuster' back to 'Old Master' exhibitions in C17 Italy, Salons in C18 Paris and the exhibitions at the Royal Academy London. Interesting in terms of the nationalist agendas of circulation in recent history is the emergence of this ideology in the Rembrandt exhibition in Amsterdam in 1898.

Francis Haskell, *Patrons and Painters. Art and Society in Baroque Italy* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1980).

A study of the mechanics of production, distribution, acquisition and evaluation of works of art in seventeenth-century Italy. The first section focuses on Rome and is useful in its exploration of what the different agents of circulation aimed to achieve through the commissioning of works of art. Most interesting is the way that rivalry between papal families and influential cardinals were played out through acts of art patronage.

Andrew McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre. Art, Politics and the Origins of the Modern Museum in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

A consideration of the motivations for, transformations of and history related to the creation of public art museums in Paris during the second half of the eighteenth century. Case studies of the exhibition of royal paintings at the Luxembourg Gallery, the unrealised museum project of the Comte d'Angiviller under Louis XVI, the Revolutionary Louvre, the Musée Central des Arts, and the Museum of French Monuments. In addition to an investigation of what the formation of art museums meant during the Enlightenment, the book considers the forerunners of modern museum directors and curators, such as Alexandre Lenoir. Useful for the topic of circulation in how the state attempted to respond to a call for the public display of what were once private collections (royal, émigré, and war booty).

Michael North and David Ormrod (eds), *Art Markets in Europe 1400-1800* (Aldershot, UK and Brookfield, Vermont, USA: Ashgate, 1998).

Several informative essays focusing on different contexts related to art markets in European centres. Useful in connection with circulation are Martens on the Bruges guild; Voker Reinhardt on Roman patronage in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries; Bok on pricing in the Dutch market; De Marchi, Van Miegroet and Raiff on Antwerp/Paris trade; Schnapper on the evidence of inventories 17<sup>th</sup> century Paris; Ketelsen on auctions in C18 Germany; Cowan and Ormrod on the rise of connoisseurship and an art market in England; Pointon on jewellery and its related gift economy in 18<sup>th</sup>-century England and France.

Antoine Schnapper, *Curieux du grand siècle. Collections et collectionneurs dans la France du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Flammarion, 1994).

A detailed study of the tastes and practices of collectors in seventeenth-century France through the study of inventories. Some reflection upon the way that objects were bought, sold and exchanged.

Martin Warnke, *The Court Artist: On the Ancestry of the Modern Artist*, trans. David McLintock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

An excellent study of the position and responsibilities of the court artist in early modern Europe. Includes some discussion of the artist as curator and agent for princely collections. Useful in connection with the concept of artist and his talents as court currency.