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Book Review — Published Version

[Book Review] Susanna Avery-Quash and Christian Huemer, eds.
London and the Emergence of a European Art Market, 1780–1820.
Issue and Debates. Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2019

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Book Reviews

Pre-1800

SUSANNA AVERY-QUASH and CHRISTIAN HUEMER, eds. *London and the Emergence of a European Art Market, 1780–1820*. Issue and Debates. Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2019. Pp. 304. \$60.00 (paper).
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The Art History Information Program was one of the first projects taken on by the J. P. Getty Trust in 1983. Since then, primary archival material from around the world has been purchased and preserved at an unprecedented scale. After 1999, the program was taken on by the Getty Research Institute and was intensified through digitization; it has since matured into a powerful research tool: the Getty Provenance Index. Much more than an index-generating algorithm, it is a large and growing data bank that makes documents of art-historical relevance accessible to scholars and provides them with tools for quantitative data analysis. The major source of data are catalogues from art sales that indicate the artwork, seller, buyer, and transaction price. Special projects have been set up to register data from British and German art markets. Therefore, the Getty Research Institute has established cooperative agreements with major museums in Britain and in Germany, integrating their data and those from many other archives in the relevant areas into the data pool. The Getty Research Institute also supports conferences and publications that demonstrate the research opportunities opened up by this digitized store of documents from historical art markets. The first major publication within this larger strategy concentrates on art sales in Britain, mainly in London, from 1780 to 1820. Contributors to the volume presented their findings at conferences in 2013 and 2016. The book was published in early 2019 by Getty Publications.

Susanna Avery-Quash, senior research curator at the National Gallery, London, and Christian Huemer, then head of the Provenance Project, edited the volume. In the introduction, they state their aim: to find and generate connections between data-driven socioeconomic analysis and the traditional micro-histories fabricated by art historians, mostly focused on individuals, social circles, or locations. The four decades chosen for a fusion of methods were, by all

accounts, a particularly turbulent epoch. In the wake of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, the flow of artworks from Amsterdam and Paris toward London increased, and artworks from more distant destinations, particularly from Italy and Spain, were also channeled into London and sold off in bulk. Avery-Quash and Huemer organize the assembled studies into three sections, each introduced by a prominent senior scholar: Neil DeMarchi, Malcolm Baker, and Filip Vermeulen, respectively.

Section one contains studies that attempt to read recognizable patterns out of the 2.3 million data points gathered in the Getty Provenance Index. Data from auction sales in England and France demonstrate the early dip in French sales and, from 1795, the strong upward trend in both markets. Peter Carpreau argues that the average price level remained stable in England while it dropped in France. Bénédicte Miyamoto traces in great detail changes in taste, first from Flemish to Italian and then from Italian to French painting, and changes in themes, from mythical history to landscape paintings. A much older market movement is considered when sales in Amsterdam and in Paris are compared: after 1745, the price level in Paris sales outstripped that of Amsterdam sales. Hans Van Miegroet, Hilary Cronheim, and Miyamoto point to the role of sales catalogues in generating new interpretations for British buyers, and to the role of close trade relationships, notably that between the Paris dealers Lebrun, father and son, who passed many works on to the London dealer and agent, Noel-Joseph Desenfans. Data from the Getty Provenance Index can also be assembled into narratives of rising and falling commercial and artistic success. Olivier Bonfait counts, for each of the four decades, the number of paintings by a given artist that were sold either in Paris or in London. He contrasts the modest London sales figures for paintings by François Boucher or Jean-Honoré Fragonard with those of their more successful contemporary colleagues Jacques-Louis David, Jean-Baptiste Greuze, and, above all, Joseph Vernet.

The contributions of the next two sections follow the traditional convention of focusing research on actual players and their practices during the relevant time period. They draw their documentation from a wide variety of sources, including the Getty Research Institute's archives. Section two, on collections, has as its centerpiece a concise account of the display of the Italian and French pictures from the collection of the Duc d'Orléans at Bryan's Gallery in Pall Mall, from December 1798 to July 1799, authored by Avery-Quash and Nicholas Penny. They argue that not only the dispersal of these paintings from France's most prestigious collection throughout Britain, but also the wide attention generated by the exhibition increased the consumption skills of the interested circles, thus leading to an increase in the demand for paintings from continental schools, drawn to the London market by the higher price level. The circle of collectors widened, and the practices of dealers adapted to the new clientele. Camilla Murgia demonstrates how mixtures of private and public display were tried out at Morland's Gallery and the Gallery of the British Institution for the Promotion of Fine Arts. Three heterogeneous collections and their dispersal are presented: that of the Austrian painter Angelica Kauffmann (by Wendy Wassyng Roworth), that of the American painter and speculator John Trumbull (by Sarah Bakkali), and that of the wealthy London patrician Welbore Ellis Agar (by Rebecca Lyons). The section is enriched by David Alexander's study on the booming print market of the time period, which offered opportunities to British artists due to the rise in demand for graphical visual information.

In section three, individual players are the subject of research. The studies are arranged along a spatial dimension: the location of the players' activities moves from London to Paris, and then on to more distant sources of sellable merchandise. For London, Julia Armstrong-Totten discusses the exhibition practices of dealer-connoisseurs Thomas Moore and Michael Bryant, and Francis Russell the rise of auctioneer James Christie. For Paris, Carole Blumenfeld portrays the painter and dealer Pierre-Joseph Lafontaine as the most active player. Maria Celeste Cola points to agents like Gioacchino Marini, who knew the sellers as well as the bureaucratic and legal impediments of art trade in Italy. The futile attempts of the various

Italian states to stop the drain of cultural heritage are convincingly reconstructed by Guido Guerzoni. Finally, Ana María Fernández García investigates the dealers and concealers who channeled valuable pieces from the plundered Spanish palaces, churches, and convents into the London market.

Taken together, the contributions add valuable detail to the history of the British art market and its connections with other European cultural centers, particularly with Paris. The methods used still fall into two distinct categories: they are driven by numerical data in a quarter of the chapters, and by references to historical documents in three quarters of the chapters. Successful fusions remain an unfulfilled promise, but some of the studies might well inspire further use of digital archives, notably the treasure troves of the Getty Research Institute.

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