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Colour in French Drawing of the 18th Century Between Theory, Connoisseurship and Practice[1]

Research on 18th-century French drawings, watercolours and pastels in the collections of the National Museum in Warsaw[2] has provoked questions about the role of colour in this genre of French art. Could this question be considered collectively for the category of works on paper that was exclusively created for the purpose of museum classification?

In the discussed historical period, the colour of drawings was based on the scale of red chalk hues, from the lightest one determining the *contre-épreuve* (**fig. 1**) to the darkest tone of burnt sanguine (**fig. 2**), the varied saturation of black chalk outlines (**fig. 3**) and the changing tonality of the *aux trois crayons* technique (red and black chalk and white crayon) (**fig. 4**). Their colour scheme could be also enriched by the diversity of grey, brown and grey-brown wash (**fig. 5**), as well as delicate spots of colour (**fig. 6**) or pastel of equally subtle expression.

A question arises whether the rank of colour in French drawing of the 18th century is actually related to the victory of the "Rubenists" over the "Poussinists" in the prolonged theoretical controversy in the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture in Paris. The discussion extending over the years raised the significance of colour in the practice of painting and drawing of the period of *Régence* and Rococo, while draughtsmanship teaching retained its traditional shape, as was testified, among other treatises, by Gérard de Lairesse (1640/41–1711): *Les principes du dessein, ou Méthode courte et facile pour aprendre cet art en peu de tems* (1719),[3] Abraham Bloemaert (1566–1651): *Livre d'étude d'après les desseins originaux de Blomart*,[4] Charles-Antoine Jombert (1712–84):[5] *Méthode pour apprendre le dessein, où l'on donne les règles générales de ce grand art...*

[1] A working version of the present paper was presented during a tutorial session led by Professor Dr Hab. Piotr Skubiszewski at the Institute of Art History of the University of Warsaw on 27 October 2015. I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Dr Hab. Antoni Ziemba for his invaluable remarks and additions.

[2] *Le siècle français. Francuskie malarstwo i rysunki XVIII wieku ze zbiorów polskich*, Iwona Danielewicz, Justyna Guze, academic eds, exh. cat., The National Museum in Warsaw, 2009 (Warsaw, 2009); *Mistrzowie pastelu. Od Marteau do Witkacego*, Anna Grochala, academic ed., exh. cat., The National Museum in Warsaw, 2015–16 (Warsaw, 2015). See also <www.cyfrowe.mnw.art.pl>.

[3] Gérard de Lairesse, *Grondleggінge der teekenkonst* (Amsterdam, 1711) (1st edition, further editions: 1713, 1766).

[4] French edition of 1740 with illustrations engraved by François Boucher – see <http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=1356068&partId=1&searchText=Bloemart+&page=1> [retrieved: 11 September 2015]; Frederik Bloemaert after Abraham Bloemaert, *Oorspronkelyk en vermaard konstryk tekenboek*, 1740 – see Marcel Roethlisberger, *Abraham Bloemaert and His Sons: Paintings and Prints*, vol. 1 (Doornspijk, 1993), pp. 389–90.

[5] Jombert on his part cites other treatises: Gerard Hoet, *Les principaux fondements du dessein* (Leiden, 1712) (2nd edition: 1723); Jan de Bisschop, *Signorum Veterum Icones* (1668–89) and *Paradigmata Graphices Variorum Artificum* (1672–89); Jean de le Clerc, *Principes de dessein* (1660–1703).

(1740)[6] and Michel-François Dandré-Bardon (1700–83): *Traité de la peinture* (1765).[7] What was the contemporary concept of drawing and the resulting teaching methods? Did colour find its place within?

Jombert's popular treatise combines conservativeness of theory with the knowledge of new perspectives that the author learned due to his friendship with a group of young artists in Paris: Charles-Nicolas Cochin the Younger (1715–90),[8] Joseph-Marie Vien (1716–1809), Claude-Joseph Vernet (1714–89), Jean-Honoré Fragonard (1732–1806) and Jean-Baptiste Perronneau (1715–84)[9]; the two latter ones would visit their elders: François Boucher (1703–70) and Jean-Siméon Chardin (1699–1779).[10] Jombert himself ran an open house where meetings were held that attracted the most famous artists, writers and philosophers of the era.

Boucher was not only the author of illustrations for the French edition of Bloemaert's drawing manual. He also made a significant contribution to the so-called *Recueil Jean de Jullienne* – a non-didactic publication illustrated by renowned engravers of the period, including the famous Gabriel Huquier (1695–1772).[11] Boucher provided a link between the subsequent generations of artists, first as an engraver, and then one of the most famous French painters.

Apart from the written treatises addressed to artists, including the future members of the Academy, publishers and graphic artists issued numerous inexpensive illustrated brochures with drawing instructions between 1760 and 1770. The brochures contained engravings imitating drawings that were supposed to be copied, along with instructions on how to draw human

[6] Charles-Antoine Jombert (1712–84) was a publisher and held the title of the *Libraire du Roi pour l'Artillerie et le Génie* [publisher of the king for artillery and military affairs]. The aforementioned popular drawing manual used 30 plates inherited from his father with illustrations by Abraham Bosse for *the Recueil de figures pour apprendre à dessiner sans maître*. The majority of illustrations, though, are the work by Nicolas Cochin the Younger, who is cited as co-author on the title page. Cochin the Younger was nevertheless the main graphic artist collaborating with Jombert, and drew up the catalogue of the latter's oeuvre – see Catherine Bousquet-Bressolier, "Charles-Antoine Jombert (1712–1784). Un libraire entre sciences et arts," *Bulletin du bibliophile*, no. 2 (1997), p. 302.

[7] Dandré-Bardon from Aix-en-Provence was the professor of painting and member of the Academy and professor of draughtsmanship at the École des élèves protégés. As member of the juries of salons and the contest for the study of expression (since 1760), he referred to the rules introduced by Charles Le Brun. He was author of *Histoire universelle traitée relativement aux arts de peindre et de sculpter, ou tableaux de l'histoire enrichis de connaissances analogues à ces talents* (1769) and *Costumes des anciens* (1772–74) – see Daniel Chol, *Michel-François Dandré-Bardon ou l'apogée de la peinture en Provence au XVIII^e siècle* (Aix-en-Provence, 1987), pp. 65–70. The NMW's collections include two drawn copies from his *Costumes* (inv. nos Rys.Ob.d.593 MNW and Rys.Ob.d.594 MNW).

[8] Cochin, since 1741 *agrée*, and since 1752 member of the Academy, was friends with Jombert from childhood. Jombert commissioned the brilliant graphic artist to illustrate publications that he issued – see Bousquet-Bressolier, op. cit., p. 311.

[9] Perronneau was a true innovator. Green shades employed by him would later be found with the Impressionists, and the pastel line applied so that it makes an impression from a distance – with Post-Impressionists. No wonder then that according to Albert Besnard (1849–1934), as stated during a lecture at the occasion of the exhibition *Cents pastels* (Galerie Georges Petit, Paris, May 1908; it included 33 Perronneau's works) for his contemporaries, Perronneau was too modern in his free use of colour, which could not be said of master Maurice Quentin de La Tour – see Léandre Vaillat et Paul Ratouis de Limay, *J.-B. Perronneau (1715–83). Sa vie et son œuvre* (Paris–Bruxelles, 1923), p. 35, n. 1.

[10] Chardin, who planned the career of an Academic painter, drew a great deal in his youth; he gave it up alongside historical painting – see Pierre Rosenberg, "Chardin: The Unknown Subversive?," in *Chardin*, [Pierre Rosenberg et al.], exh. cat., Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, Paris et al., 1999–2000 (London, 2000), pp. 28–33. Towards the end of his life, with failing eyesight, around 1780 he gave up using oil paints and began to paint portraits using pastels (free from dangerous lead). Chardin constructed his still lifes and genres scenes by means of colour, and drawing was his indispensable tool – see Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, *Chardin Material* (Berlin, 2011), pp. 39–40.

[11] See Isabelle Tillerot, "Engraving Watteau in the Eighteenth Century: Order and Display in the *Recueil Jullienne*," *Getty Research Journal*, no. 3 (2011), pp. 33–34.

figures, animals and landscapes, not to mention decorative motifs and ornaments intended for craftsmen. Jombert, whose drawing students were expected to have a detailed understanding of anatomy and osteology and familiarity with the most admired antique statues, only covered monochromatic washes based on water-diluted red chalk, ink and bistre in his manual. As for the question of colour – that is, coloured wash in drawing – he redirected the reader to the work *Les Règles du lavis et du dessin* (1722) by the royal engineer Nicolas Buchotte (1673–1757).[12]

Drawing, present since centuries in European tradition, enjoyed increasing appreciation in 18th-century France. Gaining the rank of a separate genre of art, it was also used as a tool that required mastery from architects and artists, military engineers and cartographers to craftsmen and art lovers and amateurs.[13] Similar belief had already been expressed by Roger de Piles: "Now, if design be the basis of painting, it follows that we cannot bestow too much pains on making it solid, that it may be able to sustain a building which consists of so many parts as that of painting. I consider design as consisting of several parts, extremely necessary for every one who desires to be an able artist; the chief of which are, correctness, good taste, elegance, character, variety, expression, and perspective."[14] Let us examine the rules of teaching draughtsmanship at the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture in Paris, keeping in mind that it did not differ greatly from the centuries-old workshop practice.

The first stage of the process involved copying drawings or engravings after the works by renowned masters; another hand exercise involved copying illustrations depicting parts of the human body (*dessiner d'après exemple*). In the 18th century, engravings by Sébastien le Clerc (c. 1734–85),[15] Charles-Nicolas Cochin, Louis Bonnet (1736–93)[16] and Gilles Demarteau[17] were used for this purpose, executed after drawings by Boucher and Carle van Loo (1705–65). The next stage was the *dessin d'après la bosse*, or drawing from a three-dimensional model, which was more often a plaster cast than an ancient sculpture that later became the subject of study for the winners of the *Prix de Rome*. The learning process was concluded with the study of a live model. All that has been described by Claude-Henri Watelet (1718–86) in his entry about drawing in the invaluable Encyclopedia of Diderot and d'Alambert.[18] The Academy had the exclusive right to produce studies from a live model, though the 1730 reform granted a similar

[12] Nicolas Buchotte – in *Les Règles du lavis et du dessin*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1722), p. 1 – lists the following colours: black ink, carmine, ultramarine, gamboge (plant juice giving a yellow tint), verdigris, bistre, indigo, (buckthorn berries) green, (iris) green, vermilion – see <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k65663926.r=Buchotte.langFR> [retrieved: 8 September 2015].

[13] Charlotte Guichard, "Nouveaux public, nouveaux usages du dessin gravé," in ead. et al., *Quand la gravure fait illusion. Autour de Watteau et Boucher. Le dessin gravé au XVIIIe siècle*, exh. cat., Musée de Beaux-Arts de Valenciennes, 2006–7 ([s.l.], 2006), pp. 93–97.

[14] Roger de Piles, *The Principles of Painting* [...] (London, 1743), p. 79.

[15] Catalogue of engravings by Le Clerc (1774) was drawn up by Jombert, who also inventoried the graphic oeuvre of Jacques Callot (1771) and Stefano della Bella (1772) – see Bousquet-Bressolier, op. cit., p. 318ff.

[16] Louis-Marin Bonnet executed an engraving out of eight plates, imitating a pastel work by François Boucher, *Flora's Head*. Owing to the preserved test impressions with the author's commentary in the collections of Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris, we are familiar with the stages of this painstaking yet effective process – see *Quand la gravure fait illusion*..., op. cit., pp. 60–61, cat. no. 28.

[17] Ibid., p. 59.

[18] [Entry] *Dessin* in *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* [online], vol. 4 (Paris, 1754), pp. 989–91, <http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/getobject.pl?c.3:2247.encyclopedie0513> [retrieved: 12 July 2017].

option to the Academy of St Luke.[19] The sitter had the status of a state official and was granted the right to wear livery and (similarly as selected artists) the royal privilege of lodging at the Louvre. This explains why throughout several decades of the 18th century, the same man[20] is repeatedly portrayed in nude studies executed from the model by the crowds of French artists attending the Academy lessons.[21] In accordance with the long academic tradition, female models were not hired; they were occasionally to be encountered in private ateliers, and their service was costly.[22] White paper and red chalk that students cut into sticks and stuck in metal holders were used for drawing. Coloured paper or grounded paper required greater painterly skills from a draughtsman and the light tones needed to be marked with white pigment. Classicist artists often used pencil, pen and black rather than red chalk, which is exemplified in the preserved sketchbooks of Jacques-Louis David (1748–1825).[23]

Red chalk, obligatorily employed at the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture for nude studies, was also used for landscapes (**fig. 7**), genre scenes, compositional and figural sketches and book illustration designs. The peak of mastery was reached in the technique *aux trois crayons*, in practice since the 16th century, combining black and red chalk with white chalk, which resulted in diversified colour harmonies, no longer employed only for the face or skin tones. Black chalk and pencil (*mine de plomb*, *pierre noire*) continued to be in use, as well as pen-and-ink; the techniques would be combined and lavishly enriched with diluted ink or ink wash, but also watercolour. The last technique allowed for achieving truly painterly effects, which, combined with the large size of compositions, especially in the case of landscapes, and neat mounts decorated with ink-drawn and coloured borders including golden strips (**fig. 8**),[24] made it a perfect decorative element for the new type of interior: rather small and low, where the *decorum* and *grand goût* of the Louis XIV era (who died in 1715) gave room to comfort and coziness. Drawing – watercolour and red chalk in particular – as an autonomous work of art became an element of decoration.[25] It remained, obviously, the basic working tool

[19] The Academy of St Luke was founded in 1655 as a result of the transformation of the guild into an artistic organization and existed until 1777 when it was absorbed by the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture. An opportunity was provided for the second course to practice drawing from a live model. Like the Royal Academy, it organized exhibitions every couple of years and awarded medals to distinguished artists. See Lajer-Burcharth, op. cit., pp. 38–39.

[20] The model was a Dechamps (or Decamps), a royal official with fixed remuneration and service-flat at the Louvre – see *Eighteenth-Century French Life-Drawing: Selections from the Collection of Mathias Polakovits*, James Henry Rubin and David A. Levine, eds, exh. cat., The Art Museum, Princeton University, 1977 (Princeton, 1977), p. 22.

[21] The students only entered the room after the model's pose was arranged by the professor who led instruction in a given month. The model's pose was changed twice-weekly. The room with tables arranged in a semi-circle, conceived for around 120 draughtsmen, was packed with almost 400 draughtsmanship students in the mid-18th century.

[22] One of the few exceptions was Watteau, for whom his wealthy friends hired a flat and female models – see Colin B. Bailey, *Jean-Antoine Watteau (1684–1721)*, in *Watteau and His World. French Drawings from 1700 to 1750*, Alan Wintermute, ed., exh. cat., The Frick Collection, New York, 1999–2000; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 2000 (London, 1999), p. 5.

[23] David belonged to another stylistic epoch, for which colour in painting or in drawing had less significance as for the artists active around the middle of the century.

[24] *Le siècle français*..., op. cit., p. 431, cat. no. 130, fig. p. 430.

[25] Sophie Raoux, *Le dessin à l'époque de sa reproductibilité technique* in *Quand la gravure fait*..., op. cit., p. 105. De Piles recommended to true art collectors (in contrast to, as he called them, *demi-collectioneurs*) the collecting of sketches, the "first" ideas, that give a better idea of the artists' intentions than large, meticulously finished drawn compositions sought after in the 17th century. Such a trend in collecting was likely universal if c. 1740 Antoine-Joseph Dezallier d'Argenville reprimanded such a practice – see Bailey, op. cit., pp. 75–77.

and a measure of all artistic creation, even if it only depicted – liberated from the constraints of the academic hierarchy of subjects – genre scenes, still lifes or landscapes.

A fundamental question arises as to what was – in the broader early modern tradition – the actual relation between the theoretical opposition of the notions of *disegno–colorito* and the use of colour in drawing in workshop practice. The opposition was inherited by the French 18th century from Italian Mannerist literature: it was namely then that, as generally known, coloured drawings dominated in the workshops of many Italian and northern artists; to cite Vasari and Baroccio or Hendrick Goltzius, Jacques de Gheyn II and Carel van Mander. It should be kept in mind, though, that the sharp distinction between *disegno* and *colore*, *colorito* (*dessin* and *coloris*), effected in theory and historiography of the second half of the 16th century (Vasari, Pino, Dolce, Lomazzo, Zuccari), was not as much a fact of artistic reality or the actual state of contemporary workshop practice, but a construction of "imaginary reality." It was essentially intended to serve the rivalry of power centres that used artistic description to legitimize their aspiration for hegemony or political domination. And so, Giorgio Vasari, remaining in the service of the grand dukes of Tuscany, as well as the circle of writers around Michelangelo, active in the orbit of the great aristocratic families of Rome, preaching the supremacy of *disegno* and draughtsmanship as that which is rational over the random, material and sensual quality of colour, proclaimed cultural (and implicitly, also political) supremacy of Florence and Rome. This stance met opposition from Serenissima writers (Marco Boschini in particular) who praised the "dashes of paint" and virtuosity of colour. Such politically informed and manipulated separation of *disegno* and *colorito* became a historiographic-theoretical stereotype that was far from actual artistic practice but permanent in the modern discourse on art, both in the field of connoisseurship and collecting (Giovanni Battista Agucchi and others) and in the strictly academic dispute (Gian Paolo Bellori, Filippo Baldinucci, French Academicians led by Nicolas Poussin and Charles-Alphonse Dufresnoy).

It should be observed, too, that the great *querelles* at the Paris' Academy, including the argument about the supremacy of "rational" draughtsmanship over the materiality of colourful paints – the argument of the "Poussinists" and the "Rubenists," eventually won by the latter party – had a locally political background in the form of factional struggles for domination in the institutional-national hierarchy within which the Academy functioned. The more it needed to be enhanced and formulated with doctrinal rigour, not necessarily in accordance with the reality of the painters' or draughtsmen's practice.

Let us now return to 18th-century France. The key to understanding changes in French drawing of the 18th century is the oeuvre of Antoine Watteau (1684–1721). Known as the inventor of the genre of *fête galante*, he was first and foremost a draughtsman. He drew everywhere and in all circumstances; however, these were not academic studies of male nudes, but landscape and figural sketches: of children, men, and women in particular. Watteau noted ideas, poses and clothing of his figures. Often, on one sheet of paper, drawings from various periods can be found; at the outset, he drew in red or black chalk, and since around 1712–13, *aux trois crayons*. It was Watteau who introduced colour to contemporary French drawing, which the artist owed to his studies on the Venetians of the Golden Age and Baroque Flemish painting. The aforementioned volumes of *Recueil des figures de différents caractères* published by Jullienne became extremely popular,[26] and Boucher, who engraved them, intercepted certain

[26] These publications were addressed to art lovers and connoisseurs and were not meant to serve as a model book for drawing students – see Tillerot, op. cit., p. 35.

characteristic qualities of the master from Valenciennes. They are evident in his early figural and landscape sketches; the artist also painted several watercolours.[27] Boucher's influence could be found in figural sketches by Hubert Robert, who admired, collected and copied Boucher's drawings[28] (**fig. 9**). Robert and Fragonard became masters of landscape drawing during their studies at the French Academy in Rome, where they would go to search for an (outdoor) motif[29] together somewhere in the city or its area. Their red chalk drawings from these years are sometimes hardly distinguishable. Two views of Tivoli, executed during the summer months of 1760, were exhibited by Fragonard at the Salon of 1765, where he debuted. Two-hundred and twenty-nine oil paintings against as many as 88 drawings were displayed there, which testifies to the increasing significance of the latter technique. Diderot in his *Salon of 1765* did not cover the drawings, focusing on Fragonard's painting *Coresus and Callirhoe*.[30] The "lower" genres that were genre scenes and landscapes gained great popularity among French draughtsmen of the 18th century.

Another perfect example of the use of colour in drawing is the oeuvre of Gabriel de Saint-Aubin (1724–80), chronicler of Parisian life. His apparently instantaneous pen-and-ink sketches were enlivened by colour (**fig. 10**). Overlapping lines and spots of colour in his works provoked accusations of "disregarding order and the principle of adequacy in compositions."[31] Saint-Aubin appears as a successor of the tradition initiated by Watteau, though he did not gain fame during his lifetime and was not mentioned by the first connoisseur of this artistic period, Pierre-Jean Mariette (1694–1774). His sketches demanded concentration from the viewer by reason of their small size, which obviously distinguished them from the large and decorative landscapes by Fragonard and Robert or red chalk genre scenes by Jean-Baptiste Greuze (1725–1805).[32]

Denis Diderot remained, unfortunately, indifferent towards the beauty of contemporary drawings, watercolours, red chalk and pieces with washes. An exception to this rule was Greuze and his expressive sketches that Diderot described in the *Salon of 1769*: "These drawings, though. What did Greuze's genius actually show us? The *Death of the Father Mourned by His Children* has a beautiful composition, expression and general impression. Art connoisseurs perceive it as a painting; I would, however, remove the church candle holder and the stoup with a wisp that serves as a sprinkler, these accessories emanate deceit; this man is not dead

[27] Beverly Schreiber Jacoby, "New Light on François Boucher's Early Work: A Lost Watercolor Exhibited in Florence by Francesco Maria Niccolo Gaburri," *Master Drawings*, vol. 23/24, no. 3 (1985/1986 [1987]), p. 372.

[28] Robert's drawing that referred to Boucher is the *Boat Ride* of 1774 (paper, red chalk, MNW, inv. no. Rys Ob.d.557 MNW); see *Le siècle français*..., op. cit., p. 435, cat. no. 132, fig. 434.

[29] *Peindre sur le motif*, or 'painting outdoors,' as Camille Pissarro and certain Impressionist would say in the following century.

[30] Fragonard was in Rome on an Academy scholarship in the years 1756–59, and then accompanied Jean-Claude Richard, Abbé de Saint-Non as a draughtsman, subsequently returning to France in 1761. In the years 1773–74, he travelled across Europe, including Italy, with Jacques-Pierre-Onésyme Bérgeret de Grandcourt and his son. Hubert Robert prolonged the duration of the scholarship in Rome, remaining in Italy until 1765.

[31] "[...] negligé l'ordre et la propreté dans ses compositions" – see Pierre Rosenberg, "Le monde de Saint-Aubin," in *Gabriel de Saint-Aubin 1724–1780*, Colin B. Bailey et al., eds, exh. cat., The Frick Collection, New York; Louvre, Paris, 2007–2008 (Paris, 2007), pp. 11, 13, 17 [translated from French by Karolina Koriat].

[32] Two centuries later, art historians began to appreciate him as a draughtsman, initially as the author of sketches drawn on pages of exhibition and auction catalogues depicting exhibited works which allowed their identification, to finally fully respect his extraordinary sense of observation and ability to depict the language of line and plane.

yet and the priest has not entered into possession of his soul."[33] Diderot – so sensitive to the qualities of Chardin's still lifes – was drawn to the composition and expression of Greuze's works and not the painterly aspect of his drawings. And still Greuze was an extraordinary "colourist" draughtsman. In his red chalk drawings, to achieve colour effects, the artist made the most of line shades and the paper grain, and in his pen-and-ink drawings, like the one admired by Diderot, he operated on various shades of wash adding depth and painterly quality to the composition.

Diderot's distance and his conservative understanding of drawing[34] is the more astonishing given that the 18th century is also an era of consummate connoisseurs and collectors of earlier and contemporary drawings: Pierre Crozat and Pierre-Jean Mariette, as well as artists-art collectors, like Boucher, whose collection went far beyond the needs of his atelier as far as didactic tools were concerned. Not all collections of prints published at that time had didactic character, as exemplified by the *Recueil Jean de Jullienne* that enabled the admirers of Antoine Watteau's talent to enjoy his drawing oeuvre otherwise dispersed in private hands. Another confirmation of the role and significance of the art of drawing and its exceptional role in pre-revolutionary France are the successful attempts of translating drawing into print and its popularization through graphic techniques. Demarteau's *manière de crayon* or Le Prince's *manière de lavis*[35] or the extremely intricate process of rendering pastel painting in a multicolour impression made from as many as eight plates by Bonnet (**fig. 11**), provide an answer to the challenge that was the rendition of colourful drawing, watercolour and pastel in graphic techniques.[36] A unique drawing could be reproduced by means of graphic reproduction. The practice did not only concern the aforementioned great artists, connected by the master-and-pupil relationship like Watteau, Boucher, Fragonard and Robert: it also applied to many other, lesser known or rediscovered draughtsmen, among them also Gabriel de Saint-Aubin. Due to a recent exhibition, his oeuvre has been rescued from oblivion, although his drawings on the margins of the *livrets de salon* and auction catalogues have for long served as an invaluable reference for historians of French art of the 18th century.[37] Two hundred years later, due to their lively subjects and vibrant line and colour, his works speak to the viewer with renewed power. Scholars ask in what manner were the techniques employed by Saint-Aubin in his drawings related to the destination of his sketches. The more finely finished drawings in certain auction catalogues, judging by their binding and secondarily added pages with final prices, must have

[33] See Denis Diderot, *Salons*, written and presented by Jean Seznec, vol. 4 (Oxford, 1967), p. 108 [translated from Polish by Karolina Koriat].

[34] His views differed from the academic doctrine, though: "Once a pupil has already mastered the copying of engravings and casts, I make him sit for two years in front of the female and male academic nude. Then I bring him children, adults, middle-aged people, elderly people, in brief – representatives of every age, sex, social status of human species." To a certain degree, he refers to the view of Roger de Piles: "There would be no mannerism neither in drawing or in colour if artists precisely imitated nature. The mannerism stems from the teacher, from the Academy, school, even from Antiquity" – see Denis Diderot, *Esej o malarstwie*, Andrzej Pieńkos, introduction and ed., Jerzy Stadnicki, tr. (Warsaw, 2015), pp. 22–23 [translated from Polish by Karolina Koriat].

[35] The technique, introduced by Jean-Charles François in the 1750s, found the greatest master in the person of Le Prince.

[36] See Raoux, op. cit., p. 105.

[37] See *Gabriel de Saint-Aubin...*, op. cit., p. 75.

been prepared to address particularly important potential buyers.[38] Sketches of the Salon paintings are also more carefully executed, to be viewed more than once, in contrast to one-time auctions of private collections where works of art were exhibited in the course of the bidding.[39]

Since we are now aware of how varied was the attitude towards drawing in 18th-century France, we may now return to De Piles's remarks on colour in painting: "There are several people, who, speaking of painting, use the words colour and colouring, indifferently, to signify the same thing, and tho' these two parts are distinguishable enough, yet it may not be improper to explain what we mean by each of them. Colour is what makes objects perceptible to sight; and colouring is one of the essential parts of painting, by which the artist imitates the appearance of colours in all natural objects and gives to artificial objects the colour that is most proper to deceive the sight."[40]

Consequently, if nature is visible due to its colour, then colour should own its proper place in drawing, and if it did not own such a place, then probably it was because of the academic tradition that made drawing to be the skeleton and fundament of any work of art. In the doctrine of the Academicians, drawing was meant to remain "colourless," "disembodied." To want it saturated with colour would have been just as reasonable as to expect our human bones to adopt any other colour than off-white. And still the most innovative and creative artists who were responsible for the fame gained by French drawing of the 18th century – and provided us with the subject of our discussion – did not shy away from colour.

This is how we are inclined to see it in the aesthetic perspective. Art history, however, requires us to consider colour in 18th-century French drawing in theoretical and practical categories. Theory as expressed in contemporary drawing manuals treats it as was understood in the outset of the founding argument about *disegno* and *colorito* (previously discussed). Artistic practice expressed in the colour of 18th-century works on paper, even in the case of purely academic forms, does benefit from the victory of the adherents of colour (but only benefits and is not caused by it). Colour is one of the most characteristic, if not constitutive qualities of art of the period, both high and low. An explosion of colour – with colourful garments including menswear, in colourful interiors, with walls decorated not only with paintings but also watercolours, red chalk drawings and engravings that emulated these techniques. The viewer expects colour: also the qualified viewer, that is, the art connoisseur and collector. Contemporary experts collect not only drawings that comply with the academic definition, but also compositions *aux trois crayons* that satisfy the most sophisticated of tastes, or works in which the varied scale of monochromatic wash renders the gradation of colour.

The colour in 18th-century French drawings cannot be therefore understood as a direct result of the victory of the "Rubenists" in their *querelle* with "Poussinists," "Baroquists" with "Classicists," successors of Raphael, the Carraccis, Guido Reni (representing the paradigm of Florentine-Roman art) over the "grandchildren" of Titian, Tintoretto and Veronese (the

[38] See Colin B. Bailey, *Sketching and Writing in the Margins: Gabriel de Saint-Aubin as Illustrator of the Boston Mariette*, in *La vente Mariette. Le catalogue illustré par Gabriel de Saint-Aubin* (Milano, 2011), p. 28.

[39] Saint-Aubin also corrected faults in descriptions of the exhibited works or identification of depicted figures as based on his extensive studies, knowledge of the Scriptures, Ovid and Cesare Ripa's *Iconology* – see *Gabriel de Saint-Aubin*..., op. cit., pp. 87, 99.

[40] De Piles, op. cit., p. 284.

paradigm of Venetian art). The source of colour in art was not the academic discourse, though the triumph of Rubenists-colourists supported the popularity of colourful drawings, opened a field for them and sanctioned it on the theoretical plane, removing theoretical concepts that did not favour colour.

Otherwise, outside the rigour of the doctrinal scheme of *dessin–coloris* in contemporary theory, including academic theory, views functioned that affirmed the inalienable role of colour in art, that, in spite of the stereotype, were not disregarded, as displayed in the statements of the aforementioned Nicolas Buchotte, but also the earlier stars of academic classicism and classicist theoreticians. When Giovanni Battista Agucchi (*Trattato della pittura*, c. 1607–15) praised the "Carracci School" among other "painting schools," he did it not for the reason of their ingenuity, dignity of subjects or elevated pathos, but because of their combination of artisanal achievements of other schools: "delicacy of design [*finezza del disegno*] of the Roman School with the gracefulness of colour [*vaghezza del colorito*] of the Lombardian [that is, Venetian] School."[41] In the French academic, classical theory of the 17th century, the choice of colour and the method of achieving them were the ever-recurring theme. The president of the Parisian Academy, Charles Le Brun, the great propagator of rational rules of mental *disegno*, paid much attention to the way in which Poussin mixed colours in his painting *The Gathering of Manna*: "[...] he added the two primary colours [yellow and blue, found in the garments of the main figures] to all other draperies, so that yellow dominates [in the picture] and the dispersed light is intensively yellow [golden]"[42]. The archclassicist Charles-Alphonse Dufresnoy, author of an academic manual – the treatise *De arte graphica* (1647), wrote: "Colouring [is] the third part of Painting. Neither is there any man who is able to restore, or to renew it to that point of excellency to which it had been carry'd by Zeuxis: who by this part which is so charming, so magical, and which so admirably deceives the sight, made himself equal to the great Apelles, that Prince of Painters; and deserv'd that height of reputation which he still possesses in the World. And as this part which we may call the Soul of Painting and its utmost perfection, is a deceiving Beauty, but withal soothing and pleasing [...] But so little have this [...] dishonour'd Painting, that on the contrary, they have only serv'd to set forth her Praise [...]."[43] Underestimated in the literature of the subject, this theme of the reevaluation of colour in the academic discourse provided – paradoxically – the ground for the great praise of colourism and free painterly gesture by Roger de Piles, the builder of the ultimate triumph of the "Rubenists" over the "Poussinists" in their late-17th-century *querelle*.

In conclusion, the doctrine of the Academy and the famous argument were not direct generators or major factors of the prosperity of colour in French drawing of the 18th century. Rather, they provided a fertile ground enhancing this phenomenon and giving it a secondary validation, particularly found in the non-orthodox reflection upon the significance of colour in

[41] On the writings of Giovanni Battista Agucchi see Denis Mahon, *Studies in Seicento Art and* Theory (London, 1946), appendix 1, pp. 241–245, 247–249, 255–257 [English translation by Karolina Koriat, after: Giovanni Battista Agucchi, *Traktat o malarstwie* in *Teoretycy, historiografowie i artyści o sztuce*, op. cit., p. 80].

[42] See Henry Jouin, *Conférences de l'Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture* (Paris, 1883), p. 61 [translated from Polish by Karolina Koriat, after: Charles Le Brun, *Szósty wykład, wygłoszony w Królewskiej Akademii Malarstwa i Rzeźby w sobotę, dnia 5 listopada 1667* in *Teoretycy, historiografowie i artyści o sztuce*, op. cit., p. 542 (original translation corrected by Antoni Ziemba)].

[43] Charles-Alphonse Dufresnoy, *De Arte Graphica. The Art of Painting* [...] *translated into English* [...] *by Mr. Dryden* (London, 1695), pp. 35–36.

art. The decisive factors were the workshop practice that – in spite of the schemes of academic teaching of drawing – included colour in the execution and aesthetics of drawings, and the development of art collecting, including collecting of drawings (Crozat, Mariette, de Julienne, the oeuvre of Saint-Aubin), whose outstanding representatives expected the sensuality of colours within rational *disegno*, searching for sensual pleasure, the distinguishing quality of the culture of Rococo.[44]

Translated by Karolina Koriat

[44] On the category of pleasure in relation to the "colour imagination" in the culture of French Rococo and its later interpretations, see Agnieszka Rosales Rodríguez, *„Francuski wiek" i obrazy rokoka w świetle nowoczesnej krytyki i sztuki. Wizje, rewizje, interpretacje* (Warsaw, 2016), in particular, chapters 3 and 5.