

The painting between France and Italy from 1700 to 1750

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The Roman Foyer

The foundation of the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture in 1648 was followed by the creation of its annex in Rome, designed to accommodate young artists who had won the Prix de Rome scholarship. Italy offered the antique and contemporary artistic references they were to study via reproduction and drawing. The objective was also to allow French art to outrank Italian art so that Paris would be the new Rome. This policy of voluntarism was to bear fruit and, in the first half of the eighteenth century, the French Academy was to become a major hub of Roman artistic life. The Academy's director might also be in charge of the venerable Saint Luc Academy, as in the case of Jean-François de Troy (1679-1752 ; Room 18), and French artists such as Pierre Subleyras (1699-1749) occupied an eminent place. Yet painters of other countries were also present in Rome : Germans such as Anton Rafael Mengs (1728-1779) (Room 21) and Flemish artists including Jan Frans van Bloemen, known as Orizzonte (1662-1742) (Room 8). There were mutual exchanges between Italians and foreigners, as Roman art always offered examples for emulation : the Baroque art of the followers of Carlo Maratta (1625-1713) was dominant at the beginning of the century, to be challenged by a return to classical art with Marco Benefial (1684-1754).

Room Subleyras

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European Art
from the Fourteenth
to Eighteenth Century

French History Painters

Carle van Loo (1705-1765) is the most famous example of a dynasty of painters of Dutch descent. He worked in Rome from 1714 to 1719 alongside Benedetto Luti (1666-1724). Upon his return to Paris, Carle painted the sketch for the *Good Samaritan** in a creamy style with iridescent effects, similar to that of Luti ; the influence of his brother Jean-Baptiste (1684-1745), his first master, comes through in the restlessness of the forms. In Italy from 1727

to 1734, he decorated the Stupinigi Palace and the Royal Palace in Turin for the king of Sardinia. *The preparatory sketch** in the Musée Fabre for the tapestry cartoon shown at the Paris Salon in 1745 (Nice, Musée des Beaux-Arts), *Theseus Conqueror of the Bull of Marathon taking it to the Temple for Sacrifice**, reveals a search for balance in the composition, compared with the painting of the same subject executed twelve years earlier and now to be found in Besançon (fig.1).



fig.1- Carle van Loo
*Theseus Conqueror of the Bull
of Marathon*
Besançon, Musée des Beaux-Arts
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Subleyras, a painter from Saint-Gilles-du-Gard, spent most of his career in Rome, as he was to stay there from his arrival at the French Academy in 1729 until his death. Shortly before he died, he was considered to be the greatest Roman painter. As a non-Italian painter, he enjoyed the rare privilege of receiving a commission from the Roman Curia for two portraits of saints being canonized, including that of the Venerable Battista Vernazza (1739)*. Like Pompeo Batoni (1708-1787), he contributed to the evolution of painting in Rome in reaction to the action-packed art of Maratta, towards more dignified and natural forms inspired by the seventeenth-century Bolognese, in a sense as a forerunner of Neo-Classicism. The colourful atmosphere of *Two Saints Appearing to Penitents** reveals the supernatural aspect of the miraculous appearance, while the composition and attitude of the figures are characterized by simplicity and nobleness.

Landscape Painters in Rome

The young Italian rival of Flemish artist Jan Frans van Bloemen, Andrea Locatelli (1695-1741) continued his style of luminous and hedonistic *peinture claire*, retaining his amiability

* An asterisk indicates that the work mentioned is displayed in the room

despite his reference to the wooded landscapes peopled with bandits of Salvator Rosa (1615-1673) : *Landscape with Bandits* (c.1720-25)*.

Giovanni Paolo Panini (1691-1765) conserves this light-filled atmosphere in his architectural caprices, an arbitrary and picturesque gathering together of the most famous elements of antiquity (*Roman Ruins**, 1733). He produced several variations on the same monuments (fig.2). Closely linked to the French circles of the Academy, of which he was a member, he was to have a decisive influence on Hubert Robert (1733-1808) (Room 20), his friend and colleague.



fig.2- Giovanni Paolo Panini
Roman Ruins
Campione d'Italia, private collection
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Originally from Provence, Joseph Vernet (1714-1789) worked in Rome from 1734 until 1753 : his seascapes were considerably popular with Italians, as well as with the English and French. *His Seascape, Calm Weather*, painted in Rome in 1745 belonged to the French ambassador to the Holy See, the duke of Saint-Aignan : his awareness of the seascapes of Adrien Manglard (1695-1760), whom he met in Rome, and Rosa's rocky coastal views was nurtured by his discovery of the Neapolitan littoral and his experience of the *peinture claire* of Panini and Locatelli.

Painters in Venice

Venice, always a magnet for foreign artists, enjoyed an unflagging influence founded on the sixteenth-century masterpieces, as well as on contemporary works including those by Sebastiano Ricci (1659-1734), Gian Antonio Pellegrini (1675-1741) and Giambattista Tiepolo (1696-1770), all followers of *peinture claire*. The city was also the backdrop to a luministic style with brown tonalities, inspired by the seventeenth-century Venetian tenebrists and the Bolognese painter Giuseppe Maria Crespi (1665-1747), which was to endure in the highly original creations of Giambattista Piazzetta (1683-1754) and Federico Bencovich (1677-1753).

Bencovich worked in Venice, Vienna and Würzburg – the tension, and strange and sensuous effects of lighting in his work were quite in keeping with the baroque piety of these regions of central Europe (*Saint Francis Borgia, Third General of the Jesuits**). Up until 1734, Piazzetta worked in *chiaroscuro* with dramatic, almost unnerving accents. From 1720 onwards, he painted several monumental, solitary figures of young men, suffused with life such as the *Singer**, that were reminiscent of the minstrels of the Utrecht Caravaggesque painters of the first half of the seventeenth century.

City scenes – the *vedute* – made up one of the most lucrative of Venice's outputs, which were snapped up by tourists, particularly the English. Antonio Canaletto (1697-1768) was their glorious pioneer, followed by Mariele Mareschi (1710-1744) and, notably, Francesco Guardi (1712-1792). While Canaletto retains a keen sense of graphic precision quite devoid of dryness, Guardi blurs colours and forms in the vibrant, diffuse light of the lagoon. His vantage points on the famous sites of Venice are many and varied : *View of the Grand Canal and the Rialto Bridge at Venice** (1770-80).