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Author(s): Jack Perry Brown
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The Return of the Salon: Jean Léon Gérôme in the Art Institute

JACK PERRY BROWN, Director, Ryerson and Burnham Libraries

When we think of art in France in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, we think first of the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists, of Monet and Renoir, of Toulouse-Lautrec and Cézanne. The name Jean Léon Gérôme does not have for us the impact of these figures; yet, at the time, Gérôme (1824–1904) was one of France’s—and the world’s—most famous and honored artists.

With the possible exception of the painter Jean Louis Ernest Meissonier, it is hard to imagine a more successful artist in France during this time than Gérôme (fig. 2). The list of his awards and honors shows not only duration, but continued industry and recognition: third-class medal at the Salon of 1847; second-class medals at the Salon of 1848 and the Exposition Universelle of 1855; Chevalier de la Légion d’Honneur in 1855; professor of painting at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts from 1864 to his death; member of the Institut de France, 1865; medal of honor at the Exposition Universelle of 1867; medal of honor at the Salon of 1874; member of the Conseil Supérieur des Beaux-Arts, 1876; jury member for the Exposition Universelle of 1878; Commandeur de la Légion d’Honneur, 1878; second-class medal for sculpture at the Salon of 1878; first-class medal for sculpture in 1881; bors concours (exempt from the standard competition for entry) at the Exposition Universelle of 1889. Gérôme’s career, while not without some negative responses and a loss of critical esteem during his later life, was extremely productive (over 550 paintings and 75 sculptures) and successful. Yet, despite his renown, Gérôme and his art dropped from sight soon after the erection in 1913 of a monument to him in his native Vesoul, the town he left in 1840 to conquer the art world of Paris.

Gérôme was in his prime at the time the Art Institute was established in 1879. His art had been purchased by American collectors for more than thirty years when his first work entered the museum in 1893. The five examples by Gérôme in the Art Institute, acquired over a ninety-five-year period, span his career and represent...
several aspects of his art. The group is comprised of three paintings, Portrait of a Lady (Rosine Faivre?) (1851), The Chariot Race (1876), and Love Conquers All (1889); and two sculptures, Anacreon with the Infants Bacchus and Cupid (1881), and Bonaparte Entering Cairo (1897). This diverse collection lacks only examples of his ethnographic paintings of the Middle East and his polychrome sculptures, and enables us to explore the very real talents of this reascendant artist.

The son of a provincial goldsmith, Gérôme was accepted into the Paris studio of the painter Paul Delaroche, where he studied until 1843. Delaroche, a student of Jean August Dominique Ingres, combined the meticulousness of the Neoclassicists with the dramatic subjects of the Romantics, and helped to shift the serious field of history painting toward genre, or scenes of everyday life. Gérôme followed his mentor to Rome in 1844 and returned to Paris the next year, entering briefly the studio of the Swiss artist Charles Gleyre. Gérôme competed unsuccessfully for the Prix de Rome, a multi-year stipend for study at the French Academy in Rome, but he scored a coup de foudre at the Salon of 1847 with The Cock Fight (Paris, Musée d'Orsay), a painting the influential critic Théophile Gautier singled out for notice. At the age of twenty-three, Gérôme was famous.

In the 1850s, Gérôme did portraits, some state commissions, and depictions of the world of the Islamic east (Egypt, Turkey, and the Balkans), a theme that occupied him for the rest of his life. He later shunned portraits, doing them only for friends and family members; he also avoided state commissions after the mid-1860s, saying that he preferred they go to artists who needed the work. Gérôme himself became a very popular painter with collectors—most of his canvases are domestic in scale—and many of his works or variants were commissioned directly or purchased out of his studio. When Paris replaced Rome as the artistic capital of Europe at mid-century, Gérôme, along with his artist compatriots in the city, did a large and regular business with American collectors and entrepreneurs.1

Gérôme's popularity was assisted by his marriage in 1863 to Marie Goupil, the daughter of Adolph Goupil, an entrepreneurial picture merchant, who was one of the first to grasp the value of reproductions in expanding the market for works of art. Although Goupil's taste tended to exclude the fringe or more modern movements in art, his international firm, with offices in London, Berlin, and New York (as early as 1846), had the clout to ad-

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vance his chosen artists. Goupil employed the latest technology for reproductions to showcase his artists, using engraving and, later, photography to imprint images on the public imagination. The publishing side of his business and his connections with the critics and mechanics of the Parisian art establishment could be and were used to enhance Gérôme's career.

Gérôme, along with Alexandre Cabanel and Isidore Pils, was appointed to one of the three professorships of painting at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, a position he held for forty years, when the teaching structure of the school was changed in 1864 to provide a morestructured curriculum for the students. The following year, he was elected to one of the fourteen positions allocated to painters in the Académie des Beaux-Arts, a division of the Institut de France. The École, the official and most distinguished French institution for the study of painting, sculpture, and architecture, served until World War I as the model for art instruction, attracting students from around the world. Admission to each atelier, or studio, was granted by the chef, and each was run with extreme independence. Gérôme's atelier drew large numbers of foreign students, particularly Americans. Gérôme's influence on technique and composition can perhaps be seen most clearly in the work of Philadelphia artist Thomas Eakins, who maintained a lifelong relationship with his teacher after spending the years 1866–70 in Paris. Several students described life in Gérôme's studio at the École in letters or memoirs, where they presented a sympathetic picture of the artist. He was an extremely popular teacher, respected if not loved, and was conscientious about his teaching responsibilities.

The sympathy recorded by his students provides an important counterpoint to the hostility caused by Gérôme's fierce opposition to the 1884 memorial exhibition of the paintings of Edouard Manet at the École and to Gustave Caillebotte's important bequest in 1894 of Impressionist works to the French nation. Caillebotte, whose masterpiece Paris, A Rainy Day (1877) hangs in the Art Institute, was a friend of many Impressionist painters and left his collection of their works to the Musée du Luxembourg, then the state museum of modern art.

Over his long career, Gérôme was preoccupied with a number of themes: classical myths and history, ethnographic reportage of the Middle East, the nude, exotic animals (particularly the lion, which had an iconic symbolism for Gérôme because of his given and patronymic names), and a category that might be described as literal idealism, standing on its head Gustave Courbet's dictum, "Show me an angel, and I will paint it." Like Ingres, Gérôme reworked the same themes time after time over several decades, returning to them forty or more years after his first essays of them as a student.

The earliest work by Gérôme in the Art Institute is Portrait of a Lady (Rosine Faivre?), signed and dated 1851 (fig. 3). Gérôme made little mention of his portraits in his records and avoided the genre in later life, but a number of accomplished examples survive from this decade of his early maturity as a painter. Gérôme, like his contemporary Edgar Degas, preferred to limit his portraits to those of family members and intimates. Several members of the Faivre family, from the artist's native Franche-Comté, were friends of the artist's parents and of Gérôme himself. Dr. Benjamin Constant Faivre, of whom Gérôme did a portrait (now lost), went to Paris to treat Gérôme when he was wounded in a duel in 1861. A chalk drawing (Neuilly, private collection) shows Gérôme's life-long friend Etienne Marie Faivre. Comparison of the Art Institute's portrait with a drawing of E. M. Faivre's wife, Rosine Thierry Faivre (fig. 4), and with an unfinished oil sketch of their daughter Marie Claudine Faivre (fig. 5) strongly suggests that the sitter depicted in the Art Institute's collection is Rosine Faivre.

Technically, the painting is brilliantly executed, albeit with a certain coldness. The direct frontal pose of the sitter clearly follows in the tradition of Ingres, although the monochrome background is darker than those in Ingres's paintings. A formal source for Gérôme's work may be the Portrait of Mme Alphonse Karr by Henri Lehmann (fig. 6), a student of Ingres, which he would have seen at the Salon of 1846. Gérôme's composition is simple in the extreme, the fur trim of the sitter's green coat forming a powerful X-shape on the surface of the canvas when seen from a distance. The white highlights of silk in the sleeve and lace on the bodice illuminate the sitter's ivory face. The finish is nearly lapidary in its smoothness; even the rich depiction of the fur reveals no brushstrokes. The materials—satin, velvet, fur, lace—are painted with every bit of the mastery of Ingres. Yet, it is perhaps in Gérôme's failure to differentiate between these inanimate surfaces and the flesh, which becomes hard and polished here, that the sitter's interior eludes us. For all his obsessiveness with surface, Ingres always managed to express something of the character of those he portrayed; Gérôme here did not.
The glossy, reflective surface of this portrait also calls to mind the new medium of photography, which in the 1850s was seen primarily in the silvered shining form of the daguerreotype. The popularity in this period of the photographic portrait, led by such men as Gérôme’s friend Nadar (Félix Tournachon) and witnessed by the fad for photographically illustrated cartes-de-visite and more formal studio works, threatened painted portraiture and led to its inexorable decline during the period of Gérôme’s working life.

Gérôme’s portrait can be contrasted to a nearly contemporary work by the great French Realist painter Gustave Courbet, also in the Art Institute, Mère Grégoire (fig. 7). As Robert Herbert has revealed previously in these pages, Courbet chose to depict a character from popular literature, a woman of less than respectable station and character, who challenged the repressive Bourbon monarchy.7 On the other hand, Gérôme’s subject is a solid member of the bourgeoisie: there is no hint here of the confusing and threatening events of the republican period following the overthrow of the July Monarchy in 1848 and of the subsequent rise to power of Louis Napoleon, nephew of Bonaparte. Gérôme, whose popularity and heights of inventiveness as a painter largely


FIGURE 6. Henri Lehmann (French, 1814–1882). *Portrait of Mme Alphonse Karr*, 1845. Oil on canvas; 60 × 50.5 cm. Minneapolis Institute of Arts. This painting, which Gérôme would have seen at the Salon of 1846, was a possible formal source for his portrait of Mme Rosine Faivre (fig. 2).
coincided with the years of the Second Empire (1852–70), in this portrait appears to have been content with exteriors, happy to render with supreme facility the materials that successful industrialization in the period 1830–70 brought to the French middle class. His meticulous style, with its emphasis on absolute clarity of presentation, suited his audience well. As one contemporary writer stated in 1866:

... today, [that] which is given to study, to travel, which is accurate, mechanical, unimpassioned, which cares nothing for military glory, which dreads revolution, which wishes to know, which exalts knowledge and seeks for sensation, but is not poetic or heroic, is represented by Gérôme. Gérôme ... the popular painter of France, is closest to the moral spirit and best shows the intellectual traits of his time. ... He investigates like an antiquarian; he is severe like the classicists; he is daring like the romanticists; he is more realistic than any other painter of his time, and he carries the elaboration of surfaces and the science of design further than any of his contemporaries. Like the modern mind, he travels, he explores, he investigates, and he tries to exhaust his theme. He labors to leave nothing unsaid, to cover the whole of his subject.
In an age when physiognomy had yet to be replaced by an understanding of interior psychology, Gérôme’s portrait occupied a strong place, its interior impressionality balanced by its arresting visual presence and superb finish.

In the 1850s and 1860s, Gérôme’s career flourished. He made extensive tours of the Danube valley, Turkey, and the Middle East, recording in his sketchbooks Eastern themes and motifs that would occupy him for half a century. His paintings of life in the Moslem world are marvels of reportage, much more detailed than works on the theme by Eugène Delacroix or by Gérôme’s teacher Delaroche, both of whom had visited Algeria a generation earlier. The artist’s exotic interests can be seen in the motifs and objects he collected on his lengthy and arduous expeditions to the edges of western civilization. Gérôme was not alone in France in his fascination with the world of Islam. The writer-sailor Pierre Loti, whose travels provided the raw material for steamy popular novels (e.g., Aziyadé, 1879) set in the Middle East and other distant locales, is a prime example of the French vogue for Turkophilia. Loti lived off and on in Istanbul and decorated his house in Rochefort à la turque. Much of this widespread interest was buttressed by the expansion of French capitalism; the French made heavy investments in the Islamic countries of the eastern Mediterranean, such as the financing of the Suez Canal. In fact, Gérôme was included in the official delegation that represented France at the opening of the canal in 1869.

Gérôme also applied his faultless technique to non-narrative subjects, depictions of racial and ethnic types, or genre scenes he had observed such as the activity of rug merchants and scenes of prayer. There is a strong architectural element in these pictures, numerically the largest component of Gérôme’s oeuvre. In these works, the artist’s strong sense of composition is coupled with and adds to the purely informational value of the exotic scene depicted, raising to the realm of considered art what in lesser hands would have been purely ethnographic illustration.

The oriental scenes include a strong element of eroticism. Ingres produced a number of pictures of imagined scenes in the harem or Turkish baths; Gérôme depicted the oriental nude explicitly. Works such as Moorish Bath (fig. 8) take the viewer into the forbidden space of the bath or harem with an almost cameralike objectivity, providing an architecturally correct and minutely observed setting and also approaching voyeurism in the intimacy of the scenes depicted.

A second of Gérôme’s recurring themes is classical antiquity. His treatment of classical scenes embodies a mixture of extremely concrete detail, supported by painstaking technique and arduous archeological study and reconstruction, with prosaic subject matter and an almost banal literalness. Gérôme’s vision of history painting became fused with genre: views of daily life in ancient times relieved of history. Occasionally, though, when he dealt with important events from ancient his-

**Figure 8.** Jean Léon Gérôme, Moorish Bath, c. 1880–85. Oil on canvas; 73.6 × 56.9 cm. The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Mildred Anna Williams Collection (1961.29). An intense interest in the far-removed world of the Near East characterized many artists and their audience of mid-nineteenth century France. Not only did oriental themes have the allure of the exotic, they allowed the portrayal of erotic subjects in a non-European, and therefore acceptable, setting.
tory such as the *Death of Caesar* (Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery), Gérôme had the ability to produce an image of memory and power. (Some of his earlier genre paintings from the 1850s and 1860s also have an enduring visual presence beyond their huge contemporary popularity, such as *Duel after the Masked Ball* [Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery].) But when he painted events of more literary or mythic origin, his depiction frequently smacked of voyeurism also, as in the Middle Eastern scenes. For example, in the famous *Phryné before the Areopagus* (Hamburg, Kunsthalle), the viewer is placed in the semi-circle of the elders of the Athenian court, ogling with them the courtesan whose beauty acquitted her of charges of impropriety. No less a critic than Degas, discussing the painting as late as 1891, called it “pornographic,” saying that Gérôme failed to understand the essence of the story.11

In *The Chariot Race* (figs. 1 and 9), the Art Institute possesses one of the prime examples of Gérôme’s fascination with the classical past, which had begun when he accompanied Delaroche to Italy as a young student. Gérôme’s youthful love affair with antiquity continued throughout his career, and his work is permeated from beginning to end with themes from classical times, either genuine events or genre scenes in an ancient settings.

Within this group, the Art Institute picture is exemplary in several ways. First, it was commissioned directly from the artist and was sold through Goupil, the artist’s father-in-law, for the extraordinary sum of 125,000 francs.12 The purchaser was A. T. Stewart, founder of the first department store in New York and an avid collector of contemporary European art.13 Stewart, like the better-known Baltimore railroad entrepreneur W. T. Walters or W. K. Vanderbilt, found Gérôme’s paintings and those of his compatriots in the official Salons to be extremely understandable and considered them to be on a higher plane than American works such as those of the Hudson River School; appreciation of contemporary European art was seen in the 1870s and 1880s as symptomatic of the coming of age of American culture. This taste for European, particularly French, official painting persisted to the end of the century. It was the unusual American, such as Bertha Honoré Palmer in Chicago or the Havemeyers in New York, who departed in collecting tastes from the perceived values of the Salon painters.14

Because Stewart’s collection was housed in his mansion on Fifth Avenue in New York, it was reasonably accessible and known to the public. His acquisition of the Gérôme was a major piece of news and was so reported by the young Henry James, who was working at the time in Paris, in his cultural column for the *New
York Tribune. Although James found the picture less successful than Meissonnier's Friedland 1807 (New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art), which Stewart had also purchased (for the immense sum of $80,000), he wrote:

It is a capital example of the artist's archaeological skill. . . . It represents what I take to be the Circus Maximus on a day of high festivity; behind rise the towers, palaces, and terraces of the Palatine, and into the distance stretches away the vast ellipse of the arena . . . . It is a fierce mêlée of beasts, men, and wheels; the struggle and confusion are powerfully expressed, and the horses and chariots painted with that hard, consummate finish characteristic of the author.13

Both Gérôme and his patrons seem to have liked explanations of the intellectual content and effort involved in his compositions. In this regard, it is useful to cite a lengthy passage in a letter written by the artist describing The Chariot Race:
The scene is the “Circus Maximus,” the grandest monument of Rome, which is situated at the foot of the Palatine Hill, in such fashion as that all the structures erected on the hill were contiguous to the Circus, thus giving a picturesque and imposing aspect to the whole.

The rectangular edifice at nearly the center of the picture is the “Septizonium,” a seven-story building, as its name indicates; the object of which has never been known. There was another story in the time of Pope Sextus V, and during that era there was an engraving made of it, which we now possess, and which is of very great service in the restoration of the building.

In the upper part are the surrounding walls of the Palace of the Caesars; a little further to the left is the residence of Augustus and the theater of that Emperor. From there, by a subterranean passage, he was able to reach his box, where the statue of Rome was located.

This restoration has been made in accordance with a plan of Ancient Rome, which was engraved on the stone pavement of a temple, and which has been conveyed to the Capitol; accordingly, there is an absolute fidelity both as to the location of the different monuments, and also, which is equally important, in regard to the dimensions, for it must be understood that the Circus would hold 150,000 spectators.

The Romans were passionately fond of the races; and the Circus had become just as much of a necessity to the multitude as food. One might well inscribe on this picture, as its epigraph, the verses of Horace:

“There are who joy them in the Olympic strife
And love the dust they gather in the course;
The goal by hot wheels shunn’ed, the famous prize,
Exalt them to the gods that rule mankind.”

The painting seems uncannily cinematic in conception: It has vast scale; its head-on view of the horses about to make a difficult turn involves the viewer dramatically; and it convincingly depicts the sweep of the famed classical site. The low viewpoint and long perspective into the circus give an immediacy to the crisply painted, surging teams and their drivers. To modern eyes, the most jarring note about the horses is the misrepresentation of their gait, with both front legs shown extended in what we know to be a physiological impossibility. It was only in 1878 that the American photographer Eadweard Muybridge successfully took sequential photographs of a galloping horse (fig. 10). This scientific demonstration was announced in Paris in La Nature in December 1878 and

FIGURE 10. Eadweard Muybridge (American, 1830–1904). Illustration from Animal Locomotion (Philadelphia, 1887), pl. 634. It was only in 1878 that Muybridge successfully took photographs of a galloping horse. His work revealed the physiological impossibility of the gait of the horses as seen in The Chariot Race (figs. 1 and 9).
in 1881, when Muybridge himself showed slides to a group of artists at Meissonier’s house, with Bonnat, Degas, Gérôme, and Moreau among the guests.\(^7\)

One can, however, question the archeological exactness of this painting. While Gérôme’s *Hail Caesar! We Who Are About to Die Salute You* (Yale University Art Gallery), for example, is set in the still-standing Colosseum, the Circus Maximus was all but non-existent. Thus, Gérôme would have had to base his conception on literary sources (he read Latin and Greek), on ancient visual representations such as the images on cameos, and on the fairly recent archeological work he might have seen in progress during his sojourn in Rome in the 1840s. Throughout the nineteenth century, the architectural antiquities of Italy and Greece were being published, as Germany, France, Great Britain, and the United States established archeological academies in Rome and Athens to document the classical past. These publications are both more scientific in their technique and more speculative in their reconstructive imagery than similar volumes by their eighteenth-century predecessors, such as James Stuart and Nicholas Revett. To acquire, as Gérôme did, copies of ancient armor, cast from extant originals, was one thing. To reconstruct from the most fragmentary foundations the largest structure in ancient Rome was quite another.

A plate from Luigi Canina’s *L’architettura antica* (Rome, 1840) (fig. 11) has been mentioned as a direct source for Gérôme’s overall composition,\(^8\) as has Charles Dezobry’s *Rome au siècle d’Auguste* (Paris, 1846), a book that Gérôme cited in arguing for the authenticity of his 1872 painting *Pollice Verso* (Phoenix Art Museum).\(^9\) All of Gérôme’s “reconstructed” buildings in *The Chariot Race* are more or less defensible, save for the tall edifice in the center background, which was perhaps depicted erroneously with seven stories because its name, the Septizonium, was misinterpreted.\(^20\) James also recorded that the architect and theoretician Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc helped Gérôme with the architectural detail of this painting.\(^21\)

A small oil sketch for this work exists (fig. 12), as do two drawings for the horses in the chariot teams (see fig. 13).\(^22\) Gérôme reused and recycled details and themes throughout his career, but such direct preparatory materials are rare for him. The chief alteration between the sketch and finished work is the rotation of the horses from a position parallel with the picture plane to a more frontal orientation in the finished panel. Consequently, the horses seem to erupt from the depths of pictorial space, to charge directly at the observer. This can be compared with Manet’s 1864 *Races at Longchamps* (fig. 14), which offers a more focused confrontation with the on-coming horses. In Manet’s composition, the viewer is placed in the path of the race, while Gérôme creates a similar effect through his panoramic setting. We know that Gérôme had some influence on Manet,\(^23\) and it is evident that he was aware of Manet’s compositional innovation in *Races at Longchamps* as Gérôme refined *The Chariot Race* in the 1860s.

The most problematic painting by Gérôme in the Art Institute is the work now known as *Love the Conqueror* (fig. 15), first exhibited at the Salon of 1889 under the title *Whoever You Be, Here Is Your Master: He Is, He Was, or He Should Be*.\(^24\) This quotation, unattributed in the Salon catalogue, is from Voltaire,\(^25\) and is variously described as having been an inscription for a statue of


FIGURE 14. Edouard Manet (French, 1832–1883). *The Races at Longchamps*, 1864. Oil on canvas; 43.9 × 84.5 cm. The Art Institute of Chicago, Potter Palmer Collection (1922.424). Manet's innovative composition involves the viewer by placing him directly in the path of the race. Aware of Manet's achievement in this painting, Gérôme also placed the viewer in the path of the chariot race, in a wide screen setting.
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Cupid located in the gardens or bedroom at the chateau at Cirey, the home Voltaire shared with Madame du Châtelet from 1739 to her death in 1749, or in the gardens at Sceaux, a seventeenth-century chateau belonging to Voltaire's patroness the Duchesse du Maine. The quotation seems to have been widely known in Gérôme's time and reflects a common enough sentiment; Balzac referred to it in the opening of Père Goriot. Although Gérôme read the classical languages, it is most likely that his reference was to Voltaire rather than to the ultimate source, the so-called Greek Anthology.

What does this painting mean? There appears to have been a paucity of comment on it when it was executed. For example, it was given a double-page reproduction in the lavish Figaro-Salon by Albert Wolff, but it is not mentioned in the text. Wolff did mention the painting in the daily Figaro (Apr. 30, 1889):

Here we are in front of the painting by Gérôme, Love the Conqueror. In this work, we are immersed in complete fantasy, because in reality, lions and tigers would throw themselves on this succulent child, and not just give him a kiss. However, I am not among those who wish to limit all works of art to the same formula; I fully understand that purely imaginary scenes have their place, providing that the artist creates them, as does Gérôme, with the utmost knowledge, care, and talent.

All of this does not say very much. What we do know is that Gérôme in the 1880s and 1890s produced a number of paintings that combined obsessive realism with figures of the imagination, creating fleshy personifications of ideals and attributes of mind, such as The Poet's Dream (1885, now lost). Love the Conqueror, done nearly forty years after the portrait of Mme Faivre, displays the same superb technique of the earlier picture; the depiction of the animal's fur is as brilliant as that on the sleeves of Mme Faivre's coat. The animals are modeled with geometric precision, a result of Gérôme's careful studies sketched in Paris's great public zoo in the Jardin des Plantes.

A photograph taken in Gérôme's studio shows the Art Institute painting on the easel (fig. 16), and a number of studies for individual animals in the composition, presumably made in the Jardin des Plantes. The photograph also reveals Gérôme's method of working, as confirmed by several of his students: He finished his compositions area by area, figure by figure, filling in the
background at the end. In the center of the finished picture, a pentimento is visible; apparently there was, at one time, another beast between the groups at the left and at the right.

The Jardin des Plantes was heavily used by artists of many different stripes to study the wild animals. The animalier sculptors took much of their material from the inhabitants of the zoo; no less a painter than Eugène Delacroix did animal studies there. In his late Lion Hunt (fig. 17), the romantic Delacroix provided a view of human-animal interaction that is very different from Gérôme’s. Despite a certain distance from the viewer in Delacroix’s composition, the force and dynamism of his scene of imagined struggle contrast strongly with Gérôme’s rather airless assembly of sketches from life.

It is clear that Gérôme had an understanding of the great felines in his painting. They are each portrayed with great sympathy, but relationships between them are lacking. Although the figure of Cupid is the apparent focus of the animals’ attention, the confrontation of the embodied and the ideal is not convincing. Love, personified by a flesh-and-blood child with the classical attributes of the wings and bow, is literally juxtaposed, in a harsh wooden cage in which we are also present, with a congeries of individually observed beasts. Gérôme has a direct and unique vision, here illustrating a common proverb while drawing on his repertory of sketches from nature, but the painting fails to totally engage the viewer because Gérôme could not translate a psychological truth into a literal reality.

Thus far, we have considered Gérôme as a painter, which he was exclusively until some time in the mid-1870s. Although there is some evidence that he had
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FIGURE 17. Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863). The Lion Hunt, 1861. Oil on canvas; 76.5 × 98.5 cm. The Art Institute of Chicago, Potter Palmer Collection (1922.404). A comparison with Love the Conqueror (fig. 15) reveals the tremendous contrast between Delacroix's depiction of animals and that of Gérôme, even though both did studies in the Jardin des Plantes. The ferocity and power of Delacroix's lions, reinforced by his bravura brushwork, exemplify this Romantic artist's approach to subjects and style. Gérôme's tame domestic cats, however, are captured in tight strokes that reveal the Salon artist's meticulous approach to painting.
modeled small figures as studies for paintings as early as the 1850s, it was only in the 1870s that he began to sculpt as a major mode of expression. Gérôme made his public debut as a sculptor with an ambitious piece in the 1878 Exposition Universelle, *The Gladiators* (Paris, Musée d'Orsay; later altered), based on figures in his painting *Pollice Verso* of 1872; he followed this with *Anacreon, Eros, and Bacchus* of 1878–81. The theme of Anacreon runs throughout Gérôme's work, from his early painting of *Anacreon, Bacchus, and Cupid* of 1848 (fig. 18), and includes a sculpture of the same subject now in the Art Institute (fig. 19). Our knowledge of the life and work of Anacreon, a lyric poet born c. 570 B.C. in Teos, a Greek city in Asia Minor, is very vague. He died at an advanced age, and his poetry is known only in scattered fragments. Gérôme's most important source on Anacreon would have been a collection in the style of the poet dating to perhaps the second century A.D., called the *Odes of Anacreon* or the *Anacreontea*. These slight poems are concerned, as apparently was the poet himself, with wine, women, and song, and with the lamenting of the advance of age. Another source would have been the *Greek Anthology*. Both these titles were widely popular in France from the seventeenth through the end of the nineteenth centuries, and were constantly in print in many editions. With his linguistic skills, Gérôme could have garnered his knowledge of the poet from works in the original language, or from French translations and commentaries.

The original of the Art Institute's piece was executed by Gérôme in plaster and exhibited at the Salon of 1881. The first work in permanent material created from the exhibited plaster seems to be a life-sized marble in Copenhagen; casts and reductions of several sizes in bronze are known, the Art Institute's example being the second largest. The piece recalls clearly the tipsy figure...
of the poet in Gérôme's painting of three decades before. A drawing of the aged bard's face (fig. 20) done for that picture bears close resemblance to the sculpted version. A more direct source for both the earlier painting and the later sculpture and other paintings are the illustrations by Anne Louis Girodet-Trioson of a book of poems, Anacreon, Recueil des compositions destinées par Girodet et gravées par M. Chatillon (Paris, 1825). There are several possible classical sources: we know that Gérôme took great interest in the archeological discoveries of his day, such as the terracotta figures from Tānagra, first excavated in the 1870s, and the Praxitelean Hermes and the Infant Dionyus, excavated at Olympia in 1877 and immediately made known through photographs. Perhaps the most direct source, however, is a bronze by James Pradier of 1844–45 (fig. 21), which Gérôme would have seen at the Salon of 1846. But, unlike the rather fussy character of Pradier's piece, that of Gérôme's sculpture is restrained and clearly classicizing, even more so than in his 1849 painting. Anacreon's drapery is clearly and intentionally classical, reflecting the idealized wet-drapery style of the Athenian sculptor Phidias.

The marble in Copenhagen was worked up by professional technicians from Gérôme's plaster, and the bronze edition was made by professional founders, in this case the Parisian firm of Barbédiennne, which presented this cast to the Art Institute in 1893. There is no evidence that this piece was exhibited at the World's Columbian Exposition, although two canvases by Gérôme, lent by American collectors, and a tinted, life-sized marble of Pygmalion and Galatea, then in the Yerkes Collection in Chicago and now at San Simeon, were on view. More likely, Barbédiennne used the occasion of the Exposition and the opening of the museum's new building to ingratiate his firm with the Art Institute in hopes of future sales.

The second sculpture by Gérôme in Chicago, Napoleon Entering Cairo (fig. 22), dates to 1897. By this time, Gérôme had switched to the firm of Siot-Decauville for casting his works, and this is a richly detailed, gilded example of their fine workmanship. The piece, the first in a series by Gérôme of equestrian portrayals of famous military leaders—Tāmārlane (Salon of 1898), Frederick the Great (Salon of 1899), Caesar Crossing the Rubicon (c. 1900), and Washington (Salon of 1901)—was a success at the Salon of 1897, where it was purchased by the French state for 10,000 francs. Gérôme declined an offer of twice that from a private collector.

but retained rights to make reproductions, a most unusual arrangement for a purchase by the state.

Napoleon's hold over the French imagination was powerful and of long duration, beginning with his early victories in Italy, and lasting through the Consulate, the Empire, the Restoration, the July Monarchy, and the Second Empire. Gérôme, a luminary of the Second Empire, must have known of the magnificent ceremonies marking the return of the emperor's body from St. Helena and its interment in Les Invalides, Paris, in December 1840, since he had arrived in the capital from Vesoul only two months previously. During the regime of Napoleon's nephew Louis Napoleon, first as prince-president and then as emperor, the founder of the first empire was obviously in vogue. Gérôme, who kept a cast of Napoleon's death mask in his studio (see fig. 2), depicted the emperor in numerous paintings, usually with Egyptian settings, as well as in several sculptures. Even under the Third Republic, tension between monarchists, Bonapartists, and republicans continued to the end of the century. As time passed, works of art featuring Napoleon had political meaning and a broader appeal as symbols of the military glory of the nation, particularly after the Franco-Prussian War.

In *Napoleon Entering Cairo*, Gérôme showed the young general making his triumphal entry into the Egyptian capital on July 24, 1798, after his victory in the Battle of the Pyramids. The small bronze is a tour de force of detail: the rider's costume, the orientalizing dec-
oration of the horse furniture, and the anatomy of the splendid Arabian animal itself are superbly depicted. The saddle and other equestrian equipment are exacting copies of the Mameluk furnishings French officers affected during the Egyptian campaign. Gérôme, an avid horseman, probably had first-hand knowledge of these kinds of objects from his trips to Egypt or from the militaria collection of his colleague, the painter Edouard Détaille, which is today in the Musée de l’Armée in Paris.39 Resonances between the young conqueror of the Mameluk dynasty riding a leaf-strewn path into the ancient city and Gérôme’s painting Entry of Christ into Jerusalem (Vesoul, Musée), shown in the same Salon,40 would have been apparent to contemporary viewers. Bonaparte Entering Cairo was very well received critically,41 and is perhaps the most successful of Gérôme’s equestrian series; it also did well commercially, selling at Tiffany’s in limited editions.

In the revival of interest and re-examination of French Salon artists that has taken place in the past two decades, Gérôme has assumed a leading place. His art is precise and exact—in a word, intellectual. But it lacks emotional engagement and the concomitant excitement of color. Gérôme’s is an exacting art, but its mastery is that of a closed order, an end, not a beginning. As one early critic put it:

Gérôme is a severe and comprehensive student of history and life, and he introduces to us the varied phases of this tragic and ironical drama made up of laughter and tears, of superstition and scepticism, and he makes us wonder, and detest and reverence the vanishing generations of men, their art, their science, their actions; he is fully equipped; he draws from the past and the present; but Corot, simple Corot, a mere landscape painter, by the freshness and force of his talent and genuine love of nature, with his little work can in a moment make us forget the cruel Roman, the sparkling pleasure-loving Greek, the sullen Turk and the austere Arab of Gérôme’s masterly works.42

This is a fair and perceptive assessment of Gérôme’s historical paintings. At this distance, however, we can appreciate his strengths in painting and sculpture in their own terms, not simply as inferior to works by Corot or Manet or Rodin. In his painting, and particularly in his sculpture, Gérôme’s industry became art.

Today, a century after he was hors concours at the Exposition Universelle of 1889, we hang Gérôme in the galleries again. After decades of obscurity, his paintings are now in the company of the contemporary works of the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists. In the past two decades, there has been reappraisal of the academic art of what has been called “the other nineteenth century,”43 stemming from the realization that there were multiple strands of art activity operating simultaneously with similar or radically different values, goals, and audiences. This re-evaluation has to do with the tides of time and taste, the art market, and the engine of academic art history. To proclaim multiplicity, as does the recall of these long-ignored works from museum storerooms to gallery walls, is not to deny the values of any particular school, fashion, or style, but to recognize that the bourgeois society created by nationalism and industrialism in the course of the century after 1789 was in fact more elastic and capacious culturally than we had formerly realized. Just as the social historians of art Jules and Edmond Goncourt in the 1850s and 1860s could rediscover and rehabilitate the Rococo of Louis XV, a century after the ferment of the dynamic Third Republic, we are able to see more clearly the various facets of the art of that time in Paris, and to appreciate the values of each.

**Figure 22.** Jean Léon Gérôme. Napoleon Entering Cairo, 1897. Gilt bronze; h. 41 cm. The Art Institute of Chicago (1988.36.8). The subject of this sculpture underscores Napoleon’s powerful hold over the French imagination.
5. Charles Moreau-Vauthier, Gérôme peintre et sculpteur (Paris, 1906), pp. 160–62. The cause of this duel is obscure: Ackerman (note 4), p. 59, citing contemporary sources, suggested that rivalry over a woman may have been involved. It occurred shortly before Gérôme was to leave on a painting trip to Egypt; he went with his arm in a sling.


1866), p. 582.

9. One of Gérôme’s artistic tours of Egypt and the east is de-
scribed by a companion, Paul Lenoir, in Le Fayoum, le Sinai, et
Petra (Paris, 1872).

10. For this aspect of Gérôme’s art, which is not represented in
the Art Institute, see Richard Ettinghausen, “Jean-Léon Gérôme
as a Painter of Near Eastern Life” in Jean-Léon Gérôme (note 4),
pp. 16–26. Also see Linda Nochlin, “The Imaginary Orient,” Art

universelle (1933), p. 172; the painting is illustrated in Ackerman

12. The painting was subsequently sold at auction (American Art
Association, New York, Mar. 24, 1887), after which it was owned
by E. H. Van Ingen, New York, followed by the George F. Hard-
ing Museum, Chicago. The painting was exhibited in New York at
the “Centennial Exhibition,” 1876, and in 1972 in Dayton, Ohio:
see Jean-Léon Gérôme (note 4), p. 73, no. 27. It is discussed in
Fanny Hering, Gérôme (New York, 1892), p. 236; Henry James,
Parian Sketches (New York, 1957), pp. 98–99; The Emma Holt
Bequest; Sudley, Illustrated Catalogue and History of the House
(Liverpool, 1971), p. 31; William R. Johnson, “Gérôme an archae-
ologist?,” Bulletin of the Watts Art Gallery 25, 7 (Apr. 1973),
n.p.; Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery, Foreign Catalogue (Liver-
pool, 1977), no. 230; Ackerman (note 4), p. 238, no. 248; and

13. For Stewart as a collector, see Boime (note 1); for a more
contemporary view, see Artistic Houses (New York, 1883), pp.
7–18. Stewart gave heavily to charity, notably to famine relief in
Paris during the Franco-Prussian War and $50,000 to relief in
Chicago after the Great Chicago Fire of 1871.

14. Both the Havemeyers and Mrs. Palmer focused on works of
the Impressionists, although their tastes evolved over time and
their collections included many more academic artists. For a de-
tailed discussion of this shift in taste, see Frances Weitzenhoffer,
The Havemeyers, Impressionism Comes to America (New York,
1986). On Mrs. Palmer, see Richard R. Brettell, “Monet’s Hay-
stacks Reconsidered,” in The Art Institute of Chicago Museum

15. James (note 12).

pp. 58–59. The three Gérômes in the Stewart sale sold well: The
Chariot Race for $7,100; Pollice Verso, today in the Phoenix Art

the matter, the gilt-bronze vases in a private collection in New
York are of the same shape as the Waddesdon marble vase and have
the identical relief decorations on both vases of the pair.

The mate to the marble vase at Waddesdon (Hodgkinson, pp.
20–22, no. 3) is decorated with a relief of playing putti that is
identical to the relief with playing putti found on the terracotta in
the Prévol still-life painting (Faré [note 39], p. 294, fig. 476) and
that is repeated again on a pair of bronze vases in the Ashmolean
Museum, Oxford (fig. 19).

I have given this admittedly confusing list of variants of these
vases to indicate the popularity of the models, the difficulty of
their dating, and the probability that many of them are not by
Clodon himself, but by other artists imitating his models.

42. A. Dingé (note 2), p. 1: “L’admiration que lui inspiraient les
précieux restes de l’antiquité grecque et romaine, ne lui ferait
point les yeux sur ce que les modernes ont fait de beau; et, tout en
étudiant les maîtres, il cherchait, comme eux, la vérité et la beauté
daus la nature.”

Brown, “The Return of the Salon: Jean Léon Gérôme in the Art
Institute,” pp. 155–73.

I have received much help in this work and would like to thank
Joseph Berton, Helen Chillman, Rachel Dressler, Gloria Groom,
Maureen Lasko, Ian Wardropper, and Faye Wrubel for their gener-
ous assistance.

1. On American collectors and collecting in Paris in this period,
see Albert Boime, “America’s purchasing power and the evolution
of European art in the late nineteenth century,” in Salons, gal-
erie, musei e loro influenza sullo sviluppa dell’arte dei secoli XIX e XX
of American collecting in which Gérôme figures prominently are
Madeleine Fidel Beaufort, Herbert L. Kleinfield, and Jeanne K.
Welcher, eds. The Diaries 1871–1882 of Samuel P. Avery, Art
Dealer (New York, 1979); and The Diary of George A. Lucas: An
American Art Agent in Paris, 1857–1909, transcribed and with an

2. H. Barbara Weinberg, The American Pupils of Jean-Léon
Gérôme (Fort Worth, 1984), pp. 35–47.

3. John Shirley-Fox, An Art Student’s Reminiscences of Paris in the
Eighties (London, 1909); John C. Van Dyke, Modern French Mas-
ters (New York, 1896); and “American Artists on Gérôme,” Cen-
tury Magazine (1889), pp. 634–36, including letters from E. H.
Blashfield, George deForest Brush, Kenyon Cox, Wyatt Eaton,
Will H. Low, John H. Niemeyer, A. H. Thayer, S. W. Van
Schaick, and J. Alden Weir.

4. The Art Institute acquired the painting from Hans Calmann,
London. It has been featured in the following exhibitions:
Dayton, Ohio, The Dayton Art Institute, Jean-Léon Gérôme,
exh. cat. by Gerald M. Ackerman with essay by Richard Et-
tinghausen (1972), pp. 32–33, no. 2; and Japan, Gift, Paris autour
de 1882, 1982, no. 21. The major bibliographical references in-
clude: John Maxon, Paintings in The Art Institute of Chicago
(Chicago, 1970), p. 264; Gerald M. Ackerman, Life and Works
of Jean-Léon Gérôme (London, 1986), p. 190, no. 38; and Richard R.
Brettell, French Salon Artists 1800–1900, The Art Institute of

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Museum, for $11,000; and A Collaboration, now lost, for $8,100. These were some of the best prices realized, but the collection as a whole suffered because it was seen as reflecting an outdated taste.


19. Israel Pemberton, “Pollice Verso,” The Librarian (1879), pp. 4–6. This painting was also in the Stewart collection (see note 13).

20. The engraving mentioned by Gérôme in his letter describing The Chariot Race (see p. 164) was by the sixteenth-century painter and printmaker Maerten van Heemskerck and portrayed the Sep-tizonium as a three-story building. It is clear that it was the name of the edifice, rather than the engraved view, that determined Gérôme’s reconstruction.

21. James (note 12), p. 98. Another painting Gérôme set in the Circus Maximus is The Christian Martyrs (Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery), a work that was in the artist’s studio with the Art Institute picture for over a decade. The Chariot Race was ordered in 1860; however, due to the artist’s painstaking approach, it was not delivered until 1883.

22. The other drawing is reproduced in Gérôme (Vesoul, 1981), no. 77.


24. Qui que tu sois, voici ton maître! Il l’est, il fut, ou le doit être! The Art Institute received the painting from the George F. Harding Museum, Chicago. It was exhibited in the Salon of 1889, no. 1152. Publications in which it is discussed include: Le Figaro, Apr. 30, 1889; Albert Wolff, Figaro-Salon (Paris, 1889), n.p.; Georges Lafenestre, Le Livre d’or du Salon de peinture et de sculpture (Paris, 1889), pp. 42–43; Hering (note 12), p. 272, pl. between pp. 184–85; and Ackerman (note 4), p. 262, no. 361.


28. For Voltaire and the Greek Anthology, see James Hutton, The Greek Anthology in France and the Latin Writers of the Netherlands to the year 1830 (Ithaca, N. Y., 1946), pp. 539–46.

29. “Et nous voici devant le tableau de M. Gérôme, de L’Amour vainqueur des fauvres. Nous nageons ici en pleine fantaisie, car dans la réalité les lions et les tigres se jeteraient sur ce bâbun aux chaînes frêles et n’en feraient qu’une bouchée. Mais je ne suis pas de ceux qui veulent emprisonner l’art tout entier dans une même formule; je comprends parfaitement que les scènes de pure imag-
ation ont leur raison d’être, pourvue que l’artiste y déploie, comme M. Gérôme, le meilleur de sa science et de son talent particulier.”


31. The curious stool on which Gérôme sits in the photograph is a Middle Eastern bird cage, no doubt a travel souvenir, such as the one shown in his painting Bashi-Bazouk Singing (Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery). Behind the canvas, we can see other studio paraphernalia against the wall and, in the far room, casts or reproductions of ancient armor which can be recognized in other works.


35. Ackerman (note 4), p. 312, no. S10. There seems to be some confusion in the literature regarding sizes. There is also a large marble version (h. 189 cm.) in Copenhagen at the Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek.


38. Ibid., nos. 171–74, 466, 539, 558.

39. I am indebted to Joseph Berton for information about the Egyptian campaign and militaria. See Ackerman (note 4), p. 322, no. 539.

40. Ackerman (note 4), p. 280, no. 441. Gérôme also exhibited at the 1897 Salon a life-sized bust of Napoleon.

41. As quoted in Gustave Haller, Nos grands peintres (Paris, 1899), pp. 154–56. This book was published by Boussod, Manzi, Joyant, successors to Gérôme’s father-in-law, Goupil.

42. Benson (note 8), p. 587.

43. Ottawa, The National Gallery of Canada, The Other Nineteenth Century: Paintings and Sculpture in the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph M. Tannenhaum, exh. cat. by Louise d’Argencourt and Douglas Druick (Ottawa, 1978). This was one of the first wide-scale reconsiderations of French official and academic art in the period 1850–1900.