College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University
DigitalCommons@CSB/SJU

English Faculty Publications | English

2011

"Visualizing Early American Art Audiences: The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and Allston's Dead Man Restored"

Yvette Piggush
College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University, ypiggush@csbsju.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/english_pubs

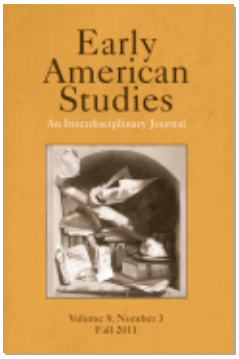
Recommended Citation

Piggush, Yvette. "Visualizing Early American Art Audiences: The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and Allston's *Dead Man Restored.*" *Early American Studies* 9.3 (2011): 716-47.

Originally Published by University of Pennsylvania Press. "All rights reserved. Except for brief quotations used for purposes of scholarly citation, none of this work may be reproduced in any form by any means without written permission from the publisher. For information address the University of Pennsylvania Press, 3905 Spruce Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104-4112."art museums, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Washington Allston, audiences, reception, antique cast collections, spectatorship

PROJECT MUSE®

Visualizing Early American Art Audiences: The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and Allston's *Dead Man Restored*



Yvette R. Piggush

Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal, Volume 9, Number 3, Fall 2011, pp. 716-747 (Article)

Published by University of Pennsylvania Press
DOI: *https://doi.org/10.1353/eam.2011.0030*

For additional information about this article
https://muse.jhu.edu/article/448113

Access provided by College of St. Benedict | St. John's University (28 Oct 2018 05:00 GMT)

Visualizing Early American Art Audiences

The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and Allston's *Dead Man Restored*

YVETTE R. PIGGUSH
Florida International University

ABSTRACT Scholarship on early American art focuses almost exclusively on the production of art and on the ideas that artists and their elite patrons intended to inculcate by placing artworks on display. This essay explores art spectatorship in the early republic and examines how middle-class audiences influenced the content of art displays created by members of the elite. Using readings of works by Washington Allston, John Lewis Krimmel, and Charles Bird King and print accounts of art exhibitions, it argues that the audiences at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts stimulated a vigorous public discourse about its exhibitions that steered the Academy's purchasing toward historical paintings. The Academy's acquisition of Allston's *Dead Man Restored* demonstrates that spectators played a more significant role than scholars have previously recognized in the development of the fine arts in the United States.

In 1816 the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, the second art academy founded in the United States, paid the South Carolina–born painter Washington Allston $3,500 for his *Dead Man Restored to Life by Touching the Bones of the Prophet Elisha* (1811–13). This acquisition, one of the new nation's first major art purchases, cost the fledgling Academy only a little less than the $4,000 raised in 1805 to create the organization. It seems that

I thank the Division of the Humanities at the University of Chicago and the McNeil Center for Early American Studies for their financial support. I am grateful to Cheryl Leibold, archivist at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, for facilitating my access to the Academy's records. For their insightful comments, I thank Steven Blevins, Bill Brown, Nathaniel Cadle, Bruce Harvey, Justine Murison, Joanne Myers, Alexander Nemerov, Eric Slauter, Andrew Strycharski, and the anonymous readers for *Early American Studies.*

Early American Studies (Fall 2011)
Copyright © 2011 The McNeil Center for Early American Studies. All rights reserved.

the financial stakes of this purchase ought to single it out as an important turning point in the early American art world. Instead, the few accounts that discuss it present it as a normal part of the Academy's patronage of American art. This explanation fits into a framework that considers patrons and artists to be the only significant actors in the early American art world, but it does not fit the surrounding facts. Up until 1816 the Academy relied on a single purchase of foreign antique casts augmented by loans, donations, and exhibitions by artists to make up its collections; it had never explicitly patronized an artist by buying a new painting. Indeed, the Academy refused to buy a collection of historical paintings by Philadelphia's famous native son Benjamin West. Allston was far from sharing West's fame as the president of London's Royal Academy and painter to King George III. *Dead Man Restored* won a prize of £210 when it was exhibited in the British Institution in 1813, but the Institution's directors purchased a different painting, W. Hilton's *Mary Anointing the Feet of Jesus,* for £588 and left Allston without a patron. After the British Institution's conflicted reaction to his first major work and after three years of failed attempts to sell it, Allston was being honest, not modest, when he told his fellow artist Samuel F. B. Morse that he was "pleasantly surprised" when the Academy bought the painting. This article argues that this surprising decision may be best explained by the emergence of a third actor—the audience—as a force shaping the production and consumption of art in America.[1]

Dead Man Restored was unmistakably an object around which concerns about spectatorship would be played out because these anxieties were already evident in the audience that took up two-thirds of the canvas. Indeed, as this essay demonstrates, efforts to understand and manage spectators saturate early American artworks, critical writing, and the institutions that developed to support them. These art audiences began to intervene in the relations between elite, predominantly Federalist patrons and predominantly Republican artists in the first years of the nineteenth century. Wealthy Federalists created institutions like the Academy after they lost

1. Washington Allston to Samuel F. B. Morse, [summer, after June 16, 1816], in *The Correspondence of Washington Allston,* ed. Nathalia Wright (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1993), 93. Albrecht Koschnik, *"Let a Common Interest Bind Us Together": Associations, Partisanship, and Culture in Philadelphia, 1775–1840* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007), 206. Jared B. Flagg, *The Life and Letters of Washington Allston* (1892; repr., New York: Kennedy Galleries, 1969), 118. E. P. Richardson, *Washington Allston: A Study of the Romantic Artist in America* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1948), 106. Thomas Smith, *Recollections of the British Institution* (London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1860), 133–34.

Figure 1. Washington Allston, *The Dead Man Restored to Life by Touching the Bones of the Prophet Elisha* (1811–13). Oil on canvas. 156 × 122 inches. Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia. Pennsylvania Academy purchase, by subscription.

political power and used them to regain their influence through cultural leadership. Philadelphia's working artists expected that they would be the primary beneficiaries of this project. Neither group anticipated that the paying viewers their new institution depended on could complicate this agenda. Patrons and artists were unprepared to find themselves in conflict over opinions about spectatorship. As a result, neither group successfully controlled art reception to realize a particular vision of their institution as either a school or a museum. Instead, financial necessity drove both the patrons and the artists to modify their goals and to accept paying, middle-class spectators as stakeholders in the Academy's direction and in the production and circulation of art more generally. The Academy's ineffectual efforts to manage (or ignore) viewers helped stimulate a vigorous public discourse about spectatorship that encouraged the growth of American art audiences and the development of exhibitions, museums, and schools to cater to their tastes.[2]

Analysis of art spectatorship in early America proves difficult because prerevolutionary North America lacked public exhibitions, sales galleries, studio visitations, and even verbal evidence for art reception. Postrevolutionary scholarship on art focuses primarily on the earliest patriotic efforts to encourage production. As David Brigham's work on Charles Willson Peale's Philadelphia Museum has demonstrated, however, the effort to prove that the United States could produce aesthetic work on a par with Europe also stimulated the creation of new venues for looking at art. Peale's museum was the best documented of these early exhibition venues. In this institution the artist and museum keeper presented the natural world as having visible, reasonable, and legible order. His display of the "wondrous work" of nature and art defined how spectators participated in early national culture. As the designer of the museum and as the author of its publicity, Peale made the diffusion of useful knowledge the dominant goal of museum exhibitions and set a careful standard for who would be in the audience.[3]

---

2. Koschnik, *"Let a Common Interest,"* 184–85, 205–11. Koschnik's analysis demonstrates the unique qualities of the Federalist transition from politics to culture in Philadelphia. For broader surveys of this transition see David Hackett Fischer, *The Revolution of American Conservativism: The Federalist Party in the Era of Jeffersonian Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), and Linda K. Kerber, *Federalists in Dissent: Imagery and Ideology in Jeffersonian America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970).

3. Margaretta Lovell, *Art in a Season of Revolution: Painters, Artisans, and Patrons in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 2–3. Major studies of early American art that focus on production include Neil Harris, *The Artist in American Society: The Formative Years, 1790–1860* (New York: G. Braziller,

The Peale family's abundant records, which document their tireless efforts to manage visitors, provide us with one of the few comprehensive pictures of an early American audience, but we know little about how consumption may have happened outside Charles Willson Peale's supervision. Scholars have sometimes assumed that Peale's vision was the norm in American exhibitions, including those at the Academy. Peale, according to one recent history, was the Academy's "driving force." Without his efforts, it would never have been established or survived. Peale certainly was an influential leader among the Academy's directors. By the early 1800s he had ended his overt Republican political activity, which could have interfered in his relationship with the predominantly Federalist lay patrons. He advocated for an academy that, like his own museum, would be a self-sustaining institution for educating American artists and for displaying their works to potential buyers. Yet, for evidence that Peale's vision did not completely control the Academy, one has but to return to the purchase of *Dead Man Restored.* The Academy bought the work only after the Peales refused to purchase it for their museum because, as Peale complained in a letter to his son Rembrandt, the painting had "great defects." Allston's image of a mystical resurrection did not fit into Peale's belief that early republican museums should teach that the natural world had a visible and regular order.[4]

Instead of seeing the Academy's purchase of *Dead Man Restored* as evidence of what Peale or the Academy patrons wanted to show viewers about art, it may be better understood as evidence of how consumer demand shapes art markets. Allston's painting did not entice the Peales, but it did appeal to those for whom the Enlightenment interest in nature had traveled to the opposite, romantic extreme of endowing the natural world with mystical vitality. In the United States this shift is evident in the 1790s gothic novels of the Philadelphia native Charles Brockden Brown. By 1816 nu-

---

1966); Lillian B. Miller, *Patriots and Patriotism: The Encouragement of the Fine Arts in the United States, 1790–1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966); and Laura Rigal, *The American Manufactory: Art, Labor, and the World of Things in the Early Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998). David Brigham, *Public Culture in the Early Republic: Peale's Museum and Its Audience* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 1, 7–8.

4. Stephen May, "An Enduring Legacy: The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1805–2005," in Jane Watkins, ed., *200 Years of Excellence* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 2005), 11. Charles Willson Peale to Rembrandt Peale, March 1, 1816, in Lillian B. Miller, ed., *The Selected Papers of Charles Willson Peale and His Family,* 5 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983–2000), 3:393. Koschnik, *"Let a Common Interest,"* 206.

merous forms of entertainment and association in the city catered to a fascination with mystery and metamorphosis. For the religiously minded members of the elite, there were the rituals of the Episcopalian churches. Men could find secular mystery and drama that bridged the city's social and political divides in the city's thriving societies of Freemasons. Theater patrons of all classes and political parties enjoyed the "grand melo-dramatic romances" offered by the Philadelphia Theater. When *Dead Man Restored* first went on display, Philadelphians could also see "Day Francis, the Great," the self-proclaimed "Emperor of the Conjurers." Francis promised that among other forms of "metamorphosis," he would perform "the part of the Salamander or anti-combustible" as part of his magic show. *Dead Man Restored*'s own representation of a metamorphic miracle made it one of the many mysterious spectacles that early nineteenth-century Philadelphians consumed. The Academy's purchase of this painting did not represent the members of Philadelphia's elite dictating the kind of art that people should like. It showed that the Academy was trying to attract audiences by offering what they already liked: grandeur, mystery, and shocking metamorphosis.[5]

In addition to locating the consumer desires of these viewers amid the Enlightenment's transformation into romantic supernaturalism, they can also be historically contextualized within the culture of tourism. According to Carole Fabricant's analysis of eighteenth-century domestic tourist literature, middle-class Englishmen and Englishwomen visited the estates of British aristocrats to enjoy their landscapes, art collections, and histories. These tours were patriotic, and they gave the visitors an illusion of participating in a shared culture with the upper class. A visit to the Academy, where the patrons' tastes were on display, resembled visiting a British estate because in both cases spectators looked at property that was not their own. Because the objects on display at the Academy were not the property of one

5. *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser,* March 18, and May 23, 1816. John Ott, "How New York Stole the Luxury Art Market: Blockbuster Auctions and Bourgeois Identity in Gilded Age America," *Winterthur Portfolio* 42, nos. 2–3 (2008): 133–58. Robert Darnton, *Mesmerism and the End of the Enlightenment in France* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 39. Koschnik, *"Let a Common Interest,"* 238–40. For a detailed study of early American Freemasons see Steven C. Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood: Freemasonry and the Transformation of the American Social Order, 1730–1840* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996). The salamander was an alchemical symbol relevant to both Masonic practices and Allston's painting. See David Bjelajac, *Washington Allston, Secret Societies, and the Alchemy of Anglo-American Painting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

individual and because they were often sensational or bizarre, however, the deferential, "hands off" spectatorship Fabricant describes hybridized with the more acquisitive and aggressive gaze of foreign tourism. As the print culture and social practices surrounding tourism at the Academy developed, visitors began to use their reactions to the objects and their discussion of these responses in print as a way of owning the collections. The existing evidence—in print and in paintings by John Lewis Krimmel and Charles Bird King—of how early Americans consumed art at the Academy reveals that middle-class spectators came to enjoy sensational and emotional entertainment. They defined themselves as amateur art lovers through their regular tours of the Academy's exhibitions. Ultimately, they influenced public opinion and the Academy's own buying decisions, beginning with the unlikely acquisition of *Dead Man Restored*.[6]

In December 1805 sixty-eight of Philadelphia's wealthiest lawyers, merchants, and doctors, led by the attorneys Joseph Hopkinson and William Meredith, gathered together with three of the city's most successful artists, Charles Willson Peale, Rembrandt Peale, and William Rush, to found the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Their charter stated that the organization aimed to provide America's artists with "correct and elegant Copies, from the works of the first Masters" and to "facilitate" the artists' "access to such Standards." According to these statements, the Academy founders agreed that their primary mission was to bring classical art education to America, saving artists a difficult and expensive trip to study in London or on the Continent. But patrons and artists quickly discovered that political, social, economic, and aesthetic differences within each group and between the two parties hampered their efforts to cooperate. Peale believed that the Academy would function with the patrons' money but without their interference, like London's artist-organized Royal Academy, where he had studied. Hopkinson and Meredith represented those patrons who wanted to play an active role in introducing America's artists to neoclassical aesthetic theories. This meant that Philadelphia's Republican-leaning community of working artists would receive its education where the Academy's Federalist

6. Carole Fabricant, "The Literature of Domestic Tourism," in Felicity Nussbaum and Laura Brown, eds., *The New Eighteenth Century: Theory, Politics, English Literature* (New York: Methuen, 1987), 257. For tourism in early America see Richard Gassan, *The Birth of American Tourism: New York, the Hudson Valley, and American Culture, 1790–1830* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008).

patrons could supervise them. Other wealthy donors hoped the Academy would become a place for gentlemen alone to enjoy the connoisseurship of the fine arts. In response to these conflicts, a number of Philadelphia's artists started their own organization, the Society of Artists of the United States, to challenge the Academy. Preoccupied with these internal struggles, neither the patrons nor the artists gave any attention to the potential role of audiences in their new organization.[7]

As a group, the patrons struggled with internal tensions between those who wished to use the Academy for the artists' benefit and those who saw it as an enclave for private pleasure. The vision of the Academy as an institution to train artists emerged out of the voluntary associations that nearly all the lay patrons belonged to. These ranged from small, private clubs to large educational and charitable institutions, including the Library Company, the American Philosophical Society, and the Pennsylvania Hospital. Hopkinson and Meredith led the Tuesday Club, an exclusive Federalist literary association of about twenty-seven men that published its own journal of belles lettres, the *Port Folio*. The club used this journal to promote Anglophile and neoclassical culture among the city's educated young men. For Hopkinson, Meredith, and the eight other club members who helped found the Academy, the institution supported the club's effort to establish and maintain European aesthetic standards in the United States. With the Academy, the Tuesday Club sought to influence artists and artisans who could neither afford the *Port Folio's* six-dollar annual subscription nor understand its aesthetic debates, but could find time to study at the Academy.[8]

Though the Tuesday Club members may have perceived the Academy as a form of public outreach, the nucleus of its collection had its roots in more exclusive forms of tourism and connoisseurship. Joseph Allen Smith, a South Carolina plantation owner, accumulated the cameos, medals, and classical casts for a potential art academy in Philadelphia during his extensive Grand Tour of Europe in the early 1800s. Since Smith's wealth came from his rice plantations, slave labor financed this significant portion of the Academy's earliest collections. Among free whites, Smith's nude antique

7. Transcript of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts Charter, available at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts Archives, Philadelphia. Koschnik, *"Let a Common Interest,"* 206–11. John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997), 201–87. Lee L. Schreiber, "The Philadelphia Elite in the Development of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1805–1842" (Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 1977).

8. Koschnik, *"Let a Common Interest,"* 162–69.

casts, which the Academy patrons immediately augmented by purchasing more statues from Paris, had a socially divisive quality. Male members of the British upper class, like those who constituted themselves into the Society of Dilettanti, notoriously cultivated a taste for classical nudes to demonstrate their aristocratic privilege to violate contemporary moral and legal codes with impunity. When the Academy patrons collected nude statues, they suggested that they too aspired to be aristocratic libertines. Although Philadelphia's artists hoped to study the casts, they objected to their public display on the grounds that they were "extremely indecorous, and altogether inconsistent with the purity of republican morals." The artists did not want their technical and intellectual interest in the casts to be translated into a display of licentiousness that sustained class divisions. The patrons, in contrast, demonstrated their social superiority to the artists by showing that they had the power to violate "republican" ideas of decency with impunity.[9]

In their response to the lay patrons' assertions of control over the Academy, the artists revealed their own internal divisions. Peale aspired to bring the artist-dominated model of shaping public taste put forward by the artists of the Royal Academy to the United States. Joshua Reynolds and other fashionable London artists had founded the Royal Academy with support from the king in 1768. By the 1780s its exhibitions made the institution self-sufficient and helped shift taste away from the foreign paintings preferred by elite connoisseurs and toward British-made history paintings, portraits, landscapes, and genre scenes. Peale hoped that Philadelphia's artists could unite to achieve the same control over public taste. Peale, however, agreed with the lay patrons that neoclassical aesthetics shaped great art and that Old Master paintings and classical casts constituted the basis of the art curriculum. According to the theories he had learned as a student of West at the Royal Academy, copying classical statues taught painters and sculptors to compose ideal representations of nature. Idealized nature, in turn, was the essence of art and especially of its highest genre: history painting. For Peale, only more education could put American artists in a position to

9. *Report of the Committee Appointed to Examine into the Rise, Progress, and Present State of the Society of Artists of the United States* (Philadelphia: James W. Palmer, 1812), 7. Fabricant, "Literature of Domestic Tourism," 257. Jason M. Kelly, *The Society of Dilettanti: Archaeology and Identity in the British Enlightenment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), xvi, 59. E. P. Richardson, "Allen Smith, Collector and Benefactor," *American Art Journal* 1, no. 2 (1969): 5–19. R. A. McNeal, "Joseph Allen Smith, American Grand Tourist," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 4, no. 1 (1997): 64–91.

supervise public taste, so he repeatedly begged the patrons for more opportunities to hold classes in the Academy.[10]

The struggling local artists whom Peale envisioned as his future students put forward different ideas about the direction of American art. In 1810 they united to form the Society of Artists of the United States to challenge not only the lay patrons' control over the Academy but also the consensus that art should be based on classical models. The miniature painters, portrait painters, engravers, landscape artists, die makers, artisans, and amateurs who made up much of the society thought the Academy was dedicated to improving their competence and profitability by providing them with practical instruction rather than neoclassical theory. As the society's leader, George Murray, an engraver, explained, "The study of the antique, though important to the pupil, has nevertheless been carried much farther than what is necessary. The great length of time generally bestowed to acquire a knowledge of it, might be more profitably devoted to the study of nature." Instead of spending long hours sketching casts in order to learn to draw the ideal human form, Murray argued that American artists should learn to represent the landscapes, people, and objects around them.[11]

When the society succeeded in pressuring the Academy to hold annual exhibitions beginning in 1811, the results of Murray's call to study nature rather than the antique inflected the objects on display. Leonora Sansay, better known as the author of *Secret History; or, The Horrors of St. Domingo* (1808), exhibited artificial flowers, made at her manufactory, even though such lifelike imitations were not the kind of idealized reality that neoclassicism deemed to be art. The German immigrant John Lewis Krimmel, whose sketchbooks reveal that he studied drawing at the Academy as well as exhibiting there, specialized in genre paintings of everyday life. His images of common people, like *Fourth of July in Centre Square* (1812), also did not conform to the classical emphasis on ideal representations of heroic persons and historic events. Given the society's resistance to neoclassicism, it is not surprising that successful, foreign-trained artists like Charles Willson Peale tended to join the society briefly or not at all. Established artists who benefited from perpetuating the aesthetics they had learned abroad did not support the society's openness to informally trained artists or its objections to the study of the

10. Brewer, *Pleasures,* 234. Hugh Honour, *Neo-classicism* (New York: Penguin, 1968), 21, 107. Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses,* ed. Pat Rogers (1769–90; repr., New York: Penguin, 1992), 45, 104, 107.

11. George Murray, "Progress of the Fine Arts," *Port Folio,* September 1810, 260.

antique. As a result, the society divided Philadelphia's artistic community into highly educated, well-connected, and wealthy artists like Peale and leaders like Murray, a Scottish immigrant and radical political agitator who existed at the edge of social and economic respectability. The society tried to insert a Republican political perspective into Philadelphia's cultural world, but it also prevented the city's artists from presenting a united front to the patrons. By 1820 the Society of Artists disappeared, along with much of its early vision of an American art world emancipated from neoclassicism.[12]

These debates over public benefit and private pleasure, over local, artisanal self-sufficiency and the pursuit of the neoclassical ideal, might have remained in words only if the Academy patrons had not insisted on erecting a building that gave its different constituencies—patrons, artists, and eventually spectators—an opportunity to fight for the control of public space. The structure embroiled the institution in conflict and, paradoxically, saved it from the lack of broad public involvement that afflicted the other contemporary effort to support the fine arts: New York's American Academy of the Fine Arts. The American Academy displayed its cast collections in rented rooms rather than incur the cost of constructing its own building. Its Philadelphia rivals were determined that they would have their own building, no matter how imprudent this financial decision might prove. Peale wanted the commission for what he thought was an art school to go to Benjamin Henry Latrobe, who would become the architect of the U.S. Capitol. Since the nonartist patrons did not agree with Peale's concept of the building, they turned to John Dorsey, an auctioneer of luxury goods and a founding patron, to design the new edifice. Dorsey's design of a circular, domed room, forty-five feet in diameter and flanked by two smaller rooms, strongly resembled Latrobe's pumphouse building for the Centre Square waterworks. His badly designed brick dome leaked, however, as Peale predicted it would, and the artist grumbled that he

12. Leonora Sansay, *Secret History; or, The Horrors of St. Domingo* and *Laura,* ed. Michael Drexler (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview, 2007). For Sansay's contributions to the exhibitions, see Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, *Third Annual Exhibition* (Philadelphia: T. and G. Palmer, 1813), 9, 26. Although Sansay and other women routinely exhibited at the Academy, they are not credited with membership in the Society of Artists in the exhibition catalogs. For a brief biography of Murray, see William Dunlap, *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States,* 3 vols. (Boston: C. E. Goodspeed, 1918), 2:285–86. For a discussion of the Society of Artists that focuses on one of its few successful professional members, see Charles Coleman Sellers, "Rembrandt Peale, 'Instigator,'" *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 79, 3 (July 1955): 331–42.

Figure 2. John Lewis Krimmel, *Fourth of July in Centre Square* (1812). Oil on canvas. 22¾ × 29 inches. Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Pennsylvania Academy purchase (from the estate of Paul Beck Jr.).

could not "help thinking less magnificent and more useful would have served it instead." Burdened with a structure that was expensive to heat and to maintain, the Academy would seem to have doomed itself before it opened its doors. Indeed, a list of stockholders from 1830 suggests that most Academy patrons, including the Peales, were generous only in their promises of support. When they were called on for their annual dues, patrons claimed "no money just now," pleaded illness, or simply "got angry." But though New York's Academy faded from public view, Philadelphia's bad building and delinquent share-holders compelled the Academy directors to make wider appeals for support and ultimately prevented their institution from becoming a moribund club for connoisseurs.[13]

13. Charles Willson Peale to John Isaac Hawkins, December 28, 1806, in *Selected Papers,* 2:997. Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, "List of Stockholders, 1830," Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera, Winterthur Library, Winterthur, Del. For the history of the American Academy see Dunlap, *History,* 2:105–6, 3:48.

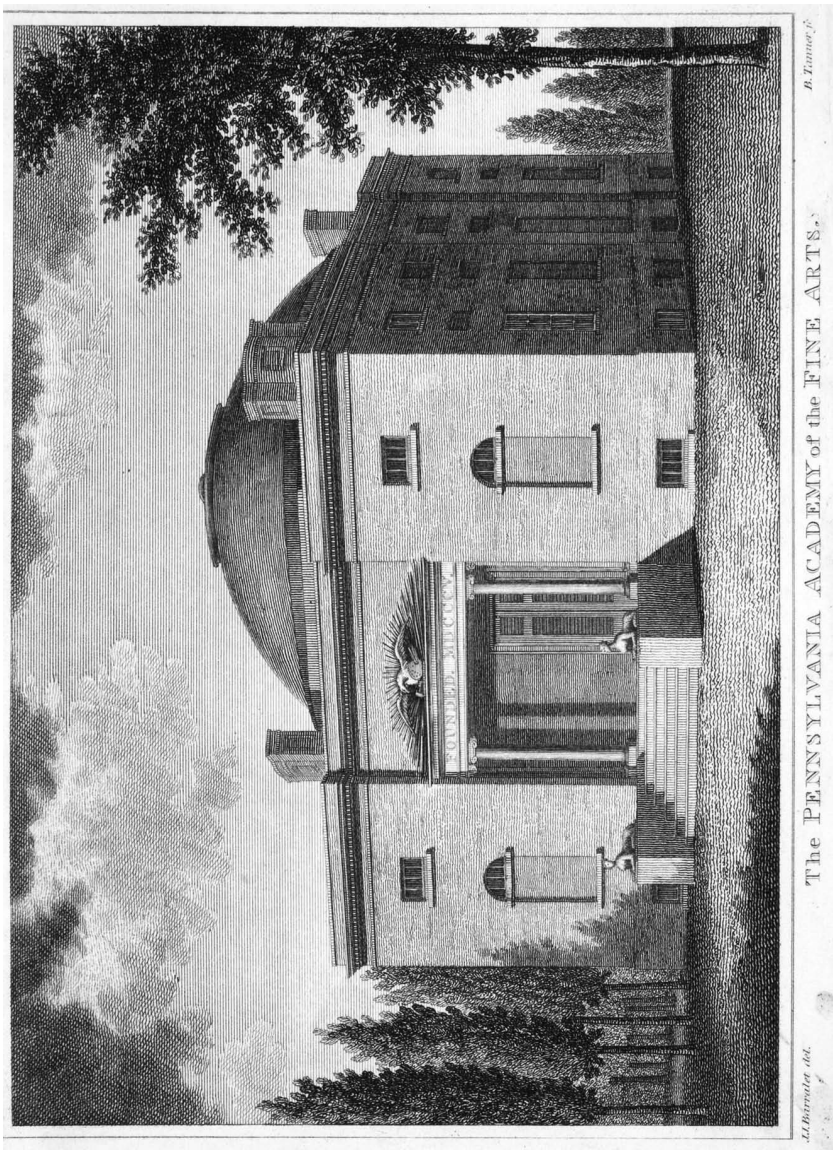


Figure 3. This image, drawn by John James Barralet and engraved by Benjamin Tanner, appeared in the *Port Folio* in 1809. The sphinxlike statues on either side of the staircase were never actually added to the building. The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Courtesy of the Library Company of Philadelphia.

The Academy's first significant effort to attract public attention came with the exhibition of its antique casts in 1807. According to Peale, the patrons were more interested in shocking the public with their collections than in educating them. He complained in a letter to a friend, "An exhibition of Casts of naked Statues seems to be the sole object with those who first had undertaken the commencement of this Institution." The patrons did not even use ticket prices, as Peale used them, to restrict access to the casts to those with the wealth and education to appreciate their aesthetic value. Instead, they charged all viewers twenty-five cents, the same cost as basic admission to Peale's museum and even less than the cheapest theater ticket, to see the antique casts. This ticket price indicates that they wanted to attract a large middle-class audience. Peale's remarks suggest that what these viewers saw was the upper-class privilege to offend the tastes of their social inferiors. Indeed, the Academy's first show did not interfere with the perception of the institution as an elite organization. A year after the exhibition, Joseph Allen Smith's future mother-in-law, Alice DeLancey Izard, characterized the Academy as a private club. "Mr. A. Smith presented his Statues, Arts, Sculptures &c. to the *Academy of Arts* in this place," Izard wrote to her daughter, Margaret Manigault. "It is a society of amateurs who built a very pretty little Edifice purposely to place these articles of Mr. Smiths & some others which they possess." Izard's adjectives—"very pretty little"—and her association of the Academy with amateurism and collecting rather than with professional development and public exhibition suggest that this public show did not detract from the conception of the Academy as a curiosity cabinet for members of the upper class.[14]

What neither Peale nor the patrons realized in 1807 was that Philadelphia spectators had already learned—in Peale's museum—to enjoy naked statues

14. Charles Willson Peale to John Isaac Hawkins, December 28, 1806, in *Selected Papers*, 2:997. Alice DeLancey Izard to Margaret Izard Manigault, January 10, 1808, in Richardson, "Allen Smith, Collector and Benefactor," 11. Brigham, *Public Culture,* 26. Izard's letter reveals what the Academy's all-male list of patrons and the print information about the Academy typically conceals: elite women played an important role in shaping the perception of the Academy by visiting it and by discussing it with others in their exclusive salons, social calls, and personal correspondence. For another reference to women's critical participation in the Academy, see Joseph Hopkinson, *Annual Discourse* (Philadelphia, 1810), 34. For more on the role of the Manigault women in constructing Federalist culture, see Daniel Kilbride, "Cultivation, Conservatism, and the Early National Gentry: The Manigault Family and Their Circle," *Journal of the Early Republic* 19, no. 2 (Summer 1999): 221–56.

as tourists consciously consuming new and exotic experiences. Before the Academy formed, Peale had demonstrated his early desire to support art collecting among Philadelphia's wealthy Federalists by exhibiting several of Smith's casts in his museum. Peale housed the casts together with his celebrated mammoth skeleton, in a separate room away from the rest of his natural history collections. He charged visitors an additional fifty cents to see this exhibition, which ideally discouraged poorer and presumably less well-educated viewers who could not be expected to grasp either the sublimity of the mammoth's size or the ideal forms in the statues' nude bodies. A visiting British traveler, Augustus John Foster, noticed, however, that even the higher admission fee did not compel visitors to treat the casts respectfully as the property of a wealthy gentleman. Foster reported he saw "some lines written with a pencil . . . in a female hand upon the legs of the gods Cupid and Mercury." The keeper of the room explained that it "must have been done during a late visit of some young women, the latter being generally educated at boarding schools and consequently not so much under the influence of that timidity and reserve characteristic of young ladies in Europe." This explanation was no reassurance to Foster, who concluded from what he read that when American women got together in groups they were "extremely plain spoken." Yet the fact that these women had the leisure and the wealth to attend both boarding school and Peale's more expensive special exhibit undermines the keeper's effort to blame their actions on their lack of refinement.[15]

Foster's account suggests that foreign artworks in the early United States were apprehended through a convergence of domestic and foreign modes of tourism. On the one hand, Peale's catalog clearly told these women that they were being admitted to see Smith's personal collection and that they were supposed to identify with his "taste" and to be grateful for his "liberality" in sharing his goods with them. Because the catalog told the women that they were looking at Smith's property, Fabricant's analysis of domestic tourism literature suggests that they should have known to keep their gaze rapidly moving over the surface of the objects. They were not supposed to allow their gaze to linger—as they clearly did—and stimulate a desire to possess the statues. By writing graffiti on the statues, these women took part in what Fabricant terms the "lengthy, devouring glare" that had motivated Smith to import these objects in the first place. The women's crude, "plain spoken"

15. Augustus John Foster, *Jeffersonian America: Notes on the United States of America Collected in the Years 1805–6–7 and 11–12,* ed. Richard Beale Davis (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1954), 257–58. Gassan, *Birth of American Tourism,* 3.

reaction suggests that encounters with the strange nude statues were opportunities to move beyond the restraints of civilized domestic tourism and indulge a desire for the bizarre and the primitive by consuming objects from a foreign culture. Their behavior even indicates that despite all of Peale's efforts to make his museum a space for rational education, its display of curiosities, freaks of nature, and exotic objects stimulated some visitors to feel, like eighteenth-century aristocrats on the Grand Tour, that they were in a foreign space where domestic behavioral norms did not apply. From the secure anonymity of their group, the women who wrote on Smith's statues displayed their aspirations to libertinism. Their "plain spoken" expression of desire threatened the masculine and the aristocratic privilege to create and to break the rules of both taste and gender.[16]

When Smith's statues joined the Academy's casts on exhibition, this approach to foreign culture as an opportunity to break the rules—and sometimes the artworks themselves—continued. In 1811 the Academy drafted an advertisement offering an impressive $150 reward for "the discovery of the person who broke the thumbs from . . . and in other ways mutilated the marble statue of the Venus de Medici." During her visit to the Academy in the early 1830s, the British tourist Frances Trollope commented harshly on what she perceived as the "disgusting depravity, which had led some of the visitors to mark and deface the casts in a most indecent and shameless manner." Although numerous studies have agreed with Trollope that graffiti and other "improper" reactions to nude art indicate that early Americans were too "puritanical" to appreciate fine art, these moments may be better historicized as political and class-based divisions pursued in conflicts over taste and behavior. Since the nude statues were at once foreign artworks and the possessions of members of the elite, American viewers construed them in terms of foreign and domestic modes of tourism simultaneously. Though writing graffiti and taking souvenirs were common activities for upper-class foreign tourists, the fact that middle-class Americans were performing these actions with domestic, private property left them vulnerable to harsh criticism from British tourists such as Trollope and Foster. Had these English writers called to mind the cartoons depicting British aristocrats on the Grand Tour leering at statues, they might have understood that their disapproval only reinforced the connection between these spectators' behavior and the actions of libertine, aristocratic tourists.[17]

16. *Guide to the Philadelphia Museum* (Philadelphia: From the Museum Press, 1805), 8. Fabricant, "Literature of Domestic Tourism," 256–57, 260.

17. William Smith, untitled document placed between September 9, 1811, draft of Board Minutes and December 9, 1811, draft of Board Minutes, Pennsylvania

The *Spirit of the Press,* a satirical paper published monthly in Philadelphia by Richard Folwell, also explored the tensions between domestic and foreign and between taste and dissipation in its early description of tourism at the Academy. Folwell simultaneously lampooned the visitors' ignorance of classical art while suggesting that the statues signified that Philadelphia's upper class was infected with foreign political radicalism and sexual promiscuity. In a supposed transcript of a conversation at the Academy, a tourist from the countryside named "Jack" asks the keeper about the identity of one of the statues and learns from the equally ignorant keeper that it depicts "Lay O'Coon" (Laocoön) and his sons. Jack immediately comprehends that "he must be an Irishman, by his name." The keeper agrees with this assessment of "Lay O'Coon's" nationality and directs Jack's attention to "Polly Bellydeer" (Apollo Belvedere). "Polly!" Jack exclaims, "Why, it is a man." "So it is," the keeper responds, "I never thought of that—But—I suppose, Polly is a man's name in France." The keeper and Jack are unsophisticated in their pronunciation and education, but they are quick to link the statues to countries known for their revolutionary politics: Ireland and France. Furthermore, French radicalism is construed as the cause of sexual transgression because French men have women's names. Neither the patrons' conservative Federalist politics nor their superior social standing protected them from Folwell's accusation that they were trying to inculcate libertine political and sexual perversions in an unsuspecting public. "Conversation at the Academy" portrays the cast exhibition as domestic tourism gone badly awry. Instead of producing a socially stabilizing consensus about taste among people of different classes, the casts alienated viewers with their strange symbolic meanings and hinted that members of the elite harbored foreign political and sexual tendencies. Given the tensions between pursuing connoisseurship and public education among the patrons, Folwell's satire of the Academy came devastatingly close to the truth.[18]

After the cast exhibition, the patrons remained reluctant to allow commerce into their institution. In an effort to assuage the emerging tensions

---

Academy of the Fine Arts Records, Archives of American Art, reel P63, #260. Frances Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (London: Whittaker, Treacher, 1832), 217. Kelly, *The Society of Dilettanti,* 31–32, 56, 59. For arguments that early Americans generally did not understand nudity in art, see William H. Gerdts, *The Great American Nude: A History in Art* (New York: Praeger, 1974), 9; E. McSherry Fowble, "Without a Blush: The Movement toward the Acceptance of the Nude as an Art Form in America, 1800–1825," *Winterthur Portfolio* 9 (1974): 103–21.

18. "Conversation at the Academy of the Fine Arts," *Spirit of the Press,* May 1, 1807. For the history of this paper see John Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: L. H. Everts, 1884), 3:1982.

Figure 4. *Laocoön,* in Tomasso Piroli, *Les monuments antiques du Musée Napoléon,* 4 vols. (Paris, 1804–6), vol. 2, plate 62. Courtesy of the University of Chicago Library.

with the city's artists in the year after the cast display, the Academy gave permission to the inventor Robert Fulton to exhibit his own collection of works, largely historical paintings by West, at the Academy. Since West was an American-born artist, the exhibition hinted that the patrons were committed to local art. West had lived in London since 1763, however, where he led the English school of historical painting at the Royal Academy, so the exhibition continued the patrons' conservative aspiration to resemble art connoisseurs on the other side of the Atlantic. Fulton was a Pennsylvania native, a correspondent of Charles Willson Peale, and a student of West before he began to devote himself to inventing. Although his political associations were Republican, they were also urban and upper class. He had married into New York's prominent Livingston family and was friends with Robert Livingston, Jefferson's ambassador to France.

Fulton turned out to have his own plan for the Academy, one that made it more dependent on paying spectators. When the exhibition was over, he offered to sell the patrons an even larger selection of West's works on a payment plan. Historical paintings were at the pinnacle of the neoclassical hierarchy of artwork; however, they had recently become tainted in the eyes of some connoisseurs by pandering to customer demand for large and sensational images. A few artists—John Singleton Copley in England, Jacques-Louis David in Paris, and Edward Savage in New York—pioneered the tactic of creating historical paintings purely for public exhibition and engraved reproduction rather than for aristocratic patrons. By proposing to sell West's paintings to the Academy, Fulton offered the institution an opportunity to buy into this trend and support itself by exhibiting West's images. President George Clymer of the Academy refused the offer. He claimed, despite the fact that Fulton's exhibition had generated one hundred dollars in revenue monthly for eight months, that Philadelphians were not sufficiently interested in the fine arts to warrant a large purchase of paintings. The patrons wanted their own tastes for classical art, not those of paying visitors, to drive the Academy's acquisitions. Artists like West and like the rising new star Washington Allston had difficulty selling their works in the United States not because of a lack of interest in art but because members of the elite wanted to preserve their status as taste-makers while discouraging lower-class, paying audiences from influencing the art market.[19]

19. Carrie Rebora, "Robert Fulton's Art Collection," *American Art Journal* 22, no. 3 (1990): 41–63. Harold E. Dickson, "Artists as Showmen," *American Art Journal* 5, no. 1 (1973): 4–17. Robert C. Alberts, *Benjamin West: A Biography* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978), 342–43. Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, "The Artist in the Era of Early Capitalism: The Independent Exhibition as Enterprise at the End of the

Allston had received a gentleman's education at Harvard and then studied at the Royal Academy and in France and Italy during the early years of the nineteenth century. He returned to Boston in 1808 to marry his fiancée, Ann Channing, and to explore the possibilities for surviving as a history painter in America. Boston was even more restricted in its notions of supporting artwork than Philadelphia. Anna Cabot Lowell, the sister of Allston's friend Charles Lowell, complained, "We have no order of men who have fortune and leisure to cultivate and encourage talents." The idea of paying audiences did not cross Lowell's mind as she explained to her correspondent that since Boston "had few or no purchasers for such pictures as his [Allston's] he will soon go to England, where I hope the sunshine of patronage may await his labors." Allston discovered that he had to leave Boston not only because there were no patrons but also because the members of its upper class, like the Academy patrons, could not see beyond the concept of elite patronage to the cultivation of paying spectators.[20]

Allston may have even tried to explain the importance of audiences to Bostonians with a small comic painting, titled *The Poor Author and the Rich Bookseller,* which he sold before leaving for London in 1811. This depiction of a bookseller deciding whether to publish an author's work is a satiric reflection on the incommensurability of fine art and commerce. But in the publisher's hesitation before making his decision, the work more specifically represents the struggle of all cultural entrepreneurs to understand the mysterious workings of consumers. Allston's printer and author are equally ugly and equally self-deceived about their appeal to the public. In the painting, the glowing sky in the window behind the writer haloes him with the light of inspiration. This device seems to signify his unique and God-given creative power. The author's unattractiveness suggests, however, that he is an inadequate mediator for the divine ideal. The author reaches out to the

French Revolution," *Abstracts and Program Statements: Seventy-Sixth Annual Meeting, College Art Association of America* (n.p.: n.p., 1988), 95–96. Emily Ballew Neff, "The History Theater: Production and Spectatorship in Copley's *The Death of Major Pierson,*" in Emily Ballew Neff and William L. Pressley, eds., *John Singleton Copley in England* (Houston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1995), 61–74. Louise Lippincott, "Expanding on Portraiture: The Market, the Public and the Hierarchy of Genres in Eighteenth-Century Britain," in Ann Bermingham and John Brewer, eds., *The Consumption of Culture, 1600–1800: Image, Object, Text* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 75–88.

20. Josiah P. Quincy, "Letters of Miss Anna Cabot Lowell," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 38 (1903–4): 304, 314–15.

bookseller, whose cross-legged posture, rich suit, and informal cloth hat recall the opulent clothing and relaxed position adopted by successful merchants in eighteenth-century American portraits. But unlike these merchants this bookseller has a dull face and a corpulent, slouched body that indicate self-indulgence rather than the alertness and energy necessary for commercial success. The empty shop in the background and the barren room in which the publisher receives the author suggest that the bookseller's wealth is as fictional as the author's manuscript. The only ornaments in the room—a half-concealed globe and a map with a conspicuous circular figure on it—reinforce the idea of grand but misguided efforts to circulate books.[21]

The bookseller has good reason to hesitate over this decision: he has obviously misjudged many times in the past. His bright blue eyes shift left, just missing direct eye contact with the viewer. This position of the eyes leaves the impression that he is anxiously trying to gauge the spectators' reaction in the gallery without allowing them to see that this is his intention. *Poor Author,* therefore, represents two cultural producers negotiating a problem we can see—whether to publish a text—because of the problem they cannot see—whether readers will eagerly purchase and read the book or turn it into the bits of useless, shredded paper that the apprentice sweeps up beneath the author's feet. Although this painting represents a center for book production and shows the two major figures involved in that production—author and publisher—the anxiety in this painting is not about having an idea to write about or a book to print. *Poor Author* worries about how the work will be received.

This preoccupation with consumption came even more to the forefront in Allston's next painting, *Dead Man Restored.* Allston began this painting of an obscure miracle from the second book of Kings immediately after arriving in London. In his first major effort to attract patrons, Allston catered to the current romantic vogue among British collectors for images of religious and supernatural events. Unlike other contemporary resurrection paintings, however, *Dead Man Restored* did not feature a prominent Christ figure mediating the relationship between audience and divine power. Since

21. Bjelajac, *Washington Allston, Secret Societies,* 136–37. William H. Gerdts and Theodore E. Stebbins Jr., *"A Man of Genius": The Art of Washington Allston* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1979), 59. Alexandra Johnson, "Between the Lines," clipping dated July 28, 1977, in "*Poor Author and Rich Bookseller* Object File," Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Unfortunately, all the information identifying the publication in which this clipping appeared was removed. James N. Green, e-mail to the author, June 22, 2008. Lovell, *Art in a Season of Revolution,* 99–100.

Figure 5. Washington Allston, *The Poor Author and the Rich Bookseller* (1811). Oil on canvas. 31½ × 28¼ inches. Collections of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Bequest of Charles Sprague Sargent, 27.220. Photograph © 2011 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

cultural producers—even if they were the prophet Elisha—could not really manage audiences, Allston minimized the visible author of the miracle in this painting to a few crumbling bones that passively transmit the power of God. He dedicated the majority of the canvas to representing the witnesses of the miracle as models of art consumption.[22]

22. Elizabeth Johns, "Washington Allston's *Dead Man Revived*," *Art Bulletin* 61, no. 1 (1979): 81–85, 87. For additional explanations of *Dead Man Restored*'s

Allston used the "natural language" of physiognomy to encourage audiences in the gallery to receive *Dead Man Restored* with the same fear and awe experienced by the figures witnessing the miracle in the image. According to eighteenth-century theories of oratory, bodily gestures and facial expressions constituted a physical language that speakers, actors, and painters could use to overcome communication barriers. Theoretically, viewers of the painting spontaneously comprehended the feelings expressed by the faces in the painting and naturally experienced a sympathetic desire to share these emotions. Physiognomy provided the internal emotions with a legible, external, and natural order in the gestures of the body. Allston's image used this language to stimulate an internal and mystical assent to the truth of the miracle it represented. The legible, natural bodies of the people in the painting provided sympathetic templates through which viewers could experience the feeling of belief in the painting's unnatural upward-moving light and glowing bones. This aspect of the painting was so important to Allston that when *Dead Man Restored* left London, first for Bristol and then for Philadelphia, he wrote an exhaustive description of how these provincial spectators should interpret what they saw. "The emotion attempted in the figure at the feet [of the reviving man] is that of astonishment and fear, modified by doubt, as if still requiring further confirmation of the miracle before him," Allston lectured viewers, "while in the figure at the head, is that of unqualified immoveable terror." By minutely taxonomizing the feelings of the painting's idealized audience in print, Allston tried to prevent people he presumed to be unsophisticated viewers from looking at the image without also experiencing a change of heart and heartfelt submission to a supernatural power.[23]

While Allston was exploring internal and emotional methods for managing viewers, the Academy was only gradually coming to see itself as an exhibition space. By 1816 financial necessity and the Society of Artists had made the Academy a somewhat unwilling host to five successful annual exhibi-

composition and symbolism, see Bjelajac, *Washington Allston, Secret Societies,* 41–46. Gerdts and Stebbins, *"A Man of Genius,"* 65–76.

23. Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, *Exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, of Mr. Allston's Picture* (Philadelphia: John Bioren, 1816), 3–4. Jay Fliegelman, *Declaring Independence: Jefferson, Natural Language and the Culture of Performance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 42–54. Alexander Nemerov, *The Body of Raphaelle Peale: Still Life and Selfhood, 1812–1824* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 13.

tions. In the public perception, and probably also in reality, these shows kept the Academy financially afloat. One commentator who described the 1813 annual exhibition in *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser* concluded, "As the principal part of the funds (if I mistake not) is drawn from what is received at the door, I sincerely hope my Fellow Citizens will lend their aid to keep it [the Academy] going." The Academy patrons compromised with the society to keep their institution solvent and unwittingly gave the artists an opportunity to use the exhibitions to establish a version of spectatorship that would produce art buyers. The artists insisted that the Academy cover or remove the statue collection during the annual exhibitions. In this way, visitors would not be distracted by desires for foreign art that they could not purchase. Instead, in addition to Sansay's artificial flowers, the artists offered portraits of famous citizens and paintings of naval battles. Visitors could buy engravings of these images to demonstrate their patriotism and their support for American-manufactured goods. Two paintings about art audiences in Philadelphia produced during the earliest annual exhibitions—Krimmel's *Fourth of July in Centre Square* and Charles Bird King's *Poor Artist's Cupboard*—indicate, however, that viewers refused to become patriotic shoppers and continued to tour the galleries to experience the artworks. Krimmel and King differed significantly over whether these spectators contributed anything to the development of American art.[24]

In *Fourth of July,* a holiday crowd gathers around two neoclassical artworks: Latrobe's waterworks in Centre Square and William Rush's sculpture *Water Nymph and Bittern*. Together, these two works suggest that Krimmel believed the Academy should be a dynamic pumping system for aesthetic experience in the city. Although *Fourth of July* was not one of the monumental history paintings that were most valued according to neoclassical hierarchies of art, it did promote the idea that neoclassical forms provided an ideal order for art and for society. For instance, Krimmel slyly reversed the patrons' insistence that the Academy was their creation. By inserting Latrobe's public building into this painting that was displayed at the Academy, Krimmel reminded viewers how much the design of the Academy echoed the clean, neoclassical lines of Latrobe's waterworks, with its pillared porch entrance on the long side of the rectangle and its large central dome. Like the water that Latrobe's machines circulated, art was an external part of the environment that was consumed to regulate the internal

24. T.H., "Academy of Fine Arts," *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser,* July 20, 1813. *Report of the Committee,* 7. "A Cursory Review of the Exhibition of the Academy of Arts," *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser,* June 15, 1811.

systems of the body and, by extension, of the body politic. Conversely, Rush's statue derived from the art that the sculptor consumed at the Academy. Rush carved the *Water Nymph* from wood, but he painted it white like the plaster casts. The thin garments that clung to the woman's body easily recalled the nude antique statues. Krimmel's painting effectively turned the Academy inside out, revealing its dependence on and contribution to other forms of aesthetic experience in the city. *Fourth of July* argued that unrestricted public access to this art was as essential to healthy independence as clean water.[25]

Krimmel also demonstrated the interdependence of art and republican social order in the painting's ability to make art out of the spectators' independent reactions to these works. Like *Dead Man Restored, Fourth of July* allowed viewers to watch another audience. But unlike Allston, Krimmel incorporated multiple reactions to artworks in his crowd scene rather than attempting to dictate one reaction. Although his painting chided members of the crowd for their ignorance, prejudice, or greedy consumption, it also frankly represented spectators misunderstanding art. To externally encompass and channel all these forms of consumption, Krimmel organized the groups from different social strata into a horizontal frieze across the middle of the painting. The nymph rises above this frieze at the exact center of the image and demonstrates that an ideal, white human form can triumph over all the heterogeneity and disorder of the real world. Within this classical formal structure, *Fourth of July* represents the crowd realistically as something of an artist's nightmare. The man dressed in Quaker clothing in the left foreground of the painting cautions his child against the vanities of art while his wife sneaks a peek at the statue over his shoulder. A young man on the far right side of the painting, who may be coming in from the country for the day, pushes back his hat and gawks in wonder at the crowd, the waterworks, and the statue. Three young women distract two upper-class dandies from the artworks. Meanwhile, the old woman selling drinks on the left side of the painting may be luring her customers away from the pure water of neoclassicism to intemperance and greed. By turning these reactions into art, Krimmel argues this diversity can be structured into a unified, beautiful picture using the idealized clean lines, stunning whiteness, and balanced horizontal and vertical proportions of classical art.[26]

---

25. Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, *William Rush: American Sculptor* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1982), 21.

26. Anneliese Harding, *John Lewis Krimmel: Genre Artist of the Early Republic* (Winterthur, Del.: Winterthur Publications, 1994), 22. David Bjelajac, *American Art: A Cultural History* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 2005), 147. For

For Krimmel's fellow Philadelphia artist Charles Bird King, divergent reactions to art and print debates about these experiences were the nemesis of the harmony that *Fourth of July* celebrated. In his 1815 still life, *The Poor Artist's Cupboard,* King worried that the democratization of art spectatorship would replace works of art with an unregulated flood of printed commentary. Viewers who preferred reading about one another's feelings and opinions would purchase the written descriptions instead of visiting exhibitions and buying paintings. One of the legible scraps stuffed into the cupboard in King's image comes from a newspaper advertisement for a new work entitled "The Art of Painting Better Advanced by Criticism than by Patronage." A large book at the bottom left corner of the picture is labeled *Choice of Criticism on the Exhibitions at Philadelphia.* King's painting indicates that art audiences in Philadelphia expanded rapidly thanks to the Academy's exhibitions, but it also suggests that these shows produced divisive print debates, such as Folwell's satiric description, rather than the unconscious aesthetic unity that Krimmel celebrated or the sale of artworks that the Society of Artists anticipated. King may even have chosen to produce this critique as a still life because this genre demonstrated his ability to imitate life visually, something that the mounds of paper in the image could never accomplish. Unfortunately, according to King, Philadelphians preferred reading about art exhibitions to purchasing the works themselves.[27]

The other problem with the print generated by expanding art audiences and domestic tourists was that it could be created, circulated, and exchanged much more rapidly and easily than an oil painting. As a result, artists also had to travel farther to improve their education so that they could compete in international markets. Jennifer Roberts suggests that the cup of water in John Singleton Copley's *Boy with a Squirrel* signifies the painting's trans-Atlantic transit; King may have incorporated a cup of water just below a shell in his painting for similar reasons. The cup pairs with the chunk of bread to indicate that the artist is starving, while the texts that cluster around the cup suggest that this starvation occurs because printed news

---

the relation of neoclassicism to whiteness and slavery, see Eric Slauter, *The State as a Work of Art: The Cultural Origins of the Constitution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 106–7.

27. For readings of King's painting see Wayne Craven, *American Art: History and Culture* (New York: H. N. Abrams, 1994), 156. Andrew J. Costenio, *The Paintings of Charles Bird King, 1785–1862* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1977), 26. Nemerov, *The Body of Raphaelle Peale,* 75, 216.

Figure 6. Charles Bird King, *Poor Artist's Cupboard* (ca. 1815). Oil on panel. 29 3/4 × 27 3/4 inches. The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Museum Purchase, Gallery Fund and Exchange. Accession number 55.93.

about art crossed the Atlantic much more successfully than artists or artworks. The shell may be a souvenir of the artist's own presumably unsuccessful quest for fame on a foreign shore. King himself had studied at the Royal Academy in London for several years before returning to work as an artist in Philadelphia when the War of 1812 broke out. As a young and struggling artist, King matched the profile of many other society members, but he does not appear to have joined the institution. Although King exhibited other artworks at the Academy, he never displayed *Poor Artist's Cupboard,* probably because the painting claimed that its annual exhibitions,

and the expanding audience for art that they provoked, were destroying American artists.[28]

As *Poor Artist's Cupboard* complains, the Academy's annual exhibitions not only put consumers in conflict with artists, but also caused these disputes to expand beyond elite periodicals like Boston's *Monthly Anthology* and Philadelphia's *Port Folio* to newspapers like *Poulson's.* Though the gentlemen and women who wrote for the *Monthly Anthology* or for the *Port Folio* used these exclusive publications to reinforce their claim to be the proper guardians of universal aesthetic criteria, the anonymous people who wrote for *Poulson's* narrated their individual travels through the exhibitions as ephemeral current events. One especially vocal audience member, who went by the pseudonym of Philo-Pictor, took it upon himself to describe the 1815 Annual Exhibition as it happened throughout the month of June in a series of letters to *Poulson's.* Philo-Pictor, like Krimmel and Allston, represented the audience to itself, but he eschewed the neoclassical aesthetic hierarchies that the elite patrons adhered to, and he ignored the artists' desire for viewers to buy art rather than stroll past it like tourists.

First and foremost, Philo-Pictor encouraged readers and potential Academy visitors to enjoy art as middlebrow amateurs—as self-conscious consumers of art as an internal, emotional experience—and not as libertine connoisseurs or as shoppers. In his letters he moves constantly through the galleries like a roving tourist and glances over artworks that range from the portraits, still lifes, and busts esteemed in academic hierarchies to the engravings and wax statues that have lesser academic value but equal aesthetic interest in his eyes. Philo-Pictor surrounds himself with an entourage of other viewers who define their status as art lovers by their repeated visits to the Academy and by their conversations about their feelings with him. These self-described amateurs are certainly in search of behavioral and intellectual refinement, but, like Folwell's "Jack," they are not passive receptors of what the members of Philadelphia's elite consider superior art. They find their criteria for taste in their immediate responses to the artworks.

Philo-Pictor distinguishes his coterie of middling amateurs from connoisseurs and from working artists by revealing the differences in class, education, and feeling among these groups. As a result, his descriptions of his travels through the Academy differ significantly from typical accounts of

28. Jennifer L. Roberts, "Copley's Cargo: *Boy with a Squirrel* and the Dilemma of Transit," *American Art* 21, no. 2 (2007): 23.

British domestic tourism, in which potential class conflict was subsumed into aesthetic rivalries. Philo-Pictor relates tastes directly to different experiences of class and labor. Unlike the constant leisure enjoyed by an aristocrat, his free time to visit the galleries has come after a long working life, which included a good deal of foreign travel. Since his visits to these other countries were for business, they did not give him time to experience "the dulcet sounds of voice or insinuating behavior of those Gentry, so ready to show all that is rare or fine in Italy." Therefore, Philo-Pictor "entreats" that "these few loose *thoughts* may not be *thought* the worse of by those Connoisseurs, who have possessed the inestimable advantage of seeing and appreciating the Louvre in all its glory!" Although he admits that members of the elite have more technical knowledge, Philo-Pictor exhibits an independent man's contempt for the "insinuating" behavior of wealthy courtiers and implies that he has acquired his tastes honestly.[29]

Philo-Pictor also resists efforts by Philadelphia's artists to claim they shared the connoisseur's superior knowledge of art and, therefore, class status. In another letter he responds to the ire of "a member of the Columbian Society of Artists" (the society renamed itself the Columbian Society in 1813) who allegedly attacked Philo-Pictor for his favorable description of some wax images. The artist claimed that Philo-Pictor could not critique art because he did not understand the academically correct genre hierarchies, which deem realistic wax statues to be inferior to ideal representations of human form in marble or paint. This critical artist may be a figment of Philo-Pictor's imagination. As King's picture demonstrates, however, contemporary artists certainly were ambivalent toward amateur spectators who published their ideas. In his response, Philo-Pictor refused to defer to this artist and argued that his "enthusiastic admiration of the Fine Arts" legitimized his aesthetic judgment. Technically proficient artists ought to acknowledge the worth of viewers' experiences and be considerate of the "tender feelings of . . . compeers and inferiors." His use of the term "inferiors" here to describe himself and other amateurs functioned as an ironic concession to the artist's unfeeling assertion of moral as well as technical superiority. Philo-Pictor argued that how the visitor experiences "tender feelings" in the presence of art is the most important element of a gallery visit.[30]

---

29. Philo-Pictor, "The Fine Arts," *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser,* June 14, 1815; emphasis in original.

30. Philo-Pictor, "The Fine Arts," *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser,* June 24, 1815. Fabricant, "Literature of Domestic Tourism," 260–61. The wax images were advertised in the catalog as "Portraits of a gentleman, in wax, plain and coloured"

Philo-Pictor also visited the galleries because he was a bachelor and the Academy offered him an excellent opportunity to look at and talk to women. The contrast between Philo-Pictor's detailed accounts of artworks and the silly remarks he overheard from women visitors—"this beats all," "vastly natural," "charming"—demonstrated his superior and masculine perspective on art. Philo-Pictor also used the female visitors, however, to indicate that the Academy was not an art marketplace but an opportunity to escape from capitalist competition into leisure. "I visited the Academy of Fine Arts this morning," Philo-Pictor opened one letter, "and was much gratified in observing it attended by the Ladies, and by them chiefly; whether the return of the blessings of Peace has confined Gentlemen to their Stores and Counting Houses, I know not—be that as it may, I have ever found the Fair Sex the greatest admirers of the Fine Arts." Although this kind of free access to women may have been a product of Philo-Pictor's imagination to please the presumably male reader of *Poulson's,* the Academy emerged in these letters as a space where audience members enjoyed socializing while appreciating the artworks. Philo-Pictor and his characters were neither the patriotic purchasers that the artists desired nor aspiring aristocrats using art to demonstrate their superior status. Instead, they combined the multiplicity of interpretive perspectives that Krimmel represented in *Fourth of July* with the tendency to describe their emotional experiences on paper that King feared.[31]

Philo-Pictor's letters portrayed the viewers in the galleries as the only united constituency willing to support the Academy. The person who seems to have best gauged the strength of this new actor in Philadelphia's art world was a merchant and art collector, James McMurtrie, who had become an Academy director in 1814. McMurtrie was in London, perhaps for business reasons, when Allston returned from Bristol in 1815. He convinced the artist that he could find a "permanent roof" to shelter *Dead Man Restored* in the United States or at least take it "traveling about from place to place" as an exhibition to paying audiences. McMurtrie's interest in the painting

by G. Miller. See Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, *Fifth Annual Exhibition* (Philadelphia: John Bioren, 1815), 7.

31. Philo-Pictor, "The Fine Arts," *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser,* June 3, 1815. Andrew Hemingway, "Art Exhibitions as Leisure-Class Rituals in Early Nineteenth-Century London," in Brian Allen, ed., *Towards a Modern Art World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 99–104.

suggests that his occupation as a merchant of luxury goods like tea gave him insight into the role of consumer demand in markets for these items. He realized he could sell a sensational painting of a resurrection to audiences already enjoying melodramatic theatricals and magic shows in Philadelphia.[32]

Since Peale's museum was still the most audience-savvy institution in the early republic, McMurtrie offered *Dead Man Restored* to the museum and to the Academy when he returned to Philadelphia with the painting. As we have already seen, *Dead Man Restored* did not fit the Peales' vision of audiences learning to reason about the external "wondrous work" of nature. Academy viewers, on the other hand, visited the galleries to experience the internal feelings that the painting represented so graphically. "The exhibition opens at the Academy this day," McMurtrie concluded his letter about the sale to Allston. "Yr picture has an entire side of the wall to itself, fronting the entrance light from above. I have not seen it in its place but can readily imagine the effect it will produce." Aside from sending Allston copies of a few favorable Philadelphia reviews, McMurtrie did not offer his own account of the painting's reception. But if McMurtrie sent the review published in the *Port Folio,* then Allston would have discovered that his painting aggravated, rather than resolved, anxieties about the role of audiences at the Academy.[33]

The *Port Folio's* reviewer did not trust Allston's faith that supernatural events provoked heartfelt and submissive order. On the surface, *Dead Man Restored* showed only disorderly shouting, weeping, fainting, running around, and—according to the reviewer—the unregulated consumption of news. "The bustle which pervades throughout the whole scene would not seem to be caused by the performance of the miracle, as the subject of it is in a pit, and removed from the sight of most of those represented in action," the writer claimed. "The mind is not quite satisfied as to the possibility of the news of his recovering having been so rapidly circulated as to cause all the commotion from whence the picture derives its interest and animation."

---

32. James McMurtrie to Washington Allston, April 15, 1816, in *Correspondence,* 87–88. Records of an 1807 voyage between Amsterdam, the Isle of France, and Philadelphia show McMurtrie acting as the supercargo for a load of Chinese tea. Watson and Paul Business Records, box 2, folder 59, Library Company of Philadelphia, Philadelphia. In 1818 McMurtrie is listed in *The Philadelphia Directory and Register* as a "stock broker" in the firm of "McMurtrie & Walmsley." John Adams Paxton, *The Philadelphia Directory and Register, for 1818* (Philadelphia, 1818).

33. James McMurtrie to Washington Allston, April 15, 1816, *Correspondence,* 87–88.

The people in the painting, according to this critic, act like an unruly audience spreading rumors of events that they have not observed. The *Port Folio*'s reviewer overlooked the irony that his reading would circulate in a print periodical and would compound the problem of unregulated news by spreading his partial account to those who had not seen the painting. The writer both feared and reproduced the power of Philadelphia audiences to wrest control of artworks away from their creators and patrons. Writing about their heartfelt experience of art, whether it frightened them with its disorder or awed them with its wonders, allowed spectators to control what they could never purchase.[34]

The Pennsylvania Academy's acquisition of *Dead Man Restored,* in conclusion, reveals how an expanding audience for art exhibitions shaped art's trajectory in the early United States away from Old Master paintings and classical statues and toward new historical and narrative paintings. Rembrandt Peale had already opened a museum with his own historical paintings in Baltimore in 1814. In 1817 the Pennsylvania Hospital began exhibiting another miracle painting, West's *Christ Healing the Sick,* to crowds of visitors. The Academy also increased its collection of historical paintings throughout the nineteenth century, most notably with its purchase of West's *Death on the Pale Horse* in 1836. The Academy directors learned that the institution's survival depended on promoting tourism with exhibitions of art that gave visitors something sensational to see, to feel, and to write about. As a result, it outlived not only the rival American Academy but also Peale's Philadelphia Museum. Since this development of an art audience in Philadelphia was largely unintended, it lacked a recognized spokesperson, aside from Philo-Pictor, who could articulate paying spectatorship into a national program for promoting art. Yet the belated emergence of an academic curriculum at the Academy in the 1840s ultimately indicated that to produce fine art, at least a generation of Philadelphians needed the regular opportunity to consume art as an emotional experience.[35]

34. "Analysis of Mr. Allston's Picture of The Dead Man Raised," *Port Folio,* May 1816, 443.

35. Susan Danly, *Telling Tales: Nineteenth-Century Narrative Painting from the Collection of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1991).