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MNEMOSYNE

Metaphors of Collecting in Late Nineteenth Century Paris

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At the same time that Aby Warburg was assembling his library and organizing his *Bildatlas Mnemosyne*, art critics and writers theorized late nineteenth-century collecting in Paris in metaphoric terms. Over and again, art collections were described as a bouquet, a conversation, a book, or indeed as a painting in and of itself put together by an 'amateur'. By creating an ensemble, the amateur proposed a metaphorical mode of knowledge similar to that celebrated by Aby Warburg. This article considers the ways in which the arrangement and spaces of the late nineteenth-century amateurs, as seen in newspaper articles, sales catalogue essays and other texts and photographs, positioned the collector of paintings, but also of drawings and prints and rare books, in contradistinction to the development of the museum and proposed alternative modes of viewing and of knowing. The interdisciplinarity of Warburg's focus on image, word, orientation and action is paralleled in many private collections.

Article

As M. Arsène Alexandre has been closely and ardently involved in the artistic movement of the past twenty years, his collection is, at the same time, like a painting of a whole aspect of art during the period that just passed, and like a summary of the struggles in which criticism has taken part.¹

At the same time that Aby Warburg was assembling his library and organizing his Mnemosyne Atlas, art critics and writers theorized late nineteenth-century collecting in Paris in metaphoric terms. Over and again art collections were described as a bouquet, a conversation, a book, or indeed as a painting in and of itself put together by an 'amateur'. By creating an ensemble, the amateur proposed a metaphorical mode of knowledge similar to that celebrated by Warburg. This article considers the ways in which the arrangement and spaces of the late nineteenth-century amateurs, as seen in newspaper articles, sales catalogue essays and other texts and photographs, positioned collectors of paintings, drawings and prints and rare books, in contradistinction to the development of the museum and proposed alternative modes of viewing and of knowing.

The nineteenth century was ripe with manuals; from how to arrange flowers, plant a garden, learn the history of France, to how to set up a library, arrange a room, have a conversation, or walk through a museum. To read these manuals is to find a clear link between visual display and other kinds of knowing. This article considers many of the metaphors used to describe collections, with reference also to hand-books of flower arranging, conversation and so on. Warburg's collections, both of books and of images aimed, as Benjamin Buchloh (1999: 124) writes, to 'construct a model of historical memory and continuity of experience' and nineteenth-century collectors such as Baron Pichon and the Goncourt Brothers aimed to make the past live again in the arrangement of their own libraries and homes. New ways of seeing and, indeed knowing, were expressed by way of metaphors used by the amateurs themselves, and those that described them, in connection with their collections. As

¹ 'Comme M Arsène Alexandre a été mêlé de très près et très ardemment au mouvement artistique de ces vingt dernières années, sa collection est, en même temps, comme un tableau de tout un aspect de l'art pendant la période qui vient de s'écouler, et comme un résumé des luttes auxquelles le critique a pris part' (*Collection Arsène Alexandre*, 1903: 6, author's translation).

Christopher Johnson (2012: xi) argues with reference to Warburg's library, collections of the nineteenth-century amateurs 'fostered combinatory thought'.

One thing after another: Organizing the nineteenth-century museum

While this article focuses on private and amateur collectors, the role of the museum, one of the most important new institutions of the nineteenth-century art world, must also be acknowledged.² Whereas in earlier periods art was mainly held in private collections, the opening of European museums allowed unprecedented access to art of the past. Private collecting did not, however, diminish as museums rose to prominence. Instead, the numbers of private collectors increased in parallel with the growth of the museum.³ The relationship between these private collectors and the museum was complex. Many of the curators and directors of the museums were themselves collectors, beginning with the first director of the Louvre, Dominique-Vivant Denon.⁴ Similarly, many private collectors, such as Etienne Moreau-Nélaton, bequeathed their holdings to museums, such as the Louvre (Laclotte, 1989; Long, 2007). Sometimes, however, as was the case for Edmond de Goncourt, private collectors felt quite hostile towards the idea of a museum. Goncourt (1897) was upset about the way museums tended to separate art from the vibrancy of private life. Rather than art being exhibited in such a way as to express the 'happiness of [a] life', he describes how the 'cold tomb of the museum' provokes disinterest in visitors, who pass by the artworks with indifference

² The literature on museums is enormous, with an emphasis on the relationship between the bourgeois state and the museum: Carol Duncan (1994) was one of the first scholars to analyze the relationship between the museum and the state; Chantal George (1994) discusses the 'collective reappropriation' of national heritage in the encyclopedic museum; whilst Daniel Sherman (1989) stresses the visual arts as performing a legitimizing and self-glorifying role for the bourgeois state; and Tony Bennett (1995) takes as a starting point the work of Habermas, discussing the civic role of the museum. Public libraries, and the Bibliothèque Nationale in particular, were also linked to revolutionary upheaval and identified with the rising nation.

³ Anne Higonnet (2009) argues that the French revolution strengthened the idea of a private art collection: 'Before the end of the eighteenth century, princely collections were neither public nor private because they belonged to the person and rank of a lord or monarch; after the acceptance of the museum concept, any collection owned by an individual, no matter how exalted, seemed private or personal' (Higonnet, 2009: 7).

⁴ See the comprehensive catalogue: *Dominique-Vivant Denon. L'oeil de Napoléon* (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1999) which discusses all aspects of his life: as administrator, collector, scholar and artist.



Figure 1: *Le Musée du Louvre et ses peintures d'après "Le musée du Louvre – Les peintures, les dessins, la chalcographie"* par Jean Guiffrey – Paris 1909 *Salle de Rembrandt.*

The organization of paintings in museums changed over the course of the nineteenth century. At the start of the century, a mixture of styles and schools of painting were hung according to principles of harmony. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, curators generally followed a chronological arrangement first implemented in Germany, divided by national schools (**Figure 1**). The didactic role of museums such as the Louvre called for a directed path and resulted in a series of catalogues published about the museum's holdings as well as a number of re-hangings, so as to make clearer the progression from one school of painting to another, and one period to another. For many museum guides of the time, such as Théophile Gautier's 1882 *Guide to the Louvre* or Edmond Duranty's 1877 and 1878 'Promenades through the Louvre' published in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, the public museum collection required scientific research and erudition. These authors lead the largely bourgeois reader through the Louvre in paths guided by national schools and historical development. Gautier's guide takes the visitor systematically from the Italian school in the Grande Galerie, through the German, Flemish and Dutch schools and finally the French School. Duranty's various 'promenades' also remain within national schools. He devotes one article to

Egyptian art, for example, and another to Dutch. The chronological and geographical arrangement of these guides is attributable both to the didactic and political function of the museum as an agent of the state, and to the reigning positivist art history of such writers as Hippolyte Taine (1865) and Eugène Fromentin (1876). These art historians argued that national schools of art, like a country's landscape, were produced as a result of climate. Thus for Taine, the wet and gray atmosphere of Holland was responsible for the coloristic aspect of Dutch painting, while the constant sunshine of Italy led to the greater clarity and precision of that country's art.

Heterogeneous grouping: The private collection

While many scholars have linked the format of the museum to ideas such as the formation of national identity, or cultural imperialism, less attention has been paid to the creative and conceptual basis of the heterogeneous and non-linear organization of the private collection.⁵ Those collectors who were described as amateurs envisioned a different organization of paintings. These collectors rejected museum categories by hanging paintings from different periods in close juxtaposition. They mixed sculptures, photographs and cloisonné gems. Each artwork could be viewed anew in a grouping in which, as in the collection of Jean Dollfus, a nineteenth-century statue by Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux was installed near a fourteenth-century Madonna (**Figure 2**).

The way in which each painting was set in contrast to the next enacted the kind of relational viewing that Andrew McClellan (1988) first traced in the Musée du Luxembourg in the latter half of the eighteenth century. This mode of display was valued again in the late nineteenth century by amateur collectors, partly as a reaction against the museological urge to hang collections chronologically and geographically. The

⁵ The literature on collecting falls into three basic categories: the first considers art collecting as an aspect of consumer culture (for a recent discussion of consumer culture at the end of the century, see Lisa Tiersten [2001]). The second focuses on motivations (see Susan Stewart [1999]). Finally, there are a wide range of more focused studies and exhibition catalogues (including, among many others, Ann Dumas et al. [1997] and Edmund de Waal [2010]). This article is concerned with the semiotics of collection.



Figure 2: *La galerie de l'hôtel de la rue Pierre-Charron*, anonymous photograph in Samuel Rocheblave, *Un grand collectionneur Alsacien, Jean Dollfus, 1823 à 1911*. Strasbourg: *Revue Alsacienne Illustrée*, 1912. My photograph, from a public domain book.

amateur created a visual logic that challenged each visitor to understand fresh connections between artworks.

One way to understand this mode of knowledge is by way of both the library and Warburg's *Bildatlas* (2000). Warburg took pains with the shape of his library, installing it in an ellipse that he believed recalled the Keplerian cosmos (Johnson, 2012: 66). For him the shape of the room conferred a specific kind of thinking. Although his picture panels were produced later (1926-29), they were the product of decades of research and are useful here as a model for considering the way in which the spatial arrangement of images promotes what Christopher Johnson calls the 'synchrony of seeing' (Johnson, 2012: 51). For Warburg, the kinds of metaphors utilized by the sales catalogue writers – 'bouquet', 'conversation' and so on – were a route to greater insight, and his arrangement of reproductions for his *Bildatlas* as well as the arrangement of books in his library, followed a metaphoric logic. Rather than being organized linearly, both the library and the *Bildatlas* reflected his 'scorn for disciplinary,

conceptual, and chronological boundaries' (Johnson, 2012: 19), and were organized thematically to trace the survival of images, but also to uncover the ways that certain images served as metaphors for experience. In the state that Warburg left it, the *Bildatlas Mnemosyne* consisted of sixty-three panels of photographically reproduced images, arranged according to theme. The Warburg Institute has published a website in which Christopher Johnson argues that 'the non-discursive, frequently digressive character of the Atlas frustrates any smooth critical narrative of its themes and contents' (Johnson, n.d.). The website identifies nine big themes, including, among others, 'the cosmological-genealogical prologue', 'ancient cosmology', 'classical "pre-imprinting"' and "'the afterlife" of classical "expressive values in [the] Renaissance"' (The Warburg Institute, n.d.).

While this kind of deep analysis of themes does not seem to be the goal of a collector like Dollfus, his juxtapositions inspire unexpected comparisons across time. In the photograph of his gallery a chair faces the viewer, inviting us to join the assembled personages that are grouped on the floor: depictions of a serious woman, a courtier, and another seventeenth-century woman beneath Carpeaux's relief of Flora. These characters seem to address each other, forming a kind of conversation with each other and with any possible visitor to the room. Michaud (2007), among others, maintains that Warburg juxtaposed images in such a way as to emphasize the resurgence of the Dionysian aspect of classical art. In Dollfus' gallery, instead, we see infants appearing in many period guises, be it Northern, Italian Renaissance, or nineteenth-century French. Dollfus' arrangement inspires dialogue amongst the artworks, rather than explicitly making an argument for continuity of deep themes in the Warburgian mode, but in some ways the effect is similar. Michael Podro explains that Warburg treats paintings as if they were texts, 'with an analyzable vocabulary and use of metaphor' dissolving 'the self-containedness of the painting' (Podro, 1982: 160–4). Such motifs as the ex-voto figure appeared, Warburg argued, both in paintings and in wax effigies; the motif was not contained within one medium. The Dollfus room, with its sculptures, boxes, carvings, paintings and miniatures argues against medium specificity. Many scholars maintain that for Warburg, the

deeply felt basis for art making was inscribed in the psyche.⁶ His project, to trace the afterlife of antique images, was similar, many scholars argue, to the psychological excavations of Freud (Holly, 2013: 76–7). Samuel Rocheblave, French Academician and professor at the University of Strasbourg, writes in his short book on Dollfus that his goal was to have everything around him ‘shine with the brilliance of life’ (Rocheblave, 1912: 28).

The private collectors, who were referred to as amateurs, can be seen to oppose the chronological installation of the museum. In a similar way, Warburg’s non-discursive arrangements opposed the historicity of the emerging art historical discipline. The difference between the private ensemble and the public museum was well understood in this period. For example, in 1895 Gustave Larroumet, the Director of Beaux-Arts at the time, wrote about the role of the museum:

A museum is a reunion of art objects that have no necessary relationship amongst themselves, that are, frankly, disparate, but that have an intrinsic artistic or historical value, and are exhibited to please or to instruct the visitors. The ideal museum would be one in which each object marks a date and where one can follow the complete history of an art, or of an art of one country.⁷

In private collections, objects are positioned according to their visual relation to each other. In a museum, each object is disparate, arranged in a series that corresponds to the passage of time. The spectator reenacts this passage of time in a compressed way as s/he follows along. Charles Baudelaire mocks the museum visitor who walks quickly

⁶ A conference at The Helix Center of the New York Psychoanalytic Society and Institute held in 2013 explored this issue. I attended the 12 October session on ‘Aby Warburg: Art, Neuroscience and Psychoanalysis’, listening to a paper by Georges Didi-Huberman titled ‘An Eccentric Science’ and a subsequent discussion by Didi-Huberman, Thomas Da Costa Kaufmann, François Quiviger, Dorothea Rockburne and Christopher Wood (see Didi-Huberman [2013]).

⁷ ‘Une musée, c’est une réunion d’objets d’art, sans rapports nécessaires les uns avec les autres, disparates, pour parler net, mais qui, ayant une valeur propre ou historique, sont exposés pour servir à l’agrément et à l’instruction des visiteurs. L’idéal d’un musée serait celui où chaque objet... marquerait une date et où l’on pourrait suivre l’histoire complète d’un art où de l’art dans un pays’ (Larroumet, 1895: 223–4).

past a crowd of paintings and then leaves, satisfied, saying, 'I know my museum' (Baudelaire, 1863: 529). Contrary to Baudelaire's sarcasm, the museum elicited a desire to know more, and, as we have seen, guidebooks were a regular supplement to the museum visit. Artists, too, frequented the museum. Edouard Manet and Edgar Degas, for example, met whilst copying paintings of the old masters in the Louvre.

Some private collections were open to the general public and were listed in guides to Paris (see, for example, Ris-Paquot [1890]). One of these was the James-Alexandre Pourtalès collection. Built to display art following the museum standards of the mid-nineteenth century with a high skylight and a separation of sculpture on the first floor and painting on the top, it inspired Henry Walters as a model for his Walters Art Museum in Baltimore (Middleton, 1997: 57–65; Johnson, 1999: 168). This kind of architecture was congruent with an attitude of awe and distance from the works of art, while the more contained spaces and less chronological displays of a private collection allowed for a more casual and comparative knowledge. In contrast to the 'majesty and amplitude' of the museum, critic Leon Roger-Milès wrote in 1900, the 'small salon with soft carpet, the comfortable home' called for a 'gaze that easily travels from shimmering hearth to walls all radiant with the sunshine of art' (Roger-Milès, 1900: n. pag.).⁸ The private collection called for a more intimate kind of visit, one mixed with conversation, with a meal perhaps, and with friendship.

The guidebooks to the museum focused most on its individual artworks and how to understand them. For us to understand the private collection, it is useful to turn to the different forms of guidebooks that take up such disparate themes as conversation and entertaining, home decoration, flower arrangement, garden layout as well as picture arrangements. The close connection between the way amateurs lived and the way they collected is one reason for this, but more importantly, the metaphorical language that critics used to describe the collections demands careful inquiry.

⁸ '[P]our les tableaux qui composent cette collection, la majesté et l'ampleur d'une galerie de musée seraient déplacées; ce qu'il leur faut, c'est le petit salon aux tapis moelleux, c'est le **home** confortable, où le regard sans fatigue va du foyer qui pétille aux murs tout irradiants du soleil de l'art' (Roger-Milès, 1900: n.p.).

Parallels with Warburg's 'combinatory thought' can be drawn, and understanding the collection as a whole changes the way we view each constituent part.

The nineteenth century was a time of social dislocation and mobility and etiquette guides of all sorts, including guides to conversation, proliferated. One such guide is the *Code de la Conversation: Manuel complet du langage élégant et poli* [*Rules of Conversation: The Complete Manual for Polite and Elegant Speech*] published in 1829. The author states their goal as 'tracing the rules for the great benefit of those people who lack a guide for joining society, for presenting themselves there in a polite manner'.⁹ The 'proper rules' had been established in the eighteenth century, where notions of conversation and space were linked. The integral connection between an interior space and conversation was embodied in the idea of the 'salon', which was at once a place and an event. The practice of the amateur in the eighteenth century was closely intertwined with his *sociabilité* (Guichard, 2008: 189–238). The friendships between amateurs and artists served the interests of each; the amateurs theorized the artist's work as well as collecting it, while the artists often served as teachers, instructing the amateurs in painting, watercolor and engraving.¹⁰ They also travelled together, becoming close friends (Redford, 2008: 1–12). This intimate relationship was interrupted by the arrival of the professional critic and the demand for public discourse that accompanied the years leading up to, and immediately following, the 1789 revolution (Crow, 1985: 1–23).

While the elites of nineteenth century Paris included many in the bourgeois realm, they preserved the aristocratic privileging of conversation associated with the tradition of the eighteenth-century salons. From the Restoration, through the July Monarchy, and into the Second Empire and the Third Republic, the socially elevated classes persisted in gathering in salons and matching wits (Martin-Fugier,

⁹ '[N]ous avons voulu tracer des règles pour le plus grand bien des personnes qui manquent d'un guide en entrant dans le monde, pour s'y présenter d'une manière convenable' (Roger-Milès, 1900: 3).

¹⁰ A 2011 exhibition at the Maison de Chateaubriand, 'Mme Geoffrin: une femme d'affaires et d'esprit', traced the 'sociabilité' of Madame Geoffrin, whose relationship with Hubert Robert was also discussed by Paula Radisch (1998).

1993; Armstrong, 1991).¹¹ In her 1844 letters, for example, Delphine de Girardin discussed the importance of conversation (de Girardin, 1860 [1844]: 112).¹² She very specifically linked the success of the conversation to the space in which it occurs: 'the destiny of the conversation depends on three things: the quality of the speakers, the harmony of their spirits and the material arrangement of the salon'. She goes on to describe the recommended arrangement of the salon: 'a salon should be like an English garden, apparently disordered; but this disorder is not the effect of chance but on the contrary is a supreme art' (de Girardin, [1844]: 112).¹³ De Girardin was so convinced of this rule that she argued that an amusing conversation could never start in a salon where the furniture was arranged symmetrically. In the discourse surrounding the amateur, a 'picturesque' arrangement in the private collection was thus seen as allowing both for sociable gatherings and for the appreciation of the conversational quality of art.

Related to the ensemble both in its spatial and its social aspect is the 'circle' (Agulhon, 1977). Littré, for example, gives the sixth meaning of this geometrical term as:

All dispositions of people or objects arranged so as to form a sort of circumference of a circle. . . in particular, the gathering of princesses and duchesses seated circularly in the presence of the queen//by extension, society, assembly of men and of women united by the pleasure of conversation. (Littré, 1876: 528–9)¹⁴

¹¹ See Anne Martin-Fugier (1991) and also Carol Armstrong (1991), whose study characterizes the social circle of Degas as one in which love of aphorism, the cult of male friendship and double edged badinage with women predominates.

¹² Delphine de Girardin writes in *Lettres Parisiennes in Oeuvres Complètes* that: 'Le destin de la conversation dépend de trois choses: de la qualité des causeurs, de l'harmonie des esprits, et de l'arrangement matériel du salon' (de Girardin, 1860 [1844]: 112).

¹³ 'Un salon doit être comme un jardin anglais, apparemment désordonné mais ce désordre n'est pas un effet du hasard, c'est au contraire le suprême de l'art'.

¹⁴ 'toute disposition de personnes ou d'objets de façon a former une sorte de circonférence de cercle. . . Particulièrement, la réunion des princesses et des duchesses assises circulairement en présence de la reine//Par extension, société, assemblée d'hommes et de femmes réunis pour la plaisir de la conversation'.

Thus a spatial term becomes a social term explicitly linked to conversation. One of the determining factors of the success of a conversation for Delphine de Girardin is 'the quality of the speakers'. A social circle is a collection of people who share some attribute, most usually one of class. Many of the amateurs belonged to formal 'circles' of like-minded people (Long, 2007: 81–2). These included the Société des Amis du Louvre [Society of the Friends of the Louvre], l'Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs [The Central Union of the Decorative Arts], Cercle de l'Union Artistique [The Circle of the Artistic Union] and the Cercle Artistique et Littéraire [The Artistic and Literary Circle]. They also, of course, formed groups of friendships and congregated in various salons, like that of Madeleine Lemaire. As Martha Ward (1991) has shown, dealers like Georges Petit and Paul Durand-Ruel fashioned their galleries to resemble the private meeting places of the amateur and, in the case of Durand-Ruel, opened their apartments to paying visitors. This commercialization of the amateur's home is evident as well, of course, in the sales catalogue essays of the time (Whitely, 2003; Patry, 2014).

Stéphane Mallarmé expressed the idea of the interior as the setting for modern life, in which ideas and conversation are exchanged amongst a circle of friends. In his 1876 defense of the Impressionist painters in the London-based *Art Monthly Review and Photographic Portfolio*, he asked, 'Why is it needful to represent the open air of gardens, shore or street, when it must be owned that the chief part of modern existence is passed within doors?' (Mallarmé, 1986: 30). He singled out Edgar Degas among this group of painters as one who depicted the modern life of the interior. Degas, in turn, included Mallarmé in several of his photographs taken as part of evening gatherings of friends (Mendelson, 1999: 80–4; Daniel, 1999). Mallarmé's friendship with Degas, involved, as did many of the friendships of Mallarmé (and indeed of Degas as well), the exchange of *jeux de mots* and witty remarks, as well as exchanges of their own art. Mallarmé asked Degas for an etching for his proposed collection of verse, the *Tiroir de laque* [*The Lacquered Drawer*], and Degas asked Mallarmé for help writing sonnets (Mendelson, 1999: 80). This artistic exchange is the subject of Dornac's portraits of Mallarmé (Emery, 2012). In one photograph, from Dornac's



Figure 3: Dornac, Mallarmé, in *Nos Contemporains Chez Eux*, Gallica/BnF (public domain).

collection of photographs, *Nos Contemporains Chez Eux* [*Our Contemporaries At Home*], Mallarmé is seated by the mantel on top of which rests a lacquer chest (**Figure 3**). The Chinese chest has many drawers; the central doors opening to reveal more drawers, which can be read as a metaphor for the structure of Mallarmé's poetry. In front of them lies a packet of letter-size papers on which rests an oval photographic portrait, perhaps of Baudelaire. On the chair next to him is a stack of four books arrayed in a fan shape, seemingly awaiting his attention. Once one knows that Mallarmé's proposed collection of poems was *Le tiroir de laque*, this chest conjures up the image of a gathering of art and friends almost as much as an actual collection of art.

Mallarmé is seated in a room commonly known as a *cabinet de travail*. In a decorating guide of 1890, Oscar Edmond Ris-Paquot described it this way:

It is there that the master of the house receives his intimate friends, there that he gives audience to his business visitors, that he takes care of the account of the house.

Whether one adopts one style or another, the furniture should always include a table or a desk, a bookcase, a secretary, a medal-holder, armchairs and sofa without forgetting a big rug. The draperies (or cloth wall-covering), door hanging, curtains, mirror, chimney decorations and paintings, terra cottas etc. complete it. A console with a marble top would fit very well. (Ris-Paquot, 1890: 210)¹⁵

Thus, it is clear that the *cabinet de travail* was a space for receiving guests, that it was a space for working, and that, importantly in this context, it required objects of collection such as paintings and sculptures to complete it. Delphine de Girardin's argument that interior decoration and conversation went together is thus repeated in Ris-Paquot's manual. The sociability of the aristocratic houses implied in de Girardin was important as well in metropolitan and intellectual spaces. For example, in an apartment not large enough to include a separate room for this study, the 'chambre de monsieur' had the characteristics of a *cabinet de travail* with the addition of a bed. This was the case in the home design manual by Emile Cardon (1884: 98), which noted that everything appropriate for a 'petit salon de curiosité' organized by an amateur would also be perfect for a man's bedroom. Thus a bookshelf, a worktable in waxed dark walnut, a fireplace with a Persian rug in front, as well as artworks such as portrait busts and prints and drawings were the recommended furnishings.

¹⁵ 'C'est là que le maître de la maison reçoit ses amis intimes, là qu'il donne audience aux visiteurs pour affaires, qu'il règle les comptes de la maison. / Que l'on adopte l'un ou l'autre style, le mobilier se composera toujours d'une table ou d'un bureau, d'une bibliothèque, d'un secrétaire, d'un médaillier, de fauteuils et d'un canapé, sans oublier un grand tapis. Les tentures, portières, rideaux, glace garniture de cheminée et tableaux, terres cuites, etc. le compléteront. Une console avec dessus de marbre y trouve fort bien sa place'.

A musical harmony: Describing the private collection

Writers of this period were attentive not just to furniture arrangements, but also to the hanging of paintings. The language they used to describe hanging paintings was often metaphorical, evoking ensembles, harmonies and symphonies. The way that paintings in a collection form a harmony was celebrated by Léon Roger-Milès in the 1901 Preface to the collection of 'M. Z.' [Zarmontel]. Here each painting is seen as a 'note' which together form a 'symphony' of nature and of color:

Between *la Colline*, a note of Corot, of a delicious softness, and *le Réveil*, this masterpiece, admirable for its health and its force, of Courbet, this duet of blond and brunette flesh that sings in the folds of the draperies; between *la Toilette*, where the woman, such as Chaplin dreamed of her, is all grace and coquetry, and *le Buveur* of Roybet of such a male pride, it is an extraordinary symphony of nature and of color in which Ziem, Monticelli, Ch. Jacque, Isabey and Jongkind are the principal players (Roger-Milès, 1901: 5).¹⁶

The idea of a symphony is played out in the use of such terms as 'note', 'sing', 'duet', and 'chief players'. The symphony is, as Roger-Milès stated, one of nature and color, but in this case it is particularly a symphony of a collection, described later as a 'beautiful ensemble' in which the paintings are the musicians. His readiness to use a musical metaphor may well be influenced by his own oeuvre as a librettist for such popular composers as Gaston Tricot (1891) for whom he wrote the words for 'Chansons après boire'. This kind of language was familiar from symbolist theories of art where synesthesia was a trope for the expressiveness of art and Roger-Milès, as editor in chief at *Le monde poétique* as well as *Le Figaro Illustré*, would have been well versed in these images. Here I want to highlight that the use of musical language to describe a collection relates both to the perceived artistry of the collection and its sociability. An ensemble can refer to a group of musicians as well as the music itself,

¹⁶ 'Entre *la Colline*, une note de Corot, d'une délicieuse douceur, et *le Réveil*, cette page maîtresse, admirable de santé et de force, de Courbet, ce duo de chairs blonde et brune qui chante dans le chiffonné des draperies ; entre *la Toilette*, où la femme, telle que l'a rêvée Chaplin, est toute grâce et coquetterie, et *le Buveur*, de Roybet, d'une si mâle crânerie, c'est une extraordinaire symphonie de nature et de couleur, dont Ziem, Monticelli, Ch. Jacques, Isabey et Jongkind sont les chefs de pupitre'.

underlying the sociability implied by many private collections. Many of the collectors discussed here not only grouped their paintings in ensembles, but also grouped their friends to experience the collection. Antoine François Marmontel was a composer of music, and teacher of Georges Bizet, whose 'beautiful ensemble' of a collection was likened to an album: 'the magnificent album of art that does not contain either a page of doubtful origin or a leaf of mediocre writing' by Camille le Senne (1898: 7).¹⁷ Just as a musical ensemble evokes a social gathering, an album conjures up the image of guests leafing through its pages. It also recalls the connection between art collections and book collections so important in the *Bildatlas Mnemosyne*; the panels of which, photographs show, leaned against the bookshelves of the Warburg library. Le Senne, who was known mainly as a theater critic as well as the founder of the Chopin Society, compared Marmontel's gatherings of friends in his weekly salons with the ensemble of his collection, which included works by Peter Paul Rubens, Rembrandt van Rijn and Anthony Van Dyke. The preface makes explicit the link between his hospitality and his collection, noting that Marmontel did not collect to satisfy an egotistical pleasure but, rather, allowed his gallery to be 'a museum open to all enlightened admirers' (Le Senne, 1898: 5).¹⁸

Even in a collection in which the painters were less diverse than usual, music became a metaphor for the ensemble. Thus in 1903, Marcel Horteloup described the collection of the composer George Mathias, which was made up mainly of Barbizon painters known as 'the school of 1830', as 'an ensemble' in his preface to the sales catalogue (1903: 3). Horteloup, a functionary in the Ministry of Education and the Arts, underlines the musical nature of the ensemble by describing Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot's *The Mandoline Player* as presiding over the ensemble. Perhaps the musical career of Mathias suggested this group of metaphors to Horteloup, but in any case he carries it into the last paragraph where he describes each canvas as a 'note' in an

¹⁷ 'ce magnifique album d'art qui ne contient ni une page d'origine douteuse ni un feuillet d'écriture médiocre'.

¹⁸ 'un musée ouvert à toutes les admirations éclairées'. This use of the word museum to apply to a private collection should be noted. It refers to the broad notion of a place in which the public can view paintings rather than to the Louvre.

ensemble (Mathias, 1903: 7). An interrelated grouping of ideas about the amateur's collection emerges from this discussion of the ensemble: harmonies, arrangements, and conversation. The amateur assembled a group of paintings that worked together as color notes in a painting and which reflected, in their arrangement, the conversations that took place in the rooms in which the artworks were installed.

I have argued elsewhere for the close link between the arrangement of private collections and private libraries at this time (Mendelson, 2007). Both bibliophiles and amateurs were described as 'passionate' about their collections, and both thought carefully about the installation of their collections. Book collectors at the end of the nineteenth century often remade their books, rebinding them, and inserting artworks that had been specially commissioned. They also experimented with different kinds of organization, never limiting themselves to strict categories. The link between painting and book collecting is made obvious by the description of collections as 'books', as in the 1902 catalogue preface written by Pascal Forthuny, which describes the collection of Paul Baudry (a man of letters and not the painter of the same name) as 'this admirable book' (Forthuny, 1902: vii).¹⁹ Baudry's collections included works by mainly nineteenth-century French painters such as Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, Théodore Rousseau and Antoine Vollon, but also some artworks from the school of François Boucher. Paul Baudry wrote books, including a guide to the ceramic collection of the museum of Rouen and a translation of the English poet John Milton, so that Forthuny's comparison underlines the collector's creativity.²⁰ He also compares the collection to a painting and the collector to a painter:

¹⁹ 'Encore une fois, nous ne pouvons, en ce qui nous concerne, qu'applaudir aux succès de M. Baudry, homme d'affaires, et nous féliciter de ce qu'ils aient eu, chez M. Baudry, amateur de tableaux, un aussi magnifique contrecoup, d'autant plus que par la vente qu'il fait, les vrais amateurs pourront bénéficier demain de ses heureuses recherches. Nous verrons tout à l'heure que, de cet admirable livre qu'est sa collection, s'il détache quelques feuillets, il en reste encore quelques-uns, et non des moindres ceux-là, puisqu'ils sont anoblis par la patine des temps'.

²⁰ I argued in my dissertation for the continued relevance of the amateur as category in the late nineteenth century (Mendelson, 2004). For Baudry, see: http://data.bnf.fr/12462947/paul_baudry/ [Last accessed 13 March 2016].

In the way of those painters, who, in front of nature, wait long hours for the sun to light to their satisfaction the tops of the trees or the mirror of the water, he also waited to be able to make the painting made of many paintings juxtaposed, for the right moment and the right light. He wanted his light to be explosive, rare and magnificent. (Forthuny, 1902: ix)²¹

Here the language of juxtaposition, contrast and color suggests a relational dialogue. Each painting is a note of color, which, combined, creates the work of art that is the collection. The collector has become an artist in his own right; the critic has as well. Like many amateurs as well as critics, Pascal Forthuny practiced many arts – writing, painting, music and poetry – which perhaps encouraged him towards his metaphorical language.²² To be clear, the artistry that Forthuny claims for the private collector did not derive from some notion of the elevated status of the artist, or his psychological intensity, but from the very semiotic power of new juxtapositions.

The critic and art historian Arsène Alexandre also collected art, and the unsigned preface to his sales catalogue makes the point that his collection is both a painting 'of a whole aspect of art during the period that just passed', and at the same time a 'summary of the struggles in which criticism has taken part' (*Collection Alexandre*, 1903: 6). The collection is imbricated in recent art history insofar as it contains recent paintings, but the writer goes further and argues for the critical power of the collection.

²¹ 'A la manière de ces peintres qui, devant la nature, attendent de longues heures que le soleil éclaire à leur gré la cime des arbres ou le miroir de l'eau, il attendit, lui aussi, pour parfaire ce tableau fait de plusieurs toiles juxtaposées, que l'occasion fût propice et la lumière convenable. Cette lumière, il la voulait éclatante, rare, magnifique. Ziem la lui révéla plus que tout autre. Aussi bien Ziem trône-t-il ici. Mais comme l'antithèse est fort probablement l'une des lois les plus certaines de la beauté, M. Baudry comprit qu'il en fallait dans l'ensemble ménager quelques-unes. C'est pourquoi, aux côtés des ciels orientaux, des scintillements d'Adriatiques, nous retrouvons, précieux contrastes, quelques gris d'argent de Corot, un peu de la palette fauve de Henner, des franches clartés de Veyrassat, un échantillon des belles ténèbres de Ribot'.

²² Available at: http://data.bnf.fr/12109330/pascal_forthuny/ [Last accessed 13 March 2016].

Color and relationality: The private collection

The insight that the collectors gained and the kind of vision that they described employing, was derived from the seventeenth-century coloristic tradition of Roger de Piles, the advocate of the Rubensian school and defender of Jean-Antoine Watteau (Lichtenstein, 1993: 138–68). Such collectors as the Goncourt brothers described their home in coloristic and de Pilesian terms. Each room was composed of varied textures and colors such that the title of their book, *La Maison d'un Artiste*, refers not to their novel writing, but to their collecting. Their home, and all the marvels contained within, was itself their artwork and the Goncourt brothers and others like them viewed themselves as artist-collectors (Silverman, 1989; Pety, 2003). Another way to view *La Maison d'un Artiste* is as a kind of manual for finding meaning in collection. Warburg's library and bildatlas constituted, in their precise organization, ways of thinking in themselves. Both the concept of combinatory thought and the intuitive process are echoed, albeit in a less thorough way, by many private collections of the late nineteenth century, those years in which Warburg was developing his ideas. That both place and space change the meaning of pictures is crucial to understanding the *Bildatlas* and the importance of the arrangements of the amateurs.²³

The composition of rooms was as important as the composition of paintings themselves. In 1897, Pascal Forthuny described Lazare Weiller's collection as a bouquet. When Weiller was obliged to sell some paintings because he moved to smaller quarters, Forthuny reassured Weiller in the preface to the catalogue: 'Sir, --this is a prediction--you will soon make us a new bouquet' (Forthuny, 1897: III).²⁴ Weiller was a writer, industrialist, the inventor of a mirrored drum for the electronic transmission of images (a precursor to television), a promoter of the Wright brothers (and buyer of the French rights to their airplanes), and also Deputy to the National Assembly during the First World War. He began by collecting the Old Masters, including Peter Paul Rubens and Jean-Marc Nattier and, according to Forthuny, he thought of his

²³ This mode of argumentation has been made regarding earlier collections. Maria Zytanuk (2011: 1–3), for example, surveys recent discussions of the way that objects are arranged as part of 'knowledge-making practices'.

²⁴ 'Monsieur—ceci est une prophétie, --vous nous composerez bientôt un nouveau bouquet'.

chateau at Osny as a fitting frame for these paintings. He patronized living artists as well, and he bought works by Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, Camille Pissarro, Claude Monet, and Alfred Sisley, among others. The metaphor of the bouquet translates the pictorial arrangement into both an allusion to the art of flower arranging and also to the importance of color. As Beverly Seaton traces in her *Language of Flowers: A History* (1995), nineteenth-century flower arrangements were highly metaphorical, with a whole discourse on the language of flowers. But perhaps more than the kind of sentimental metaphors of 'innocence' or 'grief' or 'forget-me-not', the image of the bouquet refers to color. Clare Willsdon (2010: 43) argues that Gustave Caillebotte specifically arranged his garden at Petit-Gennevilliers as a palette to experiment with color, and he made paintings both of the garden and the bouquets that he arranged with flowers grown there. Similarly, Baudelaire compared Delacroix's palette to 'a bouquet of flowers knowingly arranged' in his *Life and Work of Eugène Delacroix* and similarly observed that Fantin Latour's 1864 painting *Hommage to Delacroix* places a bouquet under that artist's portrait ([1863]: 487).²⁵

Color was understood at this time to be a relational system in which one color never stands alone, but is seen in so far as it is in harmony with another color. This view of color, as it had been theorized earlier by Roger de Piles, turns up again and again throughout the nineteenth century and is evident in the work of such specialists as Michel Eugène Chevreul (1839), critics such as Baudelaire (1863), artists such as Paul Signac (1899), art theorists such as Charles Blanc (1867), and even home design consultants such as Henri Havard (1885). Blanc states flatly, 'Color is relative . . . Form is absolute' (1867: 22).²⁶ Meanwhile, Signac described how this relativity works when he examined Delacroix's painting technique:

²⁵ 'je n'ai jamais vu de palette aussi minutieusement et aussi délicatement préparée que celle de Delacroix. Cela ressemblait à un bouquet de fleurs savamment assorties' ['I had never seen a palette as meticulously and delicately prepared as that of Delacroix. It was like a bouquet of flowers knowingly arranged'].

²⁶ 'La couleur est relatif. . . la forme est absolue'.

This knowledge of scientific color theory serves him first to harmonize or emphasize through use of the contrast of two adjacent colors, to regulate felicitous meetings of tints and tones through the tuning of analogous colors or the analogy of complementary colors. (Signac, 1921 [1899]: 35)²⁷

But whereas Signac concentrates on color theory, Baudelaire had a much more poetic view of Delacroix's color which focuses more on atmosphere than on science. He calls Delacroix's 1834 *Women of Algiers*, which Signac analyzes from the point of view of complementary colors, a 'poem of the interior, full of rest and silence' (Baudelaire, [1846]: 482). The critics who celebrated the homes of the amateurs also celebrated them as 'poems'.

From the way each color is inflected by the neighboring colors, following the metaphor of Forthuny, we know that the way in which one painting was placed in relation to another changed the way it was seen. This kind of installation also implies a path from one painting to the next. In one account after another, the viewer ambles, like a *flâneur*, from artwork to artwork in an unexpected path. The contrast of this kind of meandering stroll with a walk down a straight path whose end is in sight as one progresses, corresponds to the differing ways that the public collection of the museum and the private collection of the amateur were arranged at the end of the nineteenth century. Keeping with the metaphor of flowers with which we began the discussion of color, I will now turn briefly to a guide to gardens.

Strolling through the private collection

Pierre Boitard and Louis-Eustache Andot's *Traité de la composition et l'ornement des jardins* [*Treatise on the composition and ornamentation of gardens*], published in 1818 and reissued several times up until 1869, proposed to create surprising paths and unexpected journeys (Camus, 1995: 21). They write about paths for the eye and advise avoiding geometric forms. Picturesque vistas were created by juxtaposing

²⁷ 'Cette connaissance de la théorie scientifique de la couleur lui sert d'abord à harmoniser ou à exalter par le contraste deux teintes voisines, à régler d'heureuses rencontres de teintes et de tons, par l'accord des semblables ou l'analogie des contraires'.

plants with artificial curiosities such as, for example, Caillebotte's garden at Yerres, which had been planned according to their book, featuring a Swiss house, a bent wood bench, a semicircular area with sculpture and trellises, and so on. Boitard and Andot wanted to avoid straight lines, recommending instead gentle curves that lead the eye onward rather than revealing the goal immediately (Wittmer, 1990: 80–4).²⁸ The wandering path was often used as a way to talk about the kind of associative logic that Warburg found so important.

Philippe-Alain Michaud (2007) argues for the importance of movement in the work of Warburg. Beginning with his early discussion of Botticelli, Warburg focused on the body in movement, 'caught in a play of overwhelming forces, limbs twisting in struggle or in the grips of pain, hair flowing, and garments blown back through exertion or by the wind' (Michaud, 2007: 28). Warburg extended his emphasis on movement from the figures of an artwork to the viewer's 'entrance into the image' (Michaud, 2007: 32). Part of the aim of his *Bildatlas* was to call into question the entrance into an image. The active experiencing of the image was made possible, Michaud argues, 'by way of a complex network of anachronisms and analogies' that he 'modified ceaselessly as he did the ordering of books in his library' (Michaud, 2007: 242).

Warburg's library in Hamburg was overflowing with volumes and arranged so that one could browse, moving from one book to another without following preordained categories. In his 'History of Warburg's Library', Fritz Saxl writes that 'the book of which one knew was in most cases not the book which one needed. The unknown neighbor on the shelf contained the vital information, although from its title one might not have guessed this' (Saxl qtd in Gombrich, 1986: 327). This principle of browsing was crucial to the private collection in general, and was taken up as well in some schoolbooks. In an 1882 schoolbook, *La France en Zigzag*, [*Zigzagging through*

²⁸ Today the park has changed, the paths no longer wander in the same way and the grounds are much smaller. These curved paths are in contrast to the long perspectives of the Haussmanian boulevards that form an important part of Caillebotte's cityscapes. As it stands now, the garden is much diminished and infelicitously garish flower arrangements destroy the sense of harmony and surprise, although the bench, the faux Romanesque chapel, and the Swiss house can still be seen.

France] by Eudoxie Dupuis, two children stumble, almost randomly, on a plethora of information as they wander in search of their father. Along the way they learn how to make linen, salt, porcelain, Aubusson tapestries; they learn about the assassination of the Duc de Guise and the martyrdom of Jeanne d'Arc; they enlarge their vocabulary and grasp the geography of France. The philosophy of Dupuis' *La France en Zigzag* is that experience and feeling enable a certain kind of learning that is fundamentally different from systematic lessons that follow chronology or subject matter.

Modes of viewing and learning are linked to the walks through the spaces where artworks were displayed. In the nineteenth century, as trains were transforming the landscape and academic disciplines were becoming more rigid, some were seeking more intuitive paths to knowledge. Certainly the children who zigzag through France looking for their father never expected to learn the history of France. Salon criticism of the nineteenth century also employed a metaphoric of spatial relations in describing the experience of art. Philippa Lewis looks at the role of metaphors of travel in art criticism and concentrates on 'le voyage en zigzag', which 'describes a journey luxuriating in diversions, sidetracks, and detours' (2013: 3).

Baron Pichon: Collecting the Past

The meandering path of the private collection called for an active search allied with the emotions and love. The way that memory, emotion and movement were connected to private collecting can be fruitfully explored in the case of Baron Jérôme-Frédéric Pichon. If a stroller in Paris, a flâneur, were to stroll along the Quai d'Anjou, on the Ile Saint-Louis he might come to no. 17, Hôtel Lauzun. The Ile Saint-Louis was spared the razing of old buildings under the Second Empire, and this building in particular conjured up a rich past. Baudelaire himself lived here when he was young, supported by the Baron Pichon. In fact it was here that Baudelaire wrote *Les Fleurs du Mal* [*The Flowers of Evil*]. Earlier, the Club des Haschischines, whose members included Alexandre Dumas and Eugène Delacroix, met here in the apartment of Théophile Gautier. Louis Le Vau had built the Hôtel in 1657 for Charles Gruyn, a wealthy supplier of the French army, but he lived there only briefly because

he was imprisoned for embezzlement shortly after the house was finished. Other occupants included Mlle de Montpensier, granddaughter of Henri IV, known as the Grande Mademoiselle, who as a girl had been promised to Louis XIV but had been exiled to the country after participating in the Fronde, and who led one of the most prominent of the salons at the time.

All this history—the salon of the Grande Mademoiselle, the circle of hashish eaters, the support of Pichon for Baudelaire—might swirl together in the flâneur's thoughts, and s/he might, if s/he were one of Pichon's guests, come to an understanding of the baron's view of collecting. For Pichon was an amateur, passionate about his collection and in love with the past, collecting precious old books, coins, sculptures, prints and drawings, and living in an interior that was still sumptuous in the old manner.²⁹ Pichon, a writer as well as president of La Société des Bibliophiles Français [The Society of French Bibliophiles], had, according to Paul Eudel, riches without equal amongst his books even after a large sale of his holdings (Eudel, 1882: 96). He kept his favorite books in an ebony armoire near his bed and he told Eudel that he wanted to die looking for one last time towards his beloved books. Pichon's letter to Georges Vicaire, which is included in the latter's preface to the catalogue of that sale, described his feelings about books as starting with simple adoration and later proceeding to knowledge of bindings and provenance:

Since my earliest youth I have loved, adored books and as all men who love, I loved everything about them, their form and their meaning. Later, I learned to appreciate their bindings and their provenance. What a pleasure to hold in ones' hands an elegantly printed book, bound in a binding contemporary with its apparition, giving the proof, by some sort of sign, that it belonged to a famous or appealing individual, and in touching this volume that he touched, read, loved, one enters into a mysterious communication with him. (Vicaire, 1897: ii)

²⁹ Atget took quite a few photographs of the interior of the Hôtel Lauzun and The Metropolitan Museum of Art has the 18th century boiserie that Pichon had installed in his library and which his son sold in order to maintain the 17th century look of the Hôtel. Metropolitan Museum. 1976.91.1.

His search for history as described here is not simply a search for what is commonly thought of as scholarship. It is a matter of love. He links the sensuality of touching the binding of a book to a 'mysterious communication' with either the writer of the book or with the former owner of the book. Pichon speaks of a kind of time travel similar to the flâneur touching the stones of old buildings, remembering their histories, imagining himself in another time. For Pichon, the book is imbued with the past in which it was printed and written. The Baron's imagined conversations with his books, with the past owners as well as authors, extended into the present in his conversations with his social and intellectual circles in Paris. Numerous scholarly groups often met at his home and he was always eager to loan his books to serious readers. In Pichon's library, conversation, sociability and sharing in connection with a collection became part of the organizational structure of the library.

Books similarly intoxicated Aby Warburg. He made a deal with his banker brother Max to support his library in Hamburg so that he could amass the quantity of books necessary for his research (Chernow, 1994: 117). Like Pichon, Warburg's collections, both of books and of images, were inspired by a historical memory imbued with feeling (Buchloh, 1999). The Warburg library in Hamburg was, as Johnson (2012: 67) describes it, a '*Denkinstrument*, an archive, a place for symposia and conversation'. Warburg's *Bildatlas* was arranged in a dialogic structure and thus presented a 'challenge to the rigid and hierarchical compartmentalization of the discipline of art history through an attempt to abolish its methods and categories' (Buchloh, 1999: 124).

Pichon's collecting extended in many directions. He bought coins, silver, prints, and small sculptures, everything that 'could awake in him some historical memory, excited his desires' (Vicaire, 1897: v). Warburg's *Bildatlas* was similarly diverse: 'There cheek by jowl, were late antique reliefs, secular manuscripts, monumental frescoes, postage stamps, broadsides, pictures cut out of magazines, and old master drawings' (Kurt Foster qtd in Buchloh, 1999: 124). While in the case of Pichon's library he collected actual objects, prints and books, rather than photographic reproductions of paintings and objects, the organizational ideas are similar. Pichon also owned a widely varied group of books in his library, including, to name just a few that were

highlighted in the preface to the catalogue of its holdings, a twelfth-century manuscript, *Occupation de l'âme pendant le saint sacrifice de la messe* [*Occupation of the soul during the holy sacrifice of the mass*]; a folio manuscript, *Mémoire sur la réformation de la police de France* [*Memoir of the reform of the French police*] (1749), which belonged to Louis XV and was decorated with 28 ink drawings by Gabriel de Saint-Aubin; and a *Discours sur la peinture* [*Discourse on painting*], dedicated to Mme la Marquise de Pompadour.³⁰ There were books on cooking, art collections, gymnastic exercises, falconry, hunting, poetry, agriculture, history, and geography.

Art history and the private collection

The library of Pichon, like many of the private collections at the end of the nineteenth century, promoted an organizational structure that cut across categories. Unlike Warburg's *Bildatlas*, the goal was not to reassess art history. Some critics, however, argued that collectors did make history. Gustave Geffroy praises the collection of Eugène Blot for creating a history of his time by including Delacroix, Honoré Daumier, Corot, Eugène Boudin, Johan Jongkind Manet, Berthe Morisot, Sisley, Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Degas and the more recent Edouard Vuillard, Pierre Bonnard and Raymond Roussel among others. For Geffroy, Blot has created 'a summary of the history of Art in our time' (1900: 3). In the preface to the Cannone sales catalogue, entitled 'Un Grand Collectionneur est un Historien' ['A Major Collector is an Historian'], Arsène Alexandre – who, as we have already seen, had himself been described in those terms – praises Cannone for having 'made a veritable history in action of the art of his century' (1930: 2). Some private collectors such as Etienne Moreau-Nélaton (Pomerade, 1988) and Roger Marx (2006), influenced by their collecting, advocated in their writing for a more cross-disciplinary practice of art history.

³⁰ Willa Silverman (2008) argues that Pichon and Uzanne stood at opposite poles of the book collecting community. Pichon is identified as the stuffy past-loving collector mocked by the circle of such figures as Uzanne and Lucien Pissarro whose luxury book production was oriented towards contemporary writing and art. I believe they both viewed the book as a hybrid object.

Etienne Moreau-Nélaton, a painter, a ceramicist and a collector best known for his donations of paintings to the Louvre (including Manet's 1863 *Déjeuner Sur L'Herbe*, now held in the Musée d'Orsay) began a series of monographs on nineteenth-century painters based on letters and interviews. He states in his *Corot raconté par lui même* [*Corot as told by himself*] that the addition of Corot's letters to an earlier book on Corot allowed the artist to tell his own story (Moreau-Nélaton, 1924; Ogawa, 2006).³¹ He goes on to describe the letters that Corot sent to his friend Abel Osmond as similar to a conversation, which touches on one subject and quickly changes to another:

The words come so quickly, often in disorder, that they free themselves of syntactic constraints that would impede less independent stylists; improvised on the fly like a free conversation, these letters touch every possible subject and change from one topic to another without transition. (Moreau-Nélaton, 1924: 126)³²

It is a conversation that is disordered, defying the rules of syntax, improvised. All these terms could equally describe the way that critics navigate the *amateur's* collection, going from one subject to another, from one painting to another in a nonlinear, surprising way.

The critics who wrote about these collectors celebrated their non-linear arrangements through the use of such metaphors as bouquets and books. Their metaphors fostered new understanding and knowledge of the artworks that can be best understood in their anti-positivist approach by way of the library and *Bildatlas Mnemosyne* of Aby Warburg. Art historians such as Michael Ann Holly (2013), Benjamin Buchloh (1999) and Tom Crow (2006) and cultural historians such as Michael Diers (1995), among many others, are reconsidering the strict disciplinary boundaries of art

³¹ David Ogawa argues that rather than letting Corot speak for himself, Moreau-Nélaton emphasizes Corot's radical and non-academic aspect. For Ogawa, 'Corot is shaped in the published biography to dovetail with Moreau-Nélaton's donation to the Louvre' (Ogawa, 2006: 335).

³² 'Les mots s'y précipitent même souvent dans un certain désordre, et s'y affranchissent volontiers de la tutelle imposée par la syntaxe à des plumes moins indépendantes; improvisées comme une conversation à bâtons rompus, ces épîtres touchent à tout et passent sans transition d'un sujet à un autre'.

history by drawing on Warburg's work. Artists and even scientists have been praising metaphorical thinking in their work (Kentrige, 2015). Critics in Paris around the same time as Warburg also took a strong interest in an experiential attitude towards art that led them away from the empiricist art history of their time. It has long been noted that academic art history and the museums of the late nineteenth century presented a similarly linear understanding of art and its development. Aby Warburg radically departed from the art history of his time. This article has shown that many private collections and the critics that described them also privileged a richly emotive and suggestive vision of art history.

Competing Interests

The author declares that they have no competing interests.

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