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CHARLES LEBRUN: PAINTING THE KING AND THE KING OF PAINTING

BY

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL
FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the transformation in the representation of painters during Charles LeBrun's tenure as Life-Chancellor to the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture, from an initial definition in terms of the monarchy at Versailles to one founded on the practice of the art of painting. To promote the status of painters and painting, Louis XIV was celebrated as the protector of the arts in a royal portrait by Henri Testelin and was depicted as the ideal subject of art in paintings by Nicolas Loir and others. A painter's stature was then derived from the skillful manner in which he painted the history of the King. Engraved portraits accompanied by verse of Charles LeBrun and Adam Frans Van der Meulen identify allegorical painters as more distinguished than those who painted in a natural style. In both cases, Louis XIV is posited as being the source, subject, and eloquence of the art celebrating his achievements. Nicolas de Largillierre's Portrait of Charles Lebrun is modeled on Testelin's royal portrait and offers a portrayal of the artist which advocates service to the monarchy, but it grounds aesthetic activity in the body of the painter. This conception of LeBrun, in turn, serves as a paradigm for Pierre Mignard to create a self-portrait that proclaims his status in relation to the art of painting rather than through service to the King.

RÉSUMÉ

Cette thèse examine la transformation dans la représentation pictural à partir de la nomination de Charles LeBrun au poste de Chancelier de l'Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture: l'évolution d'une peinture définie par la Monarchie de Versailles à l'une fondée sur l'exercice de l'art de peindre. Afin de promouvoir le statut des peintres ainsi de la peinture, Louis XIV fut célébré comme le protecteur des arts dans un portrait executé par Henri Testelin ainsi que considéré comme le sujet-idéal des peint de Nicolas Loir entre autres. La notoriété du peintre était alors fondée sur la manière dont était décrite l'histoire du Roi. Les portraits gravés accompagniés des vers de Charles LeBrun ou de Adam Frans Van der Meulen décrivent les peintres allégoriques comme plus distigués que ceux utilisant un style plus naturel. Dans les deux cas, Louis XIV est tout de même considéré comme étant la source, le sujet et le discours d'un art célébrant ses propres réalisations. Le Portrait de Charles LeBrun réalisé par Nicolas de Largillierre, le fut utilisant comme modèle le portrait royal de Testelin; il offre un portrait de l'artiste comme étant au service de la Monarchie, tout en établissant l'activité aesthétique au niveau du choix de l'artiste. Cette conception de LeBrun sert de paradigme pour Pierre Mignard, qui créé un autoportrait qui proclamme son statut de peintre en relation à la peinture et non plus en une service du Roi.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank the faculty, professional, and support staff at the Department of Art History for their efforts on my behalf throughout my studies at McGill University. I am particularly indebted to Professor Tom Glen for allowing me the freedom to explore my ideas and for his guidance in expressing them. His editorial assistance in the preparation of this thesis was especially valuable. Bien sûr, although it goes without saying, I wish to thank my wife, Nancy Drummond, for her encouragement and endless support.

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INTRODUCTION

In the portrait bust of Charles LeBrun by Nicolas de Largillierre, now in Munich, LeBrun is delicately turning the medallion worn around his neck with the thumb and index finger of his left hand to present it's face to the beholder (Fig. 1). By drawing the viewer's attention to the medallion in this manner, LeBrun indicates the importance he places upon it, and the viewer's acknowledgement of his possession of it. The medallion was a gift from the King, and as such, it reflects a certain degree of intimacy or friendship between the painter and the monarch. According to Nivelon, LeBrun's student and earliest biographer, shortly before Louis XIV left Paris to take command of the French army in Flanders at the start of the War of Devolution (1667-8), he gave a medallion studded with diamonds and bearing his portrait to Colbert and charged his First Minister with it as a gift for LeBrun.[1] The King also expressed his displeasure at being unable to present the medallion himself and told Colbert to pass these regrets along to his First Painter. It was later said that LeBrun wore this portrait of the King "à sa boutonnière, comme un ordre de chevalerie."[2]

The attribute of a golden chain has traditionally been linked with designating social position.[3] In the ancient world it signified esteem conferred by a person of higher social standing. During the Renaissance the presentation of golden chains was revived, and Titian was among the first artists so honoured. The practice became widespread during the Baroque period, and Rubens had four

golden chains bestowed upon him by various kings and princes. The golden chain was often accompanied by a medal with the patron's portrait. The image of the prince served as a reminder to the wearer of the favor he had received and the service and devotion that would be required of him in return. Rubens, in a letter thanking Cardinal Federigo Borromeo for his gift of a portrait medallion, clearly indicates his awareness of the implications that this gesture represented. He described it as:

> "a very special favor, not only for the value of the gift but also because it comes to me as a spontaneous offering of Your Most Illustrious Lordship to anticipate me, and by this gift to bind me to your perpetual service. Therefore I beg you to count me in the future among your most affectionate servitors."[4]

The attribute of the golden chain was also sometimes read as the psychological equivalent of the restraints binding prisoners, and this negative connotation may be inferred from Rubens' choice of the phrase "to bind me to your perpetual service." In general, Rubens seemed to enjoy the prestige of his patronage by heads of state and valued his attainment of nobility and knighthood as formal recognition of his efforts to "live honorably" and to further the "dignity and honor of the art of painting."[5]

It is in these terms of conferring status on the artist by associating him with a powerful patron that Largillierre presents an image of LeBrun emphasizing the possession of a portrait medallion of Louis XIV. In choosing to have himself portrayed in this manner, LeBrun, an arriviste ennobled in 1662, authorizes a claim to a relationship with the monarchy, and to a form of representation, that

had formally been the reserve only of the old nobility in France. The attitude towards royal service of those families owning a "noblesse ancienne" was one in which they saw themselves as the principal servants of the monarchy.[6] This relationship to the monarchy is expressed in the address by the noble deputies from Burgundy to Louis XIII at a meeting of the Estates-General in Paris in 1614:

> "nothing pleases us more, Sire, than our Sovereign's gaze - and any time spent beyond his presence or his service we consider lost time.... The glory of being recognized in the presence of Your Majesty is much dearer to us than any other advantages that might befall us elsewhere."[7]

The nature of the relationship between the monarch and those in his service was inherently personal, and one in which the exchange of gifts and the visible expression of mutual support and affection served to bind social and political attachments. Nobles serving the king expected to be rewarded for their efforts with various offices, honors, and distinctions and the exchange between the two parties served to express and to affirm the obligations linking them. Initially, the personal idiom which informed the nobility's idea of service to the King was one in which merit was determined by birth rather than by competence. Under Louis XIV, the principal of service to the King in return for his protection was systematized in various institutions and extended to include the bourgeoisie involved in administering the state. The royal gaze, now metaphorically extended to include all of society, required merit to be tangible and reducible to measurable signs if it was to be recognized and rewarded.

Charles LeBrun and the other founders of the Academy chose to enhance

the status of their art and to secure the future of their institution through service to the monarchy.[8] In return for the sovereign's financial and political protection, the Academy developed an imitative, discursive style of painting, inspired by LeBrun's leadership and the example of his art, that aspired to articulate narratives celebrating the reign of Louis XIV. The system of representation underlying this imagery was governed by the concept of ut pictura poesis or "as is painting so is poetry."[9] Deriving ultimately from Horace and Aristotle, this form of representation dominated all types of artistic expression in seventeenth-century France. It required the portrayal of the great deeds of great men to create art that functioned as exempla and which legitimized contemporary rulers by associating them allegorically with ancient and mythological heroes. In the art produced at the academies, the imitation of the object gradually came to be doubled by an imitation in manner, and painters and poets imitated each other's means of representation as well as their respective subjects: a painting became a text to be read, and a series of verses created an image of an object. Although the ut pictura poesis system of representation essentially functioned to glorify noble and royal patrons, as the bourgeoisie gained political and monetary prominence during Louis XIV's bureaucratization of the state, it, too, began to appropriate the forms of representation once reserved for the aristocracy.[10]

Although LeBrun's artistic efforts in forming Louis XIV's image are well-known, the painter's identification of his personal glory with his service to the King has received little attention in art historical literature. This essay presents the

theory that LeBrun and other painters strove to achieve their own glory through their works perpetuating the memory of Louis XIV. Once having accepted royal patronage and service as their ideal, painters came to represent themselves in terms of the monarchy at Versailles. This supposition is demonstrated through an analysis of the contemporary portrayal of the theme of actions and their representation as it was applied to the King and his painters. The first section of this essay examines a number of images produced under the auspices of the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture, beginning with Henri Testelin's portrait of Louis XIV as Protector of the Arts, which advocate the King as the preeminent subject of painting; the originary source of the art praising him; and the means through which the painter might gain significant status and recognition in representation. The second section offers an interpretation of Nicolas de Largillierre's Portrait of Charles LeBrun as a manifestation of the ideal of royal service in which the source of aesthetic activity is found to reside in the painter rather than the King. Largillierre's image of LeBrun is founded upon Testelin's royal portrait but it pictures the artist as the king of painters. In producing such a portrait, Largillierre creates a prototype from which Pierre Mignard models a self-portrait that establishes a new conception of the artist. Mignard's painting proclaims his status on the basis of the successful practice of his art rather than through service to the Monarchy.

There is no precedent in art historical research for the subject of this essay, but two sources have served as helpful starting points for developing the ideas

considered herein. Many of the images illustrating this discussion have been previously brought together in the catalogue by Myra Nan Rosenfeld for the exhibition Largillierre and the Eighteenth-Century Portrait, which she organized for the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts in 1981.[11] The catalogue has been an invaluable reference for the study of Largillierre's Portrait of Charles LeBrun regarding such matters as iconography, style, influence, and scholarship. Pierre Georgel and Anne-Marie Lecoq have surveyed briefly some of the pictures featured in the first section of this essay in their book entitled La Peinture dans la Peinture.[12] They identify a number of images that portray a relationship of service between painters and the monarchy during the period in question, but they do not determine that Louis XIV's painters delineated their own status in terms of this relationship. Furthermore, it will be seen that the authors err in their interpretation of the significance of the pictures for the representation of painters.

Despite the lack of any antecedents for this essay in the literature of art history, the efforts of scholars investigating the status of the men of letters at the Académie Française have provided many insights that are useful for approaching the problem with regard to painters. The basic premise presented here is derived from the examination of French historiography during the Ancien Regime in Orest Ranum's Artisans of Glory: Writers and Historical Thought in Seventeenth-Century France.[13] The function of the histories written for the French monarchy was to immortalize the feats of great kings so that they might serve as exemplars to future rulers. Ranum explores the manner in which men of letters strove to

achieve their own glory through their histories perpetuating the memory of French sovereigns.[14] Richard Lockwood analyzes several speeches given by members of the Académie Française on the occasion of the induction of new members which praise both writers and Louis XIV by employing the theme of actions and their representation.[15] In so doing, Lockwood provides a model for looking at pictures honoring painters produced at the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture.

Orest Ranum states that since Louis XIV was constantly compared to heroes from history or mythology, "When he looked in the mirrors he may only have seen Alexander or Augustus."[16] Ranum further notes that this process of resemblance radiated to the men of letters serving the King: "When writers looked into the mirrors of Versailles they sometimes saw the King[17]." The same correspondence is found between Louis XIV and his First Painter, Charles LeBrun.

CHAPTER I: PAINTING THE KING

The idea held by the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture that painting should serve the King in return for royal protection is given pictorial expression in a royal portrait by Henri Testelin (Fig. 2). The Portrait of Louis XIV as Protector of the Arts was commissioned by the Academy on February 27th, 1666, and Testelin brought it to the Louvre on January 7th, 1668, where it was hung in the grand salle des assemblées.[18] The Academy members wanted to embellish the interior of their premises with paintings of the prominent individuals who were instrumental in bringing the institution into being, and foremost among those to be immortalized was Louis XIV.[19] In his discussion of the image, the contemporary historian of the Academy, Guillet de Saint-Georges, notes that despite Louis XIV's recent successes in the campaigns of 1667 during the War of Devolution, which would have provided ample opportunity for Testelin to depict the King as a great warrior, the Academy instead wished to insinuate the rising status and perfection of its own art which was able to flower in the peaceful regime fostered by Louis XIV.[20]

Testelin's painting was the object of a lecture given by Saint-Georges to the Academy on the 6th of October 1691, in which he explained all the allegorical intentions of the canvas.[21] The King is seated, several steps up and removed, on a throne set between two massive piers and surmounted by a canopy. He wears his coronation outfit and holds an elongated scepter representing the scepter of Charlemagne and signifying the legitimacy and continuity of the French

monarchy. With his left hand, Louis places a laurel crown on a chubby youth who personifies the Academy. The youth holds a shield bearing that institution's coat-of-arms in order to indicate that the King "qui est le glorieux possesseur de la plus belle couronne de l'univers, est le dispensateur des couronnes et des prix qu'il destine pour la gloire du plus beau de tous les arts."[22] Attributes of the arts and sciences are displayed throughout the image. They begin in the immediate foreground and follow a semi-circular path to the figure of the King, and in so doing serve as a pictorial counterpoint to the steps' curves. Among them are a globe signifying the success of astronomy under the protection of the King, and a book opened to reveal the advances made in geometry and perspective. The art of painting is represented by a palette, brushes, and a sketch in which a female personification of Painting draws a portrait of the King on a hand-held oval. Various tools of the sculptor are evident and this art is further indicated by the bust of Alexander the Great. The bust also serves as an allegorical reference to the King: as Alexander was the greatest hero of the Antique period, Louis XIV has become the greatest hero of all time. Finally, in the background to the right of the King, an elaborate arcade surrounding a fountain embellished with allegorical figures refers to the flourishing of architecture during Louis XIV's reign.

The sketch of Painting drawing a portrait of the King mentioned by Saint-Georges is difficult to see in a reproduction. An idea of the image, however, may be found in a drawing by Charles LeBrun now at the Louvre (Fig. 3).[23] The drawing depicts the seated figure of Painting at work on a portrait of the King

enthroned and around her three putti busily engaged in activities related to the art of painting. The iconography of the drawing derives ultimately from the Antique prototype of Victory writing the names and deeds of great kings on a commemorative shield to preserve the memory and glory of great princes for posterity. By replacing Victory with the figure of Painting, LeBrun signals the importance of his art rather than that of the poets in reflecting the glory of the Sun King.

A more elaborate rendering of the iconography of LeBrun's drawing is evident in an engraving by G. Audran. The engraving was done after a lost painting by Claude Audran II that was part of a series of works on the theme of the relation of painting to the other arts commissioned by Charles Perrault and completed in 1683. It was published in Perrault's Le Cabinet des Beaux-Arts... (1690) as La Peinture peignant un enblème de Louis XIV (Fig. 4).[24] Audran's engraving shows the figure of Painting crafting an emblem of the King on an oval canvas, and surrounded by an "academy of children" working at their art as in the above image by LeBrun. The emblem portrays a garden blossoming under a brilliant sun, symbolic of Louis XIV, while a phrase written around the sun reads: "Je fais fleurir toutes choses." The significance of the metaphor is that the art of painting is one of the activities flourishing under the King's reign. In addition to the figure of Painting producing an emblem referring to Louis XIV, various other elements in the picture signify the King, and, in so doing, establish him as the preeminent subject of representation: the Antique bas-relief of Apollo Belvedere

was a common allegorical reference to Louis XIV, so too, the mirror surmounted by the sun motif at the right of the engraving; and in the background there appears a reproduction of LeBrun's painting The Queens of Persia at the Feet of Alexander which allegorically proclaims Louis as the new Alexander. The ut pictura poesis theme is introduced by the book held open by a child-assistant to a page entitled "La Peinture Poé[me]" which reverses the traditional definition of an emblem as "la poésie peint" in favour of the art of painting.

Since the iconography of the pictures by LeBrun and Audran establishes Louis XIV as the subject of painting, its appearance in Henri Testelin's Portrait of Louis XIV as Protector of the Arts completes the theme of service to the King in return for the sovereign's protection to which the royal portrait is meant to allude. It also further defines the theme: it is not merely the peaceful regime provided by the King that will enable the arts to flourish, but also the status of painters and painting will increase as a result of having Louis XIV as the subject of their art. The position of painting as being foremost among the arts to portray the King advocated in the pictures by LeBrun and Audran is, ironically, pursued in Saint-Georges' lecture on Testelin's painting. Saint-Georges begins by discussing the relative merits of the arts of painting and poetry in producing a portrait of the King. Men of letters are deemed unable to describe adequately the King's greatness:

> "les orateurs et les poëtes, qui, effectivement pour représenter ce héros, sont constraints d'employer une longue suite de paroles, soutenues des meilleurs figures de la rhétorique, sans pouvoir exprimer qu'avec langueur et embarras ce que l'âme de ce grand héros a de qualités excellentes, et sans même pouvoir donner que très-imparfaitement l'idée des traits de son visage, lorsqu'ils l'osent entreprendre."[25]

The arts of painting and sculpture are judged to be far superior:

> "Elles sont en possession d'imiter fidèlement le visage de notre héros. Ainsi le talent de l'Académie fait heureusement le portrait d'un original inimitable, et il le fait d'une manière intelligible à toutes les nations de la terre, sans être réduit à la stérilité des expressions du poëte et de l'orateur, qui, faute d'une langue universelle, ne peuvent employer que celle de leur pays".[26]

This articulation of the idea that painting should serve the King, and that Louis XIV and his great deeds were the Academy's ideal subject, is further expressed in two officially sanctioned works employing other iconographical formulas. One was among the first reception pieces submitted to the Academy. It is by Nicolas Loir and is known today as the Progress of the Graphic Arts in France (Fig. 5).[27] At the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture candidates for membership were required to submit a painting on a theme chosen for them as a diploma or reception piece before gaining final acceptance into the ranks of the institution. The other official picture forms part of a series of images referred to as L'Historie du Roi. The series illustrated events from the life of Louis XIV in a style that might be termed "documentary": the King is shown in various historical events with a varying cast of his subjects in what passes for a natural setting. The images were largely designed by LeBrun and his colleague Adam Frans Van der Meulen. They were made into tapestries at the Manafacture des Gobelins, and were further disseminated through engravings. One of the events chronicled in the series pertains directly to the production of art for the King: Louis XIV Visiting the Gobelins (Fig. 6). In the two works by Nicolas Loir and LeBrun, the status of the art of painting is enhanced through its association with the figure

of the King.

An explanation of the allegorical intentions of Loir's painting was given by Nicolas Guérin in his Description de l'Académie Royale (1715).[28] At the right, a male personification of Time pulls aside the heavy veils symbolic of Ignorance that had formerly concealed the arts of Painting and Sculpture, who are represented as female personifications "unies comme deux soeurs inséparables."[29] The putti appearing around these figures signify the talent of the artists working in these media. At the top left of the canvas, Fame trumpets the glory of Louis XIV while Minerva, who also symbolizes France, displays an oval portrait of the King to the sister arts "qu'elle leur montre comme l'objet qui doit les occuper et dont le grand nom doit illustrer et éterniser leurs ouvrages."[30] Below Minerva, a crude youth, perhaps Envy or Calumny, flees the scene.

As Guérin's comments indicate, for painters at the Academy the message of the allegory is clear: Louis XIV is the proper subject of their art, and with the King as subject, their own glory, as well as that of their art, is assured. The employment of the figure of the King to ennoble the art of painting is further substantiated by the choice of subject matter for Loir's image. During LeBrun's tenure as the head of the Academy, the iconography of the diploma pieces of prospective members normally involved allegorical representations of the contemporary historical events such as are depicted in the l'Histoire du Roi series.[31] In keeping with the policy at the Academy, Nicolas Loir was initially instructed to produce an allegorical picture on the subject of the King's siege of

Dunkerque during the War of Devolution (1667-8) for his reception piece.[32] The painting he finally submitted, however, is an allegory of the royal foundation of the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture. This suggests that the raison d'être of the Academy, which is determined as painting the history of the King, was itself clearly acknowledged by the Academy members to be an important aspect of that history. The same desire to glorify painting by representing the art in service to the King underlay Testelin's decision to portray Louis XIV as Protector of the Arts rather than as a warrior in his royal portrait.

On October 15th, 1667, as recorded by the Gazette, Louis XIV called in at the Gobelins, in the company of Colbert, the Duke of Orléans, the Prince of Condé and others, to see "les manafactures qui s'y fabriquent et particulièrement celles qui se sont faites pendant la campagne et que Sa Majesté avoit ordonnées avant son départ."[33] This is the scene represented in Louis XIV Visiting the Gobelins (Fig. 6). Charles LeBrun is also pictured, as he escorts the King through the magnificent display of paintings, statues, furniture, tapestries, and other works of art produced at the royally sponsored institution. Here, the message made through allegory in the image by Nicolas Loir is rendered as self-evident: works of art are made for the King, to reflect his glory; and the status of the artists creating the objects is raised through association to the King.

The visit of a monarch to a painter's atelier would obviously confer significant prestige upon the artist. The convention derives ultimately from the Antique. Among the anecdotes concerning artists that have survived is the

account from Pliny's Natural History of Alexander the Great bestowing great respect on his painter Apelles by calling in at the painter's studio one day. During the Renaissance this story became part of a common currency in which princes and their painters asserted their worth by comparing themselves to Apelles and Alexander through allegorical compositions. The image of Louis XIV Visiting the Gobelins, by the nature of its subject matter, surely refers to this tradition; and sophisticated contemporary viewers would have been inspired to make the connection to the Antique example. A further allusion to Alexander is also evident in the inset inclusion of the Crossing of the River Granicus, a battle scene from LeBrun's Alexander Series, whose lower half dominates the center of Louis XIV Visiting the Gobelins. Since the Alexander Series refers allegorically to Louis XIV, the beholder is reminded that Louis XIV, too, has been at war, and the point inferred by the above comment in the Gazette - that the King's wartime activities in the Southern Netherlands were undertaken to provide a peaceful regime in France under which the arts could flourish - is established.

In Pierre Georgel's explanation of Louis XIV Visiting the Gobelins, LeBrun's commentary on his own role in the creation of the King's image is said to be made evident by the manner in which the painter twice represents himself within the work: his likeness, which appears in his capacity as the Director of the Gobelins, and the image of one of his battlepieces from the Alexander Series.[34] Georgel further indicates that in presenting himself in this fashion, LeBrun has positioned himself as being outside the field of representation that both articulates

and authorizes the absolute monarchy:

> "Ainsi, lors même qu'il s'efface devant la Pouvoir, le peintre affirme son propre pouvoir, solidaire du premier et d'autant plus fort qu'il paraît en procéder. Devant les héros de l'Histoire comme devant les modèles passifs et les objets de son atelier, il reste le meneur de jeu. LeBrun, personnage de second ordre de *La visite aux Gobelins*, est en réalité l'ordonnateur et l'historien du spectacle."[35]

This interpretation of the image is problematic. In an absolute monarchy it would seem unlikely, and even perilously presumptuous, for LeBrun to assert his status, in whatever context, as greater than the King's. Georgel's comments infer that the King's glory is dependent upon LeBrun's description of it, when, in fact, the contemporary viewer would have understood just the opposite: works praising the King would have been seen as superfluous to the manifestation of his glory, and, indeed, it is the King's glory that served as the source of the art in which he figures.

The imagery created at the Academy, with the King and his activities as the ideal subject, was not only celebratory but ideological as well. The cult of kingship which characterises early modern France culminates in Louis XIV's reign, and, to a great extent, prestige itself becomes the substance of power.[36] Louis XIV's quest for absolute power required great efforts of communication through all media to sustain itself; and this is attested to by the hundreds of images of him that have survived. The media blitz was achieved by bureaucratizing the patronage of the arts through the academies and other official bodies, and by commissioning works that reflected the King's glory.[37] Glory was a fundamental concept of the era, and it may be broadly defined as the honour and esteem

accorded to virtuous persons for their great achievements.[38] In her Discours de la gloire of 1672, Mlle de Scudéry wrote: "tout le monde parle de la gloire, & cherche la Gloire."[39] Glory is associated with power by Louis XIV in the Mémoires pour l'instruction du Dauphin: "Our first object must always be the preservation of our glory and of our authority."[40] The connection is made more politically explicit by Jean Chapelain who argued that glory was necessary if kings were to be revered by their subjects and respected in neighboring states.[41] Since glory was intimately related to power, the activities of the academies in the promotion of the King's image fulfilled a role much like modern-day propaganda.

The function of the sum of the work produced by the academies has been described by Louis Marin as a "Portrait of the King" and by Jean-Marie Apostolidès in terms of Louis XIV's mise-en-scène as machine.[42] In either view, the representation of the Sun King both creates and legitimizes the absolute monarchy by positing Louis XIV as the cause and subject of the academicians' historiography and, at the same time, as a reality unto himself that was beyond any form of portrayal. The implications this has for the academicians is succinctly described by Richard Lockwood: "the highest praise of a King who wishes to define himself as absolute is to define him as beyond praise, as the source and producer of praise rather than its object or product."[43] In suggesting that it is LeBrun who is the master of the representational field, therefore, Georgel places the painter in the position that is rightly occupied by the King.

The view that the King was both cause and effect of his representation is

implied in a statement made by Louis XIV himself. Before a gathering of writers assembled by Colbert in 1663 to begin writing the history of the King's reign, Louis XIV gave voice to the importance he placed upon glory and to his awareness of the distinction between noble actions and their representation that sustained the work done at the academies:

> "Vous pouvez, Messieurs, juger de l'estime que je fait de vous, puisque je vous confie la chose du monde qui m'est la plus précieuse, qui est ma gloire. Je suis sûr que vous ferez des merveilles; je tâcherai de ma part de vous fournir de la matière qui mérite d'être mise en oeuvre par des gens aussi habiles que vous êtes."[44]

The King 'entrusts' (confie) his glory, which emanates from him in the form of his heroic actions, to the writers so that they might have a noble subject to depict.

At the Académie française, men of letters expressed the nature of their relationship with the King in similar terms: their praise of the King is superfluous to his glory; Louis XIV is the origin of their literary efforts; and their own glory is a consequence of their portrayal of the King.[45] This is most apparent in a speech given to the Académie française by Jacques-Nicholas Colbert as part of his induction ceremony in 1678. Colbert first makes the King's glory dependent on its description but later finds that it is rather the subject of Louis XIV that insures the success of the literary efforts at the Academy:

> "Il [Louis] protège une Compagnie [the Académie Français] qui contribuera à donner à ses grandes actions l'immortalité qu'elles ont si justement méritée.
>
> Mais je me trompe, Messieurs, ce sont les exploits de Louis le Grand, c'est cet assemblage de vertus militaires et politiques qui donnera l'immortalité à vos ouvrages."[46]

Colbert's speech further indicates that the King provides not only the noble

subject matter necessary for great art, but the eloquence with which to render it:

> "Tirez seulement, si vous le pouvez, des images fidèles des actions de ce grand monarque: il vous a fourni des miracles et des prodiges qui feront naître dans votre esprit des pensées et des expressions extraordinaires."[47]

In finding both the subject matter and the manner of treating it to be derived from Louis XIV, Colbert subsumes aesthetic activity entirely within the King.

The assumption that Louis XIV was the source of the art representing him, and that an artist's own glory was a reflection of this activity, is also proclaimed in the contemporary praise of Charles LeBrun and Adam Frans Van der Meulen. They were the two painters most actively engaged in painting the King's history.

Van der Meulen was an important collaborator of LeBrun's on the l'Histoire du Roi series and is reported as being the "Peintre des Conquêtes du Roi" in the annals of the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture.[48] A native of Brussels, Van der Meulen studied with Pieter Snayers and developed a painting style consistent with the tradition of Flemish naturalism. In Paris, Van der Meulen specialized in painting large-scale landscapes and battle scenes featuring Louis XIV which were made into tapestries and further disseminated through copies and engravings. In paintings such as Louis XIV, As Commander in a Cavalry Engagement (Fig. 7) and Louis XIV and His Generals at the Siege of Lille (Fig. 8) he portrayed the King's exploits in a naturalistic style that provides a straightforward enunciative structure for reading the images, as opposed to allegorical embellishment which requires a certain degree of learning to be properly read. Van der Meulen strove for accuracy in his depictions of the King's

achievements over the spectacular and decorative effects often associated with battlepieces. To achieve precision in his rendering of events, he often accompanied Louis XIV on campaigns, or visited battle sites after the troops had departed; in order to produce hundreds of preparatory drawings and topographical studies which would later form the basis of his compositions.

A measure of Van der Meulen's status in society and among painters can be determined from an engraved portrait of him by Pierre Van Schuppen (1687) (Fig. 9).[49] The engraving is modeled after a portrait by Largillierre that has not survived. It depicts a bust-length likeness of Van der Meulen in an oval frame set above a mantle below which a quatrain appears. The effect the engraving imitates is that of a painting hung on a gallery or library wall in a palace. An inscription written in French around the oval frame announces the name and rank of the individual represented in the image:

> "FRANCOIS VANDER MEVLEN NATIF DE BRVXELLES, PEINTRE ORDINAIRE DE L'HISTOIRE DV ROY TRES-CHRETIEN".

The inscription demonstrates that the name of the painter only emerges in relation to his position as the painter of the King's history. The idea that the painter's glory is provided through the figure of the King is further indicated by the verse written below the mantle. The words here do not mention Van der Meulen at all, but rather speak of the King as painter:

> "C'est de Louis Le Grand le Peintre incomparable,
> Qui de ses plus beaux faits a peint la verité,
> Et qui sans le secours des couleurs de la fable,
> Le Fait Voir ce qu'il est a la Posterité."

These lines represent Louis XIV himself as the source of his glory and immortality. His great actions manifest themselves to future generations directly, without need of great artists and their hyperbolic allegories (couleurs de la fable). At the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture, the aesthetic base of the art produced was founded on a noble subject and on the manner in which it was rendered.[50] A hierarchy of genres was established which assigned a fixed scale of values to categories of subject matter. History painting was at the top of the scale since the depiction of the greatest human themes, in the most compelling form, required the greatest skill and learning. In a lecture to the Academy, published in 1669, Félibien describes the purpose of the history painter:

> "he must treat history and fable; he must, like the historians, represent great events or, like the poets, pleasant subjects; and, mounting still higher, he must, by means of allegorical compositions, know how to conceal under the veil of fable the virtues of great men and the most exalted mysteries. He who acquits himself well in undertakings of this kind may be called a great painter."[51]

To contemporaries, Van der Meulen's natural style would have appeared less as art than as reportage: the painter merely records, with as much accuracy as possible, the actual events of the King's reign. In this literal documentation of events, Van der Meulen functions as an extension of the King's body. The painter's skill brought him a certain status but he is not further identified in the verse because the subject of his work is the King, and its style, a transparent naturalism instead of the artful imitation of both the object and of poetry, is also the King. In this engraving by Van Schuppen, Van der Meulen's glory arises out of his capacity as painter of the King's history and less as a result of his status

as an artist.

In Gerard Edelinck's engraved portrait of Charles LeBrun (1683) (Fig. 10), the painter does acquire recognition as an artist because of his great reputation as a history painter. But it becomes evident that LeBrun's new found status is also figured as the result of his service to Louis XIV. LeBrun's Alexander Series made him the undisputed master of allegorical history paintings celebrating Louis XIV. The series consists of five paintings executed in the 1660s that firmly establish LeBrun's style and reputation.[52] The subject matter concerns exploits from the life of Alexander the Great and the pictures are meant to be interpreted as allegories for Louis XIV's deeds.

In 1662 LeBrun was called to the court at Fountainebleau and commissioned by Louis XIV to produce a painting on a subject of his own choosing. The result was the Queens of Persia at the Feet of Alexander (Fig. 11), now at Versailles, and the first painting of what would come to be called the Alexander Series. The picture is paradigmatic of the ut pictura poesis concept of painting practiced at the Academy.[53] It depicts the moment when Alexander and his comrade Hephestion, after having defeated Darius in battle, visit the captured Persian royal family. Hephestion and Alexander are at the right of the canvas. The Persian queens and their attendants are in a tent on the left, with one group kneeling and the other standing behind them. The figures in the tent are in a variety of postures and display facial expressions that will later appear in LeBrun's Conférence sur l'Expression. The design, postures, and facial expressions are all

meant to aid in the construction of a verbal narrative; and the beholder moves from figure to figure, defining the emotional reaction of each and its relation to the whole. Félibien's lengthy contemporary description of this piece indicates the extent to which pictures were considered as texts to be read.[54] In the figure of Alexander alone he finds four concurrent affections of the soul: compassion, denoted by his face and countenance; clemency, evident in the gesture of his open hand; friendship, shown in the placing of the other hand on Hephestion; and civility, indicated by the drawing back of one leg.

The moral of the painting's subject is one of self-control: Alexander displays great discipline and restraint by not ravishing the Persian women and, consequently, he is to be commended. Allegorically, the image refers to Louis XIV's love affair with Marie Mancini.[55] Like Alexander, the Sun King masters his passions, and ends the romance in favour of an arranged marriage which would better serve the state. LeBrun tempered the severity of the design, and the painting's message, with a variety of picturesque details, and the result was much admired by the King and court, and aspired to by budding academicians.

Edelinck's engraved portrait of Charles LeBrun (Fig. 10) is modeled after a portrait study of LeBrun, now in Munich, by Nicolas de Largillierre (Fig. 1).[56] The engraving was Edelinck's reception piece for entrance into the Academy. It portrays an oval, bust length portrait of LeBrun set against undulating drapery. A sextain by Quinault appears on a mantle below the painter's likeness, and the verse is bordered on the left and right by oval emblems. As in the image of Van

der Meulen, an inscription around the frame distinguishes the individual represented:

"CHARLES LE BRVN EQVES REGIS PICTORVM PRINCEPS"

The painter's identity is once again described in terms of his position in the King's service. LeBrun's status as Louis XIV's First Painter, however, is announced in Latin rather than in French. Latin was traditionally the more respected of the two languages. It was used by the ancients, revived by the humanists, and was the standard against which the French language would be measured in the 'Querrelle des anciens et modernes'. As such, its exploitation to name LeBrun signifies a more prestigious conferment than the vernacular French designating Van der Meulen in Van Schuppen's engraving. Latin would have also addressed a more sophisticated and learned audience than would have French, just as LeBrun's allegorical pictures would have required more knowledge to interpret than Van der Meulen's "documentary" images.

LeBrun's greater status compared to Van der Meulen is further established through the First Painter's representation in the verse below his likeness. The quatrain in the engraving of Van der Meulen refers only to Louis XIV. Quineault's lines praise the painter:

> "Au siecle de Louis l'heureux sort te fit naistre,
> A luy fallait un Peintre, Et te fallait un maistre
> Qui fournist a ton art plus d'un noble dessein.
> Par toy nous triomphons d'Athenes et de Rome.
> Il n'est que toy LeBrun pour nous peindre un si grand homme
> Comme il n'est que Louis, pour occuper ta main."

The First Painter achieves recognition in the verse as a painter because his

allegorical style has a higher value as art than does Van der Meulen's naturalism. Quineault exalts LeBrun above all other painters for his ability to represent the King, while Louis XIV is posited as the only subject worthy of Lebrun's efforts. The emblems form a pictorial counterpoint to this theme.[57] They depict an eagle staring at the sun and the sun shining over a rainbow, at the lower the left and right, respectively. Their explanation was given by a contemporary of LeBrun's, Jacques Bullart. Bullart had published two editions of a book of engraved portraits accompanied by brief biographies entitled Academie des Sciences et des Arts in 1682 and 1695. Members of the French school were almost completely omitted from both editions, however Bullart had begun accumulating biographical information on various painters to remedy this situation for a third edition that was never published. Amid this miscellaneous information are the emblems from Edelinck's engraving of LeBrun and a description of them. Louis is equated with the sun in each emblem and LeBrun is represented by the eagle and the rainbow. Just as the eagle is the only bird that can stare directly at the sun, so, too, LeBrun is above all other painters in his ability to represent the King; and as the rainbow is given color from the light of the sun, the King inspires LeBrun's hand.

The idea that Louis XIV is both the source of the art glorifying him and its subject, is articulated in the engraving of Van der Meulen through the painter's absence from the verse completing the image. In the engraving of LeBrun, the painter's skill as an artist authorizes his representation in the verse, but Quineault is still able to posit the King as the origin of LeBrun's achievement. The writer

does this by appropriating the iconography used to celebrate painters, involving a comparison of ancient and modern artists, for Louis XIV.

LeBrun's art is judged by Quineault to have surpassed the example set by Antiquity: "Par toy nous triomphons d'Athenes et de Rome." The aggrandization of painters through comparisons to the Antique was a practice common to by both painters and writers. Usually the representations involved the figure of Apelles, Alexander the Great's painter, who's skills were reputed to be beyond compare. LeBrun had been praised in such a manner earlier in his life, during his tenure with Fouquet.[58] In 1661, About a month prior to Fouquet's arrest, the minister hosted a great spectacle at Vaux for Louis XIV and members of the court. LeBrun was responsible for the artistic dimension of the festivities and his efforts were judged a great success. La Fontaine, who was in attendance, wrote the following verse describing the events and praising the abilities of the painter and his associate the sieur Torelli:

> "On vit des rocs s'ouvrir, des termes se mouvoir,
> Et sur son piédestal tourner mainte figure.
> Deux enchanteurs pleins de savoir
> firent tant par leur imposture,
> Qu'on crut qu'ils avaient le pouvoir
> de commander à la nature.
> L'un de ces enchanteurs est le sieur Torelli,
> Magicien expert et faiseur de miracles;
> Et l'autre, c'est Le Brun, par qui Vaux embelli
> Présente aux regardants mille rares spectacles:
> Le Brun dont on admire et l'esprit et la main,
> Père d'inventions agréables et belles,
> Rival des Raphaëls, successeur des Apelles,
> Par qui notre climat ne doit rien au Romain.
> Par l'avis de ces deux la chose fut réglée."[59]

La Fontaine employs what had become part of the standard iconography for praising the painter: a comparison with Apelles and Raphael is made, and it is LeBrun's talent and inventions that allow French art to surpass the exquisite example set by the Antique and Renaissance masters.

Quineault's example of the iconography differs significantly from La Fontaine's. Instead of it being the artist's creative ability that permits LeBrun to transcend the Antique, it is Louis XIV as the subject of art that is the cause for such success: "te fallait un maistre / Qui fournist a ton art plus d'un noble dessein./ Par toy nous triomphons d'Athenes et de Rome." The King is the master who provides even more than just the noble subject needed by LeBrun to better the ancients. The word "dessein" had an ambiguous meaning in the seventeenth-century and could connote both "drawing" and "design".[60] The latter connotation implies the King as subject, and this suggestion is made explicit in the verse in which Louis XIV is identified as the only subject worthy of representation by LeBrun. The implication of "drawing" is that Louis XIV, as well as supplying the subject of art, contributes the eloquence necessary for LeBrun to translate contemporary events into allegories since drawing was the foundation of history painting practiced at the Academy under LeBrun's tenure. This point is further substantiated by Quineault's statement that the King supplies "*plus* d'un noble dessein" [emphasis added], and by the emblem depicting the sun shining over a rainbow, in which Louis XIV is the sun giving color to the rainbow, or art, created by LeBrun.

The idea that Eloquence is found to originate with the King, as opposed to the artist, is expressed by LeBrun at the Galerie des Glâces. One of the dozen oval medallions that form part of the decorative program is entitled Protection Accorded to the Fine Arts (1681-4) (Fig. 12).[61] The painting depicts Louis XIV enthroned and wearing roman armour. Minerva and Eloquence appear to the left and right of the King, respectively. Behind the latter figure are five female personifications of the various fine arts. Painting is the second figure in this group and is identified by the attribute of a palette. Unlike Loir's Progress of the Art of Painting in France (Fig. 5), in which Louis XIV appears through the conceit of a royal portrait, the King's presence in an allegorical composition is no longer mediated and he appears directly among the allegorical figures. Eloquence, with a caduceus in hand, kneels before the King as if in supplication, and her attendance among the personifications of the arts suggests that, like them, her powers and achievements derive from the King.

In Edelinck's engraving, LeBrun achieves a presence in the verse below his name because of his status as a great artist. His achievement, however, is established as resulting from having Louis XIV as his subject. Furthermore, the King may be seen as the basis for the eloquence with which LeBrun forms his allegorical compositions in praise of the Monarch. Finally, LeBrun's artistic efforts celebrating Louis XIV are found to be superfluous to the reality of the Sun King's glory and immortality. Instead, it is Louis XIV's majesty that is determined to be the foundation of LeBrun's reputation and art, and aesthetic activity is completely

ground in political discourse. Charles Perrault summarizes the state of the relationship between LeBrun and the King in his contemporary treatise on the art of painting, La Peinture:

> "Mais LeBrun, si le temps dans la suite des àges,
> Loin de les effacer, embellit tes ouvrages,
> Et si ton art t'éleve au comble de l'honneur,
> Sçache que de Louis t'est venu c'est bonheur."[62]

CHAPTER II: THE KING OF PAINTING

Quineault, Perrault, and the anonymous author of the quatrain below Van der Meulen's likeness, put forth a view of painters in which their glory and the triumph of French painting is determined to originate with Louis XIV. Such a view subsumes the identity of painters, normally constructed in terms of the aesthetic realm, within the political discourse sustaining the absolute monarchy: the painter finds his image in the figure of the King. But another form of praise for the painter was also possible, one in which the political and aesthetic spheres are separated. The King is presented as the model of kingship, and painting the King is recognized as the ideal of art, but the production of art is determined to be the painter's domain of expertise, and painters begin to create an image of themselves as practioners of their art. As the artist preeminently responsible for the creation of the image of Louis IV's reign, it should come as no surprise that this form of praise of the painter is found in a portrait of Charles LeBrun.

Charles LeBrun was the dominant figure in French art during the first half of Louis XIV's reign. In his official capacities as First Painter to the King, life-Chancellor of the Académie de Peinture et de Sculpture, and Director of the Gobelins factory, LeBrun controlled the official patronage, production, and style of the visual arts from the early 1660s until the death of Colbert, his protector at court, in 1683. The most familiar image of LeBrun is the portrait of him by Nicolas de Largillierre, which is on permanent display in the Richelieu wing of the Louvre (Fig. 13). Commissioned by the Académie de Peinture et de Sculpture in 1683 as

Largillierre's reception piece for membership into its ranks, the Portrait of Charles LeBrun was successfully completed in 1686.[63] The painting was given to Madame LeBrun at her husband's death in 1690, and had entered the collection of the Musée du Louvre by 1799.[64] Largillierre was one of a group of painters who transformed the genre of portraiture in France in the last quarter of the seventeenth century through the introduction of Flemish painting techniques deriving ultimately from Sir Anthony Van Dyck.[65] Although a Parisian by birth, Largillierre was brought up in Antwerp and trained as a Flemish painter. He became a master in the Antwerp Guild in 1673-1674 and soon after relocated to London, where he may have worked in Sir Peter Lely's studio. In Paris in 1682, Largillierre was probably introduced to LeBrun by Adam-Frans Van der Meulen, the Flemish landscape and battle scenes painter who frequently collaborated with Charles LeBrun.[66]

Largillierre's Portrait of Charles Lebrun depicts the First Painter to the King at his ease in a luxurious red and dark blue velvet robe, seated in a gilded armchair, and looking out at the beholder. On his chest he wears the medallion given to him by Louis XIV. Although not working, LeBrun holds several brushes in his left hand while gesturing with his right towards an oil sketch of Franche-Comté Conquered for the Second Time set on an easel.[67] This is a preparatory study for one of the paintings in LeBrun's ceiling cycle at the Galerie des Glaces and it contains a likeness of Louis XIV. Two casts after the classical sculptures of the Battling Gladiator and the Antinous are situated on a table at the far right.

Beneath them lies an engraving by Gerard Edelinck of LeBrun's painting The Queens of Persia at the feet of Alexander.[68] Two more casts after the antique appear to the left of the painter, an Apollo Belvedere torso and the head of a goddess, possibly Athena.[69] A globe, book, and portfolio of drawings are also evident. A pilaster located behind these items and billowing curtains running across the top of the canvas complete the scene. The tonality of the painting is dominated by a reddish brown suffused in a shimmering golden atmosphere common to Largillierre's early work.

Anthony Blunt contends that Largillierre created a new genre with the Portrait of Charles Lebrun that is comparable to a royal portrait, which he referred to as: "the state-portrait of the artist".[70] His theory was also reiterated in the catalogue to the Largillierre exhibition held in Montreal in 1981.[71] According to Blunt, seventeenth-century portraits of painters tended to feature either the artist without any identifying attributes, or at work in what would appear to be the actual surroundings of his studio. Largillierre, however, develops a more allegorical space for LeBrun to inhabit, and just as a king would be depicted with the attributes of the monarchy in a royal portrait, LeBrun is portrayed amidst objects symbolic of his achievement: the classical casts through whose imitation his style was made, together with examples of his most celebrated works. The analogy to a royal portrait is underscored by Largillierre's use of Henri Testelin's Portrait of Louis XIV as Protector of the Arts (1666-1668) as a model for elevating the LeBrun portrait to the rank of history painting (Fig. 2).[72] Largillierre's success in

transforming this portrait of a painter into a history painting was confirmed by Guillet de Saint-Georges, the Academy's first historiographer, who qualified the Portrait of Charles LeBrun as a "tableau historique" in 1693.[73]

The problem with the theory put forth by Blunt is not that it is an incorrect assessment of the painting but rather by interpreting it within the context of portraits of artists he fails to explain adequately how the image functioned as a "state-portrait" of the artist. This is better understood by relating the Portrait of Charles LeBrun to a series of images to which it alludes, and which advocate royal service and the subject of the King as the highest purpose of the art of painting. It becomes evident that Largillierre incorporates aspects of the iconographies and meanings of the paintings previously considered in this essay, in order to create an image of LeBrun as the king of painting and the model to which other painters should aspire.

As mentioned, Largillierre's starting point for his painting of LeBrun is the portrait of Louis XIV as Protector of the Arts by Henri Testelin (Fig. 2). Largillierre adopts Testelin's general format of a seated, full-length figure situated at some remove from the front of the picture plane and enframed by architectural elements and hanging curtains, as well as the specific allegorical details of a globe, symbolizing celebrity, and the cast of a bust of Athena. It has been established above that Testelin's painting articulates the message to painters that their duty was to create images of the King in return for the sovereign's political and financial protection. Since the royal portrait was hung in the Academy's grande

salle des assemblés, it would have served as a constant reminder to the academicians of their purpose to celebrate Louis XIV, and that it was the King to whom they owed allegiance. Into this form of portraying the King, of which the Academy members would have been keenly aware, Largillierre substitutes Charles LeBrun for Louis XIV.

In addition to appearing in a format adopted from a royal portrait, LeBrun mimics the mode of production in which images of the King were made. The Portrait of Charles LeBrun was Largillierre's reception piece, a type of commission that typically required an iconography referring to contemporary events from the King's history. Largillierre, however, was instructed to glorify Louis XIV's First Painter, Charles LeBrun. LeBrun is aggrandized through the forms and means of production used for royalty, and, as a result, his status is elevated far above that normally reserved for artists in seventeenth-century France.

It would seem presumptuous that such a powerful form of representation, made in the image of Louis XIV, including a likeness of the King, and commissioned and produced in the manner reserved for a painting of the King, would have been merely serving to promote the status of an artist. In borrowing the form of Testelin's royal portrait, Largillierre also adopts and adapts its message that the function of painters was to paint the history of the King. Now, instead of it being Louis XIV delivering this message, or Minerva and Fame, as it was in Nicolas Loir's The Progress of the Graphic Arts in France (Fig. 5), it is LeBrun, through his own image and the example of his work, who proclaims the

King as the ideal subject of art. The ultimate referent for the Portrait of Charles LeBrun is Louis XIV, and Largillierre's painting operates within the totality of images created at the Academy in praise of the King. In this context, Largillierre's picture of LeBrun is less a portrait of an artist than it is the portrait of the artist as the painter of the King.

In order for LeBrun to serve successfully as a model to which other painters should aspire, Largillierre first had to establish him as a preeminently skilled and talented painter. Fundamentally, LeBrun's status as a painter is indicated by the brushes in his left hand and the examples of his work around him. Moreover, his pose is remarkably similar to the figure of Painting in the drawing by LeBrun at the Louvre (Fig. 3). Both LeBrun and Painting are portrayed seated before a canvas, with the left leg crossed over the right, the left hand holding a group of brushes, and the right arm lifted above the left. Largillierre's Portrait of Charles LeBrun also includes attributes representative of painting, sculpture, engraving, and drawing - the arts that formed the core of studies at the Academy. LeBrun and the academicians promoted painting as a rational art appealing primarily to the intellect rather than to the eye.[74] They championed the permanence of drawing over what they felt to be the incidental nature of color, the development of history painting to express noble ideas, and works from Antiquity were posited as norms of perfection for learning how to idealize nature. This doctrine, and LeBrun's mastery of it, is made apparent by Largillierre in the attributes that take the form of casts from classical statuary and the celebrated

compositions from LeBrun's own oeuvre. The arrangement in the portrait of the attributes of the four arts practiced at the Academy culminates with LeBrun's oil sketch of Franche-Comté Conquered for the Second Time. The sketch takes up almost as much room on the canvas as the First Painter, and since it is a history painting of Louis XIV, and incorporates or eclipses the other arts depicted, LeBrun's artistic efforts are displayed as the successors of the classical tradition.

The other picture by LeBrun reproduced in the portrait, the Queens of Persia at the Feet of Alexander, is a textbook example of the type of history painting practiced at the Academy. Indeed, it is the model of history painting in Audran's engraving of La Peinture peignant un emblème de Louis XIV (Fig. 4). The image includes many of the visual examples of specific emotions with which LeBrun illustrated his series of lectures given to the Academy in 1668 on the expression of the passions.[75] LeBrun's pose in Largillierre's portrait of him has led one scholar to speculate that the painter is shown as lecturing on drawing or on the expression of the passions.[76] The book appearing to the left of the painter is a traditional symbol of learning. Interpreted in relation to the LeBrun's lecturing pose and the nearby engraving, it may ultimately refer to LeBrun's scholarly efforts to develop a rational system for depicting the passions of the soul. The development of such a system, which is the final component of LeBrun's method of history painting, was one of his great pursuits. Largillierre's allusion to it serves to focus the viewer's attention on both the First Painter's great intellect and the primacy of his painting skills.

Having established LeBrun's credentials as a great painter, Largillierre further defines the First Painter in relation to Louis XIV by representing the same themes expressed in Edelinck's engraved reception piece by Quineault's verse (Fig. 10). Largillierre's Portrait of Charles LeBrun captures the media of drawing, sculpture, engraving, and, as a history painting, it imitates poetry. The themes from Edelinck's engraving that Largillierre communicates without the support of emblems or the written word are LeBrun's status as First Painter to the King; the figure of the King as the primary aim of painting; and the status of LeBrun's art as having surpassed the example set by the ancients as a consequence of having the King as subject.

LeBrun's role as the First Painter, and the implication that the object of the Academy is to paint the history of the King, is announced in the engraving by the inscription around his likeness, and in Quineault's verse: "Il n'est que toy LeBrun pour nous peindre un si grand homme / Comme il n'est que Louis, pour occuper ta main." This finds its pictorial counterpart in Largillierre's portrait through the inclusion of an image of Louis XIV, and in the manner in which the King both gestures towards, and occupies the hand of, LeBrun. The King is literally almost in the hand of the painter, and his presence there instigates a complex interplay of gestures between LeBrun and the figures in Franche-Comté Conquered for the Second Time which blur the boundaries between the respective pictorial spaces of the portrait of the painter and the oil sketch reproduced within it (Fig. 14). The King points at LeBrun with one arm and the other is directed down towards the

personifications of Franche-Comté and its villages to signify that he is providing LeBrun with the great deeds that will ennoble the painter's art. The supplicating gesture of the personification of Franche-Comté at Louis XIV's feet is directed out to LeBrun, while the demonstrative right hand of the First Painter reciprocates this communication to acknowledge his claim to the representation of the King's victory. This point is further emphasized by the location of the personifications immediately above LeBrun's brushes. In Largillierre's Portrait of Charles LeBrun, the idea that the painter should paint the history of the King, which is only generally alluded to in the verse by Quineault, is explicitly defined in relation to a contemporary event from the Dutch War.

As we have previously determined, to praise the painter for glorifying the King would have been a dangerous presumption since it would make Louis XIV's glory contingent upon its description. Largillierre resolves this problem by depicting Louis XIV almost literally handing LeBrun the subject for the painter's art. As Quineault did in the verse for the engraved portrait of LeBrun by Edelinck, Largillierre presents the King as the subject by which LeBrun surpasses the art of the ancients. But unlike Quineault's verse, which represents the King as both source and subject of art and LeBrun as a mere extension of the King's body, political and aesthetic activities remain distinct in Largillierre's painting, and Louis XIV dominates the former as his First Painter commands the latter. Largillierre articulates this theme through the manner in which he reproduces and juxtaposes the two images praising the King by LeBrun within the portrait: the oil sketch of

Franche-Comté Conquered for the Second Time and the engraving of the Queens of Persia at the Feet of Alexander.

The Queens of Persia at the Feet of Alexander had been an important image in the development of LeBrun's career and in the representation of Louis XIV through the figure of Alexander the Great. The glorification of the King by relating him to a hero from Antiquity, however, conforms to a type of praise that had been superseded in official patronage by a more direct form of allegory. At Versailles, the iconography for LeBrun's ceiling cycle underwent several transformations.[77] The initial scheme was devoted to Apollo, in keeping with the Grande Commande of the Gardens at Versailles. The second focused on the exploits of Hercules, which would have accommodated the iconography of the Escalier des Ambassadeurs. Finally, LeBrun was ordered by Louis XIV's secret council to forge a more direct portrayal of the King's conquests to represent better Louis XIV's victories in the Dutch War. The King is obviously the origin of the subject matter for the imagery of the cycle at Versailles, but LeBrun's task was to give it some form of monumental expression. Nivelon provides a description of LeBrun's efforts to translate the contemporary scenes into allegories glorifying the King:

> "La résolution étant prise sur le changement, M. Le Brun se renferma deux jours dans l'ancien hôtel de Grammont et produisit le premier dessi n de ce grand ouvrage, qui est le tableau du milieu, qui fait le noeud principal de tout, sur lequel fut ordonné d'en continuer la suite sur ces mêmes principes et ces belles lumières, avec cette prudente restriction de la part de M. Colbert de n'y rien faire entrer qui ne fût conforme à la vérité, ni de trop onéreux aux puissances étrangères que cela pouvait toucher; ce qui est exécuté d'une manière si savante qu'eux-mêmes,

intéressés en faveur de leur patrie, les voyant ou entendant ce récit, sont charmés de la beauté et de la noblesse de ce langage pour perpétuer à la postérité les actions des grands rois."[78]

The style of the cycle is exemplified by the oil sketch for Franche-Comté Conquered for the Second Time (Fig. 15).[79] Franche-Comté had been captured in the War of Devolution (1667-8) but had been returned to Spain under the terms of the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle. During the Dutch War (1672-8), Louis XIV easily recaptured the province in three months. It is this victory that is represented. At the center of the image, Louis XIV is standing above the female personifications of Franche-Comté and its villages, whom Mars has brought to the King's feet. The Soux river, personified by a bearded man, who, having seen Victory hanging trophies on a palm-tree, clings to Louis XIV's coat in a gesture of submission. Fame carries two trumpets to signify that the province has been twice defeated, and, above the King, Glory appears illuminated by brilliant light. Behind Louis XIV, the club wielding Hercules, who is accompanied by Minerva, surmounts a rock and lion, symbolizing Besançon and Spain, respectively. The winter months in which the campaign took place are represented by their appropriate zodiacal signs. Finally, at the far right of the picture, an eagle perched on a dead tree refers to the futile support offered by Germany against Louis XIV.

Although it was not unusual to allegorize contemporary history, the relentless consistency of this idiom of expression in the cycle at the Galerie des Glaces is unique. With the exception of Le Roi Donne Ses Ordres Pour Attacquer En Même Temps Quatres Des Plus Fortes Places De La Hollande, which includes

Louis XIV's brother, the Prince de Condé, and Le Vicomte de Turenne, Louis is the only "real" person appearing in the entire cycle. Everyone or everything else, from army commanders and enemy forces to countries, cities, rivers, winds, and storms are symbolized by a generalized type or by personifications. LeBrun has adhered to Colbert's warning mentioned by Nivelon, and has painted the truth of the event. But Louis XIV has entered a godly realm, and the description of the King and his great deeds are no longer mediated through, or substituted by, Alexander the Great. The decision to depict the King's actions explicitly rather than through a figure from Antiquity, the latter of which would have been more common to the tradition of decorating the great halls of Renaissance and Baroque princes[80], suggests that Louis XIV and his actions were deemed better than those of mythological or historical figures in their capacity to serve as exempla for future generations.

In the Portrait of Charles LeBrun, Largillierre represents both forms of glorifying the King, their respective importance, and LeBrun's authority over each. The oil sketch featuring Louis XIV holds a more privileged space at the center of the canvas than does the engraving which lies folded over the table and under some classical statuary. The sketch is also rendered in a more prestigious medium. Furthermore, in the section of the Queens of Persia at the Feet of Alexander that Largillierre offers the viewer, the figure of Alexander is not even visible, but is buried beneath the casts of classical statuary. This arrangement visually demonstrates that Louis XIV has supplanted Alexander as the model of

kingship, and that it has become more relevant to glorify the King directly rather than through an allusion to heroes from Antiquity. Since Louis XIV has now transcended the great figures of the past, he enables LeBrun to surpass the art of Antiquity by providing him with a more noble subject, which Largillierre communicates to the beholder through the interplay of gestures between Louis XIV and the First Painter.

In the verse to Edelinck's engraving, Quineault implies that Louis XIV provided LeBrun with the subject matter and eloquence with which the painter can produce art which surpasses that of the ancients. This implication submerges aesthetic activity within the figure of the King. Largillierre keeps the political and aesthetic realms separate, and identifies Louis XIV as the archetype of kings and LeBrun as the king of painters. The former is manifested by the more prestigious manner in which Louis XIV's likeness is portrayed and juxtaposed with the engraving of Alexander. An image of a conquest by Louis XIV is contrasted with a portrayal of one of Alexander's deeds to establish the political discourse in which the Sun King emerges as victor. Louis XIV's achievements as King will allow for no substitution in their representation and will themselves serve as the standard for future monarchs. In succeeding the heroes of the past, Louis XIV provides LeBrun with a subject to ennoble further the art of painting, but it is the First Painter that is the master of the skills required to translate the King's actions into works of art. This is indicated by the attributes delineating the methodology of history painting that was practiced at the Academy and the idea of LeBrun's

unparalleled command of it. The King may provide the noble subject matter needed for great art, but the painter represents the events, and each has dominion over a different set of skills.

LeBrun is portrayed in a distinguished form of representation by Largillierre: he is pictured with the King, in a format derived from a royal portrait, in a painting commissioned in the manner of an image of the King, and finally, as the king of painting. The iconography of the portrait indicates that the First Painter has achieved such prestigious recognition because of his service painting the history of Louis XIV. The primary audience for Largillierre's reception piece would have been the members of the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture. Upon witnessing the ascent of LeBrun into such significant status through his work celebrating Louis XIV, the members of the Academy would have been inspired to follow the example of their leader and paint the history of the King in hopes of attaining some of the glory now accorded to LeBrun.

Largillierre's rendering of the figures contributes to the effect of the iconography by having them actively inviting the viewer to take part in completing the theme of actions and their representation that the portrait represents. The figures and objects depicted are given a directional, as well as a narrative role, that serves to link the viewer's space with that of the painting. The relationship between LeBrun and the figures in the oil sketch represents the manner in which the beholder should interact with the portrait. The sketch of Franche-Comté Conquered for the Second Time not only describes one of Louis XIV's victories

in the Dutch War, it signals the link between LeBrun and the King. The beholder responds to Largillierre's painting in a similar fashion. Upon viewing the Portrait of Charles LeBrun we are persuaded to form a narrative by reading the display of objects as attributes referring to the painter and to the King. A more immediate, physical response to the gestures within the image is also encouraged, one in which the viewer is always compelled to consider the likeness of the First Painter and his relationship with the King. The most natural entrance into the canvas is through the gaze initiated by LeBrun. This, in turn, leads to the painter's gesturing right arm and to the King within the oil sketch, who reciprocates LeBrun's communication. The casts of classical statuary, at the right and bottom left of the canvas, are also positioned to direct the viewer to LeBrun. Largillierre's Flemish-influenced painting style further encourages this interaction between beholder and portrait through the reflections animating the painted surface, most notably on the gilded chair and LeBrun's brocaded jacket.

The judgement of contemporary painters regarding Largillierre's success in creating a "state-portrait" of the artist with the Portrait of Charles LeBrun is evident from the reception of the painting by Pierre Mignard. In an article written in 1921, Louis Hourtiq convincingly demonstrates that Mignard's Self-Portrait, now in the same gallery at the Louvre as the Portrait of Charles LeBrun, is based on Largillierre's image of LeBrun in terms of its size, composition, and iconography (Fig. 16).[81] Hourtiq interprets Mignard's Self-Portrait as a challenge to LeBrun in the quest for glory:

> "C'est un veritable tournoi devant la postérité. Et chaque fois que Le Brun met un chef-d'oeuvre dans son plateau, Mignard mets un poids égal dans le plateau adverse."[82]

Mignard counters the iconography in the portrait of his rival by including a painting after his cupola of the Val-de-Grâce by Michel Corneille and an engraving of Trajan's Column in response to LeBrun's Franche-Comté Conquered for the Second Time and the Queens of Persia.[83] The image from the Val-de-Grâce indicates Mignard's service to God, just as the Column of Trajan, which parallels the ancient Roman emperor with Louis XIV through the depiction of the French calvary on its shaft, glorifies the King.[84] Since Mignard celebrates both God and King, Hourtiq suggests that the painter's iconography is the more impressive of the two. He further supports this position by stating that Mignard creates a more allusive figure in the sculptural bust of a goddess at the left of his Self-Portrait than its counterpart in the Largillierre's work.[85] The bust is actually a portrait of Mignard's daughter, the Comtesse de Feuquières, who presented her father's Self-Portrait to the Academy after his death in 1696. The Antinous and the Battling Gladiator in Largillierre's painting are met in Mignard's by two statuettes, possibly representing Diana and Venus. Mignard also includes books, palettes and brushes to demonstrate his learning and to indicate his professional status. Although Hourtiq declares Mignard victorious in terms of the paintings' respective iconographies, the style of Mignard's picture is judged to be outmoded and incapable of competing with that of the portrait by Largillierre. Hourtiq praises Largillierre's image for its splendour, elegance, beautiful Flemish color, and the

manner in which the surface is animated by reflections. The drapery in Mignard's work is described as being plain and heavy, portrayed with arbitrary folds, and lacking in spirit. The yellow of the robe worn by Mignard is deemed unpleasant, and since it dominates the canvas, the whole is condemned.[86]

Throughout his life, Mignard was LeBrun's arch rival for official favour and recognition.[87] In art historical literature Mignard has played a secondary role to LeBrun, just as he did during much of his life. It is only within the last decade that his reputation has begun to be restored.[88] Little remains of his grand decorative cycles and he has been known primarily as a portrait painter. After spending twenty years in Rome, Mignard displayed his capacity to execute large scale commissions by decorating the cupola of the Val-de-Grâce in 1663. His efforts were widely praised by his contemporaries, among them Molière. He became LeBrun's bitter enemy as the latter's fortune ascended at court during the early 1660s and it became apparent that Mignard would only have a minor part to play in the increasingly bureaucratized system of official patronage. It was only with the death of LeBrun's protector Colbert in 1683, that Mignard, under the auspices of Louvois, would finally begin to achieve the success he desired. He was chosen over LeBrun to paint the Petite Galerie and its adjoining salons at Versailles in 1684; was made a noble in 1687 as LeBrun had been in 1662; and following LeBrun's death in 1690, Mignard became First Painter and also assumed command of the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture.

In the context of Mignard appropriating LeBrun's roles and rewards in life,

it is not surprising to find him adopting the form in which LeBrun was represented as well. In his contention that Mignard's iconography is more effective than Largillierre's because of its broader allusiveness, however, Hourtiq, like Mignard himself, fails to realize that it is through the image of the King within the Portrait of Charles LeBrun, and the representation of LeBrun as the maker of the King's image, that the rhetorical value of the painting as a "state-portrait" of the artist is made. Mignard's effort to displace the image of LeBrun with his own results in the creation of a very different type of picture, despite its superficial resemblance to Largillierre's portrait of the First Painter.

Largillierre's Portrait of Charles LeBrun is constituted within a royal portrait, an economy of images advocating service to the King, and a method of production through which the history of the King is made manifest in art. Unlike LeBrun, Mignard is not appropriating an image of the King as the basis for his representation, but that of a painter. His Self-Portrait is also not an officially sanctioned painting commissioned by the Academy and operating within the totality of images created to glorify Louis XIV. Instead, Mignard produces his likeness in the manner more often associated with glorifying painters: self-portraiture. Finally, just as Mignard is not expropriating the representational forms of royalty nor their means of production, he is no longer establishing his status on the basis of service to the monarchy but rather on the art of painting alone. LeBrun sits for Largillierre and posterity in a pose setting off a series of physical and narrative gestures linking the painter and his work to Louis XIV. Mignard is

simply at work, with pad and pencil in hand, another drawing implement hanging over edge of the table, and a palette and brushes on the floor by the side of his chair. Around him, the examples of his art contributing to the iconography of his self-portrait cohere into a description of Mignard as a successful and versatile history painter, but not specifically as a painter of the King's history.

It becomes evident that LeBrun's status as the most renowned painter to Louis XIV cannot be displaced, but only followed upon. LeBrun achieves such significant recognition for his services as painter to the King that the status of painting and painters reaches a respectable level in official discourse. In attempting to supersede the representation of LeBrun, Mignard unwittingly pays tribute to the First Painter's status as an artist by defining himself in terms of a painter and the art of painting.

Mignard's Self-Portrait marks a shift in the manner in which painters proclaimed their status. Their prestige is no longer represented in terms of a relationship to the monarchy but rather to the art of painting. Further evidence of this transference is found in a self-portrait by Largillierre. His Self-Portrait (1711) presents the artist boldly confronting the viewer, drawing him into the painted world with the gesture of his left hand (Fig. 17).[89] Largillierre invites us to contemplate his sketch for an Annunciation scene.[90] The standard interpretation for the picture is that Largillierre, who was a renowned portraitist, wished to insinuate his capacities as a history painter in accordance with the hierarchy of genres established at the Academy.[91] The identification of painters through the

figure of the King, and through service to the monarchy, has now been replaced by standards concerning the practice of the art of painting.

A final closure to the representation of the relationship of service between painters and the King is signified in Watteau's L'Enseigne de Gersaint (1720)(Fig. 18). Gersaint was a picture dealer and friend of Watteau's, and the painting was commissioned as a shopsign for Gersaint's boutique.[92] It depicts a fashionable clientele browsing and admiring the works on display in the shop. At the left, a portrait of the King is being removed to storage in a wooden crate. Pierre Rosenberg, Michael Levey, and others have explained the picture as a commentary by Watteau on the assumption of new subject matter and style in place of the iconographies glorifying kings and the nobility through allusions to the heroes of Antique history and mythology.[93] The portrait of a monarch displayed by Minerva and Fame in Nicolas Loir's Progress of the Art of Painting in France (Fig. 5), which announced that painters achieve dignity for themselves and their profession by portraying the king, is withdrawn in Watteau's painting by the new arbiters of taste. Paintings of the sovereign are no longer relevant to Gersaint's clients, and, as a result, they no longer have great importance for the status of painters.

CONCLUSION

Charles LeBrun and the other founders of the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture sought to strengthen their institution and profession through service to the King. To manifest the status of painters and painting, Louis XIV was celebrated as the protector of the arts in a royal portrait by Henri Testelin and was represented as the ideal subject of art in paintings by Nicolas Loir and others. The stature of painters was then derived from the skillful manner in which they painted the history of the King. Engraved portraits accompanied by verse, of LeBrun and Adam Frans Van der Meulen, identified allegorical painters as more distinguished than those who painted in a natural style. In both cases, Louis XIV is posited as being the source, subject, and eloquence of the art celebrating his achievements. Nicolas de Largillierre's Portrait of Charles LeBrun offers a different portrayal of the artist. His image of the LeBrun, based on the royal portrait formula, advocates service to the monarchy through the creation of art celebrating the King's activities. Although Louis XIV contributes the noble subject for LeBrun's art, it is the First Painter who is determined to possess the skills required to translate it into great art. LeBrun is represented as the master of the aesthetic domain just as Louis XIV is pictured as the model of kingship. In pursuing the identity of the painter by painting the King, LeBrun serves in the construction of the ideology supporting the absolute monarchy. Since he attains such a significant form of representation as a painter, however, the portrait of him by Largillierre

provides a model for the representation of a painter based on the art of painting. In using Largillierre's Portrait of Charles LeBrun as the prototype for one of his self-portraits, and in attempting to appropriate LeBrun's role as First Painter, Mignard ultimately establishes his status on the sole basis of his skill as a versatile history painter. A self-portrait by Largillierre also figures the painter in terms of his art and the hierarchy of genres governing the value of subject matter in paintings fostered by the Academy. Finally, in an image by Watteau, the notion articulated by the Academy that the King is the ideal subject of art is metaphorically put to rest as an art dealer consigns a portrait of the King to storage to make way for pictures more relevant to his clientele.

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93. Pierre Rosenberg, "Répétitions et Répliques dans l'Oeuvre de Watteau," in François Moureau and Margaret Morgan Grasselli, eds., Antoine Watteau (1684-1721): The Painter, His Age and His Legend, (Paris: Champion-Slatkine, 1987): 109-110; Giovanni Macchia, "Le Mythe Théâtre de Watteau," in Moreau and Grasselli, 187; Michael Levey, Painting and Sculpture in France 1700-1789, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993): 37.

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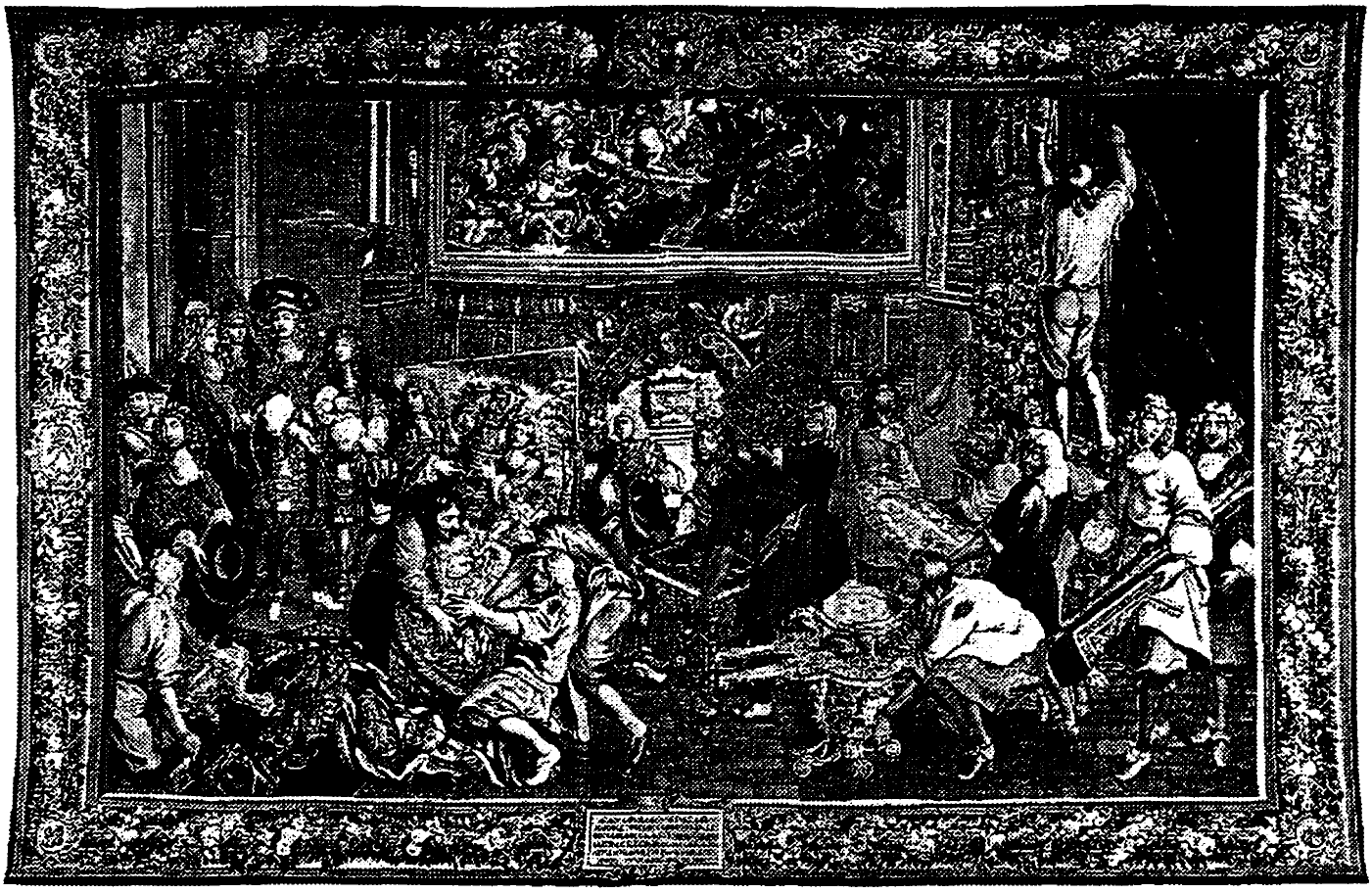
2. Henri Testelin, Louis XIV as Protector of the Arts.

3. Charles LeBrun, Painting Working for the Glory of Louis XIV.

4. G. Audran, La Peinture peignant un enblème de Louis XIV, after Claude Audran II.

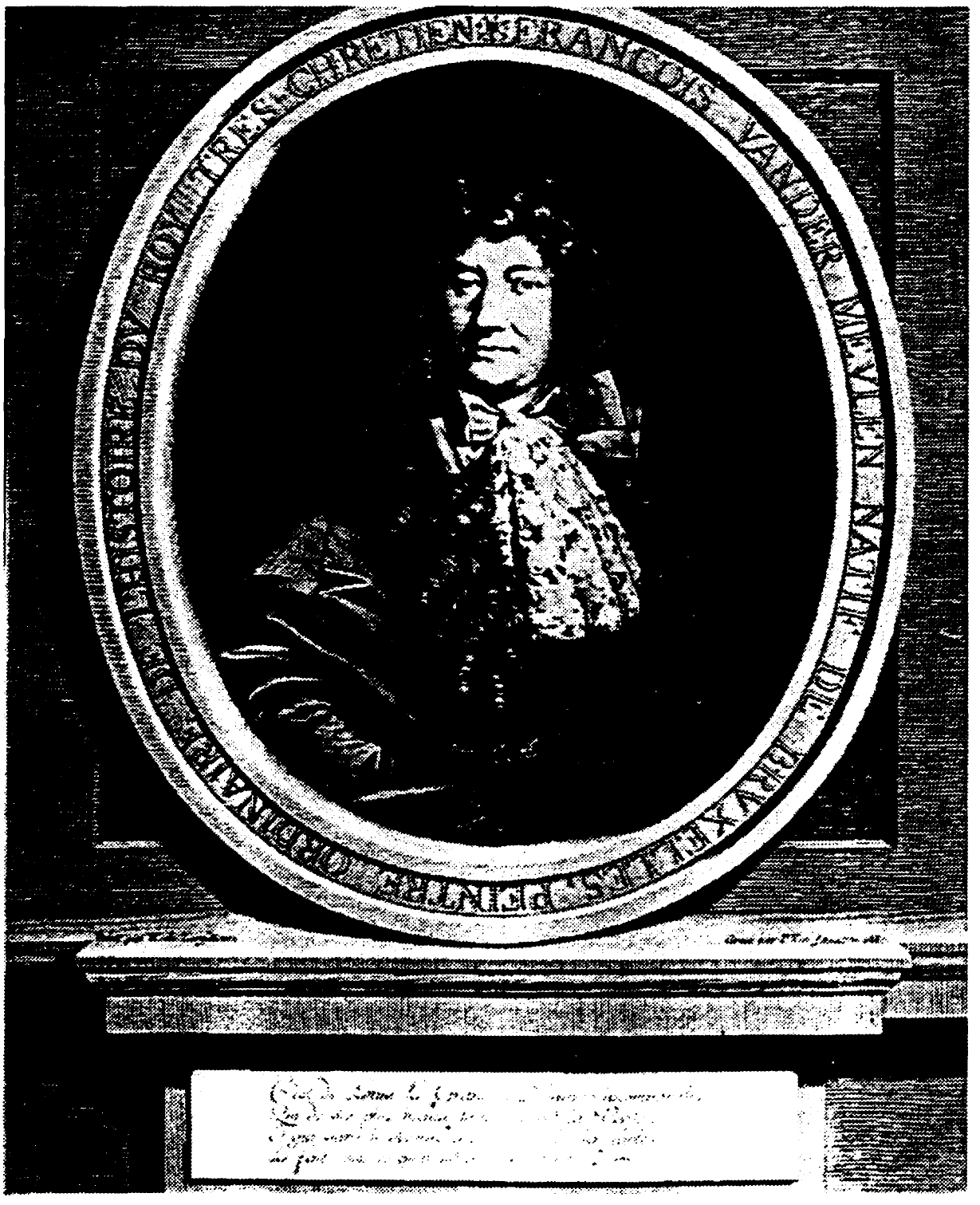
5. Nicolas Loir, Progress of the Graphic Arts in France.



6. Charles LeBrun, Louis XIV Visiting the Gobelins.

7. Adam Frans Van der Meulen, Louis XIV as Commander in a Cavalry Engagement.

8. Adam Frans Van der Meulen, Louis XIV and his Generals at the Siege of Lille.



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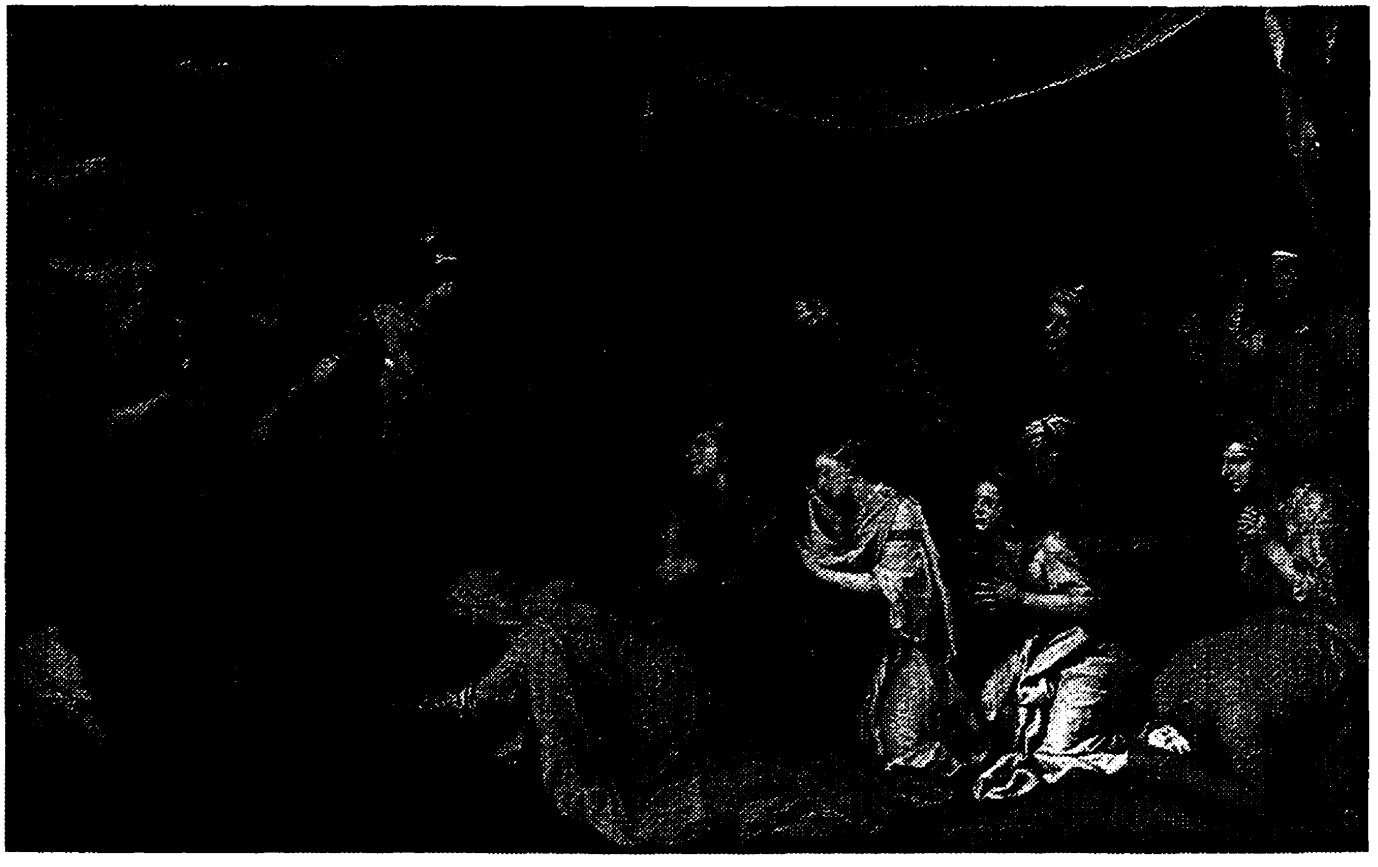
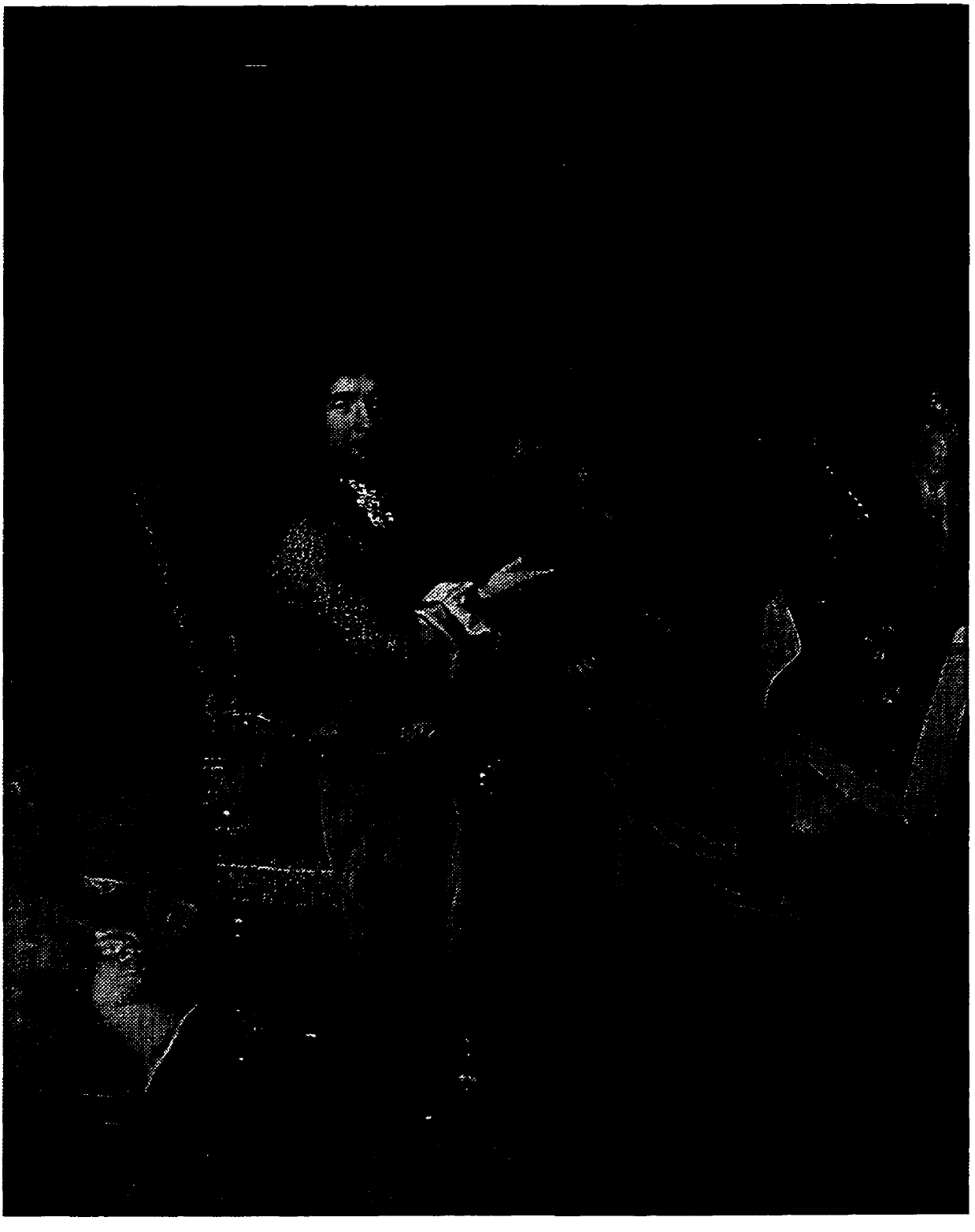
10. Gerard Edelinck, Portrait of Charles LeBrun, after Nicolas de Largillierre.



11. Charles LeBrun, The Queens of Persia at the Feet of Alexander.

12. Charles LeBrun, Protection Accorded to the Fine Arts.



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14. Nicolas de Largillierre, Portrait of Charles LeBrun, (detail).

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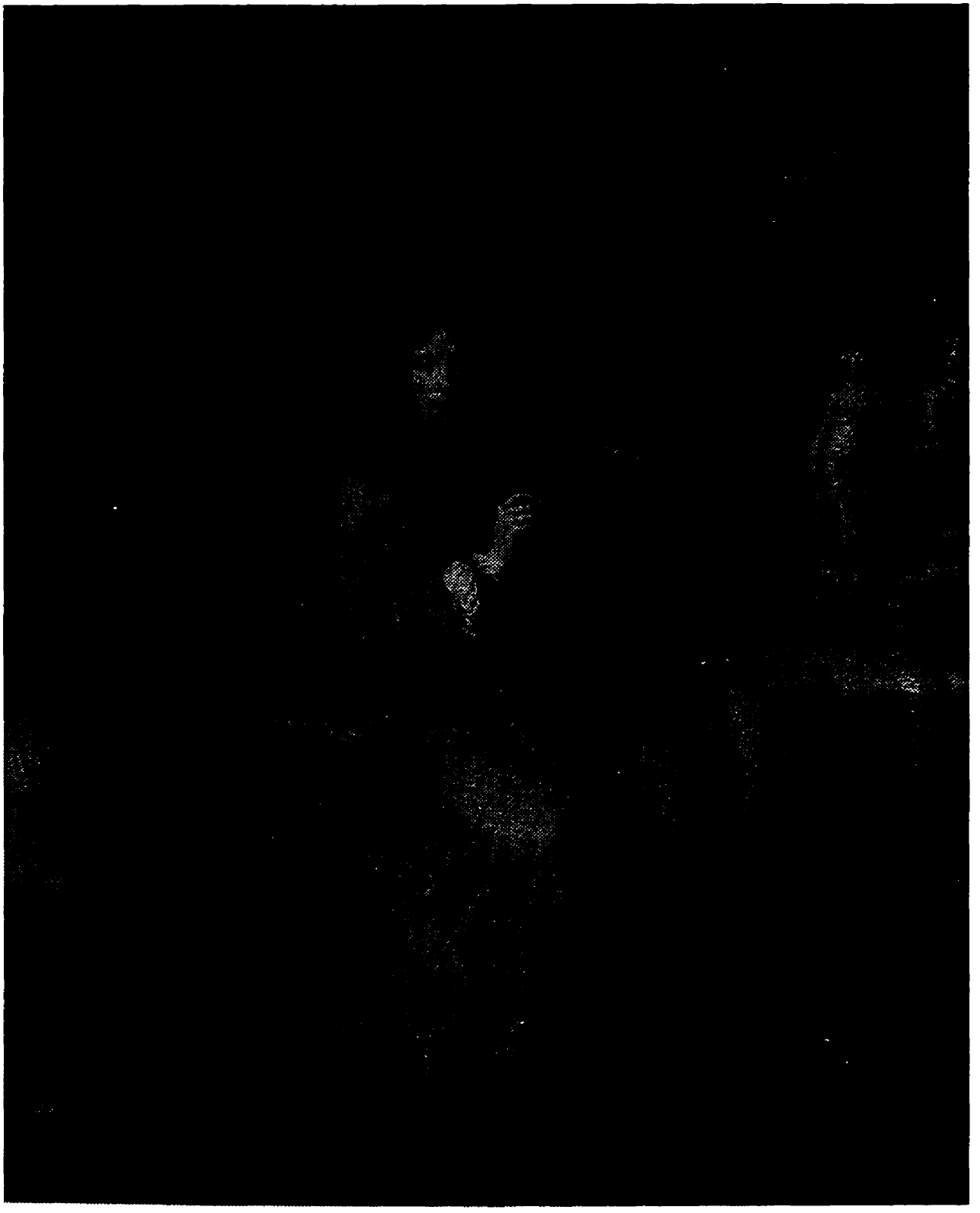

16. Pierre Mignard, Self-Portrait.

17. Nicolas de Largillierre, Self-Portrait.

18. Antoine Watteau, L'Enseigne de Gersaint.

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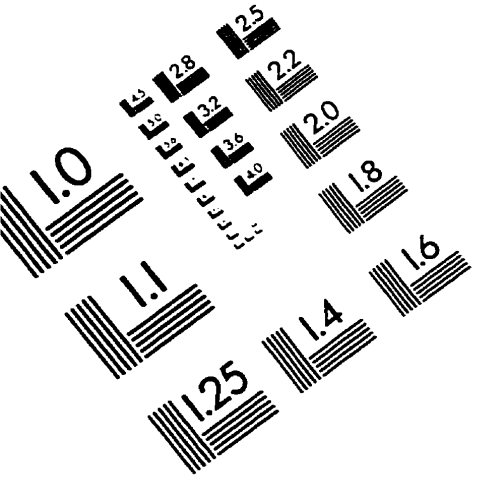

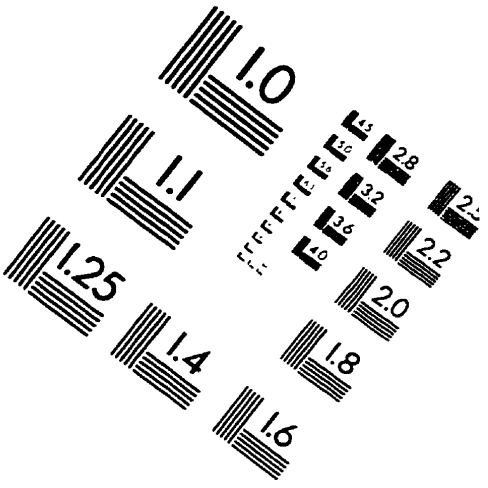

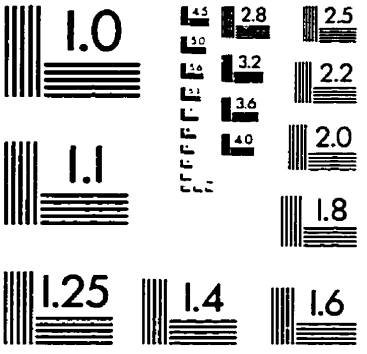

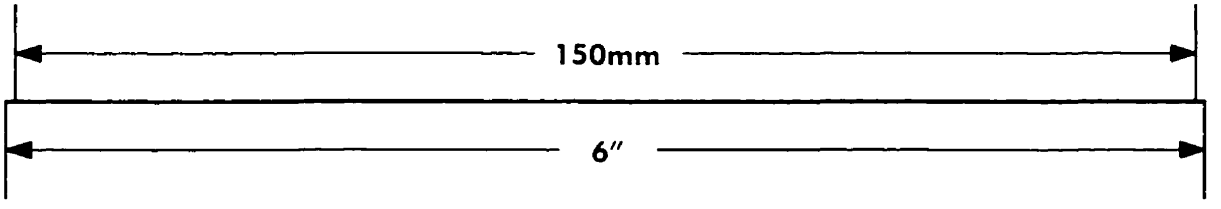

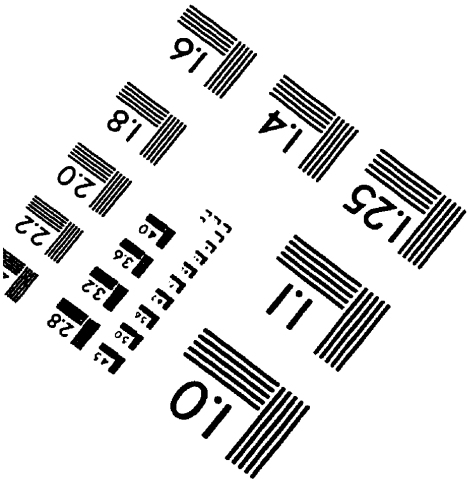

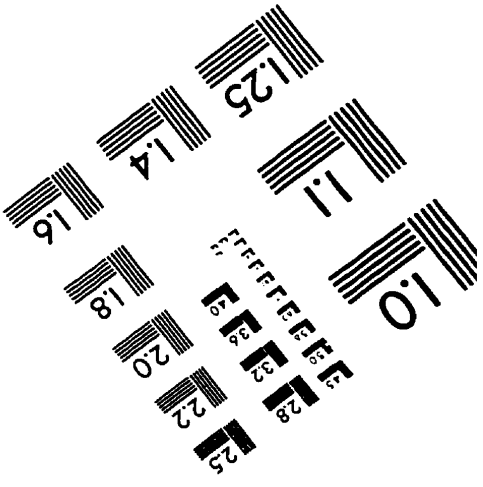

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