

SCHOLARS AND THE BOUNDARIES OF “TRULY FRENCH” ART IN THE FOURTH REPUBLIC

Linda Stratford
ASBURY COLLEGE

Initiatives in the visual arts in France have long been evaluated on the basis of assumed engagement between artistic practice and the nation. It comes as no surprise, then, that in the midst of the destabilizing social changes and political fractures found in the Fourth Republic, visual arts instructors and scholars would look to artistic production as a source of cohesion and continuity.¹ Against the backdrop of an altered national status and perceptions of a traditional national identity at risk in the 1950s, aestheticians urged artists to preserve the Gallic spirit by looking to the classical past for inspiration; art historians wrote of sustaining the classical “French spirit” in modern abstract painting; studio instructors in the official schools of art instruction maintained a classical “call to order” in the name of the nation, continuing to assign to their students artistic practices derived from the court of Louis XIV despite calls for reform. The unitary notion of a classical French art provided a haven for native French cultural tradition; yet it officially marginalized artistic approaches falling outside of the rubric of the premeditated order, technical discipline and heroic sensibility, voices of authority associated with national artistic practice. Meanwhile, across the Atlantic, approaches antithetical to these norms were embraced by members of the New York School—in particular those of the paint-dripping, “lasso-throwing” Jackson Pollock. This inquiry will investigate the failure on the part of scholarly elites in France to more adequately critique the notion of “truly French” art, a failure which contributed to the decline of a centuries-old bastion of French national repute and to a situation recognized as political crisis by the end of the decade.

The impact of the Fourth Republic “*crise identitaire*” upon French aestheticians is evident in a review of the professional journal of the French Society of Aesthetics, *La Revue d’Esthétique*, over the course of the 1950s. In

1954, scholar Georges Jamati appealed passionately to French humanists to hold to the lessons of classical humanism and to look to the past for strength. “Don’t follow Savonarola!” he pleaded, pointing art lovers confronted with what he called “a tragic world” to look to examples of the classical past, reminding his French audience of both Moses and the mythical giant Antaeus, whose descendants thrived not by “denying the past” but rather by “returning to their original sources of strength.”² Frequent, disparaging commentary on the notion of “art for art’s sake” may also be found throughout the journal as a number of French aestheticians expressed fears that artists associated with this perspective would fail to situate artwork into proper societal context. At a November 1954 meeting of the French Society of Aesthetics, Professor Raymond Polin of the University of Lille suggested that “originality for the sake of originality” promoted a philosophy which limited aesthetic understanding, shifting emphasis away from what made a people artistically different and unique. Henri de Waroquier agreed, commenting on the anarchy prevalent in the absence of “true values, such as found in the classics.” *Revue d’Esthétique* had published several articles in the preceding year concerning the societal context of art. Contributor Amédée Ponceau described many of his peers as “those who more and more, refuse to accept the present,” and who by means of aesthetic inspiration might be inspired to take up the call to resist forces of cultural rupture plaguing France.³ That year *Revue d’Esthétique* published the work of Wayne State University art historian John Wilcox, who addressed the implications of originality for its own sake in an article entitled “Art for Art’s Sake in France” in which he suggested that the notion of “art for art’s sake” was not a “French” idea, but was German in inspiration. The article provided a litany of nineteenth-century French writers who had protested the “new literature” inspired by German Romanticism, scornfully referred to as “la littérature facile” due to its emphasis on subjectivity as opposed to societal norms.⁴ The message sent by French aestheticians espousing a (Tainean⁵) sociological aesthetic inquiry at mid-century amounted to a moral imperative: artists were to recognize and carry out their calling within a societal context. As Professor Polin and so many other scholars were convinced, the role of art in France at mid-century was to remind individuals what they held in common as heirs of French civilization.⁶

At the time of these arguments, French society was indeed at a point of considerable strain in regard to what the heirs of French civilization held in common. Political instability plagued the assembly-based government of the Fourth Republic from the very start. Popular alienation from Fourth Republic government ensued as social unrest peaked in France by the summer of 1953 following a period of rising unemployment and urban-rural tensions over food prices. Shopkeepers led by Pierre Poujade organized tax resistance

efforts, trade union agitation resumed with a new urgency,⁷ and public sector strikes broke out, including that of the French postal service. The effectiveness of the Fourth Republic in rallying a population badly in need of postwar reconstruction was thus called into question. Social fractures only worsened in the late 1950s as the French population divided over what exactly to do with the French colonies. Whereas many of the French were indifferent to the conflict over independence for Indo-China (a conflict tabled in 1954 with the cease fire and partition arrangements negotiated at Geneva), more vehement opinion arose over the future of Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria.⁸ Colonial interest groups formed and began sending lobbies to Paris. Gaullists called for a strong, continued French presence in the colonies while anticolonial interest groups arose especially among intellectuals and Catholics. After actual war broke out between Algeria's National Liberation Front (FLN) and France in 1954, the ramifications of the war pitted French against French ever more fiercely. Opinion over Algeria was so heated that coalition governments became almost impossible to establish, much less maintain. Finally, by 1958, Charles DeGaulle was able to cite the risk of civil war over the issue of Algeria in his demands for full powers, promising a "rassemblement," a "coming together," under his leadership that others had failed to produce.⁹

The notion of a cultural "rassemblement" by means of an artistic call to order is common in the discourse of French aestheticians over the duration of the Fourth Republic. Calling for a conference on the subject of "Rupture or Continuity" French aestheticians convened in 1955 to discuss art and the nation.¹⁰ There, French aesthetician Etienne Souriau associated concerns in regard to artistic continuity with concerns in regard to the cohesiveness of French society.¹¹ Part of the work of aestheticians, Souriau and others at the conference argued, was to facilitate a better understanding of the ways in which art forms demonstrated cultural coherence as French society experienced dizzying effects of change over the course of the 1950s.¹² *Revue d'Esthétique* continued the discourse on aesthetic ancestry over the duration of the Fourth Republic as many contributors warned against the effects of originality for its own sake. "Little by little," wrote Pierre Guastella, "what has been growing in the general public is a sort of 'respect for disrespect,' an *a priori* defiance of tradition, and in its place, a fashionable cult of novelty."¹³ This aesthetician argued that in an era of such intense change, not only in artistic matters but also in "scientific and social realms," it was imprudent to simply equate novelty with talent, while conceding that the embrace of novelty seemed to be the trend of the 1950s. Charles Lalo had expressed similar concerns in a 1949 *Revue d'Esthétique* article addressing the perils of "unbridled youth," in which the president of the Society of Aesthetics stressed the importance of tutelage under masters before launching a career in the

arts. While adolescent-like energy brought with it many positive factors, Lalo conceded, the recent history of “the current crisis of *juvenilisme*,” in fact, “*l’infantilisme*” suggested that “Romantic contamination” had produced a number of “overly excited adolescents,” demonstrating insufficient maturity to be yet recognized as great artists.¹⁴

It is certainly not difficult to identify native French artists working in a manner at odds with the classical composite ideal espoused by visual arts scholars in France in the 1950s. Important avant-garde native French painters such as Bernard Buffet, Camille Bryen, Jean Dubuffet, Jean Fautrier, Jean Hélion, André Masson, Georges Mathieu and Pierre Soulages worked in a manner antithetical to “*francité*” as defined by purveyors of the French classical tradition and pursued modes of painting in keeping with international trends in expressionism and surrealism, even, according to some accounts, prefiguring what critic Harold Rosenberg termed “action painting” taken up by some American abstract expressionists. However, despite the work of these important native painters, scholars in France continued to claim that a classically inspired aesthetic consensus characterized contemporary French work.

Why did scholars continue to describe mid-century painting practices in France in terms of a composite classical ideal despite evidence to the contrary? What must be taken into account is the felt influence of modernization measures embraced by French leadership in the 1950s, provoking not only economic and technological advances, but attitudinal adjustments as well. French aestheticians affirmed the perpetuity of classical humanistic values in modern French art within the context of much discussed fears of an anticultural, antihumanistic future associated with the American-like emphasis on technological progress.¹⁵ At a December 1953 meeting of the French Society of Aesthetics, members explored the impact of American-style progress upon France in a discussion prompted by one member’s observation that America “seems to focus all its energies into practical endeavors, leaving little room for concerns of an aesthetic nature.”¹⁶ What would be the influence of so technically minded a society upon the self-consciously classical French? One attendee asked speaker Lucien Rudrauf, recently returned from a ten-month sojourn in the U.S., whether he found the average aesthetic intelligence of the Americans inferior to that of the French. The presumed indifference of the average American to artistic matters gravely concerned many French aestheticians who worried about the ramifications of American-style technical progress on a self-consciously classical aesthetic culture.

A more nuanced perspective on French artistic tradition did appear from time to time. In a 1956 review of contemporary French artist Jean Bazaine’s text “*Notes sur la peinture d’aujourd’hui*,” *Revue d’Esthétique* readers were

asked to consider whether less than classical art forms (such as African carvings) might play an essential role in providing alternative values at mid-century. Given the nature of modern industrial society, Bazaine hoped to provoke renewed interest in primitive culture, waning against an overly intellectual approach to art resulting from “four centuries of rationalism.”¹⁷ Paradoxically, Bazaine argued that Romanticism, not classicism, played a potential role in the quest to maintain traditional French values against the rising tide of industrial change.

Other French aestheticians offered revisionist definitions of the Gallic spirit in art, challenging traditional applications of the term “classicism” with its connotations of order, discipline, and heroic sensibility. Charles Lalo, for example, reflected upon the possibility that anarchy offered a new aesthetic “order,” suggesting that in certain cases anarchy might exhibit artistic virtue in its own right. Aesthetic anarchy might be permissible, and even laudable, Lalo argued, if out of anarchy a new sort of order were to appear.¹⁸ Other aestheticians writing in the 1950s widened notions of the orderly virtues of French classicism. Waroquier suggested his colleagues broaden their definition of classicism to simple “kinship with intellect.”¹⁹ Lalo proposed broadening the term “classicism” to include qualities of dynamism traditionally associated with Romanticism. Within a broadened understanding, Lalo explained, Romanticism might not be considered “inaccessible to Latin culture.”²⁰

Significantly, revisionist aestheticians sought to expand and redefine classicism in the wake of modern trends rather than directly challenge the paradigm of national aesthetic individuation based on classicism altogether. Art historians in France followed a similar path. Jean Laude, Jean Cassou and Bernard Dorival maintained the paradigm of national schools of art in their writing despite the rise of international cosmopolitanism. While critics outside of France contended that American abstract expressionism was fast leading art in a cosmopolitan, supranational direction, Cassou claimed to find in American abstract expressionism the affirmation of national particularity. Cassou cited “Walt Whitman’s America” in claiming that America provided for Pollock’s work “an inspiration springing from elementary forces, from cascade and prairie, from anonymous, barely domesticated space. . .”²¹ Thus abstract expressionism itself evinced national particularity, he argued, “something . . . essential” distinguishing it as “American.” Art historian Bernard Dorival also saw in various modes of contemporary abstract painting the affirmation of national particularity, rather than its abolition. Dorival agreed that abstract expressionist works displayed key ingredients of American culture, “rich in information about the country’s essential nature.”²² The abstract work pioneered by the group, *Jeunes Peintres de Tradition Française* (JPTF) (Young Painters in the French Tradition), served as an example closer

to home, the art historian explained, that aesthetic modernism need not abolish national particularities. These painters sought to work in a manner both abstract yet recognizably “French.” When aesthetic conservatives charged JPTF painters as being “less than French” because of their avant-garde approaches, Dorival provided a spirited defense of their work, explaining that JPTF painters were indeed loyal to national origins, painting in a manner, albeit abstract, yet “truly French.”²³ Laude, personally less convinced of the national character of American abstract expressionism, defended the quest taken up by certain modern abstract French painters to recapture historically rooted French artistic practice in contemporary art.²⁴

Laude, like Cassou, Dorival and the majority of French art historians at mid-century, argued the case for artistic individuation based on nationhood. These art historians delineated measures by which even abstract painting practices, across a wide stylistic spectrum, might be considered “French” by evincing norms of order, discipline, and social sensibility.

By Laude’s account, the central debate in the postwar period was whether the basis of artistic practice was to be found in a societal context, or in formal aestheticism. American contemporary art, as demonstrated in the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) exhibits brought to Paris in the 1950s, and as championed by American critic Clement Greenberg, seemed to validate the latter. Laude explained, “Nonetheless this dividing line indicates not only two aesthetics, but designates rather precisely, two opposing cultures (European and Yankee).”²⁵ The individualized subjectivity characteristic of painting practices in America distinguished American from French painting practices, Laude claimed. Bernard Dorival agreed that classical discipline and adherence to quality workmanship (“*beau métier*”) distinguished French from non-French approaches, including the highly subjective, “less-than-French” approaches of the Ecole de Paris.²⁶ Colleagues such as art historian René Barotte agreed, championing the mid-century quest of JPTF painters to maintain classical order in their avant-garde works, practicing “innately French” discipline and order, and resisting contemporary trends towards excessive liberty in painting.²⁷ Thus JPTF painters could be distinguished from other French painters painting in a “less-than-French” manner: Bernard Buffet, Camille Bryen, Jean Dubuffet, Jean Fautrier, Jean Hélion, Georges Mathieu and Pierre Soulages. Art historian René Huyghe contributed to this discourse, qualifying “truly French” contemporary artists as heirs of Renaissance classicism, led not by medieval superstition and emotions, nor spontaneity and individualism, but rather by intelligence, in the manner of da Vinci. Trends in the opposite direction, that is, movements in art based on the subconscious or on irrational forces and set in motion by non-French schools of painting, Huyghe worried, represented nothing short of a “crisis of civilization.”

The issue of recovered cultural sovereignty appeared in the work of Fourth Republic art historians who, like aestheticians, urged the French to look to the past, to the lessons of classical humanism, in order to preserve “the French spirit” and thus provide a renewed French identity in the modern world. Jean Laude spoke out against American-style market pressures exerted upon artists in the postwar years and wrote with appreciation of the work of Frenchman Jean Bazaine, who resisted modern pressures in this direction.²⁸ Bazaine openly expressed scorn for the market-driven nature of the contemporary art world and insisted upon the centrality of moral conscience in any aesthetic endeavor.²⁹ By such examples, Laude claimed, the French would maintain their moral and cultural sovereignty in the face of superpower pressure for attitudinal change. French art historian Marcel Brion agreed that contemporary French abstract artists would continue to lead the charge to communicate the “constants of the human spirit,”³⁰ thus affirming Gallic sovereignty in the face of an increasingly materialistic, consumer-driven, industrial society bent on privileging technological progress over classical, humanistic culture. This, combined with commitment to purportedly “French” artistic norms of order and discipline, constituted the aesthetic consensus so many French art historians championed in the 1950s.

Art historians and aestheticians provided the scholarly and theoretical underpinning for lessons in classical consensus given practical application in the training of young artists by official studio professors in France. Long a means of forging national solidarity, educational institutions in the postwar era maintained the classical call to order, as studio instructors in the Fourth Republic charged their students to look to the past, to the lessons of classical humanism, in order to preserve the national aesthetic tradition and its classical values. Official and unofficial instruction across a wide range of aesthetic convictions propelled young French painters to rely not on their own subjectivity, but rather, on what they held in common, as heirs of French civilization, remaining true to lessons of the French past.³¹ Concerns regarding archaic pedagogy, which some considered irrelevant in a changing, industrial society, were being broached in the atmosphere of postwar educational reform.³² The prominent place accorded the humanities in French education was called into question, given the new technical emphasis accompanying modernization.

Somewhat more muted dialogue took place in regard to national and municipal art schools across France. The most prestigious school of fine arts in the nation, the *Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts* (ENSBA), established in 1816 as a neoclassical school of art instruction, emphasized the study of classical antiquities as models. The collection of the Academy of Painting and Sculpture, made up largely of copies of important paintings and sculp-

tures from the Italian Renaissance, and housed at the ENSBA, allowed students to master classical norms by copying Renaissance paintings and Greek busts. This official school of training, centered in Paris, incorporated a number of regional centers as well, all under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education's Fine Arts division with instructors appointed by the Fine Arts instructional division of the ministry.³³ Members of the Academy of Fine Arts, housed within the Institut de France, also exerted authority in the ENSBA, participating on admissions juries and awarding prizes. Ties to the Academy ensured that traditional, classical approaches stemming from practices derived from the time of Louis XIV would be maintained, amounting to what has been recognized as "the defense of a particular aesthetic doctrine."³⁴ Official state instruction in the visual arts thus generated artists well trained in French classicism who for years had copied busts, portraits, religious scenes and draped figures and who for the most part would establish careers in classical imitation.

Alternatives to official instruction in painting could be found in what were referred to as the "*Académies libres*," such as *l'Académie de la Grande Chaumière* in Paris, as well as in private artists' studios, where stylistic and technical innovation outside of official norms was encouraged. A clear distinction existed between the aesthetic approaches of the official institutions, conservative and classical in nature, and non-traditional, supranational institutions and training studios, the two representing a contrast of aesthetic approaches, the one for traditional training built around classical imitation, and the other for greater freedom of technique.³⁵ Paradoxically, however, a number of avant-garde artists who distanced themselves from official schools in the quest for greater freedom of approach, themselves took up the quest for "truly French" artistic taste. Studio instructors outside of the national institutions of training discouraged unwarranted subjectivism in painting, steering students toward the imitation of nature and French classical practices, albeit in modern abstract forms. Progressive painter André Lhote guided young art students in his studio in the lessons of Poussin and Ingres, emphasizing in his practice of cubism, the importance of premeditated composition and line and couching his approach in what he referred to as an "authentic French tradition" in modernist terms, encouraging young painters to look to "the most authentic sources of French art."³⁶ Lhote instructed young artists to maintain the French spirit in painting by emphasizing classical virtues of intelligence, reason, balance, and moderation. Painter Edouard Pignon challenged younger artists to communicate recognizably "French" aesthetic tradition in modern, abstract form.

Thus, the majority of painting instructors in the Fourth Republic, both official and unofficial, conservative and avant-garde, were less concerned with

challenging the notion of French national culture built upon the imprint of aristocratic norms than with the survival of national aesthetic particularities. ENSBA professor Jacques Derry expressed concern that above all, art be “rooted,” reflecting regional and national particularities deemed “French.” “Borders which carry with them distinct personalities interest artists,” he explained, seeking to counter what he perceived to be the melting-pot nature of cosmopolitan abstract art. Arguing that there likewise existed a distinctly “French” taste in art, he explained his opposition, and that of his peers, to the cosmopolitan direction into which artistic production was being led worldwide at mid-century. The challenge to be taken up by the French government, Derry explained, was to oppose international modernism. French officials needed to protect and nurture distinctly “French” art, “the summation of traditional expression,” he argued, countering what he called the vanities of those joining the international trend. Government needed to guide young artists away from recent trends toward “vain individualism.”³⁷

The common fear of Jacques Derry and others at the highest level of art instruction in France was that in avant-garde practices French artists would fail to promote what was believed to be held in common artistically, that practices associated with the artist’s interior subjectivity would negate lessons of the French past. Jean Souverbie, Institut member and ENSBA painting professor in the 1950s, decried abstract painting practices by young artists-in-training in an article entitled “No Abstract Art Before Age Forty” in which he calculated the risks of abandoning classical academic training.³⁸ Souverbie expressed disdain for the seductive “flick-of-a-brush” method, as he called it, insisting instead upon “the skilled perfection of our craftsmanship.” Studio instructors needed to protect students from such false values, the professor claimed.

ENSBA Director and Institut member Nicolas Untersteller seemed to agree. In a report acknowledging the 1948 tricentennial of the ENSBA, he acknowledged the national school’s roots in Louis XIV’s Academy of Painting and Sculpture. Citing plans to invigorate and modernize the curriculum, and to include instructors from among noted contemporary artists, Untersteller was also careful to cite the importance of maintaining French tradition. Despite calls to modernize, he explained, “The School of Fine Arts, or for that matter any ‘grande école,’ ought to conserve its fundamental values.”³⁹ When a 1952 government commission was appointed to investigate reforms in official art instruction in France and to address the issue of modernization, commission members noted that French art instruction maintained its emphasis on sketches from nature, Greek busts, live models, still lifes, landscapes, and portraits, while art schools in America pioneered areas of industrial aesthetics, film and television. Several members suggested the creation of an industrial design segment within the ENSBA which allowed

students to explore graphic design, film and television. However, the suggestion failed to elicit consensus within the committee.⁴⁰

Nowhere was the adherence to classical academic standards more stubbornly maintained than in the annual Prix de Rome competition held at the ENSBA. A jury of ENSBA professors and members of the Academy awarded this annual prize of three years and four months of study in Rome to a student displaying exceptional talent through a submission piece. Prix de Rome recipients could expect fame, ready-made careers, and access to government commissions following their sojourn in Rome, often receiving important posts in the national system of fine arts instruction and becoming professors and fine arts school directors themselves. The culmination of this sort of career was likely a seat in the Institute. Because Prix de Rome juries were composed of Academy members and ENSBA professors, submissions strongly affirmed the aesthetic values of those institutions, conservative, academic and classical in orientation and hostile to technical innovation.⁴¹ A review of winning entries from 1945 to 1959 reveals this to be true, with the majority of winning entries over the course of this period featuring the human figure in lyrical, allegorical, or religious settings, classically robed and offering only the slightest hint of modern aesthetic evolution. Observers at the time testified to “the reactionary character” of the Prix de Rome jury and finally, in 1959, ENSBA students launched a strike: architecture students refused to participate in the Prix de Rome competition that year, requesting reforms and modernization—“no more Martyrs, Acropolises, or Pantheons.”⁴² That year students submitted a lengthy report to the newly appointed Minister of Cultural Affairs, André Malraux, enlisting his help and that of certain members of the National Assembly in their cause.

The “identity crisis” associated with changes in Fourth Republic French society led many scholars and instructors in the visual arts on a somewhat stubborn quest for recognizably “French” art. Assumed engagement between artistic practice and the nation promised a measure of cultural continuity while technocratic leadership transformed the hexagon; in addition, the notion of Gallic artistic consensus mitigated against the unwelcome effects of alienation and fractures dividing the French during a period crucial to post-war recovery. Unfortunately, at the same time, a powerful artistic movement antithetical to the classical qualities of order, discipline, and heroic sensibility so many in the French art world associated with “truly French” art was drawing worldwide attention away from Paris to New York. Jackson Pollock, Franz Kline and other contemporary abstract artists from America were capturing critical attention around the globe. The United States, already enjoying political and economic superpower status, now seemed to be emerging as a worldwide cultural force as well.

Following the rise of American abstract expressionism, by the end of the decade, critics affirmed that New York had replaced Paris as the world's artistic capital. Charles DeGaulle, irritated at the reduced world status of France, and returning to leadership in 1958 on a platform promoting restored French prestige abroad, included in the newly created Fifth Republic a Ministry of Culture, a step taken largely to restore the global reputation of the French.⁴³ The new Ministry of Culture quickly assembled the first official international exhibition dedicated to cosmopolitan modernism in French history: The Paris Biennale, opening October 1959 at the Museum of Modern Art of the city of Paris. Led by André Malraux, the Ministry of Culture immediately sought to overturn decades of judgment against artistic approaches French scholars had long viewed as antithetical to “truly French” art. The once exclusive national paradigm was quite suddenly and quite deliberately widened to accommodate the less than classical School of Paris and other movements previously associated with the less than French avant-garde. What accounts for this sudden change of attitude? Once a haven for native French tradition, the unitary notion of classical French art had become by the end of the decade a diplomatic liability, robbing France of its international leadership in an arena long held with pride. By 1959, it appeared clear that if the Gallic spirit continued to cling to the classical past for inspiration it would do so at the cost of international repute. Only the future would tell whether the French would one day be able to reclaim the artistic hegemony to which they had long become accustomed.

NOTES

1. The years following the Second World War have been described as a period of intense transformation and disruption. “Rarely had an old society been so constrained to partake of the present and to protect its historical, religious and political values . . .” Jean-Pierre Rioux, *The Fourth Republic, 1944–1958* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 445; Richard F. Kuysel describes concerns regarding French identity at risk in the 1950s in the course of American-style modernization in his chapter “The American Temptation—The Coming of Consumer Society,” *Seducing The French. The Dilemma of Americanization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); others commenting on the profound impact of modern industrialization upon French society include Stanley Hoffmann, *Decline or Renewal? France since the 1930s* (New York: Viking Press, 1974), John Ardagh, *France Today* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982) and Fernand Braudel, in *L'Identité de la France* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988). Steven Englund has also described the frantic search for roots taken up by scholars at moments of national upheaval, identifying Pierre Nora's *Les Lieux de mémoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984/1986), a multi-volumed documentary spanning fifteen hundred years of history in which specific incidents, places and people are identified as aspects of “national memory,” as a project fueled by national identity crisis. “Unlike Braudel, who fought the Ghost of Nation Past implicitly, Nora freely confesses, in an all but

Proustian spirit, that he is distressed by the sickness of heart that modernity occasions. He not only notes but even poignantly mourns the passing of the classic French self-conception nurtured by generations of historians, most supremely by Michelet. ‘Few eras have experienced such a questioning of the coherence and continuity of its national past. . .’ Surely every aspect of today’s “*crise identitaire*” has been accompanied—indeed, all but occasioned—by foreign developments, from the ending of the “*trente glorieuses*” (three decades of prosperity and comparative social peace) to the diminution of French sovereignty attendant on integration into the new Europe, to, above all, the painful social dislocation brought on by increased Islamic immigration and the related, profoundly embarrassing, political backlash that is the National Front.” Steve Englund, “The Ghost of Nation Past,” *Journal of Modern History* 64 (June 1992): 302/301.

2. Jamati served as a co-director at the *Centre national de la Recherche scientifique* (CNRS), Vice-President of the *Société d’Histoire du Théâtre*, and was a poet, dramatist, and art writer.

3. Amédée Ponceau, “Art et civilisation,” *Revue d’Esthétique* 6 (1953): 241.

4. John Wilcox, “L’Art pour l’art en France,” *ibid.*, 6 (1953): 21.

5. Taine furthered positivist approaches to art and society, tabulating demographic and environmental factors by which cultures had developed distinguishing features. His preoccupation with “milieu, race, moment” had a great impact on the sociological approach to aesthetics found in France at mid-century.

6. Herman Lebovics has commented on the role played by culture in the quest for national unity in his study of the creation of the French Ministry of Culture. “First, the culture of the classical age and its derivations were the “glue” of modern France and, in the unstable political situation of the postwar years, an important component of national unity and class harmony.” Herman Lebovics, *Mona Lisa’s Escort. André Malraux and the Reinvention of French Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 4.

7. Led by the *Confédération générale du travail* (CGT), the largest and most important trade union in France.

8. This was due to the presence of large French communities there.

9. Rioux, *The Fourth Republic*, 312.

10. The conference was followed by CNRS documentation. See Jean Jacquot, ed. *Visages et perspectives de l’art moderne* (Paris: Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1956).

11. D. Victoroff review of Etienne Souriau, *Visages et perspectives de l’art moderne* in *Revue d’Esthétique* 9 (1956): 443–444.

12. *Ibid.*, 444.

13. Pierre Guastalla, “Préface à une esthétique de la peinture contemporaine,” *ibid.*, 398.

14. Charles Lalo, “La Jeunesse et les révolutions artistiques,” *Revue d’Esthétique* 2 (1949): 122; Many French critics described the brash new American art as “rebellious” and “adolescent”; see critic Georges Besson, “Several Aspects of Infantilism in American Art,” *Lettres Françaises* (30 April–7 May 1953). MOMA Archives V. 5. MOMA translation. Interest in the topic of American aesthetic training, and taste was most likely jettisoned by five large exhibits largely devoted to American abstract expressionism brought to Paris by The Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), New York, between

1953 and 1959. The American work was reviewed poorly by the majority of French critics who disparaged the movement from the perspective of a lack of purportedly “French” values of order, discipline, and heroic sensibility.

15. See “The American Temptation—the Coming of Consumer Society” in Richard F. Kuisel, *Seducing the French*.

16. Meeting of the French Society of Aesthetics, 12 December 1953, *Revue d’Esthétique* 6 (1953): 438.

17. Jean Laude, review of Jean Bazaine, “Notes sur la peinture d’aujourd’hui,” *ibid.*, 9 (1956): 100.

18. Charles Lalo, review of Albert Camus, *L’homme révolté* in *Ibid.*, 5 (1952): 443–444.

19. Meeting of the French Society of Aesthetics, 19 November 1949, *Ibid.*, 3 (1950): 98.

20. Charles Lalo, review of Louis Réau, *L’Ère romantique. Les Arts plastiques* in *Ibid.*: 109.

21. Jean Cassou quoted by Critic Pierre Schneider in *Art News* (March 1959): 47. MOMA Archives V.37. Schneider provided this quote in the context of his review claiming the French still viewed Americans as “noble savages.” “Dozens of Henry Jameses might disembark in the Old World: people here will stick doggedly to the image incarnated by Whitman. . . All reactions, whether favorable or hostile, seem predicated on this image.”

22. Bernard Dorival, *Arts* (28 January–3 February 1959), MOMA Archives V.35.

23. Laurence Bertrand-Dorléac, *Histoire de l’Art. Paris 1940–1944* (Paris: Sorbonne, 1986), 157.

24. Jean Laude, “Problèmes de la Peinture en Europe et aux Etats-Unis (1944–1951),” *Art et Idéologies* 20 (1978): 38.

25. *Ibid.*, 53. A number of critics reviewing American abstract expressionist works brought to Paris by the MOMA complained of the obsession with individual liberty represented by the movement: “It all comes out of an art which is obsessively individualist . . . in the absolute liberty which it promotes, each seeks only to render feelings or emotional shock.” Critic Frank Elgar in “Pollock et la nouvelle peinture américaine” *Carrefour* (21 January 1959) MOMA Archives V.37.

26. Bertrand-Dorléac cites a postwar text by Dorival, *Les étapes de la peinture française contemporaine*, in which Dorival discusses “le génie national” and the exemplary work of JPTF in this regard. Bertrand-Dorléac, *Histoire de l’Art*, 164.

27. Laurence Bertrand-Dorléac, *L’art de la défaite. 1940–1944* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1993), 222.

28. Laude described an aggressive art market in the post World War II period, sustained by the U.S. at the advent of American abstract expressionism. Laude, “Problèmes de la Peinture,” 32. Sociologist Raymonde Moulin has described American-style pressure on the French art market in the years following World War II. She contends that the French art market was heavily impacted by American-style speculation, blaming the Americans for using their economic power to influence the art market in France in the 1950s so that the private market moved in the direction of highly abstract, avant-garde art. Raymonde Moulin, *The French Art Market. A Sociological View*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987).

29. Jean Laude, review of Jean Bazaine, *Notes sur la peinture*.
30. Raymond Bayer, review of Marcel Brion, *Art abstrait* in *Revue d'Esthétique* 9 (1956): 335.
31. Sanford Elwitt, *The Making of the Third Republic. Class and Politics in France 1868–1884* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1975).
32. Rioux, *The French Republic*, 418.
33. By mid-century, seven ENSBA centers existed throughout France as did over fifty municipal schools of art instruction.
34. Moulin, *The French Art Market* 10.
35. *Ibid.*, 109.
36. Bertrand-Dorléac, *Histoire de l'Art*, 156.
37. Jacques Derry, *Nationalisme et Internationalisme. Rapport à l'Occasion du Congrès International des Artistes Catholiques* (11–31 July 1963). A.N. AJ52.808.
38. Jean Souverbie, “Pas d’art abstrait pour les moins de quarante ans,” *Figaro Littéraire* 14 July (no year given; filed with other material from 1950s). A.N. AJ52.808.
39. Report from Nicolas Untersteller, ENSBA Director, A.N. AJ52.808.
40. Reports in regard to instructional reforms, ENSBA 1947–1954. A.N. AJ52.972.
41. “Juries are generally conservative and hostile to technical innovation, given that they are made up for the most part of professors who wish to maintain their position.” Moulin, *The French Art Market*, 109.
42. Annette Michelson, “Paris,” *Arts* (23 July 1959). MOMA Archives V.35. These events are interesting in light of the massive student demonstrations which would follow in May 1968.
43. Herman Lebovics has described Fifth Republic cultural policy as a weapon of international diplomacy. “France set out to deploy its ample cultural capital to gain an edge in as many of the ways as possible that international power is measured,” noting the historic assumptions on the part of the French, since Francis I, as to the “close causal relationships between great military-diplomatic power and great cultural authority.” (“Mona Lisa’s Escort,” manuscript, 361, 366). “The grandeur of France which General DeGaulle wishes to restore has always been cultural as well as political and military: the existence of a ministry with a dynamic head is intended to promote the *présence française* in the modern world.” F.F. Ridley and J. Blondel, *Public Administration in France* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1969), 282.