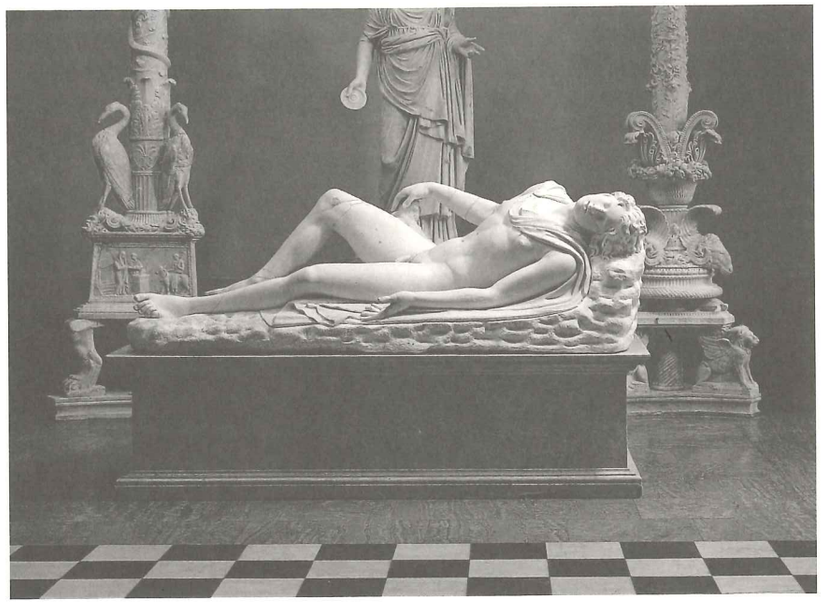

Frontispiece The greater Stone Gallery of the Royal Museum, Stockholm, Sweden: the original display according to the reconstruction of 1992. King Gustavus III acquired the centrepiece of his collection, the sleeping *Endymion* from Hadrian's Villa, as a result of his Grand Tour to Italy in 1783–84. The King's sculpture gallery, personifying the protection of the arts, was delivered, ironically, after the King's assassination in 1792. Within three months of the King's murder and a failed coup d'etat, the Royal Art Collections were transformed into a national public museum. See the further discussion in this volume by Magnus Olausson and Solfrid Söderlind (in Chapter 5). (Courtesy of the National Museum of Fine Arts, Stockholm.)

Grasping the World

The Idea of the Museum

Edited by Donald Preziosi and Claire Farago

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Contents

3.

From the Princely Gallery to the Public Art Museum: The Louvre Museum and the National Gallery, London

Carol Duncan

The Louvre was the prototypical public art museum. It first offered the civic ritual that other nations would emulate.[1] It was also with the Louvre that public art museums became signs of politically virtuous states. By the end of the nineteenth century, every Western nation would boast at least one important public art museum. In the twentieth century, their popularity would spread even to the Third World, where traditional monarchs and military despots create Western-style art museums to demonstrate their respect for Western values, and – consequently – their worthiness as recipients of Western military and economic aid.[2] Meanwhile in the West, museum fever continues unabated. Clearly, from the start, having a public art museum brought with it political advantages.

This [essay] will look at two of the most important public art museums in Europe, the Louvre Museum in Paris and the National Gallery in London. However different their histories and collections, both of these institutions stand as monuments to the new bourgeois state as it was emerging in the age of democratic revolutions. If the Louvre, whose very establishment was a revolutionary act, states the central theme of public art museums, the story of the National Gallery in London elaborates its ideological meanings. Its details were spelled out in the political discourse that surrounded its founding and early years, a discourse in which bourgeois and aristocratic modes of culture, including the new art-historical culture, were clearly pitted against each other. The larger question here is what made the Louvre and the other museums it inspired so politically attractive, and how did they differ from older displays of art? Or, to rephrase the question in terms of the theme of this book, what kind of ritual does the public art museum stage, and what was (and is) its ideological usefulness to modern states?

I

Ceremonial displays of accumulated treasure go back to the most ancient of times. Indeed, it is tempting to extend our notion of 'the museum' backwards

into earlier eras and discover museum-like functions in the treasuries of ancient temples or medieval cathedrals or in the family chapels of Italian Baroque churches. Some of these older types of display come surprisingly close to modern museum situations.[3] Yet, however they may resemble today's public art museums, historically, the modern institution of the museum grew most directly out of sixteenth-, seventeenth-, and eighteenth-century princely collections. These collections, which were often displayed in impressive halls or galleries built especially for them, set certain precedents for later museums.[4]

Typically, princely galleries functioned as reception rooms, providing sumptuous settings for official ceremonies and framing the figure of the prince. By the eighteenth century, it was standard practice everywhere in Europe for princes to install their collections in lavishly decorated galleries and halls, often fitting individual works into elaborate wall schemes of carved and gilt panelling. The point of such show was to dazzle and overwhelm both foreign visitors and local dignitaries with the magnificence, luxury, and might of the sovereign, and, often – through special iconographies – the rightness or legitimacy of his rule. Palace rooms and galleries might also be decorated with iconographic programs that drew flattering analogies to the ruler – galleries of portrait busts of legendary emperors or depictions of the deeds of great monarchs of the past. A ruler might also surround himself with sculptures, paintings, and tapestries of a favorite classical god to add luster to his image – Louis XIV's appropriation of the sun-god Apollo is the most famous; in Madrid it was Hercules, celebrated in a series of paintings by Rubens, whose exploits were linked to the throne. In one way or another, these various displays of objects and paintings demonstrated something about the prince – his splendor, his legitimacy, or the wisdom of his rule.[5] As we shall see, public art museums both perpetuated and transformed the function of these princely reception halls wherein the state idealized and presented itself to the public.

The Louvre was not the first royal collection to be turned into a public art museum, but its transformation was the most politically significant and influential. In 1793 the French revolutionary government, seizing an opportunity to dramatize the creation of the new Republican state, nationalized the king's art collection and declared the Louvre a public institution.[6] The Louvre, once the palace of kings, was now reorganized as a museum for the people, to be open to everyone free of charge. It thus became a lucid symbol of the fall of the Old Regime and the rise of a new order. The new meaning that the Revolution gave to the old palace was literally inscribed in the heart of the seventeenth-century palace, the Apollo Gallery, built by Louis XIV as a princely gallery and reception hall. Over its entrance is the

revolutionary decree that called into existence the Museum of the French Republic and ordered its opening on 10 August, to commemorate 'the anniversary of the fall of tyranny' (Figure 3.3.1). Inside the gallery, a case holds crowns from the royal and imperial past, now displayed as public property.[7]

The new museum proved to be a producer of potent symbolic meanings. The transformation of the palace into a public space accessible to everyone made the museum an especially pointed demonstration of the state's commitment to the principle of equality. As a public space, the museum also made manifest the public it claimed to serve: it could produce it as a visible entity by literally providing it with a defining frame and giving it something to do. In the museum, even the rights of citizenship could be discerned as art appreciation and spiritual enrichment. To be sure, equality of access to the museum in no way gave everyone the relevant education to understand the works of art inside, let alone equal political rights and privileges; in fact, only propertied males were full citizens. But in the museum, everyone was equal in principle, and if the uneducated could not use the cultural goods the museum proffered, they could (and still can) be awed by the sheer magnitude of the treasure.

As a new kind of public ceremonial space, the Louvre not only redefined the political identity of its visitors, it also assigned new meanings to the objects it displayed, and qualified, obscured, or distorted old ones. Now presented as public property, they became the means through which a new relationship between the individual as citizen and the state as benefactor could be symbolically enacted. But to accomplish their new task, they had to be presented in a new way. In a relatively short time, the Louvre's directors (drawing partly on German and Italian precedents) worked out a whole set of practices that came to characterize art museums everywhere. In short, the museum organized its collections into art-historical schools and installed them so as to make visible the development and achievement of each school. Certainly, it did not effect this change overnight. It first had to sort out the various, and in some ways, contradictory, installation models available at the time, and the different notions of artistic 'schools' that each entailed.[8]

Probably the most fashionable way of hanging a collection in the later eighteenth century was what might be called the connoisseur's or gentlemanly hang. This installation model was practiced internationally and corresponded rather precisely to the art education of European aristocrats. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, there was widespread agreement among cultivated men (and those few women who could claim such knowledge) that, aside from the sculpture of classical antiquity, the masters most worth collecting were sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italian, Flemish, Dutch, and French. Men of taste and breeding, whatever their nationality, were

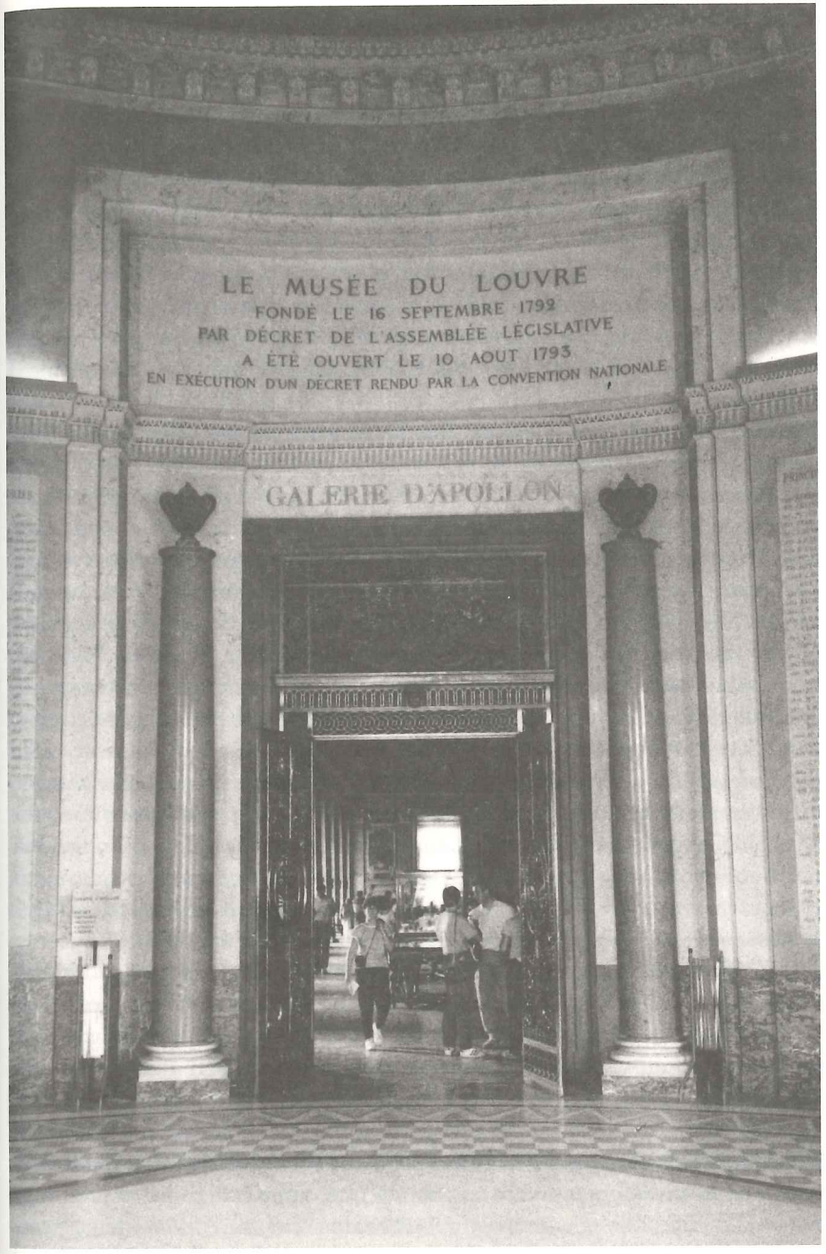

Figure 3.3.1 Louvre Museum, Paris, entrance to the Apollo Gallery. Photograph by Carol Duncan

expected to have learned key critical terms and concepts that distinguished the particular artistic virtues of the most popular masters. Indeed, such knowledge was taken as a sign of aristocratic breeding, and in the course of the eighteenth century it became the fashion to hang collections, including royal collections, in a way that highlighted the formal qualities of the various masters – that is, in a way that displayed one's knowledge of current critical fashions. A gentlemanly hang, be it in England, Italy, or France, might group together on one wall contrasting examples from opposing schools. For example, an Italian *Venus* or martyrdom on the right might be balanced by a Flemish *Venus* or martyrdom on the left, the better to show off their particular qualities of drawing, color, and composition; alternatively, works by various masters from the same school might be grouped together to complement each other.[9]

In the later eighteenth century, this gentlemanly type of installation was given increasing competition by newer, art-historical arrangements, versions of which were being introduced into certain private and princely collections.[10] In these new arrangements, more was made of the progress demonstrated by each school and its principal masters. By and large, this progress was measured in terms of a single, universal ideal of beauty, an ideal toward which all societies presumably evolved, but one that, according to experts, ancient sculpture and Italian High Renaissance painting most fully realized. As the administrators of the Louvre Museum put it in 1794, the new museum's goal was to show visitors 'the progress of art and the degrees of perfection to which it was brought by all those peoples who have successively cultivated it'.[11] And when, some years later, the noted German art expert Gustav Waagen toured English art collections, he could, in the same spirit, pronounce the National Gallery's *Resurrection of Lazarus* by Sebastiano del Piombo the star of the collection and indeed of all English collections combined, since, in his eyes, it was the one work that most embodied the genius of the Italian High Renaissance and therefore most achieved the universal ideal.[12]

These kinds of judgments concerned more than the merits of individual artists. Progress in art could be taken as an indicator of how far a people or an epoch evolved toward civilization in general. That is, the art-historical approach gave works of art a new cultural-historical importance and a new cognitive value. As such, they required new, more appropriate kinds of settings. Whereas older displays, princely and gentlemanly alike, commonly subordinated individual works to larger decorative schemes, often surrounding them with luxurious furnishings and ornaments, the new approach called for settings that would not compete with the art. At the same time, new wall arrangements were evolved so that viewers could literally retrace, work by work, the historical lines of development of both individual artists and their schools. In the course of the nineteenth century, the conviction that art must be valued and ranked

according to a single ideal of beauty would be gradually modified; educated opinion would appreciate an ever greater range of schools – especially fifteenth-century Italian art – each for its own unique qualities, and would increasingly demand their representation in public collections.[13] In all of this, the concept of high art was being rethought. Rather than a rare attainment, it was coming to be seen as a necessary component of every society, an organic expression of one or another particular national spirit.[14] However, the language associated with the evolutionary approach and the habit of extolling ancient sculpture and High Renaissance art above all else, would hang on for a long time. Malraux noted how long this change took in the museum market: only late in the nineteenth century would different schools be treated fully as equals, and only toward the end of the century could a Piero della Francesca be rated as equal or superior to Raphael.[15]

Historians of museums often see the new art-historical hang as the triumph of an advanced, Enlightenment thinking that sought to replace earlier systems of classification with a more rational one. To be sure, the new construct was more in keeping with Enlightenment rationality. But more significant to the concerns of this study was its ideological usefulness to emerging bourgeois states, all of which, in the course of the nineteenth century, adopted it for their public art museums. Although still pitched to an educated elite and still built on a universal and international standard, the new system, by giving special emphasis to the 'genius' of national schools, could both acknowledge and promote the growth of state power and national identity.

The differences in these models of display amount to very different ritual structures. Just as the public art museum redefined the content of its displays, so it reconceptualized the identity of its visitors and their business in the museum. That is, as a new kind of dramatic field, the art museum prompted its visitors to assume a new ritual identity and perform a new ritual role. The earlier, aristocratic installation addressed the visitor as a gentleman and reinforced this identity by enabling him to engage in and re-enact the kind of discerning judgments that gentlemanly culture called 'good taste'. By asking him to recognize – without the help of labels – the identities and distinctive artistic qualities of canonized masters – Guido Reni, Claude, Murillo, and other favorites – the visitor-cum-connoisseur could experience himself as possessing a culture that was both exclusive and international, a culture that marked its possessor as a member of the elite.[16] In contrast, the public art museum addressed its visitor as a bourgeois citizen who enters the museum in search of enlightenment and rationally understood pleasures. In the museum, this citizen finds a culture that unites him with other French citizens regardless of their individual social position. He also encounters there the state itself, embodied in the very form of the museum. Acting on behalf of the public, it stands revealed as keeper of the nation's spiritual life and

guardian of the most evolved and civilized culture of which the human spirit is capable. All this it presents to every citizen, rationally organized and clearly labeled. Thus does the art museum enable the citizen–state relationship to appear as realized in all its potential.

Almost from the beginning, the Louvre's directors began organizing its galleries by national school.[17] Admittedly, some very early displays presented works of art as confiscated treasure or spoils of a victorious army (this was the era in which French armies systematically packed up art treasures from churches and palaces all over Europe and sent them to the Louvre[18]). But by its 1810 reopening as the Musée Napoléon, the museum, now under the direction of Vivant Denon, was completely organized by school, and within the schools, works of important masters were grouped together. The conversion of the old palace into a public art museum had taken some doing architecturally, but in certain ways the old building was well equipped for its new symbolic assignment. It was, after all, already full of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century spaces originally designed to accommodate public ritual and ceremonial display (Figure 3.3.2). Its halls and galleries tended to develop along marked axes so that (especially in the rooms occupied by the early museum) visitors were naturally drawn from room to room or down long vistas. The setting was well suited to the kind of narrative iconographic program it now contained.

Thus ordered, the treasures, trophies, and icons of the past became objects of art history, embodiments of a new form of cultural-historical wealth. The museum environment was structured precisely to bring out this new meaning and suppress or downplay old ones. In this sense, the museum was a powerful transformer, able to convert signs of luxury, status, or splendor into repositories of spiritual treasure – the heritage and pride of the whole nation. Organized chronologically and in national categories along the museum's corridors, works of art now became witnesses to the presence of 'genius', cultural products marking the course of civilization in nations and individuals.[19] The ritual task of the Louvre visitor was to re-enact that history of genius, re-live its progress step by step and, thus enlightened, know himself as a citizen of history's most civilized and advanced nation-state.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the Louvre explained its ritual program in its ceiling decorations. An instance of this is still visible in what was originally the vestibule of the Musée Napoléon (the Rotunda of Mars), dedicated in 1810. Four medallions in the ceiling represent the principal art-historical schools, each personified by a female figure who holds a famous example of its sculpture: Egypt a cult statue, Greece the *Apollo Belvedere*, Italy Michelangelo's *Moses*, and France Puget's *Milo of Crotona*. The message reads clearly: France is the fourth and final term in a narrative sequence that comprises the greatest moments of art history. Simultaneously, the history of

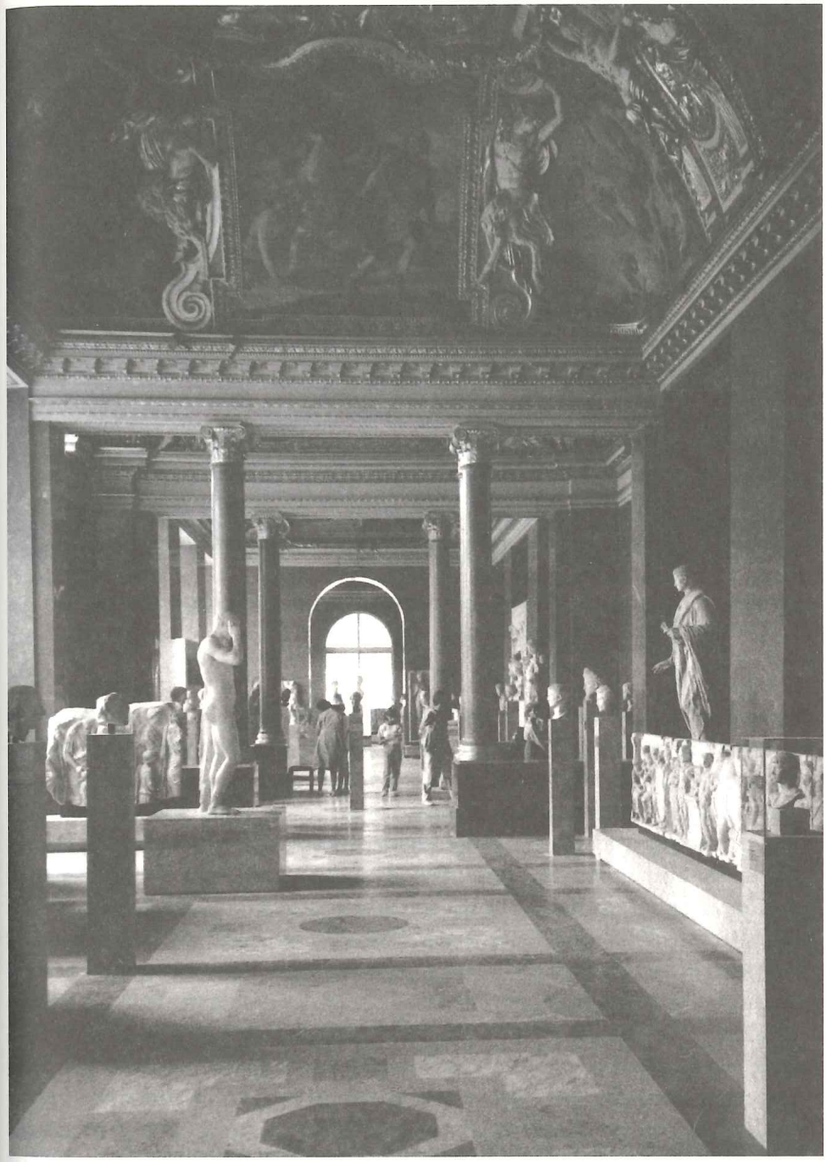

Figure 3.3.2 The Old Louvre Palace, a former royal apartment converted to museum use in the nineteenth century. Photograph by Carol Duncan

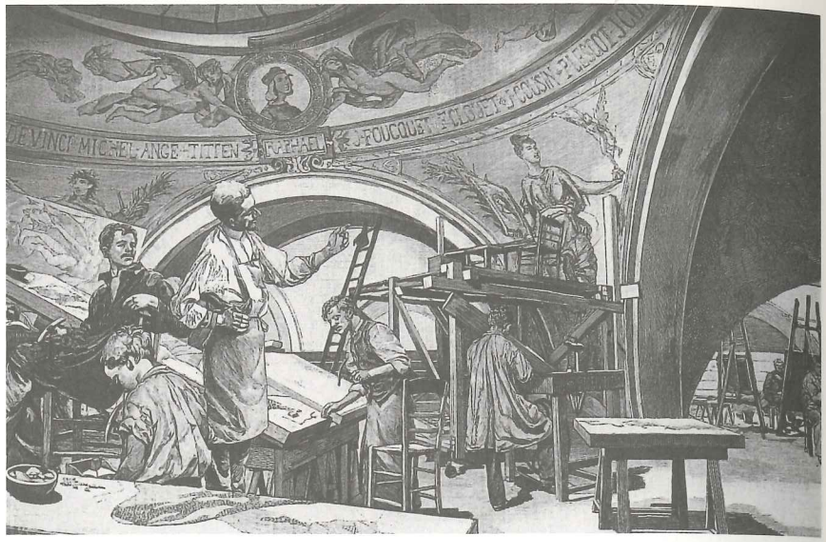

Figure 3.3.3 Creating a genius ceiling in the central dome of the Louvre Museum, Daru taircase (mosaic decorations later removed). From *L'illustration*, 27 August, 1887. Photograph by Carol Duncan

art has become no less than the history of Western civilization itself: its origins in Egypt and Greece, its reawakening in the Renaissance, and its present flowering in modern France. The same program was elaborated later in the century in mosaic decorations for the five domed spaces above the Daru Stairway (Figure 3.3.3) (subsequently removed).

Other ceilings further expound the symbolic meanings of the museum's program. Throughout the nineteenth century, museum authorities used the ceilings to spell them out, lecturing visitors from above. They especially hammered home the idea of the state as protector of the arts. Often resorting to traditional princely iconography, images and insignia repeatedly identified this or that government or monarch as the nation's cultural benefactor. One ceiling, for example, decorating the museum's 1812 grand stairway (the stair is gone but the ceiling remains), represents *France in the Guise of Minerva Protecting the Arts* (by Maynier, 1819). The napoleonic insignia that originally surrounded it were later removed. Successive regimes, monarchical or republican, often removed the insignia of their predecessors in order to inscribe their own on the museum's walls and ceilings.

Increasingly the iconography of the museum centered on artists. For example, in the Musée Charles X (the series of rooms opened to the public in the 1820s), ceilings still celebrate great patron-princes of the past; but artists

Figure 3.3.4 The Louvre Museum, the newly decorated Salle des Etats in 1886. From *L'Illustration*, 30 October 1886. Photograph by Carol Duncan

are also abundantly present. As in later decorations, sequences of their names or portraits, arranged into national schools, grace the entablatures. Indeed, ever greater expanses of overhead space would be devoted to them as the century wore on. If anything, the nineteenth century was a great age of genius iconography,[20] and nowhere are genius ceilings more ostentatious than in the Louvre (Figure 3.3.4). Predictably, after every coup or revolution, new governments would vote funds for at least one such ceiling, prominently inscribing its own insignia among the names or profiles of the great artists so honored. Thus in 1848, the newly constituted Second Republic renovated and decorated the Salon Carré and the nearby Hall of Seven Chimneys, devoting the first to masters of the foreign schools, and the second to French geniuses, profiles of whom were alphabetically arranged in the frieze (Figure 3.3.5). It is relevant to recall that from the early nineteenth century on, most artists were very aware of themselves as candidates for the category of great artist so lavishly celebrated on the ceiling and plotted their artistic strategies accordingly.

It should be obvious that the demand for great artists, once the type was developed as an historical category, was enormous – they were, after all, the means by which, on the one hand, the state could demonstrate the highest kind of civic virtue, and on the other, citizens could know themselves to be

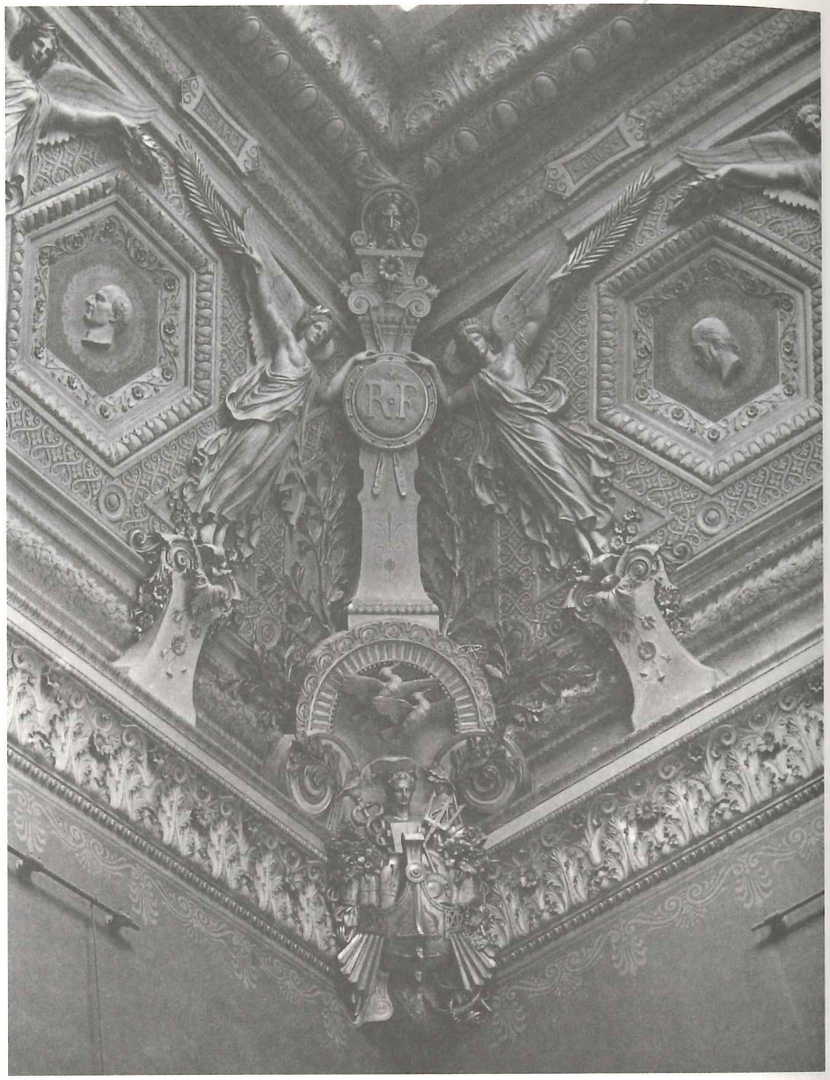

Figure 3.3.5 The Louvre Museum, detail of a genius ceiling in the Hall of Seven Chimneys, commissioned in 1848 by the French Republic. Photograph by Carol Duncan

civilized. Not surprisingly, quantities of great artists were now duly discovered and, in time, furnished with properly archetypal biographies by the burgeoning discipline of art history.[21] These conditions are perpetuated

today in the institution of the giant retrospective. A voracious demand for great artists, living or dead, is obligingly supplied by legions of art historians and curators trained for just this task. Inevitably some of the great artists inducted into this role fill it out with less success than others. Even so, a fair or just good great artist is still a serviceable item in today's museum business.

The importance of the Louvre Museum as a model for other national galleries and as an international training ground for the first community of professional museum men is everywhere recognized. After the example of the Louvre, there was a flurry of national gallery founding throughout Europe, whose heads of state often simply designated an existing royal or imperial collection as a public art museum. Conversions of this kind had been made before the Revolution, in Dresden and Vienna, for example, but would continue now with greater speed. Under Napoleon's occupying armies, numerous public art museums were created in, among other places, Madrid, Naples, Milan, and Amsterdam. Of course, some of the new 'national galleries' were more like traditional princely reception halls than modern public spaces – more out to dazzle than enlighten – and one usually entered them as a privilege rather than by right.[22] Whatever form they took, by 1825, almost every Western capital, monarchical or Republican, had one.

The influence of the Louvre continued in the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the many public art museums founded in European provincial cities[23] and in other places under the sway of European culture. In New York, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, and other American cities, museums were carefully laid out around the Louvre's organizing theme of the great civilizations, with Egypt, Greece, and Rome leading to a centrally placed Renaissance. When no Greek or Roman originals were on hand, as they were not in many American cities, the idea was conveyed by plaster casts of classical sculpture or Greek-looking architecture, the latter often embellished with the names or profiles of great artists from Phidias on; such façades are familiar sights everywhere.

As for the Louvre itself, despite a long history of expansions, reorganizations, and reinstallations, the museum maintained until very recently its nineteenth-century bias for the great epochs of civilization. Classical and Italian Renaissance art always occupied its most monumental, centrally located spaces and made the museum's opening statements.[24] In the course of the nineteenth century, it expanded its history of civilization to include the art of ancient Egypt, the Near East, Asia, and other designated culture areas. Just as these episodes could be added, so others could be subtracted without damaging the museum's central program: in the years after the Second World War, Impressionist painting and Far Eastern art were moved out of the Louvre altogether, the one to the Jeu de Paume, the other to the Musée Guimet. In terms of the museum's traditional program, neither

collection – however valued as a collection – was essential, and, as one museum official affirmed, their subtraction actually clarified the museum's primary program:

> It may be said that the Louvre collections form today a coherent whole, grouping around our western civilization all those which, directly or indirectly, had a share in its birth. ... At the threshold of history there stand the mother civilizations: Egyptian, Sumerian, Aegean. Then, coming down through Athens, Rome, Byzantium, towards the first centuries of our Christian era, there are the full blossomings of Medieval, Renaissance and Modern art. At the Louvre, then, we are on our own home territory, the other inhabited parts of the earth being dealt with elsewhere.[25]

The museum's commitment to lead visitors through the course of Western civilization continues to this day, even though a new entrance, new access routes and a major reinstallation allow visitors to map their own paths through a somewhat revised history of art. As I write this (in 1993), the museum is getting ready to unveil its latest expansion, the newly installed Richelieu Wing, in which, for the first time, northern European art will be given the kind of grand ceremonial spaces that, up until now, were usually reserved for French and Italian art. It appears that, in today's Louvre, French civilization will look more broadly European in its sources than before, more like a leading European Community state. Whatever the political implications of the new arrangement, the Louvre continues its existence as a public state ritual.

But 1993 is a long way from 1793. Of the legions of people who daily stream through the Louvre, most, whether French or foreign, are tourists. Which is to say that, as a prime tourist attraction, the museum is crucial to the city's economy. If it still constructs its visitors as enlightenment-seeking citizens, it must also cater to crowds of hungry, credit-card-bearing consumers in search of souvenirs and gifts. Besides a revised art-historical tour, therefore, the Louvre of 1993 also includes spacious new restaurants and a monumental shopping mall.[26] Such developments, however, belong to the Louvre's later years. We have still to consider more of the public art museum's significance in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, first in Britain.

[...]

II

Let us turn now to the National Gallery in London. If the Louvre is the prototype of the public art museum – and that is its status in the literature[27] – how are we to understand the National Gallery? The dramatic and revolutionary origins of the French museum, including its very site in what was

once the royal palace, is unparalleled in the British example, whose founding, next to the Louvre's, seems sorely lacking in political and historical fullness. The decisive events and powerful symbolic ingredients that made the French example so much the archetype of the European public art museum are simply not present.

The first missing ingredient is a significant royal art collection of the kind that seventeenth- and eighteenth-century monarchs had often assembled and which then became the core of a national gallery. Certainly, England had once known such royal treasure: Charles I's famous and much admired collection of paintings. Broken up when Charles fell, the story of this collection – its destruction as much as its creation – must figure as the beginning of the story of public art museums in England.

Charles came to the English throne in 1625, bringing with him ideas about monarchy that were shaped by continental models and continental theories of the divine right of kings. Especially impressed by the haughty formality and splendor of the Spanish court, he sought to create on English soil similar spectacles of radiant but aloof power. Accordingly, he commissioned Inigo Jones to design a properly regal palace complete with a great hall decorated by Rubens (in 1635). A show of power in the seventeenth century also demanded a magnificent picture collection; elsewhere in Europe, church and state princes – Cardinal Mazarin and the Archduke Leopold William are outstanding examples – paid fortunes for the requisite Titians, Correggios, and other favorites of the day. Charles understood fully the meaning of such ceremonial display. So did his Puritan executioners, who pointedly auctioned off a large part of the king's collection. Not only did they feel a Puritan discomfort with such sensually pleasing objects; they also wished to dismantle a quintessential sign of regal absolutism.[28] The absence of a significant royal collection in England is as much a monument, albeit a negative one, to the end of English absolutism as the Louvre Museum is to the end of French absolutism.

This is only to say that the process of British state building was English, not French, as was the development of the symbols and public spaces which culturally articulated that process. In the England after Charles I, monarchs might collect art, but political realities discouraged them from displaying it in ways that recalled too much the regal shows and absolutist ambitions of the past. In fact, after Charles and a very few other grand seventeenth-century art collectors – in particular the Earl of Arundel and the Duke of Buckingham – there would be no significant English collections for several decades.[29] It was only after the Restoration that large-scale English picture-collecting would be resumed, most notably by the powerful aristocratic oligarchs to whom state power now passed. Meanwhile, British monarchs kept rather low public profiles as art collectors and art patrons.

Kensington Palace is a telling reminder of the modesty in which monarchy was expected to live, at least in the later seventeenth century. The residence of King William III and Queen Mary (installed on the throne in 1689), the building began as an unpretentious dwelling, certainly comfortable and dignified enough for its noble occupants – as seen in its two 'long galleries' filled with art objects – but not in any way palatial. It lacked the ceremonial spaces of an empowered royalty, spaces that would appear only later under Kings George I and II. William's picture gallery held a fine collection, but it remained a source of private pleasure, not regal display. In fact, various royal residences would end up with considerable holdings, but these were never institutionalized as 'the British Royal Collection'. Even now, they remain largely private; indeed, when displayed in the new Sainsbury Wing of the National Gallery in 1991–2, they attracted attention precisely because so much of the collection has been unfamiliar to the art-viewing public.[30]

Besides the want of a royal collection properly deployed as such, British eighteenth-century history lacks a potent political event that could have dramatically turned that collection into public property – in short, an eighteenth- or nineteenth-century type of democratic revolution. Of course, another way to get a public art museum (short of being occupied by a French army) was through the liberalizing monarchical gesture as seen on the continent, in which a royal collection was opened up as a public space in symbolic (if not direct political) recognition of the bourgeois presence. The French crown had been planning just such a move at the time of the Revolution. The Revolution took over that museum project but also redefined it, making what would have been a privileged and restricted space into something truly open and public. The revolutionary state thus appropriated the legacy of absolutist symbols and ceremonies and put them to new ideological use, making them stand for the Republic and its ideal of equality. The English ruling class, on the other hand, had rejected the use of a royal art collection as a national symbol just as deliberately as it had blocked the development of an absolutist monarchy. There was political room neither for the kind of art collection that the people could meaningfully nationalize nor for the kind of monarch who could meaningfully nationalize it himself.

By the late eighteenth century, however, the absence of a ceremonially important royal collection was more than made up for by those of the aristocracy. In fact, the British art market actually became the most active in the eighteenth-century Europe as both the landed aristocracy and a newly arrived commercial class sought the distinctive signs of gentlemanly status. Whether defending older class boundaries or attempting to breach them, men of wealth deemed it socially expedient to collect and display art, especially paintings. Italian, Flemish, and other old-master works of the kind prescribed by the current canons of good taste poured into their

collections. As Iain Pears has argued, art collecting, by providing a unifying cultural field, helped the upper ranks of English society form a common class identity:

> They increasingly saw themselves as the cultural, social and political core of the nation, 'citizens' in the Greek sense with the other ranks of society scarcely figuring in their understanding of the 'nation'.[31]

In short, here were the social elements of the 'civil society' of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century political philosophy, that community of propertied citizens whose interests and education made them, in their view, most fit to rule.[32]

To modern eyes, the social and political space of an eighteenth-century English art collection falls somewhere between the public and private realms. Our notion of the 'public' dates from a later time, when, almost everywhere in the West, the advent of bourgeois democracy opened up the category of citizenship to ever broader segments of the population and redefined the realm of the public as ever more accessible and inclusive. What today looks like a private, socially exclusive space could have seemed in the eighteenth century much more open. Indeed, an eighteenth-century picture collection (and an occasional sculpture collection) was contiguous with a series of like spaces (including, not incidentally, the newly founded British Museum[33]) that together mapped out the social circuit of a class. Certainly access to these collections was difficult if one did not belong to the elite.[34] But from the point of view of their owners, these spaces were accessible to everyone who counted, the:

> finite group of personal friends, rivals, acquaintances and enemies who made up the comparatively small informal aristocracy of landed gentlemen, peers or commoners, in whom the chains of patronage, 'friendship' or connection converged.[35]

Displayed in galleries or reception rooms of town or country houses, picture collections were seen by numerous visitors, who often toured the countryside expressly to visit the big landowners' showy houses and landscape gardens.[36] Art galleries were thus 'public' spaces in that they could unequivocally frame the only 'public' that was admissible: well-born, educated men of taste, and, more marginally (if at all), well-born women.

Art galleries signified social distinction precisely because they were seen as more than simple signs of wealth and power. Art was understood to be a source of valuable moral and spiritual experience. In this sense, it was cultural property, something to be shared by a whole community. Eighteenth-century Englishmen as well as Frenchmen had the idea that an art collection could belong to a nation, however they understood that term. The French pamphleteers who called for the nationalization of the royal collection and the creation of a national art museum had British counterparts who criticized

rich collectors for excluding from their galleries a large public, especially artists and writers.

Joshua Reynolds, Benjamin West, and Thomas Lawrence, the first three presidents of the Royal Academy, were among those who called for the creation of a national gallery or, at least, the opening up of private collections. Even before the creation of the Louvre, in 1777, the radical politician John Wilkes proposed that Parliament purchase the fabulous collection of Sir Robert Walpole and make it the beginning of a national gallery. The proposal was not taken up and the collection was sold to Catherine the Great. A few years later, the creation of the Louvre Museum intensified the wish for an English national collection, at least among some. Thus in 1799, the art dealer Noel Joseph Desenfans offered the state a brilliant, ready-made national collection of old masters, assembled for King Stanislas Augustus of Poland just before he abdicated. Desenfans, determined to keep the collection intact and in England, offered it to the state on the condition that a proper building be provided for it. According to the German art expert J. D. Passavant, the offer 'was coolly received and ultimately rejected'. Desenfans's collection was finally bequeathed to Dulwich College [...] and was, for another decade or so, the only public picture collection in the vicinity of London.

Why was Parliament so resistant to establishing a national gallery? In the years between the founding of the Louvre in 1793 and the fall of Napoleon in 1815, almost every leading European state acquired a national art museum, if not by an act of the reigning monarch then through the efforts of French occupiers, who began museum building on the Louvre model in several places. Why did the ruling oligarchs of Great Britain resist what was so alluring in Berlin, Madrid, and Amsterdam? The answer to this question, I believe, lies in the meaning of the art gallery within the context of eighteenth-century patrician culture.

Eighteenth-century Britain was ruled by an oligarchy of great landowners who presided over a highly ranked and strictly hierarchical society. Landed property, mainly in the form of rents, was the basic source of wealth and the key to political power and social prestige. Although landowners also engaged in commercial and industrial capitalist ventures, profits were normally turned into more land or land improvement, since that form of property was considered the only gentlemanly source of wealth. Living off rents was taken to be the only appropriate way of achieving the leisure and freedom necessary to cultivate one's higher moral and intellectual capacities. Apologists for the landowners argued that ownership of land was a precondition for developing the wisdom, independence, and civic-mindedness necessary for the responsible exercise of political power. They maintained that holdings in land rooted one in the larger community and made one's private interests identical with the general interest and well-being of the whole of society. Landowners, both old

and newly arrived, thereby justified their monopoly of political rights on the basis of their land holdings.

In fact – and contrary to the claims of their apologists – the great landowners exercised power according to narrow self-interest. The business of government was largely a matter of buying and selling influence and positioning oneself for important government appointments, lucrative sinecures, and advantageous marriages for one's children. The more land one owned, the more patronage, influence, and wealth one was likely to command and the better one's chances to buy, bribe, and negotiate one's way to yet more wealth and social luster.[37] To be even a small player in this system required a great show of wealth, mediated, of course, by current codes of good taste and breeding. A properly appointed country house with a fashionably landscaped garden was a minimum requirement. If few landowners could compete with Sir Robert Walpole's Houghton, the Duke of Marlborough's Blenheim, or the Duke of Bedford's Woburn Abbey, they could nevertheless assemble the essentials of the spectacle. As Mark Girouard has described it,

> Trophies in the hall, coats of arms over the chimney-pieces, books in the library and temples in the park could suggest that one was discriminating, intelligent, bred to rule and brave.[38]

Art collections, too, betokened gentlemanly attainments, and marked their owners as veterans of the grand tour (mandatory for any gentleman). Whether installed in purpose-built galleries or in other kinds of rooms they provided a display of wealth and breeding that helped give point and meaning to the receptions and entertainments they adorned. Compared to today's academic discourse, the critical vocabulary one needed to master was decidedly brief and the number of canonized old masters few: the Carracci, Guido Reni, Van Dyck, and Claude were among those most admired.[39] However shallow one's understanding of them, to display them in one's house and produce before them the right clichés served as proof that one was cultivated and discerning and fit to hold power. Whatever else they might have been, art collections were prominent artifacts in a ritual that marked the boundary between polite and vulgar society, which is to say, the boundary of legitimated power.[40]

Given the structure of the British oligarchy, the notorious self-interest of its ranking magnates, and the social uses of art displays, the unwillingness to create a national gallery until 1824 is not surprising.[41] Absorbed in a closed circle of power, patronage, and display, the ruling oligarchy had no compelling reason to form a national collection. Indeed, at this historical moment – an era of democratic revolutions – it had been good reason *not* to want one, since national galleries tended either to signal the advent of Republicanism or to give a liberalized face to surviving monarchies attempting

to renew their waning prestige.[42] The men who dominated Parliament had no reason to send either of these signals. Their existing practices of collection and display already marked out boundaries of viable power and reinforced the authority of state offices.[43]

Parliament's claim to represent the interest of the whole society, when in fact self-enrichment had become the central operating principle of its members, was a contradiction that became ever more glaring and ever less tolerable to growing segments of the population. Over the first few decades of the nineteenth century, groups of industrialists, merchants, professionals, disgruntled gentry locked out of power, and religious dissenters mounted well-organized attacks on both the structure and policies of the government. They not only pressed the question of what class should rule, they also challenged aristocratic culture, contested its authority, and discredited some of its more prestigious symbols. Their most scathing and effective attacks on the culture of privilege would come in the 1820s and 1830s, when radicals and reformers, the Benthamites prominent among them, gave voice to widely felt resentments.[44] (The Benthamites were followers of the social reformer and utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham, 1748–1832.) From those decades date proposals for public art galleries and campaigns to increase access to existing public museums and monuments. In the context of early nineteenth-century Britain, these efforts were highly political in nature and directly furthered a larger project to expand the conventional boundaries of citizenship. The cultural strategy involved opening up traditionally restricted ritual spaces and redefining their content – this as a means of advancing the claims of 'the nation'. The effort to define and control these spaces would build as the nineteenth century wore on.

This concern to defend and advance the rights of the political nation easily shaded into feelings of a broader nationalism, appearing elsewhere in western Europe in the early nineteenth century, as well as patriotic sentiments, which the wars with France intensified. The creation of the Louvre Museum and its spectacular expansion under Napoleon sharpened these feelings of English–French rivalry and gave them a cultural focus. The marvels of the Louvre caused acute museum envy not only among English artists and writers like Hazlitt, Lawrence, and West, but also among some of the gentleman collectors who sat in Parliament and felt the lack of a public art collection as an insult to British national pride. Both during and after the wars, however, the state was diffident about projects that might have fostered national pride. As the historian Linda Colley has argued, in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century England, to encourage nationalism was to encourage an inclusive principle of identity that could too easily become the basis of a political demand to broaden the franchise. It is thus no surprise that the expression of nationalist feeling came from outside the circles of official power. Typically,

it took the form of proposals for cultural and patriotic monuments, as well as charitable institutions and philanthropic gestures.[45]

In 1802 the wealthy and self-made John Julius Angerstein, the creator of Lloyds of London, set up a patriotic fund for dependants of British war dead and contributed to it handsomely. He also published the names of everyone who contributed and exactly what each gave. The tactic exposed the landed aristocracy as selfish – their donations were generally meager – while publicizing commercial City men like Angerstein as patriotic, generous, and more responsive to the true needs of the nation. Angerstein clearly saw himself as the equal if not the better of any lord of the realm, and he lived accordingly. With his immense fortune and help of artist friends like Thomas Lawrence, he amassed a princely art collection of outstanding quality, installed it in magnificently decorated rooms in his house in Pall Mall, and – in pointed contrast to many aristocratic collectors – opened his doors wide to interested artists and writers. But not all doors were open to Angerstein. As a Russian-born Jew who lacked formal education – and was reputedly illegitimate to boot – he was never allowed to shake the appellation 'vulgar' and could never fully enter the highest ranks of society.

Nevertheless, after his death in 1823, Angerstein's art collection became the nucleus of the British National Gallery. With the help of Lawrence, the state was allowed to purchase the best of his collection – thirty-eight paintings – at a cost below their market value.[46] By now, sentiment in Parliament had shifted in favor of such a gallery; both Lord Liverpool, the Prime Minister, and his Home Secretary Sir Robert Peel backed the move. However, while the motion passed with relative ease, working out just where it would be and who would oversee it occasioned considerable political skirmishing. The trustees of the British Museum clearly expected to take it in hand, but had to give up that idea in the face of fierce parliamentary opposition. The problem was solved when the government was allowed to buy the remainder of the lease on Angerstein's house in Pall Mall, and the new National Gallery opened there in May, 1824. Thus, intentionally or not, Angerstein posthumously provided both the substance and site for a prestigious new symbol of the nation. There is every indication that he would have heartily approved and supported this transformation of his property. Both his son and executors thought so.[47] Indeed Angerstein's son believed that had it been proposed to his father that he contribute to a National Gallery, 'he might have given a part or the whole [of his collection] for such a purpose'.[48]

Which brings me back to the larger, historical issue with which I began this section. Although the story of the founding of the National Gallery lacks a clear-cut revolutionary moment, it nevertheless points to a growing acceptance of a new concept of the nation in Britain. Because the issue of nationalism looms so large in today's political news, and because the terms nation and

nationalism are now so much in currency, we must take care not to read modern meanings into early nineteenth-century political discourse when it speaks of 'the nation'. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, one spoke of patriotism, not nationalism. Later ideas of the nation as a people defined and unified by unique spiritual yearnings or 'racial' characteristics, are foreign to the early nineteenth-century political discourse I am describing. Although there was great concern and interest in the uniqueness of national cultures, nations were generally understood and described in social, political, and economic terms, and the term 'nation' was normally used as a universal category designating 'society'. The word 'nation' was often used in the context of a middle-class campaign to dispute the claim of the privileged few to be the whole of the polity. In British political discourse, the nation could even be a code word for the middle class itself, one that highlighted the fact that British society consisted of more people than those presently enfranchised.[49] The founding of the National Gallery did not change the distribution of real political power – it did not give more people the vote – but it did remove a portion of prestigious symbolism from the exclusive control of the elite class and gave it to the nation as a whole. An impressive art gallery, a type of ceremonial space deeply associated with social privilege and exclusivity, became national property and was opened to all. The transference of the property as well as the shift in its symbolic meaning came about through the mediation of bourgeois wealth and enterprise and was legitimated by a state that had begun to recognize the advantages of such symbolic space.

The story, far from ending, was only at its beginning when the National Gallery opened in 1824. The struggle between the 'nation' and its ruling class was still heating up politically. Years of resentment against the aristocracy, long held in by the wars, had already erupted in the five years following the Battle of Waterloo (1815). If the violence had subsided, the political pressures had not. Throughout the 1820s, a strong opposition, often Benthamite in tone and backed by a vigorous press, demanded middle-class access to political power and the creation of new cultural and educational institutions. This opposition ferociously attacked hereditary privilege, protesting the incompetency of the aristocratic mind to grasp the needs of the nation, including its cultural and educational needs, and the absurdity of a system that gave aristocrats the exclusive right to dominate the whole. After the passage of the Reform Bill in 1832, elections sent a number of radicals to Parliament, where, among other things, they soon took on the cause of the National Gallery.

Debate was immediately occasioned by the urgent need to find a new space for the collection, since the lease on Angerstein's old house in Pall Mall would soon end and the building was slated for demolition. In April,

1832, Sir Robert Peel proposed to the House of Commons that the problem be solved by the erection of a new building on Trafalgar Square. He had in mind a dignified, monumental structure ('ornamental' was the term he used), designed expressly for viewing pictures. The proposal passed easily, but not before it sparked a lively discussion, with many members suggesting alternatives to it. A few members even toyed with the possibility of a British Louvre: instead of spending public money on a new building, they argued, why not put the collection in one of those royal buildings already maintained at public expense? Indeed, as one speaker noted, Buckingham Palace would make a splendid art gallery – it already had suitable space and, as a public art museum, it would be bigger and better than the Louvre! It was Joseph Hume who took the idea to its logical and radical conclusion. Since the nation needed a new art gallery, and since the government spent huge sums to maintain royal palaces which royalty rarely or never occupied, why not pull down a palace and build an art gallery in its place? In Hume's view, Hampton Court, Kensington Palace, or Windsor Castle would all make fine sites for a new public space.[50] Hume's proposal could hardly have been serious. But it does expose, if only for an instant, an impulse in the very heart of Parliament to dramatically displace vulnerable symbols of British royalty and claim their sites for the public.

As the new building on Trafalgar Square progressed, radical and reforming members of Parliament again concerned themselves with the National Gallery. In 1835, they created a select committee of the House of Commons and charged it to study the government's involvement with art education and its management of public collections.[51] The committee was full of well-known radicals and reformers, including William Ewart, Thomas Wyse, and John Bowring, long an editor of the influential Benthamite organ, the *Westminster Review*. The committee's immediate purpose was to discover ways to improve the taste of English artisans and designers and thereby improve the design and competitiveness of British manufactured goods. Its members, however, were equally intent on uncovering the ineptitude of the privileged gentlemen to whom the nation's cultural institutions were entrusted.

To the committee, the management of the National Gallery was a matter of significant political import. Most of its members were convinced that art galleries, museums, and art schools, if properly organized, could be instruments of social change capable of strengthening the social order. The numerous experts called in to testify to this truth repeatedly confirmed the committee's already unshakable belief that the very sight of art could improve the morals and deportment of even the lowest social ranks. Not surprisingly, the committee found the nation's improving monuments to be seriously mismanaged by their inept aristocratic overseers, who allowed entry fees and other obstacles to keep out most of the people. These issues were aired

not only in the Select Committee *Report* of 1836 and its published proceedings, but also in subsequent parliamentary proceedings, in other public meetings, and in the press at large.

Reforming politicians were not only concerned with the utilitarian benefits of art. They also believed that culture and the fine arts could improve and enrich the quality of national life. To foster and promote a love of art in the nation at large was political work of the highest order. Thomas Wyse, a member of the Select Committee of 1836 and well known as an Irish reformer, addressed these concerns at some length in his public speeches. In 1837, he spoke at a gathering called for the purpose of promoting free admission to all places in which the public could see works of artistic and historical importance. The real issue in the question of free admission, argued Wyse, was the conflict between the needs of the nation and the interests of a single class. The outcome was important because art, far from being a mere luxury, is essential for a civilized life. Art is 'a language as universal as it is powerful', said Wyse; through it, artists leave 'an immediate and direct transcript' of moral and intellectual experience that embodies the full nature of man. The broad benefits of art therefore belong by natural right to everyone – the nation as a whole – and not just to the privileged few.[52] As Wyse argued elsewhere, however great English commercial achievements, no nation is whole without the arts:

> Rich we may be, strong we may be; but without our share in the literary and artistic as well as scientific progress of the age, our civilization is incomplete.[53]

For Wyse, as for many other reformers of his day, progress toward this goal could be brought about only by removing from power a selfish and dull-witted aristocracy and replacing it with enlightened middle-class leadership. These ideas run through the Select Committee hearings of 1835 and its *Report* of the following year. Radical committee members pounced on anything that could demonstrate the ill effects of oligarchic rule, anything that, as one member put it, showed the 'spirit of exclusion in this country', a spirit that had allowed art-collecting gentlemen to monopolize the enriching products of moral and intellectual life.[54]

It was just now that the National Gallery, having lost its house in Pall Mall, was on the point of moving into its new building on Trafalgar Square.[55] The coming move provided an excellent opportunity to ask whether or not the National Gallery could be called a truly *national* institution. Here, certainly, was an entity purporting to serve the cultural needs of the nation. But did its planners and managers understand those needs? Alas, as so many testified, prompted and prodded by Ewart and the others, the National Gallery was a sorry thing compared to the Louvre, to Berlin's Royal Gallery, and to Munich's Pinakothek, the new picture gallery built as a complement to the Glyptothek.

As the eminent picture dealer Samuel Woodburn said, 'from the limited number of pictures we at present possess, I can hardly call ours a national gallery'.[56] But it was not merely the size of the collection that was wrong. As the Select Committee made plain, it was not enough to take a gentleman's collection and simply open it up to the public. In order to serve the nation, a public collection had to be formed on principles different from a gentleman's collection. It had to be selected and hung in a different way. And that was the crux of the problem. So testified Edward Solly, a former timber merchant whose famous picture collection, recently sold to Berlin's Royal Gallery, had been formed around advanced art-historical principles. Solly noted that whereas other nations gave purchasing decisions to qualified experts, in England the 'gentlemen of taste' who made them – creatures of fashion with no deep knowledge of art – were hardly up to the serious mental task of planning an acquisition program for a national collection worthy of the name. Solly's opinion was inadvertently backed by the testimony of William Seguier, the first keeper of the National Gallery.[57] Grilled at length, his ignorance of current museological practices was of great political value to the Committee. No, admitted Seguier, there was no plan for the historical arrangement of pictures according to schools. No, nothing was labeled (although he agreed it was a good idea), and no, he had never visited Italy, even though, as everyone now knew, Italy was the supreme source for a proper, publicly minded art collection. Nor was there any rationalized acquisitions policy, so that, as keeper, Seguier had been helpless to watch the build-up of Murillos and other things inappropriate to a national collection while nothing whatsoever by Raphael was acquired.

And what should a national collection look like? The Committee was well informed about continental museums and frequently cited the Louvre as a model of museum arrangement and management.[58] Although no one from the Louvre testified at the hearings, the Committee did have two renowned museum experts on hand. One was Baron von Klenze, director of Munich's new museum. His descriptions of its art-historical arrangements and labeling, not to mention its fire-proofing, air-heating, scientifically researched lighting and color schemes, inspired much admiration and envy. The other star witness was Dr Gustav Friedrich Waagen, a leading art-historical authority and director of the Royal Gallery at Berlin. He told the Committee that a public collection had to be historically arranged so that visitors could follow 'the spirit of the times and the genius of the artists'. Only then would they experience art's harmonious influence upon the mind. Dr Waagen also insisted that early Renaissance art was necessary to a good collection, as were representative works from even earlier times. The point to be made (and the Committee made it repeatedly) was that the traditional favorites among gentleman collectors, what still passed among them as 'good taste', would

no longer do. The Committee therefore recommended that the National Gallery change its course and focus its efforts on building up the collection around works from the era of Raphael and his predecessors, 'such works being of purer and more elevated style than the eminent works of the Carracci'.[59] A taste for the Carracci was now disparaged as evidence of class misrule.

The Committee published its report in 1836, but the objectives for which it struggled were far from won. It would in fact require decades of political pressuring and Select Committee probings before the National Gallery would conform to the type developed on the continent. Although it would always be a picture gallery (and never a universal survey museum like the Louvre), it would eventually become one of Europe's outstanding public art museums, complete with elaborate genius ceilings and sumptuous galleries in which the history of art unfolds with the greatest possible quality and abundance. It is significant, however, that it would become a fully realized civic ritual only in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, the same era that brought universal male suffrage to much, if not all, of Britain. That is to say, the National Gallery came to rival the Louvre only when political developments forced the British state to recognize the advantages of a prestigious monument that could symbolize a nation united under presumably universal values. As the historian E. P. Thompson has noted, it is a peculiarity of British history that the formation of the bourgeois state – and of its supporting culture – evolved slowly and organically out of a complex of older forms.[60] So, too, the evolution of its National Gallery. However protracted, piecemeal and partial the process, eventually, in Britain as in France, the princely gallery gave way to the public art museum.

NOTES

For a fully annotated version of this essay see the original publication; omissions indicated here by bracketed ellipses.

1. Much of what follows draws from Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach, 'The Universal Survey Museum', *Art History* 3 (December 1980): 447–69.
2. For example, in 1975, Imelda Marcos, wife of the Philippine dictator, put together a museum of modern art in a matter of weeks. The rush was occasioned by the meeting in Manila of the International Monetary Fund. The new Metropolitan Museum of Manila, specializing in American and European art, was clearly meant to impress the conference's many illustrious visitors, who included some of the world's most powerful bankers. Not surprisingly, the new museum re-enacted on a cultural level the same relations that bound the Philippines to the United States economically and militarily. It opened with dozens of loans from the Brooklyn Museum, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the private collections of Armand Hammer and Nathan Cummings. Given Washington's massive contribution to the Philippine military, it is fair to assume that the museum building itself, a hastily converted unused army building, was virtually an American donation. (See 'How to put together a museum in 29 days', *ArtNews*, December 1976: 19–22).

   The Shah of Iran also needed Western-style museums to complete the façade of modernity he constructed for Western eyes. The Museum of Contemporary Art in Teheran opened in 1977 shortly before the regime's fall. Costing over $7 million, the multi-leveled modernist structure was filled with mostly American post-Second World War art – reputedly $30 million worth – and staffed by mostly American or American-trained museum personnel. According to Robert Hobbs, who was the museum's chief curator, the royal family viewed the museum and its collection as simply one of many instruments of political propaganda. See Sarah McFadden, 'Teheran report', and Robert Hobbs, 'Museum under siege', *Art in America* (October 1981): 9–16 and 17–25.
3. For ancient ceremonial display, see Joseph Alsop, *The Rare Art Traditions* (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), p. 197 (on temple treasures); Ranuccio B. Bandinelli, *Rome: The Center of Power, 500 BC to AD 200*, trans. P. Green (New York: Braziller, 1970), pp. 38, 43, 100 (on museum-like displays in temples, houses, and palaces); [...] Germain Bazin, *The Museum Age*, trans. J. van Nuis Cahill (New York: Universe Books, 1967), Ch. 1 (on the ancient world); and Francis Haskell, *Patrons and Painters: Art and Society in Baroque Italy* (New York and London: Harper and Row, 1971), Ch. 3 and *passim* (for displays in Italian Baroque churches and seventeenth-century palaces).
4. The princely gallery I am discussing is less the 'cabinet of curiosities', which mixed together found objects, like shells and minerals, with man-made things, and more the large, ceremonial reception hall, like the Louvre's Apollo Gallery. For a discussion of the differences, see Bazin, op. cit. (note 3), pp. 129–36; and Giuseppe Olmi, 'Science-honour-metaphor: Italian cabinets of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', in O. Impey and A. MacGregor (eds), *The Origins of Museums: The Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), pp. 10–11. [...]
5. For princely galleries see Bazin, op. cit. (note 3), pp. 129–39; Niels von Holst, *Creators, Collectors and Connoisseurs*, trans. B. Battershaw (London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1967), pp. 95–139 and *passim*.
   [...]
6. More exactly, it established an art museum in a section of the old Louvre palace. In the two hundred years since the museum opened, the building itself has been greatly expanded, especially in the 1850s, when Louis-Napoléon added a series of new pavilions. Until recently, the museum shared the building with government offices, the last of which moved out in 1993, finally leaving the entire building to the museum.
7. For Louvre Museum history, see Andrew McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre: Art, Politics, and the Origins of the Modern Museum in Eighteenth-century Paris* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). [...]
8. McClellan, op. cit. (previous note), gives a full account of the ideas that guided the installation of the very early Louvre Museum and of the difference between it and earlier installation models.
9. For some detailed descriptions of gentlemanly hangs, see ibid., pp. 30–9. [...]
10. For example, in the Uffizi in Florence, the Museum at Naples and in Vienna in the Schloss Belvedere, the latter installed chronologically and by school by Christian von Mechel (von Holst, op. cit. [note 5], pp. 206–8; and Bazin, op. cit. [note 3], pp. 159–63). See [...] André Malraux's *Museum without Walls*, trans. S. Gilbert and F. Price (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967), for an extensive treatment of the museum as an art-historical construct.
11. Quoted in Yveline Cantarel-Besson (ed.), *La Naissance du Musée du Louvre*, vol. 1 (Paris: Ministry of Culture, Editions de la Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1981), p. xxv.
12. Gustav Friedrich Waagen, *Treasures of Art in Great Britain (1838)*, trans. Lady Eastlake (London: 1854–7), vol. 1, p. 320.
13. For a good example of this, see William Dyce, *The National Gallery, Its Formation and Management, Considered in a Letter to Prince Albert* (London: 1853).
14. Raymond Williams, in *Culture and Society, 1780–1950* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), Part I; and *Keywords* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 48–50 and 76–82, treats the changing meaning of such key critical terms as 'art' and 'culture'.
15. Malraux, op. cit. (note 10), gives an overview of this development in art-historical thinking.
16. See Iain Pears, *The Discovery of Painting: The Growth of Interest in the Arts in England, 1680–1768* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1988), for an excellent treatment of this.
17. For Louvre installations, see McClellan, op. cit. (note 7).
18. For accounts of this looting, see McClellan, op. cit. (note 7).
19. Genius is another of those terms that, by the early nineteenth century, already had a complex history and would continue to evolve. See Williams, *Culture and Society*, pp. xiv and 30–48, or

Malraux, op. cit. (note 10), pp. 26–7 and *passim*, for some of the changing and complex meanings of the term. At this point, genius was most likely to be associated with the capacity to realize a lasting ideal of beauty. But, new definitions were also in use or in formation – for example, the notion that genius does not imitate (and cannot be imitated), but rather expresses the unique spirit of its time and place (seen, for example, in statements by Fuseli, Runge, and Goya).

20. See Francis Haskell, *Rediscoveries in Art: Some Aspects of Taste, Fashion and Collecting in England and France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1976), pp. 8–19.
[...]

21. See Nicholas Green, 'Dealing in temperaments: economic transformation of the artistic field in France during the second half of the nineteenth century', *Art History* 10 (March 1987): 59–78, for an early phase of the literature of art-historical genius.

22. See von Holst, op. cit. (note 5), pp. 169–71, 204–5, 228–9; and Brazin, op. cit. (note 3), p. 214. The ornately decorated Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg was probably the most princely of these nineteenth-century creations in both its traditional installations and its visiting policy. Until 1866, full dress was required of all its visitors. Entrance to the Altes Museum in Berlin, the national gallery of the Prussian state, was also restricted, although in form it was a model of the new art-historical gallery. [...]

23. See Daniel J. Sherman, *Worthy Monuments: Art Museums and the Politics of Culture in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1989).

24. See Duncan and Wallach, op. cit. (note 1), for a tour of the Louvre as it existed in 1978.

25. Georges Salles, director of the Museums of France in 'The Museums of France', *Museum* 1–2 (1948–9): 92.

26. For the new Louvre, see Emile Biasini, Jean Lebrat, Dominique Bezombes, and Jean-Michel Vincent, *Le Grand Louvre: A Museum Transfigured, 1981–1993* (Milan and Paris: Electra France, 1989).

27. See, for example, Nathanial Burt, *Palaces for the People: A Social History of the American Art Museum* (Boston and Toronto: Little Brown, 1977), p. 23; Alma Wittlin, *The Museum: Its History and Its Tasks in Education* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1949), pp. 132–4; and Francis H. Taylor, *Babel's Tower: The Dilemma of the Modern Museum* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), p. 17. I cite here only three of the many writers who have understood public art museums in terms of the Louvre.

28. Peter W. Thomas, 'Charles I of England: a tragedy of absolutism', in *The Courts of Europe: Politics, Patronage and Royalty, 1400–1800*, ed. A. G. Dickens (London: Thames & Hudson, 1977), pp. 191–201; Francis Haskell, *Patrons and Painters: Art and Society in Baroque Italy* (New York and London: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 175; and Pears, op. cit. (note 16), pp. 134–6. [...]

29. Pears, op. cit. (note 16), pp. 106 and 133–6; and Janet Minihan, *The Nationalization of Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 1977), p. 10. [...]

30. As Tim Hilton wrote of this exhibition in the *Guardian* (2 October 1991), p. 36, 'something seems not to be right' when people must pay £4 to view works that 'seem to be national rather than private treasures' and 'seem so obviously to belong ... in the permanent and free collections of the National Gallery upstairs'. As Hilton noted, the Queen's Gallery, a small, recently established exhibition space next to Buckingham Palace, has made selected portions of this collection available to the public; it does not, however, change the status of the collection as private property.

31. Pears, op. cit. (note 16), p. 3.

32. See J. G. A. Pocock, *Politics, Language and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History* (London: Methuen, 1972), especially Ch. 3, 'Civic humanism and its role in Anglo-American thought'.

33. The British Museum, founded in 1753 by Sir Hans Sloane, president of the Royal Society, is sometimes described as the nation's first public museum (see, for example, Margorie Caygill, *The Story of the British Museum* [London: British Museum Publications, 1981], p. 4). However, it began its life as a highly restricted gentlemanly space and was democratized only gradually in the course of the nineteenth century. The state did not appropriate public funds for its purchase, but rather allowed a lottery to be held for that purpose. Nor was it conceived as an art collection. Although today it contains several aesthetically installed galleries of objects now classified as 'art' (including the famed Elgin Marbles), it originated as an Enlightenment cabinet of curiosities – the museological category from which both science and history museums descend. See Caygill, ibid., and David M. Wilson, *The British Museum: Purpose and Politics* (London: British Museum Publications, 1989).

34. Pears, op. cit. (note 16), pp. 176–8; and Peter Fullerton, 'Patronage and pedagogy: the British Institution in the early nineteenth century', *Art History* 5(1) (1982): 60.

35. Harold James Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society, 1780–1880* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 51.

36. Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1978), p. 191.

37. For the social and political workings of eighteenth-century society, I consulted Asa Briggs, *The Making of Modern England, 1783–1867: The Age of Improvement* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965); Perkin, op. cit. (note 35); Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer, *The Great Arch: English State Formation as Cultural Revolution* (Oxford and New York: Basil Blackwell, 1985); Edward P. Thompson, 'The peculiarities of the English', in *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1978), pp. 245–301; and Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

38. Girouard, op. cit. (note 36), p. 3.

39. John Rigby Hale, *England and the Italian Renaissance: The Growth of Interest in Its History and Art* (London: Arrow Books, 1963), pp. 68–82.

40. Pears, op. cit. (note 16), explores this meaning of eighteenth-century collections in depth, especially in Chs 1 and 2. See also Corrigan and Sayer, op. cit. (note 37), Ch. 5.

41. For Parliament's neglect of the National Gallery after 1824, see Minihan, op. cit. (note 29), pp. 19–25.

42. For a good example of the latter see Steven Moyano's study of the founding of the Altes Museum in Berlin, 'Quality vs. history. Schinkel's Altes Museum and Prussian arts policy', *Arts Bulletin* 72 (1990): 585–608.

43. In any case, there was nothing in the eighteenth-century British concept of the state that would call for spending public money on art galleries (see John S. Harris, *Government Patronage of the Arts in Great Britain*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1970, pp. 13–14). [...]

44. George L. Nesbitt, *Benthamite Reviewing: The First Twelve Years of the Westminster Review, 1824–1836* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934); Briggs, op. cit. (note 37), Chs 4 and 5; and Perkin, op. cit. (note 35), pp. 287–91, 302.

45. Linda Colley, 'Whose nation? Class and national consciousness in Britain, 1750–1830', *Past and Present* (November 1986): 97–117.

46. The Prince of Orange had been willing to pay more, and the fear of losing the collection to a foreigner was a factor in prompting Parliament's approval of the purchase. At the same time, Sir George Beaumont, a prominent amateur and patron of the arts, made known his intention to give the nation paintings from his collection, on condition that the state provide suitable housing for them. Beaumont's offer, combined with the prestige of the Angerstein Collection, tilted the balance in favor of a national collection. For a blow-by-blow account of the legal and legislative history of the founding of the National Gallery, see Gregory Martin, 'The National Gallery in London', *Connoisseur* 185 (April 1974): 280–7; (May 1974): 24–31; and 187 (June 1974): 124–8. See also William T. Whitley, *Art in England, 1821–1837* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930), pp. 64–74. [...]

47. As the latter wrote to a representative of the government: 'Well knowing the great satisfaction it would have given our late Friend that the Collection should form part of a National Gallery, we shall feel much gratified by His Majesty's Government becoming the purchasers of the whole for such a purpose.' Christopher Lloyd, 'John Julius Angerstein, 1732–1823', *History Today* 16 (June 1966): 373–9.

48. Ibid., p. 68.

49. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1991), p. 4; and Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), Ch. 1, especially p. 18. [...]

50. *Parliamentary Debates (Commons)*, 13 April 1832, new ser., vol. 12, pp. 467–70; and 23 July 1832, new ser., vol. 14, pp. 643–5.

51. The committee was to discover 'the best means of extending a knowledge of the Arts and of the Principles of Design among the People ... (and) also to inquire into the Constitution, Management, and Effects of Institutions connected with the Arts' (*Report from the Select Committee on Arts, and Their Connection with Manufacturers*, in House of Commons, *Reports*, 1836, vol. IX. 1, p. iii).

52. In George Foggo, *Report of the Proceedings at a Public Meeting Held at the Freemason's Hall on the 29th of May, 1837* (London: 1837), pp. 20–3. [...]
53. In a speech delivered at the Freemason's Tavern on 17 December 1842, reproduced in John Pye, *Patronage of British Art* (London: 1845), pp. 176–85.
54. William Ewart, in House of Commons, op. cit. (note 51), p. 108.
55. Paid for by the government, the building would have to be shared with the Royal Academy, a situation, in the opinion of the Committee, that amounted to government support for a body that was the very soul of oligarchic patronage and actually retarded the cultivation of the arts in England. Much of its proceedings were devoted to an investigation of the R.A.
56. Ibid., p. 138.
57. Seguier was a successful art expert and restorer who had guided several high-ranking gentlemen in the formation of conventional aristocratic collections. Both George IV and Sir Robert Peel had availed themselves of his services (*Dictionary of National Biography*).
58. House of Commons, op. cit. (note 51), p. 137.
59. ibid., p. x.
60. Thompson, op. cit. (note 37), *passim*.

4.

Museums and the Formation of National and Cultural Identities

Annie E. Coombes

> And so it is interesting to remember that when Mahatma Gandhi ... came to England and was asked what he thought of English civilization, he replied, 'I think it would be a good idea.'[1]

Multi-culturalism has become, albeit belatedly in England, one of the buzzwords of the educational establishment. Exactly three years on from the Swann committee report, optimistically entitled *Education for All*, and in the wake of the ensuing debates on the relative merits of an initiative that may be 'multi-cultural' but is not necessarily always actively 'anti-racist', the controversy continues.[2] By April 1986, multi-culturalism was also on the agenda of the museum ethnographic establishment, at the annual conference of the Museum Ethnographers Group. In addition, specific proposals were advanced that a policy decision be made by the Group concerning dealings with the apartheid régime in South Africa.[3]

This essay is written then, in the context of what might be interpreted as the moment of a more self-consciously political conception of the roles available to museums in general. It also comes at a moment of renewed

interest in the ethnographic collection as a possible site for academic anthropology's engagement with the multicultural initiative inspired by documents like the Swann Report. Moreover, such an involvement has the potential, acknowledged by both the anthropological establishment and its critics, of redeeming the discipline's tarnished reputation as a product and perpetrator of the colonial process.[4]

In order to understand some of the difficulties and contradictions arising from implementing a multi-cultural initiative in the display of material culture already designated 'ethnographic', I want to elaborate a case study situated at a comparable historical conjuncture in 1902, when the Education Act of that year announced the same objective of 'Education for All'. More specifically, the 1902 Act also made provision for school children accompanied by their teachers to count visits to museums as an integral part of their curriculum; an early indication of government recognition of the educational potential of such institutions.[5] Another effect of this Act was to generate a series of debates within a professional body which is still the official organ of the museums establishment today: the Museums Association.[6] The focus of these discussions was threefold: concern with the problem of attracting a larger and more diverse public, proving the museums' capacity as a serious educational resource and, in the case of the ethnographic collections, as a serious 'scientific' resource. While the existence of such debates cannot be taken as a measure of the efficacy of any resultant policies, it does give a clear sense of the self-appointed role of museums within the State's educational programme at this moment.

1902 was a significant year in other respects since it marked the renewal of concerted strategies by both contending parliamentary parties to promote the concept of a homogeneous national identity and unity within Britain. Imperialism was one of the dominant ideologies mobilised to this end. The Empire was to provide the panacea for all ills, the answer to unemployment with better living conditions for the working classes and an expanded overseas market for surplus goods. Through the policy of what was euphemistically referred to as 'social imperialism', all classes could be comfortably incorporated into a programme of expansionist economic policy in the colonies coupled with the promise of social reforms at home. It was in this context that museums and in particular the ethnographic sections, attempted to negotiate a position of relative autonomy, guided by a code of professional and supposedly disinterested ethics, while at the same time proposing themselves as useful tools in the service of the colonial administration.

The degree to which the museum as a site of the production of scientific knowledge and as the custodian of cultural property can claim a position of relative autonomy from the vagaries of party politics and State intervention, is an issue central to an understanding of the ethnographic collection's actual and possible role today.

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Olmi (2.2) Giuseppe Olmi, 'Science-Honor-Metaphor: Italian Cabinets of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', in *The Origins of Museums*, eds Oliver Impey and Arthur MacGregor, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985, pp. 1–16.

B. On post-Revolutionary Europe to the mid-nineteenth century:

Bann (1.4) Stephen Bann, 'Poetics of the Museum: Lenoir and Du Sommerard', in *The Clothing of Clio: A Study of the Representation of History in Nineteenth-Century Britain and France*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp. 77–92.

Déotte (1.3) Jean-Louis Déotte, 'Rome, the Archetypal Museum, and the Louvre, the Negation of Division', in *Art in Museums*, ed. Susan Pearce; New Research in Museum Studies: An International Series, 5, London and Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Athlone Press, 1995, pp. 215–32.

Duncan (3.3) Carol Duncan, 'From the Princely Gallery to the Public Art Museum: The Louvre Museum and the National Gallery, London', in *Representing the Nation: A Reader. Histories, Heritage and Museums*, eds David Boswell and Jessica Evans. London: Routledge, 1999, pp. 304–31.

Haskell and Penny (5.5) Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, 'Museums in Eighteenth-Century Rome', in their *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture 1500–1900*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981, pp. 62–73.

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C. On the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries:

Bohrer (2.5) Frederick N. Bohrer, 'Inventing Assyria: Exoticism and Reception in Nineteenth-Century England and France', *The Art Bulletin*, 80/2 (June 1998), 336–56 (REVISED)

Clunas (4.7) Craig Clunas, 'China in Britain: The Imperial Collections', in *Colonialism and the Object: Empire, Material Culture, and the Museum*, ed. Tim Barringer and Tom Flynn, London and New York: Routledge, 1998, pp. 41–51.

Mitchell (4.6) Timothy Mitchell, 'Orientalism and the Exhibitionary Order', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 31 (1989), reprinted from *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Donald Preziosi, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 455–72.

D. Regarding the twentieth century (to World War II):

Coombes (3.4) Annie E. Coombes, 'Museums and the Formation of National and Cultural Identities', *Oxford Art Journal*, 11/2 (December 1988), pp. 57–68.

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Grindstaff (3.5) Beverly K. Grindstaff, 'Creating Identity: Exhibiting the Philippines at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition', *National Identities*, 1/3 (1999), pp. 245–63.

Haraway (3.2) Donna Haraway, excerpt from 'Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908–1936', *Social Text*, 11 (Winter 1984/85), pp. 52–8. (EXCERPT)

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Bhabha (3.1) Homi Bhabha, 'Double Visions', *Artforum*, 30/5 (1992), pp. 85–9.

Canclini (6.6) Néstor García Canclini, 'Remaking Passports: Visual Thought in the Debate on Multiculturalism', *Third Text*, trans. E. P. Quesada (1994),