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# *Dialogues in Art History, from Mesopotamian to Modern: Readings for a New Century*

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*Frontispiece:* Simone Martini with Lippo Memmi, detail of Gabriel from *Annunciation with Saints*, 1333, tempera and gold
Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence; photograph Scala/Art Resource, New York

**EWA LAJER-BURCHARTH**
Harvard University

# *Image Matters: The Case of Boucher*

Clad in gray velvet and white lace, a powdered wig with curls rolling down his back, the subject of Carl Gustav Lundberg's *François Boucher* epitomizes the eighteenth-century image of an accomplished artist (fig. 1). Painted in 1741 as Lundberg's admission piece to the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture in Paris, Boucher's portrait inscribes itself within a tradition of artistic representation that originated in the late seventeenth century with Charles Le Brun. In Le Brun's portrait, painted in 1683 by Nicolas de Largillière, the painter's sartorial splendor, equaling that of an important courtier, signaled not the wealth of the wearer per se but the idea of distance between artistic creation and manual labor, a conceptual dissociation that was at the core of the Academy's mission, as Le Brun saw it, and thus also at the core of the academic artist's self-image.[1] Though clearly smaller in its scale and ambition, Lundberg's likeness, painted as it was expressly for the Academy's eyes, suggested a similar idea. If its half-length format, combined with the pose and the costume of the sitter, harked back specifically to the Titianesque formula of a gentleman's portrait, it did so precisely to convey a sense of dignity to Boucher's professional status as an artist operating at a distance from the material bases of his work. The work itself does not even figure in his image.

François Boucher, *Madame de Pompadour*, 1756, oil
Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Alte Pinakothek, Munich

Boucher was indeed a prominent member and, eventually, the director of the Academy. He was also, like Le Brun, a court artist, gaining, if only late in life, the title of the *premier peintre du roi*. Yet, none of Boucher's official functions could be said to have determined the character and importance of his output. Extending from ambitious depictions of history and mythology to designs for porcelain cups and snuffboxes, Boucher's aesthetic project is most striking in its vast scope and material diversity. It is in its expansiveness that the novelty and interest of Boucher's approach resides, an approach that signals a new—and in a key sense modern—kind of artistic self-awareness grounded in the very materiality of the image, an approach through which Boucher was, in a sense, able to materialize himself.

Boucher's practice thus raises a broader issue of artistic identity and the means by which it was asserted and maintained in the early modern period. We are not, to be sure, accustomed to consider Boucher as a modern artist. Quite the contrary: since the mid-eighteenth century, his work has been construed as the negative ground against which all ambitious and novel aesthetic practice in France had to define itself. Rooted in the critical reaction against rococo that had emerged in the 1740s and 1750s in the writings of Étienne de La Font de Saint-Yenne and Denis Diderot, the aesthetic

disregard for Boucher hinged on the conception of his work as a moral rather than material practice.[2] It is, though, precisely the material aspects of his output—what I would call its morphology—that we need to consider if we are to recognize Boucher's modernity.[3]

At stake in the rethinking of Boucher's work is more than the painter's art historical reputation, for such reconsideration raises questions about the methodological models that have served so far in the discussion of the eighteenth century as the origin of artistic modernity. Neither the approach grounded in the notion of the public sphere nor that based on the concept of visuality, to mention just two recent influential models of analysis, allows us to account for the distinct character and significance of Boucher's project.[4] It is not the emergence of the modern institutional framework of art production but the advent of commercial modernity as the defining condition of social and individual life in early eighteenth-century France that mattered most for Boucher's professional self-definition. His practice reveals the development of artistic self-understanding tied to the notion of a commercially diffused self-image. This notion of the image is irreducible to the iconography of the artist or to portraiture. The fact that, as far as we know, Boucher never painted a self-portrait suggests that this form of self-identification, linked as it was to the idea of subjective presence, was of no interest to him. Rather, for Boucher the material vehicle of self-reproduction was his entire oeuvre.

Though Lundberg's portrait evidently shuns any notion of the artist's material engagement in the production, or, for that matter, the reproduction, of images, it does allude to the importance of touch. Boucher's manicured hand fondling his jabot, notwithstanding the distilled elegance of this gesture (suggesting distance from manual labor), points nonetheless to the importance of the hand as such, and through it to what I want to call Boucher's *tact*.

In the eighteenth century *tact* was a term used interchangeably with *touch* to refer to one of the senses, but it also had other connotations, including a polite or pleasing behavior, which is how we commonly understand the term now.[5] Drawing on some aspects of its eighteenth-century usage, I would like to suggest a simultaneously broader and more specific notion of tact as an adaptive aesthetic conduct, a method (a tactic) of artistic accommodation to the demands of an "other" conceived both as someone else and, more abstractly, as an idea of alterity irreducible to a person.[6]

1. Carl Gustav Lundberg, *François Boucher*, 1741, pastel
Musée du Louvre, Paris; photograph Réunion des musées nationaux / Art Resource, New York

The capacity to accommodate the needs and wishes of others was in the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century manuals of *honnêteté* considered the most essential asset of a gentleman. "We are delighted with people who do what we want without being told," observed one author of a manual for an *honnête homme*.[7] "Whosoever is accommodating can confidently hope to be captivating," declared the author

of another.[8] To acquire such skill of *complaisance,* one had to master the art of decoding hidden messages and undeclared desires, that is, to develop an almost magical capacity to "get inside the other," according to the most renowned theorist of *honnêteté,* Antoine Gombaud, chevalier de Méré.[9] Essential to the development of this magical skill were two strategies: *souplesse* (suppleness, or adaptive flexibility of manner)—for "the persona of an *honnête homme* must transform itself, as the occasion warrants"—and *insinuation,* a mode of working subtly "beneath the surface of the other."[10]

These behavioral terms also happen to describe well the technical process that proved crucial for Boucher's artistic formation. I am referring to his work as an engraver of Jean-Antoine Watteau's work. Having won the Prix de Rome in 1723, the twenty-year-old Boucher did not receive the funding stipulated by the prize. Therefore he did not, as was the custom, go to Italy to enjoy the privileges of the *pensionnaire du roi* at the French Academy in Rome.[11] Instead, he continued to work in Paris in the printing trade. Having come into contact with Jean de Jullienne, he was engaged in the project of engraving the oeuvre of Watteau, who died in 1721. Though other artists were also hired for the project, Boucher became its leading contributor, executing roughly 119 out of 350 etchings after Watteau's drawings for the *Figures de différents caractères* (published in two volumes in 1726 and 1728) and also producing important etchings after Watteau's paintings and other works, subsequently published as Watteau's *Oeuvre gravé.*[12] Thus Boucher's hand became vital to the visual articulation of Watteau's oeuvre.

Watteau's hand, conversely, gained paramount importance in the process of Boucher's own artistic self-definition. Between 1722/1723 and 1727, Boucher was intimately involved in Watteau's work, handling it daily, and, given the number of sheets he produced and the pay of twenty-four livres per day he received (which provided a reasonable income), he was unlikely to have been doing anything else.[13] For roughly five years, then, Boucher's artistic activity consisted of working subtly "beneath the surface of the other." It is precisely the tactile intimacy of this extensive—and intensive—project, in which one artist repeatedly retraced the outlines of another artist's world, that I would like to investigate. What effect did it have on Boucher?

First, it was, in my view, a lesson in *souplesse* understood as a kind of bodily routine, a habit of hand that Boucher was able to acquire by his extensive rehearsal of someone else's trace. Its significance lay not simply in Boucher's becoming able to mimic Watteau, that is, to be "like" him, but in his developing the flexibility and adaptability of his own manner through the exercise of another artist's line. Describing Boucher's efficacy and skill in acquitting himself at his task, Pierre-Jean Mariette noted that "his light and lively touch seem to have been made for this job."[14] Indeed, a careful examination of his sheets offers ample evidence of Boucher's etching talents, further honed, no doubt, through this exercise. The tonal richness and subtle modeling of his *Pomona* (fig. 2), for example, with its contrast between the female protagonist, bathed in light, and her dark-skinned suitor, disguised as an old woman and rendered in palpably varied strokes, clearly demonstrate the kinesthetic range of his hand.[15]

This sustained morphological engagement with another artist's trace lent not only a kinesthetic but also a subjective dimension to the suppleness. It helped Boucher develop an understanding of his own touch in relation to that of another artist. Etching is a medium particularly conducive to achieving such self-understanding. In comparison to drawing on a sheet of paper, the transcription of the original design onto the acid-resistant ground covering the plate slows down the artist's hand, allowing it to get under the skin, so to speak, of the image.[16] It is this slight impediment of hand, this deceleration of touch necessitated by the etching process, that not only enhances the dexterity of the etcher's hand but also induces self-reflexivity, a recognition of the *embeddedness* of one's own trace in that of another, of its inscription by—and openness to—what Jacques Derrida called a "perennial alterity."[17] What I am suggesting is that Boucher's discovery of his trace through the process of reproduction led him to develop

2. François Boucher, after Antoine Watteau, *Pomona*, [1727], from *L'Oeuvre d'Antoine Watteau . . . gravé d'après ses tableaux et desseins originaux* (Paris, n.d.], etching
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Widener Collection

an imaginary model of self-identity always already inscribed by alterity

This technically grounded self-discovery was related to a lesson of a more general nature that Boucher learned by working on Watteau, namely a lesson of authorship. Not only were Watteau's works replicated in print and publicized, thus reaching a wider audience, but, through Jullienne's initiative, the dispersed drawings and paintings of Watteau also began to form a more or less coherent, unified whole—an oeuvre—that spoke for the artist, who was barely one generation older than Boucher, in a new way—as an author [18]

It is precisely as an author that Watteau appears in the frontispiece to the first volume of the *Figures de différents caractères* (fig. 3). Etched by Boucher after Watteau's self-portrait, now lost, the frontispiece represents the artist in half-figure, holding his *porte-crayon* in one hand and a portfolio of his drawings in the other [19] As such, Watteau's image performs a demonstrative function—*Ecce auctor!*—but also, implicitly, raises the question of authorship as constituted by the relation between the artist and his work (the portfolio) or between the artist's body and its traces (the *porte-crayon*).

What highlights and complicates this question is the presence of another author—Boucher—who has insinuated himself into this representation through a savvy game of proper names. Thus, underneath the etched image, we find a standard, that is, doubled inscription referring to the division of labor on the print: "Watteau pinxit" on the left, "Boucher sculpsit" on the right. But Boucher repeats this pair of signatures also *within* the image, placing one on each side of the cover of the portfolio held by Watteau, thus creating an ambivalent impression that the works contained in the portfolio are of joint authorship.[20]

What this quartet of signatures graphically conveys is not only Boucher's eagerness to mark his contribution to Watteau's oeuvre but also his self-consciousness about his own authorial status in this reproductive project. That Boucher chose the form of signature to hint at it is telling. At the very time when he was scribbling his name on the frontispiece, signature was acquiring its modern function as an autograph of a person, a unique bodily trace. Though this process has been long in the making—its origins in France, as Béatrice Fraenkel has demonstrated, reach back to the sixteenth century—it was only in the early eighteenth century that the written form of proper name became a fully personalized sign.[21] As an inscription of the unique individual body

3. François Boucher, *Portrait of Watteau*, frontispiece for *Figures de différents caractères* (Paris, 1726], vol. 1, etching
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Widener Collection

on a material surface, the autograph signature was a mark of an individual par excellence But in order to function as a reliable proof of identity, it also entailed a constraint of individuality one had to sign always in the same way It was precisely the visual consistency of its written form, its reproducibility, that turned the proper name into a *sign* of individual identity The adoption of signature as the preeminent mode of self-identification has thus inaugurated a new understanding of identity, based on the idea of the consistency of a self capable of generating reproducible signs through the mastery of its body and hand.[22]

4. François Boucher, *Study of a Young Woman Seen from Behind* (sketch for *La Toilette*), c. 1742, black, red, and white chalk
Collection Frits Lugt, Institut Néerlandais, Paris

It is exactly such an attempt at self-consistency that we witness in Boucher's tremulous signature scratched inside the frontispiece. Its uncertain, provisional form, as if the hand were still rehearsing a movement about to become a manual routine of the signing self, represents the very instance of the young artist's assumption of his trace as the means of self-identification.[23] But its strategic placement on another artist's oeuvre points also to his recognition of the work itself as a site of identity, a product of the artist's trace understood as a signature: a reproducible sign of a unique, embodied self

The *Figures de différents caractères* thus ultimately suggests a major difference in the self-understanding of the two artists. Watteau, who never signed his works, defined himself as an artist through the trope of the mask, the notion of identity as a masquerade being also repeatedly thematized in his work. For this reason, his elusive art, and the artist himself, have often been associated with the social and cultural ideals of *honnêteté*.[24] Boucher's success in reproducing Watteau's work, the *souplesse* with which he did it, may well be seen as a feat of politesse befitting an artist-gentleman. Yet I would argue that Boucher's tact in this matter amounted to something radically different. His success in the project of reproduction had to do with his capacity for (self-)abstraction, a capacity to which his whole practice testifies, albeit in different ways. Boucher's work exhibits from very early on not a cultivation of *honnête* personality linked to the performance of the mask but the opposite, an impersonal stance linked to the assumption of the sign.

The artistic importance of the Watteau project for Boucher, then, must be measured not in terms of "influence"—though there is much of it discernible in Boucher's oeuvre, as indicated in his sketch for *La Toilette* (fig. 4),

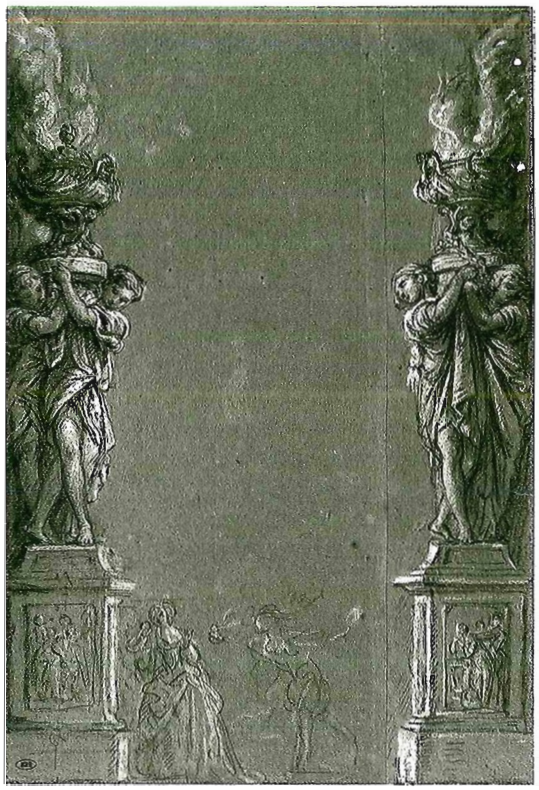
among others—nor in terms of "identification," with the work or with its author, but rather in terms of the morphological experience of someone else's work that proved decisive for Boucher's understanding of his own. This experience allowed him to internalize not only a stock of images but also another artist's touch and, through it, to develop a distinct sense of his own trace. Thus, I would suggest that the lesson of Watteau—the lesson of *souplesse*, of authorship, of self-reproduction—prodded Boucher to embrace a mode of operation that was different from the one customarily adopted by ambitious artists pursuing an academic career, and one that was, more importantly, motivated by a set of concerns that exceeded the discourse and practice of the Academy.

It is often, and justly, emphasized how productive, and hard-working, Boucher was, and how diverse were his activities. The logic behind this expansion and diversification, however, has not been considered. Through repetition, reproduction, and circulation, Boucher was involved in the generation of his own work as an *oeuvre*.

The recognition of the link between reproduction and reputation evident in Boucher's practice has not gone unnoticed by modern scholars.[25] His well-known habit of generating numerous "presentation drawings" after his own work, destined expressly for sale (some of them already framed), was clearly a self-marketing strategy. The highly finished pastel drawing *Boy Holding a Parsnip* (1738), which, rather than being drawn from life, is based on Boucher's own earlier painting of a *Kitchen Maid and a Young Boy*, is one of the most often cited examples of this strategy.[26] New printing techniques, such as the *manière de crayon*, allowed Boucher to mechanize, as it were, this practice of self-reproduction.[27]

But Boucher's self-marketing may be thought to incorporate not only the artist's expressly self-reproductive practice in paint-

5 François Boucher, *The Chinese Garden*, 1742, oil sketch
Musée des beaux-arts et d'archéologie, Besançon; photograph Giraudon / Art Resource, New York



6. François Boucher, *Design for Theater Animated by Figures*, 1760s, probably for the Opéra, Paris
Musées de Narbonne; photograph Jean Lepage

ing, drawing, and prints, but also other activities and various media, which allowed him to circulate his touch. Boucher's mode of artistic operation, which may be defined as *design* in the modern sense of the term, must be recognized as the means not only of financial gain but also of commercial self-dissemination.[28] The sheer variety of Boucher's designs, and the different cultural domains for which they were produced, is telling. He designed tapestries for the Beauvais and the Gobelins manufactures (fig. 5), for the theater and the opera (fig. 6), and for porcelain factories at Vincennes and Sèvres (fig. 7). He also produced book illustrations and frontispieces, along with designs for allegorical cartouches, fountains, clocks, vases, and a plethora of small luxury items, such as snuffboxes, jewelry cases, fans, and even the cut-out marionettes popular at the time. (He didn't shrink from anything.) Given the scope of these activities, it is not surprising that in Gabriel Huquier's 1749 design for an address card for his new print shop (fig. 8), Boucher's *oeuvre* appears not among those of painters but among those of the major rococo decorators Meissonier, Oppenord, and Lajou (lower right).[29]

7. Charles-Eloi Asselin, after François Boucher, tea service (*déjeuner losange*), Sèvres, 1766
Reproduced by kind permission of the trustees of the Wallace Collection, London

Boucher's contribution to the dissemination of the *goût rocaille* has, of course, been frequently acknowledged, but his self-conscious construction of himself as a *goût* or a *style* has not. Yet it seems to me that this is precisely what Boucher's frenetic productivity was all about. It was motivated by a desire to reproduce the artist in a specific way, as an abstract category, such as, precisely, a taste or a style. Diderot was referring only to Boucher's pictorial practice when he observed that the painter's style of execution was so much his own that it was instantly and unmistakably recognizable even in a fragment of a painting done by him.[30] But this is, in fact, a description of the effect that makes Boucher recognizable in a multiplicity of forms, objects as well as images. For, through his effort of artistic self-circulation, Boucher aimed at situating himself in the wider world of things. This is different from saying that Boucher's practice amounted to a kind of exquisite craftsmanship, a view epitomized by Georges Brunel's observation that "Boucher made pictures like a cabinetmaker makes furniture";[31] the difference resides in Boucher's self-consciousness about the self-reproductive, authorial aspect of his productivity

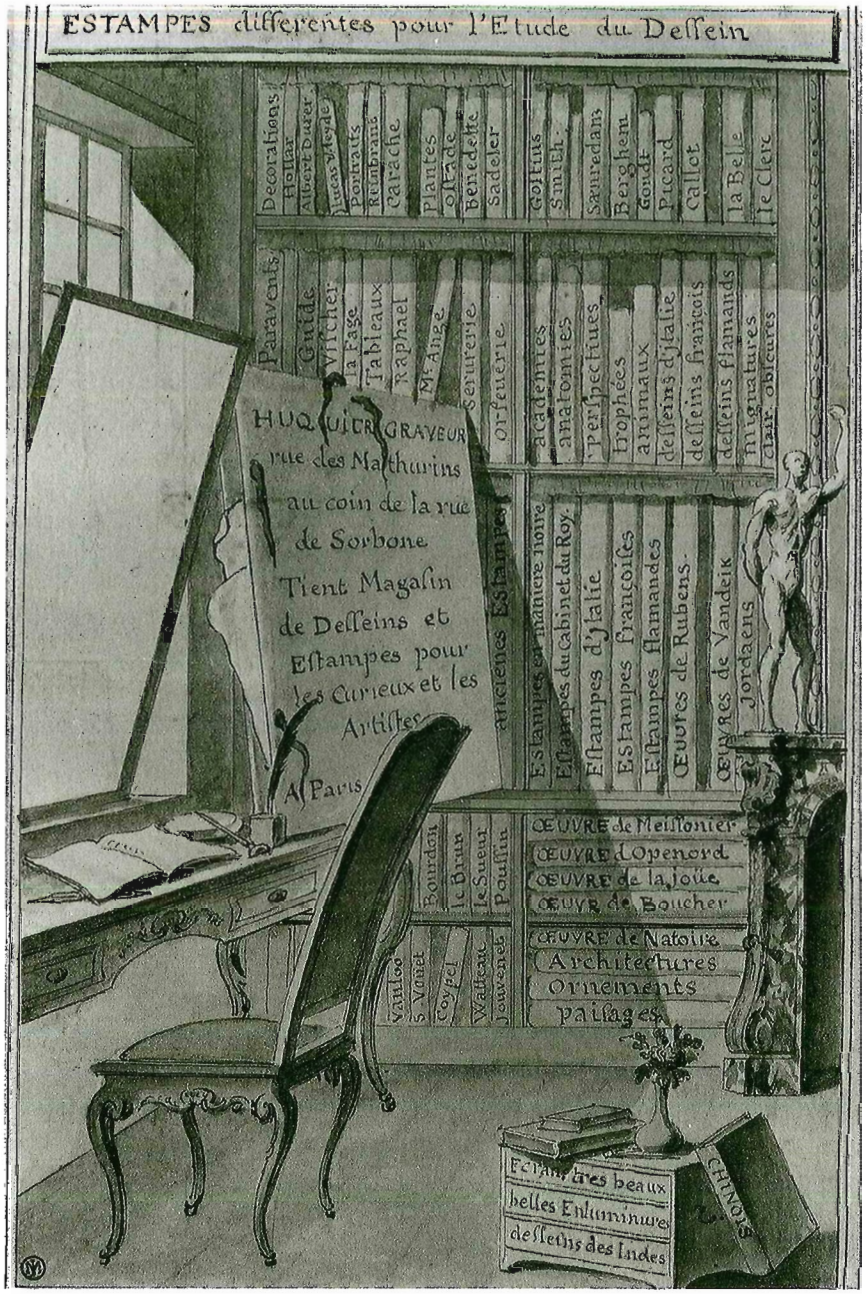
In this sense Boucher's entire practice may be said to have been permeated by the market that constituted its main driving force. He created images and designs for it, thus

also generating a demand for these objects—a demand that returned to him, putting pressure on his own production. Antoine Bret hinted at this phenomenon in his obituary of the artist when he asserted that, at a certain point, Boucher managed to increase the number of his drawings circulating on the market, often records of Boucher's most successful or popular compositions, to more than ten thousand, and that he did this precisely in response to the disappointment of many collectors who wanted to possess what other collectors owned.[32]

The pressure of demand was also manifested in the artist's studio practice. As his former student Johann Christian von Mannlich reported, Boucher frequently asked his students to copy his own drawings, which he would then merely retouch—and thus authorize—before selling them as his own.[33] This practice generated some problems, as indicated by the note Boucher felt obliged to publish in the *Mercure de France* of March 1755. In it, Boucher disowned a series of prints produced by his frequent collaborator, the engraver Claude Duflos, then circulating on the market. Purportedly based on Boucher's original drawings, the prints were denounced by the painter as based, in fact, on second-rate work by his "least advanced students."[34]

Notwithstanding these problems, Boucher was willing to share the trace, as it were. In his readiness to authorize someone else's work for commercial purposes—what Christian Michel has called the "promiscuity" of his touch (a fortuitous choice of a term, I think, pointing as it does to the erotic dimension of Boucher's practice as a sui generis commercial art)[35]—Boucher appears, then, as an Andy Warhol avant la lettre, his studio a protofactory anticipating the practice of art in the postindustrial era of consumerism, an art that self-consciously relates to, if not embraces, the operations of the market.

Such comparison is not as far-fetched as it may seem. Boucher's mode of operation may be seen as a function of a broader sociocultural transformation that took place in mid-eighteenth-century France (Paris in particular), which modern scholars have called a "material revolution."[36] The global extension of commerce generated a flow of exotic goods on the French market, and that in turn stimulated the local production of their imitations. Combined with the processes of urbanization, the new profusion of goods caused a gradual but irreversible shift in the relation between people and objects, generating the new practices—and ethics—of conspicuous consumption, including the consumption of art.[37]




8. Gabriel Huquier, *Design for an Address Card for His Print Shop*, 1749, brown and red ink on pencil sketch
École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts, Paris

The profound social and cultural effects of consumption have been described by, among others, Daniel Roche, whose term "the cul-

ture of appearances" refers not only to the increased importance of dressing as a form of self-representation but also to the paramount role of display and bodily performance, based on material possessions, that spread among different social strata in France under the ancien régime.[38] The question is how the culture of appearances affected the practice of art and the understanding of artistic identity.

It was a commonplace to deplore the vulgarization of art and the concomitant decline of artistic status due to commerce in the eighteenth century. Melchior Grimm once said of Boucher contemptuously, "This painter has long enough been called a painter of fans."[39] Such pronouncements—for Grimm was not the only one to express this view—testify to the anxiety that surrounded the emergence of the market as an important factor in the production and dissemination of art. But what actually were the visible consequences of eighteenth-century art's implication in commerce? How did one paint in the era of conspicuous consumption?

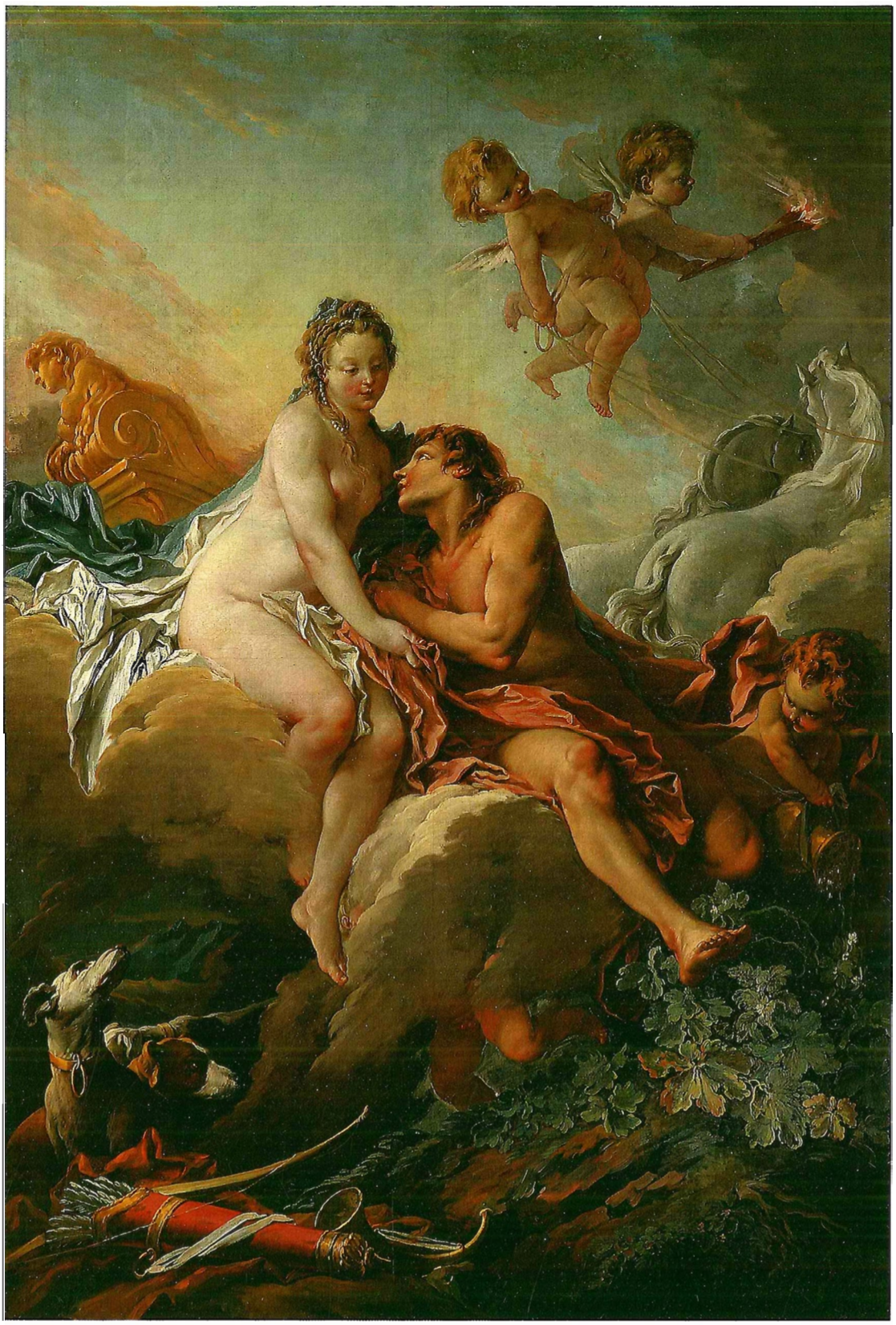
A series of large-scale mythological paintings produced by Boucher for the Parisian lawyer François Derbais offers an instructive answer to our query. Executed between 1731 and 1734 for the billiard room of Derbais' *hôtel particulier* on the rue Poissonnière, these five paintings illustrate the boldness with which Boucher sought to situate himself as an aspiring artist in a modern commercial culture.[40] There is much to suggest that Boucher used, if not instigated, this commission as a shortcut to the public arena while he awaited full membership in the Academy.[41] Mariette reported that Boucher was so eager to become known that he would have painted these canvases for nothing.[42] Another commentator, Papillon de la Ferté, announced that "these ingenious compositions attracted a throng of admirers, who publicized the talents of the young artist."[43] Whether, as some scholars have suggested, the painter wished to attract the attention of other potential private patrons, or, alternatively, to seek state commissions from the tapestry manufactories, the Derbais paintings signal that Boucher was able to recognize, perhaps even to create, a career-launching opportunity for himself, rather than simply count on institutional protection (a lesson he may have learned from the Prix de Rome debacle).[44] More to the point, the paintings suggest his willingness to accommodate his art to commercial purposes, which, far from causing the deterioration in quality imputed by Grimm, produced significant aesthetic innovation.

Reinventing the language of large-scale decorative mythologies, Boucher's breakthrough canvases for Derbais, especially the rectangular pendants *Venus Requesting Arms from Vulcan* and *Aurora and Cephalus* —which are the artist's first signed and dated works—seek to redefine the effect of painting as a desirable object (figs. 9 and 10). This erotic aim is signaled by the very choice of the subject matter, the mythic scenes of female seduction based on Virgil's *Aeneid* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.[45] Ovid had also served as a source for the comparable pendants *Hercules and Omphale* and *Perseus and Andromeda* that Boucher's teacher, François Lemoyne, executed in the early 1720s for the financier François Berger. Shown at the Salon of 1725, these ambitious and much-admired private commissions may have inspired Boucher, especially with their sensuous rendering of the female nude.[46] Yet, Boucher's overall approach to the amorous subjects is markedly different from his teacher's as well as from the depictions of similar themes by his contemporaries.

The difference is apparent, first of all, in Boucher's treatment of the body and in the way he defines its role within the field of representation. If in Lemoyne the figures are firmly anchored by their narrative function, in Boucher they are primarily the agents of display. They do not perform any significant action but are shown engaged in amorous interplay, their poses and gestures emphasizing their corporeal reciprocity, which is only loosely related to the textual source.[47] Nudity is their defining feature. Though the painter includes some of their requisite attributes—such as Vulcan's forge tucked under the cloud beneath Venus, and the watering can, a reference to the dew associated with Aurora as the personification of Dawn—iconographic specificity is not his major concern here. Nor is he interested in a reliable spatial definition of the locale,

9. François Boucher, *Venus Requesting Arms from Vulcan*, 1732, oil
Musée du Louvre, Paris; photograph Erich Lessing / Art Resource, New York

10. François Boucher, *Aurora and Cephalus*, 1733, oil
Musée des beaux-arts de Nancy; photograph Pierre Mignot



as Lemoyne felt obliged to do His protagonists appear in a quasi-abstract setting, filled with an amorphous substance and cluttered with disparate fragments and few attendant figures. There is no apparent logic that rules this shallow and overcrowded space where bodies and things float, defying gravity Their artful disarray has, of course, been carefully composed: in each canvas, the prominent diagonal alignment of the main figures is balanced by the latent counterdiagonal arrangement of their attendants, attributes, and assorted fragments—but this composition is quite arbitrary, in the sense that it does not correspond to any narrative development or establish a clear hierarchy of meaning among the elements of the painting.

In their lack of narrative emphasis and their carefully staged disorder, these compositions resemble decorative designs more than history paintings, and their elongated vertical format is similar to the shape of an ornamented screen panel, such as the *Rocaille,* designed by Boucher at roughly the same time (fig. 11).[48] The composition of the Venus and Vulcan bears an especially close resemblance to that of the *Rocaille,* with Venus' pose echoing the arabesque shape of the palm rising above the cluster of natural and man-made collectibles.

What distinguishes the paintings from designs such as the *Rocaille* is the erotic quality of display manifest in the nudity of the main figures, which are pulled up to the surface to maximize their arousing effect. It is the woman's body that Boucher clearly privileges in its erotic mission. Venus and Aurora are placed in the limelight, hovering above their partners, whose admiring gazes relay the desiring look of the spectator From the airborne cloud on which she is seated, the woman in each pendant thus presides over the scene, epitomizing its seductiveness.[49]

But it is a seductiveness of a specific kind. Colin Bailey speaks of the canvas' "brazen sensuality," conspicuous especially in comparison to Charles-Joseph Natoire's rendition of Venus and Vulcan, which is far more *sage.*[50] Yet although erotically suggestive, the interaction between the figures is by no means explicit. There is no smooching here, no avid grabbing of bodily parts, as in *Hercules and Omphale,* painted by Boucher in

11. François Boucher, *Rocaille*, c. 1735–1736, drawing
École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts, Paris

the same period for a different purpose.[51] In the *Venus and Vulcan*, the sexual encounter, evoked by Vulcan's not-so-subtle sword and the piece of fabric that flows promisingly out of Venus' genital "source," seems suspended, or deferred; the figures themselves appear somehow inert, focused on self-presentation rather than action.

Moreover, if the woman's body is the privileged carrier of eros, it performs this role in a particular way. In *Aurora and Cephalus*, the goddess' body languidly slides down onto her lover's, her pose marking the diagonal descent of the entire composition, a cascade of bodies and things tumbling across the canvas. Not only does Boucher depart from the standard iconography in rendering Cephalus as reciprocating, rather than resisting, Aurora's love, as the young hunter does in, for instance, Nicolas Poussin's earlier version of this theme (fig. 12); he also, in a sense, deactivates Aurora by turning her from an agent of seduction into a token of a pictorial commotion in which both she and her lover seem to have been caught. Thus the woman's body is represented as the face of a movement of the whole pictorial surface, the effect conveyed most visibly by the positioning of the female figures in both canvases and by the manner of rendering their soft and snowy flesh as a palpable but exceptionally smooth surface on which the viewer's eye may glide unobstructed—the opposite of, say, the late Rembrandt's women, with their barnacled flesh that traps or saps the gaze.[52]

12. Nicolas Poussin, *Cephalus and Aurora*, 1627–1630, oil
The National Gallery, London, G. J. Cholmondely Bequest, 1831

The erotic mission of the woman in these pendants is, then, to define the painting itself as a token of desire, a material object that carries an explicit promise of sensuous gratification likened by the painting to the appeal of female flesh. The corporeal dominance of women in the two paintings must be seen as serving this strategic function, as must their underplayed iconographic specificity and the generic quality of their body type, repeated not only in the pendants but also in the other three canvases painted for Derbais.[53] [This cloning effect may have been responsible for the confusion about *Aurora and Cephalus*, which, when offered for sale later in the century, was taken to represent Venus and Adonis.][54] That the identity of the women in both pendants is thus aligned with Venus is all the more significant if we realize that Venus was not only a figure of sensual pleasure par excellence but also represented other forms of eros. For example, in seventeenth-century depictions of the *Kunstkammer*, Venus often figured as an allegory of the desire to own and amass rare objects.[55]

The association between erotic and other forms of possession is also conveyed by Boucher's suggestive treatment of objects, notably the attributes of male figures in each scene. Placed prominently in the lower left corner of each pendant, the armor forged by Vulcan and Cephalus' hunting tools vie for the viewer's attention almost like a third protagonist in each scene. This impression is particularly strong in the pieces of armor at Vulcan's feet, which seem strangely alive, as if they were inhabited by some invisible warrior.[56] Given that these canvases were most likely hung low—which we may infer from a print representing an eighteenth-century billiard room—these attributes would have been right at the eye level of the viewer.[57] With their palpable textures and vivid colors—as in Cephalus' red leather quiver, with its golden trimmings and blue satin strap—they resemble collectibles sold at the time by the *marchands merciers*, and the compressed and cluttered space of these paintings resembles a shop window

display.[58] But in their staged mode of presentation, they appear not only as luxury objects but also as tokens of desire involved somehow in the erotic scenarios represented here. Moreover, though they belong to men, these attributes are compositionally aligned with women. the armor appears at the end of the diagonal originating in Venus, and Cephalus' gear is placed directly under Aurora's body

What Boucher formulates in these paintings is, then, an aesthetic of promiscuity of a particular kind. He paints neither the love of the gods nor human sexuality per se but the love of things, the seduction of luxury. The brilliant execution of these canvases reinforces this effect. Their saturated colors and bold handling, which Boucher's contemporaries recognized as uncommon at the time, were clearly meant to advertise the young and relatively unknown painter's skills.[59] But this technical brio aimed also, more specifically, at turning the paintings into promiscuous objects. The extraordinarily sensuous treatment of their surface transformed the pendants into material rather than merely visual forms of seduction. Not only the viewers' sight but also their sense of touch was thus courted; a desire to possess, not only to look, was stimulated.

At stake in this sensuous solicitation was not only a new visual idiom but a redefinition of the status of painting as an element of interior decor. Transforming the pendants into appealing objects, Boucher sought to diminish the distance separating his paintings from other luxury commodities that furnished Derbais' fashionably appointed house.[60] To phrase it differently, Boucher's approach not only signaled a change in the signifying economy of the painted image—what Norman Bryson has called the eroticization of the plane of signifiers—but also suggested its entry into the domain of economy tout court.[61]

The space of the erotic encounter between gods thus announced itself to be a site of the viewer's encounter with a seductive material thing—a commodity. And the role of the female figure was to make this seduction explicit. she was a cipher of the desire that underlies the consumerist immersion in the sphere of inanimate things which these paintings render so animately. Through her, in other words, Boucher disclosed—and exploited—the erotic nature of human attraction to material possessions. And thus he also engaged with the subjective effects of consumption.

Subjectivity is at issue in Derbais' pendants on two interrelated levels. One has to do with these paintings' mode of address; another concerns the pattern of human interaction they represent, which may be seen to envision a certain model of selfhood. First, in their exceptionally sensuous handling of paint, the pendants addressed themselves explicitly to an individual subject. It is not simply that they were private commissions produced for a specific individual. They also solicited and privileged a chiefly subjective response, their viewer having been defined not by class, social position, or knowledge, but by his or her capacity for sensorial reaction.

Second, these canvases represented the ancient myth as a terrain of private fantasy based on the experiences of the senses. The subjects, though based on specific literary sources, did not require erudition in order to be grasped and appreciated. Boucher offered idiosyncratic interpretations of these themes that emphasized and encouraged a play of imagination linked to the interaction between the main figures in each pendant.[62] The amorous reciprocity of Venus and Vulcan, of Aurora and Cephalus, referred to the libidinal nature of their relation but also helped establish the viewer's eroticized relation to the canvas as a terrain of self-projection. In other words, the sensualized relation between the figures stood in for the viewing subject's relation to an erotically charged illusion of itself conveyed by these canvases. What was at stake in these mythological fantasies was, then, not only a new decorative idiom but also a certain model of subjectivity associated with the emergent culture of appearances: a self caught up with a mirage of itself, a subject as an effect of a sensuous surface.

In these respects, the two paintings may also be seen to represent Boucher. With Derbais' commission, Boucher made a bid for his artistic identity· the fact that these were his first signed and dated works confirms their importance as self-representations. This self-definition—a bold declaration of his

artistic self-worth—hinged on the spectacle of woman. But if the woman is here a figure of Boucher, it is in a specific sense, as his sign, his *signature.* This distinction is important because of much recent discussion about Boucher's feminine identity [63] His works evince less an identification with femininity than a sort of disidentification, the assumption of an image—specifically the image of the female body under which Boucher places his signature in each pendant[64]—as the product of his hand that stands for him but simultaneously obscures him. This placement of the signature suggests that the assumption of the visual sign involves a splitting of the subject between the signifier and signified, that is, its partial eclipse by the signifier Boucher's highly stylized image of the woman's body—its generic quality; its alignment with the painting's surface—functions thus not unlike the artist's signature, that is, as the stylized trace of his body: both say "It is I" only insofar as I am not in it; it stands for me only in my absence.

Referring to women in Boucher's painting in general, Roger Scruton has aptly observed: "There is *no one* there."[65] One can say that Boucher's entire practice is marked by a kind of subjective evacuation that has to do with his development of a consistent "signature" style, based on a generic vision of femininity First inaugurated in Derbais' paintings, this feminine vision, and the stylistic consistency of which it became a mark—it is enough to remember the parade of Venuses in his art—was inseparable from the artist's own consistent but abstracted sense of identity. This eclipse of the artist as a subject of his painting is suggestively conveyed by the motif of the putto in *Aurora and Cephalus* that hovers above the artist's signature, almost entirely obfuscated by a cloud. What else is it than the image of the artist as a producer of illusions that both reproduce and obliterate him?

The intimate connection between art and the culture of consumption first manifested

13. François Boucher, *La Toilette* [or *Lady Fastening a Garter*], 1742, oil
Photograph © Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid

14. François Boucher, *The Milliner (Morning)*, 1746, oil
Photograph © The National Museum of Fine Arts, Stockholm

in Derbais' paintings is evident in Boucher's entire practice, but his *tableaux de mode* speak of it perhaps most explicitly. Both *La Toilette* (or *Lady Fastening a Garter*) of 1742 and *The Milliner (Morning)* of 1746 represent scenes from modern life permeated by fashionable commodities (figs. 13 and 14). It is precisely the emphasis on the new role of these objects in defining the nature of human relations that distinguishes Boucher from Jean-François de Troy, the recognized eighteenth-century master of *tableaux de mode.*

Boucher's depictions are neither scenes of male seduction nor nocturnal dramas of self-fashioning, as de Troy's were.[66] More descriptive than narrative, these paintings depict only a very rudimentary interaction between two figures—a kind of figural reciprocation that harks back to the Derbais pendants—as an exchange of things (the bon-


15 Anne-Philippe-Claude de Tubières, comte de Caylus, after François Boucher, *À la pagode*, Edme-François Gersaint's trade card, 1740, engraving
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris

net, the ribbon), with which one puts together one's image for others. In the *Toilette*, this exchange invites a circulatory gaze, from the servant to the lady and back again. The difference of their social status becomes noticeably blurred by the similarities of their attire: we realize that the servant cuts no less fashionable a figure than the lady, with her white satin frock and a bonnet like the lady's own. The interchangeability of their identities is further underscored by the motif of the folding screen behind them. Similarly, in *The Milliner* the transmission of fashionable accessories from one woman to another creates the ground for their special intimacy, their quasi-amorous complicity in the desire for the thing that erases any sense of subjective difference between the buyer and the seller. (They indeed appear not unlike the Venus and Vulcan from Derbais' pendant.) The commercial object is thus shown to define the most basic relations between people, and it is with the object, and with the language of the trade, that the artist aligns his own project and his identity quite explicitly, signing his painting on the milliner's box "f. Boucher."[67]

Another token of the direct implication of Boucher's practice in commerce is his design for the trade card of Edme-François Gersaint (fig. 15). Gersaint was a well-known Parisian *marchand* of art and other collectibles. His shop, situated on the Pont Notre-Dame, was in 1740 renamed À la pagode, which is why a new card was designed.[68] Mingling natural specimens (shells and corals) with exotic *objets de luxe* (a tea set, lacquer boxes, china figurines) and works of art (in frames leaning against the wall on the side), Boucher's image visualized the effect of commerce as a force that breaks the boundaries between the practice of a *marchand* and that of an artist. In this sense, the card has a double function as both a portrait of Gersaint's enterprise and a representation of Boucher's.

Gersaint and Boucher in fact knew each other well.[69] The artist frequented the dealer's shop, which functioned as a meeting place for artists, collectors, and connoisseurs, and he was involved in some of Gersaint's commercial ventures. For instance, in 1736 he designed the frontispiece for Gersaint's catalogue raisonné of the collection of shells and other natural curiosities published for the sale of Joseph Bonnier de la Mosson's famous cabinet of natural history.[70]

Boucher was himself an avid collector of both natural specimens and art. The 1771 sale of his own collection drew crowds, including many prominent artists.[71] Not only was the artist's collection valuable—his minerals were considered unique—but it was also carefully and artfully arranged. His

shells, rocks, and corals were presented like art in specially designed cases similar to those featured in Augustin de Saint-Aubin's depiction of the cabinet of the marquis de Bonnac, Boucher's contemporary (fig. 16), and their highly aesthetic presentation was described repeatedly in the major travel guides of the period.[72] Many of Boucher's objects were acquired from Gersaint.[73]

Gersaint was also the connecting figure between Boucher and his most important patron, Madame de Pompadour. Like Boucher, Pompadour was one of Gersaint's clients, a fact evident in *The Toilette of Venus*, which Boucher painted for her in 1751 (fig. 17). Destined for the sumptuously appointed bathroom suite at Pompadour's château in Bellevue, the painting was her shop sign, as it were. The careful arrangement of precious things—luxury objects of the kind Pompadour bought from Gersaint or another dealer, Lazare Duvaux—reminds us of Boucher's own elegantly arrayed collection and of his discernment as a decorator of his own studio and dwelling at the Louvre. The artist had it refurbished on his own initiative and at considerable expense, manifesting a decorative ambition similar to that of his patroness, whom he helped create spaces for and about herself, such as Bellevue.[74]

Boucher's painting was for and about Pompadour—but in a particular way. Personified by Venus, Pompadour's body, presented here in the midst of all the precious things (the mirror in a gilded frame; the prominent bronze perfume burner, a pitcher, a silver tray, the jewels strewn about the silk and damask draperies, the sofa) acquires, even more literally than in Boucher's paintings for Derbais, the status of a commodity, one possession among many. Not only the fact that she is surrounded by these various objects but her *relation* to them, as this painting represents it, is important: her body is itself an object, flesh tucked in between the sheets of things. As such, Boucher's Venus is a figure for (rather than a portrait of) Pompadour as a woman of taste who defined herself through material things, a collector of luxury objects, as well as objets d'art, of which she was the brilliant orchestrator in space, as evidenced most famously by the interiors of Bellevue. It is precisely in its generic quality, lacking in physiognomic or anatomical specificity, a body typical of a Boucherian goddess of love, that this mythological figure defines the woman patron's identity in economically specific terms. Venus as a shopper, the iconography of her toilette representing yet another illustration of what happens to mythology in the age of consumption.

And this Venus is also a figure for Boucher. I do not mean that Boucher identified with

16. Augustin de Saint-Aubin, *Cabinet of Natural Wonders*, 1757, engraving
From Pierre Remy, *Catalogue raisonné d'une collection considerable de coquilles rares et choisies du cabinet de M. le [marquis de Bonnac]*, auction cat., November 21, 1787, frontispiece, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris

17. François Boucher, *The Toilette of Venus*, 1751, oil
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of William K. Vanderbilt, 1920 (20.155.9); photograph Art Resource, New York

18. François Boucher, *Design for a Frontispiece: Group of Children around a Drapery*, c. 1735–1740, ink drawing
École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts, Paris

Pompadour· no psychological engagement was involved, no subjective insinuation of the kind that the chevalier de Méré spoke about. I mean, rather, that this is an image of both Boucher's and Pompadour's abstracted identities, a portrait without a subject, as empty as one of many of Boucher's designs of allegorical frames for book dedications, their core left void so that it can be filled by the user, according to specific purpose. The cartouche Boucher designed as a frontispiece for the publication of his own work, where his signature scribbled lightly across the void appears like a phantom, sustained by the putti similar to those that prop Venus' body for view, illustrates this point well (fig. 18). And it is this understanding of the subject as a cipher or a sign that constituted the grounds of Boucher's and Pompadour's affinity

This similarity also explains, in my view, the reason behind Pompadour's preference for Boucher as a portraitist, a choice that was far from obvious, given his notorious lack of skill in capturing resemblance. Though Pompadour was well aware of this shortcoming —stating in a letter to her brother in April 1751 that a copy of Boucher's likeness she was sending to him to Italy "much resembles the original, less myself"[75]—she seems to have been entirely satisfied with his results, giving him additional portrait commissions. These portraits have a somewhat repetitive quality, and they demonstrate not only a flattering idealization of the sitter's features but also a curious evacuation of subjectivity (figs. 19 and 20).[76] The self seems to have been displaced in these likenesses from the body onto the surrounding objects, the choice of which was evidently determined by Pompadour herself

As I have argued elsewhere, Pompadour's contribution to the making of these portraits may be detected not only on the iconographic but also on the formal level, testifying to the sitter's implication, as it were, in the painter's trace.[77] Pompadour, we may recall, was an amateur artist; her drawing and etching skills had been honed by none other

19. François Boucher, *Marquise de Pompadour*, 1759, oil
Reproduced by kind permission of the trustees of the Wallace Collection, London

than Boucher himself, a fact alluded to in the Munich portrait through motifs such as the intersecting etching tools lying on the floor, the prints scattered near them, and the double signatures—*Boucher* and *Pompadour* —visible on one of the prints, which suggest the collaborative dimension of the sitter-painter relation. [The similarity to the game of signatures in Watteau's portrait engraved by Boucher is striking.]

These small but significant allusions were not only a deferential testimony to Pompadour's skills and her implied contribution to the portrait itself, but also, nolens volens,

20. François Boucher, *Madame de Pompadour*, 1756, oil
Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Alte Pinakothek, Munich

a reference to Boucher's particular talent, a quality that was most uniquely his own and that made the artist such a perfect match for Pompadour—precisely what I have called his tact

Having tact as an artist, then, meant being able to accommodate the other—a client, the market—but thus also to accommodate oneself, in a particular, always shared, way. It implied operating as an individual whose identity is dispersed, in representation—that is, nowhere, being a kind of self that exists for the sheer purpose of producing appearances—including the one called "Boucher"

## NOTES

1. Largillière's portrait of Le Brun (Musée du Louvre) adheres to the formula echoed throughout the eighteenth century—see, for example, Adélaïde Labille-Guiard's *Self-Portrait with Two Pupils* (Metropolitan Museum of Art)—with the artist clad in an elegant satin attire complete with a hat.

2. Attempts at a new assessment of Boucher have recently become evident, for example, in the essays published in the catalogue of the exhibition *François Boucher et l'art de rocaille*, ed. Emmanuelle Brugerolles (exh. cat., École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts) (Paris, 2003; hereafter Paris 2003a); in the conference organized by Jo Hedley at the Wallace Collection, London, on the occasion of the exhibition *Boucher: Seductive Visions*, in February 2005, where I presented an earlier version of this essay; and in *Rethinking Boucher*, ed. Melissa Hyde and Mark Ledbury (Los Angeles, 2006).

3. Defined briefly, morphological analysis is the analysis of form as inseparable from technique.

4. Thomas E. Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven, 1985), and Norman Bryson, *Tradition and Desire: From David to Delacroix* (Cambridge, 1984).

5. As the 1708 edition of Antoine Furetière's *Dictionnaire universel* succinctly defined it. "Tact: the feeling or sense of touch" (Tact: le sentiment du toucher). It is precisely under *tact* that one finds the main entry on touch in Denis Diderot and Jean Le Ronde d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisoné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, 17 vols. (Paris, 1751–1765), 15:819–822. For the figurative sense of *tact*, see the 1762 edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française:* "To have a fine or assured tact means to have a fine and confident judgment in the matter of taste" ("Avoir le tact fin, sûr, etc. pour dire, Juger finement, surement en matière de goût"). *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 4th ed. (Paris, 1762), 794.

6. For tact as a category of visual analysis, see Yve-Alain Bois' incisive essay "Ryman's Tact," *October* 19 (Winter 1981): 93–104. I am, though, developing here a somewhat different, morphological understanding of tact.

7. "On se plaist bien avec les personnes qui font tout ce qu'on veut, sans qu'on les en avertisse." Charles-Henri Boudhors, ed., *Oeuvres complètes du chevalier de Méré*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1930), 2:107. For the discussion of Méré and the eighteenth-century discourse of *honnêteté*, see Domna C. Stanton, *The Aristocrat as Art: A Study of the Honnête Homme and the Dandy in Seventeenth- and Nineteenth-Century French Literature* (New York, 1980), especially chapter 3.

8. "Quiconque sait complaire peut hardiment espérer de plaire." Maurice Magendie, ed., *L'honneste homme ou l'art de plaire à la cour, par Nicolas Faret* (Paris, 1925), 70.

9. Méré in Boudhors 1930, 3:160. "There is—states Méré—a measure of sorcery in this art, for it instructs us in the divination, which is how we discover a great number of things that otherwise we would never know. . . . It requires that we penetrate people's unspoken thoughts and, very often, their most closely guarded secrets." Méré in Boudhors 1930, 2:107–108.

10. Méré in Boudhors 1930, 3:57; Stanton 1980, 132.

11. He went later, at his own cost, not as the *pensionnaire* of the Academy. For discussion of the reasons why Boucher did not go to Italy after winning the prize, see Alastair Laing, *The Drawings of François Boucher* (New York, 2003), and, more recently, Jean-François Méjanes in Françoise Joulie and Jean-François Méjanes, *François Boucher: Hier et aujourd'hui* [exh. cat., Musée du Louvre] (Paris, 2003).

12. The full titles of Jullienne's publications are *Figures de différents caractères de Paysage et d'Études dessinées d'après nature par Antoine Watteau, Peintre du roy en son Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture, gravées à l'eau-forte par les plus habiles Peintres et Graveurs du temps, tirées de plus beaux Cabinets de Paris*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1726, 1728); and *L'oeuvre d'Antoine Watteau . . . gravé d'après ses tableaux et dessins originaux*, 2 vols. (Paris, n.d.). For Boucher's work for Jullienne, see Émile Dacier and Albert Vuaflart, *Jean de Jullienne et les graveurs de Watteau au XVIIIème siècle*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1921–1929); Pierrette Jean-Richard, *L'oeuvre gravé de François Boucher dans la Collection Edmond de Rothschild* (Paris, 1978), 33–68, and Marianne Roland Michel, "Watteau et les *Figures de différents caractères*," in *Antoine Watteau (1684–1721): le peintre, son temps, et sa légende*, ed. François Moreau and Margaret Morgan Grasselli (Paris and Geneva, 1987), 117–127. See also Marianne Roland Michel, "De Watteau à Boucher," in Paris 2003a, 38.

13. Georges Brunel, *Boucher* (London, 1986), 82 (the original source for this information is Pierre-Jean Mariette). Compared to the sixty livres *a month* (plus food and lodging) he was receiving before from Jean-François Cars for engraving frontispieces for theses, Jullienne's salary was a lot, or at least clearly an improvement.

14. "Sa pointe légère et spirituelle semblait faite pour ce travail" (Pierre-Jean Mariette, *Abecedario de P. J. Mariette, et autres notes inédites de cet amateur sur les arts et les artistes*, ed. Philippe de Chennevières and Anatole de Courde de Montaigion, 6 vols. [Paris, 1851], 1:166).

15. This etching (retouched with engraving, probably by Cars), was based on Watteau's small painting of *Vertumnus and Pomona*, which, as Mariette tells us, used to serve as a shop window decoration at a boutique of a commercial painter on the Pont Notre-Dame before entering Jullienne's collection. Dacier and Vuaflart 1921–1929, 14–15. For the painting, see Pierre Rosenberg and Ettore Camesasca, *Toute l'oeuvre peint de Watteau* (Paris, 1982), no. 126.

16. See Charles-Nicolas Cochin in the revised edition of Abraham Bosse's treatise, reissued as *De la manière de graver à l'eau-forte et au burin et de la gravûre en manière noire* (Paris, 1745), xxi. See also François Courboin, *L'estampe française: Graveurs et marchands* (Paris, 1914), 28–73.

17. See Jacques Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins* (Chicago, 1993). For Derrida, it is drawing practice in general that carries within itself "a trace of perennial alterity" insofar as it amounts to operating with signs that are always already inhabited by the traces of another sign, that is, by the work of the preexisting artist. My point, in its particular morphological emphasis, is slightly different from Derrida's in that I do not believe every artist works with the model of identity based on alterity to the same degree, or with equally important consequences. But, like Derrida, I want to insist on the artistic production of the trace as not only an empirical process but also a psychic structure.

18. Many aspects of Jullienne's initiative indicate his gradually developing ambition to create an oeuvre and, through it, to construct Watteau's artistic identity, rather than simply reproduce the work. An expanded discussion of this aspect of Jullienne's work, and of Boucher's involvement in it, may be found in "Boucher's Tact," a chapter in my forthcoming book, "A Touch of Self. Painting and Individuality in the Eighteenth Century."

19. There has been considerable debate about the original on which this etching was based. The drawing that served as the model for this etching, now at the Musée Condé at Chantilly, is believed to have been done by Boucher after Watteau's (presumably lost) painted self-portrait, but some scholars doubt the latter's existence. So the question is whether the original existed at all or whether it was fabricated by Boucher himself. For a discussion of this issue, see Beverly Schreiber Jacoby, *François Boucher's Early Development as a Draughtsman, 1720–1734* (New York, 1986), 84–95; Margaret Morgan Grasselli and Pierre Rosenberg, *Watteau, 1684–1821* [exh. cat., National Gallery of Art] (Washington, 1984), 14; Marianne Roland Michel, "De Watteau à Boucher: formation d'une manière et d'un genre," in Paris 2003a, 39; Nicole Garnier, "Les portraits de Watteau," *Watteau et son cercle dans les collections de l'Institut de France* (Chantilly, 1996), 25–26; Colin B. Bailey, in *Watteau and his World: French Drawing from 1750 to 1750*, ed. Alan Wintermute [exh. cat., Frick Collection] (New York, 1999), 68–70; Jo Hedley, *François Boucher: Seductive Visions* (London, 2004), 30–31.

20. Moreover, not only is his signature featured more prominently on the portfolio than Watteau's, but Boucher tucks in Watteau's own signature under the artist's hand, making it appear as if under erasure.

21. See Béatrice Fraenkel, *La Signature: Genèse d'un signe* (Paris, 1992). Coinciding with an increasing vogue for portraits, this new appreciation of signature went hand in hand with the development of a personal style of writing in the eighteenth century, a period when people began to collect autographs as tokens of a person. It became a mark of good taste among people of *bonne compagnie* not to sign their letters: one's penmanship sufficed, and was cultivated, as a sign of one's identity. On this eighteenth-century habit, see Fraenkel 1992, 275.

22. See Fraenkel 1992, 10, though she speaks of the sense of permanence rather than, as I want to emphasize, the consistency of the self.

23. I may add that Boucher does not sign his work for Jullienne consistently. The type of (internal) signature he used for the frontispiece appeared on several other of his etchings, but others bore only an abbreviated form, "bouch," or his initial, and some were not signed at all. I have examined two complete editions in the print collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the New York Public Library.

24. For this association, see notably Thomas Crow on Watteau in Crow 1992, chapter 2.

25. See Beverly Schreiber Jacoby, "François Boucher's Stylistic Development as a Draughtsman: The Evolution of His Autonomous Drawings," in *Drawings Defined*, ed. Walter Strauss and Tracie Felker (New York, 1987), 259–279; Perrin Stein, "Notes on the Boucher Exhibitions Marking the Tercentenary of the Artist's Birth," *Burlington Magazine*, 146, no. 1212 (2004): 169–173; and Katie Scott, "Reproduction and Reputation: 'François Boucher' and the Formation of Artistic Identities," in Hyde and Ledbury 2006, 91–132.

26. The work dates to c. 1735. See Hedley 2004, 61.

27. Gilles Demarteau's print *Nymphs and Tritons*, after Boucher's drawing of the figures from his *Rising of the Sun*, illustrates this practice as an image visibly adjusted and revised (two figures are added), either by the artist or by the printer, in order to appear autonomous rather than preparatory. See Stein 2004.

28. The notion of *dessin* as design, that is, as an applied rather than fine art, emerged precisely in the eighteenth century, when the first institution promoting such an understanding of drawing was founded. Established in 1766 by Jean-Jacques Bachelier, L'École royale gratuite de dessin aimed at training artisans in drawing as preparation for their work in industry. The school survived the Revolution and was renamed L'École nationale des arts décoratifs. On the functioning and the program of the school in the eighteenth century, see Reed Benhamou, "Public and Private Art Education in France 1648–1793," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 308

(1993): 35–42. For "complaisant imagination," see Jean-Bernard Restou, *Galerie Française* (1771), cited in Alexandre Ananoff and Daniel Wildenstein, *François Boucher*, 2 vols. (Lausanne, 1976), 1:134.

29. G. Huquier, *Design for an Address Card for His Print Shop*, entry in Paris 2003a, cat. 68, 279.

30. "Boucher a un faire qui lui appartient tellement que dans quelque morceau de peinture qu'on lui donnât une figure à exécuter, on la reconnaîtrait sur-le-champ." (Diderot, "Salon de 1761," in *Oeuvres esthétiques*, ed. Paul Vernière [Paris, 1965], 451).

31. Brunel 1986, 53: "Boucher is first and foremost the great Parisian craftsman of the period of Louis XV."

32. Antoine Bret, in Ananoff and Wildenstein 1976, 1:135.

33. "He kept us busy for a long time copying those of his finest drawings that he wished to retain in his portfolio. These were copies that we only had to sketch out without finishing them and that he would retouch himself during his lunch time, thus turning them into originals to be sold for two *louis* a piece." Johann Christian von Mannlich, *Histoire de ma vie*, ed. Karl-Heinz Bender and Hermann Kleber, 2 vols. (Trier, 1989), 1:157, my translation. The study of Triton related to Boucher's painting *The Rising of the Sun*, in the library of Hertford House, has been suggested by Jo Hedley as an example of this studio practice. See Hedley 2004, 115, fig. 91. Another may be a drawing, *Man Asleep*, also related to *The Rising*, in the collections of the École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts (henceforth ENSBA), reproduced in Paris 2003a, cat. 31, 157.

34. *Mercure de France*, March 1755, 145. Duflos published his response to Boucher's note in the May issue.

35. Christian Michel in Paris 2003a, 98.

36. Daniel Roche, *France in the Enlightenment* (Cambridge, Mass., 1998), 557.

37. The discussion of consumption in the eighteenth century in general and in France in particular has been rich. For an overview dealing with both England and France, see the following anthologies: John Brewer and Roy Porter, eds., *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London, 1994); Ann Bermingham and John Brewer, eds., *The Consumption of Culture, 1600–1800: Image, Object, Text* (London, 1995); Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford, eds., *Consumers and Luxury: Consumer Culture in Europe, 1650–1850* (Manchester, U.K., 1999). I also found especially useful Michael Stürmer, "An Economy of Delight: Court Artisans of the Eighteenth Century," *Business History Review* 53, no. 4 (Winter 1979): 496–528; and Natacha Coquery, "The Language of Success: Marketing and Distributing Semi-luxury Goods in Eighteenth-Century Paris," *Journal of Design History* 17, no. 1 (2004): 71–89.

38. Daniel Roche, *La culture des apparences: Une histoire du vêtement, XVIIe–XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1989), translated into English as *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Régime* (Cambridge, 1994), a rendering of the title that does not do justice to the argument of the book.

39. "Il y a longtemps qu'on appelle ce peintre un peintre d'éventail." *Correspondence littéraire*, 1753, 2:282, cited in Alastair Laing's essay in *François Boucher, 1703–1770* [exh. cat., Metropolitan Museum of Art] (New York, 1986), 106.

40. Boucher's decorative set for Derbais consisted of five large canvases representing mythological subjects: one pair consisted of *Mercury Confiding Bacchus to the Nymphs* (also known as *The Birth of Bacchus*) and *The Rape of Europa*, presumably done in 1732–1733 and 1733–1734, respectively (both now at the Wallace Collection); a set of vertical pendants, *Venus Requesting Arms from Vulcan* (Musée du Louvre) and *Aurora and Cephalus* (Musée des beaux-arts, Nancy), signed and dated 1732 and 1733, respectively; and a large *Birth of Venus* (c. 1731, now in the Romanian embassy in Paris). He also painted two overdoors with putti (*Amours*) for the billiard room and four overdoors for the stairway of the house, with images of children engaged in activities representing the four seasons. The billiard room works, including the overdoors, were mentioned in the after-death inventory of Derbais made on March 2, 1743 ("Deux tableaux dessus de porte représentent des amours dans leur bordure de bois doré," in the section "Salle de billard," *Inventaire aprés décès de M. Derbais, 2 Mars 1743*, Archives nationales, Minutier central, LIX, 230, nos. 96–99). The inventory was first discovered by Brunel: see his discussion of Derbais' "commission," 64–71. Though they have not been identified as Boucher's and no dimensions are given, it has been accepted in the literature that the large paintings listed in the Derbais inventory are by Boucher.

41. Boucher had already been accepted as an associate of the Academy in November 1731 but became a full member only in January 1734.

42. Mariette 1851, 165.

43. "Ses ingénieuses compositions attirerent un concours d'admirateurs, qui publierent les talens de ce jeune artiste." M.P.D.L.F. [Denis Pierre Jean Papillon de la Ferté], *Extrait des différens ouvrages publiés sur la vie des peintres* 2 vols. (Paris, 1776), 2:658.

44. Alistair Laing (in New York 1986) proposed the first possibility (private patrons); Colin B. Bailey, in *The Loves of the Gods: Mythological Painting from Watteau to David* [exh. cat., Galeries nationales du Grand Palais] (Paris, 1992; hereafter Paris 1992b), has suggested the second (tapestry manufacture). As Laing and others have noted, the arrangement was apparently such that it allowed Boucher to bring people to Derbais' house to see his work. See Laing in New York 1986, 159.

45. Virgil, *Aeneid*, book 8, and Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, book 7.

46. Jo Hedley has also suggested the Berger pendants as inspiration for Boucher (Hedley 2004, 39). In his monograph on Lemoyne, Jean-Luc Bordeaux makes a persuasive argument about Lemoyne's impact on Boucher, stating that "Le Moyne made female nudity his chief force of inspiration, thus preparing the way for Boucher, Natoire [and others]." Jean-Luc Bordeaux, *François Le Moyne and His Generation, 1688–1737* (Neuilly-sur-Seine, 1984), 33.

47. Boucher shows Cephalus readily responding to Aurora's charm, whereas, according to Ovid, he was enamored with another woman, Procris, and far more ambivalent about the goddess' advances. This ambivalence was clearly registered, for example, in Lemoyne's version of the same theme, painted in 1724 as an overdoor for the Hôtel de Ville in Versailles. For this painting, see Bordeaux 1984, no. 50. Traditionally, painters emphasized Cephalus' reluctance. On Boucher's departure from the standard iconography, see also Donald Posner, "Boucher's Beauties," in Paris 1992b, 64.

48. Boucher's drawing of it is in the collection of ENSBA. Engraved by Claude Duflos, it was part of the series of ornamental designs published as *Nouveaux morceaux pour des paravants* in 1737 (a terminus ante quem for Boucher's drawing) and sold at François Chéreau and Huquier. See Peter Fuhring's entry in Paris 2003a, no. 25, 138–141.

49. This is also true of the other three mythological paintings, in which the woman's body functions as a sensual focus of the composition even when this focus is not quite warranted by the iconography.

50. Paris 1992b, 384.

51. *Hercules and Omphale*, 1731–1734, Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow.

52. I am thinking of Rembrandt's *Bathsheba* (1654, Musée du Louvre), for instance. To evoke Rembrandt, whose work was enjoying a growing interest among the French eighteenth-century collectors and connoisseurs, is also to bring up another difference between him and Boucher. As a commercially self-conscious artist, Boucher was, in my view, exactly the opposite of the Rembrandt whom Svetlana Alpers helped us to understand in her *Rembrandt's Enterprise: The Studio and the Market* (Chicago, 1988). Whereas Rembrandt developed a personalized touch, self-consciously cultivating its uniqueness as a way of marketing himself, Boucher adopted a recognizable yet impersonal touch, a kind of touch that flaunted rather than disavowed its reproducibility.

53. It is the same body type, with blond hair decorated with pearls, smallish breasts, and plump legs, that Boucher was to modify later, aiming at a greater robustness and firmness of the flesh. On the evolution of Boucher's female nude, see Jacoby 1987, especially 270–274. For Boucher's comment on what he considered the ideal model of the female body, see Mannlich 1989, 1:196.

54. Boucher's pendants were bought by d'Angiviller for the museum in the Watelet sale of 1786, in which *Aurora and Cephalus* was listed under the title *Venus and Adonis*. See "Provenance" in Laing's entry in New York 1986, cat. 18, 136.

55. See Andrew McClellan, "Watteau's Dealer: Gersaint and the Marketing of Art in Eighteenth-Century Paris," *Art Bulletin* 78, no. 3 (September 1996): 440. The author cites Krzysztof Pomian, *Collectors and Curiosities: Paris and Venice 1500–1800*, trans. Elizabeth Wiles-Portier (Cambridge, 1990), 52–53, as his source. For Venus as an allegorical figure of the authority and seductiveness of art, see also Caroline Arscott and Katie Scott, "Introducing Venus," in *Manifestations of Venus: Art and Sexuality*, ed. Caroline Arscott and Katie Scott (Manchester, U.K., 2000), 22.

56. In *Venus and Vulcan*, the pieces of armor extend the defining diagonal of the painting established by the main figures, thus also announcing their structural equivalence to the body of Venus. This connection is accentuated by the chromatic correspondence between the blue quiver and the blue feathers of the helmet held by the putto and partly obscuring the goddess' right arm. Cephalus' hunting tools and dogs form the key compositional element of the diagonal trajectory reaching upward through Cephalus to the horses of Aurora's chariot. And their arrangement—one of the dogs raising its head, the quiver leaning toward it from the side—echoes the poses of the flirting protagonists above. So the importance given to these objects defines them not only as prominent but as interchangeable with the bodies.

57. See figs. 3.3 and 3.4 of Victor Stein and Paul Rubino, *The Billiard Encyclopedia: An Illustrated History of the Sport* (Minneapolis, 1996), 72.

58. Georges Brunel has noted that these objects are depicted less as attributes than as collectible items that may well have belonged to the painter. Brunel 1986, 96.

59. Alastair Laing described the pendants as "a manifesto of Boucher's gifts after his return from Italy" (New York 1986), 133. For the contemporary reception of Derbais' paintings, see Laing (New York 1986) and Paris 1992b, nos. 33–34.

60. Derbais' inventory attests to the owner's considerable taste and discernment. The decoration of the rooms in his *hôtel* underscored their function and included many fashionable furnishings and decora-

tive objects, including small pieces of Chinese furniture and a truly outstanding number of expensive mirrors. In addition to a large billiard table ("un billiard de bois de chêne couvert en dessus de son tapis") and assorted ornamented chairs, the billiard room featured several large mirrors: "Deux trumeaux de fenêtre en deux glaces chacune . . . dont les deux premières sont de quarante-huit pouces de haut sur trente-quatre de large et les deux autres de trente-neuf pouces de haut sur même largeur" ("Inventaire après décès de M. Derbais, 2 Mars 1743," Archives nationales, Minutier central, 4). I am grateful to Elizabeth Rudy for procuring a copy of the inventory for me, and to Frédérique Baumgartner for helping me decipher the French handwriting. Regarding the status of Boucher's painting as a luxury object, Mannlich's later reference to Boucher's paintings as furniture ("tableaux comme meubles"), comes to mind. He was speaking of Boucher's later pastorals (Mannlich 1989, 1:157).

61. Norman Bryson, *Word and Image: French Painting of the Ancien Régime* (Cambridge, 1981), 96. Michael Stürmer (1979) introduced the term *economy of delight* to describe the new approach to decoration of the interior that emerged in France in the eighteenth century and to emphasize its relation to the commercial modernity.

62. The idiosyncrasy of his interpretation is evident in comparison to other painters' renditions of these Ovidian themes, such as those of Poussin and Lemoyne, mentioned earlier.

63. See, for example, Melissa Hyde, *Making Up the Rococo: François Boucher and His Critics* (Los Angeles, 2006).

64. In the Louvre painting, he signs in the bottom right—"f boucher 1732"—that is, under Venus. In the Nancy painting, discussed below, he signs—"boucher/173[3?]"—in the bottom center, which is on the axis of Aurora and the obfuscated putto.

65. Roger Scruton, "Flesh from the Butcher," *Times Literary Supplement*, April 15, 2005, 11, an essay on Boucher published on the occasion of the Boucher exhibition *Seductive Visions*, at the Wallace Collection, London (my emphasis).

66. I am thinking of *The Garter* (1724, in a private collection in New York) and *The Departure for the Ball*, 1737 (one version of it is in the J. Paul Getty Museum, another in a private collection) in particular. See Christophe Leribault, *Jean-François de Troy (1679–1752)* (Paris, 2002), nos. 114a and 234–235 (pp. 271, 343–344). On de Troy's and Boucher's *tableaux de mode*, see also Richard Rand's perceptive discussion in *Intimate Encounters: Love and Domesticity in Eighteenth-Century France* (Princeton, 1997).

67. In the Stockholm version, the signature is accompanied by a date: 1746. As Laing has noted, in the Wallace Collection's version of *The Milliner*, which is assumed to date from after the one now in Stockholm, Boucher's signature is presented in a florid form that further blurs the distinction between the identity of the painter and that of the milliner's establishment. Laing in New York 1986, 227.

68. See Guillaume Glorieux, *À l'enseigne de Gersaint: Edme-François Gersaint, marchand d'art sur le Pont Notre-Dame, 1694–1750* (Seyssel, 2002), 264–267.

69. The card itself, based on Boucher's drawing, engraved by the renowned connoisseur Anne-Philippe-Claude de Tubières, comte de Caylus, must have been a product of a friendship rather than a result of a paid commission.

70. Engraved by Claude Duflos, Boucher's still life served first as the frontispiece to Gersaint's *Catalogue raisonné des coquilles et autres curiosités naturelles* (1736) and was reused by him for Bonnier de la Mosson's sale catalogue in 1744. See Glorieux 2002, 360–370.

71. The sale was conducted on Boucher's premises beginning on February 18, 1771, and lasted several days. See [Pierre Remy,] *Catalogue raisonné des Tableaux, Dessins, Estampes, Bronzes . . . Meubles curieux, Bijoux, Minéraux, Cristallisations, Madrepores, Coquilles et autres Curiosités qui composent le Cabinet de feu M. Boucher Premier Peintre de Roi* (Paris, 1771). Honoré Fragonard and Jean-George Wille were among the buyers. See Jean-George Wille, *Mémoires et journal*, ed. G. Duplessis, 2 vols. (Paris, 1857), 1:470.

72. Remy lists several display cases, among them "un coquillier plaqué en bois de violette, par Oebene, et garni en bronze doré, par Philippe Caffieri" (a shell cabinet veneered in violet wood by Oeben with bronze mounts by Philippe Caffieri), *Catalogue raisonné . . . de feu M. Boucher*, lot no. 1863. The collectors' manuals and travel guides from the period describe Boucher's cabinet at length. "This ingenious painter has placed his shells on tables covered with glass. They present to the eyes of the onlooker an enameled parterre which rivals nature. On the left as one enters, one finds a glass-fronted case richly filled with madrepores, minerals, precious stones, etc., which are very beautiful." Antoine N. Dézallier d'Argenville, *Conchyliologie nouvelle et portative* (Paris, 1767), 312–313. Another description is offered in the latter's *La conchyliologie ou histoire naturelle des coquilles*, which was published in several editions. In the 1780 version, Boucher is mentioned on page 236.

73. For Boucher as Gersaint's client, see Glorieux 2002, 573. Another source of items for Boucher's collection was barter trade with other collectors. Mannlich describes vividly a scene of Boucher's joy at opening a package with shells and rocks sent to him as a gift. He admired every piece with tears in his eyes, but then retained only very few of these items, putting the others aside for bartering. Mannlich 1989, 1:156.

74. On Boucher's decoration of his Louvre quarters, and the expense involved, see Brunel 1986, 36.

75. "Ressemble beaucoup à l'original, peu à moi." Letter of April 26, 1751, in Auguste Poulet-Malassis, ed., *Correspondance de Mme. de Pompadour avec son père, m. Poisson, et son frère, m. de Vandière* (Paris, 1878), 50.

76. We have oil sketches for two of them (in the Musée du Louvre and Waddesdon Manor) and three finished versions of her portrait (in the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Alte Pinakothek, Munich; the Victoria and Albert Museum; and the Wallace Collection).

77. Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, "Pompadour's Touch: Difference in Representation," *Representations* 73 (Winter 2001): 54–88. A close-up of the double signatures is reproduced on page 69.