

**The Collecting of Collections:
Reproductive Prints as Meta-Collections in Eighteenth-Century France**
Amy M. Von Lintel

When Walter Benjamin wrote in 1936 that the work of art relinquishes its “aura” in the age of technological reproducibility, he identified printmaking as a central technology in this development.¹ The theorist mentions the print’s invention in the Middle Ages and then quickly jumps to the advances of lithography in the nineteenth century, entirely ignoring the eighteenth with its proliferation of engravings and etchings.² Indeed, the practices of printmaking and print collecting in the eighteenth century run counter to Benjamin’s central thesis. The majority of prints in this period were reproductive and allowed for the circulation of “originals” of both nature, such as landscapes, events, or natural history specimens, and works of art. Rather than diminishing the originality of their antecedent, or rendering the category of uniqueness obsolete in some way, reproductive prints carried with them the authenticity and uniqueness of their

¹ Benjamin describes the aura as the “here and now” of the work, its “authenticity,” and its “authority.” He stresses photography and film as the media that go the furthest to devalue the aura, as they reproduce without the human hand, and he later contrasts these “technical” reproduction techniques to more “manual” ones. Yet, his section one clearly includes engraving and etching as among the “technical” media. See Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility,” in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, 251-83 (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003). As Jacquelynn Bass rightly points out, Benjamin’s arguments themselves need to be “subject to criticism” and historicization. For a reading of Benjamin in his own context, and a critical evaluation of his essay, see Bass, “Reconsidering Walter Benjamin: “The Age of Mechanical Reproduction” in Retrospect,” in *The Documented Image: Visions in Art History*, ed. Gabriel P. Weisberg and Laurinda S. Dixon, 337-48 (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987).

² According to Benjamin, the difference between lithography, photography, and film and earlier means of reproduction is their mass circulation and their increasing speed of production: lithography can keep pace with daily news, while photography and film can record at the speed of sound and electricity, for example. This increased circulation and speed had the effect of changing perceptions of art, destroying the concept of authenticity, and replacing cult value with political value. Benjamin collapses every century prior to the nineteenth, identifying a single function for art, that of the ritual. He does not account for the third and shifting term of the *social* function of art, which I have tried to explore in the eighteenth century. Benjamin’s binaries between ritual and political, pre-modern and modern are highly reductive, and not only for periods prior to modernity. Art continued to be produced, received, and evaluated with respect to its authenticity in the modern era as well, despite the possibility of its reproduction. The masses’ identification with technological media, moreover, did not seismically alter the categories of art; in fact, they were considered quite separately from high art in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For a critical re-evaluation of Benjamin’s narrative and a more accurate account of the history of reproductive media up to the twentieth century, see Baas, 340-44.

“original.” This is especially clear when they include textual inscriptions that identify the person, place, or thing that the print reproduced and circulated. Counter to Benjamin’s claim, the eighteenth-century reproductive print was collected precisely because of its ability to transmit these “auras” and preserve them for posterity.³ Although a number of scholars have contested Benjamin regarding periods prior to the nineteenth century, the existing literature has not sufficiently explored the role of print collecting in the discourse on originality and reproduction.⁴ Whereas the print’s function as a transparent link to an original object has often been observed, its connection to an “original collection” remains to be fleshed out.

In 1729, Pierre Crozat, one of the most important collectors and promoters of art in early eighteenth-century Paris, completed the first volume of his publication commonly referred to as the *Recueil de Crozat*.⁵ The title page of this album reads: “Collection of prints after the most Beautiful Paintings and the most Beautiful Drawings in France. In the Cabinet of the King, in that of the Monseigneur le Duc d’Orleans & in other Cabinets (fig. 1).” Each of the eighty-eight reproductive prints presents the viewer with a caption that labels not only its title, artist,

³ This is articulated in a number of sources including the *Recueil de Crozat*, but appears in and is most often quoted from Roger de Piles, *Abrégé de la vie des peintres, avec des réflexions sur leurs ouvrages, et un traité du peintre parfait, de la connoissance des desseins, et de l’utilité des estampes*, 2nd ed. (Paris: J. Estienne, 1715), 77-90.

⁴ On rethinking Benjamin’s arguments on reproduction, see Katie Scott, “Chardin Multiplied,” in *Chardin*, ed. Pierre Rosenberg, 62-3 and 68 (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000); Margret Stuffmann, “Les Tableaux de la collection de Pierre Crozat. Historique et destinée d’un ensemble célèbre, établis en partant d’un inventaire après décès inédit (1740),” *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 72, ser. 6 (1968): 37; and Anthony Hughes, “Authority, Authenticity, and Aura: Walter Benjamin and the Case of Michelangelo,” in *Sculpture and its Reproductions*, ed. Anthony Hughes and Erich Ranfft, 29-45 (London: Reaktion Books, 1997). Hughes’ focus on sculpture brings up the point that a similar argument about meta-collecting could be made for sculptural reproductions like casts. Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny explore this theme in the national context of the French crown collecting Italian culture through casts, and briefly mentions the interest of individual collectors towards the works in specific collections. See Haskell and Penny, *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture 1500-1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 37-42 and 60.

⁵ *Recueil d’Estampes d’après les plus Beaux Tableaux et d’après les plus Beaux Desseins qui sont en France. Dans le Cabinet du Roy, dans celui de Monseigneur le Duc d’Orleans, & dans d’autres Cabinets* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1729-1742). Pierre Crozat was a banker from Toulouse, who moved to Paris around 1700 and became a significant figure in the art culture of the first half of the eighteenth century. His home on the Rue de Richelieu was not only the site of an impressive art collection that included paintings, drawings, and decorative works, but it was also the venue of regular social gatherings for artists, amateurs, and other important cultural figures like Watteau, Rosalba Carriera, the Comte de Caylus, Mariette, and even the Regent le Duc d’Orleans. See Stuffmann, 22-23.

printmaker, and medium, but also the collection in which the original work is found.⁶ The text size and format of these captions constructs a hierarchy of information. Just beneath the title in prominent type are listed the important figures of artist and collector.⁷ It is worth noting that while the revered Raphael is the most prominent artist in the album, his name appears next to and of equal status with that of collectors like Crozat (fig. 2 and 3). Providing a reproduction that might be studied for its subject, style, and composition, each print also offered links to a known collection and an example of the taste and aesthetic discernment of a known collector. The *Recueil de Crozat*, therefore, made possible and desirable the collecting of French collections.

This paper will attempt to explore the role of prints as objects of mediation or meta-collection in eighteenth-century France. Not only do individual art objects circulate from one collection to another, but through the reproductive print, the collection itself was able to circulate and be collected. This meta-collection through prints might be compared to practices in Asian art, in which the identities of collectors are often present on the works themselves in the form of seals and colophons.⁸ While European paintings do not engage in similar practices, works on paper such as prints quite often do. This, in turn, has implications for a reevaluation of the concept of originality—or to use a period term “invention”—in eighteenth-century France. Although this notion was a source of value for works of art, it was not synonymous with singularity. A reproductive print could present a collaboration of different originalities. It

⁶ According to Walter Benjamin, captions only became obligatory for photographic reproductions in the press, which did not occur until the late nineteenth century. For eighteenth century prints like those in the *Recueil de Crozat*, I would argue that the captions were if not obligatory, then entirely necessary, which counters Benjamin’s argument. See Benjamin, 258.

⁷ This format deviates slightly in certain prints. In a few, the original collection is not a private cabinet, but a church like the Cathedral of Rheims. In others, foreign collections are cited, such as that of the archbishop of Milan and the Duke of Grafton in England. In still others, no caption appears at all. Yet, the vast majority follows this format.

⁸ See Yang Xin, “Approaches to Chinese Painting,” in *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting*, ed. Yang Xin et al., 4 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

simultaneously carried traces of the creativity of an artist, the interpretive skill of a printmaker, and the admirable connoisseurship of a collector.

Because of this last level of “invention,” a reproductive print that identifies a collector presents a complex interconnection between production and consumption. With regard to practices of collecting, these notions overlap, and the making of choices in consumption can be seen as productive.⁹ An owner of original works of art like Crozat, while clearly a consumer, was also a producer of both his collection and, possibly, its circulation in the form of prints. Crozat’s paintings and drawings provided material for a large number of the prints in the *Recueil* (figs. 2 and 3). This was likewise the case for the Duc de Picquigny who commissioned prints of his thirteen painted overdoors by Jacques de Lajouë (fig. 4).¹⁰ Each painting was an allegorical image of the arts and sciences. As in the *Recueil de Crozat*, the size and layout of the textual captions call attention to the role of the Duc as collector, but here without being coupled to the name of an artist: below the title of the painting, the phrase “taken from the cabinet of the Monseigneur le Duc de Picquigny” stands alone. Crozat, however, was more than the producer of an album after his own collection. He also organized the involvement of other collectors and the numerous artists necessary to reproduce their works. Crozat preferred that his artists work directly from the paintings and drawings onto the engraving plate; therefore, he installed four printing presses in his house and gained permission to borrow many of the works of art for his publication project.¹¹ Certainly enjoying the temporary expansion of his own collection during this process, Crozat likewise made possible a wider consumption of these collected works through the production of their reproductions.

⁹ Jean-Christophe Agnew, “Coming Up for Air: Consumer Culture in Historical Perspective,” in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, ed. John Brewer and Roy Porter, 19-39 (New York: Routledge, 1993).

¹⁰ Marianne Roland Michel, *Lajoüe et l’art rocaille* (Neuilly-sur-Seine: Arthena, 1984), 32 and 37.

¹¹ Francis Haskell, *The Painful Birth of the Art Book* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1987), 24.

Once a print album like the *Recueil* was purchased, owners obtained an object with various relations to originals in known collections, namely iconic or pictorial, textual, and synedochal, as in a part that references the original collection as a whole. At the same time, these buyers could themselves act as a producer or creator of their own collections into which they would insert the loose prints or the bound album. A number of period theorists allow print collectors a great deal of agency within their collections, which was of course part of the enjoyment of their creation.¹² The cataloguing and viewing experiences of the prints was one in which its collectors could have control, as they are empowered to define the objects' location, classification, and display. The portability of prints in contrast to a painting provided greater freedom for their collector as well.

In this period in France, a desire for the consumption of famous collectors and collections can be observed among the educated elite. Estate sale catalogues, such as those compiled by the dealer Edme-François Gersaint, often mention prints after art from the Barbarini or Farnese palaces, as well as the Vatican.¹³ There is also a tradition of paintings and prints after collections and exhibitions, including images of *wunderkammern* or the Paris Salon.¹⁴ Even Crozat's private salons appeared in two known paintings by Lancret.¹⁵ But the most frequently collected

¹² De Piles, 78. See also A.J. Dézallier d'Argenville, "Lettre sur le choix et l'arrangement d'un cabinet curieux," *Mercur de France* (June 1727): 1295. In this letter, he gives advice to the collector of art and natural history and makes the same suggestion of freedom in designing one's own cabinet.

¹³ Edme-François Gersaint, *Catalogue Raisonné des diverses curiosités du cabinet de feu M. Quentin de Lorangère* (Paris: Jacques Barois, 1744), 254.

¹⁴ See for example, the Museum of Fernando Cospi, the Museum of Ole Worm, the Museum of Ferrante Imperato, and the Museum of Francesco Calzolari as reproduced in Anthony Alan Shelton, "Cabinets of Transgression: Renaissance Collections and the Incorporation of the New World," in *The Cultures of Collecting*, ed. John Elsner and Roger Cardinal, 183, 196, and 202 (London: Reaktion Books, 1994). On images of the Paris Salon and other exhibitions, see David H. Solkin, ed., *Art on the Line: The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House 1780-1836* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 2 and 16.

¹⁵ Stuffmann, 24-5.

collections in eighteenth-century France were the same two identified in the title of the *Recueil de Crozat*: that of the King and the Duc d'Orleans.¹⁶

Other sources of the consumption of collectors and collections were the estate sale catalogues themselves, which were collected items in their own right. They were usually of a much smaller, more portable format that allowed for use as a guide during the sale. Although they rarely included illustrations of actual objects for sale, these catalogues quite often presented their readers with a portrait print of the collector, especially later in the century. These images, usually in an allegorical composition, celebrated the collector's contribution to the arts. The frontispiece for the 1775 sale of Pierre-Jean Mariette's collection depicts a sculpted bust of the amateur resting above figures of History, Drawing, Taste, and Study who gather in Mariette's cabinet.¹⁷ In another frontispiece from a sale in 1782, two putti crown the roundel portrait bust, while below symbolic figures of the arts weep over the loss of the collector. The caption reads, "The arts in crying honored his memory / His love for them will live in their history."¹⁸

The *Recueil de Crozat*, on the other hand, presents works of art from a number of existing French collections, many of whose collectors were still living.¹⁹ The album thus promotes French art culture not through work produced by French artists, but through the contemporary collections of French collectors.²⁰ Colin Bailey's recent study *Patriotic Taste* convincingly

¹⁶ See Edme-François Gersaint, *Catalogue raisonné des differens effets curieux & rares contenus dans le cabinet de feu M. le chevalier de La Roque* (Paris: Chez Jacques Barois, 1745), 191 and *Catalogue raisonné des bijoux, porcelaines, bronzes, lacqs... & autres effets de curiosité, provenans de la succession de M. Angran, vicomte de Fonspertuis* (Paris: Pierre Prault, 1747), 272 and 287, as well as Jean Chatelus, "Thèmes Picturaux dans les Appartements de Marchands et Artisans Parisiens au XVIIIe siècle," *Dix-Huitième Siècle* 6 (1974): 314-15.

¹⁷ Emile Dacier, "Les Catalogues de ventes illustrés au XVIIIe siècle," *Le Portique* 3 (1946): 108.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 110-11.

¹⁹ An exception to the "living" collector was the Duc d'Orleans, who died in 1723 after the commencement of the project, but before it was published. The year before, Louis XV had been crowned, displacing the Duc d'Orleans as Regent. The introductory text includes the provenance history of each item, but the prints themselves only label the current location.

²⁰ Francis Haskell downplays the importance of French collections in the *Recueil*, in order to emphasize its broader, international scope. What began as a record of paintings in French collections, he writes, grew to include Europe as a whole and its "works of all Nations." See Haskell, *The Painful Birth of the Art Book*, 42. There is evidence of this

claims that it was only later in the century when French collectors came to value French art; indeed, the artists represented in the *Recueil de Crozat* are Italian. Yet, the *Recueil* is evidence that a different kind of “patriotic taste” was present in France at a much earlier date: by the time of its publication in 1729, French collectors were celebrated and their collections were widely admired.²¹ For example, the forward of the *Recueil* praises the judgment of the King and then goes further with regard to the Regent: “We will enjoy a treasure so precious in the riches of the Cabinet of Monseigneur le Duc d’Orleans, Prince whose knowledge in painting passes that of a simple amateur.”²² This reverence is found regarding Crozat as well. Crozat’s house was featured in *L’Architecture Française* in 1727, and his art works within it were described in detail in the 1719 publication by the Abbé du Bos *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et la peinture*.²³ The *Mercure de France* from May 1728 praised him as a “famous *Curieux*,” who was “always attentive and full of zeal for the advancement of the Arts of Drawing,” and whose “Cabinet, known by all the Artists & the Amateurs, is one of the richest in Europe.”²⁴ Clearly, there was an audience in eighteenth-century France that appreciated the inventive feat of procuring an admirable collection.

At times this desire for contact with known collections was satisfied through an actual visit. Gersaint notes that “the title of *Curieux* gives [one] entry into the most famous cabinets.”²⁵

shift beyond France, but the preface of the 1729 volume clearly states its focus on France. Haskell also draws attention to the “failure” of the project and its incomplete status. I am instead attempting to evaluate its successes in light of French collecting. See Haskell, 54. Barbara Scott claims that the purpose of the *Recueil* was to make the Italian school of painting more widely known. Without disputing this claim, I wish to raise the possibility of other functions as well. See Barbara Scott, “Pierre Crozat: A Maecenas of the Régence,” *Apollo* 97 (Jan. 1973): 14.

²¹ Colin Bailey states that the Crozat albums privileged foreign schools of art and therefore did not fall under the trend of the “goût patriotique.” Yet, the preface of the albums presents the desire to celebrate French collectors for their artistic taste, which, I would argue, is an alternative but no less important form of patriotism than collecting French art. See Bailey, *Patriotic Taste* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 18.

²² “Nous joindrons à un tresor si precieux les richessent du Cabinet de Mgr. le Duc d’Orleans, Prince dont les connoissances en Peinture passioient celle d’un simple amateur.” See *Recueil de Crozat*, iv.

²³ Stuffmann, 30 and 37-8.

²⁴ *Mercure de France* (May 1728): 1002.

²⁵ See Gersaint, *Lorangère*, 2.

And whereas the Louvre pieces remained inaccessible to the public, the holdings of the late Duc d'Orleans were put on display in the Palais Royal in 1727.²⁶ While each painting on display would have contributed to the visual literacy of this audience, the role of the Regent as a collector was also something of which visitors took note. The publishing industry, at the same time, brought these collections to a wider audience. In 1727, Dubois de Saint-Gelais wrote a description of the Palais Royal exhibition as both a souvenir from the public exhibition and as a replacement for those unable to attend, while more general guidebooks outlining the attractions of Paris included careful descriptions of the city's private collections.²⁷ Nonetheless, there was a belief that the beauty of a collector's works of art was translated more faithfully through images than through words. According to the *Recueil de Crozat*, "There is not a discourse that is able...to designate a Painting in the imagination of one who cannot see it," but "the Art of Printing...can spread in all countries and transmit for centuries to come what is most precious and most divine in the works."²⁸ The promotional article for the *Recueil* in the *Mercur de France* from 1728 concurs: printed images can "transport" the viewer to "the most beautiful Cabinets... with infinitely more benefit and satisfaction than if they were reading the simple descriptions of it."²⁹

²⁶ Thomas Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 41.

²⁷ Dubois de Saint-Gelais, *Description des Tableaux du Palais Royal avec la Vie des Peintres à la tête de leurs Ouvrages dédié à M. le Duc d'Orleans Premier Prince du Sang* (Paris: Charles-Maurice d'Houry, 1727). The popularity of this publication can be noted in that it is included in a number of library inventories in the Getty collection, such as that of the late M. Lancelot of the Academy Royale des Belles-Lettres from 1741 and the late M. Angran Vicomte de Fonspertuis from 1748. For an example of a Paris guidebook, see Luc-Vincent Thiéry, *Guide des Amateurs et des étrangers voyageurs à Paris*, vol. 1 (Paris: Hardouin et Gattey, 1787).

²⁸ "Il n'y a pas de discours qui puisse...dessiner un Tableau dans l'imagination de celuy qui ne l'a point vû." See *Recueil de Crozat*, ii.

²⁹ Gersaint, *Lorangère*, 40 and *Mercur de France* (May 1728): 1003.

Thus, it was presumed that the print could translate something of the work of art from its original collection.³⁰ Prints in the *Recueil* not only circulated an “aura”—that is what is most “precious and divine”—from the original work, but they also served to build up auratic significance around collectors and their collections, and this complicates the notion of uniqueness along with originality. Produced as multiples and valued as such, prints are not singularly unique in the same way as a painting or drawing. Yet, rather than rejecting the category of uniqueness in light of multiples like prints, this category needs to be qualified and historicized. Once a print entered a collection, for example, it was seen as a representative of uniqueness on several levels. As noted in a published letter from 1727 advising readers on how to form a collection, the same print might be collected multiple times because of its multiple referents, which could include not only artist, style, subject, and design, but also an original collection and its collector appreciated for his personal and therefore unique connoisseurship and taste.³¹

Furthermore, theories of collecting often discuss how the process of collection removes the object from its original context and recontextualizes it. However, the role of reproductive prints in eighteenth-century France questions this theoretical assertion. Created for the market, these prints did not themselves possess an original context. Instead the print served as a referent to the context in which its antecedent was found, and this context travels along with the print. Thus, the reproductive print in a particular collection reveals a layering of contexts, rather than a simple or unilateral recontextualization. The narrative of the reproductive print involves not only its current place in a collection, but also its link to another physically distant collection.

³⁰ As Katie Scott notes, “reproduction does not describe a simple or single relationship...touch and uniqueness – commonly associated with painted originals – also played a part in reproduction.” See Scott, 68.

³¹ Dézallier d’Argenville, 1303.

With these ties to a distant collection are parallel ties to its collector, offering an outlet for social exchange as well. Prints in publications like the *Recueil de Crozat* made possible an indirect dialogue between the collector of the original object and the collector of its reproductive print.³² The purchaser of the print might be emulating, paying respect to, and/or modeling his taste on the known collector. This purpose of the *Recueil* is stated in the 1728 promotional article in the *Mercure*:

We do not believe we are risking anything to guarantee...the emulation, taste and love that this *Recueil* will excite....Without spending a lot, one can form a complete Cabinet, in which one reunites what created the ornament of several others, & which had been placed with care and immense spending.³³

Not only can these *amateurs* bring together the masters of art through a print collection, but they can also gather the possessions of the most revered and wealthy collectors in France. As Genevieve Warwick argues, “a collector’s choice of objects, too, may be understood as an affirmation of identity...as narratives of an ideal self constructed by the collector.”³⁴ In collecting reproductions, the collector might participate in an act of social self-fashioning.³⁵ Indeed, the circulation of French collections and collectors through prints proceeded in part from

³² Organized by Crozat, the *Recueil* was intended for sale on the open market. It was advertised in the *Mercure* 1721 and 1728 and sold by subscription. The subscribers were promised a dedication page in the publication, although this page was never incorporated. In 1728, it was still planned that subscribers would pay eighty livres for the first sixty prints, and then when the rest were finished, they would pay another eighty livres for the remaining sixty prints as well as the lives of the artists and the written descriptions. They could be bound by their purchasers, except for English buyers, for whom the bound volume was provided due to lower import duties on books versus prints. The extent to which these plans were actually carried out is not entirely clear. Subscribers names were to be listed and individually inscribed in each volume, and the plates were to be destroyed, neither of which occurred. See *Mercure de France* (May 1728): 1002-1014 and Haskell, *The Painful Birth of the Art Book*, 40-2.

³³ *Mercure de France* (May 1728): 1002.

³⁴ Genevieve Warwick, *The Arts of Collecting: Padre Sebastiano Resta and the Market for Drawings in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 3.

³⁵ An over-simplified claim of consumption through emulation needs to be guarded against. As Colin Campbell argues, consumption cannot be reduced to a single motive. His character-action approach seeks to define motives for consumption by looking for conscious choices and active justifications by consumers. In this study, I am exploring several motives for the collection of prints after known collections, emulation being one of them. See Campbell, “Understanding Traditional and Modern Patterns of Consumption in Eighteenth-Century England: A Character-Action Approach,” in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, ed. John Brewer and Roy Porter, 40-57 (New York: Routledge, 1993).

the desire to inform, influence, and spread artistic taste.³⁶ Roger de Piles, a widely-read period theorist, writes:

By the means of Prints, you can see laid out on a table...the works of different Masters, and form of them an Idea, and judge them by comparison, and make choices among them, and contract by this practice a habit of good Taste.³⁷

And what better way to establish taste and judgment than by emulating known and respected collectors? It was this aspiration that lay at the heart of projects like Crozat's *Recueil*.³⁸

In conclusion, I want to return to the issue of print collecting in Benjamin's "age of technological reproducibility." Although reproductions are, as Benjamin argued, "more independent" than their originals, and can reach "situations which the original itself cannot attain," does this independence necessarily negate the "here and now" of the original? When, in Benjamin's words, the "cathedral leaves its site" and enters "the studio of an art lover," it loses something of its authenticity.³⁹ Susan Stewart, a more recent theorist on collecting, parallels Benjamin's assertion. She writes, in a section of her study *On Longing* entitled "context destroyed:" "The collection seeks a form of self-enclosure which is possible because of its ahistoricism. The collection replaces history with *classification*."⁴⁰ Like Benjamin with the destruction of the "here and now" which substitutes "a mass existence for a unique existence," Stewart defines the collection as something that severs an original context and replaces it with a

³⁶ In his study on the private cabinet, Bailey asserts that private collections did not claim to function as "a school or public repository for the forming of taste." In this paper, I hope to have cast doubt on this assertion by exploring how the private collection could circulate through the reproductive print, thereby influencing taste. See Colin R. Bailey, "Conventions of the Eighteenth-Century Cabinet de Tableaux. Blondel d'Azincourt's *La Première idée de la curiosité*," *Art Bulletin* 69 (1987): 445.

³⁷ "Par le moyen des Estampes, vous pouvez sur une table voir sans peine les ouvrages des différens Maîtres, en former une Idée, en juger par comparaison, en faire une choix, et contracter par cette pratique une habitude de bon Goût." See de Piles, 82-3.

³⁸ Crow, 34 and 112.

³⁹ Benjamin, 254.

⁴⁰ Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 151.

new ahistorical reality.⁴¹ For both, the destruction lies in a binary substitution: “this for that.” The eighteenth-century collection of reproductive prints, however, is an exception to this rule. Not only are multiple images produced in these prints, but multiple originalities, uniquenesses, and contexts, procuring a “this *and* that” relationship instead. In an album of reproductive prints after art from known collections like the *Recueil de Crozat*, authority is not diminished, contexts are not destroyed, history is not ignored. On one level, the *Recueil* circulated and enhanced the authority of original works of art. On another, it offered its owners the “aura” of famous French collectors and their collections, producing for consumption a collection of collections.

University of Southern California

⁴¹ Benjamin, 254.

RECUEIL
D'ESTAMPES

D'APRÈS LES
PLUS BEAUX TABLEAUX
ET D'APRÈS
LES PLUS BEAUX DESSEINS
QUI SONT EN FRANCE

Dans le Cabinet du Roy, dans celuy de Monseigneur
le Duc d'Orleans, & dans d'autres Cabinets.

DIVISE
SUIVANT LES DIFFÉRENTES ÉCOLES;
AVEC
*Un abrégé de la Vie des Peintres, & une Description Historique
de chaque Tableau.*

TOME PREMIER.
CONTENANT L'ÉCOLE ROMAINE.



A PARIS,
DE L'IMPRIMERIE ROYALE.

M DCCXXIX.

Fig. 1. Title page from the *Recueil de Crozat*, 1729. 55 cm.
Research Library, The Getty Research Institute,
Los Angeles (1366-334).



SAINT GEORGES

*D'après le Tableau de Raphaël qui est dans le Cabinet de M. Crozat.
gravé sur bois, de la grandeur de l'Original, par Nicolas de Larmessin.*

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Fig. 2. Print from the *Recueil de Crozat* after Raphael's painting *Saint George*. The first two lines of the caption read: "Saint Georges. D'Après le Tableau de Raphaël qui est dans le Cabinet de M. Crozat." Research Library, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (1366-334).



Fig. 3. Print from the *Recueil de Crozat* after a drawing by Raphael for the painting *School of Athens*. The first two lines of the caption read: "Estudes pour le tableau de l'Ecole d'Athenes. D'après le dessin de Raphael d'Urbain, qui est dans le Cabinet de M. Crozat." Research Library, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (1366-334).



Fig. 4. Print after a painted overdoor by Jacques de Lajouë from the collection of the Duc de Picquigny, 1741-44. 39 x 47 cm. The first two lines of the caption read: "L'Histoire, Tiré du cabinet de Monseigneur le Duc de Picquigny." Research Library, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (P980005).