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La restauration des oeuvres d'art en Europe entre 1789 et 1815: pratiques, transferts, enjeux

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Robert Skwirblies

## Restoration of artworks in the Berlin royal picture collection between 1797 and 1830

Internationalization, professionalization, institutionalization

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Robert Skwirbli

# Restoration of artworks in the Berlin royal picture collection between 1797 and 1830

Internationalization, professionalization, institutionalization

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- 1 In Berlin, the first three decades of the 19th century were full of political and cultural changes. This also concerns the way people looked at works of art and how they treated them. As the attention to older paintings at that time in Berlin increased<sup>1</sup>, a profound discussion about art conservation and restoration emerged. Some examples may illustrate the change of mind in these very years between 1797 and 1830 and give an impression of the level of knowledge, practices and purposes. The documents come from Prussian government institutions, from academy professors, state officials, and even ministers, as well as from art collectors, traders, and independent painters.
- 2 Four backgrounds have to be considered: firstly, the private art market; then, the Royal Art Academy, which was responsible for young artists' education; thirdly, the project of an art museum, closely related to the academy and the Prussian government; and lastly, the traditional royal picture collections and galleries in the castles of Berlin and Potsdam. These last ones were in the midst of structural change, since in 1797 the first concrete plans for a public art museum were published, and finally in 1830 this museum was opened. It included a picture gallery of more than 1,200 old masters' works<sup>2</sup>. Just a few years earlier a restoration workshop was established that has to be considered one of the most professional and modern in Europe<sup>3</sup>: since March 1824, the Palatinate painters Jakob Schlesinger (1792-1855) and Christian Philipp Koester (1784-1851), together with their assistants, took care of hundreds of paintings from more than four centuries. Their written treatises are the basis of many subsequent publications on art restoration in the 19th century<sup>4</sup>. This advance is all the more surprising, as only a couple of years earlier the situation seems to have been almost catastrophic.

## Detecting the problem: alarming condition of pictures in the royal collections

- 3 In December 1815 the Prussian Court Counsellor Ernst Friedrich Bußler (1773-1840) wrote a letter to his superior, the Lord Stewart Burchard Friedrich von Maltzahn (1773-1837), explaining his sorrows about the royal picture collection and the "sad condition of the works" in the royal castles<sup>5</sup>. Bußler described the main problem: a large number of pictures needed to be cleaned and restored. Specifically, he referred to damages due to transportation of the artwork during the Napoleonic period – most pictures were moved from Berlin and Potsdam either to Königsberg or to Paris and then back again<sup>6</sup>. It seems that Bußler, who saw the Musée Napoléon with its treasures from all over Europe, including those from Prussia, was also ashamed of their state of conservation: "As a result of its treatment of these works of art, the Prussian State, not without merit, has been reproached with accusations of Barbarism". In spite of restoration and conservation measures documented since the late 17th century<sup>7</sup>, a lack of maintenance for decades must have led to the desiccation and destruction of many paintings.

**Fig. 1 Ernst Friedrich Bußler**



Detail from: Franz Krüger, *Parade at Opernplatz* 1824, Berlin, Staatliche Museen SPK, Nationalgalerie  
Photo by the author

- 4 Bußler claims that without renewed varnish the pictures would dry out, and the colours would lacerate and then fall off the carriers. Dryness on the one hand, and mould on the other would cause the pictures to suffer. But there was no one responsible. The position had become

vacant after the death of the former official restorer since 1789, Christian August Wilhelm Beckly, which might have been Bußler's motive to write his report a few weeks later. At any rate, Beckly had completed the restorations in addition to all his other work and, according to Bußler's remarks, not in a very thorough and careful manner. That would not have been possible in any case – for the late Beckly was in one person, custodian of the royal galleries, arms painter, and restorer. Bußler points out that these duties were incompatible with each other and proceeds to lay out a description of the profession.

5 A picture restorer should work every day in “fully undisturbed peace of mind”. He should not just find solutions for multiple technical demands. The restorer should also “put himself into the mindset of the artist” whose work he is repairing, and would thus achieve a truer replenishment of drawing and colours, and broken pieces. Bußler is thinking about both conservation and retouching when he bewails that, the more a picture is retouched, the more it becomes a “bad new one”, and how, with regret and pain one would avert one's gaze from such artwork, once revitalizing and attractive, when it no longer maintained the “physiognomy of the master's manner” nor the “immense power of his mind”.

6 The romantic idea of the artist as a powerful character whose work radiates from within him, explains well the dilemma of the more technical work that restoration was in reality. Bußler was familiar with this, and also with the disdain of the artists for that laborious work: The Berlin Academy professor Johann Gottfried Niedlich (1766-1837) restored a picture that had just come back from Paris, *The Three Graces* attributed to Dominichino<sup>8</sup>. Niedlich told Bußler that he was pleased to have restored that artwork, but that he nonetheless could not imagine continuing that job.

7 Bußler claims that a “great artist” should from time to time restore a “first-rate, exquisite work”, but the mundane and technical labour – renewing of canvases, puttying and punctual renovations – should be prepared by a “capable craftsman, who has assembled some practical experience in this subject”. Bußler himself was an amateur painter: he copied some pictures in the royal gallery<sup>9</sup>. Since 1820 he was an honorary member of the Berlin Art Academy and a passionate mediator between administration and academic-artistic circles. This is evident in the restoration of *The Three Graces* by Niedlich – apparently due to Bußler's intervention.

## The look abroad: in search of professionals for a new profession

8 Berlin was a provincial town concerning the arts, and the officials knew that. Bußler brought the local painter Karl Friedrich Wilhelm Bock (1759-1829) into consideration as new Court Restorer, who applied for the job soon after<sup>10</sup>. Bock claimed to have proven his talent by restoring several pictures from the royal collection and the famous Danzig Altar piece<sup>11</sup>. Bußler mentions a copy after Raphael, St. Cecily, which has fallen down from the wall, “completely disrupted”, a “Deluge” attributed to Dominichino, that must have been so mouldy that it had holes in the canvas<sup>12</sup>; and an “enormous” Luca Giordano which was “boundlessly ruined” – according to Bußler they have all been restored in an excellent way by Bock<sup>13</sup>.

**Fig. 2 Antonio Carracci (copy after), *Deluge***



Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Preußischer Kulturbesitz  
Photo. Jörg P. Anders

**Fig. 3 Backside of the *Deluge***

Doubled canvas and stretcher frame presumably from Bock's restoration before 1815  
 Photo by the author

- 9 Nonetheless, Karl von Hardenberg (1750-1822), the State Chancellor and chief of Prussian government who had to decide about that application, was very careful to give such a job to a minor painter. Due to his experiences in Paris in 1814-1815, Hardenberg tried to convince the famous painter and art trader Féréol Bonnemaïson (†1826/27) who was responsible for restorations in the Musée Napoléon to continue his work in Berlin<sup>14</sup>. This shows a new dimension in the politics of art and organization: While Bußler – even though he had been in Paris, too – still thought in terms of the old royal collections, dispersed in the castles' galleries and rooms, Hardenberg already had the new public museum in mind for which a professional restoration atelier was necessary. It is also important that Bonnemaïson was the seller of a big part of the Giustiniani collection that the Prussian king had bought in 1815 in Paris, flush with the recent victory over Napoleon, and that he was personally known by King Frederick William<sup>15</sup>. But Bonnemaïson refused Hardenberg's offer, by making excessive conditions: Apart from the demand of 30,000 Francs and a big atelier, he offered only three months of work in Berlin, since the King of Spain, the Duke of Wellington and the Duke de Berry had offers for him as well<sup>16</sup>. Bonnemaïson's haughty answer reveals the lack of appeal offered by

the Prussian capital at that time. In the end Hardenberg grudgingly accepted the employment of Bock in 1817, ordering that only the less important pieces should be entrusted to him<sup>17</sup>.

10 The most famous restorers, however, were Italian. As one employee in the ministry of culture, the amateur collector Wilhelm Uhden (1763-1835), noted in 1819, the Prussian government tried to convince the painter Pietro Palmaroli (1778-1828) from Rome to lead the restoration of the royal picture collection<sup>18</sup>. Already in 1811, the Prussian diplomat and conservative art critic Friedrich Basilius von Ramdohr (1757-1822) had reported to a colleague about Palmaroli's fame in Rome: "Palmeroli vient d'achever la restauration du tableau à fresque de Volterra dont j'ai eu l'honneur de Vous entrevenir il y a quelque temps. On le voit exposé chez lui. C'est un ouvrage étonnant. Malheureusement il va être enlevé de Rome & passer à Paris."<sup>19</sup>As we see once more: Paris was the hub for Europe's specialists in ancient art. As far as one can judge from the documents, the negotiations in 1819 with Palmaroli concluded without any result<sup>20</sup>.

11 Two years later, in 1821, the huge collection of Edward Solly (1776-1844), an English merchant living for several years in Berlin, was acquired by the Prussian state<sup>21</sup>. From its over 3,000 paintings, more than 1,000 were chosen for the gallery of the future Art Museum. Most of them were from the 15th, 16th century or even older, and they were for the most part in a poor state of conservation. Already during the negotiations to purchase the collection, the responsible parties were aware of the necessity to clean and restore the pictures<sup>22</sup>. But it took some years to realize how huge this challenge really was, and how it differed from the demands of a classical royal picture collection. Until then, Prussia's high officials continued to court those who they considered Europe's first class restorers.

**Fig. 4 Karl vom Stein zu Altenstein**

Detail from: Franz Krüger, *Parade at Opernplatz* 1824, Berlin, Staatliche Museen SPK, Nationalgalerie  
Photo by the author

- 12 The responsible minister Karl von Altenstein (1770-1840) tried to come to terms with Bonnemaison's assistant, Alexis Delahante (1767-1837), who was an art trader, too – and



brother-in-law of the Berlin General Music Director Gaspare Spontini (1774-1851), who had also just come from Paris.<sup>23</sup> The documents show that Delahante must have been more a salesman and collector than a painter and restorer. In fact, the responsible minister hoped that Delahante would also be of assistance in acquiring more high quality pictures by selling or exchanging the less important ones in the former Solly collection. Although there were considerable sums of money paid to Delahante, it is by no means certain if he ever touched one of the paintings.

13 A similar case to Delahante was Stefano T[h]eoli, who was given the order to restore a number of pictures from Solly's former collection in early 1822<sup>24</sup>. The employment led to strong disagreements between the restorer and those responsible for the Museum, which is to be discussed below. Hardenberg resigned in July 1822 and told his minister Altenstein not to employ Teoli anymore, but the works seem to have continued until early 1823. Probably it was the Prussian State Counsellor Friedrich Schultz (1781-1834) who was responsible for Teoli's engagement. Due to Schultz' intermediation Teoli also restored an Italian Renaissance painting<sup>25</sup> possessed by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) between June 1822 and February 1823 in Berlin<sup>26</sup>. Schultz first praised the colouring, after the picture had been cleaned, but some months later he complained that Teoli had, by razing away the varnish, also removed the original colour glaze, "which gives to the colouring of neck and face the pleasing warmth that characterizes the master"<sup>27</sup>. Teoli would not have accepted his critique, and, finally, his retouchings would have generally been of a low quality. Schultz is not the only one to adopt a new mistrust of cleaning and retouching measures<sup>28</sup>. We can suppose that the State Counsellor, who was an amateur, repeated some specialists' opinions we are now going to have a look at.

14 When Karl Friedrich Schinkel (1781-1841) went to Italy some time later in 1824, together with the future director of the Berlin Picture Gallery, Gustav Friedrich Waagen (1794-1868), the latter wrote a report to his superior, Minister Altenstein, in Schinkel's name<sup>29</sup>. They had to view the works restored by Palmaroli and Vincenzo Camuccini (1771-1844). Like Bonnemaison, the latter was a painter, active as restorer, copyist, trader and collector, too<sup>30</sup>. The Prussian King even went to visit him on his trip to Italy in 1822<sup>31</sup>. Altenstein had asked Schinkel to examine the restorations done by the southwest German painters Schlesinger and Koester in the Boisserée collection in Stuttgart, as well<sup>32</sup>. More than the famous and risky transportations of frescoes onto canvas, the Prussians were interested in the restoration of panel paintings. After their inspection, the Prussian architect and art expert was only more convinced of the "excellent talents" gained with the employment of Schlesinger and Koester, who had since begun working for the Prussian state<sup>33</sup>.

**Fig. 5 Karl Friedrich Schinkel and Johann Gottfried Schadow**

Detail from: Franz Krüger, *Parade at Opernplatz 1824*, Berlin, Staatliche Museen SPK, Nationalgalerie  
 Photo by the author

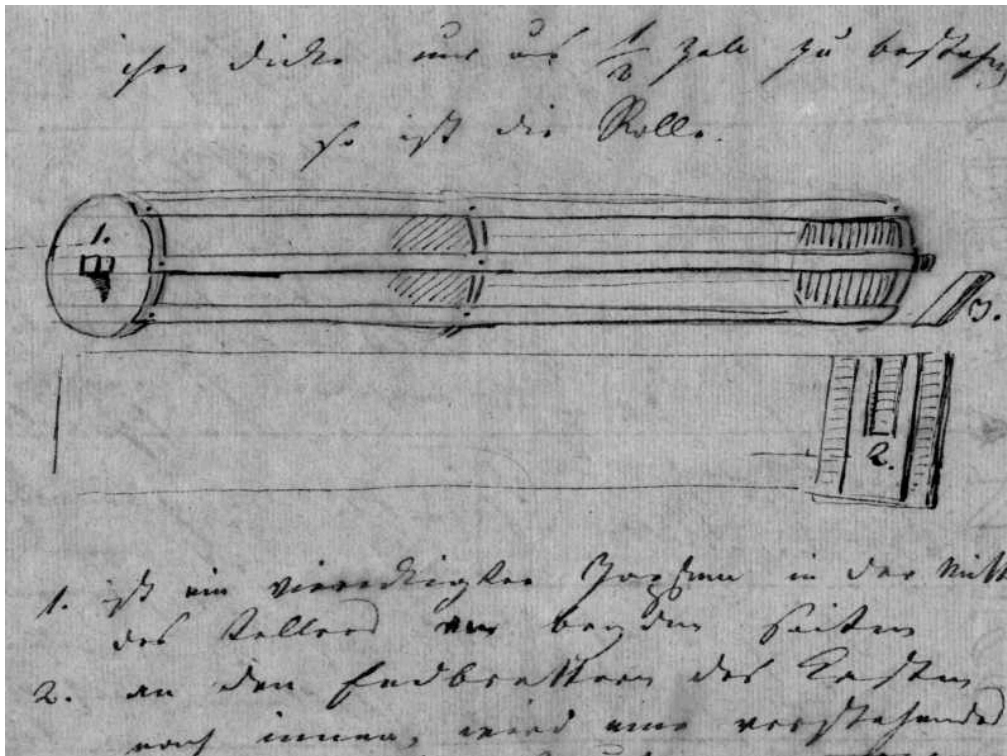
- 15 Schinkel stresses the general scepticism against Italian restorers to highlight the correct decision the Prussian administration have made in adding the Palatinate artists to their staff<sup>34</sup>. They were a “treasure” and worth being kept in Berlin. The Italians would ask for more money but work less systematically and carefully than Schlesinger and Koester. These two would try from the very beginnings of a restoration to conserve and enhance the pristine character of a picture. They would identify with their work and put themselves in the place of the original artist, while Palmaroli or Camuccini would blur the painting’s original character, harmonizing and degrading it to their own taste.

### **Contradictions: art conservation demands and practice in Prussia**

- 16 Again we are confronted with a particular image of the restorer seen as a surgeon who has to restore and to reveal the “character” of a picture and its master; the opposite of the egocentric and superficial artist who cares more about himself than about the old master’s work. As we will discover below, this scepticism rose from bad experience after the purchase of the Solly collection in 1821. No wonder that the head of Berlin’s Art Academy, the sculptor Johann Gottfried Schadow (1764-1850), considered restoration as little more than a commercial trick to brighten and polish up old works – causing irreversible damage such as the wiping off of the upper glazing colour coats<sup>35</sup>. Schadow mistrusted nearly all picture traders and restorers, as he said, due to their commercial practices, and recommended for example the acquisition of the Dutch Boismann’s collection in Utrecht, because the pictures were “virgin”, untouched. By

the way, Schadow reveals some prejudices that align with Schinkel's and Waagen's opinion just quoted: Italian paintings were more often renewed and damaged, while in the "good Dutch" painting cabinets usually pictures would not have been touched since their completion. However, the opinion of Prussia's premier artist represents the 18<sup>th</sup> century tradition, which was the same as for the Italian and French star restorers: restoration as a commercial repairing and renewing of artworks, with the intention of better representation and prices, and without historicizing the artefacts.

**Fig. 6 Friedrich Georg Weitsch's report to the ministry, 1804**



Detail, Berlin, Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz  
Photo by the author

17 However, a more practical, regular and everyday method of restoration work, as Bußler has clearly pointed out as the real requirement in the royal collections, for the Court galleries as well as for the future museum, definitely had its tradition in Prussia, and should just be enhanced by the experiences from the famous French and Italian galleries and their keepers. An example can be given with the Academy painter and professor Friedrich Georg Weitsch (1758-1828), who was sent to the new Western provinces in 1803-1804 to seek out artworks in secularized churches and monasteries<sup>36</sup>. To one of his reports from that travel, Weitsch attached a short description of how old pictures should be transported<sup>37</sup>. It shows care and attention to the particular problems of older canvases and paintings on wood. A detailed sketch shows the construction of a vibration-free container for rolled-up canvases.

18 But this seems to have been an exception. It was not just the royal castles that did not employ a full-time restorer. The Art Academy itself seems to have been quite disinterested in restoration and conservation problems, which is not surprising when we recall Schadow's opinion. When the Giustiniani collection in Paris was acquired and sent to Berlin in 1816, a young Prussian painter offered himself as curator for the 150 pictures on their transport to Berlin<sup>38</sup>. Philipp Franck (ca. 1780-1848) was living in Paris and had been involved with the retransfers of Prussia's artworks in 1814<sup>39</sup>. Foreseen only as a helper on the trip to Frankfurt am Main, he happened to remain with the expedition until reaching Berlin. Franck even stayed almost half of the year 1816 in Berlin attending to the paintings by order of Hardenberg. It is astonishing how self-confidently he behaved in protecting the historical paintings<sup>40</sup>. In his opinion, this was also necessary because staff and painters at the Academy would not take care in the way

they should. It is obvious that the young ambitious painter who had got to know Paris with its immense artistic life, the Louvre museum in the Napoleonic era, looked down now on the provincial town of Berlin.

19 Indeed, a castilian's complaint from 1821 reveals the practices of the young élèves when copying pictures in the castle's gallery<sup>41</sup>. They would "swab the paintings with spittle to reveal the base coat of colour" and even damage the pictures with graffiti or in other ways: Some of these students or friends of theirs were even observed eating and discarding the remains of fruit among the artwork in the gallery. The castilian mentioned one painting in particular, of a painter with his students, that was "severely damaged"<sup>42</sup>. Although it was usual at that time even to caulk pictures, the manners of the Academy scholars reveal a lack of general care for the old works, and might explain Franck's anxiety. He was perhaps not aiming at the professors but at the employees and disciples, and he said explicitly that the pictures from the Giustiniani collection were "in danger"<sup>43</sup>. Specifically, he was afraid of the paintings being moved around – the Academy had little space and wanted to transfer the pictures, or even put them into an ex horse stable, where the "air would destroy them". Franck referred to "supporting studies" to prove his apprehension. Some years later, we find the same situation: Schinkel and a colleague complained that the pictures from the former Solly collection would be conserved badly at the Academy, and were already showing signs of new damage<sup>44</sup>.

20 The pictures of the royal castles remained under control of the Lord Stewart, in keeping with a decision of King Frederick William in February 1819, until a definitive selection for the museum was made<sup>45</sup>. This happened only in 1829<sup>46</sup>. For this reason the restoration campaign of the 1820s concerned almost exclusively the hundreds of pictures that came from the Solly collection, chosen for the future museum in 1822-23 by one of the most dedicated museum planners, the archaeologist Aloys Hirt (1759-1837), as well as some single acquisitions.

## **Trial and error: towards a professional restoration atelier in the Royal Museum**

21 Aside from looking outwards – the internationalization – the most important question of that time was the professionalization of picture cleaning and restoration in Berlin. Considering the prices and salaries the Prussian government was willing and able to pay, and the pretension of the star-restorers and painters, it was obvious that there was no way to collaborate with Bonnemaison or Palmaroli. It is illuminative to look at the concrete figures. The ministry granted 3,000talers for the restoration and maintenance of the future museum collection in September 1822, and added the same amount in March 1823<sup>47</sup>. Bonnemaison's claim mentioned above was of 7,500 talers for three months of work. Teoli asked for 4,000 talers a year<sup>48</sup>, and finally got more than 1,200 for his work done in 1822-23. Delahante had received 576 talers shortly before<sup>49</sup>. However, the local painter, Bock – the Court Restorer since 1817, as we remember – received for his restoration of some single pictures<sup>50</sup> about 183, his colleague Aloysius Menschel (1782-after 1834) 100, and two others 50 talers at the same time. A carpenter and his company were paid 25 talers for the gluing of several pictures. By comparison: a worker or craftsman earned about 100 talers a year<sup>51</sup>. In spite of all these efforts, only 41 pictures had been restored<sup>52</sup>, out of more than 1,000.

22 But it was not just the money and the amount of pictures: the huge collection of historical paintings had to be shown not in a representative noble gallery but in a museum, in an educative context. They needed a different treatment than the painter-restorers in the tradition of the past century could offer to them. This shows that Schadow's ideal of untouched artworks – to be found only in some private collections with newer paintings – was by no means helpful concerning the paintings forming the now enormous royal collections. We recall Bußler's report on the damages to the older collection, and we have to consider the number of recently purchased paintings, mostly altar pieces and devotional pictures from 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century Italy.

23 A commission was founded to organize the preparation of works for the museum, led by Schinkel and Hirt and involving three professors of painting from the Art Academy<sup>53</sup>. For those

responsible, it was important to have control over every measure taken on the works of art. Hirt was also concerned about leaving the care of the pictures to just one painter: So he asked the minister not to employ only Delahante for the collection, due to his meagre experience and the scale of the collection<sup>54</sup>. “A bad restorer can destroy the whole collection”, warned Hirt in February 1822. When they were still in Solly’s possession, he was condemned to see pictures cleaned or retouched from “unskilled and blundering hands”, as he claimed. Hirt might refer to Teoli and the local painter [J.W.] Geis[s]ler. In 1819, the latter were given three large altar pieces of high value from Solly’s collection to restore, for which he received 67 talers<sup>55</sup>. After Delahante had left, Teoli and the other painters mentioned above were engaged.

24 From two official complaints we learn about the measures taken by the hired restorers and the conflicts with the Museum’s commission. Teoli wrote twice in vain to Altenstein, in February 1823, complaining about the vilification of his work, the withdrawal from his job and the denial of full payment by the Commission<sup>56</sup>. Teoli quotes the professors’ justification, regarding a *St. Sebastian*, given to him for restoration<sup>57</sup>: “that the essential element was the beautiful colouring of the figure, and that this has been lost at the restorer’s hands”. Teoli claimed that on the contrary, “la figure du Saint étoit bien ruinée et endommagée, puis qu’on avoit emporté la Couleur et les demi-teints en la lavant avec des Corrosifs, de manière que la tête du Saint étoit à moitié disparu, au lieu de la quelle se présentoit une autre plus basse que la première que l’auteur avoit probablement fait avant.” Without being able to judge this particular case, it is very likely that the conditions of many paintings like this were indeed very poor and hard to differentiate. Furthermore, Teoli mourned the professors’ observation, mistrust and intervention: After he had begun to work, they would have appeared in the atelier and criticised “que la tête ne réussissait pas bien et que probablement je m’étois trompé dans le Choix des Couleurs. Pour la corriger je remis de Suite et dans leur présence la tête dans le premier état, ce qui donna lieu à une grande Discussion entr’eux dont le résultat fut par un accord général que je dusse faire de nouveau comme j’avois commencé”. Teoli obviously wanted to show the professors as fools in his polemics. It is probable though, that Hirt, Schinkel, and the Academy painters did not agree on how to face the challenge of restoring the mass of old works. Finally, Teoli refused to follow the instructions: “Un jour que j’étois près d’achever, un des Professeurs me conseilla d’employer des Couleurs à Corps et de mettre des traits de Clair sur la tête et sur le reste de la figure, ce qui étoit contre les Règles de l’art de la Restauration, et selon moi n’aurait pas produit un bon effet, je m’y refusai donc comme contraire à ma méthode.” Two days later, Teoli claimed, he was dismissed from his work.

**Fig. 7** Marco Basaiti, *Saint Sebastian*



Berlin, Gemäldegalerie Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Preußischer Kulturbesitz (missing)  
 Photo. Atelier Schwarz

- 25 This conflict reveals an intercultural misunderstanding, as mentioned above. But the point is not a question of honour, nor of national traditions, but the differing ideas of a restorer's profession and duties, apart from technical and practical customs, called by Teoli "the rules of restoration art". A second case may illustrate this: in summer 1822, the Berlin painter Antonio Schrader, who signed as "Court painter and restorer", was given two less important pictures for restoration. He faced a lot of suspicion from the Museum commission as well<sup>58</sup>. In his complaint from January 1823, Schrader described that he had been asked by the commission to clean the picture entrusted to him and to present the result before restoring it. "For I unfortunately know from experience," Schrader wrote, "that German talent is rarely recognized, or only when no foreign talent can be found. I therefore feel obliged to be as careful" as the commission. He partly removed the dirt and proved that he "did not lose any of the inks comprised in the picture". Although Schrader claimed to have completed his work without being criticised by the commission, Hirt later refused full payment, considering the restorations as not sufficient. Bitterly, Schrader asked: "It almost seems to me as if the professors considered the restorer of a painting as a servant to their artistic works. I wonder whether they are on the right track?" He offered himself as a specialist<sup>59</sup>: "Twenty years of experience have taught me great cautiousness, and that what might be well-suited to a private collection is often not applicable at all to such a precious art treasure as the Royal picture collection."
- 26 This sounds like a warning, and in fact, bad experience was yet to come to make the responsible officials careful: A certain Hor[r]ack from Dresden, supposedly a former tailor, was hired in early 1823 for restoration work<sup>60</sup>. He was asked to transfer a large painting from its destroyed wooden carrier onto canvas. The operation failed, as reported by another painter, C. Zimmermann, who assisted Horrack. Instead of using a "special grounding, from a kind of yeast", that would have been flexible, the latter tried to flatten the new carrier with chalk: It absorbed the tincture that was then coated on to glue the colour layer onto the canvas, and some parts of the picture were lost. In June 1823, Horrack fled with the advance payment, leaving the half destroyed painting in the atelier, which was then given to Menschel for repairs. Horrack's defence – who even asked to be employed again – was supported by Zimmermann in a letter to the responsible minister: The restorer would have been forced by the commission to transfer the painting to canvas instead of wood as Horrack would have recommended. However, Schinkel and Hirt declared that he would have proceeded his work in a risky way without the commission's acknowledgement.
- 27 This might have been the final signal, together with the failure to employ single restorers, to establish a ministerially controlled workshop based on the division of labour. Those responsible had their attention drawn to two young painters who had won fame with their restorations of the medieval paintings in the Boisserée collection in Heidelberg: Schlesinger and Koester. Waagen had recommended them<sup>61</sup> and Schinkel praised their work, as we have seen above. Together with Hirt, they were then involved in the formation of the future museum's restoration atelier in Berlin that was planned to be a "school for restorers" as well<sup>62</sup>. As the commissioners pointed out, the two new restorers showed a lot of experience, great skill and care in all details of their work, and with paintings from all periods and schools<sup>63</sup>. Hirt also tried to convince other Academy professors and scholars to participate in this hierarchically organized manufactory<sup>64</sup>.
- 28 In October 1824, Hirt wrote an extended report on the restoration of the former Solly collection<sup>65</sup>. Still in the process of being established, the enormous efforts already begun showing progress: The number of paintings being restored or prepared for the exposition was three-digit. The concrete measures were coordinated and harmonized by the experts, artists and restorers alike. If we trust Hirt's and Schinkel's judgements from 1824, the results were satisfying aesthetically as well as with respect to the conservation of the art works. Six years later, in 1830, another report from Uhden to his minister points out the success of the restoration campaign concluding with the proposal to establish the restoration

workshop with regularly employed restorers and its own budget of 2,000 talers a year as a permanent institution of the Art Museum that had just opened its gates to the public<sup>66</sup>. This was implemented and has formed the structural basis for these efforts up to the present day. This rapid process of institutionalization not only entailed a professionalization but also prompted a separation from the commercial art market. It corresponds with the fading renown of private collections including the royal ones – whose masterpieces were more and more often exposed as copies or wrongly attributed minor works – and with the establishment of public museums as the halls of fame for art.

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## Notes

1 SKWIRBLIES, R., “<Ein Nationalgut, auf das jeder Einwohner stolz sein dürfte>. Die Sammlung Solly als Grundlage der Berliner Gemäldegalerie“, *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen*, n°51, 2009, p. 69-99.

2 VOGTHERR, C. M., “Das Königliche Museum zu Berlin. Planungen und Konzeption des ersten Berliner Kunstmuseums“, *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen*, n°39, 1997, supplement.

3 A publication by Ute Stehr, Berlin, is in the process of being published.

4 RUDI, T. (ed. and comm.), Christian Philipp Koester, *Ueber Restauration alter Oelgemälde*. Nachdruck der Originalausgabe von 1827 bis 1830 (Bücherei des Restaurators 5), Leipzig, Seemann, 2001; PERUSINI, G. (ed. and comm.), Christian Philipp Koester, *Sul restauro degli antichi dipinti a olio*, Udine, Forum, 2001; SCHIEBL, U., “Der Maler und Restaurator Jakob Schlesinger (1792-1855) und seine Abhandlung <Ueber Tempera-Bilder und deren Restauration>“, *Die Kunst und ihre Erhaltung*, festschrift für Rudolf E. Straub, Worms, Werner, 1990, p. 97-117.

5 As the following quotations: Bußler to Maltzahn, 28th December 1815, Berlin, Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz (in the following: GStA PK), I.HA Rep.74 Staatskanzleramt L sect.8 Spez. n°5, no foliation.

6 Cf. SAVOY, B., *Patrimoine annexé. Les biens culturels saisi par la France en Allemagne autour de 1800*, Passages/Passagen 5, Paris, Maison des Sciences et de l’homme, 2003.

7 With further references to mostly unpublished sources: FITZENREITER, D., “Gemälderestauratoren in den Preußischen Schlössern“, *Jahrbuch der Stiftung Preußische Schlösser und Gärten Berlin-Brandenburg*, n°3, 1999/2000, p. 130-136; *Idem*, “Die Gemälderestauratoren der preußischen Schlösser im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert und ihre Arbeitsmethoden“, *Die Kunst zu bewahren. Restaurierung in den preußischen Schlössern und Gärten = ibid.*, n°8, 2006, p. 49-58, and: *Idem*, “Gemälde und Rahmen“, *Marmor, Stein und Eisen bricht. Die Kunst zu bewahren. Restaurierung in den preußischen Schlössern und Gärten*, exposition catalogue, Leipzig, Koehler & Amelang, 2006, p. 141-146.

8 Last attribution: Roman school around 1650, formerly Potsdam, Bildergalerie Sanssouci, GK I 7619.

9 FITZENREITER, D., *op. cit.* 1999/2000, p. 134, claims that Bußler restored some pictures himself. This seems to be a misunderstanding of a letter from the Gallery inspector to Bußler (quoted *ibid.* p.136, n. 9). The amateur probably just copied the paintings and did not dare retouch them.

10 BUBLER, *op.cit.*

11 Bock to Hardenberg, 3rd February, 16th November and 12th December 1816, GStA PK, I.HA Rep.74 Staatskanzleramt L sect.8 Spez. n°5, no foliation. The picture which is referred to: The Final Judgement by Hans Memling, Danzig, Muzeum Narodowe.

12 Today: Imitator of Antonio Carracci, Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, Kat.-N°385. Special thanks to Ute Stehr and Daniel Fitzenreiter for their help in examining the picture.

13 BUBLER, *Op.cit.*

14 Hardenberg to Maltzahn, 27th March 1816, GStA PK, I.HA Rep.74 Staatskanzleramt L sect.8 Spez. n°5, no foliation.

15 *Ibid.*; Cf. Danesi Squarzina, S. (ed.), *Caravaggio in Preußen. Die Sammlung Giustiniani und die Berliner Gemäldegalerie*, exhib. cat., Milan, Electa 2001.

16 Bonnemaïson to Hardenberg, 2nd April 1816, GStA PK, I.HA Rep.74 Staatskanzleramt L sect.8 Spez. n°5, no foliation.

17 Hardenberg’s conception for a royal order, 27th March 1817, GStA PK, I.HA Rep.74 Staatskanzleramt L sect.8 Spez. n°5, no foliation.

18 Note on royal order from 4th February 1819, GStA PK, I.HA Rep.76 Kultusministerium Ve sect.1 part.15 n°31 t.1, fol.207.

19 Ramdohr to Friedrich von der Goltz, Rome, 5th December 1811, GStA PK, BPH Rep.49 F 12/1, no foliation.



- 20 Cf. SCHÖLZEL, C., "Das Wirken Pietro Palmarolis in Dresden", *Zeitschrift für Kunsttechnologie und Konservierung*, n°8 t.1, 1994, p.1-24.
- 21 SKWIRBLIES, R., *op. cit.*
- 22 Altenstein to State Counsellor Friedrich Schultz, 1st September 1820, GStA PK I.HA Rep.76 Kultusministerium Ve sect.15 part.8 n°13 t.1, fol.111.
- 23 Altenstein to Hardenberg, 21st November 1821, GStA PK, I.HA Rep.74 Staatskanzleramt L sect.8 Spez. n°5, no foliation; further documents: GStA PK, I.HA Rep.76 Kultusministerium I sect.30 n°198; GStA PK, I.HA Rep.76 Ve sect.15 part.1 n°4 t.1, up to summer 1822.
- 24 Altenstein to Hardenberg, 13th May 1822, GStA PK, I.HA Rep.76 Kultusministerium Ve sect.15 part.1 n°4 t.1, fol.112f.; Hardenberg to Altenstein, 22nd July 1822, GStA PK, I.HA Rep.74 Staatskanzleramt L sect.8 Spez. n°27, fol.220. Perhaps he was a Roman silversmith family member, born in 1769, who lost his commission in 1805 and might have changed profession, cf. BULGARI CALISSONI, A., *Maestri argentieri, gemmari, e orafi di Roma*, Rome, Palombi, 1987, p. 413f.
- 25 Lombardian painter, Portrait of Paola Gonzaga Trivulzio, Weimar, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Inv.-n°G183.
- 26 BOTHE, R., HAUSSMANN, U., *Goethes "Bildergalerie". Die Anfänge der Kunstsammlungen zu Weimar. Im Blickfeld der Goethezeit. Sonderband*, Berlin, G+H, 2002, p. 141f. Cf. Anonymus, *Des Herrn Directors Dr. Waagen Bilder-Taufe und Aufstellung der Gemälde im königlichen Museum zu Berlin*, Leipzig, Brüggemann, 1832, p. 20.
- 27 Schultz to Goethe, 16th August 1822 and 24th February 1823, quotation in: Bothe/Haussmann, *op. cit.*, p.141.
- 28 Nearly the same words Wilhelm von Humboldt uses to accuse vicariously the collector Edward Solly of unprofessional and heavy retouchings of his pictures, Humboldt to his wife, 30th August 1823: VON SYDOW, A., (ed.), *Wilhelm und Caroline von Humboldt in ihren Briefen. t.7.Reife Seelen. Briefe von 1820-1835*, Berlin, Mittler & son, 1916, p. 162.
- 29 Waagen in Schinkel's name to Altenstein, no datation, GStA PK, I.HA Rep.76 Kultusministerium Ve sect.15 part.1 n°4 Adh., fol.107 (modern handwritten copy).
- 30 Cf. GIACOMINI, F., *Per reale vantaggio delle arti e della storia. Vincenzo Camuccini e il restauro dei dipinti a Roma nella prima metà dell'Ottocento*. Roma, Quasar, 2007.
- 31 King Friedrich Wilhelm III's diary, 9th December 1822, GStA PK, BPH Rep.49 F 25, fol.107v.
- 32 Altenstein to Schinkel, 21st June 1824, draft, GStA PK, I.HA Rep.76 Kultusministerium I supplement II n°90, fol.3.
- 33 Having been asked for collaboration in autumn 1823, they had started work in March 1824, Schinkel and Hirt to Altenstein, 7th October 1823 resp. 24th June 1824, GStA PK, I.HA Rep.76 Kultusministerium Ve sect.15 part.1 n°4 t.3, fol.26f., 78f.
- 34 As the following quotations: WAAGEN/SCHINKEL, *Op.cit.*
- 35 As the following quotations: Schadow to Hardenberg, 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1817, GStA PK, I.HA Rep.74 Staatskanzleramt L sect.6 Gen. n°1 t.1, fol.82.
- 36 The Secretary of the Prussian Art Academy, Johann Gottfried Moelter (1754-1805) to Hardenberg, 11th June 1803, GStA PK, I.HA Rep.76 alt Kultusministerium III n°253, no foliation.
- 37 *Verhaltens Maasregeln bey Versendung alter Ohlgemälde sowohl auf Holtz als Leinwand gemalte, wen sie durch Alter bröcklich oder dürre geworden*, 7th October 1804, GStA PK, I.HA Rep.76 alt Kultusministerium III n°253, no foliation.
- 38 Wilhelm von Humboldt to Hardenberg, 6th December 1815, GStA PK, I.HA Rep.74 Staatskanzleramt L sect.8 Spez. n°4, fol.7.
- 39 Hardenberg to Friedrich von der Goltz, 31st August 1814, GStA PK, I.HA Rep.81 Gesandtschaft Paris IX n°14, fol.30; Hardenberg to Hans von Bülow, 2nd November 1815, GStA PK, I.HA Rep.74 Staatskanzleramt L sect.6 Gen. n°1 t.1, fol.13; see: SAVOY, B., (ed.), *Jean Henry. Journal d'un voyage à Paris 1814*, Paris, Le Promeneur/Gallimard, 2001; *Eadem*, « Peintres berlinois à Paris 1800-1820 », CHAUDONNERET, M.-C. (ed.), *Les artistes étrangers à Paris. De la fin du Moyen Âge aux années 1920*, Bern, Lang, 2007, p. 157-175.
- 40 Franck to Hardenberg, 10th and 26th June 1816, GStA PK, I.HA Rep.74 Staatskanzleramt L sect.8 Spez. n°4, fol.35f.
- 41 The castillian of the Berlin Castle, Richter, to the Lord Stewart, 20th July 1821, AdK, Berlin, PrAdK n°5, fol.12.
- 42 Abraham de Pape, Drawing lessons, Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, Kat.-N°1010.
- 43 Franck to Hardenberg, 26th June 1816, GStA PK, I.HA Rep.74 Staatskanzleramt L sect.8 Spez. n°4, fol.36.

- 44 Schinkel and Aloys Hirt to Altenstein, 19th July 1822, GStA PK, I.HA Rep.76 Kultusministerium Ve sect.15 part.1 n°4 t.1, fol.128v.
- 45 King Friedrich Wilhelm III to Altenstein, 20th February 1819, after royal order from 4th February 1819, GStA PK, I.HA Rep.76 Kultusministerium Ve sect.15 part.1 n°3 t.1, fol.122.
- 46 VOGTHERR, C. M., “Die Auswahl von Gemälden aus den preußischen Königsschlössern für die Berliner Gemäldegalerie im Jahr 1829“, *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* 47, 2005, p.63-105; SKWIRBLIES, R., *op. cit.*, p. 96-98.
- 47 GStA PK, I.HA Rep.76 Kultusministerium Ve sect.15 part.1 n°4 t.2, fol.51-53.
- 48 Teoli to Altenstein, 1st February 1823, GStA PK, I.HA Rep. 76 Kultusministerium Ve sect.15 part.1 n°4 t.2, fol.13.
- 49 *Ibid.*, fol.52.
- 50 State Counsellor August von Harlem to Altenstein, 20th May 1827, GStA PK, I.HA Rep.76 Kultusministerium Ve sect.15 part.1 n°4 Adh., fol.45v.
- 51 MÜLLER, H.-H., “80 Stunden Arbeit für einen Hungerlohn“, *Berlinische Monatschrift*, n°7 fasc.2, 1998, p. 12-16.
- 52 Schinkel’s and Hirt’s report to Altenstein, 1st March 1823: GStA PK, I.HA Rep.76 Kultusministerium Ve sect.15 part.1 n°4 t.2, fol.63-73f.
- 53 Johann Erdmann Hummel (1769-1852), Karl Ludwig Kuhbeil (1766-1823), Karl Wilhelm Wach (1787-1845): Schinkel/Hirt, 1st March 1823, *op. cit.*, fol. 64-64v. Cf. VOGTHERR, C. M., *op. cit.*, p. 150, 196.
- 54 As the following quotations: Hirt to Altenstein, 12th February 1822, GStA PK, I. HA Rep.76 Kultusministerium Ve sect.15 part.1 n°4 t.1, fol.98v.-99.
- 55 State Counsellor Friedrich Schultz to Altenstein, 9th December 1819: The painter [J.W.] Geis[s]ler were given altar pieces attributed to Tizian (today: Francesco Vecellio, Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, Kat.-N°202), to Antonio Sogliano (today: imitator of Lorenzo di Credi, Stiftung Preußische Schlösser und Gärten, GK I 2054) and to Squarcione (unidentified, perhaps: Marco Zoppo, Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, Kat.-N°1170), GStA PK, I.HA Rep.76 Kultusministerium Ve sect.15 part.8 n°13 t.1, fol.83v.; GStA PK, I. HA Rep.76 Kultusministerium Ve sect.15 part.1 n°4 t.1, fol.58.
- 56 Teoli to Altenstein, 1st and 12th February 1823, GStA PK, I. HA Rep.76 Kultusministerium Ve sect.15 part.1 n°4 t.2, fol.13f., 48f., as the following quotations.
- 57 Due to Teoli’s description most likely: Marco Basaiti, formerly Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, Kat.N°37.
- 58 Schrader declared to have restored a non identified picture from Giorgione’s school and a Annunciation by [Frans] Franck[en], probably: School of Marten de Vos, formerly Royal Prussian Castles, GK I 2651, Schrader to Altenstein, 24th January 1823, GStA PK, I.HA Rep.76 Kultusministerium Ve sect.15 part.1 n°4 t.2, fol.26f. (as the following quotations).
- 59 Schrader mentions a treatise of his, given to and ignored by the Commission: How paintings from all schools were to be cleaned, and in which ways; the substances for cleaning and how to use them; which colours were to be used for restoration, how to prepare those colours to withstand air and light detection; the transfer onto new canvas or wood; how to varnish pictures, how many times and when to protect them from going brown. *Ibid.*
- 60 Anonymous, *op. cit.*, p. 18-22, obviously exaggerated in its polemics. Partly conserved is the correspondance of Zimmermann, Schinkel and Hirt, and Horrack with the ministry: GStA PK, I.HA Rep. 76 Kultusministerium Ve sect.15 part.1 n°4 t.2, fol. 129f., 133-135, t.3, fol. 4-8. The picture – Mary with the Child, St. Sebastian and Hieronymus – could not be identified yet.
- 61 GEISMEIER, I., “Gustav Friedrich Waagen – 45 Jahre Museumsarbeit“, *Forschungen und Berichte. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin*, n°20/21, 1980, p. 400f.
- 62 Schinkel and Hirt to Altenstein, 7th October 1823, GStA PK, I.HA Rep.76 Kultusministerium Ve sect.15 part.1 n°4 t.3, fol.27.
- 63 Schinkel and Hirt to Altenstein, 26th June 1824, GStA PK, I.HA Rep.76 Kultusministerium Ve sect.15 part.1 n°4 t.3, fol.78-78v.
- 64 Hirt to Altenstein, report on the restoration works in the picture collection of the future museum, 18th October 1824, GStA PK, I. HA Rep.76 Kultusministerium Ve sect.15 part.1 n°4 Adh., fol.61-65. The only one finally involved was Johann Erdmann Hummel (1769-1852).
- 65 *Ibid.*, fol.59-69v.
- 66 Uhden to Altenstein, 23th September 1830, GStA PK, VI.HA NI Altenstein A part.VI b n°7, fol.62.

### *Pour citer cet article*

#### Référence électronique

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### *À propos de l'auteur*

#### **Robert Skwirbliés**

Robert Skwirbliés est né en 1980 à Berlin. Il termine actuellement une thèse de doctorat sur le déplacement des peintures primitives italiennes en Allemagne, au début du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, sous la direction de Prof. Dr. Werner Busch (Freie Universität Berlin). Depuis 2010, il collabore en outre au projet ArtTransFrom des Prof. Dr. Bénédicte Savoy (Technische Universität Berlin) et Dr. France Nerlich (Université de Tours) sur les formations artistiques transnationales entre la France et l'Allemagne.

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### *Résumés*

En Prusse, dans les collections royales, l'attention portée à la conservation et à la restauration des peintures s'accroît au début du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. L'expertise des personnes impliquées se transforme considérablement à cette époque. Les peintres vernaculaires traditionnellement employés sont remplacés par des restaurateurs français et italiens recevant des commandes. Des peintres-restaurateurs allemands prennent ensuite leurs places et se regroupent dans un atelier lié au nouveau musée de Berlin. Après une période de négligence caractérisée par des actions très limitées, des restaurations plus systématiques et contrôlées sont ainsi supervisées par les autorités dans l'institution naissante.

The efforts on conservation and restoration of pictures in the Prussian royal collections increased in the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Local painters were replaced first by French and Italian restorers, then by German professionals that founded an own workshop, related to the new public art museum in Berlin. Systematic, frugal restorations and control by the authorities superseded former disregard and selective measures.

### *Entrées d'index*

**Mots-clés** : Berlin, collection royale, formation, Koester, musée, peinture, Schlesinger, collection

**Keywords** : background, Berlin, Koester, museum, painting, royal collection, Schlesinger