

Of Patronage and Paris

BY MATTHIAS ANDERSON



Many, if not most, of the world's greatest artworks owe their existence to the patrons and collectors who commissioned or bought them. From the Medicis' fostering of the Florentine Renaissance and Napoleon's reliance on Jacques-Louis David to Henri Matisse's work for Dr. Albert Barnes, patrons have actively helped shape the history of art. This year, you and other collectors have a unique opportunity to shape American contemporary realism by helping a group of gifted painters take the next step in their professional development.

How? This August, the classically trained artist-educators Sean Forester and Vanessa Rothe will lead an invited group of colleagues to Paris, where they will examine museum masterworks, hear lectures on the arts and humanities, and paint together. These activities are hardly rare in Paris, but their end goal is. The Paris Seminar has been created to meet an urgent need: America's ateliers and art schools are not offering advanced instruction in the composing and painting of complex multi-figure scenes. This means that even today's best artists often shy away from such meaningful projects. Moreover, American artists are often not



An American-born, Paris-trained artist who painted complex multi-figure compositions well:
Charles Courtney Curran (1861-1942)

Fair Critics

1887, Oil on canvas, 18 x 32 in.

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City; 2014.128; Gift of Daniel and Mathew Wolf, in memory of Diane R. Wolf



Aaron Westerberg (b. 1974)

Transition in Rose

2011, Oil on linen, 34 x 22 in.

Private collection, Brentwood, California

particularly familiar with historical literature, mythology, and philosophy; this is a disadvantage, because drawing ideas from the past and connecting them to the present is an essential feature of artistry.

There are few better places than Paris to stand before ambitious narrative masterworks, to examine their brushwork and surfaces, and to deconstruct their composition. Making and learning together, the participating artists will learn how their fore-runners put theory into practice, all while broadening their artistic ambitions and enhancing their already significant technical skills.

Trained at such institutions as the California Institute of Art, Florence Academy of Art, Grand Central Academy, Laguna College of Art and Design, and the Repin Institute, the invited artists for 2015 are Andrew Ameral, Candice Bohannon, Michelle Dunaway, Adrian Gottlieb, Amaya Gulpide, Michael Klein, Iliya Mirochnik, Julio Reyes, Kate Sammons, Jordan Sokol, and Aaron Westerberg.

Forester and Rothe have developed an innovative curriculum that includes Forester's own course about how composition was taught in 19th-century academies, as well as lectures by Parisian museum curators, the artist-philosopher Alan Lawson (co-founder of the Alpine Fellowship), *Fine Art Connoisseur* editor-in-chief Peter Trippi, and possibly a professor from the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts. A talk about materials and tools will be delivered by Dominique Sennelier, who represents the third generation of the Sennelier family to run France's most important art-supply firm. No intellectual slouches themselves, the artist-participants will also present their own papers and act as discussants after the guest lectures.

Home base for this lucky group will be L'Académie de la Grande

Chaumière, an atelier in the Montparnasse neighborhood once frequented by Picasso, Modigliani, and other legends. This atmospheric setting will surely further the program's goal of fostering the camaraderie through which inspirations are shared and movements advanced.

YOUR OWN COLLECTION, INSTANTLY

Needless to say, 10 days in Paris is an expensive proposition, encompassing the participants' flights, accommodations, space rentals, modeling fees, museum admissions, and meals. To raise the total necessary sum of \$55,000, all of the artists have agreed to provide one signed work measuring between 16 x 20 inches and 30 x 40 inches. The works will not be sold separately, but instead to one canny patron for \$55,000 as the 2015 Paris Seminar Collection. All will be completed and signed before August.

If the patron is amenable, the collection will be renamed for him or her, and will be exhibited at New York City's Salmagundi Club during an open house that celebrates both the Paris Seminar and the patron's generosity. (This will be a rare public viewing—an ideal occasion for the patron to invite his or her friends and colleagues to see them.)

Given the bright futures of the participating artists, there is every reason to expect the collection will grow in value over time, which is another reason it will be accompanied by a folder containing documents of authenticity. Finally, the patron will be invited to attend the Paris Seminar, at his or her own expense, in order to enjoy its activities alongside the participants he or she has benefited.

Readers of *Fine Art Connoisseur*, which will publish another article about the Paris Seminar late next year, are invited to learn more about this unique patronage opportunity by visiting parissemnar.com. ■

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Amaya Gurpide (1974)

Saudade

2014, Graphite, black and white chalk on hand-toned paper, 43 x 30 in.

Collection of the artist

