



The Restoration of Paintings in Paris, 1750-1815: Practice, Discourse, Materiality

Noémie Étienne

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The decades following the 1973 publication of Alessandro Conti's *Storia del Restauro* have seen considerable scholarly interest in the development of restoration in France in the second half of the eighteenth century. A number of technical treatises and biographies of restorers have offered insight into restoration practice. *The Restoration of Paintings in Paris, 1750–1815*, however, is the first book to situate this work within the broader historical and philosophical contexts of the time.

Drawing on previously unpublished primary material from archives in Paris, Berlin, Rome, and Venice, Noémie Étienne combines art history with anthropology and sociology to survey the waning decades of the Ancien Régime and early post-Revolution France. Initial chapters present the diversity of restoration practice, encompassing not only royal institutions and the Louvre museum but also private art dealers, artists, and craftsmen, and examine questions of trade secrecy and the changing role of the restorer. Following chapters address the influence of restoration and exhibition on the aesthetic understanding of paintings as material objects. The book closes with a discussion of the institutional and political uses of restoration, along with an art historical consideration of such key concepts as authenticity, originality, and stability of artworks, emphasizing the multilayered dimension of paintings by such important artists as Titian and Raphael. There is also a useful dictionary of the main restorers active in France between 1750 and 1815.

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