

# **Call for papers, “Create and After ? Posterity and Critical Fortune of 17th and 18th Century European Artists”**

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Attribué à Philippe de Champaigne, Allégorie de la vie humaine, 1646, huile sur panneau, H: 28, 4 cm ; L : 37, 4 cm, Le Mans, musée de Tessé, LM 10.572.

Call for contributors

Date limite :

Samedi 28 juin 2025

## **Call for papers International symposium**

**Symposium dates : November 7 and 8, 2025**

**Event location : Salle Vasari, Galerie Colbert, 2 rue Vivienne, 75002 Paris.**

## **Arguments**

According to Antoine Schnapper, one of the tasks of the art historian is to 'go against the tide of neglect and oblivion'. Art history has been built on a selection of works and events deemed worthy of remembrance. Conversely, artists, artefacts and other objects deemed unworthy of an era, a trend or a discourse have been neglected or obscured. The notions of 'critical fortune', 'posterity' and 'reception' highlight this dynamic. The artists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and their works who enjoy lasting recognition escape oblivion, while others, less valued, disappear from the narrative. These contrasting fates are rooted in a variety of factors: changing aesthetic sensibilities, the material nature of the works, historical upheavals and their visibility in museum collections.

The history of European art has its origins in the writing of artists' biographies, from Vasari to Félibien to Dezallier d'Argenville. It is based not only on the objective appreciation of works, but also on the judgements made by artists, the public, critics, historians and the art market, which can alter or reinforce an artist's position. Since the end of the 19th century and the birth of art history as a discipline, historians such as Henry Jouin (1878 ; 1888; 1890), Jules Guiffrey (1877) ; Pierre Marcel (1914 ; 1924) and Jean Locquin (1912 ; 1933) have set out to fill these gaps by shedding light on the mechanisms that led to certain artists being forgotten. However, these early studies, which were often based on specific cases, did not provide an overall analysis of the oblivion or marginalisation of artists. Since the 1960s, many artists of the 17th and 18th centuries have been rediscovered or reassessed thanks to monographs accompanied by catalogues raisonnés. New methodologies and easier access to sources have enriched this research, thanks to digital technologies that bring to light previously unpublished information on artists' careers and their influences. The rise of social history and gender studies has made it possible to place artists in broader contexts, and the study of materials and techniques offers new perspectives on artistic creation. These tools have considerably renewed the approach to monographs, providing a more nuanced reading of artists' careers. However, the traditional monograph, even when accompanied by a catalogue raisonné, is not always sufficient to provide a comprehensive overview of the critical fortunes of artists.

While there are still many forgotten or neglected artists, the wealth of publications in recent decades provides fertile material for new general reflections, fleshed out by new approaches to the discipline, such as *studies*. This colloquium therefore proposes to question the notion of posterity, reception and critical fortune, not only from the point of view of the artist, but also from that of the amateur, cultural institutions and the public in the 17th and 18th centuries. It will look at the factors and mechanisms that contributed to the rise or fall of certain artists. It is therefore intended to be a reflection on the test that all artists must overcome : time. What role have critics, academies, Salons, the public and cultural institutions played in this dynamic ? What influence have the art market and collectors had on the recognition of artists ? In addition, this symposium will look at the challenges faced by art historians when faced with material gaps : how do we deal with an artist or a work for which sources are rare or absent ?

**The first theme of this colloquium will focus on the notion of posterity.** In his Salon of 1765, Diderot stated : 'The artist, in his studio, must feel around him the gaze of a severe and incorruptible posterity'. In so doing, he emphasised the need for artists not to work 'for their own century', but to create a future legacy. Taken from the Latin *posteritas*, posterity refers to the time that comes after, the future. As early as the 17th century, Furetière's dictionary bears witness to this conception that it is

the artist's responsibility to look after his posterity. It was up to him to ensure that he would be remembered. Many artists in the 17th and 18th centuries directed their careers in this direction. This focus of the symposium will therefore seek to explore the means put in place by artists to ensure their posterity. How did artists' personal strategies - whether in terms of constructing their image or managing their relations with patrons, critics or institutions - influence their posterity ? In addition, we would like to encourage papers on the material resources that certain artists have deployed to guarantee the longevity of their works. This includes, for example, a certain technical mastery to ensure the longevity and transmission of their works.

***Preferred topics for submissions :***

- The use of writing in the construction of posterity : analysis of artists' memory strategies
- Analysis of the use of prints to promote and disseminate a work of art
- Building a legacy : transmission within families and artists' studios
- Absence, indifference and refusal of posterity
- The impact of the materiality of works of art on posterity : ephemeral creations, time-tested techniques, etc.

**The second theme of the colloquium will be reception .** This term refers to the way in which a work or an artist is perceived and appreciated by the public, who are the main players here. Reception is subjective, sensitive and dependent on the tastes of an era, as well as the social and political influences of the time. By ensuring that his work is well received during his lifetime, the artist takes a step towards success and immortality. Tastes evolve regularly, and works are constantly re-evaluated in the light of one artist's, one audience's and one era's view of another. Criteria differ according to time and place and can therefore be received differently by each century and each new generation. Sometimes it is the works themselves that fall victim to this process, particularly when restoration work alters the original appearance of the objects. This constant questioning of taste can be damaging for some artists, but beneficial for others. The aim is to study how these contexts have influenced artistic criticism and the fortunes of artists. How have political and social events altered the criteria by which works are judged? How does the material state of a work affect its reception ?

***Preferred topics for submissions :***

- The use and role of the written work in the reception of artists and their works : press articles, critical reviews of the Salons, Academy lectures, treatises, etc.
- The influence of taste on the reception of artists according to the context of space and time
- Lack of interest in an artist, a factor in the destruction of works
- The disappearance of works, a factor in the oblivion of artists
- Consequences of the emergence of the concept of genius in the 18th century on the reception of artists and their works

**The final theme of this symposium will be the notion of critical fortune.** This methodical examination of an artist's reception reflects not only the aesthetic and intellectual judgements made about their work, but also the evolution of their reputation and influence in art history. Critical fortune thus acts as a selective memory, determining which artists are preserved in history and which others sink into oblivion. It influences not only the individual trajectories of artists, but also our understanding of the evolution of styles and aesthetic debates over time. In this sense, critical fortune becomes an essential filter in the writing of art history, structured by the choices of what is valued and what is omitted. Favourable critical fortune can propel an artist to the rank of 'master', while unfavourable fortune can condemn him or her to indifference. However, such fortunes are often unstable, subject to fluctuations in trends, social contexts and power dynamics in the art world. This focus will explore transformations in the perception of artists : how were certain artists revalued in the 19th and 20th centuries? What are the reasons for these critical revisions, and how have these reassessments altered their place in art history ? In this way, writing the critical fortune will renew the discourse on an artist for generations to come.

***Preferred topics for submissions :***

- The role played by monographs in building the critical fortunes of artists past and present.
  - The importance of the vocabulary used to describe artists: 'master', "small", 'great', 'minor artist', 'major artist', etc.
  - The influence of museums (museography, exhibitions, etc.), universities (conferences, seminars, publications, etc.), the art market and the press.
  - New methodologies : what contribution can they make to the writing of critical fortune ?
  - Regimes of historicity: the influence of the socio-historical context on the writing of art history and on heritage issues.
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## Submission Guidelines

The proposals will last twenty minutes and will take the form of individual and collective case studies, focusing, among other things, on the themes listed in the call for papers.

**Proposals for presentations (between 600 and 700 words) must be submitted, along with a short biography, to the following address: fortunecritique@gmail [dot] com (fortunecritique[at]gmail[dot]com)**

**The submission deadline is set for: June 28, 2025.**

A publication will be considered after the conference.

## Organizing Committee

- [Élisa Bérard](#), PhD candidate in Art History, Sorbonne University, Centre André-Chastel
- [Romane Delsinne](#), PhD candidate in Art History, Sorbonne University, Centre André-Chastel
- [Enzo Menuge](#), PhD candidate in Art History, Sorbonne University, CNRS, Centre André-Chastel

## Scientific Committee

- [Christine Gouzi](#), Professor of Modern Art History, Sorbonne University, Centre André-Chastel
- Étienne Jollet, Professor of Modern Art History, Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne

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