

DISCUSSION PAPER SERIES

DP17778

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ARTISTIC RECOGNITION: THE
AWARDING OF MEDALS AT THE PARIS
SALON, 1850 - 1880**

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ECONOMIC HISTORY

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Discussion Paper DP17778
Published 02 January 2023
Submitted 02 January 2023

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www.cepr.org

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Abstract

From the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century, the Paris Salon was the leading visual arts exhibition venue in France. For an artist, having a painting admitted to the Salon was a good signal; obtaining one of the competitive medals systematically awarded at the exhibition was even better. Based on two unique datasets, this paper quantitatively analyzes which elements drove the likelihood of winning a medal. Both in its own time and the secondary literature about the exhibition, the juried Salon system has often been criticized for being prejudiced. Our paper shows the changes in the way the jury acted as rules and regulations varied over time, adding a dynamic dimension to our analysis. We find that nepotism, proxied here as having one's master sit on the jury, helped win medals, but this was not systematically the case. The hierarchy of genres setting history paintings at the top was not always respected. By contrast, women were systematically discriminated against. Even for the minor genres, in which many were forced to specialize, medals were more likely to end up being won by men.

JEL Classification: N33, N93, Z11

Keywords: Art markets, France

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Measuring Nepotism and Sexism in Artistic Recognition: The Awarding of Medals at the Paris Salon, 1850 - 1880

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Abstract

From the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century, the Paris Salon was the leading visual arts exhibition venue in France. For an artist, having a painting admitted to the Salon was a good signal; obtaining one of the competitive medals systematically awarded at the exhibition was even better. Based on two unique datasets, this paper quantitatively analyzes which elements drove the likelihood of winning a medal. Both in its own time and the secondary literature about the exhibition, the juried Salon system has often been criticized for being prejudiced. Our paper shows the changes in the way the jury acted as rules and regulations varied over time, adding a dynamic dimension to our analysis. We find that nepotism, proxied here as having one's master sit on the jury, helped win medals, but this was not systematically the case. The hierarchy of genres setting history paintings at the top was not always respected. By contrast, women were systematically discriminated against. Even for the minor genres, in which many were forced to specialize, medals were more likely to end up being won by men.

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Measuring Nepotism and Sexism in Artistic Recognition: The Awarding of Medals at the Paris Salon, 1850 - 1880

Introduction

The Paris Salon played a central role in art history. As the main venue to exhibit fine arts in France from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century, it was an important vector for the transmission of taste and innovation in the arts for both French artists and those who had come to Paris from around the world. It was a major artistic and social event seen by thousands of people, including essential art critics and patrons (Kearns & Vaisse, 2010; Lemaire, 2004; Lobstein, 2006; Maingon, 2009). However, today, it is perhaps best known as the venue that rejected the Impressionists; the jury controlling access to the exhibition has often been accused of being reactionary (Vaisse, 2010). This reputation masks the Salon's importance for artistic careers in the nineteenth century (White & White, 1965). For an artist, having a work accepted at the Salon was a mark of recognition and an opportunity to develop a new clientele. The exhibition was crucial both as an arts venue and business opportunity (Mainardi, 1989; Etro et al., 2020).

While some charges about the Salon's conservatism are well-founded, many are incorrect in how the jury is often depicted as a uniform, unchanging conservative bulwark. The jury was, in fact, far from static. Its composition, the rules that

governed its functioning, and its prerogatives evolved. It could also change as a function of the political environment surrounding the state-sponsored show. One of the most significant areas of evolution was the concept of prizes and medals. Indeed, the jury devised an additional way to show recognition of artistic merits beyond simple admission to the exhibition. At the end of the eighteenth century, the jury took charge of awarding a monetary prize to encourage the best artists. This prize gradually evolved, with the first prize being a state commission for new work, the second prize being the state acquisition of an existing work, and the third one a prize where the artist did not have to create or sell a work (Gallini, 1989). Physical medals appeared under Napoleon and became systematic starting in 1804. From this point forward, beyond the importance of being accepted to exhibit at the Salon, winning one of the medals awarded to a select number of exhibiting artists boosted an artistic career.

Over the nineteenth century, the French artistic scene became more centralized and subject to a strict hierarchy in which two institutions, the Académie des Beaux Arts⁴, and the Salon, played the central role. These institutions' centralization and size attracted artists from France and abroad. By the second half of the nineteenth century, France was home to the most significant number of painters in Europe (Jensen, 1988, p. 360). The optimal career trajectory for many aspiring artists was to train at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, exhibit their works at the Salon, win the most prestigious awards (the Prix de Rome, Salon medals, and the Légion d'honneur), get commissions from both the state and private patrons, and ultimately be appointed to the Académie des Beaux-Arts (Jensen, 1994; Chaudonneret, 2007).

As described below, extensive time-series datasets can be used to judge which criteria affected whether or not a work of art was admitted to the Salon (Mill, 2015).

⁴ The *Académie des beaux-arts* was founded in 1816 as the heir of the royal academies of the same name. It acted as the guardian of a certain artistic tradition and was influential in the institutions of training. It also played a role of consecration to guide contemporary artistic production.

However, in this paper, we present novel data available about which artists had the extra distinction of receiving a medal. We use this information to study the factors that would lead a jury to favor one artist—or kind of art—over another. In this paper, we focus on the medals awarded by the jury between 1848, when for the first time, the medals were awarded by a so-called “jury de récompense,” and 1880, which marks the end of the state-sponsored salon. Focusing on this period of study allows us to analyze distinct modalities of jury composition and criteria for the attribution of medals. This variation can be exploited to determine which organizational form was more or less likely to give awards to artists with particular backgrounds, who worked in a specific genre, and who may or may not have had an advocate on the jury in the form of a master. Since one of the main criticisms historically directed at the jury members was their lack of openness, we specifically test to what extent juries were more likely to be influenced by non-artistic elements to guide their choice.

This paper is organized as follows: the first section describes how the Salon operated during the period under study. It also charts the changing categories of medals and the process by which medals were awarded. Section 2 presents the data available about the Salon exhibitions and medals awarded, and Section 3 the methodology we use to gauge the impact of different artist-level and work-level criteria. Section 4 presents results and is followed by a conclusion in section 5.

1. The Salon Jury in 19th century France and its Medals

The Jury

Before the French Revolution, the Salon was accessible only to the artists belonging to the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture⁵, with a day a year left for other artists to exhibit (Hauptmann, 1985). This changed with the Revolution; by 1791, it became a right for all artists to exhibit their works. This openness was short-lived. In 1798, the fine arts administration created an admission jury. It was strictly in charge of considering which works were worthy of being exhibited at the Salon. From 1803 to 1814, the administration delegated the organization of the Salon—and thus the task of judging which works of art were admitted—to the “classe des beaux-arts” of the Institut de France.⁶ The state retook control of appointing the jury in 1814, and this close state control continued until 1832. It was in this year that the Institut de France—at that point renamed the Académie des beaux-arts—regained the right to appoint the jury.

However, in 1848—amid another political revolution—this admission jury, which artists had long criticized for its severity, was abolished. The jury de récompense (awards jury), was created (Dupin de Beyssat, 2022a, p. 84-90). It was elected by the exhibiting artists and was responsible for determining which submissions were awarded medals. While the idea of a Salon without an admission jury was immediately abandoned after the 1848 Salon, the principle of an award jury survived. At subsequent exhibitions, it was composed of members appointed by the fine arts administration and a selection of artists chosen from those elected to the admission jury. The confusion between these two juries was corrected at the 1852 Salon: from this date on, and until the last official Salon in 1880, a single jury was

⁵ The *Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture* was an artistic institution in charge of regulating and teaching painting and sculpture under the Ancien Régime. It benefited from royal patronage and sought to emancipate itself from the rigidity of guilds but also from the status of artisans associated with them.

⁶ The Institut de France was created in 1795 to bring together the scientific, literary and artistic elite. Divided into classes, it more or less took over the organization and ambitions of the former royal academies, which were abolished during the Revolution.

responsible for selecting both the works worthy of being exhibited and those worthy of being awarded a medal.

From 1849 to the Universal Exhibition of 1855, the jury was composed of two groups: members appointed by the administration—mainly public personalities known for their taste or expertise in artistic matters—and artists nominated by the exhibitors (Dupin de Beyssat, 2022a, p. 90-97). Each group had fifty percent of the seats. This semi-democratic appointment method resulted in a jury that reflected a range of artistic movements. Elected members included the leading figure of Romanticism, Eugène Delacroix, landscape painters like Camille Corot and François-Louis Français, and genre painter Alexandre Decamps. In 1857, the Académie des Beaux-Arts took over the Salon's jury, a decision motivated by the imperial administration's desire to curry favor with an institution that was criticized but still influential (Dupin de Beyssat, 2022a, p. 97-102). This sudden return to an academic jury, hardly representative of the profile and production of the wide range of exhibitors at the Salon, was very quickly criticized by the artistic community. This opposition prompted Napoleon III to open the Salon des refusés in 1863, whose purpose was to submit the jury's decisions to public judgment (Cahn, 2016; Picon, 1996; Wilson-Bareau, 2007). This questioning of the legitimacy of academic authority was confirmed at the next Salon, in 1864, with the return to a jury largely elected by the awarded artists - i.e., those who had previously won prizes or medals for their works (Dupin de Beyssat, 2022a, p. 102-110). This approach satisfied the artistic community, and lasted until the last Salon of 1880. It was even taken up by the various other Salons that proliferated after the end of the state-sponsored exhibition.

The Medals and Other Awards

These changes in the jury also interacted with changes in the system by which medals were awarded. This sub-section describes these changes, while Appendix 1

provides a more detailed breakdown of the medals by year and type. As early as 1791, the Salon recognized artists' merits in order to encourage and support them.⁷ In its first phase, this recognition took the form of commissions and acquisitions. However, from 1804 onwards, these rewards were embodied in real medals, awarded to an artist's submission (*envoi*) - i.e., to all the works exhibited by the artist at a particular Salon. These medals' worth differed as a function of the genre of the painting (e.g., portrait, history, landscape) to which they were awarded. In 1810 a "second class" medal was introduced, followed in 1833 by a "third class," thus institutionalizing a hierarchy in the awards independent of paintings' genres. Therefore, any painting of any genre was eligible for any class of medal.

In 1848, this hierarchical medals system was still in place despite the many changes experienced by the Salon and its jury (Dupin de Beyssat, 2022a, p. 112-113). A first-class medal was worth 1,500 francs, a second-class medal 500 francs, and a third-class one 250 francs. This system lasted sixteen years. In 1864, in parallel with the reintroduction of a jury elected by the artists, the administration adopted a single medal system worth 400 francs. This allowed for increasing the number of awards at no additional cost, a logical adjustment in view of the dramatic increase in the number of exhibitors at each Salon (White and White, 1965; *Salons et expositions de groupes 1673-1914* database, 2006-). The measure was, however, quickly decried by the artistic community, which criticized the disappearance of a hierarchy in classes and the symbolic progression they represented (Dupin de Beyssat, 2022a, p. 113-115). Thus, from 1872 onwards, different classes of medals were reinstated with a first class medal worth 1600 francs, a second class worth 600 francs and, from 1874,

⁷This was also to compensate artists for the disappearance of their privileged clientele in the Revolution, namely the aristocracy, the Church and the financiers of the Ancien Régime.

a third class worth 400 francs (Dupin de Beyssat, 2022a, p. 115-117). This reversal also meant a decrease in the number of awards.⁸

Beyond the potential financial gain stemming from winning a medal—including its signaling effect to potential patrons, public or private—the medal also led to certain advantages and privileges within the art world. Some medal winners were allowed to bypass the admission jury and were thus able to exhibit what they wanted within the limits of the etiquette (Dupin de Beyssat, 2022a, p. 128-132). From 1866 onwards, some medal winners became labeled as "hors-concours." They could no longer get additional medals at the Salon, except for the medal of honor, which was given at each Salon to a single artist who had "distinguished himself among all by a work of brilliant merit" (Salons rules, reproduced in Sanchez and Seydoux, 2001-2006) and was worth 4,000 francs. Another important privilege was the right, from 1864 on, to vote in the election of the members of the jury and thus to choose the artists responsible for selecting the works to be admitted and rewarded (Dupin de Beyssat, 2022a, p. 126-128). An important caveat, however, needs to be stressed. Being a medal winner was necessary but not sufficient to get these privileges. These advantages were often subject to conditions of quantity and quality in the awards obtained, specified in the exhibition regulations drawn up by the administration, and constituting an elite within the elite.

In addition to the medals awarded at the Salon, artists in the second half of the nineteenth century could hope to get other awards. The first was the Prix de Rome (Grunchec, 1986; Lechleiter, 2008 and 2019; Verger & Verger, 2011; Verger, 2019). The Académie awarded it annually to a student of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. Initially, in painting, this was awarded only for history painting. However, between

⁸ The value associated with each medal, specified in the regulations, represented the production value of the "medal" received by the laureates. The symbolic object, adorned with allegories or a portrait of Napoleon III, was produced by the Paris mint and involved significant expenditure on the part of the fine arts administration. Artists could also sell these medals for their material and use the proceeds of the sale to live and produce.

1816 and 1863, a prize for historical landscape was awarded every three years. The winners, in addition to the title and prestige associated with the Prize, were entitled to a three-year boarding stay at the French Academy in Rome, the Villa Medici, to familiarize themselves with antiquities and the Old Masters and to perfect their craft. As prestigious as it was selective, this prize lost part of its prestige in the second half of the 19th century. By the end of the century, it was no longer a condition *sine qua non* for access to fame and fortune.

2. Data

This paper relies on two major databases that we have combined. The first one, the Whiteley index, has already been used in several publications (for example, Greenwald, 2019; Greenwald, 2021; Greenwald & Oosterlinck, 2022). The second is novel and was first presented—but not statistically analyzed—in Dupin de Beyssat (2022a).

In 1993, Jon Whiteley finalized his index of paintings exhibited at the Paris Salons. In this impressive work, he describes all the paintings exhibited at the Salons between 1683 and 1881 (in total, more than 148,000 artworks) by assigning them keywords (Whiteley, 1993).⁹ Besides completeness (all works are included), one of the main merits of the index is its granularity. The author compiled the information available in the *livrets* (the exhibition catalogs) to create keywords based on the artwork titles. This has resulted in an exact database. For example, a dog might not just be listed as a dog, but the exact breed is often provided. For our purposes, the

⁹The index is publicly available online, <https://github.com/dsg2123/Painting-by-Numbers/tree/main/Data/Whiteley%20Index>

Whiteley Index provides precise information about the genre—i.e., landscape, history painting—of artworks exhibited at the Salon.

For the information about artists and medals, the data comes mainly from the catalogs of the Salons, published each year and put online in the Salons database of the Musée d'Orsay and the INHA (*Salons et expositions de groupes 1673-1914* database, 2006-). Depending on the year, the entries give the artist's name, his birthplace, the master or masters of whom he was a pupil, and his address. For each painting the artist exhibited, the title, the registration number¹⁰, and a possible commentary explaining the subject are also provided. This information comes from the registration forms filled in by the exhibiting artists themselves. Declarative, they were not subject to any verification or correction - except for spelling mistakes - by the editors in charge of compiling the catalogs. In our dataset, each painter is assigned a unique identifier. To do so, the spelling of their names was homogenized. Women are listed with their married and maiden names, where applicable, to avoid duplication. When faced with different spellings in the catalogs, the similarity of surnames and first names, the place of birth, the address of residence, and the masters mentioned were used to ensure that each identifier represented, indeed, only one painter.

Our datasets allow us to measure the impact of a series of variables on the likelihood of winning a medal at the Salon. The variables are linked to the painter, the painting, and the Salon itself in a given year. Since we are interested in the influence of some variables on the odds of getting a medal, in many instances, our variables refer to the presence of a specific characteristic before a given painting was submitted at the Salon.

¹⁰ At each exhibition, artists registered their works with the administration in order to compile the catalog, and each work was given a unique number, the registration number, to identify it.

In addition to specific variables about painters and paintings, we also control for the changing conditions of the Salon, which we classify into four different regimes. For each regression, we first consider the whole sample, with a dummy variable for each regime; we then run the regressions on the four different sub-periods representing each regime. These regimes are as follows:

- The "democratic" regime starts with the Salon libre of 1848 where, while the admission jury was abolished, an award jury was set up and elected directly by the exhibiting artists, by real universal suffrage (women artists could also vote). The appointment of a jury by election continued until the Salon of 1853 and reflected the loss of authority of the Académie des Beaux-Arts in the artistic community and the rise in the esteem of the so-called minor genres (notably genre scenes and landscapes), makers of which were finally represented on the jury.
- The "academic" regime includes the Salons from 1857 to 1863. During this period, the Académie des beaux-arts regained the prerogative of judging which works should be shown at the Salon. It also gained the right to decide which works were worthy of a medal. The value and categories of medals awarded remained unchanged, but the number of medals awarded increased with the invention of a new concept : the “rappel de médailles.”. The rappel de médailles more or less allowed artists to win the same level of medal multiple times rather than only progress with each win.
- The "egalitarian" regime began in 1864. It represented a watershed in Salon history. First, the Académie des beaux-arts once and for all lost its *de jure* presence at the jury : the jury was from then on elected by the artists who had won a medal. Even though some academicians were elected, this reform generated a dramatic change in terms of generations and genres. Second, the medal hierarchy was abolished and a “médaille unique”, worth approximately

the value of a 3rd class medal, instituted. This reform aimed to increase the number of medals without weighing too much on the budget of the administration. These changes reduced the existing disparity among artists leading to a more equal status.

- Finally, the motto “back to order” (“retour à l’ordre”) characterizes the last decade (1872-1880) of the official Salon. Even though the election of the jury by awarded artists remained, this regime saw a comeback of the old modalities related to awarding medals: a strong hierarchy of medal classes and a high selectivity. One of the manifest effects of this reversal can be seen in the most favored genres. History painting comes back to the fore. This *Retour à l’ordre* period can be seen as a swansong, where the Salon and its jury were less and less able to satisfy all the divergent interests of the artistic community. Furthermore, the exhibition was in increasing competition with commercial galleries as venues for showing artists and critics emerged as arbiters of taste (White and White, 1965). In the face of these headwind, those responsible for organizing the Salon tried to recover some of the exhibition’s dwindling glory by reverting to traditional management and standards for recognizing artistic success.

Dependant variables

Our primary dependent variable of interest **Medal** is a dummy variable that takes the value of 1 if the painting belongs to an *envoi* that received a medal at a specific Salon. (Recall that medals were not awarded to a particular artwork but to all the works that the artist exhibited in a given year.) This field lists all the medals obtained by artists at the Salon, as well as their categories. These lists have been compiled from the biographical information given in the exhibitors’ notes from 1850 onwards, from the list of awarded artists at the beginning of the catalog from 1864

onwards and supplemented by the data collected in Dupin de Beyssat (2022a). Gaps may remain for medals given before 1850, as they are not systematically specified in the catalog. We also create a variable called **First Medal**, which is a dependent variable that represents the *first time* an artist wins a medal at the Salon. This was, of course, a transformation movement for an artistic career.

Painter-linked variables

- **Female painter:** we create dummies linked to the gender of the painter, to test for the presence of a gender bias. The gender is determined by the presence in the catalog of the terms "Mlle" or "Mme," which indicate a female exhibitor. This dummy variable takes the value of 1 if the exhibitor is female-identified.
- **Born abroad:** we distinguish painters by using their place of birth, which is almost systematically reported in the catalogs from 1852 onwards. This information is however affected by the information given by the artists themselves and by the constant geopolitical transformations in nineteenth-century Europe. The dummy variable takes the value of 1 if the painter was born outside France, zero otherwise. We expect foreign-born artists to benefit less from informal professional and social networks than their French colleagues.
- **Born in the French provinces:** we distinguish painters by using their place of birth, which is almost systematically reported in the catalogs from 1852 onwards. It is, however, also self-reported like **Born abroad**. The dummy variable takes the value of 1 if the painter was born in France but not in Paris, zero otherwise. We expect provincial artists to benefit less from informal networks than their Parisian colleagues.

- **Living in Paris:** we distinguish painters living in Paris from the other under the assumption that Parisian-based painters would benefit from better connections. This variable is based on the address given by the artists in the catalog and classifies artists according to whether they live in the Paris area, the provinces or abroad. The dummy variable takes the value of 1 if the painter lived in Paris, zero otherwise.
- **Member of the Academy** is a dummy variable taking the value of 1 if the artist was a member of the Académie des beaux-arts prior to the year of analysis.
- **Prix de Rome:** is a dummy variable taking the value of 1 if the artist received the Prix de Rome at some point before the year of analysis, a prestigious mark of recognition of his or her work. We expect this form of recognition to correlate positively with the likelihood of obtaining a medal.
- **Student of a Member of the Jury:** A painter may have been a student of members of the jury. This tie may have affected the partiality of the jury. We thus expect this link to increase the likelihood of getting a medal. The information was determined by comparing the names of the masters listed in the exhibitor's note with the names of the actual jury members who sat on the jury year after year. The dummy variable takes the value of 1 if the painter had a master-student relationship with a jury member and zero otherwise.

Painting-linked variables

- **Genre:** the subject matter of paintings, known as their genre, played an essential role in paintings' appraisal. This variable distinguishes six genres: History, Genre (as a category), Portraits, Landscape, Still Life and Copies & Imitations. This information has been determined thanks to the Whiteley Index with minor corrections, such as 1) Isolated figures have been coded as

Genre; 2) Animals have been coded as Genre ; 3) Marines have been coded as Landscape; 4) Copies & Imitations, when conflicted with another genre, have been coded as Copies & Imitations; 5) Miscellaneous have been coded as NA. When more than one genre was attributed to a single painting, the final choice was made manually based on reproductions if available and based on the title if not.¹¹ Genres were subject to a hierarchy, with some genres more sought-after than others. Even though many portraits were exhibited at the Salon, the fact that portraits were copying reality meant they were considered a lower genre (Greenwald & Oosterlinck, 2022). In line with the hierarchy of genres, we expect medals to be more frequent for the most prestigious genre: history paintings. Indeed, prizes were at first more generous for history paintings than other genres (Dupin de Beyssat, 2022a, p. 73). We code a dummy variable for each category if the painting belongs to the genre. Genre painting is the omitted variable in the regressions.

- **Medium (Oil Painting):** painters could rely on different techniques: oil painting, watercolor, drawing, enamels, paintings on ceramics, tempera, cartons and sketches, gouache, miniatures and pastels. The information is available in the "Types/matériaux" field of the *Salons* database and the details sometimes contained in the titles. Works for which no technique was specified were considered by default as oil paintings. We create a dummy variable taking the value of 1 if the artwork was an oil painting. Oil paintings represent around 77% of the corpus.

Table 1 provides summary descriptive statistics of our different variables. As a whole the database comprises 74,338 artworks. As one would expect, the number of

¹¹ For 1 260 works of art the Whiteley Index provided no information. Their genre could thus not be determined.

artworks which received a medal is proportionally low (3.26%). The same holds for the percentage of artworks created by Prix de Rome winners (2.41%). Works by female artists represent 14.79% of the sample, a percentage that already reflects the difficulties women face to have their work accepted at the Salon.

This difficulty is likely linked to the fact that they often specialized in genres (still-lives, miniatures, and copies), which were less likely to be admitted to the Salon. Several reasons, not mutually exclusive, several reasons may explain why women were less likely to paint history, landscape, portrait, and genre paintings. Women were not allowed in the Ecole des beaux-arts, where the academic doctrine was taught (Noël, 2004; Sauer, 1991; Vottero, 2008). These genres represented an investment in time and money—they were often large canvases or works completed on the demanding, inflexible schedule of a patron sitting for a portrait. The production of miniatures, still-lives, or copies required less time, and the paintings could be sold faster than history paintings (Greenwald, 2021). If women were more resource-constrained, and this seems a reasonable assumption, they may not have had the means to create history paintings. One may also conjecture that history paintings were viewed as unsuitable for women (Lacas, 2021; Sofio, 2016). Painters were mostly born in France, but with a substantial percentage born abroad. For 10.5% of the artworks, the master of an artist sat on the jury. It should be noted that women were also unlikely to be part of this 10.5%—many masters did not accept female students, even in ateliers outside of the male-only Ecole de beaux-arts.

Table 1: Summary descriptive statistics of the different variables.

	<i>Absolute Number</i>	<i>Percentage of Total of Works</i>
Total Works in Dataset	74,338	-
<i>Dependent Variables</i>		
Medal	2,423	3.26
First Medal	996	1.34
<i>Painter-Linked Explanatory</i>		

<i>Variables</i>		
Works by Female Artists	10,992	14.79
Works by Male Artists	63,346	85.21
Works by Paris-Born Artists	21,995	29.59
Works by Artists Born in the French Provinces	31,794	42.77
Works by Foreign-Born Artists	20,549	27.64
Works by Artists Whose Masters on the Jury	7,819	10.52
Works by Artists Who Won the Prix de Rome	1,790	2.41
<i>Art Work-Linked Explanatory Variables</i>		
Portrait	16,714	22.48
Still Life	4,540	6.11
History	9,054	12.18
Landscape	18,547	24.95
Copy	2,295	3.09
Genre	17,294	23.26
Genre Missing	5,894	7.93
Medium (Oil Painting)	57,101	76.81

3. Methodology

Our methodology aims at understanding the elements affecting the probability for a specific painter to get a medal as well as the variables driving the odds for a painter to get his or her first medal. For all regressions, we first report the results for the sample as a whole, then for each period. Considering the dependent variable is a dummy variable, we run probit regressions. The results do not deviate from one another.

More formally, we run the following Probit regression

$$(1) \text{ Medal}_{ijt}(\text{Yes}) = \beta_0 + \Gamma X_{i,j,t} + \varepsilon_i$$

where $\text{Medal}_i(\text{Yes})$ is a dummy variable equal to one if a painting i , created by a painter j , obtained a medal in year t , X_i is the set of variables of interest, β_0 , is a coefficients. Γ is a vector of coefficients and ε_i the error term.

We then run the Probit regression at the artist level, to see the elements influencing the odds for an artist to get his/her first medal

$$\text{FirstMedal}_{ijt}(\text{Yes}) = \beta_0 + \Gamma X_{i,j,t} + \varepsilon_i \quad (1)$$

where $\text{FirstMedal}_i(\text{Yes})$ is a dummy variable equal to one if a painting i , created by a painter j , at the Salon in year t , received a medal, which was the first medal ever received by artist j . X_i is the set of variables of interest, β_0 , is a coefficients. Γ is a vector of coefficients and ε_i the error term

To supplement the results of this regression, we then test whether artists who had become well-established (proxied here by their hors-concours status) changed the subjects they painted once getting a medal was no longer possible nor, presumably, as important to their careers. To do so we compute the absolute number of paintings and percentages of paintings of each genre before and after they became hors-concours and test whether they are statistically significant. In short, we are trying to gauge whether artists seeking to please the jury behave differently from those who no longer need to paint with a medal in mind. Because we have data about the same

artists both before and after their hors-concours status, we can test the same individuals' behaviors in two very different professional scenarios.

4. Results

First, we look at the variables increasing the odds for a specific artwork to get a medal. Medals were awarded for the whole envoi, with no information regarding the specific artwork(s) that were recognized. In the absence of information on the envoi, we consider that all paintings from the envoi received a medal if the artist was given a medal on that given Salon. We exclude hors-concours artists,¹² as they were no longer eligible for most medals.¹³ Our first, and main variable of interest is therefore the Medal dummy variable. Table 2 provides the results of our analysis.

Table 2: Probit regression, dependent variable Medal

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Artist Attributes				
Female	-0.493***	-0.461***	-0.454***	-0.461***
Paris Resident	0.229***	0.195***	0.198***	0.195***
Place of birth (omitted: Born abroad)				
Provincial Born	-0.026	0.124***	0.076***	0.124***
Paris Born	-0.039	0.121***	0.067**	0.121***
Master on Jury	0.281***	0.228***	0.226***	0.228***
Prix de Rome Winner	0.847***	0.769***	0.756***	0.769***
Work Attributes				
Oil Painting	0.327***	0.309***	0.296***	0.309***
Genre (omitted: Genre)				
History Painting	0.113***	0.104***	0.095***	0.104***

¹² An artist is declared as hors-concours at a given Salon, i.e. he/she can no longer claim any additional medals, except the medal of honour. This variable was created on the basis of the *Informations biographiques* field in the catalog and through the successive rules establishing this status.

¹³ They could win a very rarely awarded Medaille d'Honneur but there were only 13 such medals awarded in the whole sample

Portrait Painting	-0.225***	-0.221***	-0.232***	-0.221***
Landscape Painting	-0.048*	-0.031	-0.024	-0.031
Still Life	-0.343***	-0.317***	-0.312***	-0.317***
Year Dummies	<i>N</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Y</i>
Regime Dummies	<i>N</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>Y</i>
Constant	-2.220***	-2.642***	-2.487***	-2.642***
N	68,335	65,150	68,335	65,150
*p ,0.1; **p<0.05:***p<0.01				

In the first specification, neither year nor regime dummies are included, in the second one year dummies are included but not regime ones, in the third one regime dummies are included but not year dummies, the last specification including both.

Many coefficients are in line with our prediction, and generally the results are stable across specifications. Having one's master in the jury significantly increased the odds of getting a medal. This may reflect either the partiality of the master or the fact that the style of the master was at that moment highly esteemed. It could also be that the most prestigious teachers, who were more likely to serve on the jury, had the best students. Former recognition, such as having received the Prix de Rome also helps predict success. Living in Paris is statistically significant and positive. Network effects may thus have been at play. Being born in France, as opposed to abroad, also increased one's chances as both Paris- and province-born-variables are positive in most specifications. Oil paintings, the most prestigious technique, were also positively associated with winning a medal.

Being created by a woman decreased the odds that an artwork would get a medal. This observation may reflect gender discrimination because the jury was partial against women in general. The results hold even though we control for the genres of paintings. That is to say, even in the genres in which they traditionally specialized women were discriminated against. At the 1879 and 1880 Salons, the rules explicitly reserved seats on the jury for painters of so-called minor genres. Even though

women were more active in these genres, out of the four still life painters who benefited from this measure, none was a woman. Our results echoes the ones found by Goldin and Rouse (2000) who report discrimination against woman in symphony orchestras, another artistic setting. Women who were able to pursue a successful career as painters often had to work outside the Salon system. For instance, Suzanne Aupoil née Béranger (1825-1902), Sophie Jadelot (b.1820), and Éléonore Escallier née Légerot (1827-1888) were all employed at the Sèvres porcelaine factory (Quéquet, 2014). Many women artists were thus, at the time, rather viewed as skilfull craftswomen rather than fine artists.

Table 2 controls for regime but only by using dummy variables. In the next section we test whether results hold once each regime is considered separately. This allows us to gauge whether the influence of having a master on the jury changed over time, as well as for example whether the odds to get a medal for different genres changed across Salon regimes. Table 3 provides the results of this exercise

Table 3: Probit regression, dependent variable Medal

	Democratic	Academic	Egalitarian	Back to order
Artist Attributes				
Female	-0.388***	-0.222***	-0.440***	-0.952***
Paris Resident	0.104	0.192***	0.221***	0.215***
Place of birth (omitted: Born abroad)				
Provincial Born	0.045	0.022	0.166***	0.249***
Paris Born	-0.284*	-0.025	0.203***	0.328***
Master on Jury	0.183	0.118***	0.184***	0.390***
Prix de Rome Winner	0.368***	0.707***	1.062***	0.914***
Work Attributes				
Oil Painting	0.093	0.324***	0.195***	0.665***
Genre (omitted: Genre)				
History Painting	-0.186***	0.096*	0.122**	0.336***

Portrait Painting	-0.403***	-0.267***	-0.107*	-0.087
Landscape Painting	0.066	-0.035	-0.069	-0.058
Still Life	-0.207*	-0.526***	-0.486***	-0.163
Year Dummies	Y	Y	Y	Y
Constant	-1.735***	-1.952***	-2.512***	-3.196***
N	9,186	11,147	18,638	26,175
*p ,0.1; **p<0.05:***p<0.01				

Results are presented for the specifications with year dummies, omitting these changes the results very marginally.

Results are strikingly different across regimes. The only variable that remains unchanged across regimes is the negative coefficient associated with women artists, and—on the positive side—the fact that the artists who won the Prix de Rome were more likely to get a medal. Living in Paris only starts to have an influence after the academic regime. Place of birth matters most during the two last regimes but not during the academic one. The role played by the master also changes across time. Having one’s master on the jury is statistically insignificant during the first regime. This may reflect the origins of the democratic regime, which was born as a reaction against a jury that was increasingly controlled by the fine arts administration. Of course one cannot rule out strategic votes which we can not observe and may have led to the election of some jury members more favorable to some artists. What seems clear however is that this strategic voting was either not targeting artists' own masters, or that these votes did not affect the behavior of the masters sitting in the jury. In the academic regime, the master-student relationship played a statistically significant role. Some artists, such as Léon Cogniet, François Picot, Alexandre Cabanel and Paul Delaroche—all of whom were much decorated themselves (Dupin de Beyssat, 2022c)—also oversaw large studios and had a large number of medal-winning pupils. In a competitive environment to get new pupils, these painters had a strong incentive to make sure that their pupils would get medals. Their influence on artistic careers was established first by training aspiring artists, then by promoting those who satisfied

their aesthetic tastes. It is therefore not surprising to see the students of these masters and members of the jury being favored in the access to the medal.

Technique seems to matter from the academic regime onwards, with oil paintings having higher odds to get a medal. As for genre, the hierarchy of genres seems to have experienced changes over time. To be sure, history paintings were more likely to be recognized after the academic regime. Yet this was not the case for the democratic one during which genre scenes and landscapes faced better odds. The composition of the jury, and the representation of all genres probably played a key role here. Compared to genre scenes, portraits were less likely to get a medal until the “back to order” regime. The statistically insignificant coefficient associated with landscapes suggests that genre scenes (our reference group) and landscapes were as likely to be awarded a medal and this across all regimes. Still-lives carry a negative coefficient during the three first regimes, an observation consistent with the hierarchy of genres.

More generally, this exercise shows that, in contrast to what the art historical literature usually stresses, the hierarchy of genres was not fixed and changed notably across jury regimes. The democratic regime even turned the traditional hierarchies (oil paintings and history paintings at the pinnacle) upside down. Our results highlight the importance of taking a more nuanced view on the salon and its medals. The “corrupt” nature of the jury was certainly not a constant phenomenon. Yet, master influence on medal awards played an important role for the last three regimes, suggesting. Critiques decrying the influence of masters on the choice of medal winners were certainly not ill-founded. For all the regimes but the first one, it seems some degree of nepotism was at play.

After our exploration into the determinants driving the odds to get a medal for a given work, we turn our attention to the odds for an artist to get a first medal. The

first medal was an important step in an artistic career as it marked a key form of recognition that could launch a professional trajectory. As for the analysis conducted at the medal level, we first report our findings for the whole period, before detailing these across regimes. Table 4 provides the results of the probit regression with the first medal obtained for a given artist as dependent variable.

Table 4: Probit regression, dependent variable First Medal

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Artist Attributes				
Female	-0.567***	-0.556***	-0.556***	-0.556***
Paris Resident	0.124***	0.118***	0.104***	0.118***
Place of birth (omitted: Born abroad)				
Provincial Born	-0.049	-0.028	0.024	-0.028
Paris Born	-0.091***	-0.07	-0.014	-0.07
Master on Jury	0.303***	0.361***	0.340***	0.361***
Prix de Rome Winner	0.586***	0.584***	0.573***	0.584***
Work Attributes				
Oil Painting	0.161***	0.155***	0.158***	0.155***
Genre (omitted: Genre)				
History Painting	0.132***	0.132***	0.125***	0.132***
Portrait Painting	-0.254***	-0.249***	-0.263***	-0.249***
Landscape Painting	-0.029	-0.031	-0.035	-0.031
Still Life	-0.144**	-0.137**	-0.147**	-0.137**
Year Dummies	<i>N</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Y</i>
Regime Dummies	<i>N</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>Y</i>
Constant	-2.351***	-2.482***	-2.466***	-2.482***
N	68,335	65,150	68,335	65,150
*p ,0.1; **p<0.05;***p<0.01				

In the first specification, neither year nor regime dummies are included, in the second one year dummies are included but not regime ones, in the third one regime dummies are included but not year dummies, the last specification includes both.

Many coefficients are in line with expectations. Results are furthermore rather stable across specifications. Having one's master in the jury significantly increased the odds of receiving a first medal. Winning the Prix de Rome was also strongly associated with the odds to get a medal for the first time. Oil painting, the most sought-after technique, also increased the likelihood. Living in Paris had a positive effect. Place of birth hardly mattered even though in one specification being Paris born abroad played against getting a first medal. Being a woman decreased the odds of recognition with a first medal, as it did with all medals. In general, the hierarchy of genres seemed to hold for first medals, with portraits and still lifes decreasing the odds compared to genres and landscapes and history paintings increasing them.

Table 5: Probit regression, dependent variable First Medal

	Democratic	Academic	Egalitarian	Back to order
Artist Attributes				
Female	-0.503***	P.P.	-0.312***	-0.754***
Paris Resident	-0.003	0.333***	0.106*	0.055
Place of birth (omitted: Born abroad)				
Provincial Born	-0.175	-0.288***	0.06	0.121
Paris Born	-0.553***	-0.415***	-0.04	0.245***
Master on Jury	-0.13	0.201***	0.289***	0.491***
Prix de Rome Winner	0.321*	0.748***	0.644***	0.465***
Work Attributes				
Oil Painting	-0.165**	0.077	0.116*	0.566***
Genre (omitted: Genre)				
History Painting	-0.291***	0.112	0.165**	0.359***
Portrait Painting	-0.601***	-0.295***	-0.136*	-0.098
Landscape Painting	0.002	-0.166*	-0.009	-0.012
Still Life	-0.051	-0.151	-0.422***	-0.026
Year Dummies	Y	Y	Y	Y
Constant	-1.347***	-2.410***	-2.459***	-3.078***
N	9,186	10,177	18,638	26,179

*p ,0.1; **p<0.05;***p<0.01				
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Results are presented for the specifications with year dummies, omitting these changes the results very marginally. P.P. represents variables omitted because they perfectly predict the absence of a medal.

We now turn to the regime-specific results reported in Table 5. Results are, in general, strikingly different across regimes. The only variables that remain unchanged across regimes is the negative coefficient associated with women artists (with not a single woman awarded a first medal during the academic period) and, on the positive side, the fact that the artists who won the Prix de Rome were more likely to get a first medal. Living in Paris only has an influence during the academic and egalitarian regimes. Place of birth matters mostly during the academic regime, with foreign-born artists, somewhat surprisingly, more likely to get a medal. Being Paris-born negatively affects the odds during the democratic regime but positively during the “back to order” one. The influence of having one’s master on the jury plays a role in the three last regimes but not during the democratic one. Oil paintings are less likely to lead to a first medal during the democratic period, an element that changes over time. The hierarchy of genres holds during the three last regimes but not during the first ones for which genres, landscapes and still-lifes increase the odds to get a first medal.

Table 6: Changes in proportions of genres before and after becoming Hors-Concours. T-test

	Before HC		After HC	
<i>Type of Painting</i>	Absolute number	%	Absolute number	%
Genre	2,824	27.22	1312	21.86
Portrait	2,055	19.81	1276	21.26
Still Life	243	2.34	148	2.47
History	1,897	18.28	1193	19.87
Landscape	2,437	23.49	1450	24.15

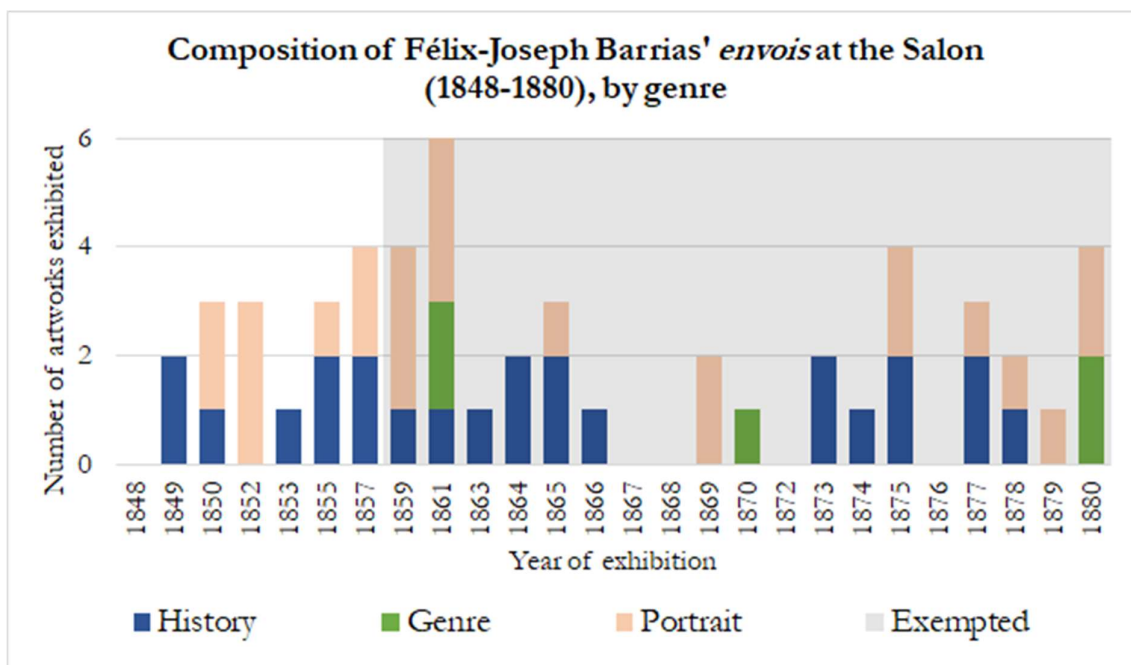
Copy	68	0.66	19	0.32
Missing	852	8.21	605	10.08
Total	10,376	100	6003	100

*In a t-test comparing two samples, the difference between the absolute numbers was found to be statistically significant at $\alpha = 0.05$, but not the difference between percentages.

In table 6, we report the proportion of each genre before and after a painter became hors-concours. By looking at the percentages we want to infer whether becoming hors-concours altered the topics chosen by the painter. The largest change is observable for genre paintings, which drop in proportion once the artist achieves this recognition. One may conjecture that genre painting, one of the lowest genres in the hierarchy of genres, might be considered less suitable for the most established artists. The increase in the percentage of portraits may have resulted from the newly acquired recognition, as it likely prompted new patrons to ask the painter to portray them. The same might be true for the increase in history paintings if they were the result of an increase in the number of publicly commissioned works.

To illustrate our observations, one may look at the case of Félix-Joseph Barrias (1822-1907) and the changes in his submissions before and after he became hors-concours. Winner of the Prix de Rome in 1844, he won several medals at the Salon between 1845 and 1855 and was declared hors-concours in 1859. Figure 1 provides a breakdown of his submissions by genre. The gray-shaded zone represents the period during which he was hors-concours. His first accepted submissions consisted equally of portraits - an easy-to-produce and immediately profitable genre - and history paintings, some of which were official commissions, such as *Soldat gaulois avec sa fille, prisonniers à Rome, bravant les insultes de leurs persécuteurs* and the *Exilés de Tibère*, acquired by the state in 1849 and 1851 for 1,500 and 5,000 francs, respectively. Recognized early on as a history painter, he continued this career even when he had reached the hors-concours status. Although by then he also painted genre paintings

(13% of his submissions), he continued to produce and exhibit a large number of history paintings (42.0% of his submissions). These were mainly public commissions, specifically to decorate the Napoleon Museum in Amiens (1863 and 1865 Salons), the Paris Opera (1875 Salon), and Paris' Church of the Trinity (1877 Salon). These invitations to complete large public history paintings were an official honor bestowed on the painter. Figure 1:



5. Conclusion

The Salon had a central position in the French art world during the nineteenth century. As the central venue for visual arts, exhibiting one's work at Salon was crucial for painters. Over the years, a system of recognition of quality developed, with the best-judged artists receiving medals of different standing to represent their respective merits. In this paper, we focus on these medals. First, we analyze which elements affected the odds that a painting would get a medal. We then explore what drove the winning a first medal, a critical moment in an artistic career. Finally, we

assess to which extent having reached the pinnacle of artistic recognition at the salon (being declared hors-concours) affected artistic production.

We report four main findings: first, the jury system changed over time, and determinants of getting a medal were often regime-specific; second, the hierarchy of genres was sometimes not respected; third, nepotism was prevalent in most periods; last but certainly not least, women were systematically discriminated against. This paper, therefore, provides greater insight into the dynamics of the Salon, which has often been understood in the literature to be a static conservative bulwark. Furthermore, it contributes to the cultural economic literature about artistic recognition and how it can be biased (e.g., Goldin and Rouse, 2000). This work addresses both art historical and economic questions relevant to the arts.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Number, value and type of medals awarded

Exhibition	Medals categories	Medals values	Number of painters awarded	Number of works awarded
1848 Salon	First class Second class	500 francs 300 francs	19 40	105 159
1849 Salon	First class Second class Third class	1 500 francs 500 francs 250 francs	3 6 12	15 21 32
1850 Salon			4 5 12	21 24 58
1852 Salon			3 6 13	7 15 24
1853 Salon			3 5 13	9 14 32
1857 Salon			3 6 13 40	19 24 49 134
1859 Salon	First class Second class Third class Rappels	1 500 francs 500 francs 250 francs	3 6 12 29	15 24 34 115
1861 Salon			7 13 13 44	24 52 53 173

1863 Salon			3 6 12 44	7 14 25 113
1864 Salon	Unique	400 francs	40	71
1865 Salon			41	79
1866 Salon			40	73
1867 Salon			40	77
1868 Salon			40	75
1869 Salon			39	86
1870 Salon			39	74
1872 Salon	First class Second class		5 22	7 38
1873 Salon	First class Second class Third class	1 600 francs 600 francs 400 francs	2 11 18	2 18 35
1874 Salon			3 13 23	5 24 40
1875 Salon			2 12 24	4 20 50
1876 Salon			4 9 17	6 18 26
1877 Salon			3 6 12	5 9 22

1878 Salon			3 6 12	4 12 18
1879 Salon			3 8 21	3 13 37
1880 Salon			4 15 25	6 27 41