BEYOND THE ORIENTALIST CANON: ART AND COMMERCE
IN JEAN-LÉON GÉRÔME’S THE SNAKE CHARMER

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ABSTRACT

This thesis re-examines Jean-Léon Gérôme's iconic painting The Snake Charmer (1879) in an attempt to move beyond the post-colonial interpretations that have held sway in the literature on the artist since the publication of Linda Nochlin’s influential essay “The Imaginary Orient” in 1989. The painting traditionally is understood as both a product and reflection of nineteenth-century European colonial politics, a view that positions the depicted figures as racially, ethnically and nationally “other” to the “Western” viewers who encountered the work when it was exhibited in France and the United States during the final decades of the nineteenth century. My analysis does not dispute but rather extends and complicates this approach. First, I place the work in the context of the artist’s oeuvre, specifically in relation to the initiation of Gérôme’s sculptural practice in 1878. I interpret the figure of the nude snake charmer as a reference to the artist’s virtuoso abilities in both painting and sculpture. Second, I discuss the commercial success that Gérôme achieved through his popular Orientalist works. Rather than simply catering to the market for Orientalist scenes, I argue that this painting makes sophisticated commentary on its relation to that market; the performance depicted in the work functions as an allegory of the painting’s reception. Finally, I discuss the display of this painting at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, in an environment of spectacle that included the famous “Oriental” exhibits in the Midway Plaisance meant to dazzle and shock visitors. My overall aim
in exploring these new ways to consider *The Snake Charmer* is to encourage alternative ways of discussing Gérôme's Orientalist paintings more broadly.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

This thesis re-examines Jean-Léon Gérôme’s iconic painting The Snake Charmer (1879) [Figure 1] in an attempt to move beyond the post-colonial interpretations that have held sway in the literature on the artist since the publication of Linda Nochlin’s influential essay “The Imaginary Orient” in 1989.¹ The Snake Charmer features eleven figures, each representing different racial and ethnic typologies, seated on the floor behind a blue-tiled wall. As the painting’s title suggests, these figures watch with rapt attention as a nude young boy, pictured from behind, holds the head of a large snake whose body is wrapped around him. The subject matter is typical of late nineteenth-century European Orientalist painting. The interior setting brings to mind the trope of mysterious “Oriental” private quarters, a space forbidden to Westerners yet nonetheless imagined repeatedly in paintings of this period. Gérôme also adds subtle hints of violence to the scene: some of the figures hold weapons and a shield hangs on the wall directly over the group.²

Nochlin’s discussion of this painting, central to an essay that constituted one of the first major post-colonialist interventions in the discipline of art history, hinges upon a critique of its subject matter and its style. Broadly speaking, she characterizes Gérôme’s Orientalist paintings as both products and reflections of nineteenth-century European colonial and gender politics.


² Sarah Lees, ed., Nineteenth-Century European Paintings at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, volume 1(Williamstown: The Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2012), 367-371. The Clark Art Institute, which owns the painting, describes the sitting figures as “armed spectators.” Furthermore, snake charming existed in ancient Egypt and not in the Ottoman world let alone Istanbul’s Topkapi Palace, from which Gérôme borrowed the architectural elements. Dates for the painting conflict slightly but I refer to the Clark Art Institute’s date because they own the work.
For Nochlin, *The Snake Charmer* is a prototypical Orientalist work insofar as it positions the depicted figures as racially, ethnically and nationally “other” to the implied “Western” (white) viewer. Moreover, the painting appears to reinforce negative stereotypes about “Oriental” subjects: it represents the snake charmer’s spectators as superstitious, lazy, and stupefied by his spectacle. The very fact that the young boy stands unabashedly naked in a public space positions him as “other,” according to Western cultural norms. The work seems to confirm the superiority of the painting’s “Western” viewers to its “Oriental” subjects, and therefore to justify European colonial domination. As Nochlin notes, Gérôme paints this invented scene with a highly-detailed naturalism. He renders everything from the cracks in the tiles to the expressions of the figures with almost methodical precision, creating a reality effect for what is a largely fictional mise-en-scène.

In this thesis, I argue that Gérôme’s painting may be more self-conscious and self-referential than Nochlin’s interpretation, and other analyses of this work, would allow. In such analysis we lose sight of the artist as an individual and the nuances of his career and body of work, such as the complex relationship of his paintings to his sculpture, and the artist’s relation to the art market. My analysis does not dispute but rather extends and complicates existing post-colonialist approaches to the painting, all of which ultimately stem from Nochlin’s original interpretation. Building on a wealth of new scholarship on the artist published in conjunction with the recent exhibitions *Gérôme & Goupil, Art and Enterprise* (2000; Musée Goupil) and *The Spectacular Art of Jean-Léon Gérôme* (2010; J. Paul Getty Museum), I aim to encourage alternative ways of discussing Gérôme's Orientalist paintings, and to integrate the study of these works into the rest of the artist’s oeuvre.

In my analysis of *The Snake Charmer*, I first place the work in the context of the artist's
oeuvre—in dialogue with Gérôme’s non-Orientalist works. Specifically, I relate the painting to
the initiation of Gérôme’s sculptural practice in 1878, an aspect of his oeuvre that has generally
been overlooked. Gérôme exhibited his first sculptural work, Gladiators (1878) [Figure 2], a
year prior to completing The Snake Charmer, and continued to produce a steady output of
sculptures until his death. I interpret the figure of the nude snake charmer, whose body appears
markedly sculptural, as a reference to the artist’s virtuoso abilities in both painting and sculpture.
Gérôme engages in a kind of paragone, displaying his achievements in two media and possibly
even rivaling a third—photography—through the finely-detailed style that he employs. Through
this paragone, Gérôme calls attention to himself and to his artistic identity. I connect this mode
of self-reference to Gérôme's many self-portraits, nearly all of which depict the artist working on
his polychrome sculptures. The Snake Charmer is, in other words, a painting that is as much
about Gérôme as it is about its “Oriental” subject.

Having established that The Snake Charmer refers the viewer back to the artist himself, I
then put this work in the context of the commercial success that Gérôme achieved through this
type of Orientalist image. Rather than taking the painting’s subject at face value, I suggest that
the relationship between the eponymous snake charmer and his audience serves as a metaphor
for the relationship of the painter to his public. In The Snake Charmer, Gérôme references his
popularity with wide-ranging consumer audiences—from wealthy Americans to middle-class
Parisians—whose taste shaped which works his dealer Goupil & Cie. sold on his behalf. For
decades, the publishing firm-turned-art dealership Goupil & Cie. sold and reproduced hundreds
of Gérôme's paintings—but only those that the firm deemed commercially viable. A significant
percentage of the works chosen for mass reproduction were paintings of “Oriental” subjects.
With this context in mind, I argue that The Snake Charmer may be interpreted as a meta-
commentary on Gérôme’s own willingness to cater to commercial demands for Orientalist subjects: Gérôme himself might be seen as the snake charmer, his audience and the consumers of his works the stupefied viewers. In this reading, the work does not simply cater to the market for Orientalist scenes, but instead makes sophisticated commentary on its position within that market.

As part of this analysis, I discuss the display of this painting at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exhibition in Chicago. The massive event attracted thousands of visitors and embodied the new modes of visual spectacle introduced in the nineteenth century. Visitors interacted with everything from the latest innovations in industrial technology, panoramas, and the famous ethnographic exhibits meant to dazzle and shock visitors. Such ethnographic displays, which presented the “Oriental” body as spectacle, had become a standard feature of such exhibitions by the end of the nineteenth century. *The Snake Charmer* was one of only a handful of works chosen for display in the American Loan galleries.³ I suggest that the dynamics between the painting’s subject and the context of its display directly informed viewers’ experience of it: one would look at a painting depicting “Oriental” spectacle after witnessing a parallel spectacle in the “Oriental” exhibits. While Gérôme could not have predicted that his work would eventually be hung in such a context, I nevertheless argue that we must take account of the way this context would have enhanced and reinforced the theme of spectacle already present within the work. The display of his work in this context also may allow a new reading of Gérôme’s style. Rather than simply manipulating the viewer into believing in the reality of the subject through the extreme naturalism of his depiction (as Nochlin suggested), I would argue

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³ Many of the works included in the American Loan art galleries—which featured the collections of prominent Americans—were in fact European artists, particularly French.
that Gérôme used his virtuoso style to play into the increasing demand for spectacle in displays of art. This was true not only of his Orientalist paintings, but his Greco-Roman scenes and life-sized polychrome sculptures as well. He did not use spectacle to enhance his realism but, rather, manipulated viewer’s understanding of realism to present a fictitious spectacle.

As this summary of my argument indicates, I agree with previous scholars that the themes of spectacle and spectatorship constitute a crucial aspect of Gérôme's work. Whether depicting a scene of gladiators fighting before a Roman crowd or a slave auction in a crowded Egyptian market, Gérôme continually represented the subject of looking throughout his career. Gérôme's style, often described as “photographic” due to the finely-calibrated details and slick surfaces of his paintings, may also be seen as a self-referential form of visual spectacle: the artist captivates viewers with the display of his virtuosity. In The Snake Charmer, Gérôme employs this style to present a frontal view of a crowd observing the titular figure, allowing the viewer to observe the reactions of the “audience” assembled before him. In essence, Gérôme paints a mirror of sorts, offering his audience a reflection of themselves in a thinly-disguised “Oriental” veil. I would argue that this visual dynamic invites us to move beyond the frame of the picture to consider Gérôme’s relationship to his own audience, the latter developed through the mediation of Goupil & Cie.

Goupil & Cie. arguably made Gérôme the most visible artist of his time, but his success—particularly within the marketplace—also garnered harsh criticism, ultimately shaping his legacy well into the twentieth century. Gérôme's works, including (but not limited to) his scenes of the Orient, had a truly global audience. Original paintings and reproductions of his

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4 I am indebted to Emily Beeny’s essay “Blood Spectacle: Gérôme in the Arena,” in Reconsidering Gérôme, from which I adopt her argument surrounding Ave Caesar! Morituri te salutant to apply to The Snake Charmer in chapter 4.
work were displayed in venues ranging from the grand estates of wealthy patrons to the store fronts of print shops catering to middle-class customers. The artist also held the position of instructor at the École des Beaux-Arts for decades and boasted an international roster of students, including Thomas Eakins and Mary Cassatt. Gérôme was thus not only a sought-after artist but also a major figure within the art establishment and its educational infrastructure. Despite this success—or perhaps because of it—contemporary critics such as Émile Zola belittled Gérôme, accusing him of willfully complying with commercial tastes. To some degree, Gérôme courted this perception, given that he was an outspoken opponent of the avant-garde styles that emerged during the late nineteenth century. He publicly objected to a posthumous Édouard Manet exhibition held in the École des Beaux-Arts in 1884, and to Gustave Caillebotte’s donation of a suite of Impressionist paintings to the state in 1894. These positions made Gérôme a representative of conservative trends in the French art world of the late nineteenth century. For these reasons, Gérôme began to fall out of critical and market favor toward the end of his career; upon his death in 1904, he had become a relatively obscure figure.

Yet while nineteenth-century French art history has more or less marginalized Gérôme, he stands as a prominent figure in nearly every publication on “Orientalist” painting. The definition of Orientalist painting remains as ambiguous and amorphous as the fictionalized region it claims to depict. Nineteenth-century Europeans and Americans painting the so-called Orient, a vast geographic region covering North Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and, at times, the Mediterranean, became known as Orientalist painters. The rise in popularity of such subjects, ranging from harem interiors to bustling street or market scenes, directly coincided with Europe's growing colonial presence in these regions. Orientalist painters, or Orientalists, usually imbued

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their works with overtly erotic and fantastical or exotic themes, as is the case with *The Snake Charmer*.

The broad definition of “Orientalist painting” obscures many of the differences among the artists grouped together in that category. Some artists, including Gérôme, actually traveled to the regions they purportedly depicted in their work; others, including Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, did not. British and French artists tended to travel as accessories of the state due to those countries’ colonial holdings in North Africa and the Middle East. American artists, such as Henry Ossawa Tanner and John Singer Sargent, generally traveled independently. The political agendas of Orientalist painters and their viewers also varied widely: figures such as Antoine-Jean Gros painted state-commissioned works while Eugène Delacroix catered more to the art market.

The tendency to generalize about Orientalist paintings and painters, though understandable to a degree, has led to the development of what I would call the “Orientalist Canon”: a familiar roster of loosely-grouped artists from Europe and North America whose works, produced between the mid-eighteenth through the mid-twentieth century, invariably are included in publications focusing on this subject. Artists include the “first wave” of Orientalists—Gros, Delacroix, Ingres, and, later, Gérôme—and a “second wave” of modernist artists who revisited the subject—Henri Matisse, Paul Klee, and others. As I discuss in my literature review, these books look to popularize, and at times to praise, this art-historical niche while typically forgoing in-depth contextual analyses of Orientalist art. The major problem with books that hew to the “Orientalist Canon” is that the paintings are almost always discussed in a vacuum, placed only in relation to other Orientalist works and removed from the rest of the

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artist's oeuvre, as well as other relevant political, social, economic and art-institutional contexts.

It was this tendency to depoliticize Orientalist painting that Nochlin hoped to counter with “The Imaginary Orient.” Unfortunately, though, few scholars have pushed beyond her initial attempt to assess Gérôme’s participation in this “Orientalist Canon.” As I note above, I do not argue against Nochlin's influential and important assertion that colonial politics directly informed *The Snake Charmer* and Gérôme’s other “Oriental” works. However, her interpretation does not exhaust the interpretive possibilities for this painting, or Gérôme's oeuvre more broadly. Orientalist imagery pervaded the nineteenth century and developed an iconography that has seeped well into the present day. This singular post-colonial argument—however revolutionary—has become the first and last assessment of these works. To repeat the same answer for the myriad of questions these images raise belittles their resonating impact. My analysis of *The Snake Charmer* should be seen as an attempt to offer one alternative answer.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Gérôme was one of the most successful artists of the nineteenth century by nearly every available measure, yet the existing scholarship devoted specifically to Gérôme’s work remains relatively scant. Disdain for artists perceived as “conservative” resulted in an almost total erasure of Gérôme from the art-historical narrative until the late twentieth century, when several scholars attempted to reignite interest in the artist. Ironically, the resuscitation of Gérôme’s reputation hinged upon a reconsideration of his Orientalist paintings, yet this component of his larger oeuvre has received the least thorough scholarly treatment. Gérôme's Orientalist works tend to be discussed in terms of how these works relate to paintings of similar subjects by other artists rather than within the specific context of his own oeuvre and career. In what follows, I address the literature on the artist broadly, tracing the trajectory of Gérôme scholarship from his own time to the present. The literature reveals a slow move to reevaluate Gérôme’s work in the decades following his death and certain trends within the scholarship, including Gérôme’s relationship to classicism, the Académie, and to photography. More importantly for this thesis, a review of the literature reveals that analyses of his Orientalist paintings generally ignoring issues such as the commercial appeal of his work, and the importance of sculpture in his artistic output.

Contemporary critics formed Gérôme’s immediate legacy—particularly Émile Zola, whose view of the artist’s detailed style as cold and formulaic has dominated analyses of his oeuvre ever since. As part of his effort to valorize the Impressionist group, Zola positioned Gérôme as the conservative antithesis to the artistic avant-garde. His polemical writings on Gérôme, particularly “Our Painters on the Champ de Mars” (1867), have proven to be the most influential assessments of the artist’s career, and often are cited in subsequent scholarship on the
artist. In that 1867 essay, Zola criticizes Gérôme for pandering to the demands of the marketplace, comparing him with an artisan or worker:

Of course, M. Gérôme works for the Maison Goupil and therefore makes a painting so that the painting can be reproduced by photography and engravings and thus sold in the thousand of copies. Here the subject matter is everything, the painting is nothing: the reproduction is worth more than the work...The whole secret of the trade consists of finding an idea that is sad or joyous, that titillates the flesh and heart, and then to treat this idea in a banal and pretty way that makes everyone happy. There is no provincial sitting room where an engraving of *Duel After the Ball* or *Molière Breakfasting with Louis XIV* does not hang on the wall, while in bachelors’ apartments you will see *Dance of the Almeh* and *Phryné before the Aeropagus*, racy subjects that men can enjoy among themselves. More serious folks display *Ave Caesar* or *The Death of Caesar*. Monsieur Gérôme works to satisfy every taste.\(^7\)

Zola deems commercial success—which he equates with the making and selling of reproductions for the print market—to be incompatible with artistic innovation.

Part of Zola’s complaint, made less than a decade into Gérôme’s partnership with Goupil & Cie., is founded: the firm bought paintings from Gérôme specifically to sell as print reproductions, first as engravings and then, later, as photographs. Whether the publishing firm explicitly instructed Gérôme on what to paint remains unclear. Given that Gérôme’s commercial success would only continue to rise, it seems that the artist did not let these accusations influence his ties with Goupil & Cie. Rather, Gérôme may have subtly reacted to these charges by carefully crafting his image as the erudite artist-traveler. In the years that followed, he would make several trips to the East, collecting objects and photographs with a quasi-anthropological zeal. His trips allowed Gérôme to present himself as an ethnographer, lending legitimacy to his

\(^7\) Émile Zola, “Our Painters on the Champ de Mars” [1867], reprinted in *The Spectacular Art of Jean-Léon Gérôme*, ed. Laurence des Cars and Dominique de Font-Rélaux et al. (London: Thames & Hudson, 2010), 357. Zola continues: “Furthermore, to conceal his total absence of imagination, he has set about producing antique rubbish and churns out classical interiors. This marks him out as a serious and scholarly man. Realizing perhaps that he will never be capable of assuming the mantle of painter, he tries instead to assume that of an archaeologist. In this light, painting becomes a kind of cabinet making...[but] never does a cabinetmaker believe he has created a work of art...You [Gérôme] are that cabinetmaker. You know your trade inside out, and in your fingers you have tremendous dexterity. This is your talent as a worker.”
portfolio of ethnic and racial types, even as he also profited from the sensationalizing, titillating, and spectacular aspects of his Orientalist artworks.

Though Zola's criticism has dominated the scholarship, he was not the only critic sympathetic to the artistic avant-garde who disapproved of Gérôme's work. In his review of the Salon of 1859, Charles Baudelaire praises the historical subject matter of *Death of Caesar* (1859) [Figure 3] but questions the artist's interpretation of the subject, specifically the choice to portray Caesar’s body as dark and shadowed.⁸ While Baudelaire admires Gérôme's dexterity—his technical virtuosity—he criticizes the false sense of reportage that Gérôme's hyper-detailed style communicates.

That these Roman games [in *Age of Augustus*] are represented with precision and local color is scrupulously observed, I have no doubts...But founding success on such features is maybe playing, if not a disloyal, at least a dangerous game, engendering distrust and resistance among many who will go away shaking their heads wondering if such things were really like that. Supposing that such criticism is unjust...it is the deserved punishment for an artist who substitutes the entertainment provided by the page of erudition for the pleasure of pure painting. The craftsmanship of M. Gérôme, it must be said, has never been strong or original...⁹

In Baudelaire’s view, then, *Age of Augustus* (1852-55) [Figure 4], Gérôme’s first major state commission, purports to portray history but in reality overwhelms the viewer with a plethora of details. Baudelaire views Gérôme’s realism as dishonest in presenting a historic scene with such pseudo-fidelity; rather than educating viewers, he entertains them.¹⁰

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⁸ Charles Baudelaire, “The Salon of 1859,” in *The Spectacular Art of Jean-Léon Gérôme*, ed. Laurence des Cars and Dominique de Font-Rélaux et al. (London: Thames & Hudson, 2010), 356. Baudelaire continues: “There is something inexplicable that remains to be explained in relation to the painting itself. Caesar cannot be a Maghrebi; he had very white skin...why then this muddy coloring in which the face and arms are covered? I have heard it argued that death strikes the face with a livid tone such as this...Others simply remark that the arms and head are enveloped in shadow. But this excuse would imply M. Gérôme is incapable of representing white flesh in twilight, which is beyond credibility.”


It would seem that Gérôme was very aware of his reputation as a salesman, a fabricator, and an entertainer. Rather than hiding his commercial sensibility—or curbing his practice—he embraced it. Speaking to a reporter from *Grand Journal*, Gérôme stated,

That’s commercial interest, you say. Well, can't that interest be sacred as well as the other interests? *Primo vivere:* that's my motto. Painters eat, drink, sleep, and buy clothes like everyone else. One can't work uniquely for glory.\(^{11}\)

Gérôme here openly acknowledges his reliance upon the art market, which was shaped by his relationship with Goupil & Cie. He acknowledged to a degree that his primary concern was not to adhere to the rules of “high art” but to pay equal attention to market demands as to those of the Salon. However, as years passed and such criticisms persisted, Gérôme began to fashion a variety of defenses and rebuttals. He stressed his prominence as a member of the École des Beaux-Arts, not only as a painter but also a sculptor.\(^{12}\) Gérôme’s acknowledgment of such criticisms strengthens the possibility that he may have directly addressed this negative reception in his artwork. Just as he fashioned his persona as erudite traveler to counteract perceptions about his business ties with Goupil & Cie., Gérôme employed the tropes of Orientalism to address the

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Cars and Dominique de Font-Réaux et al. (London: Thames & Hudson, 2010), 353. The assessment of Gérôme’s work during his lifetime was, of course, not entirely negative. Théophile Gautier praised Gérôme's style and interpretation of a range of subjects, from the classical works from his early Néo-Grec period to his later Orientalist paintings. He finds redeeming qualities in the false sense of reportage the artist's detailed style lends to. For Gautier, Gérôme’s hyperrealism adds conviction to his subject; his style is didactic and transports the viewer to real places. Gautier described Gérôme as the “artist traveller” and wrote favorably of the hyperrealism of his Orientalist paintings: “M. Gérôme satisfies one of the most demanding instincts of the period: the desire of peoples to encounter others, apart from in portraits produced from the imagination. He has everything required to fulfill this important mission: a quick and efficient eye, a sure and learned hand—which records every detail with the imperturbable clarity of a daguerreotype—and, above all, a sense that we shall call exotic—for want of a more precise term which helps him discover at once the characteristic differences between races.”


\(^{12}\) Ackerman, 142. Gérôme proclaimed, “the Institute cannot remain still before such a scandal...How can the government dare welcome such a collection of inanities into a museum? Why...have you seen the collection? The state be ward of such junk! The Luxembourg Museum is a school. What lessons are our young artists going to receive there from now on? They’ll start to do Impressionism because the state wants Impressionism.”
popularity of Orientalism in the marketplace.

Despite the existence of a range of critical opinions about Gérôme’s work during the late nineteenth century, Zola’s negative view came to dominate in retrospect. R.W. Glessner’s obituary of the artist, who died in 1904, gives insight into how partisans of the avant-garde helped to form Gérôme’s legacy well into the twentieth century. Even when offering a lengthy recounting of the artist’s career, Glessner prophetically anticipates Gérôme’s obscurity in the history of art, boldly stating: “It is unquestionable that Gérôme is destined to go down to posterity as a second-rate master.”13 Glessner argues that it was Gérôme's hyper-realism that robbed his images of emotion and expression, echoing aspects of Zola's critique.

During the 1970s and 1980s, a new wave of scholars returned to Gérôme’s career, though all of these accounts in one way or another had to come to terms with the artist's nineteenth-century critics—the perception of Gérôme as a retrograde or “bad” artist—and the significance of his Orientalist paintings to the rest of his oeuvre. The first major reconsideration of the artist was Albert Boime's short essay “Jean-Leon Gérôme, Henri Rousseau's Sleeping Gypsy and the Academic Legacy” (1971). Boime introduces the possibility that Gérôme metaphorically inserted himself into his works, specifically in his Orientalist paintings depicting lions in vast deserts. For Boime, Gérôme's compositional choices, particularly the horizontal orientation of his desert scenes, give his work an expressive quality, allowing him to convey feelings of desolation and to hint at transcendence. He does not take these pictures as literal depictions of the “Orient,” but instead suggests that Gérôme uses the subject as a vehicle for other ideas and meanings.14 Boime's interpretation is limited by his decision to focus on one rather narrow

14 Albert Boime, “Jean-Léon Gérôme, Henri Rousseau's Sleeping Gypsy and the Academic Legacy,” The
thematic strand of Gérôme's Orientalist paintings, but his essay nevertheless marks the beginning of a period of reassessment of Gérôme’s Orientalist paintings and the category of Orientalist art more broadly.

Two other foundational texts from this period, Gerald Ackerman's *The Life and Work of Jean-Leon Gérôme* (1986) and Nochlin's aforementioned “The Imaginary Orient” (1989), have proven invaluable to later scholars. Ackerman's biographical account has become the touchstone for nearly every subsequently-published text on the artist. The monograph consolidates a vast range of published and unpublished sources, presenting a detailed history of Gérôme’s life and career substantiated by the artist’s own writings—relying heavily upon his letters and journal entries. Ackerman also provides a full catalogue raisonné comprising hundreds of works.\(^{15}\)

Ackerman’s express aim is to raise Gérôme from obscurity, and to argue that the negative views of Zola and other nineteenth-century critics have unjustly shaped the artist’s legacy. He claims that “this study offers information and considered opinion in place of conjecture and prejudice and tries to be objective and avoid polemic.”\(^{16}\)

In his zeal to “vindicate” Gérôme—particularly from the charge of catering to public taste for commercial gain—Ackerman shies away from any truly substantive analysis of Gérôme's style and subject matter. However, Ackerman’s text accomplishes an important task: it challenges Gérôme's absence from the art-historical canon. Ackerman therefore opens up space to pose a range of questions about Gérôme’s work and the

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\(^{15}\) Ackerman, 183-303. There are 553 entries for paintings alone.

\(^{16}\) Ackerman, 9.
vicissitudes of his reputation during his lifetime and after his death.

Whereas Ackerman ultimately served as Gérôme’s apologist and primary advocate, Nochlin, in “The Imaginary Orient,” directly critiques the national and racial politics of Gérôme’s work. As I note in my introduction, her essay remains one of the most important texts on Gérôme and on the phenomenon of Orientalism. Nochlin accuses previous scholars of failing to explore the complexities of Orientalist imagery, using *The Snake Charmer* and other examples by Gérôme as case studies. Nochlin compares Gérôme's hyperrealistic style to photography, arguing that the apparent verism of his style lent his works a pseudo-documentary quality. The sheer number of minute details Gérôme provides convey a false sense of truth that, according to Nochlin, viewers project onto the paintings’ subject matter (often stereotypical at best, frankly racist at worst). Such small details seem so incidental and banal that their inclusion encourages the viewer to absorb them as truth. Nochlin cites, for example, the cracked tiles of the blue mosaic wall in *The Snake Charmer* as a symbol of nepotism: this tiny detail implies that societies in the “Orient” lack the capability to maintain their own infrastructure, thus justifying European colonial interventions to “protect” such objects of cultural heritage. Furthermore, Nochlin addresses the tendency to portray “Oriental” sites as timeless or “primitive.” Istanbul, where *The Snake Charmer* is purportedly set, was the seat of the Ottoman Empire, one of the major world powers of the time, yet Gérôme presents it as a mysterious, culturally backward place. In fact, Gérôme had made two trips to the Ottoman Empire by 1878, and would make yet another the

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17 Nochlin, “The Imaginary Orient,” 38-39. Nochlin describes this small but crucial detail as such: “The vice of idleness was frequently commented upon by Western travelers to Islamic countries in the nineteenth-century, and in relation to it, we can observe still another striking absence in the annals of Orientalist art: the absence of scenes of work and industry…When Gérôme’s painting is seen within this context of supposed Near Eastern idleness and neglect, what might at first appear to be objectively described architectural facts turns out to be *architecture moralisée.* The lesson is subtle, perhaps, but still eminently available, given a context of similar topoi: these people—lazy, slothful, and childlike, if colorful—have let their own cultural treasures sink into decay.”
following year.\textsuperscript{18}

Clearly, Ackerman and Nochlin provide two very different models for interpreting the artist. Both are limited in the ways that they approach the artist and his work: Ackerman does not put Gérôme’s work in a political or social context, while Nochlin limits her analysis to Gérôme’s Orientalist paintings, missing the opportunity to address his Greco-Roman scenes and his business ties with Goupil & Cie. However, the publication of these texts spurred other scholars to revisit Gérôme; most subsequent scholarship has focused on his non-Orientalist paintings. In “The Return of the Salon: Jean-Léon Gérôme in the Art Institute” (1989), Jack Perry Brown outlines key themes in the artist’s oeuvre, such as his repetition of a select number of classical and “Oriental” subjects throughout his career. Brown provides two insights important to the argument developed in this thesis. First, Gérôme’s teacher, Paul Delaroche, who had traveled to Algeria and expressed enthusiasm for the East as inspiration, introduced Gérôme to “Oriental” subjects unrelated to their market appeal.\textsuperscript{19} This suggests that Gérôme, at least for a time, possessed a genuine interest in “Oriental” subjects. Second, Gérôme imbued erotic and voyeuristic elements in both his Greco-Roman as well as his Orientalist paintings. In \textit{Phryne Before the Areopagus} (1861) \textbf{[Figure 5]}, Gérôme positions the viewer as a member of the Greek audience watching the nude courtesan, Phryne. Some observers such as Edgar Degas deemed the painting voyeuristic and “pornographic” due to its un-idealized rendering; Phryne appeared too

\textsuperscript{18} Ackerman and Lafont-Couturier, 164-167. He went to modern-day Turkey in 1871, 1875, and 1879.

\textsuperscript{19} Gérôme’s style and subjects were heavily influenced by his teacher. Delaroche, whose paintings were also sold as print reproductions, employed a crisp and defined aesthetic, which Gérôme inherited. Brown likens this sleek style to contemporaneous photography, specifically the daguerreotype. However, despite teaching an international roster of students at the École des Beaux-Arts for nearly forty-years, Gérôme’s history paintings were faulted for possessing qualities of genre painting—domestic scenes set in antiquity that lack didactic and heroic elements, crucial components of a successful history painting in line with the École’s ethos.
The artist’s “Oriental” slave auction paintings employ a similar visual device, emphasizing the erotic elements of the subject. While his “Oriental” figures—such as in *The Snake Charmer*—are generally more objectified than his Greco-Roman scenes, Brown reminds the reader that Gérôme’s non-Orientalist paintings are not dissimilar. By studying Gerome’s classicism within the context of the artist’s oeuvre, Brown succeeds in reevaluating Gérôme’s subject matter and invites further discussion.

Given his proximity to both the École des Beaux-Arts and the Académie des Beaux-Arts, Gérôme’s relationship with classicism also has garnered significant scholarly attention in recent years. In “History without Values? Gérôme’s History Paintings” (2008), John House analyzes the criticism directed at Gérôme’s history paintings in the 1860s. Contemporary critics, including Baudelaire, claimed that Gérôme degraded the “values” of history and its place in the hierarchy of painting by what they saw as a focus on detail and technique over ethos and morality. His figures are not idealized in the classical manner; in an effort to bring history to life, Gérôme makes his figures too realistic, too un-idealized, for champions of “high art.” In *Death of Caesar*, Gérôme fails to depict the heroic figure in a manner of respect and esteem, and instead portrays him sprawled on the floor, a shadowed heap completely denied of dignity. Such rendering runs against the typical rendering of a heroic figure according to institutional norms. Similarly, as discussed by Brown, *Phryne Before the Areopagus* fails to idealize the female nude


21 Brown chooses to focuses his analysis only on Gérôme’s non-Orientalist paintings.


23 Ackerman and Lafont-Couturier, 41. Ackerman discusses the American context of Gerome’s patronage. He argues Gérôme’s history painting found success there because newly wealthy Americans easily understood the “technical mastery” of the works and seemingly straightforward subjects.
in a manner appropriate to the story. Critics remarked on the figure’s resemblance to a “courtesan.” House finds these accusations curious given that Gérôme himself taught at the École des Beaux-Arts, seemingly upholding the characteristics of “high art.” In an attempt to offer an explanation, House connects Gérôme’s aesthetic choices with his ties to Napoleon III and the context of the period. History painting underwent a “crisis” in the Second Empire, a shift in both definition and function. As Gérôme’s classicism continued to move away from the previous norm, critics attributed Gérôme’s subversion of the ideals of high art either to his relationship with the private art market—chiefly Goupil & Cie.—or to the broader climate of “self-indulgence” during the Second Empire. While House does not offer a real verdict, he succeeds in presenting Gérôme as a trickster of sorts, purposefully pushing the boundaries of history painting for his own gains. In the following chapters I apply House’s insights to Gérôme’s Orientalist paintings, suggesting that the artist plays with the visual tropes of the Orient to comment on the importance of his sculpture to his oeuvre, and his relation to the marketplace.

24 When Phyrne, a courtesan in ancient Greece, was brought to trial for impiety, she was disrobed in front of her jury. Humbled by her beauty, they ultimately found her innocent.

25 House, “History Without Values?” 261-261. Originally the morality of the subject constituted a history painting; however, Ingres shifted towards aesthetic and Gautier believed a sophisticated elevation of any subject could make a work a history painting. House later discusses how the lack of state patronage fed into this.

26 House, “History Without Values?” 275.

27 House, “History Without Values?” 276. House goes on to say, “in his hands, history became a marvelous toy-box, a store-house of picturesque details and anecdotes; he could intrigue his viewers by the parade of bric-a-brac, real and imaginary, from the past, and could tease them with stories that appealed to their curiosité, yet prevented any single clear-cut moral interpretation. History painting, in Gérôme’s hands, becomes a sophisticated and highly lucrative game.” For more on Death of Caesar and Gérôme’s relationship with classicism and history painting see: Gülru Çakmak, “Jean-Léon Gérôme: The Innovative Years (1851-1859) part I” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 2010) and Çakmak, “The Salon of 1859 and Caesar: The Limits of Painting” in Reconsidering Gérôme.

In addition to the scholarly essays just cited, recent exhibitions on Gérôme have shed new light on several aspects of Gérôme’s career. The 2000 exhibition catalogue Gérôme & Goupil, *Art and Enterprise*, compiled by the Musée Goupil in Bordeaux, France, offers previously unknown details about Gérôme's business ties with the publishing firm. In the catalogue, Ackerman and Hélène Lafont-Couturier, Director of the Musée Goupil, extensively explore the relationship between Gérôme and publisher Adolphe Goupil and the context in which the artist's paintings were sold as print reproductions. Ackerman here continues to argue for Gérôme's greatness, now acknowledging his international commercial success. Documents in the exhibition and catalogue reveal, for the first time, the extent and modes of Gérôme's financial gains, including how many prints the firm sold, the range in prices, and the range of sizes, creating a fiscal timeline of the artist’s popularity. Due to the efforts of the Musée Goupil to make such data public, we now know that the most commercially successful years for Gérôme were between 1865-1885, with 1880 being a record year. Of the nearly 200 paintings Gérôme produced during this time, less than thirty portray non-Orientalist subjects. This leaves little doubt that Gérôme painted *The Snake Charmer*, completed in 1878, at a time when his Orientalist paintings brought him a loyal following with both wealthy and middle-class patrons.

The J. Paul Getty Museum's 2010 exhibition *The Spectacular Art of Jean-Léon Gérôme*, the first major retrospective of the artist in decades, and the accompanying publication *Reconsidering Gérôme*, provide the most comprehensive evaluation of Gérôme's oeuvre since the publication of Ackerman’s volume. The exhibition catalogue argues for a renewed interest

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29 Ackerman and Lafont-Couturier, 19.

30 Ackerman, 216-259.

31 Laurence des Cars and Dominique de Font-Rélaux, Edouard Papet eds. *The Spectacular Art of Jean-Léon Gérôme*
in the artist's work, simultaneously acknowledging and dismissing his critics—then and now.

Gérôme's work is examined from multiple vantage points: in terms of medium (painting, sculpture, photography) and geography—both real and depicted (France, America, and the “Orient”). Mary G. Morton's “Gérôme in the Gilded Age” focuses on Gérôme's looming presence in nineteenth-century America, a country he never visited, and his success among collectors. This period saw a shift in American taste for art, from landscapes to contemporary French art, and though some criticized Gérôme's commercialism, American patrons constituted a huge portion of his sales. Morton briefly discusses the compositional similarities between Gérôme and his former student Thomas Eakins, specifically the theme of looking in Gérôme's arena scenes and Eakins’ *The Gross Clinic* (1875) [*Figure 6*], arguing the French Academician seems to have influenced the country's most notable artists. “Gérôme: Working in the Era of Industrial Production,” by Pierre-Lin Renié, examines the artist's paintings in the context of the success his reproductions found, discussing the artist's immense popularity among middle-class art buyers who vied for print reproductions of paintings distributed by the much-heralded Goupil & Cie.

The one essay that focuses on Gérôme’s sculptural work may be the catalogue’s strongest contribution. Édouard Papet's “‘Father Polychrome': The Sculpture of Jean-Léon Gérôme”

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32 Total of nine essays.


34 Morton, “Gilded Age,” 192. “Like *Pollice Verso*, *The Gross Clinic* takes place in a highly organized arena in which the doctor, with the composure of the helmeted gladiator, performs a socially—in this case scientifically—condoned act of violence.”
provides context for Gérôme's foray into sculpture and proves invaluable considering the artist's polychrome sculptures, which have received the least scholarly attention to date. The author implies that Gérôme pursued polychrome sculpture with an almost obsessive vigor in an attempt to align himself with the technical virtuosity of antiquity and, simultaneously, to attract a public deeply interested in Greco-Roman figurines. The discovery in 1870 of polychrome Greek figurines, called “tanagras” after the city where they were unearthed, and the decision to display them at the 1878 Paris Exposition Universelle soon ignited a demand for these statuettes and similar replicas. Many saw these small sculptures as possessing Praxitelean qualities and, thus, became an emblem for the sophistication of late antique polychrome technique. Gérôme, who had exhibited his life-sized bronze statue Gladiators at the same exposition, would soon begin to paint his statues. He produced his first polychrome sculpture, Tanagra [Figure 7], in 1890.

However, in emphasizing the legacy of antiquity in Gérôme’s sculpture, Papet skirts around the issue of commercialism, crucial in analyzing the artist’s move into this medium.

Perhaps surprisingly, these revisionist accounts of Gérôme’s work touch only briefly on his Orientalist paintings. This may be due to the lingering presence of Nochlin’s post-colonialist declaration and a resistance to move beyond such an influential essay. Of the nine essays included in Gérôme & Goupil, Art and Enterprise, only one directly addresses the artist's

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35 Gerald M. Ackerman, “Gérôme’s Sculpture: The Problems with Realist Sculpture,” Arts Magazine 8 (Feb., 1986): 84. Ackerman briefly mentions the tanagra discoveries when discussing the sculpture Tanagra.


37 Though Gérôme’s sculptures have generally been overlooked, Ackerman provides the earliest accounts. Ackerman traces the range of his sculptural works—bronzes, marbles, polychrome and bejeweled figures, busts, and monuments—after a herculean effort to locate all seventy of his sculptures. Furthermore, Sarah Jordan Lippert, in “Theory, Practice, and Competition in the Visual Arts: The Fortunes of the Paragone in French and British Nineteenth Century Art,” refers to Gerome’s polychrome sculptures. I discuss the artist’s sculptures, and the relevant scholarship, at greater length in chapter 3.
Orientalist paintings. Stephen R. Edidin's “Gérôme's Orientalism” provides a brief but interesting account of Gérôme's travels to Egypt, and gives context for the ethnographic “types” the artist repeatedly portrayed, such as dancing almehs and bashi-bazouks mercenaries. Edidin argues that Gérôme's Orientalist paintings meld fictional tropes with the artist’s own actual experiences in the Ottoman Empire. Edidin seems to want to balance Gérôme’s invented scenes with truth—emphasizing that he was in fact a well-traveled artist and that, despite the fantastical elements in his works, there exist real elements in them.

Likewise, only one essay in The Spectacular Art of Jean-Léon Gérôme is dedicated to Gérôme’s Orientalism. “The Paradox of Realism: Gérôme in the Orient,” by Sophie Makariou and Charlotte Maury, also provides historical context for Gérôme's travels to the Orient; the authors directly compare what the artist would have seen with the images he produced, emphasizing Gérôme's attention to architectural detail. Their essay makes clear that Gérôme took considerable liberties in all his Orientalist paintings, but that the extent of his departure from reality varies from image to image. In one work, The Muezzin (The Call to Prayer) (1866) [Figure 8] Gérôme depicts a mosque in Cairo with architectural features only found in Islamic Spain. In Public Prayer in the Mosque of Amr (1871) [Figure 9]—possibly based on an albumen print—he depicts a figure wearing shoes, an impossible occurrence for such a holy space. Gérôme compiles a pastiche of Oriental architecture; his sources can, in fact, be identified due to his careful rendering. The same cannot be said of his figures, which despite their apparent


attention to ethnographic detail are rendered performing culturally inaccurate activities.

Makariou and Maury discuss *The Snake Charmer* in relation to the artist’s 1875 trip to Istanbul. They show that the architectural elements depict the “Golden Path” hall in Istanbul’s Topkapı Palace, but point out that it is quite unlikely that he actually saw the palace harem Altın yol, or the “Golden Path,” due to its exclusion of foreign visitors.\(^{40}\) Therefore, although Gérôme actually traveled to Istanbul, he almost certainly based the setting of this painting on a 1865 photograph by Abdullah frères; however, he manipulated the elements in the photograph to his taste.\(^{41}\) Such analysis reveals that there was complexity in Gérôme’s pastiche of “Oriental” tropes; in the case of *The Snake Charmer*, we gain insight into exactly what he referenced and what he chose to invent. The essay therefore suggests that Gérôme took more care with the accuracy of architectural elements (the “backdrop” of the painting) than the figures in the foreground.

The editors of *Reconsidering Gérôme* (2010), the scholarly volume published in conjunction with the Getty exhibition, acknowledge that the conversation on Orientalism has become increasingly complicated since Nochlin's “The Imaginary Orient.” They argue for renewed interest in the artist and offer alternative ways of analyzing many of Gérôme's paintings. Gérôme's institutional and commercial success garner much attention, as well as how his images reached a plethora of viewers due to the technological innovations in printmaking spearheaded by Goupil & Cie. Two essays in particular have proven invaluable to the interpretation provided


\(^{41}\) Makariou and Maury, “The Paradox of Realism,” 262-263. The authors continue, “In the narrow corridor of the palace...space is limited and it can only be photographed tangentially. Gérôme preserves the angle of photography in his work, and continues the perspective line rightwards. In so doing, he has to enlarge the frame of the original image and invent continuity.”
in my thesis: Emily Beeny’s “Blood Spectacle: Gérôme in the Arena” and Mary Roberts's “Gérôme in Istanbul.” Beeny offers an interpretation of the artist's gladiator scenes that closely echoes Boime's analysis of his “Oriental” landscapes as well as House’s essay. Beeny claims that in his depiction of the Romans viewing the fighting gladiators, Gérôme makes a veiled reference to contemporary Parisian audiences. This assessment challenges the notion that the artist simply revisited certain historical subjects for their popularity, and suggests that he used his artworks as vehicles for commentary on his identity as an artist and his reception by the public.

In her essay, Roberts offers new information on Gérôme's relationship with the Ottoman Empire and how the artist sold Orientalist paintings to Sultan Abdülaziz. Her analysis complicates the notion of Western Orientalism and challenges scholars to consider how Gérôme’s works may have operated beyond the strict East/West paradigm. The demand for Orientalist paintings in the “Orient” suggests that Orientalism operated in more nuanced way.

The number of essays published in the past few years mark an encouraging turning point in Gérôme scholarship; however, there still remains a need to explore the complexities of Gérôme's oeuvre further, particularly regarding his Orientalist works. Certainly there is no denying that Gérôme's images of Arabs and Africans both reflected and reinforced a French colonial viewpoint, but how may have these images of non-Westerners engaged with American ideas of race? To overlook the fact that Gérôme's Orientalist scenes were extremely popular in post-Civil War America, where he found his largest groups of patrons, seems a missed opportunity.

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42 Roberts, “Gérôme in Istanbul,” 121. Gérôme seems to have had a rather unique relationship with the Ottoman Court: “We have no source confirming whether or not Gérôme visited the sultans residence, the Dolmabahçe Palace, during this 1875 trip, but documents in the palace archives reveal that some months later he was instrumental in negotiating the sale of paintings to the sultan through hi father-in-law’s firm, Goupil et Cie. In this enterprise his interlocutor was another former student, Ahmed Ali Bey, one of the foremost Ottoman artists in his generation, who came to be known as Şeker Ahmed Paşa. In the mid-1860s Sultan Abdülaziz sponsored Ahmed Ali’s studies in Paris, where he worked in the studios of Gérôme and Gustave Boulanger. Returning to Turkey sometime between 1871 and 1872, he quickly rose in the rank and position in the palace bureaucracy.”
opportunity. Furthermore, Gérôme used photographs taken abroad to model his Orientalist scenes; how does this relate to the commercial success of travel photography and postcards at the time? And what currency should scholars give to those who charged Gérôme with anachronism and commercialism? Should their assessment be worth more than the many collectors who bought the artist's work? The scholarly attention given to Gérôme in the last decade lends encouragement to further exploration, and lays the groundwork for the analysis that follows in this thesis.
CHAPTER 3
SCULPTURE AND SELF-REPRESENTATION:

THE SNAKE CHARMER AS PARAGONE

This chapter presents a visual and iconographic analysis of Gérôme’s *The Snake Charmer* in order to argue that the painting constitutes an early example of the artist’s longstanding practice of self-allusion. In this case, I contend that the central figure in *The Snake Charmer* references Gérôme’s recent foray into the medium of sculpture. *The Snake Charmer* was completed in 1879, only one year after Gérôme exhibited his first sculpture, *Gladiators*.

Previous scholars have observed Gérôme’s tendency to reference himself and his artistic practice; here, I apply this insight to *The Snake Charmer*, arguing that similar qualities may be found. To substantiate this claim, I place *The Snake Charmer* in dialogue with two series of paintings in which Gérôme connects his work as a painter and as a sculptor: his self-portraits, the majority of which show him working on polychrome sculptures, and his *Pygmalion and Galatea* series, which arguably are veiled self-portraits. These works, considered together, indicate the importance of his sculptural practice to his self-image, and suggest that Gérôme viewed his oeuvre through the concept of the paragone, or a “competition” between painting and sculpture. Indeed, I would claim that *The Snake Charmer* is the work that initiates this strand of self-reference in which Gérôme alludes to his achievements in sculpture in painted works.

I then go on to discuss how we might read *The Snake Charmer* as a complex paragone in which Gérôme competes with himself. I characterize the central figure, the snake charmer, as sculptural in appearance, and argue that through this figure Gérôme makes a subtle reference to his newfound identity as a sculptor. In *The Snake Charmer* he therefore simultaneously presents himself as a virtuoso in both painting and sculpture, as he does in the later self-portraits and
I also extend the paradigm of the paragone to address the issue of Gérôme’s relationship to photography. As I discuss in my review of the literature, Gérôme's finely-detailed style is often compared with photography. The focus in such discussions, especially in analyses of Gérôme’s Orientalist works, is on the purported truth-value of the subjects he depicts. I argue instead that Gérôme asserts his talents in the media of both painting and sculpture in ways that allowed him to rival the technological achievements of contemporary photographic processes, asserting the superiority of those “old” media over photography.

While many scholars relate Gérôme’s paintings to photography, few have discussed Gérôme’s sculptural work, or the importance of sculpture to his self-definition as an artist from the late 1870s onward. As I will show, there may be more than one reason that Gérôme, who never trained as a sculptor, chose to pick up this medium relatively late in his career and to pursue it with dedication until his death. The beginning of Gérôme's full commitment to sculpture was marked by the exhibition of the life-sized bronze Gladiators at the 1878 Exposition Universelle—the year before Gérôme finished The Snake Charmer. However, the artist had been engaging with sculpture in varying degrees up to that point. Gérôme would at times create small figurines—never shown publicly—as models for select figures in his paintings, such as Mirmillo (1859-73) and Retiarius (1859), which were used for the painting Ave Caesar! Morituri te salutant (1859) [Figures 10-12].43 These small plaster models should not be confused with the bronze sculptures Adolphe Goupil began to commission in the 1860s—specifically to sell—based on Gérôme’s paintings.44 Sculptural qualities evidently existed in

43 de Cars and Font-Rélaux, Spectacular, 291. It should be noted that Gérôme’s original plaster models no longer exist; however, Mirmillo and Retiarius are accepted to be metal casts of those models.

44 Florence Rionnet’s “Goupil and Gérôme: Two Views of the Sculpture Industry” in Gérôme and Goupil, Art and Enterprise (Pittsburgh: The Frick Art and Historical Center, 2000), 45-53. Though inspired by Gérôme’s paintings, other artists in fact made these early sculptures. Rionnet explains that “Goupil applied the same process in
Gérôme’s early works, which he continued to expand and experiment with decades on.

But when Gérôme began to sculpt his own work, he turned to the medium of polychrome sculpture. Unlike its monochromatic counterpart, polychrome sculpture was not held in high esteem during the nineteenth century; while practiced rather widely, this genre was considered a kind of craft or artisanal practice, as opposed to the “fine art” associations of sculpture in marble or bronze. For this reason, the subject of Gérôme’s first exhibited polychrome sculpture—Tanagra—was strategically chosen. Tanagra shows a female nude seated upright with one arm to her side and the hand holding a small figurine, as if to present the object to the viewer. While nearly all the pigment has since worn away, the statue was originally tinted to give naturalistic features. The hair, eyes, mouth, and nipples were colored, yet the skin remained white and untouched. For nineteenth-century Salon goers, the life-sized figure must have appeared startlingly real—the style makes a spectacle of the work, calling attention to the virtuosity of its making. Gérôme exhibited the work at the Salon of 1890, during the height of the commercial demand for painted figurines made popular by the 1870 excavations at the village of Tanagra in reverse, this time taking advantage of the popularity of a number of paintings to publish sculpted interpretations. So the characters painted by his son-in-law Gérôme…were subtly metamorphosed into sculptures. The figures were not modeled by Gérôme…rather, Goupil preferred to entrust the work to two of the most famous sculptors of the time: Alexandre Falguière and Antonin Mercié…although they had an academic background…the managed to liberate themselves substantially from the academic tradition in response to public tastes and therefore enjoyed great popularity with art publishers.”


Lippert, 234. Lippert, referring to Ackerman’s catalogue raisonné, acknowledges that with “Tanagra, Gérôme once again collapsed the expected separation between naked and nude in nineteenth century sculpture, because the original color dramatically heightened the illusion of reality.”

Ackerman, “Gérôme’s Sculpture,” 84-86. Gérôme’s polychrome statues would becomes more ornate towards the end of his life, with various decorative elements added such as jewels and gilded gold in the case of his last—and unfinished work—Corinthia (1904).

Ackerman, 326. The American critic Spielman, commenting on The Ball Player, found Gérôme’s painted marble so lifelike that it was ”as near the borderline of realism as permitted in art.”
Boeotia. Polychrome sculpture thus allowed Gérôme to align himself with antiquity while also appealing to the marketplace at a time when his commercial sales were at a steady decline.

However, polychrome sculpture also enabled Gerome to engage in a complex paragone, presenting himself as a virtuoso of multiple media. In her discussion of the concept of the paragone as manifested in British and French art of the nineteenth century, Sarah Jordan Lippert cites Gérôme as a key example, focusing on his series Pygmalion and Galatea. She discusses the many functions of the paragone in Gérôme’s work: it serves to quell his detractors, to demonstrate his ambition and skill, and to respond to his shifting reputation as well as broader changes in the art world. As discussed in the previous chapter, Gérôme had detractors both within avant-garde circles and the Académie, who charged the artist with pandering to the marketplace and subverting the traditional rules of history painting. I extrapolate from Lippert’s discussion of Gérôme’s self-portraits and his Pygmalion and Galatea series to argue that The Snake Charmer should be included among the works in which Gérôme references his own skills as an artist and his commercial success.

49 de Cars and Font-Rélaux, Spectacular, 302. The excavated tanagras were exhibited at the same 1878 Exposition Universelle Gérôme debuted Gladiators. The public had become enamored with the small painted sculptures from antiquity, and soon a commercial demand for similar objects surfaced. Originally tinted all over, only color on the small hoop dancer in the figure's hand remains visible.

50 Ackerman, “Gérôme’s Sculpture,” 83-89. Ackerman explains Gérôme’s foray into sculpture as a combination of his interest in anatomical realism and the insistence of his sculptor friends, among them Barye, Auguste Bartholdi, and Eugène Fmiert, who gave him informal lessons. Ackerman does not mention paragone but relates Gerome’s sculptural works to the those of the renaissance in their similar technical virtuosity—their “shared values.” Similarly, he explains his foray into polychrome sculpture as a desire to be aligned with the ancients. While Ackerman generally discusses the sculptural works as separate from the paintings, he argues that Gérôme applies the same “intellect” to both mediums. Writes Ackerman: “Gérôme’s sculpture, like his painting, is intellectual. Ideas motivate his artist impulses. While the impulses are often witty which makes us at times take them to be trivial—they are always based on learning and serious thought about the subject.” Ackerman, 89.

51 Lippert, “Theory, Practice, and Competition,” 215. Lippert provides one example of Gérôme’s political ambitions: he tried to gain political favor with the Bonapartes with a painting Execution of Marshall Ney but failed.

53 Of the handful of self-portraits he did, only two show him in a standard format: an early picture of him as a young man in 1845 and a later one in 1886.
The importance of Gérôme’s sculptural practice to his artistic identity is reaffirmed in his self-portraits, nearly all of which depict him in his studio working on polychrome sculptures, either chiseling the marble or applying the paint. Lippert frames Gérôme's allusions to his own work—particularly the self-portraits that depict him carving statues—as “self-aggrandizing” or even “narcissistic.” She suggests that in these self-portraits, Gérôme reaffirms his status as an accomplished painter. In fact, Gérôme presents himself not just as a painter, but as both sculptor and painter, showing his mastery over both media. In *The Artist’s Model* (1895) [Figure 13], for example, Gérôme paints himself working on the life-size *Tanagra* with a model sitting next to the statue in the exact same pose. Save for the coloration—the stark white of the statue and the fleshy tones of the model—the two figures appear nearly identical. The proximity of the statue and the model on which it is based invites the viewer to compare the similarities between his own work—both the paintings and the sculpture—and nature. Perhaps Gérôme offers the work as a testament to his realism, implying that careful observations from the living model inform the reality on his canvas.

In another relevant example, *Gérôme Polychroming the Masks of La Bouleuse* (1901) [Figure 14], the artist depicts himself painting masks at the base of the life-sized sculpture *The Ball Player (La Joueuse de Boules)* (1902) [Figure 15]. In this painting, the sculpture rests on a wooden crate in the center of the canvas; Gérôme positions himself behind the makeshift pedestal, holding a painter’s palette. The statue’s hair has already been colored a dark brown, as have two of the three masks. While the painting accurately depicts *The Ball Player*, Gérôme

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53 Ackerman, “Gérôme’s Sculpture,” 84. In fact a life-sized figure of Gerome was added by his son-in-law, Aimé-Morot, to *Gladiators* in 1911 in the Louvre garden as a tribute to the artists. He had referenced photos of the artist in his studio with his sculptures.
manipulates the sculpture’s appearance within the painting by positioning the statue so that it appears to watch him at work—the sculpture has, in effect, come to life, echoing the Ovidian tale of Pygmalion and Galatea. Interestingly, in The Artist’s Model Gérôme makes this connection clear through another reference to his own oeuvre: on the wall behind the artist rests his painting Pygmalion and Galatea.54

Gérôme revisited Ovid’s myth in three paintings and one polychrome sculpture over the course of his career. In this tale, Pygmalion, a Greek sculptor, became so disenchanted with women that he decided to create his ideal woman out of ivory. He sculpted such a beautiful figure that he soon fell in love with his sculpture and began adorning her with clothing and gifts in an effort to make her real. Pygmalion offered a sacrifice to the goddess Aphrodite who, inspired by the sculptor’s love, brought his creation to life. When Pygmalion realized his wish had been granted, he and Galatea soon wed. The only extant painting in Gérôme’s series of works interpreting the mythic tale, Pygmalion and Galatea (1890) [Figure 16], shows the sculptor in his studio, embracing his creation.55 Galatea's feet, still marble, are attached to a pedestal, while her upper torso turns to respond to her maker's embrace. The contrast between the static and dynamic parts of her figure stresses this miraculous moment of opaque, white marble transforming into rosy flesh. That Gérôme painted two nearly identical versions of Pygmalion and Galatea—both 1901—suggests that this moment of material transformation—of the sculptor’s creation coming to life—interested Gérôme greatly [Figures 17-18]. He decided to

54 Ackerman, 274. Ackerman attributes the inclusion of the painting to “how seriously Gérôme took the production of tinted sculpture.”

55 Ackerman, 268-69. According to Ackerman's catalogue, which relies on old photographs, these two versions are either lost or “whereabouts unknown.” One version shows Galatea from the front with Pygmalion to her left while the other shifts Pygmalion to her right.
revisit the myth in polychrome sculpture. Though now entirely monochrome, the marble
*Pygmalion and Galatea* [Figure 19]—exhibited at the Salon of 1892—was originally tinted and
used as a reference for the painted versions.\(^{56}\) By revisiting the same subject in painting and
sculpture Gérôme positions himself as a virtuoso of both media. He paints a moment of
transformation in *Pygmalion and Galatea*, and later performs his own moment of transformation
by painting the sculptural version to add realism—in effect bringing his work to life.\(^{57}\)

The painted figure of Galatea, as depicted in Gérôme’s 1890 painting, brings to mind the
young boy at the center of *The Snake Charmer*. Both figures are nude and viewed from the
back—the snake charmer’s face is cast in shadow, his features barely discernable, a strange
decision considering Gérôme’s talents as an ethnographic portraitist. Both figures also appear
anchored: Galatea to a marble block, and the snake charmer to a small rug. Similarly, movement
can only be seen with the upper torsos, which are transformed—or animated—through touch.
*Pygmalion* wraps his arms around Galatea just as the snake wraps its body around the snake
charmer. The figure of the young snake charmer appears sculptural in a variety of other ways as
well.\(^{58}\) He appears anchored to the floor, legs straight, static, and pressed together, a stark

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\(^{56}\) Ackerman, 318. “The marble was once slightly tinted, and Galatea's body was still white in her lower,
stiffer torso. The polychrome has since faded or been bleached away.”

\(^{57}\) Lippert, “Theory, Practice, and Competition,” 224-225.

\(^{58}\) There exists precedent for Gérôme’s figures being described as sculptural; however, only in regards to
his non Orientalist paintings: see Lippert, “Theory, Practice, and Competition,” 219. Lippert describes the titular
figure in *Phryne Before the Aeropagus* as sculptural: “The figure of Phryne is striking, due to its sculptural quality,
more than its painterly animation or *vivezza*. Phryne’s hard white flesh makes he look like a statue of Aphrodite for
which she supposedly served as a model, and undermines her resemblance to a living creature. Her prominent
position on a large slab of stone, which projects into the interior space, is more akin to a museum pedestal than a
courtroom, and the idol or figurine beside her makes the two seem like part of an exhibition display. Phryne’s story,
centering on spectatorship and the male gaze, parallels the relationships involved in artistic creation, such as that
between a model and an artist, or a viewer and a sculpture.” For another reference, see Jean-François Corpataux,
returns repeatedly and insistently to the character as both a living and principle statuary figure. Phryne, or rather her
body, is described as ‘perfect, a living statue that inspired Praxiteles,’ beautiful, turned and polished like an ivory
contrast to his raised arms; his form is rooted heavily to the ground. He raises the snake with one arm, but the movement appears stiff and unnatural compared to the slumped figures of his audience. The perfect anatomical proportions of the young figure also harkens to classical sculptures of the male nude; he balances the “ideal” with the “real,” giving attention to the muscles of the arm, back, and thighs (though rendering those details in a soft manner appropriate to the figure’s age). However, the stiffness of his lower body brings to mind Egyptian and even some Archaic Greek statuary, both which appear less naturalistic than those from the Classical period. An unidentified light source behind the snake charmer, located beyond the picture plane, further emphasizes the figure’s nudity, and enhances the juxtaposition of the figure’s light skin with the dark mosaic panel in the background, a visual “trick” that also connects The Snake Charmer to Pygmalion and Galatea.\(^5\) Lippert observes that in Pygmalion and Galatea this contrast makes the “sculpted” figure look more immobile.

When comparing The Snake Charmer with Gérôme’s other paintings featuring young male nudes, these sculptural qualities become even more evident. An analysis of Gérôme’s oeuvre reveals only one work depicting a young boys that is stylistically comparable, and this one also relates to the theme of sculpture: Michelangelo (in his studio) (1849).\(^6\) Michelangelo (in his studio) [Figure 20] depicts the aged Renaissance master besides the large, fragmented

\(^5\) Lippert, “Theory, Practice, and Competition,” 224. Lippert describes the “contrast of Galatea’s unmoving body to the dark background.” Laurence des Cars and Dominique de Font-Rélyaux, Edouard Papet eds. The Spectacular Art of Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904) (London: Thames & Hudson, 2010), 264: Gérôme modifies the architectural elements of the “Golden Path” to better present a contrast between the lightness of the boy’s body and the dark-blue of the tiles. He switches the order of the mosaic panels in the photograph, placing a blue panel where there should be a white one.

\(^6\) Gérôme painted two other works with nude young men; however, they appear older than the boy in The Snake Charmer and stylistically incomparable. They are: Cock Fight (1846) and The Idyle (1852).
Greco-Roman sculpture similar to the Belvedere Torso. With squinted eyes the figure crouches over the sculpture, assisted by a young boy whose backside faces the viewer. As in *The Snake Charmer*, the boy’s face is shadowed and indiscernible; we are given the weathered face of the master but not his assistant’s. However, here, unlike *The Snake Charmer*, the boy’s pose appears relaxed and almost languid; he moves towards the sculpture in a gentle *contrapposto* pose reminiscent of classical Greek sculptures. Despite this, there is no mistaking the boy for marble: he is completed covered in contemporary Renaissance garb. Gérôme emphasizes the softness of the body to juxtapose the figure’s youth with the hunched posture of the grey-haired Michelangelo.

Most scholarship on *The Snake Charmer* connects this work not to sculpture but to photography; yet, beyond remarking upon the purportedly “photographic” qualities of *The Snake Charmer*, few scholars have paid much attention to the work’s stylistic characteristics. In this painting, Gérôme depicts a lavishly decorated yet slightly decrepit hall, where a group of men and boys watch a nude young man holding a large snake. The boy is visible only from behind, his face masked in shadow. The faces of the seated men are individualized yet generalized, evoking the many ethnic “types” representative of French conceptions of the “Orient” during that period. The composition features a variety of objects that allow the artist to show off his skill in naturalistically rendering different textures and volumes: the straw basket to the boy’s left (presumably used to house the snake); the shield that hangs on the wall behind; a pile of objects in the shadows; and of course the blue-and-white wall, with its ornate yet cracking tiles.

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61 For further reading on *Michelangelo (in his studio)* see “Groping the Antique: Michelangelo and the Erotics of Tradition” in *Reconsidering Gérôme*.

62 Nochlin has commented on how this is as if the Western viewer is being granted a peek into a restricted scene. As previously mentioned, Roberts has also written on how the photographs Gérôme used from the Topkapı were probably from a harem area he most likely did not have access to during one of his many trips to Istanbul.
decorated with a combination of floral motifs and Arabic script, which occupies the majority of the picture plane.

Whereas scholars often connect the painting’s detailed rendering with a sort of documentary realism, I believe that the work’s relation to photography is far more complex. While Gérôme referenced photographs, he did not strictly rely on them. Rather, he improved their “faults”: the blurriness, the obscuring shadows, and the lack of color and atmosphere the mechanical process could not communicate. However, Gérôme professed admiration for photography, saying it “has forced artists to free themselves of their familiar routine and to forget old formulas. It has opened our eyes...[and] has done art a considerable, inestimable service.”

Gérôme’s comments suggest that he valued photography not for its “documentary” qualities, but for the freedom it could give to artists by allowing them to see and to recreate the world in new ways. By referencing and improving on photography, he reveals its limits and his own ability to outdo it.

Gérôme’s knowledge of contemporary photographers and photographic techniques was also extensive. He traveled in the company of photographers—most notably Adolphe Goupil's son, Albert Goupil, and Frederic-Auguste Bartholdi. His relationship with these two men may have introduced new visual perspectives and attention to motifs that he would have known only from postcards and other commercial images of the Orient. Indeed, photography seems to have been a crucial component in the making of The Snake Charmer. A photograph gave him access to a forbidden zone—the “Golden Path” in the famous Topkapı Palace in Istanbul—allowing

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63 Ackerman and Lafont-Couturier, 29.

64 Roberts, “Gérôme in Istanbul,” 119-121. One of the reasons Gérôme made the trip, according to Robert's archival evidence, was to complete commissions assigned by the Sultan. Palace archives also state Gérôme facilitated the sale of paintings to the Sultan by Goupil & Cie.
him to copy its architectural and decorative details. However, by transferring the image to canvas he embroiders upon and “improves” the photographic process, as we see if we compare The Snake Charmer with Abdullah frères’ photograph of the Topkapi Palace and note the various ways in which the two do not match. First, we can see that photography at the time was not nearly as sharp as Gérôme's style. In Abdullah frères’ Interior of the Topkapı Palace (1865) [Figure 21] some areas of the hall are lost in stark shadows, and the decorative motifs appear cloudy and grainy, a product of the limitations of photography at this time. Gérôme, by contrast, creates a more subtle transition between light and dark towards the right of the canvas, which prevents a portion of the floral motif from being lost, as seen in the photograph. By positioning the camera at an angle, the Abdullah frères are unable to fully capture the spanning the top of the wall. The small portion visible in the photograph appears is partially cast in shadows and is seemingly illegible. By contrast, by creating a frontal one-point perspective, Gérôme is able to paint the entire expanse of the wall, including the complete calligraphic panels. And, of course, Gérôme is able to provide color to the scene, to communicate the beauty of the blue-and-white Ottoman tiles; its restriction to monochromatic imagery is perhaps the most significant limitation of nineteenth-century photography. We may interpret this as the artist providing the viewer with visual details that photography cannot capture—the artist improves on photography. While Gérôme professed his admiration for the medium, he reminds the viewer that he values art for more than “mere copying.”

In addition, though Gérôme employs a “photographic” style, seeming to document a real place with astonishing accuracy, he makes numerous concerted departures from reality. As

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65 It remains unclear whether Gérôme’s accurately transcribed the actual Arabic script in the “Golden Path.”

66 Makariou and Maury, “The Paradox of Realism,” 262.
previously mentioned, he took many liberties in depicting the “Golden Path,” such as adding spatial depth to the narrow corridor and creating distance between the tiled wall and the viewer. The distance between the young snake charmer and his audience is also not true to reality. The photograph offers the most complete view of the wall, suggesting that the photographer had no more room to back up. Therefore, the space would not be capacious enough for a group of figures to sit and watch a performance a few feet in front of them. Gérôme also rearranged the fourth and fifth mosaic panels of the wall to create a dramatic contrast between the darker tiles and the pale skin of the snake charmer. He eliminated spots of green and red to invent a harmonious repetition of blues and whites throughout the composition, creating a soft but still intricate backdrop for the scene. Finally, the Arabic script above the floral tiles did not exist in the “Golden Path” but was borrowed from a completely different part of the Topkapı Palace—the Baghdad Pavillion. Gérôme does not simply invent the script or add superfluous decorative elements but rather draws on another very real section of the same architectural structure, creating a pastiche from various photographic sources.

In The Snake Charmer, then, Gérôme alludes to both sculpture and photography within a

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67 des Cars and Font- Rélaux, Spectacular, 278. The Topkapı palace was the official home to the Ottoman sultans for hundreds of year but by the mid-nineteenth century the newly built Dolmabahçe Palace was the official residence.

68 des Cars and Font- Rélaux, Spectacular, 262-263.


70 Roberts, “Gérôme in Istanbul,” 120-121. Archival evidence describes Gérôme’s research-like exploration of Istanbul and surrounding areas. Roberts provides a detailed account: “Once he arrived in the capital, a succession of articles reported Gérôme’s unfolding itinerary to their local readership, praising his industriousness in producing about fifteen studies of mosques in Istanbul, including the New Mosque (Mosque of the Valide Sultan) and Rustem Paşa Mosque, and several mosques in Scutari (Üsküdar) on the Asian shore of the Bosporus, all of which were to appear in subsequent paintings. Later reports specify the painter’s two-week visit to Bursa, commencing on June 2, to see the major Ottoman monuments, mosques, and tombs in the former Ottoman capital, again in the company of Chlebowski and the young French artist Antoine Buttura who had accompanied Gérôme from Paris. From these sites, it is recounted, the painter ‘has brought back with him a rich harvest of studies,’ including sketches of the magnificent tiles in the Green mosque.”
painting, enacting a sort of three-way paragone within the work in order to display his talents as both painter and sculptor, showing that through a mixture of the two he can rival photography. A key issue in this interpretation of the painting is that it shows Gérôme using an Orientalist subject to reflect back on his own artistic practice. In the following chapter, I extend this concept by placing *The Snake Charmer* in the context of Gérôme’s working relationship with the publishing firm Goupil & Cie. The commercial environment in which he worked—the reproduction of his paintings in print form—and the popularity of both Orientalist subjects and visual spectacle suggests that the artist was aware of the reception of his works and may have offered a rebuttal within his canvas.
CHAPTER 4
GÉRÔME AND GOUPIL & CIE: ORIENTALISM
AND COMMERCIAL SUCCESS

In this chapter, I extend my exploration of Gérôme’s self-reference in *The Snake Charmer* to the painting’s commercial value, placing the work in the context of Gérôme's longstanding relationship with the publishing firm Goupil & Cie. I argue that Gérôme’s depiction of a bewitching “Oriental” performance is a thinly-veiled reference to both his technical virtuosity and his commercial success. As I discussed in chapter 3, Gérôme’s work often made reference to his own processes of making and his skills as a virtuoso artist. I believe that this tendency to allude to himself extended beyond his technical skills to his commercial success. If we position the artist this way, we may see him as doing far more than simply capitulating to market demand. More than just a formulaic appropriation of exotic tropes, I would argue that *The Snake Charmer* is a painting about complying to the commercial market—a meta-commentary on the artist’s relationship to his audience. In other words, *The Snake Charmer* may be seen not just as an Orientalist painting, but as a painting about Orientalist painting. I am not suggesting that Gérôme was not invested—professionally and financially—in the selling of Orientalist works. Rather, I suggest that Gérôme points to the demands of the marketplace and their effect on his career by painting an image of this very demand.

71 This chapter is especially indebted to the archival work of the Musée Goupil in Bordeaux.

72 Lippert, “Theory, Practice, and Competition,” 220. As discussed in the previous chapter, Lippert argues Phryne possesses sculptural qualities. She argues Gérôme did this to insert a meta-commentary: he was “criticizing the cult of beauty.”

73 In so doing, I adapt John House’s argument, discussed in chapter 2, that the artist did not simply bow to commercial demands but played with the conventions of history painting—focusing on technical dexterity rather than emphasizing the morality of the subject—to possibly express critical views of the state. The artist uses a similar strategy in *The Snake Charmer*: he plays with the conventions of Orientalism to comment on his own artistic practice.
My analysis is indebted to Emily Beeny's suggestion that the Roman audience watching a bloody gladiator match in Gérôme’s *Ave Caesar! Morituri te salutant* may be seen as stand-ins for a contemporary audience engaging in new forms of public spectacle. Beeny interprets *Ave Caesar! Morituri te salutant* as a mirror of sorts, offering Parisian viewers a reflection of themselves. One of the first of Gérôme’s works to be acquired by Goupil & Cie., *Ave Caesar! Morituri te salutant* shows a massive audience observing the aftermath of a bloody gladiator match. Beeny observes that many of Gérôme's paintings incorporate themes of spectator and spectacle, and depict an audience watching an often-dramatic scene such as the auctioning of slaves. That is, she points to the theme of looking throughout his oeuvre, and argues that in 1859 mass spectacle, that is, large groups gathering to view some form of public entertainment, including viewing installations of painting, was perceived as a very new, modern experience.74 Salon goers, she suggests, would have “experienced both a moral repulsion from and a narcissistic attraction to their painted counterparts.”75 Viewers would have expressed disgust over the violent and grotesque scene, of the Roman spectators cheering on such bloody entertainment; but these same viewers possibly saw themselves in the crowd or at least kinship with their Roman counterparts. There appears to be a precedent for this tendency on Gérôme’s

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74 Emily Beeny, “Blood Spectacle” in *The Spectacular Art of Jean-Léon Gérôme*, 44. The author points to *Phryne before the Areopagus, Dance of the Almeh, and The Snake Charmer* as examples of the running theme of spectator and spectator. Beeny mentions a common theme in Gérôme’s oeuvre: looking. The same holds true for *The Snake Charmer*. Gérôme makes spectatorship the painting’s primary theme, and creates a composition that enhances that effect. He creates the illusion of a shallow space, which emphasizes the physical proximity of the figures to one another, as well as the viewer to the scene. Its centralized composition seems staged not only for the audience inside the picture, but also for the viewer outside. Moreover, the figures within the painting are all engaged in some form of looking: the boy looks at the snake with rapt attention, while the assembled group watches him as if captivated. The boy “charms” the large python, the figures in the painting, and, by extension, the viewer. None of the figures look out to the viewer, creating a sense of voyeurism. And yet, the Western viewer is also positioned as a member of the painted audience, invited to participate as both an “insider” and an “outsider.” The Western viewer is given access to this “savage” performance but at a safe distance, looking but not participating and, thus, maintains a clear “us” and “them” divide. Furthermore, the voyeuristic quality lends gravitas to this “reportage”: the artist seems to have been granted access to a forbidden scene, which he then shares with his audience.

75 Beeny, “Blood Spectacle,” 44.
part: in *Heads of the Rebel Beys at the Mosque El Assaneyn* (1866) [Figure 22], for example, Gérôme modeled the decapitated heads after several critics.\(^76\)

Following Beeny’s lead, I argue that the multi-ethnic audience depicted in *The Snake Charmer* may be seen as an allegory of Gérôme's contemporary audience. He reflects back to his viewers an image of themselves: an audience captivated by spectacle. Gérôme has created a metaphor for the public's insatiable demand for fantastical images of the Orient, subversively depicting this Western audience in an Eastern guise. It is true that, if members of Gérôme’s audience recognized this allusion, they may have found it quite disturbing. As Beeny suggests, nineteenth-century Salon goers may have related to the Roman crowds, but the perceived cultural and racial differences between the Parisian public and the audience in *The Snake Charmer* may have been too great. However, these paintings proved very popular and were reproduced in print form, possibly explaining why Gérôme revisited the subject many times.

Gérôme’s subject in *The Snake Charmer* is thus the popularity of Orientalist painting, fanned by the reproductive images made available by Goupil & Cie. The firm’s influence was far reaching. Adolphe Goupil, Gérôme’s future father-in-law, founded Goupil & Cie. in 1829. The firm grew from a single Parisian shop at 12, Boulevard Montmartre to an international powerhouse.\(^77\) The firm soon began buying and selling fine art, eventually gaining image rights and, by extension, the freedom to sell reproductions.\(^78\) By 1855, annual sales for Goupil & Cie.

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\(^76\) Ackerman and Lafont-Couturier, 117.

\(^77\) Ackerman and Lafont-Couturier, 168-169. The liquidation process lasted until 1921. It should be noted that the firm went through many name changes as members came and went. However, Adolphe Goupil remained a constant presence; for that reason, I will refer to the firm only as Goupil & Cie.

\(^78\) Ackerman and Lafont-Couturier, 14.
were between 1,200,000 and 1,400,000 francs. Encouraged by this success, Goupil & Cie. opened branches in New York, London, and Berlin, and moved from their original headquarters to a larger building on the rue Chaptal, at the center of Paris. The following years saw the network expanding to Vienna, the Hague, and Brussels; Goupil & Cie. had warehouses as far away as Sydney, Alexandria, Havana, and Johannesburg.

The print reproduction of paintings for which Goupil & Cie. held the copyright, would become the firm’s major source of revenue, and the Paris branch soon became a hub for technical innovations in industrial printmaking. The firm bought the rights to hundreds of paintings, selling printed, and later photographic, reproductions from its European and American branches. This allowed Goupil & Cie. access to the most sophisticated forms of various print reproductions that would eventually make them one of the biggest global suppliers. The introduction of photography in 1830 changed traditional methods of engraving, lithographs, and etchings. The firm started experimenting with photography on albumen paper in 1853, though poor results led to purchasing the patent for photoglyphy in 1867. This process was enhanced and turned into photo-engraving in 1873. The firm won medals at the Exposition Universelle in 1878 and 1889, and went on to receive the prestigious Progress Medal for innovations in publishing technology. Adolphe Goupil, the backbone of the firm until his death in 1893, was

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79 Ackerman and Lafont-Couturier, 164.
80 Ackerman and Lafont-Couturier, 165. The store closes in 1893 and reopens in 24, Boulevard des Capucines. Not until the after the death of Théodore Vibert in 1850 is the firm renamed Goupil & Cie.
81 Ackerman and Lafont-Couturier, 14.
83 Ackerman and Lafont-Couturier, 14.
84 Ackerman and Lafont-Couturier, 166.
even made Officer of the Legion of Honor in 1877 for his accomplishments.  

Gérôme’s career coincided with the rise of the Goupil firm, and the artist owed his massive success to the dealer. The firm's most profitable artist, he followed in the steps of other luminaries of the late nineteenth century, including Horace Vernet, Ary Scheffer, and Gérôme's former teacher, Paul Delaroche. In fact, many of Gérôme's peers had business ties with Goupil & Cie. before him: the firm’s reach within the art world was both deep and wide. However, it should be acknowledged that, as both Goupil's employee and son-in-law, Gérôme shared a uniquely close working relationship with the firm. Starting in 1859, until the artist's death, Goupil & Cie. bought original paintings from Gérôme and sold them to wealthy patrons, notably Americans eager to possess works bearing the prestige of the French Académie. Importantly, Goupil & Cie. also sold smaller, less expensive print reproductions of Gérôme’s works to middle-class buyers looking for an analogous form of prestige at a relatively low price point. In some ways, then, Gérôme's artworks—like those of most artists during this period—lived a double life. In their original, unique painted form, they were exhibited at Salons and Expositions Universelles, or displayed in galleries and grand homes. In print form, they were distributed widely, bringing the artist greater financial stability, garnering him a large audience. Gérôme's relationship with Goupil & Cie. thus allowed the artist to be both a fine or “elite” artist as well as a successful, “popular” artist—a member of the Académie and a king of the marketplace.

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85 Ackerman and Lafont-Couturier, 164-166.
87 Ackerman and Lafont-Couturier, 15.
88 Paintings were reproduced as photographs, photogravures, and engravings, though not necessarily for every work.
Gérôme's standing with the firm hinged upon the popularity of his Orientalist images, which constituted a considerable portion of his oeuvre. From 1859 to 1901, Goupil & Cie. would sell 337 of Gérôme's paintings, and reproduce 122 (in 370 different editions) of these works in print and photographic form. Reproductions ranged from small carte-de-visite photographs to larger lithographs. Goupil & Cie. essentially owned reproduction rights to Gérôme's paintings, and the artist could not sell reproductions without first asking the firm's permission. Gérôme and the firm split the profits from these sales; however, the details of their financial arrangement remain unclear, perhaps because of the familiar ties between them. Whether Goupil himself had any influence on the subjects Gérôme chose to paint has yet to be determined. However, we do know that the company only bought works that were virtually guaranteed to sell, and there are recorded instances in which Gérôme altered paintings at Goupil’s request because the suggestions were deemed “commercially sound.” We can deduce, then, that Gérôme was willing to work within the parameters set by Goupil & Cie., and that the content and style of his work were—at least to some degree—shaped by the demands of his dealer and his vast (though stratified) clientele.

Yet to say that Gérôme's paintings were simply in line with the tastes of Goupil & Cie. and the firm’s clients (as Zola did in 1867) is a characterization that overlooks the complexity of

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89 Ackerman and Lafont-Couturier, 164-165.

90 Ackerman and Lafont-Couturier, 13-19.

91 Ackerman and Lafont-Couturier, 21. Gérôme’s “correspondences shows that he was anxious to sell his paintings, sometimes going so far as to alter them to please his customers: “Prayer in the Mosque” had been reserved by Monsieur Simon and I remember that he made me put in a figure facing the spectator, by saying that since all the others were seen from the back or in profile, it would not sell. I did as he wanted because his reasons were commercially sound.”

92 Ackerman and Lafont-Couturier, 27. Goupil sometimes sold reproduction rights for Gérôme’s works to be used in books and magazines.
his relations with the Salon and the marketplace. His Orientalist paintings are a case in point. Goupil & Cie. profited highly from Gérôme's Orientalist paintings (at least 350 throughout his career). Gérôme was so prolific in this arena that in 1893 he was appointed Honorary President of the French Orientalist Painters Society. However, despite the commercial success of these works, they did not receive much favor from art critics. Only Théophile Gautier, who had previously praised the artist's first major painting, *The Cock Fight* (1846) [Figure 23], seemed to find admirable qualities, praising Gérôme's ethnographic realism and Eastern subjects. Gautier, writing on the 1857 Salon, proclaimed:

> [Gérôme] has been the first to study the Orient as a historical painter; he has sought out style where others, whom we certainly admire, only sought out color. Let us thus acknowledge, separately, the drawing of M. Gérôme and the color of Decamp. He who succeeds in uniting these qualities to an equal degree would be more than human. If Michelangelo had said: 'What a pity they do not know how to draw in Venice!', Titian might have rightfully replied: 'What a pity they do not know how to Paint in Rome!' God alone, omniscient, is capable of capturing every facet of the world at once; it is nevertheless likely the jury would still refuse some of his works. The Institute is not always fond of Nature.\(^95\)

Gautier was referring to *Prayer in the House of an Arnaut Chief* (1857) and *Egyptian Recruits Crossing the Desert* (1857) [Figure 24-25], the first Orientalist paintings Gérôme showed at the Salon. For Gautier, the paintings’ strength came from that fact that Gérôme actually visited the Orient; he traveled to Egypt for eight months the previous year. His scrupulous studies and observations lend a genuine sense of truth. Gautier, in a separate publication, praises his travels at even greater length.

> M. Gérôme, for his part, has actually made the pilgrimage…he has seen Cairo, that capital of the Orient, the city of the caliphs, where Saracen art shone with such brilliance

\(^{93}\) Gérôme began painting Orientalist works before making ties with Goupil & Cie.

\(^{94}\) Ackerman and Lafont-Couturier, 167.

\(^{95}\) des Cars and Font-Rélaux, *Spectacular*, 355.
while the Occident was still wallowing in harsh barbarity. He has meandered these winding streets bordered by houses with overhanging stories...he has followed that crowd composed of all types from the Orient: from noble-raced Arabs and stern Wahabites to the Negro with his bestial traits...the young artist, accompanied by several friends, traveled up the Nile...Photography, of an only too familiar perfection today, dispenses the artists from copying monuments as it provides absolutely accurate proofs, to which a fortunate choice of moment and perspective can bring a great value of effort. So Gérôme did not focus his efforts on this aspect: his fervid studies as a painter of history, his talent as a draughtsman—refined, elegant, precise, yet stylish—a special vision, which we shall gladly call ethnographic...all this made him better qualified than others to render that simple detail that the modern explorers of the Orient have neglected up to now in their landscapes, monument and color—that is to say: mankind.96

Gautier’s view of Gérôme as the erudite artist-traveler—an image Gérôme seems to have embraced—presumes the artist’s works should be viewed as absolutely factual. We now know that was not the case; however, Gautier’s writings balance the narrative of Gérôme as a fictionalizing Orientalist. In fact, he made more trips to the “Orient” than many of the earlier Orientalists.97 Just as he meticulously researched his Greco-Roman subjects he did so—to a degree—with his Orientalist paintings. These works fused observations and memories of his trips to the East with well-established tropes and stereotypes of the “Orient.”

Gérôme's extensive travels make his Orientalist paintings more problematic in that he was exceptional in his desire to experience the “Orient” first-hand but nevertheless followed the Orientalist tradition in distorting reality to such fantastical ends.98 On some level, I agree with

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97 Ackerman and Lafont-Couturier, 164-166. Gérôme's travels must be viewed within the context of other Orientalist painters. Delacroix and Gleyre made but a single trip to the East. Ingres and Gros made none. While mentioned to some degree, Gérôme's extensive travels are rarely discussed in detail. Charles Gleyre, his mentor for a brief period in 1844, who had traveled across Egypt around this time, introduced Gérôme to Orientalist subjects. Gérôme first traveled to Constantinople in 1853—presumably by accident—when a trip to Central Europe was detoured due to the Crimean War. The following years found the artist returning multiple times.

98 Ackerman and Lafont-Couturier, 166-167. 1862 found the artist in Egypt, Judae, and Syria, this time accompanied by the sculptor Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi, most famously known for designing the Statue of Liberty, who took photographs during the trip, and fellow artists Adrien Bailly and Narcisse Berchere. Gérôme visited Egypt and Palestine in 1868 alongside his brother-in-law Albert Goupil, who took photographs of their trip, which were
Albert Boime's view that Gérôme was a late Romanticist in some respects; his enthusiasm in experiencing the "Orient" appears to have been genuine. Gérôme was not content in simply collecting "exotic" props; first-hand experience was essential. Delacroix spoke of the "East" as being the "reincarnation of the Classical ideal of Greece and Rome"; Gérôme may have felt the same way. That said, by the mid-nineteenth century many artists realized the value of Orientalist paintings in the art market. Perhaps Gérôme strove to be both the Romantic artist traveler and a businessman in his own right, using his travels to legitimize his image as an Academician thoroughly researching his subject all the while creating fantastic images with no basis in reality.

Balancing Gérôme's travels with the pictorial liberties he took when painting stands as paramount in deciphering his Orientalist works. With The Snake Charmer Gérôme depicts the Ottoman Palace, which he visited, but chooses a particular location he almost certainly did not have access to: the "Golden Path." As previously discussed, Gérôme referenced Abdullah frères' "Interior of the Topkapi Palace," but felt at liberty to manipulate its appearance. Therefore, while The Snake Charmer possibly holds metaphorical undertones such as commentary on the marketplace and forms of popular public entertainment, it remains important to keep in mind that it adheres to the principles of the Orientalist convention, namely distorting an Eastern reality into a Western fantasy.

Interestingly, Gérôme's Orientalist paintings found favor in the very place he distorted: the Ottoman Empire. While Goupil & Cie. mostly sold Gérôme's Orientalist paintings to Europeans and Americans, records indicate that the Ottoman Court in fact purchased such works later published by Paul Lenoir in 1872. (He also left Gérôme his collection of Middle Eastern artifacts upon his death.) In 1871 Gérôme traveled to Turkey again and in 1873 to Algiers via Spain. Between 1874 and 1879, Gérôme would return to Egypt and Constantinople three more times. By 1880 Gérôme had made a total of nine trips to Egypt alone.

99 Gerald M. Ackerman, “Why some orientalists traveled to the East: some sobering statistics” (paper presented at the 1995 “Picturing the Middle East” symposium at the Dahesh Museum, New York). Ackerman argues that about half of the American and British orientalists he studied fell into this category.
as well, further complicating the reception of Gérôme's Orientalist works. Mary Roberts, in “Gérôme in Istanbul,” provides archival documentation of the artist's 1875 visit to Turkey and the purchase of three paintings by Sultan Abdülaziz: An Egyptian Café, Bashi-Bazouks Dancing (The Pyrrhic Dance) (1878), and Lion dans sa grotte (date unknown) [Figures 26-28]. ¹⁰⁰ (In a slightly ironic twist, Sultan Abdülaziz later lent two of these paintings to France for the 1878 Paris Exposition Universelle.) Roberts suggests that the Zeybeks—the correct name for the bashi bazouks pictured—were essentially ethnic “others” in the large Ottoman Empire and the court engaged in a kind of self-Orientalizing by purchasing and displaying the art. ¹⁰¹ It is fascinating to consider that Orientalism may operate beyond a East/West dichotomy and can exist in a different but similar form in the Orient.

Ironically, while The Snake Charmer has become one of Gérôme’s best-known Orientalist paintings, there is no indication that the work was ever reproduced in print or photographic form. Given Goupil & Cie.’s business model, this suggests Goupil found the painting unappealing to a wide audience and, thus, not appropriate for reproduction. ¹⁰² The firm sold the painting in 1880 to American businessman Albert Spencer for 75,000 francs, the most expensive work sold that record year, with other works selling for 11,000 to 25,000 francs. ¹⁰³ The Snake Charmer was, as I already have noted, produced at a crucial point in Gérôme's career, during the years that Goupil & Cie. sold the highest number of his paintings and published the


¹⁰¹ Roberts explores the possibilities as to why the Orientalist tropes in Bashi-Bazouks, referred to as Zeybeks, a “native group” from the mountainous regions of the Ottoman Empire, would have appealed to the Ottoman court.

¹⁰² Ackerman, “Gérôme’s Sculpture,” 83. Not only was The Snake Charmer never reproduced, it was never exhibited at the Salon.

¹⁰³ Ackerman and Lafont-Couturier, 42.
most Orientalist images. In 1878, the firm published nearly all of the sixteen Orientalist paintings completed that year and in 1880 Goupil & Cie. sold nineteen of the twenty paintings bought from Gérôme, a record that stood until the firm dissolved. Furthermore, of the nearly 200 paintings Gérôme produced from 1860 to 1890, less than thirty portray non-Orientalist subjects. This leaves little doubt that Gérôme painted The Snake Charmer at a time that Orientalist paintings proved commercially viable amongst both wealthy and middle-class patrons. Thus, it seems reasonable to suggest that the demands of the marketplace and, more importantly, his commercial audience were at the forefront of Gérôme's mind. That Goupil & Cie. did not choose to sell reproductions of The Snake Charmer at the height of their success with Orientalist paintings seems strange, suggesting that the firm did not find the painting as commercially viable as Gérôme's other works. But why? Perhaps they found the nudity of the young boy—with his gaping audience watching in delight—too uncomfortable.

Building on House's suggestion that Gérôme played with the conventions of history painting, I argue that Gérôme plays with the conventions of Orientalist paintings in The Snake Charmer though, as evident from his Salon critics, he failed in convincing his audience in both regards. Perhaps to counter his critics, many of whom dismissed the artist as pandering to his audience, Gérôme makes the demand for Orientalist images the subject. By painting his wide-

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104 Ackerman and Lafont-Couturier 151-166. They were reproduced as photogravure plates, around 25x7 cm in size, and sold for 6 francs each. Among this group were Arabs Crossing the Desert (1870?), Bashi-Bazouk Dancing (1878), Sabre Dance in a Cafe (1876) and Woman of Constantinople (1876). Almeh (1863) was the only Orientalist image reproduced in multiple forms. Non-orientalist images also reproduced in multiple forms include: Phryne before the Areopagus starting in 1861; Duel After the Ball (1857) in 1867, printed in nine forms; Louis XIV and Moliere (1862) in 1866 in eight forms, and Pollice Verso (1872) in 1873 was printed in seven forms.

105 Ackerman, 216-259.

106 As previously mentioned, Gérôme is known to have altered his paintings to please his patrons. That he added a frontal figure to Prayer in the Mosque to make the work more appealing (the previous figures were presented in profile or from behind) suggests Goupil and Cie. may not have reproduced the painting for the same reason: full-frontal figures sold better.
ranging audience in an Oriental guise, Gérôme acknowledges his commercialism. However, by painting an allegory of the Orient, Gérôme places blame on the public's desire for Orientalist images. *The Snake Charmer* is both an acknowledgment of and rebuttal to this accusation: yes, he paints for Goupil & Cie., but he is simply catering to the public’s demand, not creating it.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

*The Snake Charmer* was one of a handful of French paintings selected for exhibition at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition, a huge event that included not only the visual arts but innovations in science, engineering, and technology.¹⁰⁷ The painting, an image in which Gérôme comments on the spectacular nature of his talents and the spectators who are captivated by his paintings, garnered its largest audience in an environment embodying the very nature of spectacle. I find its display an important place to end in discussing new ways to approach *The Snake Charmer*, proposing the context of the painting’s display as a subject worth future scholarship.

While I have not come across evidence that Gérôme himself chose the painting for exhibition, it is worth examining the display of *The Snake Charmer* beyond the Gilded Age home of its buyer and within the context of its larger viewership: how may have the thousands of visitors to the World’s Columbian Exposition experienced an Orientalist painting about the power of spectacle to influence a group of viewers? In the nineteenth century, we must recall, Orientalist paintings were only a small part of a much larger visual culture depicting the “Orient”: these images were both popular and pervasive, and one of the places viewers encountered many such images was at major national exhibitions like the one staged in Chicago in 1893.¹⁰⁸

This conclusion offers a brief history of the World's Columbian Exposition, its layout and

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¹⁰⁷ The painting’s display at the World’s Columbian Exhibition is the only known exhibition of the work. As previously stated, it was not exhibited at the Salon.

components, and, much like the previous chapter, adopts elements of Emily Beeny's analysis of Gérôme to ask how the painting functioned when inserted in an elevated environment of spectacle. Beeny argues that nineteenth-century viewers were titillated at seeing their own sense of excitement reflected in *Ave Caesar! Morituri te salutant*, making the experience one steeped in “enthrallment and narcissism.” Applying this insight to *The Snake Charmer*, I argue that the painting may have acted as a mirror to visitors to the World's Columbian Exposition, potentially evoking a similar response.

In some ways, Gérôme had an even larger presence in America than France. The majority of the artist's paintings were sold to newly rich Americans looking to possess the prestige of the French Académie. As a result, most of Gérôme's paintings remain in the United States to this day. The first works exhibited in the US were his first Orientalist paintings, *Prayer in the House of an Arnaut Chief* and *Egyptian Recruiters Crossing the Desert*. *Duel After the Ball* (1857) [Figure 29] was the artist's first painting sold in the United States (to William T. Walters), sparking his fame. In 1892, Fanny Field Herring published a biography on the artist, titled *Gérôme, His Life, and Works in New York*, helping to further promote the artist's presence across the Atlantic, despite a decline in sales beginning in 1887. Ironically, Gérôme never

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110 Ackerman and Lafont-Couturier, 26-27. Precedence exists for Gerome’s works being appealing to being displayed in an environment of spectacle. There are cases when Goupil & Cie. allowed his works to be used for “theatrical purposes” such as a magic lantern show or a tableau vivant. One example: in 1902 *Almeh* was used as a “slideshow” during various performances at London theaters.

111 Ackerman and Lafont-Couturier, 9.

112 Ackerman and Lafont-Couturier, 34

113 Ackerman and Lafont-Couturier, 165.

114 Ackerman and Lafont-Couturier, 167.
traveled to America, though he taught over 150 American students during his tenure at the Académie.115 Neither did Goupil, but Goupil & Cie.'s extensive commercial outlets ensured that the artist enjoyed as much success abroad as at home.116 Yet, as previously discussed, *The Snake Charmer* was never reproduced in print form. Goupil & Cie. sold the work to the American businessman Albert Spencer in 1880. In 1888 Alfred Corning Clark purchased the work from Spencer, eventually coming into the collection of his son Robert Sterling Clark in 1942. The painting currently resides at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, Massachusetts.117

It was at the World’s Columbian Exposition that most Americans got their first look at *The Snake Charmer*. This exhibition, the first of its kind hosted in the US, offered visitors a vast multi-acre site built specifically for the event, which was meant to commemorate the anniversary of Christopher Columbus’ discovery of the Americas.118 A map of the layout shows sections reserved for various aspects of a modern technological society: agriculture, horticulture, machinery, and the arts. The diverse displays were meant to evoke wonder from visitors, who were also treated to zoological exhibits and cultural artifacts from around the world [Figure 30-31]. The Fairgrounds also included a ferris wheel and the Midway Plaisance, which extended out from the main grounds and provided visitors with a variety of exhibits that included spectacularized examples of non-Western cultures reconstructed *in situ*, such as an American


116 Ackerman and Lafont-Couturier, 35-36. By 1904 Gerome had sold 144 paintings to American patrons.

117 Ackerman and Lafont-Couturier, 42-43. However, he was not immune to the shifts in tastes. Much like in Europe, his popularity in the US began to decline in 1887 as reflected in drop in sales.

118 Construction took years and the site was finally open to the public one year after the actual 400th anniversary.
Indian village, a Chinese village theatre, a Persian concession, exhibits from Algeria and Tunis, a Moorish palace, and a street in Cairo.\textsuperscript{119} Therefore, visitors experienced highly staged versions of the Orient in an environment steeped in spectacle and awe.

*The Snake Charmer* was displayed in the Fine Arts Building, an enormous structure that held nearly 200 art galleries. The painting was situated in the American Loans section, a nod to its owner, alongside another painting by Gérôme—*Eminence Gris* (1873) [Figure 32]. His polychrome sculpture *Pygmalion and Galatea* was displayed in the neighboring gallery.\textsuperscript{120} William Walton, in *Art and Architecture*, a review of the Chicago's World Fair, describes the site as such:

> A small but very important portion of the great exhibit of French paintings in oil in the Art Gallery will be found in the American section, somewhat unfairly displayed there as spoil of war, as it were, as trophies of America's glory and not of France's.\textsuperscript{121}

It seems fitting that wealthy American patrons, who had for decades purchased Gérôme's works in an attempt to be associated with the prestige of the French Académie, should display such works as their own. The World’s Columbian Exposition strove to show the world the advancement of American society—of Western society—and making connections with the history and advancements of Europe only strengthened this.

What kind of experience may visitors have had in seeing *The Snake Charmer* in a gallery adjacent to *Pygmalion and Galatea*? If the Salon reviews of Gérôme’s polychrome sculptures are any indication, American viewers may have experienced a similar sense of shock in seeing


\textsuperscript{120} Ackerman and Lafont-Couturier, 42.

\textsuperscript{121} William Walton, *Art and Architecture* (Philadelphia: George Barrie, 1893), 27.}
freestanding, life-sized figures rendered with such painstaking detail that they almost appear to be alive [Figure 3]. Gérôme’s polychrome works thus may be seen as a kind of spectacle—blurring the lines between art and artifice. As I argue, *The Snake Charmer*, with its allusion to (and triumph over) photography, may achieve a similar effect through the artist’s hyper-realistic style. Given that the World’s Columbian Exposition operated as an environment of spectacle, the display of these two works in this visual context may have emphasized their “spectacular” qualities.

Furthermore, when considering the specific display of *The Snake Charmer*—its proximity to Gérôme’s polychrome work, which tells a tale of artistic transformation, and initiates a dialogue between his painted and sculptural works—we may revisit the concept of the paragone. Both works allude to more than one medium. The display of both *Pygmalion and Galatea* and *The Snake Charmer* in 1893 may serve as a microcosm of Gérôme’s oeuvre, exemplifying his creative range and repeated practice of self-reference.

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122 Lippert, “Theory, Practice, and Competition,” 22. Lippert surmises, in regard to polychrome sculpture, that it must indeed have been quite a spectacle viewing these life-like sculptures, painted to not simply decorate but enhance its resemblance to nature, for nineteenth century viewers.
ILLUSTRATIONS

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