

2013

# Why the School of Paris is not French

Robert Jensen  
*University of Kentucky*, robert.jensen@uky.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/artlas>

---

### Recommended Citation

Jensen, Robert. "Why the School of Paris is not French." *Artl@s Bulletin* 2, no. 1 (2013): Article 5.

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact [epubs@purdue.edu](mailto:epubs@purdue.edu) for additional information.

This is an Open Access journal. This means that it uses a funding model that does not charge readers or their institutions for access. Readers may freely read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of articles. This journal is covered under the [CC BY-NC-ND license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

## Why the School of Paris is not French

Robert Jensen\*

*University of Kentucky*

### Abstract

“Why the School of Paris is not French” explores the role geography plays in the definition of membership in the School. Noting that the School artists have an overwhelming foreign nationality, the paper asks what conditions were necessary for foreign artists to not only live and exhibit in Paris but to succeed as artists. The conclusions reached through a statistical study are that artists only began to succeed in Paris after 1900. Finally, the paper argues that the ability of foreign nationals to thrive in Paris is related to networks of relationships centered on communal studios.

### Résumé

Cet article explore le rôle de la géographie dans la délimitation de l'appartenance à l'École de Paris. Constatant que les artistes de l'École de Paris présentent une écrasante majorité de nationalités étrangères, cet article interroge les conditions nécessaires aux artistes étrangers pour, non seulement vivre et exposer à Paris, mais également y connaître le succès. Une étude statistique nous fait arriver à la conclusion que les artistes n'ont connu le succès parisien qu'après 1900. Enfin, cet article avance que la capacité des étrangers à réussir à Paris est liée à des réseaux de relations centrés sur des ateliers communautaires.

*\* ROBERT JENSEN is an Associate Professor of Art History and Director of the School of Art & Visual Studies at the University of Kentucky, Lexington. He is the author of Marketing Modernism in Fin-de-Siècle Europe (Princeton University Press, 1994) and a forthcoming study The Geography of Innovation: Essays on the Economics of Artistic Practice.*

Long before the phenomenon was first labeled as such in 1925, the School of Paris was always about geography, or rather, about multiple geographies.<sup>69</sup> It was about the geography of immigration, primarily of Eastern European Jews, who were drawn to Paris' cultural life and the freedoms it offered. It was also, therefore, always about the geography of anti-Semitism, which was the lens through which fears about the decline of French art were channeled during the 1920s and 1930s. And, of course, it was about the geography of Paris itself, about how, before the war, artistic bohemia migrated from the hillsides of Montmartre to the streets around the broad boulevard of Montparnasse.

Even within the Montparnasse district, micro-geographies came into play, shaping, at least partially, the public and on-going art historical perceptions of artists according to where in this cosmopolitan village of artists, writers, and pleasure seekers one chose to live. Live too far from the center of things and one gets left out of the art historical narratives. Marc Chagall, the most overtly Jewish artist working in Paris during these years, always chose to live outside the Montparnasse district. He tended therefore to have closer relationships with figures not normally associated with the *École de Paris*, such as the Swiss poet Blaise Cendrars and the French painter Robert Delaunay and his Russian-Jewish wife Sonia Terk-Delaunay. Consequently Chagall is not usually treated as part of the *École de Paris*. Similarly Diego Rivera occupied a studio (in the same building as Piet Mondrian) at 26, rue du Départ on the perimeter of the Montparnasse ghetto, which likely contributed, along with his departure from Paris in the early 1920s, to Rivera's excision from art historical discussions of the *École*, despite Rivera's Jewishness, despite Rivera's close relationships with some of the central actors in the *École*, most notably Amedeo

Modigliani. Or take the example of Constantin Brancusi, who taught Modigliani how to sculpt. Brancusi maintained studios even further from the heart of Montparnasse than Rivera, at 8, impasse Ronsin, off the rue de Vaugirard, about three quarters of a mile from what should be considered the heart of Montparnasse culture: the Café du Dôme, at 109, boulevard Montparnasse. Despite Brancusi's personal and artistic connections to the *École*, he too is consistently left out of the narratives and is usually isolated from all his contemporaries working in Paris during this period.

We might ask, therefore, what does it mean to be a member of the *École de Paris*? In the beginning, and often since, the School of Paris has been defined by its Jewishness. Simply to be a Jewish artist, however, was not enough to belong to the *École*. Chagall, Rivera, and Man Ray are rarely if ever thought of as members, yet they were all Jews. Chagall, as well as keeping his distance from Montparnasse, may have been thought to be too Jewish and not sufficiently cosmopolitan in the art he made. To be a member of the *École* there seems to have been an implicit aesthetic connection to one or more of the great French artists of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, in particular Degas, Renoir, Cézanne, Gauguin and Toulouse-Lautrec. For this reason too Rivera and Man Ray are probably thought to be too modern to belong to the *École*, no matter how closely connected they were personally with its leading figures.

Conversely, the absence of Jewish ancestry did not necessarily disqualify an artist from membership. By any measure, Pablo Picasso was central to the many personal relationships that coalesced into the School of Paris. He was friends with most and had at least a passing acquaintance with them all. They took their lead from him. During the heyday of the *École* Picasso was able to be both the avant-garde Cubist and the classicist, who incessantly quoted the great figures of 19<sup>th</sup>-century French art. There is also the case of the Japanese artist Tsuguharu Foujita, who must count as a definitive member of the *École*, though he obviously wasn't

<sup>69</sup> Kenneth E. Silver and Romy Golan dominate the study of the School of Paris. See their joint contributions to the exhibition catalogue, *The Circle of Montparnasse: Jewish Artists in Paris 1905-1945* (New York: Universe Books, 1985), and Silver's *Esprit de Corps* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989) and Golan's *Modernity and Nostalgia* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995) as well as the marvelous photo-documentary work of Billy Klüver and Julie Martin, *Kiki and Montparnasse 1900-1930* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1989).

Jewish. And there are a number of other non-Jewish artists closely associated with the *École*, both stylistically and personally, such as the erstwhile Futurist, turned classicist, Gino Severini, and the Scandinavians Per and Lucy Krohg. It is hardly a coincidence that all these artists also lived in the heart of Montparnasse.

If geography is essential to understanding the School of Paris it is all the more striking, if not perplexing that geography is largely absent from art historical narratives devoted to the interwar avant-gardists working in Paris. In the standard narratives of early 20<sup>th</sup> century art that feature the Dadaists, Surrealists, and non-objective artists what is French and the French tradition disappears under the weight of the ‘isms’ of modern art. For example, the multinational Surrealists have never been regarded as belonging to the *École de Paris*. Yet some of them lived and worked in Montparnasse, sometimes living in the same buildings as the *École* artists. By being largely blind to geography these narratives typically miss the essential kinship between the avant-gardists and the *École* artists in the most fundamental way possible: the fact that they were, among the visual artists especially, overwhelmingly not French.

The phrase, the School of Paris, was coined during the period to indicate the non-French character of only one subset of all the foreign artists working in Paris during this period. Yet consider this abbreviated list of internationally famous artists active in Paris during the 1920s: Aleksandr Archipenko, Jean Arp, Romaine Brooks, Patrick Henry Bruce, Constantin Brancui, Brassai (Gyula Halász), Marc Chagall, Giorgio de Chirico, Salvador Dalí, Sonia Delaunay-Terk, Max Ernst, Alexandra Exter, Tsuguharu Foujita, Alberto Giacometti, Julio González, Juan Gris, André Kertész, Moïse Kisling, František Kupka, Tamara de Lempicka, Jacques Lipchitz, Man Ray, Louis Marcoussis, Joan Miró, Lisette Model, Amedeo Modigliani, Piet Mondrian, Gerald Murphy, Jules Pascin, Morgan Russell, Diego Rivera, Gino Severini, Amadeo de Souza-Cardoso, Chaïm Soutine, Theo van Doesburg, Kees

van Dongen, and Ossip Zadkine. The later international prominence of all these artists stands in marked contrast to this list of major French artists who emerged in Paris during the 1920s drawn from a survey by a contemporary observer, Maurice Raynal: Yves Alix, André Beaudin, Maurice Dufresne, Marcel Gromaire, Jean-Francis Laglenne, André Lhote, Auguste Mambour, Roland Oudot, and André Dunoyer de Segonzac.<sup>70</sup> Only Lhote and Dunoyer de Segonzac produced reputations that survived the interwar years and both painters are very minor figures compared to their non-French contemporaries. The prestige of contemporary French art was so low during the 1920s that when Raynal published his volume on modern French painters in 1928, 16 of the 50 painters (a figure which included many French artists who made their reputations before the First World War) he discussed were not, in fact, French.<sup>71</sup>

Whether we consider the Paris *École* in the restricted sense of a group of largely Jewish artists taking their cue from late 19<sup>th</sup> century French art or in the expanded sense of all the notable foreign artists working in Paris between the two world wars, we are confronted with the essential fact of the uniqueness of this situation. It is the first such ‘school’ in Western art history to be composed of cosmopolitan artists who then dominate the historical narratives devoted to art of the period and place. Cities like Rome once attracted many foreign artists, but art historical narratives rarely incorporate these foreigners. If an art historian were to discuss 17<sup>th</sup> century Roman art, she would have no qualms about giving none or only pass reference to the non-French artists working there.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>70</sup> See Maurice Raynal, *Modern French Painters*, trans. Ralph Roeder (New York: Tudor Publishing Co., 1934).

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> To give just one example, Richard Spear, a noted historian of 17<sup>th</sup>-century Italian art, published an essay intending to explain the economic basis of art in Rome. Although Spear does refer on a number of occasions to the foreign artists working in Rome, nowhere in his analysis does he attempt to explain why they were there in the first place and why they succeeded in being there, even to the extent of dwarfing the reputations of their Italian contemporaries in the genres of history painting (Poussin) and landscape (Claude Lorrain). Spear takes their presence both for granted and yet not essential to the narrative of 17<sup>th</sup>-century art in Rome. See Richard Spear, “Rome: Setting the Stage,” in *Painting for Profit: The Economic Lives of Seventeenth-Century Italian Painters*, Richard Spear and Philip Sohm, eds. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), 32-113.

What happens in Paris in the second and third decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is new to the history of post-medieval Western art. It was not so much a matter of being a 'school' composed of famous foreign artists that is significant. Rather, it was Paris' capacity to serve as a place where young foreign artists with minimal or no domestic reputation could come to live, to make their art, to show and to sell their work, and most importantly, to achieve eventually international reputations, to the point of eclipsing most of the prominent French artists of the period. The rise of the *École* precisely coincides with the general disintegration of the reputations of native French artists, unfortunate enough to be born in the 1890s or later, artists who attempted to carry the great 19<sup>th</sup>-century tradition of modern French painting on into the 20<sup>th</sup> century and largely failed. Such reversals of career formation and reputation were unprecedented in Western art history.

To explore how this came about I began by conducting a simple statistical survey. My methodology differs from most geographical studies, in that I am not measuring every artist who came to Paris, but only those who became very successful. I needed objective measures of artistic success.<sup>73</sup> To do this I created a data set of internationally recognized 19<sup>th</sup> century artists, first by compiling a textbook survey of 36 European and American books devoted to 19<sup>th</sup> century art, selecting only those artists illustrated in three or more of these texts.<sup>74</sup> This

<sup>73</sup> On the uses of textbook illustration studies to understand what art history deems the most important art and artists see, for example, David W. Galenson, "Measurement," in *Old Masters and Young Geniuses* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006): 21-46.

<sup>74</sup> The textbooks surveyed were: Laurie Schneider Adams, *Art Across Time* (Boston: McGraw-Hill College, 1999); Enrico Annoscia, et al. *Art: a World History* (New York: DK Publishing, 1998); Guilio C. Argan, *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Propyläen Verlag, 1977); H. H. Arnason and Marla F. Prather, *History of Modern Art*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1998); Sandro Bocola, *The Art of Modernism* (Munich, London and New York: Prestel, 1999) Richard Brettell, *Modern Art 1851-1929* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, *Nineteenth-Century European Art* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2003); Bruce Cole and Adelheid Gault, *Art of the Western World* (New York: Summit Books, 1989); Matthew Craske, *Art in Europe 1700-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Stephen Eisenman, ed. *Nineteenth-Century Art: A Critical History* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2007); William Fleming, *Art & Ideas*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (Fort Worth: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1990); Claude Frontisi, ed. *Histoire visuelle de l'art* (Paris: Larousse, 2001); Maximilien Gauthier, *Tout l'art du monde*, vol. 3 (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1966); Volker Gebhardt, *The History of Art* (Hauppauge, N.Y.: Barron's, 1997); Ernst Gombrich, *The Story of Art*, 16<sup>th</sup> ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1995); Lawrence Gowing, ed., *A History of Art*, rev. ed. (Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Andromeda, 1995); George Heard Hamilton, *19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Art* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1970); George Heard Hamilton, *Painting and Sculpture in Europe 1880-1940* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); Frederick Hart, *Art*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1993); Mary Hollingsworth, *L'Arte nella Storia dell'Uomo* (Florence: Giunti, 1989); Hugh Honour and John Fleming, *The Visual Arts: A History*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Upper

Saddle River, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 2002); René Huyghe, ed. *L'Art et l'homme* (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1961); H. W. Janson, *History of Art*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2001); Paul Johnson, *Art: A New History* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003); Martin Kemp, ed. *The Oxford History of Western Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Fred S. Kleiner, Christin J. Mamiya, and Richard G. Tansey, *Gardner's Art Through the Ages*, 11<sup>th</sup> ed. (Fort Worth: Harcourt College Publishers, 2001); Edward Lucie-Smith, *Art and Civilization* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1993); Fritz Novotny, *Painting and Sculpture in Europe 1780-1880* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960); Stefanie Penck, ed. *Prestel Atlas Bildende Kunst* (Munich, London, and New York: Prestel, 2002); Herbert Read, *The Styles of European Art* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1965); Donald Martin Reynolds, *Nineteenth-Century Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Robert Rosenblum and H. W. Janson, *Art of the Nineteenth Century* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1984); Henry M. Sayre, *World of Art*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1997); Larry Silver, *Art in History* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1993); Marilyn Stokstad, *Art History*, rev. ed. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1999); Valerio Terraroli, ed. *Lezioni di Storia dell'Arte*, vol. 3 (Milan: Skira, 2003); Jacques Thullier, *History of Art* (Paris: Flammarion, 2003); David G. Wilkins, Bernard Schultz and Kathryn M. Linduff, *Art Past, Art Present*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994); and Rudolf Zeitler, *Die Kunst des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Propyläen Verlag, 1966).

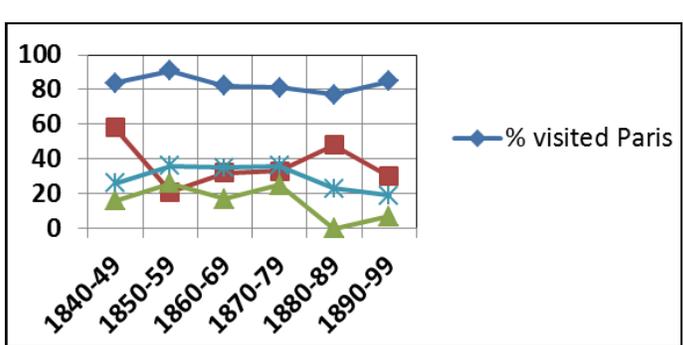


Chart I: Foreign Artists who Visited Paris

in post-1900 exhibitions.<sup>76</sup>

I then studied all these artists' behavior vis-à-vis the following questions having to do with how careers might be constructed in Paris. First, who visited Paris? Did they study art there? How many resided in Paris briefly versus more than three years? Who exhibited in Paris and how often? Who had commercial gallery shows? Finally, who first bought their work? This is what I discovered. The

Saddle River, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 2002); René Huyghe, ed. *L'Art et l'homme* (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1961); H. W. Janson, *History of Art*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2001); Paul Johnson, *Art: A New History* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003); Martin Kemp, ed. *The Oxford History of Western Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Fred S. Kleiner, Christin J. Mamiya, and Richard G. Tansey, *Gardner's Art Through the Ages*, 11<sup>th</sup> ed. (Fort Worth: Harcourt College Publishers, 2001); Edward Lucie-Smith, *Art and Civilization* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1993); Fritz Novotny, *Painting and Sculpture in Europe 1780-1880* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960); Stefanie Penck, ed. *Prestel Atlas Bildende Kunst* (Munich, London, and New York: Prestel, 2002); Herbert Read, *The Styles of European Art* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1965); Donald Martin Reynolds, *Nineteenth-Century Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Robert Rosenblum and H. W. Janson, *Art of the Nineteenth Century* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1984); Henry M. Sayre, *World of Art*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1997); Larry Silver, *Art in History* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1993); Marilyn Stokstad, *Art History*, rev. ed. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1999); Valerio Terraroli, ed. *Lezioni di Storia dell'Arte*, vol. 3 (Milan: Skira, 2003); Jacques Thullier, *History of Art* (Paris: Flammarion, 2003); David G. Wilkins, Bernard Schultz and Kathryn M. Linduff, *Art Past, Art Present*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994); and Rudolf Zeitler, *Die Kunst des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Propyläen Verlag, 1966).

<sup>75</sup> Robert Rosenblum, Maryanne Stevens, and Ann Dumas, 1900: *Art at the Crossroads* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2000).

<sup>76</sup> Donald E. Gordon, *Modern Art Exhibitions 1900-1916: Selected Catalogue Documentation* (Munich: Prestel Verlag, 1974).

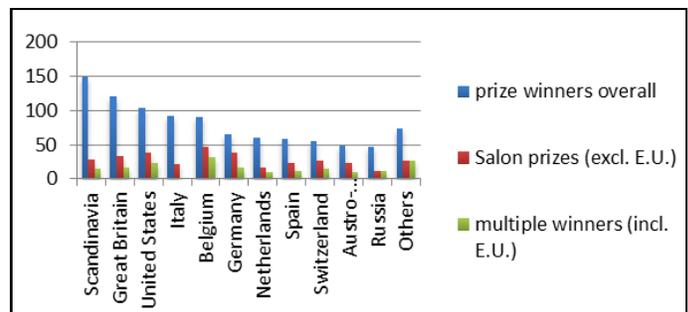
great majority of the artists in my data set visited Paris at least once (Chart 1). The chart is organized by birth decades. Artists most likely to visit Paris for the first time should be in their twenties, so that if they were born in the 1840s they probably first visited Paris in the 1860s. It was in the 1870s, therefore, that the largest percentage of foreign artists within their birth cohort visited Paris. Interestingly, the percentage of important foreign artists to visit to Paris declines in the 1880s, and still further in the 1890s, falling to its lowest point in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and then rising steeply again in the second decade of the century. These numbers suggest that towards the end of the century and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century an increasing number of non-French artists who subsequently developed international reputations could do so without being compelled to visit Paris. This development reflects the internationalization of modernism that progresses from the 1890s onward. Think, as an example, of the artists of *Die Brücke* who never visited the French capital. It was only after the First World War that the attraction of Paris again grew.

It was in the 1870s that foreign artist visitors who chose to live in Paris were most often only residents for a few months or years. Subsequently, short-term residencies were increasingly less attractive to foreign artists compared to long-term residencies. After 1900 the number of short-term Parisian residencies declined dramatically. If an important artist chose to live in Paris after 1900 they were much more likely to reside there for more than three years. In fact, many artists in my sample took up life-long residence in the city.

I should note here that a small sample size possibly explains why the birth cohort of the 1840s shows such a dramatic long-term residency in Paris, almost sixty percent. This generation is dominated in art historical narratives by the French Impressionists; few non-French artists from this generation make it into the textbooks, hence the small sample size. Moreover, very often their presence in these art historical narratives concerns their adaptations of

French Impressionist techniques and subject matter to their native art traditions, an apprenticeship usually involving some considerable time spent in France.

What role did art education play in this choice of short versus long-term residencies? In our first two birth cohorts about a third of the artists who visited Paris also took art instruction there. In the subsequent two birth cohorts, while the overall number of artists visiting Paris declined, instruction increased. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, as frequent art historical studies have described, Paris was the finishing school for artists from all over the world, from as far off as Japan. In contrast, after 1900 the number of eventually important foreign artists who chose to take art instruction in Paris for a significant period of time dramatically declines.

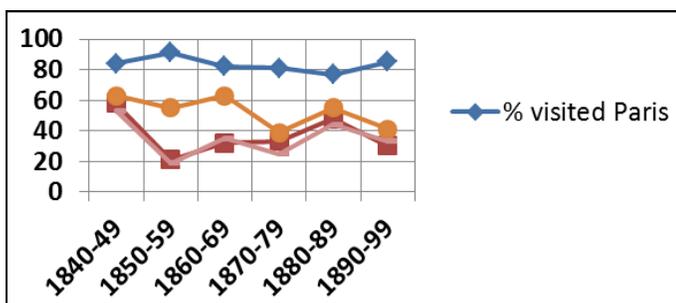


**Chart 2: Foreign Painters' Success in the Paris Salon System Before 1890**

If we think about it, the foreign artists who packed the Parisian art schools in the glory days of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, unless they were already well-established artists before coming to Paris, very rarely became famous while working there. Many brought established styles with them to Paris, and the schools were just a means to network with other artists or to discover the latest artistic fashions. If they had not yet developed mature work they typically do so only after returning to their native countries. Mary Cassatt and Vincent van Gogh are among the rare exceptions of foreign artists who were effectively trained and made their significant work while working in France. After 1900, the situation is

radically different. Again it is worth recalling all the foreign artists who did most if not all of their innovative work while living in Paris during the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

If not art instruction, then did exhibition opportunities serve as the tipping point that caused this radical realignment to occur? Consider Chart 2, based on the list of living foreign artists decorated at the Salon or at one of the Universal Exhibitions published in the Salon catalog of 1890.<sup>77</sup> The opening of the Salon to foreign artists after 1880 meant that an extraordinary number of foreign artists were medaled in subsequent exhibitions. More than 140 Scandinavian artists were so honored, 120 British artists, and so on. Then one notices that most of these medal winners received their medals at one of the two international exhibitions and a much smaller number were medaled at one of the Salons, 30 Scandinavian artists compared to the 140 overall. And then, see, the number of foreign artists who won multiple medals is smaller still. Eighteen Scandinavian artists were so honored. So within the Salon system there still existed important barriers to foreign artists seeking to construct careers in Paris. The Salon system seemed to award foreign artists, but in practice it did so far less than it might initially appear. Medals at these exhibitions might have great currency back home, but they bought very little in Paris.



**Chart 3: Foreign Artists who Visited Paris**

In Chart 3 we can see that a great many of the foreign artists who visited Paris in the 1880s and

<sup>77</sup> The Salon catalogue annually published lists of all artists (indicated by nation) who had won medals prior to that year's exhibition.

early 1890s showed at least once there. In fact, their participation in one of the international exhibitions was often the primary reason for their visit. After the breakup of the Salon system in 1890, the number of one-time exhibitors declines. But the percentage of artists who received multiple Parisian exhibitions begins to track upward, more or less paralleling the number of artists who chose long-term Parisian residency. In other words, the likelihood of multiple exhibitions in Paris was closely tied to long-term residency. Both the *Salon des Indépendants* and the *Salon d'Automne* (established in 1903) opened their doors wide to foreign artists. Before 1914 important foreign artists residing in Paris often outnumber important French nationals showing at these two venues.

Here is a situation where an individual can decisively alter an institutional environment. In this instance, Pablo Picasso showed artists that a foreign artist could in fact succeed in Paris beyond simply showing one's work. Picasso did not even trouble to exhibit at these progressive Salons. He found both domestic and foreign-born dealers to sell his work and both domestic and foreign collectors competed to acquire it. So, it is hardly coincidental that Picasso was also at the heart of the School of Paris, even though he wasn't Jewish, even though he was the most innovative artist of his generation, even though he represented at least one 'ism,' Cubism. Nor is it coincidental that the people around Picasso, like the writers Andre Salmon and Jean Cocteau, became friends and early supporters of key representatives of the *École de Paris*.

Although not normally associated with the School of Paris, the career of the Italian, self-styled metaphysical painter Giorgio de Chirico shows how these networks of personal relationships were integral to the growing commercial success of non-native artists in Paris. De Chirico's participation in the 1912 *Indépendants* exhibition brought the artist to the attention of both Picasso and his friend, the art critic, Guillaume Apollinaire. Not only did Apollinaire subsequently write a

glowing review of the artist's work, he introduced de Chirico to the dealer Paul Guillaume, who later became one of the key brokers of the *École de Paris*. This is why, for example, that the American collector Albert Barnes bought de Chirico's work together with the paintings of Modigliani and Soutine (yet otherwise showed no interest in the art of the Surrealists).

The de Chirico example demonstrates how the exhibition opportunities via the *Indépendants* and the *Salon d'Automne*, where important foreign artists often surpassed important French artists, were very important. But both the Picasso and de Chirico cases also illustrate that it was essential for the long-term reputation of a foreign artist that they are able to develop a relationship with a Parisian art dealer. Prior to 1900, such opportunities hardly existed for un-established foreign artists. Such opportunities, moreover, are conditional on finding buyers for this art, since art dealers rarely come before art collectors in identifying and promoting heretofore unrecognized artists.<sup>78</sup> As with Picasso, these buyers—collectors and dealers alike—were a mixture of domestic and foreign patrons. Before 1900, international competition had fueled the sharp rise in prices for the French Impressionists. After 1900, this competition increasingly favored the cosmopolitan artists residing in Paris. The transition from the Salons system to the commercial gallery system after 1900 worked in favor of foreign artists in Paris, breaking the gatekeeping abilities of French artists-controlled institutions of exhibition and career formation.<sup>79</sup>

Another factor that led to the internationalization of Parisian art is also essentially geographical in character; this is the ease by which foreign artists arriving in Paris came to be plugged into the cosmopolitan community of Montparnasse. The small art schools that flourished in Montparnasse

during this period were of course a meeting ground for young artists just as they had been when van Gogh first came to Paris in 1886 and immediately met Emile Bernard, Paul Gauguin and Henri Toulouse-Lautrec. Added to the networking potential of art schools after 1900 were the close living environs offered by the famous *La Ruche*, the 'beehive,' a building originally erected for the 1900 World's Fair that was relocated to what was at the time a predominately Jewish neighborhood. Poor young French artists and writers as well as foreign arrivals claimed *La Ruche* as temporary or even long-term residence during these years.<sup>80</sup>

Just as important as *La Ruche* were the interpersonal relationships that developed around the omnipresent figure of Modigliani, who was at least as important as Picasso in anchoring the relationships among what came to be the *École de Paris*. He knew virtually everybody who was important to the *École*. A new arrival to Montparnasse would have found it difficult *not* to encounter Modigliani, since his various apartments and modest studios were always just down the street from some of the most popular Parisian art schools for foreign nationals: the *École de la Palette*, etc. and he was a frequent visitor to the two great artist hangouts of the period, the cafés *Dôme* and *La Rotonde*, just around the corner from where he usually lived. These networks explain how the young Japanese artist, Foujita, arriving in Paris, probably with very little or no French and even fewer connections, would within several months become friends with virtually all the key figures of the *École de Paris*.

My last point is the most speculative, but one that at least can be grounded in some uncontested facts. While the School of Paris became famous in the 1920s, its formation and the maturation of the art of most of the artists involved occurred during the war years. In 1915 and 1916 Montparnasse was an island in a storm, an island dominated moreover by the two charismatic figures of Picasso and Modigliani. Meanwhile the French

<sup>78</sup> A useful discussion of the stages through which an artist's reputation passes is Alan Bowness' *The Conditions of Success: How the Modern Artist Rises to Fame* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989).

<sup>79</sup> For a discussion of the evolving market structure for contemporary art in France, from the Salon system to the Salons system to the commercial gallery system see David W. Galenson and Robert Jensen, "Careers and Canvases: The Rise of the Market for Modern Art in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century" *Van Gogh Journal*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2007): 136-66.

<sup>80</sup> An impressive list of major artists and writers passed through *La Ruche*, including Archipenko, Brancusi, Cendrars, Chagall, Delaunay, Jacob, Kisling, Léger, Lipchitz, Modigliani, Rivera, Soutine and Zadkine.

artists who might have been expected to uphold the practices of the pre-war avant-gardes were mostly at the Western front. And who knows how many potentially important artists died in the war or the influenza epidemic that followed? It is during the war, too, that the return to tradition develops, long before Jean Cocteau, who happened to witness its birth, described this return to tradition as the call to order.

Perhaps because Picasso left Paris in 1917 for Rome and the *Ballet Russes*, he took himself out of the later narratives surrounding the *École de Paris*. But it is important for the personality of 1920s Parisian culture that Picasso during the war and right after returned to the grand tradition of 19<sup>th</sup>-century French painting all the while sustaining his reputation as the Cubist without peer. Picasso was both the *École* and the avant-garde.

Meanwhile the cosmopolitans continued to sit out the war drinking coffee at the Café du Dôme. It was at that time that they developed the early strands of their relationships with French dealers, which flowered after the war into a booming international market for their art. When the great mess of the war was finally over, they were there to welcome their French contemporaries back to an altered economic and cultural landscape tilted against French artists. And the *École* was also there as conduits for other young artists streaming in from the U.S., Spain, Italy, Scandinavia and Eastern Europe. Some, like Tristan Tzara and Joan Miro, joined the avant-garde. Others joined the *École*. Either way, until the economic collapse of the Depression, Paris was no longer the capital of French art.