Patrick Bade - Neoclassical Painting, Part 2

- I think, Patrick, that, I think Judi mentioned to me that sometimes, the participants, they unsubscribe when they want to, by mistake. So Judi, are you there? Do you want to just mention to people?

- [Judi] Oh, I'm here. Yes. So what I want to say is that, as everybody knows, we send the schedule at the beginning of the week, and then I send out daily reminders. So if there's a talk you don't want to listen to, don't unsubscribe from that particular talk on the reminder, because that unsubscribes you from our entire mailing list. So if you don't want to listen to a talk, and you want to remain on the meeting list, do not unsubscribe. It's a very easy thing to do, but there is a button that says unsubscribe. And if you do that for one talk, you've gone for everything. So that's it, Wendy, in a nutshell.

*Visuals are displayed throughout the presentation.*

- Okay. All right, good. Thanks Jude, so Patrick, we're going to hand over to you, and thank you. We're looking forward to the lecture today, thanks.

- Thank you very much, Wendy. So we get to Neoclassicism, part two, and the most important painter associated with the style, he's really the artist who defines this style, this is Jacques-Louis David. You see his self-portrait on the left, and one of his most famous pictures, "The Death of Marat," on the right hand side. So he was born in 1748, and he lived through interesting times. So, well, you know what the Chinese said about living through interesting times? He was lucky, really, to come through it all unscathed. I've frozen again, can you believe it? It was working perfectly just now. I'm going to have to do all of this again, hmm. Stop share. No, it's still frozen. I dunno why it does this sometimes, right.

- [Judi] Patrick, don't worry. Just take your time.

- [Participant] What's going on?

- Well, it's not moving. Ah, let me see. Maybe, 'cause I think I had it up twice.

- [Judi] Don't worry, Patrick. What, is it your presentation that's frozen?

- Yes. It's the PowerPoint that's frozen. So I've just now closed it. I'm going to try and open it up again.

- [Judi] Okay, don't worry. Bear with us, everybody.

- Now. Oops. What's happened there? Ah, it's working. Good thing, right. For those of you who missed the beginning there, I'm back on track, yes.

- [Judi] Yeah, perfect. So this is Jacques Louis David. He is the major figure of neoclassical painting. And although he produced some very extraordinary images, some remarkable paintings, but also, he's one of those artists who's interesting because of the times that he lived through, and which, one of the key turning points in Western civilization. Now, he was a distant relative of Francois Boucher here, bottom right, "Birth of Venus." And he initially went to Boucher to train for an apprenticeship with him. But Boucher was really too old by that point. And instead, he went to an artist called Joseph-Marie Vien, whose work we saw briefly last time, top lefthand side.

This is perhaps his best known work, "The Cupid Seller." And so Vien was a pioneer of the Neoclassical style. And you can do a little compare and contrast between the late Baroque, Rococo, or Boucher, with all its movement, it's theatricality. And you can see that Vien has eliminated that, and the frothiness, the frilliness, of the Rococo style. And it's a much more sober style that he is adopting. Now I was rude about this picture last week, and some people picked me up on this. So I thought I'd address this question of quality in art and how one judges that, and if one should make those kind of judgments. Is this a second-rate painting? And why is it a second-rate painting? Now, of course, as I said last time, none of this is scientific, it's all very subjective. But usually, in a particular period, there will be a consensus among critics, art historians, connoisseurs. But even the consensus is something that is variable, and shifts from period to period.

As I mentioned before, the Apollo Belvedere that you see on the left in the 18th century, was universally recognised as one of the greatest creations of Western art, was thought to be a sublime masterpiece. Today, there is a consensus among art historians and critics that it's actually rather third-rate, that it's just a rather poor Roman copy of a Hellenistic bronze, which was probably never very good in the first place. Now, when Lord Elgin offered his marbles to the nation in the early 19th century, he was offering them for the price of 30,000 pounds, which was a huge sum of money in the day. And the government set up a commission to decide whether the Elgin Marbles or the Parthenon Marbles was worth this huge sum of 30,000 pounds. And they invited experts and artists, and they were all asked the same question, which was, how do you rate the Parthenon Marbles in relation to the Apollo Belvedere? Well, if you said that to any art historian or connoisseur today, they'd say, "What, come again?"

How could you possibly even think that there could be a comparison in quality between these two works of art? So to get back to Vien, I'd like to do a little compare and contrast with you. And as I said, this is very subjective, and you are perfectly willing, welcome, to disagree with everything I say, and to state your own opinion at the end. But I'd be very surprised if many of you thought that this painting was as good as this one. This is a Chardin that was painted about 20 years earlier, "The Young Schoolmistress," so, why? Why is this better than this? Well, a number of reasons. I think the drawing in the Vien is rather slack. He's not a terrific draughtsman, and he's certainly not somebody who's at all interested in the paint surface. It took, this is all again, very subjective.

To my mind, it's a very bland image, it's a rather superficial image. It's a rather trivial picture, or you could say that Chardin's image of a young woman trying to teach a younger child, well, that's also a rather trivial subject, but I think it's incredibly subtle in its depiction of the relationship of the young girl and the child. So there's that element too. I think there, there is a psychological complexity and interest which is absent from the Vien, and there's a harmony of colour. In a way, they're not dissimilar. They're both using these rather typically mid-18th century pastel range of colours. But Chardin manages, I think, an actually exquisite harmony of colour, and also there is this question of paint surface, which is so smooth and bland, not interesting, I think, with the Vien, and Chardin, it's amazing that critics of artist Chardin, you could pick up almost any book on Chardin. And when they start talking about the paint surface, you'll find very often they start to use metaphors of food and eating.

And there is something so gorgeous and scrumptious, what can I say about this paint surface, with this wonderful use of stumbling where you drag quite dryish paint of a lighter colour over a darker or more intensely coloured ground, and you get these very, very exquisite and beautiful effects. Well, back to David. So he was actually, he remained closely associated with Vien for 15 years, so he must have got something from him to stay with him for such a long time. And so, what you did in France in the 18th and into the 19th century, you went into the studio of a respected master and Academy mission. And then you went in for the Prix de Rome competition, which took place every year, and a subject would be given and all the artists competing for the Rome prize would paint that subject. The subject in 1771 was the combat of Mars and Venus. Vien didn't think that David was ready for it. So he told him not to enter for it, but he did anyway. And to everyone's astonishment, he won. Now Vien was very displeased. I mean, French are really, they're into rules and regulations, and doing what you're told, I think, probably more than the Brits are.

And Vien was so displeased that David had disobeyed him, that he actually had the prize annulled. Now, looking at this picture, you think, well, what had he actually learned from Vien? 'Cause this actually looks much more like Boucher than it does like Vien. It's still got a very, very Rococo/Baroque look. It's full of movement, it's very theatrical. You've got these very theatrical gestures. You've got these flickering pastel hues of colour, and look at the drapery, and it's very agitated, complicated drapery flying, the Marilyn Monroe effect, as I like to call it. You can see, what's the, I think it's the contest. It must be "The Contest of Mars and Minerva." That's right, Mars, by Suvee, but if you look at Minerva, you can see, it's like the wind is coming up from the pavement to lift and agitate her drapery. So it took him three more attempts at the Prix de Rome before he won it. This is his third attempt in 1773, which is the suicide of Seneca.

And still it's got a very, very late Baroque look to it: billowing curtains in the background, these overexaggerated gesticulations, and so on. So it was his fourth attempt, Antiochus and Stratonice, that finally won him the Prix de Rome in 1774. And here we can see him actually moving away from the late Baroque. Let's do a little quick compare and contrast, towards a more classical style. You can see that the figures are now splayed out parallel to the picture

surface. You've still got a certain movement in drapery, but it's calming down, and the whole thing has a rather more sober and classical look to it. And he's clearly looking at Poussin, top left. This is "The Death of Germanicus" by Poussin, great 17th century Classical/Baroque artist. And also, I think more recent artists who are ahead of him in the move towards Classicism like Greuze. This is Greuze's painting of "Septimius Severus," bottom left-hand side. So he wins the Prix de Rome in 1774, and the following year, his teacher Vien is appointed director of the academy in Rome. So the two of them travel to Italy together.

And on the way to Rome, David stops in Parma, and he goes into the cathedral, and he looks up into this amazing dome fresco by Correggio, in the dome, and he has a fit. It's a famous example of what's called the Stendahl syndrome, after the great French romantic writer. Stendahl syndrome is where you see a work of art, and you are so intensely moved by it that you have a severe physical reaction. And in the case of David, he was so powerfully moved by this, that he had what seemed to be an epileptic fit, and collapsed writhing on the ground. Now, I've had, in much, in my lifetime, I've experienced the Stendahl syndrome, not to anything like the same degree as David. I can remember the very first time I went to the Musee d'Orsay. I started to have palpitations, which is a typical symptom of the Stendahl syndrome. And I actually had to sit down for a while. And I also even had it as recently as the year before last, when I first went to the Schchukin show in Paris, when I walked into a room full of these Matisses, I was absolutely overwhelmed, and I just had to sit down.

So I imagine many of you have experienced similar things during your lives, but for David it was very important, because he suddenly realised, yes, there is much more to art than just entertaining the wealthy and the aristocratic, that art can be something really important. Now, if you won the Prix de Rome, so you had up to five years living in Rome at the expense of the French state. But you had to produce works that were sent back, and then they were judged in Paris, and a commentary was made. And this is the work that David sent back to the French, to the Academy in Paris in 1778. And it's 'The Funeral of Patroclus." So it's a story, it's a classical story, it's a story from the Trojan Wars. And you think, hmm, he hasn't really learned much, he hasn't changed much, this is still very operatic, still very, very theatrical. You see the figure of Achilles with his helmet, with its billowing ostrich feathers and billowing drapery and the agitation and the movement.

So this was actually quite strongly criticised by the judges in Paris. And they said to him, "Look, there's too much going on in this picture. It's far too complicated. You need to simplify your work, and above all, you need to put it into a clear and simple spatial setting." And he does finally seem to have taken this advice to heart. And another very big factor was that, that the following year, 1779, he went from Rome down to Naples, and he saw all the excavations of Pompeii. He saw lots of classical art. And he later said this was a revelation to him. And it was like having a cataract operation, that his eyes were open to the world in a different way. So this painting dates from 1780. It's David on the left hand side, a rather topical subject, this one, 'cause this is St. Roch, who's the patron saint of plague victims. And he's intervening with the Virgin Mary on the behalf of the plague victims. And on the right hand side, you can see two paintings of Virgin by

Poussin. The top one is early in his career, and the bottom one is later in his career. And I think you can see that the David is really a fusion of these two paintings of Poussin. That the composition is certainly indebted to the early one, but the rather smoother or sculptural style is more indebted to the late Poussin.

So we see a much similar composition. We see the figures more sculptural, they're brought close to the picture plane. And the breakthrough picture is the following year. This is the blind Belisarius. This was sent to the Salon of 1781. It was the last Salon that was reviewed by the great philosopher and writer Diderot. And he greeted it as a masterpiece, and he said, "This is what we've been waiting for." This, finally we have a noble art, high-minded art, but we've moved beyond all the frivolity and the superficiality of the Rococo. So it tells a story from Roman history. Belisarius had been a very successful heroic Roman general, but in his old age, he fell into poverty and he landed up begging in the streets. So it's really a story about sacrifice and ingratitude. You see a woman offering him alms, and you see one of his former soldiers reacting in horror to the sight of the general begging in the streets. This is a huge picture. It's in the museum in Lille, which I recommend you see, those of you living in London or in Britain. A day trip to Lille is a wonderful thing to do. It's an hour and a quarter from London by Eurostar. Lille has fabulous museums and the Musee des Beaux Arts is considered to be the best collection of painting in France outside of Paris.

And this is one of the outstanding masterpieces in that museum, so again, I think the Poussin is a key influence on this new sober, sculptural, rather grave style. This is Poussin on the right hand side, one of the seven sacraments. And here we've got a nice detail that shows you the wonderful crispness. Now Neoclassicism, especially when it gets into the 19th century, can become terribly glossy, terribly bland. And even in some of the later work of David, as we shall see, it's got a kind of a boring blandness. Although it's very smoothly painted, and the figures are treated sculpturally, I don't find this. It's got a sort of almost jewel-like sharpness and crispness. Now this is the key work of his entire career. You could say this is the key work of the Neoclassical movement, as far as painting is concerned. This was painted in Rome in 1784, and the title is "The Oath of the Horatii." It's another very big picture, it's now in the Louvre, and it has a very serious moral subject. It's a kind of a morality, which I think is rather alien to us, even repulsive. It's actually a horrible story. It's a story from early Roman history when there was a rivalry between the city states of Alba and Rome, and they decided to resolve this in a battle. And I suppose rather sensibly, instead of having a full scale battle with two armies, they decided to resolve the dispute by appointing three heroes on both sides who are going to fight it out, and whoever survived would win.

And on the Romans' side, you have Horace, and his two brothers who we see here, on the left of this picture. And on the the side of Alba, you have the Curiatii, and so we have a big conflict, personal conflict of interest here, because Sabina, who you see on the righthand side in the sort of mustard yellow and blue get up, she's a sister of the Curiatii, and she's married one of the Horatii. And Camilla, who's on the extreme right, and she's wearing a white dress. She, her fiance is one of Curiatii. So it's a no-win situation for the two women, because either the

husband or the fiance is going to get killed, or the brother is going to get killed. And so the Horatii, they're in this rather alarmingly proto-fascist gesture, they're swearing an oath and they go off and they do battle with the Curiatii and of the six of them, five are killed. And the only one who survives is Horace. So the Romans have won, and Horace comes back and he finds his sister Camilla weeping over the death of her fiance. And he then immediately stabs her to death. And this is presented as showing how moral and how high-minded he is, because he puts duty and patriotism over personal feelings.

So as I said, it's a kind of morality, a high-minded morality, which is, I think, probably not very attractive to most of us. Now when this 1785 you could write that down, it's a rather important date for Neoclassicism, 'cause it's where, I talked last week about softcore Neoclassicism. This soft focus version of Neoclassicism. 1785 is when you get the real thing, the real hardcore version of the style, and you get it simultaneously happening in painting, sculpture and architecture. It's really an amazing way that the three things align. So while David was painting this picture in his studio in Rome, Canova, who's the sculptural equivalent of David, Antonio Canova, was carving the tomb of Clement XIV that you see on the right hand side. And the the two artists, Rome was, all the artists in Rome would've known one another. I'm quite sure the two artists knew each other, were in contact with one another, knew what what they were doing. And you can see some very interesting stylistic similarities: the smooth surface, this clear separation of parts, which is so different from Baroque or Rococo, where you have a flow of one part into another. And especially these slightly wilting, mourning women, are really very like one another, stylistically.

And one of the points I want to make actually, about David, again, something I think that's not very attractive to us, is the very clear assignment of gender roles. And you've got a kind of gender zoning. So you have the lefthand side of this picture is the male zone. And look at the body language of these men, with their quasi-fascist salute and their very determined posture. So that's the male zone. Female zone, where females are being all kind of soppy and wilting and floppy, is on the righthand side of the picture. And look at this wonderful detail of these very masculine legs of the men on the lefthand side. Also at the same time, and here we can't be sure, of course, that they knew each other, 'cause they're in different places. You have Ledoux designing these extraordinary customs barriers in Paris, this is also at 1785. Paris was surrounded by a tax wall, and any food brought into the city had to be taxed. This was of course one of the things that caused the unrest and resentment that led to the French Revolution. There were originally 50 of these barriers in the wall gaps where the food could be brought in, where it could be taxed. There are only two of them left now, intact.

This one, this is the Barrière de la Villette. It's a five minutes walk from where I live in Paris. When people come and visit me, usually the first walk I do with them is to take them down to the Canal Saint-Martin and to see this building. And if I would ask people, when do you think this building was built? And of course if they know, they know, but if they don't know, they're very unlikely to get it right. It's a kind of strangely timeless building. I mean, it could be 20th century, it could be from the 1930s. And you can see he's using classical look columns. They are classical,

but they're very abstracted. They're very, very simplified. And again, there is this clear separation of parts that is characteristic of the Neoclassical style. And you can see, if you look at the arcade in the background of the painting, and the arcade surrounding the dome in the upper part of the Ledoux building, they're remarkably similar. So over the next five years, between "The Oath of Horatii" and the outbreak of the French Revolution, David is developing his Neoclassical style. This is "The Death of Socrates."

So you can see many of the same features. The composition spread out, parallel to the picture surface. This frieze-like arrangement of the figures, this crisp, smooth application of paint, strong linearity, the treatment, the very sculptural treatment of the materials that hug the bodies underneath. He's of course looking, as artists always do, he's looking back to the past. Top right, Poussin, again, and bottom left, Raphael School of Athens, this strange gesture pointing to heaven, I think is something that he's borrowed from Raphael. And here is a preparatory drawing that you can see has been squared up for an enlargement, and you see this very, very sculptural treatment of the material. Now his next very important picture was in the Salon of 1789. 1789, that should ring lots of bells with you. It's one of the key years in European history. The outbreak of the French Revolution. So this was on show in the summer of 1789, when the French Revolution was brewing. And it's another scene from Roman history.

And I'm going to read to you, it has a very, very long title when it first exhibited. So I'm going to read you the title, which was, "J. Brutus, First Consul, has returned to his home having condemned his two sons who had joined the Tarquins and conspired against Roman liberty; lictors bringing the bodies so they may be given burial." So the Tarquins were the old royal family of Rome when it was still a kingdom, and they were replaced by a republic. So, you know, certainly with hindsight, we think, "Oh that's very close to the bone." That can't be a coincidence that in the summer that the French Revolution breaks out, that's going to topple the monarchy, you have this painting praising Republican virtue and attacking monarchists. Now the strange thing is, it took a while for the penny to drop about this. It was the painting was bought by a member of the French Royal family.

So they obviously didn't see it as an attack on them. And while it was on show, David wrote a letter to a friend talking about it in detail, and explaining it, and not at all mentioning any kind of revolutionary or monarchist political agenda. But after the revolution really seriously broke out, within a year or so, this painting, people quickly actually did give it a revolutionary and anti-monarch interpretation. It's an amazing picture, in lots of different ways. I love the way, for instance, Brutus, who's had to make this terrible decision to sentence his own son to death. And he's sitting there in this pose that suggests melancholy, and he's in shadow. And one of the slightly macabre, striking features of the picture is the legs of the body of his son. They catch the light as they're brought in. Another strange feature of this picture is that the centre of the picture is taken up by this furniture and still life. David is making a point here, that although Brutus was first consul and a very important man, his wife still does the darning, she's still sewing, and that's an instance of Republican virtue.

And look at this wonderful chair. David designed the chair, and he had it made by the famous ebeniste, Jacob. Robin could probably tell you a lot more about it, but it it's a kind of timeless design. It is really, you can imagine this being produced today. And then of course you've got the same idea of the gender zoning, you've got the men. 'Cause Brutus is being very tight-lipped about it all. He's not showing any emotion, and you've got the hysterical women on the right hand side, all falling about and being female. Interestingly, that picture also, clearly nobody in the summer thought that it had a political agenda, because it remained in the Salon 'til the end of the Salon. Whereas this picture actually was initially sent to the Salon, and had to be removed for political reasons. This is a portrait of the great scientist and chemist Antoine Lavoisier, he's one of the greatest scientists at the 18th century. He was the one who gave oxygen and hydrogen their names and identified their properties. And this painting had to be removed, because Lavoisier had a sideline as a tax farmer.

Tax farming was a very, well, it was something we know about. It's something that I suppose the Tory party today are very keen on, it's outsourcing a government function. So that's what the government, they sold off the right to gather taxes, they privatised it. And of course it was an incredibly corrupt system. And the tax farmers came to be very hated and resented, although in fact, there's no evidence I think, that Lavoisier himself was corrupt or abused the system. So the painting, he became so unpopular that it was decided that it was wiser to remove the picture from public exhibition. And in fact, he was later guillotined in 1794, accused of corruption, because of this business of the tax farming. So in June, now, in the summer of 1789, France had become almost ungovernable. The finances of France were in a catastrophic state. One major reason for this was that the American War of Independence had been heavily financed by France in order to get back against the Brits for the loss of the French colonies in the Seven Years War.

So that really crippled France, the expense of that. And the other problem was, of course, under the Ancien Regime, only ordinary people paid taxes at the Catholic church, which was one of the wealthiest elements in France, and the aristocracy paid no taxes. So there was terrible hunger and poverty in Paris, and as I said, resentment of the imposition of tax on food coming into the city. And the situation got so bad that Louis XVI decided to recall the Estates-General, that's the French equivalent of parliament, which had not met for 150 years. They'd not met since 1614. So they were called and they met in Versailles, and they soon got very uppity, and they said, we're not going to support you to get more taxes unless you allow some degree of democracy. And they became so forceful in their demands that in June, 1789, Louis the XIV and his ministers thought, "You know, enough is enough. We've got to stand on this. It's getting out of hand." And they shut down the meeting place where the Etates-General were gathering every day. So this is the 6th of June, 1789. So they found themselves locked out.

And a certain Dr. Guillotin, later famous for his invention of what was meant to be a humanitarian device for chopping people's heads off, he said, "Well, let's go to the tennis court. We'll meet in the tennis court." So they all met in the tennis court, and at 10:30 in the morning, they swore an oath not to be disbanded until some kind of constitution had been granted. And

David was there, and he witnessed this. And this is his drawing for a huge painting that he wanted to execute to celebrate this very important moment. Of course, it's a very elaborate composition, but there are some interesting and telling incidental details, like if you look up to the left of the picture, you can see there's been a huge gust of wind that has caused somebody's umbrella to turn inside out. We've all experienced that at some time. And you can see the gust of wind has blown in the curtain. And this actually happened in this great moment of drama, where everybody was embracing one another, except of course the one man who's resisting, bottom right hand corner.

You can see his arms across his chest. He's not part of it, but everybody else is embracing and welcoming what they think is going to be a new age of the brotherhood of man. So as I said, David was there, and he had a notebook and he had scribbled a little, he obviously thought at the time, this is a moment I have to commemorate, and you can actually see in the top half, a tiny sketch of the umbrella being turned inside out. And you can see his sketch, what the interior of the tennis court looked like. So this was going to be vast. It was going to be 35 foot by 26 foot. And he started on the canvas. The canvas still exists, but he soon got swept up in the actual events of the revolution, got distracted from this work, and he went back to it at various times, but eventually he abandoned it in 1804, the year that Napoleon declared himself emperor. So you've got this big white canvas, and unfinished.

When you see an unfinished painting, it's always very, it tells you a lot about how the artists work. And we can see that, we can see he's made a very elaborate underdrawing. And this is not a painterly way to work. He's almost painting by numbers. You put in the contours, and you can see he's just filled in some of the heads in oil on the righthand side. So as I said, he was distracted. He became very involved, directly involved in the revolution in various ways. First of all, he put a lot of energy into reforming the Royal Academy of Arts. And secondly, he was in a way, the Goebbels of the French Revolution. He was put in charge of organising big public events, rallies, these revolutionary rallies like this one, and another one showing the celebration of the Supreme Being that replaced the Christian faith, the cult of the Supreme Being for a short time. His mass rallies were really the prototype for all the great mass rallies of totalitarian regimes in the 20th century. He also produced these two images, which are perhaps the most iconic images of the French Revolution. I've already shown you this little drawing on the lefthand side, a little, very, very quick sketch. He must have made that in a minute or two, of Mary Antoinette on a tumbrel, on the way to have her head cut off.

And you see that they've humiliated her by cutting off her hair, and she's been forced to wear a revolutionary Phrygian cap. And you see, it's such a brilliant little piece of observation. You can see the famous Hapsburg lip, lower lip jutting out, that all members of the Hapsburg family had. So I don't know what you think about this. Is this a tender drawing that shows sympathy towards her? Or is it a very cruel drawing that is gloating in her fate? I'm not really sure, and I think it's an amazing piece of drawing, but I'd be quite interested to hear what your opinion is about that. And on the other side, we have this very famous painting of the death of Marat. Now Marat was one of the firebrands of the revolution, very nasty piece of work, I suppose, as with the Russian

Revolution, idealism very quickly gave way to some pretty nasty and ambitious types who took over the revolutions. And Marat was certainly one of those. And so, he was one of the leading spirits behind the so-called Terror, with a capital T, when thousands of people were denounced and publicly executed as traitors to the revolution.

Again, it's very much a prototype for what happened later in Russia, in the Russian Revolution. Well, a young woman who lived in Normandy, in Caen, she was called Charlotte Corday, and she stoked herself up by reading "Plutarch's Lives." Somehow, that fits so perfectly into this whole Neoclassical period, that it was through reading an ancient Roman text that she fired herself up to commit this act. And so she went to Paris, and she decided she was going to rid the world of this monstrous character. And she went to his house, but she was an attractive young woman, and his mistress was suspicious, and she wouldn't let her in. So she then wrote him a letter in which she promised to denounce people and reveal plots. And so she went back again. One of the details of the story, which I find very piquant, is that before she went back the second time and that she committed the crime, she called in her hairdresser, 'cause she didn't want to go into history on a bad hair day.

She wanted to look her best. And so she went back, and this time, she did get into the house, and she found Marat in his bath, and she took out a kitchen knife and she plunged it into him. So David, now, he was an elected member of the governing body of revolutionary France. He was called upon to paint three pictures of revolutionary martyrs, to be hung in the National Convention. And two of them are completed and one was left unfinished. This is the only one, this is the only finished one that survives, and it's an incredibly powerful image. And I think part of its power derives from the fact that it is a secular version of a standard religious image, a Christian image, of the lamentation of the dead body of Christ. So this is really, I think you are, in a way I'm spoiling it for you by telling you that, 'cause it works better if it's working unconsciously. I think another extraordinary thing about this picture is the huge expanse of emptiness in the upper part of the figure. If this were a Baroque martyrdom, we'd probably have, if Rubens were painting this, he'd have a gorgeous blonde angel coming from above, bringing a palm, but of course, with now Christianity has been abandoned. So there is no afterlife, there's just emptiness. And there are no angels flying around with palms.

The other, so it's a propaganda picture. And he, in fact, Marat took baths because he had a very painful skin condition. And the baths relieved the skin condition. Wasn't because he was particularly clean. Nobody was particularly clean, I suppose, in the 18th century. And in fact, if you were an upper class person, and you're too fussy and you changed your underwear too often, somebody might denounce you and you could end up on the guillotine. So David is making a huge point that his desk is just a packing case. So on the righthand side you have the bureau du roi, which Robin told you about, which is probably the most expensive and lavish desk. I mean, the cost of that desk would've supported villages of peasants for many lifetimes, incredible sophistication and elaboration. And so it, as I said, David's really making a point of the fact that Marat lives a simple life and has rejected the lavishness of the old aristocracy. We also have this latter, which again is a lie. It says, "Charlotte Corday to Citizen Marat. It's enough that

I'm very unhappy to have a right to your sympathy." This was not what she wrote to him at all. As I told you, she wrote to him offering to denounce other people.

This is the unfinished revolutionary martyr. He was a young boy called Joseph Bara, B-A-R-A, who was murdered by royalists. But David never got round to finishing that. He did finish painting of the death of another revolutionary martyr, a man called Le Peletier de Saint-Fargeau, and he was murdered by Royalists because he voted for the death of Louis XVI. And in the original version, complete version of the painting, there you can see a note that says, "I vote for the death of the king." And this, I regret very much that this painting was destroyed, 'cause I think it must have been a very powerful image, on a level with the death of Marat. And it has a very strange story. The painting remained in David's possession after the revolution and was inherited by his family. Now Le Peletier de Saint-Fargeau had a daughter who was an infant, who was orphaned after his murder, and she was officially adopted by the French Republic, and she, I dunno what her real name was, but she was renamed Liberte, so that was a mouthful, her name was Liberte Le Peletier de Saint-Fargeau. Now children, as I'm sure many of you know from your own children or grandchildren, can be very rebellious, very perverse. So this little girl who was adopted by the republic, because her father had voted for the death of the king, grew up to be an ardent royalist.

And she was very ashamed of the fact that her father had voted for the death of the king. So in a rather extremely shameful shoddy deal, the descendants, the family of David sold the oil painting to this woman. And she of course destroyed it. And she wanted all evidence of the image to be disappeared. And there had been print after it, and she spent a fortune trying to make sure that every print after the picture was also destroyed. And only one torn version of the print has survived. This is it, and it's now in the Bibliotheque national. So there is this cliche that the revolution devours its children, and the French revolution was a classic example of that. David was a member of the Jacobin party, the most extreme faction of the revolutionaries, led by Robespierre, a few comparisons over the last year, of course, between Robespierre and Jeremy Corbin, Labour Party. So there came a point where the Convention and the other politicians felt that Robespierre was getting out of hand and they turned on him. And the day that Robespierre was arrested, and of course he was subsequently, he went to the guillotine, his head was chopped off, in the Convention in the morning, David publicly embraced Robespierre, and promised to die with him if necessary, but he failed to turn up in the afternoon to vote with him.

He later, rather feebly claimed that he had the runs and he was stuck on the toilet. But he was then, Robespierre was arrested, executed, David was also arrested and imprisoned, and was very, very lucky to escape execution. The events were moving so fast that it was really a matter of timing, I suppose, whether you got the chop or not. But he was imprisoned in the old, the Palais de Luxembourg, which had been turned into a prison. And from his prison cell or room, he had this view of the Luxembourg gardens, and he painted this exquisite picture. Again, one I often used to use to try and trick students, because if you don't know it, you'd never attribute this to David. He never painted anything else like this, ever again, it was a result of unique

circumstances.

I think what is so amazing about it is the freshness and directness of the observation. You think, "Oh, this doesn't belong in the 18th century. This belongs in the 19th century." It looks like a Constable or a Romantic landscape. So he's eventually released from prison, and he's a very chastened man. Now, the revolution led to all sorts of relaxations of previous laws, moral laws, it enabled divorce. So it was very easy to get a divorce after the revolution. And David took advantage of this to trade in his wife for a younger model. And after he was released from prison, obviously the younger version wasn't sticking with him, but his abandoned wife did. And not only that, she had in the meantime inherited a lot of money, so she was independently wealthy. They remarried in 1796, and it was around this time that David paints this huge picture, which again, I think what you have to say about David is again and again, he has got his finger on the pulse. He knows what's going on politically. So after the horror of the Terror, and all these people being rounded up and executed, the period 1795 to 1799, so it's only a period of four years. It's the period of the Directoire, and it's really a period of relaxation, and it's a period of reconciliation. And this painting, another huge, huge painting that's in the Louvre is, oops, I'm just looking at the time, what time, ooh, I really am running out of time.

I will have to stop shortly. But this is a painting about reconciliation and the role of women in the reconciliation of the embittered factions of the revolution. These are two portraits he painted during the Directoire period. I think that very much have that lovely relaxed quality, a period of relaxation after the horrors of the revolution. And I'm going to talk a little bit about Madame Recamier, maybe I'll finish with Madame Recamier. So she was a great beauty, and she had a salon in Paris. She was married to a much older man who was rumoured to be her biological father. So it was probably a good thing that she said she didn't like sex and didn't do sex, but she was obviously a rather seductive woman. And she was famous for having the most ravishing toes in Paris. So in her portraits, she's always shown exposing her toes. She posed for David, he found her very irritating as a model because she turned up for sessions late. She was very unreliable. And when he found that she commissioned another artist, Baron Gerard, to paint her portrait, he abandoned this. So it's actually an unfinished picture and you can see hasn't got its final glossy surface.

This is a joke parody of it by Magritte. Napoleon, this is one of the portraits on the left hand side, was painted in the late 1790s. It's when Napoleon came back from victorious campaigns in Italy. It's the only one of several portraits of Napoleon by David that is actually painted from life. Napoleon gave David three hours and in those three hours, he painted this, I'm going to move on, 'cause I want to, David, of course, after the fall of Napoleon, he identifies very strongly with Napoleon, becomes a kind of court artist to Napoleon, he makes a big misjudgment. When Napoleon comes back from Elba in 1815, he declares his allegiance again to Napoleon. So when Napoleon is defeated a second time, Waterloo, David has to go into exile in Brussels. But his fame is such that he's still able to send pictures back to exhibit in Paris at the Salon. This is one of them. I think this is, if I had more time, this is another picture where I would discuss with you why I think this is an absolutely terrible picture. I think these late pictures that he did from

Brussels have lost all kind of integrity.

This one Anita Brookner, her version, her book incidently, I greatly recommend it, Anita Brookner's book on David, brilliant, brilliant biography. And she calls this picture "The Great Fireplace in the Sky." David, very important teacher, two or three generations of artists go through his studio, really pick up his style. This is Baron Gerard, this is his portrait of Madam Recamier, which is in the Musee Carnavalet, which is just about to reopen after long closure. She preferred this version, and I think I can see why, it's a very sexy version. Once again, she's exposing her toes. So Baron Gerard, he's a former pupil of David, very much working in this glossy, smooth, Neoclassical style, but a wonderful draughtsman. And the drawings have an extraordinary freedom that you wouldn't necessarily expect from the very glossy, highly finished paintings. This is his sketch for the Madam Recamier portrait. And I'm going to finish with this, 'cause this belongs to me. I bought it last year at the Galerie Amicorum. It's a tiny little sketch, pen and ink sketch, by Baron Gerard of around the same date, I suppose around 1800, could even be, I suppose, a preliminary sketch for Madam Recamier. And I see I've used up all my time, and I'd like to be able to answer some questions if I can. So I'm going to stop the share.

- Patrick, that was fabulous. Thank you so, so much. Would it be possible to have another session on this period, or?

- Well, actually what I'll do is, I may, because there's more material I wanted to talk about.

- Yeah.

- So I'll put that into the beginning of the next session, so that you, yeah.

- Okay. So we can finish it off, because there is so much to say. I do know that, there's so much more.

- Yes, yes, but well, about his pupils, I'd like to say a little bit more about his pupils.

- Okay, great. That's good. And if you need a full session, that doesn't matter. We can be flexible, as you know.

- Yeah, yeah.

- [Wendy] You're in charge.

- Oh, well thank you so much. It's so wonderful. You're so supportive about all of these things.

- [Wendy] Definitely. We must be flexible, thanks.

Q&A and Comments:

Q: Any reason why Mary's dress is red in these pictures?

A: That red and blue is, I dunno if there's a symbolic reason, but it was traditional for the Virgin to be in red and blue.

Q: Were all the artists at the time well-versed in Roman history?

A: Yes, they were, most of them. And also, when once artists started being educated in academies, they would be given lectures on this kind of thing and they would be expected to be learned in Roman history.

Q: When was the Neoclassical building?

A: Oh, I haven't said all that stuff, 'cause I didn't tell you the date, 1785. It's the same year as "The Oath of Horatii."

Q: Might the architect of the Barbican have simplified, borrowed their designs from David?

A: Yeah, I mean, I'm sure that they were aware of, they're more likely from Ledoux. I'm sure they're aware of, it is sort of chunky, isn't it? In an almost Neoclassical way. Yes, right. Going onwards.

Although her expression is sad, a little bitter, you can see why her erect, yes, absolutely. I mean, so, he certainly conveys that she kept her dignity of Marie Antoinette to the very end. I think the drawing of Marie Antoinette is unsympathetic to her.

Somebody that, Suzanne is saying, "She looks tough and totally unattractive." Yeah, as you say, not surprising, as she's on the way to the guillotine. Somebody says she has the arms of a male.

Q: If Marat is in the bath, why is there a sheet and a blanket draped over it?

A: It's probably to keep the water warm, maybe. I can't think of another reason. The Marat picture used the colours and sense of Chardin's stillness, removing, do you know, I think that's a very interesting contrast. It would be a nice, 'cause the subject matter is so different and the ethos is so different. But there are actually aesthetic qualities that Chardin and David have in common. Be nice to do a detailed compare and contrast between the two.

Q: Was Marat's skin condition the same of as Banard's wife?

A: That I don't know, but I think with her, in her case, there was also a psychological element, of her compulsive necessity to constantly wash herself.

Q: Do you see the death of Marat as a tribute to Caravaggio's Entombment?

A: Probably not. I'll tell you why. Because I don't think Caravaggio was, he was certainly not an artist who was very much in favour. Although of course that, Caravaggio's Entombment was in Rome, so I suppose David would've seen it. He would've known it. So it's possible.

Ron has said, "Have I seen the play 'Marat/Sade?'" Ages and ages ago, and I can't remember it very well. He says the final scene ends with the stage replication of David's painting.

Have I seen the film? Yes. Oh, no, no, I have, I saw a film. No, I'm sorry. I saw the film "Danton." I haven't seen the film "Robespierre." So I actually don't, can't comment on that.

Let me see, some nice comments. Thank you very much. Much appreciated.

Somebody says, "This is a weird observation. The last sketch reminds me a little bit of a precursor to Chagall." I think that must be a coincidental similarity, I would think.

Q: Why were the men in the sketch of the tennis court shown in the nude?

A: Good point, and I should have elaborated that. It's with Neoclassicism, really the artists wanted you to know that they know what the body is like underneath the material, unlike say Rococo, where the dress has a life of its own. You will have noticed, for instance, in "The Death of Socrates," how the iron-smooth material hugs the body, and it shows you what is going on with the body underneath the material. So it's quite common in the Neoclassical period and right through academic painting in the 19th century for artists to make nude sketches before they paint the clothes over them.

I thought he had to soak in the bath for most of the day, and that's why he fitted the bath out as a kind of writing desk, yes, I think that's correct.

Q: What happened to the lady who stabbed Marat?

A: I'm afraid she got her head cut off. Let me see.

Might talk about, so Tom Lawrence, yes. Let me see, but it won't be for a long, long time, because I'm going to take a break from the art history lectures to work as a team with Trudy and Dennis and David. We're going to do a Team Talk course on the period of the Second World War. So I won't get back to the art history probably for a couple of months.

I meant Danton. Yes. Yeah, that film, it was so marvellous, oh, maybe it's not the same film. The one I saw with Danton had, oh, very, very famous French actor. And the scene I loved in it, it just made me laugh, was when the revolutionaries broke into a palace and they're chopping up all

this exquisite furniture and using it as firewood..

Marie Antoinette's image. Is that the woman who would say, "Let them eat cake?" Apparently she never said that. But it's, I think it's one of those myths. So that seems to be it. Thank you all very, very much indeed. And next week I will finish off a little bit of what I was going to talk about tonight, and then talk about Shelly Poole.

- [Judi] Thank you so much Patrick, and thank you to everybody who've joined us this evening, and we'll see everybody next week.

- Good, thank you very much, Judi.

- [Judi] Pleasure. Bye-bye.

- [Patrick] Bye-bye.