

**Louisiana Purchases:
Consumption, Complexion, and Creolization in Colonial New Orleans**

My dissertation casts objects as vectors of cultural exchange and identity formation in the colonial Gulf South. In privileging verbal and non-verbal evidence related to bodily adornment, I consider how concern over physical appearance reflected competing bids for distinction and supremacy between indigenous peoples, Euro-Louisianans, and free and enslaved Africans. Françoise Gallard (1713-1738), a Louisiana creole of Canadian parentage married to the commandant of the Arkansas Post, provides a compelling example. Upon her death in New Orleans in 1738, Gallard left behind an assortment of personal effects that communicated claims to respectability, including a *toilette* of black “Chinese” lacquer recorded in her inventory (**fig. I**). Although it does not survive, this multi-component dressing set combined utilitarian function with exotic luxury and was inherited by Gallard’s Arkansas-born noble daughter, Françoise Petit de Coulange (1732-1812) (**fig. II**). Clearly, these women’s priorities included fashioning a suitable public image that might transcend lowly or colonial birth and refute impressions of frontier rusticity.

The *toilette* and its contents fueled more than vanity, however. Rather, this constellation of objects enabled Gallard and her daughter to arbitrate a specifically French standard of codified refinement in Louisiana’s third colonial capital. However, longstanding exposure and proximity to various indigenous peoples and Africans also required them to negotiate their own identities and sense of self in an unmistakably New World setting. Contemporary accounts frequently compared the French ritual of dressing, also known as the *toilette*, to indigenous practices; one French onlooker alluded to similarities between European dressing boxes and the double-woven, lidded river cane baskets made by local Native American women to store their finery, including vermillion that echoed the crimson rouge favored by white Louisiana creoles (**fig. III**). At the same time, elite women relied on the labor of enslaved Africans, some of whom were undoubtedly forced to witness and assist them in wielding an embodied, self-referential power through cosmetic means that reified physical whiteness. Gallard’s lacquerwork *toilette* thus offers a multifaceted opportunity to reflect on how creole culture was forged; the stratification of Louisiana’s social hierarchy and the consolidation of wealth in the Gulf South; and the formation of a complicated world of color in a nascent creole community and slave society.



Fig. I

Pair of black lacquerwork dressing boxes from a larger dressing set (*toilette*), comparable to that in Françoise Gallard's inventory, which itemized seven lacquerwork boxes, a brush, and a dressing mirror
France, circa 1720-1735
Sotheby's Paris



Fig. II

Françoise Petit de Coulange
France, circa 1761-1764
Pastel
The Historic New Orleans Collection



Fig. III

Double woven lidded baskets with
"alligator entrails" (*nish-tu wa-ki*) pattern
Clara Darden (Chitimacha, circa 1829-1910)
Saint Mary Parish, Louisiana, circa 1900
Split and dyed river cane
Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology
Harvard University

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EDUCATION

- Ph.D. (ABD, in progress): Yale University, History of Art (Dr. Edward S. Cooke, Jr., advisor)
 - Dissertation: “Letters of a Canadian Woman: Corporeal Concerns, Entangled Identities, and Self-Fashioning in the Atlantic World of Madame Bégon, 1696-1755” (working title)
 - Examination fields: Art and Architecture of Mesoamerica (Olmec to Aztec); Asian Export Art 1550-1800; Decorative Arts and Material Culture of the Colonial Americas and Early Modern Europe 1550-1800; French Art and Architecture 1660-1789
- M.Phil., 2019: Yale University, History of Art
- M.A., 2017: Yale University, History of Art
 - Qualifying paper: “Cloth of Gold: Ebenezer Storer’s Waistcoat and Courtly Fashion in Colonial Boston”
- M.A., 2014: Winterthur Program in American Material Culture, University of Delaware
 - Thesis: “Power Houses: Furnishing Authority in New France, 1660-1760,” awarded the 2014 E. McClung Fleming Prize for best thesis
 - Museum Studies Certificate, University of Delaware Museum Studies Program
- B.A., 2011: The College of William and Mary, French and Francophone Studies and History
 - Certificate in early American history and culture, National Institute of American History and Democracy

AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

- **Barra Foundation Dissertation Fellow**, McNeil Center for Early American Studies, University of Pennsylvania, 2021-2022
- **Doctoral Fellow**, Terra Foundation for American Art, Summer Residency, 2021
- **Graduate Fellow**, MacMillan Center European Studies Council, Yale University, 2020-2021
- **Dianne Woest Fellow in the Arts and Humanities**, The Historic New Orleans Collection, 2020-2021
- **Global South Research Fellow**, New Orleans Center for the Gulf South, Tulane University, 2019-2020
- **H. Allen Brooks Travelling Fellow**, Society of Architectural Historians, 2019
- **John Marshall Phillips Fellow in American Art**, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Yale University, 2016-2017
- **Digital Humanities Fellow**, Delaware Public Humanities Institute, Center for Material Culture Studies, University of Delaware, 2013-2014
- **Lois F. McNeil Fellow**, Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, 2012-2014
- **Summer Fellow**, Historic Deerfield, 2011

INTERNSHIPS

- **Albert Sack Graduate Curatorial Intern**, Department of American Decorative Arts, Yale University Art Gallery, fall 2016-spring 2017
- **Getty Foundation Graduate Curatorial Intern**, Department of Sculpture and Decorative Arts, J. Paul Getty Museum, summer 2014-summer 2015
- **Curatorial Intern**, Department of European Decorative Arts after 1700, Philadelphia Museum of Art, fall 2013-spring 2014
- **Curatorial Intern**, Stenton Historic House Museum, spring 2013
- **Curatorial Intern**, Département des Objets d’art, musée du Louvre, winter-spring 2010
- **Curatorial Intern**, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, fall 2008
- **Curatorial Intern**, Dumbarton House Museum, summer 2008

OTHER EMPLOYMENT AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- **Consultant and Translator**, Natchez National Historical Park (US National Park Service) and the Historic Natchez Foundation, 2018
- **Assistant Tutor**, Historic Deerfield Summer Fellowship, summer 2017
- **Research Associate**, Sumpter Priddy III, Inc., American Antiques and Fine Art, summer 2014

ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES AND OTHER SERVICE

- **Co-Founder** with Cynthia Chin, *Materializing Race: Objects and Identity in #VastEarlyAmerica*, a virtual community dedicated to exploring the intersections of identity and material culture in the Americas circa 1450-1830 through online symposia, roundtables, and other events, 2020-present
- **Contributing Editor**, *The Junto*, A Group Blog on Early American History, spring 2018-present
- **Graduate Coordinator and Co-Founder**, Yale French North American Studies Working Group, Yale Center for Race, Indigeneity, and Transnational Migration, fall 2016-present
- **Social Media Manager**, Yale Department of the History of Art, fall 2016-present

PUBLICATIONS

- Contributor, *A Voice on Its Own: Appropriation and Invention in the Arts of Spanish America*, Denver Art Museum (forthcoming)
- Contributor, *French Rococo Ebénisterie in the J. Paul Getty Museum*, J. Paul Getty Museum (2021)
- “A House on Royal Street,” in *64 Parishes* (winter 2019)
- Review of Jean-François Blanchette, *Du coq à l’âme : L’art populaire au Québec*, in *Material Culture Review/Revue de la culture matérielle* 49:98 (May 2016)
- “Chaises à l’anglaise et bureaux anglais, ou repenser la culture matérielle en Nouvelle-France”/“‘English’ Chairs and ‘English’ Desks: Rethinking Material Culture in New France,” *Borealia* (A Group Blog on Early Canadian History), December 2015

RECENT LECTURES, PAPERS, AND SYMPOSIA

- 2021
- “Creole Complexions and Racial Makeup: A Case Study from Colonial New Orleans,” Cleanth Brooks Forum, St. George Tucker Society Annual Meeting
 - “Objects, Identity, Entanglement: [De]Colonial Histories and [Un]Making Empires in the Colonial Americas,” Humanities and Sciences Department, ArtCenter College of Design
 - “*La Belle Créole*: Identity, Race, and the Dressing Table in the French Atlantic World,” Anne Schroder New Scholars Session, American Society for 18th-Century Studies Annual Meeting
 - “Visualizing the French Empire in the 18th Century,” Panel co-chair with Izabel Gass, American Society for 18th-Century Studies Annual Meeting
 - “‘A *Toilette* in their Fashion’: Indigenizing the Dressing Table in France and New France,” College Art Association Annual Meeting
- 2020
- “Body Politics: Keeping (and Making) Up Appearances in the French Atlantic World,” SECAC 2020 Annual Meeting, Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts
 - “‘Red with Vermilion like our *Sauvages* who go to war’: Rouge, Race, and the Rhetoric of Alterity in the Letters of Madame Bégon, 1748-1753,” Yale 18th- and 19th-Century Art and Visual Culture Graduate Symposium
 - “North of ‘America’: Style and Identity in French Canada,” Colonial Williamsburg Antiques Forum
 - “‘Verny de la Chine’ et ‘façon de pourcellenne’: l’exotisme en Nouvelle-France aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles,” Department of History, University of Ottawa
- 2019
- “Facing Early Louisiana: Colonial Portraiture, 1699-1803,” Department of Art and Art History, University of Alabama
 - “About Face: Exotic Luxury and Cosmetic Agency in French Colonial New Orleans,” CUNY Early American Republic Seminar