

CHARLES LE BRUN AND THE REPLICAS OF *THE TRIUMPHS OF ALEXANDER*:
EXTENDING A REPUTATION THROUGH WEAVING AND PRINT

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CP.

**Charles Le Brun and the replicas of *The Triumphs of Alexander*:
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Abstract

Between 1661 and 1679, Charles Le Brun painted a cycle of five monumental paintings referred to as *The Triumphs of Alexander* for Louis XIV. The paintings were universally acclaimed, and remain one of Le Brun's best-known projects. Weavers in France and Flanders reproduced the paintings as a suite of tapestries. The paintings were also reproduced as prints, with engravings produced in France and abroad. The printed and woven replicas of *The Triumphs of Alexander* reached a wide audience across geographical boundaries for nearly a century.

Le Brun's *Alexander* designs were the perfect subject matter for royal propaganda. This thesis, however, considers a different question: the extent to which the popularity of the designs can be attributed to the impressive reputation Le Brun achieved and, if the reputation of Le Brun was a factor in the popularity of his *Alexander* designs, whether that reputation was incidental to Le Brun's position within Louis XIV's court, or whether Le Brun actively participated in the expansion of his reputation through replicas (directly, or by creating the circumstances that allowed for the production and dissemination of replicas).

This thesis adopts a new approach by considering Le Brun's *Alexander* designs across media, across geographic boundaries, and within their socio-economic context. This multidimensional analysis reveals that combining his talent and ambition, Le Brun partly created and partly fed and encouraged the circumstances that facilitated the dissemination of his works through tapestries and prints in France, which prints in turn proved essential in expanding Le Brun's reputation abroad through additional, foreign-produced, prints and tapestries. Le Brun was at once the King's humble servant, and the master of his own destiny.

Introduction

In the summer of 1661, Louis XIV (reportedly finding himself in something of a social lull and in need of distraction) invited Charles Le Brun to come paint at Fontainebleau. It is there that Le Brun painted *The Family of Darius*, the first in what would become a cycle of five monumental paintings referred to as *The Triumphs of Alexander*. The cycle of *The Triumphs of Alexander* was universally acclaimed, and remains one of Le Brun's best-known projects.

The paintings were reproduced as a suite of tapestries known as *The Story of Alexander* in France at the Gobelins and at Aubusson and Felletin, and in Flanders by weavers in Brussels and Antwerp. They were also reproduced as prints referred to as *The Battles of Alexander*, with engravings produced at the Gobelins and abroad. The printed and woven replicas of *The Triumphs of Alexander* reached a wide audience across geographical boundaries for nearly a century, between approximately 1676 and 1765.

Le Brun's *Alexander* designs illustrated the life of a king who was courageous, possessed superior military skills and tactics, and knew to exercise self-restraint and show mercy. In short, they provided a pictorial reference manual for the kind of king Louis XIV wanted to be, or at least wanted others to believe him to be. From this perspective, it is not surprising that they would be so well received by the King and his entourage – they were the perfect subject matter for royal propaganda. This thesis, however, considers a different question: the extent (if any) to which the popularity of Le Brun's *Alexander* designs can be attributed to the impressive reputation the artist achieved and, if the reputation of Le Brun was a factor in the

popularity of his *Alexander* designs, whether that reputation was incidental to Le Brun's position within Louis XIV's court, or whether Le Brun actively participated in the expansion of his reputation through replicas (directly, or by creating the circumstances that allowed for the production and dissemination of replicas).

The Triumphs of Alexander was not the only painting cycle designed by Le Brun to be translated into tapestry, nor was it the only cycle to be reproduced through engravings. However, *The Triumphs of Alexander* is significant, and presents a good case study for this thesis, because it was the first project Le Brun executed further to a commission issued directly by the monarch. *The Story of Alexander* was the first tapestry series to be entirely woven at the Gobelins and one of its most popular, and *The Battles of Alexander* were the most popular prints ever produced by the Gobelins. In addition, we have the benefit of replicas woven at Aubusson (where they were one of the most popular tapestry series, being re-woven hundreds of times), as well as in Flanders, where weavers in Brussels and Oudenaarde and Antwerp copied the designs.

This body of art works permits a multi-dimensional examination of Le Brun's reputation in the context of his role as an artist in the service of the King and director of the Gobelins, which has not been the subject of focused analysis previously. Extensive scholarly work has been produced in recent years with respect to Charles Le Brun and the arts during the reign of Louis XIV. In writing this thesis, I have benefited from recent scholarly work with respect to Le Brun's biography and his ascension within the Court of Louis XIV; the chronology for the painting of *The Triumphs of Alexander* has been revised after several years of

archival research, as has the chronology for the weaving of *The Story of Alexander* at the Gobelins; the replicas of *The Story of Alexander* produced by Brussels weavers have been considered in one paper, although not analyzed in depth; the Flemish replicas originating from Oudenaarde and Antwerp have been considered, but similarly not analyzed in depth. During the past five years, different exhibitions at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles have considered the prints produced based on the designs of Charles Le Brun during the reign of Louis XIV, and the tapestries designed by Le Brun specifically for Louis XIV.

However, there is no research that has attempted to bring together the paintings, prints, and all of the tapestries based on Le Brun's *Alexander* designs, and asked the question posed at the outset, namely the extent (if any) to which the popularity of Le Brun's *Alexander* designs can be attributed to his reputation and, if so, whether Le Brun actively participated in the creation and expansion of that reputation. This thesis considers Le Brun's *Alexander* designs across artistic media, across geographic boundaries, and within their socio-economic context. As such, it provides a new approach to the consideration of Le Brun's reputation, and the extent to which that reputation was incidental to his service for Louis XIV, or intentionally crafted by him.

The following analytical framework has been adopted in order to facilitate the examination of the central question of this thesis: chapter 1 provides a summary biography to Charles Le Brun to highlight certain facts and milestones in his development as an artist which, in turn, provide insight into Le Brun's intentions and aspirations as he set out to design *The Triumphs of Alexander*. Chapter 2

introduces the project of *The Triumphs of Alexander* in detail, and considers the French tapestries produced based on Le Brun's *Alexander* designs, which include the replicas woven at the Gobelins between 1670 and 1689 and the replicas woven at Aubusson and Felletin between 1680 and 1765. Chapter 2 also considers the prints produced in France and abroad between 1670 and the first quarter of the eighteenth century.

Chapter 3 contains an examination of the Flemish replicas woven based on Le Brun's *Alexander* designs in Brussels, Oudenaarde, and Antwerp. In addition to documenting the Flemish replicas that are known to have been woven and comparing them to the original Le Brun designs, both in terms of composition and quality of weaving, the chapter includes a discussion of the important networks of weavers and dealers in place with respect to Flemish tapestry at the end of the seventeenth century and the early part of the eighteenth century.

Finally, chapter 4 integrates the information contained in the earlier portions of the thesis, and considers the factors that could explain the immense popularity of Le Brun's *Alexander* designs: the state of tapestry design in Flanders at the end of the seventeenth century and during the early part of the eighteenth century; popular taste and the Aubusson and Felletin replicas of *The Story of Alexander*; the rise in the popularity of prints during the reign of Louis XIV and the corresponding increase in the interest of collecting these prints; the association of the designs with Louis XIV; and, last but not least, Le Brun's reputation, as carefully crafted and controlled by the artist.

Chapter 1: Charles Le Brun's ascension into the Court of Louis XIV

As this thesis considers Charles Le Brun's reputation as seen through the particular example of the replicas of *The Triumphs of Alexander* in print and tapestry, it is appropriate to begin by providing a brief summary of Le Brun's background and entry into the Court of Louis XIV. This summary does not purport to provide a comprehensive biography of the artist;¹ rather, it is intended to highlight certain facts and milestones in his development as an artist which, in turn, provide insight into Le Brun's intentions and aspirations as he set out to design what turned out to be one of his most highly acclaimed projects for the King.

From protégé to *Premier Peintre du Roi*

Charles Le Brun was born in France in 1619. The son of a master sculptor, he originally worked with his father and likely learned the basics of drawing and modeling from him.² When Le Brun determined that he would rather become a painter than a sculptor a series of "apprenticeships" were arranged through his father's connections. Because of the senior Le Brun's status as a master, young Charles did not have to be formally apprenticed;³ this proved to be to his advantage, as he was free to move from one master to another, learning as much as he could from each, and taking advantage of new opportunities.

There is no contemporary record of the artistic beginnings of Le Brun; the accounts that have been produced on his life are posthumous, and therefore subject to inaccuracies. Accordingly, there is some uncertainty with respect to the Le Brun's early development as an artist, for example with respect to the exact timing of certain apprenticeships. For the purposes of this thesis, however, it is the general

arc of Le Brun's career that warrants consideration, such that this uncertainty is not material.⁴

Le Brun's first placement was with painter François Perrier in 1633-34, where he remained for a short period. He then moved on to the studio of renowned painter Simon Vouet around 1635-36.⁵ Vouet himself had acquired a certain celebrity and benefited from the patronage of the French nobility.⁶ Although this is not known with certainty, it is likely that as part of his instruction with Vouet, Le Brun would have been given the opportunity to participate in high-profile projects, including the commission for painting a chapel at the new château Saint-Germain in 1635 and, in 1636, painting the chapel of the Hôtel Bellegarde. The *hôtel particulier* had been acquired by Chancellor Pierre Séguier in 1634, who retained Vouet for the décor of the chapel.⁷ It is probably in this context that Le Brun would have first crossed paths with Séguier, who would have a profound influence on Le Brun's career. In addition to being exposed to high-profile commissions, Le Brun was also given the opportunity to visit Fontainebleau in 1638, while working for Vouet.⁸

Séguier encouraged Le Brun to continue to learn from Vouet, and he remained his pupil until at least 1640, at which time Le Brun began to work independently from Vouet, although remaining under the protection of Séguier. In 1641, with the support of Séguier, Le Brun obtained his *brevet* as "*peintre et valet de chambre du roi*" (painter and valet of the King's chamber) – which did not signify that Le Brun was engaged as a painter by the King, but rather that he was allowed to draw a modest wage as a painter.⁹ In 1642, with the encouragement and financial blessing of Séguier, Le Brun left France to join Nicolas Poussin in Rome, where he

remained until 1645.¹⁰ While in Rome, he was exposed not only to the works of Poussin, but also to the work of Raphael at the Vatican. Le Brun was particularly marked by his contact with the works of the two artists, and would declare later on that he regarded Raphael and Poussin as his two Masters.¹¹ This may well have been an attempt at self-promotion on the part of Le Brun, as he was certainly not a pupil of either Raphael or Poussin in the traditional sense.¹²

Returning to Paris in 1646 and still benefiting from the protection of Séguier, Le Brun worked independently on commissions for *hôtels particuliers* belonging to wealthy noblemen, as well as for churches,¹³ which enabled him to begin to build his reputation not only as a talented pupil, but as an accomplished artist in his own right. In 1656, he obtained his *brevet* as “*peintre ordinaire du roi*” (ordinary painter for the King).¹⁴ This particular *brevet* allowed him to participate in works undertaken by the Court, and receive a pension.¹⁵ In 1648, Le Brun supported the foundation of the *Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture*.¹⁶ It is not known whether Le Brun’s support of the Académie derived from his desire to be free to operate outside of the strict regulations of the *Maîtrise* (the guild), which would have been to his financial advantage, or whether his motivation stemmed from a desire to distance himself from the artisans governed by the guild, to whom he considered himself superior. Le Brun’s support of the Académie appears never to have waned, and he remained influential within it for the rest of his life, eventually becoming Chancellor and Director.

Although it has been posited that the invitation extended by Louis XIV to Charles Le Brun in the summer of 1661 represented the first opportunity for him to

work for the King and, therefore, that the commission doubled as an interview,¹⁷ the history of Le Brun's early development as an artist shows the reality to be otherwise. Between 1653-1655, Le Brun became involved in the redecoration of the apartments of the monarchy, likely partly owing to his connection with Séguier.¹⁸ It is almost unthinkable that his work there would have escaped the King's attention: amongst Le Brun's designs was a ceiling with decorated with a painting of "Louis XIV driving the chariot of the State" (*Louis XIV dirigeant le char de l'État*).¹⁹

Between 1658 and 1661, Le Brun shifted his attention away from the Louvre and devoted the majority of his time to the decoration of the new château of Nicolas Fouquet, Superintendent of finances under Louis XIV, at Vaux-le-Vicomte.²⁰ Although the departure from the Louvre to Vaux-le-Vicomte has sometimes been interpreted as evidence of the fleeting loyalty of Le Brun, abandoning the protection of Séguier for the substantial financial reward offered to him by Fouquet, this is unlikely to have been the case. Gady argues, compellingly, that notwithstanding Séguier's role in Fouquet's downfall in 1661, as of 1658, the Chancellor was on amicable terms with Fouquet, and Le Brun's departure would not likely have been an affront to Séguier.²¹

The designs created by Le Brun at Vaux-le-Vicomte surpassed in magnificence what that had been seen previously in France before: elaborately painted ceilings, gilding, and complex allegories, all reflecting unity of style. By all accounts, the décor designed by the young painter was grandiose: relying heavily on the iconography of ancient mythology, Le Brun had transformed Fouquet into Hercules,²² and Vaux-le-Vicomte into a total work of art. Shortly after the grand

unveiling of Vaux-le-Vicomte (complete with a ballet by Molière and fireworks), Fouquet was arrested and imprisoned, allegedly for misuse of the King's funds.²³

It was while Le Brun was occupied at Vaux-le-Vicomte that the King called upon him and asked him to mobilize at Fontainebleau, and it was after his latest patron had been jailed that Le Brun, together with André Le Nôtre and Louis Le Vau joined the service of the King full-time.²⁴ Le Brun seems to have shifted his devotion from Fouquet to Louis XIV and Colbert without apparent hesitation, notwithstanding the latter's involvement in Fouquet's downfall. Jean de Lafontaine, who had so eloquently praised Le Brun for his achievements at Vaux-le-Vicomte, was highly critical of him for this shift in loyalty.²⁵ If not a question of loyalty, at the very least, it can be said that Le Brun possessed an innate sense when it came to allying himself with the rich and powerful, as exemplified by his early career trajectory.

Between 1662 and 1664, Jean-Baptiste Colbert (a close advisor to the King, who had in part orchestrated the arrest and imprisonment of Fouquet), now *Superintendant des bâtiments* (a prestigious and influential post), assembled the production of luxury goods, including tapestries, rugs, metalwork, cabinet making, sculpture, and painting, under the umbrella of the Gobelins.²⁶ Although heavily involved with the Gobelins from the outset, Le Brun was officially named director in March 1663.²⁷ Amongst other things, the manufacture originally housed five looms, a sixth being added after a few years, which speaks to the primacy of tapestry as an art form during that period.²⁸ Contemporary accounts tell how Le Brun's preoccupations extended to the smallest details,²⁹ and Le Brun's micro-managing

tendencies are credited as having resulted in arguably the finest weavings ever achieved.³⁰

Le Brun's ambition

Although undeniably talented, Le Brun was clearly concerned with his position within society as an artist, and took steps to ensure his ascension from the outset of his career.

The patronage of Séguier proved critical in the earlier stages of Le Brun's career. Séguier was the most powerful of Louis XIV's court officers; he loved literature and the arts, was liberal, and generous.³¹ In addition to being responsible for controlling and sealing royal decrees, preside at the King's council when the latter was absent, and administering justice, Séguier also had the power to grant privileges and permissions for printing, which allowed him to have an enormous influence on taste and the careers of artists such as Le Brun.³² Moreover, Séguier's entourage was important – not only in status, but in composition, and varied. In his circle, Le Brun would have been exposed to discussions with the leading intellectuals of the time about literature, philosophy, and mythology, for example. In the midst of this entourage, Le Brun would have acquired an understanding and taste for the importance of erudition.³³ These meetings and discussions would prove to be a lasting influence on and a source of inspiration for Le Brun. For example, Séguier had Marin Cureau de la Chambre as an acquaintance (he was also personal physician to the King). At the time Le Brun participated in the circle of Séguier, Cureau de la Chambre was writing about physiognomy,³⁴ which would later become an important subject for Le Brun at the Académie and a significant part of his legacy

to future generations of draughtsmen, through the publication of his own treatise on the expression of the passions. The expression of emotions would also be a salient feature of Le Brun's design for *The Family of Darius*, described by André Félibien as "an infinity of beautiful expressions that render [the painting] incomparable".³⁵

In 1908, Pierre Marcel wrote that Le Brun left Rome because, believing himself superior to Poussin, he had nothing left to learn from him. Le Brun allegedly also thought that Poussin feared his talent, which prompted Marcel (from his twentieth-century perspective), to remark caustically that "Poussin did not in fact fear Le Brun's talent, nor did he have reason to – although Le Brun never quite understood that."³⁶ Apocryphal as this story may well be, it does provide a window into the ambitious character of Le Brun, who was intent on ascending into the realm of the most celebrated painters of his time. It could even be argued that Le Brun, through his references to Raphael and Poussin as having been his masters, wanted to be considered as being as talented and important they were: the student surpassing the master.

Le Brun was exceptionally skilled at publically praising his patrons and protectors, while ensuring he basked in the light he projected onto them.³⁷ He knew to use what few social and professional connections he had to secure his ascension to the court of Louis XIV, intuiting how to ingratiate himself with his patrons by using his art to aggrandize them.³⁸

Although he amassed considerable wealth and real estate during his career, Le Brun appeared to have been most proud of the prestige and recognition he had gained as an artist. When dictating his Last Will and Testament in 1690, a mere

three days before his passing, Le Brun (having made provisions for his wife, nephew, and several religious organizations), stipulated that a small box decorated with a medal portrait of the King, ornamented of diamonds, was to be retained by his nephew's family in perpetuity:³⁹

Le portrait du Roy en forme de médaille enrichi de diamans, dont sa Majesté a eu la bonté d'honorer ledit testateur seroit bien aise de perpetuer dans la famille dudit S. Le Brun auditeur ce gage precieux de la faveur du Roy, il veut et entend que ledit S. Charles Le Brun ny ses enfans nés et a naitre n'en puissant disposer en quelque facon que ce soit...⁴⁰

This medal portrait of the King was his most prized possession, the symbol of the culmination of his ambition.

NOTES

¹ For a comprehensive, recent biography of Charles Le Brun and a discussion of his ascension within the Court of Louis XIV, as well as his relationships with apprentices and others within the King's circle, see Bénédicte Gady, *L'ascension de Charles Le Brun: Liens sociaux et production artistique* (Paris: Editions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, 2010).

² Michel Gareau, *Charles Le Brun: First Painter to King Louis XIV* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1992), 7.

³ Gady, *L'Ascension de Charles Le Brun*, 84.

⁴ When faced with discrepancies in biographical sources, I have opted to follow the work of Gady, who is responsible for the most recent scholarship on Le Brun's life and career. See Bénédicte Gady, *L'ascension de Charles Le Brun*, *supra*, note 1.

⁵ Gady, *L'ascension de Charles Le Brun*, 83–86.

⁶ Michel Gareau, *Charles Le Brun: First Painter to King Louis XIV* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1992), 8-9.

⁷ Gady, *L'ascension de Charles Le Brun*, 85-86.

⁸ Gady, *L'ascension de Charles Le Brun*, 86. Although there is no evidence to support or discount this hypothesis, it is possible that during his visit, Le Brun saw the cycle of Alexander the Great that had been frescoed at Fontainebleau.

⁹ Gady, *L'ascension de Charles Le Brun*, 195.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* It is important to note that at the time, the French academy in Rome was not yet in place, and students wishing to learn from the Italian masters had to do so on their own, unless they could secure financial support from a protector, as Le Brun did.

¹¹ A. Félibien, *Conférences de l'Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture, pendant l'année 1667* (Paris: Frederic Leonard, Imprimeur ordinaire du Roy, 1755), 77-78.

¹² *Ibid.* In 1667, Le Brun, in a speech before the Académie, Le Brun said that his masters were Poussin and Raphael. However, the chronology reveals that he spent his formative years with Perrier and Vouet, as opposed to Poussin. Furthermore, Poussin engaged in painting only, and was not involved in the design of tapestry or in art of any other media. Poussin was not a particularly skilled draughtsman, and disliked working on very large canvasses, which stands in contrast to the work done by Le Brun, and undermines the claim that Poussin was in fact Le Brun's master. Similarly, Raphael being dead at the time of Le Brun's visit to Rome, the most Le Brun could do was spend a vast amount of time copying his designs. While he might have felt a certain artistic kinship with Poussin and Raphael, to credit them as masters seems at least unsupported if not opportunistic.

¹³ Gareau, *Charles Le Brun*, 23-26.

¹⁴ Gady, *L'ascension de Charles Le Brun*, 202.

¹⁵ Gady, *L'ascension de Charles Le Brun*, 300–310.

¹⁶ Michel Gareau, *Charles Le Brun*, 20. See also Louis-Antoine Prat, *Le Dessin Français au XVIIe Siècle* (Paris: Musée du Louvre; Somogy éditions d'art, 2013), 468.

¹⁷ Donald Posner, "Charles Le Brun's Triumphs of Alexander", *The Art Bulletin* 41, No. 3 (Sept. 1959): 239.

¹⁸ Gady, *L'ascension de Charles Le Brun*, 195.

¹⁹ Gady, *L'ascension de Charles Le Brun*, 199–200.

²⁰ Gareau, *Charles Le Brun*, 27.

²¹ Gady, *L'ascension de Charles Le Brun*, 214–217.

²² For one of the ceilings at Vaux-le-Vicomte, Le Brun painted the *Apotheosis of Hercules*, which depicted Hercules being drawn by four horses. This design is strikingly similar to the design of the fountain of Hercules, designed several years later by Le Brun at Versailles, which shows that Le Brun was certainly not above re-using some designs, a phenomenon seen in several instances.

²³ Unfortunately, Fouquet appeared to have made a number of miscalculations, one of which was to mingle the Crown's funds with his own, and the other, far graver, to outshine Louis XIV. In 1661, at Jean-Baptiste Colbert's instigation (with the support of Louis XIV), Fouquet was arrested and jailed shortly after the spectacular unveiling of Vaux-le-Vicomte.

²⁴ Louis Marchesano, and Christian Michel, *Printing the Grand Manner: Charles Le Brun and Monumental Prints in the Age of Louis XIV* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2010), 11.

²⁵ Gady, *L'ascension de Charles Le Brun*, 214. See also Gareau, *Charles Le Brun*, 30.

²⁶ The manufactory opened its doors as the *Manufacture Royale de tapisseries* in 1662. A royal edict of 1667 specified that the manufactory would thereafter be referred to as the *Manufacture Royale des meubles de la Couronne*. For convenience, the manufactory is referred to as the Gobelins throughout. (See Charissa Bremer-David, *Woven Gold: Tapestries of Louis XIV* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2015), 16–17). The decision to organize the production of luxury goods in France in that manner, in addition to representing sound economic policy at the time, also turned out to have been a decision that would most influence the nature and reputation of French culture for centuries to come.

²⁷ Gareau, *Charles Le Brun*, 35.

²⁸ Pascal-François Bertrand, "Tapestry Production at the Gobelins During the Reign of Louis XIV, 1661-1715", in Thomas P. Campbell, Editor, *Tapestry in the Baroque: Threads of Splendor*, (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art; New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2007), 345. Colbert also collected tapestries personally and championed the medium, which may have affected the decision as to how many looms to install at the Gobelins initially.

²⁹ E. Gerspach, *La Manufacture Nationale Des Gobelins* (Paris: Librairie Ch. Delagrave, 1872), 10.

³⁰ Pascal-François Bertrand, "Tapestry Production at the Gobelins During the Reign of Louis XIV, 1661-1715", in *Tapestry in the Baroque: Threads of Splendor*, ed. Thomas P. Campbell, (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art; New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2007), 350-51.

³¹ Gady, *L'ascension de Charles Le Brun*, 80.

³² Ibid.

³³ Gady, *L'ascension de Charles Le Brun*, 80–88.

³⁴ Gady, *L'ascension de Charles Le Brun*, 89.

³⁵ Félibien, *Les Reines de Perse*, 7.

³⁶ Pierre Marcel, *Charles Le Brun*, (Paris: Librairie Plon. 1908), 100. See also Louis-Antoine Prat, *Le Dessin Français au XVIIe Siècle* (Paris: Musée du Louvre; Somogy éditions d'art, 2013), 446. Prat writes that Le Brun was not particularly successful in Rome, and left without Poussin's approval.

³⁷ Gady, *L'ascension de Charles Le Brun*, 115.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ The inventory taken after the death of Charles Le Brun describes "...une boîte a portrait du Roy, compose de cinq gros diamans brillans ovalle (sic), cinq autres de forme carree, aussy brillans, trente autres petits a facettes faisant le tour et une couronne compose de trente juit diamans aussy a facettes, de diverses grosseurs..." (Archives Nationales (France), Minutier Central, Edme Torinon (notaire), Étude LXV/126. 7 février 1690, 177).

⁴⁰ Archives nationales, minutier central, fonds LXV, liasse 126, 7 février 1690 – Testament de Charles Le Brun. See also Roger Armand Weigert, *Le Testament de Charles Le Brun. Inventaire des tapisseries de Charles Maurice Le Tellier, (Extrait des Archives de l'Art Français, Nouvelle Période, T. XXI, 1946-1949)*, (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1949).

Chapter 2 – Fashioning an identity for a King, and securing a reputation for Le Brun: Alexander and Apelles

Charles Le Brun had been to Fontainebleau several years previously; he was at ease working in palatial surroundings, and he was well aware of the need to portray the King in the most flattering light possible; he had also already conceived of combining contemporary history with ancient history to celebrate the King through allegory, as his work in the galleries of the Louvre attested.¹ Nevertheless, when he set out to paint at Fontainebleau in the summer of 1661, Charles Le Brun was almost certainly aware of the consequences this particular commission could have for his career. The Louvre has catalogued in excess of two hundred preliminary drawings, sketches, and studies related to the paintings executed by Le Brun for the life of Alexander the Great,² which attest to the level of preparation and dedication the artist brought to bear on this project.

Le Brun spent just over a decade working on the paintings and supervising the assistants who contributed to the five monumental canvases. This proved to be time well-spent: the cycle of *The Triumphs of Alexander* was received to universal acclaim, and remains one of the projects for which Le Brun is best known, in no small part thanks to the many reproductions of the works that were produced in France and abroad, with and without his supervision. What follows is a discussion of the five monumental paintings celebrating the life of Alexander the Great (commonly referred to as the cycle of *The Triumphs of Alexander*) executed by Le Brun, which will be followed by a consideration of the two principal ways in which these paintings were replicated, namely through prints and tapestries first woven at the Gobelins and then at Aubusson and Felletin, and in Flanders.

Monumental paintings fit for a King: *The Triumphs of Alexander*

According to Claude Nivelon,³ Le Brun was left to choose which episode from the life of Alexander the Great he would paint.⁴ Working in the vicinity of the King—(and regularly in the actual presence of the King who reportedly liked to discuss painting with Le Brun),⁵ Le Brun must have felt considerable pressure to make the correct choice. He chose to represent the magnanimity and mercy shown by Alexander the Great to the family of King Darius after his defeat at the battle of Issus, in a painting alternatively known as *The Family of Darius*, *The Queens of Persia*, or *The Tent of Darius* (Fig. 1). The choice of this subject matter as a first painting was judicious. Le Brun used the opportunity to represent Alexander as a generous, gallant, magnanimous king, without drawing attention to the fact that Louis XIV had not yet proven himself in battle.⁶ (Incidentally, this episode from the life of Alexander the Great was the most popular scene reproduced between 1500 and 1750,⁷ and Le Brun would have likely seen several model compositions for this scene, such as Poussin's *Coriolanus* (1645-1650)).⁸

According to Quintus Curtius Rufus (on whose account Le Brun is believed to have relied),⁹ after the Battle of Issus the Macedonians, led by Alexander, captured Darius' family. When Alexander, accompanied by Hephaestion, arrived at the tent of Darius, the Queen and the princesses mistook the taller Hephaestion for Alexander and bowed before him. One of the eunuchs in the tent pointed out the error and Queen Sysigambis (Darius' mother) fell at the feet of Alexander, begging for his pardon. Alexander helped her up, and said: "My lady, you made no mistake. This

man is Alexander too.”¹⁰ Thereafter, he comforted the women and treated them with clemency.

The painting, which has been housed at Versailles since 1682, is oil on canvas, and measures 2.98 x 4.53 m.¹¹ Le Brun’s composition shows Queen Sysigambis at the center of the scene in the foreground, kneeling before Alexander. Alexander stands slightly to the left of the center of the composition, with Hephaestion standing to his right. The right half of the composition is dominated by Darius’ tent, under which are eighteen figures in various postures and dress.¹² In the background, one can see three soldiers in front of a tent, as well as other smaller, less well-defined, tents. A tree trunk, against which a woman is seated, is visible in the lower left corner, in the foreground. A tall leafy tree borders the composition to the right.

The painting of *The Family of Darius* was received to great acclaim.¹³ Its unambiguous iconography elevated the King, and its monumental size conveyed its significance. The painting also marked a turning point for French art. Until then, Italian painters had been perceived as the true masters.¹⁴ The “translation” of a historical narrative from text to image in a painting had been uncommon in France until Le Brun’s *The Family of Darius*, which undoubtedly contributed to the positive reception of the painting.¹⁵

By 1662, Le Brun was working exclusively for the King as *Premier Peintre*, a title made official in 1664.¹⁶ He began working with Colbert in setting up the Gobelins. Following the popularity of *The Family of Darius*, in 1663, a booklet entitled “*Les Reines de Perse aux pieds d’Alexandre, Peinture du Cabinet Du Roy*”, was

written by André Félibien (with Le Brun likely approving the text) and published.¹⁷ In addition to unabashed praise and admiration for the talents of Le Brun and the painting, Félibien's publication contained a very detailed description of the painting, from the colors used to the expressions on the faces of the figures.¹⁸ Interestingly, Félibien concluded his laudatory pamphlet by stating that it was now time to abandon allegorical representations of the King steeped in ancient history, but that the actions of Louis XIV should now be represented.¹⁹ Nevertheless, owing to the success of *The Family of Darius* and because it would have been inappropriate to simply abandon the allegorical relationship between Alexander and Louis XIV, the decision was made by Colbert and the Petite Académie to complete a monumental cycle of paintings, hereafter referred to as *The Triumphs of Alexander*.²⁰

It is unknown whether the paintings were intended as a suite to decorate particular apartments at the Louvre although this could be the case, given their monumental proportions. For the other paintings in the cycle, Le Brun turned to Alexander's military conquests and triumphs. Uncertainty remains with respect to the dating of these subsequent paintings, but they would appear to have come in the following order:²¹ *The Crossing of the River Granicus*, completed between 1662 and 1665; *The Entry of Alexander into Babylon*, also completed between 1662 and 1665; *The Battle of Arbela* is believed to have been the fourth and penultimate painting undertaken by Le Brun in the cycle, completed between 1665 and 1669;²² and *The Defeat of Porus* (or *Porus Wounded before Alexander*), likely completed between 1665 and 1672.²³ Like *The Family of Darius* before them, all of the paintings are of monumental scale, and rely on Le Brun's skills in representing human expressions

to convey the range of emotions - courage, terror, surprise, pain, anger – and the sheer physicality of war, loss, and victory.²⁴

The Crossing of the River Granicus (Fig. 2) illustrates Alexander the Great's first victory in Persia over the army of Darius. The battle took place in 334 BC. By crossing the River Granicus (today referred to as the Biga River), located near the site of Troy, Alexander's army could have access to the Orient, such that the battle was highly strategic. In the time of Alexander, the river was particularly turbulent and dangerous; the battle was fierce, and Alexander nearly died.

Le Brun made at least eight drawings to establish the composition and placing of the figures in the painting, in addition to his numerous studies of individual figures, horses, and draperies.²⁵ The painting, which is in the collection of the Louvre, measures 4.70 m x 12.09 m, and is oil on canvas.²⁶ One of the most striking features of the painting is the light that seems to emanate from it. True to the historical accounts, which state that the battle took place at dawn, the light chosen by Le Brun for the painting indicates that the sun is beginning to rise on the horizon, behind the hills that embank the river.²⁷ The general arrangement of the figures and hills in the background is triangular; Alexander, on horseback and identifiable by his white-plumed helmet, is located along the central axis of the composition. He has already succeeded in crossing the river, which is behind him at the extreme left and the lower bottom edge of the composition, and he looks ahead to the right. A horse in front of Alexander falls; a soldier is trampled, as another falls off a horse; immediately behind Alexander, two Persian soldiers hold weapons high above their heads, ready to strike Alexander. Amidst the entanglement of horses

and soldiers, there is no mistaking that the forces led by Alexander the Great, weapons drawn, are ready to conquer Persia.

It is possible to infer that Le Brun was especially proud of this painting, as it was depicted in his design for the tapestry *Le Roy Étant Représenté dans les Gobelins*, which is part of the tapestry series *L'Histoire du Roi*, designed by Le Brun between 1665 and 1679.²⁸ Although one can only speculate, Le Brun's pride might be related in part to the fact that Bernini saw the painting in the courtyard of the Gobelins in 1665, and admired it.²⁹

Le Brun did not follow the historical chronology when painting the cycle of *The Triumphs of Alexander* and his next work was *The Entry of Alexander into Babylon* (Fig. 3). Alexander's triumphal entry in fact takes place after his victory at Arbela, which Le Brun would paint subsequently. Quintus Curtius Rufus recounts how, having defeated Darius at Arbela, Alexander advanced on Babylon. One of the Persian commanders gave Alexander the keys to the city, and the latter made a triumphant entry, carried on a luxurious chariot.³⁰

The painting is oil on canvas and is in the collection of the Louvre.³¹ Measuring 4.50 m x 7.07 m,³² it is smaller than the earlier two canvasses, although still monumental in scale. Most of the action for this victory scene takes place in the foreground, as though the viewer were standing near, watching Alexander's victory parade pass by. Alexander immediately draws attention, standing in a white chariot pulled by an elephant; in his right hand, he holds a gold scepter, which matches his gold cape and gold helmet, on top of which the laurel wreath of the victor has been placed. Men carrying gifts follow Alexander, and a silver brazier smokes in the

bottom right corner. In the bottom left corner, a mother, draped in a pale blue dress, has her back to Alexander; she holds a child who bears an expression of wonderment.

The penultimate painting by Le Brun depicted *The Battle of Arbela* (Fig. 4). Arbela (close to modern day Mosul, Iraq) was the site of the decisive battle of the Macedonian army's invasion of the Persian Achaeminid Empire ruled by Darius III. Notwithstanding the superiority in number of the Persian army, Alexander the Great emerged victorious owing to the superiority of his military tactics and army. This battle was a decisive victory for Alexander, and eventually led to the fall of Darius' rule over Persia.³³

The painting, which is in the collection of the Louvre, is oil on canvas, and measures 4.70 x 12.65 m.³⁴ The battle is depicted as taking place at high noon; this can be seen in the luminous blue and white sky far on the horizon, although the scene unfolding in the middle ground is darkened by the grey smoke of conflict. Alexander and Hephaestion are painted on either side of a central axis, in the second spatial plane of the composition. An ominous-looking eagle flies directly above Alexander, making him readily identifiable. The foreground of the painting is occupied by battling soldiers, some fleeing, and others triumphantly dominating over the fallen ones. Le Brun's composition succeeds in conveying the tumult and fog of war with the heap of fallen bodies and the smoldering architectural structures in the background to the right.

For his last painting in the cycle of *The Triumphs of Alexander*, *The Defeat of Porus*, Le Brun turned to the Macedonian warrior's military campaigns in India. It is

unknown why that is the case, although it has been suggested that the play written by Jean Racine, playwright and historiographer to the King from 1677, entitled *Alexandre le Grand*, may have influenced Le Brun.³⁵ The play, which debuted in December 1665 (before Le Brun painted *The Defeat of Porus*), emphasized the gracious treatment of the defeated King Porus by Alexander.³⁶

The Defeat of Porus (Fig. 5) represents a scene after the Battle of the Hydaspes, a river located in today's Punjab. This battle resulted in complete victory for the Macedonian army, despite severe losses. During battle, Porus was seriously wounded. Alexander, impressed by the Indian King's military skills and bravery, showed mercy and invited the fallen king to determine his own faith.³⁷

The painting is in the collection of the Louvre, is oil on canvas, and measures 4.70 m x 12.64 m.³⁸ The scene, which is illuminated as though it were taking place at sundown, shows King Porus, fallen, lying in the arms of a soldier and looking up to Alexander; the latter, on horseback, extends an open hand to him. Porus marks the center of the composition, while Alexander is to the right of the central axis. Alexander is easily identifiable, as he stands taller than the majority of the other figures in the painting; he also seems to be illuminated, his light blue tunic, embroidered with gold, catching the eye. While the immediate surroundings of Alexander appear almost still, the battle continues to rage in the left portion of the narrative; slain elephants can be seen in the background.

The cycle of *The Triumphs of Alexander* occupied Le Brun on and off for slightly over a decade, between 1661 and 1672.³⁹ Not surprisingly, Le Brun worked with assistants for these monumental scale paintings. Lydia Beauvais, for example,

has identified twenty-six sheets of studies drawn by Le Brun that would have been given to Claude Nivelon with respect to the painting of *The Defeat of Porus*, which is only one example of the type of collaboration that would have taken place between Le Brun and his many assistants.⁴⁰ The studies mostly relate to the figures in the left of the composition, which would seem to indicate that Le Brun was relying on Nivelon to paint the early sketches of the figures on the canvas.⁴¹

Although the artistic quality of Le Brun's cycle would come to be regarded in the nineteenth century and for much of the twentieth century as outsized, confused, and boring, it was received with universal admiration and great success by the King and his entourage in Baroque France.⁴² *The Family of Darius* was the most successful of the paintings; it remained on view at Fontainebleau and later at Versailles, where it hung opposite Veronese's *Supper at Emmaus* (ca. 1559, Paris, Musée du Louvre) in the Mars room.⁴³ The other four paintings were displayed at a salon organized by the Court in 1673.⁴⁴ However, by that time, the King had been engaged in military campaigns of his own, and the prevailing wisdom (foretold by Félibien in *Les Reines de Perse* in 1663) was that it was no longer appropriate to rely on historical allegories in the representations of the King.⁴⁵ After their display at the salon, the paintings hung in the Académie for several years, before finally resting at the Louvre starting in 1686.⁴⁶

The cycle of *The Triumphs of Alexander* illustrates the life of a king who was courageous, possessed superior military skills and tactics, and knew to exercise self-restraint and show mercy. In short, the paintings provided a pictorial reference manual for the kind of king Louis XIV wanted to be, or at least wanted others to

believe him to be. The paintings served as propaganda for the still-young King and, through laudatory publications such as Félibien's *Les Reines de Perse*, prints, and tapestries, they also became a promotional tool for Le Brun who, given his ambition and approximately thirty years of experience by that time, was probably well aware of the benefits accruing to him by playing Apelles to Louis XIV's Alexander.

Preserving *The Triumphs of Alexander* through Tapestry: *The Story of Alexander at the Gobelins*

The painting of *The Family of Darius* was not intended as a model for a tapestry, notwithstanding its monumental scale. Pascal-François Bertrand, relying in part upon the high value placed on tapestries over painting during the seventeenth century, argues that the remaining paintings, however, were in fact models for the tapestry series.⁴⁷ Bertrand's argument is supported by the fact that the timeline for the weaving of the tapestries of *The Story of Alexander* overlapped with the timing of the paintings.⁴⁸ The five monumental paintings were adapted as tapestry cartoons by a team of painters, closely supervised by Le Brun. The paintings of the battles were redesigned for weaving as three separate tapestries each, with a larger center panel and two wings in each case. One complete series was therefore composed of eleven separate tapestries.⁴⁹

The Story of Alexander was woven eight times at the Gobelins: four times on high-warp looms, and four times on low-warp looms. It is unknown why this may have been the case, other than to note that this would have enabled production to proceed faster, by making use of all of the looms in the Gobelins. The tapestries produced on low-warp looms were also less expensive, which was not likely a factor for the King, but may have been a consideration in determining which of the

tapestries to give away as diplomatic gifts (see page 30). Images of the tapestries can be found as (Fig. 6 to 10). According to a recently revised chronology created by Jean Vittet, the first weavings began on high-warp looms likely began before 1664. The first tapestry suite was delivered to the Garde-meuble between 1670 and 1683, while the last tapestry suite woven on a high-warp loom was delivered to the Garde-meuble in June 1689.⁵⁰

The tapestries produced in the ateliers of the Gobelins were woven with wool, silk, and precious metal-wrapped thread.⁵¹ The exceptional quality of their weaving is a testament to the high level of skill of the weavers employed in the various ateliers of the Gobelins, as well as to the involvement and close supervision effected by Le Brun. Indeed, from producing multiples preliminary sketches for the paintings, to executing the paintings, and supervising the creation of the cartoons, Le Brun was likely more involved with the production of *The Story of Alexander* than with most other projects. This would come as little surprise, since *The Family of Darius* was the first work Le Brun made for the King, and *The Story of Alexander* was the first original tapestry series to be woven entirely at the Gobelins.⁵²

Some of the cartoons designed for *The Story of Alexander* survive, although they are incomplete and have not been thoroughly studied. These cartoons were inventoried for the first time in 2008 by Arnauld Brejon de Lavergnée, based on a cross-reference of inventories taken in 1690, 1894, an inventory taken at the Louvre, and the inventory of the Mobilier National.⁵³ There would have existed at least twenty-two cartoons at the time the tapestries were woven, as each of the eleven tapestries were woven on the high-warp and on the low-warp looms, which

required different cartoons. The completed cartoons would have been divided into strips during weaving. Unfortunately, very few of these strips have been recovered or are in sufficiently good condition to permit observation.⁵⁴

Based on the inventory compiled by Brejon de Lavergnée and a close inspection of the photographs available, it appears that the cartoons closely followed the paintings, although certain modifications were introduced with respect to color, for example. Furthermore, because the tapestries of the battles were woven in three parts each, the cartoons necessarily had to break up the composition of the paintings.

Six bands from a cartoon design for the low-warp loom have been recovered for *The Passage of the River Granicus*, as illustrated by Brejon-Lavergnée.⁵⁵ Although the cartoon shows the reverse image from the painting (hence the conclusion that it was intended for the low-warp loom), the level of detail provided in the cartoon is remarkable in comparison to the landscape and background elements, and clearly intended to be followed by the weavers: from the facial expression of Alexander, to the details and shading of his armor, and the definition of each figure involved in the battle. The portion of the cartoon that survives does not include the extreme left and right portions of the painting; these would have been created as separate cartoons, as these portions of the battle were woven separately as wings to the central tapestry. Based on a review of photographs, little, other than the colors of certain elements, has been changed when compared to the painting. Even the protective cover on the back of the white horse situated to the left of the painting (the right of the cartoon) is of the same leopard-print material.

Unfortunately, the cartoons related to *The Battle of Arbela* that have been recovered are in very bad state of conservation, and cannot be compared to the painting.⁵⁶ Similarly, only a small portion of the cartoons that survive with respect to *The Defeat of Porus* is legible.⁵⁷ It clearly shows Alexander, on his horse, extending a hand, with a compassionate expression on his face – exactly as he is found on the painting.

Four bands of a cartoon related to *The Entry of Alexander into Babylon*, painted for the high-warp loom, appear to have survived in surprisingly good condition. Based on a comparison of photographs of the cartoons and of the painting, very little has been changed in preparation for the weaving of this episode from *The Triumphs of Alexander*, beyond the colors of some of the clothing. Every detail, including the flowers strewn in the foreground, has been captured.

The most noteworthy departure between the tapestries and the paintings is with respect to *The Family of Darius*, for which no cartoon is available for study, as it has been mounted on the ceiling of the antechamber of the great dining hall at Versailles.⁵⁸ It is therefore not possible to state with certainty whether the change was made by the painter(s) of the cartoon, or by the weavers, although given Le Brun's reputation for control, the variation is unlikely to have occurred during weaving, and was most likely made on the cartoons. The change involves the removal of a young woman leaning against a tree in the foreground in the lower left corner in the painting. This young woman does not appear in the tapestries woven at the Gobelins, although the reason for her deletion is unclear. As pointed out by Thomas Kirchner, the figure of the young woman plays a role in the painting;

although not a participant in the action, she is a witness to it, and guides the viewer of the painting through the narrative.⁵⁹ From her body language in response to the mistake that has clearly been made by the Queen, the viewer can deduce that the story ends well. The inclusion of such a figure, particularly in the case of complex narratives, was recommended by theorists such as Leon Batista Alberti, with whose work Le Brun may have been familiar.⁶⁰ If artistically relevant and appropriate, it is puzzling why this figure would have been excluded from the composition of the tapestry of *The Family of Darius* woven at the Gobelins. While Kirchner posits that this may have been as a result of input by a weaver,⁶¹ this is unlikely. Indeed, most of the Flemish replicas of *The Family of Darius* include this witness figure, as do at least some of the replicas woven at Aubusson (see page 37). Le Brun may have simply decided that the figure was not necessary to convey the narrative.

Like the paintings, the tapestries also proved to be tools of propaganda for the reign of Louis XIV. However, in addition to being displayed locally, they served to disseminate the key messages embedded in the narratives further afield. Three of the four low-warp tapestry sets woven at the Gobelins were given as gifts, with one remaining in the royal collections. The gifts were made to the King's brother, Philippe I, duc D'Orléans in 1681; to the King of Denmark, in 1682; and to the King's cousin, Anne-Marie-Louis d'Orléans, duchesse de Montpensier, before her death in 1693. Of the four sets woven on high-warp looms, only one left the royal collection: it was given to Duke Leopold Joseph of Lorraine in 1699.

The tapestries also played an important role at home in France. Florian Knothe writes that, under Louis XIV's rule, "public and ecclesiastical spaces were

adapted as venues for his entrées, military processions, and diplomatic visits, as well as regularly for religious festivals” – and each event represented an opportunity for Louis XIV to display his tapestries.⁶² Tapestries were displayed for important royal ceremonies: *The Family of Darius* was displayed in the Cathedral in Reims on the occasion of the coronation of Louis XV;⁶³ without irony, tapestries were often depicted in tapestries representing important events, such as the tapestry of the Coronation of Louis XIV included in Le Brun’s design for *L’Histoire du Roi*;⁶⁴ as well as for religious occasions. The *Mercure Gallant* reported that *The Story of Alexander* tapestries had hung on the street in their splendor for all to admire on the occasion of the Fête-Dieu (*Corpus Christi*), 1673.⁶⁵

Thus, royalty, nobility, foreign diplomats, and commoners alike would have been reminded, by the display of the tapestries, of Louis XIV’s (alleged) military genius, impeccable character, virtue, and – not subtly – of his incomparable wealth. They would have also been reminded of Charles Le Brun’s genius in tapestry design.

Reproducing and disseminating *The Triumphs of Alexander* through prints: *The Battles of Alexander*

In response to the success of the paintings and to ensure the continued popularity of the association between Louis XIV and Alexander the Great, the paintings were reproduced as engravings by artisans at the Gobelins. Engravings could be used to make as many copies as one required and, therefore, were the perfect medium to ensure the dissemination of the narratives created by Le Brun in his cycle of *The Triumphs of Alexander* as widely as possible. The consequences of such reproduction and dissemination benefited the King, who saw the message

contained in the iconography of the paintings reiterated and reinforced at home and abroad, the engravings effectively becoming tools for political propaganda.

Of course, such dissemination was also to the benefit of Le Brun, who could count on an increase of reputation in relation to the promotion of his relationship with the King and talent. Le Brun would not have been immune to the possibilities offered by the reproduction of his works through engravings and prints. Indeed, in May 1656, long before the cycle of *The Triumphs of Alexander* was contemplated, Le Brun obtained a special Privilege from the King, which protected Le Brun's works against unauthorized copying.⁶⁶ It is especially informative to note that the Privilege granted to Le Brun does not have a fixed term, and would therefore seem to have been in force for the duration of his life.⁶⁷ The pertinent terms of the Privilege are very broad and punitive:

Nous lui avons permis & permettons de faire copier & graver ses ouvrages par telles personnes que bon lui semblera, faisans très-expresses inhibitions & deffences a tous autres Graveurs, Sculpteurs, tant de nos sujets qu'estrangers qui trafiquent dans notre Royaume, & a toutes autres personnes de quelque qualité & condition qu'elles soient, de copier ou graver à l'advenir, ny d'exposer en vente les ouvrages dudit Le Brun...a peine de confiscation d'iceux, de quinze cent livres d'amandes...& de tous d'espens, dommages, & intérêts, & en ce cas de contravention...⁶⁸

Paraphrasing, the Privilege granted to Le Brun alone the power to have his works copied and engraved by those persons he deemed suitable to the task. Anybody else (whether French or foreigner doing business in France) was prohibited from engraving or copying or selling Le Brun's works. Failure to comply with the Privilege could result in the seizure of the unauthorized copies or

engravings, a fine of fifteen hundred *livres*,⁶⁹ in addition of the reimbursement of expenses, damages, and interests incurred by Le Brun in seeking redress.⁷⁰

The Privilege preceded Le Brun's publishing activities, which began in the 1660s when he published two prints based on his designs for a tapestry series based on *The Story of Constantine*.⁷¹ Accordingly, it is probable that by 1656, Le Brun already anticipated the manner in which reproductions of his work could be used to expand his reputation (looking to his former master, Simon Vouet, for example),⁷² hence the need to assert his rights and exercise control over the process. As noted by Christian Michel, it was rare for a painter to request a Privilege, because the Privilege implied that the artist asserted rights over his works and to the profits to be derived from the sale of prints reproducing his works, which was not a common conception of artistic rights and ownership at the time. Therefore, this was usually something done by publishers and engravers.⁷³

Between 1670 and 1678, Le Brun's *Alexander* designs were reproduced at the Gobelins in print by a combination of etching and engraving in a cycle known as *The Battles of Alexander*.⁷⁴ It is unknown whether this project was undertaken at Colbert's initiative or on the recommendation of Le Brun, but it was funded and published by the royal press.⁷⁵ It seems relevant to note that the accounts of the *Bâtiments du Roi* indicate that Le Brun and Colbert approved the reproduction of the four completed paintings of *The Triumphs of Alexander* (*The Family of Darius*, *The Passage of the River Granicus*, *The Entry of Alexander into Babylon*, and *The Battle of Arbela*) in 1670.⁷⁶ It would therefore seem reasonable to infer that Le Brun did more than merely follow Colbert's lead with respect to this project. From Le Brun's

perspective (as reported by his assistant and early biographer Claude Nivelon), the basis for the promotion of *The Triumphs of Alexander* through prints was that “These paintings, composed and characterized in this [grand] manner, can reveal to those who will see them that, strictly speaking, Le Brun was as bound to represent these great actions as Alexander was to execute them.”⁷⁷

Gérard Édelinck (Flemish, 1640-1707) and Girard Audran (French, 1640-1703), who were known as the best engravers at the Gobelins, were specifically selected by Le Brun to make the engravings.⁷⁸ Édelinck produced the engraving for *The Family of Darius* (Fig. 11), while Audran produced the engravings for the other four compositions of *The Battles of Alexander* (Fig. 12 to 15).⁷⁹ According to Michel, “Édelinck took care to consult Le Brun and always complied with his advice”,⁸⁰ which supports the proposition that Le Brun exercised tight control and supervision over the reproduction of his works. The resulting engravings, measuring between 68 cm x 90 cm and 71 cm x 159 cm, were very large for prints.⁸¹

The prints generated from the engraved plates were exact copies of the paintings, with two exceptions: the engravings for *The Family of Darius* and *The Entry of Alexander into Babylon* were not reversed during the engraving process.⁸² Consequently, the prints generated from these two plates show the mirror images of the paintings: in *The Family of Darius*, Alexander and Hephaestion now stand to the right of the composition, instead of the left; and in *The Entry of Alexander into Babylon*, Alexander is traveling towards the East, rather than the West.

Each of the engraving included a text description, in French and in Latin, at the bottom. The inscription for *The Family of Darius* reads “Il est d'un Roy de se

vaincre soy mesme/Sui victoria indicat Regem”, which is clearly intended to remind the viewer that the painting celebrates the magnanimity of Alexander/Louis XIV. The inscription found at the bottom of the engraving of *The Passage of the River Granicus* reads “La Vertu Surmonte Tout Obstacle/Vertus Omni Obice Maior”, a tribute to Alexander/Louis XIV’s courage and perseverance in the face of adversity. The (self-explanatory) inscription for *The Battle of Arbela* states “La Vertu est Digne de L’Empire du Monde/ Digna Orbis Imperio Virtus”; that at the bottom of the engraving of *The Defeat of Porus* “La Vertu Plait Quoique Vaincue/Sic Virtus et Victa Placet”, referring to the grace of Porus under defeat, and the magnanimity of Alexander in response. The inscription at the bottom of *The Entry of Alexander into Babylon*, properly considered the last in the series (notwithstanding the order in which it came in the painted sequence), fittingly, states that “Ainsy Par La Vertu Se levent Les Heros/Sic Virtus Evehit Ardens” – a reminder that a virtuous King will know success.

Critically, each of the prints that were published bore one of two inscriptions: “C. Le Brun pinxit”, or “sur le tableau de Mr. Le Brun, Premier Peintre du Roy”.⁸³ To the extent that prints were acquired from official sources, therefore, there could have been no mistake about the identity of the artist who produced the original work. It is noteworthy that the inscription “Ch. Le Brun pinxit” was also included on the print of *Porus in Battle* sold by Bernard Picart (1673-1733) in Amsterdam⁸⁴ – notwithstanding the fact that Le Brun did not complete the design for this scene, or that Le Brun had been dead for nearly thirty years at the time the print was

produced, which would seem to indicate that the identity of the author of the design of the print was of some consequence.

The Battles of Alexander were included in the *Cabinet du Roi*, a collection of over 950 images of various subjects, produced by the French state in twenty-three folio volumes.⁸⁵ Le Brun may have suggested that *The Battles of Alexander* be included in the *Cabinet du Roi*, although this is speculative.⁸⁶ *The Battles of Alexander* were also reproduced as prints after Le Brun's death, in a variety of sizes. They were engraved by Audran's nephews Jean (1667-1756) and Benoît I (1661-1721),⁸⁷ as well as by Sébastien Leclerc of the Gobelins, who was commissioned to create small engravings of *The Battles of Alexander* in 1694.⁸⁸ The set of engravings created by Leclerc included six prints; in addition to the five scenes painted by Le Brun, he included an engraving of *The Visit of Colbert de Villacerf to the Gobelins*.⁸⁹ Coincidentally, the design for this engraving shows a tapestry of *The Family of Darius* being hoisted by workers, for the benefit of Colbert de Villacerf (Fig. 16). As mentioned above, in 1717, Bernard Picart reproduced *Porus in Battle* (which was a sixth battle executed by Jean Audran based on a design begun (but not completed) by Le Brun)⁹⁰ on a large scale, and offered it for sale.⁹¹

The prints of *The Battles of Alexander* were widely disseminated. Audran, who had a shop in Paris, offered for sale prints of the engravings made by Édelinck and himself, in set or individually, as early as 1676.⁹² They were also distributed as part of the *Cabinet du Roi*, first as diplomatic gifts.⁹³ However, as the endeavor was very expensive, the prints were also offered for sale to the public.⁹⁴

The August 1679 edition of the *Mercure Galant* advertised the prints for sale, offering as a preamble that the prints:

...were most appropriate to give the opinion that one must have of France, because they communicated its grandeur by showing the brilliance of the superb divertissements of its Prince, the magnificence of its buildings, and the infinite number of rare objects it contained.⁹⁵

The five prints of *The Battles of Alexander*, which were included in the prints available for sale, were the most expensive.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, they outsold the other prints contained in the *Cabinet du Roi*, even the prints reproducing works from masters such as Titian and Raphael; *The Family of Darius* was the most popular print.⁹⁷ By 1683, at least eighteen hundred prints of *The Family of Darius* alone had been distributed.⁹⁸ Tellingly, Le Brun also entrusted Pierre Perron, the concierge of the Académie, to sell some of his prints on consignment, between 1684 and 1687.⁹⁹ Starting in 1696, the prints made from the Leclerc's engravings were sold by a Parisian publisher.¹⁰⁰ In his portrait of Charles Le Brun (dated 1683-1686, Paris, Musée du Louvre), Nicolas de Largillière (1656-1746) showed Charles Le Brun seated, surrounded by some of his works; a print of *The Family of Darius* is clearly visible, slipping off the table (Fig. 17).¹⁰¹

Re-weaving *The Story of Alexander* at home: Aubusson

Paris and the Gobelins did not have a monopoly on tapestry production in France. Amongst others, the manufactures of Aubusson and Felletin, in the region of the Marche in France, were in operation long before the Gobelins were organized, and after.¹⁰²

The Aubusson and Felletin manufactures experienced significant financial difficulties for several years and, although the King was generally sympathetic to their plight, the first support from the Crown came in 1620, when the manufactures (and the others in the same area) were released from the obligation of having to pay tariffs on the tapestries they sent to Paris for sale.¹⁰³ Aubusson was subsumed under the royal umbrella in 1665, when it became the Manufacture royale de tapisseries d'Aubusson. In 1689, Felletin also became part of the royal apparatus.¹⁰⁴ Part of the assistance offered by the Crown came in the form of tapestry designs. At the time the manufactures came into the realm of the royal manufactures, Colbert had undertaken to hire a renowned painter from the Manche area to produce tapestry designs.¹⁰⁵ This was never done. Colbert did, however, ask the painters of the Gobelins to copy certain cartoons by Le Brun, which were destined for Aubusson (but evidently also made their way to Felletin).¹⁰⁶ The cartoons that were sent to Aubusson included *The Elements* (a popular allegorical series designed by Charles Le Brun in 1664);¹⁰⁷ *The Months* (or the *Royal Palaces*), designed by Le Brun in 1665;¹⁰⁸ and *The Story of Alexander*.¹⁰⁹ As the original cartoons provided by Colbert wore out, they were replaced with scenes designed by the painters at the manufactures, who added episodes representing *Alexander holding a globe*; *the marriage of Alexander and Roxane*; and *Alexander taming Bucephalus*.

The cartoons delivered to Aubusson were simplified versions of those designed by Le Brun.¹¹⁰ According to Chevalier, unlike the weavers at the Gobelins, the weavers at Aubusson (and Felletin) were given wide berth to modify cartoons as they saw fit, adding to or subtracting from them.¹¹¹ Although hundreds of sets of *The*

Story of Alexander were woven by the manufactures,¹¹² no attempt was made at documenting all copies in existence for the purposes of this thesis. An examination of a small sample size is sufficient to reveal how different they are from Le Brun's *Alexander* designs.

Two examples of *The Family of Darius* (Fig. 18 and 19) produced at Aubusson and woven between 1700 and 1725 show that the composition was woven in the same orientation as the painting and Gobelins tapestry.¹¹³ The two tapestries are not identical, which likely indicates that they were woven in different workshops at Aubusson. In most respects, however, they are the same and they vary considerably from the original Le Brun design. For example, there are only eight figures under the tent, as opposed to the eighteen from the original composition; in addition, the features of the figures are much blunter. Further, the entrance to the tent is much narrower than in the original design, and less background has been included. Interestingly, the "witness figure" of the woman sitting against the base of a tree at the bottom left-hand side of the composition is included in the Aubusson replicas. This provides support for the proposition that it was Le Brun who decided to remove the figure from the cartoons used by the Gobelins weavers. It likely also indicates that the painters at the Gobelins relied upon the painting and prints to reproduce the cartoon of *The Family of Darius*, as opposed to the cartoons that were being used at the Gobelins.

A consideration of five examples of *The Entry of Alexander into Babylon* (Fig. 20 and 21, for example)¹¹⁴ also confirms that not all tapestries of this design that are attributed to the Aubusson manufacture are identical, but that their key features

were the same and differed from the original design by Le Brun. Like the original, Alexander stands in a chariot being pulled by an elephant, on which a boy sits. Slaves or prisoners, located in the lower right-hand side of the composition, carry a brazier while, in the lower left-hand side of the composition, a family gathers to watch the procession. As with the original, a soldier on a horse stands in the foreground, center of the composition, appearing to guard Alexander. However, the composition itself is much simplified: there are fewer figures attending the procession; the architectural background has been reduced to a single, simple building; there are fewer details on the figures themselves, as well as on the chariot. The composition, as a whole, is much tighter, and the figures seem foreshortened, such that the sense of visual depth present in the original Gobelins tapestry has all but vanished in the Aubusson replicas.

A replica of *The Passage of the River Granicus* produced by the workshop of Pierre Vergne at Felletin, ca. 1680 (Fig. 22),¹¹⁵ has been so simplified that it only bears a passing resemblance to the original design by Le Brun. Whereas the original captures the tumult of the river, the efforts of the soldiers to cross the river and hoist themselves onto land, overcoming obstacles that include fallen trees, rocks, horses, and bodies, the composition in the Felletin replica has been reduced to nine soldiers occupying the foreground with a few more, barely distinguishable soldiers in the background. There are no trees or bodies to surmount to reach dry land. The soldiers are expressionless, and the horses recall those of the wooden variety. Still, some of the features of Le Brun's design – such as the man wearing a lion skin, in the center of the composition, have been retained.

The Story of Alexander was one of the most successful series ever woven at Aubusson and Felletin; hundreds of sets were produced. In the eighteenth century (they were woven until 1765),¹¹⁶ sets were also sent to Paris to be sold by Pierre Mage in his shop.¹¹⁷ The tapestries from *The Story of Alexander* woven at Aubusson and Felletin even made their way to the royal palaces of Portugal and the Ukraine.¹¹⁸ What this demonstrates is that Le Brun's *Alexander* designs were popular and attracted significant interest even from those who could not afford higher-end reweavings (such as the Flemish replicas discussed in the next chapter, or private commissions from the Gobelins), both in France and abroad.

NOTES

¹ For example, the design for *Louis XIV Dirigeant le char de l'État*.

² Lydia Beauvais, *Charles Le Brun, 1619-1690: inventaire général des dessins, École française* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2000), 463.

³ As recounted in Thomas Kirchner, *Les Reines de Perse aux pieds d'Alexandre de Charles Le Brun: Tableau-manifeste de l'art français du XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Éditions de la maison des sciences de l'homme, 2013), 23-25.

⁴ Three primary literary sources provided inspiration for the visual interpretations of the life of Alexander the Great: Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*; Arrian's *Anabasis of Alexander*; and Quintus Curtius Rufus' *History of Alexander the Great*. The latter work circulated widely in France. The National Library of France has more than 10 editions of Rufus' work in Latin and four editions in French, all printed before 1550. A new French translation of that work had also appeared in 1653. Consequently, it is likely fair to assume that Le Brun drew upon Rufus' version of the ancient story when conceiving his cycle of paintings dedicated to the triumphs of Alexander. Kathleen Wilson-Chevalier, "Alexander the Great at Fontainebleau", in *Alexander the Great in European Art: 22 September 1997-11 January 1998*, Nicos Hadjinicolaou, Editor (Thessaloniki, Greece: Organisation for the Cultural Capital of Europe, 1997), 16-19.

⁵ Louis Marchesano, and Christian Michel, *Printing the Grand Manner: Charles Le Brun and Monumental Prints in the Age of Louis XIV* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2010), 11. See also Thomas Kirchner, *Les Reines de Perse aux pieds d'Alexandre de Charles Le Brun: Tableau-manifeste de l'art français du XVIIe siècle*. Paris: Éditions de la maison des sciences de l'homme, 2013), 23.

⁶ Pascal-Francois Bertrand, "L'Histoire d'Alexandre de Charles Le Brun: grand décor palatial ou modèles de tapisseries?", in Collections du Mobilier national, *La Tenture de l'Histoire d'Alexandre le Grand* (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 2008): 19.

⁷ Wilson-Chevalier, *Alexander the Great at Fontainebleau*, 16.

⁸ Kirchner, *Les Reines de Perse*, 27. Painting in the Nicolas Poussin Museum, Les Andelys.

⁹ Kirchner, *Les Reines de Perse*, 17.

¹⁰ Quintus Curtius Rufus, *The History of Alexander* (London: Penguin Books, 2004), Book Book Three, [17]. Interestingly, Rufus includes as part of his narration of this event that he only wishes that Alexander had "been able to maintain this degree of moderation to the end of his life..." Rufus goes on to chastise Alexander for his pride and bad temper, and his lust for blood and violence. Le Brun may not have been aware of the caution included in this narration of the story; ironically (and as discussed in Chapter 4), by the middle of the eighteenth-century, the name of Alexander became associated with these negative connotations.

¹¹ Collections du Mobilier national, *La Tenture de l'Histoire d'Alexandre le Grand* (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 2008), 20.

¹² Le Brun no doubt had recourse to some of his earlier drawings when he composed *The Family of Darius*. Indeed, one of the Eunuchs looks strikingly similar to the figure of a servant he painted in *Le Silence*, in 1655 (oil on canvas, 87 x 118 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre.)

¹³ Kirchner, *Les Reines de Perse*, 87.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁵ Kirchner, *Les Reines de Perse*, 30.

¹⁶ Marchesano, *Printing the Grand Manner*, 12 and Footnote 16. Le Brun evidently obtained his brevet as *Premier Peintre du Roi* in 1658, but only began using the title after his work at Fontainebleau. The title was formalized in 1664.

¹⁷ Pascal-François Bertrand, "Tapestry Production at the Gobelins During the Reign of Louis XIV, 1661-1715". In Thomas P. Campbell, Editor, *Tapestry in the Baroque: Threads of Splendor*, (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art; New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2007), 135.

¹⁸ André Félibien, *Les Reines de Perse aux pieds d'Alexandre, Peinture du Cabinet Du Roy* (Paris, 1663).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Pascal-François Bertrand, *L'histoire d'Alexandre le Grand*, 19-20.

²¹ Based on the most recent chronology established by Jean Vittet. Jean Vittet, "L'Histoire d'Alexandre sur les métiers des Gobelins: Nouvelle chronologie des tissages", in *La Tenture de l'Histoire d'Alexandre le Grand*, *supra*, 41-54.

²² Donald Posner, "Charles Lebrun's Triumphs of Alexander", *The Art Bulletin* 41, No. 3 (Sept. 1959): 238. Vittet, *Nouvelle chronologie*, 42.

²³ Posner, *Triumphs of Alexander*, 238. Vittet, *Nouvelle chronologie*, 42.

²⁴ It is interesting here to consider the extent to which Le Brun's attention to the expression of emotions in his paintings were informed by the time he spent in Séguier's entourage, as well as with the King's personal physician, Marin Cureau de la Chambre, with whom it is believed that Le Brun discussed physiognomy. The expression of emotions - or "Passions", as Le Brun referred to them, would be an important part of Le Brun's scholarly work at the Académie, where he presented a two-part lecture on this subject in 1668. Le Brun's treatise on the expression of the passions was published post-humously. See Bénédicte Gady, *L'ascension de Charles Le Brun: Liens sociaux et production artistique*, (Editions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme: Paris, 2010), 89; and Marchesano, *Printing the Grand Manner*, 8.

²⁵ Beauvais, *Charles Le Brun*, 16. A preliminary sketch in red chalk drawn by Le Brun, which is enhanced by black chalk and finished with black ink on beige paper, shows the entanglement and immediacy of battle, due to Le Brun's free style, and his use of quick strokes in red chalk to focus the battle at the center of the composition, while leaving the horizon largely undefined. (Paris, Musée du Louvre, department des arts graphiques, INV 29430 r⁰).

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- ²⁶ Vittet, *Nouvelle chronologie*, 71.
- ²⁷ Beauvais, *Charles Le Brun*, 463.
- ²⁸ Maurice Fenaille, *L'État Général des Tapisseries de La Manufacture Des Gobelins Depuis Son Origine Jusqu'à Nos Jours, 1600-1900, Vol. II* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale; Librairie Hachette Et Cie., 1904), 166-185.
- ²⁹ Charissa Bremer-David, *Woven Gold: Tapestries of Louis XIV* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2015), 26.
- ³⁰ Quintus Curtius Rufus, *The History of Alexander the Great*, Book Three.
- ³¹ Collections du Mobilier national, *La Tenture de l'Histoire d'Alexandre le Grand*, 77.
- ³² Ibid.
- ³³ Posner, *Triumphs of Alexander*. See also Vittet, *Nouvelle chronologie*, 106.
- ³⁴ Collections du Mobilier national, *La Tenture de l'Histoire d'Alexandre le Grand*, 48.
- ³⁵ Jean Racine, *Oeuvres complètes* (Éditions de la bibliothèque Digitale, 2013).
- ³⁶ Florian Knothe, "The Battle of the Granicus", in *Tapestry in the Baroque, supra*, 369.
- ³⁷ Ibid.
- ³⁸ Collections du Mobilier national, *La Tenture de l'Histoire d'Alexandre le Grand*, 49.
- ³⁹ Posner, *Triumphs of Alexander*, 238. Vittet, *Nouvelle chronologie*, 42.
- ⁴⁰ Beauvais, Charles Le Brun, 15-16. See also Bremer-David, *Woven Gold*, 102.
- ⁴¹ Beauvais, *Charles Le Brun*, 14.
- ⁴² Pierre Marcel wrote *The Triumphs of Alexander* were "tableaux de chevalet démesurés et confus", and that "leur ardeur facile et leur fougue ne compensent pas l'ennui qu'elles dégagent." He went on to criticize the composition as lacking in drama, and the color and design as vulgar. Pierre Marcel, *Charles Le Brun* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1908): 54.
- ⁴³ Christian Michel, "Charles Le Brun and the Diffusion of His Oeuvre through Prints", in Marchesano, *Printing the Grand Manner, supra*, 42.
- ⁴⁴ Louis-Antoine Prat, *Le Dessin Français au XVIIe Siècle* (Paris: Musée du Louvre; Somogy éditions d'art, 2013), 461.
- ⁴⁵ Marchesano, *Printing the Grand Manner*, 26.
- ⁴⁶ Florian Knothe, "The Battle of the Granicus", catalogue entry no. 40 in *Tapestry in the Baroque, supra*, 371.
- ⁴⁷ Pascal-François Bertrand, "L'Histoire d'Alexandre le Grand de Charles Le Brun: grand décor palatial ou modèle de tapisseries?" in *La Tenture d'Alexandre le Grand, supra*, 19, 25.

⁴⁸ Vittet, *Nouvelle chronologie*, 108–109.

⁴⁹ The first series woven at the Gobelins was in fact composed of twelve pieces, as it included an entre-fenêtre. However, that entre-fenêtre was not reproduced, and is not considered as part of the series for the purposes of this thesis.

⁵⁰ Vittet, *Nouvelle chronologie*, 108-109.

⁵¹ Fenaille, *L'État Général des Tapisseries*, 184-185.

⁵² *La Tenture de l'Histoire d'Alexandre le Grand, supra*.

⁵³ Vittet, *Nouvelle chronologie*, 42.

⁵⁴ I am grateful to Thomas Bohl of the Mobilier National, who allowed me to view the strips of cartoon that were in storage at the Mobilier National, and who also permitted me to take photographs of these cartoons.

⁵⁵ See Arnaud Brejon de Lavergnée, en collaboration avec Béatrice Caillon, “Les cartons peints de l’Histoire d’Alexandre”, in Collections du Mobilier national, *La Tenture d'Alexandre le Grand, supra*, 33–40. Unfortunately, high-resolution images of the entire cartoon could not be obtained, hence the reliance on the image included in the book.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 33-39.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Bremer-David, *Woven Gold*, 136.

⁵⁹ Kirchner, *Les Reines de Perse*, 87–88, 90.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 52-53.

⁶² Florian Knothe, “Tapestry as a Medium of Propaganda at the Court of Louis XIV: Display and Audience”, in Thomas P. Campbell and Elizabeth A. Cleland, Editors, *Tapestry in the Baroque: New Aspects of Production and Patronage* (New Haven: Yale University Press; and New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2010), 342-43. See also Bremer-David, *Woven Gold*, 43.

⁶³ Knothe, *Tapestry as a Medium of Propaganda*, 342-43.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Bremer-David, *Woven Gold*, 43.

⁶⁶ Peter Fuhring, “The Market for Prints under Louis XIV: Charles Le Brun”, *Print Quarterly* 19, No. 1 (March 2002): 5.

⁶⁷ Fuhring, *The Market for Prints*, 3.

⁶⁸ Privilege, as reproduced in Fuhring, *The Market for Prints*, 4.

⁶⁹ As a point of comparison, the equivalent of just under 245 grams of gold for use in tapestry-making cost between 43 and 51 *livres* in 1687, depending on the quality of the gold. Put another way, infringing the rights granted to Le Brun under the Privilege would cost the offender the equivalent to sixteen pounds of gold. (Source Jan Jans: – 1692, *Mémoire relative aux tapisseries de haute-lisse produites par la Manufacture des Gobelins entre 1662 et 1691*, Archives Nationales (France), O¹2040/A.)

⁷⁰ The works of the Beauvais manufacture, which also proved exceptionally popular later in the eighteenth century (referring, for example, to the Bérain *Grotesques*), were protected against unauthorized copying, and those who infringed this royal copyright protection would be dealt a fine of 10,000 *livres*, and the counterfeit weavings would be seized. This was not the case with the works of the Gobelins, save and except with respect to the Privilege granted to Le Brun personally. Bremer-David, *Beauvais*, 409. This may be why the popular works of the Gobelins were used as inspirations, unlike *The Story of Alexander*, which were literally copied.

⁷¹ Marchesano, *Printing the Grand Manner*, 12.

⁷² Marchesano, *Printing The Grand Manner*, 17. See also Michel, *Charles Le Brun*, 39.

⁷³ Michel, *Charles Le Brun*, 39.

⁷⁴ Marchesano, *Printing the Grand Manner*, 2.

⁷⁵ Marchesano, *Printing the Grand Manner*, 2.

⁷⁶ Michel, *Charles Le Brun*, 58. Michel is referring to the accounts reported by Jules Guiffrey in 1881-1901, Vol. 1, Col. 474.

⁷⁷ From Claude Nivelon, *Vie de Charles Le Brun et description détaillée de ses ouvrages*, Lorenzo Pericolo, editor (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2004), as reported and translated in Marchesano, *Printing the Grand Manner*, 17.

⁷⁸ Marchesano, *Printing the Grand Manner*, 19.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 58-77.

⁸⁰ Michel, *Charles Le Brun*, 43.

⁸¹ Vittet, *Nouvelle chronologie*, 94–97.

⁸² Marchesano, *Printing the Grand Manner*, 61 and 75.

⁸³ Marchesano, *Printing the Grand Manner*, 58-77. It is unknown if the prints that were produced in Germany or in Flanders bore an inscription with respect to Le Brun's authorship.

⁸⁴ Marchesano, *Printing the Grand Manner*, 84.

⁸⁵ Marchesano, *Printing the Grand Manner*, 15.

⁸⁶ Marchesano, *Printing the Grand Manner*, 19.

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- ⁸⁷ Michel, *Charles Le Brun*, 39.
- ⁸⁸ Bremer-David, *Woven Gold*, 103-04. See also Michel, *Charles Le Brun*, 44.
- ⁸⁹ Knothe, *The Battle of the Granicus*, 371–72.
- ⁹⁰ Louis Marchesano speculates that Le Brun, after the death of Colbert, may have wanted to try to counter the attacks of Louvois and regain his fame by adding a sixth battle scene to his *Alexander* designs. Marchesano, *Printing the Grand Manner*, 15.
- ⁹¹ Marchesano, *Printing the Grand Manner*, 3.
- ⁹² Knothe, *The Battle of the Granicus*, 371-72.
- ⁹³ Edith Appleton Standen, *European Post-Medieval Tapestries and Related Hangings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, Vol. 1 (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1985), 231.
- ⁹⁴ Marchesano, *Printing the Grand Manner*, 15-16.
- ⁹⁵ *Le Mercure Galant* (August 1679), 89.
- ⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 88-96.
- ⁹⁷ Marchesano, *Printing the Grand Manner*, 20.
- ⁹⁸ Kirchner, *Les Reines de Perse*, 87.
- ⁹⁹ Michel, *Charles Le Brun*, 39.
- ¹⁰⁰ Knothe, *The Battle of the Granicus*, 371–72.
- ¹⁰¹ Nicolas de Largillière (French, 1656-1746), *Charles Le Brun (1619-1690)*, 1683-1686, oil on canvas, 232 x 187 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre.
- ¹⁰² Dominique Chevalier, Pierre Chevalier, and Pascal-François Bertrand, *Les Tapisseries d'Aubusson et de Felletin: 1457-1791*, Solange Thierry, éditeur (Paris: La Bibliothèque des Arts, 1988), 13.
- ¹⁰³ Chevalier, *Aubusson et Felletin*, 35.
- ¹⁰⁴ Chevalier, *Aubusson et Felletin*, 61.
- ¹⁰⁵ Chevalier, *Aubusson et Felletin*, 65 and 67.
- ¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰⁷ Chevalier, *Aubusson et Felletin*, 67.
- ¹⁰⁸ Chevalier, *Aubusson et Felletin*, 74.
- ¹⁰⁹ Chevalier, *Aubusson et Felletin*, 68.
- ¹¹⁰ Chevalier, *Aubusson et Felletin*, 71.

¹¹¹ Chevalier, *Aubusson et Felletin*, 73.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ W.E.F.T.I.D. (accessed March 11, 2016), inventory no. Biii5_1_5 and Biii5_1_4. The tapestries are somewhat smaller than the Gobelins originals.

¹¹⁴ W.E.F.T.I.D. (Accessed March 11, 2016), inventory no. Biii5_1_6 (ca. 1725-50); Biii5_1_7 (ca. 1750); Biii5_1_10 (ca. 1700); and Biii5_1_11 (ca. 1700). See also *Le Triomphe d'Alexandre*, woven at Aubusson by Reynaud, end of seventeenth century, currently in the Maison de Retraite, Ville d'Aubusson (documented by Chevalier, *Aubusson et Felletin*, 71.)

¹¹⁵ Chevalier, *Aubusson et Felletin*, 72.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Chevalier, *Aubusson et Felletin*, 74.

Chapter 3 – Dissemination of the King’s image and Le Brun’s reputation abroad: *The Story of Alexander* in Flanders

The Gobelins reproduced *The Story of Alexander* eight times, and Aubusson re-wove the series hundreds of times. What is intriguing about *The Story of Alexander* is that it was copied and reproduced in large numbers by Flemish weavers, almost as soon as the original tapestries woven at the Gobelins were taken off the looms. The extent to which Flemish weavers copied and reproduced Le Brun’s *Alexander* designs between 1689 and 1735 was unprecedented for a French tapestry design from the Gobelins, and was not to be repeated.¹

What follows is a summary of the documented sets of Flemish replicas of *The Story of Alexander*, as well as an overview of how the replicas compare to the engravings of Le Brun’s *Alexander* designs, on which they were based.

Documenting the Flemish Replicas of *The Story of Alexander*

The Flemish replicas of *The Story of Alexander* were based on the engravings of Le Brun’s paintings produced between 1672 and 1689 and again in 1694. It was from these black and white engravings that painters prepared cartoons for use by the weavers.²

The timing for the production of the first set of the tapestries of *The Story of Alexander* in Brussels is debatable: Ingrid de Meûter, for example, places the first set to 1687,³ while Raf Vanhoren (with whom Koenraad Brosens agrees) concludes that it was more likely than not that the first set of replicas of *The Story of Alexander* was produced in Brussels by the workshop of Jan-Frans Van den Hecke in 1676.⁴ The fact that Van den Hecke purchased the cartoons for *The Story of Alexander* from his father’s inventory at the time of the latter’s death in 1675 supports this conclusion.⁵

From this fact, it is possible to infer that cartoons for tapestries based on Le Brun's *Alexander* designs began being made in Brussels almost as soon as the engravings were published, and that the first set of Brussels tapestries of this design were delivered only six years after the first complete set of *The Story of Alexander* was delivered to the garde-meuble by the Gobelins, in 1670.⁶ Considering the amount of organization (from the placement of the commission to the acquisition of materials and the securing of financing) and the amount of labor a tapestry series of this magnitude requires, the rapidity with which Le Brun's designs were identified as desirable for tapestries and marketable and produced is remarkable.⁷

There are sixteen documented editions of *The Story of Alexander*, as set out in Table 1 (page 60).⁸ Of these sixteen, thirteen sets originate from six workshops based in Brussels: six sets from the workshop of Jan-Frans Van den Hecke; two sets from the workshop of Gerard Peemans; one set from the workshop of Marcus de Vos; two sets from the workshop of Judocus de Vos; one set from the workshop of Jan-Frans Van der Borcht (alternatively known as Van der Borcht, Van der Beurcht, or A Castro);⁹ and one set from the workshop of Pieter Van den Hecke.¹⁰ Three sets (one of six pieces belonging to the Harvard Club,¹¹ in New York, one set of two pieces belonging to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and one set of one tapestry at the Provand's Lordship in Glasgow), are based on designs by Peter Ijkens and likely originate from workshops in Antwerp or Oudenaarde.¹² The comparative analysis below only considers the individual tapestries for which images and basic information (regarding workshop, materials, etc.) are available.

A brief comparison of the Flemish replicas

Of the Flemish replicas of *The Story of Alexander* discussed in this thesis,¹³ the most popular composition is that of *The Family of Darius*, which is represented thirteen times, compared to ten times for *The Battle of Arbela*, and nine times each for *The Battle of the River Granicus*; *The Entry of Alexander into Babylon*; and *The Defeat of Porus*.

The Family of Darius

I have observed four variants in the composition of the replicas for *The Family of Darius*. Three of the replicas produced by Jan-Frans Van den Hecke (Figures 23, 24, and 25) are the mirror image of the tapestry woven at the Gobelins. This likely indicates that the cartoon was designed based on the engraving made by Audran in 1672, which also showed Alexander and Hephaestion standing to the right of the composition.¹⁴ A fourth replica produced by Jan-Frans Van den Hecke (currently in the Würzburg Residenz, Fig. 26) presents a composition that is also a mirror image of the painting, but has been dramatically cropped, with the figures located in the very near foreground. The trees on either side of the engraving have been eliminated, as well as the witness figure, and the tent in the background. It would not appear that these changes have been made to accommodate a smaller size of tapestry.¹⁵

The replica produced by Judocus de Vos that is in Hampton Court Palace (Fig. 27) is identical to the engraving, subject to two exceptions: there are three witness figures in the lower left corner of the composition: one (partially cut-off) appears to be the same woman as in the engraving; she is accompanied by two standing men;

in addition, instead of a single tent in the background with three lounging soldiers, several tents are depicted, and at least six soldiers can be counted.

The replicas based on the cartoons by Ijken at the Harvard Club (Fig. 28) and the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Fig. 29) are very similar to the Édelinck engraving, although the composition has been simplified somewhat: there are fifteen figures inside the tent instead of eighteen, and more foliage has been included to fill the background.

The degree of similarity between the replicas and the engravings is striking. The intention of the designers was clearly to copy the designs by Le Brun, and not only to be inspired by them. The minimal variances also suggest that little discretion was left to the designers, and to the weavers (which is not necessarily unusual – for example, consider the many re-weavings of *The Acts of the Apostles*, designed by Raphael).¹⁶ To the extent that more foliage has been added, or minor figures removed, these choices could be attributed to economic considerations: weavers who had the skill and experience to execute faces and bodies could command higher wages than those who executed landscapes and backgrounds.¹⁷ Consequently, tapestries with fewer figures and more greenery and background were also more affordable. This probably indicates that the replicas of *The Story of Alexander* were executed for different markets and price points.

The Entry of Alexander into Babylon

The replicas of *The Entry of Alexander into Babylon* produced by the workshops of Marcus de Vos (Fig. 30), Judocus de Vos (Fig. 31, 32), Jan-Frans Van den Hecken (Fig. 33), and produced based on the designs by Pieter Ijken (Fig. 34)

are all very similar to the Audran engraving. Some variations include the simplification of the background, for example as in the replica woven by Marcus de Vos, which does not include the extensive architectural background of the original.

The Battle of Arbela

Only four images of the replicas of *The Battle of Arbela* are available: the design produced by Jan-Frans Van den Hecke, currently at Skokloster Castle (Fig. 35); the two replicas likely produced based on the design by Pieter Ijken, and the replica produced by Judocus de Vos for Blenheim Palace (Fig. 36). Although the quality of the images for these replicas varies, it is possible to ascertain that the replicas produced by Jan-Frans Van den Hecke and Judocus de Vos have been produced in the same orientation as the painting and the engraving, and contain the same key features of the composition. In order to accommodate for size, the composition has been cropped by both workshops by omitting the elements of the composition situated at the outermost boundaries.

In contrast, the replica of *The Battle of Arbela* in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Fig. 37)¹⁸ and that in the collection of the Harvard Club (Fig. 38) (whose design has been attributed to Pieter Ijken),¹⁹ are mirror images of the engraving. Because of the awkward manner in which the replica in the Metropolitan Museum of Art has been cropped, Alexander is nearly falling outside of the composition, which is not the case with respect to the Harvard Club replica. Ijken seems to have compressed the composition of the engraving into a single panel by eliminating the portions of the original composition near the center. The result is an overall composition that is rather confused, with bodies piling onto one

another, without a clear sense of the direction of the action. Nevertheless, in both cases, key components of the composition (such as the fleeing soldier) have been reproduced.

The Battle of the River Granicus

A comparison of the replicas of *The Battle of the River Granicus* to the engraving of the same composition is difficult, as few images are available: one for a replica produced by Jan-Frans Van den Hecke (Fig. 39) and two replicas produced by Judocus de Vos (Fig. 40, 41). Nevertheless, it is still possible to assert that these replicas closely follow the design by Le Brun.

Interestingly, it would appear that Ijkens did not reproduce Le Brun's design for *The Battle of the River Granicus*, which may be an indication that Ijkens was given more latitude in making his designs than van Schoor and Van der Heyden, possibly because he was designing for a different market, as was concluded with respect to *The Family of Darius*.

The Many Trials of Porus

Two images of replicas of *The Death of Porus* are available – that produced by Jan-Frans Van den Hecke and currently at Skokloster Castle (Fig. 42), and that of the replica owned by the Harvard Club, which is based on designs by Ijkens. Only the replica produced by Jan-Frans Van den Hecke is faithful to the design produced by Le Brun, as reproduced in the Audran engraving.

The design made by Pieter Ijkens only captures a fragment of the composition presented in the engraving, and is referred to as *Alexander Extends Clemency Towards King Porus* (Fig. 43). The figures in Ijkens' composition are

confined to an area slightly off-center, while trees fill the rest of the available space. As noted earlier, the cost of labor for a weaver who did foliage and landscape was considerably less than for a weaver specializing in heads and flesh; therefore, this could be another indicator that the cartoons prepared by Ijkens were used for replicas aimed at a lower end of the market than those produced by van Schoor and Van der Heyden.

Judocus de Vos, in producing replicas of *The Story of Alexander* for the Duke of Marlborough and King George I (Fig. 44), did not rely on Audran's engraving of *The Defeat of Porus*. Rather, the designs he used were based in part on an engraving produced by Jean Audran (the nephew of Girard Audran, who executed the first engravings between 1672-1678), illustrating *The Battle of Porus* (Fig. 45).²⁰

Additional Scenes

Judocus de Vos²¹ and Pieter Ijkens each added additional scenes to *The Story of Alexander* designed by Le Brun. Judocus de Vos, in addition to *The Battle of Porus* (described above), added *Alexander with his horse Bucephalus, taking leave of Hephaestion* (Fig. 46); *Alexander's visit to Diogenes in his tub* (Fig. 47); and *Alexander meeting the Chaldean prophets on his way to Babylon* (Fig. 48). These scenes were produced for both the Duke of Marlborough²² and King George I.²³ An interesting feature of these additional designs is that the same design has been used for the head of Alexander the Great, which originated with Le Brun, and that attention has clearly been paid to creating a design in the idiom of Charles Le Brun, meaning that emphasis is given to creating a narrative in which the figures are depicted in an "airy background" with "landscape and architectural features"²⁴ and, making

extensive use of perspective, locating these figures in different planes of the composition.

Pieter Ijkens added two designs to Le Brun's *The Story of Alexander: Alexander and Hephaestion Before Battle* (Fig. 49), and *The Capture of King Porus after the Battle of Hydaspes River* (Fig. 50). Ijkens also used designs for Alexander and the soldiers that were consistent with those used for the other replicas. However, unlike Judocus de Vos, the additional scenes do not feature any sort of landscape or architecture. Far from introducing the viewer to figures in an airy background, Ijkens' figures almost seem dwarfed by the forest around them.

It is unknown why Judocus de Vos and Pieter Ijkens added scenes to the *Alexander* designs by Le Brun. One possibility is that Judocus de Vos' patrons required more tapestries than the original designs offered. Another possibility is that, by 1710, which is approximately when both sets would have been commissioned, the taste was shifting away from complex battle scenes, and that the addition of the new scenes provided a style update to Le Brun's *Alexander* designs, which were more than forty years old by then. In the case of Ijkens, who did not design a cartoon for *The Battle of the Granicus*, it could simply be that it was felt that the customers in the market for which he was designing would not want to decorate their interiors with complex battle scenes, and would prefer tapestries that depicted compositions that were closer to landscapes.

Materials and weaving quality

If the replicas show a great deal of uniformity, more variation is present with respect to their materials and weaving quality, insofar as it can be determined from the photographs and where information regarding warp thread count is available.

To provide a frame of reference, it is convenient here to repeat that, of the eight tapestry sets of *The Story of Alexander* woven at the Gobelins, six were woven with gold thread. The tapestries were also woven with wool and silk, and the looms were set up with nine warp threads per centimeter. The weavers working at the Gobelins were highly skilled, and the tapestries of *The Story of Alexander* are considered some of the finest tapestries ever produced.²⁵

Some of the replicas produced by Jan-Frans Van den Hecke, notably three of the six replicas currently in the collection of Skokloster Castle and those in The Hermitage State Museum, were woven with wool, silk, and silver. The replicas woven by the other workshops, however, were made without precious metal-wrapped thread. Interestingly, Judocus de Vos presented the option of using gold and silver thread to the Duke of Marlborough, as the latter had commissioned a set of *The Art of War* tapestries that included those precious materials. The Duke of Marlborough declined, however, stating that he did not like the effect of the silver and gold thread in the finished tapestry.²⁶

The fineness of the weaving of the replicas varies, with as little as seven warp threads per centimeter to nine warp threads to centimeter, based on the information available.²⁷ Not surprisingly, there is a correlation between the number of warp threads per centimeter and the quality of the materials used. Thus, the three

replicas in the Skokloster Castle woven with wool, silk, and silver have nine warp threads per centimeter, while those woven with wool and silk only have a warp thread-count that varies between seven and eight threads per centimeter.

The replicas that are based on the designs by Pieter Ijkens were woven with wool and silk. The replicas in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art contain between seven and eight warp threads per centimeter. As noted earlier, based on personal observations and discussions with Dr. Cleland and Ms. Yarema-Wynar, the quality of the weaving of the two replicas at the Metropolitan Museum of Art varies considerably, which may suggest that the two tapestries were not originally produced by the same workshop, but were subsequently assembled as a group, perhaps by a dealer. Even considering the more finely woven of the two replicas, *The Family of Darius*, there is little doubt that the weaving of the tapestry is not as fine as that of other tapestries – for example those of Hampton Court Palace, and certainly not those of the Gobelins.

Conclusion: the Flemish replicas of *The Story of Alexander*

The replicas produced between 1676 and 1735 fall along a spectrum, when considering the degree of similarity with the engravings Le Brun's *Alexander* designs. At one end of the spectrum, Jan-Frans Van den Hecke remained largely faithful to the designs while, at the other end of the spectrum, Judocus de Vos felt free to eliminate certain scenes, and add others. This could indicate that Van den Hecke and de Vos used different designers, and that these designers were afforded a different degree of artistic discretion. It could also indicate that the workshops were producing replicas for different markets. Yet, regardless of where they fall on the

spectrum, the replicas produced in Brussels remained faithful to the design idiom of Le Brun.

The designs attributed to Pieter Ijken, on the other hand, stand clearly apart. They were both less faithful to the Le Brun designs, and not in keeping with the French style popular at the time, which indicates that he had a fair amount of discretion.²⁸ It could be that, as hypothesized by De Meûter, the designs by Ijken were intended to circulate to workshops in Antwerp and Oudenaarde, which were not known as high-end centers of production, unlike Brussels.

Tellingly, however, whether the cartoons for the replicas were by the hand of van Schoor, van der Heyden, or Ijken, any person familiar with the engravings of Le Brun would have recognized the tapestries studied in this chapter as copies of Le Brun's *Alexander* designs.

Although the sample size of the replicas used for this comparative analysis is too small to generate statistically meaningful information, it is nevertheless interesting to note that the replicas woven most finely, with precious metal-wrapped thread, were produced earlier than those without gold or silver thread, although the fineness of the weaving, based on warp thread-count, could remain quite high even through the early part of the eighteenth century (in the case of the replicas produced by Judocus de Vos). By the same token, again based on this very small sample size, it would appear that the replicas based on the designs by Pieter Ijken were not executed as skillfully or woven as finely as those made in the larger, multi-generational Brussels workshops. This would seem to accord with the hypothesis that Ijken's cartoons were aimed at workshops producing for a lower

end market. It is also consistent with the trend that saw tapestries become less popular as the eighteenth century progressed,²⁹ and there would have been less appetite to produce high-end tapestries on speculation.

Although this study of the Flemish replicas does not reveal much new information with respect to issues of production, it does confirm that the *Alexander* designs by Le Brun had a reach and popularity that extended beyond the Court of Louis XIV. It is also likely that at least some of the dealers (such as Naulaerts) and weavers (such as Leyniers) knew of Le Brun and his reputation. The ultimate objective set out by Louis XIV – to fashion an image of the King that would communicate his virtues and the splendor of his Court,³⁰ was achieved – as was Le Brun’s ambition to establish a reputation that would rival those of the great masters.

Table 1 – Sixteen Documented Flemish Tapestry Replicas based on Charles Le Brun’s *The Story of Alexander*

Tapestry	Workshop/Designer	Current Location	Source/Reference
The Family of Darius	Jan-Frans Van den Hecke	Würzburg Residenz	Vanhoren, <i>Tapisseries bruxelloises</i> , 62.
		Skokloster Castle	
		Hermitage Museum	
		Sold, Baden-Baden, 1995	
		Haroué Castle	
	Gerard Peemans	Würzburg Residenz	Vanhoren, <i>Tapisseries bruxelloises</i> , 62.
	Marcus de Vos	Staatliche Museum, Meiningen	Vanhoren, <i>Tapisseries bruxelloises</i> , 62.
	Judocus de Vos	Hampton Court Palace	Vanhoren, <i>Tapisseries bruxelloises</i> , 62.
		Blenheim Palace	Brepasola, <i>Threads of History</i> , 45-49.
	Pieter Van den Hecke	Former Vieux-Bourg Castle, Ghent.	Vanhoren, <i>Tapisseries bruxelloises</i> , 62.
Pieter Ijkens			de Meûter, <i>Pieter Spierinckx</i> , 140-141.
	Harvard Club		Mary Saunders, Curator, Harvard Club (personal communication).
	Metropolitan Museum of Art		Stanton, <i>European Post-Medieval Tapestries</i> , 231.
	Provand’s Lordship, Glasgow		de Meûter, <i>Pieter Spierinckx</i> , 140-141.
The Battle of Arbela	Jan-Frans Van den Hecke	Berwick, Frankfurt	Vanhoren, <i>Tapisseries bruxelloises</i> , 62.
		Würzburg Residenz	
		Skokloster Castle	
		Hermitage Museum	
		Haroué Castle	
Gerard Peemans	Würzburg Residenz	Vanhoren, <i>Tapisseries bruxelloises</i> , 62.	
Jan-Frans Van der Borch	City Hall, Brussels	Vanhoren, <i>Tapisseries bruxelloises</i> , 62.	
Pieter Van den Hecke	Former Vieux-	Vanhoren,	

Tapestry	Workshop/Designer	Current Location	Source/Reference
		Bourg Castle, Ghent.	<i>Tapisseries bruxelloises</i> , 62.
	Pieter Ijkens	Harvard Club	de Meûter, <i>Pieter Spierinckx</i> , 140-141. Mary Saunders, Curator, Harvard Club (personal communication).
		Metropolitan Museum of Art	Stanton, <i>European Post-Medieval Tapestries</i> , 231.
The Entry of Alexander into Babylon	Jan-Frans Van den Hecke	Würzburg Residenz	Vanhoren, <i>Tapisseries bruxelloises</i> , 62.
		Skokloster Castle	
		Sold, Baden-Baden, 1995	
		Haroué Castle	
	Gerard Peemans	Würzburg Residenz	Vanhoren, <i>Tapisseries bruxelloises</i> , 62.
	Marcus de Vos	Breme Galerie Neuse	Vanhoren, <i>Tapisseries bruxelloises</i> , 62.
	Judocus de Vos	Hampton Court Palace	Vanhoren, <i>Tapisseries bruxelloises</i> , 62.
Blenheim Palace		Brepasola, <i>Threads of History</i> , 45-49.	
Pieter Ijkens	Harvard Club	de Meûter, <i>Pieter Spierinckx</i> , 140-141. Mary Saunders, Curator, Harvard Club (personal communication).	
The Battle of the River Granicus	Jan-Frans Van den Hecke	Berwick, Frankfurt	Vanhoren, <i>Tapisseries bruxelloises</i> , 62.
		Würzburg Residenz	
		Skokloster Castle	
		Haroué Castle	
Gerard Peemans	Narodowe Museum, Posnan	Vanhoren, <i>Tapisseries bruxelloises</i> , 62.	
Marcus de Vos	Staatliche Museum, Meiningen	Vanhoren, <i>Tapisseries bruxelloises</i> , 62.	
Judocus de Vos	Hampton Court Palace	Vanhoren, <i>Tapisseries bruxelloises</i> , 62.	

Tapestry	Workshop/Designer	Current Location	Source/Reference
		Blenheim Palace	Brepasola, <i>Threads of History</i> , 45-49.
	Jan-Frans Van der Borgh	City Hall, Brussels	Vanhoren, <i>Tapisseries bruxelloises</i> , 62.
The Death of Porus	Jan-Frans Van den Hecke	Skokloster Castle	Vanhoren, <i>Tapisseries bruxelloises</i> , 62.
	Pieter Ijkens	Harvard Club	de Meûter, <i>Pieter Spierinckx</i> , 140-141. Mary Saunders, Curator, Harvard Club (personal communication).
The Battle of Porus	Judocus de Vos	Hampton Court Palace	Vanhoren, <i>Tapisseries bruxelloises</i> , 62.
		Blenheim Palace	Brepasola, <i>Threads of History</i> , 45-49.
Alexander Extends Clemency Towards King Porus	Pieter Ijkens	Harvard Club	de Meûter, <i>Pieter Spierinckx</i> , 140-141. Mary Saunders, Curator, Harvard Club (personal communication).
Alexander with his horse Bucephalus, taking leave of Hephaestion	Judocus de Vos	Hampton Court Palace	Vanhoren, <i>Tapisseries bruxelloises</i> , 62.
		Blenheim Palace	Brepasola, <i>Threads of History</i> , 45-49.
Alexander's visit to Diogenes in his tub	Judocus de Vos	Hampton Court Palace	Vanhoren, <i>Tapisseries bruxelloises</i> , 62.
		Blenheim Palace	Brepasola, <i>Threads of History</i> , 45-49.
Alexander meeting the Chaldean prophets on his way to Babylon	Judocus de Vos	Hampton Court Palace	Vanhoren, <i>Tapisseries bruxelloises</i> , 62.
		Blenheim Palace	Brepasola, <i>Threads of History</i> , 45-49.
Alexander and Hephaestion before Battle	Pieter Ijkens	Harvard Club	de Meûter, <i>Pieter Spierinckx</i> , 140-141. Mary Saunders, Curator, Harvard Club (personal

Tapestry	Workshop/Designer	Current Location	Source/Reference
The capture of King Porus after the Battle of the Hydaspes River	Pieter Ijkens	Harvard Club	communication). de Meûter, <i>Pieter Spierinckx</i> , 140-141. Mary Saunders, Curator, Harvard Club (personal communication).

NOTES

¹ My review has included catalogued collections (both private and in museums), auction catalogues (through the database SCIPIO, available at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and updated regularly), and W.E.F.T.I.D., a proprietary database created and maintained by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in addition to the volumes referenced in the Bibliography included at the end of this thesis.

Here, I make a distinction between *The Story of Alexander*, which was copied based on engravings, and *The Story of Meleager*, also by Charles Le Brun, which was woven multiple times in Brussels based on cartoons designed by Le Brun for a commission by Jean Valdor in ca. 1658, before the foundation of the Gobelins. Valdor leased the cartoons to various Brussels workshops. In that sense, the various tapestry sets based on *The Story of Meleager* cannot be said to have been “copied” based on a design for The Gobelins. Charissa Bremer-David, *Woven Gold: Tapestries of Louis XIV* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2015), 20. For more on the Flemish weavings of *The Story of Meleager*, see Koenraad Brosens, “Charles Le Brun's Meleager and Atalanta and Brussels Tapestry c. 1675”, *Studies in the Decorative Arts* 11, No. 1 (FALL-WINTER 2003-2004): 5-37.

² Bremer-David, *Woven Gold*, 103.

³ Ingrid De Meûter, “Le peintre anversois Pieter Spierinckx (1635-1711), créateur de cartons de tapisseries”, in Koenraad Brosens, Ed., *Flemish Tapestry in European and American Collections: Studies in honour of Guy Delmarcel* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2004), 140–141.

⁴ Raf Vanhoren, “Tapisseries bruxelloises d’après les modèles de Charles Le Brun: l’Histoire d’Alexandre le Grand”, in *Cahiers du Patrimoine, La tapisserie au XVIIe siècle et les collections européennes: Acts du colloque international de Chambord, 18 et 19 octobre 1996* (Paris: Éditions du patrimoine, 1999). See also Koenraad Brosens, *A contextual study of Brussels tapestry, 1670-1770: the dye works and tapestry workshop of Urbanus Leyniers (1674-1747)*, (Brussels: Paleis der Academien, 2004), 81.

⁵ Vanhoren, *Tapisseries bruxelloises*, 63. Brosens has located records that show that the set of cartoons sold for 110 guilders, which was less than the 200 obtained for the cartoons of *The Story of Decius Mus* (designed by Peter Paul Rubens), but nevertheless a high price, which showed the value of the designs at that time. Brosens, *A contextual study of Brussels tapestry*, 44.

⁶ Jean Vittet, “L’Histoire d’Alexandre sur les métiers des Gobelins: Nouvelle chronologie des tissages”, in Collections du Mobilier national, *La Tenture de l’Histoire d’Alexandre le Grand* (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 2008), 108.

⁷ Brosens, in his comprehensive study of the Leyniers workshop, emphasizes the complex web of social and commercial relationships that existed between Flemish weavers in Brussels (and sometimes extending to Antwerp and Oudenaarde) at the end of the seventeenth century and into the eighteenth century. (Brosens, *A contextual study of Brussels tapestry*.) Based on the interrelationships between Brussels weavers, the six workshops listed by Vanhoren as being involved in the production of replicas of *The Story of Alexander* can be reduced to three or four distinct multi-generational family entities.

(Delmarcel, *Flemish Tapestry*, 362-370. See also Brosens, *A contextual study of Brussels Tapestry*, 93; and Vanhoren, *Tapisseries bruxelloises*, 62.) These entities, as well as the workshops responsible for the eight sets of replicas identified by de Meûter, were supplied by only three designers: Lodewijck van Schoor; Pieter Ijkens; and Jacobus van der Heyden. (Brosens, *A contextual study of Brussels Tapestry*, 95. See also Bapasola, *Threads of History*, 45.)

For example, Delmarcel writes that Jasper van der Borghht married the daughter of Jan-Frans Van den Hecke (Delmarcel, *Flemish Tapestry*, 362-370), which would provide a strong family connection. Therefore, Jan-Frans van der Borghht could have been both the grandson and the godson of Jan-Frans van den Hecke. Either way, the links between these two workshops were sufficiently strong to support the hypothesis that they collaborated and may have shared designs for *The Story of Alexander*. Further, Jan-Frans Van der Borghht was the godson of Jan-Frans Van den Hecke, and could have collaborated with the Van den Hecke workshop for the set of replicas he produced (currently in the Brussels City Hall), or borrowed cartoons from that workshop, although there is no evidence on this point.

What the foregoing demonstrates is that although it is possible that as many as twenty-one sets of replicas of *The Story of Alexander* based on the designs by Le Brun were made, these replicas came from very a very limited number of design sources and relatively few production centers. A high degree of similarity between the replicas themselves, therefore, is to be expected.

⁸ There are several instances where individual tapestries from *The Story of Alexander* have been noted in auction sales catalogues. However, the lack of supporting information regarding these tapestries makes it difficult to include them in this study. For example, it is unclear how many times the same tapestry may have been offered for sale. I have also found that, often, the tapestries were simply described as “Gobelins tapestries”, which clearly could not have been the case. Ingrid de Meûter as similarly noted tapestries have been offered for sale at auction, but she also provides very little information. See De Meûter, *Pieter Spierinck*, 150-151 (footnote 64).

⁹ Guy Delmarcel, *Flemish Tapestry*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1999), 362-370.

¹⁰ Vanhoren, *Tapisseries bruxelloises*, 62.

¹¹ W.E.F.T.I.D., accessed several times between January 2016 and March 24, 2016. This has also been confirmed by personal communications with Mary Saunders, curator at the Harvard Club (January 2016). Unfortunately, Harvard Hall, where the tapestries normally hang, is undergoing renovations, and it was not possible to view the tapestries, which are stored offsite. In addition to documentation prepared by French & Co. in 1944 at the time of the sale of the tapestries to the Lorillard family, the *Bulletin of the Harvard Club of New York City*, dated June, 1986, at page 6 contains a description of the tapestries, and a diagram of the order in which the tapestries hang.

¹² Although neither set has been attributed to a particular workshop, Ingrid De Meûter (who has personally examined them) attributes their design to Pieter Ijkens, from whom dealer Nicolaas Naulaerts ordered cartoons in 1689. Based on the attribution made by French & Co. at the time of the sale of the tapestries to the Lorillard family, in 1944. According Mary

Saunders (curator, Harvard Club), this attribution has not been disturbed. The most recent consideration of the tapestries has been by Ingrid de Meûter. (Personal communication from Mary Saunders (curator, Harvard Club), January 2016.) See also De Meûter, *Pieter Spierinckx*, 140–141.

Based on her review of primary sources, De Meûter confirms that Ijkens was specifically instructed to rely upon the engravings of Le Brun's *Alexander* designs (to be provided to him by Naulaerts) and given a short timeframe within which to prepare the cartoons. (De Meûter, *Pieter Spierinckx*, 140–141.) Interestingly, it appears as though Naulaerts acquired at least one set of designs for *The Story of Alexander* before he commissioned the designs from Pieter Ijkens. At the time of his death, Jan II Leyniers (a Brussels workshop master not involved in the production of replicas of *The Story of Alexander*) found himself indebted to Naulaerts, and his widow settled his debt in part in 1687 by transferring to him designs for *The Story of Alexander*. These were valued at the time at 921 guilders, a low price in Brosens' opinion, and a sign that "it is clear that the Alexander designs were valued low in 1686". This conclusion is counterintuitive: if the designs were valued low, it could be either because there were several versions of the designs available in Brussels, or because the popularity of the designs was waning. Both of these propositions stand in sharp contradiction with the commission of additional cartoons by Ijkens in 1689 by Naulaerts, and the fact that a majority of replicas were produced after 1686. A more compelling interpretation is that Naulaerts already had some designs for *The Story of Alexander* from van Schoor, and therefore did not value those provided by the Leyniers widow as much. (Brosens, *A contextual study of Brussels tapestry*, 60 and 133-176.)

The tapestries in the collection of the Harvard Club are dated to 1725, while those in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art are dated to 1700-1735. De Meûter, *Pieter Spierinckx*, 140–141. See also Edith A. Standen, *European Post-Medieval Tapestries and Related Hangings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, Vol. 1 (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1985), 231.

¹³ Including the twelve documented by Vanhoren; the set in Blenheim Palace, documented by Bapasola; and three sets documented by Ingrid De Meûter, namely those of the Harvard Club, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the single tapestry in the Provand's Lordship, in Glasgow, which is of *The Family of Darius*.

¹⁴ Alternatively, it may be that the cartoon was produced based on Gérard Édelinck's 1661 engraving, which was in the same sense as the painting, but that the designer failed to reverse the image to take into account that the tapestries would be woven on low-warp loom, as was the norm in Flanders.

¹⁵ According to Vanhoren, the tapestry measures 4.15 x 6.45 m (Vanhoren, *Tapisseries bruxelloises*, 65), which is approximately the same dimension as *The Family of Darius* in Skokloster Castle, which is 4.20 x 6.89 m (http://emuseumplus.lsh.se/eMuseumPlus?service=RedirectService&sp=Scollection&sp=SfieldValue&sp=0&sp=3&sp=3&sp=Slightbox_4x5&sp=0&sp=Sdetail&sp=0&sp=F).

¹⁶ Bremer-David, *Woven Gold*, 53.

¹⁷ See for example a memorandum written by Jan Jans, master weaver at the Gobelins, which sets out the price of tapestry depending on whether the tapestry includes figures, or

landscapes. The same principles applied to weaving workshops in Flanders. (Jan Jans: – 1692, *Mémoire relative aux tapisseries de haute-lisse produites par la Manufacture des Gobelins entre 1662 et 1691*, Archives Nationales (France), O¹ 2040/A.)

¹⁸ The tapestry does not have any borders, and no weaver’s mark is present. Standen dated this tapestry to 1700-1735, and believed it to be Flemish. (Standen, *European Post-Medieval Tapestries*, 231.) Unfortunately, the tapestry is in a rather poor state: its colors are faded, and a significant amount of dirt has accumulated over time. Further, the structure of the tapestry is damaged, and there are significant areas of exposed warp. Based on first hand observations and discussions with Dr. Elizabeth Cleland and conservator Olha Yarema-Wynar, it would appear that the tapestry is a fragment, due to the manner in which the edges have been sown, as well as due to the rather odd overall composition. The tapestry also exhibits several areas of repair.

¹⁹ De Meûter, *Pieter Spierinckx*, 140–142.

²⁰ As noted on page 35, this particular print was reproduced in large scale by Bernard Picart in Amsterdam in 1717, which would have been too late for Judocus de Vos to rely on his publication. Rather, de Vos must have located a print of *The Battle of Porus* from another set of prints that circulated even before Picart went to work.

²¹ Judocus de Vos is believed to have apprenticed at the Gobelins, returning to Brussels around 1684 (Bapasola, *Threads of History*, 30), which means that he may have seen the original tapestries on the looms, and even worked on them. It is somewhat ironic, in these circumstances, that he would take considerable license with the design of *The Story of Alexander*, when compared to the weavers who had only ever seen the engravings.

²² Bapasola, *Threads of History*, 47.

²³ H.C. Marillier, *Hampton Court Palace*, 28.

²⁴ Brosens, *A contextual study of Brussels tapestry*, 85.

²⁵ Bremer-David, *Woven Gold*, 101.

²⁶ Bapasola, *Threads of History*, 38.

²⁷ W.E.F.T.I.D.; See also H.C. Marillier, *Hampton Court Palace*, 28; and information provided on the collections database of Skokloster Castle (http://emuseumplus.lsh.se/eMuseumPlus?service=RedirectService&sp=Scollection&sp=SfieldValue&sp=0&sp=3&sp=3&sp=Slightbox_4x5&sp=0&sp=Sdetail&sp=0&sp=F).

²⁸ The only information we have with respect to the commission to Ijkens from Naulaerts was that he was to prepare designs for a tapestry of *The Story of Alexander*, based on the designs by Le Brun. De Meûter, *Pieter Spierinckx*, 140–142.

²⁹ Thomas P. Campbell, “Continuity and Change in Tapestry Use and Design, 1680-1720”, in *Tapestry in the Baroque*, *supra*, 491-507.

³⁰ Louis Marchesano, and Christian Michel, *Printing the Grand Manner: Charles Le Brun and Monumental Prints in the Age of Louis XIV* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2010), 22.

Chapter 4 – Le Brun’s reputation and its significance, as seen through the replicas of *The Triumphs of Alexander*

The copying and dissemination of Le Brun’s *Alexander* designs for paintings through prints and tapestries served as tools of propaganda for Louis XIV and his Court, by reinforcing again and again the connection between the King and Alexander. Through the dissemination of the designs, however, Le Brun also saw his reputation expanded: sumptuous tapestries were woven at the Gobelins, and were displayed on special occasions, as well as offered as lavish diplomatic gifts; hundreds of re-weavings based on his designs were produced at Aubusson and Felletin, for more than half a century; his name appeared on prints that were reproduced in multiples for decades, widely disseminated, collected, and even used as models for tapestry cartoons in Flanders. What has not been discussed to this point, however, is why were Le Brun’s *Alexander* designs so popular?

There are several factors which, alone or in combination, can provide an answer to this question: the state of tapestry design in Flanders at the end of the seventeenth century and during the early part of the eighteenth century; the Aubusson and Felletin replicas of *The Story of Alexander* and popular taste; the rise in the popularity of prints during the reign of Louis XIV and the corresponding increase in the interest of collecting these prints; the association of the designs with Louis XIV; and, last but not least, Le Brun’s reputation, as carefully crafted and controlled by the artist. These factors, which are discussed in turn below, provide support for the hypothesis that Le Brun’s reputation was at least partly responsible for the popularity of his designs.

The state of tapestry design in Flanders: embracing French-ness

The tapestry industry in Flanders at the end of the seventeenth century was but a shadow of its sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century self.¹ The workshops in existence in the earlier part of the eighteenth century and throughout experienced financial difficulties, and often relied on state support and subventions.² It became common for tapestry workshops to collaborate on larger sets, whether due to the production capacity of the workshops or as a result of the necessary capital outlay required to produce a large tapestry set.³ The re-utilization of tapestry cartoons, a practice in weaving workshops dating back at least to the fifteenth century,⁴ also would have assisted in lowering costs.⁵

Koenraad Brosens writes that the appetite for creating new designs in Brussels waned by 1650 and that, after 1660, workshops began to recycle older designs in order to fill up their sales catalogues.⁶ Indeed, in circumstances where the Brussels tapestry industry was suffering economically, it would have been easier and less expensive to simply re-use cartoons already on hand, rather than commission new designs. *The History of Alexander the Great* designed by Jacob Jordaens in 1628, provides a compelling example of an economically sustainable alternative to the *Alexander* designs by Le Brun.⁷ Jordaens, who was a watercolorist and tapestry designer, achieved a great reputation during his lifetime, being named the dean of the artists' guild by the City Council of Antwerp in 1621, and remaining "one of the most active and sought-after designers of tapestries in Antwerp through the 1660s".⁸ His designs for the *History of Alexander the Great* were comprised of eight individual pieces, four of which were original designs conceived by Jordaens;⁹

three other designs were adapted from the cartoons for earlier tapestries;¹⁰ and one design (of which two versions exist), that were not by Jordaens or his workshop.¹¹ According to Kristi Nelson, in selecting which discrete episodes from the life of Alexander the Great to celebrate, Jordaens relied on the account written by Quintus Curtius Rufus¹² – just as Charles Le Brun did slightly more than thirty years later.

Jordaens' *History of Alexander the Great* was woven at least nine times,¹³ and was purchased by patrons in the highest quarters, including Philip IV of Spain.¹⁴ Nelson has traced the production of Jordaens' series to three workshops based in Brussels: Jan Raes and Jacob II Geubels; Andries van den Dries; and Jan Leyniers.¹⁵

As was common practice at the time:

Tapestry weavers utilized Jordaens's cartoons in various ways. As the owners of cartoons, they frequently took liberties with the full-scale patterns and employed them in the manner they or a patron found desirable. Sometimes, they followed the models exactly if weaving a second, third, or fourth set...but in other instances, they departed from the original, interchanging a figure here and there...modifying a figure or parts of the composition...or altering the extent to which the complete cartoon was followed while making a tapestry...At times, an original series was extended with additional pieces, as occurred with Jordaens's *Proverbs in Tarragona*.¹⁶

It would have therefore been not only acceptable but also expected for tapestry workshops to re-use the cartoons from Jordaens' *The History of Alexander the Great* for years to come. Yet, this was not done once Le Brun's *Alexander* designs became available.

Brosens confirms that French tapestry designs were very popular in Flanders and that Le Brun's designs, in particular, "were warmly welcomed" in Brussels¹⁷ – a fact that certainly seems supported by Naulaerts' commission to Ijkens, which

specifically called for the reproduction of Le Brun's designs.¹⁸ Reinforcing the point, Brosens writes that: "The survey of [Lodewijck] van Schoor's designs for tapestry has made clear that, between 1680 and 1700, Brussels tapestry production oriented itself both iconographically and stylistically on contemporary French tapestry".¹⁹

The last workshop documented to have the Jordaens cartoons in its possession is Leyniers, an important family of weavers in Brussels between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries. Jan II Leyniers, at some point before 1686, came into possession of the *Alexander* designs by Le Brun,²⁰ although he did not produce a set of replicas.²¹ The fact that Leyniers, who had the cartoons for the *History of Alexander the Great* by Jordaens, would nevertheless incur the expense of acquiring Le Brun's *Alexander* designs supports the proposition that the designs by Le Brun were considered very highly, and not amenable to simply being imitated or approximated. The irony is that Vanhoren has pointed to an "undeniable parallelism" between Jordaens' *Alexander the Great and Hephaestion Consoling the Family of Darius* (Fig. 51) and Le Brun's *The Family of Darius*.²²

The beauty and sumptuousness of the tapestries produced at the Gobelins under the artistic direction of Charles Le Brun set a new standard for visual richness for the courts of Europe.²³ Le Brun's contribution to French style, as exemplified in *The Triumphs of Alexander*, has been described (among other things) as the "novel" invention of "arrangements that ordered the chaos of multiple vanishing points and hundreds of figures through the effects of carefully controlled light, shadow, and color";²⁴ and a combination of "serene frieze-like compositions and academic figures" and "diagonal compositions characterized by a *horror vacui* and muscular

figures depicted in twisted poses”.²⁵ When Le Brun painted *The Family of Darius*, his contemporaries considered it as Le Brun’s “most complex and artistically demanding work by that time”.²⁶ The painting was “a manifesto that brought together reflections that were artistic, theoretical, political, philosophical, and scientific, and proclaimed resolutely the birth of a new era in art history that would see France supersede Italy as leader.”²⁷ Le Brun had a profound influence on French art, and *The Triumphs of Alexander* marked the debut of a new French style for tapestries, one characterized as giving emphasis to the creation of a narrative in which the figures are depicted in an “airy background”, with landscape and architectural features.²⁸ From this perspective, it is not surprising that the struggling Flemish workshops would have wanted to imitate Le Brun’s style.

Popular Taste: The Aubusson and Felletin replicas of *The Story of Alexander*

The majority of the replicas produced by Aubusson and Felletin date from 1700 to 1750, although we know that they were woven from slightly earlier, and until 1765.²⁹ This time period coincides approximately with the decline in the popularity of tapestries depicting historical subjects. After the death of Louis XIV, in particular, the taste for historical subject matters and heavy Baroque allegories was replaced with a taste for lighter, rococo designs,³⁰ such as the *Grotesques* series designed by Jean-Baptiste Monnoyer (often referred to as the Bérain *Grotesques*), as well as *The Story of the Emperor of China*, designed jointly by Jean-Baptiste Belin de Fontenay at Beauvais,³¹ the peasant and country life scenes of David Teniers,³² and the designs of Jan van Orley.³³ It was these designs that contributed to the establishment of a “neo-Baroque” style in Brussels between 1700 and 1715.³⁴ Even

Judocus de Vos, shortly after delivering *The Story of Alexander* and *The Victories of the Duke of Marlborough* to Blenheim Palace, was engaged in weaving sets of *Chinoiseries* by 1717.³⁵

The fondness for tapestries illustrating historical narratives experienced a serious decline through the first quarter of the eighteenth century and into the middle of the century, when most of the Aubusson and Felletin replicas are dated.³⁶ Although tapestries illustrating scenes drawn from history were not abandoned altogether³⁷ and remained in use for formal occasions and displayed in the state or parade rooms of the elite classes,³⁸ they no longer represented current taste. In private quarters, more decorative tapestries, such as the *Grotesques*, were favored. These practices and preferences remained in place (at least in the wealthier households that continued to collect tapestries) until the middle of the eighteenth century.³⁹

In light of the foregoing, the market for the Aubusson and Felletin replicas of *The Story of Alexander* should have decreased, as opposed to becoming one of the most popular series ever produced at the manufactures. The same analysis applies to the Flemish replicas, which were mostly produced from the end of the seventeenth century to 1735.⁴⁰ The popularity of the re-weavings, therefore, cannot be explained solely with respect to taste or their subject matter.

The rise in the popularity of prints during the reign of Louis XIV, and the corresponding increase in the interest of collecting

The extent to which Le Brun's *Alexander* designs were replicated and disseminated through prints is discussed in pages 31-37, and will not be repeated here. Rather, what must be considered, at this juncture, is the extent to which the

rise in the popularity of prints as an art form and increased desirability with collectors played a role in the popularity of Le Brun's *Alexander* designs.

In the seventeenth century, and particularly after 1670, the popularity of engravings increased dramatically in France, and abroad.⁴¹ The strong demand for French prints (described by Peter Fuhring as “tremendous”),⁴² in particular, was owing to their quality, as well as to the fact that French culture had become a point of reference for taste and luxury during the reign of Louis XIV.⁴³ This development was not limited to France, and the increase in popularity for French prints was a pan-European phenomenon.⁴⁴ Prints that reproduced collections of paintings were particularly popular, and were published in France with the *Cabinet du Roi* (in which *The Battles of Alexander* were included), but also in Austria and Venice.⁴⁵

Much as Henri IV had instituted a tariff on the importation of Flemish tapestries into France in order to encourage and protect the nascent French industry, so did Louis XIV impose a tariff on the importation of foreign prints in order to protect French engravers.⁴⁶ Predictably, other countries responded by imposing a tariff of the importation of French prints into their countries. This did not diminish the appeal of French prints abroad but, rather, resulted in German and Dutch engravers, amongst others, copying the French prints, and selling them without having to pay the increased tariffs (or the French engravers receiving royalties).⁴⁷

Prints were sold in the workshops of engravers, and in the specialized shops of print publishers and print sellers.⁴⁸ They were even sold at international commercial fairs, and by itinerant print sellers.⁴⁹ In addition to being widely

available, prints were also the most universal art form, in the sense that they could be acquired by collectors – serious or amateurs – regardless of rank; they could be purchased one at a time, making them affordable for most people; and they illustrated subjects ranging from religion, science, botany, allegories, history, and, of course, the celebration of the King.⁵⁰

These circumstances were obviously extremely favorable to the dissemination of Le Brun's *Alexander* designs, and they should not be discounted in accounting for their popularity.

The association of Le Brun's *Alexander* designs with Louis XIV

The period of production of most of the replicas (1680-1715) coincides with the height of the reign of Louis XIV, although the production would go on after his death. Leaving aside the circumstances that gave rise to the painting of *The Family of Darius*, the spirit that animated the creation of the cycle of paintings, as well as that of the engravings and the tapestries, was firmly rooted in political propaganda⁵¹ and the desire to fashion the identity of a young King in the image of the Macedonian hero. It is appropriate, then, to consider whether the popularity of Le Brun's *Alexander* designs can in fact be attributed to their association with Le Roi Soleil.

There is evidence to support the proposition that the popularity of Le Brun's *Alexander* designs derived from their association with Louis XIV in only one case, that of the commission by the Duke of Marlborough (discussed below). However, it is likely the case that several patrons acquired tapestries and prints because of the King, directly or indirectly: for example, one could expect that a middle-class

merchant might want to acquire the same set of prints that was given by the King to a foreign diplomat – not because the prints were after Le Brun, but because the merchant would be acquiring something that the King thought was sufficiently special to distribute as gifts to important people. Or else, a wealthy palace owner might want to acquire a set of tapestries like the one Louis XIV gave to the King of Denmark.

The commission placed by the Duke of Marlborough with the workshop of Judocus de Vos, through the intermediary of Antwerp dealer Naulaerts,⁵² provides an interesting case study of a situation where the appeal of Le Brun's *Alexander* designs was entirely related to the identity of Le Brun's patron, Louis XIV. The Duke of Marlborough was a British general who achieved tremendous success in the field during the War of the Spanish Succession. It was Marlborough (then known as John Churchill, not having yet been made Duke) who led the British to victory at the Battle of Blenheim in 1704. This battle was decisive in putting a stop to French ambitions with respect to the Spanish throne.⁵³ Although popular wisdom is that Louis XIV was the Duke's archenemy,⁵⁴ Robert Wellington suggests that, prior to the War of the Spanish Succession, the Duke may have had some admiration for the King, who had praised him when the Duke found on the French side during the Franco-Dutch wars.⁵⁵ After the Battle of Blenheim, Churchill was made Duke of Marlborough and a country house, Blenheim Palace, was built for him at public expense. The Duke of Marlborough decorated the Palace with several sets of tapestries, a taste Jeri Bapasola directly links to Louis XIV.⁵⁶ The first set of tapestries ordered by the Duke of Marlborough was *The Art of War*, designed by

Lambert de Hondt, a Flemish artist, and woven by Judocus de Vos.⁵⁷ The next commission by Marlborough included a set of *The Story of Alexander* after the designs by Le Brun. Marlborough was working with a Flemish firm, and we can assume that he was pleased with the work of Flemish designers, as *The Art of War* was by a Flemish designer, and the other set that was part of this second commission was by David Teniers, another Fleming. It would seem fair to assume, in the circumstances, that selecting Le Brun's *Alexander* designs was deliberate. Bapasola writes that the Duke of Marlborough "perhaps considered himself equally if not more worthy of comparison to Alexander than his nemesis, for whom this tapestry series had originally been designed." I suggest a slightly different, albeit compatible, interpretation: the Duke of Marlborough had defeated Louis XIV/Alexander, and the commission of the tapestry series was analogous to a hunting trophy: he had taken from Louis XIV his princely virtues, and the courage, self-restraint, magnanimity, and military genius associated with the great Macedonian King were now the Duke of Marlborough's to display. The appeal of Le Brun's *Alexander* designs, for the Duke of Marlborough, rested in their association with Louis XIV.

The power of the association with Louis XIV may also have played a part in the acquisition of the other set of *The Story of Alexander* replicas produced by Judocus de Vos, which is in Hampton Court Palace. The provenance for this set is described as having been purchased "by General Cadogan in Flanders in the reign of George I,"⁵⁸ which would appear to suggest that the commission was not the subject of extensive discussions, or could even have been acquired on the market, as it is

known that Judocus de Vos produced tapestries on speculation.⁵⁹ Still, it cannot be ruled out that the King of England entertained a competitive spirit towards Louis XIV of the sort that existed between François I^{er} and Henry VIII, and that he has to acquire the same set of *Alexander* tapestries as Louis XIV had.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, it is unlikely that the association between Louis XIV and Le Brun's *Alexander* designs can account for all of the designs' popularity. Thanks to the work of Colbert, the Petite Académie, and Le Brun, the complex iconographic program designed to aggrandize and immortalize Louis XIV was generally successful in creating positive associations between the French absolute monarch and Alexander the Great. The popularity of Louis XIV, however, waned as he engaged in successive wars, which proved costly both at home and abroad. By the second half of the eighteenth century (at which time the production of replicas had ceased), Alexander had overstayed his welcome – much as had the Royal House of Bourbon.⁶⁰ The lines from Quintus Curtius Rufus that had been conveniently omitted in 1661, when Le Brun painted *The Family of Darius* and presented Alexander as a paragon of magnanimity and self-restraint, seem more appropriate to the political climate that characterized the mid-eighteenth century:

[18] Had he been able to maintain this degree of moderation to the end of his life, I would certainly consider him to have enjoyed more good fortune than appeared to be his when he was emulating Father Liber's triumph on his victorious march through all the nations from the Hellespont right to the Ocean. [19] For then he would surely have overcome the defects he failed to overcome, his pride and his temper; he would have been reluctant to execute without trial men who had distinguished themselves in battle and had conquered so many nations along with him.⁶¹

Moreover, the period of active reinforcement of the association between Louis XIV and Alexander the Great ceased in 1670, when the *Petite Académie* determined that Louis XIV would be better represented by contemporary subjects – “Louis himself was The Great”.⁶² At that time, writes Pierre Vidal-Naquet, “There is a nationalistic turn that takes place, fracturing the “European conscientiousness”.”⁶³ Thus, it appears unlikely that, whether during the Franco-Dutch Wars (1672-1678) or the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714), what drove the production of replicas of Le Brun’s *Alexander* designs, whether for foreign or Flemish patrons, was the association of the designs with Louis XIV.⁶⁴

Furthermore, between 1676 and 1765 (the period that encompasses the production of the Flemish replicas, the Aubusson and Felletin replicas, and most of the prints), rather than being associated with Louis XIV, Le Brun’s *The Story of Alexander* and, in particular, *The Family of Darius* – the most popular episode in the cycle and the most frequently copied – was more likely to be associated with French culture than with Louis XIV.⁶⁵ This fact lessens the probability that the popularity of Le Brun’s *Alexander* designs was entirely or even mostly related to the association between Louis XIV and the designs or subject matter.

Charles Le Brun: Courtier, artist, academic, and savvy promoter

By the time weaving workshops and publishers were producing replicas of Le Brun’s *Alexander* designs, Le Brun was already an accomplished painter, academic, and courtier. He had circulated in the most influential artistic circles in France and in Rome, and his design for the tapestry series of *The Story of Meleager* was well known across Europe. Lauded in vernacular publications such as the

Mercure Galant and in poetry,⁶⁶ Le Brun benefited from a favorable reputation, which I suggest contributed to the popularity of his *Alexander* designs, as well as to the voluminous copies generated from them. I further suggest that Le Brun was an active participant in the dissemination of his works, and was at least partly responsible for creating the circumstances that gave rise to the copying of his *Alexander* designs.

The hypothesis posited above rests on a number of facts, including: Le Brun seeking a Privilege from the King with respect to the reproduction of his works in 1656, shortly after he had begun working at the Louvre, but before he officially began his career as First Painter to the King; Le Brun relying on this Privilege to self-publish two engravings from *The Story of Constantine – The Battle at the Milvian Bridge* and *The Triumph of Constantine*,⁶⁷ which were inspired by the frescoes by Giulio Romano (but in the time of Le Brun believed to be by Raphael – whom Le Brun claimed as a master⁶⁸) in the stanza di Raffaello at the Vatican;⁶⁹ the inclusion of an inscription attributing the *Alexander* designs to Le Brun on the prints generated from the engravings he supervised; Le Brun likely played a hand in having Colbert include *The Battles of Alexander* in the *Cabinet du Roi*; and his self-referential nature as an artist, as seen for example in some of the most important tapestry designs he created for the King.

Most of these points have been discussed extensively in earlier pages, but some additional discussion is warranted.

Le Brun's involvement and interest in reproduction

Le Brun's brother and brother-in-law were engravers.⁷⁰ Not only was he long since attuned to the power of prints and reproductions, Le Brun had already had a taste of the possibilities engendered by the reproduction of his works in Flanders during the 1660s and 1670s. It was then that the cartoons for *The Story of Meleager*, which had been commissioned by Valdor, had been leased to Flemish workshops, which included the workshops of Gerard Peemans and Jan II Leyniers.⁷¹ It is probable that, over time, Le Brun became aware of the pan-European popularity his designs had achieved, and sought to capitalize on his growing reputation,⁷² in part by encouraging the reproduction of his works through prints by retaining the best engravers at the Gobelins to do so, Édelinck and Audran.

Le Brun was a particularly strong supporter of engravers, and encouraged them tremendously. It is not coincidental that the first engravers to join the Académie were engravers of Le Brun's works, or those of his friends and allies.⁷³ Henri Jouin wrote that engravers should have been thankful to their champion.⁷⁴ Of course, the reverse is at least as true: Jouin counted ten volumes of engravings after Le Brun's designs in the *Cabinet des Estampes* which, according to him, was unlikely to represent the complete oeuvre, as at least forty engravers had, overtime, dutifully replicated the work of the master.⁷⁵

The Battles of Alexander were engraved more than any other Gobelins series.⁷⁶ This was an expensive endeavor, and resulted in the Crown offering the prints for sale to the public. As director of the Gobelins, Le Brun would have been in a position to exercise influence on the production of the manufacture and, at a

minimum, encourage Colbert in his decision to produce prints in high volumes. Knowing his ambition, his position within the Académie, and his proclivity for the limelight, this was more than likely the case. Had Colbert not relied on Le Brun in considerable measure and given Le Brun a fair amount of power, it would not have been necessary for Le Brun to approve the engraving of the completed paintings from *The Triumphs of Alexander* in 1670.⁷⁷ Effectively, Le Brun was likely in a position to influence the wide dissemination of his *Alexander* designs through print, much of it at the expense of the Crown.⁷⁸

A self-referential artist

The motivation that I ascribe to Le Brun above is consistent with his self-referential nature as an artist, as seen for example with respect to the two monumental narrative tapestry series he designed for the King after *The Story of Alexander*, namely *The History of the King* and *The Royal Residences* (or *The Months*).⁷⁹

The Visit of Louis XIV (Fig. 52), which belongs to *The History of the King* series, depicts a visit of the King to the Gobelins on October 15, 1667. The tapestry shows the King and his entourage standing in the upper left corner of the composition, observing artisans busily carrying and installing various luxurious objects designed at the Gobelins, such as a silver brazier, an inlaid table, and a rug. A close examination of this tapestry demonstrates that Le Brun was highly preoccupied with his status and ranking as an artist, and thought of himself as a designer of influence in the evolution of French design. This is evident in the consideration of three elements of the tapestry: Le Brun has pictured himself as standing to the right

of the King; although not explicitly illustrated, the artisans are directed by Le Brun and carrying objects designed by him; and, conspicuously, an image of *The Passage of The River Granicus* is represented in the upper center portion of the composition. Arguably, the tapestry is as much about Le Brun as it is about Louis XIV.

The same can be said about *The Royal Residences*, which is a series of twelve tapestries, each depicting a Royal Palace, seen through a balustrade that frames the composition.⁸⁰ Against the balustrade rest various objects, such as metalworks, rugs, and musical instruments (for example, see Fig. 73). Although less overtly self-referential, *The Royal Residences* are about displaying the high quality of the luxurious goods produced by the Gobelins – starting with the tapestries themselves, and continuing with the decoration of the palaces themselves, and the luxury objects shown in the foreground, against the balustrade. Inasmuch as Le Brun's name, in his time, was synonymous with the Gobelins, the tapestries are therefore very much about him and his artistic identity and reputation.

Summary: A successful strategy by Le Brun

It is undeniable that Le Brun enjoyed the public support of Colbert and the King from the 1660s to at least 1683, the year of Colbert's death. This probably accounts for some the success of his *Alexander* designs. In addition, however, the foregoing supports the hypothesis that Le Brun also developed a reputation that enabled him to be immensely successful in his own right, as opposed to only because of his association with the King.

The circumstances of the production of some of the Flemish replicas provides yet another example in support of this proposition. Gerard Peemans, who had

woven *The Story of Meleager*, wove two sets of *The Story of Alexander* based on designs by Le Brun; Leyniers, who had woven multiple sets of *The Story of Meleager*, acquired Le Brun's *Alexander* designs, although he never produce tapestries from them. It is not unlikely that these two weavers understood the value of Le Brun's reputation, and believed they could profit from producing Le Brun's designs – just as Le Brun understood the benefits that could accrue to his career through the self-directed reproduction and dissemination of his designs.

Le Brun, conscious of his reputation and desirous to expand it further, played an active role in encouraging and facilitating the wide dissemination of high quality engravings of his *Alexander* designs, thereby increasing their popularity and desirability. He harnessed the opportunity presented by the dissemination and popularization of *The Triumphs of Alexander* by the Court of Louis XIV as a coordinated effort made for political purposes to his advantage, and he expanded his reputation as a master and become part of the lexicon of revered artists, much as Raphael and Poussin, his proclaimed masters.⁸¹ The fact that the *Alexander* designs were by Le Brun was more than likely a factor in their enormous popularity.

NOTES

¹ Guy Delmarcel, *Flemish Tapestry* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1999), 18.

² Delmarcel, *Flemish Tapestry*, 214-220.

³ Delmarcel, *Flemish Tapestry*, 219.

⁴ Kristi Nelson, *Jacob Jordaens: Design for Tapestry* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1998), 14–15.

⁵ Raf Vanhoren, “Tapisseries bruxelloises d’apres les modeles de Charles Le Brun: l’Histoire d’Alexandre le Grand”, in *Cahiers du Patrimoine, La tapisserie au XVIIe siècle et les collections européennes: Acts du colloque international de Chambord, 18 et 19 octobre 1996* (Paris: Éditions du patrimoine, 1999), 61.

⁶ Koenraad Brosens, *A contextual study of Brussels tapestry, 1670-1770: the dye works and tapestry workshop of Urbanus Leyniers (1674-1747)*, (Brussel : Paleis der Academien, 2004), 81.

⁷ Nelson, *Jacob Jordaens*, 6. The *History of Alexander the Great* was the first tapestry series designed by Jordaens, although the patron for whom the work was undertaken is unknown.

⁸ Nelson, *Jacob Jordaens*, 3, 6.

⁹ *Alexander the Great Saved from Drowning in the River Cydnus; Alexander Wounded in the Thigh at the Battle of Issus; Alexander the Great and Hephaestion Consoling the Family of Darius; and Alexander the Great and the Wife of Spitamenes*. Nelson, *Jacob Jordaens*, 19.

¹⁰ *Alexander the Great Receiving the Surrender of a City; Alexander the Great Victorious, Presented with Arms, and Adored as a God by his People; and Alexander the Great Dispatching Troops for Battle*. The design for *Alexander the Great Receiving the Surrender of a City* was revised by Jordaens; the design for *Alexander the Great Victorious, Presented with Arms, and Adored as a God by his People* was revised in part by Jordaens, and in part by an assistant; and the design for *Alexander the Great Dispatching Troops for Battle* bears none of the marks of Jordaens or his workshop. Nelson, *Jacob Jordaens*, 19-20.

¹¹ *Alexander the Great Slaying the Lion*. Nelson, *Jacob Jordaens*, 19-20.

¹² Nelson, *Jacob Jordaens*, 22.

¹³ Nelson, *Jacob Jordaens*, 19.

¹⁴ Guy Delmarcel, “Tapestry in the Spanish Netherlands, 1625-60”, in Campbell, Thomas P., Editor, *Tapestry in the Baroque: Threads of Splendor* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 203.

¹⁵ Nelson, *Jacob Jordaens*, 12, 21.

¹⁶ Nelson, *Jacob Jordaens*, 14.

¹⁷ Brosens, *A contextual study of Brussels tapestry*, 83.

¹⁸ See chapter 3, footnote 33.

¹⁹ Brosens, *A contextual study of Brussels tapestry*, 94.

²⁰ Brosens, *A contextual study of Brussels tapestry*. These designs were transferred to the firm of Naulaerts in partial settlement of a debt owed by Leyniers at the time of his death in 1686. See footnote 7 in chapter 3 for more details.

²¹ A review of the sales catalogue for the Leyniers (-Reydams) workshop for the years 1685-1735, compiled by Brosens, confirms that Leyniers did not weave *The Story of Alexander*. See Brosens, *A contextual study of Brussels tapestry*, 133-176.

²² Vanhoren, *Tapisseries bruxelloises*, 67.

²³ Thomas P. Campbell, "Continuity and Change in Tapestry Use and Design, 1680-1720", in *Tapestry in the Baroque*, *supra*, 491.

²⁴ Charissa Bremer-David, *Woven Gold: Tapestries of Louis XIV* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2015), 102.

²⁵ Brosens, *A contextual study of Brussels tapestry*, 86.

²⁶ Florian Knothe, "The Battle of the Granicus", catalogue entry no. 40 in *Tapestry in the Baroque*, *supra*, 385.

²⁷ Kirchner, *Les Reines de Perse*, 85. "Les Reines de Perse était pourtant bien davantage que le chef-d'oeuvre d'un peintre, symbole de sa réussite personnelle. Le tableau était au sens moderne du terme un "manifeste", qui alliant reflexions artistiques, théoriques, politiques, philosophiques et scientifiques, et proclamait résolument l'avènement d'une nouvelle ère de l'histoire de l'art qui allait voir la France supplanter l'Italie dans son rôle de chef de file, et Paris éclipser Rome dans sa position de métropole culturelle majeure." Translation by Author.

²⁸ Brosens, *A contextual study of Brussels tapestry*, 85.

²⁹ See p. 37.

³⁰ Campbell, *Continuity and change*, 495-496.

³¹ Charissa Bremer-David, "Manufacture Royale de Tapisseries de Beauvais, 1664-1715", in *Tapestry in the Baroque*, *supra*, 412. Although the Beauvais Grotesques sets were immensely popular, they were only woven at the Gobelins, and not copied (or, at least, literally copied) in the same manner as *The Story of Alexander*. An explanation for this is that the manufacture benefited from special protection from the King against unauthorized copying.

³² Brosens, *Flemish production*, 444-445.

³³ Vanhoren, *Tapisseries bruxelloises*, 63.

³⁴ Brosens, *Flemish production*, 448. Ironically, this stylistic change can be attributed in part to the death of Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Le Brun's protector at the Gobelins, in 1683. After that time, the Gobelins focused on re-weaving designs from old masters, such as the Grotesques

by Raphael. Campbell, *Continuity and change*, 502. For a comprehensive discussion of these re-weavings at the Gobelins and their implications, see Pascal-François Bertrand, *La Peinture Tissée: Théorie de l'art et tapisseries des Gobelins sous Louis XIV* (Rennes, France: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2005).

³⁵ Brosens, *Flemish production*, 449.

³⁶ See chapter 3.

³⁷ Not entirely surprisingly, *The Family of Darius, The Defeat of Porus, and Triumphal Entry into Babylon* woven at the Gobelins hung in the apartment of Napoleon I in the Tuileries, from his ascent to power until 1808. [Jean Vittet, "L'Histoire d'Alexandre sur les métiers des Gobelins: Nouvelle chronologie des tissages", in Collections du Mobilier national, *La Tenture de l'Histoire d'Alexandre le Grand* (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 2008), 77.

³⁸ Campbell, *Continuity and change*, 495.

³⁹ Campbell, *Continuity and change*, 504.

⁴⁰ See chapter 3.

⁴¹ Henry Jouin, *Charles Le Brun et les Arts Sous Louis XIV: Le Premier Peintre: Sa Vie, son Oeuvre, ses Ecrits, ses Contemporains, son Influence, D'Après le Manuscrit de Nivelon et de Nombreuses Pièces Inédites* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1888), 429. For a modern reference, see Peter Fuhring, "Publishers, Sellers, and the Market", in Peter Fuhring, Louis Marchesano, Rémi Mathis, and Vanessa Selbach, editors, *A Kingdom of Images: French Prints in the age of Louis XIV, 1660-1715* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2015), 30.

⁴² Peter Fuhring, *Publishers, Sellers, and the Market*, 31.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 33.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 34.

⁵⁰ Véronique Meyer, "Collectors and Collecting Prints", in *A Kingdom of Images, supra*, 36-37.

⁵¹ See Florian Knothe, "Tapestry as a Medium of Propaganda at the Court of Louis XIV: Display and Audience", in Thomas P. Campbell and Elizabeth A.H. Cleland, Editors, *Tapestry in the Baroque: New Aspects of Production and Patronage*, (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 342-355.

⁵² For more details on the commission and the resulting replicas, see chapter 3, footnote 33.

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- ⁵³ Jeri Bapasola provides a helpful summary of the history of the War of the Spanish Succession, and of the role of the Duke of Marlborough in it. Jeri Bapasola, *Threads of History: The Tapestries at Blenheim Palace* (Lydney, UK: Lightmoor Press, 2005), 10–15.
- ⁵⁴ Bapasola, *Threads of History*, 41. See also <http://www.blenheimpalace.com/attractions-and-events/palace/portraits/> (accessed April 8, 2016).
- ⁵⁵ As expressed by Dr. Robert Wellington when delivering the paper “Sun King to Moon King” at the Bard Graduate Center, New York, on January 26, 2016.
- ⁵⁶ Bapasola, *Threads of History*, 17.
- ⁵⁷ Bapasola, *Threads of History*, 33.
- ⁵⁸ H.C. Marillier, *The Tapestries at Hampton Court Palace* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1962), 28.
- ⁵⁹ Koenraad Brosens, “Flemish Production, 1660-1715”, in *Tapestry in the Baroque, supra*, 452.
- ⁶⁰ In 1781, French scholar Nicolas Beauzée, secretary to count d’Artois (the brother of Louis XVI), wrote that Alexander the Great “had no other motive than his own vanity, no right on his side other than what he could seize with his sword, no rule other than that dictated by his passions, and no virtue other than a violent and often thoughtless daring.” (Quoted in Wilson-Chevalier, *Alexander the Great at Fontainebleau*, 25.)
- ⁶¹ Quintus Curtius Rufus, *The History of Alexander* (London: Penguin Books, 2004), Book Three, 12 [18]–[19].
- ⁶² Pierre Vidal-Naquet, “Introduction: Les Alexandres”, in Grell, Chantal, and Christian Michel, *L’Ecole des Princes ou Alexandre Disgracié: Essai sur la mythologie monarchique de la France absolutist* (Paris: Société d’Edition “Les Belles Lettres”, 1988), 8.
- ⁶³ Vidal-Naquet, *Les Alexandres*, 8.
- ⁶⁴ Of course, Louis XIV was not the only monarch to associate himself with Alexander the Great. His Grandson, Philip V of Spain, did the same beginning in 1735, as did Frederick of Prussia in the 1740s, and Tsar Alexander II in the late eighteenth century. Only associations with Louis XIV are considered here, largely as a result of the timing of the replicas.
- ⁶⁵ Thomas Kirchner, *Les Reines de Perse aux pieds d’Alexandre de Charles Le Brun: Tableau-manifeste de l’art français du XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Éditions de la maison des sciences de l’homme, 2013), 111.
- ⁶⁶ Gareau reproduces several of the poems written in honor of Le Brun, including those by Jean de La Fontaine, Loret, and Père Étienne Carneau, and others. Michel Gareau, *Charles Le Brun: First Painter to King Louis XIV* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1992).
- ⁶⁷ Louis Marchesano, and Christian Michel, *Printing the Grand Manner: Charles Le Brun and Monumental Prints in the Age of Louis XIV* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2010), 1.

⁶⁸ André Félibien, *Conférences de l'Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture, pendant l'année 1667* (Paris: Frederic Leonard, Imprimeur ordinaire du Roy, 1755), 77-78. In 1667, Le Brun, in a speech before the Académie, said that his masters were Poussin and Raphael. However, the chronology reveals that he spent his formative years with Perrier and Vouët, as opposed to Poussin. Furthermore, Poussin engaged in painting only, and was not involved in the design of tapestry or in art of any other media. Poussin was not a particularly skilled draughtsman, and disliked working on very large canvasses, which stands in contrast to the work done by Le Brun, and undermines the claim that Poussin was in fact Le Brun's master.

⁶⁹ Prat, *Le Dessin Français*, 486-487. On this point, see also Bremer-David, *Woven Gold*, 20.

⁷⁰ Maxime Préaud, "Printmaking under Louis XIV", in *A Kingdom of Images, supra*, 12.

⁷¹ Brosens, *Flemish production*, 443.

⁷² Consistent with this hypothesis, Charissa Bremer-David writes that "Le Brun personally supervised the creation and execution of the etched and engraved series to his exacting standards and, in doing so, not only strictly controlled the diffusion of the designs to a much wider audience but also elevated the artistic quality of the printed medium. Critical acclaim for these prints contributed to the enduring prestige of Le Brun's great *Alexander* cycle, and their circulation generated new editions of the tapestry series in the weaving workshops of Aubusson and Brussels." Bremer-David, *Woven Gold*, 103.

⁷³ Maxime Préaud, "Printmaking under Louis XIV", in Peter Fuhring, Louis Marchesano, Rémi Mathis, and Vanessa Selbach, editors, *A Kingdom of Images: French Prints in the age of Louis XIV, 1660-1715* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2015), 12.

⁷⁴ Jouin, *Charles Le Brun*, 429.

⁷⁵ Jouin, *Charles Le Brun*, 430.

⁷⁶ Knothe, *The Battle of the River Granicus*, 371.

⁷⁷ See page 33.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ To this, of course, we could add the portrait of Le Brun executed by Nicolas de Largillière but undoubtedly approved by Le Brun, which shows Le Brun surrounded by his designs, including a print of *The Family of Darius* (Nicolas de Largillière (French, 1656-1746), *Charles Le Brun* (1619-1690), 1683-86, oil on canvas, 232 x 187 cm, Musée du Louvre).

⁸⁰ Bremer-David, *Woven Gold*, 25.

⁸¹ André Félibien, *Conférences de l'Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture, pendant l'année 1667* (Paris: Frederic Leonard, Imprimeur ordinaire du Roy, 1755), 77-78. In 1667, Le Brun, in a speech before the Académie, said that his masters were Poussin and Raphael. However, the chronology reveals that he spent his formative years with Perrier and Vouët, as opposed to Poussin. Furthermore, Poussin engaged in painting only, and was not involved in the design of tapestry or in art of any other media. Poussin was not a

particularly skilled draughtsman, and disliked working on very large canvasses, which stands in contrast to the work done by Le Brun, and undermines the claim that Poussin was in fact Le Brun's master.

Conclusion

Although sometimes referred to as a *célèbre oublié*, it is important to remember that the label is largely the product of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries' distaste for the "grand manner" with which Le Brun became synonymous.¹ It is also the case that a complete inventory of his drawings, for example, was not undertaken until 1912 and 1913 when Pierre Guiffrey and Jean Marcel published a summary inventory of them. A definitive catalogue of Le Brun's drawings and their relationship with finished works did not come until 2000, when Lydia Beauvais produced a comprehensive inventory, accounting for over three thousand cartoons, sheets, and fragments.² Therefore, the first point of this thesis, which has been made by several others (particularly in the past decade or so), is that Le Brun was an exceptionally talented designer and painter, appreciated in his time, and revered across Europe.

A consideration of *The Triumphs of Alexander* and the replicas generated based on the paintings permits a multi-dimensional examination of Le Brun as an artist and director of the Gobelins. It has shown an individual who was a talented painter and draughtsman, but could also recognize and foster talent in other painters, weavers, and engravers. The enormous success of *The Triumphs of Alexander* cannot be truly appreciated by considering Le Brun's designs for a single media. To the extent that this thesis considers Le Brun's *Alexander* designs across media, across geographic boundaries, and within their socio-economic context, it provides a new approach to the consideration of Le Brun's reputation, and the

extent to which that reputation was incidental to his service for Louis XIV, or intentionally crafted by him.

The consideration of the printed and woven replicas of *The Triumphs of Alexander* undertaken here demonstrates that Le Brun's reputation is inextricable from his service to Louis XIV, and benefited immensely from the conditions that existed with respect to tapestry design in Brussels at the end of the seventeenth century and during the eighteenth century, and from the tremendous demand and market for French prints that existed during the reign of Louis XIV. It also makes a compelling case for the argument that Le Brun was not a passive actor when it came to crafting and expanding his reputation.

The biography of Charles Le Brun confirms that he was not only a talented artist – he was also a very gifted courtier, a necessary ingredient in fulfilling his ambition. Le Brun displayed a deft intuition when it came to aligning himself with patrons and protectors, and showed an innate sensitivity by aggrandizing them through his art.

Based on the following facts, it is possible to conclude that Le Brun harnessed the opportunity presented by the dissemination and popularization of *The Triumphs of Alexander* by the Court of Louis XIV as a coordinated effort made for political purposes to his advantage: Le Brun sought a Privilege from the King with respect to the reproduction of his works long before he officially began his career as First Painter to the King; Le Brun relied on this Privilege to self-publish two engravings from *The Story of Constantine*, which showed his understanding of the benefits of publication, as well as overtly placed him in competition with Raphael; the

engravings he approved bore an inscription attributing the *Alexander* designs to him; Le Brun likely played a hand in having Colbert include *The Battles of Alexander* in the *Cabinet du Roi*; and his self-referential nature as an artist.

Combining his talent and ambition, Le Brun partly created and partly fed and encouraged the circumstances that facilitated the dissemination of his works through tapestries and prints in France, which prints in turn proved essential in expanding Le Brun's reputation abroad through additional, foreign-produced, prints and tapestries. Le Brun was at once the King's humble servant, and the master of his own destiny.

NOTES

¹ Louis-Antoine Prat, *Le Dessin Français au XVIIe Siècle* (Paris: Musée du Louvre; Somogy éditions d'art, 2013), 462.

² *Ibid.*, 463.

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Figures

Chapter 2 - Fashioning an identity for a King, and securing a reputation for Le Brun: Alexander and Apelles



Fig. 1 - Charles Le Brun, *The Family of Darius*, ca. 1661, oil on canvas 2.98 x 4.53 m. Musée du Château de Versailles.



Fig. 2 - Charles Le Brun, *The Crossing of the River Granicus*, ca. 1662-1665, oil on canvas, 4.70 m x 12.09 m. Musée du Louvre.



Fig. 3 – Charles Le Brun, *The Entry of Alexander into Babylon*, 1662-1665, oil on canvas, 4.50 m x 7.07 m. Musée du Louvre.



Fig. 4 – Charles Le Brun, *The Battle of Arbela*, 1665-1668, oil on canvas, 4.70 x 12.65 m. Musée du Louvre.



Fig. 5 – Charles Le Brun, *The Defeat of Porus*, 1665-1668, oil on canvas, 4.70 x 12.64 m. Musée du Louvre.

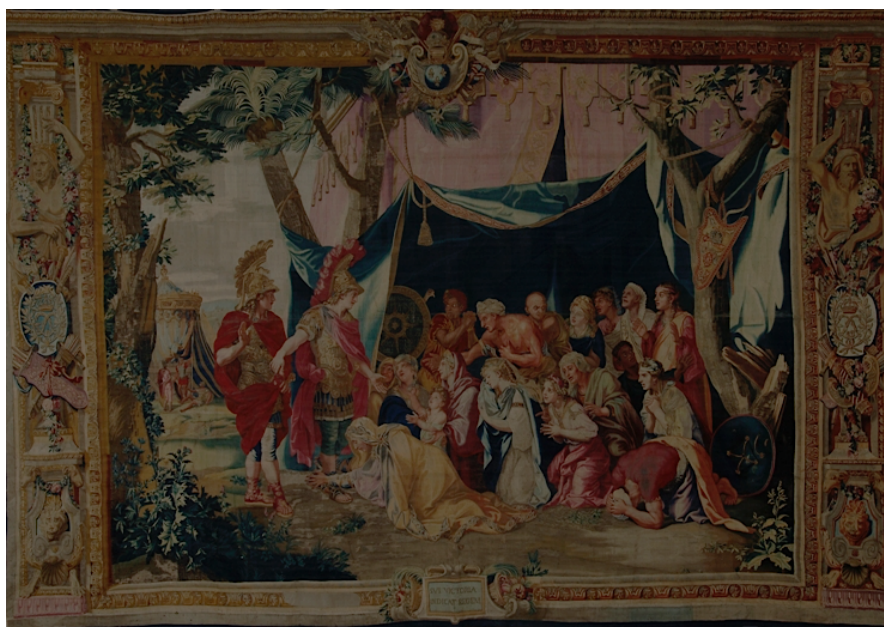


Fig. 6 – Charles Le Brun, *The Family of Darius*, ca. 1670, woven at the Gobelins, wool, silk, precious metal-wrapped thread, 4.80 x 7 m. Mobilier national, GMTT 81-003.



Fig. 7 – Charles Le Brun, *The Battle of the Granicus*, 1677, woven at the Gobelins, silk, wool, gold, and silver, 4.85 x 8 m. Mobilier national GMTT 81/2.



Fig. 8 – Charles Le Brun, *The Battle of Arbela*, 1676, woven at the Gobelins, silk, wool, gold, and silver, 4.85 x 8.7 m. Mobilier national GMTT 82/1.



Fig. 9 – Charles Le Brun, *The Entry of Alexander into Babylon*, 1676, woven at the Gobelins, wool, silk, and precious metal-wrapped thread, 4 x 5.4 m. Mobilier national, GMT 82-003_9.



Fig. 10 – Charles Le Brun, *The Defeat of Porus*, 1685, woven at the Gobelins, wool, silk, gold, and silver, 4.8 x 8.75 m. Mobilier national GMTT 81/4.



Fig. 11 – Gérard Édelinck (after Charles Le Brun), *The Family of Darius*, 1672-1678, engraving, 68 x 90 cm. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, département des Estampes et de la Photographie.

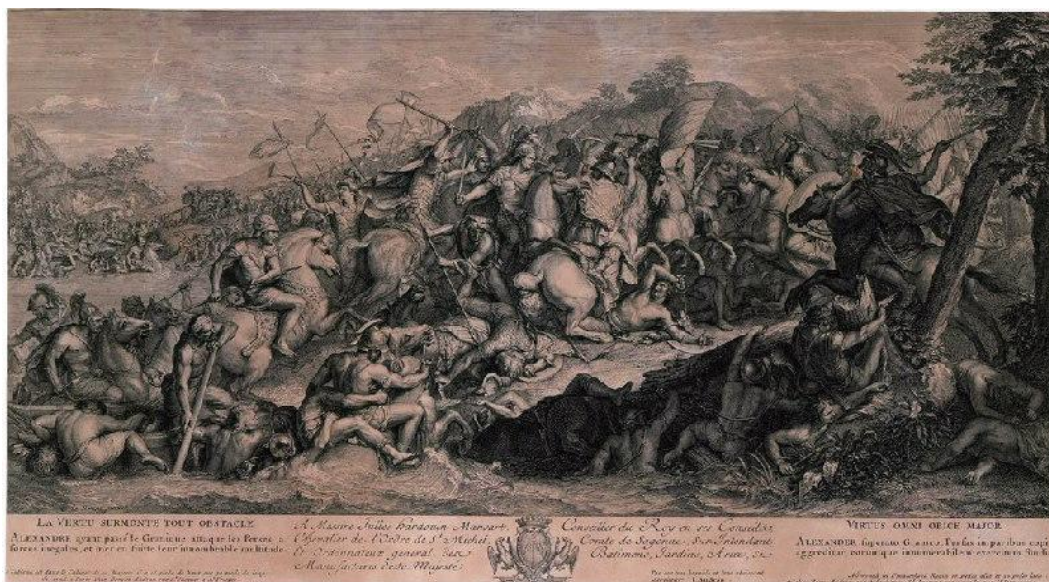


Fig. 12 - Girard Audran (after Charles Le Brun), *The Passage of the River Granicus*, 1672-1678, engraving, 72 x 140 cm. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, département des Estampes et de la Photographie.



Fig. 13- Girard Audran (after Charles Le Brun), *The Battle of Arbela*, 1672-1678, engraving, 71 x 159 cm. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, département des Estampes et de la Photographie.



Fig. 14 - Girard Audran (after Charles Le Brun), *The Entry of Alexander into Babylon*, 1672-1678, engraving, 72x 93 cm. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, département des Estampes et de la Photographie.

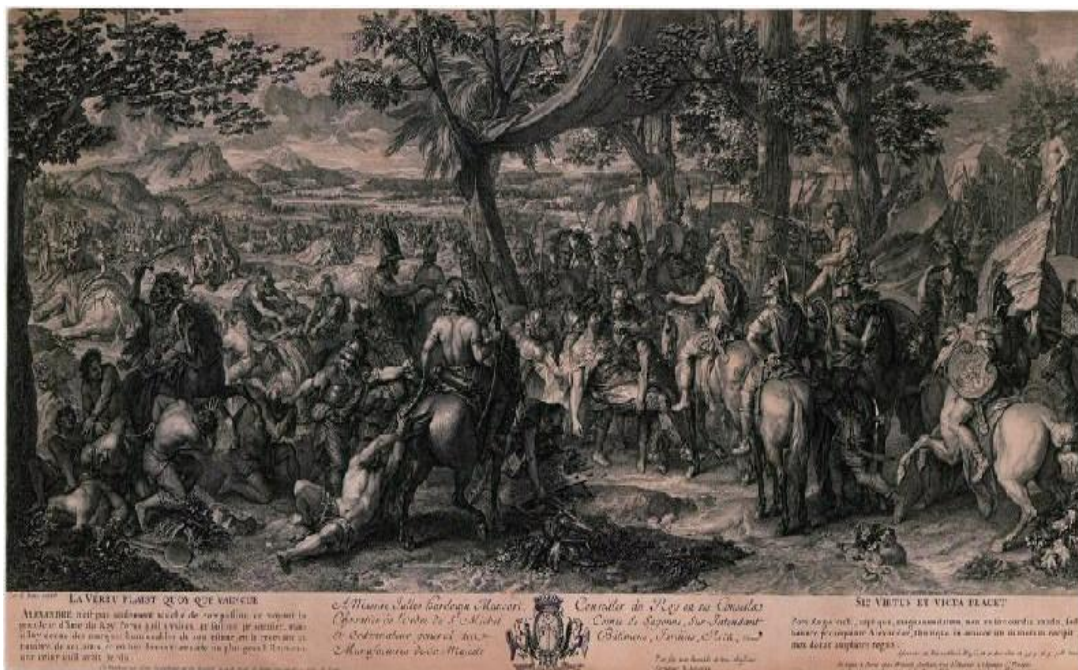


Fig. 15 - Girard Audran (after Charles Le Brun), *The Defeat of Porus*, 1672-1678, engraving, 71 x 159 cm. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, département des Estampes et de la Photographie.

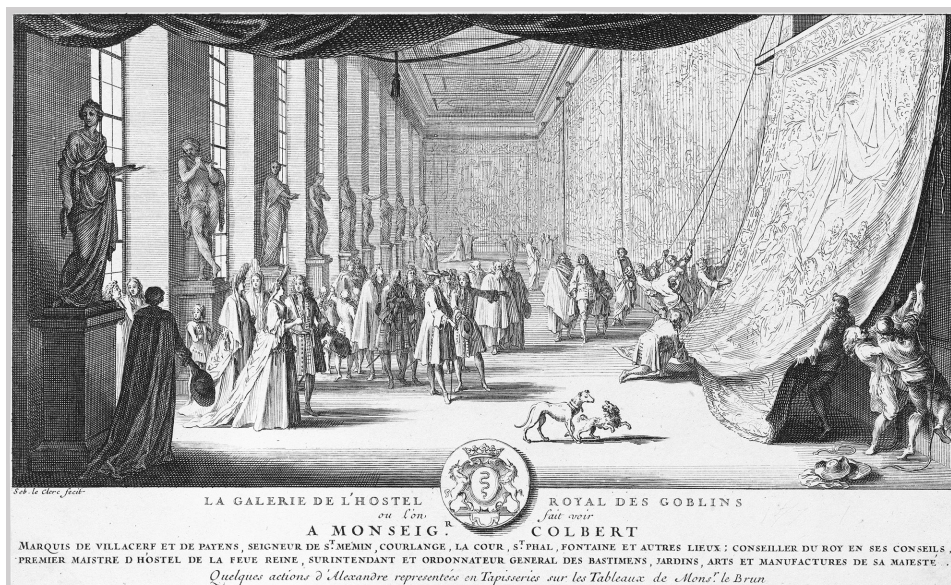


Fig. 16 - Sébastien Leclerc, *The Visit of Colbert de Villacerf to the Gobelin*, ca. 1665, etching, 5 11/16 x 9 3/8 in. (14.5 x 23.8 cm). Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Fig. 17 - Nicolas de Largillière (French, 1656-1746), *Charles Le Brun* (1619-1690), 1683-1686, oil on canvas, 232 x 187 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre.



Fig. 18 - Charles Le Brun, *The Family of Darius*, ca. 1700-1725, tapestry, 7 ft. 7 in. x 10 ft. 7 in. (231.1 x 322.6 cm). Attributed to the Manufacture royale d'Aubusson.



Fig. 19 – Charles Le Brun, *The Family of Darius*, ca. 1700-1725, tapestry, 7 ft. 5 in. x 11 ft. 6 in. (226.1 x 350.5 cm). Attributed to the Manufacture royale of Aubusson.



Fig. 20 – Charles Le Brun, *The Entry of Alexander into Babylon*, ca. 1750, tapestry, 9 ft. 8 in. x 13 ft. 11 in. (294.6 x 424.2 cm). Attributed to the Manufacture royale d'Aubusson.



Fig. 21 – Charles Le Brun, *The Entry of Alexander into Babylon*, end of 17th century, atelier of Reynaud (Manufacture royale d'Aubusson), tapestry, 293 x 415 cm. Ville d'Aubusson, Maison de retraite.



Fig. 22 – Charles Le Brun, *The Passage of the River Granicus*, ca. 1680, atelier of Pierre Vergne (Manufacture royale of Felletin), tapestry, 284 x 351 cm. Private Collection.

Chapter 3 – Dissemination of the King’s image and Le Brun’s reputation abroad: *The Story of Alexander* in Flanders



Fig. 23 - Jan-Frans Van den Hecke, *The Family of Darius*, c. 1600s, wool, silk and silver, 420 x 689 cm. Skokloster Castle, inv. 3106.



Fig. 24 - Jan-Frans Van den Hecke (after a design by Charles Le Brun), *The Family of Darius*, ca. 1695, wool, silk, and silver, 451 x 690 cm. The Hermitage State Museum.



Fig. 25 - Jan-Frans Van den Hecke (after a design by Charles Le Brun), *The Family of Darius*, ca. end of 17th century, tapestry. Château Haroué, France.



Fig. 26 - Jan-Frans Van den Hecke, (after a design by Charles Le Brun), *The Family of Darius*, after 1700, wool, silk, metal-wrapped thread, 4.15 x 6.45 m. Würzburg Residenz.



Fig. 27 - Judocus de Vos (after design by Charles Le Brun), *The Family of Darius*, ca. early 18th century, wool and silk, 13 ft. 5 in. x 26 ft. 7 in. Hampton Court Palace.



Fig. 28 - Pieter Ijkens (after a design by Charles Le Brun), *The Family of Darius*, ca. 1700-1725, wool and silk, 11 ft 5 in x 15 ft 2 in (348 x 462.3 cm). Harvard Club.



Fig. 29 – Pieter Ijckens (after a design by Charles Le Brun), *The Family of Darius*, ca. 1700-1735, wool and silk, 8 ft 9 in x 12 ft 5 in (266.7 x 378.5 cm). Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Fig. 30 – Marcus de Vos (after a design by Charles , *The Entry of Alexander into Babylon*, last quarter of the 17th century, wool and silk, 4.38 x 7.78 m. Breme Galerie Neuse.



Fig. 31 – Judocus de Vos (after a design by Charles Le Brun), *The Entry of Alexander into Babylon*, ca. 1709-1714, wool and silk. Blenheim Palace.



Fig. 32 – Judocus de Vos (after a design by Charles Le Brun), *The Entry of Alexander into Babylon*, c. 1700, wool and silk, 13 ft 5 in x 16 ft 8 in (408.9 x 508 cm). Hampton Court Palace.



Fig. 33 - Jan-Frans Van den Hecke (after a design by Charles Le Brun), *The Entry of Alexander into Babylon*, c. 1600s, wool and silk, 418 x 773 cm. Skokloster Castle, inv. 3085.



Fig. 34 - Pieter Ijkens (after a design by Charles Le Brun), *The Entry of Alexander into Babylon*, ca. 1700-1725, wool and silk, 11 ft 3 in x 13 ft (342.9 x 396.2 cm). Harvard Club.



Fig. 35 - Jan-Frans Van den Hecke (after a design by Charles Le Brun), *The Battle of Arbela*, c. 1600s, wool, silk, and silver, 420 x 794 cm. Skokloster Castle, inv. 3154.



Fig. 36 - Judocus de Vos (after a design by Charles Le Brun), *The Battle of Arbela*, ca. 1709-1714, wool and silk. Blenheim Palace.



Fig. 37 - Pieter Ijkens (after Charles Le Brun), *The Battle of Arbela*, ca. 1700-1735, wool and silk, 8 ft 9 in x 12 ft (266.7 x 365.8 cm). Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Fig. 38 - Pieter Ijkens (after a design by Charles Le Brun), *The Battle of Arbela*, ca. 1700-1725, wool and silk. 11 ft 5 in x 17 ft 6 in (348 x 533.4 cm). Harvard Club.



Fig. 39 - Jan-Frans Van den Hecke (after a design by Charles Le Brun), *The Battle of the Granicus*, c. 1600s, wool, silk, and silver, 420 x 689 cm. Skokloster Castle, inv. 3153.



Fig. 40 - Judocus de Vos (after a design by Charles Le Brun), *The Battle of the Granicus*, c. 1700, wool and silk, 13 ft 5 in x 21 ft 3 in (408.9 x 647.7 cm). Hampton Court Palace.



Fig. 41 - Judocus de Vos (after a design by Charles Le Brun), *The Battle of the River Granicus*, ca. 1709-1712, wool and silk, Blenheim Palace.



Fig. 42 - Jan-Frans Van den Hecke (after a design by Charles Le Brun), *The Defeat of Porus*, c. 1600s, wool and silk, 420 x 615 cm, Skokloster Castle, inv. 3153.



Fig. 43 – Pieter Ijkens (after a design by Charles Le Brun), *Alexander Extends Clemency Towards King Porus*, ca. 1700-1725, wool and silk, 11 ft 6 in x 10 ft 3 in (350.5 x 312.4 cm). Harvard Club.



Fig. 44 – Judocus de Vos (after a design by Jean Audran/Charles Le Brun?), *The Battle of Porus*, c. 1700, wool and silk, 13 ft 6 in x 21 ft (411.5 x 640.1 cm). Hampton Court Palace.



Fig. 45 – Jean Audran (after Charles Le Brun), *The Battle of Porus*, 18th century, engraving, 29 x 59.3 cm. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, department des Estampes et de la Photographie.



Fig. 46 – Judocus de Vos, *Alexander with his horse Bucephalus, taking leave of Hephaestion*, ca. 1700, wool and silk, 13 ft 5 in x 12 ft 8 in. (408.9 x 386.1 cm). Hampton Court Palace.



Fig. 47 – Judocus de Vos, *Alexander's visit to Diogenes in his tub*, ca. 1710, silk and wool, 9 ft. 3 in. x 7 ft. 6 in. Hampton Court Palace.



Fig. 48 – Judocus de Vos, *Alexander meeting the Chaldean prophets on his way to Babylon*, ca. 1700, wool and silk, 13 ft. 5 in. x 13 ft. 9 in. Hampton Court Palace.



Fig. 49 – Pieter Ijkens, *Alexander and Hephaestion Before Battle*, ca. 1700-1725, wool and silk, 11 ft 2 in x 6 ft 3 in (340.4 x 190.5 cm). Harvard Club.



Fig. 50 – Pieter Ijken, *The Capture of King Porus after the Battle of Hydaspes River*, ca. 1700-1725, wool and silk, 11 ft 3 in x 8 ft 3 in (342.9 x 251.5 cm). Harvard Club.

Chapter 4 – Le Brun’s reputation and its significance, as seen through the replicas of *The Triumphs of Alexander*



Fig. 51 – Jacob Jordaens, *Alexander the Great and Hephæstion Consoling the Family of Darius*, woven by Leyniers, ca. 1628, wool and silk, 12 ft. 6 in. x 15 ft. 3 in. Brussels (location unknown).



Fig. 52 – Charles Le Brun, *The Visit of Louis XIV*, ca. 1665-1679, woven at the Gobelins, wool, silk, silver, and gold thread, 375 x 580 cm. Mobilier national.



Fig. 53 – Charles Le Brun, *Juin – Fontainebleau*, last quarter of the 17th century, woven at the Gobelins, wool, silk, and gold, 320 x 525 cm. Mobilier national, GMTT 111/3.