

## French Taste in Victorian England: The Collection of Yolande Lyne-Stephens

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The Lyne-Stephenses were not mentioned by Gustav Waagen in the three volumes of his *Treasures of Art in Great Britain*.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, it was several decades too soon for Waagen to have had the opportunity to meet Yolande and Stephens who had not started to collect by this point. Similarly, the 1857 Art Treasures Exhibition, held in Manchester, was also too early for the Lyne-Stephenses to have had any involvement as lenders. Yet these sources are seminal in the history of collecting in England. The Lyne-Stephenses' collecting habits would almost certainly have been studied more carefully had their name appeared in one or other of these publications. This might be the reason why Yolande Lyne-Stephens also fails to feature in recent publications dedicated to women collectors, such as *Great Women Collectors* by Charlotte Gere and Marina Vaizey, the edited collection *Women Patrons and Collectors*, or even Julie Verlaine's *Femmes collectionneuses d'art et mécènes de 1880 à nos jours*.<sup>2</sup>

Yolande's colourful life has been studied by Jenifer Roberts in her recent biography, *The Beauty of Her Age*, but there is still little focus on Yolande as a collector.<sup>3</sup> Paradoxically, however, Yolande is mentioned in passing in several publications discussing the collection of eighteenth-century French art such as *Delicious Decadence: The Rediscovery of French Eighteenth-Century Painting in the Nineteenth Century* or Edward Morris's *French Art in Nineteenth-Century Britain*.<sup>4</sup> Recently, she was also the subject of an extended footnote in the National Gallery catalogue of *The Seventeenth*

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Waagen, *Treasures of Art in Great Britain*, 3 vols (London: Murray, 1854).

<sup>2</sup> Charlotte Gere and Marina Vaizey, *Great Women Collectors* (London: Wilson, 1999); *Women Patrons and Collectors*, ed. by Susan Bracken, Andrea M. Gáldy, and Adriana Turpin (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012); and Julie Verlaine, *Femmes collectionneuses d'art et mécènes de 1880 à nos jours* (Paris: Hazan, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> Jenifer Roberts, *The Beauty of Her Age: A Tale of Sex, Scandal and Money in Victorian England* (Stroud: Amberley, 2016).

<sup>4</sup> Humphrey Wine, 'The National Gallery in the Nineteenth Century and French Eighteenth-Century Painting', in *Delicious Decadence: The Rediscovery of French Eighteenth-Century Painting in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Christoph Vogtherr, Monica Preti, and Guillaume Faroult (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 121–40 (p. 135); Edward Morris, *French Art in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Yale University Press, 2016), p. 85.

*Century French Paintings* and was given a section in the catalogue of *The Fifteenth Century Netherlandish Schools* under the subtitle ‘Mrs Lyne-Stephens’ Bequest’.<sup>5</sup> In 2016 Humphrey Wine and Virginia Napoleone wrote a long entry on Yolande in the online appendix to the National Gallery catalogue *The Eighteenth Century French Paintings*.<sup>6</sup> This article builds on this earlier scholarship by drawing on archival material in Britain and France, offering new perspectives on this elusive cosmopolitan figure. Mrs Lyne-Stephens, née Yolande Duvernay (1812–1894), started life as a ballerina and went on to become one of the stars of the Paris Opera. From 1833 Pauline Duvernay, as she was known on stage, was regularly invited to London to dance for the season. The personality and early life of the ballerina are well documented in books devoted to the great dancers of the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup> Yolande soon became famous with British audiences, which allowed her to gain the favours of Stephens Lyne-Stephens (1801–1860). The latter was living on his father’s immense fortune, which he had inherited from a cousin in the glass industry in Portugal. Having, in turn, inherited the family fortune in 1851, Stephens became reputedly the richest commoner in England.<sup>8</sup> He took Yolande as his mistress on condition that she would never again appear on stage. On 19 August 1837 she danced for the last time.

After Yolande stopped dancing, journalists and social commentators lost interest in her. The ensuing fifty years of her life are thus something of an enigma, as very little personal information survives. Stephens and Yolande lived together for nearly ten years before marrying in 1845. Being Stephens’s mistress forced Yolande to live a much quieter life than the one she had led previously. Indeed, as a French Catholic and former dancer who had become the mistress of one of the richest commoners of the country but who could not speak English properly, she did not impress the moralistic Victorian circles in which Stephens moved.<sup>9</sup> On the death of

<sup>5</sup> Humphrey Wine, *The Seventeenth Century French Paintings*, National Gallery Catalogues (London: National Gallery, 2002), p. 30, n. 8; Lorne Campbell, *The Fifteenth Century Netherlandish Schools*, National Gallery Catalogues (London: National Gallery, 1998), p. 15.

<sup>6</sup> Humphrey Wine and Virginia Napoleone, ‘Yolande Lyne Stephens née Duvernay (1812–1894)’, in *Former Owners of the Eighteenth-Century French Paintings in the National Gallery* <<https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/research/research-resources/national-gallery-catalogues/former-owners-of-the-eighteenth-century-french-paintings/yolande-lyne-stephens-nee-duvernay>> [accessed 2 October 2020].

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Cyril Beaumont, *Three French Dancers of the Nineteenth Century: Duvernay, Livry, Beaugrand* (London: Beaumont, 1935), pp. 9–18.

<sup>8</sup> For more information on the Lyne-Stephens’ fortune, see Jenifer Roberts, *Glass: The Strange History of the Lyne Stephens Fortune* (Chippenham: Templeton, 2003). According to Roberts, his income would be around £3 million in today’s currency (p. 275).

<sup>9</sup> Philip S. Wilkins, ‘Founding a Cambridge Cathedral: Yolande Lyne-Stephens, Canon Christopher Scott and the Church of Our Lady of the English Martyrs’, in *Catholics in Cambridge*, ed. by Nicholas Rogers (London: Newton, 2003), pp. 106–18 (p. 107).

her husband in 1860 the situation grew even more complicated when she became the companion of the married General Edward Claremont (1819–1890) who was the British military attaché in Paris. Before long, Yolande and Edward, together with his wife, Frances Claremont (1814–1892), and their children, all began sharing the same house. This *ménage à trois* alienated polite society still further and they seem to have had few visitors. Therefore, the fantastic collections she amassed remained largely hidden for nearly half a century.

As a couple, the Lyne-Stephenses had acquired three properties, between which Yolande shared her time over the years. In 1844, after seven years together, Stephens and Yolande established themselves officially and employed the architect William Burn (1789–1870) to design the alterations to their new home, Lower Grove House in Roehampton (no longer extant but located where the grounds of the University of Roehampton lie today). In 1849 they moved into the main Grove House (*Figs. 1, 2*). Its purchase seemingly acted as a spur to their early collecting. Living between England and France, they acquired, in 1856, the historic hôtel belonging to



*Fig. 1:* Morning room at Grove House, Roehampton where the portrait of Yolande by Antonin Marie Moine (c. 1830) and the photographic portraits of General Claremont can be seen, April 1911, photograph, private collection.



*Fig. 2:* Dining room at Grove House, Roehampton, April 1911, photograph, private collection.

the Comte Molé (now referred to as the Hôtel de la Vaupalière in memory of the marquis who had built the house in 1769) at 85 rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, in 1856 Stephens — who wanted an estate suitable for sport and hunting — acquired Lynford Hall, in Norfolk, at auction (*Fig. 3*). The existing house on the estate of nearly eight thousand acres was not

<sup>10</sup> The hotel is now at 25 avenue Matignon. See Jérôme Coignard, *Hôtel de la Vaupalière*, *Connaissance des arts* (Paris: Société Française de Promotion Artistique, 2007).



Fig. 3: English School, A view of Lynford Hall, Mundford, Norfolk, oil on canvas, 125 × 210.8 cm. © Bonhams.

grand enough for the Lyne-Stephenses' taste, so they re-employed William Burn to build a new mansion. Located in Thetford Forest, Lynford Hall, with its fifty bedrooms and dressing rooms, became one of the architect's most ambitious projects and one of the grandest houses in England.<sup>11</sup> Burn's project took five years to complete and Stephens died one year before it was finished.

On the death of her husband in 1860, Yolande inherited Stephens's great wealth, along with Lynford, an empty house. She employed the garden designer William A. Nestfield (1793–1881) to work on the garden and the French interior designer Eugène Lami (1800–1890) to create a decorative scheme for the reception rooms.<sup>12</sup>

Stephens seems not to have been very interested in art until Yolande appeared in his life and they started acquiring old master paintings. She did not collect art before they were married for the simple reason, no doubt, that she was not in a financial position to do so. Their choice of pictures was, as we will see, very much in the *goût du temps*, and it is tempting to say that it was her taste that moulded the couple's collection. There are two strong factors that support this claim. First, the fact that Yolande's

<sup>11</sup> For more information on Lynford Hall, see Mark Girouard, *The Victorian Country House* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), p. 183; Jill Franklin, *The Gentleman's Country House and Its Plan, 1835–1914* (London: Routledge, 1981), pp. 6, 36, 160, 241, 264; and Richard Wilson and Alan Mackley, *Creating Paradise: The Building of the English Country House, 1660–1880* (London: Hambledon, 2000), pp. 35–36, 63, 217.

<sup>12</sup> 'Lynford Hall, Norfolk, the Seat of Mr. H. A. Campbell', *Country Life*, 28 November 1903, pp. 758–66. In this article Eugène Lami's name is misspelled as 'E. L'aury'.

name can be found in annotated sales catalogues indicates that she was certainly known to regular buyers in the Parisian art market.<sup>13</sup> Not all the names of purchasers were written in these catalogues, only those of people who could be identified without too much difficulty, so her presence here is significant. Second, Yolande outlived her husband by thirty-four years, during which time she continued to acquire art and, in this period, there was no divergence in taste.

Although Yolande left very little writing about her collection, upon her death in 1894 her Lynford Hall estate was put up for sale and a sale prospectus drawn up by the land agent Edward Tewson, and the firm of solicitors Tatham and Pym included a description of the house and several contemporary photographs of the interiors (*Figs. 4, 5, 6*).<sup>14</sup> These photographs, together with Yolande's will in which she talks about her paintings, and the 1895 Christie's sale catalogue of her collection, are the main



*Fig. 4:* Library, Lynford Hall, 1895, photograph taken from the Lynford Hall Estate sales brochure, private collection.

<sup>13</sup> The list of identified sales in which Yolande made some purchases will be discussed later in this article.

<sup>14</sup> Sale particulars of the Lynford Hall estate in Lynford [...] (with photographs and plans), Swindon, Historic England Archive, SC00759.



*Fig. 5:* Grand drawing room, Lynford Hall, 1895, photograph taken from the Lynford Hall Estate sales brochure, private collection.



*Fig. 6:* Principal staircase, Lynford Hall, 1895, photograph taken from the Lynford Hall Estate sales brochure, private collection.

documents used for this study.<sup>15</sup> Wine and Napoleone's 2016 National Gallery catalogue's online article takes a detailed look at the history of the pictures following the 1895 sale. In this article, by contrast, we will focus on the provenance of the pictures it has been possible to establish prior to entering Yolande's collection. Thanks to the information found in the above documents, especially annotated auction catalogues, we can understand the habits and tastes of the couple, discover a fascinating circle of people around them, and recover what allowed them to form what was considered at the time a remarkable ensemble of old master paintings.

### Collecting across the Channel I: marital collaborations

Studying the Christie's 1895 sale catalogue allows one to see very clearly a preference for the historical French and Northern schools of painting. Indeed, out of the group of eighty pictures, twenty-eight were by painters from Northern Europe, while twenty-four were by French masters, most of them from the eighteenth century.<sup>16</sup> The collection also contained a number of notable early Italian and Spanish pictures. Perhaps surprisingly, given the context, the British School was only represented by four equestrian portraits, which are the only pictures that we know Stephens had acquired before meeting Yolande.

The first record of a painting Stephens acquired at auction is very different from his previous hunting commissions. On 13 May 1837 a gentleman named 'Pennell' appears to have acquired *La Gamme d'amour* by Jean Antoine Watteau from the sale at Christie's of the collection of Sir John Pringle (*Fig. 7*).<sup>17</sup> It would seem somewhat early for Stephens to have purchased such a piece but he was, by then, determined to win the heart of Yolande and we know that he spent the final days of April 1837 '[inviting] her to dinners and [showering] her [with] gifts of expensive jewellery'.

<sup>15</sup> Probate of the will of Yolande Marie Louise Lyne-Stephens of Roehampton in the County of Surrey and of Lynford Hall near Brandon on the County of Norfolk widow, dated 8th March 1887 issued by the Probate Registry of Her Majesty's High Court of Justice on 5th October 1895, Kew, National Archives, fol. 1042; *Catalogue of the Celebrated Collection of Pictures, Porcelain, Objects of Art and Decorative Furniture of Mrs. Lyne-Stephens, Deceased*, Christie, Manson & Woods, 9–17 May 1895 <<https://archive.org/details/porceleboochri/page/n3/mode/2up>> [accessed 2 October 2020].

<sup>16</sup> These figures only include the old masters; the French contemporary works have been excluded from the count. The Northern School comprises Dutch and Flemish artists.

<sup>17</sup> Sale catalogue, Christie's, London, 13 May 1837, lot 53. The painting is now in the National Gallery, London (acc. no. NG2897). The sale catalogues referred to in this article can be found in the Christie's archives, London, the Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, Paris, the National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, or in the [Lugt database](#), unless otherwise stated.





Fig. 7: Jean Antoine Watteau, *The Scale of Love*, c. 1717–18, oil on canvas, 50.8 × 59.7 cm, National Gallery London, bequeathed by Sir Julius Wernher, Bt, 1912. [CC BY-NC-ND 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

Given this background, the painting could have been bought as a present for Yolande and possibly even on her advice (Roberts, *Beauty*, p. 55). As the first purchase of an old master painting Watteau was a bold choice for a British gentleman. Indeed, as recently noted in *Delicious Decadence*, in Victorian Britain the eighteenth-century French School remained remarkably unpopular and there do not seem to have been many collectors of the school during that period. The obvious exception, of course, was Richard, 4th Marquess of Hertford (1800–1870). Scholars such as Alastair Laing, however, consider him to have been ‘a French collector, living in Paris, who just happened to be English’.<sup>18</sup> In France, on the other hand, the eighteenth-century French School, representing as it did a jewel in the country’s artistic crown, was becoming increasingly popular. Important leading figures, such as the Goncourt brothers, were avid collectors and it soon became extremely fashionable and *raffiné* to own these kinds of pictures.<sup>19</sup>

Coinciding with the couple’s installation in their new home, it would be ten years before Stephens made his second identifiable purchase at

<sup>18</sup> Cited in Jon Whiteley, ‘Collectors of Eighteenth-Century French Art in London: 1800–1850’, in *Delicious Decadence*, ed. by Vogtherr, Preti, and Faroult, pp. 43–58 (p. 58).

<sup>19</sup> Guillaume Faroult, Monica Preti, and Christoph Vogtherr, ‘Introduction’, in *Delicious Decadence*, ed. by Vogtherr, Preti, and Faroult, pp. 1–4 (p. 3).

auction, a large-scale *Annunciation* by Bernardino Lanini, acquired in 1847 at the sale of the pioneering collector of early Italian pictures, Edward Solly.<sup>20</sup> The auctioneer's book indicates that the dealer responsible for this transaction was 'Durrell'. Research has not revealed any art dealer of that name. However, could 'Durrell' simply have been a misspelling of the name Pennell, who had helped with the purchase of the Watteau? Mr Pennell is probably George Pennell (died *c.* 1866).<sup>21</sup> There is not much extant information about him, but he seems to have enjoyed the unenviable reputation of having gone bankrupt on more than one occasion.<sup>22</sup>

Early Italian works were only slowly becoming fashionable in England and Sir Charles Eastlake (1793–1865) had to fight to introduce them into the National Gallery's collection. Collecting these early Italian paintings, however, was the height of fashion in Paris, as noted by James Stourton and Charles Sebag-Montefiore.<sup>23</sup> At the end of her life, Yolande possessed ten Italian works. Four represented Madonnas and all of them, with the exception of the only picture dated from the eighteenth century, the self-portrait by Rosalba Carriera, were religious in theme. It is quite hard to fathom the rationale for the Italian purchases as, unlike the rest of the collection, they do not really accord with any high fashion but are rather more a reflection of the taste of sophisticated connoisseurs. These purchases, however, do prove that Yolande, who had acquired most of them while widowed, was well aware of new art historical interests which may have complimented her own personal piety.

From the following year, 1848, the couple's knowledge of the art world seems to have evolved, as 'Norton' acquired their next identifiable purchase, a major work by Aelbert Cuyp, from Richard Sanderson's sale at Christie's in June 1848 (*Fig. 8*).<sup>24</sup> The purchaser was presumably Peter Norton (died *c.* 1868), who was a print seller and picture dealer based in Soho Square. He seems to have worked for a distinguished clientele, such as the Dutch art collector and silk merchant, Wynn Ellis (1790–1875) (Sebag-Montefiore and Armstrong-Totten, p. 450). Three days later, at the sale at Phillips, London, of the collection of Duc Charles Auguste Louis Joseph de Morny, the Lyne-Stephenses acquired yet another Dutch picture,

<sup>20</sup> Sale catalogue, Christie's, London, 8 May 1847, lot 25. Now in the North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, NC (acc. no. GL.60.17.45).

<sup>21</sup> On Pennell, see 'Court of the Queen's Bench, Westminster', *The Times*, 3 December 1857, p. 8.

<sup>22</sup> See Charles Sebag-Montefiore with Julia I. Armstrong-Totten, *A Dynasty of Dealers: John Smith and Successors 1801–1924: A Study of the Art Market in Nineteenth-Century London* (Uckfield: Roxburghe Club, 2013), p. 450.

<sup>23</sup> James Stourton and Charles Sebag-Montefiore, *The British as Art Collectors: From the Tudors to the Present* (London: Scala, 2012), p. 208.

<sup>24</sup> Sale catalogue, Christie's, London, 17 June 1848, lot 25. Now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (acc. no. MET 32.100.20).



Fig. 8: Aelbert Cuyp, Equestrian portrait of Cornelis (1639–1680) and Michiel Pompe van Meerdervoort (1638–1653) with their tutor and coachman, c. 1652–53, oil on canvas, 109.9 × 156.2 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Isaac van Ostade's *Village Inn*, and *Le Savetier ivre*, their first work by Jean Baptiste Greuze.<sup>25</sup> Unfortunately, it has not been possible to identify who carried out the bidding on the pair's behalf.

While their French and early Italian acquisitions can be considered as unusual in Victorian England, Dutch and Netherlandish pictures were very much in keeping with the general fashion of the times. Indeed, as early as the beginning of the nineteenth century, English collectors had been very much drawn to this particular field and, during Yolande's lifetime, two major collections entered London's National Gallery: that of the late prime minister Sir Robert Peel (1788–1850) in 1871, followed by that of Wynn Ellis in 1876.

The Lyne-Stephenses augmented their group of Northern pictures when they acquired Jacob van Ruysdael's *A Heath Scene* from the Charles Brind sale at Christie's in 1849. In the auctioneer's catalogue, held in the archives at Christie's, the name 'Rutley' is inscribed against this purchase. Subsequently, Rutley also helped the Lyne-Stephenses acquire Bartolomé Esteban Murillo's *Joseph and the Infant Jesus* from the sale of King Louis Philippe's collection in 1853.<sup>26</sup> 'Rutley' is very likely to have been John Lewis Rutley. He is recorded as a 'fine art dealer, valuer and insurer' in

<sup>25</sup> Sale catalogue, Phillips, London, 20–21 June 1848, nos. 53 and 108. The van Ostade is now in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC (acc. no. 1946.716).

<sup>26</sup> Charles Brind sale catalogue, Christie's, London, 10 May 1849, lot 60; Louis Philippe sale catalogue, Christie's, London, 7 May 1853, lot 168.

the online database *Exhibition Culture in London 1878–1908*.<sup>27</sup> The activities of his family firm are partially set out in an article published in *The Times* in 1914, where Rutley is described as ‘one of the most respected, as he is certainly one of the oldest, picture dealers in London’.<sup>28</sup> By then the couple seemed to know their way around the art world, reflected in their careful choice of dealers.

While the Ruysdael appears to be in line with their previous acquisitions, the purchase of Spanish pictures was avant-garde.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, apart from collectors such as William Bankes (1786–1855), who created a Spanish room at Kingston Lacy, enthusiasm for the school was not widespread. Among the rare Hispanophile collectors such as Arthur, 1st Duke of Wellington and John and Joséphine Bowes, who owned a more diverse group of Spanish pictures, British collectors tended to restrict themselves to works by Murillo and Velázquez.<sup>30</sup> The fact that the Lyne-Stephenses’ collection contained no fewer than four by Velázquez and three Murillos should therefore not be considered unique among collecting practices of British collectors of the time.

If the pair acquired Murillo’s *Joseph and the Infant Jesus*, the other Spanish works of the collection were purchased by Yolande alone, after her husband’s death. She might have been inspired by the interest in Spanish paintings, which reached its height in Paris during the nineteenth century. Following the Napoleonic invasion of Spain, Spanish art began finding its way into France. In the *Guide de Paris*, published in 1867, it is interesting to note that in the section dedicated to private collections, Théophile Thoré-Bürger (1807–1869) mentioned a *Portrait of an Infant* by Velázquez from the Hertford collection, *Une Petite Infante* by Velázquez in the collection of James de Rothschild, and a Velázquez, ‘[represented] with a delicious standing Infanta, in silver dress’ in the Pereire collection.<sup>31</sup> Most of

<sup>27</sup> See University of Glasgow, *Exhibition Culture in London 1878–1908*, online database, 2006 <<http://www.exhibitionculture.arts.gla.ac.uk/people.php>> [accessed 2 October 2020].

<sup>28</sup> ‘Romance of Art-Dealing’, *The Times*, 17 April 1914, p. 5. The picture is now in the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, Florida (acc. no. SN349).

<sup>29</sup> Hilary Macartney, ‘The British “Discovery” of Spanish Golden Age Art: Taste, Collecting, and the Response of British Artists’, in *The Discovery of Spain: British Artists and Collectors: Goya to Picasso*, ed. by David Howarth and others (Edinburgh: Trustees of the National Gallery of Scotland, 2009), pp. 80–105 (p. 81).

<sup>30</sup> Hugh Brigstocke, ‘El descubrimiento del arte español en Gran Bretaña’, in *En torno a Velázquez: pintura española del siglo de oro*, ed. by Hugh Brigstocke and Zahira Véliz (London: Apelles, 1999), pp. 5–25.

<sup>31</sup> See W. Bürger [Théophile Thoré-Bürger], ‘Les collections particulières’, in *Paris Guide par les principaux écrivains et artistes de la France: Première partie la science et l’art*, 2nd edn (Paris: Lacroix, Verboeckhoven, 1867), pp. 536–51, for the Hertford (p. 538), James de Rothschild (p. 540), and the Pereire Velázquez ‘[représenté] par une Delicieuse Infante Debout, en Robe Argentine’ (p. 541). All translations from the French are my own.

the great Parisian collectors, in fact, seem to have owned an *Infanta* by Velázquez — as indeed did Yolande — so she was not particularly avant-garde in her choice. Once again, she was just following fashion.

The fact that Rutley's gallery enjoyed a good reputation and was well established by the time the Lyne-Stephenses sought his services is a good indicator that the couple's needs had changed. Until 1849 the Lyne-Stephenses had been rather indiscriminate in their choice of agent, not necessarily going to recommended dealers. Now, they were using established firms such as Rutley or Norton, whose experts specialized in old masters. By the 1860s the couple had acquired examples of most of the schools that would form their collection and they seem to have acquired a good working knowledge of the London art world. Having followed the French fashion with regard to their taste, they were also following French auctions. After the French Revolution and the fall of the monarchy, the French art market was one of the most attractive in Europe and several great collections were created in the capital.<sup>32</sup>

The Lyne-Stephenses made what would appear to have been their first painting acquisition in Paris, Claude Lorrain's *The Artist Sitting on the Shore*, at the Dubois sale of 1840.<sup>33</sup> An annotated catalogue at the Institut national d'histoire de l'art records that the name of the buyer was 'Poiret', but unfortunately this is not a name for which it has thus far been possible to find any links in the art world. The following year, in 1841, a second purchase was made, from the Hérès sale this time, and Ludolf Backhuysen's *A Coast Scene* was added to the collection. While both those pictures are relatively traditional and in line with their previous acquisitions, the later purchase is revealing.<sup>34</sup> The name annotated in the sale catalogue is 'Reized' which would appear to be a misspelling of Reiset. Frédéric Reiset (1815–1891) was an important collector, connoisseur, and curator at the Louvre. It is not known how he came into contact with the Lyne-Stephenses, but of all those identified as having been approached for advice by the couple, Reiset was unique in that he was an art historian and not an art dealer. Although it seems that Stephens only consulted him on this one occasion, Reiset was to play an important role in Yolande's life and in her future collecting habits. The involvement of this great connoisseur in the couple's collection must have been enormously helpful. But quite apart from that, it also appears that the two families had been close friends for several generations. This connection is highlighted by a study of Yolande's will,

<sup>32</sup> See Tom Stammers, *The Purchase of the Past: Collecting Culture in Post-Revolutionary Paris c. 1790–1890* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

<sup>33</sup> Sale catalogue, Paillet, Paris, 7–11 December 1840, lot 124. Now in a private collection. The picture was sold again as lot 36 as recently as 15 April 1992 at Christie's, London, without any further information being established as to its provenance.

<sup>34</sup> Sale catalogue, Paillet, Paris, 25–26 March 1841, lot 9.

in which she bequeathed large sums of money to several members of the Reiset family, including her god-daughter Yolande, born in 1883, the great-granddaughter of Frédéric Reiset.<sup>35</sup>

Reiset became a trusted adviser to the widowed Yolande when she wanted to purchase important works in Paris. One catalogue annotated by Louis Souillié at the National Art Library in London, related to the sale of the collection of the Château de Pommersfelden in May 1867, mentions 'Reiset pour Mrs Lyne-Stephens' next to two paintings: a collaborative work by Peter Paul Rubens and Jan Brueghel, titled *The Holy Family*, and a departure from the hunt by van der Meulen.<sup>36</sup> The friendship with Reiset was also crucial in securing Yolande's participation at major national exhibitions. The Archives nationales holds extensive records on how the Galerie des portraits nationaux was put together for the Universal Exhibition of 1878. As Yolande was the owner of the *Portrait of Babuti* by Greuze, her name features in a list of potential lenders and the draft of a letter she never actually received can be found in the archives, along with a handwritten note saying, 'Reiset answered verbally that we could not ask anything of Mrs Lyne-Stephens.'<sup>37</sup> This demonstrates that Reiset acted as a go-between for the French museum when they wished to contact Yolande, and also proves Reiset's involvement in the Lyne-Stephens' collection.

On 15 May 1854 the Lyne-Stephenses made their last recorded purchase as a couple. At the auction of the collection of le Comte de B., un amateur étranger, held at the request of Ferdinand Laneuville, the couple bought two paintings by the French eighteenth-century painter Jean-Baptiste Pater, *The Swing* and *The Dance*.<sup>38</sup> The buyer is recorded in the *procès verbal* as 'Favart, place de la Bourse'. This name remains a mystery among the Parisian art-dealing fraternity.

On 28 February 1860, at the age of only fifty-eight, Stephens Lyne-Stephens died. Although, after twenty-three years of companionship, this event changed Yolande's life dramatically, it did not stop her from expanding the collection. Up to this point, the couple is known to have purchased

<sup>35</sup> The French will is kept in the Archives nationales, Paris, MC/ET/XV/85. For an understanding of the genealogy of the family, see Base collaborative Pierfit, 'Adolphe, marquis de Moÿ de Sons', in *Geneanet*, 6 September 2017 <<http://gw.geneanet.org/pierfit?lang=fr&p=adolphe&n=de+moy+de+sons>> [accessed 2 October 2020].

<sup>36</sup> Vente de la Galerie du château de Pommersfelden, appartenant au comte de Schönborn, Pillet, Paris, 17–24 May 1867, lots 194 and 209. The Rubens–Brueghel work is probably the picture kept at the High Museum of Art, Atlanta (acc. no. 1989-113). The van der Meulen, now titled *Philippe-François d'Arenberg Saluted by the Leader of a Troop of Horsemen*, is kept at the National Gallery, London (acc. no. NG1447).

<sup>37</sup> 'Mr Reiset a répondu verbalement que l'on ne pouvait rien demander à Mme Lyne-Stephens.' Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, Archives nationales, F/21/699.

<sup>38</sup> Sale catalogue, Vautier, Paris, 15 May 1854, lots 13 and 14. Now in a private collection.

sixteen paintings, mostly after 1847 and probably in order to adorn their new residence in Roehampton. Apart from Watteau's *La Gamme d'amour*, which was never intended for their new dwelling as it was purchased long before the couple moved in together, the other works remained at Roehampton until after Yolande's death. With her London residence already amply decorated, Yolande seems to have concentrated her efforts on the embellishment of the interiors of her Norfolk and Parisian homes.<sup>39</sup>

### Collecting across the Channel II: acquisitions as a widow

Turning our attention to the paintings purchased by Yolande once she was widowed, it becomes clear that her activities as a buyer were concentrated over a very short period. Indeed, most of her acquisitions, with the exception of the six pictures bought at the Beurnonville sale in 1881, were made between 1865 and 1869. When comparing the purchases made during Stephens's lifetime with those made afterwards, what is particularly striking is that the majority were carried out in Paris. This was probably a natural evolution following the last purchase Stephens made with the help of Frédéric Reiset. In what follows, we will track Yolande's purchases during the final years of the Second Empire, in order to restore her place as an independent woman at the heart of the Parisian collecting scene.

Her first identified purchase was made five years after the death of her husband, in 1865, when she acquired two paintings and a pastel from the legendary James-Alexandre de Pourtalès collection: Carlo Dolci's *Christ in Limbo*, Murillo's *Faith Presenting the Eucharist*, and a self-portrait in pastel by Rosalba Carriera.<sup>40</sup> Those were apparently not bought with the help of Reiset. Annotated catalogues recorded the buyer as 'Marcille', who must have been one of the Marcille brothers. Eudoxe Marcille (1814–1890) was a painter who, in 1870, became the director of the Musée des Beaux-Arts d'Orléans and, in 1871, the director of the Drawing School of the same town. He was a distinguished collector in his own right. If Eudoxe was not the person who helped Yolande, then it must have been his brother, Camille Marcille (1816–1875). He, too, was a painter, a collector of French eighteenth-century art, and the curator of the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Chartres. The Marcille brothers were brought up by a father who was also a significant collector and it is thus not surprising that both brothers pur-

<sup>39</sup> It is important to remember that Yolande sold the Hôtel Molé in June 1875 and then moved to a rented flat at 122 avenue des Champs-Élysées.

<sup>40</sup> Sale catalogue, Pillet, Paris, 27 March 1865, lots 47, 199, 303. Lot 124, Veronese's *Portrait of a Lady*, was also purchased at that sale but it has not been possible to understand how it left Yolande's collection. It has therefore not been included in this study. The Murillo is now in the Faringdon collection, England (National Trust acc. no. 70).

sued artistic careers.<sup>41</sup> It is important to note, however, that neither of them were professional art dealers. Therefore, it can be presumed that they knew Yolande and acted on her behalf out of friendship.<sup>42</sup>

Two months later, in May 1865, at the Charles A-L-J, Duc de Morny sale in Paris, Yolande purchased one of her most prized paintings: *A Young Lady, Called an Infanta* by Velázquez (*Fig. 9*).<sup>43</sup> According to the annotated



*Fig. 9:* Juan Bautista Martínez del Mazo, *María Teresa (1638–1683), Infanta of Spain*, c. 1645, oil on canvas, 148 × 102.9 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

<sup>41</sup> François Marcille (1790–1856). Upon his death in 1856 he had over five thousand pictures of the eighteenth-century French School. No museum, apart from the Louvre, could compete.

<sup>42</sup> See the introduction of the catalogue, *Vente de Tableaux et dessins formant la collection de feu Camille Marcille*, Pillet, Paris, 6–7 March 1876.

<sup>43</sup> Sale catalogue, Escribe & Pillet, Paris, 31 May 1865, lot 127. The work is now considered to be by Juan Bautista Martínez del Mazo and is kept in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (acc. no. MET 43.101).



catalogue and the *procès verbal* of the sale, the buyer of this picture was the Marquess of Hertford. Richard Seymour-Conway, 4th Marquess of Hertford (1800–1870), was among the most important collectors of his generation. Part of his celebrated collection is now on public display at the Wallace Collection in London.<sup>44</sup> This sale annotation is particularly interesting because the Wallace Collection's archives do not have any record of him ever acting on behalf of a third party at auction. Furthermore, these archives do not contain any evidence of him selling works of art that he himself had acquired. Although Hertford was not seemingly in the habit of rendering services such as this, it is known that he and Yolande were acquainted. This is implied in the memoirs of Sir Edward Blount (1809–1905), a British banker based in Paris. Blount recalled how the Marquess of Hertford, Richard Wallace, and General Claremont, Yolande's companion, would visit Paris art galleries and auction houses together.<sup>45</sup>

Blount also recorded how, when the marquess was on his deathbed at his Parisian home, Bagatelle, on 25 August 1870, he was present along with both Richard Wallace and General Claremont (pp. 266–68). The fact that the general and Lord Hertford shared a common interest in exploring the Parisian art world together makes it very likely that Yolande would have benefited from his advice when considering possible acquisitions. These comments in Blount's memoirs, however, are probably what led some writers to state that Yolande was not the collector and Claremont was advising her.<sup>46</sup> The marquess was not a museum curator like Reiset or the Marcille brothers, but he dedicated most of his life to his collection and was, like them, known as a remarkable connoisseur. It is, therefore, perfectly possible that he might have been considered an adviser of choice by Yolande. The Lyne-Stephenses started acquiring art through London dealers but, seemingly, by the end of the 1850s they had come into contact with art historians and connoisseurs whose advice Yolande preferred to use in order to continue collecting.

A year later, in May 1866, Yolande purchased Abraham Mignon's *A Hollow Tree Trunk* from the Herman de Kat sale.<sup>47</sup> The annotated catalogue, held at the Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie (RKD), records the name 'Féral' as the purchaser of this work. This may refer to Eugène Féral (1832–1900), a Paris-based expert in paintings who worked for the city's auctioneers during this period. Féral has not been the subject of any research and there are no records on his activities, but his name came

<sup>44</sup> See the article by Suzanne Higgott in this issue of *19*.

<sup>45</sup> *Memoirs of Sir Edward Blount, K.C.B. &c.*, ed. by Stuart J. Reid (London: Longmans, Green, 1902), pp. 265–66.

<sup>46</sup> See, for example, [Wine and Napoleone](#), 'It was with Claremont's advice, and possibly that of Wallace, that Yolande expanded her art collection.'

<sup>47</sup> Sale catalogue, Pillet, Paris, 2–3 May 1866, lot 50. In 2002 the picture was recorded as being part of the Heinz Foundation Collection, Washington, DC.

to light because it appears in several sale catalogues for which he acted as an expert. It is difficult to discover the importance of Féral to his contemporaries but given the number of important sales for which he was the official expert one can assume that he was very knowledgeable. Therefore, it is not a surprise to see his name on the list of people who helped Yolande.

At the sale of the Marquess de Salamanca that took place between 3 and 6 June 1867, Yolande did something she never seems to have done before: she attended the sale in person. Moreover, according to the annotated catalogue and the *procès verbal*, she herself successfully bid on a number of works: two by Velázquez, *Portrait of Philip IV* and *Bust of Woman*, a still life by Frans Snyders, and two further paintings by Garofalo and Teniers.<sup>48</sup> One reason for Yolande's decision to bid in person is possibly explained by looking at a copy of the sale catalogue in the RKD. The inscription beside lot 41, the once highly valuable *Portrait of Philip IV* by Velázquez, reads as follows: 'Mrs Lyne-Stephens contre Hertford'. Did she perhaps know that the marquess was interested in the picture and, therefore, decided to attend the sale herself? This shows that not only did Yolande now consider herself a serious collector but that she was also a determined one.

In May 1868, at the Comte d'Espagnac sale, a 'Mr Richard' purchased, for Yolande, the *Portrait of the Cardinal de Richelieu* by Philippe de Champaigne.<sup>49</sup> Although it has not been possible to connect this name with a member of the Parisian art trade, one wonders if this might not, in fact, have been a reference to Richard Wallace (1818–1890), the heir to the 4th Marquess of Hertford.<sup>50</sup> After Lord Hertford died, Yolande and General Claremont remained in contact with Sir Richard and Lady Wallace, as can be seen from correspondence and documents retained in the archives of the Wallace Collection. One of the letters, dated 27 November 1871, was written by Sir Richard and addressed to the general. It is a polite refusal of an invitation from Yolande to come and visit them.<sup>51</sup> As well as this letter, the Wallace Collection Archive also contains Sir Richard and Lady Wallace's visitors' book for their London home, Hertford House.<sup>52</sup> Yolande is recorded as having visited Lady Wallace in August 1882.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Sale catalogue, Pillet, Paris, 3–6 June 1867, lots 41, 45, 66, 116 (a Garofalo whose description does not match any of Yolande's picture), and 120 (a Teniers that again does not appear in Yolande's sale).

<sup>49</sup> Sale catalogue, Pillet, Paris, 8 May 1868, lot 186. The picture is now in the collection of the National Gallery, London (acc. no. NG1449).

<sup>50</sup> This supposition is reinforced by the fact that the 4th Marquess of Hertford purchased the *Portrait of the Comte d'Espagnac* by Vigée-Lebrun during that auction (Wallace Collection acc. no. P449). Richard Wallace, who often acted for the marquess at auction, could, on that day, have bid on behalf of Yolande too.

<sup>51</sup> A loan from the Claremont archives to the Wallace Collection, uncatalogued.

<sup>52</sup> See the article by Helen Jones in this issue of 19.

<sup>53</sup> Visitors' book, London, Wallace Collection Archive, AR2/44, p. 55. Yolande's name appears together with Comte and Comtesse de Ségur-Lamoignon, Marquis

In 1869, perhaps inspired by her experiences at the José de Salamanca sale, Yolande was once again present in the auction room, this time at the Baron François Delessert's sale. Here the *procès verbal* records her name as the purchaser of *A Sea Piece* by Ludolf Backhuysen (this painting was later reattributed to Willem van de Velde in the Christie's sale of 1895).<sup>54</sup> The Delessert sale was the last known auction at which Yolande bid for herself and, in fact, it has not been possible to find any evidence that she bought at auction again until the Beurnonville sale of 1881. On that occasion, 'Malinet' is recorded as purchasing no fewer than six paintings on Yolande's behalf: a *Portrait of a Lady* by Watteau, Nicolas Lancret's *Niçaise*, François Hubert Drouais's *Portrait of La Comtesse du Barry*, Jean-Marc Nattier's *Portrait of La Princesse de Conty*, Gerard David's *Mystic Marriage of St Catherine*, and a *Portrait of a Lady* by Hans Memling.<sup>55</sup> The Comte de Beurnonville was the nephew of Frédéric Reiset; it is highly possible Yolande knew him. This would explain her reappearance in the salerooms.<sup>56</sup> Despite this being the largest known group of paintings that Yolande ever acquired at one sale, and despite the fact that the works themselves are of superior quality, it has not been possible to find very much information on 'Malinet'. The name probably referred to Malinet, Maitre de Curiosités, 25 quai Voltaire, who appeared from time to time as an expert for some auction or other. Unlike her preference for conferring with art scholars, Malinet seems to have specialized in trading in oriental china — a genre which Yolande also collected.<sup>57</sup> One can assume that because of her connection with the Reiset family, she would have known the pictures or discussed them with Frédéric before purchasing them, so did not need a specialist scholar on site to bid on her behalf.

Looking at the creation of the collection allows one to see how Yolande created contacts in the art world, starting to purchase from a small dealer and later working with reputed art specialists, creating friendships among museum curators and some of the greatest collectors of her time.

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and Marquise De Möy and her personal chaplain, M. Dwane, separated by a line from those visitors that came on 16 August and by another line from visitors on 18 August. Lady Wallace could have either received two groups of visitors on the 16th or they could have visited on the 17th.

<sup>54</sup> Sale catalogue, Pillet, Paris, 15–18 March 1869, lot 4 (as per Backhuysen).

<sup>55</sup> Sale catalogue, Pillet, Paris, 9–16 May 1881, lots 49, 112, 141, 195, 287, and 363. The Hans Memling (now considered to be by a follower of Rogier van der Weyden) and the Gerard David are now both in the National Gallery, London (acc. nos. NG1432 and NG1433). The Lancret is now in the Sterling and Francine Clark Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts (acc. no. 1955.957).

<sup>56</sup> See Neil Jeffares, 'Biographical Index of Collectors', in *Dictionary of Pastellists before 1800* <<http://www.pastellists.com/Collectors.htm>> [accessed 3 October 2020].

<sup>57</sup> See Proantic, 'Le Musée chinois de l'Impératrice', *Le Magazine de Proantic*, 6 February 2016 <<http://www.proantic.com/magazine/le-musee-chinois-de-limperatrice/>> [accessed 4 October 2020].

She gained so much confidence that she even went herself to bid at auction. For a long time she considered bequeathing her whole collection to the British nation. However, a last-minute change of heart has made her name disappear from the list of great collectors of the period. Had the pictures entered the National Gallery they would have been a major showcase of French taste in the nineteenth century and acting in some ways as a miniature Wallace Collection. Despite having generated much excitement in 1895 while coming up at auction, the Lyne-Stephens collection is now forgotten.

### Thwarted legacies

Yolande and the National Gallery were near contemporaries. As she moved to England, she witnessed the formation of this great institution, whose ambition was to become a national museum with a world-class collection of paintings that could rival those of Berlin, Rome, or Paris.<sup>58</sup> Trustees were appointed to ensure that this aim was achieved. A great number of letters between the trustees and the public are preserved in the National Gallery's archive.<sup>59</sup> These documents reveal the enthusiasm of the population, both British and international, who wanted to contribute to this project by donating works of art to the nation. Yolande was inspired in the same manner and, in her will dated 8 March 1887, forty-eight of her pictures were to be included in a generous bequest. The conditions pertaining to this gift were as follows: '[they] shall be known described and marked as the Lyne-Stephens Collection and shall be deposited in The National Gallery or some other suitable Gallery in some suitable position for their proper exhibition to the public.'<sup>60</sup> Was Yolande's wish that the gift should be referred to as the 'Lyne-Stephens Collection', rather than as the 'Yolande Lyne-Stephens Collection', her way of acknowledging her late husband's role in the formation of the group? After all it was his family's wealth that had made the collection possible.

In this same English will, Yolande bequeathed her estate at Roehampton to her companion, General Claremont or, if he predeceased her, to his son, Harry Claremont. The estate was given in trust, however, and was to be passed down the male line or, to use the wording of the will, 'in the tail male'. The art collection at that house was included in the estate and everything was to be enjoyed by each male heir in turn, on condition they took the name of Lyne-Stephens in lieu of their original surname. Yolande hoped that these measures would be sufficient to ensure that the

<sup>58</sup> Jonathan Conlin, *The Nation's Mantelpiece: A History of the National Gallery* (London: Pallas Athene, 2006), p. 6.

<sup>59</sup> Letter books, London, National Gallery Archive, NG6/1 and NG6/2.

<sup>60</sup> See Yolande's English will (p. 3), Kew, National Archives, fol. 1042.

name of Lyne-Stephens continued to live on through a family associated not only with the magnanimous bequest she was making to the National Gallery but also with one of the grandest houses in Roehampton.

On 12 June 1894, however, barely three months before her death, Yolande had a final change of heart and added one last codicil to her will, revoking her bequest to the nation and asking for the pictures and works of art, originally intended as part of her donation and adorning Lynford Hall, to be sold instead (English will, pp. 29–30). This extraordinary decision, which took place so late in her life, seems to have been prompted by anger at the government's decision to introduce a new Finance Bill that meant estate duty would have to be paid on the full value of the contents of a house and not just on the value of an estate.<sup>61</sup> The effects of this last-minute change to Yolande's will was that the longevity of the Lyne-Stephens name could now only be assured by the Claremonts agreeing to change their name and continuing to live at Roehampton.

As planned, Harry Claremont inherited Roehampton on Yolande's death in 1894. However, he survived his benefactress by no more than four months. The new Lyne-Stephens heir, Harry's son Stephen, was only six years old when his father died. The trustees made the decision to sell almost the entire contents of the house at the Christie's sale of 1895. Despite Yolande's strongly expressed desire that the Roehampton home should remain as she left it and should never leave the family, Stephen, on reaching the age of majority in 1911, asked his lawyer to find a way of breaking the entail on Grove House and sold the property. This then led to a second sale at Christie's, where what was left of the original contents of the house was also put up for auction.<sup>62</sup> Not only did Stephen sell off all that was left of Yolande's legacy but, after a life of carefree spending, he himself was killed in 1923 in a motor racing accident. Stephen had no heirs and thus the family name of Lyne-Stephens died with him.

Although Yolande made General Claremont and his family her direct heirs, another major beneficiary of her will was her lawyer and trustee and also, it would seem, her friend, Horatio Noble Pym. Unexpectedly, her name became associated with a museum for the first time thanks to him. Their friendship became stronger over time and the fourth codicil of Yolande's will, dated 12 December 1891, specified that £10,000 should be given to Pym's wife and a further £5000 each to three of his children.

<sup>61</sup> For more information on this tax, see Peter Mandler, 'Art, Death and Taxes: The Taxation of Works of Art in Britain, 1796–1914', *Historical Research*, 74 (2001), 271–97.

<sup>62</sup> *Catalogue of the Collection of Pictures by Old Masters of Sir Thomas Andros de la Rue Bart., also Choice Pictures by Old Masters: The Property of Stephen Lyne Stephens, Removed from Grove House, Roehampton*, Christie's, London, 16 June 1911. The paintings are lots 94–111.

Meanwhile, Pym's fourth child and Yolande's god-daughter, Yolande Sylvia, had already been provided for in the main body of the will.

In an earlier will Yolande had promised the contents of her apartment in Paris to General Claremont's son, Harry. On 2 July 1893, however, she wrote an eighth codicil, appointing instead Horatio Noble Pym as the beneficiary of 'All my goods and property at No 122 Avenue des Champs Elysées Paris and all the surplus and residue of my French Rentes French shares and Obligations and of all my other properties in France'. Pym was himself keen on art and a great bibliophile, which might explain why Yolande was happy to bequeath him part of her collection.<sup>63</sup>

According to Jenifer Roberts, Pym and his family inherited a total of £92,000 in Yolande's will, around £11 million in today's currency (*Beauty*, p. 216). Wishing to celebrate Yolande's memory, perhaps, Pym bequeathed in her name three of his newly inherited paintings to the National Gallery. It will be remembered that, just before she died, Yolande cancelled her bequest to the British nation. However, although she amended her British will, she failed to change her French one. This latter document, dated 23 June 1888, was retained by her French notary, Maurice Plique, and clearly sets out her intended bequest to the trustees and director of the National Gallery of London:

I bequeath to the Trustees and Director of the National Gallery of London the following pictures. The painting by Gerard David representing the Mystical Marriage of Saint Catherine, the picture by Carlo Dolci, Jesus Christ in Limbo, the painting by Memling, portrait of a woman of the 15th century.<sup>64</sup>

This list is identical to the three pictures offered to the trustees of the National Gallery by Pym. Ultimately, only two of the three pictures Pym offered were accepted. The Carlo Dolci *Christ in Limbo* was not judged of sufficient quality to become part of the national collection. As a result, it was included in the 1895 auction. On 14 March 1895 *The Times* announced the Lyne-Stephens bequest to the museum.<sup>65</sup> The two paintings — the Memling, now considered to have been painted by a member of the workshop of Rogier van der Weyden, and the Gerard David — are both still

<sup>63</sup> Horatio N. Pym, *Odds and Ends at Foxwold: A Guide for the Inquiring Guest* ([n.p]: privately printed by Ballantyne, Hanson, 1887).

<sup>64</sup> 'Je lègue aux Trustees et au Directeur de la Galerie Nationale de Londres les tableaux suivants[,] Le tableau par Gerard David représentant le mariage mystique de Sainte Catherine[,] Le tableau par Carlo Dolci, Jésus Christ dans les limbes[,] Le tableau par Memling, Portrait de femme au quinsième siècle.' Depot judiciaire du Testament de Mme. Lyne-Stephens, Paris, Archives nationales, MC/ET/XV/2682.

<sup>65</sup> 'The National Gallery', *The Times*, 14 March 1895, p. 10.

on display at the National Gallery (NG1433, NG1432), with labels stating, ‘Bequeathed by Mrs Lyne-Stephens, 1895.’

Although Yolande decided not to go ahead with her bequest to the nation and ordered that on her death the forty-eight paintings should be sold at auction, she would have been bitterly disappointed to see most of her Roehampton and Paris treasures — bequeathed to Claremont and Horatio Pym, respectively — included in the sale. The auction, which started on 9 May 1895 and continued for eight days, fetched a staggering £227,778 (£30 million in today’s currency). The total for the seventy-eight paintings alone amounted to nearly £47,000.

On 4 January 1896 *The Times* devoted a whole column to picture auctions of the past season. The article is notable in the current discussion because it places Yolande’s collection firmly in the context of the period.<sup>66</sup> The three great sales of 1895 were those of the Duchess of Montrose, Viscount Clifden, and Yolande Lyne-Stephens. A comparison between the total amounts achieved by the pictures allows one to understand just how valuable Yolande’s collection really was: the Montrose collection sold for £14,167, Clifden’s £26,441, and Yolande’s £46,876, greater than the other two sales combined.<sup>67</sup>

With such a fantastic collection, together with substantial wealth to bequeath to her heirs, it is tempting to wonder why Yolande did not decide to set up a private museum. She was most certainly aware of the opening of the Bowes Museum in 1892 and of the intention of her friend, Lady Wallace, to turn her own house into a museum. The Lyne-Stephens fortune was more than equal to that of the Boweses or the Wallaces, so it would not have been at all surprising if Yolande had followed their lead and created a museum of her own.

There may have been two reasons for her failure to do this. The first is obvious: Yolande was not the true owner of Lynford Hall but only the beneficiary of the estate for her lifetime.<sup>68</sup> She knew that there were several heirs and that the great project in which she and Stephens had invested all their thought and energy would, therefore, have to be sold once she

<sup>66</sup> ‘Sales of the Past Year: Pictures and Drawings’, *The Times*, 4 January 1896, p. 4.

<sup>67</sup> Sale catalogues, Caroline Agnes, Duchess of Montrose (1818–1894), Christie’s, London, 30 April 1895; Henry, 4th Viscount Clifden (1863–1895), Robinson and Fisher, London, 25 May 1895.

<sup>68</sup> In his will, as well as providing for Yolande financially, Stephens left her the estate at Roehampton, the hôtel in Paris, and the art collections housed there. Yolande was also to be allowed to enjoy Lynford Hall for the remainder of her lifetime, but on her death the property was to become part of Stephens’s residuary estate. Following his father’s advice, Stephens wanted to help his uncles and cousins. However, his lawyer drafted a will stating that his residuary estate should be divided between ‘such issue of his four uncles as shall be living at my decease, share and share alike’. Therefore, the residuary estate was to be divided between ninety-three beneficiaries (Roberts, *Beauty*, p. 90).

died. She could not bequeath the house to the nation, as it was not hers to give. She could, however, have decided to turn her estate at Roehampton into a museum but, by the end of her life, the Claremonts had been sharing the place with her for so long that it had somehow almost become their house too, and they may have needed to retain it as a dwelling place. Moreover, Roehampton was not, like Lynford Hall, a place she had created entirely from scratch, and it thus held far less relevance. As for establishing a museum in Paris, the Hôtel Molé had been sold a long time ago and her flat on the Champs-Élysées was merely rented. Yolande had no building, therefore, that she could use as a museum and that is probably the reason for her intended bequest to the nation of pictures and precious objects from her collection. This idea of a bequest makes one believe that Yolande, like the Boweses and the Wallaces, wanted the family name to be remembered in history.

The main explanation, however, why no Lyne-Stephens museum was ever established is probably that, by the end of her life, Yolande's main interest was no longer her collection. Instead, she ploughed most of her time and energy into the construction of the Church of Our Lady and the English Martyrs in Cambridge. She had previously contributed towards the cost of building the Church of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in Wellingborough and had a church built in the grounds at Lynford, the Church of Our Lady of Consolation and Saint Stephen. But Cambridge was a project on a much grander scale given that it is one of the largest Catholic churches anywhere in the country.

In 1883 the University of Cambridge decided that a church should be constructed for their Catholic students. The Duke of Norfolk donated funds for the purchase of a plot of land, but thereafter it was necessary to raise money to build the church itself. When asked for assistance, Yolande's answer probably exceeded all expectations, for she agreed to help but with the stipulation that she, and she alone, should be allowed to fund and direct the entire project. Her conditions were accepted and over the following seven years she financed and made decisions regarding the erection of the church and rectory, the furnishing of both, the ceremonial accoutrements, and the vestments of the clergy. It seems that the only exception she allowed was for Baron von Hügel, a local Catholic, who was the first curator of the University of Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, to donate a medieval processional cross, that she then had restored at her own expense. The church in Cambridge thus seems to have become her life's greatest project and she wrote a letter to Bishop Arthur Riddell to explain her feelings:

What I have most at heart is Cambridge, and for this [...] I must be allowed to indulge my own taste and fancy, for I think it would not do building a church there which could not be worthy [of] the surroundings. (Roberts, *Beauty*, p. 179)



The imposing building is perhaps what Yolande Lyne-Stephens most wanted to leave behind as a personal memorial.<sup>69</sup>

While Yolande's collection was so quickly consigned to history, her extraordinary efforts in getting the Church of Our Lady and the English Martyrs in Cambridge built and decorated are still acknowledged. Today, one can still find the trace of Yolande in the church as the inscription, 'Pray for the good estate of Yolande Marie Louise Lyne Stephens, Foundress of this church', is still visible above the rose window of the north transept, while an engraved portrait of her after a painting by Carolus Duran continues to hang in the dining room of the rectory (*Fig. 10*) (Wilkins, p. 107).



*Fig. 10:* Carolus Duran, *Portrait of Yolande Lyne Stephens*, 1888, oil on canvas, 107 × 77 cm, private collection. © Simon Little Lefays Fine Arts.

<sup>69</sup> For more information on the erection of the church, see Wilkins.

Meanwhile, several pictures from her collection, which have now found their way into museums and were intended to be remembered by posterity as the ‘Lyne-Stephens Collection’, are today recorded under the provenance ‘Collection of Mrs Yolande Lyne-Stephens’. With the passing of the years, Yolande seems to have placed her husband ever more in the shade. Perhaps this reflects the strength of her personality and, indeed, of her success and singularity as a female collector. Despite her original intention to safeguard both the Lyne-Stephens name and her beloved collection, she failed to achieve either of her aims. However, in an entry on one of Vigée-Lebrun’s portraits formerly owned by Yolande, she is described by the curators of the National Gallery of Art in Washington as ‘an art collector of considerable stature’.<sup>70</sup> This surely provides a strong signal that she, at least, deserves a great deal more attention.

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<sup>70</sup> Vigée-Lebrun, *Portrait of Madame d’Aguesseau de Fresnes*, 1789, National Gallery of Washington (acc. no. 1946.7.16). For the provenance, see <<https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.32694.html#provenance>> [accessed 19 October 2020].