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Eugénie Hautier (1822–1909): promoter of vocational drawing courses for girls and adult women in 1860s France

ABSTRACT: Born in 1822 to a military officer, pupil of the House of the Legion of Honor in Saint-Denis and then a painter, Eugénie Hautier created in 1860, in Paris, a drawing school for young girls and young women with the financial support of the municipality, in order to increase this type of school in the city. In 1864, she was one of the very few women which had an audition during the vocational education and training survey led by the *ministère du Commerce*. She presented her drawing school together with a proposal for the creation of a vocational school dedicated to applied arts. Combining drawing and technical lessons and productive work, this new school should contribute to resolve, according to her, the issue of women's work, by preparing them for professions better valued on the labour market.

KEYWORDS: Drawing teaching, girls and adult women education, vocational training, applied arts, 19th century, France.

Female drawing schools as a setting for women's vocational training in the 19th century are something which up until now has attracted little attention from historians. Their promoters as well as their professors are relatively unknown. Among these, however, the French painter Eugénie Hautier (1822–1909) stands out. Hautier opened a drawing school for girls and adult women in Paris in 1860 with the financial aid of the municipality (Laurent, 1998, p. 51–55; d'Enfert 2017; Rogers 2017, p. 118–120). Her doing so initiated a wave of the creation of similar institutions in the French capital during the 1860s and the increasing involvement of female artists in the field of teaching. Eugénie Hautier was one of very few women to make a statement in the context of the great inquiry on professional instruction conducted by

the French ministry of Commerce in the years 1863–1864: here she presented not only her drawing school, incidentally of repute, but also the project of a professional school centred on the industrial arts (France, 1864, p. 153–161). Focussing on graphic education and productive work, this school was established in the second half of the 1860s. Eugénie Hautier believed that it would contribute to resolve the issue of women's work by preparing them for 'new' careers, both adapted to their 'qualities' and better valued on the labour market.

In the first section of this article, the educational path and the artistic career of Eugénie Hautier are presented. The drawing school that she founded in 1860 is then explored, the focus being on the context of its creation as well as on its function and recruitment. Lastly, Hautier's idea for a "practical school of industrial arts for impoverished young females" is then examined through the analysis not only of her statement in 1864, but also through a handwritten brief dating from 1862 conserved in the French *Archives nationales*.

A bourgeois education coupled with artistic training

Eugénie Anne Hautier was born in Rennes on 13th October 1822, the daughter of an artillery officer Alexandre-François-Eugène Hautier (1795–1875). In February 1834, at the age of 11½, she was admitted to the school of the Legion of Honour in Saint-Denis, near Paris (France, 1835, p. 902, 910). This institution accepted the daughters of superior officers who were members of the order of the Legion of Honour (Rogers, 1992, p. 114). It was most certainly within this institution, where she would remain until the age of 17¹, that her artistic training began. The course of study did indeed in the 1830s include *arts d'agrément* (music, drawing, and dance), all typical aspects of bourgeois female education. Besides the arts, religious instruction, reading, writing, arithmetic, history, geography, botany, needlework, embroidery and mending were also taught (Rogers, 1992, p. 352–355).

In Saint-Denis, drawing was an important discipline. When Eugénie Hautier became a pupil there, teaching was under the supervision of Jean-Baptiste Paulin Guérin, a history painter of repute. Pupils first of all learned the basics. Then they studied figure, floral and landscape drawing, initially from engraved models and later from plaster casts and from nature. At the

¹ Archives of the school of the Legion of Honour in Saint-Denis: personal dossier of Eugénie Hautier. I thank Father Gabriel Grimaud for having transmitted it to me.

end of the course, pupils learned ornamental drawing and the best among them were initiated to painting (Rogers, 1992, p. 187). This was a relatively traditional path of graphic training, albeit with certain differences, in the few female drawing schools in activity during the same era (d’Enfert, 2017).

This teaching served a dual purpose. On one hand, it proposed an initiation to the arts typical of a young bourgeois woman’s education, which could find application in traditionally feminine jobs such as embroidery (Lievyms, Verdo, Bégat, 1842, p. 96). On the other hand, it represented the first step for artistic training with an opening onto the practice of fine arts, which could provide professional perspectives in the domain. Like other fellow students (Sofio, 2016, p. 189), it was the second path – that of the fine arts – which Hautier chose to pursue. Her artistic training did not cease when she left the Legion of Honour. Indeed, specialising in the final years of study at Saint-Denis “allowed a number of boarders to become professional painters as soon as they completed their schooling” (Sofio, 2016, p. 189).

Eugénie Hautier was indeed to frequent the teaching studios of several reputed Parisian painters before choosing for herself the career of an artist. She became a pupil of Henry Scheffer, one of “the most sought after professors for women” (Sofio, 2016, p. 182–183), as well as of Joseph-Nicolas Robert-Fleury and Eugène Isabey, two history painters. In 1848, she started to exhibit her work at the Salon of Living Artists (*Salon des artistes vivants*) in Paris by presenting two portraits in the painting section (Salon, 1848, p. 159). Hautier was at this point 25 years old and living in Paris, in the *Nouvelle Athènes* neighbourhood – currently the 9th district (*arrondissement*) – where a number of artists and writers were in residence. A single woman, she was fairly well integrated into high society. In 1853, the *Revue des beaux-arts* described her as a “young person of much spirit, who divides herself between music and painting” (Guénot, 1853, p. 167).

Hautier exhibited her work not only at the Paris *Salon* (on several occasions until 1863) but also in the provinces, while diversifying her production: in addition to portraits, she presented paintings of flowers or fruit, still life, interior or historical scenes. Like a number of other artists of the period, she was also a copyist within the context of orders or acquisitions of art work from / by the state. Despite her remaining a background artist, she gained a certain notoriety through her pictorial production and obtained various prizes and medals as a result of several exhibitions (Alvin, 1863, p. 167; Bassanville 1866, p. 28; Eyraud *et al.*, 1909, p. 26).

A second career as teacher

In one of her obituaries, we learn that her rewards “bestow her the honour of being named director of a municipal school in the city of Paris in 1860” (Eyraud *et al.*, 1909, p. 8). In fact it is in 1860 that Hautier founded a drawing school for girls and young women, at the demand of the prefect of the Seine department, Baron Haussmann². The school was installed in the 9th district of Paris. Even though she began there, in a way, a second career, her teaching activity began nonetheless before 1860 as she already had “her own studio, in which she took on students of well-to-do families” (Alvin, 1863, p. 168). It is without doubt this studio which was transformed into a “municipal school”, a term which masked its real status: it was indeed a private school subsidized by the municipality (to the amount of 3,500 francs per year), the counterpart of the subsidy being to receive “twenty-five young girls for free” whilst the other paid a fee of two francs per month (France 1864, p. 155).

Hautier’s drawing school was not the first female drawing school to have been established in Paris in the 19th century. In 1860, there were some already in activity in the centre of the city (d’Enfert, 2017). The opening of Hautier’s school in 1860 is nonetheless an important moment in the history of Parisian female drawing schools. It initiated a phase of great development of such schools in the capital, as part of a voluntarist municipal policy to reorganize and develop drawing instruction. Following on from Hautier’s drawing school, other schools of the same type opened. The trend was so popular that by the end of the 1860s, all of the twenty Parisian districts had a female drawing school. In the most part these schools were directed by women, who as a result led double careers as both artists and teachers (d’Enfert, 2017).

Hautier was the only teacher in her drawing school and was assisted by two supervisors. She gave her lessons in the afternoon, from 1pm until 4pm, three times a week on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays³. A Parisian drawing professor estimated that the school would gather a mere fifty students or so (Bardin, 1863, p. 35). In fact, however, from 1863–1864, the school had around 120 students enrolled, and 70 to 80 students attended each lesson

² One of her obituaries indicate that Hautier was a relative of baron Haussmann, prefect of the Seine from 1853 to 1870 (Eyraud *et al.*, 1909, p. 15).

³ Archives de Paris, VD⁶ 1731 n^o 6: Advertisement draft for a “municipal drawing school, specifically destined to girls who wish to dedicate themselves to industrial arts”, n.d. See also (*Gazette des beaux-arts*, 1870, p. 287).

(France, 1864, p. 154). These students were essentially girls and young women of the “middle class” aged between 10 and 25, and up to 28 years old. Certain students among the eldest were “schoolmistresses without a post, women forced to renounce their profession, which no longer provided them with a sufficient income” (France, 1864, p. 155). As for teaching, it included figure drawing (notably of the head), ornamental, floral and fruit drawing. Beginners drew from lithography models, and the more confirmed from casts and from nature. During the second half of the 1860s, Hautier introduced new more ‘professional’ teachings. These included classes on porcelain painting, enamel and faïence, in the context of the “practical school of industrial arts for impoverished young females” which she set up as an extension of her drawing school (*cf. infra*).

Hautier’s drawing school rapidly acquired a good reputation. She gained notoriety during school exhibitions organized by the Central Union of Fine Arts Applied to Industry (*Union central des beaux-arts appliqués à l’industrie*). In 1865, she was rated by the jury as the leader of Parisian female schools for floral and ornamental drawing, and generated the enthusiasm of the director of the *Moniteur des arts*, according to whom every student was “in the process of becoming a true artist” (Fillonneau, 1865; Union centrale, 1866, p. 420). In 1869, it was the work of students in faïence and porcelain painting which attracted attention (Térigny, 1869, p. 101). The school had a certain renown abroad: it was cited as an example in England (Anonymous, 1863, p. 53–54; Rogers, 2017), Belgium (Alvin, 1863, p. 167–169) and in Switzerland (Menn, 1874, p. 174), and certain of its student’s works were acquired by the South Kensington Museum in London (Science and art department, 1870, p. 125).

In 1870, Eugénie Hautier was appointed inspector of the teaching of drawing in Parisian schools, within the creation of a specific service for the inspection of girls’ primary schools. She joined a (small) body of municipal inspectors which was before exclusively male and there she would remain the only woman until 1881. In this position, she played a decisive part in the organization and development of the teaching of drawing for girls in Parisian primary schools during the 1870s (Gréard, 1878, p. 108–110). Her role as inspector led her to take part in various instances where she would rub shoulders with important personalities from the artistic and education spheres. She took part in the supervisory committee of the teaching of drawing in Paris, and was chosen as member of judging panels for school exhibitions, such as those of the Central Union in both 1874 and 1880. When she retired in 1886, she settled down in the region of Belley, in the county of Ain, where her life

came to a close in the company of two other former pupils of the school of Saint-Denis (Eyraud *et al*, 1909).

A promoter for the professional training of women in the arts industries

In the first half of the 1860s, Eugénie Hautier expressed a range of proposals concerning drawing instruction and its relation to women's vocational training. She brought forth this subject in various contexts: in the prize giving speeches she delivered to the students of her drawing school; in the statement she made in 1864 before the commission on professional instruction conducted by the ministry of Agriculture, Commerce and Public Works; and in a "Memoir with the aim of demonstrating the utility of the creation of a practical school in industrial arts for impoverished young females" she drafted in October 1862 and then addressed to emperor Napoleon III (so indirectly the empress) in February 1863⁴. According to certain obituaries, this memoir was addressed beforehand to the minister of Commerce Armand Béhic, who is said to have formed "a commission of thirty members of diverse nationalities, in order to study the project" (Eyraud *et al*, 1909, p. 12). We have, however, found no trace of such a commission.

Through her project of a practical school in industrial arts, Hautier wished to contribute to the resolution of the question of work for women of working and middle classes. She wanted to abate the "difficulty they had to obtain work" and help them "earn a sufficient salary allowing them to live"⁵. Actually, Hautier took a number of elements from *L'Ouvrière (The Woman Worker)*, a survey published by the philosopher and politician Jules Simon (1861). She used an observation as her starting point: that of the deterioration, not only moral but financial, of women's work and of the obstruction of jobs. Equally invoked was the proliferation of factories, the development of the sewing machine and the competition with prisons and convents. Women of "modest means but above those of workers" who wished through working "to slightly improve their living standards"⁶ but also men in jobs that might be suitable

⁴ Archives nationales (AN), F/21/541: Projet d'une École pratique des arts industriels pour les jeunes filles pauvres, par Eugénie Hautier, directrice de l'École municipale et spéciale de dessin pour les jeunes personnes (1863).

⁵ AN, F/21/541: Letter from Eugénie Hautier to the emperor, 10 February 1863.

⁶ AN, F/21/541: Eugénie Hautier, « Mémoire ayant pour but de démontrer l'utilité de la création d'une école pratique des arts industriels pour les jeunes filles pauvres », 12 October 1862.

for women were also targeted. As she adhered to the liberal approach of Jules Simon Hautier did not question a situation caused in her opinion by “permanent, legitimate causes, which would not be easy to dispose of”. There was no question of her stripping employers of the “precious liberty” they had to employ men rather than women, nor to forbid work in prisons, which constituted a “beneficial element of punishment that justice inflicts on the guilty”⁷. She wanted in contrast for women to be allowed to access “new careers” adapted to their feminine nature. These excluded careers demanding strength but also those requiring intelligence because “the activity of the human mind in women is not as innate as it is in men”: “To find combinations which come naturally to a man, women need to make a certain effort which they have not yet managed to do. As a result, they are confined to manual work”⁸. In the same way, Hautier considered that in the field of arts, women “are not, in general, talented creatively speaking [...] they do not have the genius for invention” (France, 1864, p. 158–159). And it is indeed for this reason that she proposed courses in applied arts – a domain under development in the Second Empire (Laurent, 1999) –, more precisely those “in which the artist is an imitator, an interpreter, and not an inventor” (France, 1864, p. 158; Simon, 1861, p. 200–202): painting on porcelain, enamel, fans, lithography, wood or metal engraving, the colouring of engravings and the correction of photographs (France, 1864, p. 158–159)⁹. These courses concerned professions that in addition could be practised at home which, as one commenter highlighted, “offers a favourable sphere adapted to women’s work” (Lagardie, 1864, p. 384–385). Incidentally, as one reviewer specified, “Mademoiselle Hautier is not one to encourage women to embrace professions in the hope of emancipation and of a woman’s mythical equality with man” (Lagardie, 1864, p. 384–385).

Hautier conceived her practical school of industrial arts as a school of a “superior grade”, in the extension of municipal female drawing schools. The school was to be equipped with tens of professors each one providing, daily, a practical lesson in relation to a specific industrial art: painting on porcelain, lithography, wood engraving, etc. Five hundred students would be expected daily, from 10am until 4pm, all of them admitted by examination, of which 100 would participate for free. Students having acquired a certain degree of skill would then have been admitted to a “special” class where they would have realized, for a fee, work entrusted by manufacturers. The diplo-

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ See also AN, F/21/541: Eugénie Hautier, « Mémoire... ».

ma awarded at the end of their studies was conceived as “a title to present to manufacturers and traders”¹⁰. A manufacturers’ patronage was envisaged for those who completed their studies.

It should be noted at this point that Hautier’s project of a practical school was not totally an original one during this era. As such, the *École impériale de dessin pour les jeunes personnes* (*Imperial School of Drawing for Young Women*), created in 1803 on the Seine’s left bank in Paris, had been provided with a lithography class from the middle of the 1830s until 1848; during the 1860s, it included various practical lessons: industrial drawing, copper engraving, wood engraving, faïence painting, oil and decorative painting, etc. (d’Enfert, 2017). More similar perhaps to Hautier’s project was a practical school of porcelain painting for girls created in Limoges in 1861: it resembled a real apprentice’s workshop, remunerating its pupils whilst training them in an exclusively feminine environment with guarantees of clear morals (d’Enfert, 2019). Lastly, the arrangement intended by Hautier was not without similarities to that of professional schools created in Paris by the saint-simonian Éliisa Lemonnier in 1862 and 1864, in which workshops of wood engraving and porcelain painting were organized and directed by specialists in these domains (Lemonnier, 1866; Coignet, 1866).

Hautier estimated the annual budget of her future practical school to be 50,000 francs: it was a particularly high sum in comparison to other female drawing schools in the capital¹¹. She had planned to finance her project with subventions from the state (20,000 francs) and subscriptions collected from “patronesses”. It was indeed to generate the interest of subscribers that she directly solicited the emperor Napoleon III in 1863, to obtain “the high patronage of the empress”¹². The subscription campaign was nevertheless unfinished in 1866 (Bassanville, 1866).

Did this practical school of industrial arts, such as Eugénie Hautier had planned, really see the light of day? The response is certainly positive. This school was cited specifically, with as its date of creation 1865, in the catalogue of the Central Union exhibition in 1869: 117 ceramic pieces were presented there, certain of which were signed by Hautier (Science and art department,

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ In 1865, The budget of the Imperial School of Drawing for Young Women was around 10,000 francs (AN, F/21/657: *École de dessin pour jeunes filles: comptabilité. 1851–1865*). Private drawing schools which were subsidized by the municipality received between 3,500 and 4,000 francs per year.

¹² AN, F/21/541: Eugénie Hautier, « Mémoire... ».

1870; Térigny, 1869; Union centrale, 1869, p. 185). Seemingly however, in the end, Hautier set up a scaled down and less expensive scheme by organizing not an autonomous school but rather practical lessons within the municipal drawing school of which she was the director (the practical school was incidentally situated at the same address) (Menn, 1874, p. 174). This leads one to think that in contrast with the initial project which was to employ specialist teachers, it was finally Eugénie Hautier herself who gave practical lessons, probably with no real involvement from manufacturers (Union centrale, 1869, p. 185–186).

Conclusion

Was Eugénie Hautier a pioneer of education and training (Laot, Solar, 2018) for girls and adult women? The answer to this question is surely ‘yes’ if it implies that she was not necessarily an innovator, but rather a cultivator and promoter of a little developed and explored domain in its practical modalities, that of in-school vocational training for women. It was good for her experience as director of a female drawing school as well as for her project of a practical school of industrial arts that she was one of few women to be received by the commission on professional instruction in 1864. It remains to be seen to what extent the teaching model proposed by Eugénie Hautier, centred on the learning of drawing and applied arts, succeeded in finding, or not as the case may be, a sustainable institutional form. The Élixa Lemonnier professional schools, municipalized during the Third Republic, seem indeed to have imposed themselves upon the domain of Parisian teaching of applied arts (Laurent, Wittman, 1996). Their curriculum was nevertheless different as it concerned ‘full-time’ schools combining general studies and vocational training (Leroy-Beaulieu, 1873, p. 459–461). In addition to the case of Eugénie Hautier, it would also be worth extending the investigation to other female artists who, like Eugénie Hautier, became directors of female drawing schools in various districts in the French capital from the 1860s: Delphine de Cool, Mathilde Duckett, Nélie Jacquemart, Delphine Keller, Marie Mac Nab, Louise Thoret, etc. Beyond their artistic occupation per se, their teaching activity remains a neglected part of their biographical paths and should therefore be brought to light.

Translated by *Naomi Rivière*
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