

## Theme of the stages of life in the decorative paintings of Paris and its suburban town halls in the first half of the French Third Republic (1872–1906)

HARADA Kaori

This thesis focuses on the theme of the stages of life featured in many of the decorative paintings of Paris and its suburban town halls from the late nineteenth to the beginning of the twentieth centuries and reveals the conditions of the order and contemporary acceptance of these paintings. This is an attempt to analyse the social context in which these decorative paintings were produced and clarify various aspects of the art of this period that developed through the painting of this subject.

The theme of the stages of life, which divides the lives of people into several stages, from birth to death, is found in the art of most ages and cultures, but in late nineteenth-century Western European art in particular, it was combined with the new interest in life emerging at the time and expressed in numerous works, as well as the frieze form. Traditional research on the end of the nineteenth century has focused on the theme of the cycle or stages of life in literature, music, and other art forms from the perspective of the symbolist artistic currents of the time. In contrast, symbolist painters produced a series of decorative paintings and large horizontal murals on this theme for the district buildings of the French Third Republic, but how their representations relate to the political and social trends of the time, including the role of the town halls, has not been sufficiently discussed. In the history of research on public decoration in the Third Republic, the significance of the decoration of small- and medium-sized secular public buildings, such as town halls, has been overlooked. This study contributes to a review of these public decorative paintings as a cultural heritage of modernity and seeks to clarify the social and political aspects that have previously been neglected.

Alongside the themes of ‘Victory of the Republic’ and ‘Liberty, Equality and Fraternity’, the stages of life are frequently found in the interior decorations of the town halls of Paris and its suburbs during the French Third Republic. These themes are closely linked to the fact that municipal buildings were the institutions that registered births, marriages, and deaths and thus played a role in integrating citizens into the institutions of the Republic. The subjects of the stages of life in these decorative paintings in town halls pictorialized the life of a citizen, augmenting it with republican symbols and traditional allegories. This theme was particularly important for the decoration of the wedding rooms in the town halls because these spaces, where civil marriages occurred, were the counterpart to church marriages, and the decorative paintings conveyed republican ideals to visitors. By analysing these decorative paintings, this study examines in detail the close links between ideology and iconography during the Third Republic. Furthermore, by

conducting an analysis based on a demonstrative examination of the representations of the various stages of life, it aims to highlight the diverse debates surrounding the views of gender, family, and life at the time and review them from a contemporary perspective.

In the following parts, the reception of the individual decorative paintings, as well as the role they played in society under the Third Republic through public competitions and the salon as a presentation venue, is detailed, along with the process of ordering and production. The first part clarifies the development of the decorations of the town halls in the early years of the Third Republic and discusses the process by which allegorical images of the 'Law' and the 'Republic' were ordered and installed as the first town hall decorations, leading to the subsequent emergence of themes of the stages of life. The decorative painting, which had the specific role of symbolising civil marriage as stipulated in the Civil Code, overlapped the allegory of the law with that of the French Republic and presented itself as an allegorical image presiding over civil marriages. The decorative paintings of the town halls, which carried a clear but very limited meaning, developed, as the decorative project began in earnest in the 1880s, the themes of stages of life, which, as discussed in Part II, entrusted the republican civil ethic to the lives of citizens superimposed on the historical representations of the Revolution and ancient Gaul. Part II demonstrates that, although they represented scenes of the past in their depictions of the national celebrations and volunteer soldiers of the revolutionary period or the soldiers and families of ancient Gaul, they had the specific quality of presenting the themes of nationalism and family values after the Franco-Prussian War, which were unique to the Third Republic period.

In Part III, Chapter 1 focuses primarily on the series of works by Henri Gervex and Emile Blanchon, who depicted the subject of 'civil marriage' peculiar to the decoration of the town hall in the context of realism and republicanism to reveal the complex intertwining of artistic and political tendencies in a non-unidirectional manner and unravel new developments in which republican institutions, such as workers' education and welfare, were incorporated into the subject matter of the stages of life. Chapter 2 reveals how peasant representations, in line with the demands of the urban population during the Third Republic, were used as themes for the stages of life in the decoration of the town halls, while at the same time, depictions linked to realistic suburbs and memories of the Franco-Prussian War were incorporated into the subject of the stages of life, and the themes of nationalism and family values continued to develop, albeit in a different manner than presented in Part II.

Part IV discusses how the pictorial subjects of the stages of life, which had been depicted in close relation to civic ethics in the decorative paintings of the town halls, developed from the late 1880s to the turn of the century, when they became intertwined with symbolism as a trend in modern painting. It shows that the traditional allegory of 'charity', which was central to the theme of the stages of life, was still needed and played a major role in the transmission of ideology

regarding the family, mother, and child in republican society.

The above discussion has clarified the characteristics of the theme of the stages of life in the decorative paintings of town halls, which are centred on civic ethics. The development of decorative paintings on this theme gradually led to more panoramic images, mixing traditional painting genres such as allegory, history, and genre painting and facilitating the entrance of artists with diverse attributes into public decoration, which in turn led to new forms of public decorative painting that would lead to unconventional representations of women and practices by women artists from the turn of the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century.