

PIERRE-OLIVIER OUELLET

Université du Québec à Montréal

BETWEEN TEMPORAL AND SPIRITUAL POWERS:  
COLONIAL DIPLOMACY ASSOCIATED WITH  
THE PAINTING *FRANCE BRINGING FAITH  
TO THE HURON-WENDATS OF NEW FRANCE*  
(c. 1666)\*

Abstract

Preserved in Quebec City, the French canvas entitled *France Bringing Faith to the Huron-Wendats of New France*, executed around 1666, constitutes a central piece of Canadian art history painted during the French colonial period. Espousing an iconography adapted to the New World, this painting presents an Indigenous figure in its foreground. The man, with a tanned complexion and black hair, whose naked body is dissimulated by a single blue and gold piece of clothing, faces a female character having European features, adorned with noble fabrics and precious jewellery. The scene, set in nature, evokes the grandeur and wilderness of North America. A two-masted French merchant ship floating on the majestic expanse of water reinforces this impression. This painting, obviously, illustrates the Europeans' arrival on this territory in the seventeenth century, and the encounters between the French and Indigenous peoples. However, the representation is also rich in motifs that are likely to attract attention and curiosity: the *mise en abyme* (the painting within the painting), the celestial figures, and the coat of arms at the bow of the vessel constitute such examples. In this

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regard, the research studies of our Canadian art history predecessors – to which we are indebted – have enabled us to, first, retrace the painting's history and, second, clarify its interpretive elements in relation to the spiritual and contextual dimensions specific to New France, in order to shed light on some of its well-kept secrets.

**Keywords:** Early modern Quebec, New France, gift-giving, painting, Canadian art history

Preserved in Quebec City, the French canvas entitled *France Bringing Faith to the Huron-Wendats of New France*<sup>1</sup> (Fig. 1), executed around 1666, constitutes a central piece of Canadian art history painted during the French colonial period. Espousing an iconography adapted to the New World, this painting presents an Indigenous figure in its foreground.<sup>2</sup> The man, with a tanned complexion and black hair, whose naked body is dissimulated by a single blue and gold piece of clothing, faces a female character having European features, adorned with noble fabrics and precious jewellery. The scene, set in nature, evokes the grandeur and wilderness of North America. A two-masted French merchant ship floating on the majestic expanse of water reinforces this impression. This painting, obviously, illustrates the Europeans' arrival on this territory in the seventeenth century, and the encounters between the French and Indigenous peoples. However, the representation is also rich in motifs that are likely to attract attention and curiosity: the *mise en abyme* (the painting within the painting), the celestial figures, and the

<sup>1</sup> Although the painting is still officially titled *France Bringing Faith to the Hurons of New France*, we prefer to add the name Wendat to the title, in recognition of the true name of the nation and the fact that the Huron name was given by the colonizers. Since the association of the two names, Huron-Wendat, is found many times in contemporary literature in Quebec, in works published by members of the nation, we therefore retain this form of designation. See, for example: Michel Gros-Louis and Benoît Jacques, *Les Hurons-Wendats: nouveaux regards* (Québec: Éditions GID, 2018); Georges E. Sioui, *Les Hurons-Wendat: l'héritage du cercle* (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> In Canada, the term *Indigenous* is accepted and even adopted by the First Nations scholars. On this subject, one should read the synthesis proposed by Chelsea Vowel in the first chapter of her book, 'Just Don't Call Us Late for Supper. Names for Indigenous Peoples', in *Indigenous Writes: A Guide to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Issues in Canada* (Winnipeg: Highwater Press, 2017), pp. 7–13.



1. Unknown French artist, *France Bringing Faith to the Huron-Wendats of New France*, c. 1666; oil on canvas, 227,3 x 227,3 cm; Québec City, Collections et archives, Pôle culturel du Monastère des Ursulines (Canada), NAC 1997.1017

coat of arms at the bow of the vessel constitute such examples. It looks as if this painting was intended to be sprinkled with a wealth of visual information, holding much potential in terms of historical relevance and significance. In this regard, the research studies of our Canadian art history predecessors – to which we are indebted – have enabled us to, first, retrace the painting's history and, second, clarify its interpretive elements in relation to the spiritual and contextual dimensions specific to New France, in order to shed light on some of its well-kept secrets.

As art historians François-Marc Gagnon and Laurier Lacroix have purported in a study published in 1983,<sup>3</sup> the circumstances surrounding the production of this large painting had been recorded in *Journal des Jésuites*, a manuscript kept by the members of the religious order, which retraced the daily activities of the missionaries in New France from September 1645 to June 1668.<sup>4</sup> A short entry from 1666, presumed to be a specific reference to the painting, mentioned that: 'On 20 [June]. The Hurons are giving us five presents to contribute something to the bastion of our church, among others, one for a painting that marks how they embraced the faith'.<sup>5</sup> As the Jesuit missionaries wrote, the Huron-Wendats offered a gift for the realization of a painting, which would have to bear witness to their conversion to the Catholic faith.

The Indigenous people's contribution to the achievement of this artwork has meaning in itself. Placed under the hospices of good understanding, the gift mirrors a desire to renew their alliance with the religious order. We, in that sense, suppose that the present offered by the Huron-Wendat man reveals their diplomatic relationship with the French who populated the St Lawrence River valley in 1666, and whose settlement caused the reconfiguration of the geopolitical situation in North America. The Huron-Wendat nation, which was among the most populous Indigenous tribes before the arrival of the French, was decimated by epidemics and wars against other enemy tribes.<sup>6</sup> The five

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<sup>3</sup> François-Marc Gagnon and Laurier Lacroix, 'La France apportant la foi aux Hurons de la Nouvelle-France, un tableau conservé chez les Ursulines de Québec', *Journal of Canadian Studies / Revue d'études canadiennes*, 18, no. 3 (1983), 5–20.

<sup>4</sup> *Le Journal des Jésuites: publié d'après le manuscrit original conservé aux archives du séminaire de Québec*, ed. by Charles-Honoré Laverdière and Henri-Raymond Casgrain (Québec: chez Léger Brousseau, 1871). In their foreword, Abbots Laverdière and Casgrain note a gap between 5 February 1654 and 25 October 1656. In addition to the loss of the notebooks for the years 1669 and 1670, they also agree that other volumes, from 1670 to 1755, were mislaid during these years (pp. VIII–IX).

<sup>5</sup> 'Le 20 [juin]. Les Hurons nous font 5. presens pour contribuer quelque chose à la bastisse de nostre eglise, entr'autres un pour un tableau qui marque comme ils ont embrassé la foy'; *ibid.*, p. 345.

<sup>6</sup> Georges E. Sioui, *Pour une histoire amérindienne de l'Amérique* (Québec: L'Harmattan–Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1999), pp. 55–82. The author also

nations of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, generally referred to as the Iroquois, determined to exterminate the Huron-Wendats, succeeded in destroying Huronia (or Wendake) between 1630 and 1650.<sup>7</sup> The Huron-Wendats were then dispersed, forced either to be adopted by their enemies or other nations, or to move to Quebec City, where they could then live under the protection of France.<sup>8</sup> Of an estimated population of more than 20,000 Huron-Wendats around 1635,<sup>9</sup> only a minute number of 100 came to settle in the colonial city.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, when, in 1666, they offered the Jesuits a gift for the creation of a painting, the Huron-Wendats of Quebec City had deserted their territory some fifteen years earlier. Reduced to a few hundred souls, a shadow of the warrior force they once were, they now had no other choice but to accept France's protection to ensure their survival. Perhaps, then, their decision to provide the Jesuits with the opportunity to visually represent their own history of conversion to the Catholic faith is a sign of this collapse and trauma more than of a willing or free-of-pressure acceptance of European protection.

Undoubtedly achieved in Paris, under the Jesuits' supervision, this artwork could not better summarise both the religious order's intentions and actions towards First Nations peoples as well as the historical role of the missionaries in the colony. It is with a certain finesse that the Jesuits

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highlights the devastating role of the European presence in these conflicts and epidemics affecting the Huron-Wendat nation.

<sup>7</sup> Huronia (or Wendake) was a large geographic area near Lake Huron, several hundred kilometers southwest of Quebec City. The name Huronia is, once again, a name created by the colonizers.

<sup>8</sup> Gilles Havard and Cécile Vidal, *Histoire de l'Amérique française* (Paris: Flammarion, 2003), pp. 61–65.

<sup>9</sup> Around 1615–16, Samuel de Champlain (1574–1635) counted about 30,000 people in Huronia (or Wendake), a figure that he revised downwards to 20,000 when he reissued his travel account in 1632. For their part, the Jesuits estimated that the Huron-Wendat population, between 1634 and 1635, totalled approximately 30,000 people. On this subject, see: Conrad E. Heidenreich, *Huronia: A History and Geography of the Huron Indians 1600–1650* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1971), p. 91–103. In his study, the latter estimates the population to be around 21,000 Huron-Wendats.

<sup>10</sup> Bruce G. Trigger, *Les enfants d'Aataentsic. L'histoire du peuple huron* (Montréal: Libre Expression, 1991), p. 197.

commissioned the artwork which, according to the good procedures of diplomacy – based on the concept of reciprocity – responds to the Huron-Wendats' gift. In fact, if the Huron-Wendats did finance (by their gift) the production of the painting, then the religious members ordered a painting that literally represents the gift of a painting by France to a member of the Huron-Wendat community.

With the idea of controlling the painting's message, it seems that the Jesuits relied on an ensemble of attributes, objects and codified gestures to determine a strong visual that would simultaneously bring forth religious, diplomatic and political aspects. More precisely, this painting is an allegory of France through the features of Anne of Austria (1601–1666), Queen of France.<sup>11</sup> In the painting, the royal figure offers a painting to a Huron-Wendat man, who welcomes the present on his knees, his body covered with a cloak with the *fleurdelisé*.<sup>12</sup> The canvas reveals an encounter between the regent and a man of the New World: a clearly fictitious meeting given that Anne of Austria never left European courts and places of worship. Thus, the artwork's entire composition and mechanics attempt to encompass the Jesuit missions from both a historical and an apologetic angle. A contextualization of their religious endeavours will allow us to better understand its meaning and identify some of its symbolic particularities.

From the beginning of their settlement in New France, the French established contact with the Indigenous peoples that already inhabited the vast territory, that is, the Montagnais-Naskapi, Algonquin, Mi'kmaq and Huron-Wendat nations. As early as 1609 French explorer and founder of Quebec City Samuel de Champlain (1574–1635) created alliances with them against the Haudenosaunee Confederacy (Iroquois).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Born in Valladolid, Spain, Anne of Austria married Louis XIII (1601–43) in 1615. Upon his death, she became regent of the French kingdom until 1651 during the minority of her son, the future Louis XIV (1638–1715). It should be noted that Louis XIV did not personally take control of the government until ten years later, the day after the death of the minister and Cardinal Jules Mazarin (1602–61).

<sup>12</sup> *Fleurdelisé* means presenting the lily flower (*fleur de lys*) motif, the lily being a symbol that had been associated with the French monarchy since the Middle Ages.

<sup>13</sup> Havard and Vidal, p. 54; Allan Greer, *Brève histoire des peuples de la Nouvelle-France* (Montréal: Boréal, 1998), p. 13.



Until 1663, however, it was with limited interest that the French initially embarked on this colonial adventure.<sup>14</sup> In the early years of New France, the metropolis administration delegated its power to various companies which, in return for economic advantages in the fur trade, had to oversee settlement and play a role in establishing the Catholic faith in this transatlantic world. Thus, after a brief existence, the Company of Canada (1613–20), formed of Breton and Norman merchants, was replaced in 1620–21 by the Company of Caën. As historian Helen Dewar exposed in an article published in 2011, this company, also known as the Company of Montmorency, was born from the association between Henri de Montmorency, Admiral of France and Viceroy of New France since 1620, Ezechiel de Caën, a merchant from Rouen, and his nephew, Captain Guillaume de Caën.<sup>15</sup>

The Company of Caën, however, failed to ultimately obtain the support of the Catholic clergymen established in Canada: Guillaume de Caën was a Protestant and his crews often turned out to be composed of Huguenots. Similarly, at court, Cardinal de Richelieu was determined to undermine the authority of his rival Henri de Montmorency. On 31 March 1626, the Cardinal concluded ‘a notarised contract with Guillaume de Bruc, Jean-Baptiste du Val, Nicolas Le Mareschal and Antoine Regnault de Montfort to establish the Company of Morbihan’,<sup>16</sup> named after the port of Le Havre, in Brittany. A few months later, an edict of the king dated July 1626 authorised this new trading company,<sup>17</sup> to ‘the enjoyment and possession of the lands of New France, both the continent and the islands and places that the said Company could conquer and populate, to hold and enjoy them

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<sup>14</sup> In fact, it was only after King Louis XIV took over the colony, in 1663, that the towns and villages of Laurentian Valley developed and saw their population increase. Yvon Desloges, ‘Québec, ville de garnison française’, in *Québec, ville militaire, 1608–2008*, ed. by Serge Bernier et al. (Montréal: Art Global, 2008), p. 105.

<sup>15</sup> Helen Dewar, ‘Souveraineté dans les colonies, souveraineté en métropole: le rôle de la Nouvelle-France dans la consolidation de l’autorité maritime en France, 1620–1628’, *Revue d’histoire de l’Amérique française*, 64, nos. 3–4 (2011), 63–92 (p. 79).

<sup>16</sup> ‘un contrat notarié avec Guillaume de Bruc, Jean-Baptiste du Val, Nicolas Le Mareschal et Antoine Regnault de Montfort afin d’établir la Compagnie du Morbihan’. Dewar, p. 82.

<sup>17</sup> Arthur de La Borderie, *Histoire de Bretagne* (Mayenne: J. Floch, 1975), vol. 5, p. 398.

in all seigniority'.<sup>18</sup> In addition to the promise of capital investment, the Company of Morbihan presented itself favorably, as 'making profession of the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman religion'.<sup>19</sup> Although this initiative eventually met with reluctance from the parliament of Brittany, which refused to register the edict, the Company of Morbihan would have laid the foundation for another Company that would be established some time later by Richelieu.<sup>20</sup>

In fact, in October 1626, Cardinal Richelieu managed to be appointed 'Grand Master, Chief and General Superintendent of Navigation and Commerce of France',<sup>21</sup> and thus got hold of the Admiralty at the expense of Montmorency. With his new administrative authority and taking advantage of the grievances of the Catholics in New France to exclude Huguenots from the colony, the cardinal abolished the monopoly of the Company of Caën. Richelieu set up, in 1627, a new company which, like the one in Morbihan, had one hundred Catholic associates, ready to work for the development of the French colony in North America. This was the Company of New France, also known as the Company of One Hundred Associates. In 1627, King Louis XIII (1601–43) granted it responsibility for the French colony's development and monopoly of trade.

On 29 April and 7 May 1627, in the context of the creation of the Company of New France, information was recorded about the guiding principle of this enterprise:

The King continuing the same desire that the deceased King Henry the Great, his Father, of glorious memory, had to search for and discover in the Countries, Lands and Regions of New France, known as Canada, some dwelling capable of

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<sup>18</sup> 'la jouissance et possession des terres de la Nouvelle France, tant le continent que isles et lieux que ladite Compagnie pourra conquérir et peupler, pour les tenir et en jouir en toute seigneurie'. 'Édits du Roi pour l'établissement du commerce au Havre du Morbihan, 1626', *Revue des provinces de l'Ouest*, décembre 1856, p. 300. See also: *Lettres, instructions diplomatiques et papiers d'État du Cardinal de Richelieu recueillis et publiés par M. Avenel* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1877), vol. 8, p. 194.

<sup>19</sup> 'faisant profession de la religion catholique, apostolique et romaine'. 'Édits du Roi pour l'établissement du commerce au Havre du Morbihan, 1626', p. 295.

<sup>20</sup> Dewar, p. 84.

<sup>21</sup> 'Grand Maitre, Chef et surintendant général de la navigation et du commerce de France'; *ibid.*



establishing a colony, in an attempt, upon divine assistance, to bring the peoples who live there to the knowledge of the true God, to have them policed and instructed in the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Foy and Religion, Monsignor Cardinal de Richelieu, Grand Maistre, chief and general superintendent of navigation and commerce of France, being obliged by the duty of his office, to make the holy intentions and designs of the said Lords Kings succeed, has judged that the only way for these peoples to get acquainted with the knowledge of the Christian Religion, to civil life, and even to establish the Royal authority there, is to draw from the said newly uncovered lands, some advantageous trade for the benefit of the King's subjects. [...]

The Cardinal invited the Sieurs de Roquemont, Houël, Lattaignant, Dablon, Duchêne, and Castillon, to bind a strong company for this purpose [...] they promised the Cardinal to set up a company of one hundred associates, and to make every effort to populate New France, known as Canada.<sup>22</sup>

Blending the temporal with the spiritual, the Company's objective was to supervise the settlement and trade, as well as lead First Nations of the New World towards the Christian faith and the recognition of royal authority. In order to appropriately conduct their commercial enterprise while defending their territories, the king granted the partners

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<sup>22</sup> 'Le Roy continuant le mesme désir que le défunct Roy Henry le Grand, son Père, de glorieuse mémoire, avoit de faire rechercher et descouvrir es Païs, Terres et Contrées de la Nouvelle France, dite Canada, quelque habitation capable pour y establir colonie, affin d'essayer, avec l'assistance divine, d'amener les peuples qui y habitent à la cognoissance du vray Dieu, les faire policer et instruire à la Foy et Religion Catholique, Apostolique et Romaine, Monseigneur le Cardinal de Richelieu, Grand Maistre, chef et surintendant général de la navigation et commerce de France, estant obligé par le devoir de sa charge, de faire réussir les saintes intentions et desseins des dits Seigneurs Roys, avoit jugé que le seul moyen de disposer ces peuples à la cognoissance de la Religion Chrestienne, à la vie civile, et mesme y etablissant l'autorité Royale, tirer des dites terres nouvellement decouvertes, quelque'avantageux commerce pour l'utilité des sujets du Roy [...] mondit Seigneur le Cardinal a convié les Sieurs de Roquemont, Houël, Lattaignant, Dablon, Duchêne, et Castillon, de lier une forte compagnie pour cet effet [...] ils ont promis à mondit Seigneur le Cardinal de dresser une compagnie de cent associez, et faire tous leurs efforts pour peupler la Nouvelle-France, dite Canada'. 'Compagnie de Canada, établie sous le titre de Nouvelle-France, par les articles des vingt neuf avril et sept may, mil six cens vingt sept', *Collection de manuscrits contenant lettres, mémoires, et autres documents historiques relatifs à la Nouvelle-France, recueillis aux Archives de la province de Québec, ou copiés à l'étranger mis en ordre et édités sous les auspices de la législature de Québec avec table, etc.* (Québec: Imprimerie A. Coté et Cie, 1883), vol. 1, pp. 63–64.

'two warships of two to three hundred barrels, armed, equipped, ready to sail'.<sup>23</sup> In this regard, the painting of *France Bringing Faith to the Huron-Wendats of New France* offers, in its right-hand part, the representation of a ship, now to be examined in greater detail. The naval representation has cannons, suggesting military armament. At the top of its mast, a first flag with the cross of St Michael is floating, recognizable by its white cross on a blue background, which had been traditionally associated with French armies since the Middle Ages.<sup>24</sup> It also seems to have become the ordinary flag of French ships towards the end of the 16th century or the beginning of the seventeenth century.<sup>25</sup> In 1661, this naval flag was even described as the 'old French national mark'<sup>26</sup> in one of the ordinances of Louis XIV, who then opted for entirely white flags for his warships. A second flag, at the stern, represents the arms of France, that is, three fleurs-de-lis against a blue background. Another detail indicates its more commercial vocation. The ship bears the coat of arms of Guillaume de Bruc, evoking the Company of Morbihan. This ornament then reveals a historical objective, that is to recall the memory of this Breton merchant who, at the head of a syndicate of merchants, set up a trading company with Cardinal Richelieu to compete with the Company of Montmorency.

Moreover, this Company of Morbihan symbolised not only the Cardinal's ambitions for New France, which were to be further concretised in 1627 with the creation of the Company of New France, but also

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<sup>23</sup> 'deux vaisseaux de guerre de deux à trois cens tonneaux, armez, éskiepez, prests à faire voile'. 'Compagnie de Canada, établie sous le titre de Nouvelle-France, par les articles des vingt neuf avril et sept may, mil six cens vingt sept', *Collection de manuscrits contenant lettres, mémoires, et autres documents historiques relatifs à la Nouvelle-France, recueillis aux Archives de la province de Québec, ou copiés à l'étranger mis en ordre et édités sous les auspices de la législature de Québec avec table, etc.* (Québec: Imprimerie A. Coté et Cie, 1883), vol. 1, p. 67.

<sup>24</sup> Colette Beaune, *Naissance de la nation France* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), p. 274.

<sup>25</sup> In 1874, Gustave Desjardins noted that the most common flag for French ships was - in 1661, and even earlier - blue with a white cross. Gustave Desjardins, *Recherches sur les drapeaux français: oriflamme, bannière de France, marques nationales, couleurs du roi, drapeaux de l'armée, pavillons de la marine* (Paris: V.A. Morel et Cie Éditeurs, 1874), pp. 83-84.

<sup>26</sup> 'ancienne marque nationale française'; *ibid.*, p. 84.

the religious purpose of this commercial enterprise. In fact, trade and colonial policy had given rise to the question of Catholic proselytizing in these faraway lands.

Thus, in the aftermath of the religious wars that had torn France apart in the second half of the sixteenth century, New France was not to reproduce such conflicts and, in the eyes of its defenders, missionaries and colonizers, was to be built on strictly Catholic foundations. In this 'century of the saints',<sup>27</sup> the members of the Company of Morbihan, like the ones of New France, embraced the missionary project proper to the spirit of the Counter-Reformation, which wanted to 'bring the light of the faith to an unfaithful country'.<sup>28</sup> Thus, it is not surprising to read in a brief historical account of the Company of New France, probably written in 1671, that 'The late Monsignor Cardinal de Richelieu, having learned that this company [of Montmorency] thought only of fur trade, and that [this company] had sent [in the colony] people of the so-called Reformed religion, wanted to destroy it, and for that reason formed an another of a hundred associates'.<sup>29</sup> In short, the Cardinal's association with the merchant Guillaume du Bruc marked a turning point in the history of the colony: from then on, the development of a Catholic New France became dependant on the will of Richelieu, as the new company of merchants would respond to his commands. Moreover, du Bruc's coat of arms may reveal more about the Jesuits' interest in this historical character. In fact, according to the historian

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<sup>27</sup> This expression evokes the ardently spiritual landscape in France in the first half of the 17th century. A study by Sophie Houdard questions its ideological stakes: Sophie Houdard, 'Le Grand Siècle ou le Siècle des Saints: une fausse perspective', *Littératures classiques*, 3, no. 76 (2011), 147–54.

<sup>28</sup> 'porter la lumière de la foy dans un pays infidèle'. 'Etat de la dépense qui a esté faite par la Compagnie de la Nouvelle France; 1628 à 1671', *Collection de manuscrits contenant lettres, mémoires, et autres documents historiques relatifs à la Nouvelle-France, recueillis aux Archives de la province de Québec, ou copiés à l'étranger mis en ordre et édités sous les auspices de la législature de Québec avec table, etc.* 4 vols (Québec: Imprimerie A. Coté et Cie, 1883), i, p. 76.

<sup>29</sup> 'Feu Monseigneur le Cardinal de Richelieu, ayant appris que cette compagnie [de Montmorency] ne pensoit qu'à la traite des pelleteries et qu'elle avoit envoyé dans quelque colonie des gens de la religion prétendue réformée, voulust la détruire, et pour cela en forma un aultre de cent associez'; *ibid.*, p. 75.

Roland Mousnier, du Bruc and his associates presented their plan for the establishment of a company to the Cardinal in the summer of 1625.<sup>30</sup> That year was certainly not insignificant in the eyes of the ‘Soldiers of God’: it corresponded to the arrival of their first missionaries in Quebec City.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, ten years after the Church of France approved the reforms of the Council of Trent (1545–63), and officially welcomed its decrees in 1615 (despite its independence from Rome), a first procession of Jesuits landed in Quebec with the missionary intention of converting First Nations. These religious men were driven by the desire to evangelise Indigenous peoples,<sup>32</sup> who were perceived as abandoned by God, living without faith or law, condemned to wander in the woods, tormented by the devil.<sup>33</sup> Jesuit missionaries, thus, settled in New France to reveal the Catholic faith, and nourished the dream of massive conversions. In order to accomplish that, they went to the heart of the Huron territory and established mission chapels. In the left area of the artwork,

<sup>30</sup> Roland Mousnier, *L'homme rouge ou La vie du cardinal de Richelieu (1585-1642)* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1992), pp. 303–05. See also: Gervais Carpin, ‘Le réseau du Canada: étude du mode migratoire de la France vers la nouvelle-France (1628–1662)’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Université Laval, Québec, August 1999), p. 40.

<sup>31</sup> These religious men soon joined their voice to that of the Récollets, already settled in New France, to complain about the Protestant Guillaume de Caën, thus participating in Cardinal de Richelieu’s decision to establish another exclusively Catholic trading company. Also, in 1625, as Joseph Monteyne wrote: ‘The Jesuits had a powerful ally in the Duc de Ventadour, a figure who had bought out the Viceroy de Montmorency [...] and had sent the Jesuit reinforcements [...] at his own expense’. Joseph Monteyne, ‘Absolute Faith, or France Bringing Representation to the Subjects of New France’, *Oxford Art Journal*, 20, no. 1 (1997), 12–22 (p. 16).

<sup>32</sup> François-Marc Gagnon, *La conversion par l'image: un aspect de la mission des jésuites auprès des indiens du Canada au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Montréal: Éditions Bellarmin, 1975); Luc Noppen and René Villeneuve, *Le trésor du Grand Siècle: L'art et l'architecture du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle à Québec* (Québec: Musée du Québec, 1984), pp. 55–76; Dominique Deslandres, *Croire et faire croire: les missions françaises au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, 1600–1650* (Paris: Fayard, 2003), pp. 94–95.

<sup>33</sup> Peter Goddard, ‘The Devil in New France: Jesuit Demonology, 1611–1650’, *Canadian Historical Review*, 78, no. 1 (1997), 40–62; Pierre-Olivier Ouellet, ‘Le Martyre des missionnaires jésuites: étude d’une représentation du “sauvage” en Nouvelle-France’, *L'homme sauvage dans les lettres et les arts*, ed. by Cristina Noacco and Sophie Duhem (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2019), pp. 319–33.



2. Unknown French artist, *The Martyrdom of the Jesuit Missionaries*, c. 1665; oil on canvas, 128 x 160 cm; Québec City, Collections du Monastère des Augustines, Hôtel-Dieu de Québec (Canada)

the chapels are similar to those seen in another painting of the time also ordered by the Jesuits, *The Martyrdom of the Jesuit Missionaries* (Fig. 2).<sup>34</sup>

The use of works of art found a place of choice in the missionary strategies of this period, as suggested by the *mise en abyme* of the

<sup>34</sup> This painting illustrates, in the same pictorial area, the death of seven Jesuit missionaries and their lay assistants between 1642 and 1650 during the war between the Huron-Wendats and the Haudenosaunee. Among the Jesuits, featuring in the middle of the composition, are Fathers Jean de Brébeuf (1593–1643) and Gabriel Lalemant (1610–1649) tied to a stake and subjected to different tortments. See: François-Marc Gagnon, 'L'iconographie classique des saints Martyrs canadiens', *Les saints Martyrs canadiens*, ed. by Guy Lafleche, 5 vols (Laval: Singulier, 1988), i, pp. 37–79; Pierre-Olivier Ouellet, 'Supressing or Exacerbating Pain: Emulation and Conversion Strategies Utilizing Images by Jesuit Missionaries in New France', *IKON*, 12 (2019), pp. 173–84.

painting *France Bringing Faith to the Huron-Wendats of New France*. In their desire to nurture faith, the missionaries soon discovered that the images and the sculptures they showed and carried around aroused the curiosity of Indigenous peoples. They anticipated that these objects would facilitate their conversion to Catholicism. Objects, that were attractive and incongruous to the eyes of Indigenous peoples, exerted a strong power of attraction – they were fascinated by the properties and mimetic rendering of religious artworks. Indigenous peoples were particularly amazed by the statuettes, considered to be alive.<sup>35</sup> As they were not familiar with the principles of two-dimensional illusionist art, the paintings and engravings also created a strong impression on them. Perceived as a window leading to another world, that of the spirits and the dead, they thought that these images could be actualised according to circumstances, as events unfolded.<sup>36</sup>

Aiming at illustrating the foundations of their faith, the missionaries realised that images were undoubtedly one of the best conversion tools at their disposal. The educational role of images was widely recognised, as the Jesuit father Le Jeune points out in his 1637 relations: ‘These sacred pictures are half the instruction that one is able to give the Savages’.<sup>37</sup> Images were essential for sparking interest; they then enabled the missionaries to provide the other half of the instruction: that is, to provide an explanation for the images, to convince by the power of words of the superiority of the Christian God, and even to correct what they considered to be a state of ignorance or error on the part of the First Nations.

But, more than that, the images responded to the traditional world conception and need of Indigenous peoples to come into contact, both

<sup>35</sup> Gagnon, *La conversion par l'image*, pp. 21–22.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 17–18.

<sup>37</sup> ‘Ces Saintes figures sont la moitié de l’instruction qu’on peut donner aux Sauvages’. Paul Le Jeune, ‘Relation de ce qui s’est passé en la Nouvelle France, en l’année 1637’, in *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France 1610–1791*, ed. by Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland: The Burrows Brothers, 1898), vol. XI, p. 89. In his book entitled *La conversion par l'image*, François-Marc Gagnon inserted this assertion from Father Le Jeune (pp. 23, 99).



visually and perceptually, with an invisible universe. To put it differently, art productions were presented as physical reflections of the Catholic spiritual world.<sup>38</sup> Images brought the Heavenly Court and the various mysteries to the eyes of Indigenous peoples. In this respect, the painting *France Bringing Faith to the Huron-Wendats of New France* is a direct transposition of this principle. The art object can be understood as an instrument to promote the Revelation and instill religious beliefs.

Pertaining to this idea of the Revelation of the spiritual universe through visual representation, we would like to draw attention to the Huron-Wendat man in the painting. One remarkable aspect is that the figure has a double face, in profile and in three-quarters.<sup>39</sup> Singularly, his right eye is directed towards the allegorical figure of France, while his left eye observes the painting in front of it. The facial expression of the man finds a curious similarity with an engraving produced by Jean Audran (1667–1756) from the drawings of the famous painter Charles Le Brun (1619–1690). Published in 1727, the collection of engravings entitled *Expressions des Passions de l'Âme* (*Expressions of the Passions of the Soul*)<sup>40</sup> is based on a lecture given by Le Brun at the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture in 1668.<sup>41</sup> The various illustrations engraved from Le Brun's drawings show heads with various expressions, accompanied by a short descriptive text. The engraving *Admiration with astonishment* (Fig. 3) shows the face of a character who shares the Huron-Wendat man's expression in every way. This emotion translated

<sup>38</sup> They were like 'metaphorical reflectors', to use the expression coined by Marc Fumaroli in his book entitled *L'école du silence. Le sentiment des images au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Flammarion, 1998), p. 191.

<sup>39</sup> The restoration of this artwork, undertaken between 2005 and 2008, has made it possible to remove excess of paint (overpainting) on the angels in the upper part of the painting. Although this brought about minor changes, the man's face, however, has remained intact.

<sup>40</sup> Charles Le Brun, *Expressions des Passions de l'Âme, Représentées en plusieurs testes gravées d'après les desseins de feu Monsieur Le Brun, Premier Peintre du Roy* (Paris: Jean Audran, 1727).

<sup>41</sup> Bruno Nassim Aboudrar, 'L'expression des passions: anatomie, dessin, sentiment', in *Les passions à l'âge classique*, ed. by Pierre-François Moreau (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2006), p. 159. Jennifer Montagu, *The Expression of the Passions: The Origin and Influence of Charles Le Brun's Conference 'Sur l'Expression Générale et Particulière'* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 234.



3. Jean Audran after Charles Le Brun, *Admiration with astonishment*, 1727. This engraving was published in Charles Le Brun, *Expressions des Passions de l'Âme, Représentées en plusieurs testes gravées d'après les desseins de feu Monsieur Le Brun, Premier Peintre du Roy* (Paris: Jean Audran, 1727); photo Bibliothèque nationale de France

into the language of the face is described as being not very different from 'simple admiration', but one notices 'the eyebrows higher, the eyes more open, the sloe more distant from the lower eyelid, & more fixed. The mouth more open, & all parts in a much more sensitive tension'.<sup>42</sup>

In the work preserved in Quebec City, the astonished admiration of the Huron-Wendat character seems to result both from the discovery of the painting (through the direction of his left eye) and from the encounter with France (through the direction of his right eye). On the one hand, this astonishment is not without recalling, from a historical point of view, the initial surprise of Indigenous peoples at the vision of artworks that, they believed, were magical and alive. This corresponds, as Father Le Jeune wrote, to the first half of the instruction. This admiration

<sup>42</sup> 'l'admiration simple', 'les sourcils plus élevez, les yeux plus ouverts, la prunelle plus éloignée de la paupière inférieure, & plus fixe. La bouche plus ouverte, & toutes les parties dans une tension beaucoup plus sensible'; Le Brun, p. 2.

with astonishment is on the other hand reserved for France, which, with her finger pointing to the sky, offers the second part of the instruction: that is to say, the words and persuasion allowing the Huron-Wendat man to transcend the image, to pass from delight to Divine knowledge. He thus moves from the discovery to the revelation of the celestial world, lifted by both the support of a work of art and the enlightening discourse of France.

In addition to presenting a face with features similar to Le Brun's drawing, the posture of the upper part of the man's body can be related to an engraving by Jacques de Brie published in 1643, in the French translation of Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*.<sup>43</sup> This work, offering a multitude of allegorical figures, showcases different models materializing certain concepts. Thus, the engraving of *Love towards God* (Fig. 4) presents the same contemplative state, with the man's head pointing upwards while his right hand rests on his chest. This representation is explained in Ripa's book as follows: 'The holy love which we are all obliged to bring to God can be represented no better than by this contemplative man. He holds his eyes up to heaven, to remind us that it is also in heaven where we should hold our thoughts. To testify to the ardour of his zeal, he carries one of his hands straight to his heart, as if he wanted to open it, or give it to his Creator'.<sup>44</sup>

The double face thus both attests to the Indigenous figure's understanding of the object and to his adherence to Catholicism offered to him by the allegory. In fact, the Queen personifying France, with her finger raised to the sky, presents herself as a figure of rhetoric, talking about faith while signalling the presence of holy figures in heaven, who also find a place in the painting.

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<sup>43</sup> Cesare Ripa, *Iconologie où les principales choses qui peuvent tomber dans la pensée touchant les Vices et les Vertus sont représentées sous diverses figures* (Paris: 1643), 1 volume in two parts.

<sup>44</sup> 'Le saint Amour que nous sommes tous obligez de porter à Dieu, ne peut mieux estre representé que par cet homme contemplatif. Il tient les yeux esleuez au ciel, afin de nous faire souvenir que c'est au Ciel aussi où nous devons attacher nos pensées. Pour tesmoigner l'ardeur de son zele, il porte droit au cœur l'une de ses mains, comme s'il le vouloit ouvrir, ou le donner à son Créateur'; Ripa, part 2, p. 109.



4. Jacques de Brie, *Love towards God*, 1643. This engraving was published in Cesare Ripa, *Iconologie où les principales choses qui peuvent tomber dans la pensée touchant les Vices et les Vertus sont représentées sous diverses figures* (Paris, 1643); photo Wikisource.org.

In addition to having a strong historical meaning, this artwork points at some other significant diplomatic practices. The examination of the bodies of our two main figures as well as their staging will help us clarify the meaning and codes with regard to these aspects. The Queen, standing in front of the Huron-Wendat man, appears in a position of authority. The man, because he genuflects in front of France, shows a degree of submission. To the raised index finger of France, referring to language and knowledge, answers the hand on the Huron-Wendat man's chest, which expresses an emotion: it represents the conversion of heart desired by the Jesuits. To this theatricality, we can add the characteristics of their clothing that establish a distinctive and unequal power relationship. As mentioned, France presents itself as Anne of Austria, Regent from 1643 to 1651. She wears clothes in all points similar to the other representations made of her between 1643 and 1663 (Fig. 5). The blue costume is set with a golden lily leaf motif. Anne of Austria's outfit has sophistication, a shimmering character exposed by how her clothing falls down to the ground, hinting at noble materials. The neckline and the lining are made of ermine, a fashionable element that reveals the high social rank of the character. The magnificent



5. Philippe De Champaigne (workshop of), *Queen Anne of Austria and Her Children Louis XIV and Philippe, Duc d'Anjou*, 1646, oil on canvas, 106 x 138 cm; Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon; ref. no. MV3440, photo: Gérard Blot, © RMN-Grand Palais/Art Resource, NY

garment ostentatiously shows her wealth, which trumpets the supreme status of the Regent, also wearing her royal crown. The outfit alludes to the religious ceremony of coronation where the monarch draws power and approbation for terrestrial rule from God.

On the other hand, the Huron-Wendat man – who has no identity of his own, limited to an abstract representation of an Indigenous character – has for his part hidden the nakedness of his body by a *fleurdelysé* mantle which, evidently, is not a garment that a First Nations person would wear. Of European design, the fabric does not present the same nobility character, having fewer details and embellishments than that of Anne of Austria. The mantle appears less valuable, but the look, colours and patterns remain similar. Like a gift from France, his

clothing therefore becomes a symbol of protection. In the context of 1666, the acceptance of this gift – the painting in the painting – and the compliance of the Huron-Wendats in front of France can therefore be understood as a political necessity in order to defend themselves against hostilities and survive.<sup>45</sup>

Another aspect of the diplomatic relationship is noticeable in the exchange between the two protagonists, or even in the gift itself. This painting, although a good example of conversion through images, resonates with Indigenous practices and cultures. In a synchronic manner, object exchanges were already understood as gestures of alliance and diplomacy by Indigenous peoples. For instance, Wampums have always been at the heart of their political deals.<sup>46</sup> Fabricated of shell beads, these objects constituted a means of giving one's word and keeping it. Their offering amounted to sealing an agreement. Gift exchanges, in Indigenous cultures, signified a willingness to get closer, and it was believed to be a mark of good understanding.

Thus, in this diplomacy that promoted the centrality of the object, the Huron-Wendats were offered various gifts to the king's representatives and to religious communities.<sup>47</sup> In return, the Jesuits developed the idea of delivering paintings, underpinned with religious intentions, to Indigenous peoples. These artworks indeed served a second purpose: as a diplomatic present, they conveyed certain values to be inculcated in the First Nations, namely the Catholic faith and recognition of royalty. This type of conversion-by-image painting was relatively common practice, as can be seen in an engraving published in 1728 in a book written by Louis Armand de Lom d'Arce, Baron de Lahontan (1666–1716) (Fig. 6).

Also, in the *Jesuit Relations*, we find the example of a painting depicting Christ, given in 1637 to a Huron-Wendat man during peace

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<sup>45</sup> In 1643, after the death of Louis XIII and the beginning of the regency of Anne of Austria, she declared herself, as the *Jesuit Relations* state, 'the Mother and protector of her subjects, French and Savages'.

<sup>46</sup> Jonathan Lainey, *La 'monnaie des sauvages'. Les colliers de wampum d'hier à aujourd'hui* (Sillery: Septentrion, 2004).

<sup>47</sup> Karin Vélez, "'A sign that we are related to you' The Transatlantic Gifts of the Hurons of the Jesuit Mission of Lorette, 1650–1750", *French Colonial History*, 12 (2011), 31–44.





6. Engraving published in Louis Armand de Lom d'Arce, Baron de Lahontan, *Nouveaux voyages de Mr. le Baron de La Hontan dans l'Amérique septentrionale, les Mémoires de l'Amérique, et la Suite du voyage de l'Amérique* (Amsterdam: Chez François L'Honoré, 1728), vol. 3, p. 15; photo: Lande Canadiana Collection (Lande S1200), Rare Books and Special Collections, McGill University Library, Montreal (Canada)

talks.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, around 1646, the Queen sent a portrait of herself with the king and the *dauphin*, meant as a request to the conversion of the First Nations, as recounted by Jesuit Jérôme Lallemant.<sup>49</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the analysis of this painting has enabled us to bring forward gestures of diplomacy inscribed at the heart of seventeenth century French colonial ideology in North America. However, although the scene is set as an exchange, it remains one that attempts to accentuate the unequal relationship between the French crown and Canada's First

<sup>48</sup> Gagnon, *La conversion par l'image*, p. 41; Deslandres, p. 343.

<sup>49</sup> Gagnon, *La conversion par l'image*, pp. 49–50; Deslandres, p. 343.

Nations peoples. France bequeathed not only the Catholic religion, but also its culture and even its laws through the representation of the Regent. The myriad of specific details encapsulates an iconography of 'francization'.<sup>50</sup> As aforementioned, this iconography implies the conversion of Indigenous peoples to the Catholic faith as much as their adherence to the mores, customs and rules of French society. This process of civil and religious francization was intended to build a New France in which the European settlers and First Nations could all become subjects of the French empire.

We might wonder why the Jesuits decided to represent the allegory of France in the guise of Anne of Austria, the late regent, who died in 1666. And, more surprisingly, why it coincided with the beginning of Louis XIV's reign and not Queen Anne's regency. We suggest that the Jesuits, who had succeeded in imposing their spiritual ideals in the early days of the colony, and in partially controlling a considerable number of temporal aspects of this emergent society, were divulging their past and current involvement in Canada through art. They, by doing that, got involved in the representation of their own history. In fact, the Jesuits had acquired, during the time of the regency, an important recognition as per their different enterprises that took place in New France –masters as it were of this place over which they deployed an authority that fused the religious mission to the daily and administrative life.<sup>51</sup> By commissioning a painting representing the regent, they tried to recall the benevolent and religious stance of the French Crown in the early days of New France: Anne of Austria having shown a devout and financial zeal in the conversion of Indigenous peoples.

The Jesuits were no doubt right to fear a major change in the administration of the colony. Unlike his mother, understood as the personification of a France ready to spread the Catholic faith to the peoples of North America, Louis XIV took charge of New France's destiny in

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<sup>50</sup> Yann Lignereux, 'Une mission périlleuse ou le péril colonial jésuite dans la France de Louis XIV: Sainte-Marie des Iroquois (1649–1665)', *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, 69, no. 4 (2016), 5–26.

<sup>51</sup> Vincent Grégoire, 'La mainmise des jésuites sur la Nouvelle-France de 1632 à 1658: l'établissement d'un régime théocratique?', *Cahiers du dix-septième: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 11, no. 1 (2006), 19–43.

1663 with a firmer hand.<sup>52</sup> Notably, he imposed a representative of his royalty on North American soil.<sup>53</sup> In fact, concerned about his effective power in 1665, he did not hesitate to ask his overseas representative, Intendant Jean Talon (1626–94), to more closely investigate the Jesuits' possessions in New France.

The Sun King, through his civil and military representatives, would then begin a political reconquest of his colony. Before that reign, New France was indeed an all-Christian-desired colony, almost a theocracy, as evidenced by the hold of churches that crowned Quebec City in a map drawn by Jean-Baptiste-Louis Franquelin (1651–1712?) in 1688 (Fig. 7).



7. Jean-Baptiste-Louis Franquelin, *Carte de l'Amérique septentrionale ... en l'année 1688 par Jean Baptiste Louis Franquelin, Hydrographe du Roy a Quebec en Canada*, 1688 (detail of the map, presenting a view of Québec City); Bibliothèque du service historique de la Marine, Vincennes, Recueil 66, n° 6 bis; photo: Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY

<sup>52</sup> Monteyne, p. 14. Although we agree with Monteyne's idea that the artwork is directly related to the monarchical presence in New France and the presentation of the faith of the French colonizers, we do not adopt his attribution of the painting to a French Récollet, named Frère Luc (Claude François, 1614–1685). This attribution unfortunately distorts the meaning of this artwork, which should rather be inscribed in the practices of the Jesuits.

<sup>53</sup> Havard and Vidal, pp. 66–68.

Thereafter, it was for the king to reclaim his given-by-nature almighty status. The small bust of Louis XIV (Fig. 8), placed on a pedestal in the market square, that has become Place Royale, was probably a timid visual expression of this nascent claim.<sup>54</sup>



8. Jean-Baptiste-Louis Franquelin, *Carte de l'Amérique septentrionale...*, 1688 (detail of Louis XIV's bust at Place Royale, Québec City); Bibliothèque du service historique de la Marine, Vincennes, Recueil 66, no. 6bis

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<sup>54</sup> Pierre-Olivier Ouellet, 'Présence et fonctions symboliques des portraits du monarque dans les intérieurs domestiques en Nouvelle-France', *Bulletin d'histoire politique*, 26, no. 1 (2017), p. 83.



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**Pierre-Olivier Ouellet** – Associate Professor of Art History, Université du Québec à Montréal; specialises in the art history of Quebec and Canada before 1900. His research interests are the art market, the circulation of artworks, the collections, the social and political significance of painting, the representation of First Nations, and historiography; e-mail: ouellet.pierre-olivier@uqam.ca