

Salon (gathering)

Source: Wikipedia, the free online encyclopedia

A **salon** is a gathering of men and women to participate in formal and informal discussion centered around a specific topic. A *salonnière*, the woman who ran the salon, decided upon its central preoccupation which may include politics, literature, art, fashion or business. This type of gathering was held in the drawing room (*salon* in French) of the *salonnière*'s home. The participants sought to increase their knowledge through conversation and readings, often consciously following Horace's definition of the aims of poetry, "to please and educate" (*aut delectare aut prodesse est*). The term *salon* is commonly associated with French literary and philosophical gatherings of the 17th century and 18th century, though the practice continues today in many cities around the world.

Although the territory of the nobles, bourgeoisie and intellectuals, the Salon was distinguished from the court by the (relative) absence of social hierarchies and the mixing of different social ranks, genders and orders which made it an institution of Enlightenment.

The Role of Women

At a time when society was defined and regulated by men, women could exert a powerful influence as *salonnières*. Women were responsible for selecting their guests and deciding whether the salon would be primarily social, literary, or political. They also assumed the role as mediator by directing the discussion. The salon was really an informal university for women. Through the salon women were able to exchange ideas, receive and give criticism, read their own works and hear the works and ideas of other intellectuals. Many ambitious women used the salon to pursue a form of higher education.

The most famous of the literary salons of Paris formed in the 1620s were the Hôtel de Rambouillet by Madame de Rambouillet and the rival salon that gathered around Madeleine de Scudéry. Here gathered the original "blue-stockings" (*les bas-bleues*), whose nickname continued to mean "intellectual woman" for the next 300 years.



A reading of Molière, Jean François de Troy, about 1728

AusAPT Salon
Au Epicentre – 22 Mai 2008

La programme c'est soir

Our *salonnières* this evening are *Mesdames Yoland* (facilitating) and *Meredith* (hosting).

Madam Yoland will lead off with an introduction and description of the evening's games and conversations, which she will then guide us through, inviting participation at various points until the conversations and learning are flowing!

7.00pm *Greeting and eating*

7.30pm *Mdme Meredith's Welcome*

Mdme Yoland's Introduction

- What is a Salon?
- Why I offered this session ('reading the world' with type)
- My chosen topics '*sut delectare aut prodesse est*'
(to please and educate :-)

7.50pm *The conversation topics (6 x 10 minutes)*

- 'Culture' (three quick guessing games)
- 'Politics' (two questions regarding each of three levels of government)
- 'Religion' (only if we get through the preceding topics!)

8.50pm Reflections on the process

9.00pm Finit
