



HENRI LABROUSTE

STRUCTURE BROUGHT TO LIGHT



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Corinne BÉLIER, Barry BERGDOLL, and Marc LE CŒUR

With essays by Martin Bressani, Marc Grignon,
Marie-Hélène de La Mure, Neil Levine,
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David Van Zanten, and Gérard Uniack

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In association with the Cité de l'architecture & du patrimoine et the Bibliothèque nationale de France,
with the special participation of the Académie d'architecture and the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève.



LABROUSTE

This exhibition, the first the Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine has devoted to a nineteenth-century architect, is part of a larger series of monographs dedicated to renowned architects, from Jacques Androuet du Cerceau to Claude Parent and Christian de Portzamparc.

Presenting Henri Labrouste at the Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine carries with it its very own significance, given that his name and ideas crossed paths with our institution's history, and his works are a testament to the values he defended. In 1858, he even sketched out a plan for reconstructing the Ecole Polytechnique on Chaillot hill, though it would never be followed through. He is one of the fathers of a rationalist culture that would long permeate French architecture, from the classics to the moderns, of which the Musée de Sculpture Comparée was one of the bastions. That museum, founded by Viollet-le-Duc, who never hid his admiration for Labrouste, is the source of the collection of casts held by the Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine. It was also there that one of Labrouste's students, Anatole de Baudot, would in 1887 create the first chair of the History of Architecture of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, now known by the name Ecole de Chaillot.

Labrouste deeply marked French architecture. He is one of those creators whose thought and built works fed the critical debate necessary to any evolution. His fourth-year submission, the restoration of Paestum, shook up academic dogma and opened a new field of references from which to draw. The Romantic architects, of which Labrouste was one of the leaders, would make history and context essential components in an architectural project, an approach that is still relevant today. Labrouste's two libraries offer a completely new vision of architecture, of its language and construction, echoing the aspirations of his day. The structure and light of their inner spaces make those buildings not simple shelters but true worlds into which library-goers are plunged. They remind us just how much places of culture and learning have a particular force and how much their architecture is a reflection of shared values. More than a simple precursor to modernity, Labrouste was an ingenious figure of his times, and the exhibition's curators have aimed to show the full richness and complexity of his art.

Here, I would like to give special thanks to the Museum of Modern Art in New York, as well as to the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, for a fruitful collaboration in working on this exhibition and catalogue. I would also like to thank the Académie d'Architecture and the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève for their support and loans, without which this exhibition could not have met its goals, and lastly, thanks to the Compagnie de Saint-Gobain, which has supported this project.

François de Mazières
President of the Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine
Paris, July 2, 2012

Since its foundation eighty years ago, MoMA's Department of Architecture (today the Department of Architecture and Design) has shared the Museum's linked missions of showcasing cutting-edge artistic work in all media and exploring the longer prehistory of the artistic present. In 1932, for instance, no sooner had Philip Johnson, Henry-Russell Hitchcock, and Alfred H. Barr, Jr., installed the Department's legendary inaugural show, *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition*, than plans were afoot for a show the following year on the commercial architecture of late-nineteenth-century Chicago, intended as the first in a series of shows tracing key episodes in the development of modern architecture over the previous two centuries. Henri Labrouste's two seminal Paris libraries were of keen interest to Hitchcock in particular, not least for the way their frank expression of new materials—iron, and gas for light—created unprecedented urban and communal spaces. These two great reading rooms have been continuously admired since they opened, in 1850 and 1868 respectively, but it would not be until 1975, exactly a century after Labrouste's death, that his architecture would be displayed at The Museum of Modern Art, and then at a time when the modern movement itself was increasingly being challenged. If many were bewildered, even scandalized, by Arthur Drexler's puzzling manifesto exhibition *The Architecture of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts*, in 1977, the accompanying book's scholarship marked a major renewal of the study of nineteenth-century French architecture, and of one of that period's most original and uncompromising creators. As the curators of the present exhibition note, Labrouste's work and reputation were launched in the very ambience in which the concept of the artistic avant-garde itself was formed. Nothing could be more appropriate, either in Paris or at New York's Museum of Modern Art, than to take a fresh look at this figure, who began his career by reinterpreting the very fundamentals of then current architectural practice.

Henri Labrouste: Structure Brought to Light is the condensed result of several years of research, initially involving the participation of many in Paris and now brought to fruition under the expert guidance of Barry Bergdoll, MoMA's Philip Johnson Chief Curator of Architecture and Design, and his colleagues Corinne Bélière, of the Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine, and Marc Le Cœur, of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. I extend to them my appreciation for the quality of their scholarship and the originality of their interpretation of Labrouste's legacy, both historiographically and in contemporary terms. At the Museum we extend thanks also to Margot Weller and Patricio del Real, Curatorial Assistants in the Department of Architecture and Design, and Ron Broadhurst, the editor of the English-language edition of this book. We are especially pleased to be associated in this project with the Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine, which has staged the show in Paris and is a natural ally for us in our shared dedication to both shedding fresh light on history and examining the stakes of the architecture of our own complex time.

Glenn D. Lowry
Director, The Museum of Modern Art

"Henri Labrouste is without a doubt the mid-nineteenth-century architect whose work was the most important for the future."

—Sigfried Giedion, 1941

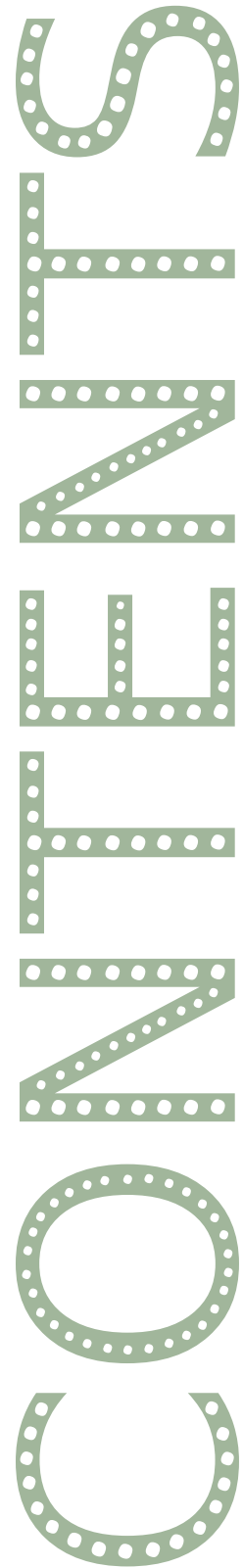
To house its collections, the Bibliothèque Nationale de France is fortunate enough to possess a set of buildings that illustrate the history of French architecture from the seventeenth to the twentieth century. Between François Mansart and Dominique Perrault, Henri Labrouste's position is first in a line of eminent builders. As Julien Cain put it, his name "is indissolubly linked to the history of the Bibliothèque Nationale" to such an extent that it is now common practice to designate by his name the famous reading room he erected at the heart of the quadrilateral on the Rue de Richelieu—an emblematic space which many library users regretfully left in 1998, when the collections in its former Printed Matter Department were transferred to the new François Mitterrand site.

In 1902, the Bibliothèque Nationale had placed a bust of Labrouste at the entrance to that mythic room. Later, in 1953, it would organize the first exhibition entirely devoted to his work. Nearly sixty years later, we are pleased to be a part of this new and worthy tribute, in collaboration with Paris's Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine and the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

It is important to underscore the generosity of Yvonne Labrouste, Geneviève-Caroline Labrouste, and Monique Malcotte, who successively donated many of their ancestor's archives. Those inestimable documents, of which many are presented in this book, have enriched the important collection of architects' drawings held by the Prints and Photography Department. In preparation for the exhibition, they were categorized, catalogued, restored, and digitized so that they could be viewed online.

The buildings raised by Labrouste for the Bibliothèque Nationale are themselves currently undergoing renovation, a process overseen by architect Bruno Gaudin and the head architect at Les Monuments Historiques, Jean-François Lagneau. The "Labrouste room," soon to be used by the library of the Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art (INHA), will once again open its doors in 2014 after regaining its original luster and clarity. As for the central stacks—so innovative in their day—they will be made accessible to library users themselves for the very first time. Until then, this exhibition is an invitation to rediscover the work of Labrouste, an extraordinary combination of Greco-Roman-imbued classical tradition and industrial modernity.

Bruno Racine
President of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France



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INTRODUCTION

Generations of writers and eminent intellectuals have worked beneath the domes of the Bibliothèque Nationale; generations of students have succeeded each other beneath the barrel vaults of the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève. Those two reading rooms, which are among the most beautiful spaces in Paris, are the source of Henri Labrouste's fame as an architect. Their powerful expressiveness, the rational solutions that the architect implemented in response to the complex programs entrusted to him, the haunting and strange refinement of their ornaments, and, above all, the importance given to new materials—particularly cast iron, magnified by a subtle play with light—have from the beginning provoked universal admiration and inspired many photographers, from Durandelle in the nineteenth century to Candida Höfer today. While the former buildings of the Bibliothèque Nationale are undergoing an unprecedented renovation campaign, it seemed to us a good time to reevaluate the approach of one of the most uncommon and demanding artists of the nineteenth century, a contemporary of Eugène Delacroix and Victor Hugo, and also to show how important his works and undertakings were in their time and how they have remained so ever since.

Like the masters of the Renaissance or the great architects of the twentieth century—Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, Alvar Aalto—Labrouste created a very personal architectural language and means of conception, combining a deeply classical culture and sentiment with a strong inclination for boldness and innovation. Labrouste is one of the rare nineteenth-century architects whose works have always been a benchmark, both in France and abroad. Since the 1970s and the pioneering work of Neil Levine, we have known that part of Labrouste's originality was first and foremost due to his awareness of the ties between artistic styles and the social history of peoples, then in his search in turn for an architectural expression suited to the mores and spirit of his era. The controversy between Labrouste and the Académie des Beaux-Arts over his restoration of the Greek temples at Paestum was less about strictly archaeological details than about the very issue of models in architecture: at the age of twenty-seven, refuting the ideal and fixed image of Antiquity upheld by the neoclassicists, the young architect wanted to believe there could be a flexibility of style under specific conditions or circumstances. Later, his decision to use iron and cast iron forced him to reconsider the structure of buildings, their distribution and ornamentation. He took traditional masonry, although he refined the expression and thickness of its varied stone courses, and combined it with an architecture of assemblage. In his two libraries, he set large metal frameworks within a stone enclosure and gave those frameworks proportions that fit their properties. Attenuated supports, detailed as columns, skillfully relate human and monumental scale and play a decisive part in the perception of space. Labrouste thus inaugurated a new building practice and heralded the fruitful research that architects would devote for the next century and a half to shaping industrial materials, particularly composite materials such as reinforced concrete.



By individualizing each element of the construction and demonstrating that such a heterogeneous whole could create a strong sense of harmony, he thus paved the way for the great rationalist trend in European and American architecture at the end of the nineteenth century, which made a distinction between supporting structure and infill, expressively playing with materials and color. That architectural language would exert international influence, up to and including the commercial architecture and office buildings in the United States in the late nineteenth century, among them, the proto-skyscrapers of Louis Sullivan.

Labrouste's work is as poetic as it is rational. Decoration, which arises from the construction and underscores it, has an essential part to play. Ornamentation, which carries a symbolic discourse (inscriptions on the facade, sculpted torches and pedestals, fictive gardens, etc.), follows the sequences of cleverly composed spaces in which shadow and light, thickness and transparency, power and lightness intersect. His reading rooms are magical spaces. At the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, Labrouste was one of the first to introduce gas lighting into an architectural composition, using it to produce artistic, sensory effects. At the Bibliothèque Nationale, the natural zenithal lighting—soft and diffuse—and the view of simulated trees help give the reading room, despite its size, a strikingly peaceful atmosphere, perfect for study. The two libraries are a testament to the importance Labrouste gave to the general ambience, and to his influence on the work of library-goers. His approach is strikingly contemporary for architects and artists engaged in creating immersive environments today. One need only visit the remarkable Rolex Learning Center (2007–9), built by the architectural firm SANAA, at the Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale in Lausanne, to see just how much a university building, a place meant to spread knowledge, can be the paradigm for a new approach to social relations.

Labrouste's libraries also express shared values. Their respective reading rooms, which are so suited to individual work, were also designed to help a community of researchers: solitary study cannot be separated from the progress of knowledge within society as a whole. Built at a time when modern library science was developing and the first great bibliographic catalogues were being compiled, they are a testament to the nineteenth century's knowledge revolution and as such are important markers for a history we have inherited, in our own digital age.

Over time, everyone who has traced the history of modern architecture has underscored the prominent position of Labrouste and his two libraries, although each time they have been ascribed a different meaning to his work. In 1975, he was one of the great figures of the nineteenth century, with Charles Garnier, singled out by the "manifesto" exhibition *The Architecture of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts* at The Museum of

Bibliothèque Nationale,
reading room vaults' springing,
near the hemicycle.
Photograph: Alain Le Toquin

Modern Art, while in 1976 he was the subject of an important monograph presented by the historian Pierre Saddy at the Caisse Nationale des Monuments Historiques et des Sites (at the Hôtel de Sully). The interpretations we are now presenting in turn are no less of our time: they include such key themes as assembly and hybridization, light and immersive environments. We are not interested in considering Labrouste as a simple precursor to modernity, as did Sigfried Giedion, who looked for forerunners of twentieth-century constructions in the productions of the nineteenth century and saw Labrouste as a misunderstood genius. It seems to us that the issues he raised and the answers he provided were very meaningful in their time, and that they have never ceased to be since, and that it is precisely for this reason that his work has enthralled generations of architects and historians.

Preparing this exhibition gave us a sense of the devotion Labrouste's work instills in those who work within it. At the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, at the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, and at the Académie d'Architecture, we found enthusiastic collaborators. We are deeply grateful to them and to the lenders to this exhibition for their support and ideas. We hope that those who discover, or rediscover, the work of Labrouste through this exhibition and its catalogue will share the same interest, pleasure, and emotions.

Corinne Bélier, Barry Bergdoll, and Marc Le Cœur



BARRY BERGDOLL
The Museum of
Modern Art

HISTORIOGRAPHY

We are so accustomed to thinking of “avant-garde” as an artistic stance of experimental art and architecture during the opening decades of the twentieth century—when a full-scale attack on academic and historicist attitudes of the nineteenth century was often the battle cry—that it opens to question our larger understanding of modern architecture culture and practice to consider that the term “avant-garde” first left military parlance to describe a new role for artistic practice in the theory of the utopian socialist Saint-Simonians in Paris in the years around 1830.¹ This was contemporary then with the unusually contentious debate over Labrouste’s restoration study of Paestum (discussed here by Martin Bressani), a debate that pitted Labrouste against his teachers and against the stalwart *secrétaire perpétuel* of the Académie des Beaux-Arts, Quatremère de Quincy. At stake were nothing less than the fundamental doctrines of the ideal, of imitation, and of the role of architectural practice in relation to society.² Such was the vigor of the debate that a half century later in 1877, when Labrouste’s drawings of ancient Paestum were engraved and published under the auspices of the Academy, Gothic Revival architect Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, himself a veteran of standoffs with academic verities, recalled it as “quite simply a revolution on a few elephant folio sheets of paper.”³

A century later, Peter Smithson—a leading voice in Team X, itself a group that criticized orthodoxy—found the very same drawing the most revelatory moment in a controversial exhibition: “I’d never heard of the Labrouste drawings of Paestum until I went to the Museum of Modern Art’s Beaux-Arts exhibition,”⁴ Smithson told an audience at London’s Architectural Association in 1978. “[T]he rendered shadow of the feathers of the arrows and the shadows of the shields lashed to the columns are drawn so lightly that it’s almost impossible to believe it was done by human hand. It’s the best rendered drawing I’ve ever seen. In one long touch of the two hair sable brush the drawing reveals two languages at work: the language of the permanent fabric and the language of its attachments—that which continues

1. See Nicos Hadjinicolaou, “Sur l’idéologie de l’avant-gardisme,” *Histoire et critique des arts* (July 1978): 49–76. Here the key text is Emile Barrault, *Aux Artistes: Du passé et de l’avenir des Beaux-Arts* (1830). Barrault had been a classmate of Labrouste at the Collège Sainte-Barbe.
2. See Levine 1977:325–416.
3. Viollet-le-Duc, March 21, 1877:1–2.
4. *The Architecture of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, The Museum of Modern Art*, October 29, 1975, to January 4, 1976.

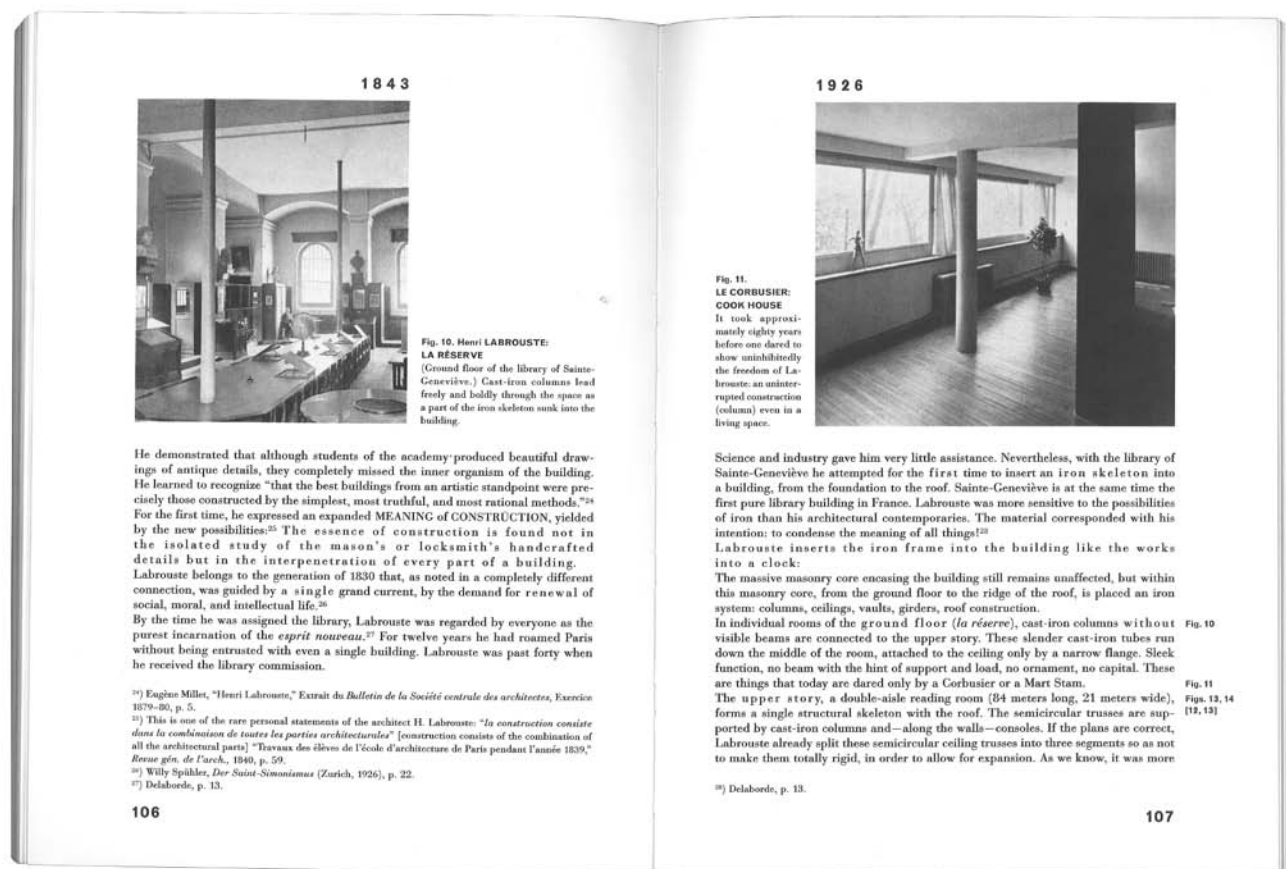
1. Gustaf Dahl, Royal Library of Sweden in Stockholm (1871–77), view of the reading room. Photograph: Åke E:son Lindman

5. Peter Smithson, "Once a Joly Swagman: Some Thoughts after Seeing Labrouste's Drawing of Paestum," *AD Profiles 17: The Beaux-Arts*, ed. Robin Middleton (London: Academy, 1978), 34.
6. Louis Sullivan, "The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered," first published in *Lippincott's Magazine* 57 (March 1896): 403–9; reprinted in Leland Roth, *America Builds: Source Documents in American Architecture and Planning* (New York: Harper & Row, 1983), 340.
7. Victor Calliat, *Encyclopédie d'architecture* (Paris: Baucé Editeur, 1856), col. 123.
8. "Henri Labrouste," *Deutsche Bauzeitung* 9 (1875): 280.
9. F. P. Cockerell, "Biographical Notices of Deceased Foreign Members," in *Sessional Papers Read at the Royal Institute of British Architects 1875–1876* (London: Royal Institute of British Architects), 218.
10. See Barry Bergdoll, "The Circulation of Images: Nineteenth-Century French Books and the Avery Library," in *Avery's Choice: Five Centuries of Great Architectural Books, One Hundred Years of an Architectural Library, 1890–1900*, ed. Angela Giral (New York: G.K.Hall; London: Prentice Hall International, 1997), 185–86.
11. Lucien Magne, *L'Architecture française du siècle* (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1889), 53.
12. *Ibid.*, 34.
13. Van Brunt, 1893: 87.
14. Albert E. Richardson, "The Style Néo-Grec," *The Architectural Review* 30 (July 1911): 28.

the idea of architecture and that which is the responsibility of those who use it."⁵ In short, Labrouste's work continued to reverberate long after the context of its making was forgotten. Maxims about the relation of form to a building's function, materials, and program recur in appreciations of Labrouste and of his pedagogy already during the architect's lifetime, long before Louis Sullivan was to declare that in searching for the form of tall office building "form ever follows function."⁶ When Labrouste closed his studio in 1856, the *Encyclopédie d'architecture* noted that "he set out as a principle the idea that in the design of buildings form should also be suitable and subordinated to function and that decoration should be born of construction expressed with artistry."⁷ Even if Labrouste insisted on no speeches at his funeral, obituaries consolidated his reputation as a pioneer of a rationalist position still seeking to assert itself as a doctrine, as much outside France as within. He was celebrated not as an individual talent but as a founding figure of modern architecture, from the *Deutsche Bauzeitung* in Berlin⁸ to the Royal Institute of British Architects, which noted of this illustrious foreign member "the vigour and vitality which has given birth to and guided the growth of the highly original art which marks the French school of the second quarter of this century."⁹ The 1890s would find not only the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève's facade paraphrased in Charles McKim's 1887 design for the Boston Public Library but also the name of Labrouste—who had transformed a library into an expressive form for exhibiting knowledge by inscribing the names of 810 thinkers and writers on it—as part of the decorative iconography of the reading room of the Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library (opened in 1897 and also designed by McKim) within Low Library on the new Columbia University campus in New York. There Labrouste's name figures among those which decorate the girders of the reading room, next to Duban, Viollet-le-Duc, Ruskin, Semper, and a host of others destined over the course of the next few decades to be progressively dissociated from the context of their own time, when they were lionized increasingly as prophets of the twentieth century.¹⁰ Already by the 1890s, then, Labrouste had become a touchstone for a rationalism based in a matrix of classical and Renaissance forms, his work an inspiration for figures from Louis-Jules André to Julien Guadet, even while many of his own pupils developed his lessons in the context of the Gothic Revival. The origins of the analysis of Labrouste not as a talented member of the generation of 1830—i.e., one of the group of Romantics—but as a singular figure who initiated modern architecture was consolidated by the publication of the first *history* of modern and contemporary architecture in French, Lucien Magne's *L'Architecture française du siècle*, published for the 1889 Exposition Universelle—the fair where the monumental cast- and wrought-iron Eiffel Tower marked the modernity of France born of the 1789 Revolution. Magne speaks already of an "art nouveau," in the 1830s. "No one more than Labrouste seemed to have been designated to realize the needed evolution from the academic school to the modern school."¹¹ The tradition of viewing Labrouste as not only a pioneer but a

historically designated actor between Christian and Hegelian history was launched. In Magne's history, juxtaposed with a plate of the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, one reads "at this period began truly a new art (un art nouveau)."¹² Labrouste's reputation began to be instrumentalized outside the complex landscape of French professional positions, lineages, and debates. In the Anglo-American debate over the extent to which a Beaux-Arts inheritance—imported into both countries as formal university programs of architecture were being established—might sponsor a new architectural synthesis rather than another revivalist practice in an eclectic and competitive field, Labrouste was a key reference point. Much of this would go under the name "néo-Grec," a confusing term because of the vast discrepancy with which it was used in different times and different places. In Paris at mid-century it designated an approach to etching a severe abstracted floral ornament and treating moldings as though they were cut almost in section, a language that spread quickly from such exemplary public buildings as Constant-Dufeux's facade for the Ecole de Dessin in the Rue Racine, Labrouste's two libraries, and Louis Duc's work at the Palais de Justice in Paris. By the 1870s when foreigners began to frequent the ateliers of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, it was an established fashion among the architects of speculative apartment blocks filling the avenues of modernizing Paris. What "néo-Grec" meant in the American and British architectural discourse in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was something else entirely. The Boston architect Henry Van Brunt, who had studied under Richard Morris Hunt, the first American to attend the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, celebrated Labrouste in an article published in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1861 and reprinted in a book, *Greek Lines*, published in time for the World's Columbian Exhibition in 1893, in which he speaks of "néo-Grec practitioners not as masters of a style" but as teachers of a progressive attitude toward tradition and historical sources.¹³ In Edwardian London a similar argument was put forth to attack the eclectic landscape of British practice by Albert E. Richardson, a classicist eager to assert the Greco-Roman heritage as a modern language of flexibility. Richardson traced a devotion to an evolutionary modernism back to a small group of mid-nineteenth-century "néo-grecs" including Labrouste: "The néo-Grec style is the epitome of design; its interest is a reflection of the tireless mind of the designer, who, having obtained a great many ideas on his subject, melts these very ideas in the crucible of his imagination, refining them again and again until the minted metal gleams refulgent," wrote Richardson. "By these means, and these alone, is original design possible."¹⁴ But it was in the 1920s that Labrouste's name began to be bandied about by opposing parties in an increasingly vociferous dispute. "In the Modernist battle Labrouste was used as a banner, becoming a myth," Renzo Dubbini noted recently. It was a myth "loaded with ideological meanings, so that even his extraordinary architectural talent ran the risk of remaining obscured."¹⁵ For the first time positions were advanced not only in the professional press but in exhibitions and general-interest publications.

15. Renzo Dubbini, "Un'architettura per il proprio tempio," in *Henry Labrouste 1801–1875*, ed. Renzo Dubbini (Milan: Electa, 2002), 15; translation by Karen Bowie in the context of a review of the volume in *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 62:1 (March 2003): 140.



2. Sigfried Giedion, *Bauen in Frankreich. Bauen in Eisen. Bauen in Eisenbeton* (Leipzig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1928), pp. 106–7; English translation: *Building in France, Building in Iron, Building in Ferroconcrete* (Santa Monica, Calif.: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1995)

By the time the Swiss historian Sigfried Giedion lionized Labrouste as the “most prominent figure in the field of architecture at the beginning of industrial development,” and juxtaposed images of Labrouste’s work with that of fellow Swiss Le Corbusier, a counter argument had already been well established that sought to debunk the tendency to isolate not only Labrouste from his context but also parts of his buildings from the larger whole. The French historian Louis Hauteœur argued at once for Labrouste’s genius but insisted on him as a great renewer of classicism rather than a precursor of something that only recently gained acceptance, “the purest incarnation of the *esprit nouveau*,” as Giedion claimed in juxtaposing the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève and Le Corbusier’s recently completed Maison Cook (fig. 2).¹⁶ The trend seems to have been launched by Jean Badovici, the founder of the avant-garde organ *L’Architecture vivante*, who already in 1926 surveyed nineteenth-century developments, largely negative and retrogressive, singling out the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève as the singly most noble building of the whole century, and claiming Labrouste as the father of “une architecture vivante.”

Walter Benjamin would develop this perception into an entire theory of the historical unconscious, even determining that the iron constructions of the arcades, on which

Labrouste drew for his two libraries, were the dream images of the century, projecting forward in his literary analysis what Giedion saw only as a historical archaeology.¹⁷ “The task of the historian,” Giedion had written, “is to recognize the seeds and to indicate—across all layers of debris—the continuity of development. The historian, unfortunately, has used the perspective of his occupation to give eternal legitimation to the past and thereby to kill the future, or at least to obstruct its development. Today the historian’s task appears to be the opposite: to extract from the vast complexity of the past those elements that will be the point of departure for the future.”¹⁸ Labrouste was not to be elevated singularly.¹⁹ Georges Gromort,²⁰ a product of the very rationalist strain that traced its origins to Labrouste, having been formed in the atelier of André, which he took over, asserted that Labrouste along with Jacques Ignace Hittorff were at once of, and yet towering above, their generation. For Gromort the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève was a masterpiece of syncretic thinking, but one that has been fundamentally made into a caricature by its champions, insisting on only aspects of the work, like a few elements of exposed iron, rather than on the overall work. “Since when ... do we become preoccupied in crossing the threshold of a great building by the type of joists which are used in the construction of the floors ... I protest only the way in which the critics have seized upon the most insignificant parts of his work and have been wary of insisting on the essential qualities which make this work especially remarkable.” The library “is one of the most noble constructions of the nineteenth century; it can hold its own with buildings of the finest periods ... because here we have a truly classic work, and the classic is timeless.”²¹

By the late 1920s, Labrouste’s reputation had bifurcated. For Hauteœur and Gromort he was a milestone in the history of French classicism, for Giedion a forerunner of *l’esprit nouveau*, an argument expanded to the wider modern movement two years later when Giedion exhibited his own photographs of Labrouste’s two libraries in Vienna in the exhibition *Film und Foto* (interiors exclusively, which he described as similar to the works inside a Swiss watch, so perfectly did their metal armatures fit inside their traditionalist casing), even captioning a view of the reading room of the Bibliothèque Nationale as “Neues Bauen im Jahre 1868 (Bibliothek in Paris).”²² Just as Moholy-Nagy had transformed the image of Marseille’s *pont transbordeur* by radical camera angles and cropping, so Giedion framed views to emphasize the interpenetration of light and material in the Bibliothèque Nationale’s stacks.

A hybrid of these opposing views appeared in America, where in 1929 the young historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock published a history of modern architecture since 1850, in which Labrouste is singled out as “the finest architect of the mid-century,”²³ framing there arguments taken up three years later in the catalogue and wall texts of the Museum of Modern Art’s first architecture exhibition, *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition*, with its famous designation of the “International Style” as the new style of the age. While Hitchcock’s history contains clear paraphrases of Gromort, it hews closer to

16. Giedion 1928 (English-language edition 1995):86.
 17. Jean-Louis Déotte, “Walter Benjamin et l’inconscient constructif de Sigfried Giedion,” *Images Re-vues* 2 (2010): document 6.
 18. Giedion 1928 (English-language edition 1995):86.
 19. Louis Hauteœur, “Avant-propos,” in *Châteaux, jardins, églises aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*, catalogue of an exhibition organized by the the Service des Monuments Historiques (Vendôme: Launay et fils, 1923), 6. See also Antonio Bruculeri, *Du dessin historique à l’action publique: Louis Hauteœur et l’architecture classique en France* (Paris: Picard, 2007).
 20. Georges Gromort, *Architecture et la Sculpture en France de la Révolution à nos Jours* (Paris: Librairie de France, 1925).
 21. *Ibid.*, 60.
 22. *Film und Foto: Wanderausstellung des Deutschen Werkbundes* (Vienna: Oesterreiches Museum, 1930), 164. See Werner Oechslin and Gregor Harbusch, eds., *Sigfried Giedion und die Fotografie, Bildinszenierung der Moderne* (Zurich: GTA Verlag, 2010), 68. See also Giedion’s article following up on *Bauen in Frankreich*, “Lumière et construction: Réflexion à propos des ateliers de chemins de fer de Freyssinet,” *Cahiers de l’art* 4:6 (1929): 275–81.
 23. Henry-Russell Hitchcock, *Modern Architecture: Romanticism and Reintegration* (New York: Payson & Clarke, 1929), 31.

24. Ibid., 35.
 25. Ibid., 39.
 26. Ibid., 123.
 27. Walter Curt Behrendt, *Modern Building: Its Nature, Problems, and Forms* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1939), 41–42.
 28. Giedion 1941:216.
 29. Ibid., 218.
 30. Ibid., 224.
 31. Ibid., 224.
 32. Peter Collins, *Concrete: The Vision of a New Architecture* (London: Faber and Faber, 1959). Here quoted from the second edition (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004), 159.

the line of Giedion's recently published *Bauen in Frankreich* in celebrating engineering as the true line of modern evolution in the nineteenth century. Like Giedion, who would soon develop a concept of "constituent" and "transitory" historical facts, Hitchcock was intent on separating the wheat of future prospects from the chaff of momentary importance. Most of nineteenth-century architecture for him, as for Giedion, was to be relegated to the past. "The influence of Paris after the day of Labrouste and Hittorff was, on the whole, repressive and literally reactionary,"²⁴ he noted, while "Engineering fortunately could go its own way. Thus it was able to produce in the mid-century the only constructions whose quality is worthy of comparison with the libraries of Labrouste ... in which, moreover, it had already been incorporated."²⁵ Repeating the assumption that it was the interior of the libraries which contained the true seeds of the future, Hitchcock celebrates the metal trusses within Berlage's great Beurs at Amsterdam, concluding, "Thus engineering became again a part of architecture in the way that Labrouste in particular had anticipated half a century earlier ..."²⁶

By 1929, then, exactly a century after the disputes in the French Academy over Labrouste's interpretation of Paestum and its consequence for contemporary practice, Labrouste himself was the subject of a battle between modernists and traditionalists. While traditionalists admired the sobriety of the envelope of his two libraries, even the ways they functioned within the harmonious fabric of nineteenth-century Paris, modernists seized upon the notion of rupture and turned their lens almost exclusively on the interiors. This was a view taken up by the German émigré historian Walter Curt Behrendt in his textbook *Modern Building*, published in 1937. If Behrendt largely lionizes Karl Friedrich Schinkel as the forerunner of modernism, he also celebrates Labrouste's use of iron, neatly dismissing the exterior to find a hidden source of modernism within: "Iron construction was first used on a large scale when Henri Labrouste, architect-engineer, built the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève ... As a true representative of that new spirit which thinks first of the organism of each structure, the architect set up within the large reading room ... an iron skeleton ... the exterior of the building does not suggest the nature of the construction so frankly revealed in the interior. Here it seems as though the architect were still afraid of accepting the consequences involved in his courageous design."²⁷ This view—in which Labrouste is now even called an engineer though he had no such training—was consecrated when Giedion was invited by Walter Gropius to deliver the Norton Lectures at Harvard University. Published in 1941 as *Space, Time and Architecture*, it would go through some seven editions in continual revision for the next three decades, would influence several generations of architects and historians, and would establish Labrouste's libraries, and in particular the stacks of the Bibliothèque Nationale, as the expression of the deep subconscious of modernity embedded in a building that can "pass" in the street. He juxtaposes photographs of the glass wall separating the reading room from the stacks with his own photographs of the great curtain wall of Albert Laprade's Garage

Marbeuf (1928–29, p. 37, fig. 4). Well into his history of engineering, English mills, and early Parisian iron markets, Giedion turns for the first time to French architecture: "Until now we have had to dissect practically anonymous constructions, to find the first signs of the new developments which life, almost unconsciously, was bringing about. Toward the middle of the 19th century, we encounter for the first time in this period a man who unites the abilities of both the engineer and the architect: the architect-constructor Henri Labrouste."²⁸ The labeling of Labrouste as an engineer is only the first of the myths presented in Giedion's history, along with the image of Labrouste as the tortured genius, shunned for having dared to oppose the academy: "The Academy waged a bitter war against the so-called 'rationalistic school' which Labrouste headed ... [he] ... had to wait more than twelve years for a chance to show his talents in an executed work of importance. It was not until he was past forty that Labrouste was commissioned to build ... in Paris (1843–50)."²⁹ Despite the fact that his career followed a path quite similar to many returning laureates of the *Grand Prix*, progressing through on-site supervision work under other architects before being trusted with his own commission, Labrouste the misunderstood genius was a perfect type of the embattled visionary of the modern movement. As Giedion proceeds to describe the stack room of the library, "Labrouste's masterpiece," the allusions to Le Corbusier's polemical strategies become more and more overt. The open iron grates of the stacks are said to have been first used "in the engine rooms of steamships,"³⁰ citing one of Le Corbusier's favored metaphors in the photomontage of *Vers une architecture*.³¹ Giedion returned again to Labrouste in a popular volume published in 1959, *Les Architectes célèbres*, organized by Pierre Francastel, who had already taken up Giedion's line of lionizing Labrouste as a pioneer in the darkness of the nineteenth century in his seminal *Art et technique aux 19^e et 20^e siècles* of 1956.

The first hint of a reaction against the willful separation of Labrouste from the context of his time came in a passing remark in the very same year about Auguste Perret's training in *Concrete: The Vision of New Architecture*, by the Canadian architectural historian Peter Collins: "Henri Labrouste's revolutionary and brilliant contribution towards creating a new architecture is well known, but there is a tendency, which may perhaps be deliberate, to overlook the fact that he was essentially a product of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts."³² But this had little immediate effect on histories. Hitchcock's *Architecture: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, published as part of the great project of Nikolaus Pevsner's *Pelican History of Art* series in 1958, for instance, discusses Labrouste's work in the chapter on "Building with Iron and Glass: 1790–1855" along with train stations and exhibition buildings, including the Crystal Palace, while works of the architects with whom he made common cause, Duban and Vaudoyer, occupy an entirely different chapter on architectural developments. A dramatic shift came in the 1970s, when the emergent postmodern critique of modernist orthodoxy and a wave of revisionist evaluations of nineteenth-century architecture developed in Europe and North America



33. *Histoire de l'art du XIXe siècle (1848–1914): bilans et perspectives* (Paris: Musée d'Orsay, École du Louvre Colloque, 2012).

34. Bruno Foucart, "Labrouste et ses contemporains," *Les Monuments Historiques de la France* 6 (1975): 7.

35. Paul Chemetov and Bernard Marrey, *Architectures: 1848–1914* (Paris: Dunod, 1980).

36. Robin Middleton, ed., *AD Profiles 17: The Beaux-Arts* (London: Academy, 1978).

This account draws on my earlier publication, "Complexities and Contradictions of Post-Modern Classicism: Notes on the Museum of Modern Art's 1975 Exhibition *The Architecture of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts*," in *The Persistence of the Classical: Essays on Architecture Presented to David Watkin*, ed. Frank Salmon (London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2008), 202–17.

37. Jürgen Habermas, "La Modernité un projet inachevé," *La Modernité, un projet inachevé, 40 architectes*, ed. Paul Chemetov (Paris: Editions du Moniteur, 1982).

with moments of significant synergy. Here the key date was 1975, when almost simultaneously exhibition projects were launched in Paris and New York. In that year the Caisse Nationale des Monuments Historiques devoted a special issue of its magazine *Monuments Historiques* to a radical reevaluation of Labrouste's work and legacy in the wake of a major ministerial effort to create lists of nineteenth-century buildings for monument protection as well as in preparation for a planned monographic show to take place at the Hôtel de Sully in 1976. And the Museum of Modern Art in New York opened its controversial *Architecture of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts* exhibition in which Labrouste's drawings of Paestum and for his Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève were given pride of place. In both cases the exhibitions were at once responses to turbulent debates over the demolition or threat to two major monuments of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century architecture, Victor Baltard's Les Halles in Paris and Grand Central Terminal in New York, as well as implicit critiques—oddly enough—of modernist orthodoxy.

In Paris a struggle of ownership and interpretation was again launched for Labrouste, but now inverted from the bifurcation in the 1920s since the established architectural profession wanted to maintain the notion of Labrouste as a protomodern, while the nascent postmodernist critique wanted to recontextualize him within the nineteenth century, itself enjoying a great revival of interest which would culminate with the founding of the Musée d'Orsay at the end of the decade.³³ Bruno Foucart—emerging as the great champion of nineteenth-century architecture and soon of the contextualist urbanism of Maurice Culot, Leon Krier, and others—penned the first of the period's critiques of Giedion (whom Foucart incorrectly calls Samuel Giedion) and of Francastel, arguing, "We have finally to let Labrouste get out from under the peremptory claims of theoreticians and from his over simplified reputation as a functionalist and user of metal."³⁴ One year later, when Pierre Saddy mounted the exhibition at the Hôtel de Sully, presenting all Labrouste's works side by side without isolating the libraries from the evidently historicist *hôtels particuliers* for instance, Labrouste was also claimed by practicing modernist architects. Also in 1976 Paul Chemetov and Bernard Marrey organized an exhibition on iron in French architecture since 1848—a date chosen for its socialist pedigree—mounted in the populist setting of the Bon Marché department store, itself a great glass and iron structure. Here Labrouste's libraries took their place next to neighbors that Giedion and Hitchcock had long ago chosen for them: "If his private buildings use signifiers the banality of which is appropriate for their function, the libraries of Sainte-Geneviève and the National place him at the origins of modern architecture."³⁵

Arthur Drexler's exhibition of student drawings from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts—along with full-scale gallery presentations of Labrouste's Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève and Charles Garnier's Paris Opera—at New York's Museum of Modern Art was immediately perceived as a thinly veiled critique of the modern movement, even though its subject

was ostensibly the academic tradition in nineteenth-century French architecture and in French and American civic architecture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. That, of course, was the very architecture tradition that the Museum had set out to curtail from the founding of its Department of Architecture in 1932 with a clear mandate to transform architectural taste and ideology in America and to create a beachhead for international modernism. Forty-three years later, the controversial and puzzling exhibition of the dazzling watercolors of the student competitions was seen as an equally seminal event; indeed it was seen by some even as a bookend that bracketed the episode of modernism in America. Drexler's exhibition and book helped usher in a type of postmodernism which one can only imagine was far from his conscious intent. After decades of missionary zeal, it seemed as if the flagship of modernism was changing the colors on its mast, a position confirmed two years later when the museum's monumental publication on the subject appeared—with Drexler's polemical forward followed by three major historical essays by the young architectural historians Neil Levine, David Van Zanten, and Richard Chaffee. Their collective historical focus would not be the great Gothic Revivalist architect and theoretician Viollet-le-Duc, who had long-established laurels as a protomodernist, but rather the Ecole des Beaux-Arts itself, that bastion of the classical tradition and for many decades the *nec plus ultra* of credentials in the American architectural profession, at least until the late 1930s when Gropius arrived with the legacy of the Bauhaus at Harvard. Even though an international tour of the exhibition was planned, in the end the event was to play itself out in a very American discursive field, one only briefly extended to Britain when Robin Middleton organized, in 1978, a follow-up event at the Architectural Association.³⁶ Mystery still veils the cancelation of the planned exhibition at Paris's Musée des Arts Décoratifs, and even more so the decision not to print the French translation of Drexler's book in 1980, for which Foucart had penned a now lost preface. The Beaux-Arts show in Paris would have been a significant prelude to the debate over modernism and postmodernism staged a few years later, in 1981, in competing exhibitions on current French architecture, with the presentation of the modernists in an exhibition curated by Chemetov called *La Modernité, un projet inachevé*, a title evocative of Jürgen Habermas,³⁷ meant to counter the postmodern view that was infiltrating the historiography of architecture since the Revolution as well as the practice of architecture.

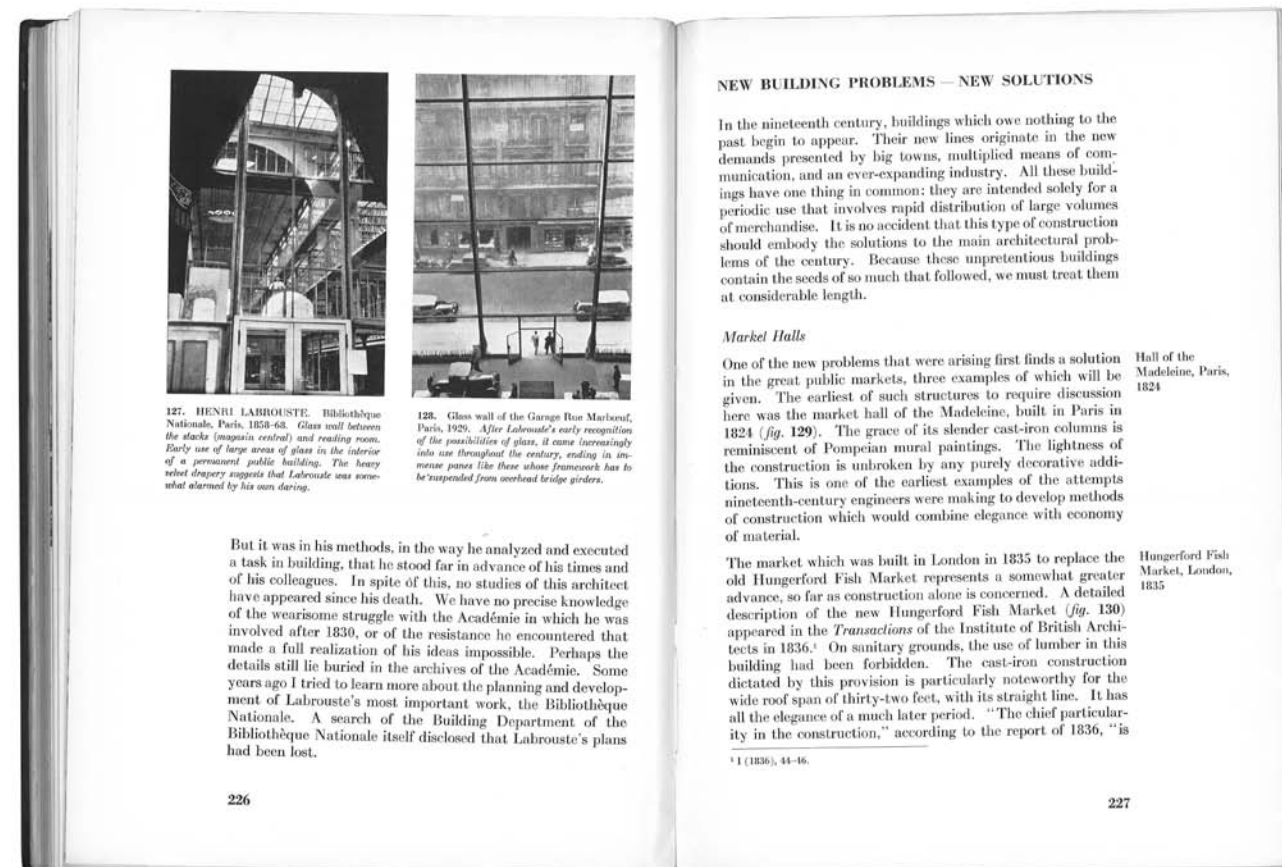
Prior to the show's opening in New York, Drexler summarized its importance in a press release: "A more detached view of architecture as it was understood in the Nineteenth century might also provoke a more rigorous critique of philosophical assumptions underlying the architecture of our own time. Now that modern experience so often contradicts modern faith, we would be well advised to re-examine our architectural pieties ... Two central concerns which merit reexamination today, according to the Museum, are the recognition of the importance of a building's system of internal

Previous pages:
3. Frank Lloyd Wright (1867–1959), headquarters of the Johnson Wax Company in Racine, Wisconsin (1936–39), view of the main work room. Photograph: anonymous, 1956

38. Drexler, memo. no. 34, draft press release, April 30, 1975, Museum of Modern Art Archives.
 39. Levine 1977:332.
 40. Levine 1982:138–73.

circulation in determining its architectural form, and the use of drawing as a flexible means of visualizing architectural form.³⁸ The critique was at least two-fold: modern architecture had become diagrammatic, and at the same time students were taught to think of architecture models as ends in themselves. The lost art of Beaux-Arts rendering would reveal the extent to which students in the French academic tradition had been taught to understand the refinements of details and surface treatment, making the very construction of a building into an act of both civic responsibility and artistic investment. What Drexler shared at this point with his young authors, Levine in particular, was a sense that Louis Kahn—and along with him the whole so-called Yale-Philadelphia axis that was recalibrating American architecture around geometric formality, processional progressions, and a material articulation of masonry walls—represented at once a new primitivism in modernism and a synthesis of the old Beaux-Arts/modernist rift that was particularly American.

No less were Levine and Van Zanten directly connected to this recalibration of American architecture away from the Miesian heritage of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill toward the work of Kahn and the latest experiments in meaning and symbolism represented by his Philadelphia colleague Robert Venturi, the single most important American figure in architecture's linguistic turn around 1970. Most polemically intoned was Levine's interpretation of Labrouste. Levine's frame of reference grew directly from the inspirational teaching of one of Kahn's greatest supporters, Vincent Scully. Levine, following Scully's lead, engaged with a wholly different set of issues more aligned with the period's interest in the semiotics of architecture and in Scully's dual interests in Kahn's powerful space making and in Venturi's reevaluation of surface, ornament, and legibility. Levine's essay "The Romantic Idea of Architectural Legibility: Henri Labrouste and the Néo-Grec" was the tour-de-force intellectual exercise of Drexler's book. Self-consciously struggling to deconstruct Giedion's view of Labrouste as a protomodernist engineer-architect, Levine at once resituated Labrouste's undertaking in the complex cultural moment of French Romanticism of the 1830s and made a case for "legibility" as the chief characteristic of that Romanticism. Legibility was of course the preoccupation of the Yale-Philadelphia axis's search for meaning in architecture, nowhere more than at Yale's Department of the History of Art, where a local brand of the period's fascination with semiology and meaning structures was conjugated in relationship to Scully's championing of Venturi, Scott Brown, and Izenour, whose *Learning from Las Vegas*, published in 1972, had been first taught as a Yale architectural studio during Levine's years in residence in New Haven. Venturi's idea of the decorated shed as a building that embraces a disjunctive separation of a working structure from a great sign professing its meaning is not hard to detect in Levine's insistence that precisely such a cleavage was pioneered by Labrouste's Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, which, he wrote, "can only be understood if one accepts the fact that the neo-Grec meant the replacement of classicism by a new way of thinking about architectural



form and content." Neo-Grec architects "were the first to make the radical distinction between structural principle and decorative form"³⁹ This rather willful reading of the envelope of Labrouste's library, which is everywhere detailed in relation to static forces and interior program, was meant to underscore an elaborate "literary expression" in the building, something that Levine went on to develop—for Middleton's follow-up conference at London's Architectural Association in 1978—in a breathtaking reading of the building in relationship to Victor Hugo's prescription that the book had killed the building, where the formerly rationalist monument of Labrouste's library was shown to be the frame for an elaborate iconographic program which grounded the whole in literary allusion and mythological iconography, precisely the themes that were increasingly being embraced by the period's postmodernist theorists and practitioners.⁴⁰ Nowhere was this connection with emerging postmodern theory and practice more overtly underscored than in an article Van Zanten wrote toward the end of the exhibition's run hoping to counter what he thought were false appraisals of the whole undertaking. "The more we—like the show itself—concentrate on these French ideas, the more we realize that we are doing so in order to understand the architecture being produced around us ... the Modern show is retrospective, not because the subject

4. Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time, and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London: Cambridge University Press, 1941), pp. 226–27



41. David Van Zanten, "Remarks on the Museum of Modern Art Exhibition: The Architecture of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts," *Journal of the Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art* (May 1976).

42. Paul Goldberger, "Beaux-Arts Architecture at the Modern," *New York Times*, October 29, 1975, p. 46. See also Goldberger's follow up article, "Debate Lingers after Beaux-Arts Show," *New York Times*, January 6, 1976, p. 30.

43. Kenneth Frampton, *Studies in Tectonic Culture: The Poetics of Construction in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995); Levine 2009.

44. Herman Hertzberger, "Henri Labrouste, la réalisation en art," *Technique et architecture* 375 (1987–88); Jacques Lucan, *Composition, Non-Composition: Architecture and Theory in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New York: Routledge/EPFL Press, 2012).

matter was 19th century drawings, but because it was really about Kahn, Venturi and Moore, Mies and Johnson."⁴¹ The theme was returned to by the recently appointed architecture critic of the *New York Times*, Scully protégé Paul Goldberger, who noted that "Labrouste's work is subtle, rich in meaning and invention, and in a certain sense can be said to have paved the way for the work of such current architects of historical allusion as Charles Moore and Venturi & Rauch."⁴²

In the years following the publication of Levine's revelatory and wide-reaching essays on Labrouste, the historical grounding of Labrouste in the complex culture of French Romanticism, as well as in the realities of French state professional practice, has been deepened with fundamental historical research by David Van Zanten, Robin Middleton, Jean-Michel Leniaud, and, more recently, Martin Bressani. All of these seem at some remove from architectural practice and current debates, as was the case during the wane of the postmodern moment in the 1970s and 1980s: architectural practice and architectural history have often moved along independent paths. Still a kind of correction to some middle ground between Giedion's interpretation—which could only account for Labrouste's iron framework—and Levine's—which seemed largely invested in the envelope and its writing on the wall—has begun to emerge in which the tectonic language of Labrouste is found precisely in the relationship between the two. This is an interpretation developed at once by such practitioners as the Dutch architect Herman Hertzberger and by one of Hertzberger's chief champions, the historian Kenneth Frampton. Where Levine rehearses anew the lineage from Labrouste to Kahn in an attempt to write a history of modern architecture concerned primarily with the issue of representation, Frampton proposes a new lineage in which Labrouste's ability to achieve a dialogue between a lightweight columnar armature and a masonry encasement created a symbiotic tectonic expression, which Frampton then traces to a set of practices ranging from Franco Albini in postwar Italy to Enrique Miralles in 1990s Spain. "Labrouste," Frampton notes in *Studies in Tectonic Culture*, "demonstrated a model and a method that Viollet-le-Duc would turn to a few years later, namely the insertion of a prefabricated, fireproof iron armature into a masonry shell tectonically prepared for its reception."⁴³ With the interpretations of Hertzberger, Frampton, and, more recently, Edward Ford in America and Jacques Lucan in Europe, Labrouste has once again entered the architectural curriculum, and for the first time in a series of analyses in which the rethinking of both container and contained are brought into a search for architectural meaning out of architectural elements rather than overlaid symbols.⁴⁴

Just as Labrouste and his fellow Romantics of the generation that came of age around the time of France's second great political and social revolution, that of July 1830, jettisoned notions of timeless ideals in favor of a view of architecture as a continual record of change and adaption, so Labrouste's own critical fortune is a veritable palimpsest of the architectural debate in the long history of modern architecture, a cipher of changing and even conflicting agendas like almost no other architect of the nineteenth

century. He has been a vital component of the constitution of notions of rationalist architecture, of the heritage of modernism in the "engineer's architecture" of the nineteenth century, and of the genealogy of an architecture of signs and signification in the articulation of post-modernism. This very history is a sign of the brilliance of his architectural works, which continue to engender ideas not only by the books they contain but by the very architectural possibilities they suggest, proof in the end that Labrouste may well have triumphed over Victor Hugo's prediction that "ceci tuera cela": the book will kill the building.

Previous pages:
5. Pier Luigi Nervi, Palazzo del Lavoro in Turin (1960–61), interior view. Photograph: G. Dagli Orti



BARRY BERGDOLL
The Museum of
Modern Art



LABROUSTE AND ITALY

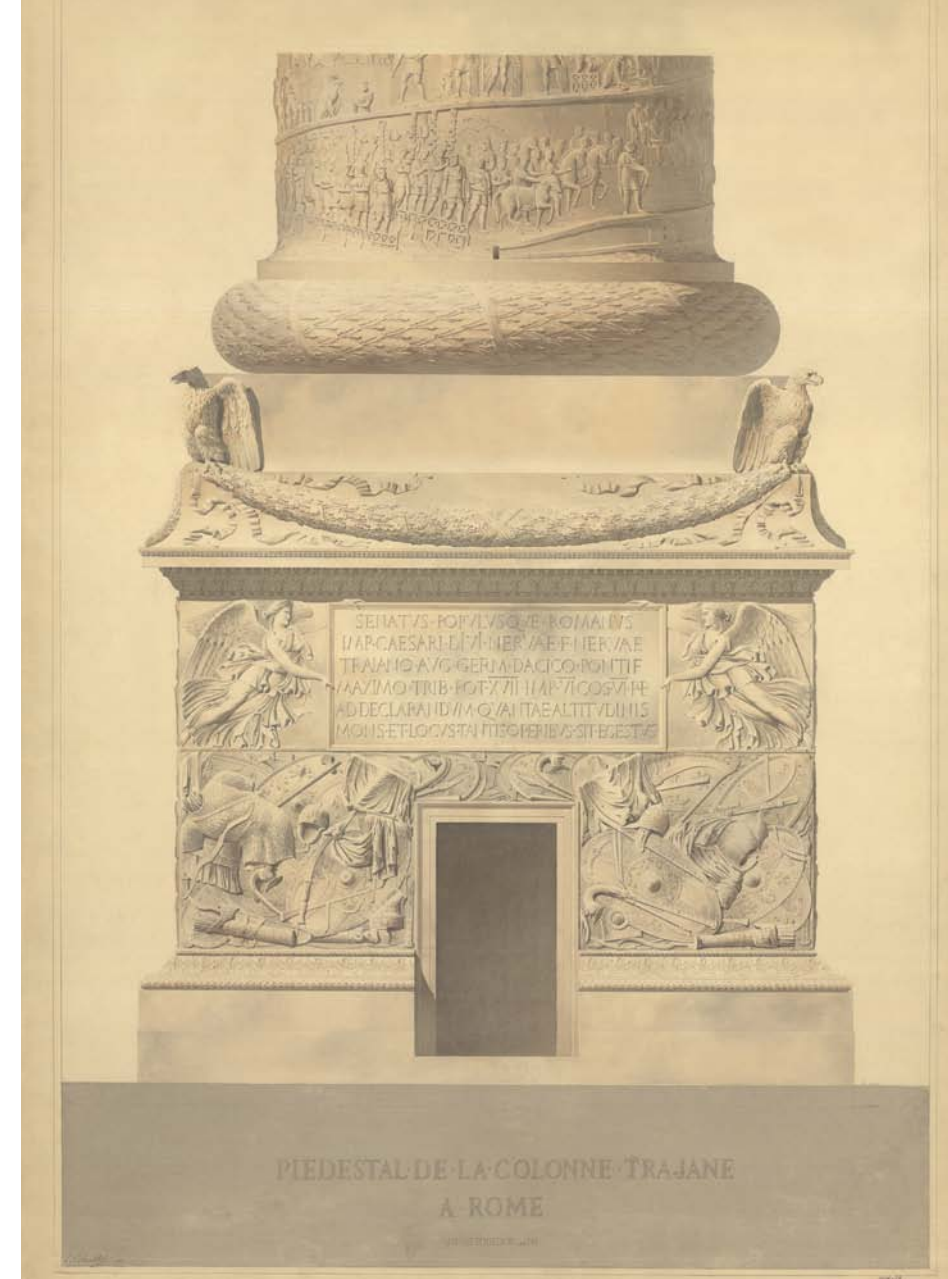
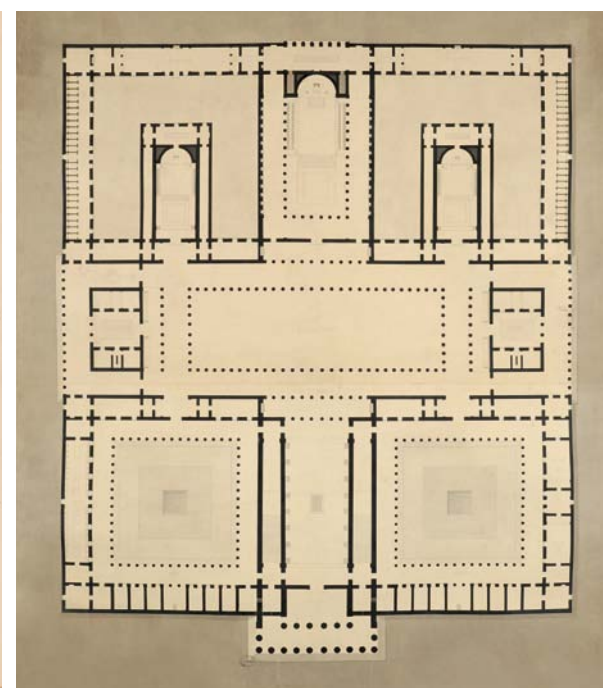
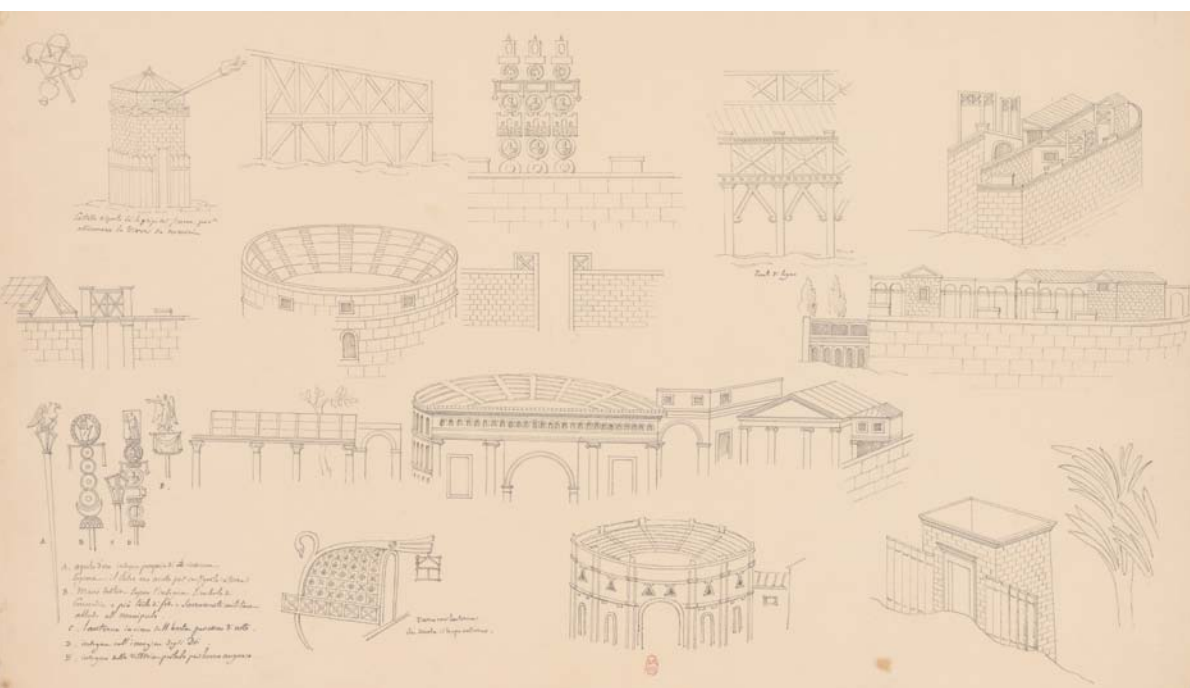
Both the disposition and the tools for breaking with the architectural conventions of early-nineteenth-century Neoclassicism that led Henri Labrouste to be recognized—as Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc recalled a half century later!—as the initiator of a veritable revolution in architecture were first honed in the least expected of places: amidst the ruins of classical antiquity. Labrouste was one of the youngest architectural students ever to win the Grand Prix—he was but twenty-three when his design for a *Cour de cassation*, a masterfully composed Doric-temple-fronted design for a majestic courthouse, was singled out by the jury, allowing him to join the sculptor, engraver, painter, and musician also awarded residency that year at the French Academy in Rome in the Villa Medici. Within months of arriving in Rome, however, Labrouste began to develop an entirely new perspective on the lessons of Rome and even the very nature of contemporary architecture and society. The five years in Italy were intended for study and enrichment, filling portfolios with studies after buildings that could be reference points both for a working office and for a teaching atelier, the veritable graphic cogs of a self-reproducing machine aimed at perfecting an architectural ideal and providing standards for the public buildings required in post-Revolutionary French society. An annual submission was required of highly finished and detailed measured drawings after the finest ancient structures, gradated to guide progress, almost like the study of a language, from the mastery of the components of classical buildings through the comparative study of buildings of a similar functional or symbolic type to, in the fourth year, the complete restoration of a major building in carefully studied and exquisitely rendered detail, accompanied by a text explaining the rationale for restoration. In the fifth year, shortly before the *pensionnaire* headed home, an original composition was to mark the transition from the study of antiquities to the creation of architecture imbued with all that had been learned. In 1825, Labrouste submitted a study of the elements

1. Viollet-le-Duc, March 5, 13, and 21, 1877:1–2.

1. Henri Labrouste, Imaginary Reconstitution of an Ancient City, undated, 65.6 × 46.1 cm, Académie d'architecture, Paris, 255.1

of the Temple of Antonin and Faustina in the Forum, and especially its great portico, useful for the work underway back in Paris by one of his teachers, Hippolyte Lebas: the church of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette, with its great Corinthian portico. The next year, he sent seven large sheets of Trajan's Column as well as renderings of triumphal arches, including the Arch of Titus in Rome and that of Trajan at Benevento. In the third year, he worked on a comparison of two great monuments of ancient Rome, the Flavian amphitheater (Colosseum) and the Theater of Marcellus, the very building that had been the subject of his teacher A.L.T. Vaudoyer's study almost a half century earlier; both were canonic buildings for studying the use of the orders on multistory-buildings and were as applicable to great works of arcaded engineering as they were as examples of the visual ordering of a facade of windows (as they had been in the development of the Renaissance palazzo). The turn to Paestum—as Martin Bressani studies in this volume—was not to move to a complete temple, after studying monumental columns, triumphal arches, and arenas, but rather to move to the study of an entire city, to take on the urban morphology of which the acropolis was the most impressive remaining part of a complex that could provide a portrait of an ancient site and its changes over time, a place that could reveal a micro-history for studying the very relationship between formal change in architecture and the underlying beliefs and social and political organization of a society.

Over the course of the 1820s, then, the mandate so carefully put in place by the generation of Labrouste's teachers was fundamentally transformed by the young architects who arrived at the Villa Medici in successive years and began to broaden the range of

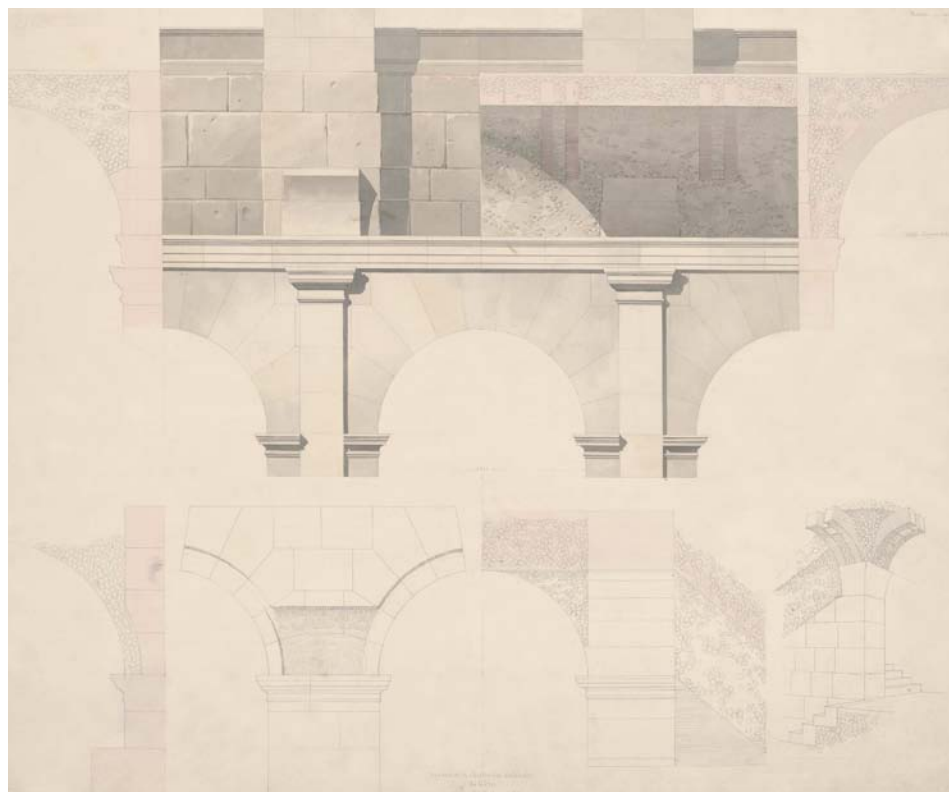


historical periods to be studied, bringing new criteria to bear on what type of lessons even the most frequently studied monuments had to offer. Labrouste was not the first. He had been preceded a year earlier by Félix Duban, and some would argue by Abel Blouet (Grand Prix, 1821) and Emile Gilbert (Grand Prix, 1822), who would later be prime advocates of an austere rationalism in which truth to materials and to structure predominated as generators of architectural form and expression. But for decades to come, Duban and Labrouste would be seen as the fathers of what was briefly called "architectural romanticism" by the 1830s, two very different sensibilities who each in their own way translated into architecture new experiments in the literary and visual arts, associated with the turn to historical rather than mythological material in painting, and the sense of historical detail in literature. By the time Labrouste was at work on his ambitious study of Paestum, he and Duban had been joined by Louis Duc (Grand Prix, 1825), Léon Vaudoyer (Grand Prix, 1826), and Labrouste's brother Théodore (Grand Prix, 1827). They would be seen for the rest of their lives and beyond as comrades in arms. They began to see their work as a shared research project, not only traveling together but also sharing drawings so that each could make a personal copy and to explore

2. Henri Labrouste, Trajan's Column in Rome, details of the bas-reliefs, [1825–30], 25.4 × 43 cm, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Prints, VZ-1030 (7)-FOL

3. Henri Labrouste, Plan for a Court of Appeals, overall plan, Grand Prix de Rome for architecture, 1824, 113 × 97 cm, École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts, Paris, PRA 178-1

4. Henri Labrouste, Trajan's Column in Rome, elevation of the pedestal, second-year submission from Rome, 1826, 97.4 × 65.8 cm, Académie d'architecture, Paris, 251.1



5. Henri Labrouste, Flavian Amphitheater, known as the Colosseum, in Rome, details of the construction of its vaults, third-year *envoi* from Rome, 1827, 41.6 × 51.5 cm, Académie d'architecture, Paris, 257.4

6. Henri Labrouste, Flavian Amphitheater, known as the Colosseum, in Rome, plan and cross section, third-year *envoi* from Rome, 1827, 102.5 × 68.5 cm, Académie d'architecture, Paris, 257.1

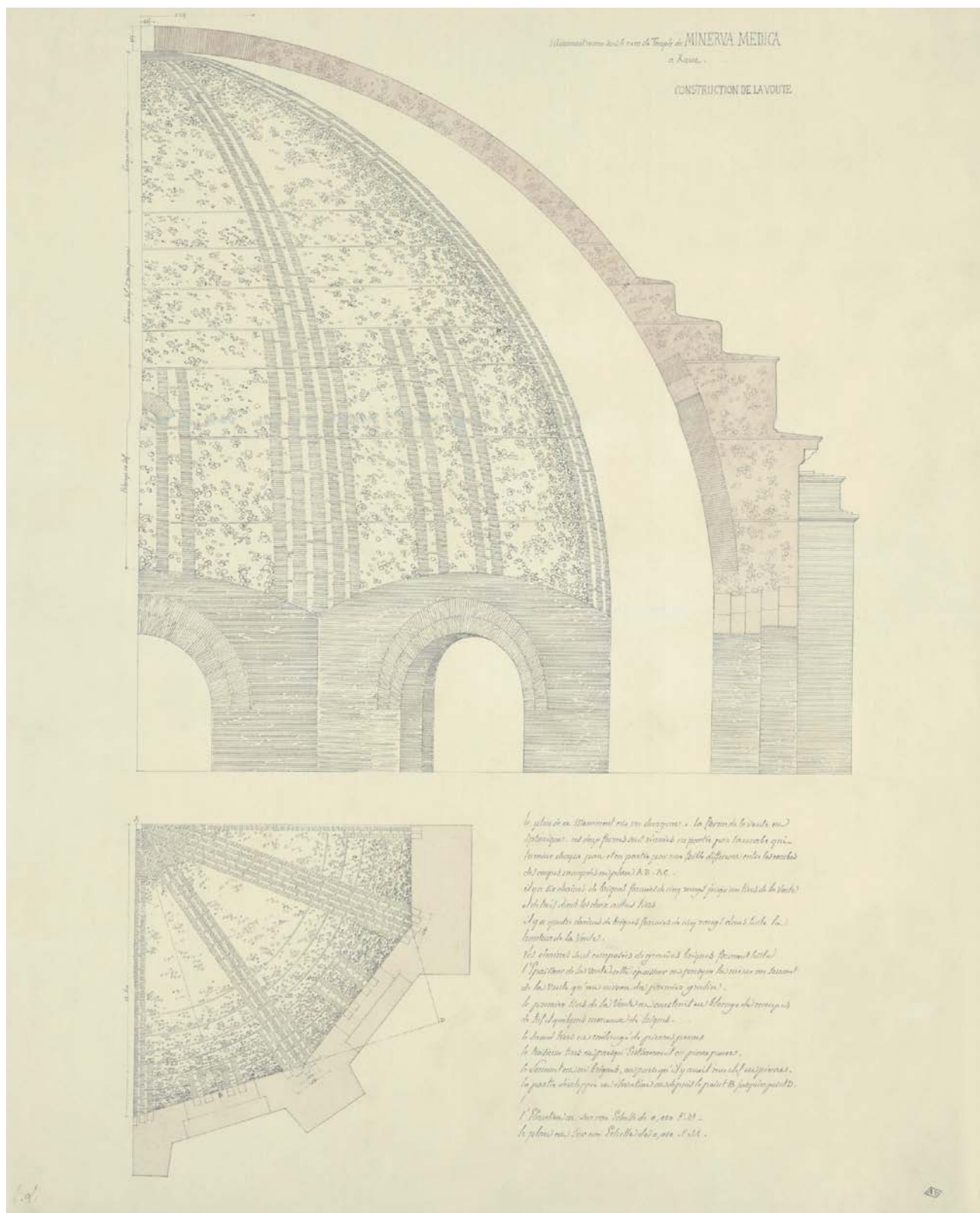
7. Henri Labrouste, Pantheon in Rome, lateral elevation of the portico and profile of a pilaster, [1825–30], 41.1 × 46.9 cm, Académie d'architecture, Paris, 268.7

new historical thinking through architectural observation, coordinating their *envois* so that the exhibition in Rome and then back in Paris would make a larger statement. By 1828, they became intrigued by the utopian socialist followers of Saint-Simon in Paris, a group whose vision of the artist as the leader of social progress began to color their thinking about the very role of the architect, and indeed of the artist in general, as belonging to an *avant-garde*.

Rather than isolating a classical high point of poised perfection in the arts, the group began to look at monuments as records of civilizations in evolution, legible traces of the process of change. They cultivated a new way of looking at architecture and even landscapes as the encounter between the material realities of mankind as builders and technical innovators and architecture as the embodiment of the potential of communal poetry. To a certain extent they were following the lead of important teachers at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, notably Charles Percier, who had already become fascinated with the range of expressions, both regional and personal, in the Italian Renaissance (long considered the most relevant updating of the classical legacy), and the inspiring historical lectures of Jean-Nicolas Huyot, who had encouraged an examination of the multiple origins of ancient societies in earlier cultures. Labrouste and his colleagues gravitated not only to the classical sites of eighteenth-century antiquarian tourism—the sites of the Roman fora, the Colosseum (figs. 5, 6), the Basilica of Constantine,

the Pantheon (fig. 7), or the Temple of Vesta—they also followed with great excitement the latest excavations and the interests of the archaeologists, antiquarians, and historians of the period who were excavating in Pompeii, discovering Etruscan cities and tomb sites of Etruria, Tuscany, and beyond (fig. 9), and following up on the stylistic diversity of architecture in Sicily—a terrain explored by Percier's student Jacques Ignace Hittorff from 1822 to 1825 and which yielded hybrid architectures from the Greek colonial sites of Agrigento and Selinunte to the Norman-Saracenic sites of Palermo, Céfalu, and Messina, all sites of hybrid mixtures. The techniques of stratigraphy gradually introduced by archaeologists for more careful dating and possible historical reconstruction became for these young archaeologist-architects not simply an approach to digging through layers in order to sift the evidence for recomposing a timeless ideal—the idea of platonic imitation that the powerful theorist and somewhat doctrinaire *secrétaire perpétuel* of the Academy, Quatremère de Quincy, defended in his treatise *De l'imitation* in 1823—but also evidence of the encounter in architecture between the demands of structure and materials and the poetic expression of larger societal beliefs. Developing a new method of rendering architecture—one that depended in part on the use of the *camera lucida* for close observation—Labrouste and his friends paid as much attention to depicting the details of materials and constructions as proportions, underscoring the relationship between form and its material support. The Colosseum, for instance, was studied not simply as an embodiment of the refined Roman solution for the superimposition of the orders, a guide then to modern construction using the proportional matrix of ancient classicism, but also as an engineering feat of great prowess, its vaulted forms intimately related to a careful





selection and deployment of different types of stones, soft and hard, that created a language of form derived from material considerations. The domed vault of the so-called Temple of Minerva Medica (fig. 8), a late Roman (fourth century) nymphaeum, was of interest for its hybrid and experimental mixture of brick and coarse Roman concrete, a system made all the easier to study once part of the dome collapsed in 1828; and Labrouste carefully observed and annotated studies. These studies announced two major themes of all his Roman studies: the collage of materials in both structuring and cladding of buildings that created a veritable language of architecture from an ever broadening palette of materials, as well as a fascination with monuments whose historical dating placed them at the crossroads between cultures, styles, and places. Such drawings would come in great use not only for teaching but for his own articulation of both the arcades and the meeting of different types of stone, brick, and iron in the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève over a decade later.

In the late 1820s, the group led the way toward conceiving of Italy as a veritable laboratory of historicism, the philosophy that all cultural manifestations are the products of their relative place in an ordered progression of historical development, whose laws and dynamics could be perceived in all societal forms. Their approach to site visits and observations translated into architectural thinking some of the new philosophy of history that had been introduced by the so-called romantic historians François Guizot, Augustin Thierry, and Jules Michelet in these years. Their writings were tinged with a political critique of the present and the belief that the transitional nature of post-Revolutionary French society could find parallels in the structure of historical evolution in general, as well as with a radical recognition of the subjective aspects of historical knowledge. "The past changes along with the present," wrote Guizot in 1820 as the future romantic architects were studying architecture under the guidance of the examples set by Neoclassical masters. "Le spectacle est demeuré le même, mais c'est un autre spectateur qui occupe une autre place" (The spectacle remains the same, but the spectator is new and in a different place).² Through comparative method these writers sought to understand parallels between different phases of history, detecting patterns of development and even thinking of historical research, according to historian Lionel Gossman, as an act of decipherment.³ Labrouste and his friends set out to explore the remains of Italy more broadly than earlier generations, and they followed eagerly new discoveries, notably of Etruscan tombs replete with vibrant mural paintings that revealed as much about Etruscan life as about artistic practice. Rather than weeding away the evidence of various periods to get to a moment of essential truth, Labrouste began to find the evidence of transition, of cultural interaction, and even of hybridity in the completeness of the landscape. As César Daly later recalled, a fascination both with the evidence of Greek colonization at Paestum and in Sicily—where Labrouste traveled twice in 1828—and with things Etruscan seized this generation: "It was an outburst of the primitive genius of old Greece which came to envelope our whole Rome School

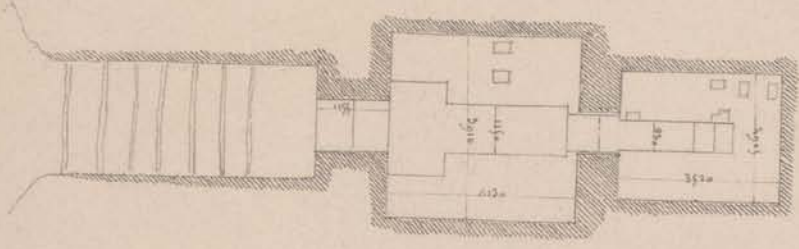
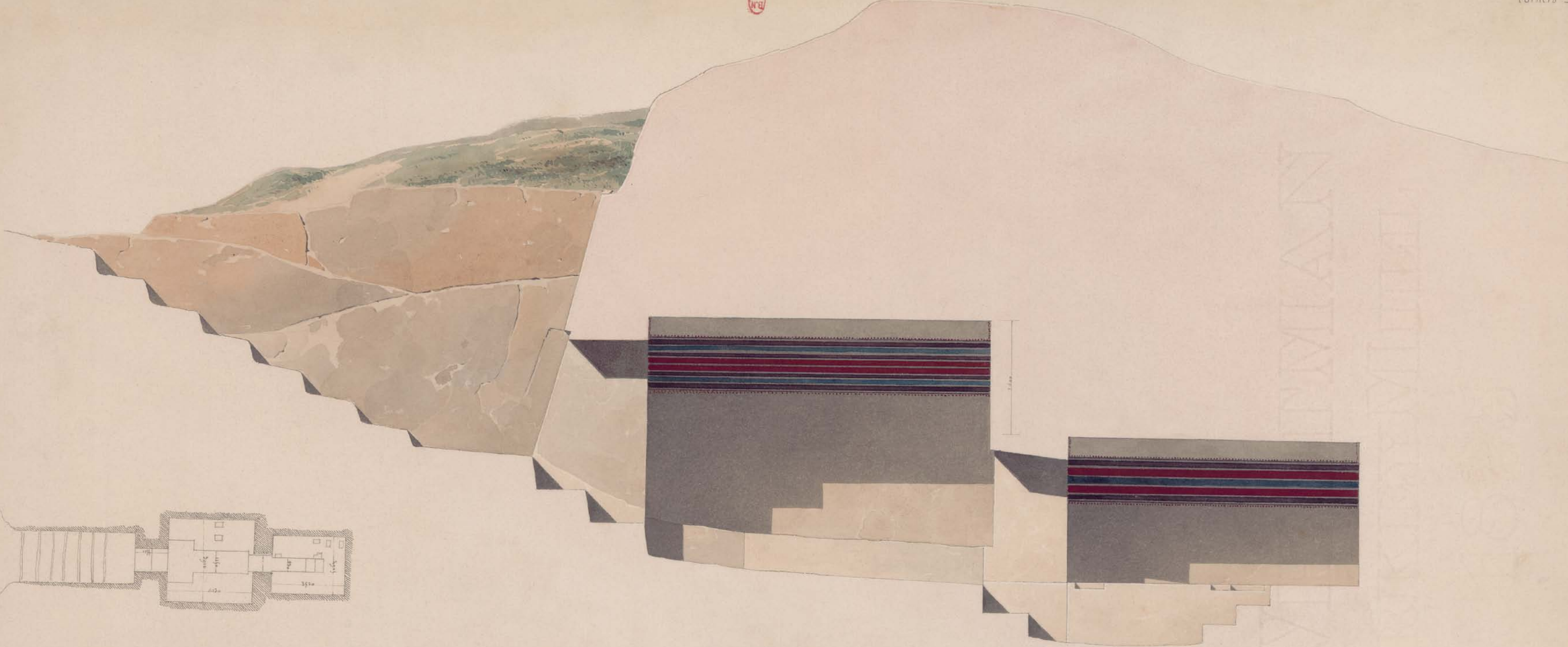
2. F. Guizot, *Discours prononcé pour l'ouverture du cours d'histoire moderne* (Paris: Ladvocat, 1820), 2, 4.

3. Lionel Gossman, "History as Decipherment: Romantic Historiography and the Discovery of the Other," *New Literary History* 18, no. 1 (Autumn 1986): 23–57.

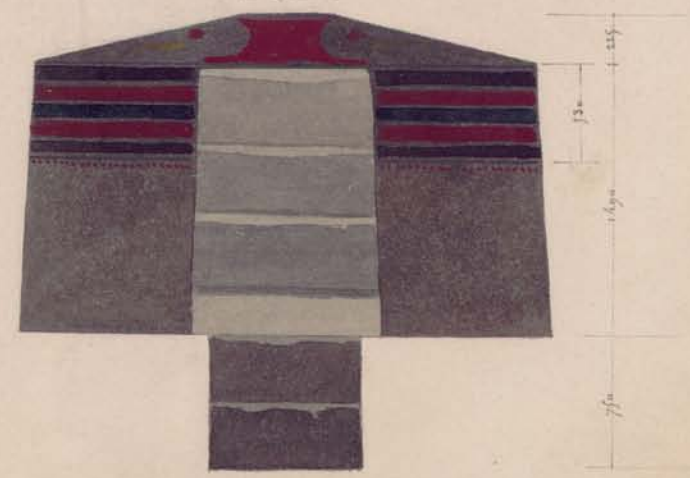
8. Henri Labrouste, Temple of Minerva Medica in Rome, cross section and partial plan of the dome, 1828, 52 x 41.5 cm, Académie d'architecture, Paris, 266

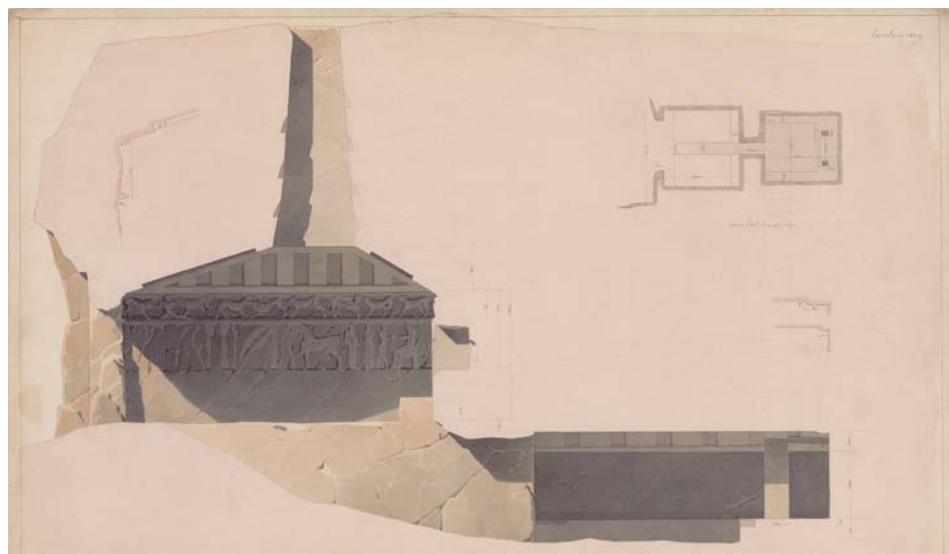
Next pages:
9. Henri Labrouste, Etruscan tomb, known as Del Mare, in Corneto, longitudinal and transverse cross sections, plan, and details of the decoration, 1829, 26.3 x 41.8 cm, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Prints, VZ-1030 (9)-FOL

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4. Daly 1862: col. 5.
5. Ibid., col. 6.

10. Henri Labrouste, Etruscan tomb, known as Della Mercareccia, in Corneto, longitudinal section, plan, and details, 1829, 26.5 × 41.5 cm, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Prints, VZ-1030 (9)-FOL

11. Henri Labrouste, Etruscan tomb, known as Delle Bighe, in Corneto, plan of the ceiling and elevation of the back wall, 1829, 42 × 26.5 cm, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Prints, VZ-1030 (9)-FOL

and to incite them to study it. The oldest temples, city gates, and theaters on Italian soil, tombs older than Rome itself, were excavated, measured, and drawn by our *grand prix* winners; they understood, no doubt, that the more they looked back to the primitive sources of art the greater would be their chances of encountering pure form, a form free of all corrupting contacts with the fancies and fashions of advanced periods of civilization. Studied in their original simplicity, it seemed to them easier to grasp the true spirit of art forms, to recognize better their *raison d'être*, and to appreciate more reasonably the sentiment or generative force which had given birth to them."⁴ Etruscan tombs then were, as Daly said, paradoxically a cradle for a new art. "Never has one drawn architecture better than at that time, and with less charlatanism in color and more conscientious respect for the forms of the art."⁵

The romantic historians became fascinated by the ways in which modern cultures were equally the products of mixtures and confrontations between cultures in the past—in France, for instance, as the product of native Celtic elements transformed by the arrival of the Romans. Stylistic diversity was itself a mirror of cultural change, and the language of Roman classical architecture was itself a relative value, a language that had evolved and might be used with full understanding of that historical resonance. The *pensionnaires* were drawn especially to architectures of transition rather than ones that represented a period of supposed poise and perfection. Already en route for Rome, Labrouste had been struck by the transition from the medieval to the early Renaissance in the banded architectures of Tuscany, as well as the dome of Florence's cathedral, Santa Maria del Fiore. He arrived at Christmas 1824, just as the city had erected a monument to Brunelleschi, looking up from the public square to his great achievement of the dome, a monument Labrouste sketched. A pendant was planned, to be sculpted by Luigi Pampaloni (erected 1830), at the same time as a new appreciation

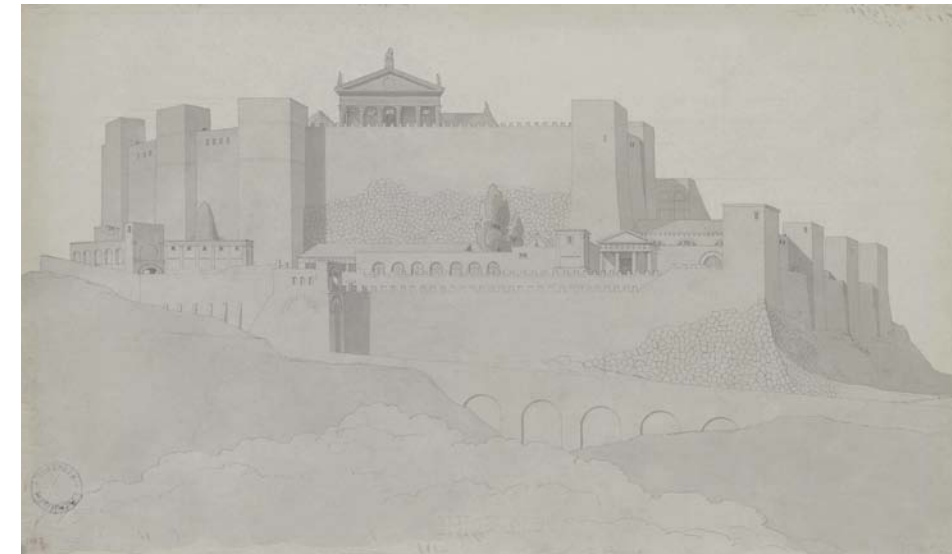
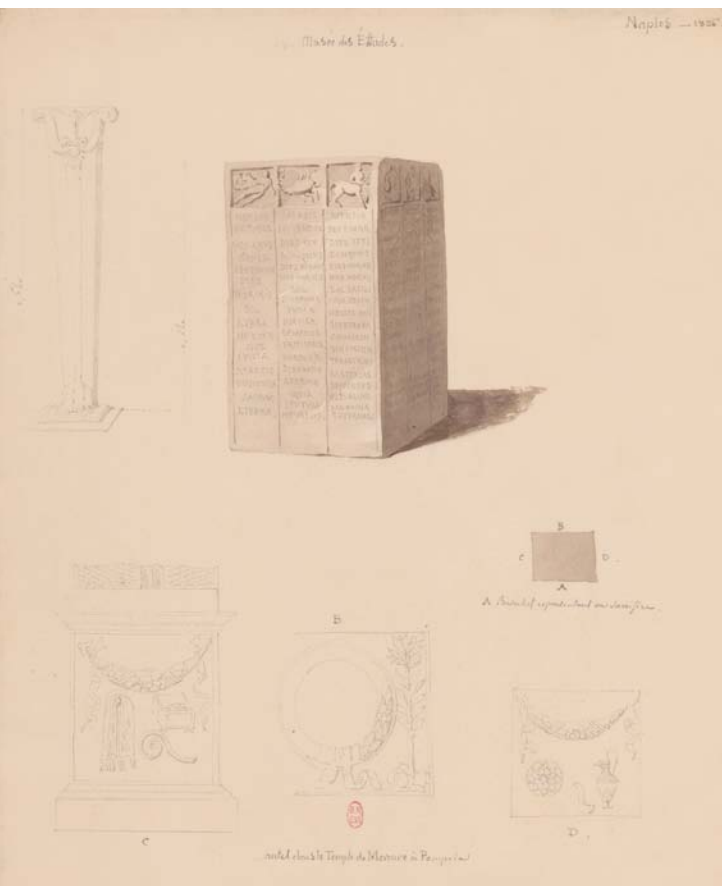


12. Henri Labrouste, Altar of the Temple of Mercury in Pompeii, preserved in the Museum of Studies in Naples, general elevation and details, 1826, 25.8 × 21 cm, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Prints, VZ-1030 (3)-FOL

13. Henri Labrouste, Pompeii paintings preserved in the Museum of Studies in Naples, 1826, 25.5 × 20.4 cm, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Prints, VZ-1030 (3)-FOL

14. Henri Labrouste, Imaginary Reconstitution of an Ancient City, undated, 26.1 × 44 cm, Académie d'architecture, Paris, 255.2

for Arnolfo di Cambio, the medieval predecessor of Brunelleschi, sparked debates over the relationship between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Santa Maria del Fiore was to become the veritable symbol for the Romantics of the complex progression toward the Renaissance, a story not of the overthrow of medieval taste by a return to a correct neo-antique but rather the assimilation of classical ordering systems into the technologically progressive experimentation of the medieval. In a little-known design of 1844 for the competition for a new church of Saint-Aubin in Toulouse,⁶ Labrouste was even to propose the ways in which he might extend the experiment of historical updating launched in Florence into a new type of a domed French church design set inside a walled cemetery, a prelude to the project for synthesizing the series of transitional thresholds in architecture that his friend Vaudoyer would soon incorporate in both a historical account of the evolution of architecture in France—in the Saint-Simonian *Magasin Pittoresque*, with the pronouncement that “the real aim of the Renaissance should have been the introduction of an antique spirit into the art of the middle ages in order to lead that art towards the rational construction which it was lacking”⁷—and in his project for Marseille Cathedral in the early 1850s.⁸ But as the Renaissance moved from the experiments of Arnolfo and of Brunelleschi to canonized



principles of imitation, it enchained architectural progress rather than advancing it. Historical study would move from the search for eternal truths to the understanding of unfinished and even derailed projects in historical progress. In 1826, Labrouste advised Duc, en route for the Academy, to draw all he could—a sheet filled with technical details of the construction drawn by Duc is indeed among Labrouste’s drawings preserved at the Bibliothèque Nationale—and later Duc would take inspiration from it for a project for a new cathedral in Birmingham, England, submitted in a competition of 1851. “As far as Florence Cathedral is concerned, I share your opinion, it is, I think, the most beautiful monument of modern architecture, and I would happily trade my 15,000 sketches for a well done study on this monument.”⁹

The underground chambers of Etruscan tombs at Corneto, represented in both relief carving and mural painting, in which a simulacrum of quotidian life is prepared for the deceased, seemed to bring yet another complex society into physical contact with the present, much the way the ongoing excavations of Pompeii gave a view of later Roman daily life. Both encounters would color Labrouste’s architectural sensibility for the rest of his life, not only in the precise lessons for architectural design, but in the desire to capture the evocative sense of being surrounded by an ambience, a world of evocations. Many years later, both an architect and a painter, Emile Trélat and Henri Delaborde, would look back on this period in which Labrouste’s drawings played a major role in changing architectural rendering and historical study and describe it not only as rational but as evincing a whole new approach to architecture as an “organism.” Like so many artists of the 1820s, the Romantic architects were fascinated by the studies into comparative anatomy and into evolution at Paris’s Muséum d’Histoire Naturelle as well as the debates there between Georges Cuvier and Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire over the relationship of form and function. For Labrouste

6. Louis Peyrusse, “Un projet d’Henri Labrouste pour l’Eglise St. Aubin de Toulouse (1844),” in *Mémoires de la Société Archéologique du Midi de la France* (Toulouse: Société Archéologique du Midi de la France, 2002), 205–15.

7. [Albert Lenoir and Léon Vaudoyer], “Etudes d’architecture en France, ou notions relatives à l’âge et au style des monuments élevés à différentes époques de notre histoire,” *Le Magasin Pittoresque* 10, no. 25 (June 1842): 195.

8. Barry Bergdoll, “Léon Vaudoyer: *Historicism in the Age of Industry* (New York: Architectural History Foundation, 1994).

9. Letter from Labrouste to Duc, July 7, 1827 (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute).



it referred doubly to architecture's nature as a complete organism, in which structure, materials, and configuration all led to a completeness whereby outer form was the expression of both physical and social determinants, but also to the idea of the organic as it was being formulated by Saint-Simonian thinkers, namely an architecture that was at one with its society, a reflection of its belief systems, its habits, its political organization. As he moved from studying Pompeii to Paestum, he saw not three temples sitting in a grassy plane but rather the center of an urban civilization, gates and city walls equally records of the progress of a society of Greek colonists who slowly adapted forms to a new place; in his report he speaks of the "architecture of Posidonia," referring to the original Greek name of the colony as a first reference to an architecture of local rather than universal characteristics and validity.

Equally novel was his particular attention to evidence of the architectural imagination in other arts. In Pompeii, as in Rome, he made studies, not simply on site but also in the museum, of the whole range of artistic materials that might traditionally be used as evidence by an archaeologist. But he also exploited the full range of imagery by which the architectural imagination of a society could be captured: buildings as depicted in mosaics, on coins and medals, on bas reliefs in the illusionistic wall painting found still in many of the houses and preserved in the Naples museum. Social life of the ancients was a prelude to thinking of an architecture that might serve the social needs of the present. Labrouste's drawings, as Trélat would note, "amazed everyone ... one discovered there things that had no authorized place in documents drawn following the Academy's rules. In his studies after buildings, he overlooked nothing, he noted down everything, he describes down to the level of the *mortar joints* and he takes them up in his written descriptions. Here one reads fluently the organism of the structure."¹⁰ His sketchbooks began to fill with images of contemporary daily life observed in the villages, including festivals and temporary decorations, as well as sketches that imagine ancient rituals, rituals of agriculture, activities that might have given rise to the ornamental vocabulary of architecture, studies that ultimately creep into his official restoration study in the perspective sketch of Temple C, which he argues was a civic basilica (what Labrouste calls a *portique*) because of its unusual plan with a central spine of columns bisecting the space. He imagines the space shortly after a ceremony, decked with shields and other weapons that have been put down in victory. He is as attentive to graffiti on the walls as he is to the evidence of construction details—like the metal joints in the stonework of the pavement—when he peels away the facade to allow a perspective view into a complete building to better record the organic life of its society.

Around 1828, Labrouste began to create for himself a whole new type of composite drawing in which he imagined cities composed of historical strata, depicting them in colorful scenes that captured the interaction between the rituals of civic life and the language of architectural expression (fig. 1). At the same time as he recorded the antique

10. Trélat 1875:14.

15. Henri Labrouste, Basilica of Saint Francis in Assisi, details of frescoes by Giotto, c. 1825, 26 × 41.8 cm, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Prints, VZ-1030 (5)-FOL
 16. Henri Labrouste, House of the Tragic Poet in Pompeii, a perspective view from the atrium, [1825–30], 21 × 26 cm, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Prints, VZ-1030 (4)-FOL



17. Henri Labrouste, Etruscan portico, known as Porta dell'Arco, in Volterra, perspective view and detail of a capital, 1825, 25.6 × 20.5 cm, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Prints, VZ-1030 (6)-FOL

18. Henri Labrouste, "Three Altars and a Port," 1828, drawing in the album presented to Pierre Guérin, Columbia University, Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library

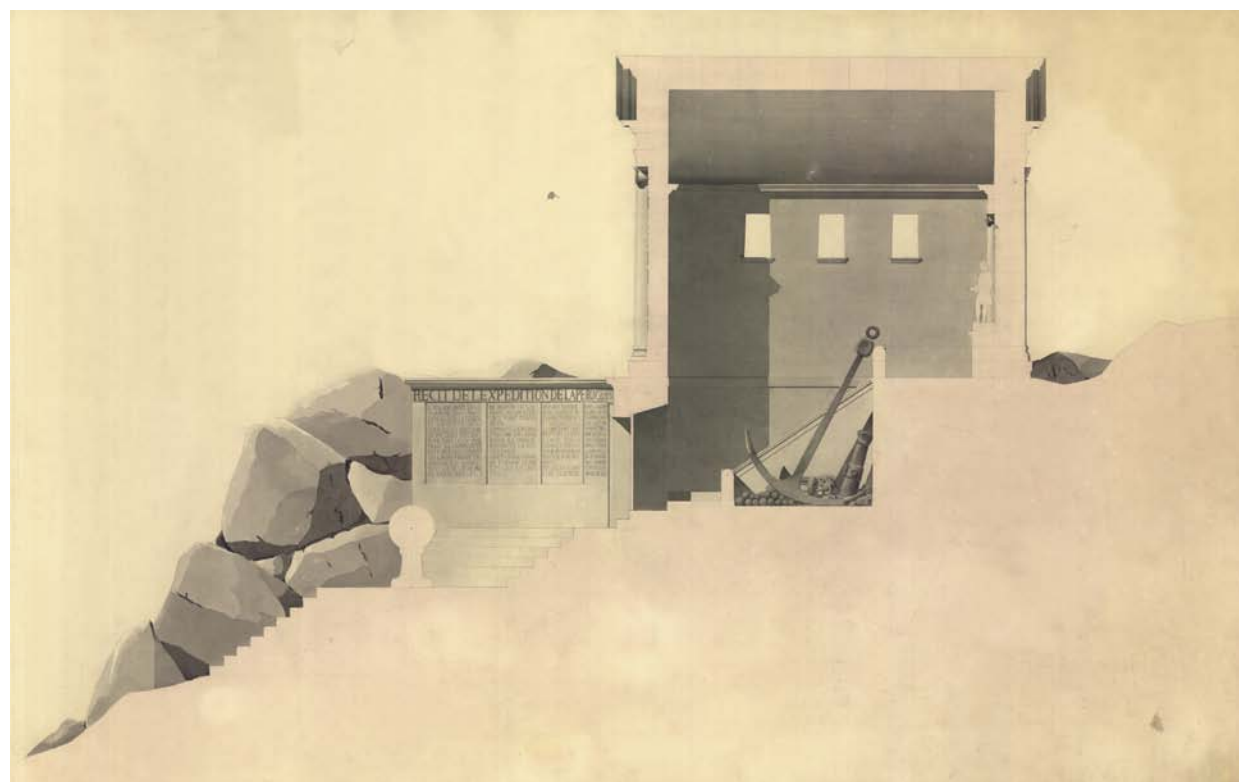
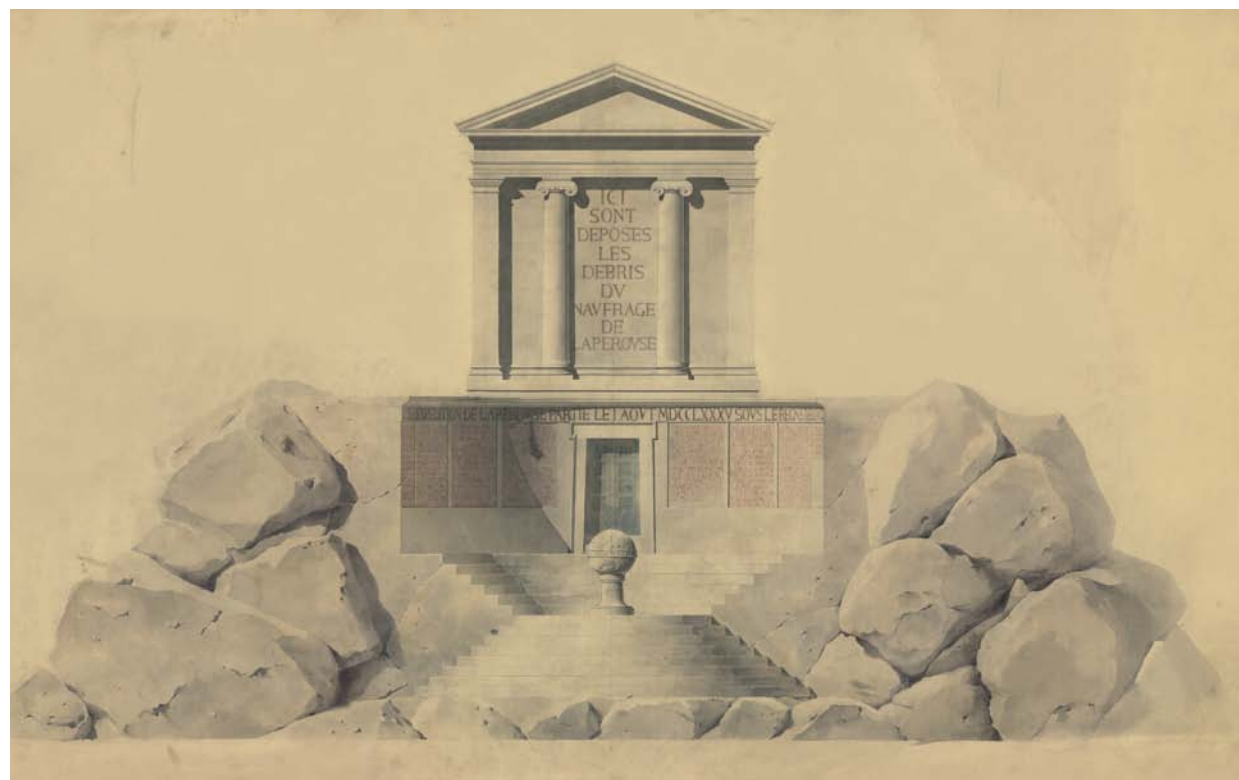
19. Henri Labrouste, altars found in the port of Antium and preserved in the Capitoline Museums in Rome, profile and elevations, 1830, 21.5 × 25.8 cm, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Prints, VZ-1030 (7)-FOL



monuments of the acropolis at Agrigento, for instance, during his 1828 trip around Sicily with Duc, he also did sketches of the upper town with its remaining city walls. It would be the matrix in which he imagined, in quick sketches and finished watercolors, a city of a highly polychromatic architecture in which both the infrastructure of city walls and defensive tower and the monumental temples and tombs within the dense urban fabric are covered with an expressive, colorful skin, in various states of cracking and repair. Applied color, as well as material variety and signs of the passage of time, were evidence of life in architecture. The polygonal stone work of the access road to the town pays homage to the type of "Cyclopean wall" that now fascinated a whole generation as evidence of the earliest structural engineering, while the city gate—the place of honor to visitors or soldiers arriving home—breaks pattern to introduce finely cut ashlar and an affirmative arch. Above are hung shields and spears as though a victorious armed expedition has just returned to celebrate its victories. The drawing, possibly not completed until his return to Paris, in fact comprises elements from a broad range of sources—the Etruscan gateway at Volterra, for instance (fig. 17)—evidence of how a whole might be constituted from both surviving remains and from a few fragments, with the methods of both Romantic comparative history and of comparative anatomy. At the same time as he studied the way a hill town might be formed of successive strata—in which the natural formations of the rock and the human formations of the wall seem literally to build on one another—Labrouste worked repeatedly on what might be a pendant study, trying to reconstitute an imagined port city based on modern-day Anzio (fig. 18), which he visited on a trip to the central Italian regions of Latium and Marche in summer 1828 with Vaudoyer, a trip focused on a quest for

evidence of remains of Vitruvius's basilica at Fano. The completed watercolor was offered in homage to the director of the academy, the painter Pierre Guérin, in an *album amicorum* prepared for his departure after six years as director to return to Paris. While each *pensionnaire* offered an image, the architects adopted a singular approach to this album: Duban, Labrouste, Duc, and Vaudoyer each selected a different setting in which to compose a series of fragments that would animate a space in a rich dialogue between the arts but also between architecture and the artifacts of daily life. All were staged as though someone had just left the scene—a frequent attribute of Guérin's own paintings—beginning with Duban's image of the interior of an Etruscan tomb lit by the hole that an imagined explorer has just created in the stone ceiling, Vaudoyer brought together the artifacts of Pompeii now in the museum of Naples and staged them in the ruins of an atrium-peristyle house, Vesuvius smoking in the distance, and Duc put fragments as objects of study in his own studio in the Villa Medici. But the most suggestive display of the relationship between artifacts and the historical imagination was Labrouste's view of the port of ancient Antium, re-created by combining the





evidence of three rostral altars he had drawn in Rome's Capitoline Museum (fig. 19) and the evidence of the studies he had made after the micro-architectures that populated ancient Roman fresco painting and ancient coins, which he seems never to have missed the chance of sketching for a growing catalogue of the concentrated urban vistas contained on ancient coins, the means by which architecture traveled literally from place to place throughout the far-flung Roman Empire. The preparatory sketches are to be found in Labrouste's sketchbook no. 325, concerned very largely with urban morphology and growth and labeled "Compositions" on the title page. From the evidence of these three great cylindrical stones in the museum, Labrouste allowed his imagination to restore the missing architectural setting and the lost cityscape of Antium's great harbor with its towering lighthouse (which he moved freely as he studied the overall pictorial composition in a series of sketch versions), colonnaded stoa, and Diocletian windowed warehouses. Reconstituting a whole city from a few significant fragments established a remarkable parallel with the claims of the natural scientists such as Cuvier, who asserted that he might be able to recover the whole organizational physiognomy of a dinosaur from a single key surviving skeletal fragment.

Casting about for a subject for his final year's *envoi*, which required the design of an original building for the uses of modern France, Labrouste studied two subjects, each of which would also be testing grounds for the conviction that as much as an ancient architecture could embody the spirit of the gods of the sea, for instance, in a cityscape, a modern architecture could express at once its time and place and embody specific ideas. He considered the idea of a monument to the great lost eighteenth-century explorer the Comte de La Pérouse, appointed by Louis XV to undertake a voyage around the world in the wake of the discoveries of Captain Cook, a voyage that ended in tragedy when his ship, the *Astrolabe*, vanished in 1788. News of the discovery of elements from the wreckage precisely forty years later off the coral atoll of Vanikoro in the Santa Cruz chain of islands in the South Seas fired the public imagination. Labrouste, who spent part of the previous year exploring Etruscan tombs at Corneto—one of which, though lost today, is even named for him—could not fail to be struck by the parallels. He set out to design a modern monument which could have some of the same relationship to the historical record and to the mystery of understanding a whole social context from artifacts left behind. His imagined coastline is at once powerful and ambiguous: Are we looking at a geological formation of boulders or at sculpted cyclopean retaining walls that are gradually peeled back to provide fine stone work, much as one finds in many ancient Etruscan tumuli, which are both of the earth and on it? The astrolabe itself becomes a sort of rostral altar before the tomb, which takes its features essentially from the Etruscan temple at Cori, which Labrouste's brother Théodore had just begun to study for his own fourth-year *envoi*, and which one year earlier Labrouste had incorporated on the obverse of an

20. Henri Labrouste, Plan for a Cenotaph Commemorating La Pérouse, main elevation, 1829, 64 × 98.4 cm, Académie d'architecture, Paris, 282.1
21. Henri Labrouste, Plan for a Cenotaph Commemorating La Pérouse, longitudinal section, 1829, 63.5 × 97.9 cm, Académie d'architecture, Paris, 282.3



22. Henri Labrouste, Plan for a Border Bridge between France and Italy, lateral elevation, fifth-year *envoi* from Rome, 1829–30, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, gift of Madame Léon Malcotte, 2009, ARO 2009 50

23. Henri Labrouste, Plan for a Border Bridge between France and Italy, perspective, fifth-year *envoi* from Rome, 1829–30, 65 × 97.5 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, gift of Madame Léon Malcotte, 2009, ARO 2009 51

imaginary antique coin he designed as his contribution to the album assembled by the *pensionnaires* for the visiting painter Pierre-Jean David. Here the tomb is clearly related as well to the portico above an ancient port, subtitled with the well wishes “A l'Heureux Retour” for David as he set off for Paris.¹¹ For the La Pérouse monument, Labrouste, having studied the fine lettering of Roman incised inscriptions, makes for the first time an architecture which is as much about incising information in stone as it is about representing an ordering system in its surface, combining the two- and three-dimensional features he admired in Etruscan tombs as well as in his own studies of both monuments and their representations in murals, mosaics, and on coins. Inside the tomb above the rock is an interpretation of a sequence of Etruscan tombs, creating a vestibule and then a room with lateral light where the artifacts are arranged in the type of evocative piling of the sort found in newly opened tombs. The deeply personal identification with the experience of the Etruscan tomb, and all that it unlocked—not only of the historical project of a more complex view of the evolution of Roman civilization but also the extent to which it occasioned debates among the young architects who made common cause over the nature of architectural meaning—is commemorated over and over again, in the imaginary Etruscan tombs that Duban gave as homages, beginning with Guérin, then in pendants created for

Vaudoyer and Duc, and finally in the unrealized project for a modern Etruscan tomb that Labrouste designed in 1871–72 for his friend Duban (fig. 26).

But in the end it was not a funeral architecture that Labrouste conceived for his final project but rather something extremely forward looking, a design for a frontier bridge over a ravine separating Italy and France, or more accurately Savoy and France, as depicted here (figs. 22, 23). His choice of a modest bridge across a ravine was anything but a straightforward piece of engineering—despite the disappointments of his teachers, notably Vaudoyer who encouraged his own son Léon to do something with some spatial complexity, something “with a little architecture” to it, “un peu d’architecture,” rather than a simple utilitarian structure.¹² Labrouste indeed was interested in how the simplest of forms—a burial mound, an urban marker, a rostral column, a rural bridge—could convey a world of ideas, the significance of a site in human history. Almost like someone cleaning their way out of the house, he literally redesigned the very bridge by which he had entered Italy at Beauvoisin five years earlier.¹³ His daughter, trained as an architect but writing under the pseudonym Léon Dassy, perhaps described it best many years later: “A monumental bridge which serves as the border between two friendly countries ... Here we find, in the thinking that imagined it, a desire to endow his creation with a very precise usage, an original expression, like an individuality all its own; and even more this bridge, even while being a French monument, was also a link between France and the host country from which the young architect was bringing back his fruitful studies.”¹⁴ Again the monument emerges like an organism from the rock which it gradually tames, moving from rocks that seem to take their cues from geology to recall the so-called cyclopean walls of the Etruscans, gradually refined into the stereotomy of Roman construction. The bridge itself is composed of the markers



11. Le Normand-Romain, Fossier, and Korchane 2005: ill. 9k.

12. A. L. T. Vaudoyer to Léon Vaudoyer. Letter in the library of the Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, forthcoming in a publication to be prepared by Barry Bergdoll.

13. L'Abbé H.-J. Perrin, *Histoire du Pont-de-Beauvoisin* (Paris: Picard, 1897).

14. Dassy [Laure Labrouste] 1879:7.

of space that delineate that most human of constructs: a border. Here something that unites also marks a division: words differentiate while the ancient Roman arches over the road celebrate the linking of the two sides of the ravine, the two nations, and finally the center is marked by one of the cippi or tumuli that fascinated this whole generation briefly known as "Etrusques," taking on the name of the period that had fascinated them and that they felt exemplified their architectural values.

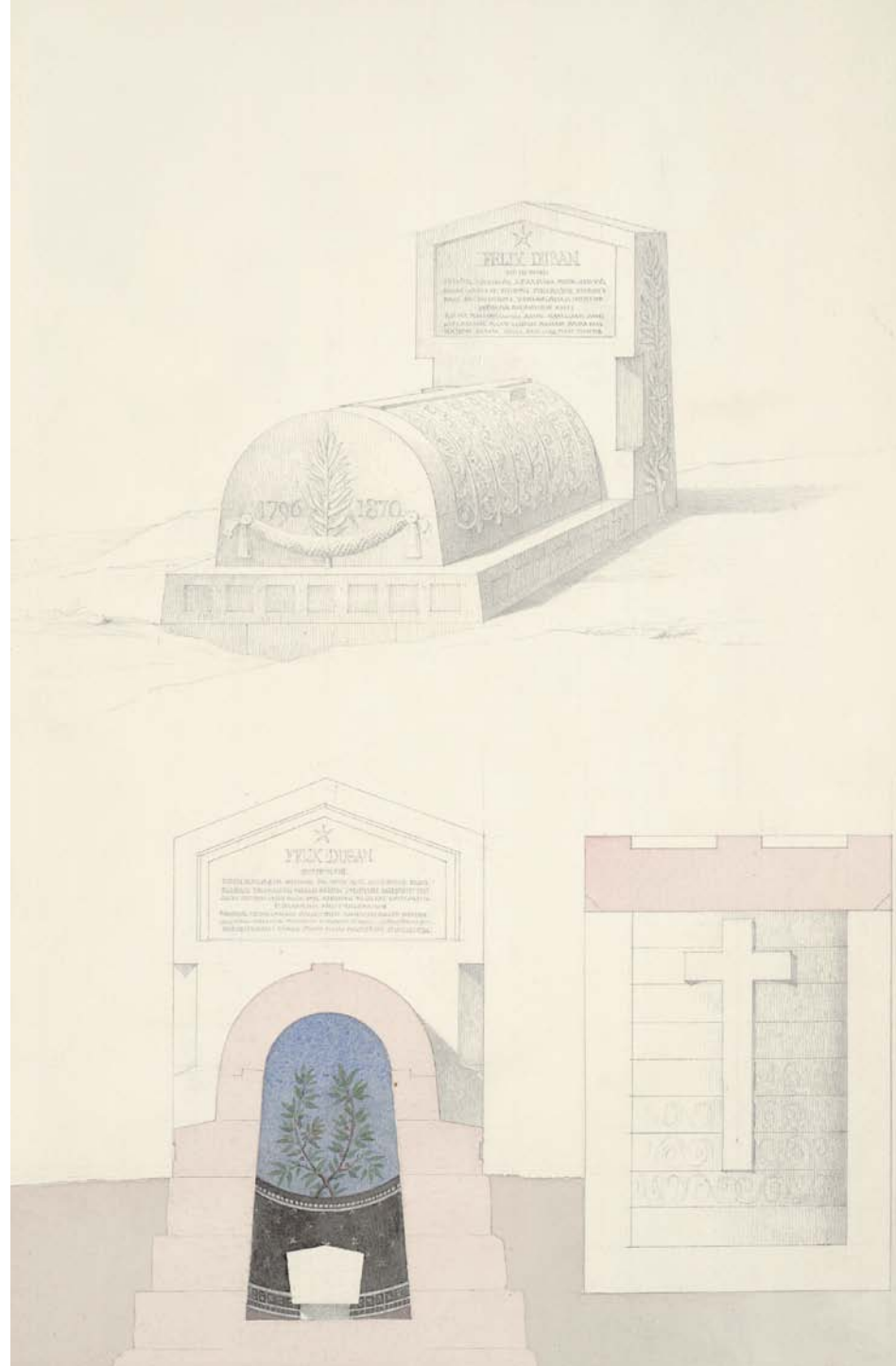
Labrouste returned from Italy, then, not simply with a stock of images and the study material that would make it easy for him to respond to the unexpected demand by a group of students in his own former atelier—that of A.L.T. Vaudoyer and Hippolyte Lebas—to open a teaching studio, but also with a philosophy of both construction and of architecture, of the science and of the art of his profession. It would be eight years before he would be entrusted with the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, a container not only for a vast library but also, in a sharply synthetic way, for a new philosophy of architecture's relationship to its society and to historical time, even the present. It was a present that felt intensely historical when he returned to Paris only months before the July Revolution of 1830 brought down the reign of the restored Bourbon monarchs and ushered in the constitutional monarchy of Louis-Philippe. And although he would have to wait a time to be entrusted with a major monument—an eight-year stretch which many interpreted as an ostracism of this radical who had been the first to embody the idea of the architectural avant-garde—in fact he would be entrusted with trying to give architecture and urban form to some of the most significant landmarks of a country once again looking to define itself. At first this would be through

24. Henri Labrouste and Th. Labrouste, First Plan for Decoration and Lighting for the Pont de la Concorde in Paris, perspective view and overall plan, 1836, 43.9 × 58.5 cm, Archives Nationales de France, Paris, Maps and Plans, VA/LVI piece 11



25. Henri Labrouste, Final Plan for Lighting for the Pont de la Concorde in Paris, elevations, plan, cross section, and details of a candelabra, 1840, 67.9 × 50.9 cm, Académie d'architecture, Paris, 283





26. Henri Labrouste, Plan for a Tomb for Félix Duban, perspective view, transverse cross section, and plan, 1871–72, 50 × 33 cm, Académie d'architecture, Paris, 317

ephemeral decorations of the sort that he had so admired in Italy—notably in a sketch of an Italian piazza all decked out in garlands.¹⁵

Three days after the July Revolution, on August 1, 1830, Labrouste opened his atelier and began almost immediately to formulate a whole new philosophy on the training of architects; in February 1831 he was named to a commission by the Ministry of Fine Arts to reform the architectural instruction at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts; and in July 1832 he joined Duban on the reconstruction of the very buildings of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, helping then not only to build anew but to do so by the picturesque *mise en scène* of the medieval and Renaissance fragments that had been assembled there as part of Alexandre Lenoir's now dispersed Musée des Monuments Français. Between designing in dialogue with what was called the remains of "notre architecture nationale" (our national architecture) and defining a credo by which to teach, Labrouste

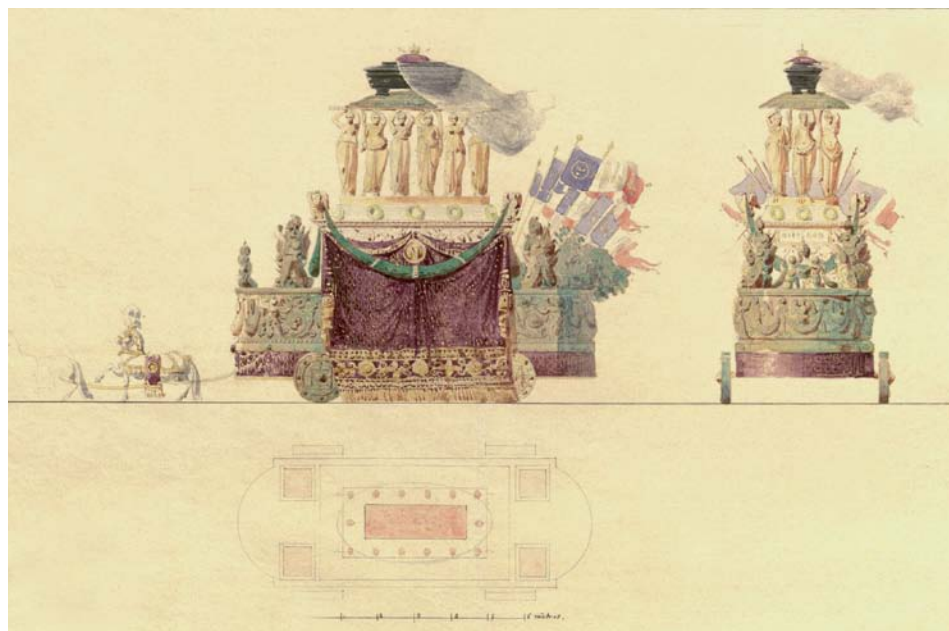
was pulling together his work of the previous five years. To his brother Théodore he laid out his ambitions for his atelier: "I want to teach them how to compose with the most simple of means. First of all they need to see clearly the purpose of their design, that they layout the parts following the hierarchy of importance it is reasonable to assign to each. Then I explain to them that firmness of structure comes more from the combination of different materials than from their massiveness, and, as soon as they know the first principles of construction, I tell them that they should derive from the construction itself a rational, expressive form of ornament. I repeat to them often that the arts have the capacity to make all things more beautiful; but I insist that they understand that form in architecture must always be fit to the function it will serve."¹⁶ Eugène Millet, later associated with Viollet-le-Duc and the Gothic Revival, wrote of his passage through the studio that Labrouste made the students study construction from his own drawings, both Italian studies and newly made study sheets, since he did not trust the construction courses of the Ecole. He was literally trying to rebuild the discipline of architecture. "We will review the different masonry methods and bonds of the monuments of the Cyclopians, in order to come to the methods of the most beautiful walls of antiquity or the middle ages."¹⁷ And as Labrouste's daughter later paraphrased her father's credo: "In architecture every form has its rationale and its logical consequences. I insist to my pupils that a work of art has a meaning, that its form is the result of a set of deductions that come in sequence, that it satisfies a need, and that it expresses an idea."¹⁸ But the "idea" was not confined to structural truth; it also derived from the determining role of a program, a program that was not simply a given but that could fulfil the role of a transformative social mission. While this would take a literal form in his projects submitted in 1837 for the Hospice Cantonal des Aliénés of Lausanne, it might also be said to permeate the approach he took to the designs of commemorations and festivals, all of which extended his reflections on the place of ornament in architecture, which he could justify only if it were related to structure and born of a civic purpose. Already in 1831 he worked with Jean-Antoine Alavoine on the décor for the first commemoration of the July Revolution on the Place de la Bastille, literally then designing the materials for a new holiday that could help construct the citizen of the new regime through the transformation of urban space. He would work with Duban on the third edition, in 1833. It is likely that there had been a certain symbiosis between his archaeological observations and his later participation in inventing a language for the civic décor of Paris. Well informed through letters—those between Vaudoyer father and son survive to document this—the *pensionnaires* followed the concerns and projects of the day back in Paris. In 1829, a competition had been held to redesign the Place de la Concorde, articulating its vast open space rendered somewhat amorphous ever since the original moats around the central space, designed by Ange-Jacques Gabriel in the mid-eighteenth century, had been filled in. By the time the project was begun, a revolution had changed the very political system of France. Under

15. Bibliothèque Nationale, Labrouste, Dessins d'Italie, Frame F18514.

16. Letter of November 20, 1830, quoted in [Laure Labrouste] 1928:24.

17. Millet 1879–80:210.

18. [Laure Labrouste] 1928:29.



27. Henri Labrouste, Funeral Wagon Designed for the Return of emperor Napoleon I's remains, lateral and frontal elevations, plan, 1840, 23.5 × 34.3 cm, Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, Paris, Bibliothèque, Jacques Doucet collections, OC 134

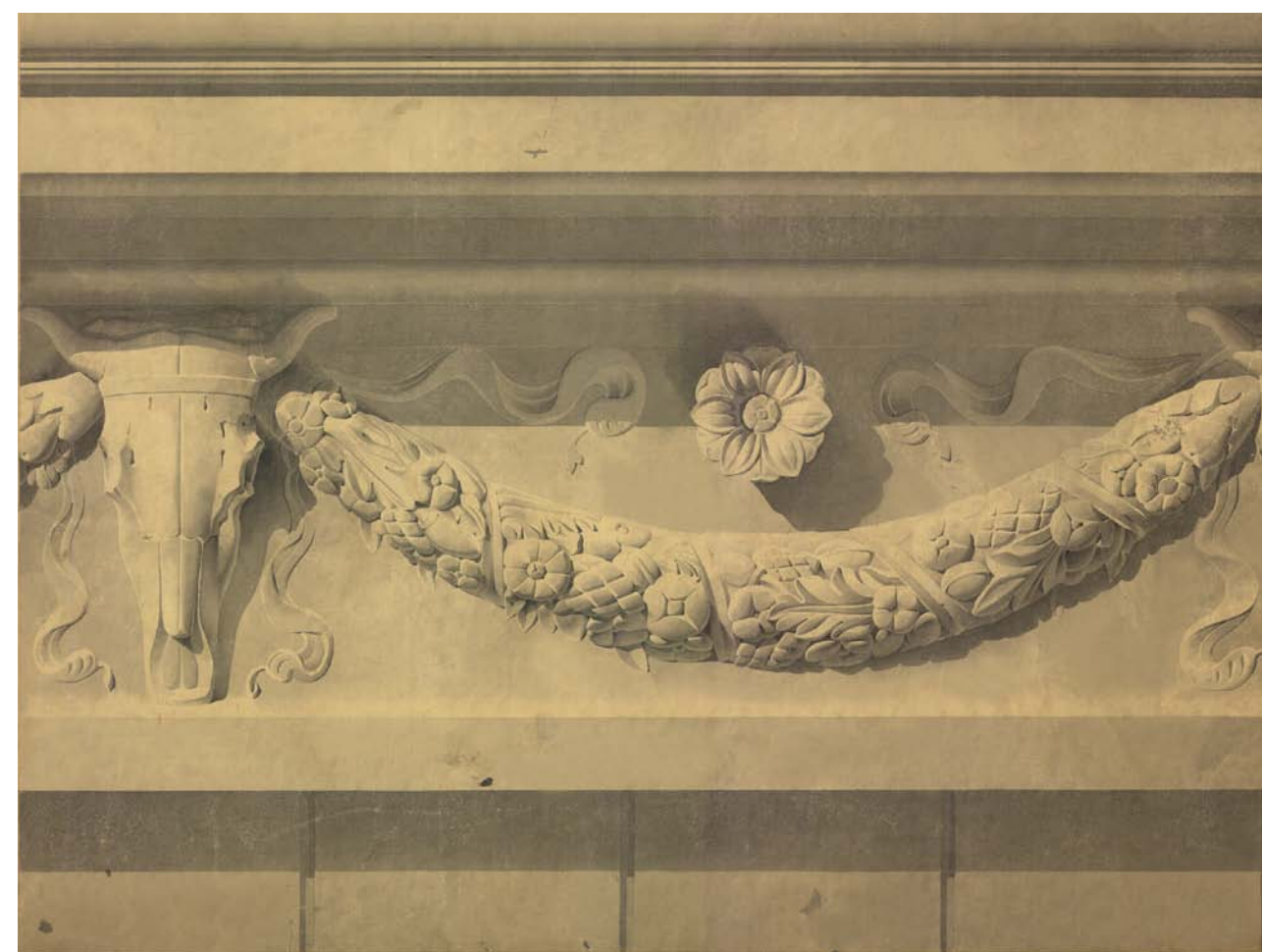
28. Henri Labrouste, Tomb of Caecilia Metella on the Via Appia in Rome, details of the frieze and profile of the entablature, [1825–30], 66 × 98.4 cm, Académie d'architecture, Paris, 253

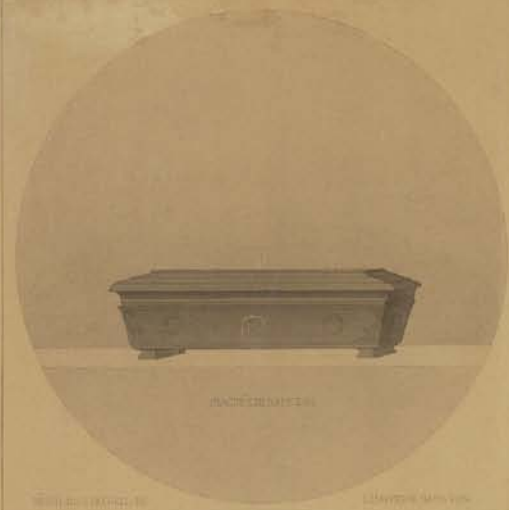
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29. Henri Labrouste, competition entry for the tomb of emperor Napoleon I in Invalides church in Paris, perspective view, plans, cross sections, and elevations, October 1841, 100.7 × 150.5 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, gift of Madame Labrouste, 1889, RF 4198

Louis-Philippe, in the 1830s, Hittorff extended the project into a veritable linking of the spaces of the Champs-Élysées, the Place de la Concorde itself, and the adjacent Tuileries, creating an urban promenading zone and rewriting the Parisian urban fabric through a system of urban lighting, covered benches, and other elements of “street furniture” of a sort known chiefly from ancient Pompeii or the Via Appia but now updated to make a civic monumental language out of cast iron and the new technology of gas lighting. In 1836, Labrouste was entrusted with extending that project to the left bank of the Seine, imagining a whole new treatment of Perronet's Pont de la Concorde (figs. 24, 25). Like Hittorff, Labrouste intended to translate the elements he had studied in the ancient city—columns, pylons, candelabras, and the like—not only into urban markers but also through an innovative use of cast iron, a material he would soon propose for the creation of a great reading room reached itself by ascending a stair weaving under and over a bridge-like structure. In the 1830s, he studied urban infrastructures in Paris and in London, fascinated especially by the use of cast iron in everything from the fountains of the Place Royale (Places des Vosges) to the new iron bridge by the Hôtel-Dieu to the construction of dioramas and railroads in England. In making his own contributions to the period's exploding modern urban transformations, Labrouste began now to explore, with astounding ornamental freedom, the creation of a language for a modern civic furniture that drew on what he had seen of the quest for communal meaning in ancient tombs, specifically in the tumuli and cippi of the Etruscan cities of the dead. At the same time, he sought to create a new iconography for a new technology, the technology of urban lighting. Having redesigned the bridge that linked France and Italy, he now sought to imagine a modern bridge that could transform the very heart

of the modernizing French capital. Labrouste worked with his brother Théodore from 1836 to 1841 on this project, studying a series of figures and lighting features in the form of candelabras as well as a series of exedral benches similar to those Baltard created in these years on the Pont Neuf. His work was indeed to serve as a major element in the décor of a political spectacle of high stakes for Louis-Philippe's flagging regime in 1840, when it was decided to stage a dramatic return of Napoleon's ashes for burial in Les Invalides (fig. 27). Louis Visconti and Labrouste now collaborated in extending the linking of urban spaces by architectural markers to create the processional route of the great catafalque that Labrouste designed, a monumental composition of caryatids holding aloft a sarcophagus set atop a giant shield, as Louis-Philippe was eager to underscore Napoleon as a military hero rather than a fallen head of state (fig. 28). This in turn was set atop a great base with huge swags, motifs that Labrouste had studied on the Tomb of Caecilia Metella along the Via Appia, a place where the ancients paid homage to the dead and where the modern Romans enjoyed a shaded *passaggiata*. Similar themes were taken up in the boat that Labrouste designed to carry the emperor's remains on their





FACE SUPÉRIEURE

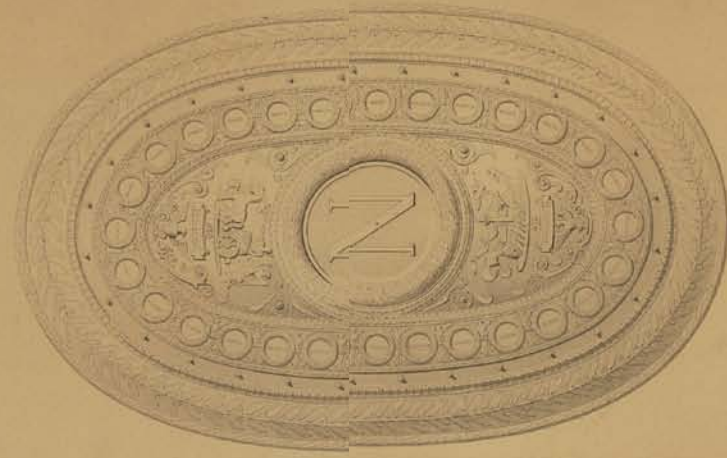
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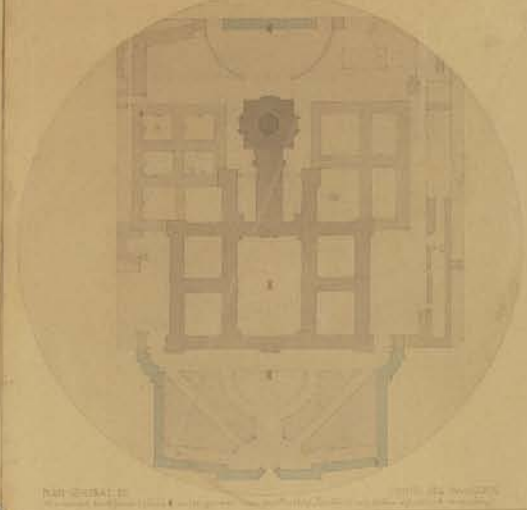
PROJET DE TOMBEAU POUR L'EMPEREUR NAPOLEON

PAR LE ROI DES FRANÇAIS

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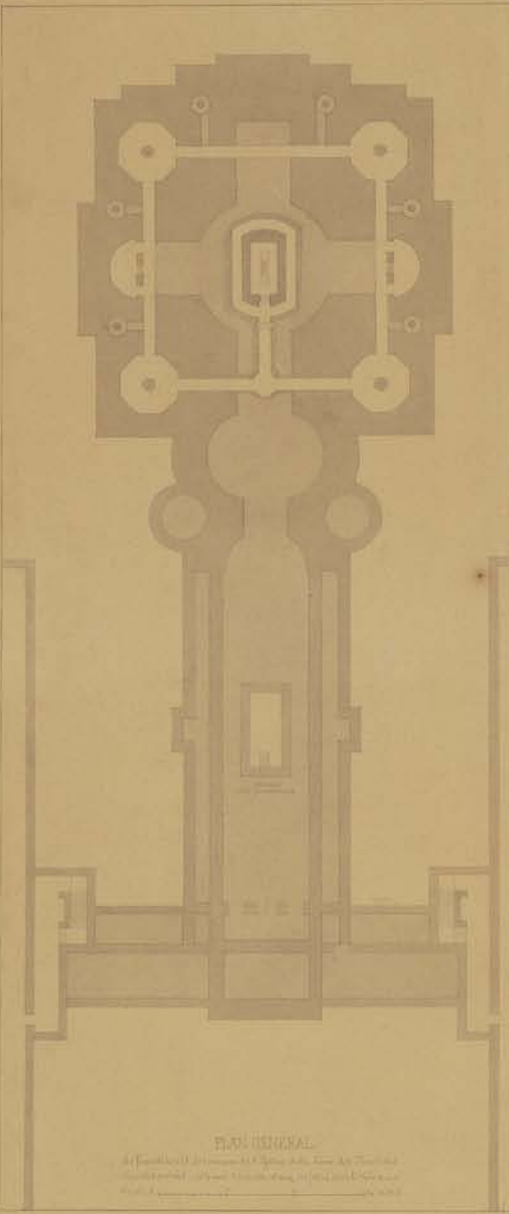


PLACE SOUS LE DOME DES INVALIDES, CE TOMBEAU COMPRENDRAIT PAR UNE GALERIE AU TERRAIN
AUX COTES DU DOME, DES COLONNES A DIVERSES DISTANCES - IL SERAIT CONSTRUIT EN MARBRE BLANC,
DANS LE TOMBEAU SERAIENT DÉPOSÉS LE CORPS DE NAPOLEON, LE CŒUR DE L'EMPEREUR, LES CŒURS DE MARIETTE
ET DE JOSEPHINE, LA MÈRE DE NAPOLEON, LA MÈRE DE LA REINE, LA MÈRE DE LA REINE DES ALÉMANES, LA MÈRE
DE LA REINE DE SUÈDE, LA MÈRE DE LA REINE DE DANEMARCK, LA MÈRE DE LA REINE DE PRUSSE,
ET SUR LE CÔTÉ SONT INSCRITS DANS DES COLONNES LES NOMS DES VICTIRES DE NAPOLEON, ET SES VICES. A L'AN-
CIENNE DE LA TOMBANTE, HIERO, RAFFELLES, SONT PLACÉS AU CENTRE, ET REPRESENTENT UN NAPOLEON DANS
UN CHARI DE TRIUMPHES ET CARRONNÉ PAR UN VÉTÉRANE. AU DESSUS SONT INSCRITS CES MOTS - MORTUUS LE 5
MAY 1821 - C'EST LA MANIÈRE DE L'EMPEREUR. LE NÉCESSAIRE TRIBUTAIRE DE NAPOLEON APRES SA MORT - UN VÉTÉRAN
NAPOLÉON - UN VÉTÉRAN TRAVAILLEUR DE NAPOLEON, AU DESSUS SONT INSCRITS CES MOTS - MORTUUS LE 5
MAY 1821 - C'EST LA MANIÈRE DE L'EMPEREUR.



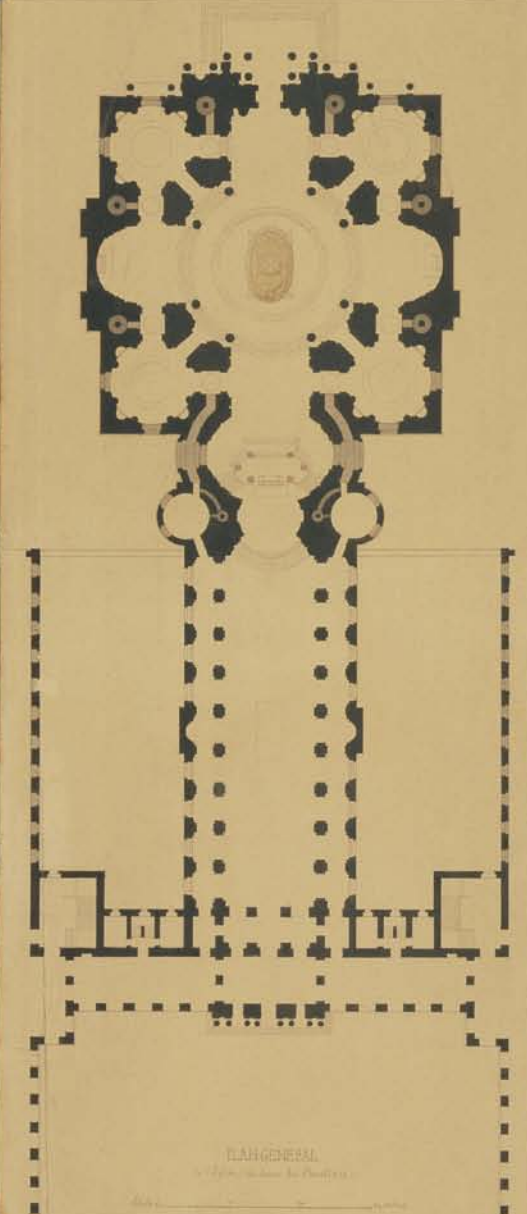
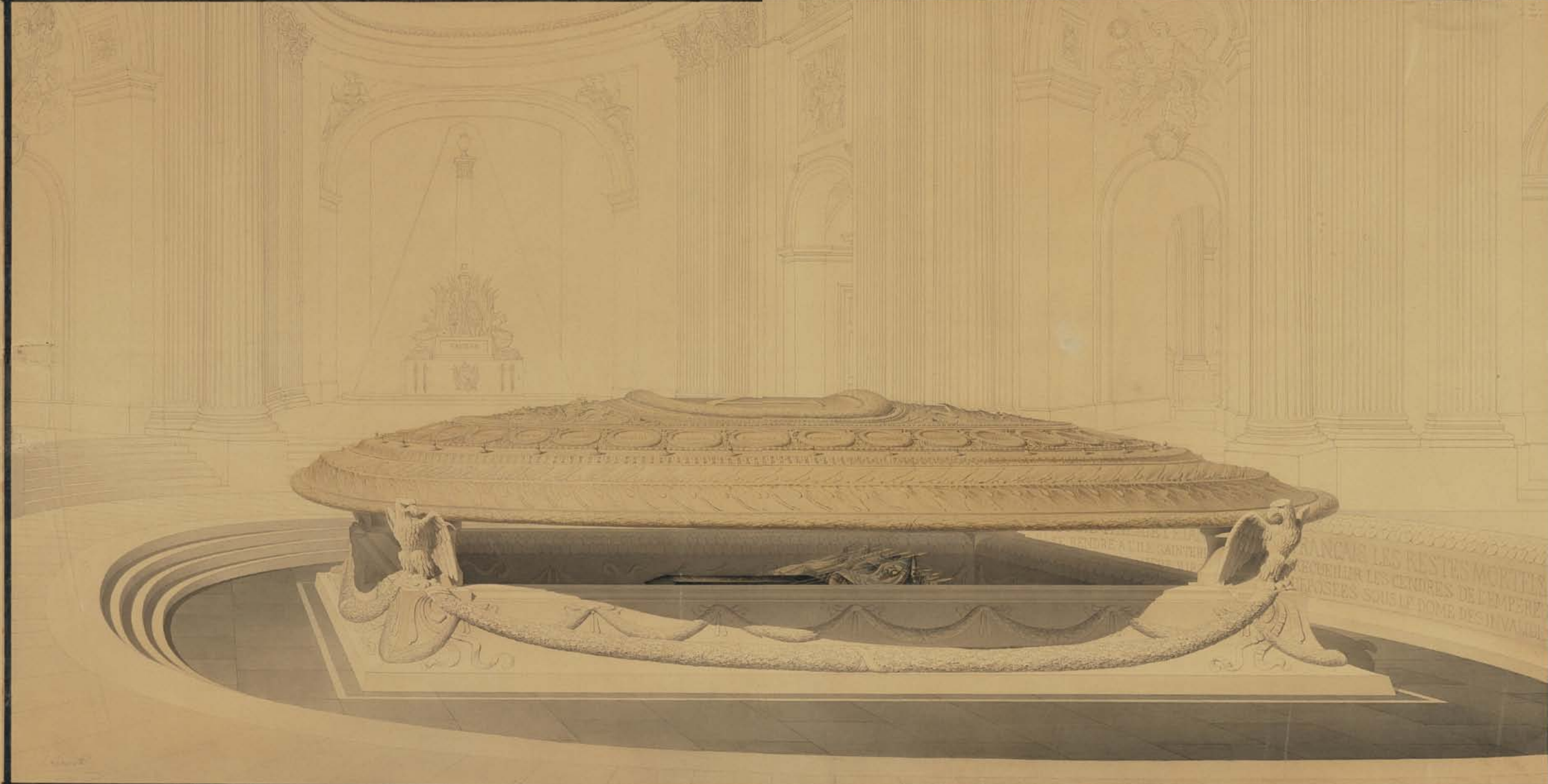
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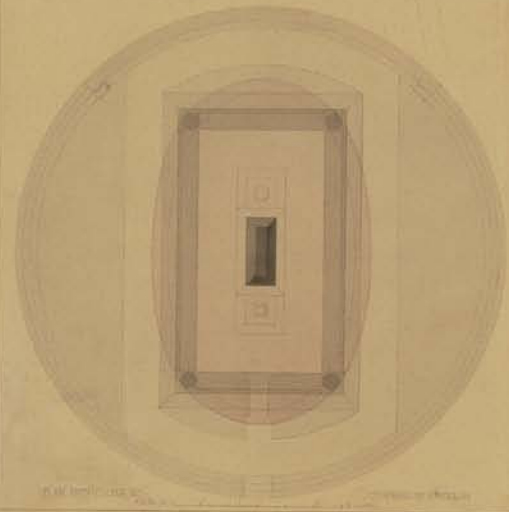
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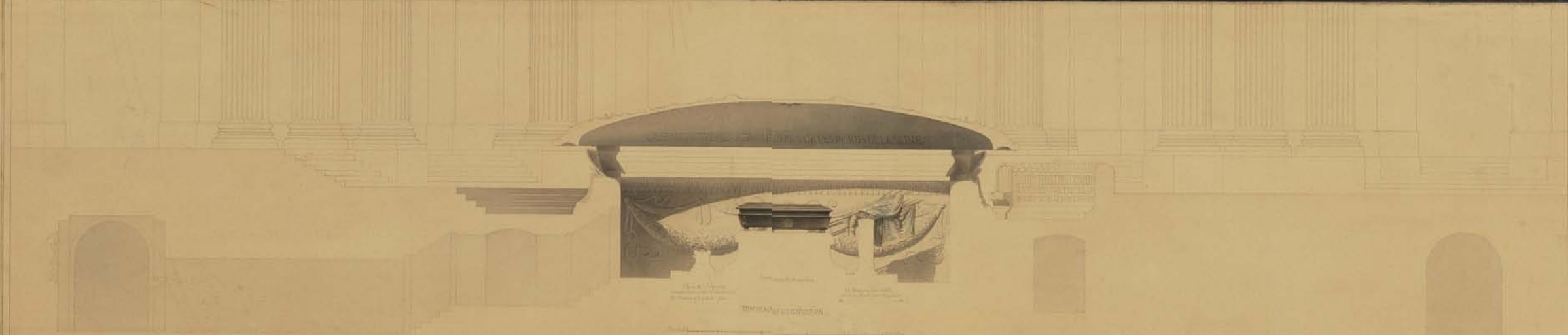
PLAN GÉNÉRAL

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SECTION GÉNÉRALE

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voyage down the Seine from Rouen to Courbevoie, a few miles from Paris, where the sarcophagus was transferred to the funerary carriage and passed under the first of several landmarks Labrouste designed to punctuate the passage.

Many of these motifs would be reconfigured in the brilliant design that Labrouste submitted one year later in the competition launched for the permanent tomb of Napoleon, a project won by Visconti. Labrouste's design (fig. 29) was radical in its minimal intervention into the space of the church. In the crypt he imagined a great garlanded cylinder with the sarcophagus set atop a high pedestal, flags laid diagonally next to it. But, in the upper church, rather than a monumental baldachin of the type Visconti ultimately built, Labrouste decided to create a modernized Etruscan tomb. Like the great circular structures that rise above many Etruscan tombs and indicate subtly the presence of the dead in the landscape, Labrouste imagined a huge elliptical bronze shield, rich in legible iconography, set over the open rectangular crypt of white marble. This was held aloft just enough for a viewer to peer into the gap between the shield and the open crypt, in a line of deep shadow, allowing fragmentary glimpses of the artifacts in the tomb. The whole was of a subtlety that no doubt scarcely served the political capital Louis-Philippe's administration hoped to accrue from the bold but potentially explosive gesture of repatriating Napoleon's remains, even if Labrouste's originality was awarded a gold medal. The project was engraved and celebrated in the *Revue générale de l'architecture et des travaux publics*, founded in 1840 by architect César Daly (a pupil of Duban) and a frequent organ of the Romantic point of view as it was now beginning to manifest itself in designs for the great challenges of the day. As Daly put it, "The fundamental idea of this composition is absolutely new, one can find nothing like it in antiquity or in any other period..." and he concluded that with this new opening, "Art has not yet spoken its last word."¹⁹

By the time this competition was announced, work had begun on construction of the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, a building that would be the vessel for all of Labrouste's research, from his studies of the assemblage of materials that comprised the language of ancient architecture to his studies of the relationship between ceremonies and rituals and the symbolic language of architecture to his notion that architecture could be a tonic for a society. Never inclined to manifestos, or even grand historical narratives, Labrouste left behind a credo not only in masonry and iron but also in iconography, completing the loop by which he had moved between the buildings of ancient societies and the iconography of their architecture in the other arts, and in particular in images that circulated on coins. In 1840 he would undertake two great exercises in architectural iconography for two of the great organs of the profession he was so dedicated to renewing: the frontispiece of Daly's *Revue générale*, whose woodblock engravings would circulate through the postal service to readers even beyond the borders of France; and the design of the medal that was given to each member attending the meetings of the newly formed Société Centrale des Architectes, of which he

19. Daly, December 1841: col. 613–14.

30. Henri Labrouste, Gate and Walls of the Alatri Citadel, elevation, 1829, 40.7 × 25.7 cm, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Prints, VZ-1030 (8) FOL

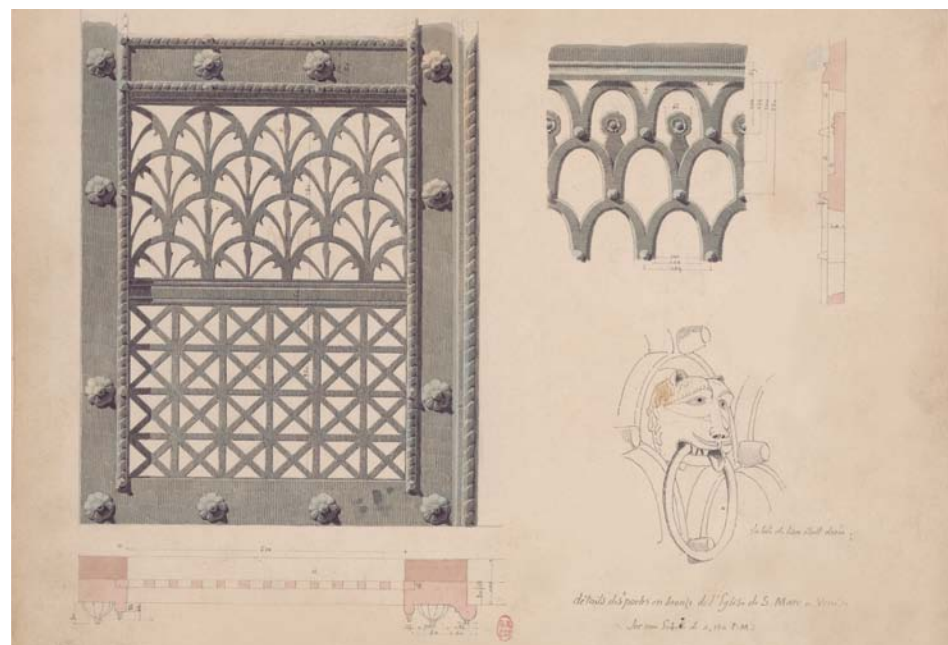
31. Henri Labrouste, Etruscan arch, known as Porta Augusta, in Perugia, elevation and plan, c. 1825, 66.5 × 97.3 cm, Académie d'architecture, Paris, 278

20. Quoted in Anonymous
1849–50: col. 151.

was a founding member. In both frontispiece and medal, a city comprised of monuments from the most diverse periods of the history of architecture would be viewed above the walls of the *civitas*. In both, medieval monuments were given their full place in the cityscape, just as within a few years many of the leading figures of the Gothic Revival would emerge from Labrouste's atelier. In the frontispiece the city is poised over the caption "History," held aloft by two caryatids identified as "Art" and "Science," the two terms by which all great architecture emerged from a dialectic between material reality and poetic imagination. On one face of the medal, designed by Labrouste and engraved by Eugène-André Oudiné, were paired a flower and a compass, indicative of the organic relationship between imagination and physics, or, as Labrouste explained, emblems of "precision" and of "freedom" ("précision et liberté").²⁰ On the other face, the city was the crown of a female figure. Having invented the iconography for both the architectural press and for the professional society of architects, Labrouste designed not only the means of modern commemoration, but also the very circulating iconography that would provide echoes and clues of the rich exploration in new materials and new symbols for the nineteenth century that would be the building blocks of his two great libraries, libraries in turn that would collect the artifacts he had just designed.

32. Henri Labrouste, Saint Mark's Basilica in Venice, details of the bronze doors, 1830, 20.4 × 25.3 cm, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Prints, VZ-1030 (10)-FOL

33. Henri Labrouste, The Apostolic Palace in the Vatican, vaults of the second floor loggias, perspective views and detail, 1830, 41.2 × 25.6 cm, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Prints, VZ-1030 (8)-FOL



LABROUSTE AND HIS ARCHIVES

In the last years of his life, Henri Labrouste became concerned with the fate of his archives, notably his drawings, which he had long left “available to all”¹: they were, to him, “the best thing [he had done]” and “the best part of [his] legacy.”² In 1866, he considered bequeathing them to Julien Thobois, one of his former students who had become his chief collaborator, “requiring him to give them after his death or when he sees fit to a young architect of his choice, on condition that that man should himself hand them on to another young architect without changing anything about the categorization of the drawings and engravings.” He would change his mind three years later and limit himself to giving “full ownership, unconditionally ... ten large or small drawings of [their] choice” to four architects trained in his workshop, “as a testament to [his] memory of and affection for [his] former students”: along with the loyal Thobois, the legatees this time were Emile Boeswillwald (1815–1896), Charles-Jules Simonet (1826–1896), and Maximilien Mimey (1826–1888). Finally, once again rethinking his choice, he abandoned the idea of handing down all or part of his archives to his young colleagues. In March 1872, he said that “[his] office and what it contains—books, engravings, drawings, etc.” would go to his daughter Laure. Then, in May of that year, he extended his bequest to his son Léon, himself an architect. After their father’s death on June 24, 1875, Laure and Léon Labrouste would thus share his collection. Thanks to the generosity of their own heirs, the totality of the architect’s archives is now divided between several Paris institutions. The Bibliothèque Nationale de France, the Académie d’Architecture, and the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève have a majority of the holdings.

THE LABROUSTE COLLECTION AT THE BNF

Held in the department of Prints and Photography, this collection of around four thousand documents is partly drawn from archives donated by the descendants of Henri Labrouste in 1952,³ and in 2009–11.⁴ It is made up of three distinct groups.

The hundreds of renderings of ancient monuments the architect produced during his stay at the Villa Medici (1825–30) were first considered of interest for their purely documentary value: in 1953, Jean Vallery-Radot, then head curator of the Prints Department, saw them as “a particularly precious addition to our already rich collections of Italian topography.”⁵ This exceptional collection was

thus long interspersed among the volumes in the topographical series rather than kept together as a whole. It was reconstituted as a monographic collection nearly sixty years later and now consists of ten specific volumes, which should facilitate work on it in the future.⁶

A second series of documents, now categorized and inventoried, sheds light on Labrouste’s career itself, his projects and works, as well as his diverse other activities: for building maintenance, advisory roles, competition juries. First, there are many sketches and manuscripts (letters, reports, accounts, etc.) relating to over sixty individual matters, rounded out by different printed materials as well as family papers (personal correspondence of the architect’s father and his children, photographic portraits, cards, etc.);⁷ then there are the major drawings (preliminary studies, finished plans, or details for scale models), photographs, and prints related to his principal works.⁸

The third set is entirely comprised of documents on the Bibliothèque Nationale.⁹ These 721 drawings are the ones Sigfried Giedion thought lost, having looked for them in vain in the 1930s¹⁰; although they had never left the library, they were only much later returned to the Prints Department. Other drawings by Labrouste and several notes in his own hand are also held in a touching album, acquired from a merchant in 1891 and very likely put together by Félix Perin (1836–1891), Labrouste’s last deputy on the Bibliothèque construction site.¹¹

Finally, several personal objects of highly symbolic interest have recently joined the archives. Along with several fine medals, a crown of artificial laurel leaves that was awarded him when he won the Grand Prix de Rome for architecture (1824) as well as his Académicien uniform, with cocked hat and sword (1867), are now in the collections.

For this exhibition, all of Labrouste’s drawings from Italy as well as all of the documents regarding his work on the Bibliothèque Nationale, restored and digitized, have been put online at <http://gallica.bnf.fr>. The architect’s other drawings and other projects will soon receive the same treatment. Marc Le Cœur

THE HENRI LABROUSTE COLLECTION AT THE ACADEMIE D’ARCHITECTURE

The Académie d’Architecture was founded in 1840 as the Société Centrale des Architectes. A cultural institution, its purpose is to promote quality in architecture, work on developing urban space, teaching, and research. The Société Centrale originally housed a library that included periodicals and reviews, medals,

engravings, and photographs, to which were added architects’ drawings. The purpose of these collections was pedagogical and for publication. It also ensured that documents in danger of dispersion or destruction remained together and were preserved. The Académie d’Architecture pursued that goal and established a first catalogue in 1987 for collections from 1750 to 1900. The catalogue of twentieth-century holdings followed a few years later.

For an exhibition on Labrouste organized in 1976 to commemorate the centenary of his death, Labrouste’s heirs gave the Académie many items, which became the Labrouste Collection. Yvonne Labrouste, whose husband was Henri’s grandson, made a first donation to the Académie, which she later enlarged. Her donation included Labrouste’s *envois* from Rome, renderings of ancient monuments, plans for the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, and handwritten manuscripts. Around the same time, Léon Malcotte, Henri’s great-grandson, gave the Académie many documents as a loan that was later changed to a donation, thus reuniting documents that had remained separated since Labrouste’s time. The collection was digitized by the Académie in 2003 and 2004 with support from the French Ministry of Culture and Communication.

The Labrouste collection is made up of different types of documents. It includes around five hundred drawings, sketches, and notebooks; medals; three portraits; two busts; decorations and some personal items; and over a thousand textual documents, both handwritten and printed. The large drawings, often watercolors (from T0 to B3), 414 in number, are the best known. They include submissions from Rome and renderings of ancient monuments, such as the Arch of Septimius Severus in Rome (1829), the Pantheon in Rome (1828), and many others. The collection also includes plans for competitions and buildings. The sixty-two small or very small format sketches, often on precarious materials, were saved by his family. Thirty-one notebooks round out the collection, mostly dating from Labrouste’s student years and his stay in Italy. The collection also includes the “Drawings by Friends” album, with work by Jean-Baptiste Lassus, Hippolyte Lebas, and Achille Leclerc.

If the large-format drawings were well known, exhibited and presented to Labrouste’s fellow architects and students, the handwritten documents were unknown. There are around a thousand of them.

The correspondence deals with his family life; his professional life; his teaching, which spanned twenty-five years; and his relations with the Société Centrale and with his friends. It is accompanied by reports and letters related to his work as part of the Service des Édifices Diocésains, the Conseil Général des Bâtiments Civils, and the Commission des Monuments Historiques.

These documents shed light on the quality of his consulting work, and those that relate to his teaching show the lasting ties that formed between Labrouste and his students. The rich nature of this additional part of the architect’s legacy, which was rediscovered in 2002, mixing as it does private and public topics, as well as being a historic fresco that sheds light on the life of an era, allows us to witness the birth of a new architecture. Gérard Uniack

THE LABROUSTE COLLECTION AT THE BIBLIOTHÈQUE SAINTE-GENEVIÈVE

“As soon as the building was finished, with great satisfaction I burned a huge quantity of papers that filled my boxes—briefs, bills, progress reports, studies, drawings, details—just as after finishing a building, you cart away the rubble.”¹²

Henri Labrouste’s plans and drawings for the construction of the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève (BSG: MS 4273) make up a collection of nearly 170 documents. Donated by Yvonne Labrouste in 1952, they spent some time in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France before reaching their initially intended destination in 1999. This body of graphic work is a precious source of documentation on the architect’s thought process over time and the gestation of his first major building. A protean set of materials, it includes preliminary plans, building diagrams, masonry or metalwork attachments, studies for the décor—all in different stages of completion. If some drawings have a simple structure and subject, others are more complex and allow us to see, along with the initial drawing, a profusion of sketches, notes, and manuscripts in different stages of completion and in varying levels of engagement with the drawing’s main theme. A final set offers a number of small drawings, some on tracing paper, mounted in a haphazardly overlapping way on thicker supports, with a pedagogical aim, as part of Labrouste’s teaching throughout his career as an architect. One set traces the development of the monument to Ulrich Gering in 1873.

Most of the textual sources (MSS 3910-3939) were given directly to the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève in 1953 by Yvonne Labrouste and Léon Malcotte. In addition to the *Construction Site Journal* (1843–51), there are twenty-nine files concerning the construction and upkeep of the building, which Labrouste would remain responsible for until his death: contractors’ memos, furniture inventories, administrative correspondence, etc. In recent years, the collection has at times been enriched by acquisitions from specialized booksellers.

The celebrations in 2001 saw the launch of a program at the library for promoting these sources, whose descriptions were expanded and completed. The graphic works, restored and inventoried

item by item,¹³ are now available online¹⁴ and will soon be newly digitized to replicate the original works more closely. A restoration of the south facade in 2008 offered a chance to exhibit drawings relating to the structure and decoration of that part of the building on picture rails in the book stacks,¹⁵ and large-scale photographs (by Michel Nguyen) of details of the facade as it was being restored were displayed on the balusters in the reading room's central walkway.¹⁶ Those beginnings are now converging into the development of a "virtual Henri Labrouste library" centered on a critical edition of the *Construction Site Journal*: the presentation of a facsimile with a parallel transcription and critical apparatus to shed light on the text (an index of proper names, a technical glossary compiled from architecture dictionaries and building manuals contemporary with the building's construction aimed at offering, beyond simple definitions, a kind of "Guide to the Art of Building" in the nineteenth century). Marie-Hélène de La Mure

1. Millet 1879–80:217.
2. For more detail on this topic, see Le Cœur 2008.
3. Donation by Yvonne Labrouste and Geneviève-Caroline Labrouste, Labrouste's daughter-in-law and daughter, respectively.
4. Donation by Monique Malcotte, widow of the architect Léon Malcotte, himself a great-grandson of Henri Labrouste. These archives had belonged to Laure Labrouste.
5. Cain, Vallery-Radot, and Weigert 1953: no pagination.
6. BNF, Prints, VZ-1030 (1-10)-FOL.
7. BNF, Prints, HZ-465 (1-9)-PET FOL.
8. BNF, Prints, HD-1176 (1-2)-BOITE FOL and HD-1018 (1-2)-FT 6.
9. BNF, Prints, HD-1019 (1-10)-FT 6.
10. Giedion 1941.
11. BNF, Prints, HC-15 (B)-FT 4 ("Plans for the Bibliothèque Nationale").
12. Henri Labrouste to César Daly, "Note de présentation de la Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève," *Revue générale de l'architecture et des travaux publics*, vol. X (1852).
13. <http://www.calames.abes.fr/pub/ms/Calames-2009224112361401>.
14. http://www.bsg.e-corpus.org/fre/ref/88159/Ms_4273/.
15. http://www-bsg.univ-paris1.fr/www/ExposVirtuelles/expofacade/expo_facade_accueil.html.
16. These images, as well as Labrouste's drafts concerning the facade, make up the iconography in Yves Peyré's album published in 2011, *Le Rétablissement d'une architecture: bonneur à Labrouste* (Paris: Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, 2011).

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