

Early French Revolution Museums

1789-1795

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Introduction

Museology, the study of museums is an introspective field of history. The scholar studies what society has deemed worthy of preservation and display (the contents of museums) and seeks to bring new knowledge from ancient objects to public awareness. By looking at the contents of a museum's collection, be it a collection of artistic, historical, or anthropological objects, we can explore, question, or infer the cultural values of our society. Our present society is indeed the result of the historical processes of change in past societies and, therefore, inherits from them. A museum is often a tool for preserving the past and museological theories contribute to the way the history of societies is told. Among the societal aspects that the values recognised through the study of museum collections, one is the way in which societies construct their national identity.

According to the foregoing view, therefore, the museum is an important element for the understanding of the construction of national identity. The museum can present historically salient cultural artifacts, materialise the memory of significant events or even celebrate them. When the museum is the product of the nation, country, political institution, it is a way for that institution to present and even create its own narrative about its identity. According to this view, history can be told and re-told through museums. As a result, a) the way in which history is presented and b) how museums contributing to the national identity narrative are conceived are both politically charged practices. The French revolution promoted the institution of museums as a place of learning for the French revolutionary values and reflection upon their role and responsibilities commensurate with the new national identity.

The French revolution was a moment of rupture with the Ancien Régime. The revolutionaries sought to rebuild society, replace systems they deemed outdated, despotic and superstitious by instating new, democratic systems. One such system, an administrative and cultural system, consisted in the creation of a new kind of institution: the national museum (at first one, in 1793, then many). The revolutionaries were utilitarians and thus sought to justify the existence of such an institution. Among the fundamental tenets that allowed for the revolutionary formulation of a new kind of museum in its proto-stage were the rationalist Enlightenment movement and the notion of the didactic value of art. We can ask three questions about these developments in the context of the French revolution:

- a) What was revolutionary about this?

- b) Was the museum itself about the revolution?
 - c) What was the museum about?
- a) What was revolutionary about this?

In a few words, the act of seizing and then displaying the former property of the church and aristocrats to the public was heralded as the ultimate democratic act. The privilege of the few had become the right of the people. In that moment, a liberation of material culture from tyrannical hoarding took place; this was a subversion of the Ancien Régime narrative of privilege by the privileged.

- b) Was the museum about the revolution?

At first, no. While, eventually, the republicans would seek to reclaim the artworks they had seized from both clergy and aristocrats, initially, instead, the destruction of artworks was deemed necessary. Paintings, portraits and bust of noble or clerical figures were considered carry messages that glorified tyranny and superstition. A purge of such items would prevent the newly freed people from being misled by their former oppressors. However, the revolutionaries quickly found that the level of iconoclasm excessive and sought to instead rehabilitate the existing works of art to better suit the republican narrative about the nation.

- c) What was the museum about?

French revolutionaries acknowledged the superstitious character of Ancien Régime art (religious scenes, portraits of kings or nobility), but sought to repurpose such art to the revolutionary cause in two ways. Firstly, they sought to preserve artworks in order to allow for the technical education of artists who would contribute to the new culture. Secondly, by displaying and thus exposing past art pieces as examples of misplaced attribution of value and as ideological manipulations, they sought to correct and ward off people falling prey to these errors and instead develop towards the new values of the French revolutionary ideal of republican democracy.

Against this background, the question arises of what a revolutionary museum is. We can give three main answers.

Definition 1: A museum created during the revolution.

For example, Alexandre Lenoir's Museum of Historical Monuments (Musée des Monuments Historiques) was created during the revolution. It took shape, beginning as a depot for

historical artifacts and objects under the supervision of Lenoir. Eventually Lenoir devised an exposition and it formally opened in 1795. Its inception was a product of the revolution.

Definition 2: A museum about the revolution.

For example, the Departmental Museum of the French Revolution (Musée Départemental de la Révolution Française) was created in 1983 with the specific aim of collecting any and all objects relating to the revolution of 1789.¹ It is one of the rare museums entirely dedicated to the revolution.

Definition 3: A museum for revolutionaries.

For example, the Louvre was opened as the first official national museum by the revolutionaries in 1793. It was designed with the purpose of educating the masses in the ideals of the Jacobin revolutionaries.

In this work, we are interested in revolutionary museums, primarily in the sense of definition 1 and we aim at showing that these museums started from the ideals of definition 3.

This work considers a context that is restricted to Europe in the eighteenth century. The period we examine begins in 1789, with the start of the regime change in France, and ends in 1801. However, the focus of this work is on the (museums during) the early revolutionary period up to the end of the first republic following Napoleon's coup d'état of the 18 Brumaire. Therefore, in particular, a museum 'created during the revolution' in the sense of this work (sense 1 above) is a museum created between 1789 and 1799. The chronology presented of the relevant political events extends to the beginning of the First Empire to include as a point of comparison the Chaptal Decree of 1801.

¹ République Française, Ministère de la culture, Platform Ouvertes de la Patrimoine. Musée départemental de la Révolution française
<https://www.pop.culture.gouv.fr/notice/museo/M1008>. Accessed 5 Sept. 2022.

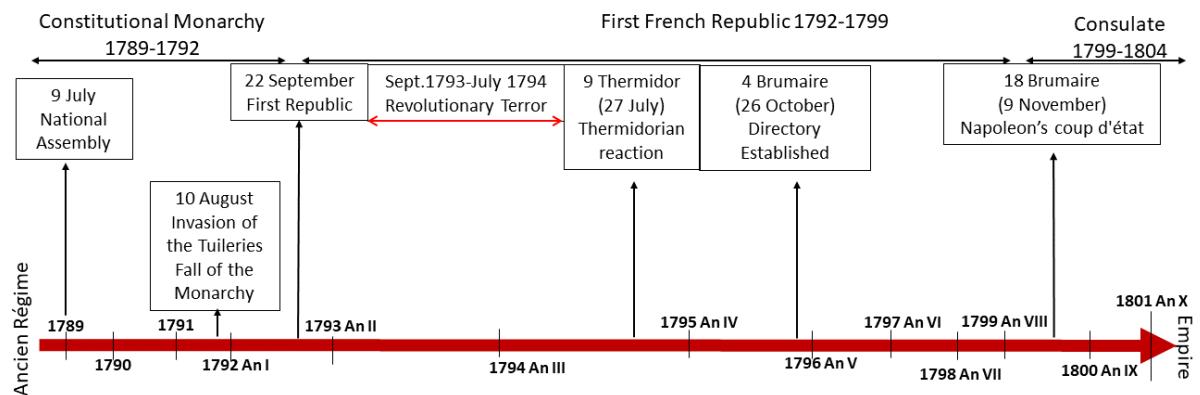


Figure 1. A summary chronology of the French revolution including significant events providing context to the development of the French museums during the period (timeline not to scale). The revolutionary calendar would be introduced alongside the declaration of the first French Republic on the 1st Vendémiaire (22 September 1792) and saw use until 1806. The calendar was organised by years of twelve months of thirty days. Ideologically it aimed to suppress the religious celebrations that characterized the Gregorian calendars. The revolutionary calendar was officially adopted in 1793. Documents after 1793 are generally dated using the revolutionary method. For example, the 14 Fructidor of the year X is the same as the 1st of September 1801. We may refer to the republican calendar, in particular, when the sources we look at use it; however, for the sake of clarity, Gregorian dates will be included alongside revolutionary dates where appropriate.

In section 1, we discuss museums in the historical context preceding the revolutionary period, i.e., before and up to the major events of 1789.

In section 2, We discuss the institutional aspects of the revolutionary's conservation efforts during the period when they are the most salient, i.e., from the beginning of the revolution to Thermidor.

In section 3, we discuss three different models of revolutionary museum projects for that period.

In section 4, we discuss the evolution of museums since Thermidor up until the early Consulate (1801).

1. Museums before 1789

Museum projects had existed under the *Ancien Régime*. In France, it was the ministers of Louis XVI who sought to establish a royal museum in the galleries of the Louvre. The project was meant to enhance the glory of the king by amassing a prestigious collection that would demonstrate to the people of France and to other powers the sophistication of the French. The cultural superiority would bring admiration and distinction to the monarch on the international stage.

The majority of scholars seem to be at a consensus that the public museum originated in Italy. For example, see Pomian.² It was there that many private collections, owned by moral subjects, were opened to public visitations. This shift from the private to the public sphere created a new inter-subject dynamic within society. The once private collections of certain individuals, whose status acted as justification for the perpetual existence of their collection, was put to the service of the collective. The understanding was that the public, that is to say society, would benefit (in ways discussed in section 3) from this newfound access to previously exclusive collections.

During this period, all museums are privately owned.

Definition 4: A privately owned museum is a museum (or its collection) that is owned by a private person (including a monarch).

Definition 5: A privately owned public museum is a privately owned museum that is opened to visitors that are members of the public.

Definition 6: A privately owned private museum is a privately owned museum that is opened to a select, private audience.

1.1. Displaying and observing art

Collections of artworks, be it paintings, sculptures, medals or other had existed in Europe prior to the revolution. The enlightenment had seen the growth of appreciation for the visual arts in intellectual circles. The movement emerged from the philosophical analysis of aesthetics, particularly developed in Germany.³ Philosophers and artists sought to find the link between beauty and moral virtue. Art was a source of observable beauty. The role of art

² Pomian. Krzysztof. *Le Musée, une histoire mondiale*. T. 1 :*Du trésor au musée*. Gallimard, Paris, 2020.

³ James J. Sheehan. *Museums in the German Art World: From the End of the Old Regime to the Rise of Modernism*. Oxford University Press, 2000. p.5

was understood to be morally didactic in nature and the contemplation of art could better mankind by sheer exposure to artistic beauty. Beauty needed to be understood through the consumption of art via observation. The philosophical discourse on the aesthetics of beauty was the focus of many eighteenth century Germanophone philosophers, including Kant, Johann Georg Sulzer, and Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten.

In this context, the contribution of neoclassicist pioneer Johann Joachim Winckelmann is salient in that it focuses on the museum. Winckelmann was an artistic connoisseur and during his time in Rome, where he was named prefect of antiquities and a Vatican librarian in 1763, he was able to view many collections and individual artifacts. Prior to this, during the 1750s, he had resided near Dresden, which hosted the Saxon electors' considerable art collection. As a neoclassicist, Winckelmann admired the art of ancient Greece, which he believed to have been the source and the herald of the greatness of ancient Greek's culture. According to his thesis, the Greek style was the pinnacle of artistic beauty and moral virtue, modern artists should strive to recreate this style and meet its standard for society to achieve its ultimate potential.⁴ But what good is art if it cannot be observed? The mere existence of art, however beautifully detailed its products, does nothing by itself if there is no one to appreciate it. Winckelmann envisioned a museum which would display Greek artworks to the people in an accessible manner. For example, the collection would need to be properly displayed, illuminated and appropriately spaced. In contrast, at the time, most existing collections tended to be cluttered and poorly illuminated.

1.2. Collecting, collecting, collecting

The significance of the collector changed. Before the eighteenth century, items were collected eclectically as items of curiosity or interest. Progressively, new sensibilities motivated the realization of a collection and it was the contents of the collection that became significant. The specific composition of a collection acted as a form of aesthetically based social distinction in an increasingly public society. An individual's collection was a social signifier, it expanded the facets in which people could distinguish themselves from others while doing so ostensibly.

Existing collections tended to be the private hoard of aristocrats and monarchs, amassed by their predecessors in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Items were kept as objects of financial value and curiosity, in virtue of the prestige they conferred or as oddities rather than because of an underlying rationale for establishing systematic or consistent collections

⁴ Ibid pp.10-14

in one subject or another. It was not until the eighteenth century that a new understanding of art, coupled with the progressive recognition of a public sphere changed the way these collections were utilized. These collections had always been a source of prestige to the owner and remained so. However, the reason was different.

Changing attitudes meant that it was no longer the act of owning an impressive collection of expensive items that conferred prestige. It was no longer the contingent adequation of contextual qualities that warranted collection (e.g., military medals for a military man); the distinguishing character of an object to a connoisseur, the appreciation of craftsmanship or its make.⁵ As a consequence, prestige came no longer from the mere possession of accumulated objects but from the ability and benevolence required to display items to the public. Such display enabled by the owner allowed the public to observe and appreciate the essence of the items. The understanding of the sense of appreciation involved in the public was rooted in the European enlightenment's vision of art as didactic.

1.3. The role of art and art collections in debate

Interestingly, Jean-Jacques Rousseau opposed the idea of art as a vehicle for moral betterment. Rousseau posited in his *Discours sur les science et les arts* published in 1750, that art was a symptom of the corruption of man and society's virtue by being an extension of the proliferation of luxury, the main proponent of moral decay.⁶ Art was decried as the rotten offspring of the immorality of luxury and by association, condemned those circles that did enjoy the arts. According to Rousseau, accessibility to art did not matter for it was only those in privileged positions in society that would have anything to gain from its existence. Luxury, Rousseau argued, did nothing but undermine the virtue of men and the subsequent corruption was visible in the arts:

Nos jardins sont ornés de statues et nos Galeries de tableaux. Que penseriez-vous que représentent ces chefs-d'œuvres de l'art exposés à l'admiration publique? Les défenseurs de la Patrie? Ou ces hommes plus grands encore qui l'ont enrichie par leurs vertus? Non. Ce sont des images de tous les égarment du cœur & de la raison, tirées soigneusement de l'ancienne Mythologie, et présentées de bonne heure à la curiosité de nos enfans ; sans

⁵ Tribby, Jay. *MLN*, vol. 103, no. 5, 1988, pp. 1198–201. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2905223>
Accessed: 1 Sep. 2022 p. 1199-1200

⁶ Leith, James A., The Idea of Arts as Propaganda in France 1750-1799. University of Toronto Press, 1965. p.11

doute afin qu'ils aient sous leurs yeux des modèles de mauvaise actions, avant même que de savoir lire.⁷

Our gardens are ornamented with statues and our Galleries of paintings. What do you think is represented in these masterpieces of art so exposed to public admiration? The defenders of the homeland? Or those men greater still who enriched it by their very virtues? No. They are images of the bewilderment of the heart and of reason, carefully taken from ancient Mythology, and presented in good time to the curiosity of our children; no doubt so they may have models of misdeed before their eyes, before they are even able read.⁸

Rousseau's line of thinking would make the concept of a museum of the arts the ultimate affirmation of societies complete moral decay. Rousseau's persistent denunciation of art as a threat to society was extremely controversial. Many of the social reformers and intellectuals of the period, referred to as *philosophes*, such as Voltaire, D'Alembert and Diderot, believed that art could in fact instruct the population in a virtuous manner. The *philosophes* believed that French society was inefficient and confused, and that this was caused by people straying from a preordained natural order. If physical science followed set and observable rules, why was it not the case with society? These thinkers saw the utility of art as a vehicle for their ideas to their fellow countrymen. The arts could be used in conjunction with logical reasoning to communicate and to convince their fellow men of their philosophy.⁹

In contrast to Rousseau, Diderot specifically believed in the positive aspects of art. In his aesthetic theory of beauty, Diderot outlines his belief that beauty is not innate to man but is discovered when man experiences order. Man, thereafter, designs items of symmetry and order, which in turn become the fine arts. Diderot was greatly concerned by the influence of luxury upon art. Diderot distinguishes two types of luxury. The first type is a beneficial form of luxury in which society encourages agriculture instead of oppressing it with extensive

⁷ Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Discours qui a remporté le prix à l'académie de Dijon. En l'année 1750. Sur cette question proposée par la même académie : si le rétablissement des sciences & des arts a contribué à épurer les moeurs. Par un citoyen de Genève.* Geneva, Barillot & fils, 1750-1751.
<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k10543566/f15.item.r=Discours%20sur%20les%20sciences%20et%20les%20arts%20rousseau%201750#> Accessed 5 Sep. 2022 pp. 50-51

⁸ Translation ours.

⁹ Leith, Propaganda in France 1750-1799, pp. 14-15

taxation. The second type is a noxious form of luxury, in which a privileged minority squanders resources while the majority remains impoverished. The beneficial form was positive for the arts, whereas the noxious was damaging to the arts. Diderot appeared to suggest that art reflects the current social reality. If art was decadent, then it was because society was corrupt. In doing so, he argues that the arts need to be used for moral purpose, to prevent it from actually corrupting society. As a result, further argues Diderot, artists need to rally themselves to the cause of the *philosophes* by using their trade to communicate their tenets to the masses. This line of thought is illustrated in the following quote:

O quel bien il en reviendrait aux hommes, si tous les arts d'imitation se proposaient un objet commun, et concourraient un jour avec les lois pour nous faire aimer la vertu et haïr le vice! C'est au philosophe à les y inviter ; c'est à lui à s'addresser au poëte, au peintre, au musicien, et à leur crier avec force : Hommes de génie, pourquoi le ciel vous a-t-il doués? S'il en est entendu, bientôt les images de la débauche ne couvriront plus les murs de nos palais ; nos voix ne seront plus des organes du crime ; et le goût et les mœurs y gagneront.¹⁰

O what good would befall man, if all the arts of imitation sought a common object, and competed one day with the laws to make us love virtue and hate vice! Its is for the philosophe to invite them; its is for him to address the poet, the painter, the musician, and to loudly shout to them: Men of genius, why have the heavens gifted you? If it is heard, soon the images of debauchery would no longer cover the wall of our palaces; our voices would no longer be the organs of crime; and good taste and manners would win.

Art was a tool of progress as it did not necessarily change its observer but reinforced existing internal virtue. Art could even move the wicked to virtue. Diderot saw the church's employment of art as propaganda as proof of its didactic utility. In his 1751 *Lettre sur les sourds*, Diderot states that art, especially painting communicated directly to the soul, without the indirect distortion of language. Religious art was a prime example of such.

The church was one institution which supported the social reformers conception of art. A great deal of importance was placed upon the visual arts within the church. One had only need to visit a cathedral to observe the numerous religious carvings, murals and paintings

¹⁰ Diderot, Denis. *Oeuvres de théâtre de M. Diderot : avec un discours sur la poésie dramatique*. Paris, 1771. <https://archive.org/details/uvresdethatred02dide/page/240/mode/2up?q=d%27imitation>
Accessed 5 Sep, 2022. p.241

depicting biblical scenes and figures. The belief in the didactic value of art meant that plastic displays of religious virtue were powerful symbols and important tools of faith. It provided a means for those who could not read the bible to learn about their faith. Contemporary thinkers saw religious art as democratic tool that allowed the disadvantaged of society into virtuous and moral education.¹¹ Even beyond religious matters, the amount of art and artifacts housed within monasteries, churches or cathedrals was a source of curiosity for both domestic and foreign tourism.

1.4. Accessible art collections in France and Europe

The Grand Tour, a touristic travel through Europe, usually conducted by English and to a lesser extent French tourist brought many curious travellers to Italy. Noted is the number of public collections to be found. Curious onlookers returned home with the sentiment of emulating such collections, or to have them become reality domestically.¹² These collections were mostly owned by clerical or aristocratic figures. Pomian highlights the significance of the concept of public collection, meaning that it does not belong to a specific individual but to a collective entity, society and the state.¹³ The shift from private to public followed the intellectual flow of the enlightenment, and the role of art as propaganda was explored by various entities, beginning with private individuals' collections and eventually state-run institutions.

There were no museums accessible to the general public in France during the first half of the eighteenth century. In general, the public did not have access to collections of objects of artistic or cultural value. The places allowing art and cultural collections to be viewed were private cabinets and ecclesiastical buildings. Rich and prominent individuals, nobles, owned private *salons*, *cabinets de curiosité* and personal collections. As the visit was at the discretion of those elite individuals such collections were rather exclusive, reserved for acquaintances of lords or esteemed guest. Ecclesiastical buildings including churches, abbeys and convents all held varying numbers of religious and moral artworks, be it canvases or sculptures, (statues, bust). As some of the buildings had a public function (for the celebration

¹¹ Ibid, pp.17-18

¹² De Rubercy, Eryck. "Dans L'europe Des Trésors: Collections et Musées Avec Krzysztof Pomian." *Revue Des Deux Mondes*, 2004, pp. 100–09. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44190326>. Accessed 3 Sep. 2022. p.102

¹³ Poulot, Dominique. "Krzysztof Pomian. 2020. *Le Musée, une histoire mondiale*. T. 1 :Du trésor au musée", *Culture & Musées*, no. 37. pp. 251-253, <http://journals.openedition.org/culturemusees/6001>. Accessed 09 Sep 2022.

of mass, for example), certain objects were displayed openly to the public. Amongst these repositories, churches, cathedrals and basilica were the most open to the public, and often sources of tourism or even pilgrimage. More secluded buildings like convents and monasteries were reserved for other members of the clergy.

The mid eighteenth century saw the culmination of a growing dissatisfaction at the quality of the French school of painting. Overshadowed by the Italian, Dutch and Flemish school, the French administration sought to promote the French school's visibility. A product of such initiatives includes the opening of the Luxembourg Gallery in 1750. The first public art gallery to be opened in France 1750. Its creation supervised by the painter Charles Coypel. It was decorated in a style imitating the previously existing art salons. It was part of minister's aspirations of revitalizing the academic arts in France. It was open for three hours, two days a week until it was closed to make room for The Comte de Provence in 1779. It was intended in providing an enjoyable spectacle for the public, who would assimilate patriotic values from the displayed portraits.

1.5. The Louvre Museum before the Revolution

Following the closure of the Luxembourg Gallery, the Comte D'Angivillier aspired to turn the Louvre into a public royal museum. D'Angivillier envisioned the Louvre Museum as a permanent exposition for the kingdom's art. The Louvre would repurpose the king's existing collection, which was hoarded haphazardly in the Versailles palace. The artworks were poorly exposed and isolated to foreign visitors, and according to the didactic ideas of art the isolated collection was seen as wasted potential. Furthermore, D'Angivillier's museum would replace the ephemeral Salons, whose displays lacked organisation, and the transitory Luxembourg Gallery. The displayed collection would serve to showcase the prestige of the monarch and demonstrate to the world the merits of the French school of painting as well as inspiring virtue and political respect as well as artistic taste in the populace. The project also continued the long-standing tradition of the centralising of France's political and social infrastructure in the capital. As such, the Louvre was to be an explicitly political project designed to increase the status of the monarch domestically and abroad.

Beyond repurposing the king's Versailles collection, D'Angivillier went about the acquisition of notable works of art within the kingdom to embellish the already extensive royal collection. In December 1774 D'Angivillier announced to the Royal Academy a yearly commission of paintings and statues consisting of: "tableaux d'histoire et de statues dont le sujet sera les grands hommes français" (History paintings and statues whose subject shall be

the great French men).¹⁴ The intention is to pack the Louvre with Patriotic imagery, with the goal of demonstrating the greatness of the French kingdom. The paintings were to depict significant historical moments, in which specific moral lesson or value could be discerned, and in any case, the concept would be carefully explained in the exposition guide. An ardent admirer of Rousseau, D'Angivillier sought to emulate the intellectual current of didactic art in his Louvre project. The idea of art as propaganda for the king and state is explicit. The museum would allow for the public to interface with a physical manifestation of the monarchy's prestige, materialising royalist rhetoric. The museums also provided a controlled setting for the public to consume art and digest the values represented. The Louvre itself acted as a potent symbol of the king's power, which would only be compounded by its transformation into public museum.

D'Angivillier focused on expanding the royal collection, particularly through the acquisition of the French school of painting. Royal commissions were used to glorify the king but also to influence public opinion. Furthermore, they would advertise the merits of French artists.¹⁵ The governmental commission were explicitly to communicate patriotic and virtuous messages to the public. Art would depict and glorify great men and acts of service to the throne. Women were not represented, and traits of public virtue were depicted as male attributes. Patriarchal chauvinism remained an aspect of artistic intellectualism.¹⁶ As a royal project, D'Angivillier and his associates were not interested in creating a public museum for the sole reason of granting greater access to the populace. The Louvre was not an act of democratic enfranchisement to the privilege of art, it was explicitly a tool of royal propaganda, in line with Rousseauist currents of didactic art as propaganda. The Louvre as an educating centre of the arts also aligned itself with the interest of the intellectual elite who, as they had previously done in the Salon, sought venues to gather and discuss matters.¹⁷ The Royal Louvre can be seen as a precursor to a modern art museum, as a state operated institution, but the collection is owned by the monarch so it remains a privately owned public museum in our terms (Definition 5).

¹⁴ Poulot, Dominique. *Musée, Nation, Patrimoine, 1789-1815*. Gallimard, 1997. p. 92.

Translation ours.

¹⁵ McClellan, Andrew. *Inventing the Louvre: Art, Politics, and the Origins of the Modern Museum in Eighteenth-Century Paris*. University of California Press, 1999. p. 90

¹⁶ Le Blanc, Jean-Bernard. *Lettre sur L'exposition des Ouvrages de Peinture, Sculpture, etc. De L'annee 1747*. Paris, 1747. Slatkine Reprints, Geneva, 1970. pp.136-141

¹⁷ Poulot. *Musée, Nation, Patrimoine*, 1997 p. 95

1.6. European Eighteenth Century Museums

Other museums projects existed in Europe at this time of the eighteenth century. Two of Frances closest neighbours, the British and Germans boasted some form of public museum.

Across the channel, the British Museum had been founded in 1753 with the collection of the physician Sir Hans Sloane. His collection was comprised of 71,000 objects, 50,000 books, prints and drawings and 337 volumes of dried plant specimens.¹⁸ Its galleries were opened in 1759 and its buildings have remained on the original site. Although it always maintained a varied collection of international artifacts, acquired one way or another, the museum did occasionally make the acquisition of large, specialised collections. In 1772 it acquired a collection of Greek vases and following Napoleon's Egyptian campaign, began an Egyptian collection in 1802 with the acquisition of the Rosetta stone. Admission needed to be applied for via a trustee and up to fifteen visitors were admitted for a maximum of two hours.¹⁹ Visitors in 1767 denote the different antiquities ranging from Egyptian artifacts and mummies, Japanese artworks, Italian and Greek art, and objects from the middles ages.²⁰

To the east, in Germany, the Dresden art gallery was one of the most famous and developed of its time, with international fame during the mid-seventeen-hundreds. However, one of the first purpose built German museums, separate from a princely court, was that of the Museum Fridericianum, named after its patron Landgrave Frederick II in Kassel. Built between 1769 and 1779 to accommodate the collection of Frederick. It contained a variety of items, ranging from natural history, scientific instruments and military paraphernalia and an expansive library. James Sheehan states "The museum was, therefore, a transitional building, combining elements of the early-modern curiosities' cabinet with enlightenment science and classical art".²¹ The Fridericianum was open to the public four days a week, from nine to ten in the morning and two to three in the afternoon. Visiting scholars were permitted access to the library. Although Landgrave allowed for a public function in his museum, it remained primarily his private depot serving headquarters for his princely

¹⁸ Biggs, Robert D. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, vol. 65, no. 3, 2006, pp. 222–23. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.1086/508590>. Accessed 5 Sep. 2022.

¹⁹ Thomson, Alexander. Letters on the British Museum. Printed for J. Dodsley. London, 1767. <https://historicaltexts-jisc-ac-uk.uea.idm.oclc.org/ecco-0390701000/ecco-0390701000-60>. Accessed 5 Sept. 2022. pp. 3-4

²⁰ Ibid, p.32-36

²¹ Sheehan. *Museums in the German Art World*. 2000. p.37

functions. The very name of the Fridericianum was a conservative reminder of Frederick's authority.

2. Revolutionary conservation

Our initial theory of the evolution of the revolutionary museum during the period of 1789 to 1801 is that there was a period of continuity, followed by a period of reassessment which crystallises into a new institutional consensus of the organisation and role of the museum. The revolution formed early on tasked with the conservation of newly created national property which would eventually be headquartered in the Louvre. In first analysis, it would be tempting to believe that the revolutionary museum project was the result of the work of conservation of the royal collection in the Louvre. The Louvre is indeed a significant icon of the revolutionary museum project, both symbolically because its history and materially because, as mentioned, this was where the commission had its institutional location. It would be coherent with the fact that the revolution is more generally known for the centralisation of the administrative body in the capital. However, the reality is more complex. A number of new institutions that made up the conservation administration were key in the realisation of the museum project and the construction of the theory of national conservation. I argue that two main systemic issues guided the development of the national conservation efforts under a developing theory of the conservation of national property: a) the sheer size of the work in front of these efforts and b) a concern with the widespread threat of vandalism. It is in response to such hurdles, rather than as a result of having to merely safeguard the Louvre's treasures, that the museum project and elements of theories were formed as instruments of actions by the relevant revolutionary institutions.

The fall of the monarchy left a vacuum for Jacobin ideas of art to be assert themselves. Ideas on the useful functions of artworks had begun to be addressed by 1790. This period saw the crystallisation of the process that institutionalised the museum as an organization of the state.

We will see below that The French revolution saw the creation of commissions in charge of conservation. These conservation efforts would bring the museum project towards institutionalisation. The Louvre was the earliest realisation of revolutionary museum efforts. Although initially it remained under the purview of the king, the groundwork that had been laid by royal ministers prior to the revolution was fresh enough for the republicans to realise a museum project. The Louvre had remained under royal care up until the invasion of the Tuilleries palace in August 1792. It had previously been supervised by the king's architects. Following the collapse of the monarchy the king's property, including his art collection, was declared *bien National*, and absorbed into the conservation project. In this manner, the

Louvre was reinvented in the revolutionaries' eye and the public museum made a staple of the republican state. Under the revolution, the Louvre would become the first state run museum in which the ownership of the collection is with the public. We will say that the Louvre was then a publicly owned museum.

Definition 7: A publicly owned museum is a museum (or its collection) that is owned by a public institution (including a national, regional or local government).

2.1. Revolutionary rupture

The events of 1789 were a violent rupture from the societal status quo of the Ancien Régime. The revolutionaries enacted a series of radical transformations of society. Organisations that had formally been under royal decree were abolished, their significance at odds with the new Jacobin ideals. Divine privilege of the crown and church were cast aside and the values *Liberté, égalité, fraternité* were affirmed in the Declarations of the rights of man and the citizen.²² The value of art was not ignored by revolutionaries. Fierce debates on the role and value of the arts within republican society marked the beginning of revolutionary efforts for a museum project.

The royal academy of arts was one of such institutions to be abolished. Deemed an elitist monopoly due its aristocratic nature, the royal academies of the arts were closed with the intention of granting greater freedom to existing artist and facilitate the instruction of new students.²³ The revolutionary museum project sought to serve as the pillar for the instruction for new artist. Jean-Baptist-Pierre Lebrun argued for his philosophy on the manner for the collection to be displayed. He argued paintings should be ordered by school and; "[...]indiquer; par la manière don't ils seront placés, les différentes époque de l'enfance, des progrès, de la perfection et enfin de la décadence des art." [indicate; by the manner in which they would be placed, the different eras of the childhood, the progress, of perfection and finally of the decadence of the arts].²⁴

²²*Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen : Décretés par l'Assemblée Nationale dans les séances des 20, 21, 23, 24 et 26 août 1789, acceptés par le Roi 1789*
<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b69480451.item> Accessed 3 Sep, 2022.

²³ McClellan, Andrew L. "The Musée Du Louvre as Revolutionary Metaphor During the Terror." *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 70, no. 2, Taylor & Francis, College Art Association, 1988, pp. 300–13,
<https://doi.org/10.2307/3051121>. Accessed 1 Sep. 2022. p.306

²⁴ Lebrun, Jean-Batiste-Pierre. *Reflexion sur le museum national. Par le citoyen Lebrun.* 1792. p. 6

The museum was not only to educate the people in revolutionary values. Furthermore, the workmanship was recognized and would act as study to new budding artists. The revolutionaries rejected works deemed subservient to the Ancien Régime and endorsed a more classical style. For example, Jacques-Louis David's technique, enshrined by his seminal painting, *Oath of the Horatii*. The museum would permit for apprentice to practice reproduction of the great masters works. This had not been permitted under the Ancien Régime, where the art galleries of the Luxembourg had been solely reserved for observation. It is within this context of aristocratic privilege that the revolutionaries sought to democratise the study of the arts.²⁵

The museum was to act as a vehicle for public instruction. The understanding of the didactic nature of art meant the republicans believed exposure to the fine arts could ensure the propagation of revolutionary values to the people of France. In many ways, the revolutionary thinking echoed D'Angivillier's project. The republican museum was to be a self-perpetuating project, for the contents of the museum would serve to preserve the values of the revolution for posterity. The museum would be a strong source of soft power for the new republican state. Different ideas on the formulation of a museums were proposed. For example, Jean-Baptiste-Pierre Lebrun illustrates his convictions on the value of a museum in his *Réflexion sur le muséum national*.

Il s'agit, Citoyens, de former un muséum, de le composer de tous les objets rares et précieux appartenant au ci-devant roi et aux émigrés. [...] Paris deviendra, pour ainsi dire, la capitale de l'univers, et, semblable à la mer à laquelle les fleuves viennent apporter le tribut de leurs eaux, il sera le point où se réunira tout l'or de l'Europe.²⁶

It is about, Citizens, forming a museum, to compose it from all the objects rare and precious belonging to the above king and to the émigré. [...] Paris will become, so to speak, the capital of the universe, and, like the sea in which the rivers bring the tribute of their waters, it will be the place where all the gold of Europe will meet.

Displaying art made accessible to foreign tourist would demonstrates revolutionary's adherence to high culture. Legitimizing the revolutionary state on the intellectual field still flushed with enlightenment ideals. Deviations to the royalist rhetoric on the use of art arose

²⁵ Leith, Propaganda in France 1750-1799, p.111

²⁶ Lebrun, Jean-Baptiste-Pierre. Reflexion. 1792. pp. 4-5

from Revolutionary aspirations and ideals. The revolutionaries were great admirers of the philosophes of the mid eighteenth century and they were convinced of the didactic values of art expounded by Voltaire and Diderot. Thus, the revolutionaries modelled their efforts in accord with the enlightenment tradition of didactic improvement; art was a vehicle of betterment for the observer. The creation of a dedicated space (museum) in which artworks could be viewed by the public to further educate them into being good citizens. What differed from earlier aspirations of moral betterment under Ancien Régime? Whereas the royalist project sought to aggrandise the status of the king by displaying his property as a symbol of prestige. The revolutionaries displayed the art explicitly as national property, belonging not to a privileged individual but to the people of France. Furthermore, the understanding of art as propaganda fed fears that the population would be duped by Ancien Régime symbolism. In order to instruct the people on their newfound freedom and to educate them into good republican "citoyens", despotic and superstitious images needed to be removed.

2.2. Revolutionary response to vandalism

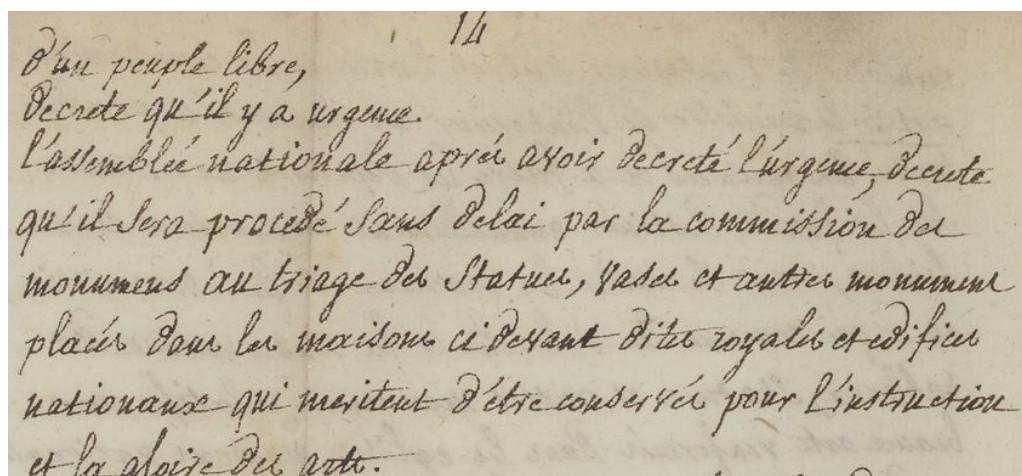
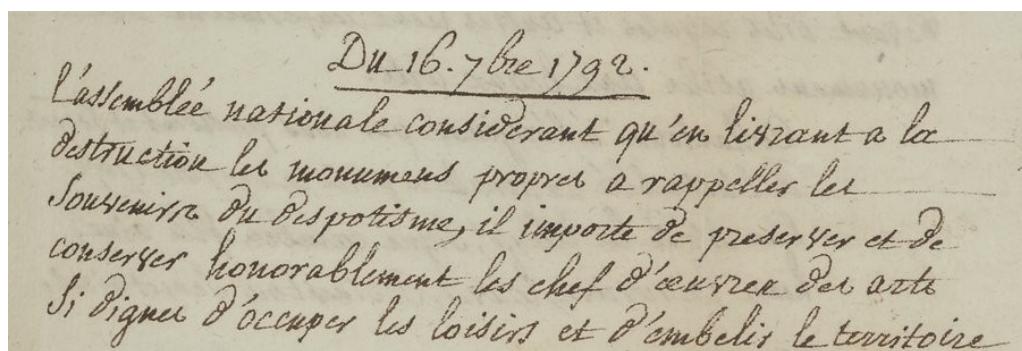
The fall of the monarchy led to a violent response against the display of royal symbols. On the 14th of August 1792 the legislative assembly decrees for "les monuments, restes de la féodalité, de quelque nature [qu'ils soit, seront] sans délai détruits", [The monuments, remains of feudalism, whatever their nature [which are, will be without delay destroyed].²⁷ Jacobin rhetoric on iconoclasm postulated that the erasure of despotic and superstitious symbols were paramount to the continued health of the revolutionary state. Artworks that depicted aspects of the Ancien Régime in a positive light was contrary to the values of the revolutionaries. The revolutionaries rejected the values that they perceived to personify feudal despotism. In this ideological context, symbols of the Ancien Régime were ugly reminders of archaic injustice. Even worst, according to didactic understanding of art, piece deemed despotic had the potential to perpetuate glorify the privileged and the elite. The republicans had underestimated the extent of public anger resulting from the king's escape attempt and perceived betrayal. The memories of slights and Ancien Régime injustices were revived by the monarch's apparent treason to the nation and, by extent, to the French people. Vengeance took the destructive shape of the hammer and chisel. Yet the reaction was so extreme and the level of damage so high that the state became alarmed. The excessive destruction of works of arts and royalist symbols prompted the revolutionaries to

²⁷ Poulot. Musée, Nation, Patrimoine, 1997. p. 136

safeguard artworks. The matter is brought to the attention of the National Assembly and a situation of emergency was declared.

While the revolutionary doctrine maintained that symbols of feudalism should be removed from public and political life, it is confronted with the paradox that many are present on monuments which are independently prized. The Convention explicitly states and emphasises both aspects of the dilemma and responds with emergency (an emergency decree, see Document 1). The decree balances the need to execute the removal of despotic symbols and the preservation of monuments "deserving of conservation for the instruction and glory of the arts". In its instruction, while waiting for the proper treatment of national properties, the Convention emphasises the need to protect them (Document 2).

a)



b) Du 16 7tre 1792.

L'assemblée national considerant qu'en livrant a la destruction les monumens propres a rappeler les souvenir du despotisme, il importe de préserver et de conserver honorablement les chef d'œuvre des art si digne d'occuper les loisir et d'embellir le territoire d'un peuple libre, decree qu'il y a urgence. L'assemblée national après avoir decrete l'urgence, decrete qu'il sera procedé sans delai par la commission des monument au triage des statues, vases et autres monumens places

dans les maisons ci devant dite royal et edifices nationaux qui méritent d'etre conserver pour l'instruction des arts.

- c) The national assembly in considering the delivery to destruction of monuments capable of recalling memories of despotism, it is of import to honourably preserver and conserve the works of art worthy of occupying the leisure's and embellishing the territory of a free people, decrees that there is an emergency. The national assembly having decreed the emergency, decrees that the commission of monuments will proceed without delay to the sorting of statues, vases and other monuments found in houses designated royal and national buildings deserving of conservation for the instruction and glory of the arts.

Document 1. a) Excerpt of decree by the convention²⁸, b) Transcription, c) Translation (ours).

a) art. 3. en attendant que les monuments qu'il importe de conserver aient pu être transportés dans les dépôts qui leur seront préparés, les administrations seront chargées de veiller spécialement à ce qu'il n'y soit apporté aucun dommage par les citoyens peu instruits ou par des hommes mal intentionnés.

- b) Art 3. En attendant que les monuments qu'il importe de conserver aient pu être transporter dans les depots qui leur seront préparés, les administrations seront chargées de veiller spécialement a ce qu'il n'y soit apporté aucun dommage par les citoyens peu instruit ou par des hommes mal intentionnés.
- c) Art 3.until the monuments which are to be conserved have been transported to the depots prepared for them, the administrations will be charged with to especially ensure that no harm be brought by poorly educated or by bad intentioned men.

²⁸ France. Convention nationale. Extrait du procés verbal de l'assemblée nationale législative et de celui de la convention nationale. Du 11. aout 1792. l'an premier de la republique francaise. 1792. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10538381m>. Accessed 24 Sept. 2022 .pp.13-14

Document 2. a) Article 3. National Convention minutes 11 August 1792²⁹, b) Transcription, c) Translation (ours).

Greater responsibility was placed upon the monument commissions in response to the anxiety brought on by excessive iconoclasm. The national convention and national legislative assembly passed a number of measures and decrees aiming to protect artworks and penalise its destruction. The first of which was on the 6th of June 1793, the National convention decreed two years of prison for mutilating sculptures in the Tuileries gardens after an address by Joseph Lakanal.

...Citoyens, les monuments des beaux-arts qui embellissent un grand nombre de bâtiments nationaux reçoivent tous les jours les outrages de l'aristocratie ; des chefs-d'œuvre sans prix sont brisés ou mutilés ; les arts pleurent ces pertes irréparables. Il est temps que la Convention arrête ces funestes excès : déjà elle a adopté une mesure de rigueur pour la conservation des morceaux précieux de sculpture qui décorent le jardin national des Tuileries. Le Comité d'instruction vous propose de généraliser votre décret et de l'étendre à toutes les propriétés nationales elles appartiennent à tous les citoyens en général ; elles ne sont à aucun d'eux en particulier c'est donc les droits de la cité entière à la main que je vous demande de protéger les arts contre les nouvelles pertes dont ils sont menacés. Je vous propose en conséquence le projet de décret suivant : La Convention nationale, ouï le rapport de son Comité d'instruction publique, décrète la peine de deux ans de fer contre quiconque dégradera les monuments des arts dépendant des propriétés nationales. Ce projet de décret est adopté.³⁰

...Citizens, the fine art monuments which embellish a great number of national buildings receive every day the outrages of the aristocracy; priceless works of art are broken or mutilated; the arts cry the irreplaceable losses. It is time that the convention puts a stop to these fatal excesses: Already she has adopted a

²⁹ France. Convention nationale. Extrait du procés verbal de l'assemblée nationale législative et de celui de la convention nationale. Du 11. aout 1792. l'an premier de la république française. 1792. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10538381m> Accessed 24 Sept. 2022. p.14

³⁰ Procès-verbaux du Comité d'instruction publique de la Convention nationale. Tome 1. Ed Guillaume, M. J. Imprimerie National, Paris, 1891. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k29288b>. Accessed 22 Sept, 2022. p.478

rigorous measure for the conservation of precious pieces of sculpture which decorate the national Tuileries Garden. The Committees instruction proposes to generalise your decrees and extend to all national properties; they belong to the generality of citizens; They do not belong to anyone in particular it is thus the rights of the entire city at stake that I ask you to protect the arts against new losses with which they are threatened. Consequently, I propose to you the draft decree as follows: The national Convention, hears the report of its Committee of public instruction, decrees the penalty of 2 years of prison for anyone who would degrade art monuments belong to national property. This draft decree is adopted.

The rhetoric of anti-vandalism was growing. Lines of reasoning were developed alongside the employment of state authority to curb destructive behaviours of the people. Lakanal describes the *bien nationaux* as collective property of the nation when he says “national properties[; they] belong to the citizens in general; they belong to none of them in particular”. In 1793, museums have become public institutions that display collections owned by the public. This concept of public ownership of monuments, national properties and so on is now established as a cornerstone of the revolutionary theory of museums.

Whereas iconoclasm was at first lauded as the revolutionary act of purging despotic symbols from the new order to acts of at best the misinformed and at worst malicious intentions. The act of defacing monuments was the antithesis to Republican rationality. Acts of vandalism had become counter revolutionary.

2.3. First commission: La Commission des monumens

By focusing on conservation and storage of artworks, the revolutionaries fortified the burgeoning museum project. The supply lines and infrastructure that had been established were reinforced. Art was to be safeguarded in depots, including the Louvre, for later dissemination to the departments. As such, revolutionary vandalism acted as the spur for revolutionary efforts of conservation, bolstered the museum project.

The absorption of church owned assets amounted to a significant quantity of art. The church's' role as an institution in the access to art within ancient Regime France ceased following the seizure of church property by the newly formed revolutionary state in November 1789. The art became *bien nationaux*, national property in the public domain. The property of émigré, the royal academies and of the crown son followed.

It was in the context on this sudden influx of goods that the Assemblée nationale formed a number of commissions with the purpose of sorting and cataloguing the new public goods (Document 3). The Commission des monument was established in 1790. It would later be replaced by the *Commission temporaire des arts* on the 1st of September 1793. We will come back to this second commission in the next section.

In December of 1790, the Commission des monument laid out a report that envisaged putting to educational use the newly nationalised art. It was to be made easily accessible to the public across the nation, in repositories in each of the departments. The repositories would be named *museums* and be homed within newly the abandoned churches.³¹ The revolutionaries sought to demystify the ancient regime's religious and monarchist institutions. Repurposing symbols of clerical or royal power was both pragmatic and a powerful symbol of the revolutionary's republicanism. The property of privileged institutions was repurposed and put to the use for the public good.

a)_

3.^o Elle charge les directoires des départemens de faire dresser l'état & de veiller, par tous les moyens qui feront en leur pouvoir, à la conservation des monumens des églises & maisons devenues domaines nationaux, qui se trouvent dans l'étendue de leur territoire ; & lesdits états seront remis au comité d'aliénation.

4.^o Elle commet au même soin, pour les nombreux monumens du même genre qui existent à Paris, pour tous les dépôts de chartres, titres, papiers & bibliothèques, la muni-

cipalité de cette ville, qui s'affociera, pour éclairer sa surveillance, des membres choisis des différentes académies.

b)

3.0 Elle charge les directoires des départemens de faire dresser l'état & de veiller, par tous les moyens qui seront en leur pouvoir, à la conservation des monumens des églises & maisons devenues domaines nationaux, qui se trouvent dans l'étendue de leur territoire ; & lesdits états seront remis au comité d'aliénation.

4.0 Elle commet au même soin, pour les nombreux monumens du même genre qui existent à Paris, pour tous les dépôts de chartres, titres, papiers & bibliothèques, la muni-cipalité de cette ville, qui s'airociera, pour éclairer sa surveillance, des membres choisis des différentes académies.

³¹ McClellan. Inventing the Louvre. 1999. p. 92

- c) 3.0 The commission charges the departmental directories to establish the state and to oversee, by any means within their power, the conservation of monuments of churches and houses which have become national property, which are found in the stretch of their territory; & said state shall be handed over to the committee of alienation.
- 4.0 The commission commits in the same care, for the numerous monuments of the same type which are found in Paris, for all deposits of charters, titles, papers & libraries, the municipality of said town, which will associate itself, to illuminate its surveillance, members chosen from the different academies.

Document 3: a) Articles 3 and 4 Decree of the 19 October 1790³², b) Transcription, c) Translation (ours).

The revolutionary decrees do not define the term “Monumens”. However, we can read from the way they refer to what they intend that a monument is understood in a sense that is physical and temporal. In the underlying philosophy of the revolutionaries, a monument is essentially a symbol, it designates something about the past. Monuments are preserved because they are deemed to represent societal, cultural or political values of significance. They should be preserved in virtue of having this character of historical evidence.

Monuments include buildings and objects, including artificial design with intentional attribution of historical meaning (statues to celebrate a person, event) or by as a result of a matter of facts and natural processes (historical buildings of a certain time period just being old). A report on the Commission’s conservation efforts lists explicitly the main types of objects counted as monuments or deemed relevant to the Commission’s mission (Appendix 2). In the revolutionary era, these objects are deemed to possess important artistic (they inspire) or educational (they show) values which both are conducive to the betterment of humanity and makes them worthy of preservation. All confiscated properties of the church and nobility count as monuments yet the revolutionary conservation administration will be faced with the task of selecting the monuments that possess significant potential for the advancement of the arts and sciences. Furthermore, the consequence of this categorization and conservation of existing objects allowed the revolutionaries to affirm which existing values were and were not of importance to the new revolutionary society.

³² France. Assemblée nationale constituante (1789-1791). *Collection générale des loix, proclamations, instructions, et autres actes du pouvoir exécutif. Tome 2, Partie 1 / , publiés pendant l'Assemblée nationale constituante et législative, depuis la convocation des Etats généraux jusqu'au 31 décembre 1791. 1792-1794.* <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k96025723> . Accessed 24 Sept. 2022.

While the museum project saw its origins in the seizure of church property, decreed by the national convention on the second of November 1789, the sudden acquisition of such a vast trove of goods was not without issue. The republican appointed several commissions charged with the duty of overseeing the proper processing of the *bien nationaux*. The commissions were appointed the herculean task of inventorying the newly acquired national property of the church, swiftly joined by émigré aristocrats' property. With the Commission's work, a process of institutional consolidation began, with the prime events highlighted in the presented extracts. By analyzing the *procés verbaux* [minutes] of the monument commissions, we can see bureaucratic process that led to the synthesis of a revolutionary museum project. In 1792, the *Commission des monumens* submitted a report of its activities (Document 4).

- a)
L'arrangement de tous ces monumens, la restauration de quelques autres, tel est le resultat des travaux effectifs de la commission.
- b) L'arrangement de tous ces monumens, la restauration de quelque autres, tel est le resultat des travaux effectifs de la commission.
- c) The arrangement of all these monuments, the restoration of several others, such are the results of the effective works of the commission

Document 4. a) Result of the commission's work³³, b) Transcription, c) Translation (ours).

The commission reported the results of its efforts, listing the conservation and even restoration of numerous types of monuments. It set the standard for the duties of the future arts commissions under the republic. Before 1792, commissions existed that had been created both by the Constituent Assembly and the Legislative Assembly, on 18 Octobre 1792, all commissions are united within a single one (Document 5). Furthermore, this centralization of conservation efforts under a single commission set the number of its members.

³³ Formation de la commission des monumens et resultat de son travail. Ed. Deloynes, Jean-Charles.

1790-1791, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b105383805> . Accessed 24 Sept. 2022. p.9.

a)

1860

*Decret portant reunion des commissions établies pour la conservation des monumens des arts et des Sciences
18. 8bre 1792.*

La convention nationale, ouï le rapport des commissaires établis pour la conservation des monumens des arts et des Sciences, réunis par le Decret du 16. 7bre dernier, Decrete ce qui suit:

Art. 1^{er}. les commissions établies par l'assemblée constituante et par l'assemblée législative pour la conservation des monumens des arts et des Sciences reformeront à l'avenir qu'une seule commission composée de 33 membres.

b

Decret portant reunion des commissions établis pour la conservation des monumens des arts et des sciences. 18 8tre 1792. [...] La convention national, ouï le rapport des commissaires établis pour la conservation des monumens des arts et des sciences, réunis par le decree du 16 7tre dernier, decree ce qui suit : Art 1^{er}. Les commissions établis par l'assemblée constituant et par l'assemblée legislative pour la conservation des monumens des arts et des science se formeront a l'avenir qu'une seule commission composée de 33 membres.

c)

Decree for the reunion of the commissions established for the conservation of monuments of the arts of the sciences. 18 8tre 1792. [...] The national convention, hears the report of the commissaires established for the conservation of the monuments of the arts and of the sciences, gathered by the decree of last 16 7tre (June) decrees as follows: Art 1st. The commissions established by the Constituent assembly and by the Legislative assembly for the conservation of the monuments of the arts and of the sciences will form in the future only one commission composed of 33 members.

Document 5. a) Excerpt of decree on the establishment of the monuments Commissions ³⁴, b) Transcription, c) Translation (ours).

³⁴ Decret portant reunion des commissions établies pour la conservation des monumens des arts et des sciences 18. 8bre 1792. Deloynes, Jean-Charles, Transcriiteur. 1792.

<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b105383822> . Accessed 24 Sept. 2022. p.19

a)

Art. 2. les Depositoires et gardes des tableaux, dessins,
Statues qui ont été nommée par la commission du 11.
Aout, en vertu du decret duj. jour, seront logés au louvre
et soumis au régime qui sera déterminé par le

ministre de l'intérieur, d'après l'assis de la commission.
art. 3. le ministre de l'intérieur est autorisé à prendre
toutes les mesures et à faire les dépenses nécessaires
sur les fonds destinés annuellement aux arts et aux
sciences, pour seconder les travaux de la commission,
en ce qui concerne la recherche et la conservation des
tableaux, statues et autres monumens relatifs aux
beaux arts renfermés dans les églises, maisons nationales
et dans celles des emigrés, lesquels objets seront recueillis
pour la répartition en être faite entre le muséum de
Paris et ceux qui pourront être établis dans les autres
départemens.

- b) art 2. Les depositoires et gardes des tableaux, dessins, statues qui ont été nommée) par la commission du 11. Aout, en vertu du decret du jour, seront logés au louvre et soumis au regime qui sera determiné par le ministre de l'interieur, d'après l'assis de la commission.

art 3. Le ministre de l'interieur est autorisé apprendre toutes les mesures et a faire les depense nécessaire sur les fonds destines annuellement aux arts et aux sciences, pour seconder les travaux de la commission, en ce qui concerne la recherche et la conservation des tableaux, statues et autres monumens relatifs aux beaux arts renfermés dans les eglises, maisons nationales et dans celles des emigrés, les quels objets seront recueillis pour la répartition en etre faite entre le museum de Paris et ceux qui pourront êtres etablis dans les autres departemens.

- c) Art 2. The depositaries and collections of paintings, drawings, statues which have been named by the commission of the 11 August, in light of the day's decree, will be lodged at the louvre et submitted to the regime which shall be determined by the minister of the interior, according to the commission's reunion.

art 3. The minister of the interieur is authorised to be made privy all the measures and to make the necessary expenses with the annual funds intended for the arts and the sciences, to support the commissions work, in what concern the research and the conservation of paintings, statues and other monuments relating to the fine arts locked away in churches, national houses and those of the emigres, these objects are to be collected for the repartition to be done between the museum of Paris and those which could be established in the other departments.

Document 6. a) Articles 2 and 3 of National Convention minutes 11 August 1792³⁵, b) Transcription, c) Translation (ours).

The commission is headquartered in Paris, specifically in the Louvre (Document 6). One year later, it remains well established there (Document 7). This localisation of the commission in Paris is emblematic of the centralisation of institutions under the revolution.

a)

4. la commission s'assemblera dans une des salles du palais, ou le museum de la république doit être établi. les inventaires, procès verbaux et autres actes relatifs au travail de la commission y demeureront déposés.

b

4. La commission s'assemblera dans une des salles du palais, ou le museum de la république doit être établi. Les inventaires, procès verbaux et autres actes relatifs au travail de la commission y demeureront déposés.

c)

4. The commission is to gather in one of the rooms of the palace, where the museum of the republic is to be established. Inventories, minutes and other acts relative to the work of the commission will remain deposited there.

Document 7. a) Article 4 of the decree on the creation of a single united arts commission³⁶, b) Transcription, c) Translation (ours).

Finally, the commission is given a permanent staging ground in what is to become the official museum of the republic. Eventually, the Louvre will become the 'central museum', where

³⁵ France. Convention nationale. Extrait du procès verbal de l'assemblée nationale législative et de celui de la convention nationale. Du 11. aout 1792. l'an premier de la république française. 1792.

<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10538381m> Accessed 24 Sept. 2022. pp.12-13

³⁶ Décret portant réunion des commissions établies pour la conservation des monumens des arts et des sciences 18. 8bre 1792. Deloynes, Jean-Charles, Transcripteur. 1792.

<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b105383822> . Accessed 24 Sept. 2022. p.20

also the centre of the conservation project is located, and the language used by the museum project reflecting and symbolically reinforcing the underlying organisational model.

This central position of the commission was not without shortcomings. On the 21st of November 1792, the first Commission reported the needs to conduct important inventories throughout the territory. In the monuments commission's report, they list their extensive work in Paris and cite the needs to repeat it in each department, yet state that due to current circumstances were unable to travel.³⁷ As we have seen above, the national assembly and national convention passed decrees which centralise the commission in Paris. It also repeatedly issues calls. In the form of decrees, for departmental municipalities to use any and all means at their disposal to undertake the urgent conservation work. By the end of the commission des monuments reported that the overabundance of artworks in Paris necessitated a nationwide redistribution: "Faire refluer dans les départements la surabondance des richesses nationales concernant les arts qui se trouvent à Paris." [Bring back to the departments the overabundance of national riches concerning the arts which are to be found in Paris.] and the "compensation pour procure a cette ville les chef d'œuvre de la première class dans les département." [compensation in procuring for this town the artworks of first class in the departments].³⁸ The *Commission des monumens* was left fighting an uphill battle against the ever-increasing amount of catalogued goods.

2.4. Second commission: Commission temporaire des arts

The first commission had difficulty contending with the widespread vandalism; its assertion regularly ignored by local authorities and agents. Following the suppression of the royal academies on the 8th of August 1793, the convention eventually appointed thirty-six "commissaires" to form the *Commission des arts* on the 1st of September 1793. Its mission was to sort, catalogue and store the goods which had formerly belonged to the academies. However, this put in it direct conflict with the Commission des Monuments. A report by the deputy Mathieu argues that despite the significant zeal, diligence and cooperation with the committee of public instruction, the *Commission des monumens* had exhausted itself past its

³⁷ Poulot. Musée, Nation, Patrimoine, 1997. p. 129

³⁸ Ibid. p. 129

prime.³⁹ The *Commission des monumens* had fallen out of favour and was replaced by the *Commission temporaire des arts* in December of 1793.

The *Commission temporaire des art* inherited its predecessors' responsibilities. It remained centralised in Paris and spent most of its time managing the goods of the capital. It worked in close tandem with the *Comité d'instruction publique*. The second Commission designated a new inventorying system, creating depots intended for specific categories (for example, paintings, sculptures, scientific instruments, musical items). Unlike its predecessor, there was a greater focus on science monuments. It also specified depots for books, manuscripts and musical items. The Commission's most significant contribution to conservation efforts was the creation of a uniform nationwide model for museum and conservation projects. In March 1794 the commission issued to the departments the *Instructions sur la manière d'inventorier et de conserver dans l'étendue de la république tous les objets qui peuvent servir aux arts, aux sciences et à l'enseignement*. However, this sudden comprehensive initiative did not alter the long trend of administrative centralisation in the capital. The departmental storage depots to be organised in the Parisian model. Furthermore, it admonished the excesses and misguided nature of vandalism and expressed the need to preserve books and scientific objects. It finished its *instructions* with a reminder of a decree of the 3rd Brumaire year II (Thursday 24 of October 1793). The last page of the instruction summarises the ideals of public instruction which motivates the mission of conservation originating from the Convention and that led to these instructions (Document 8).

³⁹ France. Convention nationale. Rapport fait à la Convention au nom du Comité d'instruction publique, : Par Mathieu, Député. Le 28 Frimaire, l'an second de la République française. Imprimé par ordre de la Convention nationale. 1793 <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b105383879>. Accessed 28 Sept. 2022. pp.63-67

a) que a proposé par l'organe de Romine, et la Convention a adopté le 3 brumaire de l'an second, un décret conservateur (1), par lequel il est défendu d'enlever, de détruire, de mutiler et d'altérer en aucune manière, sous prétexte de faire disparaître les signes de féodalité et de royauté, dans les bibliothèques, dans les collections, cabinets, musées, ou chez les artistes, les livres, dessins et gravures, les tableaux, les statues, les bas-reliefs, les médailles, les vases, les antiquités, les modèles et autres objets qui intéressent les arts, l'histoire ou l'enseignement (2).

Cette loi veut que les monumens publics, transportables et qui portent quelques-uns des signes proscrits, qu'on ne pourroit enlever sans leur faire un dommage réel, soient déposés dans le musée le plus voisin, pour y servir à l'instruction nationale (3).

Et l'article X invite les sociétés populaires et tous les bons citoyens à surveiller avec le plus grand zèle l'exécution de ces mesures (4).

En obéissant à de telles lois, et en suivant les avis que cette instruction contient, toutes nos richesses, toutes nos conquêtes littéraires seront inventoriées et conservées, et les législateurs s'en serviront utilement pour hâter les progrès de la raison, sans laquelle il n'est point de liberté.

b) ... et la Convention a adopté le 3 brumaire de l'an second, un décret conservateur (1), par lequel il est défendu d'enlever, de détruire, de mutiler et d'altérer en aucune manière, sous prétexte de faire disparaître les signes de féodalité et de royauté dans les bibliothèques, dans les collections, cabinets, musées, ou chez les artistes les livres, dessins et gravure, les tableaux, les statue, les bas -reliefs, les médailles, les vases, les antiquités, les modelés et autre objets qui intéressent les arts, l'histoire ou l'enseignement (2). Cette loi veut que les monumens publics, transportables et qui portent quelques-uns des signes proscrits, qu'on ne pourroit enlever sans leur faire un dommage réel, soient déposés dans le musée le plus voisin, pour y servir à l'instruction nationale (3).

Et l'article X invites les sociétés populaires et tous les bons citoyen a surveiller ace-le plus grand zèle l'exécution de ces mesures (4). En obéissant a de telles lois, et en suivant les avis que cette instruction contient toutes nos richesses, toute nos conquête littéraire seront inventoriées et conservées, et les législateur s'en serviront utilement pour hâter les progrès de la raison, sans laquelle il n'est point de liberté.

c) ... and the convention adopted the 3rrd Brumaire of the Year II, a conservationist decree (1), by which it is forbidden to remove, to destroy, to mutilate and to alter in any way, under pretext of erasing signs of feudalism and royalism, in the libraries, in the collections, cabinets, museums, or for artistes the books, drawings et engravings, the paintings, the statues, the bas-reliefs, the medals, the vases, the antiquities, the models and other objects of interest to the arts, history or instruction (2). This law wants that public monuments, transportable and which carry some of the prohibited signs, that cannot be removed without causing real damages, be stored in the closest neighbouring museum, as to serve national instruction (3). And Article X invites the popular societies and all good citizens to watch over with the greatest of zeal the execution of these measures (4). By obeying such laws, and in following the notices these instructions contain, all our riches, all our literary conquest shall be inventoried and conserved, and the legislators will make good use of them to hasten the progress of reason, without which there is no liberty.

Document 8. a) Instruction sur la manière d'inventorier et de conserver⁴⁰, b) Transcription, c) Translation (ours).

Despite the zeal made clear by the extensive nature of the *Instructions*, the *Commission temporaire* scope of activities mostly remained limited to Paris. With a few notable expeditions undertaken by commission members, the majority of departments remained out of actionable reach. In spite of the difficulties encountered in its work, the Commission's increasing organisational sophistication demonstrated the progressive institutionalisation of the conservation project. The extent of the commissions network and detail of its instructions demonstrate the maturity of the revolutionary conservation project. As the stakes heightened in the face of increasing complexity of sorting and the threat of vandalism, the Commission's work became much more important to justify. Its success would affirm the legitimacy of the revolutionaries' creation of national property. The emphasis on public instruction and the value of artistic, scientific and historical monuments for the progress of

⁴⁰ Bouquier, Gabriel. Félix. Lindet, Vicq-d'Azyr, Thomas. *Instruction sur la manière d'inventorier et de conserver, dans toute l'étendue de la République, tous les objets qui peuvent servir aux arts, aux sciences et à l'enseignement, proposée par la Commission temporaire des arts, et adoptée par le Comité d'instruction publique de la Convention nationale.*, l'Imprimerie nationale, Paris, 1793. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k6575239f>. Accessed 28 Sept. 2022. p.70

reason upheld revolutionary ideals of public instruction. Indeed, the work of the *Commission temporaire* and the *Commission des monumens* before it was to secure the monuments worthy to be displayed for the benefit of the people. Their work was to establish the supply lines intended to permit the optimum success of the museum project.

3. Models of museum projects

There are initially 3 types of models. The first two are both institutional and mandated models (mandated by the Assembly and thus commission). But they differ in that the first model is to re-appropriate something existing while the second is to create something where there is nothing. I argue that there is a third model which differ from both in which creative license is given – or negotiated by individuals or collectives that build on existing depots in order to use them to create museums that do not necessarily fall in line with institutional directions. To some extent, the museums of the second sort start as ones of the third. The third model we have in mind is one of a typical museum Projects perhaps illustrated only once by Lenoir. Hence, we will spend a little bit longer on it.

3.1. Pre-existing (royal) institution appropriated by the revolution

In this model, the museum, as an institution, and its residing collection exist already, and the revolution appropriates both (museum and collection) and re-appropriates their purpose (to give them a new function and justification).

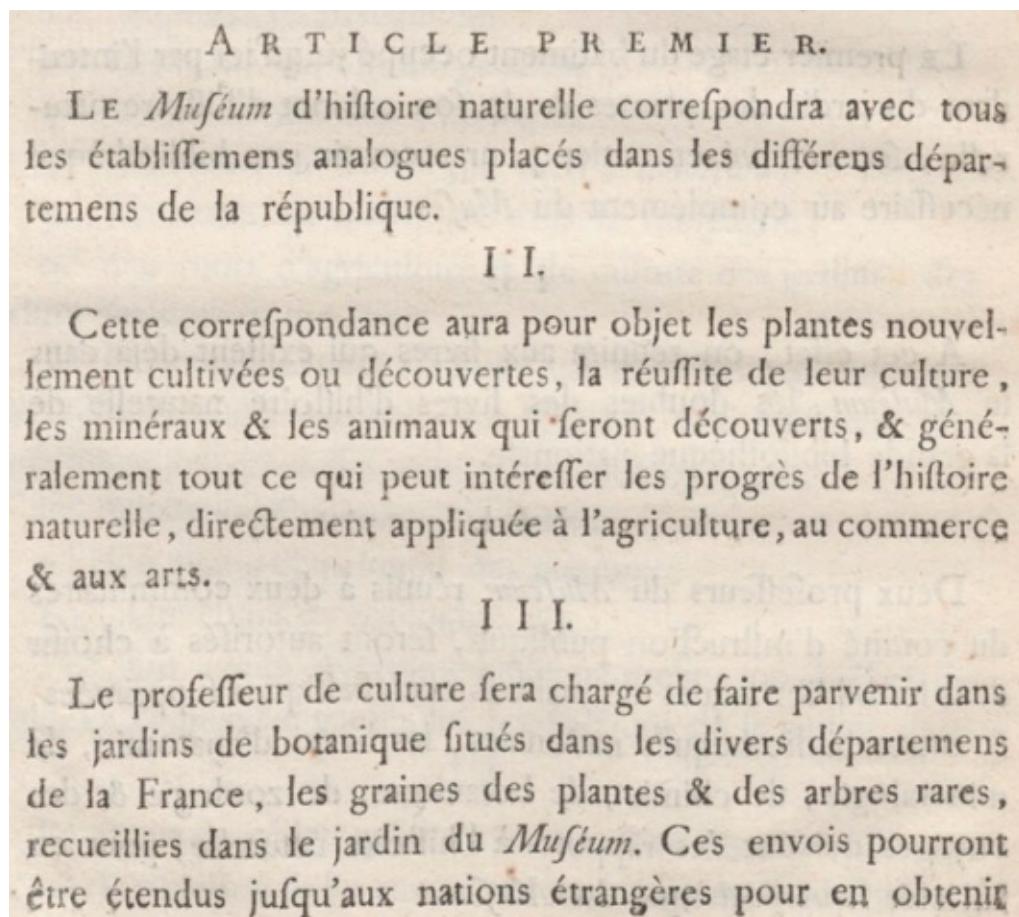
This model is emblematically represented by the Louvre during the early revolutionary period. The Louvre remained under royal supervision until the fall of the monarchy in 1792. The prestige of the king had remained following the events of 1789, the republicans having kept the king in high regard, blaming their discontent on incompetent and misleading ministers, and thus absolving Louis XVI of any wrongdoings. Following the fall of the monarchy and the invasion of the Tuileries palace, the king's property, among which his art collection, were seized and declared *bien nationaux*. Up until that point, the Louvre had been under the royal architect's jurisdiction, and little had been done besides minimal refurbishment. The republicans were aware of the Louvre's history with museum projects and sought to fulfil such a project on republican terms. The act of establishing a *Museum de la République* [Museum of the republic], would be an act of emancipation from the crown. Furthermore, the creation of the museum was an extension of the act of making seized art into national patrimony.

The Louvre was opened as the National Museum on the 10th of August 1793. Necessarily it was created during the revolution and so it is a revolutionary museum in the sense of Definition 1. The change in authority from ancient regime monarchy to Jacobin republicanism and the subsequent reordering of society meant that previous efforts to utilise the royal art collection for furthering the crown's interest was reframed to fit republican

aims. The Commission's role in sorting and cataloguing the newly seized *bien nationaux* including what was to be kept, repurposed, or disposed of.

The development of the Natural history museum [Muséum d'histoire naturelle] is another example of the revolutionary appropriation of royal institutions dedicated to conservation. Officially founded by national Convention decree the 10th of June 1793 with the mission to instruct the public, the Muséum's collection was created through the absorption of the Royal botanical gardens the *Jardin du Roi* [the king's garden]. According to O'Connor (in a review of Spary's Utopia's Garden), the survival of the Jardin, in contrast to other royal institutions, is due to the complexity of the scientific and taxonomical work involved. This was the result of "systematic stripping of plants" from aristocratic and church gardens.⁴¹ The repossession had an extensive character that resulted in a diverse collection with which the revolutionaries were left to deal (Document 9).

a)



b) ARTICLE PREMIER.

⁴¹ O'Connor, John T. *Utopian Studies*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2002, pp. 223–25. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20718527>. Accessed 3 Oct. 2022. pp.223-224

Le *Muséum d'histoire naturelle* correspondra avec les établissemens analogues placés dans les différens départemens de la république.

II.

Correspondance aura pour objet les plantes nouvellement cultivées ou découvertes, la réussite de leur culture, les minéraux & les animaux qui seront découverts, & généralement tout ce qui peut intéresser les progrès de l'histoire naturelle, directement appliquée à l'agriculture, au commerce & aux arts.

III.

Le professeur de culture sera chargé de faire parvenir dans les jardins de botanique situées dans les divers départemens de la France, les graines des plantes & des arbres rares, recueillies dans le jardin du *Muséum*. Ces envois pourront être étendus jusqu'aux nations étrangères pour en obtenir [...]

c) ARTICLE FIRST

The natural history Museum will correspond to the analogous establishments placed in the different departments of the republic.

II.

Correspondence will have for subject newly cultivated or discovered plants, the success of their culture, the minerals & animals that are discovered, & generally all that can interest the progress of natural history, directly applied to agriculture, to trade & to the arts.

III.

The culture professor will be tasked with sending to the botanical gardens situated in the various departments of France, the seeds of rare plants & trees, gathered in the garden of the museum. These shipments could be extended to foreign nations as to obtain [...]

Document 9. a) Décret de la Convention nationale du 10 juin 1793⁴², b) Transcription, c) Translation (ours).

Similarly, to the Louvre's connection to departmental depot and museums, the Muséum d'histoire naturelle was attached to a nationwide network of departmental natural history establishments, including botanical gardens and museums. The Muséum was to collect botanical, mineral and animal specimens, "qui peut intéresser les progrès de l'histoire

⁴² France. Convention nationale. Décret de la Convention nationale du 10 juin 1793, l'an second de la République françoise, relatif à l'organisation du jardin national des plantes & du cabinet d'histoire naturelle, sous le nom de Muséum d'histoire naturelle Imprimerie nationale, Paris, 1793.

<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k6472815x>. Accessed 3 Oct. 2022. p.6

naturelle, directement appliquée à l'agriculture, au commerce & aux arts” [which could interest the progress of natural history, directly applied to agriculture, to commerce & to the arts].⁴³ The Parisian Muséum was to distribute its own cultivated specimens to the other departments.⁴⁴

3.2. Depot: Newly created institutions

This model is largely instantiated by departmental and regional museums. They start as depots but they are meant to become more. There were initially no departmental museums, and a place (the depot) is created (sometimes by appropriation) to store a collection appropriated too by the revolution with a newly created purpose. It is institutionally organised and mandated. These institutions were designated provisional and were intended to safeguard the *bien nationaux* until their contents could be processed by the conservation administration. The collections of the departmental museums of this period were eclectic. Consisting of general works of art, derived principally from the state or objects issued from revolutionary confiscations aswell as objects relating to local history and the works of local artist.⁴⁵

Initially, there were no plans for departmental museums. Houssaye attributes the initial idea to the minister Roland based on his address on the 3rd of November 1792, in which he formulates the initial concept for a departmental museum.⁴⁶ For example, on the 19th of December 1793 Toulouse saw the convent of the Augustins turned into the Muséum provisoire du Midi de la République. Its original collection was comprised of the nationalised property of the Toulouse clergy and of the Royal academy of the arts and sciences [*Académie royale des sciences et des arts*].⁴⁷ It was officially opened to the public on the 27th of august 1795.

⁴³ Ibid. p.6

⁴⁴ Ibid. Article III.

⁴⁵ Camille Doutremépuich, “L'appropriation du modèle du Louvre par les musées de province au tournant du xix^e siècle”, *Les Cahiers de l'École du Louvre*. 2017, <http://journals.openedition.org/cel/794>. Accessed 04 Sep 2022. p.5

⁴⁶ Houssaye, Henry. “Les Musées de Province: I. Les Origines et L'organisation.” *Revue Des Deux Mondes (1829-1971)*, vol. 38, no. 3, 1880, pp. 546–65. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44752758>. Accessed 4 Oct. 2022. pp.549-550

⁴⁷ Poulot. Musée, Nation, Patrimoine. 1997. p. 119

The reappropriation of former church buildings is indicator of revolutionary pragmatism. In responding to the state of emergency declared by the national convention in the name of conservation, empty church buildings acted as an opportune clutch for those lacking resources. Ideologically, it represented the rejection of religious superstition and installation of republican secularity. However, in some departments, a certain amount of syncretism between revolutionary ideals and Catholicism emerged. Dominique Poulot highlights how the city of Troy designated its cathedral as both museum depot and place of worship in 1790. Poulot attributes these sentiments to newly emerging ideas of commemoration and collective national ownership.⁴⁸

3.3. 'Any other': Atypical depot

Once the commission had inventoried monuments, they were sent to dedicated depots awaiting distribution or merely to be conserved.

The provisional Petit-Augustin depot [*dépôt provisoire national de la rue des Petits-Augustins*], was one such depot established in Paris. The depot was opened in November 1790 and officialised by decree on the 18th of October 1792. Alexandre Lenoir was assigned the depots director by the Monument Commission. The depot quickly became Lenoir's pet project. The director arranged the objects entrusted to him in public expositions, with the aim of educating people in the history of the nation. Lenoir went beyond passively accepting items allocated to the depot, and actively sought out various artifacts and artworks he desired to add to his collection. In a sense the depot took on a life as its own. From independent public expositions and Lenoir's personal acquisitions the provisional depot became the director's passion project (Document 10).

⁴⁸ Ibid. p.119

a)

Nota. Ces morceaux que j'ai déterré , pour ainsi dire , de chez l'héritière de Richelieu , sont , en sculpture , aussi précieux que quelques tableaux ignorés ou cachés , et que mon zèle pour les arts que je professé , et mon dévouement à ma place , m'ont fait découvrir et restituer à la nation : (comme le peuvent attester des citoyens commissaires de la commission des monumens , parmi lesquels je nomme avec reconnaissance le citoyen Leblond , dont les conseils et l'amitié m'ont été d'un grand secours , et à qui la Nation sera redevable de beaucoup d'objets intéressans rassemblés dans ce dépôt .)

- b) Ces morceaux que j'ai déterré, pour ainsi dire, de chez l'héritière de Richelieu, sont, en sculpture, aussi précieux que quelques tableaux ignorés ou cachés, et que mon zèle pour les arts que je professé, et mon dévouement a ma place, m'ont fait découvrir et restituer à la nation : (comme le peuvent attester des citoyens commissaires de la commission des monumens, parmi lesquels je nomme avec reconnaissance le citoyen Leblond, dont les conseils et l'amitié m'ont été d'un grands secours, et à qui la nation sera redevable de beaucoup d'objets intéressans rassembles dans ce dépôt.)
- c) These pieces that I have uncovered, so to say, from the heiress of Richelieu, are, for sculpture, just as precious as several unknown or hidden paintings, and which my zeal for the arts for which I profess, and my devotion to my position, have led me to discover and restore to the nation : (as can be attested to by the citizen commissaries of the monuments commission, among which I name with great gratitude the citizen Leblond, who's counsel and friendship have been of great aide et to whom the nation is indebted by many interesting artifacts brough together in this depot.)

Document 10. a) Notice succincte des objets de sculpture et architecture⁴⁹, b) Transcription, c) Translation (ours).

⁴⁹Lenoir, Alexandre. Notice succincte des objets de sculpture et architecture, : réunis au dépôt provisoire national, rue des Petits-Augustins, par Alexandre Lenoir, garde dudit dépôt. De l'Imprimerie de Desenne, rue ci-devant Royale, butte Saint-Roch, no 25. Paris, 1793.
<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10538385d> Accessed 26 Sept. 2022. pp. 11-12

Lenoir's enthusiasm is clear, his work is his passion. He not only derives joy from the preservation of the arts but is a connoisseur through and through. His eagerness also adheres to revolutionary rhetoric of the arts for the people. Yet behind this facade is an act of self-promotion, Lenoir is also displaying his ability as both connoisseur of the arts and hinting at his potential ability as member of the museum administration (Document 11).

a)

Je compte donner au Public, lorsque mes occupations me le permettront, la notice des différens objets que j'ai réunis, et qui sont, dès-à-présent, confiés à ma garde, ainsi que de ceux qui viendront par la suite, afin de mettre la NATION à même de connaître une partie de ses richesses.

b)

Je compte donner au Public, lorsque mes occupations me le permettront, la notice des différens objets que j'ai réunis, et qui sont, dès-à-présent, confiés à ma garde, ainsi que de ceux qui viendront par la suite, afin de mettre la nation à même de connaître une partie de ses richesses.

c)

I count to give to the public, when my occupations allow, the note of the different objects I have gathered, and which are, as of now, entrusted to my guardianship, as well as those that will follow, as to let the nation to know a part of its richness.

Document 11. a) *Notice succincte des objets de sculpture et architecture*⁵⁰, b) Transcription, c) Translation (ours).

Lenoir's passionate language is also one of negotiation with existing museum authority. Despite Lenoir's warm praise and close connections to the commission's members, his undertakings often caused friction between him and the commission. Indeed, Lenoir's desire to showcase the history of the nation meant displaying and collecting religious and royal artifacts. Paintings, status, sculptures from the Middle Ages certainly had historical merit, but were noxious imagery to the eyes of the revolutionaries. Lenoir prided his collections in its recreation of historical settings, even recreating royal tombs of St Denis! The reality is that the scenes were often anachronistic or even mostly fictive.⁵¹ But they are significant for being the first contemporary attempt at visualising the past. Although these recreations were

⁵⁰ Ibid.p.28

⁵¹ McClellan. Inventing the Louvre. 1999. pp. 193-194

popular with visitors, it was effectively opposing the monuments commission orthodoxy on which monuments were deserving of preservation. Beyond the conservation of royalist monuments, Lenoir was notoriously unwilling to part with monuments which had been stored in the Petits-Augustins. What would become Lenoir's Museum is an offshoot from republican ideals of preservation. What was meant to serve as a temporary depot of *bien nationaux* monuments became Lenoir's private undertaking, receiving official recognition in 1795, and becoming the Musée des monument Francais. Lenoir was in crass terms the *Bousier* of revolutionary conservation, amassing his own collection to fit his particular vision. Arranging monuments in historical scenes. Collecting monuments deemed discardable and unworthy of preservation by the commission. Lenoir's private enterprise marks an alternative vision of the revolutionary museum and a precursor to period expositions in modern museums.

Lenoir's museum is indisputably a product of the revolution. A public museum designed specifically for the instruction of the nation. The museum was as such made for the revolutionaries' citizens of France, as stated by Lenoir in his guides. It's focused on the historical past, however imagined, rather than the ideological virtues that characterized the fine art museums sets it apart.

The museums were set up in the name of the revolution, but they were not of the revolution. How could one expose the revolutionary day-to-day if it was simply a fact of life. Expositions that expounded revolutionary ideals or the art of revolutionary era painters were not commemorating the revolution for it was still ongoing. They served the purpose of securing revolutionary legacy for posterity. Erecting a museum purposely of the museum would have been an assertion of its conclusion. By showcasing middle aged history in his period pieces, Lenoir was asserting that feudal past was a fait-accompli. In 1794, *the Committee d'Instruction publique* questioned his request to expose the tomb of Francis I, to which he responded: "the progress of the arts and instruction are my only concern".⁵² What differed from the commission's orthodoxy was Lenoir's attitude towards symbols of feudalism; objects of historical curiosity and artistic importance, not trojan horses of despotic ideals. By preserving feudal monuments and presenting them to the public, Lenoir was demystifying the once sacred. Lenoir's efforts at conservation won him popularity in the wake of the Terror. As revolutionary iconoclasm became vilified, Lenoir was able to assert his project to being truly republican in nature. His adherence to the revolutionary ideal of public

⁵² McClellan. Inventing the Louvre. 1999. p. 168

instruction meant his museums was celebrated as a “true mirror” of the revolution.⁵³ His particular methodology demonstrating the equalizing and educational ideals of the revolution, affording Lenoir a substantial reputation.

⁵³ Ibid 169.

4. Late republic and after

The later revolutionary period was one of significant upheaval, characterized by political instability of the revolutionary wars. The coup of 9 Thermidor year II (27 July 1794), which deposed Robespierre and ushered in a conservative reaction against revolutionary Jacobinism and the Terror. The subsequent year saw political purges and suppression of the Jacobin clubs and culminated with the declaration of the Directory [Directoire] on the 26th of October 1795. The sudden change in political rule meant projects for the fine arts under Robespierre were no longer in favour. The Directory lacked the stability required to pay attention to the fine arts. Distracted by war, the threat of left-wing insurrection and royalist rebellions, attention to the arts became secondary. Although attempts to mobilise the arts were made during the Directory period, Leith shows that the Directory desired to assert and maintain a French artistic hegemony in Europe.⁵⁴ The main gains during this period were made from military conquest and the plunder of artworks was funnelled into the Louvre collection. However, this desire was hampered by the lack of funds and matters of greater national urgency. The Directory ended with Napoleon's coup on the 18 Brumaire year VIII (9 November 1799) and ushered in the period of the Consulate, which would eventually see the formulation of a new nationwide museum network.

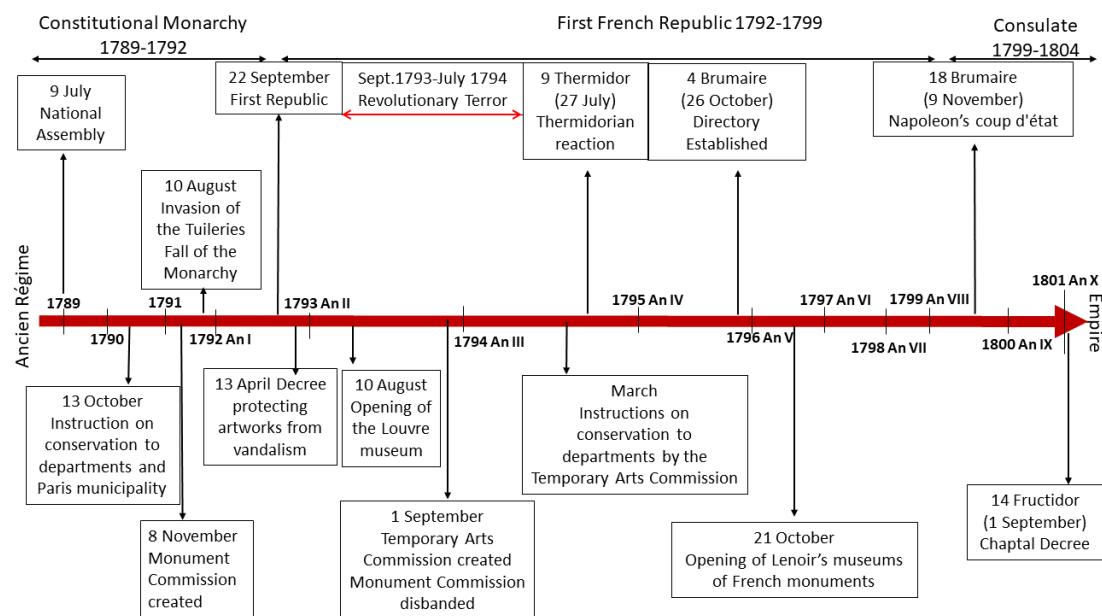


Figure 2. Comparative chronology of political revolutionary events and museum project milestones.

⁵⁴ Leith, Propaganda in France 1750-1799, pp. 154-156

4.1. Proliferation of museums

It proves extremely difficult to acquire a list of museums created during the period of interest to this work. Simple keyword searches in the minutes of the monuments' commission and of the national convention did not bring obvious reference to the creation of specific museums. One would require following the method sometimes illustrated in secondary literature of accessing local archives, few of which seem to be digitised or accessible online and remotely. One museum (Musée des Antiques in Paris) could be found mentioned only in one piece.⁵⁵

Appendix 3 (List of Museums) to this work contains a list of museums created in France during the revolution and until 1801. We collated this list using two main sources: a) the public database of the Musée de France⁵⁶ and b) the category pages for museums created in a given year in the French edition of Wikipedia. In the database, a text search was conducted for the phrase "revolution" and yielded few results (including false positive, for example, the address listed, rather than the name or relevant comments). Furthermore, we performed searches for localities where museums had been notoriously created. Using Wikipedia, the list was completed by going through each list of museums per year (nonspecific to France).⁵⁷ When a reference to the museum's website (for those still in existence) or the website of the department in some cases was available in the database, further details were obtained from these websites. Table 1 summarises the year-by-year creation of museums (in Paris and departments) over the period from 1793 to 1801. My findings are summarised in Table 1 below.

During the early revolutionary period the opening of museums progresses consistently between the capital and departments. The creation of new museums reaches a peak in 1795 with a total of 11 revolutionary museums created, with 5 opened in Paris and another 6 among the departments. During the subsequent late revolutionary period, no new museums are created in Paris and the opening of departmental museums plateaus. By the end of the 1799, only 7 new museums have been created. This period of relative stagnation under the

⁵⁵ See Daugeron, Bertrand, and Pavillon Chevreul. "Entre L'antique Et L'exotique, Le Projet Comparatiste Oublié Du « Muséum Des Antiques » En L'an III." *Annales Historiques de La Révolution Française*, no. 356, 2009, pp. 143–76. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41890642>. Accessed 31 Aug. 2022.

⁵⁶ République Française, Ministère de la culture, <https://data.culture.gouv.fr/explore/dataset/liste-et-localisation-des-musees-de-france/table/>. Accessed 30 Sep. 2022.

⁵⁷ For exemple, Wikipedia. Catégorie:Musée fondé en 1793 https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catégorie:Musée_fondé_en_1793 Accessed 04 Oct. 2022.

revolution is followed by a sudden burst in 1801 which results from Chaptal's decree during the Consulate. 15 museums were designated by the decree, including some localities, such as the Toulouse, where museums had already been established. Figure X shows this progression year on year.

Table 1. Summary of creation museums during the period 1793-1801. The number of museums per year is divided between Paris and the departments.

Year of creation	Localisation	Number of museums
1793	Paris	2
	Department	3
1794	Paris	1
	Department	2
1795	Paris	2
	Department	1
1796	Department	1
1797	Department	2
1798	Department	1
1799	Department	3
1801	Department	13

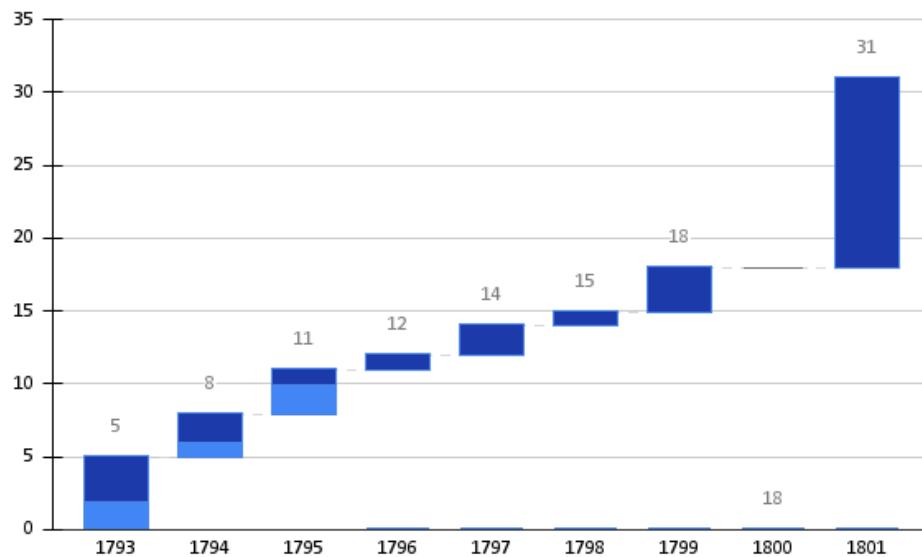


Figure 3. Plot of the number of museums created per year and according to whether they were created in Paris (light blue) or in the departments (dark blue). The cumulative number of museums over time is indicated each year.

4.2. The Chaptal model of 1801

In 1801, during the consulate, 15 departmental museums are created by decree. This defines a new model of museums. This model is no longer based exclusively on the collection of local

properties and instead emphasises the display of redistributed non-local properties. It is the basis for the modern system of French provincial museums. This model sees the creation and officialization of several new museums and institutes a system of centralized redistribution from the capital to the provincial museums.

By the end of 1790s, the Louvre and Versailles depots were overflowing with a hoard of artworks, notably from Italy, captured during the revolutionary wars (1795-1799). It was no longer sustainable for the Louvre to be the sole recipient of looted art. On the 1st of September 1801, the minister of the interior, Jean-Antoine Chaptal, issued a decree, "le décret Chaptal", to redistribute the excess of artworks to 15 departmental museums.⁵⁸ The museums of Lyon, Bordeaux, Strasbourg, Bruxelles Marseille, Rouen, Nantes, Dijon, Toulouse, Geneva, Caen, Lille, Mayence, Rennes and Nancy were designated as recipients.⁵⁹ The decree saw existing collections of depots and provisional museums greatly augmented with very fine selection of art, the majority from the French and Flemish school of painting, although a significant Dutch, German and Italian works were included.

Bodenstein posits that the redistribution doubled as a conciliatory gesture towards former antagonism between the central and departmental administration over conservation.⁶⁰ Indeed, Georgel describes the uneasy relations between central and departmental authorities towards conservation efforts in the early revolutionary period (1790-1793).⁶¹ Later, this was heavily used and a total of 846 paintings were distributed to the departmental museums between 1801 and 1810.⁶²

⁵⁸ H. de La Ville de Mirmont. *Histoire du musée de Bordeaux : Tome premier. Les origines. Histoire du musée pendant le Consulat, l'Empire et la Restauration (1801-1830)* Bordeaux, 1899.

<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k6524815d>. Accessed 3 Oct. 2022. p.42

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Bodenstein, Felicity. *National Museums in France, Building National Museums in Europe 1750-2010. Conference proceedings from EuNaMus, European National Museums: Identity Politics, the Uses of the Past and the European Citizen, Bologna 28-30 April 2011.* Peter Aronsson & Gabriella Elgenius (eds) EuNaMus Report No 1. Linköping University Electronic Press: <https://ep.liu.se/ecp/064/014/ecp64014.pdf> . p.293

⁶¹ Georgel, Chantal. "L'État et 'Ses' Musées de Province Ou Comment 'Concilier La Liberté d'initiative Des Villes et Les Devoirs de l'État.'" *Le Mouvement Social*, no. 160, 1992, pp. 65–77. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3779236>. Accessed 1 sep. 2022. p. 67

⁶² Houssaye, Henry. "Les Musées de Province. p.551

In addition to being a systematically designed national redistribution model in contrast to early revolutionary models of the museum project (in which transfer could occur less systematically), a further salient difference is in one of the uses Napoleon would make this new network of museums: a tool for his propaganda with the aim of legitimising his position as emperor. This strongly departed from the early revolutionary ideal and reverted to using museums in the way the Ancien Régime monarch did.

Conclusion

The enlightenment intellectual current on the value of didactic art influenced revolutionary ideas of conservation and museum exposition. The first half of the eighteenth century saw the formulations of ideas on the role of art and its effect on society. Philosophers theorized that art could better humanity. Art contained certain properties which allowed for the moral betterment of mankind. Similarly, some thinkers believed that art could have harmful effects. As art as an expression of the artists view of the world, Rousseau argued that art created under the poor social and economic conditions of mid eighteenth century France was corrupt and would simply recreate vice for art was the product of unfair social conditions. The first major influence on revolutionary conception of the museum came from the tension in those intellectual debates; the revolutionaries positioned themselves by arguing for conservation while, at the same time, removing the perceived corruption of the Ancien Régime.

The earlier eighteenth century also saw the emergence of European privately owned public museum projects. An evolution from previously exclusively private collections, enjoyed only by their owners (privately owned private museums), usually monarchs or princes, to private collections made accessible to the public, usually in the form of galleries which the principal function of demonstrating the owner's prestige. In France, a project for a royal Louvre Museum was begun by the minister D'Angivillier. The goal was to showcase the king's glory by utilising his art collection. The public would be instilled with awe at the glory of the king, creating patriotic sentiment. It would additionally be a source of additional international prestige. Paintings depicting royal or aristocratic figures were commissioned in the belief that their exposition would instil respect for the monarchy and landed elites. The revolutionaries demarcated themselves from this previous model by pushing the public development of the museum project further and creating publicly owned public museums dedicated to the tokens of memory of the nation and the instruction of the citizen.

Politically, the revolutionaries were in rupture with the Ancien Régime. The democratic founding principles of the revolution (Liberté, égalité, fraternité) guided the republican legislators. The newly formed national assembly dissolved the privileged institutions of the church and aristocracy and eventually the monarchy. These institutions' properties were seized and held to belong to the nation as a whole; initially to the monetary benefit of the state. Eventually, a broader concern with conservation emerged. Ideologically, the revolutionaries were aligned with the eighteenth-century philosophers and embraced their

ideas of the value of art. The revolutionaries believed in the educational potential of art, as well as its propagandistic value. By 1790, the revolutionaries sought a means to put the massive amount of art and objects acquired for the good of the entire nation. The revolutionaries envisioned a nationwide network of museums with the goal of instructing the public to be good revolutionary citizens as well as to develop general education. The political and cultural views of the revolution conflicted on the matter of art depicting royalty, for example, as it created a risk to keep the people trapped in the superstitions of the Ancien Régime. In order to resolve such conflict, the conservation administration had to establish a consensus that the destruction of symbols that recalled feudalism was in fact, harmful, ignorant, and even counter revolutionary, as it damaged the educational potential of the nation's property. Meanwhile the creation of revolutionary museums was itself a symbolic act. As a material representation of the democratic principles of the revolution, formerly privileged spaces were made accessible to all. Formerly exclusive collections could now be enjoyed by the humblest of citizens.

The institutional response to the dilemma was characteristic of the revolutionary state; a centralised and increasingly sophisticated bureaucracy was established in the capital to oversee the nation's conservation efforts. By the end of the 1790s, the revolutionary museum project had acquired the goods of the church, the monarch and aristocrats, as well as the plunder from its neighbours it 'liberated' during its wars. The provincial museum network had begun to be formalised with each department given explicit instruction on their conservation duties, formulated after the institutional Parisian model. As we have illustrated, the Commissions were centralised in Paris and principally occupied itself with the organisation of the Parisian museums. The departments depots and museums acted as secondary organs of the central museums. The departments were thus left to their own devices without the direct interference of the commission and some even established their own, unsanctioned museums. Other efforts developed as offshoots of the museum commissions efforts. Alexandre Lenoir's Museum of French Monuments began its life as one of the principal monument's depots in Paris. Lenoir's personal conservation aspirations and political manoeuvring led to the eventual creation of his own museum. Conservation efforts continued but found themselves neglected following the political shift of the Thermidorian reaction. The following period of war and political instability rendered the arts and associated projects secondary in importance. The museum project languished with minimal changes to its structure despite a slow proliferation of museums. It wasn't until the advent of the military success under the Consulate and the subsequent announcement of the Chaptal

Decree in 1801 that conservation efforts exploded; the Louvre had become overcrowded and needed to become the supplier of departmental collections. After a period of normalisation but also political turbulence we observe that a new model emerges with regional models that no longer only collect local national properties but are vehicles for the collection and exposition of non-local properties.

The departmental museum network would be further officialised under the Empire and is now widely regarded as the origin of the modern provincial museum model in France. The creation of the Chaptal system was made possible by the earlier revolutionary efforts to establish a departmental network of revolutionary museums. However, with the advent of Napoleon's empire, the ideological function of the museum shifted away from revolutionary ideals of public instruction and towards glorification of the new emperor. The fundamental shift in ideological purpose indicates the end of French museums as revolutionary in that respect and we could even consider that they return under the model of the Ancien Régime, in which museums acted as symbols of the ruler's status. Napoleon did not need to communicate new ideals to the people through the careful exposition of artworks in museums, he just needed to demonstrate his greatness, illustrated by the volume and quality of his empire's property. The project of political legitimisation of the regime remained but revolutionary ideas on the democratising use of didactic art had been abandoned.

Appendix 1: Terms and Definitions

List of terms:

Académie Royale	Royal Academy
Assemblée Législative	Legislative Assembly
Assemblée Nationale	National Assembly
Bien National	National Property
Cabinet de curiosités	Cabinet of Curiosities
Comité d'instruction publique	Committee for Public Instruction
Commission des arts	Arts Commission
Commission des monumens	Monuments Commission
Commission temporaire des arts	Temporary Commission of the arts
Consulat	Consulate
Convention Nationale	National Convention
Décret Chaptal	Chaptal Decree
Directoire	Directory
Jardins du roi	King's Gardens
Musée Départemental de la Révolution Française	Departmental Museum of the French Revolution
Musée des Monuments Historiques	Museum of Historical Monuments
Museum Central de la République	Central Museum of the Republic
Museum d'Histoire Naturelle	Natural History Museum
Première République Française	First French Republic

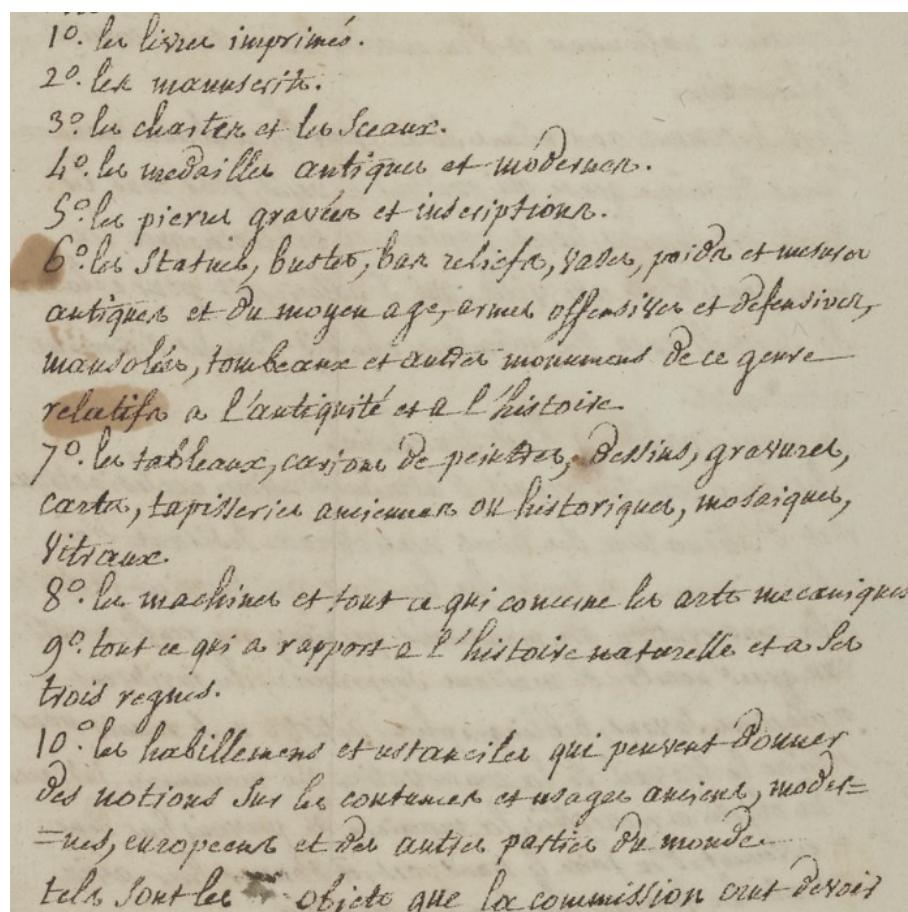
Definition:

- **Definition 1:** A museum created during the revolution.
- **Definition 2:** A museum about the revolution.
- **Definition 3:** A museum for revolutionaries.
- **Definition 4:** A privately owned museum is a museum (or its collection) that is owned by a private person (including a monarch).
- **Definition 5:** A privately owned public museum is a privately owned museum that is opened to visitors that are members of the public.
- **Definition 6:** A privately owned private museum is a privately owned museum that is opened to a select, private audience.
- **Definition 7:** A publicly owned museum is a museum (or its collection) that is owned by a public institution (including a national, regional or local government).

Appendix 2: Examples of monuments

The list of small objects given in the first Commission's report includes (with simplifications)⁶³:

1. Printed books
2. Manuscripts
3. Charters and seals
4. Modern and antique medals
5. Engraved stones and inscriptions
6. Statues, busts
7. Paintings, drawings, engravings, maps ancient or historic tapestries, mosaics and stained glass
8. Machines for mechanical arts
9. Anything relating to natural history, animal, mineral, plants
10. Culturally significant clothes (ancient and modern, European and rest of the world).



⁶³ Formation de la commission des monumens et resultat de son travail. Ed. Deloynes, Jean-Charles.

1790-1791, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b105383805> . Accessed 24 Sept. 2022. p.2

Appendix 3: Table of museums

A list of revolutionary museums with annotation (see section 4.1. for explanations of how this information was gathered).

Column names are self-explanatory aside from:

- Open date: Date of when the museum was opened to the public.
- Domain: the nature of the collection, among which:

Box marked with Chaptal indicate museums founded by the Chaptal decree 31 August 1801 and were recipients of Artworks from the Musée central du Louvre.

Name	Department	Town	Open date	Domain	What is it now?
Muséum national d'histoire naturelle	Seine	Paris	10 June 1793	Natural History	Muséum national d'histoire naturelle https://www.mnhn.fr/fr
Muséum central des arts de la République	Seine	Paris	10 August 1793	Art Antiquity	Musée du Louvre https://www.louvre.fr
Musée des Jacobins	Gers	Auch	16 December 1793	Art	Musée des Amériques d'Auch https://www.ameriques-auch.fr
Muséum du Midi de la République	Haute-Garonne	Toulouse	1795 (Created 23 December 1793)	Art	Musée des Augustins de Toulouse https://www.augustins.org/fr/
Museum de Nancy	Meurthe et Moselle (Meurthe-et-Moselle since 1871)	Nancy	1793	Art	Musée des Beaux-Arts de Nancy https://musee-des-beaux-arts.nancy.fr/accueil-145.html
Conservatoire des arts et métiers	Seine	Paris	1794	Science	Musée des Arts et Métiers https://www.arts-et-metiers.net
Musée de Reims	Marne	Reims	1 April 1800 (Created 1794)	Art	Musée des Beaux-Arts de Reims https://musees-reims.fr/fr/musees/musee-des-beaux-arts/
Musée de Rennes	Ille-et-Vilaine	Rennes	1794	Art Archaeology	Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rennes https://mba.rennes.fr
Musée de Tours	Indre-et-Loire	Tours	4 March 1795	Art	Musée des Beaux-Arts de Tours https://mba.tours.fr/131-le-musee-des-beaux-arts-de-tours.htm
Museum des Antiques	Seine	Paris	2 June 1795	Natural History Anthropology	Closed 7 October 1795
Musée des Monuments français	Seine	Paris	21 October 1795	Art History	Closed in 1816
Muséum de Toulouse	Haute-Garonne	Toulouse	1796	Natural History	Muséum de Toulouse

Musée d'Orléans	Loiret	Orleans	1797	Art	Closed in 1804 and collection moved to the Jardin des plantes d'Orléans. Reopened in 1823 https://webmuseo.com/ws/mbao/app/report/index.html
Musée spécial de l'École française	Seine-et-Oise (Yvelines since 1968)	Versailles	1797	Art	Closed in 1810
Musée de Peinture et de Sculpture de Grenoble	Isère	Grenoble	16 February 1798	Art	Musée de Grenoble https://www.museeegrenoble.fr
Musée du Mans	Sarthe	Le Mans	21 June 1799	Art Archaeology	Musée de Tessé https://www.lemans.fr/dynamique/des-idees-de-visite/les-musees/le-musee-de-tesse/
Muséum de Nantes	Loire-Atlantique	Nantes	15 August 1810 (Created 1799)	Natural History	Muséum de Nantes https://museum.nantesmetropole.fr
Musée du département de la Côte d'Or	Côte d'Or	Dijon	7 August 1799 (1801 Chaptal)	Art	Musée des Beaux-Arts de Dijon https://beaux-arts.dijon.fr
Muséum d'Histoire naturelle d'Angers	Maine-et-Loire	Angers	5 May 1801	Natural History	Muséum des sciences naturelles d'Angers https://musees.angers.fr/lieux/musee-des-sciences-naturelles/index.html
Musée de Bordeaux	Gironde	Bordeaux	31 August 1801 (Chaptal)	Art	Musée des Beaux-Arts de Bordeaux https://www.musba-bordeaux.fr/en
Musée de Caen	Calvados	Caen	2 December 1809 (Created 1801) (Chaptal)	Art	Musée des Beaux-Arts de Caen. Original location destroyed in 1944. Re-opened in 1970 No website
Musée de peinture d'Angers	Maine-et-Loire	Angers	1801 (Chaptal)	Art	Musée des Beaux-Arts d'Angers https://musees.angers.fr/lieux/musee-des-beaux-arts/index.html
Musée de Lyon	Rhône	Lyon	23 November 1803 (Created 1801) (Chaptal)	Art	Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon https://www.mba-lyon.fr/fr
Musée de Marseille	Bouches-du-Rhône	Marseille	9 September 1804 (Created 1802) (Chaptal)	Art	Musée des Beaux-Arts de Marseille https://musees.marseille.fr/musee-des-beaux-arts-mba
Musée des Beaux-Arts de Nantes	Loire-Atlantique	Nantes	1801 (Chaptal)	Art	Musée d'Arts de Nantes https://museedartsdenantes.nantesmetropole.fr/home
Musée de Rouen	Seine-Maritime	Rouen	1809 (Created 1801) (Chaptal)	Art	Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rouen https://mbarouen.fr/en/the-museum-4
Musée de Valenciennes	Nord	Valenciennes	June 1801 (Chaptal)	Art	Musée des Beaux-Arts de Valenciennes https://musee.valenciennes.fr
Musée de la Bourse	Somme	Amiens	1802	Art Archaeology	Musée de Picardie https://www.amiens.fr/Vivre-a-Amiens/Culture-Patrimoine/Etablissements-culturels/Musee-de-Picardie

Musée des Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles	Dyle (1795-1814) Modern day Brussels-Capital Region Belgium	Bruxelles	1803 (Created 1801) (Chaptal)	Art	Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique https://www.fine-arts-museum.be/en
Musée régional de Mayence	Mont-Tonneur (1794-1814) Modern Day Rhineland-Palatinate Germany	Mayence	1801 (Chaptal) Opened 1803	Art	Landesmuseum Mainz (Mainz State Museum) https://landesmuseum-mainz.de/de/startseite/
Musée des Beaux-Arts de Strasbourg	Bas-Rhin	Strasbourg	1801-1802 (Chaptal)	Art	Musée des Beaux-Arts de Strasbourg. Destroyed in 1870. Reopened 1890 https://www.musees.strasbourg.eu/musee-des-beaux-arts
Museum de Strasbourg	Bas-Rhin	Strasbourg	1804	Natural History	Musée zoologique de la ville de Strasbourg https://www.visitstrasbourg.fr/fiche-sit/f223013438_musee-zoologique-strasbourg/

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