

Fontaine in the Burnham Library

DAVID VAN ZANTEN, *Northwestern University*

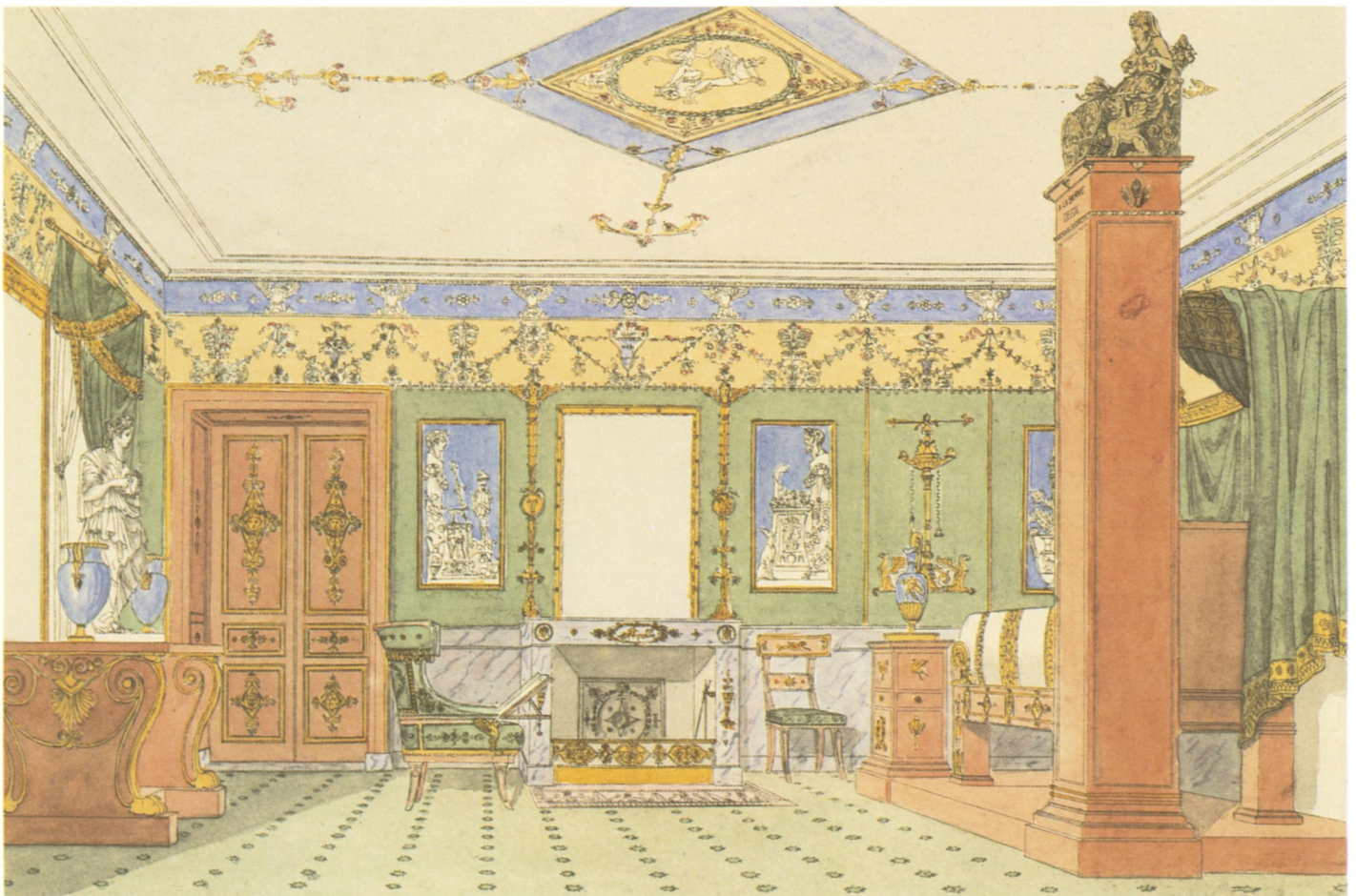
IN 1927, the Burnham Library at The Art Institute of Chicago purchased the library of the celebrated French architect Pierre François Léonard Fontaine (1762–1853). Fontaine had established his reputation during the Napoleonic Empire while working in collaboration with fellow architect Charles Percier (1764–1838).¹ They had met while students in the school of A. F. Peyre and had gone on to win pensions at the French Academy in Rome, Percier winning the competition for the Grand Prix de Rome in 1786 and Fontaine being awarded the Second Grand Prix in 1785.² Arriving back in Paris after five years of study in Italy at the commencement of the Revolution, they managed to survive and, indeed, flourish by executing an extraordinary series of theater sets and interior decorations in an exquisite archaic Greek style, and by publishing their *Palais, maisons et autres édifices dessinés à Rome* (1798) in striking line drawings (see fig. 2).

When Napoleon emerged as emperor in 1804, Percier and Fontaine became his architects, rebuilding the villa Malmaison (1800–02) for him and Empress Josephine, designing the facades along Paris's rue de Rivoli (1802ff.), erecting the elegant Arc de Triomphe du Carrousel in the courtyard of the Louvre (1806–08), and carrying out extensive interior alterations of the Louvre (1805ff.) and

other royal residences. This work culminated in the immense but never-completed Palais du Roi de Rome, begun on the Colline de Chaillot in 1812 and intended to terminate a complex of public buildings spreading out below it across the Champs de Mars to the Ecole Militaire.

Percier and Fontaine could not have been more different personally. Percier was completely absorbed in his work, living all his life in the same pinched quarters in the Louvre, wearing the same clothes every day (by the time of his death, fifty years out of style), meticulously executing exquisite drawings like a surgeon through a small hole in a protective cover sheet which he moved about his drawing board as he worked. He rarely appeared in public, the emperor once remarking in exasperation to Fontaine, "Your Percier does nothing: I never see him." In contrast, Fontaine was a regular public man in his habits, rising at five in the morning to work in his drafting room, going out to visit construction sites at noon, dining with his adopted daughter and her family at six, and returning home to Passy at ten, unless obliged to make an appearance at some function.³ Percier and Fontaine's was never a partnership in the legal sense: Fontaine alone held the successive posts and he alone was named *architecte de l'Empereur* in 1811. But

FIGURE 1. Charles Percier and Pierre François Léonard Fontaine. *Recueil des décorations intérieures* (Paris, 1812), plate 13. This edition of Percier and Fontaine's volume on interior decoration was hand colored, probably under their direct supervision, revealing their intended color schemes. Their manipulation of decorative elements to create almost-fantastic spaces was a valuable lesson for the succeeding Romantic architects.



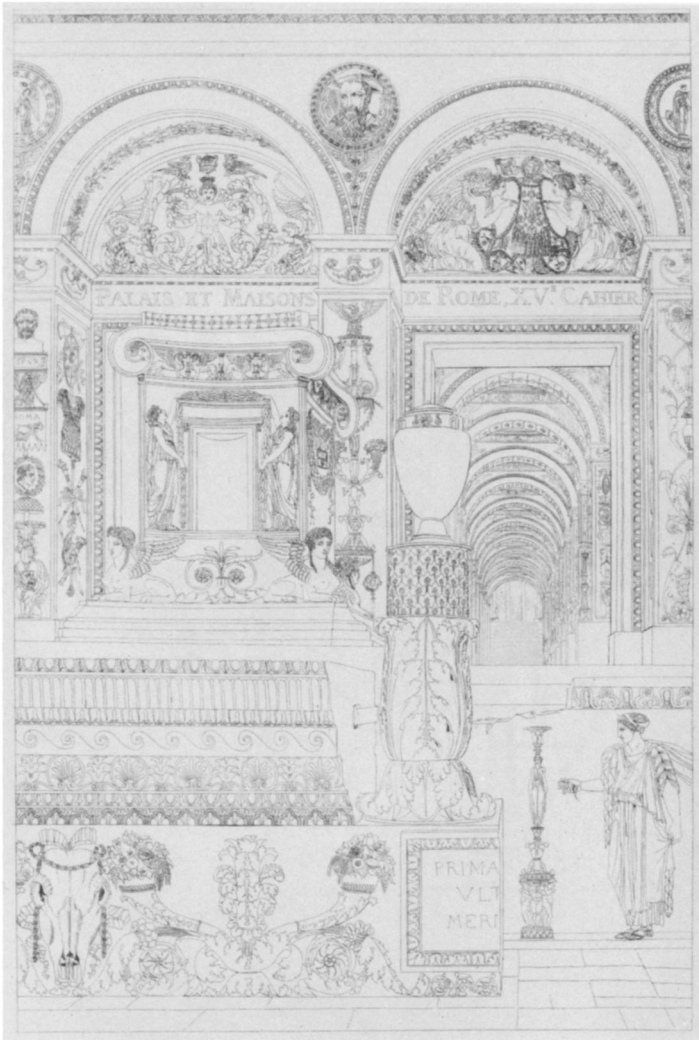


FIGURE 2. Percier and Fontaine. *Palais, maisons et autres édifices modernes dessinés à Rome* (Paris, 1798), plate 86. This compendium of typical Renaissance buildings consists of one hundred plates of line drawings executed by Percier. They are striking for their proportions, spatial relationships, and harmony of forms, and were inspired by the “Etruscan” style popularized by English designer John Flaxman.

he made no secret of his collaboration with Percier, and they published numerous volumes under both their names, with Percier’s listed first.

After the collapse of Napoleon’s empire in 1814–15, the fortunes of the two collaborators diverged. Percier withdrew from active practice, devoting his time to his immensely successful career of teaching at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts until his death in 1838. Fontaine, who had always been the businessman and planner in the collaboration, in the meantime emerged as the most trusted architect of the Restoration and the July Monarchy—the palatial architect of nineteenth-century France *par excellence*. At a time when architects were disconnecting themselves from the personal service of royalty and the aristocracy to find careers in the burgeoning governmen-

tal bureaucracy and in private practice, Fontaine remained the personal architectural advisor to a succession of French sovereigns. During the Empire, he not only served Napoleon as *architecte de l’Empereur*, but also sent regular reports on the monuments of Paris to Czar Alexander of Russia, the emperor’s rival and, later, in the war of 1812–14, his enemy. He personally presented his last report upon Alexander’s victorious entry into Paris in 1815. After 1815, Fontaine continued as the personal architect of the re-established Bourbon monarchy (erecting the Chapelle Expiatoire for Louis XVIII between 1815 and 1826), while also serving as architect of the Palais Royal, Neuilly, and the other residences of Louis Philippe d’Orléans, the Restoration monarchs’ rival. When the Revolution of 1830 brought this same Louis Philippe to power, Fontaine slipped easily into position as the new king’s close architectural advisor. In this capacity, the hardy Fontaine enjoyed two decades of activity from his sixty-eighth to his eighty-sixth years, before finally being retired by the Revolution of 1848 to the ceremonial post of president of the Conseil des Bâtiments Civils during the last five years of his extraordinary life.

In their designs and in their publications, Percier and Fontaine elaborated an exquisite classical revival style that was quickly picked up by all the architects and decorators of the day and has come since simply to be designated “Empire.” It was a style of simple shapes and flat surfaces modestly but effectively articulated by two-dimensional ornamental and figurative patterns in wonderfully simple, rhythmic compositions, almost naive in appearance. This Percier and Fontaine “Empire” style was the culminating achievement of the French classical tradition in design—an imaginative creation, not a revival—surviving at least until the fall of Napoleon III’s Second Empire in 1870 and being revived periodically to this day.

I.

What arrived at the Burnham Library in April 1927 was an impressive array of 441 basic architectural texts, a body of 148 original architectural drawings, two bound manuscripts, and six bound manuscript inventories, ten volumes of engravings never formally published, and three published volumes modified by Fontaine in various ways. This original material represents only a portion of that now preserved in Paris—most notably Fontaine's diaries at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, recently published—but the Art Institute's collection is intriguing and, in some cases, important.

At first, the original drawings seem disappointing. They are almost entirely by Fontaine's nephew, Pierre François Louis Fontaine (1798–1863).⁴ He had been a good (if not stellar) student of Percier's and, informally, of his uncle's at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts from 1816 on, and had won the Second Grand Prix de Rome in 1822. He was a competitor for the prize again the next year, and though he did not place, he went off to Italy and Sicily on his own for about two years. He subsequently enjoyed a comfortable if undistinguished career as an architect in the administration of the Palais Royaux, his uncle's bailiwick, where he served as architect of the palaces of Saint-Germain and Saint-Cloud and of the stables du Roule and on the rue Montaigne in Paris. The drawings in Chicago's Fontaine collection clearly document this career, starting with thirteen sheets, mostly sophisticated student projects from his last years at the Ecole. There are fifty-seven archaeological drawings on paper with watermarks bearing dates from 1822 to 1825. These include fifteen drawings of Renaissance buildings (almost all in Rome) and six carefully inscribed folders of studies of the remains at Agrigentum, Selinunte, and Taormina in Sicily; the so-called "Temple of Hercules" at Cori; and the Pantheon and Theater of Marcellus in Rome. In addition to these finished drawings are seventy-four sheets, mostly incomplete sets of working drawings, for a small number of private commissions he enjoyed in addition to his government posts: a rental building and a tomb for the Ecorcheville family; out-buildings at the châteaux of Hazeville and Théméricourt; stables for a large house in the fifteenth arrondissement; and two thermal bathhouses, one at Versailles and one at Fontainebleau. Of greater interest, however, are two sheets: one with a plan for the Paris Opéra (fig. 3) sketched on the 1860 announcement of the competition for the project (he had won his Second Grand Prix with a project for an opera house); the other a small

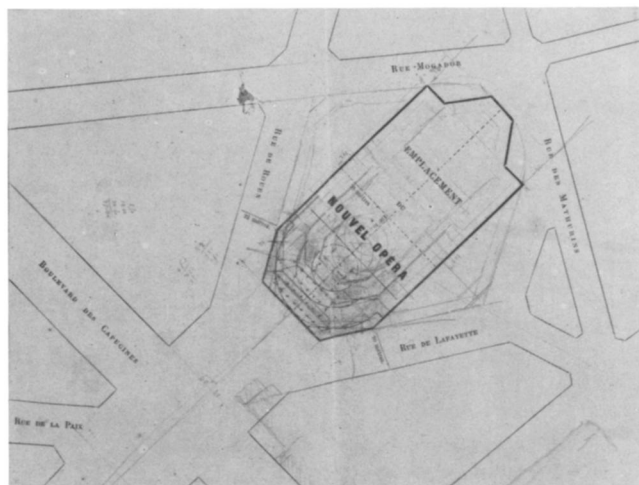
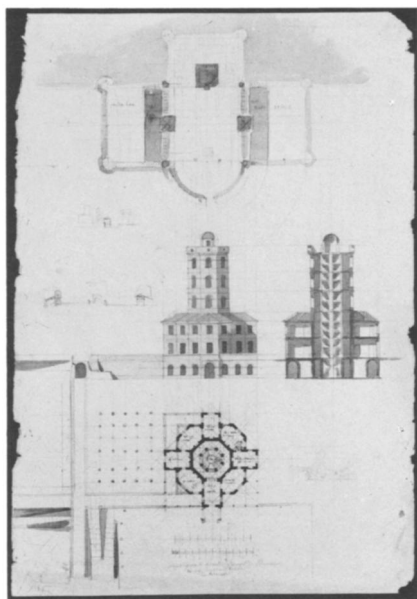


FIGURE 3. Many of the drawings in the Fontaine collection are by the elder Fontaine's nephew, Pierre François Louis Fontaine. One of particular interest is this plan for the project for the competition to design the Paris Opéra, 1860–61, sketched on the 1860 announcement for the competition.

cross-section of a large iron-roofed market building. A single sheet represents his government work—a design for a masonry fencepost for the palace at Saint-Cloud inscribed "St.-Cloud 1840."

Six sheets seem not to be by Fontaine's nephew. Two are seventeenth- or eighteenth-century drawings, one of a waterwheel and the other a sepulchral wall monument, perhaps from the hand of Fontaine's father, a builder in Pontoise. The four remaining drawings are two renderings of a window and a door which are eighteenth century in style (perhaps student drawings by Fontaine); the design for an assembly room to be erected in some existing structure (it should be noted that one of Fontaine's earliest commissions was to design a political meeting hall in the church of Saint-Joseph in Paris); and, finally, an important sheet showing the plan, site plan, elevation, and section of the headquarters building (fig. 4) Napoleon commissioned Fontaine to design in 1811 for a projected naval harbor at Terneuzen (formally Westerscheldt, today Holland).⁵

The remaining works on paper consist of a mass of unbound engravings and a book of tracing-paper drawings of Roman antiquities. On the back of two of the engravings appear extraordinarily skillful (if miniscule)



sketches for a large building on a hillside, perhaps the Palais du Roi de Rome. The frontispiece of the book is signed “de Wailly” and is inscribed “acheté à la vente du cabinet de Mr. de Wailly, architecte membre de l’Institut.” Charles de Wailly (1729–1798) was an influential late eighteenth-century architect and decorator and someone whose work Percier and Fontaine would seem to have respected.⁶ Interestingly, a hand quite different from de Wailly’s (Percier’s? Fontaine’s?—whose is not clear) added twelve drawings on the later, blank pages, including six compositions of ancient architectural fragments and a drawing of an arched entranceway inscribed “Museum National des Arts consacré à l’étude et à l’amour des arts par décret de l’assemblée législative l’an I^r de la République” (fig. 5).⁷ The Apollo Belvedere is shown set on a pedestal between two door openings. The moldings and quoining appear to be those of the Palais du Louvre, implying that this was a project, executed or not, for the installation of the art treasures appropriated in 1796 from Italy by Napoleon and transported to Paris. Inserted at the end of the book are two tracings of J. N. Huyot’s 1814 restoration of the Temple of Fortune at Praeneste, two pages of furniture designs, and plans for the three floors of an unidentified villa (see fig. 6).

The manuscript material in the Fontaine collection is more important and, perhaps, more telling. It consists of the bound (and probably transcribed) text of Fontaine’s celebrated *Journal des monuments de Paris*, a chronicle of Napoleon’s building projects sent to Czar Alexander of Russia between 1809 and 1815 (see p. 134); a survey of the government buildings of Paris, with observations on

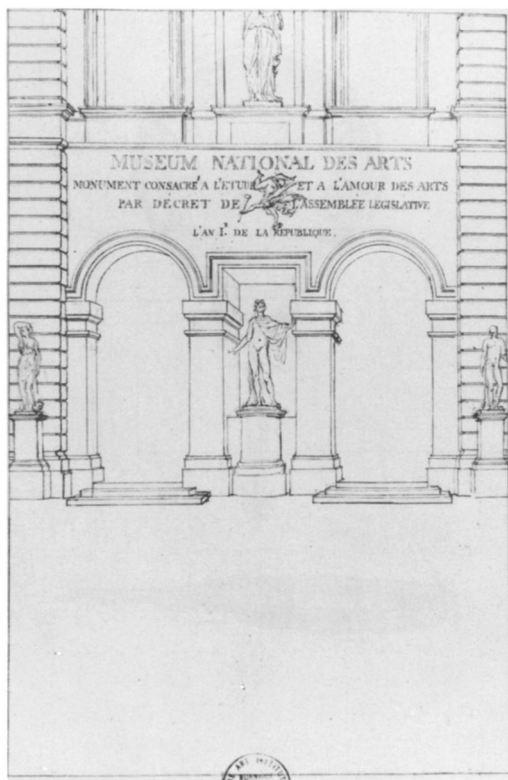


FIGURE 4. Percier and Fontaine (?). Pencil sketches (plan, elevation, etc.) for a projected naval port at Terneuzen, Holland, c. 1811. Napoleon I is known to have commissioned Fontaine to design this port, but the authorship of these sketches has not been verified.

FIGURE 5. Percier (?). Sketch for the entrance to a “Museum National des Arts.” This pencil drawing by an unidentified hand has added to Charles de Wailly’s *Fragmens antiques* (Paris, 1750/60), a volume of drawings of Roman antiquities. De Wailly was a late eighteenth-century architect and decorator whose work was admired by Percier and Fontaine.

their condition, requested by Napoleon on December 24, 1813; and six volumes of inventories of royal property, including land, buildings, and furniture, made in response to legislation of March 2, 1832.⁸

The text of the *Journal des monuments* was greatly valued by the descendants of Fontaine and published in toto in 1892.⁹ Because the original drawings were in Russia (having been sent to the czar), the illustrations of the 1892 publication were only approximations of Fontaine's originals. The titles of the plates were therefore rearranged (and in several cases omitted), but otherwise the publication is identical to the Burnham Library manuscript text.

The six manuscript inventories raise a broader question and lead on to the third body of unique material in the Fontaine collection: the unpublished printed material. The latter includes four huge (60.9 × 86.4 cm) folios mapping the royal parks and properties at numerous locations throughout France. These are inscribed as being authorized by the law of 1832 creating the civil list and requiring an inventory of royal estates. Furthermore, there are six volumes of printed plans of the interior rooms of the royal châteaux at Monceaux, Raincy, Neuilly, and Eu, evidently also part of the 1832 inventory. In the case of the château at Eu (a particular favorite of Louis Philippe's), there are three, almost identical volumes of these printed plates, one of which records extensive pencil alterations and additions to the structure, as if Fontaine used these plans as layout sheets for design discussions with the king (see fig. 7).

It is striking to see in the penciled notations on the Eu volume that the chapel was to be in the Gothic style with traceried windows and ribbed vaults. We think of Fontaine's work in terms of Percier's exquisite Neoclassicism; yet, after 1830 and Percier's retirement from active practice, Fontaine's name is connected with a series of projects that are much freer in style and often medievalizing: the redecoration of the Théâtre Français of 1831–33, the Chapelle Saint-Ferdinand of 1843, and the château at Eu.¹⁰ In each case, he had another collaborator: the celebrated decorator Aimé Chenavard (1798–1838) in the first and last cases (Chenavard designed the stained glass in the chapel windows in particular) and in the remaining instance the architect Pierre Bernard Lefranc (1795–1856), a former student of Percier's.¹¹ Unfortunately, Fontaine's precise relationship to these designers and involvement with these projects are unclear: was it a voluntary association, replacing his former partnership with Percier, or was Fontaine merely

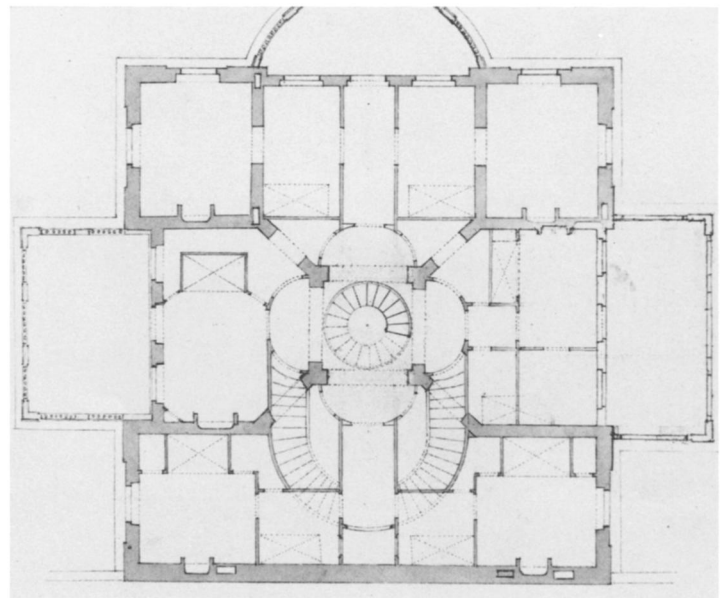
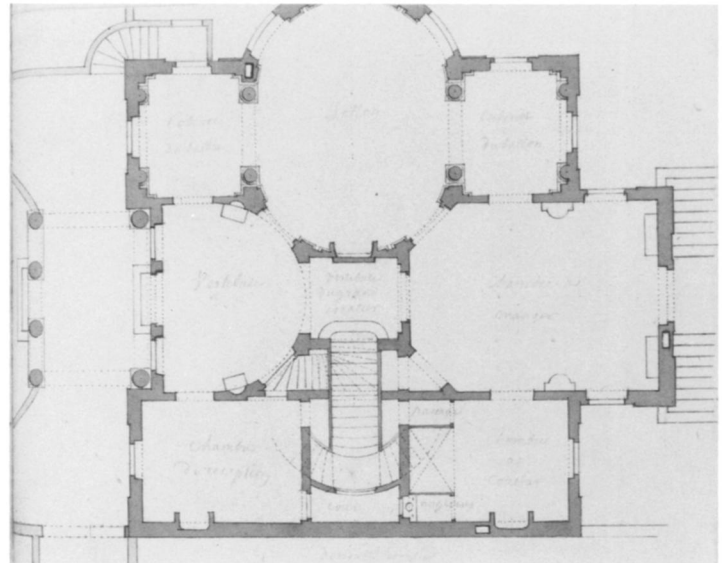


FIGURE 6. Percier (?). Plans for the first and second floors of an unidentified villa. These pencil drawings by an unidentified hand were added to de Wailly's volume (see fig. 5).

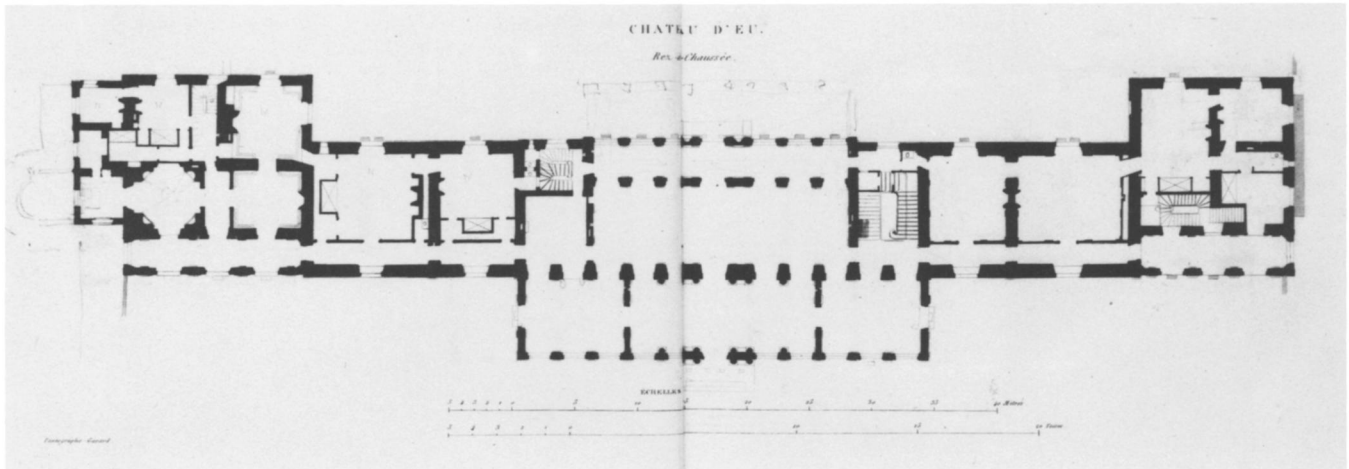


FIGURE 7. Fontaine. Published plan of the Royal Château at Eu, with pencil additions (Paris, 1830/40). The pencil additions suggest that Fontaine may have used these sheets in discussing his plans for the château with the king, Louis Philippe.

overseeing the work of these younger, more up-to-date designers in his capacity as architectural consultant to the king? A clear note of tension appears in the memoirs of the king's eldest son, the Duc d'Orléans. In 1834, he noted:

We are at Eu, which has been charmingly transformed and will become still more so if Chenou *can* grasp the style of its époque [of construction] and if Fontaine *wishes* to. I have even persuaded the King to send for Chenavard to draw up a scheme of furnishing, which is quite necessary since everything now is unharmonious.¹²

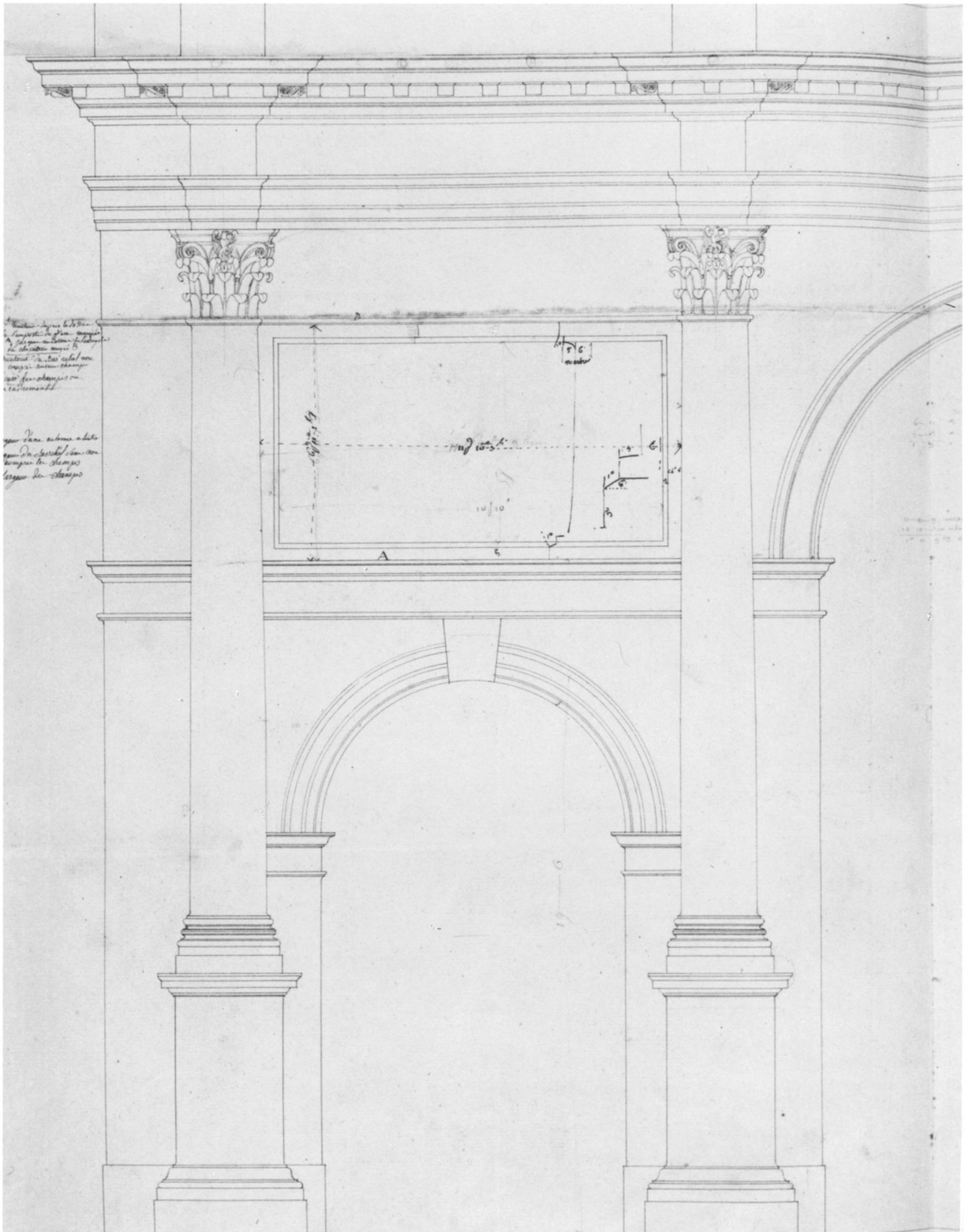
The Art Institute copies of the Eu book prove that Fontaine was constantly at Louis Philippe's elbow, regardless of which designer was employed to actually execute the work.

There are also several books in the Fontaine purchase which, although published, have been made unique in one sense or another. In a volume of engravings of Percier and Fontaine's *Arc de Triomphe du Carrousel* (from several sources and originally published unbound) are bound three original drawings for the structure, all undated, two showing alternative arrangements of the grill dividing the Place du Carrousel and one of the structure itself (see figs. 8, 9). These would seem to emanate from Fontaine's long tenure as architect of the Louvre. There is a copy of Jehan Cousin's 1560 *Livre de perspective* with penciled notes as well as a building in the style of



FIGURE 8. Percier and Fontaine. View of the west side of the Arc de Triomphe du Carrousel, Paris, 1806–16. (Photo: Northwestern University, Department of Art History)

FIGURE 9. Office of Percier and Fontaine. Detail of elevation for the Arc de Triomphe du Carrousel, Paris, 1806–16. Drawing included in Louis Pierre Baltard, *Arc de Triomphe du Carrousel* (Paris, 1825). Fontaine was architect of the Louvre for many years, and the illustrations in Baltard's book were probably produced during those years.



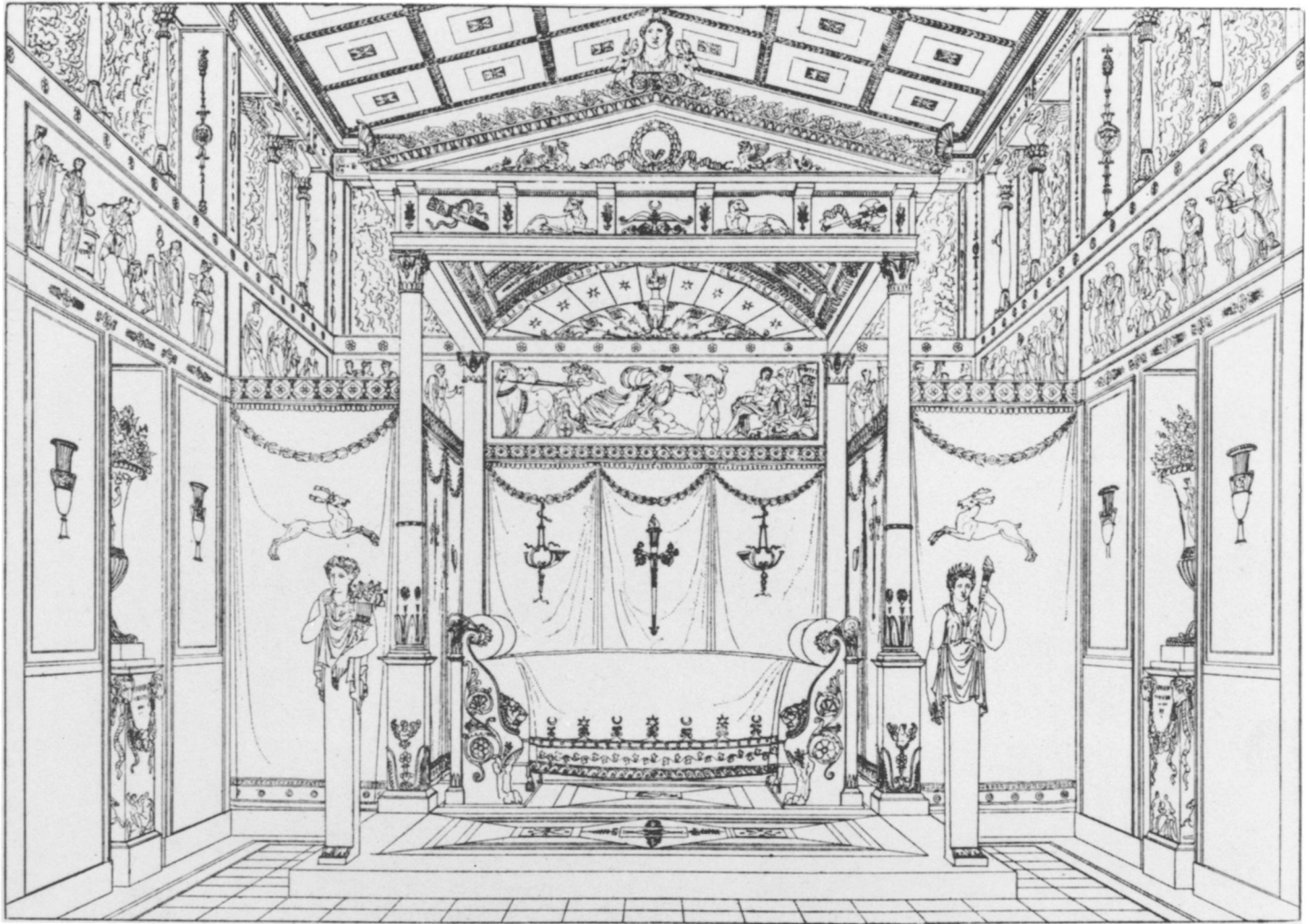


FIGURE 10. Percier and Fontaine. *Recueil des décorations intérieures* (Paris, 1812), plate 25.

Percier and Fontaine sketched on one page. Finally, there is a copy of the first thirteen plates of Percier and Fontaine's *Recueil des décorations intérieures* which has been hand colored (see fig. 1; see also fig. 10).

The most important of these "personalized" books is probably the colored copy of the *Recueil des décorations intérieures*. (Indeed, the original inventory of the Fontaine purchase records two hand-colored copies, one of which was being sold as a duplicate.) A number of copies of early editions of the volume exist with some hand-colored plates.¹³ The problem is to determine who colored them. Hans Ottomeyer concluded that certain copies were produced under Percier and Fontaine's direct

supervision, and the existence of this volume from Fontaine's own library bears him out since one would assume this is an "official" copy. Not only does this confirm the art-historical hypothesis that the color scheme was Percier and Fontaine's own, but it also permits us to glimpse the brilliant colors with which Percier worked in interior decorations that have long since been destroyed.

II.

Although the original documents interspersed in the Fontaine material are unexpected and interesting, they are not the most illuminating items in the purchase. It was an architect's library the Art Institute was after

when it raised the money for this purchase, and it was an architect's library that it got. Although the manuscript material is quite random, the books seem to compose a whole, complete in all professional departments. In this library, we have the opportunity to get some sense of what the leading architect of France during the first half of the nineteenth century was like.

At first glance, the library seems a balanced and predictable one, embracing thirteen volumes on engineering; several on Paris building laws and prices; eighty-eight volumes of plans and views of Paris and other cities; twenty-eight publications of modern buildings, twelve of Renaissance structures, twenty-four of ancient Greek and Roman architecture; and fifty-three books on drawing, perspective, the Orders, and the theory of architecture. It is very similar to the library of another contemporary architect, Jean Nicolas Huyot (1780–1840).¹⁴ In both libraries, we see the profound conservatism of the early nineteenth-century architectural mind: while they contain historical and technical volumes published within Fontaine's and Huyot's lifetimes, the vast majority of the theoretical texts date from before 1800 (forty-seven out of fifty-three in the case of Fontaine) and the majority even from before 1700 (thirty-five out of fifty-three for Fontaine). They both had (and presumably treasured) the works of the ancient Roman Vitruvius; the Renaissance theorists Alberti, Palladio, Serlio, Scamozzi, and Vignola; and the French classicists Fréart de Chambray, François Blondel, Jacques François Blondel, and Perrault, oftentimes in multiple editions.¹⁵ One might, in response, ask what theoretical treatises were written between the latter Blondel's *Cours* (1771–77) and 1840; to which one must answer that, with the exception of the works of Quatremère de Quincy, the famous perpetual secretary of the Académie des Beaux-Arts, these were mostly a scattering of short octavos putting forward radical theories, such as the volumes of Laugier, Viel, and Ledoux.¹⁶ Interestingly, Fontaine's library contains not one of the numerous works of Quatremère, while Huyot's contained at least eight, and, with the exception of the 1847 re-edition of Ledoux's *Architecture considérée . . .* (probably added to the library by Fontaine's nephew), none of these more recent works were in Fontaine's possession. As one can deduce from his library as well as his works, to Fontaine (and to contemporaries like Huyot), architecture in the nineteenth century was a continuation of Renaissance and Baroque classical forms. One formed one's ideas and opinions according to the strictures of Vitruvius, Pal-

ladio, and Perrault. The innovations of Fontaine's and Huyot's work were but corrections and perfections of this tradition.

It is illuminating in this regard to compare Fontaine's library with that of a Romantic architect, Jean Baptiste Lassus (1807–1856).¹⁷ Lassus was the leading student in the atelier of the radical Henri Labrouste (1801–1875) upon its founding in 1830 and went on to be an important Gothic Revivalist and collaborator of Viollet-le-Duc's, a leader of the Revivalist movement in France, before Lassus's early death in 1856. In some senses, his library is not so unique. Although it does contain the radical treatises missing from Fontaine's, these turn out to be quite few in number: Fortoul's *De l'Art en Allemagne* (1842); Reynaud's *Traité d'architecture* (vol. 1, 1856); Cattois's *Architecture civile et domestique du moyen age à la Renaissance* (1855); Vernehl's *L'Architecture byzantine en France* (1851); and the first volumes of Viollet-le-Duc's *Dictionnaire raisonné* (1854ff.).¹⁸ Far greater in number and weight are Lassus's holdings of the "classic" theorists (Vitruvius, Palladio, Perrault, and the Blondels) and of Quatremère de Quincy. Yet, there are two ways in which Lassus's library is quite distinct. Firstly, scattered among the classic works is a series of older books not previously taken seriously by academic architects: Frezier's *Théorie et pratique de la coupe des pierres* (1737–39); Laugier's *Essai sur l'architecture* (in both the 1753 and 1755 editions); the *Songe de Poliphile* (Legrand's edition of 1804); and François Mazois's *Palais de Scarrus* (1819). Frezier and Laugier insisted upon the importance of actual structure in architectural aesthetics; the *Songe* and Mazois upon the symbolic and fantastic; thus, between them are represented the two uneasy components of French Romantic architectural explorations—the intricacies of engineering and the hallucinations of the creative imagination. Secondly, and more importantly, in addition to architectural volumes, Lassus's library included 159 books on the history of cities, churches, and institutions. This was the real heart of his library. The Romantic approach to architecture was not essentially formal but historical; its literary sources are less abstract treatises than the stories of the great monuments of history.

The profound traditionalism of Fontaine's library points up a second characteristic: its concentration on palatial architecture in general and that of France in particular. Besides numerous general publications on domestic and palatial architecture such as Ferrerio's *Palazzi a Roma* (1655), one finds Marot's *Magnifique Château*

de Richelieu (c. 1660), Vanvitelli's *Dichiarazione dei disegni del real palazzo di Caserta* (1756), Le Rouge's *Description de Chambord* (1756), and Lebrun's *Grand Escalier du château de Versailles* (1725). In addition, there is a series of huge folios of seventeenth-century prints of the buildings, gardens, tapestries, and decorative paintings of Louis XIV's palaces, especially Versailles. Fontaine was a courtier more than a craftsman; his library documents how princes chose to live.

Percier and Fontaine's own publications concentrate on palatial architecture in its many aspects, especially their *Plans de plusieurs châteaux, palais, et residences de souverains de France, d'Italie, d'Espagne et de Russie* of 1833. Percier's students produced a large body of publications likewise concentrating on palatial subjects: Famin's and Grandjean de Montigny's *Architectures toscane* (1815); Gauthier's *Les Plus Beaux Edifices de la ville de Gênes* (1818–31); Haudebourt's *Palais Massimi à Rome* (1818); Lesueur's and Callet's *Architecture italienne* (1827); Bouchet's *Villa Pia* (1837); and, most famous today, Letarouilly's celebrated three-volume *Edifices de Rome moderne* (1840–57). During his last decade of service to Louis Philippe, Fontaine was working on a luxurious publication of the royal palaces of France, one copy of which was to be kept in each Bourbon residence.¹⁹

III.

There is one last, and perhaps even more telling, thing that comes from spending time with Fontaine's library on the shelves of the Burnham Library: a sharp sense of continuity between the illustrated volumes and Percier and Fontaine's own work. One of the most consistent and striking qualities of Percier and Fontaine's publications is the sense of spatial collapse that is obtained by means of Percier's characteristic method of line drawing. Percier and Fontaine's style was fixed in the public mind by the one hundred plates of their *Palais, maisons et autres édifices dessinés à Rome* of 1798 (see fig. 2). This is a compendium of typical Renaissance buildings, principally domestic, which owe their interest and impact to their proportions, spatial layout, and harmony of forms rather than to any intensely decorated elements. Percier, the draftsman of the plates, was clearly interested in something very different from the compressed, molded, three-dimensional masses of the buildings of Michelangelo or of Baroque architecture. He chose compositions of flat planes with neat patterns of openings sliced

through them, outlines with the narrowest and most conventional moldings, casting shadows as sharp and thin as Percier's engraved lines. These he rendered in a delicate technique with no shading or perspectival thinning of his lines so that he produced a fascinating tension (or alternation) between the evocation of complex three-dimensional spaces and the delineation of elegant two-dimensional patterns across the surface of the plates. He adapted the simple, archaic "Etruscan" style popularized by the English designer John Flaxman (1755–1826), inspired by Greek vase paintings. By applying it to complex spatial compositions of modern rather than ancient origin, Percier demonstrated, firstly, how rich the effects of this simple technique could be and, secondly, that the conventional products of Renaissance architects might be as pure as those of the ancient Greek potters.

This quality was observed and emphasized by Percier's students and it pervades their numerous publications (just cited), becoming in some cases even more calculated and perversely confusing. The first of these was A. P. S. M. Famin's (1776–1859) and A. H. V. Grandjean de Montigny's (1776–1850) *Architectures toscane* of 1815, which applies Percier's technique to the delicate and decorative monuments of Florence, producing a kind of architectural pre-Raphaelitism (see fig. 11) reminiscent of the contemporaneous works of French painter J. A. D. Ingres (1780–1867) rather than of Flaxman. The most ambitious was Martin Pierre Gauthier's (1790–1855) *Les Plus Beaux Edifices de la ville de Gênes* (1818–31), in which Percier's technique is used to represent the wonderfully complex spaces of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century palaces of Genoa, which are Baroque in their elaborateness but almost Quattrocento in their understated articulation (see fig. 12). The most intriguing are the publications of architect Jules Bouchet (1799–1860): *La Villa Pia et les jardins du Vatican* (1837); *Compositions antiques* (1851); and *Le Laurentin, maison de campagne de Pline* (1853).²⁰ The Italian Renaissance architect Pirro Ligorio's encrusted Villa Pia gave Bouchet the perfect opportunity to interweave the edges of architectural ornaments and masses in a kaleidoscopic play of engraved lines. Picking up Percier's imaginary "compositions" which served as frontispieces to each fascicle of the *Palais, maisons et autres édifices . . .*, Bouchet executed an extraordinary series of architectural fantasies, some rendered in color, as in an example from the Musée Vivenel in Compiègne (fig. 13), where

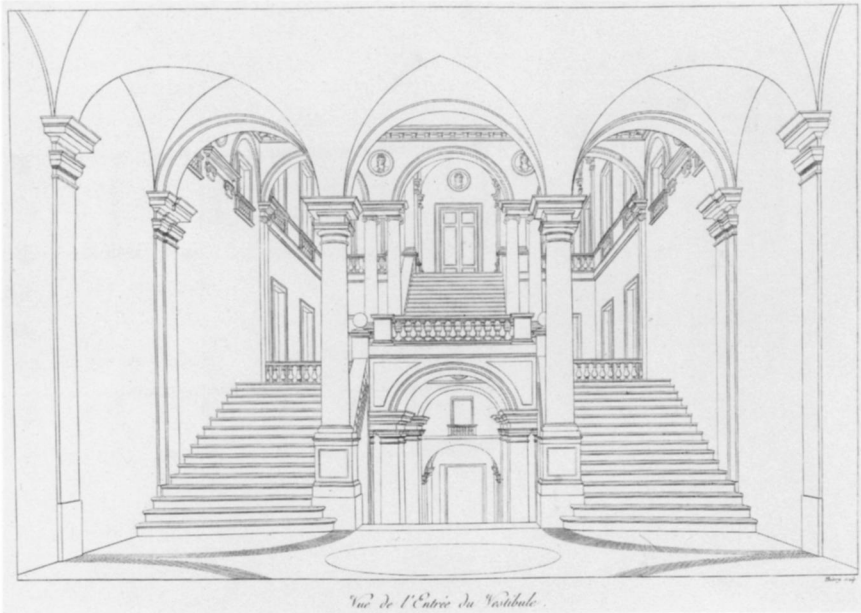


FIGURE 11. Auguste Grandjean de Montigny and A. Famin, *Architecture toscane* (Paris, 1815), plate 91. Grandjean de Montigny and Famin, both students of Percier, applied Percier's technique of line drawing in their own publication.

FIGURE 13. Jean Bouchet. "Composition." Musée Vivenel, Compiègne. (Photo: courtesy of the author)



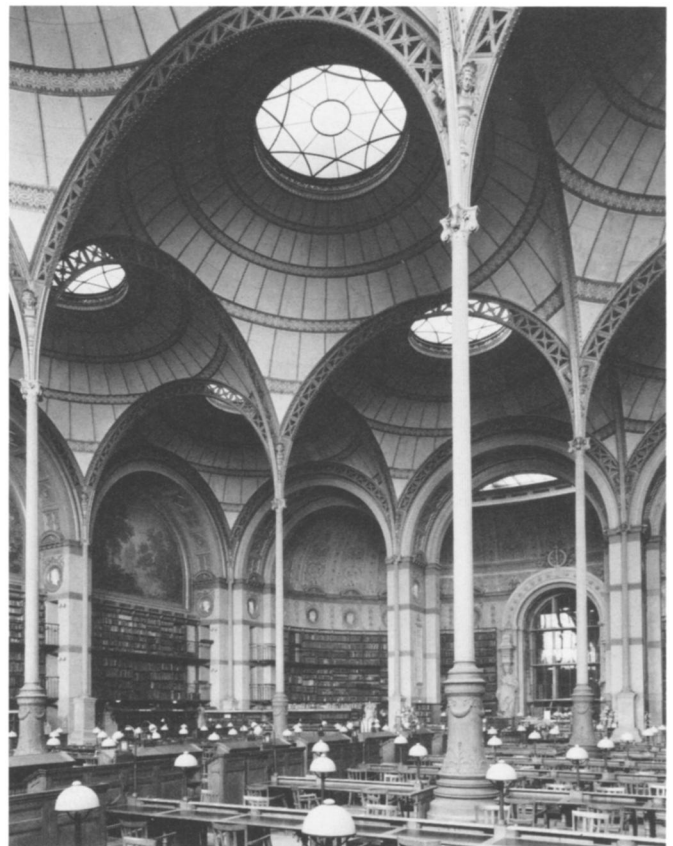
FIGURE 12. Martin Pierre Gauthier. *Les Plus Beaux Édifices de la ville de Gênes* (Paris, 1818), vol. 1, plate 22.





FIGURE 14. Félix Duban. Courtyard of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Paris, 1833–40. Duban was one of the leaders of the succeeding generation of Romantic architects who carried forward the ideas of Percier and Fontaine. In his courtyard of the Ecole (filled with fragments of French architecture), Duban created an interplay of planes much like those seen in Percier's illustrations. (Photo: Northwestern University, Department of Art History)

FIGURE 15. Henri Labrouste. Reading room of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, 1868. (Photo: Northwestern University, Department of Art History)



he blended a study in architectural perspective with the slim columns and open walls of third-style Pompeiian wall paintings to produce a symphony of suggestions and denials of space.

The problem was carrying this quality into three-dimensional execution. Percier and Fontaine's solution, in the facades along rue de Rivoli, was to adopt the anonymous vocabulary of the conventional Renaissance domestic examples of their *Palais, maisons et autres edifices* . . . , where the flat facade planes and sharp, thin shadow moldings function as an equivalent of Percier's linear engraving technique. In their more monumental Arc de Triomphe du Carrousel (see figs. 8, 9), they emphasized the simple, cubic mass of the arch itself with fields of flattened relief decoration carved evenly across the surfaces, everywhere to precisely the same depth, with a few symbolic elements—the red marble columns and the bronze quadriga—floating in front of or above this surface. But their real opportunity to play with planar and spatial effects came in their interiors, especially as represented in their *Recueil des décorations intérieures* (1801, 1812; figs. 1, 10). Here, not only did they manipulate surface effects, but they also introduced hangings, window openings, and mirrors—vistas (or the suggestion of vistas) enlarging and repeating the primary spaces. The characteristic thinness of the articulation leads to an intriguing slightness of demarcation between hard and soft, inside and outside, reality and illusion.

It is not on the issue of the eternal verity of the Renaissance conception of architecture based on the proportions of the column or on that of the continuity of the niceties of palatial planning, but rather on the broader issue of spatial design that Percier and Fontaine taught the leaders of the succeeding Romantic generation of architects a valued lesson. The two men who managed to create monumental architectural ensembles out of the attractive but tentative suggestions of Percier's plates were the leaders of the Romantic movement, Labrousse and Félix Duban (1796–1871). Duban's great work was the completion of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts between

1832 and 1840, especially the courtyards filled with fragments of French historical architecture remaining from the Musée des Monuments Français formerly on the site.²¹ (Percier had been active in the museum's formation and had executed designs for these courtyards that had not been carried out.) Duban created here a play of spatial effects in splaying the sides of the outer court, bowing those of the inner court to embrace the whole extent of the museum facade, and making the Quattrocento facade from the château at Gaillon a thin, open theater-flat dividing the two (see fig. 14). He thus created a tableau with spaces seen through planes like those of third-style Pompeiian wall paintings or the compositions of Bouchet.

Labrousse's illusionism was more fantastic in the vestibule of the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève (1839–50) in Paris and, more monumentally, in the reading room of the Bibliothèque Nationale (1860–68; fig. 15), where he was inspired by the use of hangings, openings, and mirrors in the *Recueil des décorations intérieures* to produce a space that is a Quattrocento-Pompeian fantasy actually built and inhabitable.

IV.

During the mid- and late nineteenth century, Percier and Fontaine were appropriated by the academic classical school and held up as models for the avoidance of the "licenses"—the imaginative twists—of the Romantics.²² This seemed to have been a profound skewing of the truth: Fontaine was the king's architect before he was leader of any school of design; Percier was an architect of the greatest imaginativeness whose sense of design went far beyond the rules and vocabulary of any party. These roles seem to have been more real to them than that of leaders of one or another stylistic camp. After a tour through Fontaine's library in the Burnham Library's stacks, one learns about palatial architecture and spatial illusionism rather than about the cold abstractions of classicism.