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To the Vandals They Are Stone:
A Profane Pre-History of the German Temple of Art, 1794-1830

By

Alice Mae Littman Goff

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

History

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Thomas W. Laqueur, Co-chair
Professor Jonathan Sheehan, Co-chair
Professor Carla Hesse
Professor Beate Fricke

Spring 2015

Abstract

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This is the story of how German writers, scholars, bureaucrats and custodians of art at all levels witnessed and participated in the French despoliations of European art collections over the course of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, and how in the aftermath of these events they developed new ideas about the place and purpose of art in modern cultural and political life at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In this period German scholars were forming new theories about the autonomy of art and its ability to remake the social and political order. At the same time they were gaining unprecedented experience of art's material fragility and its dependence on the contingencies of the environment and good will of human actors. This dissertation argues that the tension between the twin discoveries of art's powers and its limitations defined the cultural politics of the Prussian state during this revolutionary era.

This dissertation begins with the looting of Italian and German art collections by French officials from 1794-1807, and investigates Germans' confrontation with the vulnerability of the objects thought to be the source of ideal beauty in the world to material displacement in the tumult of military conflict and occupation. The second chapter turns to the German reaction to the museum founded in 1793 in the Palace of the Louvre in which the collections won through battle were exhibited to a broad and international public. In the face of the brilliance and innovativeness of this museum, German visitors rethought their repulsion to the despoliations and articulated new visions for the methods and contexts under which art could be known and appreciated. The silence of art and the difficulty of getting it off its pedestal is the subject of the third chapter, which takes up the challenges for Prussian delegates of identifying, reclaiming, and returning looted artworks to German cities and towns after the fall of the Napoleonic regime. The last two chapters are about the promise, forwarded by aesthetic theorists and cultural administrators, that once back in German custody, looted art objects would achieve new vitality, becoming vibrant participants in the cultural life of the state. In Prussia this achievement was to be secured by the establishment of a centralized public museum of art, an institution that hoped to abandon the chaotic, limited, dangerous, and frustratingly silent material basis of art in favor of a realm of pure ideal aesthetic experience. "*To the Vandals they are stone!*" Schiller wrote of the antiquities in Paris, expressing the desire not only to transcend the object but to cordon off art's materiality as the domain of those unable to experience its true spiritual charge. The

assessment, however, both enlightens and deceives. Indeed, to the Vandals they *were* stone—the various transgressions against art objects which we will encounter in the following could not be conceived as such without the bottom line of art's materiality. To be an object in this period was a deeply vulnerable proposition. At the same time, however, the object was not only the purview of the victor, but also the ultimate concern of the vanquished. The problem and, I will argue, fundamental impossibility of escaping from this truth—of making stone transform into something beyond itself—became in this moment the defining paradox of the museum of art in the nineteenth century. The inheritance of this history continues to inform and challenge museum practices today.

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INTRODUCTION
Stepping into the Gap

> A central current…in French painting from Jean-Baptiste Greuze…to the advent of Manet…can be understood in terms of an ongoing effort to make paintings that by one strategy or another appear—in the first place by depicting personages wholly absorbed in what they are doing, thinking, and feeling, and in multifigure paintings by binding those figures together in a single, unified composition—to deny the presence before them of the beholder or, to put this more affirmatively, to establish the ontological fiction that the beholder does not exist. Only if this was accomplished could the *actual* beholder be stopped and held before the canvas.
>
> — Michael Fried, "Jeff Wall, Wittgenstein, and the Everyday," *Critical Inquiry* 33 (Spring 2007): 499-501.

> [Steve Wynn] was standing in front of the painting at this point, facing us. He raised his hand to show us something about the painting – and at that moment, his elbow crashed backwards right through the canvas.
> There was a terrible noise.
> Wynn stepped away from the painting, and there, smack in the middle of Marie-Therese Walter's plump and allegedly-erotic forearm, was a black hole the size of a silver dollar – or, to be more exact, the size of the tip of Steve Wynn's elbow…
> "Oh shit," he said.
>
> — Nora Ephron, "My Weekend in Vegas," *Huffington* Post, 16 October, 2006.

It is safe to assume that Steve Wynn, billionaire Las Vegas casino magnate with no peripheral vision, is not the beholder art historian Michael Fried had in mind. And yet the arbitrary juxtaposition of these two modes of art criticism is mutually illuminating. Wynn's encounter with Picasso's *Le Rêve* (at the time still hanging on his office wall, though he had just sold it for $139 million) amplifies the paradox inherent in Fried's statement that only a painting's denial of a viewer's presence can secure this presence in front of it. Wynn makes this look less like an aesthetic strategy and more like a risky proposition in which the decks are clearly stacked. While a work of art might fix a gaze in a certain manner of speaking, its dubious ability to command the limbs of its beholder falls disastrously short of effective self-defense. Indifference comes at a cost. As with the farmer in Brueghel's *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* pictured below, one is moved to shout at the farmer blithely plowing his fields. *DO* something. Or at least *turn around*. [Fig. I.1]

The following story resides in the gap between 'ontological fiction' and 'oh shit.' It is about the realization, typical of moments of disaster, that what art can be said to do and what art can do are often two different things. Sometimes this is not a particular problem. Steve Wynn and Michael Fried probably do not worry much about each other's approaches to a canvas. Other times, however, and especially when the public administration of culture is at stake, the

revelation of the indifference of art objects to the dramas of the sentient can cause deep uncertainties about their utility as carriers of social and political meaning.

This story takes place in one of these moments of uncertainty. At the turn of the nineteenth century in Europe art was both doing things and being said to do things that it had never done nor been said to have done before, and as such the gap mattered intensely. In this period German scholars developed new ways of thinking and talking about art that emphasized its autonomy.[1] It was produced according to its own set of ideal laws; it developed in specific historical contexts; its reception was governed by certain psychological and physiological apparatuses. For these reasons, encountering a work of art was thought to allow its viewer access to a specialized liberated realm of moral truth, grounded in history and reason.

By the end of the eighteenth century, however, these assertions of aesthetic autonomy were joined by a series of political events and military conflicts that made art objects' inability to follow through on their theoretical promises painfully evident. After the iconoclastic cultural politics of the first years of the French Revolution, on June 27, 1794 the Committee of Public Safety authorized the seizure of objects of cultural value from defeated states for transportation to Paris where they could become part of private and public museum collections. The practice continued in the Napoleonic period through the Italian campaigns and the Prussian and Habsburg defeats. "His form rises above humanity," Winckelmann had famously written about the Apollo Belvedere, but in 1798 it had not risen high enough to avoid being crated up and trundled over the Alps to be paraded through a thronging festival of people in Paris and eventually installed in the burgeoning museum in the Louvre.[2] At stake in this material refutation of an artwork's ideal self-sufficience was the extent to which it could be a reliable tool of politics if its theoretical meaning diverged so fundamentally from its material presence.

This dissertation is about how German writers, scholars, bureaucrats and custodians of art at all levels reconciled these two registers of engaging with a work of art, both intellectually, and as a matter of cultural practice. It tells the story of their commentary on and participation in the French looting of European art collections, their engagement with the museum that grew out of the despoliations in the Palace of the Louvre, the Prussian reclamations of art collections after the fall of Napoleon in 1815, and the subsequent efforts to build a new kind of public museum of art in Berlin.

Throughout, this narrative will pursue two primary questions. The first asks how the gap between art's theoretical autonomy and its material vulnerability emerged as a problem of German cultural life in the revolutionary period. The second asks how Prussian art administrators sought solutions to the conflict, which threatened the very premise of a state built on and motivated by the arts.

1. How the Gap Came to Be: The Illusion of the Political Symbol

[1] An account of the philosophical construction of art's autonomy and its political engagements is in Jonathan M. Hess, *Reconstituting the Body Politic: Enlightenment Culture and the Invention of Aesthetic Autonomy* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999).

[2] In the German context, the work of Johann Joachim Winckelmann has been seen as particularly foundational for establishing the study of art as both an aesthetic and historical enterprise. See Suzanne Marchand, *Down from Olympus: Archaeology and Philhellenism in Germany, 1750-1970* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

The answer to the first question lies in a close examination of the story of the French despoliations of cultural property and their aftermath as a drama of objects rather than as an allegory for the conflict between political ideologies. The looting, exhibition, and reclamation of works of art certainly amplified their symbolic load as their fates became metaphors for the historical destiny and cultural superiority of competing national and political identities. At the same time that artworks acquired a increased symbolic visibility in this period, however, art objects became increasingly difficult to manage. German custodians of art collections and commentators on the cultural politics of the day confronted the challenge of transporting, restoring, maintaining, and exhibiting a massive quantity of works of different sizes, material, and origin, many of which were neither inventoried nor affirmatively identified. The question, hot in the German press, of whether Paris could be considered the new Rome was not only about the symbolic inheritance of classical civilization. It was also about the influence of climate on ancient sculpture, the potential for damage in the transportation of Renaissance canvases, and the importance of physical context to art historical appreciation. A concern for the finitude of art developed out of these experiences, which actively recognized the limitations of such lofty notions as 'the nation's heritage,' or 'art belongs to humanity.'

This narrative introduces a different perspective on the relationship between objects and politics in the revolutionary period. Historians of France have frequently argued that the Revolution made the cultural realm into an embodiment of political meaning, by instituting a representational collapse which eviserated the distance between sign and signified. "Political symbols and rituals were not metaphors of power; they were the means and ends of power itself," Lynn Hunt writes in her influential study of revolutionary political culture.[3] However, German witnesses and participants in the upheavals of objects both within France and across Europe confronted instead the mobilization of culture into the political life of the Republic as a deeply ironic proposition, at odds rather than in sync with actual practice. The claim to 'liberate' art into a realm of active political subjectivity accompanied a harsh physical journey that underscored its inanimate vulnerability rather than its liveliness. Establishing a solid affinity between objects and political meanings was from this vantage not an outcome of revolutionary action but its central challenge.

2. How the Gap was Bridged: The Limitations of Philosophy in Stone

The gap between the symbolic and the material worlds of art that Germans identified as a problem of French cultural politics was also a challenge for administrators and bureaucrats who sought to integrate art into a new political landscape after the fall of the Holy Roman Empire. In pursuit of the question of how they approached this challenge I will focus on Prussia, whose agenda of reform after the defeats of 1806 included a special focus on the possibilities of culture for political renewal.[4] One of the most visible answers after the reclamation of looted cultural property in 1815 was the institution of a public museum, which would unify the royal collections, put them under civic administration, and correct the distorted relationship between art and power that many had criticized in the Napoleonic Louvre.

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[3] Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 54.

[4] On the institution of culture in the Prussian reform state, Andreas Thier, "Kultur, Reform und Staatlichkeit in Preußen um 1800," in *Krise, Reformen— und Kultur: Preußen vor und nach der Katastrophe von 1806*, ed. Bärbel Holtz (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2010).

Prussian administrators would discover, however, that the museum project raised as many questions as it answered, as debates emerged about its organization, architecture, and the terms of its duties to people and art. The design proposed by Karl Friedrich Schinkel in 1823 eventually carried the day, and part of its allure was its commitment to transcendence. This 'temple of art' would abandon the mundane world of objects that had been revealed to be chaotic, limited, and dangerous in the revolutionary period in favor of a realm of pure ideal aesthetic experience. While this vault might be possible in theory, however, the material contingencies of frustratingly silent and obdurate art objects posed problems throughout the museum's planning and construction. Monumental statues cracked, inscriptions on the building's façade lied, the authenticity of statues came into question. Focusing on the complications and challenges that attended the process of creating an institution founded on idealist principles in theory, this dissertation will show how in practice the museum was a place where the capacity of art to transform the social and political order was contested, and the limitations of aesthetic transcendence as socially transformative were exposed.

This story also reaches beyond a deceptive commonplace about German cultural life in the French revolutionary period. It is a well-trodden thesis, introduced by Heine and made canonical by Marx, that Germans, confounded in turns by the violence of the Revolution and defeat on the battlefield, carved out a mode of transcendent cultural engagement that turned away from the jarring concreteness of contemporary realities and upwards and inwards in a move Rebecca Comay has recently described as "the sublime conversion of practical impotence into spiritual triumph."[5] While this idea has been thoroughly debunked by historians of politics, it has retained a presence in understandings of German arts and letters in this period, which has been dominated by the intellectual traditions of idealism and romanticism.[6] The following analysis offers two correctives to this impulse. First, it shows the inescapability of objects and their deeply material concerns even for those who proclaimed most vehemently their loyalty to the institution's spiritual mission. Second, it argues for the insufficiency of idealism both as a technique of arts administration and as an interpretation of the museum institution's meaning.

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[5] Rebecca Comay, *Mourning Sickness: Hegel and the French Revolution* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 11; Karl Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*: Introduction," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert. C. Tucker (New York: Norton, 1978), 59. The deliniation between German idealism and French materialism has been inherited by post-war historiography as a means to explain the development of German history into the 20th century. Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961) is a classic example of this iteration of the *Sonderweg* genre.

[6] Historians of the German Jacobin movement, popular culture in the Rhineland, and the influence of the Prussian Reform movement have been among those arguing against the cliché of the 'unpolitical German.' Michael Rowe, *From Reich to State: the Rhineland in the Revolutionary Age, 1780-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); James M. Brophy, *Popular Culture and the Public Sphere in the Rhineland, 1800-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Matthew Levinger, *Enlightened Nationalism: The Transformation of Prussian Political Culture, 1806-1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

As such this study also addresses the relationship between ideas and objects in the museum more generally, a relationship which has been key to the understanding of the institution's modernity. The history of the public museum of art has frequently been told as a story of the growing separation of art collections from their reflective obligations to absolutist sovereign power.[7] Once loosed from their representational function in this regard they could become repositories for new kinds of meanings derived from the concerns of the human sciences with history, individual subjectivity, and social mores.[8] In this way the museum has been made into an expressive vessel for the performance of regimes of knowledge and power that may be produced through its objects and infrastructures, but which ultimately reside in language and ideas that eclipse consideration of its profane materiality.[9] Hilde Hein writes, for example, that "the objects [museums] house have no less mass nor girth than their premuseum state…but to the curators who acquire and dispose of them, the transfigured identity of the objects inducted into museum has only a residual relation to their physical bulk."[10] Krzystof Pomian attributes this phenomenon to the museum's status as inheritor of the church's role as a conjurer of intangible realms of significance: "the museum can be seen as one of those institutions whose role is to form a consensus of opinion around the technique of opposing the visible and the invisible."[11] Even as numerous studies have drawn attention to museums as sites for a variety of sensory practices where people do much more than look at and think about art, these analyses have largely continued to emphasize the complicity of the bodies and spaces in the production of meaning.[12] The goal of this dissertation, by contrast, is to show the ways in which the material

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[7] James Sheehan, *Museums in the German Art World: From the End of the Old Regime to the Rise of Modernism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 41. For an account of the relationship between early modern collections and monarchical power see Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, *Court, Cloister, and City: The Art and Culture of Central Europe 1450-1800* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Horst Bredekamp, *Antikensehnsucht und Machinenglauben: die Geschichte der Kunstkammer und die Zukunft der Kunstgeschichte* (Berlin: Klaus Wagenbach, 1993), in particular the discussion of François Chauveau and Robert Nanteuil's 1659 portrait of Cardinal Mazarin, 31.

[8] Anke te Heesen, *Theorien des Museums zur Einführung* (Hamburg: Junius Verlag, 2012), 37-47.

[9] This is particularly a feature of studies born of 'The New Museology,' a critical approach to the study of museums and their role in social, political, and epistemological hierarchies especially those operating through a Foucaultian framework: Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1992); Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1995). For an overview of museum studies literature see Randolph Starn, "A Historian's Brief Guide to New Museum Studies," *The American Historical Review* 110, no. 1 (February 2005).

[10] Hilde Hein, *The Museum in Transition: A Philosophical Perspective* (Washington, D.C.: The Smithsonian Institution, 2000), 55.

[11] Krzysztof Pomian, *Collectors and Curiosities: Paris and Venice, 1500-1800*, tran. Elizabeth Wiles-Portier (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1990), 43.

[12] Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (London: Routledge, 1995); Charlotte Klonk, *Spaces of Experience: Art Gallery Interiors from 1800 to 2000* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009); Helen Rees Leahy, *Museum Bodies: The Politics and Practices of Visiting and Viewing* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012).

world of the museum can resist the terms of embodiment often proclaimed to be the institution's central goal. The stories of the recalcitrance of objects in the museum open up the contingencies of concrete practice that are smoothed over at the level of discourse.

While the following narrative hopes to return some opacity to our understanding of the museum institution, this is not to suggest that an investigation of its materiality must surface with cold, hard nothing, or, in Steve Wynn's parlance, 'shit.' Instead, this history takes the stoniness of art objects, as opposed to their transparency or liveliness, to be the real source of their cultural influence. Somewhere between the absorptive mode of Fried and the abusive mode of Wynn, art objects in the museum may not secure the presence of viewers but they provoke the actions of others to work to secure this. Their indifference, their inability to faithfully project messages on behalf of their beholders, their resistance to intentions and their vulnerability to damage and displacement occasions an intense theater bent on overcoming their factual stoniness. This is the theater with which this dissertation is concerned.

As is proper for any story about the work of art in German life at the turn of the nineteenth century, we will take Friedrich Schiller along as our guide. This was the writer who, perhaps more than any other of his generation, posited the ability of art to dissolve the distance between Fried and Wynn, between a realm of ideal meaning and a realm of profane material reality. "Humanity has lost its dignity, but Art has rescued and preserved it in significant stones [*bedeutende Steinen*]," Schiller wrote in his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*.[13] This was the programmatic document upon which Germans premised a vision of a state grounded on and motivated by aesthetics. It proposed that through art, rather than through the blood of revolution, individuals could access the ideal of reason and instill it in their sensible world. But we will be taking along a slightly different Schiller, one now less certain of art's ability to bring together noumenal and phenomenal worlds. This is the Schiller of *Die Antiken zu Paris*, a poem written in 1802 after the despoliations of Italian artwork and their subsequent exhibition in Paris:

Die Antiken zu Paris	The Antiquities in Paris
Was der Griechen Kunst erschaffen,	That which Grecian art created,
Mag der Franke mit den Waffen	Let the Frank, with [arms paraded],
Führen nach der Seine Strand	Bear to Seine's triumphant sand,
Und in prangenden Musäen	And in his museums glorious
Zeig er seine Siegstrophäen	Show the trophies all-victorious,
Dem erstaunten Vaterland!	To his wond'ring fatherland!
Ewig werden sie ihm schweigen,	They to him are silent ever,
Nie von den Gestellen steigen	Into life's fresh circle never
In des Lebens frischen Reihn.	From their pedestals come down.
Der allein besitzt die Musen	The muses are alone possessed,
Der sie trägt im warmen Busen;	By he who holds them in warm breast;

[13] Friedrich Schiller, "Ueber die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen," in *Schillers Werke: Nationalausgabe*, ed. Lieselotte Blumenthal, Benno von Wiese, vol. 20.1, *Philosophische Schriften* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger Verlag, 1962), 334. Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters* trans. Reginald Snell (London: Routledge, 1954), 52.

Dem Vandalen sind sie Stein![14] To the Vandal they are stone![15]

Stone for Schiller had lost its ability to connect different registers of experience: the profane object was the purview of the vandal. Virtuous and true engagement with art, he implied, was now predicated on a physical impossibility: the statue that could transcend its earthly parameters and step off its pedestal "*in des Lebens frischen Reihn*".[16] It is easy to recognized in these lines the inclination to abandon stones for a world of spirit: a statue that steps off its pedestal is, after all, no statue at all. But in Schiller's sorrowful formulation of the state of art in European culture at the turn of the nineteenth century, there is a sense that the idealist poet does not quite make it off the ground. With its spiritual consolation confined to only two lines of the last stanza, his primary concern is the obstinate solidity of the objects, and their forcible displacement from their rightful installations. He begins with the fact of their physical location, and ends with the fact of their materiality. Stone may be the jurisdiction of the vandal, but it was also the substance with which the vandalized had to contend. Many things stepped off their pedestals in the period with which this story is concerned from 1794-1830—the upheavals of revolution, secularization, the fall of empires, and the establishment of new infrastructures for the care and promotion of art prompted an unparalleled upheaval of meaningful objects—but none did so of their own volition. The spiritual privilege outlined by Schiller and his contemporaries was predicated on a pervasively real world of material fracture and loss that refused to be cordoned off or abandoned for loftier and more abstract heights. "*Dem Vandalen sind sie Stein,"* and everyone else too. This is where the magic happens.

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[14] Friedrich Schiller, "Die Antiken zu Paris," in *Schillers Werke: Nationalausgabe*, ed. Norbert Oellers, Siegfried Seidel, vol. 2.1, *Gedichte in der Reihenfolge ihres Erscheinens 1799-1805* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger Verlag, 1983), 408.

[15] Friedrich Schiller, "The Antiquities in Paris," in *The Poems of Schiller*, trans. Edgar Alfred Bowring (New York: Alden, 1883), 229-230, with my amendments in brackets.

[16] Gerhard Kaiser, "Ideen oder Körper: zu Schillers und Goethes Rezeptionsweise antiker Plastik," in *Antiquitates Renatae: deutsche und französische Beiträge zur Wirkung der Antike in der europäischen Literatur: Festschrift für Renate Böschenstein zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Verena Ehrich-Haefeli, Hans-Jürgen Schrader, and Martin Stern (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1998).

Introduction Illustrations

Fig. I.1
Unknown after Pieter Brueghel the Elder (1527/28-1569)
Landscape with the Fall of Icarus, 1558
73.5 x 112 cm
Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique

CHAPTER 1
The Tragedy of the Object in the Napoleonic *Kunstraub*

Was der Griechen Kunst erschaffen
Mag der Franke mit den Waffen
Führen nach der Seine Strand...

— Friedrich Schiller, *Die Antiken zu Paris*

Imagine that you are Laocoön, the serpent-wrestling Trojan priest of the most famous work of classical sculpture in Europe at the end of the eighteenth century. It is 1797, and it has been an eventful year. For decades you have been at the center of a vigorous debate on the nature and meaning of artistic creation, in which the leading aestheticians of the age have sought to answer the question of whether you, head thrown back and mouth ajar, are crying out in pain, and what consequences this grotesque gesture might have for your arresting beauty. However, a rather more immediate physical concern threatens your condition. Just as you are approaching your three-hundredth anniversary as resident of the pope's sculpture collections in Rome, French soldiers and Italian artisans remove you from your niche in the courtyard of the Belvedere, pack you into a crate, and load you onto a cart bound for the port at Livorno. From there you set sail, first to Marseille, and then up the rivers Rhône and Saône towards Paris. The trip takes fourteen arduous months. Your right arm, a terracotta prosthetic of early modern origin, is left behind, deemed too incongruous with the rest of your white marble surface to warrant exhibition in Europe's new cultural capital. You arrive in Paris in 1798 as a fragment, and just in time to be an unintentionally literal fulfillment of the words in Goethe's essay about you of the same year: "To seize well the attention of the Laocoön, let us place ourselves before the group with our eyes shut…let us open and shut them alternately and we shall see all the marble in motion; we shall be afraid to find the group changed when we open our eyes again."[1] You are outfitted with a new plaster arm before your debut in front of the French public in the Louvre in 1800, where you will remain until 1815, when geopolitics change and your fate is reversed. You are loaded back onto a cart to be restored to Rome. The return journey is eventful. En route, your conveyance overturns on an alpine pass at Mont Cenis, and you crack your abdomen. Luckily for you, the illustrious sculptor Antonio Canova will repair the break upon your arrival in Rome. The "noble simplicity and quiet grandeur" which the German art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann had famously identified in your marble expression does little to describe your physical travails.

This bumpy road of displacement and fracture was shared by many objects swept up in the tumultuous cultural politics of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars: thirty porphyry columns from the tomb of Charlemagne from Aachen; Van Eyck's *Ghent Altarpiece*; 6,773 bronze medallions from Berlin; the Apollo Belvedere from the Vatican; the bronze horses from St. Mark's in Venice; a Mantuan onyx vase from Braunschweig; 26,000 engravings from

[1] Johann Wolfgang Goethe, "Observations on the Laocoon," in *Goethe on Art*, trans. John Gage (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 81. On the *Laocoön* as a fragment in France see Brigitte Bourgeois, "Fragments of a Revolution: The *Laokoon* in Paris, 1798-1815," in *The Fragment: An Incomplete History*, ed. William Tronzo (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2009), 60-80.

Cologne; the Chrodo Altar from Goslar. The roll call of objects transported from the art collections of the European states defeated by France during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars is a wide and motley array extending well beyond this selection.[2] In the summer of 1794, following the victory of the French Army over the Coalition powers at Fleurus in the Austrian Netherlands, the Committee of Public Safety authorized a commission of experts to "collect all the monuments, all things of value, and all resources of learning that had any relevance to arts and sciences in order to enrich the Republic."[3] Thus began a campaign that would be a consistent feature of French military conquest across Europe for two decades. In 1796, this *Kunstraub*, ['art robbery'] as it was known by Germans at the time and continues to be known today, continued in Italy with the acquisition of 110 paintings from Milan, Parma, Modena, and Bologna following Napoleon's victories there in the spring and summer. The most significant transfer of artworks was stipulated in the Treaty of Tolentino, which ended hostilities with the Papal States in 1797, granting the French commissioners access to the rich collections of the Vatican. The despoliations continued in Savoy, Tuscany, and Naples. From 1800-1801, the campaigns against the Austrians in southern Germany yielded a modest cache of treasures from Munich and its surrounding regions. In 1806-1807, after the Prussian defeats at Jena and Auerstadt, "the German due was cashed," as the historian Paul Wescher puts it, and with much greater results, as the director of the Musée Napoleon, Dominique-Vivant Denon selected over a thousand paintings, along with even numerous other artifacts from Berlin, Potsdam, Kassel, Braunschweig, Danzig and Schwerin.[4] In 1808 and 1809 Denon accompanied the Grande Armée to Spain and Austria, and in 1811 he made a last mission to Italy.

Germans experienced these events as readers, tourists, scholars, and participants. They debated the virtues and violations of French cultural policy in occupied territories; they aided and subverted French officials' missions to find and transport objects; they assimilated and rejected the cultural landscape created by the Napoleonic interventions into new and old understandings of art and its meanings. In these diverse interactions, they articulated a deep concern for the material status of art in the midst of conflict: what it was, where it was, how it was treated, and whether this mattered. This chapter will investigate this concern in two episodes. First, it considers the reaction of German art historical scholars to the displacement of Italian art collections into France from 1796-1802, and in particular their views of the material dangers attending the transplantation of some of the most revered and theorized works of art in the western canon. Second, the chapter tells the story of the precarious involvement of the caretakers and custodians of German art collections in the Kunstraub from 1806-1807, who, because of their responsibility for the material integrity of their collections, were made liable for their loss.

Throughout, this chapter is about a unique moment in the cultural history of the revolutionary period in Europe during which art became a central front in the symbolic communication of political positions, and was at the same time exposed, often tragically, to be dependent on the goodness of human actors. On the heels of a century in which a new science of

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[2] A sample of the array of scientific objects collected by the commission over the course of this period might include items such as 52 live animals from a Dutch menagerie. Charles Gillispie, *Science and Polity in France: the End of the Old Regime* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 442.

[3] Committee of Public Safety (20 August 1794) quoted in Gillispie, *Science and Polity in France: the End of the Old Regime*, 434.

[4] Paul Wescher, *Kunstraub unter Napoleon* (Berlin: Mann, 1976), 98.

aesthetics had yielded new assertions about the importance of the classical art tradition to contemporary society, the revolutionary period challenged the notion of art's ability to stand up to the challenges of modern life, exposing its vulnerability to destruction, displacement, and reinterpretation. As the artwork Laocoön seethed power through its pain, the object suffered the consequences of the inanimate: unable to struggle, it could only submit to the will of its human conquerors. For German commentators this emerged as a paradox. The national political claims made on art's behalf did not match these objects' material realities. The figurative liveliness of artworks belied the revelation of their vulnerabilities as objects. This chapter begins with the ways in which Germans pointed out the material fragility of art as a means of denying the French justification of the Kunstraub as an act of liberation, which would enroll art objects, citizen-like, in the political community of the Republic. It ends with the ways in which, in the absence of their pillaged collections, Germans' visions of the place of art in their own political communities were formulated as independent of the fragile and unreliable material object: an aesthetic community of spirit rather than of things.

The German engagement with the Kunstraub thus crystallizes a crisis between objects and ideas that is at the center of the German reaction to the revolutionary period more broadly, and that is crucial to understanding the attempt to assimilate some of its theoretical innovations into the cultural political order. "That which Grecian art created / Let the Frank with arms paraded / Bear to Seine's triumphant sands," is an expression of this disjuncture: that objects of such prized aesthetic value and vitality could be boxed up like so many things and made into the spoils of war. This realization provoked new ideas about the dangers and possibilities afforded by the material life of a work of art, a life made all the more apparent during the Napoleonic despoliations. This story of the German response to the Kunstraub is about the emergence of the art object as a site of danger and tragedy: both a thing to escape from, and a thing from which one cannot escape.

The Béranger Vase and the Representation of the Object in the Italian *Kunstraub*

In 1815, Prussian troops entered Paris after the final defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo and captured the famed porcelain manufactory at Sèvres.[5] There they found a confounding object, a 1.2 meter tall vase in the Etruscan style with a painted panel running around its circumference, depicting the transportation to Paris of the most famous artworks claimed by Napoleon in the Italian campaigns seventeen years before. [Fig. 1.1]

The work was commissioned by the emperor himself in 1813, and painted by a frequent and celebrated Sèvres artist, Antoine Béranger.[6] The vase's scale, in which the figures and the objects in transit take up the bulk of the space in the illustration, afforded an up-close view of the particularities of what was taking place, rather than a distanced survey of a landscape of action as in other historically themes porcelain of the imperial period. The procession of statues, books, and paintings appeared with all the physical difficulty and particularity that could well have

[5] William Burton, *A General History of Porcelain* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1921), 195.

[6] The vase was most likely part of a series of porcelain commissions from Sèvres ordered by Napoleon to depict notable scenes from the history of the Empire. On the representation of the Empire through porcelain see Steven Adams, "Sèvres Porcelain and the Articulation of Imperial Identity in Napoleonic France," *Journal of Design History* 20, no. 3 (2007): 189.

attended the actual event. An officer inserts his boot into the path of the caravan to slow their progress; a trio of canvases leans against a scaffold festooned with a garland of greenery; the muscles of a band of men strain as they haul a cart bearing the considerably less exercised frame of the Venus de Medici.[7] [Fig. 1.1.1] A team of horses in front of a stack of paintings rears, suggesting the start and stop of the delicately engineered procession's forward motion. [Fig. 1.1.2] The intimacy of this view—the uneven dirty ground, the shoes and hands of the movers, the strewn celebratory foliage— indicated a scene of transition rather than of fixed designations: these were things on the way, a long way from being mounted on their pedestals in the galleries of the Musée du Louvre to widen the eyes of the thronging public from all over Europe in reverence. The feature illustration was quite literally pedestrian. The trappings of ancient glory appeared merely as mundanely precious cargo.

For all its avoidance of euphemistic allegory, the Béranger vase, an artwork which represented the process by which artworks were made into representations of the prowess of the Napoleonic regime, was a symbol about symbols. It documented the moment orchestrated to crown Paris as the new Rome and it contained in itself the monuments that made that crowning possible. The vase was richly ornamented with medallions bearing the profiles of famous men of antiquity, associating Napoleon's achievements with this history. Its formidable height and gilt emphasized the brilliance of this legacy.

From the perspective of its maker, the juxtaposition of the material details of the procession of antiquities to Paris with its symbolic meaning perfectly embodied the ethical foundation from which the cultural administrators of France pursued the accumulation and exhibition of European art. The actual act of seizing and transporting works to Paris was important to this self conception in two ways. First, it was the means by which the French Empire styled itself as the successor to the Roman, which had despoiled the cultural property of its opponents, most notably the Greeks, during the course of their imperial expansion.[8] Showing the material process of the Kunstraub, rather than just its effects, emphasized the extent to which French cultural officials engaged in a time honored practice, recapitulating the classical example. A banner accompanying the most celebrated caravan of antiquities—the so-called 'third convoy'—read, "Greece surrendered them, Rome has lost them: / Their fate has changed twice. It

[7] The Venus de Medici was not actually part of the 1798 acquisitions from Italy, arriving in Paris first in 1803, but by the time of the vase's manufacture, it had become such an icon of the triumph of the Musée Napoleon and the Kunstraub that Béranger included it in the panel illustration.

[8] Margaret Miles argues that the most apt classical parallels to the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Kunstraub are Mummius' sack of Corinth in 146 BC and Marcellus' despoliation of Syracuse in 212 BCE. Margaret Miles, *Art as Plunder: The Ancient Origins of the Debate about Cultural Property* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 320. As Miles' work testifies, already in the eighteenth century, and with particular energy during the revolutionary period the ancient example had become central to the development of ideas about the protection of cultural property during conflict. Ludwig Völkel, the director of the Museum Fridericianum in Kassel would write a history of ancient looting in 1798, at the height of the Italian Kunstraub, eight years before his own collection would become the target of the French campaigns. Ludwig Völkel, *Ueber die Wegführung der Kunstwerke aus dem eroberten Ländern nach Rom: Eine Vorlesung in d. casselischen Alterthümer-Gesellschaft* (Leipzig: Breitkopf u. Härtel, 1798).

will not change again."[9] Second, featuring artworks in their moment of transportation emphasized the prevailing rhetoric that the artworks were, through their transfer to France, liberated. This position was articulated in 1794 by Jacques-Luc Barbier, a French history painter who accompanied a first shipment of artworks from Belgium to Paris: "The fruits of genius are the patrimony of liberty…For too long these masterpieces have been soiled by the gaze of servitude…The immortal works of Rubens, Van Dyck and the other founders of the Flemish school are no longer on alien soil...They are today delivered to the home of the arts and of genius, the land of liberty and equality, the French Republic."[10] The transportation of works to Paris was the formative moment of change, when the property of churches and monarchs would become true art. The French state's claim to the artistic heritage of Europe made the monuments of antiquity into trophies, but not mere spoils. Artworks, citizen-like, would undergo a transformation under the auspices of a new and free political environment and thus fulfill their greatest degree of humanity.

The physical facts of the Kunstraub were thus an important element in the French performance of their cultural ascendancy in Europe. The particular transport of objects to which the painting on the Béranger vase refers was indeed staged to be the most visible and celebrated of these transformative performances. On July 27, 1798, a festival marked the entrance of a caravan of 29 carts containing the most prized monuments of antiquity and paintings of the Renaissance into Paris. The Apollo Belvedere, the *Transfiguration* of Raphael, the Capitoline Venus, the Laocoön, Corregio's *St. Jerome*, and the bronze horses of Saint Mark's were among the dignitaries in the procession. Further carts carrying animals, manuscripts, minerals, botanical specimens, on and on, followed these. The writer brothers Edmond and Jules de Goncourt wrote many years later of the spectacle that "all was an Olympus of marble," but their words do disservice to the actual event.[11] Certainly, the grand entrance of the so-called 'third convoy' was designed to reflect the might and triumph of the Grande Armée and of Napoleon Bonaparte on the Italian peninsula, and to stake a claim to the splendor of Rome. "Never have more noble trophies adorned the triumphs of a conqueror," wrote a French officer of the convoy, "but perhaps neither has one been so deserving of these as the brave army of the Italian campaign, and their incomparable leader."[12] It was a gesture of the French Republic's mastery over Europe. But if this had been a mere show of military might through the display of trophies, the proceedings might have looked somewhat different. The festival did not, despite the Béranger vase's gleaming claim to the contrary, feature the trophies at all. An 1802 engraving of the entrance of the third convoy by Pierre-Gabriel Berthault shows that the artworks arrived, not as an Olympus

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[9] Charles Saunier, *Les conquêtes artistiques de la révolution et de l'empire; reprises et abandons des alliés en 1815, leurs conséquences sur les musées d'Europe* (Paris: H. Laurens, 1902), 37.

[10] Luc Barbier in Andrew McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre: Art, Politics, and the Origins of the Modern Museum in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 116.

[11] Edmond and Jules Goncourt in Saunier, *Les conquêtes*, 37.

[12] François-René-Jean de Pommereul, *Campagne du général Buonaparte en Italie, pendant les années IVe et Ve de la République française, par un officier général* (Paris: chez Plassan, 1797), 362.

of marble, but still in their packing crates, completely concealed to onlookers.[13] [Fig. 1.2] These crates were encased in the trappings of victory, each festooned with foliage and each bearing a sign announcing its contents and heralding its arrival. It was the packing material that spoke the loudest, rather than the trophies themselves. "Artists, come running! Here are your masters!" proclaimed the crate containing the revered *Transfiguration* of Raphael.[14] "They are finally on free soil," extolled a placard adorning the bronze horses from Saint Mark's, an echo of Barbier's earlier proclamation at the arrival of works from Belgium.[15] The glory of the French acquisition of the masterpieces of western art was most acute in the moment of transit, when the act of conquest was most palpable and their transformation through contact with republican soil imminent.

For the Prussian occupants of Sèvres in 1815, the fate of the vase ought to have been obvious. The commanding field marshal, Prince Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher, had announced that all pieces that celebrated "the history of Napoleon and its consequences" would be confiscated, packed and sent to Berlin. Its feature illustration was a window into a past that the Prussians were now seeking to cancel through the reclamation and repatriation of the artworks that were taken to France during the Kunstraub, a story we will come to in the next chapters. It might seem that to take the vase, featuring as it did the very moment that was to be undone, would be the ultimate retribution for the losses of the previous two decades. But as the functionaries at Sèvres carried out Blücher's order, the director of the manufactory, Alexandre Brongniart, pled with the Prussians to spare it. The work represented the height of skill in porcelain manufacturing, he contended. It was a beautiful vase only, and not a symbol of the Napoleonic legacy. For good measure, Brongniart had made an attempt to scratch out the fallen emperor's name in the 'Musée Napoleon' etched into the portico towards which the transport progressed.[16] Blücher, who would show no compunction about claiming trophies of his own from French private collections during his stay in Paris, conceded, remarkably, and the vase remained in Sèvres.[17]

At first, this may seem a puzzlingly quiet end to a work that appears as a bombastic amplification of the symbolic weight of the Kunstraub. But while the Béranger vase may have been a trophy about trophies to Béranger, it was also an object about objects. And while we cannot know definitively why Blücher chose to leave it behind, I think it is for this reason that it could not join the other Prussian spoils from Sèvres. In depicting the very act of pillaging, in showing it in all of its blatant and un-allegorical detail, the vase may have made impossible its own enlistment in this very process. Kunstraub appeared *on* Béranger's vase, not only as a

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[13] The bronze horses of Saint Marks were the exception, as these were mounted on a cart without benefit of crate. McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre*, 123; Patricia Mainardi, "Assuring the Empire of the Future: The 1798 Fête de La Liberté," *Art Journal* 48, no. 2 (July 1, 1989): 155–163.

[14] Mainardi, "Assuring the Empire of the Future," 159.

[15] McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre*, 123.

[16] Andrea Busiri Vici, "Un vaso di Sèvres documenta le asportazioni Napoleoniche dall'Italia," *Antichita Viva* 3 (1971): 62-63.

[17] M.G. Lechevallier-Chevignard, "Le Rachat de la Manufacture de Sèvres aux armées alliées en 1815 et la destruction des effigies de Napoléon," *Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire de l'art français* (1907): 116. The vase can now be found in the Musée National de la Ceramique in Sèvres.

performance of imperial grandeur and hegemony, but also as a discrete and profane set of actions. To incorporate it into a new wave of trophy-taking would only have lifted the curtain on the performance, exposing the ironies and mundane operations of making art do the work of politics.

From this perspective in 1815, we can see in the vase's illustration not only the commemoration of a French attitude towards the Kunstraub during the Napoleonic period, but also a representation of the German response to it at the same time. For while the Apollo Belvedere seems to stand gallant and triumphant at his entrance into the city, the rubble behind his conveyance draws attention to the precariousness of his balancing act. Perhaps these classical ruins in the background of the parade signify the rebirth of ancient tradition, but on the surface of this delicate porcelain vessel, they could also be the shards of antiquities toppled from their carts. While the moment of material transfer could work in service of the message of a symbolic democratic liberation of the arts, it could also expose the perilousness of its practical execution and the ironies of its rhetorical grandiosity. [Fig. 1.1.3]

This observation formed the core of the German response to the French despoliations of Italian art collections between 1796-1802. By pointing out the ultimate and dangerous materiality of these acts, German critics disputed the pygmalionic myth at the heart of the cultural policy behind the Kunstraub. For the French orchestrators of the third convoy, the crates sang out on behalf of their occupants. For the German observers, these crates signified the fragile silence of their inanimate contents. As long as these artworks were of stone rather than flesh, they could not be enlisted as lively participants in the democratic liberation of Europe's aesthetic heritage.

The German response to the Kunstraub was both fueled by and channeled through a journal that was a primary source of information on the cultural news from Italy for a German readership: *Der neue teutsche Merkur*, a monthly founded by Christoph Martin Wieland in 1773 in Weimar. Its content during the Italian campaigns drew on French and English sources, and a diverse network of correspondents who could report on the Kunstraub as eyewitnesses, giving its coverage a uniquely vivid portrayal of these events. Perhaps the most 'embedded' of these sources was the Hessian painter Johann Wilhelm Tischbein, who was the director of the Academy of Arts in Naples, and who was in the Academy building when it was stormed by French and Neapolitan troops engaged in combat during the French invasion of the city in 1799. In an interview for the *Teutsche Merkur*, he told of the soldiers who tore through the rooms of his personal apartment in the Academy looking for valuables, bayonets outstretched, allowing him to observe and convey to German readers even the facial expressions of the pillagers: "There is something very particular to be observed in the face amidst the anger and fear. A darkness sits on the brow! and a glance flashes out from underneath it."[18] One group of soldiers was arrested by the image of Helena's gaze in one of Tischbein's paintings (ironically, *Hector Confronts Paris with his Weakness and Exhorts Him to Go to War*).[19] Others were less aesthetically minded. In his memoirs, Tischbein reported that many of the men streaming through his quarters were

[18] Johann Wilhelm Tischbein in Karl August Böttiger, "Wilhelm Tischbein," *Der neue teutsche Merkur* 9 (1800): 66.

[19] Böttiger, "Wilhelm Tischbein," 65.

convinced that he was a pastry chef: "They took the plaster casts in my rooms to be made of sugar, and were only convinced of their mistake after biting into them."[20]

The intimacy of the view offered in the pages of the *Merkur* extended from on-the-ground reporting to critical commentary on the Kunstraub and the cultural politics in Italy and France more generally. This commentary came primarily from two quite different correspondents, one an eclectic antiquarian and the other a classical art historian, who, despite their distinct intellectual backgrounds and profiles, shared a deep commitment to exposing the material fragility of art amidst the grand rhetoric and cultural performance the Kunstraub was supposed to enact. They accomplished this in two different ways. From one perspective the displacement of ancient sculpture was tantamount to its material destruction. From the other perspective the despoliations were a futile bid for art's immutable spirit. Both used a focus on the object in order to undermine the potency of the symbolic meanings carried out in the name of art during this period.

As in Tischbein's contrast between a soldier held in rapture at a work of art, and a soldier who thinks it is candy, one mode of German commentary on the Kunstraub featured the chaos and destruction of objects that underlay their supposed liberation. Karl August Böttiger, a *Gymnasium* director, journalist, and antiquarian who served as primary editor of the *Merkur* from the summer of 1796, was a vociferous representative of this position. He had fingers in many pies: His published writings included such topics as the history of tattoos in the ancient world; Greek vase painting; ancient wax fruit production; the question of whether ancient art should be used to decorate athletic facilities; and a somewhat lewd but (or and) popular work of historical fiction about a Roman patrician woman, including a long discursus on her morning toilet. He collected ancient erotica; was a trusted consultant for his classicist colleagues in Weimar on matters of philological import; and would go on to become the director of the collection of antiquities in Dresden.[21] His wide and eclectic array of endeavors, and in particular his efforts at popularizing (and commercializing) the study of antiquity, did not endear him to Weimar's intellectual elite. He was ridiculed by Goethe and Schiller as "*Freund ubique*," ["Friend everywhere"], for his opportunism as a journalist and publicist, a designation that became more barbed when Böttiger obtained a bootleg copy of Schiller's *Wallenstein* and attempted to distribute it to Dresden and Copenhagen, just as Schiller's honorarium for the exclusive production of the piece was under negotiation with the Weimar theater.[22]

For someone so enmeshed in the networks of learned sociability and exchange the despoliations of art in Italy constituted a barbarous trespass against the international community of artists and scholars centered around the study of antiquity. Citing the petition to the Directory written by French artists protesting the despoliations, the appeals of one of the most vocal critics of revolutionary cultural policies, and other French opponents to the Italian incursions, Böttiger decried in his published articles the argument that amassing the artistic treasures of Europe in Paris was in the interest of the nation.[23] In Italian cities, and especially in Rome, Böttiger

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[20] Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Tischbein, *Aus meinem Leben* (Berlin: Prophylaen Verlag, 1922), 305.

[21] Julia A. Schmidt-Funke, *Karl August Böttiger (1760-1835): Weltmann und Gelehrter* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2006), 85-110.

[22] Schmidt-Funke, *Karl August Böttiger*, 79.

[23] Karl August Böttiger, "Ueber die von den Franzosen angezeichneten, aber noch nicht entführten Kunstwerke in Rom und im Kirchenstaat," *Journal des Luxus und der Moden*

asserted, these works could continue to serve as the cultivators of humanity, beyond the limited confines of an overly zealous and fruitless patriotism. In this argument, Böttiger aligned in particular with perhaps the most vocal and visible critic of the transfer of artworks from Italy, the French writer Quatremère de Quincy, whose *Lettres à Miranda sur le Déplacement des Monuments de l'Art de l'Italie*, published in 1796, provided the most extensive defense of the Roman context for the proper understanding of ancient art and civilization. "Just as careless pruning can kill a tree, unwisely removing the models of antiquity from their natural trunk would dry up the sap that the modern culture of Rome passes into all the branches of learned Europe," Quatremère wrote.[24] For Böttiger, as for many of his associates and contemporaries, the Kunstraub was a violation of a cosmopolitan spirit of inquiry that had been established on Italian soil, and could only be secured there in the future.

Unlike Quatremère, however, Böttiger addressed the question of context as a literal and environmental concern. While Quatremère spoke of ancient artworks in Rome as 'analogies'—signs that could unlock the secrets of the ancient past, for Böttiger extraction of art exposed its material opacity and vulnerability to damage. The title of his most thorough article for the *Merkur* on the Kunstraub, "And How Will All This Be Kept in Paris?" is indicative of his position. Rather than arguing for the cosmopolitanism of the Italian context in opposition to the French, Böttiger undermined the Directory's claims to make Paris into Europe's new capital of culture by exposing the material fragility at the heart of the operation. Anticipating the proclamation made at the festive arrival of the third convoy in 1798 portrayed on the Béranger vase—"Artists come running! Here are your masters!"—Böttiger parroted the rhetorical anthropomorphism that underpinned the French justification of the displacements: "Greeks and Romans will be awakened from the dead…to celebrate Bonaparte's victory party. You will see! But as of yet there is nothing to see. The main shipments from Paris are still swimming on the Rhône."[25] When he quipped that, "It is still a question, whether the Italian buffalo or the Italian artworks will be the first to acclimatize in France," Böttiger may have had his tongue in his cheek, but he included a citation to the lecture of a French scientist on the climatic impact on the buffalo population tasked with hauling antiquities over the Alps to Paris, in case there was any doubt of the immediacy of the problem.[26]

Böttiger's correspondents shared his concern over the physical effects of the displacements. The weather in France, "which even in the most beautiful provinces does not compare to that of Italy," Johann Wilhelm Archenholz remarked, posed problems for the conservation of artworks, and he shared a common concern in this regard that they might

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(November 1796); Karl August Böttiger, "Ueber die Kunstplunderungen in Italien und Rom" *Der neue teutsche Merkur* 11 (November 1796). For a detailed analysis of the French opposition to the despoliations in Italy, see Dominique Poulot, "The Cosmopolitanism of Masterpieces," introduction to *Letters to Miranda and Canova on the Abduction of Antiquities from Rome and Athens*, by Quatremère de Quincy, trans. Chris Miller and David Glicks (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2012).

[24] Quatremère, *Letters to Miranda*, 104.

[25] Karl August Böttiger, "Und wie wird alles dies in Paris aufgehoben seyn?," *Der neue teutsche Merkur* 1 (1798): 147.

[26] On the question of buffalo see Böttiger, "Und wie wird alles dies in Paris aufgehoben seyn?," 148.

degrade.[27] In April 1797 Böttiger published a letter from David Vogel, the Swiss architect, to E.I. Dupont in the *Merkur*, which featured a similar anxiety: "The climate of the city of Paris, which lies under the 29th parallel, is characterized by fast and severe changes in the air and weather, and is filled five months out of the year with fog and mist, is hardly the most suitable climate in France, either for the exhibition or for the preservation of high art."[28] The weather mattered not only to the objects, but also to the conditions under which they could be seen. Any disadvantageous modes of displaying antiquities in Rome, one visitor remarked, could be forgiven in light of "the mild sky and the fine pure sun which shone down upon them," while in Paris the lack of such conditions only emphasized any shortcomings.[29]

By evoking the material vulnerabilities of classical art in the hands of (and in the air of) the French republic, Böttiger and his correspondents related the despoliations in Italy to the physical violation of ancient artworks in the iconoclastic waves that had marked the first years of the French Revolution and the Terror.[30] In his lengthy article on "How Will All This Be Kept in Paris?" Böttiger includes a list of damages and transgressions reported to the Directory and printed in Parisian newspapers on the works arriving from Italy, including everything from bad restorations, to a ladder puncturing a hole in a Flemish masterpiece, to paintings being stacked on top of one another and individual works removed by pulling them out without benefit of unheaping the pile. The Thermidorian Republicanism that proclaimed itself to be the legitimate protector of culture, consciously in opposition to the destructive fanaticism of the early Revolution, was unmasked in Böttiger's account to be just as big a danger to objects as its predecessors.

Carl Ludwig Fernow, a Weimar classicist living in Rome, represented a different perspective on the material object in the Italian *Kunstraub*. Fernow was, as Böttiger introduced him to his readers in November 1796, "one of the most perceptive artists living abroad, who is now in Rome and is able to be an eyewitness to the latest developments," and he was indeed the *Merkur*'s most frequent writer on affairs in Italy.[31] Fernow was both a completely likely and an unusual source on which to rely for news from the front lines of the selection, packing, and transportation of artworks out of Rome. On one hand he was in Rome at the time of the conquests where he had been in residence as a student of art and aesthetics since 1794. He was also renowned for his deep reverence, typical for Germans of his standing and interests, for the

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[27] Johann Wilhelm von Archenholz, "Ueber die Verpflanzung großer Kunstwerke aus Italien nach Frankreich," *Minerva. Ein Journal historischen und politischen Inhalts* 8 (August 1796): 203.

[28] David Vogel, "Brief an Hrn. Dupont de Nemours," *Der neue teutsche Merkur* 5 (May, 1797): 62.

[29] F. J. L. Meyer, *Briefe aus der Hauptstadt und dem Innern Frankreichs*, vol. 1 (Tübingen: Cotta'schen Buchhandlung, 1803), 134.

[30] Böttiger published two articles in the *Merkur* on the state of the arts in France in 1794, which focused on the destruction of art and the French response to it under Robespierre, and were released in two volumes in 1795: Karl August Böttiger, "Zustand der Wissenschaften und Künsten in Frankreich unter Robespierres Regierung," *Der neue teutsche Merkur* 1 (January 1795); Karl August Böttiger, *Zustand der neuesten Litteratur, der Künste, und der Wissenschaften in Frankreich in Auszügen und Erläuterungen* (Lagarde: Berlin, 1795).

[31] Karl August Böttiger, "Ueber die Kunstplunderungen in Italien und Rom," *Der neue teutsche Merkur* 11 (November 1796): 250.

study of antiquity from the actual site of classical civilization. An ode to him by Fernow's childhood friend, Ludwig Nauwerk, sets the scene:

> "Where Raphael made noble spirits
> And clad them in noble forms,
> And Buonarotti's creative calling
> Filled dead stones with life; […]
> There where the God is still enthroned in Belvedere's walls*,
> Where we grieve for the Laocoön, […]
> There is Fernow happy […]
> *The Apollo di Belvedere, not the pope."[32]

On the other hand Fernow had an uneasy relationship with art objects. In his aesthetic writings the classical world functioned both as the epicenter and the margin of artistic development. As Harald Tausch writes, "The idea of antiquity is necessary [for Fernow's thought] as a utopian *telos*, not in order to arrive at it, but rather because in approaching it, though cognizant of one's radical separation from it, one becomes productive. Through the distance of antiquity, art experiences itself as poesis."[33] By defining the engine of artistic production as an effort [*Kunststreben*] to strive towards, rather than to replicate exactly the ancient model, Fernow emphasized the autonomy of art, which was central to his aesthetics, as it was to many of his contemporaries. This autonomy was defined by an independence from the mimetic obligation to reproduce nature in its individual qualities, and the freedom of art to discover and express its essential and common characteristics.[34] But not only was the artist and artistic production secure in its autonomy from the vicissitudes of discrete and particular objects, so too was the theory of art to be created independent of these. In his article, "*Ueber den Zwek der bildenden Kunst*" of 1799, Fernow wrote,

> "The foundations of art must be purely philosophical, developed from existence and *tested* in experience; the foundations of art and criticism should not, however, be *created* out of these. The theory of art cannot emerge without experience; but this should only be a valid witness of that which *is achieved*. It may give *signs* and *hints*, but it may never allow itself to proffer *general rules* for that which *must be achieved*."[35]

Fernow's detailed contributions to the *Merkur* on the blow-by-blow of the French incursions in the art collections of Rome are an ironic foil to his insistence on the abstracted nature of aesthetic

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[32] Ludwig Nauwerk, "An Fernow in Rom im März 1797," *Der neue teutsche Merkur* 5 (May 1797): 13.

[33] Harald Tausch, *Entfernung der Antike: Carl Ludwig Fernow im Kontext der Kunsttheorie um 1800* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2000), 18.

[34] Carl Ludwig Fernow, "Ueber den Zwek der bildenden Kunst," (1799) in *Ästhetik des Charakteristischen: Quellentexte zu Kunstkritik und Streitkultur in Klassizismus und Romantik,* ed. Roland Ganz, Jürgen Schönwälder (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2008), 88.

[35] Fernow, "Ueber den Zwek der bildenden Kunst," 101. Emphasis in the original text.

production. He reported on the empty pedestals and walls in the Museo Pio Clementino,[36] the skill of the Romans who were well paid to help pack up artworks,[37] the welfare of the objects during transport,[38] and he told a thrilling story of a dispute in the Roman senate over a particularly ugly sculpture adorning the hall, which ended in the work's dismemberment, despite hefty cries of "vandalism!"[39] At the same time, however, in his commentary on these events, Fernow pursued the position that the material displacements that he chronicled would not affect the understanding of Rome as the rightful epicenter of the ancient spirit, nor would it impact the meanings and importance of artworks in the classical canon. In his first letter published on the subject in the *Merkur*, Fernow asserted, "[The French] will not win any more from the robbery of the artworks of Rome than the latter loses: the mere ownership of these [objects], and the meaningless right to be proud of this ownership."[40]

Where Böttiger decried the despicability of the displacements by exposing the material consequences of its sweeping rhetoric, Fernow showed that in targeting mere objects the Directory's artistic commissioners had simply missed the mark. The seizure of art was a meaningless gesture, for the true mastery of the arts lay in an immutable spirit which could not be simply transferred from one place to another. Where Böttiger had exposed the cries of the third convoy to be hypocritical, Fernow unmasked them as nonsensical. "They are now singing on the banks of the Seine, "Rome is no longer in Rome! Rome is now in Paris!….But what makes Rome Rome cannot be packed up in boxes and carried to Paris on the back of a buffalo…"[41] Indeed, throughout his reporting to the *Merkur*, Fernow allowed for the real possibility that in France the artworks might enjoy more advantageous upkeep, and be visible in a more suitable light. The material welfare of objects was irrelevant: the displacements could do nothing to change the position of *art*, even as it changed the position of objects called *artworks*.

In two different ways, Böttiger and Fernow exposed as fallacy the French claim to inheritance of ancient tradition by pointing to the material opacity of the objects through which they attempted this symbolic feat. These claimants were not republicans, participants in the democratic liberation of culture, but mere pawns, and fragile ones at that. However, these commentaries were not simply reactionary. Even as Böttiger and Fernow decried the misguidedness of the cultural politics of the Republic, their assertions also revealed a positive argument for the resistance of art objects to political enchantment. Here again, the Béranger vase provides a sly but useful representation of this stance. The vase painting is replete with interactions between people and artworks, with individuals beholding art, reacting to it,

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[36] Fernow to Böttiger, 7 April 1797, *Der neue teutsche Merkur* 5 (May 1797): 81.

[37] Fernow to Böttiger, 12 May 1797, *Der neue teutsche Merkur* 7 (July 1797): 273.

[38] Fernow to Böttiger, 4 August 1797, *Der neue teutsche Merkur* 9 (September 1797): 83.

[39] Fernow to Böttiger, 14 April 1798, *Der neue teutsche Merkur* 5 (May 1798): 102.

[40] Fernow to Böttiger, 28 August 1796, *Der neue teutsche Merkur* 11 (November 1796): 272.

[41] Karl Ludwig Fernow, “Ueber Den Gegenwärtigen Zustand Der Kunst in Rom,” *Der neue teutsche Merkur* 3 (1798): 279–280. As with Böttiger's acclimatizing buffalo, Fernow inserted that this proclamation was not just oppositional rhetoric, by arguing in a previous letter that what makes Rome Rome could indeed not be moved: the real aesthetic particularism of Italy, he asserted, lay in fresco paintings, which would endure in their original location "for as long as the walls endure." Fernow, "Italienisches Ausleerungs Geschäft," *Der neue teutsche Merkur* 2 (February 1798): 131-132.

sometimes even touching it. These may be expressions of rapturous patriotism, but they could also be responses to the precariousness of the material feat of moving such massive and precious objects over the rough and ruin-strewed ground. An old man throws up his hands in front of the cart carrying the Apollo Belvedere, perhaps in fear at the stability of the conveyance [Fig. 1.1.4]. This could even be Böttiger. A man blithely carrying a platform of books and paintings looks, unimpressed by the procession in which he is part, outwards and beyond the walls of the vase towards something more interesting [Fig. 1.1.5]. This could be Fernow.

The German emphasis upon the material contingencies of the Kunstraub, as evidenced in the writings of Böttiger and Fernow, throws the vase's symbolic assertiveness into doubt. Is it the thing-ly fragility of the objects in the convoy that provokes the gestures and stares, or the force of their animation into 'liberated citizens'? In front of the Laocoön, a sculpture that fueled an entire field of study over the problem of creating a correspondence between marble and life, there are two men, aghast, one clutching the other as if to protect him from the approaching marble, but it is difficult to know whether it is physical or aesthetic force from which he needs protection. [Fig. 1.1.6]

Behind each ambiguity in the reactions of the onlookers, behind the suspected precariousness of the artworks en route, behind Blücher's decision to leave the vase in Paris, and behind the pages of *Der neue teutsche Merkur* lies the question of how much an art object had to do with the kinds of meanings that could be drawn from it. This was the question that confronted German commentators as they evaluated the significance and consequences of the Kunstraub in Italy and as they watched the procession of antiquities towards Paris. For classical sculpture the problem was especially acute. These artworks formed the material basis through which an entire field of scholarly and artistic inquiry had derived both a history of aesthetic development and a theoretical framework for the ideal of beauty itself. At stake thus were not only the advantages or disadvantages of the displacements, but also the foundations of the aesthetic regimes to which these objects had been coupled, and the historical trajectories in whose progress they marched. With the confrontation between the cosmopolitan cultural networks that had been a hallmark of eighteenth century classicism and the beginnings of the nationalization of culture that will define the nineteenth, the art object emerges as a newly unreliable partner.

There is a tragedy in these encounters. In the pages of the *Merkur*, Böttiger, Fernow and their associates and correspondents came face to face with the unavoidable and tragic reality of art's material fragility and confinement to discrete objects in discrete locations. The attention to the Kunstraub as a phenomenon of marble rather than spirit was a reckoning with the fact that the artworks, whose vitality had been such an integral part of their description in the aesthetic tracts of the previous century, could be simply boxed up and shipped away like any other thing. The Kunstraub was a sobering reminder of the indifference of the inanimate world to the dramas of the sentient. Fernow wrote in 1797 of the packing of a statue of Trajan: "It was a special moment as Trajan was pulled through the long gallery and almost seemed to bid his friends goodbye forever."[42] The statues of antiquity might take leave of their friends, but they could not fight against their enemies. Schiller's line, "To the Vandal they're but stone" reserved art's liveliness for its spiritual rather than its physical owners, and while this might comfort the dispossessed it was also an assertion of a matter of fact: In the face of conflict, art exhibits a

[42] Fernow to Böttiger, 12 May 1797, in *Der neue teutsche Merkur* 7 (July 1797): 273.

material opacity. It cannot react, cannot defend itself, and lets itself be carted away on the backs of buffalo.

The Empire of Caprice: The Liability of Custodianship in the 1806 *Kunstraub*

In the fall of 1806, on the heels of Prussian defeats at Jena and Auerstadt, the *Kunstraub* came to northern German states. This time, the official acquisitions were led by the director of the newly crowned Musée Napoleon in Paris, Dominique-Vivant Denon, rather than by official treaty, as in the Italian campaigns. Denon's strategy was pragmatic: take things the Louvre didn't already have. As Paul Wescher points out, while Napoleon paid homage at the grave of Frederick II, Denon was busy appraising the late monarch's effects in Berlin and Potsdam, before moving on to Braunschweig and Salzdahlum, and in 1807 to Kassel, and Schwerin.[43] These missions were strategic on the part of Denon. He collected artworks with an eye towards diversifying and extending the collections of the Musée Napoleon. While the selection of works from German collections included many of the most visible and renowned items, some of his choices were baffling to onlookers.

None felt this tension more awkwardly than the custodians of art collections in German cities, who were tasked with the administration of royal and public collections and the protection of objects. The caretakers of art at all levels— from artists and museum directors, to palace servants and castellans— presided over the fragmentation of their own collections, first in hiding objects from the occupiers, and second in handing objects over to Denon and his collaborators. This led to complicated questions of allegiance and obligation in a time of unclear administrative domains. When rulers and their courts went into exile in the wake of the French invasions in northern German states, these caretakers were left unsure of whom they should serve and how, and became de-facto negotiators between the French occupiers and royal collections on one hand, and between local authorities and rulers in exile on the other. In Prussia, as we will see, when the immediate crisis of the occupation was over in 1808 caretakers were also held responsible for the loss of objects they had sought to prevent.

By 17 October 1806, news of Napoleon's rout of Prussian forces in Jena and Auerstadt three days earlier had reached Berlin, and, after the emperor's rejection of Friedrich Wilhelm III's entreaty for peace, the city began to gird itself for the arrival of French troops. Minette Henry, a seventeen-year old Berliner, wrote of the anticipation in her diary, "20. October. I never spent a sadder Sunday…We expect the French today or tomorrow. We have lost our father and are only women in the apartment, which faces the street, and Mama is so afraid. No, I cannot describe how horrible it all was."[44]

The Henrys had particular cause for fear, as their 'lost father,' Jean Henry, had fled the city days before, charged in his position as director of the royal *Kunstkammer* to spirit as much of the precious collection to the east, out of reach of the acquisitive French army. "No one believed that the inhumanity of the enemy would be such as to destroy a public institution,"

[43] Wescher, *Kunstraub*, 99.

[44] Minette Henry, diary entry, 20 October 1806, Nr. 178, Heft 3, Nachlass Runge-DuBois-Reymond, SBB. The diary entries were copied by Minette's son, the physiologist Emil Henry DuBois Reymond.

Henry reflected a year later.[45] It is an odd retrospective claim for Henry to make, first because the Kunstkammer was hardly recognized to be a public institution at the time, and second because the civic administrators showed little faith in the capacity of institutional frameworks, such as they were, to sufficiently protect valuable artworks. Collections were dissolved and distributed in what the sculptor Johann Gottfried Schadow described as an "empire of caprice [*Reiche der Willkühr*]."[46]

Henry received his orders on Friday morning, October 17th from Graf von Schulenburg-Kehnert, interim governor of the city, and with the threat of an "urgent danger" he and his assistant began immediately to pack up as many objects of value as possible, with particular attention to those made of precious metals. On Saturday morning Minette helped him to enlist friends, family and servants in the hasty effort. Henry recalled the events a year later: "We spent the entire day with wrapping and packing the gold and silver Prussian medals, the suite of foreign medals in gold and silver, the coin cabinet, the roman consular and imperial coins in silver, the Stolsch collection of engraved gemstones along with the most important cameos; we also rescued the Grecian copper coins, and the beautiful suit of oriental coins…In my hurry I also packed the most important silver and gold treasures from the Kunstkammer into a box…but because it didn't fit in the wagon, I sent it along to the silver cabinet…We were occupied in this way until 8 o'clock."[47] The packers gave rudimentary care to secure objects against damage, using straw or wrappings as protection within each container.[48] Henry sent one box with objects of "internal value," to be transported with other royal properties to Königsberg by canal. The six remaining cases with coins and medals, along with the Stolsch collection he took east overland himself. Having obtained horses and wagons for the journey, a watchman as companion, and the necessary travel documents, Henry set off on 19 October 1806, just two days after the news of the French victories. "Had…Schulenberg had more certain information [about the French arrival], and hadn't put so much pressure on my departure," Henry lamented, "I could have at least worked on Sunday, and then could have rescued much more. But I couldn't have taken any more without finding another wagon with horses and more assistants, all of which bordered on the impossible."[49] As it was, he was able to evacuate 12000 coins, 5000 stones, and many art objects. That night he reached Stettin on the river Oder, several weeks later Danzig, and eventually in December he arrived in Königsberg.

Henry's actions were echoed in other German cities awaiting French occupation after the defeats of October 1806. The director of the picture gallery at Sanssouci in Potsdam, Johann Gottlieb Puhlmann, also received orders that emphasized the urgency of protecting his collections. Puhlmann selected 62 of the paintings, "which were among the rarest and most able to be transported without damage," and sent them by canal on Monday the 20th to the Royal

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[45] Report by Jean Henry, 12 August 1807, PAW I-XV: 18, Historische Abteilung, AdW.

[46] Johann Gottfried Schadow, *Kunst-Werke und Kunst-Ansichten* (Berlin: Verlag der Deckerschen Geheimen Ober Hofbuchdruckerei, 1849), 88.

[47] Report by Jean Henry, 16 June 1807, PAW I-XV: 9, Historische Abteilung, AdW.

[48] Commission zur Ausmittelung des durch pflichtwidrige Fahrläßigkeit verloren gegangene Königl. Eigenthums to Akademie der Wissenschaften, 18 July 1809, PAW I-XV: 9, Historische Abteilung, AdW.

[49] Report by Jean Henry, 12 August 1807, PAW I-XV: 18, Historische Abteilung, AdW.

Palace in Berlin without the benefit of packaging.[50] Because by that time the safety of the palace was in question, the paintings were outfitted with four boxes and sent to the eastern fort of Küstrin, along with the royal silver, and miscellaneous personal objects and papers belonging to the royal family in the previous days.[51] Back in Potsdam, Puhlmann was left with a patchy collection and might have taken some consolation from Matthias Oesterreich's characterization of the gallery at Sanssouci in his first catalogue of its contents in 1764: "The abundance and diversity of something says little or nothing about its intrinsic worth."[52] In order, however, to mask the diminution in its size for future exacting French visitors, Puhlmann rehung the remaining 116 paintings "spreading them out as far as possible from each other, and where gaps were unavoidable, I filled them with paintings from the corridors of the gallery and from my personal collection…in order to cover any trace of the fact that a portion of the gallery had fled."[53] His efforts were in the nick of time. The 62 paintings left Berlin along with 10 cases of royal table linens from the "whiteries chamber" on October 23, and the French arrived the next day.[54]

In Braunschweig, similar preparations were underway, laden with particular irony. The Duke had just named a new director, Johann Friedrich Ferdinand Emperius, to oversee the unification of the famed ducal collections with the portrait gallery in Salzdahlum in a new and ambitious public museum project.[55] Instead of unifying, however, Emperius found himself, just a month after his appointment, spending a frantic afternoon packing up as many objects as possible "of the highest value and the smallest size," including gems, gold, silver, bronze and ivory, items from the mineral collection, 18,000 ancient coins, and an onyx Mantuan vase, the prize piece of the duke's collection.[56] These were sent via Hannover to Denmark. Ninety paintings from Salzdahlum were also boxed up and transported to Braunschweig, where it was thought they could be more effectively defended.

In Hessen-Kassel, at the declaration of war at the beginning of October, the Elector Wilhelm I ordered 42 crates of objects from his properties and the Museum Fridericianum, including 4876 gold and silver medals, 122 rare coins, and 36 pieces of art to be sent to Karlshafen where they could be shipped to safety England. However, once the packages arrived

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[50] Puhlmann to Friedrich Wilhelm III, 10 March 1810, I.HA Rep. 89, 90418, fol. 1, GStAPK; Lentze, "Zur Nachricht in Betreff der Versendung der Königlichen Effecten von Berlin," April 1807, I.HA Rep. 36: Hof u. Güterverwaltung, 2862, GStAPK.

[51] Lentze, "Zur Nachricht," GStAPK.

[52] Matthias Oesterreich, *Beschreibung der Königlichen Bildergallerie und des Kabinets im Sans-Souci* (Potsdam: Christian Friedrich Voß, 1764), iv-v.

[53] Puhlmann to Friedrich Wilhelm III, 10 March 1810, I.HA Rep.89 90418, fol. 1, GStAPK.

[54] Götz Eckardt, "Der Napoleonische Kunstraub in den Königlichen Schlössern von Berlin und Potsdam," in *Studien zur Berliner Kunstgeschichte*, ed. Karl-Heinz Klingenburg (Leipzig: E.A. Seemann, 1986), 125.

[55] Savoy, *Kunstraub*, 126.

[56] Johann Friedrich Ferdinand Emperius, "Materialien zu einer Geschichte der Wegnahme und der Wiedererstattung der europäischen besonders deutschen Kunst- und Bücherschätze, durch die Franzosen," *Die Zeiten* 12 (December, 1816): 157-8.

there, the price of shipment was deemed too high, and they were forwarded to the Elector's hunting estate at Sababurg, and sealed off in a tower, entrusted to the estate administrator.[57]

These hiding missions were no doubt in part provoked by the example that Napoleon and French agents had set in Italy and southern German states in the decade before. However, the removal of objects from often poorly inventoried collections to sometimes un-predetermined destinations opened up a set of dangers that paralleled and prefigured in some ways the trauma and destruction of the French incursions themselves. Administrators might have successfully avoided the arrival of the French military, but nearly every hiding mission faltered at the challenge of the open road.[58] Puhlmann's 62 paintings from Potsdam missed the French by a day, but landed in Küstrin just before the city fell and were soon discovered and sent back to Berlin to be appraised with the remaining royal collections.[59] The 90 Salzdahlum paintings arrived in Braunschweig with no time left to hide them before "busy bodies" betrayed their location to French officials.[60] For Kassel's treasures, walled into the tower in Sababurg, rumors played a similarly fateful role. On the journey from Karlshafen to the hunting castle, the roads were muddy and the caravan carrying the 42 boxes had to travel by daylight, relying on the help of local farmers to progress through the forest. Schwede, the son of an administrator of the Sababurg estate, who was home on vacation from the university at Göttingen, recalled the messiness of the operation: "[…] Given the circumstances, the delivery of the boxes to the castle at Sababurg was no secret in the surrounding area, and even if their contents were unknown, it was beyond doubt that they contained valuables."[61] In the first days of November, the same Hessian minister who had accompanied the initial delivery to the castle tower returned with French officers, presumably tipped off by villagers in exchange for money or protection.[62] The trove was returned to Kassel. Their fate is particularly poignant, as the museum director, Völkel,

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[57] Ludwig Völkel, "Die Beraubung des Museums und der Bibliothek zu Kassel durch die Franzosen und der Bau des westphälischen Ständesaals," *Verein für Hessische Geschichte und Landeskunde* 8 (1882): 262; Albert Duncker, "Zur Geschichte der Kasseler Kunstschätze, vornehmlich in den Zeiten d. Königreich Westphalen," *Deutsche Rundschau* 34 (1883): 223.

[58] The hurriedness of the operations also posed a challenge. Prussia's ambivalent neutrality between 1795 and 1806 had ended with a declaration of war on Napoleon on October 9 and a tentative alliance in the works with Russia. Military engagement, however, came more quickly than expected. On October 10 Prussian forces met the French and were defeated at Saalfeld. The defeats at Jena and Auerstadt the next week were swift, crushing, and unexpected, leaving the Prussian military in complete disarray. Christopher Clark, *Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia 1600-1947* (London: Penguin, 2006), 296-311. For an account of the battle and its impact on Prussian cultural life, Peter Paret, *The Cognitive Challenge of War: Prussia 1806* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009) and most recently Karen Hagemann, *Revisiting Prussia's Wars against Napoleon: History, Culture, and Memory* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

[59] Lentze, "Zur Nachricht," GStAPK.

[60] Emperius, "Materialien zu einer Geschichte der Wegnahme," 158-59.

[61] Theodor Schwede, "Verbergung des Silbergeräthes uc. des kurfürstlichen Hofes im Jahr 1806 auf dem alten Jagdschlosse Sababurg im Reinhardswalde und den Raub dieses Schatzes von den Franzosen," *Zeitschrift des Vereins für hessische Geschichte und Landeskunde* 1 (1867): 253.

[62] Duncker, "Zur Geschichte der Kasseler Kunstschätze," 223.

pleaded that the objects should be spared given that they were the property not of the landgrave, but of a public institution. The Museum Fridericianum, considered by many to have been the first such art museum on the European continent, would have perhaps lent the most credence to the claim of any of the northern German institutions. However, he was denied with the rationale that, since the boxes had been moved out of the museum and hidden, they could justifiably be considered spoils of war.[63] In keeping with this designation, the medal collections, which composed a large portion of the seized goods, were pilfered by soldiers on their journey to Paris and never made it into the Musée's collections. Their displacement out of the museum had made them ordinary things, in the arguments of Denon, exempt from the immunity they might have received had they been ensconced in an officially recognized public art collection.

Henry's journey with the objects of the Kunstkammer was also plagued by mishap. As he approached Danzig, things seemed to be going well. He had found time in Stettin to look over the coins and medals to check for damage, and though he had found none, he took the preventative measure of repacking several of the cases. These were secured in the wagons with wood blocks and covered with animal skins. He employed a watchman, Lehmann, and found civilians on the road who had also acted as surveillance. Just after the caravan left Neustadt, Lehmann was preparing his bed for the night, when, as Henry relates in his report of the incident a year later, "…his loud scream notified me that a case was missing. After an inspection of the entire place turned up nothing, I fell into a fever, which, amplifying the shocking possibility of misfortune, caused me immediately to hurry back to Neustadt."[64] There Henry notified the West Prussian authorities, and drew up an announcement of the theft, which was circulated that night to every official office in the region, along with a draft in German and Polish for every house in Neustadt promising a reward for the case's return. Despite these promises of rewards and immunity in exchange for the return of the missing case, the medals remained unaccounted for.[65] Indeed exactly what was missing was unclear, much to the frustration of the officials attempting to recover the case. As Henry lamented in his report, the packing had happened in such a hurry, and many of the bags and boxes were then repacked in Stettin without the possibility of inventorying. "I couldn't think of order," Henry wrote, "and it was also not necessary to have done so."[66] The main goal of the effort had been to evacuate the treasures, not to count or describe them. Outside of the Kunstkammer the artworks had become mere things, discharged of their usual organization in cabinets or cases, and open to the vicissitudes of travel.

Napoleon arrived in Potsdam on October 24, 1806 and spent a month divided between the empty royal residences there and in Charlottenburg and Berlin. The emperor showed little interest in the process of acquiring artworks itself— this he left to Denon, who followed his entrance into the city some days later. But he was fascinated with the valuable objects that furnished his temporary residences, many of which found their way into French possession in the course of the occupation. The story of the victorious emperor's genuflection before the grave of

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[63] Völkel, "Beraubung," 265.

[64] Report by Jean Henry, 12 August 1807, PAW I-XV: 18, Historische Abteilung, AdW.

[65] A forester near Danzig identified possible suspects in 1815, who claimed to have sent the medallions to England in exchange for money, but the further progress of the case in the West Prussian court is unknown. Rittmeister and Forstmeister Trost, 24 August 1815, I/KKM, I/MK, Akte 19, Nr. 21, ZA.

[66] Report by Jean Henry, 12 August 1807, PAW I-XV: 18, Historische Abteilung, AdW.

Friedrich II is legendary:— "if you were alive I would not stand here"—but a more intimate description of his tour through Prussian material history was documented in a diary kept by a servant of the Prussian palaces in Potsdam by the name of Tamanti, and was later published in the *Vossische Zeitung*.[67] Because Tamanti could speak French, he was asked to accompany the emperor on his tours through the palaces in order to answer his questions. As Napoleon proceeded from room to room in Sanssouci, he picked up objects, asked Tamanti to explain them, and then in turn related these explanations to his accompanying generals. Beds, paintings and engravings, sheet music, writing implements, even the servants themselves came under his scrutiny as former acquaintances of the gloried late Prussian king.

> "[The Emperor asked] and what sword is this, lying on the table? It was (presumably) the sword of Friedrich the Great, which we had forgotten to hide away in the tumult! But because this sword was known to many French military men for years, and one of his attendants expressed as much, I was obliged by necessity to answer that it was an infantry officer's sword…belonging to Friedrich the Great. Had Friedrich the Great really carried such a small sword? the Emperor asked, and I answered yes."[68]

Tamanti's chronicle of Napoleon's object-tour through the Hohenzollern palaces is a fitting introduction to the Prussian Kunstraub of 1806-7. He portrayed the residences and their collections as a kind of museum, stopped in time after the preparations for the invasion, and Napoleon as an inquiring and contemplative visitor, impressed and in awe of each item he beheld. In each interaction we get Tamanti's sense, pervasive in this period as Eva Giloi has argued, of the incorporeality of the monarchy consolidated and made accessible through the mundane object and personal artifact.[69] "See here, gentlemen! Here is the music of Friedrich the Great, which he himself flauted [*geblasen hat*]," Tamanti quotes the emperor as exclaiming.[70] But perhaps more importantly, the diary is a revealing window into the difficult position of servants and custodians of collections during the occupation. As a translator Tamanti was an important gatekeeper, opening up information about the palaces and their contents at Napoleon's request. He was also the connection between French officials and the household staff, who held keys to cupboards and rooms and were thus necessary to the literal opening of anything locked.[71]

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[67] The GStAPK contains only a copy of the diary, and the note on its folder attests to its publication: "*Eine Abschrift des Tagebuchs des preußischen Kammerdieners Tamanti, veröffentlicht von Bogdan Krieger in der Sonntagsbeilage der Vossischen Zeitung 1901, Nr. 34-36, mit dem Titel: Getreue Relation dessen, was sich auf den königlichen Schlössern in Potsdam und in Berlin während der Anwesenheit des Kaisers Napoleon zugetragen hat. 1806 Oktober 22 - November 2*," Kammerdiener Tamanti, n.d., I.HA Rep. 36: Hof u. Güterverwaltung: 2990, GStAPK.

[68] Kammerdiener Tamanti, n.d., GStAPK.

[69] Eva Giloi, *Monarchy, Myth, and Material Culture in Germany 1750-1950* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[70] Kammerdiener Tamanti, n.d., GStAPK.

[71] They were even sometimes keys to the aura of Friedrich that Napoleon sought after. As Tamanti relates Napoleon asking, "Did this man [pointing at the castellan] know Friedrich the

This meant, however, that he was potentially complicit in any damages that might follow from the access he provided. He was thus careful in his retelling to emphasize the extent to which he was able to defend the monarchy's possessions, and described to this end how he translated the plea of a merchant to leave Potsdam unscathed (Napoleon promised), and emphasized at the end that in his service he had done everything in his power to "protect [the collections] from all possible damages."

Once the despoliations of royal property began in earnest over the next weeks, however, the delicate line Tamanti had been able to walk became a less tenable position. At the center of the conflict were the castellans, a position within the royal residences, defined by J.G. Krünitz's *Oekonomische Encyklopädie* as "the commander of a castle or palace, upon whom the security and defense of the same depends. […] In German one calls those servants castellans who have supervision of the rooms in the different princely and noble castles and palaces."[72] Because they quite literally held the keys to the rooms and cabinets where targeted objects were held, castellans were usually present during the despoliations, and were also often responsible for the removal, packing, and shipping of selected works. In the occupation, their role as securors and defenders of royal property was thus inverted into its opposite. A castellan at Sanssouci, Schulze, bemoaned that an embarrassing affliction had rendered him incapable of participating in the packing of statues from the outdoor 'Circle of Muses' and that inexperienced substitutes had caused the muse of dance to fall off of her pedestal.[73] Others decried their awkward obligation to the occupiers. Hagedorn, a castellan in the Neue Garten in Sanssouci, where a number of antiquities were kept, wrote of the tumultuous situation:

> "The day before the 18th the men came…and one called me here, the other called me there, such that I didn't know where I should go, because they wanted to go out of the house, I wanted to close it up, and then I saw that a medallion of Ludwig XVI, King of France was taken away without my knowledge…and when [one of the men] came back the next day, I told him that something had been taken from me, and he glared at me, that men like him must have something to show for it…Written in haste, but what is written has its truth."[74]

Because of their implications in the incursions into royal property, castellans were very concerned that the looters provide a receipt indicating their name and the names and numbers of objects taken. These requests were heeded in some instances, though not all, and many castellans became the only record-keepers of the damages, documenting French officers who forced entry

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Great? I answered that this castellan had served Friedrich the Great as a footman for many years, and that he had been made a castellan by him. Ach, then he knew him very well, said the Emperor." Kammerdiener Tamanti, n.d., GStAPK.

[72] J.G. Krünitz, *Oeconomische Encyclopädie, oder allgemeines System der Land- Haus- und Staats-Wirthschaft in alphabetischer Ordnung*, vol. 7 (Joachim Pauli, 1776), 716-17.

[73] Schultze, 21 December 1806, fol. 73 I.HA Rep. 36: Hof u. Güterverwaltung: 2861, GStAPK.

[74] Hagedorn, 22 November 1806, fol. 30 I.HA Rep. 36: Hof und Güterverwaltung: 2861, GStAPK.

and removed objects without showing proper authority or permission, much less giving a receipt. In a response to one such report from the castellan Droz at Sanssouci,[75] Puhlmann wrote to the Prussian minister Lentze, protesting that the emperor must be convinced to establish proper procedures, "otherwise 50 to 60 generals may still come, until the palace is completely emptied…What could possibly stop a man who presents himself so brusquely, and talks of bashing down doors?"[76] Receipts, Lentze and his colleagues hoped, could help the occupying authorities clamp down on illicit looting, and could help Prussian authorities in the tracking of objects that had been unjustifiably removed.

Inventories were also crucial to protecting castellans and other caretakers of collections from the suspicion of both their exiled masters and local authorities. Indeed, by 1807 the Academy of Sciences had already launched an investigation into Henry's culpability in the loss of the case of coins and medals near Marienwerder the year before. In 1809 these types of investigations increased in intensity when the King ordered the constitution of a commission for the "Determination of Property of the State Lost in the Last War through Negligence Contrary to Duty."[77] This commission ordered that castellans draw up inventories of all objects that had been lost after the French arrival, and pursued instances of discrepancies between earlier inventories with a level of detail and pedantry that is somewhat astonishing given the chaos that had characterized the early months of the occupation.[78] Again the commission took up Henry's responsibility for the Kunstkammer, asking, "could Henry not have brought more items into security, even in the little time allotted, if he had used less accuracy and fussiness while packing; and could not this have been, given the state of things at the time, more advantageous, advisable, and necessary?"[79] No, rejoined Friedrich Castillon, who responded for Henry and on behalf of the Academy, "although more could have been saved had it been simply thrown without ceremony into bags or barrels, in that case Henry would have been made responsible for the damage of the [collections]..."[80] In their task of defending the property of the Prussian state, those who had the most direct contact to art objects during the Kunstraub were also potential violators, split between the demands of occupiers on the ground and exiled rulers, preservation and access.

Adding to the uncertainty of the despoliations was the complicated figure of Denon himself. On the one hand, Denon arrived in German territories as a member of its intellectual community, despite his job as "the eye of Napoleon." He was a well-known and respected artist

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[75] Droz, 20 November 1806, fol. 24, I.HA Rep. 36: Hof u. Güterverwaltung: 2861, GStAPK.

[76] Puhlmann to Lentze, 21 November 1806, fol. 26, I.HA Rep. 36: Hof u. Güterverwaltung: 2861, GStAPK.

[77] Eckardt, “Der napoleonische Kunstraub in den königlichen Schlössern von Berlin und Potsdam,” 132-133.

[78] Massow to Kastellane, 25 May 1809, Akten und Inventare der Plankammer, Nr. 148, SPGS. On the persecution of a castellan from Charlottenburg about a missing valise of gems, see Eckhardt, “Der napoleonische Kunstraub,” 135.

[79] Immediat-Kommission to AdW, 18 July 1809 PAW I-XV: 9, fol. 116, Historische Abteilung, AdW.

[80] Castillon to Immediat-Kommission, 18 July 1809, PAW I-XV: 9, fol. 116v, Historische Abteilung, AdW.

and scholar who had already made a name for himself in German learned circles through his account of his travels with Napoleon in Egypt, which was translated into German in 1803.[81] He was accepted thus as a colleague by local scholars: Goethe even risked showing him his coin collection.[82] On the other hand, even as Denon was a figurehead in the sociability of the circulation of knowledge, he also presided over the dismemberment of German collections, many of which were themselves part of the same kinds of public institutions of learning of which he was an advocate. The terms and consequences of the clash of understandings about the scope of cultural networks and the place of objects within them came to focus especially in German responses to the Louvre, which will be the focus of the next chapter. In the 'empire of caprice' of the Kunstraub too, administrators of collections were caught up in an awkward juxtaposition of collegial exchange and forced seizure, as Denon appraised and selected artworks for his own museum.

The work of the Strausburgian artist Benjamin Zix offers a perspective on the conflicted figure of Denon to the administrators and custodians of German collections. Zix accompanied Denon on his travels through central Europe and documented different aspects of the journey through drawings of the French army, landscapes and historical sights, and the museum director at work.[83] An image of Henry's Kunstkammer in Berlin, where, beginning on November 5, Denon left with 52 paintings, 47 bronze and marble statues, 172 bronze, marble, and terracotta sculptures and objects, 538 engraved stones and 6773 medals and coins, shows the despoliation underway.[84] [Fig. 1.3] Denon stands in the middle of the room and examines a painting in the company of his secretary Perne. The cupboards are open and artifacts of all sorts spill out onto the floor. It is in some ways a portrayal of the dismantling of the collection. However, an associate carefully fills out a register of works being taken at the table in the background. The director of the Musée is portrayed here as an erudite man, who stands in the midst of the Kunstkammer's ruins but is measured in his appraisal of its collections, rather than a zealous trophy-taker. Another inked sketch by Zix shows Denon during the inspection of two works in the Paintings Gallery in Kassel. [Fig. 1.4] Here Denon appears studiously examining their details up close, and grasps one canvas on both sides as if prepared to dispatch it himself to the laborers around him removing frames from canvases for packing. His secretary Perne kneels at his side.[85]

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[81] Dominique-Vivant Denon, *Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute Égypte* (Paris: P. Didot L'Aine, 1802); Dominique-Vivant Denon, *Reisen durch Ober- und Unter-Ägypten während Bonaparts Feldzügen*, trans. Dietrich Tiedemann (Hamburg, Berlin, 1803).

[82] Savoy, *Kunstraub*, 124.

[83] On Zix's relationship to Denon and the Kunstraub, see Régis Spiegel, *Dominique-Vivant Denon et Benjamin Zix. Acteurs et témois de l'époque napoléonienne. 1805-1812* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2000).

[84] Dominique-Vivant Denon, "Inventaire des objects d'Art et de Curiosité enlevés du Palais du Roi de Prusse á Berlin par ordre de S.M. L'Empereur, pour être transporté a Paris," 5 November 1806, I.HA Rep. 36: Hof u. Güterverwaltung: 2862, GStAPK.

[85] Scholarly opinion is divided on whether the man kneeling next to Denon in these works is the secretary Perne or Zix himself. As the figure bears little resemblence to extant portraits of Zix, I must agree with the reading of Tristan Weddigen, "The Picture Galleries of Dresden, Düsseldorf, and Kassel: Princely Collections in Eighteenth-Century Germany," in *The First Modern Museums of Art: The Birth of an Institution in 18th- and Early 19th Century Europe*, ed. Carole Paul (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Trust, 2012), 161. See also Stefanie

Behind them is the director of the institution, Johann Heinrich Tischbein the Younger, eldest brother of Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Tischbein, who had defended his non-sugar sculptures from the biting soldiers in Naples during the Italian campaigns. Plump and forlorn, Tischbein stands behind Denon and Zix, hands clasped in front of his belly, perhaps mid-wring. His downcast eyes suggest his sorrow at the unfolding situation, while Zix portrays him as a kindly impotent figure, his lips in an appeasing half-smile as he watches Denon's inspection. However, the construction in the background and the nearly bare walls signal that the fate of most works has already been determined.

Indeed, this was entirely consistent with the impression Denon made on many of the gallery administrators with whom he came into contact in the fall and spring of 1806/7. Puhlmann remembered him in a testimony to Friedrich Wilhelm III as a "really quite good natured man," and Minette Henry reported in her diary with some astonishment that he had so impressed her mother, that she had invited him to a breakfast with other friends of the family, including Alexander von Humboldt, with whom Denon talked until 2pm about "America, Egypt, and their scholarly work."[86] Denon was part of a cosmopolitan network of men of culture, and his associations in this regard softened the blow of his mission to German observers. He also showed skill in the management of the acquisitions, often placing blame on Napoleon for certain confiscations, and ensuring the protection of collections from further incursions after his own. "It is undeniable that Denon conducted himself with much finesse in this business, and that he appeared to mitigate the hatefulness of his task with the kindness of his presence," reads an entry about him in an encyclopedia of 1833. And yet, his memory was conflicted. The entry proceeds, "He was...supposed to have ripped the gems in the royal art cabinet from their settings."[87]

Ideas and Stones

In the fall of 1807, Karl vom Stein zum Altenstein sat alongside his exiled mentor and fellow statesman, Karl August von Hardenberg, in the modest Russian port city of Riga and drafted a treatise on the political and cultural status of Prussia. The task of reform was to reformulate the administrative operation of the state and the social and economic structures of Prussian society in light of the devastating defeat at the hands of Napoleon in October 1806, made even more palpable by the indemnities of the resulting Treaty of Tilsit. At the heart of the measures put forth during the reform period from 1806-1810 was what Matthew Levinger has termed a "politics of harmony" between rationalized institutions on the one hand and a spirit of public and national unity on the other.[88] Many of the resulting policies, which targeted monarchic decision-making, aristocratic privilege, commercial relationships, and military hierarchies, were indebted to the political theory of the eighteenth century. Though often

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Heraeus, "Top Lighting from Paris in 1750: The Picture Gallery in Kassel and Its Significance for the Emergence of the Modern Museum of Art," in *The Museum is Open: Towards a Transnational History of Museums, 1750-1940*, eds. Andrea Meyer, Benedicte Savoy (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), 69.

[86] Minette Henry, Nachlass Runge-DuBois-Reymond, SBB.

[87] K.G. Jacob, "Denon, Dominiue Vivant," *Allgemeine Encyklopädie der Wissenschaften und Künste*, ed. J.S. Ersch and J.G. Gruber, vol. 23 (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1833), 149.

[88] Matthew Bernard Levinger, *Enlightened Nationalism the Transformation of Prussian Political Culture, 1806-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 20.

accommodationist in their policymaking, reformers generally held up ideals of representative governance, universal legal equality, and the perfectibility of man in their plans to make Prussia a competitive European power. The priority in the reform agenda was, however, on implementation. As Marion Gray has pointed out, the reformers' correspondence is riddled with metaphors about stone, puns on the name '*Stein*' for the early movement's main figure and Prussia's first minister from 1807-1808, but also a rhetorical symptom of the optimism with which they pursued the transformation of the ideals of a new political order into concrete institutional and bureaucratic realities.[89]

Altenstein's memorandum distinguished itself from the pragmatic technicality of other proposals for reform in Prussia. The memorandum's overarching argument—somewhat humorously, given the extensive division and subdivision of its topics— was that the success of a polity is dependent upon the correspondence between the organization of its government and a "self contained idea, which in its unity is an organic whole and which contains all the subordinated ideas that emerge from it."[90] This idealist premise could make it exemplary of the frequent assertion that the German response to the French Revolution occurred most forcefully in a theoretical rather than an actual register.[91] Altenstein fearfully and artfully avoided "any connection to the circumstances of the actual state," wrote the skeptical Prussian historian, Ernst von Meier.[92]

His sometimes ethereal language is, however, purposeful and self-reflective. Even in his avoidance of the concrete, Altenstein sought to harness the potency of the ideals of equality and freedom to the state and thereby to prevent revolutionary upending of the political and social order. The reform agenda had as its goal, writes Reinhart Koselleck, "the abolition of the domination of men over men, and the dissolution of all forms of guardianship through proper and lawful governance."[93] Koselleck's formulation makes blatant the Kantian tension in the theoretical advocacy of freedom from tutelage through an infrastructure of governance, but the dichotomy need not be paradoxical. Indeed, the relationships between theories and infrastructures were the core element of Altenstein's political program. In the hierarchy of ideas over stones, he defined the task of politics to negotiate between the two— expressing the former in terms of the latter. "The first requirement for success is that the state communicate the adopted idea— not only in words, but in all measures and dealings. [...] The idea must be articulated now,

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[89] Marion W Gray, *Prussia in Transition: Society and Politics under the Stein Reform Ministry of 1808* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1986), 68.

[90] Karl Sigmund Franz Freiherr vom Stein zum Altenstein, "Denkschrift über die Leitung des Preußischen Staates (an Hardenberg)," in *Die Reorganisation des Preussischen Staates unter Stein und Hardenberg; veranlasst und unterstützt durch die preussische Archivverwaltung in Verbindung mit der Notgemeinschaft der deutschen Wissenschaft*, ed. Georg Winter and Rudolf Vaupel, vol. 1, *Allgemeine Verwaltungs- und Behördenreform* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1931), 369.

[91] For a recent iteration of this position as part of a analysis of German idealism see Rebecca Comay, *Mourning Sickness: Hegel and the French Revolution* (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 2011).

[92] Ernst von Meier in Eduard Spranger, "Altensteins Denkschrift von 1807 und ihre Beziehungen zur Philosophie," *Forschungen zur Brandenburgischen und Preußischen Geschichte* 18, no. 2 (1905): 120.

[93] Reinhart Koselleck, *Preussen zwischen Reform und Revolution. Allgemeines Landrecht, Verwaltung und soziale Bewegung von 1791 bis 1848.* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1967), 154.

in order that unhappiness does not transform into cowardly complaint and doubt, but rather strengthens with new hope and thus swells with even greater expressions of power."[94] It was through the articulation of a "higher idea" in letter and deed that Altenstein explicitly set Prussia apart from its critically influential revolutionary neighbor and occupier, France. While France had made of the philosophical heritage of the eighteenth century a tool of destruction in the implementation of a new order— turning ideas into stones—Prussia would seek the reverse, turning stones into "higher ideas" and thereby enabling the creation of "the goodness of mankind."[95]

For Altenstein, who would become Prussia's first cultural minister in 1817, the arts were an essential element in the alchemy of material and idea. Art, wrote Altenstein, was a well-recognized means to stimulate growth, educate the citizenry, and promote innovation. But more important than its utility to the wealth of the state, aesthetic experience was the path for the exaltation of mankind. Art, like politics, would be the means by which stones could be transformed into ideas, lifting the nation along with it. "All that is touched by [art] will approach this higher status," Altenstein wrote in a perhaps more prosaic formulation of the Schillerian position.[96] Here also a comparison with France throws the superiority of the reform position into relief:

> "According to the highest idea that serves as the guiding principle of the state, true science and fine art must be assigned the highest value. France, in accordance with a lower tendency that is oriented towards the sheer expression of power, cannot regard science and art from this higher perspective. It is in conflict with them, in that it attempts to use them for a baser purpose, and thus desecrates them. Science and art will someday have revenge, in that they will follow the higher tendency and assure victory for it. Prussia must use this."[97]

The crime of French art policy was not in its content. In fact, Altenstein and his colleagues readily confessed admiration of many of France's achievements in public institutions of culture. The French crime against art was, rather, according to Altenstein, an act of desecration. By enlisting art objects in the tumultuous project of republican state making, they had robbed it of its potential to elevate humanity. The juxtaposition between high and low was thus not only an expression of value, but also an argument about the proper relationship between registers of earthly and transcendent political creation. If art is a mere device in the operation of the state, intoned Altenstein, it is sullied; it remains on the ground. If, however, art is recognized to be the "expression of the highest condition of mankind," anyone that is exposed to it will be transported beyond the realm of base mundanity to a loftier state of virtue.

The rhetoric of elevation in Altenstein's political thought is of course heavily indebted to the philosophical work of his contemporaries. The question of the material conditions for the pursuit of human freedom was a central element of the post-Kantian theoretical landscape. In particular, Altenstein's understanding of the state as the medium for the progress of mankind

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[94] Altenstein, “Denkschrift,” 372.
[95] Altenstein, “Denkschrift,” 370.
[96] Altenstein, “Denkschrift,” 454.
[97] ibid.

towards an ideal of freedom connects to his friendship with Fichte. The sense of the state as moving humanity forward and upwards into a realm in which the state is no longer necessary is also a feature of Altenstein's Fichtean debt. According to this formulation Prussia's political renaissance would be dependent on the arts and sciences, and therefore must create the concrete framework for their flourishing— funding, government agencies, academies, collections— but it must also ensure that the products of this framework be able to surpass it, to step out of their material frames. As Hermann Lübbe has written, this duplicity of transcendence would become a constitutive element of the Prussian *Kulturstaat* as culture gradually assumed a position in the government bureaucracy after 1817. The state held a twin commitment both to art's autonomy and to external infrastructures that ensure this function.[98] Freedom and institutionalization were collaborators rather than antitheses. Art may rest on a basis of support, but this support is what propels it upward and away from its dependencies. Once it has ascended according to this higher tendency it could look down at the world below.

The stories of sculptures that get chewed on like candy, lost coin collections, intercepted stashes of paintings, puzzling vases, and tippy buffalo carts may go some way to explaining the allure of such a trajectory to Altenstein and his contemporaries. The occupations and seizures, the hiding and packing and transporting missions, and the damages incurred along the way revealed the dangers of the age of revolutions to the material world of art. It is no wonder that the Fichtean articulator of Prussian cultural renewal would invoke a future free from the messy disappointment of the world of stones. Castellans and custodians, Napoleons and Denons were stuck in a flawed world of marble and canvas. The true experience of art would transcend this realm, and "capture [man's] sensibility, transform these into higher feelings, and through these in turn bring him onto the highest plane."[99] Such was Altenstein's conviction of this transformative potential that he closed this idea with the statement, "There is no need to expand on the way in which...all the most important spiritual powers, can be lifted up and enlivened."

As we have seen, however, the material life of art had become a problem that could not be easily evaded. As Ernst Moritz Arndt argued, when confronted with the empty walls of churches and galleries on his 1798 trip to Italy, a politics of ideals might just as easily succumb to the violence of the 'external world.'[100] Altenstein was wrong when he wrote that there was no need to elaborate on how a spiritual power may be conjured up and enlivened. The project of transforming stones into ideas was exactly the thing that needed to be expanded upon, elaborated, and was indeed the central task of the cultural politics of the early nineteenth century, which sought to create institutional answers to the problems that the revolutionary period had unveiled.

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[98] Hermann Lübbe, "Deutscher Idealismus als Philosophie preussischer Kulturpolitik," in *Kunsterfahrung und Kulturpolitik im Berlin Hegels*, ed. Otto Pöggeler and Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert (Bonn: Bouvier, 1983), 4.

[99] Altenstein, "Denkschrift," 454.

[100] Ernst Moritz Arndt, *Reisen durch einen Theil Teutschlands, Ungarns, Italiens und Frankreichs in den Jahren 1798 und 1799* (Leipzig: Gräff, 1804), 2:416.

Chapter 1 Illustrations

Fig. 1.1
Antoine Béranger (1785-1867)
L'éntrée à Paris des oeuvres destinées au Musée Napoléon, 1813
Porcelain vase, 1.2 m in height
Musée national de la Céramique de Sèvres

Fig. 1.1.1
Antoine Béranger (1785-1867)
L'éntrée à Paris des oeuvres destinées au Musée Napoléon, 1813
[detail of *Venus de Medici*]

Fig. 1.1.2
Antoine Béranger (1785-1867)
L'éntrée à Paris des oeuvres destinées au Musée Napoléon, 1813
[detail of horses and paintings]

Fig. 1.1.3
Antoine Béranger (1785-1867)
L'éntrée à Paris des oeuvres destinées au Musée Napoléon, 1813
[detail of ruins]

Fig. 1.1.4
Antoine Béranger (1785-1867)
L'éntrée à Paris des oeuvres destinées au Musée Napoléon, 1813
[detail of man raising arms]

Fig. 1.1.5
Antoine Béranger (1785-1867)
L'éntrée à Paris des oeuvres destinées au Musée Napoléon, 1813
[detail of man looking into distance]

Fig. 1.1.5
Antoine Béranger (1785-1867)
L'éntrée à Paris des oeuvres destinées au Musée Napoléon, 1813
[detail of *Laocoon*]

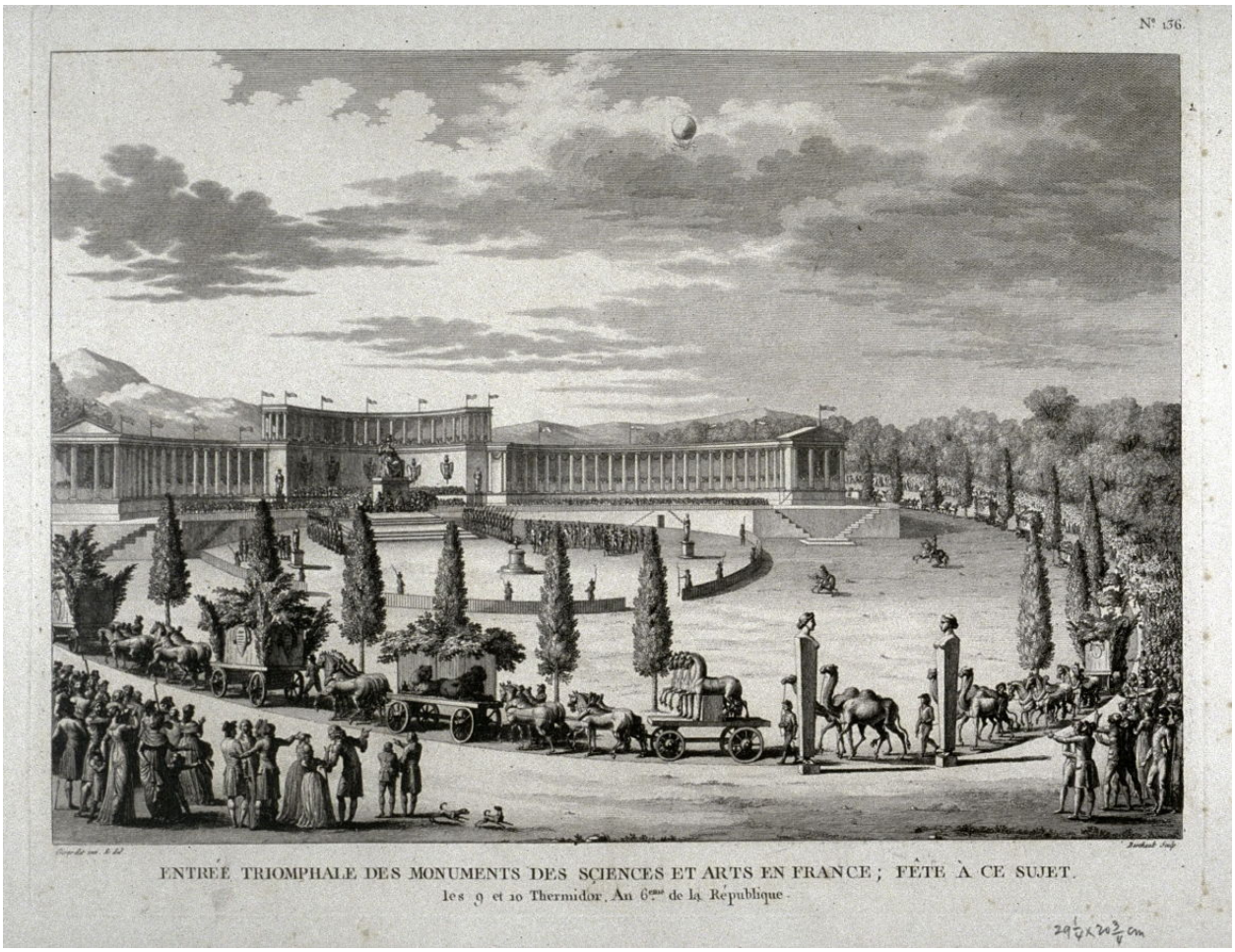

Fig. 1.2
Pierre-Gabriel Berthault (1737-1831)
Entrée triomphale des monuments des sciences et des arts en France; fête à ce sujet: les 9 et 10 thermidor an 6.me de la République, 1802
24 cm x 29 cm
Bibliothèque Nationale de France

Fig. 1.3
Benjamin Zix (1772-1811)
Vivant Denon in the Kunstkammer of the Royal Palace of Berlin, 1807
12.8 cm x 16.6 cm
Private collection, Paris

Fig. 1.4
Benjamin Zix (1772-1811)
Clearing Out the Kassel Painting Gallery, 1807
25.7 cm x 21.6 cm
Bibliothèque nationale de France

CHAPTER 2
A Brilliant Place: German Responses to the Musée du Louvre, 1800

...Und in prangenden Museen
Zeig er seine Siegstrophäen
Dem erstaunten Vaterland!

— Friedrich Schiller, *Die Antiken zu Paris*

"Lucky you," wrote the German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder to the professor of antiquities at the Bibliotheque Nationale, Aubin-Louis Millin in 1798,

> "that you live at the junction where all the resources for the learned study of the fine arts come together from the ends of the earth, and that you may one day live at the epicenter of all the networks of ideas on our continent...To be not only the conservator of the museum of antiquities, but also, I would say, to be the keeper of the grand and virtuous taste of the ancients in our time...is a brilliant place in the history of the human spirit."[1]

By the time Millin received Herder's letter his place had become even more brilliant. On the very day Herder sat down in Weimar to write these words the Apollo Belvedere, the Laocoön, Raphael's *Transfiguration of Christ*, along with crates of other works of cherished classical heritage entered Paris with pomp and celebration on a convoy of spoils from Napoleon's Italian campaigns.

Herder's envious amazement at his friend's proximity to these newly transplanted masterpieces echoed the awe felt by many witnesses to the arrival of cultural property in Paris from across Napoleon-conquered Europe. The coronation of Paris as the new Rome was understood to be a significant event on the scale of humanity. While skeptics saw in it the extinction of a culture of artistic exchange that could only thrive amongst the ruins of the classical landscape, enthusiasts lauded new possibilities for the pursuit of aesthetic truths in a modern democratic polity. This perception of colossal meaning with universal consequence in the physical location of a collection of artifacts was not bombast. It was endemic in a period and from a pen dedicated to understanding how the governing laws of nature and culture became manifest in the world of phenomena. Indeed, the cadence of Herder's statement to Millin— from the singular "lucky you" to the capacious "ends of the earth;" from the particular "epicenter" to

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[1] "*Wie glücklich sind Sie, die Sie im Zusammenfluß gelehrter und Kunst-Hülfsmittel aus aller Welt Ende leben, und vielleicht einst im Mittelpunct der Ideen-Verbindungen unseres Welttheiles leben werden, auf der Stelle, die Sie bekleiden. Conservateur des Museums der Antiken nicht nur, sondern ich möchte sagen, Erhalter des großen und guten Geschmacks der Alten gerade zu einer Zeit zu seyn, da so vieles für die Nachwelt gewirkt und angelegt wird, ist ein glänzender Platz in der Geschichte des menschlichen Geistes*." Johann Gottfried Herder to Aubin-Louis Millin, 27 July 1798, in *Briefe: Gesamtausgabe, 1763-1803*, ed. Karl-Heinz Hahn, vol. 7 (Weimar: Böhlau, 1982), 406.

the universal "human spirit"—mirrors more or less the chain of scales in Hegel's famous diagnosis of Napoleon for his friend Friedrich Immanuel Niethammer in 1806: "The Emperor—this world-soul—I saw riding through the city to review his troops; it is indeed a wonderful feeling to see such an individual who, here concentrated in a single point, sitting on a horse, reaches out over the world and dominates it."[2] Herder's "brilliant place in the history of the human spirit" is such a moment in an era of great moments, in which the entirety of human culture's history and future appeared wrapped up in the crates of objects teetering through Parisian streets.

Alongside the reverence of Herder's identification of the arrival of art objects in Paris with the cultural progression of humanity, there shows a glint of recognition that this progression was in practice confined in scope: "Lucky you," Herder wrote, rather than, "Lucky us." A 'brilliant place' was confined by a particular location (Paris), by a particular audience (the visitors and residents thereof), and by particular infrastructures (the networks of transportation, the architectures and administrations of the museums, libraries, and other repositories who hosted the newly won objects.). Herder reminded Millin of the specificity of his "brilliant place" in his letter by contrasting it with his own. The occasion of his writing was to thank the French professor for his gift of some Persian antiquities, conveyed to Weimar via the antiquarian Johann Gottfried Schweighäuser. In combination with the artifacts he had collected through contacts in Vienna, Florence, and St. Petersburg, Herder was happy to relate that he would be able to make a contribution to the scholarship on the subject. "Judge for yourself, *mein Herr*, how much I was moved by your goodness, through which I am now in a position to lay before the eyes of the reader that which will persuade his empirical understanding [*was ihn sinnlich überzeuget*]. […] If only I had d'Anquetil's dictionary…: then I would have made more progress!"[3] In as much as Herder—the foremost thinker of his time about the relationship between the environment and art—ascribed to Paris and Millin's place within it a resonance far beyond the city limits, he also exposed its borders. While Millin's place might be brilliant, it was a place nonetheless, and subject to the vagaries of natural and human forces. Herder's intellectual commitment to art as geographically, aesthetically and materially embedded within the restraints of culture, both in this letter and in his thinking more broadly, shows that his words to Millin do not leap between "place" and "spirit" the way Hegel's vault from "horseman" to "world soul" proclaims.[4] Instead,

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[2] "*den Kaiser— diese Weltseele— sah ich durch die Stadt zum Rekognoszieren hinausreiten; —es ist eine wunderbare Empfindung, ein solches Individuum zu sehen, das hier auf einen Punkt konzentriert, auf einem Pferde sitzend, über die Welt übergreift und sie beherrscht.*" Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Briefe von und an Hegel*, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister, vol. 1, *1785-1812* (Hamburg: F. Meiner, 1952), 120.

[3] Herder to Millin, *Briefe*, 406.

[4] Herder's position on the transposition of Greek artworks to Rome, written in 1774, is indicative of his position on the confinement of cultural products within the constraints of context: "If you vainly feed this precious, foreign cattle outside its element, in public buildings, then, despite the food and water, it will perish; or it will grow fat and degenerate. It does not bear young at all, or does so only with extreme difficulty and rots away in a long, living death." Johann Gottfried Herder, "The Causes of Sunken Taste among the Different Peoples in Whom It Once Blossomed," in *Selected Writings on Aesthetics*, ed. Gregory Moore (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 322. His work on mapping precisely the locations and qualities of that nebulous conception of a 'public,' is also exemplary of this aspect of his thought. Anthony La

"a brilliant place" demands that the gap between the particular and the universal be fanned out and investigated. 'What *is* the relationship between a place and its brilliance?' is a question that Herder's letter asked, rather than answered.

It is also a question that occupied German witnesses of the arrival of artworks in Paris between 1794-1811, in particular their installation in the brilliant place that has become most foundational to contemporary definitions of a 'cultural institution,' with its peculiar brand of lofty weightiness: the Musée de Louvre, as of 1803 the Musée Napoleon.[5] The Louvre was the institutional embodiment of the idea that in a democratic environment works of art were liberated, no longer objects of private desire or royal privilege but vessels of universal humanity. During the Kunstraub*,* Germans had countered this claim by expressing concern for the contingent fragility of the material objects caught up in these displacements.[6] As long as the works of art were teetering over the Alps, and sloshing around the canals of northern Europe, it was possible to unmask the rhetoric of 'liberation' and the touting of Paris as the center of human culture as a fantasy. Once these works were unpacked and put on display, in a venue open to all, a more differentiated response began to emerge. Wilhelm von Humboldt was in Paris in 1797 for the opening of the first major exhibition of artworks from Italy, and wrote in a letter to Goethe that although there were many reports of damages to objects during their transport and restoration, some of which were probably true, it is "certain, that when everything that is here is appropriately installed, this gallery will be unique in all the world; and I cannot lie, that such a enormous unification of so many works of art will have a truly elevating effect on the imagination."[7] The exhibitions that resulted from the *Kunstraub* at the Louvre, from the first presentation of the spoils of the Belgian campaigns in 1794 to the last exhibition opened after

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Volpa, "Herder's Publikum: Language, Print, and Sociabilty in Eighteenth-Century Germany," *Eighteenth Century Studies* 29, no. 1 (Fall, 1995), 5-24.

[5] Because of the changes in the institution's name across the period under consideration, I will refer to the museum as the 'Louvre' in this chapter, with the reminder to readers that the galleries that made up the museum of antiquities and paintings did not fill the palace, which hosted apartments for the sovereign, the Salon Carré, administrative offices, and, until 1805, artists' quarters. See Jean-Pierre Babelon, "The Louvre: Royal Residence and Temple of the Arts," in *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past*, ed. Pierre Nora, Lawrence D. Kritzman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); Christiane Aulanier, *Histoire du Palais et du Musée du Louvre*, vol. 1, *La grande galerie du bord de l'eau* (Paris: Éditions des Musées nationaux, 1948).

[6] These seizures are the subject of chapter 1 of this dissertation. See also the comprehensive account of the *Kunstraub* in the German lands: Bénédicte Savoy, *Kunstraub : Napoleons Konfiszierungen in Deutschland und die europäischen Folgen* (Wien: Böhlau, 2011). On the larger European picture: Paul Wescher, *Kunstraub unter Napoleon* (Berlin: Mann, 1976); Cecil Gould, *Trophy of Conquest the Musée Napoléon and the Creation of the Louvre* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965); Charles Saunier, *Les conquêtes artistiques de la révolution et de l'empire; reprises et abandons des alliés en 1815, leurs conséquences sur les musées d'Europe,* (Paris: H. Laurens, 1902).

[7] Wilhelm von Humboldt to Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Spring 1798, in *Goethes Briefwechsel mit den Gebrüdern von Humboldt (1795-1832)*, ed. F. Th. Bratranek (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1876), 53-54. I draw this reference from Jane van Nimmen, "Raphael's Paintings at the Louvre, 1798-1848" (PhD diss., University of Maryland, 1986), 66-68.

Napoleon's fall and during the efforts by Prussia to reclaim its art collections in 1814, elicited serious consideration of the idea that, as Andrew McClellan affirms, "the Louvre would become the museum to the entire world."[8]

And yet in considering the universality of the Louvre's purported resonance and its claim to put art into the hands of mankind German visitors were also confronted with the realities of objects and buildings confined in a literal sense not only within national geographies, but within particular cities and under particular conditions. The physical space of the museum— the bodies it contained, the environment it offered, the objects and surfaces that defined its limits— was the wall against which its significance as a public institution of culture was thrown into relief and contested. This was Herder's "brilliant place," which provoked a reverence laced with ironies of the prosaic. The following tells of Germans' responses to the Louvre, showing how in their descriptions of the museum as a public space, as an aesthetic space, and as a spiritual space, they expressed concern for the scale and scope in which art could be known and experienced.

This chapter has three parts. It first considers briefly the nature of the museum's claim to universality before presenting how German visitors experienced this universalism, sometimes as a function of and sometimes as an antagonist to the museum's physical environment. At the same time that the Louvre stood for its admirers as a hallmark achievement of public culture, with its expansive collections ordered along the scale of human historical development and open to all, it also provoked for German audiences a questioning of what this publicness entailed in the most concrete terms. The chapter's second section looks at the ways that the specificity of the museum space figured in the kinds of art historical understandings that German scholars could draw from it. While many German critics deplored the museum as an uprooting force, stripping art objects of their associations with the classical landscape and thereby their aesthetic resonance and interpretive utility, they also found in its immediate conventionality a platform for new kinds of aesthetic meaning. Finally, the last section will take up a story of one visitor who attempted to transcend the material concreteness of the museum by finding in it a space for spiritual contemplation. These efforts foundered on the challenge of Herder's brilliant place, overcome by physical obstacles that stood in the way of transcendence in an institution of things rather than gods.

The problem of the "brilliant place" appears in Herder's letter to Millin in some ways as a casualty of circumstance, and the confrontation with the immediate and capacious scope of art's reception an inevitable result of the despoliations of art during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic periods. In some ways the following narrative might count as an episode of a much broader and uniquely modern phenomenon: looting, damage, and accidents of art crystallize the ways in which the physical object and the more abstract notion of a work of art align and misalign.[9]

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[8] Andrew McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre: Art, Politics, and the Origins of the Modern Museum in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 116.

[9] Miguel Tamen writes, for example, of the early twentieth century art historian Julius von Schlosser, who resists translating the word 'lacerate' in a passage he sites from Ghiberti on the destruction of a statue in fourteenth century Siena: "the possibility of a statue's being *lacerated* is foreign to art history…[T]o lacerate implies the existence of flesh. And it may be that for art historians statues cannot have flesh, except perhaps as occasional trite or trendy metaphors." Miguel Tamen, *Friends of Interpretable Objects* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 30-31.

However, more significant to the following discussion is the way in which the "brilliant place" arose as an intentional theme of German commentary in two ways. First, the sources under consideration in this chapter are primarily the published accounts of German travelers to Paris who, as artists, scholars, diplomats, or journalists, were, in their descriptions of local environments, asking and answering questions about how much the Kunstraub actually mattered to the new cultural institutional life of the French capital, and how in turn this should matter for their reading publics. France had been a popular travel destination for German nobility and bourgeois intellectuals since the seventeenth century, and at the turn of the nineteenth century remained alongside Italy and England an important destination for the education of German speaking artists, hundreds of whom went to study at the École des Beaux-Arts or in private ateliers.[10] This popularity persisted through the Revolution, and became even more pronounced during the relative stability under Consulate and Empire, with the political unrest stimulating German curiosity about how these events had affected life in the French capital.[11] The market for accounts of all aspects of life in revolutionary Paris was well recognized by publishers and authors alike. Bernhard Struck estimates that at least 134 travelogues were published on France between 1790-1815, certainly a conservative estimate.[12] Reporting on the Louvre and other cultural institutions was fundamentally about the consequences of the Revolutionary period and how to assimilate its excesses and its virtues within the realities of life in the city.[13]

Second, explorations of the 'brilliant place' in the following account are portals into the much larger questions that preoccupied German writers and thinkers on art in this period as they developed theories of human cultural development, and studied the differences and affinities between the varieties of its expression. The confrontation between individuality and community; immediacy and abstraction; embodiment and transcendence; context and autonomy were crucial themes in European intellectual life at the turn of the nineteenth century, spurred in no small part by the challenge of the Revolution that theories of human culture and society must be held to account for their relationship to lived experience. These were the antinomies that the early German romantics sought to overcome through their formulation of a dialectically produced ideal of absolute unity within which aesthetics was a central operative.[14] The Louvre was a critical test of these visions. It was, as James Sheehan has written, a conflicted model for German

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[10] France Nehrlich, Bénédicte Savoy, eds., *Pariser Lehrjahre: Ein Lexicon zur Ausbildung deutscher Maler in der französischen Hauptstadt* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013).

[11] Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink, Rolf Reichardt, *The Bastille: A History of Symbol of Despotism and Freedom* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 183-185; Thomas Grosser, *Reiseziel Frankreich: Deutsche Reiseliteratur vom Barock bis zur Französischen Revolution* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1989), 287.

[12] Bernhard Struck, *Nicht West-Nicht Ost; Frankreich und Polen in der Wahrnehmung deutscher Reisende zwischen 1750-1850* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2006), 85.

[13] Thomas Grosser, "Der Lange Abschied von der Revolution: Wahrnehmung und mentalitätsgeschichtliche Verarbeitung der (post-)revolutionären Entwicklungen in den Reiseberichten deutscher Frankreichsbeuscher 1789-1814/15," in *Frankreich 1800: Gesellschaft, Kultur, Mentalitäten*, ed. Gudrun Gersmann, Hubertus Kohle (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1990), 161-193.

[14] See for example, Friedrich Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early Romanticism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), especially chapter 5, "The Sovereignty of Art."

audiences of how art could interact with power, both as a force of public enlightenment and as a force of imperial dominance.[15] It exposed the difficulty of a politics of culture as a bridge between the ideals of human subjectivity and the infrastructures of statecraft. These are the stakes of the 'brilliant place,' the conceit that unites this chapter. The tension between a place and its brilliance was not just a facet of the German reaction to the Louvre, but a problem for those trying to identify ways for art to work for society at a time when its cooperation seemed most urgent.

The Public Museum

Though not the first museum open to a general public in Europe, the Louvre looms large in the origin-story of the public museum because of its affiliation with the French Republic. It allied more explicitly than ever before a policy of open access to the presentation of art according to existing categories of human historical development, a mission of popular artistic education, and the performance of national rather than monarchical sovereignty. For this reason, the Louvre's publicness was not only a feature of its operational strategy, in Carol Duncan's words it made it into "a producer of potent symbolic meanings," a characterization that could have come from the pens of the museum's administrators.[16] The Louvre was a public museum that sought a public audience, and also to embody that public's interests, represent its history, and cultivate its aspirations. For German visitors to the Louvre these claims to embodiment inspired both marvel and consternation. Against such grandiose rhetoric of cultural meaning, the idiosyncrasies of the space, the physical presence of visitors, and the collections' physiological and psychological impact led many to pose the question of what the 'public' in the 'public museum' ought to mean, conceptually and in practice. We encounter a few answers in this section. It is more important, however, that the museum provoked the question in the first place. The Louvre emerges in these accounts not as the site where art could be delivered to humanity, but where the limits of its pretentions of universality were recognized and questioned.

The Museum's Vanishing Point

The national museum of art in the Palace of the Louvre, known at the time of its establishment as the Museum Français, opened on August 10, 1793 on the day of a festival to commemorate the first anniversary of the Republic. This Festival of National Unity was choreographed by Jacques-Louis David, and enlisted works of public sculpture to symbolically inscribe the birth of the Republic into the landscape of the city, and the minds of its citizens.[17] At

[15] James Sheehan, *Museums in the German Art World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 49-52.

[16] Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 24.

[17] Historians largely agree that the festival of 10 August 1793 was a key moment in the performance of the cultural revolution that accompanied the political one, though in different ways. Jules Michelet emphasizes the festival's tremendous power to unify the populace, and places the foundation of the museum at the center of the project: Jules Michelet, *Histoire de la Révolution française*, vol. 6 (Paris: Chamerot, Libraire-Éditeur, 1853), 215-225. On the iconography of the festival and its work in consolidating the Revolution's representational apparatus, Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 19), 96-119. Dan Edelstein points to the odd work of the festival

the Place de la Bastille, crowds drank water from the breasts of a statue of Nature; at the Place de la Révolution, a pyre made of feudal debris was burnt in front of a statue of Liberty; at the Place des Invalides the crowd passed by a statue of Hercules slaying a hydra, meant to symbolize the destruction of feudalism by the people; the performance culminated at the Champs de Mars with a reading of the constitution.[18] The opening of the museum was part of this allegorical spectacle of symbolic cultural regeneration. It announced an antidote to the logic that had underwritten the destruction of art associated with the *ancien régime* in the first years of the Revolution by creating a space where objects could be recast as republican national patrimony, and thus made physically and ideologically safe.[19] The revolutionary imperative to annihilate the trappings of the past was replaced by an imperative to master that past, to present art as part of a historical progression with the Republic as its triumphant end.[20] Even at the height of the Terror, when the

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of August 10 1793 within the revolution—ostensibly an event that inaugurated the new and short-lived constitution of 1793, but this was cloaked within the celebration of a return to nature, an assertion of the primacy of natural law within the Republic. Dan Edelstein, *The Terror of Natural Right: Republicanism, The Cult of Nature, and the French Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2009), 180-187. See also the descriptions in McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre*, 96-99; Mona Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution* (Harvard University Press, 1991), 83-84.

[18] McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre*, 97.

[19] On iconoclasm in the French Revolution, Stanley J. Idzerda, "Iconoclasm during the French Revolution," *American Historical Review* 60, no. 1 (1954); Miguel Tamen, *Friends of Interpretable Objects*, 28-75; Dario Gamboni, *The Destruction of Art: Iconoclasm and Vandalism Since the French Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 31-40; Edouard Pommier, "Museum und Bildersturm zur Zeit der Französischen Revolution," in *Kunst als Beute: zur symbolischen Zirkulation von Kunst und Kulturobjekten*, ed. Sigrid Schade and Gottfried Fliedl (Vienna: Turia + Kant, 2000), 27–43; Dominique Poulot, "Revolutionary 'Vandalism' and the Birth of the Museum: The Effects of Representation of Modern Cultural Terror," in *Art in Museums*, ed. Susan Pearce (London: Athlone, 1995), 192-214. The Musée des Monuments Français, founded in 1795 by Alexandre Lenoir as a repository (and place of preservation) for artworks that were being destroyed as symbols of aristocratic privilege, is an important element of this story of museums in the Revolution. Because it was not a destination for objects looted through the Kunstraub, it will not concern me in the following, but it has been the subject of much study including, McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre*, 155-197; Francis Haskell, *History and its Images: Art and the Interpretation of the Past* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 234-252; Alexandra Stara, *The Museum of French Monuments, 1795-1816: 'Killing art to make history,'* (London: Ashgate, 2013).

[20] The place of the Louvre in French Revolutionary history is addressed by an extensive literature including Christiane Aulanier, *Historie du palais et du musée du Louvre*, 10 vols. (Paris: Editions de la Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1948-1971); Yveline Cantarel-Bresson, *La naissance du Musée du Louvre. La politique muséologique sous la Révolution d'après les archives des Musées nationaux* (Paris: Editions de la Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1981); McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre*; Dominique Poulot, *Musée, Nation, Patrimoine 1789-1815* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997); Edouard Pommier, *L'Art de la liberté: doctrines et débats de la Révolution française* (Paris: Gallimard, 1991); Daniel Sherman, *Worthy Monuments: Art*

exhibition of religious art in particular was a dangerous proposition, the Louvre's power and legitimacy lay in its capacity to rise above revolutionary politics, and in doing so, somewhat paradoxically, it became an invaluable organ of the state.[21] Crucial to this feat of standing both in and out of politics was the institution's claim to embody the cultural heritage not only of France, but also of humanity. As its halls filled with the spoils of foreign conquest, these pretensions towards universality became even more pronounced.[22] "Imagine Paris…as the capital of the arts," wrote Boissy d'Anglas in 1794, "it must be the school of the universe, the hub of human science, and command the respect of the whole world through knowledge and instruction."[23] Its endurance through the Napoleonic period depended on its ability to exceed the realm of the literal individual object, and reframe itself and its contents towards the scale of humanity.[24]

This was not mere rhetorical posturing by d'Anglas. The Louvre enacted this shift in scope in concrete ways through its acquisition strategies, its accessibility, and its promotion of itself and its holdings. First, the museum's embodiment of a historical narrative of art, a relatively recent innovation in European galleries, was central to its universalistic claims.[25] From its foundation in 1793 it had proclaimed itself to be a repository for the entire history of art, and under the leadership of Denon from 1803 it sought this goal with particular zeal. Its galleries burgeoned from spoliations in German states in 1806, Vienna in 1809, and Italy in 1811, missions carried out by Denon with the explicit purpose of filling holes in his holdings to create an encyclopedic collection rather than an array of masterpieces.[26] By appropriating the entirety of art's historical record, Denon strove toward a collection whose objects, individually testaments to a narrative of art's chronological development, stood en masse at that development's apex. "Sire," Denon wrote to Napoleon in 1804,

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Museums and the Politics of Culture in Nineteenth Century France (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

[21] McClellan *Inventing the Louvre*, 112.

[22] Ibid., 116.

[23] Boissy d'Anglas (1794) in McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre*, 116.

[24] Andrew McClellan argues that this transcendent pretension towards the universal has been a feature of museums since the early modern period, but that it became an especially important source of the institution's legitimacy once its utility was conceived in terms of service to society beginning in the Enlightenment and revolutionary periods. Andrew McClellan, "Art Museums and Commonality: A History of High Ideals," in *Museums and Difference*, ed. Daniel J. Sherman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 29.

[25] The first instance of a collection hung according to historical principles is the Habsburg gallery of paintings in the Belvedere, instituted by Christian van Mechel in the 1780s. Debora Meijers, *Kunst als Natur: Die Habsburger Gemäldegalerie in Wien um 1780* (Vienna: Kunsthistorisches Museum, 1995).

[26] See for example Denon's considerable efforts to represent the so-called 'primitive school' of Italian painting in the collections. Monica Preti Hamard, "L'exposition des 'écoles primitives' au Louvre: 'La partie historique qui manquait au Musée'," in *Dominique-Vivant Denon: L'oeil de Napoléon* (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1999), 226-253. Also on Denon's gap-filling strategy, David Gilks, "Attitudes to the Displacement of Cultural Property in the Wars of the French Revolution and Napoleon," *The Historical Journal* 56, no. 1 (March 2013): 133.

> "The result of your conquests, [the museum] surpasses in both grandeur and majesty anything that all the eras of antiquity were able to offer. The collections amassed by Ptolomy Philadelphus, and Leo X disappear in the face of these which bring together the [collections] of Alexandria, with the antiquities of Greece and Rome...the Roman school, the schools of Naples, Venice, Florence, those of Lombardy, Flanders, Holland, and of Germany, which have produced the greatest perfection since the renaissance of the arts."[27]

Following in the classical tradition of appropriating the cultural treasures of one's enemies, Denon boasted not only about the extent of the spoils, but also that in the very act of their despoliation the Louvre was as much a participant in art's history as it was an end to it. The Louvre's function as educator and promoter of French artists underscored this aspiration. By exposure to the comprehensive canon of artistic development French artists would assimilate its lessons and exceed its achievements in pursuit of the highest aesthetic ideal.[28]

Second, the Louvre aimed to become the artistic hub of humanity through its accessibility. The galleries were generally open free of charge to the public at large on Saturdays and Sundays, and to artists and foreign visitors with identification during the week. In spite of constant construction and changing rotation of works on display as new shipments of artworks arrived from abroad, the museum's administrators made it possible for inquiring visitors to request to view items in storage or undergoing restoration.

The paintings of the Louvre by the French artist Hubert Robert underscore the connections its planners and administrators made between its historical focus, its abounding collections, its voluminous publics, and its claim to a presence on the scale of humanity at large. Robert had been appointed part of the museum's governing committee after the Thermidorian reaction in 1795, and augmented his role in the planning of the museum space with a series of images that forwarded his aspirations for the institution's design and use. *Le Project d'aménagement de la Grande Galerie du Louvre* portrays a bold thesis for the development of the Grande Galerie, under construction at the time Robert exhibited the painting at the Salon of 1796. [Fig. 2.1] It presents a vibrant space in which visitors of all types mingle with the works hung on the walls in impressive abundance, some copying, others pointing, some strolling, others enraptured by the display. In the center of the image, a child tugs at the arm of its mother. Impatient companions, or perhaps marveling strangers, peer over the shoulders of engrossed copyists. This is not simply a viewing public, but an engaging public, reacting to the space in a variety of ways. The historicist approach of the museum is evident in the arrangement of works on the walls by schools, punctuated, as Robert had proposed, by columned niches with classical sculptures to delineate different genres of works. The foreground of the image portrays the Italian school, with paintings of Raphael, Titan and Reni evident on the walls.[29] On the right

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[27] Denon to Napoleon, 15 October 1804, in *Vivant Denon, Directeur des Musées sous le Consulat et l'Empire: Correspondance* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1999), 2:1264-1265.

[28] McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre*, 147.

[29] Marie-Catherine Sahut in *The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect*, ed. Kynaston McShine (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1999), 193.

hand side of this front section of the gallery, a man half-decked in a green cloak has a small case of materials out and is sketching the outlines for a copy of Raphael's *The Holy Family* onto a large canvas, while the original leans partially shrouded in cloth on a temporary easel erected apparently for his benefit. This is Robert himself, sitting at the last and prospective stage in the spectrum of artistic development presented on the canvas: the French school is drawing from and is poised to eventually supersede the achievements of the Italian Renaissance.[30]

The primary features of the Louvre featured by *Le Projet*—its publicness, its collections, and its historicism—are not merely, however, presented as aspects of the institution, but are amplified by the work's central compositional feature: the perspectival subsuming of the gallery into a hazy vanishing point such that it appears to extend ad infinitum into the distance. As the space continues on and on, the scenes of intimate activity between artworks and viewers are replicated endlessly. The skylights function not only as an argument for Robert's preferred mode of lighting the gallery, but also as indications of the museum's limitlessness. The Louvre is projected thus beyond a specific moment, and beyond a specific set of material conditions, an aspirational vision of the museum whose universalism secures the infinitude of its resonance.[31]

"*Kunstfieber*" and "*Gassenkoth*": German Visitors Describe the Louvre

German visitors to the museum took seriously the institution's projected stature. While public opinion had been outraged by the despoliation of art on the Italian peninsula from 1796, after 1800, discussion of French cultural policy shifted substantially. One reason for this may have been a loss of interest in debating the virtues of the Kunstraub once it had, by the end of the Italian campaigns and the ascension of Napoleon, become a *fait accompli*. Even more significant, however, was the fact that by 1800, the results of the despoliations of art in these territories had been determined. The question posed by the art historian Karl August Böttiger at the beginning of 1798, "And How Will All of This Be Kept in Paris?" had been unequivocally answered.[32] These works would not be destroyed through their displacement, but rather incorporated into an institution devoted, for better or for worse, to their public visibility and scholarly investigation. After years of planning and construction, the new antiquities galleries opened in 1799/1800, featuring the fruits of the Italian campaigns, and supervised by the classical scholar Ennio Quirino Visconti. Though the art historian Carl Ludwig Fernow had blamed him for allowing the plundering of Rome in his capacity as conservator of the Museo Pio-Clementino, writing that he was evidence that "intellectual and moral enlightenment are two different things," Visconti was a well respected authority on classical sculpture, a successor in the intellectual tradition of Johann

[30] Johanne Lamoureux, "Seeing through art history: showing scars of legibility," afterword to *In the Aftermath of Art: Ethics, Aesthetics, Politics*, by Donald Preziosi (New York: Routledge, 2006), 134-135.

[31] The Salon provides the historic precedent and in some ways counter example to this conception of the museum's boundlessness. Since the first half of the eighteenth century, the Salon was a space which had, Tom Crow argues, given rise to an expansive idea of a 'public' of art that we see in play in the Louvre, at the same time that it was supposed to allow for the intimate and private experience of art. Thomas E. Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth Century Paris* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 3.

[32] Karl August Böttiger, "Und wie wird alles dies in Paris aufgehoben seyn?," *Der neue teutsche Merkur* 1 (1798).

Joachim Winckelmann, and a valued interlocutor for many German scholars.[33] In addition to the opening of the galleries of antiquities and the appointment of Visconti, 1799 also saw the long anticipated unveiling of the first half of the Grande Galerie containing the collections of French and northern European paintings. The side of the gallery hosting the Italian collections would open in 1801, completing the Louvre as a museum space.[34]

The labels of 'vandalism' and 'barbarity,' so frequent in earlier responses to the French confiscations of art became less plausible as the museum began to draw the attention of commentators, not only as an emblem of military prowess, but also an engine of scientific inquiry and art historical research. While the Kunstraub may have been a vile act of national chauvinism, the Louvre offered an auspicious signal that France would stand behind a more inclusive and open future for the arts in Europe. In the first pages of its inaugural issue of 1801, the *Allgemeine Literatur Zeitung* published an anonymous review of the exhibition of antiquities opened in the previous year, which gave a powerful argument for this newly optimistic perspective.[35] The article declared that while the ethics of the Kunstraub could only be arbitrated by "the wisest of all courts, the tribunal of time," it was apparent that

> "[a]fter all that trusted reports have...told of how the French commissioners packed the works...about how they were led into Paris with triumph on the festival day of the new Republic, and about the agreed upon rules for their planned exhibition and *publicizing*, there can be no doubt that the former and present rulers of the Republic have always been serious about giving these treasures the utmost protection, security, and utility as the true common property of all cultivated people."[36]

The openness of the museum institution was, in this estimation, evidence of a commitment to serving humanity at large rather than only national or Parisian interests. "Surely, he who

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[33] Carl Ludwig Fernow, "Ueber den gegenwärtigen Zustand der Kunst in Rom," *Der neue teutsche Merkur* 3 (1798): 286.

[34] The Grande Galerie opened with some of the features Robert's 1796 aspirational painting of the space had put forward. The paintings were arranged into bays ordered by schools, separated by columns with classical sculpture set into the walls in niches between each section. Robert's 1801 painting of the gallery bears close resemblance to his 1796 work, with the notable difference that the overhead lighting scheme was abandoned in the final reconstruction.

[35] Benedicte Savoy regards the *ALZ* article as a "eulogy" for the by then five year old debate on the Kunstraub. Savoy, *Kunstraub*, 224.

[36] Anonymous, "Beschreibung der in dem *Museum der Antiken* zu Paris bis jetzt eröffneten Säle," *Allgemeine Literatur Zeitung* (January-March, 1801): vi, italics in original. Josef August Schultes, an Austrian botanist and early developer of the deep sea diving helmet, put it more bluntly when he visited the Louvre in 1811 and wrote to his friend, the Erlangen historian Johann Georg Meusel, "Barbaric nations would have destroyed these masterpieces of art rather than bringing them home; a pork rind, a pickle, a roasted chicken would be more important to pillagers of the world than the Laocoön group or the Pythian Apollo." Josef August Schultes, *Briefe über Frankreich, auf einer Fussreise im Jahre 1811* (Leipzig: Gerhard Fleischer, 1815), 389.

understands how to convey [*mitzutheilen*] the artistic treasures so nobly and publicly, must be afforded ownership of them," the author concluded.[37]

This was 1801, when the Kunstraub had so far only affected Germans' ability to see and study art in the favored environment of Italy. However, even when in 1806 Denon arrived at the collections of the northern and central German states, this faith in publicity persevered. The visibility offered by the Louvre, this newly centralized repository for European art, could mitigate the acute local trauma of the Kunstraub in German states, some argued. In 1807, the *Morgenblatt für gebildete Stände* wrote in its review of the exhibition of German collections opened on the first anniversary of the battle of Jena that, despite the "sorrowful feelings of Germans at the sight of this *spolia opima*," Germans could be consoled by the "cosmopolitan idea...that the works of art, along with the discoveries of scholars, are not confined to the narrow frame of the nation, but rather belong to mankind as a whole."[38] Some German gallery administrators were particularly surprised by Denon's interest in works of the northern Renaissance school during the despoliations, confirming the value of the Louvre as an internationally visible stage, even for those at whose expense it was built up.[39] Johann Ferdinand Friedrich Emperius, the director of the museum at Braunschweig, which had suffered significant losses in Denon's raids from 1806-7, acknowledged that although he felt that the Louvre had had little impact on the quality of French artistic life, it had undoubtedly been the best means through which to the cultivate in its visitors a "taste for true beauty," and to promote the study of the history of art.[40] The publicness of the institution expressed through its historical mission, the scope of its collections, its accessibility, and its visibility mounted a serious challenge to arguments that had denounced the Kunstraub as an affront to the cosmopolitanism of European cultural and aesthetic interests.[41]

However powerful the Louvre's ability to persuade German commentators that the museum could embody the interests of human culture most broadly, these claims also introduced for many critics a problem of scale. On one hand, the volume, variety, and aesthetic weight of the collections, along with the volume and diversity of its public made the Louvre into a completely unique and fascinating material environment. And yet these innovations underwrote an understanding of the museum as a grand metaphor, which sought to transcend the mechanics of its actual existence and inner workings.[42]

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[37] Anonymous, *ALZ* (1801): vii.

[38] "Kunst-Ausstellungen in Paris im Herbste 1807" *Morgenblatt für gebildete Stände* no. 262 (2 November 1807): 1045. See also Savoy, *Kunstraub*, 228.

[39] Savoy, *Kunstraub*, 144-45.

[40] Johann Friedrich Ferdinand Emperius, "Materialien zu einer Geschichte der Wegnahme und der Wiedererstattung der europäischen besonders deutschen Kunst- und Bücherschätze, durch die Franzosen," *Die Zeiten* 11 (November 1816): 157.

[41] Savoy, *Kunstraub*, 229-235.

[42] On the consequences of the view which "treats as 'philosophical' the question of the 'source' of the museum's interest for and influence on artistic movements and historical thinking, and neglects the practical, and the skills of the museum, the context and distribution that it gives to objects," see Dominique Poulot, "L'invention du musée en France et ses justifications dans la littérature artistique," in *Les musées en Europe à la veille de l'ouverture du Louvre*, ed. Edouard Pommier, (Paris: Klincksieck, 1995), 81-110.

Pointing out this awkward discrepancy between the material and discursive museum would become a cornerstone of the criticism of the Louvre through the writings of Quatremère de Quincy, as we have seen.[43] Arguing that the masterworks of the ancients could only achieve the vitality and spirit of an artwork in their native context, Quatremère decried the "mutilation" and "dispersal" of the "museum of Rome," through which an aesthetic totality was reduced to individual and profane fragments. The museum was not the metaphorical seat of humanity, but rather a discrete and contingent locale, a cold tower of riches. Its constitution was like "an ignoramus tearing out of a book all those pages on which he found vignettes."[44]

Quatremère's critique was of a different moment, however, written before many of the first objects seized in Italy had left Italian soil. The German commentary after 1800 was neither focused on condemning the museum nor the cultural policies that underwrote it, but rather attempted to reconcile the institution as a set of discrete phenomena and material practices with the institution as a symbolic gesture of aesthetic and political meaning. This negotiation was present even in the rhetoric of those extolling the museum's virtues as the new repository for the culture of humanity. The article in the *ALZ* of 1801 was exemplary in this regard. It signaled not only a new appreciation of the museum's cosmopolitan achievement, but also marked an important shift in the German discussion away from the issue of the morality of the despoliations and toward a consideration of the museum itself as a matter of practical and professional importance. As Bénédicte Savoy writes, in the complex arguments about the museum as both "*Traum und Trauma* [dream and trauma]" from 1800 the debates became concerned more and more with museological practice: techniques of display, curatorial practice, and access.[45] It is telling that within his long descriptive inventory of objects in the newly opened antiquities galleries, the anonymous author spends far more space describing their restoration and placement within the museum than discussing their individual features and characteristics. He devotes his entire entry on the Apollo Belvedere, for example, to the statue's pedestal, affixed to the work on the occasion of Napoleon's visit to the museum on the first anniversary of the Eighteenth Brumaire.[46]

The Louvre's infrastructure aimed to propel the status of its contents to a plane of aesthetic significance that lay beyond its own discrete location, but these apparati also drew attention to the site-specificity of these works and their impact. To be in the galleries of the institution itself, confronted with its objects and reflecting on their meanings, was to realize the insufficiency of the notion of universalist cosmopolitanism to represent adequately what this place was about and what kind of work it was doing. Karl August Böttiger, conveyer of Herder's "brilliant position" letter to Millin, and perennial critic of the Kunstraub and of museums more generally, realized this. In an 1807 lecture he pointed to the conundrum inaugurated by the Louvre's lofty pretensions. Certainly, Böttiger conceded, "[o]ne thing cannot be denied...One could not have proceeded more liberally and more accessibly with the exhibition of these artistic treasures...One requires neither a certificate of permission, nor a golden key to be admitted daily

[43] Dominique Poulot, "The Cosmopolitanism of Masterpieces," introduction to *Letters to Miranda and Canova on the Abduction of Antiquities from Rome and Athens*, by Quatremère de Quincy (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2012).

[44] Quatremère de Quincy, *Letters to Miranda*, 100.

[45] Savoy, *Kunstraub*, 225.

[46] Anonymous, *ALZ* (1801): xiv.

during the set hours."[47] And yet Böttiger refused to equate these public measures with a shift from the space of the gallery to the space of humanity:

> "These old artworks belong [*gehören*] indeed to the entirety of educated and education-seeking humanity; however the people who are called to be the keepers and protectors of these treasures are those whose arm can use the sword to defend their ownership [*Besitz*]."[48]

Juxtaposing two terms of ownership, *gehören* for mankind, and *Besitz* for the sword bearers, Böttiger reacted to the military's undeniable presence in the Louvre's cultural achievements. As Jonah Siegel has written, the Louvre under Napoleon represented something both quite old and something quite new: a public museum of the spoils of war.[49] This was, as Böttiger elucidated, the problem of scale introduced by Herder's "brilliant place": that the property of all must, in its material form at least, rest in the hands of a few.

This is not to say that German commentators didn't use the same kinds of lofty vocabulary in describing the museum's position in the history of art and its impact on its future. However, if we examine this language more closely, looking past the sweeping statements about the Louvre's benefit to humanity as Böttiger compeled his readers to do, the struggle between the museum's scales of impact becomes apparent. German reports on the institution are replete with the tension between an ideal of the museum's public and its actual, physical public. Where writers often spoke in generic and vague terms about the virtue of the museum's accessibility and its impact on the scale of humanity, they also frequently portrayed their fellow visitors in vivid and not always complimentary terms. Caspar Heinrich Freiherr von Sierstorpff, a forestry expert from Braunschweig who visited the museum in 1803, offered alongside his description of the works in the exhibit a parallel catalogue of the people on display: those who fall asleep on benches and have to be ushered out at closing time; Englishmen who "see little more than the blind"; soldiers who stand in front of the battle paintings; women who prefer paintings of flowers and martyrs; lovers who whisper pleasantries to each other in front each work; French painters who point out the mistakes in every piece; "In short," Sierstorpff concludes, "everyone finds something here that fits into his or her wheelhouse."[50] Rather than the monolithic humanity-scale public, Sierstorpff's sociology of the gallery presents a highly differentiated viewership, which he articulates along the lines of gender, class, and nationality, each of which claims a different kind of engagement with the museum space and its holdings.[51]

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[47] Karl August Böttiger, *Ueber Museen und Antikensammlungen: eine archäologische Vorlesung, gehalten den 2ten Januar 1807* (Leipzig: Dyk'schen Buchhandlung, 1808), v.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Jonah Siegel, "Owning Art after Napoleon: Destiny or Destination at the Birth of the Museum," *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 125, no. 1 (2010): 143-145.

[50] Caspar Heinrich Freiherr von Sierstorpff, *Bemerkungen auf einer Reise durch die Niederlande nach Paris im elften Jahre der grossen Republik*, vol. 1 (Hamburg: Campe, 1804), 342-355.

[51] Museum-going as an embodied practice has become an important facet of the scholarly literature on the history of museums. See for example Helen Rees Leahy *Museum Bodies: The*

Though Sierstorpff seemed to relish the variety of people he encounters, the close-up of humanity in the gallery could also work to undermine the optimistic gloss of the museum's purported universalism. Publicity figured in its physical form as an undesirable counterpoint to the beauty on the walls and pedestals. The anonymous writer in the *Allgemeine Literatur Zeitung*, for example, who extolled the museum's efforts to treat its collections as "true common property," ended his long review of the exhibition of 1801 with the observation that "the stream of gaping viewers was naturally quite large in the [exhibition's] first three *decades* [the revolutionary calendar's unit of measuring weeks] and somewhat bothersome to the actual lover of art. But soon this flood of curiosity will trickle off and then there will be nothing to stand in the way of the quiet enjoyment afforded by looking."[52] The notion of the public's unsuitability to the practice of cultivated viewership was a common refrain. "I never would have believed that one could be seized with boredom in this place," the Swiss writer Ulrich Hegner wrote, "had I not been taught otherwise by a yawning guard."[53]

At the register of local and intimate experience, the museum's publicness was a much more complicated and heterogeneous endeavor than its rhetorical formulations would allow. This diversion figured in the stark contrast commentators frequently drew between the museum's noble aesthetic content on one side, and its vulgar human content on the other. The Rhenish astronomer Johann Friedrich Benzenberg advised his readers with characteristic disdain, that they would do well to visit the galleries on days when admission was restricted to appropriately identified foreign tourists, that is when the museum would not be filled with the Parisian public whose crude physique and demeanor clashed with the aesthetic grandeur of the artworks.[54] Rainy days were to be particularly avoided, when the coarseness of the local visitors was accompanied by an odious smear of street mud [*Gassenkoth*] tracked in on their feet.[55] Benzenberg was relieved at least to see that a coat check existed to divest visitors of their umbrellas and canes with which they might accidentally (or purposefully) puncture the artworks. “For all intentional damage caused to an artwork, the law provides ten years imprisonment,” Benzenberg assured his readers.[56] The reality of security was presented with somewhat more diplomacy in the galleries themselves, as the Hamburg jurist, Friedrich Johann Lorenz Meyer reported, with small cardboard signs attached to the pedestals: “In the name of the arts! Citizens, protect our property by refraining from touching the art with your hands.”[57] Although these

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Politics and Practices of Visiting and Viewing (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012); Sandra Dudley, ed., *Museum Materialities: Objects, Engagements, Interpretations* (London: Routledge, 2010); David Howes and Constance Classen, “The Museum as Sensescape: Western Sensibilities and Indigenous Artifacts,” in *Sensible Objects: Colonialism, Museums and Material Culture*, ed. Elizabeth Edwards, Chris Gosden, and Ruth B. Phillips (Oxford: Berg, 2006).

[52] Anonymous, "Beschreibung" (1801): xvi.

[53] Ulrich Hegner, *Auch ich war in Paris*, vol. 2 (Winterthur: Steinerischen Buchhandlung, 1803), 64.

[54] Johann Friedrich Benzenberg, *Briefe geschrieben auf einer Reise nach Paris*, vol. 2 (Dortmund: Mallinckrodt, 1806), 216.

[55] Ibid., 216-217.

[56] Ibid., 217.

[57] Friedrich Johann Lorenz Meyer, *Briefe aus der Hauptstadt und dem Innern Frankreichs*, vol. 1 (Tübingen: Cotta, 1802), 190. Hegner also mentions the security in the

visitors' reports lauded the museum's commitment to the public, they also portrayed this public in concrete terms that emphasized its physical rather than abstract presence. The arms of humanity and the wayward limbs of the pedestrian enthusiast were quite different, and yet uncertainly related entities.

Of course the unflattering portrayals of museum visitors in these accounts might argue against the very notion of a public museum, and against the republican project more generally. The Swiss book dealer Johann Georg Heinzmann took particular exception to the kinds of art on display, which he decreed to be lascivious, and potentially harmful to its viewers. Most critics became too distracted by the grandeur of its collections, he wrote, to pay any attention to the actual encounters between humans and artworks happening in the name of republicanism: "That which was shut up in Italian trophy rooms and cabinets stands exhibited now in Paris for e v e r y o n e ! ! [sic] to see, to behold! Should it count as a warning or a provocation? — Young men and women — children even — are standing in front of these pictures! Should this build character? Should this be a republican national gallery? I recoil!"[58] The clear attitude of these questions aside, Heinzmann raised a crucial point which reverberated through the entirety of the German responses to the Louvre on all sides of the political spectrum. What should a public museum signify in the most concrete terms? What should the intimate physical interactions between people and artworks in the gallery result in? The mundane world of viewing art revealed in his description was a vehement counter to the universalizing platitudes of national, republican, or international belonging.

Where German commentators pitted the museum's abstract public against its real one, they also addressed its claims to universality by describing their own places within the galleries in the most physical terms. The effect of the first major blockbuster exhibits the Louvre hosted were unprecedented and impressive spectacles, regardless of their ethical legitimacy.[59] The place was literally overwhelming, sometimes to the point of illness. Sierstorpff had seen many of the pieces in the Louvre on previous trips to Italy, and yet he was unable to handle the aesthetic onslaught: "Although I have, as my wife asserts, nerves made of twine, and can usually take a strong dose of such stimuli without feeling an overwhelming strain, I freely admit that I was taken over by a kind of art fever [*Kunstfieber*] when I saw all the great masterworks again…" Moving through the galleries, Sierstorpff became "blind with dizziness," exclaiming that "[i]t is too much all at once!"[60] Unable to overcome his frenzy at seeing so many old friends again at once, "to whom you both want to say many things for the first time, and don't know what to say," he resolved to go home and come back on many repeated visits, taking in only a few works each time.[61] Hegner found that as he approached the entrance to the museum his heart began to pound at the thought of the rooms "filled with enough stuff to contemplate for an entire

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galleries provided by "many guards, who make sure that nothing is touched." Hegner, *Auch ich war in Paris*, vol. 2, 51.

[58] Johann Georg Heinzmann, *Meine Frühstunden in Paris: Beobachtungen, Anmerkungen und Wünsche Frankreich und die Revolution betreffend* (Basel: Heinzmann, 1800), 107-108.

[59] On the spectacle of the Louvre, Francis Haskell, *The Ephemeral Museum: Old Master Paintings and the Rise of the Art Exhibition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 30-45;

[60] Sierstorpff, *Bemerkungen auf einer Reise*, vol. 1, 159-160.

[61] Ibid., 262.

lifetime."[62] Although he had engaged a guard to lead him through the Italian paintings, the visual onslaught "congested his understanding," preventing him from appreciating his guide's explanations, until the "joyful anxiety subsided."[63] The Louvre's collections, striving towards the universal, had the effect of making its visitors realize their own physical limitations, and their finite capacity for appreciating its volume and scale.[64]

Reactions to the Louvre as a physical space were not always explicit attacks on the museum's claims to universality. Many writers coupled the peculiarities of their experience of the galleries with an affirmation of the institution's importance to humanity. That the anonymous author of the *ALZ* heralded the museum's collections as "common property" in the same piece in which he bemoaned "the stream of gaping visitors" did not amount to hypocrisy as much as it indicated a distinction between modes of discussing the museum: the description of his visit on one hand, and his assessment of the institution's projected stature on the other. The museum's significance as a cultural phenomenon extended clearly beyond the intricacies of presentation, and the behaviors of its visitors. However, as Robert's painting *Le projet* clearly articulates, the Louvre's most central effort was to make the experience of art on the most intimate and prosaic level reverberate outwards into European society most generally, changing the narrative about how art should be seen, to whom it should belong, and the place of the French nation within these developments.[65] This is evident in the picture's staging. Each physical encounter between body and artwork in the Grande Galerie is repeated in various iterations down the hall, becoming fainter and more diffuse as they approach the work's vanishing point. The descriptions of the gallery spaces cited drove a wedge into this correspondence. They grant the museum universal stature *in spite of* its material limitations, not because of them. The juxtapositions between the idea of a museum of and for humanity and the reality of a museum bound by walls and filled with bodies in these accounts reveals the extent to which the Louvre stood not as an achievement of public culture, but rather as a harbinger of the questions that this publicity produced. How were these scales to be reconciled? What was the relationship between its belonging to humanity, its centrality in history on one hand, and the smear of boot grease on its floors and the nausea of its beholders on the other? Did it matter that a "brilliant place in the history of the human spirit" was poorly lit, or loud, or even that it did, *pace* Robert, have definitive limits?

The Museum of Art

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[62] Hegner, *Auch ich war in Paris*, vol. 2, 50-51.

[63] Ibid., 52-53.

[64] It remains to be studied in depth the range of physiological effects the Louvre incited in its audiences, but to the complaints of cardiac arrhythmia, dissociative disorder, and migraine, we may also add dyspepsia: according to the English poet Martin Archer Shee, "All is confusion and astonishment: the eye is dazzled and bewildered...like a glutton at a feast, anxious to devour every thing, till the intellectual stomach palled and oppressed by variety, loses the pleasure of taste, and the power of digestion." Martin Archer Shee, *Elements of Art, A Poem in Six Cantos* (London: William Miller, W. Bulmer, 1809), 174. I take this reference from Gould, *Trophy of Conquest*, 84.

[65] The debates about the restoration of paintings in the Louvre testify in particular to the stakes involved in making objects correspond to meanings. McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre*, 131-133.

That these questions about the museum's physical presence and its ideal stature were open at the turn of the nineteenth century must confound contemporary efforts to read the Louvre exclusively as "the fullest statement of the ideal of civilization."[66] It could not actually be a repository for the totality of humanity if the terms of this feat of embodiment were, at least by some of its visitors, in doubt. These questions also necessitate a revision of the purported consequence of the Louvre's universal term: that in its containment of history, its abdication of any mimetic duty towards sovereign power, and its appropriation of classical and religious art from its previous installation in churches or among ruins, the Louvre took art out of the circulation of life and placed it in a newly neutral and decontextualized environment. Dario Gamboni speaks of the Louvre's "refunctionalizating" effect, Andrew McClellan of its "secularizing power," and Dominique Poulot of its "pacification." In these accounts the Louvre transformed objects from expressions of monarchical decadence, ritual significance, and everyday utility into autonomous actors in a history of artistic development. According to Edouard Pommier,"the museum became the last stop for art of the past, which could be separated from its origin and context and given a new life and a new destiny…The museum became a place of distraction, even of repression."[67] Here art stood for itself, and the institution prohibited any attempts to make it into a transparent carrier of a political regime, religious faith, or economic status. Art became autonomous in the modern public museum of art, acquiring thus a near-enchanted power to conjure abstract and invisible realms of meaning.[68] Through its newfound imperviousness in the non-context of the museum, the art object acquired a new political significance—no longer reflective but evocative of worlds beyond reference to its immediate surroundings.

This argument has had powerful resonance in the subsequent history of museum practice and its critical interpretations, in part because it distinguishes between the realm of art and another world of mundane and peripheral conditions through which the institution could be either denounced or reified.[69] This master narrative of the modern museum draws a strict line between the scales that were, however, in the German reaction to the Louvre intimately connected and contested. To be sure, many German visitors to the Louvre and witnesses of the Kunstraub decried the dismemberment of an original organic aesthetic totality and the death of

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[66] Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach, "The Universal Survey Museum," in *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts*, ed. Bettina Messias Carbonell (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 54.

[67] Dario Gamboni, *The Destruction of Art*, 35; Poulot, *Musée, Nation, Patrimoine*, 191; Edouard Pommier, "Museum und Bildersturm zur Zeit der Französischen Revolution," in *Kunst als Beute*, 36. See also on the decontextualization of art in the Louvre under Napoleon, Thomas W. Gaehtgens, "Das Musée Napoléon und sein Einfluß auf die Kunstgeschichte," in *Johann Dominicus Fiorillo: Kunstgeschichte und die romantische Bewegung um 1800*, ed. Antje Middeldorf Kosegarten (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 1997), 339–369.

[68] Krzysztof Pomian, *Collectors and Curiosities: Paris and Venis, 1500-1800*, trans. Elizabeth Wiles-Portier (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1992), 44, 263-64.

[69] The power of this inheritance surfaces in the condemnation of the museum as a mausoleum, the subversion of museum spaces by the twentieth century avant-garde, and the current interest in interactivity and visitor participation in curatorial practice today. A useful survey of this idea in writing on museums is in Andrea Witcomb, *Re-imagining the Museum: Beyond the Mausoleum* (London: Routledge, 2003), 8.

art in the museum. And yet in doing so they simultaneous asserted the ultimate dependence of the work of art on the contingencies of the museum environment, and asserted the institution's physical presence in the kinds of art historical meanings that could be drawn from it. Its local particularities invaded the experience of art, rather than retreating from it. For both skeptics and enthusiasts, the immediacy of the museum environment became an important front on which the discussion of its aesthetic mission must be conducted.

"The Place Excites the Spirit of Research": Aloys Hirt and the Problem of Context

Ironically, it was one of the most vocal German theorists of the anticontextual Louvre that set up the centrality of the museum's environment to future museum building projects in Berlin. Aloys Hirt was a classicist, active member of the Prussian Academy of Sciences, and had in 1797 made the first full and public proposal for a royal museum of art in Berlin, calling for an institution which would bring the collection together in one place, "exhibited in systematic order according to different nation, period, style, and mythological or historical subject! In this manner the collection can become educational…One must see it frequently, study it, and compare it…Only in this way is the artistic sensibility of a people aroused."[70] Not only would a museum, in Hirt's formulation, be of certain public benefit, but the specificities of its location and organization were central to the kind of social impact it could have.

In the spring of 1801, however, Hirt presented another argument for the importance of the museum, this time in the form of an institutional critique. The occasion was the anonymous article we have already encountered in the *Allgemeine Literatur Zeitung* of the same year, in which the author had declared the debate on the virtue of the Italian Kunstraub to be moot. Hirt objected vehemently to the assessment that the museum must be evaluated apart from the admittedly nefarious origins of its contents. Instead, Hirt argued, the museum was inextricably tied to the act of displacement that occasioned its rise to prominence. The *ALZ* had surrendered its analytic powers to a watery and ultimately unsuitable description of the Louvre, "and they will thus hopefully not take offense, if I assume their usual critical function."[71] This critical function amounted to an extensive analysis of the ways in which the experience of art's meaning— the ability to place it in a historical moment, to understand its innovations, to appreciate its beauty, and to emulate its affect— was a result of the place in which it is seen. For Hirt, the only viable place was Italy:

> "The place excites the spirit of research: the ruin of a building provokes an idea, and this idea becomes speculation through the shard of a relief, and a fragment of a painting elevates this [speculation] to a probability, a coin gives it a historical shape, and determines further its circumstances and time period."[72]

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[70] Aloys Hirt, "Ueber den Kunstschatz des Königlich-Preussischen Hauses: eine Vorlesung," *Berlinisches Archiv der Zeit und ihres Geschmacks* (December 1797): 510-511.

[71] Alois Hirt, "Bemerkungen über einen Aufsatz in der Allgemeinen Litteratur-Zeitung von Jena, die Verpflanzung der alten Monumente der Kunst von Rom nach Paris betreffend," *Eunomia* (April, 1801): 310.

[72] Ibid., 312.

The ruins of the classical landscape made art historical meaning possible by providing a context for "unmediated looking," Hirt argued.[73] This was not, however, just any looking, but a deeply focused and scholarly practice. Rather than addressing the encounter with ancient artworks as a general activity of a learned friend of culture— the nebulous *Kunstfreund*, ubiquitous in writing on art in this period— Hirt detailed a research methodology only possible in the rich contextual fabric of the ancient landscape. The referents of artworks, architecture, weather, and ruins led the viewer on a journey of interpretation larger than the individual material presences before his eyes. Only here could the careful calculations of reasoned investigation and analysis escape pedantry and participate in the nobler project of excavating the ancient spirit. Only in the organic totality of the ancient environment could objects do something beyond themselves for their beholders.

How are we to understand, then, a scholar who had come out so strongly for the centralization of art in a museum in 1797, only to condemn that very project in 1801? First, the date of the article in *Eunomia* is significant. While it is tempting to read Hirt's language along the lines of the debates of the previous years waged by the antiquarians Fernow and Böttiger in *Der Neue Teutsche Merkur* on the superiority of the Italian landscape for the appreciation of art, in 1801 these arguments had taken on a new dimension. Where Fernow and Böttiger had been responding to the question of whether Napoleon's despoliations constituted a moral and advantageous cultural policy, Hirt was responding to a new problem. The Italian "liquidation business [*Ausleerungsgeschäft*]," as Fernow had characterized it in 1798, was largely over, and attention was, as we have seen, now more critically focused on the museum, rather than on the act of seizure. At stake in his analysis was thus the issue, not only of why Italy mattered to the perception of art, but how the Louvre mattered to it too. Hirt may have been opposed to the museum of the Louvre specifically, but he was not opposed to the museum in general. Rather, he was posing a question. If the ancient landscape gave scholars and artists the ability to move beyond viewing objects to understanding history, aesthetic value, and artistic production, what did the museum offer in return?[74]

Hirt's answer was, in this case, pessimistic, but it was not dismissive. His description of the classical setting as providing an experience of "unmediated looking" is revealing. The museum was, in his estimation, a foil to this. It was an obtrusive mediation—inserting the prosaic apparatuses of its closed galleries, security measures, and organization into artistic appreciation and study. It muffled the associational power of art to evoke an ancient spirit, and ensured instead merely that "undecipherable hieroglyphics would dangle in front of our eyes."[75] As it was, the Louvre was a flat, fragmentary, and arbitrary repository of deadened specimens, which impeded the true clarification of its contents.

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[73] Ibid., 314.

[74] For a survey of Hirt's museological contributions in his 1801 article, with particular focus on their relevance for his vision of a public museum in Prussia, Bénédicte Savoy, "'Die Ehre Einer Trophäe': Aloys Hirt und der französische Kunstraub," in *Aloys Hirt: Archäologe, Historiker, Kunstkenner*, ed. Claudia Sedlarz (Berlin: Berlin Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2004), 135-136. Savoy points out that Hirt's article is the only response to the Italian *Kunstraub* from Berlin, and is printed in the new journal, *Eunomia*, and is the longest article it had ever published. We must see it thus as representative of his own position, which will be explored in more detail in later chapters, rather than of a larger body of opinion.

[75] Hirt, "Bemerkungen über einen Aufsatz," 314.

> "What does one achieve through expanding or contracting the circle [of artworks in the museum], through choosing twenty or thirty or up to a hundred of the grandest monuments? —Answer: a study of pieces, an imitation of a small number of ideally beautiful forms, which only develop artists and taste in one dimension, and through which one will never obtain a free overview of the spirit of art as a whole."[76]

In this sense the environment of the museum mattered even more to art than in Italy. It could not offer an organically comparative experience. It could not fade into the background of an encounter between a viewer and an artwork. It must instead be carefully constructed. In the museum the stakes of the material contingencies of art's presentation were high.[77]

In the context of his advocacy for a museum in Berlin, his reverence for the "unmediated" experience of art in Italy, and his diagnosis of the artificiality of the museum institution in Paris, Hirt's condemnation of the Louvre was also an argument for the importance of the museum as an immediate environment with an undeniable effect on the kinds of meanings that could be drawn from art. In a long response to the various facets of the *ALZ*'s article, and a point-by-point reaction to the description of individual works in the galleries appended to it, Hirt engaged the themes of restoration, exhibition practice, and cataloguing, while condemning infelicities and offering suggestions.[78] I think he must thus be seen not only as the first proposer of a museum of art in Berlin, but also as the first proposer of the questions that the Louvre provoked, and that would come to concern museum designers and administrators in Germany after 1815, as we shall see in subsequent chapters. In bemoaning the loss of the Italian context, and pointing out the stiltedness of the museum as a host for art, Hirt was asking: How should the mere thing achieve any kind of stature on the wall of a building alien to its creation in a foreign land? What could the object in the museum do for itself, and what could the museum do for it? In this, while he may have vehemently opposed the anonymous reviewer in the *ALZ*, Hirt shared similar concerns with his contemporaries about the relationship between the scales of art's reception. For museum enthusiast and skeptic, the particular environment of the Louvre had become an unavoidable if fraught contributor to the way art could be seen and the kinds of meanings that could be drawn from it.

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[76] Ibid.

[77] Recent attention to the critique of Quatrèmere de Quincy has resulted in a similar conclusion that the argument against the displacement of art into the museum was simultaneously an argument for the importance of the museum setting to the experience of art. Alexandra Strada calls this a "black/ and white" version of the museum; Jean-Louis Déotte calls this distinction the "archetype" and the "negation" of the museum. See Strada, *The Museum of French Monuments*, 142; Jean-Louis Déotte, "Rome, the Archetypal Museum, and the Louvre, the Negation of Division," in *Art in Museums*, ed. Susan Pearce (London: Athlone, 1995), 215-232. Bénédicte Savoy also argues for a distinction between "good" and "bad" museum practice in Hirt's thought: Bénédicte Savoy, "'Die Ehre einer Trophäe': Aloys Hirt und der französischen Kunstraub," 134.

[78] Hirt, "Bemerkungen über einen Aufsatz," 331-333; 336-342.

Johann Friedrich Benzenberg's Visit to the Louvre

Hirt had made a case in 1801 for the importance of the museum setting, but we will have to wait until his involvement with the Royal Museum of Art in Berlin to understand more fully the kind of effect he felt it should ultimately have. Many German visitors to the Louvre, however, offered answers to the questions that Hirt left open. The Romantic philosopher Friedrich Schlegel has been perhaps the most recognized of these commentators, who in his visits to the galleries of paintings at the Louvre and around Paris between 1802-1804 wrote a series of texts for the journal *Europa* that would have a lasting influence on the terms and conventions of aesthetic description and art historical convention. Already in the first pages of his first essay for *Europa*, Schlegel made clear that he would not simply be describing the paintings on display for his reader, but rather including his own position as a viewer as the primary lens through which his descriptions would proceed. "I only have a sense for the old painting, only this can I understand and grasp, and only about this can I speak. [...] I have looked at all the paintings of the museum without exception more than once, but how many do I forget instantly, after I have forced myself to look at them!"[79] In this an answer to Hirt's question emerges. Schlegel disagreed with the Louvre's historical narrative, thought its lighting disadvantageous, and found fault in many of its most celebrated works. He emphasized the extent to which his journey through the museum was a matter of personal decision, and that his writing about it would conform, not to its breadth or organization, but to his individual interaction within it. The museum thus mattered in as much as it provided the material basis upon which one could have a subjective experience of a work of art—the centerpiece of Schlegel's romantic aesthetics. The particularities of the space however—what Hirt would have seen as its limitations—were of little concern. Schlegel, for example, never called the Louvre in his descriptions for *Europa* by name.[80] The physical presence of the institution was a medium for an affective encounter with an artwork but not a challenge to the ways art could be known within it. His discoveries of meaning in the paintings he saw at the Louvre— and these were significant, amounting to a complete reappraisal of the pattern of development within the Italian and Northern Renaissance—were made despite the problems of space that he cited. While Schlegel can thus be considered a primary figure in the assertion of the physical experience of art to aesthetic criticism, he also elided the museum as a specific and particular place. Schlegel's answer to Hirt thus fails to address the challenge of the "brilliant place."

We must turn thus to a more pedestrian visitor to the Louvre for an attempt to reconcile the museum's immediate and abstract scales. Johann Friedrich Benzenberg, who had studied in Marburg and Göttingen with Lichtenberg, Kästner, and Blumenbach, was noted for his experiments with gravity, and became an important advocate for bureaucratic and constitutional reforms in the lower Rhine region as a writer for the major regional liberal organ, the

[79] Friedrich Schlegel, "Nachricht von den Gemälden in Paris," (1803), in *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, ed. Ernst Behler, vol. 4, *Ansichten und Ideen von der christlichen Kunst*, ed. Hans Eichner (Munich: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, 1959), 13.

[80] Hubert Locher, "Verbal Transformations of the Display of Picture Galleries," in *Elective Affinities: Testing Word and Image Relationships*, ed. Catriona MacLeod, Véronique Plesch, and Charlotte Schoell-Glass (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009).

Westfälischer Anzeiger.[81] He shared the guarded admiration of many of his German liberal contemporaries for French republican ideals, if not their practical execution. Although particularly skeptical of the Napoleonic regime, Benzenberg traveled to Paris in 1804 to further his natural historical studies and published his account of life in the "capital of the world" in German in 1805/6.[82] He was a deferential but candid portraitist of the major cultural institutions of the city, as well as its infrastructure and organizations for social welfare. "Since the Revolution, in all of these old institutions the rigid ceremoniousness of the dead alphabet has fallen away…In its place there is now a free and lively spirit, which, as a child of the age, has a joyous and youthful effect on the renewed sciences."[83] As with other German visitors to Paris in the period, Benzenberg was immediately taken by the unprecedented publicness of its institutions of culture, which he lauded for inciting a new and democratic spirit of inquiry.

Benzenberg began his account of the museum, spread over several letters in the second volume of his travelogue, by describing his visit to see Jacques-Louis David's *Les Sabines,* exhibited in a former cabinet of the Academy of Architecture in the Louvre since 1799. An early indication of his skeptical attitude towards the work—which he found too affectedly theatrical with Hersilia, the heroine in the middle of the painting adjudicating between her father and husband, too much like an actress who "always knows five minutes before what is about to happen"—Benzenberg introduced the work by focusing on the infrastructures of the institution surrounding it.[84] The color of the walls, the price of admission, the helpful signs preventing visitors from losing their way in the labyrinthine halls, and the barriers preventing the eager public from communing too closely with the painting presided over his analysis of the work itself, which ended with the protest that David had neglected to bridle the horses in the scene: "David surely had his reasons...but I cannot agree with them."[85]

This kind of pedestrian pedantry is not entirely surprising from a man whose literary oeuvre consisted primarily of treatises on systems of measurement standards for land surveyors, descriptions of his astronomical and gravitational experiments, and a pamphlet entitled, "What Do I Consume in Düsseldorf?"[86] However, once out of sight of David and surrounded by artworks that he favored, Benzenberg's prosaic descriptions ceded to a portrait of the institution less concerned with its discernable traits than with the possibilities it opened up. Like many of his contemporaries, these favorable and expansive artworks were for Benzenberg the northern schools, and in particular the genre paintings of the Dutch and Flemish seventeenth century.[87]

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[81] On Benzenberg, see the account of his life and political engagements, Julius Heyderhoff, *Johann Friedrich Benzenberg: der erste rheinische Liberale* (Düsseldorf: Ed. Lintz, 1909).

[82] Johann Friedrich Benzenberg, *Briefe geschrieben auf einer Reise nach Paris*, vol. 1 (Dortmund: Mallinckrodt, 1805), 106.

[83] Ibid., 154.

[84] Benzenberg *Briefe geschrieben auf einer Reise nach Paris*, vol. 2, 112.

[85] Ibid., 113-114.

[86] Johann Friedrich Benzenberg, *Was verzehre ich in Düsseldorf?* (Düsseldorf: J. Wolf, 1830).

[87] Here Benzenberg joins many German visitors to the Louvre from whom the paintings of the northern Renaissance and Flemish and Dutch traditions were the gleaming center. This fascination has been linked to the search for a particularly German characteristic within the

Each work he encountered presented a potential story that reached forward and backwards beyond its surface. In a painting of the interior of a tavern with two men playing cards by David Teniers the Younger, for example, he wrote of one of the figures, "He appears to have crawled his way in all directions through Europe, and finally encountered a Dutch recruiter, and married a girl in the village where he worked during his vacation, and now that he is old, he has retired and lives with his wife. The painter painted the entire life story in his face and his hat."[88] In some instances he penned entire monologues for the painted figures in the scenes he beheld. Benzenberg did not limit his imagination to elaborating on the paintings on display. He ended his account of the museum with a long rumination on the oddity that the Louvre did not exhibit a single Dutch work portraying the life of a miller, and then proceeded to conjure up what such a work would look like, the seasons it would be, the mechanism of the mill, the figures in the scene, and how they would gather around the oven stoking their pipes. The Louvre and its contents emerged in his account as an inspiration for storytelling that left the confines of the gallery's walls and created a new world outside of it.

Though Benzenberg was leaving the immediate world of the gallery through these fantastical descriptions, his understanding of the nature of these works' aesthetic function and allure reveals a fundamental engagement with the solidity of the environment in which he found himself. This was not the kind of rapturous spiritualism of Ludwig Tieck and Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroeder's vision of artworks so powerful that at night their artists descend from heaven into the gallery to regard their masterpieces.[89] Instead, as he related the features of the works of the Dutch school with intimate precision and enthusiastic conjecture, Benzenberg forwarded a set of assertions about the nature of artistic representation, finding a middle ground between the unseen worlds opened up by the museum's contents and the prosaic space of the museum itself.

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history of art defined by its spiritualism. See for example, Keith Moxey, *The Practice of Persuasion: Paradox and Power in Art History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 71.

[88] Johann Friedrich Benzenberg, *Briefe geschrieben auf einer Reise*, vol. 2, 127. The current identity of the painting in question, listed in the 1804 catalogue of the Grande Galerie as "588. L'Intérieur d'un estaminet," is unknown. *Notice des Tableaux des écoles française et flamande, Exposés dans la grande Galerie* (Paris: L'Imprimerie des Sciences et Arts, 1804), 86. Bénédicte Savoy asserts that painting 588 corresponds to the work known today as *Partie de cartes dans une hôtellerie (Interieur mit Kartenspielern)* (1643/45) currently in the collection of the Musée Grenoble, Inv. MG 2855. However, assuming Benzenberg accurately identified the catalogue number in his account, his description of the work does not match the Grenoble work, which depicts a woman among the five figures gathered around the card table, rather than the five men indicated by Benzenberg. Bénédicte Savoy, ed., *Helmina von Chézy. Leben und Kunst in Paris seit Napoleon I* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2009), 536. Given that the *Catalogue interministériel des Dépôts d'Oeuvres d'Art de l'Etat* lists the Grenoble work to be part of the Louvre's collections from 23 August 1795, after it was seized from the residence of the emigrated duke Emmanuel de Croy-Soire, it is possible that it corresponds to the other Teniers the Younger tavern scene listed in the 1804 catalogue as "*583. L'Intérieur d'un Estaminet, où l'on voit sur le devant des joueurs de cartes.*"

[89] Ludwig Tieck, Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder, *Herzensergießungen eines Kunstliebenden Klosterbruders* (Berlin: Johann Friedrich Unger, 1797), 126. Indeed, Wackenroder and Tieck exclude Dutch painters explicitly from this fantasy, their main medium being Albrecht Dürer, who Benzenberg criticized in his *Briefe.*

The achievement of Netherlandish art was the way in which it brought the liveliness of the world into a mundane and comprehensible form, rooting rather than transporting the viewer. “This is the life of people who rejoice with food and drink,” he wrote of these works. “There are days and hours, where this life does us the innermost good— where we don’t want anything big, no Alps, no Rhine Falls, but rather only the domestic, the limited, the calm.”[90] The greatest paintings, he argued, were not those that evoked the astounding complexity of existence, but rather the most simple, immediate, and familiar. The enduring quality of art, in contrast to works of historical scholarship, was that through this immediacy it brought out the qualities of humanity that could resonate across time periods. That which chronicles merely obscured, true works of art (Benzenberg included not only painting in this category, but also novels and poetry) made vivid, inviting recognition of truths that lay buried in the chaos of lived experience. These truths may not, according to Benzenberg, be evident at the moment of representation but only reveal themselves after generations of looking.[91] Benzenberg articulated in his letters a vision of aesthetic power drawn from the concrete proximity between viewer and painting, in which each realized through the other a groundedness in the physical world.

As an example, Benzenberg focused on a work by Gerrit Dou, known as "The Young Mother," which depicts a young woman sitting next to her child in a cradle, being tended by a maid. [Fig. 2.2] The scene is an intimate urban bourgeois interior, for which Dou was renowned. It was perfect, Benzenberg wrote, in its embodiment of "prosperity [*Wohlhabenheit*]' but not "luxury [*Pracht*]," clean and orderly with everything in its place.[92] Almost. As soon as he had plotted out the scene's fitting appointments—a cabbage on a washing board; a skinned rabbit in a basket, and an unskinned one for tomorrow; a fire in the oven— Benzenberg alit on a glitch in this harmonious matrix: several of the panes in the open windows at the top left of the composition, the only source of light aside from the scarce glow of a fire in the otherwise dull darkness of the apartment, are broken, and jagged shards of glass hang within their frames. Further, a tankard and lamp have fallen over and lay strewn across the floor. "In a household, where everything is so much in its place, the master of the house does not tolerate broken panes and disorder," Benzenberg wrote. But these imperfections did not serve Benzenberg as indications of the painting's inferiority. Sure, "the artist did not have the liberty of spirit with which to elevate himself above life and choose a moment to represent out of it in which the unity of thought might reign." But this very inability to lift oneself over and above the blemishes was exactly what distinguished the painting in his eyes. "It seems to me that the character of Dutch artists lies...in that they do not elevate themselves with poetic freedom above life, and view and

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[90] Benzenberg, *Briefe geschrieben auf einer Reise nach Paris*, vol. 2, 135.

[91] Ibid., 146. Benzenberg gives an example to this end of the image of the "*Wandersmann*" from Comenius' *Orbis Pictus* (1658), a woodcut in which all the equipment the traveler needs to determine the clear and honest path is numbered and enumerated in a short poem. Benzenberg refers his reader's to Herder's description of this work in *Adrastea* (1801), which emphasizes Comenius' insistence on "simplicity [*Einfalt*]" in the face of the depravity and conflict of the Thirty Years War: "only through simplicity can our understanding, will, and interactions be freed from degradation: the harmonious standard of our everyday concepts, abilities, and instincts show us the way." Johann Gottfried Herder, "Briefe zu Beförderung der Humanität," in *Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. Johann V. Müller (Carlsruhe: Im Bureau der Deutsche Klassiker, 1820), 136.

[92] Benzenberg, *Briefe geschrieben auf einer Reise nach Paris*, vol. 2, 139.

represent it in a transfigured form in the mirror of fantasy."[93] The material imperfections evident in these scenes— their imperviousness to fantasy— intensified their liveliness and their ability to engage the imagination of the viewer.

The space of the museum in this formulation was a crucial context for encountering art, though not as a launch pad for scholarly inquiry as Hirt had understood it, but as the site of immediate physicality, in which the limitations of the space acted as a conductor of discrete and concrete meaning. This concept becomes clear in Benzenberg's description of Raphael's *Transfiguration*, the most famous painting on display in the Louvre, if not in European cultural life at the time most generally. The work had arrived in Paris from Rome in the festival of the third convoy in July of 1798, and was immediately exhibited in November of that year, and then again once the Grande Galerie re-opened in 1801. Particularly jarring for him about the *Transfiguration* was the disjuncture between the painting's two episodes, the transfiguration of Christ in the top half, and the struggle of the apostles to cure a young boy in the bottom. Benzenberg's trouble was the very difficulty of the work for art criticism of the period, in which the orientation of painting towards historical narrative both as a subject matter and as a mode of analysis was a newly important frame of reference. This work, Raphael's last, displayed two scenes simultaneously which were in fact distinct and separate biblical episodes that occurred at different times.[94] For the Swiss painter Johann Heinrich Fuseli, the convergence of anachronic events amounted to a "leap of boundaries," in which art defied the rigidity of historical chronology.[95] For Benzenberg, however, the disjuncture was not entirely a problem of temporal dimensions, but of levels of representation with different capacities to engage the viewer. The human struggle of the bottom half of the painting portrayed a scene of comprehensible human powers. "How a noble man stands there supported by himself, how the folds of his dress are, we know about these things because we have seen them in life." The top half of the image, in contrast, depicted a scene of which its painter could have had no knowledge, and both he and the viewer must necessarily lose their bearings in the "Aether," this "unknown world of clouds": "When [a man] floats in the air, then both painter and viewer lose the visual language [*Zeichensprache*]."[96] Benzenberg would perhaps not have disputed the leap of artistic fantasy present in the painting, but it is this leap between worlds that alienated him from it.

While Benzenberg's commentary on the *Transfiguration* resonates with and participates in a much larger discourse on this confounding painting, it is significant that it occurs within a description of the museum that included a detailed assessment of the space, its layout, physical infrastructures, and social worlds. Benzenberg is standing in the middle of the gallery objecting to the presence of a miracle within it. His language thus edges beyond its exclusive purchase on the painting to describe the challenge of the museological world as a host for art. In condemning

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[93] Ibid., 155.

[94] This line of critique was inaugurated by the French sculptor Falconet, who, writing in 1772, went against the overwhelming popularity of Raphael's works in France, condemning the *Transfiguration*'s lack of harmony: "[N]ot only does one half bear no relation to the other, but the principal subject [the transfiguration itself] was placed there just above as if it were an only barely distinguishable episode, in a manner that leaves room for doubt as to whether it is the subject [at all.]." Falconet (1772) in Martin Rosenberg, "Raphael's Transfiguration and Napoleon's Cultural Politics," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 19, no. 2 (December 1, 1985): 199.

[95] Jane van Nimmen, "Responses to Raphael's Paintings at the Louvre," 198.

[96] Benzenberg, *Briefe geschrieben auf einer Reise nach Paris*, vol. 2, 156.

the representation of transfiguration, he is also challenging the alchemy of aesthetic transformation that the museum was supposed to enable.

> "When these figures step out of the dark, far away, and notional fog into the precisely drawn proximity of the present, they lose the soft aroma of distance and enter into a world where they stand in contradiction to all that stands around them."[97]

It is unclear whether the foreground that Benzenberg referred in these lines was that of the painting or his own plane of viewership, standing on the mud-smeared floors in front of this illustrious masterpiece. And with the ambiguity of these words, Benzenberg proposed a way out of the brilliant place that sacrifices neither term, but engages instead their mutual possibilities. In his embrace of the immediacy of the Netherlandish schools, and his critique of the enchanted grandeur of the Italian, Benzenberg offered a new perspective on the Louvre's claim to exceed its discrete location and constituencies by the volume of its collections, the openness of its exhibitions, and the beauty of its masterpieces. Its impact, he argues, would not come from its metaphorical spiritual stature, but from the discrete and prosaic environment from which it could hardly escape.

Conclusion: The God Behind the Marble

This chapter has been concerned with the questions that the Louvre provoked for German commentators, questions that have asked after the ways in which the mundane life of the place of the Louvre mattered to its widely recognized if not entirely celebrated brilliance. We have encountered these questions in relationship to the museum's public, and to the museum's contribution to art history and aesthetics. In both of these contexts however, the brilliant place was proposed and resolved as an intellectual problem: how are we to understand the Louvre and its contents, German commentators asked, given its different and often competing realms of significance? How should we react, and how should this reaction be communicated discursively? It must be remembered however, going back to Herder's letter with which we started, that the brilliant place was not only a conceptual challenge, but a practical one. To Herder, who was in the process of trading works of Persian art with his colleagues across distances, a brilliant place was also a technical difficulty of how to engage with the material world concretely in light of the ethereal capaciousness through which that world was described and interpreted. The Louvre posed the question not only of how to understand art in the museum, but of how to behave around art in the museum. We turn thus finally to an episode in this conundrum of how the museum’s universalist pretensions could affect the way visitors comport themselves within the gallery space. The following story presents, perhaps, an extreme difficulty in parsing the relationships between the transcendent and the concrete, but it nevertheless exemplifies the extent to which the problems of the brilliant place might be solved theoretically, but at the level of practice were potentially and literally dangerous for the success of the public museum as an institution.

In 1805, Helmina von Chézy, a Prussian writer living in Paris, recorded an event that had "much occupied [her] thoughts since then.” She had seen a young woman in the Louvre who

[97] Ibid., 155.

stood stunned in front of the Apollo Belvedere, a confiscation stipulated by the Treaty of Tolentino the year before. But it was not the statue that captured Chézy, but its enraptured viewer: "Gradually a fire flared up in her eyes…electrifying her entire self. The most wonderful transformation unfolded; the fire…broke loose, and awakened in her heart the first impulse of love." Chézy continued to watch the young woman, as she began to express her emotions in a state of "sweet confusion":[98]

> "[…] This, they say, is the Apollo Belvedere,
> The highest work that sculptors ever produced?
> It would be true, if it was of marble.
> But humans have never reached such heights,
> Since where you see stone, there in a golden sphere
> My gaze sees the deity radiating.
> How can you beckon me to leave?
> Turning yourselves so coldly to other sculptures?
> Does no flicker of the soul seek to pull you under?
> Can you not see the god in the marble?[99] […]"

The young woman's older sister finally succeeded in tearing her away from her beloved statue, and escorted her, sobbing and looking longingly over her shoulder, out of the gallery.

Chézy left Paris for Montmorency in a reverie, deeply affected by the scene she had witnessed. There, a ghostly encounter began to take form in her thoughts. In the village where "the name Rousseau is unknown; they speak only of Jean-Jacques," the presence of the *philosophe*—that famous explorer of the borderlessness between man and environment—began to mingle with the young woman and her marble god in her thoughts. "Here he sat, there he wrote, here in the wheat field, where the soft grass lured him to sit, and the cherry tree stretched out its blossom-laden branches…under whose rough shadow he charted the human heart." But Chézy's communion with her aesthetic god culminated in a sensibility quite distinct from that she had seen performed in the galleries of the Louvre. In Montmorency, amidst the specter of Rousseau, the world and the things in it dissolved into nothing "in the face of the pure and full feelings of selfhood," feelings of containment, in which "the soul learned to enjoy itself."[100]

Chézy returned to Paris and went immediately to the antiquities gallery of the Louvre, where she expected to find the young woman from Provence standing in front of the Apollo. When she did not appear, Chézy questioned a guard who she remembered having been present for the woman's first visit. The guard informed her that the woman had come daily since that first outburst, and had taken to sitting down in front of the sculpture, whereupon, hands folded, she would begin to weep. In the spring she brought baskets of roses, which she scattered on the steps leading to his pedestal. Then one morning they found her, having slipped early into the gallery, exhausted from crying. The room was filled with the fragrance of flowers and the sculpture was draped in a veil of Indian muslin embroidered in gold. The guards closed the room off to visitors; her family came and, with some difficulty, led her away. Rumors had it that she

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[98] This is Chézy's paraphrase. Helmina von Chézy, *Leben und Kunst in Paris seit Napoelon I*, vol. 2 (Weimar: Verlag des Landes-Industrie-Comptoirs, 1806), 389.

[99] Ibid., 390.

[100] Ibid., 391-392.

had been given a sleeping tonic and had died shortly thereafter. “We will never forget her,” the guard assured Chézy. “How beautiful she was. How moving were her pleas. Her lovely figure and sensitive inner being made her fervor so fascinating.”[101]

It would be possible to write off the young woman's "sweet confusion," quite simply as confusion. Here was a disturbed woman doing a disturbed thing. Indeed, the story became a matter of pathological interest some years later, when it was picked up by *The Times of London* and featured under the headline, "Singular Insanity," in an article that ran, oddly enough, exactly ten years to the day after the statue's departure from Rome to Paris.[102] It was from *The Times*, in turn, that the English barrister George Dale Collinson heard of the tale, which he reprinted in his *Treatise on the Law concerning idiots, lunatics, and other persons non compotes mentis.*[103] To see the god in the marble became a symptom of mental illness, for which there could be legal accommodation.

The diagnosis does disservice, however, to the extent to which the anecdote found traction in Chézy’s thoughts. In her telling an invisible force transports the young woman, compelling her to worship not the statue of Apollo but the god. Here she is in good company. "I become oblivious to everything else as I look at this masterwork of art, and I myself take on an elevated stance, so as to be worthy of gazing at it. My chest seems to expand with veneration and to rise and heave, as happens with those I have seen who seem swollen with the spirit of prophecy…" wrote Winckelmann of his own Apollo Belvedere-induced transcendence sixty years earlier.[104] For Winckelmann the sculpture so embodied the ideal of art that it was transformative, turning under his gaze into a moving and sentient being. The encounter with the execution of this ideal is pygmalionesque, a bond so strong as to uplift statue and beholder, bringing the marble to life.[105] Emphasizing this resonance, Chézy inserted her own flight to Montmorency as a parallel to the encounter in the gallery, where the landscape came alive with the spirit of Rousseau: “Often in reading, I felt a cool, ghostly breeze on my cheek…as if from the beating of his spirit’s wings.”[106] There she found escape from Paris, “pleased with the victories of its noble warriors, and decorated with the treasures of antiquity.” The young woman of Provence is in Chézy’s telling a representation of aesthetic communion, which counters the “sad images of France’s misery”. It is an assertion of an artwork's capacity to step beyond the frameworks defined for it— to leap off the pedestal and, with its viewer in tow, into a realm of liberated imagination.

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[101] Ibid., 393.

[102] “Singular Insanity,” *The Times*, May 3, 1807.

[103] George Dale Collinson, *A Treatise on the Law concerning idiots, lunatics, and other persons non compotes mentis...: With an appendix, containing the statutes relating to lunatics, the practice on proceedings in lunacy, and a collection of lunatic petitions, with the orders of the Chancellor thereon*, 2 vols. (London: W. Reed, 1812).

[104] Johann Joachim Winckelmann, “Beschreibung des Apollo im Belvedere in der Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums,” in *Kleine Schriften, Vorreden, Entwürfe*, ed. Walther Rehm (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002), 267–268. Translation from Alex Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 127.

[105] Victor Ieronim Stoichita, *The Pygmalion Effect : from Ovid to Hitchcock* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 118.

[106] Chézy, *Leben und Kunst*, vol. 2, 390-91.

But this is not a story of the emancipatory potential of the viewer's step on to and the sculpture's step off of the pedestal, but of its follies. Chézy portrays for her German readership the young woman's encounter as an absolving retreat from the frictions of the political and social life of Paris through which the boundary between human and material environment could be dissolved.[107] Perhaps that could work in Montmorency. But in the Louvre the young woman's violently passionate exchange with the specter of Apollo ends in the inability of the statue to dissolve, despite her struggle for unity with it. Her appeals to her fellow visitors only served to further highlight the distinction between stone and spirit. "O! Let me drink up his reflection/ Dying in his gaze, I want to perish here," is a plea that remains unfulfilled.[108] This is a tragic story, in which the viewer does not come out on top, much less transcendent. In the perceptions of the young woman, the Apollo Belvedere is an overwhelming force, of such power that merely his gaze is lethal, that the god's representation can itself drown the beholder. In the perceptions of Chézy and her fellow onlookers, the decks are similarly stacked: try as she might, the woman's gestures are no match for the durability of the sculpture. No muslin veil could bring the marble to life. The young woman must die from her passion. No, this is not exactly the Pygmalion by which the eighteenth century sought to outline the limitlessness of man's creative talents, but a tragic reversal in which the human form was sacrificed to the stone one. The young woman's actions constituted a violation of the sculpture's intranscendable material integrity: too much God, not enough marble. While such exhortations might not rouse much objection as words on the page—in the writings of Winckelmann or Rousseau, for example—to enact them in the space of the gallery left the young woman in awkward (and fatal) violation of a statue that cannot hear her entreaties.

This account contains the "brilliant place" as a predicament of the experience of art in the museum in the most immediate sense, but also in the most exalted. Chézy, in witnessing an interaction that both embodied the ideal experience of art in the museum—an experience that transcended space and matter, if not reason—and embodied the impenetrable barrier of the object with material limits, emerged with a cautionary tale of what it meant to get the scales of the encounter with art wrong. Of all the proposals that we have seen across this chapter for how to assimilate the Louvre's universalist aspirations with its physical locations, and integrate its historical particularities with its ideal significance, Chézy and the young woman from Provence are perhaps its most daring articulators. Where others sought forms of reconciliation in the Louvre, this story leaves us with no hope.

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[107] On Chézy's avoidance of political stance, see Savoy's introduction in Helmina Chézy, *Leben Und Kunst in Paris Seit Napoleon I.*, ed. Bénédicte Savoy and Mara Bittner (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2009), xvi.

[108] Chézy, *Leben und Kunst*, vol. 2, 390.

Chapter 2 Illustrations

Fig. 2.1
Hubert Robert (1733-1808)
Le Project d'aménagement de la Grande Galerie du Louvre, 1796
1.15 m x 1.45 m
Musée du Louvre, Paris

Fig. 2.2
Gerrit Dou (1613-1675)
The Young Mother (1658)
74 cm x 56 cm
Mauritshuis

CHAPTER 3
To the Places Where They Were to be Found Previously: The Restoration of Prussian Art Collections, 1814-1815

Ewig werden sie ihm schweigen,
Nie von den Gestellen Steigen…

— Friedrich Schiller, *Die Antiken zu Paris*

On April 6, 1814 Johann August Sack, the newly installed Prussian governor of the Lower Rhine territories headquartered in Aachen, responded to a request from Berlin for an inventory of all cultural property that had been seized during the French occupation.[1] The modest list, compiled by the local archivist, included an unusual entry on behalf of the *Krönungskirche*, the cathedral built by the Holy Roman Emperor Charlemagne in the last decades of the 8th century:

32 marble columns
2 porphyr columns
2 granite columns

"[M]ay the city of Aachen, which is so renowned for its antiquities, have [these objects] restored to it, now that Paris has been occupied," Sack wrote to Prussian officials.[2] The columns in question were, indeed, among the most significant victims of the French incursions into the German lands over the past twenty years. In 1794 one of the commissioners charged with the despoliations of the Rhine territories, Charles DeWailly, had ordered their removal from the interior of Charlemagne's cathedral, and, most notoriously, from the area surrounding the emperor's tomb. It had been a feat neither easy nor cheap. Some of the columns, which were thought at the time to have been themselves ancient *spolia*— brought by Charlemagne to Aachen from Roman sites in Ravenna for the building's construction—were reportedly extracted through the cathedral's windows, while others were lifted through openings created especially for the

[1] The French lost control of their territories on the left Rhine bank in January 1814, and the Prussians took over administration of the lower Rhine region with Sack's arrival in Aachen in March. France formally ceded the region in the First Treaty of Paris in May 1814, but its governance would remain provisional until the territories north of the Moselle were officially annexed to Prussia in February 1815. For the history of this borderland region in the interregnum period between French and Prussian control see Franz-Ludwig Knemeyer, "Die Verwaltung in den einzelnen Staaten (ab 1803 bzw. 1815): Die Rheinbundstaaten bis 1814," in *Deutsche Verwaltungsgeschichte: Vom Reichsdeputationshauptschluß bis zur Auflösung des Deutschen Bundes*, vol. 2 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1983), 342-43; Michael Rowe, *From Reich to State: The Rhineland in the Revolutionary Age, 1780-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 213-243; Jeffry Diefendorf, *Businessmen and Politics in the Rhineland, 1789-1834* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 213-242.

[2] Sack to Hardenberg, 6 April 1814, Akten und Inventare der Plankammer, Nr. 149, fol. 61, SPSG.

purpose in the roof.[3] Their transportation to Paris had been an immense undertaking, requiring years and significant financial and labor resources.[4]

The seizure of the columns in 1794 had inspired little outcry beyond Aachen itself. However, the effort to reclaim them twenty years later, initiated by Sack's humble list, caught the undivided attention of German public opinion, becoming a cause célèbre for German nationalism for the next century, and a favorite fable about French cultural terrorism. This sudden interest in the Aachen columns was due in no small part to the fate of several of them once they arrived in Paris. In 1800, eight had been built into the antiquities galleries in the Louvre, where they separated the Salle des Hommes Illustres, the Salle des Saisons, and the Salle des Romains. [Fig. 3.1] Two more had been integrated into the Salle d'Apollon, where they flanked the Apollo Belvedere and sported smaller busts atop their capitals. [Fig. 3.2] The columns and their reclamation had become, quite literally, a load-bearing issue. When Prussian delegates in Paris sought their repatriation for the first time in 1815, they were met with outrage from the museum's director, Dominique-Vivant Denon, who insisted that if the columns were taken down the building would collapse. "[D]id you not also cause the vandalistic destruction of the church of Karl the Great through the removal of the columns and sarcophagus?" the Prussian delegate Eberhard von Groote protested. When the secretary general of the museum, Athanese Lavallée, retorted that "Oh, that was only a church! You wouldn't destroy as retribution the

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[3] There is some disagreement about how the columns left the cathedral. Bénédicte Savoy argues for the window exit in: Bénédicte Savoy, *Kunstraub: Napoleons Konfiszierungen in Deutschland und die europäischen Folgen* (Vienna: Bohlau, 2011), 48. Eduard Teichmann supports the roof exit thesis in: Eduard Teichmann, "Zur Geschichte der Säulen in der Aachener Liebfrauenkirche," *Zeitschrift des Aachener Geschichtsvereins* 28 (1906): 472. The columns are now recognized to be of various origin: some were ancient Roman or Byzantine, and some had bases and capitals built for them at the time of their installation in Aachen. The difficulty in uncovering the columns' provenance was significantly intensified by the French interventions into the cathedral structure and subsequent Prussian attempts at its renovation. See for example the complex discussions of this question in recent literature: Matthias Untermann, ""*opere mirabili constructa"*: Die Aachener 'Residenz' Karls des Großen," in *799: Kunst und Kultur der Karolingerzeit: Karl der Große und Papst Leo III in Paderborn*, ed. Christoph Steigemann and Matthias Wemhoff, vol. 3, *Beiträge zum Katalog der Austellung Paderborn* (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1999), 155-57; Gunther Binding, *Antike Säulen als Spolien in früh- und hoch-Mittelalterlichen Kirchen und Pfalzen— Materialspolie oder Bedeutungsträger?* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2007), 18-26; and Dale Kinney, "The Discourse of Columns," in *Rome Across Time and Space: Cultural Transmission and the Exchange of Ideas, c. 500-1400*, ed. Claudia Bolgia, Rosamond McKitterick, and John Osborne (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 198, esp. ff. 69.

[4] The first two of the columns arrived in Paris on 8 May 1795. Minutes of the meeting of the Conservatoire du Musée national des arts, 8 May 1795 are reprinted in Yveline Cantarel-Besson, *La naissance du musée du Louvre: La politique muséologique sous la Révolution d'après les archives des musées nationaux*, vol. 1 (Paris: Editions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1981), 171. It is unknown when the remaining ones arrived, but none were exhibited until 1800. Two were reportedly damaged en route and left as ruins in Lüttich. Karl Faymonville, *Die Kunstdenkmäler der Stadt Aachen: das Münster zu Aachen* (Düsseldorf: L. Schwann, 1916), 68.

house of the king!" von Groote was overcome: "a horrifying blood surged through my limbs, and I could have ripped the columns out right then…burying that miserable little man under the rubble of the falling ceiling."[5] The ever-strategic Denon responded by ignoring Groote's outrage and directly petitioning the Prussian king, Friedrich Wilhelm III, upon whom the appeal to monarchical interests worked well.[6] On August 23 Friedrich Wilhelm issued a decree that those columns supporting the museum would be left in place.[7]

The concession caused an uproar in the German press, and the columns quickly became a matter of national honor and of the king's betrayal of his public. For Aachen, a territory ceded to Prussia in the settlements of 1815, the issue seemed to many contemporary witnesses an important indication of royal good will and Prussian unity. "The only thing that the columns support is the royal word— and far more important than the columns is the certainty, that the royal word does not change," Johann Friedrich Benzenberg opined in the *Rheinische Merkur*.[8] The similarly dismayed Prussian authorities in Paris knew, however, that countering the king's decision, which was based on the contention that preventing the possible destruction of the building containing the shared inheritance of antiquity was the most important concern, could only follow through concretely debunking Denon's claims that the structural integrity of the Louvre was of greater value than the columns themselves. To achieve this required, not evacuating the columns of their profane value, as Benzenberg argued, but rather establishing their concreteness in specific terms: 'where were they?' 'what was their value?' and 'how extensively were they implicated in the architectural stability of the museum building?' became the focal questions of the delegates. Further, the king's decree had left open the possibility of reclaiming a number of columns not on display in the museum, and thus began an effort to positively locate those that had been in storage or put to other uses and arrange for their shipment back to Aachen.

One might think that determining the material status of 36 marble and granite columns would not be so difficult, as it had been, for example, for the elusively tiny and nameless coins or jewelry that had often slipped through the fingers of their custodians during the Kunstraub of 1806. Despite their imposing size, however, definitively locating and identifying the "32 marble columns; 2 porphyry columns; and 2 granite columns" of Sack's 1814 inventory proved a considerable challenge, such that even today historians give differing accounts of how many and what types have ended up where.[9] After conducting extensive research in Aachen Karl Freiherr

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[5] Eberhard von Groote, "Die Wegnahme der durch die Franzosen geraubten Kunstschätze in Paris, 1815," *Agrippina* 31 (10 March 1824): 122-123.

[6] Denon to Friedrich Wilhelm III, 21 August 1815, III. HA: Ministerium der auswärtigen Angelegenheiten, 2.04.1, III, Nr. 18451, f. 100, GStAPK.

[7] Friedrich Wilhelm III to Ribbentrop, 23 August 1815, III. HA: Ministerium der auswärtigen Angelegenheiten, 2.04.1, III, Nr. 18451, fol. 102, GStAPK.

[8] Johann Friedrich Benzenberg, "Aus Paris," *Der Rheinische Merkur* 2, no. 325 (6 November 1815): 1.

[9] As Lydia Konnegen points out, the material composition of the Aachen columns has been disputed since the early modern period because there were no existing records on this matter from the time of their construction, and it was not until the nineteenth century that their actual content could be known definitively. Lydia Konnegen, "'Zu Aach hab ich gesehen die […] seulen […] von porfit grün und rot" Die antiken Säulen des Aachener Domes und ihr Schicksal im 18. und 19. Jh.," *Das Münster* 60, no. 1 (2007): 41, 45.

vom Stein zum Altenstein, a key participant in the reclamation efforts of 1815, came up with a more definitive list than Sack's from which a claim could more assertively proceed:

a. 19 of granitello from Elba
b. 4 of blue antique marble
c. 2 of grey Egyptian
d. 2 of green porphyry
e. 2 of red Egyptian granite
f. 7 of differently colored marble[10]

Eight of the Elban granitello columns, which were historically more significant that the others, Altenstein identified as being those employed as supports for the ceiling of the galleries in the antiquities museum, two were ornamentally placed at the entrance to the museum, and two of the red egyptian granite columns flanked the Apollo. A month later, however, Altenstein's further research had yielded new results. An updated list was revised to include 38 columns rather than 36, and new totals for each material:

1. 19 of grey Egyptian granite with ancient capitals
2. 2 of oriental rose granite, 12'2" high
3. 1 of green antique
4. 6 of blue antique
5. 5 white
6. 1 of Istrian stone
7. 2 of very rare green porphyry
8. 2 of grey Egyptian granite[11]

Unsurprisingly, competing and starkly different totals swirled through the incensed press coverage of the saga. However, though the incensed assertion of the *National-Zeitung der Deutschen* that of the "40 beautiful granite columns" from Aachen, "ten were used to adorn the throne of the robber of nations in the Tuilleries, and the other thirty as supports for the roof of the Paris Museum," might mobilize public opinion, the problem of counting columns posed a real hurdle.[12] First, given, as Altenstein termed it, "the purposeful obfuscation of the state of the matter by Denon," the ability to affirmatively name and identify the columns hidden in storage as the proper property of Aachen was the only possibility for securing their return. Second, Altenstein sought to prove to the king through an explication of the columns' material worth and thereby their historical value that their return was worth pursuing. Eventually, the pedantic

[10] Altenstein to Friedrich Wilhelm III, 14 October 1815, III. HA: Ministerium der auswärtigen Angelegenheiten, 2.04.1, III, Nr. 18451, fol. 96, GStAPK.

[11] Altenstein to Hardenberg, 15 November 1815, III. HA: Ministerium der auswärtigen Angelegenheiten, 2.04.1, III, Nr. 18451, fol. 139, GStAPK.

[12] "Künste und Wissenschaft: Paris," *National-Zeitung der Deutschen* 40 (4 October 1815): 811-812.

persistence of the Prussian delegates paid off, and by November 1815 28 columns extracted from the Louvre and its storage rooms were on their way back to Aachen.[13]

The difficulty of the columns' restoration to Aachen, however, did not end with their return to the former imperial city. "The…[columns] came back to Aachen in 1815, from which they should have never been removed. And now they lay around there in different locations, damaged and unappreciated, and it does not appear that the cathedral will ever get its ornamentation of columns back again," despaired a writer in the *Allgemeine Bauzeitung* in 1840.[14] The ecclesiastical governance of the region was in complete disarray, and there were simply not enough funds nor power in the community to undertake a thorough restoration of the church. The columns sat around for nearly thirty years until 1843 when, with support from the Prussian government and in particular from the romantic-leaning new monarch, Friedrich Wilhelm IV, the reclaimed columns were reintegrated into the cathedral. However, because little information was available with which to match the columns of 1843 to their pre- 1794 locations, and because many had been broken or eroded during their travails in the previous decades, their installation was only a partial restoration, and architects had to include modern columns and capitals where original elements had been lost or were no longer able to fit into the cathedral structure.[15] Because of their protected status ensured by Friedrich Wilhelm III, the columns built into the Louvre remain there to this day.

The questions that the Prussian delegates to Paris confronted in this task are also the questions of the following chapter on the reclamation of art objects at the end of the Napoleonic regime. The primary question— how to get the seized art back— subsumed two even thornier definitional questions: which seized art; and which 'back'. That is, what were the objects that needed to be reclaimed, and to whom should they be returned? On the one hand, these were prosaic logistical matters involving the challenges of often unreliable infrastructures for identifying, transporting, tracking, and taking possession of objects in the volatile years of 1814–1815. However, as I have argued throughout, the mundane contingencies of the management of art objects must not be relegated to a peripheral zone of haphazardness. In the material travails of the reclamations, Prussian officials confronted an issue that was central to their self-proclaimed commitment to, as Friedrich Wilhelm put it in his assurance to Denon regarding the columns, "national honor, and the interest…in the progress of the arts within my states, [that] have driven me to demand back all that which was seized by the force of arms."[16] They faced the limits of the state's capacity to control the material objects of culture, which they felt, especially since their

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[13] Hardenberg to Altenstein, 19 November 1815, III. HA: Ministerium der auswärtigen Angelegenheiten, 2.04.1, III, Nr. 18451, fol. 144, GStAPK. Konnegen claims only 25 columns were sent back to Aachen. The discrepancy may have at least in part something to do with two columns from Cologne that were reclaimed along with the Aachen columns that may have been factored into the totals by Hardenberg. Konnegen, "Zu Aach…," 44.

[14] Franz Mertens, "Über die Karolingische Kaiser-Kapelle zu Aachen," *Allgemeine Bauzeitung* 5 (1840): 136.

[15] Konnegen, "Zu Aach…," 44-49. On the restoration in the nineteenth century see Jenny H. Shaffer, "Restoring Charlemagne's Chapel: Historical Consciousness, Material Culture, and Transforming Images of Aachen in the 1840s," *Journal of Art Historiography* 7 (December, 2012).

[16] Friedrich Wilhelm III to Denon, 23 August 1815, III. HA: Ministerium der auswärtigen Angelegenheiten, 2.04.1, III, Nr. 18451, fol. 103, GStAPK.

loss in the previous decades, to be increasingly integral to this state's sense of national identity and legitimacy. The objects caught up in the reclamations— stuck in museums, lost in storage, unwieldy and fragile to transport, tricky to reinstall— exhibited confoundingly ambiguous identities and an ability to evade the best efforts of administrators to secure their positions within this transitional period.

I have begun this chapter with the story of the Aachen columns because it offers an irresistible allegory for the symbolic stakes of the Prussian reclamations of art at the end of the Napoleonic era more generally. It is quite an image: the ancient Roman columns, installed in Aachen by the first imperial conqueror to unite western Europe and then extracted and reinstalled by the next imperial conqueror to unify western Europe in an institution meant to be the cultural expression of that unification, were now the targets of a new extraction and reinstallation through which the sovereignty of a newly victorious state could be concretized on the ruins of a newly defeated one. In 1814 the columns contained a palimpsest of trophies that trumped even the layers of meaning on the Béranger vase of Sèvres: a trophy of a trophy *of a trophy*. Because of their stature in this regard the Aachen columns appear larger than life—grandiose symbols that echo through the ages, unequivocal in their allegorical performance of imperial hegemony. However, the story of the columns' reclamation also serves as a kind of anti-allegory: that is, a story about the limitations of understanding the post-Napoleonic settlements and their effect on German cultural practice in allegorical terms. Quite apart from the concerns of an artwork's symbolic meaning, it was the difficulty of managing art objects— of counting, extracting, moving, and containing them—that defined their cultural political significance in this period.

Napoleon's defeat and the triumphant Prussian arrival in Paris in 1814 and 1815 was a moment laden with symbolic promise for the reassertion of German political and cultural power. It was a moment to put into action many of the visions I have discussed in this dissertation thus far—in the critical commentary on the Kunstraub, in the ideals of aesthetic engagement that developed around the Louvre, and in the cultural-political planning of the reform era—about the appropriate relationship between art and the state which the Revolutionary and Napoleonic periods had distorted. However, despite the symbolic amplification of the artworks caught up in these despoliations and their aftermath, during their French tenure these works had also become like the Aachen columns: imbricated in material situations that limited the possibility of their restoration to original places and original significances. Not all objects were so evocatively built into the topography of the French state as the Aachen columns, and not all were so literally changed by their experiences there that they could not be reinserted into their previous niches in their previous spaces. Many, however, were un-catalogued, untraceable, un-transportable, of contested provenance, and of uncertain future ownership. The complex negotiations that consumed Prussian authorities and cultural administrators charged with rolling back the clock on cultural objects involved a struggle with the issue of whether a 'restoration' of art was possible given the dramatically changed political, administrative, and cultural landscape of central Europe. The project of inserting objects back into a certain domain of meaning— one that had grown large in their absence— faltered on the material contingencies of art and its management. They could not be restored; they had to be reinvented.

This chapter is in three sections. The first investigates an early Prussian experience of the difficulties that would be involved in reclaiming art collections through the Academy of Art's first attempt to secure plaster cast models from the Louvre as indemnity for the loss of Prussian collections. In this effort, Academy members realized the ways in which the infrastructures of the museum, built to promote the visibility of its collections beyond Paris, would become an

impediment to, rather than a facilitator of, the replacement of confiscated artworks. The second section tells of the Prussian delegates in Paris from 1814-1815, who were charged with locating lost objects and extracting them from French museums and repositories. Here I argue that the success of reclaiming art hinged on the ability of the delegates to make their documentation of lost collections correspond to the physical objects themselves—to make the inventory bear upon reality—in an environment of uncertain cooperation, a paucity of documentation, and rampant misunderstanding. The third section looks at the problem of reinstalling objects into their pre-war settings through two case studies of looted church property. Unlike the works in the royal collections whose ownership and destination after their repatriation was mostly clear, religious objects, reclaimed by Prussian officials on behalf of since-secularized religious institutions under uncertain administrative structures after 1814, were met with the question of where they should go and who should take care of them. While state actors showed a commitment to returning objects to their original environments rather than integrating them into a centralized national collection in Berlin, they were met with competing and contested claims of ownership at the local level.

The Bankrupt Sculptor: Replacements for the Lost Collections of the Academy of Science

We have seen in the last two chapters how the Kunstraub took place in the context of and in some cases through the networks for the exchange of knowledge and artifacts that had been built up between European communities of learning over decades and centuries. When Denon came to Berlin in 1806 he was received as a fellow intellectual; the display of Prussian artifacts in Paris was recognized by many to advance their scholarly prestige and possibilities; many significant German scholars took up residence in Paris to work in French collections and collaborate with French colleagues. The persistence of these academic networks in the Napoleonic period explains the astonishing speed and optimism with which Prussians began to consider how to get their lost collections back. The stolen objects from Berlin's Kunstkammer had barely arrived in Paris when their governing body, the Academy of Sciences in Berlin, began to pursue their return, emphasizing its status as an institution of public learning. These were not enemy rulers, but members in the trans-European community of scholars investigating the same questions and striving towards the same goals. By reclaiming objects the Academy was also arguing for its continued relevance to and participation in these networks.

Opinions were divided, however, on what kind of return to secure. Since it had come under the supervision of the Academy in 1786, and in particular under the leadership of Jean Henry, the Kunstkammer had become a centralized and accessible repository for the royal art collections, and it was deeply embedded in the intellectual life of the city.[17] Given its significance, Henry advocated for an outright reclamation. Perhaps, he hoped, since the despoliations had transpired during a state of war since concluded, Prussian diplomats might be able to plea their repatriation under the terms of the newly reached peace in Tilsit, and they could remind French officials for extra measure that the Kunstkammer belonged to an organization

[17] The first detailed history of the Kunstkammer and evidence of its early importance to Berlin's intellectual elite is to be found in Leopold von Ledebur, *Geschichte der Königlichen Kunstkammer in Berlin* (Berlin: E.S. Mittler, 1831). The most recent account is in Eva Giloi, *Monarchy, Myth, and Material Culture in Germany 1750-1950* (Cambridge University Press, 2011).

devoted to public education and scholarly inquiry and not directly to the court.[18] The leadership of the Academy had insisted for their part that the lost collections be appraised in order to seek monetary reimbursement, a strategy of reparations rather than a restoration. Compiling an accurate appraisal was, however, a challenging task. "We are unanimous in the position that it is impossible to…appraise artworks according to a monetary value that are one of a kind, invaluable, and for which one could demand any arbitrary price," wrote Henry of his work together with Aloys Hirt to provide the Academy with a definite number they could use in their negotiations.[19] Impossibility aside, Henry and Hirt proposed a sum of 68,800 rthlr, which was later amended to include another 1530 rthlr worth of objects that were only discovered missing in January 1808.[20]

Hirt favored neither proposal. Instead, he argued that the Academy should follow up on a promise Denon had made during his stay in Berlin the year before to send plaster casts of the Louvre's collections as a form of indemnity for the lost Prussian objects. With casts and imprints the Academy would acquire a resource "of invaluable worth and utility for the entire land," wrote Hirt, emphasizing that the casts would mitigate the pain of the loss in that they would expand rather than contract the possibility for a collection of value to "daily study".[21] In the end, the director of the Academy Friedrich von Castillon was swayed by the plaster cast proposal because it seemed the most probable to yield results.[22] In November the Academy of Arts sent an official proposal to both Napoleon and the acting governor of occupied Berlin, Henri-Jacques-Guillaume Clarke, requesting "a collection of plaster casts of the celebrated antiquities that can be found at present in Paris. This collection would serve to hone the taste of our students, and would replace, in some fashion, the masterpieces of which we have been deprived."[23] Henry reluctantly supported the plan, emphasizing that a plaster collection would only be useful if it provided a comprehensive inventory of the Louvre's best works. As a fragment it would have no worth.[24]

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[18] Jean Henry to Akademie der Künste, 25 August 1807, Historische Abteilung, PAW I-XV: 9, fol. 15, AdW.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Jean Henry to Akademie der Wissenschaften, 18 January 1808, Historische Abteilung, PAW I-XV: 9, fol. 78, AdW.

[21] Aloys Hirt, report to AdW, 29 August 1807, Historische Abteilung, PAW I-XV: 9, fol. 17, AdW.

[22] Castillon may have been persuaded of the impossibility of a reclamation of the objects themselves by the case of Cologne, which had attempted in vain to secure their revered Rubens, *The Crucifixion of St. Peter* in 1802, arguing that with its return Cologne could open a museum of art to the benefit of the already significant arts community there. The government in Paris responded that while they would indeed authorize the construction of a museum of arts in Cologne, it would have to be paid for by the city treasury, and would have to forgo the Rubens among its collections. See Norberto Gramaccini, "Rubens' *Petrus-Martyrium* im Exil," in *Lust und Verlust: Kölner Sammler zwischen Trikolore und Preußenadler*, ed. Hiltrud Kier and Frank Günter Zehnder (Cologne: Wienand, 1995), 87-88.

[23] AdK to Napoleon, 22 November 1807, I. HA, Rep. 76 alt Ältere Oberbehörden für Wissenschaft, Kunst, Kirchen- und Schulsachen, III Nr. 251, fol. 3, GStAPK.

[24] Jean Henry to AdW, 28 January 1807, Historische Abteilung, PAW I-XV: 9, fol. 94, AdW.

In their request, the Academy members hoped to take advantage of one of the most significant contributions of the Louvre to the study and appreciation of art in Europe: its interest in the publicity and visibility of its collections through their reproduction. The proliferation of scholarship, descriptions, casts, and engravings inspired by the exhibitions in the Palais de Louvre drew the possibilities for encountering art beyond the museum and into books, journals, catalogues, plaster cast collections, and academies of arts around Europe. 'Masterpiece of the month clubs' offered serialized reproductions of works for readers, some of which imitated the order of works in the galleries through the grouping of etchings, or in complete renderings of the paintings hanging on the walls.[25] A centerpiece of the Louvre's propagation of information about its collections was its plaster cast workshop, the Atelier du moulage. It was founded in 1794 and quickly became an important tool for the promotion and distribution of plaster casts of the Louvre's holdings abroad, sending collections to artist academies, including to the Hague and to Philadelphia.[26] The circulation of casts from classical antiquities for the courts of Europe had been a feature of the artistic economy since the sixteenth century, however the arrival of European collections in Paris during the Kunstraub marked for many objects a first opportunity at reproduction.[27] Nearly all of the antiquities from Prussian collections in Paris were depicted at least once in engravings, and plaster casts were made of at least five.[28] To reclaim plasters rather than originals was not only a conservative strategy but an engagement with the kinds of circulation of artistic knowledge that the Louvre had supported.

Indeed, the Academy's request continued an active interest in adding to their already existing collection of plaster casts, understood to be a crucial tool for the study of antiquity in the present.[29] The encyclopedist Johann Georg Sulzer had praised plaster as the cheapest of the

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[25] See Jane Van Nimmen, "Responses to Raphael's Paintings at the Louvre 1798-1848" (Phd diss., University of Maryland, 1986), 128. These included publications by Charles Landon, François Emmanuel Toulongeon, Antoine Michel Filhol, Robillard Peronville and Pierre Laurent. I have not been able to identify similar works in German. One particularly ambitious project initiated by the artist Maria Cosway and entrepreneur Jules Griffiths involved printed reproductions of the paintings in the galleries of the Louvre with which subscribers could decorate their homes according to the same hang as in the actual museum. See Van Nimmen, 127; Francis Haskell, *The Ephemeral Museum: Old Master Paintings and the Rise of the Art Exhibition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 44; Digital reproductions of the 1802 prospectus available in the digital library of the Fondazione Cosway Maria, Lodi: http://www.lombardiabeniculturali.it/ricerca/?q=cosway+griffiths; On the engravings of seized artworks in Paris more generally, see also Savoy, *Kunstraub*, 343-345.

[26] Florence Rionnet, *L'atelier de moulage du Musée du Louvre (1794-1928)* (Paris: Réunoin des musées nationaux, 1996).

[27] Francesco Primaticcio's bronze casts of the most celebrated Roman sculptures for François I around 1543 prompted Vasari to proclaim that Rome had nearly been superseded by Fontainebleau, an early iteration of the argument of Paris as the new Rome familiar from the Napoleonic *Kunstraub*. See Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture, 1500-1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 5.

[28] Savoy, *Kunstraub*, 367-68.

[29] The Academy, which had lost its original set of plaster casts in a fire in 1743, had by 1807 recently made significant acquisitions to the collection through the purchase of the Lütke collection in 1801. See Claudia Sedlarz, "Incorporating Antiquity: The Berlin Academy of Arts'

reproductive media for sculpture in his *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste* in 1771, comprable in significance to book printing. “Through casts the cabinets in which the noblest works of fine arts have been shut in can be pushed away, and Rome can exist in all countries alike,” he wrote thirty years before the new Rome was being proclaimed on the banks of the Seine.[30] Further adding to the popularity of the cast was the fact that by the late eighteenth century, artists and scholars had become familiar with the fact that most extant ancient sculptures were in fact Roman copies of Greek originals. The notion of the copy as inferior or less authentic had only just begun to take hold, and sporadically at that.[31] Ennio Quirino Visconti, former cataloguer of the Museo Pio-Clementino and the director of the antiquities galleries in the Louvre since 1799, had created a stir in Rome with his assertion that the famed Discobolus excavated in 1781 on the Villa Palombara on the Esquiline Hill was a copy, but had in subsequent work argued for a middle ground in which copying be understood as constitutive to the spirit of Greek art: “It moved the earliest artists to copy nature: that same spirit led those who followed these artists to copy both nature and art.”[32] The discovery of copying as indigenous to the classical world underscored its relevance as a contemporary artistic practice in some circles.[33] Hirt, who would become the chief advocate for public collections to serve arts education in post-Napoleonic Prussia, saw in plaster the ideal medium for a double restoration. Such a collection would count as a quasi-return of the Academy's sculpture and coin collections, and it would also

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Plaster Cast Collection,” in *Plaster Casts: Making, Collecting and Displaying from Classical Antiquity to the Present*, eds. Rune Fredericksen, Eckart Marchand (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 2010), 197-228.

[30] Johann Georg Sulzer, *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Weidemann, 1771), 4. Bettina Uppenkamp writes that plaster’s cheapness and efficiency for the reproduction of valuable classical sculpture also made it a perfect for the representation of the position that no material could be endowed with the true ideal beauty of the original: “Where the material of a work of art was of no matter to its expressive power, the material composition of cheap plaster was not a problem. The qualities of the material were, in fact, an advantage, because, in contrast to the inconsistent colors of marble, or the shine of bronze, it did not threaten to distract from the individuality of the work.” Bettina Uppenkamp, “Gips,” in *Lexikon des künstlerischen Materials: Werkstoffe der modernen Kunst von Abfall bis Zinn* ed. Monika Wagner, Dietmar Rübel, Sebastian Hackenschmidt (Munich: C.H. Beck Verlag, 2010), 109.

[31] On the evolution of the emergence of a qualitative difference in the authority of reproductions over originals in western art historical thinking, see Marcello Barbanera, “Original und Kopie: Aufstieg und Neidergang eines intellektuellen Begriffspaares seit dem 18. Jahrhundert in der klassischen Archäologie,” in *Original und Kopie: Formen und Konzepte der Nachahmungen in der antiken Kunst*, ed. Klaus Junker, Adrian Stähli, and Christian Kunze (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2008), 35-61. Barbanera puts Jonathan Richardson Sr and Jr. at the beginning of this development, with the French publication in 1728 of their report on a trip to Italy, *Description de divers fameaux desseins, statues, bustes, basreliefs &*.

[32] Visconti (1807) in Barbanera, “Original und Kopie,” 51.

[33] Claudia Sedlarz writes that academic plaster cast collections in Berlin at the end of the eighteenth century "had not only the function of exemplifying the canon in drawing lessons, but also acquired an aesthetic function as the embodiment of antiquity...Casts functioned as a kind of umbilical cord, connecting Berlin to Rome and the present to the past." Claudia Sedlarz, "Incorporating Antiquity,” 208.

embody the reconstruction of the classical ideal for the benefit of students of fine arts.[34] Winckelmann's famous imperative—"The only way for us to become great, or, should it even be possible, to become inimitable, is to imitate the ancients"— was given new promise through the possibilities for the circulation and expansion of ancient models.[35]

Though this early effort at reclamation showed some Prussian faith in the scholarly good will between French and German institutions of learning, and certainly optimism about the power of reproduction to draw possibilities for the study of art beyond the location of the original object, it eventually became a powerful lesson in the follies of such beliefs. The French authorities were initially amenable to the Academy's requests, granting 10,161 francs worth of casts from the collections of antiquities in the Louvre and the coin and medal collection of the Bibliothèque impériale, including the costs of packing and customs.[36] But as the weeks passed, the Academy realized that even the medium of plaster— designed especially for the circulation and dispersal of art amongst and between European centers of learning— would pose its own problems. Denon, reportedly having anticipated the emperor's concession, had already had a set of casts made to send to Berlin, and was unwilling to accept requests for specific works from Academy members, relayed to him primarily by Alexander von Humboldt.[37] "It might have been wished that the General Director Denon had rushed less…and that it had occurred to him to ask the Academy which pieces would it actually desire to acquire. But, as our trusted colleague [Humboldt] reports, Denon does not like for people to meddle in his affairs," a furious Aloys Hirt wrote to the leadership of the Academy.[38]

As it was, the inventory of casts packaged for shipment to Berlin included many undesirable works which Hirt found to be unsatisfactory. Some were pieces the Academy already owned; others were modeled after modern copies rather than ancient originals; there were five copies of an ordinary and widely available anatomical model; also included were a large quantity of miscellaneous limbs and body parts, some from sculptures already in the plaster collection as complete models, and some formed from actual body parts. "It seems," Hirt fumed, "that Mr. Denon simply bought up some old junk shop, or the hovel of an impoverished plaster cast maker, or the studio of a bankrupt sculptor, in order to grace the Academy with the beneficence of the

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[34] Beat Wyss, "Klassizismus und Geschichtsphilosophie im Konflikt: Aloys Hirt und Hegel," in *Kunsterfahrung und Kulturpolitik im Berlin Hegels*, ed. Otto Pöggeler and Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1983), 122.

[35] Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Gedanken ueber die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerey und Bildhauerkunst* (Dresden, Leipzig: Walther, 1756), 3.

[36] Denon even echoed Hirt's sentiments in a response to a preliminary inquiry about a restitution of plaster casts. Denon to l'intendant général, 17 November 1807, in *Vivant Denon, Directeur des musées sous le consulat et l'empire: Correspondance (1802-1815)*, ed. Marie-Anne Dupuy, Isabelle le Masne de Chermont, Elaine Williamson (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1999), 1:460.

[37] Hirt had suggested that Humboldt act as the representative of the Academy's interests in Paris, as he was called upon to do throughout this period. Aloys Hirt to AdW, 14 January 1808, Historische Abteilung, PAW I-XV: 9, AdW. The questions about his allegiance to these interests, given his close ties to the French intellectual community, were repeatedly in doubt, as we will see later in this chapter. Savoy, *Kunstraub*, 154.

[38] Aloys Hirt to AdW, 30 March 1808, Historische Abteilung, PAW I-XV: 8a, fol. 20, AdW.

Musée Napoleon."[39] The collection was hardly worth the cost of transportation, he bemoaned, appending a list of the items that were actually desired to his report.[40] It was, however, too late for amendments to be made, since Denon had the casts boxed up and sealed before Humboldt could intervene.[41] Deciding that they were not worth shipping, the Academy had them stored in Paris until a cheaper solution could be found.

A year later the 40 cases of plaster miscellany were still in Paris, and the rent for their storage on the property of a Monsieur Karcher, rue de la Michodière no. 24, was adding up.[42] Faced with the prospect of declaring the reclamation a total loss, either through continuing to pay rent for the casts in Paris or paying for their shipment to Berlin, the Academy began a renewed effort to obtain a useful collection of casts from the antiquities galleries of the Louvre. Working through official Prussian diplomatic channels, they abandoned their reliance on Humboldt's personal relationship with Denon, and sought instead to obtain a copy of Napoleon's decree, guaranteeing that they would receive copies of all the antiquities in the museum's collections.[43] By presenting French authorities with evidence of the emperor's promise, the Academy hoped to force Denon to exchange the unwanted casts languishing expensively in storage for objects of use.[44] However, diplomatic channels failed to produce evidence of such a decree, and the matter remained unresolved.[45] After the fall of the Napoleonic regime in 1814, Prussian agents entered Paris to begin the restitution of their confiscated collections, and found themselves three and a half years behind on rent to the younger Mr. Karcher, the elder having died in the interim.[46] After opening the cases to ensure that the plaster had not "turned into junk" during its six-year residence in storage, the delegates repackaged the works in linen and sent them finally along their way to Berlin by sea.[47] Despite a mishap with the ship on the way from Rouen to Hamburg, the boxes finally arrived in 1815, and were installed in the Monbijou Palace, due to lack of space

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[39] Ibid.

[40] Aloys Hirt to AdW, 30 March 1808, Historische Abteilung, PAW I-XV: 8a, fol. 22, AdW.

[41] Alexander von Humboldt to AdW, 10 March 1808, Historische Abteilung, PAW I-XV: 8a, fol. 26, AdW.

[42] AdW, c. May 1809, Historische Abteilung, PAW I-XV: 8a, fol. 52, AdW; Uhden to Königsberg, 18 April 1809, I. HA, Rep. 76 Ve Kultusministerium, Sekt. 15, Abt. XI: 16 Bd. 1, fol. 1, GStAPK.

[43] Unsigned letter to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, c. 18 April 1809, I. HA, Rep. 76 Ve Kultusministerium, Sekt. 15, Abt. XI: 16 Bd. 1, fol. 3, GStAPK.

[44] Wilhelm von Humboldt to Karl Friedrich Heinrich von der Goltz, 9 May 1809, III. HA, 2.04.1, III, 18417, GStAPK.

[45] Unsigned letter to Sektion, 16 September 1809, I. HA, Rep. 76 Ve Kultusministerium, Sekt. 15, Abt. XI: 16 Bd. 1, fol. 18, GStAPK.

[46] Boehm to Section for Culture, I. HA, Rep. 76 Ve Kultusministerium, Sekt. 15, Abt. XI: 16 Bd. 2, fol. 1, GStAPK.

[47] Poignantly, one of these delegates to deal with the aftermath of the plaster fiasco was Jean Henry, who quipped in his diary that the "sublime idea" for the casts "had come originally from Hirt, without whom we could have already obtained from [governor] Clarke an indemnity in currency, sixty or seventy million écus." Jean Henry, *Journal d'un voyage à Paris en 1814* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), 42. Bussler and Henry, Pro Memoria, 22 May 1814, III.HA 2.04.1, III, 18449, GStAPK.

at the Academy.[48] While Prussian cultural authorities remained committed to maintaining and expanding their plaster casts even after the debacle, the objects' homecoming was an awkward triumph. The place of casts in the study and appreciation of art, and especially their value relative to original objects would become one of the most highly contested subjects in the design of a public museum of art in Berlin after 1815.

What had started out a decade earlier as an effort to find replacements for the lost originals of the Academy collections ended up as a lesson in the impossibility of the very act of transfer that a plaster cast was intended to facilitate. Amidst the difficulties of communicating needs and managing objects over distance and in tense political circumstances the reproduction of classical sculpture seemed less like a means through which the collections of a single institution could be made globally present and more a replication of the tragic fragility and limitations of artworks themselves: liable to loss, degradation, and ultimately dependent on the competence of local actors.[49] The Academy was indeed operating under rather delicate circumstances. Clearly anxious not to upset Denon, perhaps for fear of further retaliatory raids on the Prussian collections, they did not complain about the unwanted casts in 1808, and while wringing their hands during meetings in Berlin, expressed their formal thanks to Denon in such a manner that the humbled museum director responded that, "I am accustomed to such sentiments of benevolence from this illustrious body, and I will never forget the friendly welcome each of its members showed me during my stay in Berlin."[50]

And yet, while the failure of the plaster cast mission might be in some ways be a virtue of the political circumstances of 1807-1808, many of its features foretold the challenges of the reclamation efforts that would follow the collapse of the Napoleonic regime in 1814 when Prussians had their first opportunity to take back their stolen collections outright. Here too the infrastructure meant to facilitate the distribution of artistic knowledge, and to enable art objects to become more manageable in the process— inventories, catalogues, reproductions, even museum institutions themselves— became instead in the tense political environment during the Congress of Vienna impediments to positive identification and repossession. On the eve of what historians know commonly as a period of restoration, the very means by which things could be restored to their previous places and given back their previous meanings were in doubt.

The Object in the Inventory: Cataloguing and Reclaiming Art in Paris 1814-1815

In 1814 Karl August Böttiger had left Weimar for Dresden, where he had become the director of the gallery of antiquities. In one of his regularly held lectures delivered in the entry hall of the museum, he articulated a pygmalionesque fantasy, re-keyed for the unique problems of the period of reclamations. Imagine, Böttiger bade his listeners, that the entire collection of statues "here in these halls" should come to life:

> "And now if all of these statues could actually move and acquire tongues and could tell us where they last stood and for which temple deity, which garden palace, which columned hall, which ring or bath they were originally intended, what all would they

[48] Schadow to Uhden, 4 December 1814, I. HA, Rep. 76 Ve Kultusministerium, Sekt. 15, Abt. XI: 16 Bd. 2, fol. 20, GStAPK.

[49] The global reach of the Louvre as a matter of theory and practice is covered in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. The tragic dependence of the object is covered in Chapter 1.

[50] Denon to Lombard on behalf of the AdW, 3 May 1808, in *Vivant Denon*, 1:508.

> have to say to us! [...] How confined is their imprisonment in these regions, where all study of art is made into a mere exotic conservatory flower! And what could they then say, these speaking marbles, apart from exhaling a bitter complaint?"[51]

Böttiger's vision reflected his own critical stance on the museum projects of his age, and particularly the Louvre, which sought to strip art objects of their contexts and associations in service of a purified aesthetic ideal. To imagine statues come to life in order to speak of their origins was to wish them out of the bland serenity of the museum walls and into an environment where they could derive utility and meaning. This was the overarching goal of the Prussian reclamations, driven by the premise that the objects' return would reinvest them with life, as we will see in Chapter 4. The museum's alienation of objects from their surroundings was also quite literally the challenge that met the Prussian delegates in Paris who sought the return of looted art. Particularly for the art not on display, they were confronted with objects torn away from all the markers that might have previously identified them— inventories, churches, individuals familiar with their specific histories. A statue come alive to speak of whence it came was truly a dream.

As it was, the German reclamations of objects looted in the previous twenty years began in the beginning of 1814 with a cataloguing project. Before definitive claims could be made against the French government, authorities needed to know what was missing. On January 11 Francis I of Austria was the first to call on his subjects to complete an inventory of all lost objects; by February 10 the *Berlinische Nachrichten* could report that the effort had been completed and the document submitted.[52] In February the Munich librarian Johann Baptist Bernhart sent an inventory to Bavarian delegates in Paris. In the same month in Berlin the historian Friedrich Rabe composed an extensive inventory of the Prussian collections, based upon information collected in 1809 during the investigation of local complicity in the *Kunstraub* in Berlin and Potsdam. In April of 1814 the provisional governments in the former kingdom of Westphalia and the Rhine territories asked local authorities to submit lists of property to be included in the Prussian reclamations.[53] In addition to official inventories, newspapers also aided the effort to circulate and collect information about lost or missing objects, most notably the *Rheinische Merkur*, which printed a report by the Cologne collector Ferdinand Franz Wallraf indicating the ways in which the press could publicize the reclamations, "so that Arminius' sons will forever know what they have to expect from their friendly neighbors as soon as they begin the old game: *Divide et Impera*."[54]

What started off as a fairly ordinary and expected bureaucratic task soon became an exercise in the limitations of the inventory as a decisive and effective tool for securing the return of collections. For major works of art with recognized and internationally agreed upon authors,

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[51] Karl August Böttiger, "Ueber die Dresdener Antiken Galerie" in *C.A. Böttiger's kleine Schriften archäologischen und antiquarischen Inhalts*, ed. Julius Sillig, vol. 2 (Dresden, Leipzig: Arnoldische Buchhandlung, 1838), 25-26.

[52] Savoy, *Kunstraub*, 161.

[53] Sack to Hardenberg, 6 April 1814, Akten und Inventare der Plankammer, Nr. 149, fol. 61, SPGS; Klewitz to Immediat Magistrat, 16 April 1814, I. HA, Rep. 91C: Militär- und Zivilgouvernment für das Land zwischen Weser und Elbe zu Halle bzw. Halberstadt, Nr. 1978, GStAPK.

[54] "Uebersicht der neuesten Zeitereignissen," *Der Rheinische Merkur* 48 (27 April 1814).

subjects, and origins, the task was less complex. But for the vast majority of items in question, whose art historical provenance was disputed or whose subject matter was generic or which had no precise name or distinguishing features or which had never before been catalogued either in Paris or in the collection of origin, a line in an inventory was a tantalizingly orderly but ultimately wishful stab at identification. Rabe's Prussian inventory gives an intimation of the problem in its exhaustive naming and renaming of each item it describes. Nearly all the works were explicated in as much detail as possible, with references to other catalogues, dimensions of the object, and exact indications of its subjects, often including competing identifications. For example:

> "In the garden of Sanssouci, near the so called Schwimmbrücke, a bust of the Duke of Braciano done according to the original by Bernini by Paul Jordans II, of red porphyry marble, 26" high, with a postament in the figure of a column, with foot and capital made of carrara marble, 6' high made of the same material, described in Oesterreich as 173, and probably as number 279 in the French catalogue, where it is taken for an image of the Duke of Alba."[55]

Here Rabe could include twelve distinct references to help indicate *which* bust of an Italian duke the Prussians sought in return. For the "Wedgewood vase" from Sanssouci, or the unsigned portrait of Maria Theresa from the Neues Palais, or the "5 paintings of unknown masters," or the bust of Castor and Pollux— "perhaps no. 55 in the French catalogue"— or the 3 paintings with "false designations" from the Gallery of Paintings, Rabe could only hope that someone somewhere would know what he was talking about.

Where local officials and residents might draw up accurate and exhaustive lists wherever possible, the true challenge was in connecting each entry in each inventory to an actual object. While the swift move to reverse the Kunstraub in the wake of Napoleon's collapse was a powerful symbolic gesture on behalf of "Arminius' sons," as the *Rheinische Merkur* had put it, the reclamations of 1814 were in fact dominated by the more mundane material struggle to connect the language of lists to the presence of artworks in French collections. As Rabe wrote, "Must not the swift order for the return [of these objects] be attributed much more to Justice with seeing eyes, rather than Justice blindfolded?"[56]

For Prussia, the Justice with seeing eyes of 1814 consisted of a small delegation of men well acquainted with the arts but with little in the way of diplomatic clout. On May 2, 1814, the Kunstkammer's director, Jean Henry, and the painter Ernst Friedrich Bussler arrived in Paris to begin the process of identifying and locating objects seized from Prussian collections, along with those of its allies and newly acquired territories. They were joined in their efforts by two Prussian artists: Wilhelm Ternite, who would later become the supervisor of the Potsdam painting gallery, and the painter Philipp Franck, who had been in Paris for some years as a student in David's studio. While the delegates were selected for their familiarity with the lost objects and for their connections to French institutions of culture and learning, their dependence on a number of precarious resources impeded their progress. Their first days of work were

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[55] Friedrich Rabe, "Nachrichten von den Kunstsachen, Münzen, Büchern und andere Merkwürdigkeiten, welche in dem Kriege 1806 und 1807 durch die franzosen aus unsere Lande genommen wurden," 2 February 1814, 1/369, PrAdK.

[56] Ibid.

plagued by miscommunications, interpersonal conflict, and uncertainty over the authority and scope of the mission. Immediately the issue of their ultimate and delicate reliance on the inventories became a point of contention. Ternite complained that Franck was withholding a catalogue of works for restitution that he had compiled, in order to "make himself important."[57]

Establishing correspondences between Prussian-authored inventories and sources of information in Paris proved difficult. Henry and Bussler were dismayed to find that their documentation of their lost collections was often grossly inconsistent with the Louvre official catalogues, and that the various editions of French catalogues contained themselves discrepancies over time. "Msr. Denon has described the inventoried artworks according to his own methods, and given them names according to his own perspective, and in this has attributed them to masters which do not correspond to our catalogues," Bussler complained.[58] More frustratingly, the Louvre's catalogues left out the medal and coin collections and included objects of which the Prussians had no record of having been taken in the first place.[59] Henry and Bussler resolved that a combination of Prussian inventories, French catalogues, and the certificates furnished by Denon upon the seizure of the collections would form the necessary foundation for their efforts.[60] For the delegation the reclamations were largely an archival project built around comparison of multiple sources of references against each other and matching these sources with the objects themselves.

A particularly telling example of this difficulty stems from a claim initiated by the same inventory provided to the Prussian delegations in 1814 by Johann August Sack, in which he had reported the Aachen's missing columns. Among these items was a single object under the heading "From the Capuchin Church": "an altar painting representing the birth of the lord— an original of the famed Rubens."[61] [Fig. 3.3] The heading was somewhat misleading. Although the painting was taken *from* the Capuchin church in 1794, where it had hung since the 1620s, that it should count as missing from this place was something of a stretch as the building had been demolished in 1802 and the monastery was dissolved as part of the secularizations during the Napoleonic period.[62]

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[57] Ternite to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 9 May 1814, III. HA III, 18449: Die Reclamation der von den Franzosen hier und in Potsdam entwendeten Kunstsachen, GStAPK.

[58] Bussler, 10 May 1814, Akten und Inventare der Plankammer, Nr. 149, fol. 37, SPGS.

[59] Henry and Bussler, Report, 16 May 1814, Akten und Inventare der Plankammer, Nr. 149, fol. 74, SPGS.

[60] Henry and Bussler, Report, 16 May 1814, Akten und Inventare der Plankammer, Nr. 149, fol. 74, SPGS.

[61] 6 April 1814, Sack to Hardenberg; Akten und Inventare der Plankammer, Nr. 149, fol. 61, SPGS.

[62] The monastery made a move to sell the painting in 1774 due to financial constraints, and purportedly had a buyer who promised 206 Louis d'Or for the picture and also to furnish the church with a painted copy of the original to hang as a replacement for the altar. Sometime after this the painting was altered by one of the brothers: Mary, who is nursing the her child in the image, was given a shirt to preserve her modesty. Christian Quix, *Historisch-topographische Beschreibung der Stadt Aachen und ihrer Umgebungen* (Cologne and Aachen: M. DuMont-Schauberg, 1829), 86-87. The sale was, however, never finalized. Of the actual moment of looting, an entry in the church records from Haares dated 1794 indicates that the painting was apparently rolled up [*zusammengerollt*] along with a screen from the Franciscan monastery to be

The difficulties that attended the reclamation of art from secularized institutions will be the subject of the last section of this chapter. Compounding this problem, however, was the somewhat generic features of the work itself. The painting from the Capuchin church depicted the adoration of the shepherds, an exceptionally popular subject in Baroque art, and one which Rubens and his studio painted repeatedly. An account of the work appears in J.F.M. Michel's *Histoire de la Vie de P. P. Rubens* of 1771: "a very beautiful painting by Rubens, which depicts the Adoration of the Shepherds: it is graphically pretty and is recognizable through the painter's unique expression, with a shepherd presenting an egg to the baby Jesus."[63] While perhaps a suitable device for a visitor to Aachen to recognize the work while it was on display, perhaps even to convince a reader to make the trip to the Capuchin monastery to regard the specimen for herself, this language of description was a poor tool of identification for a painting no longer able to be accounted for within the vast landscape of French art collections displayed in public, private, and in storage.

It is possible that it was an unintentional error that what arrived in Aachen nearly two years after Sack's 1814 report was not in fact the Rubens that had left the Capuchin monastery in 1794. Local authorities who could remember the painting and its features quickly identified the error and determined the work now in their possession to be an *Adoration of the Shepherds* of similar features, though of lesser quality by Erasmus Quellinus, a student of Rubens. Sack wrote in protest to the Prussian ambassador Goltz in Paris that it would be "highly desirable, if this highly middling piece which doesn't belong to us, be exchanged for our true property, one of the most majestic original Rubens paintings…"[64] The real work in question, he asserted, was to be found, according to the testimony of a resident of Aachen who had visited Paris, in the palace at St. Cloud.

The task proved difficult, given the tricky identification of the painting and the obduracy of the French. The Louvre's secretary general Lavallée argued that the Quellinus painting was the only work in their possession depicting this subject, and the returned painting must thus undoubtedly be the original Rubens. More exact evidence of the painting's features and the details of its departure from the monastery would be required in order to disprove Lavallee's claims.[65] The documentation that Sack submitted to Prussian authorities testifies to the challenge of clarifying the identity of the painting his subjects sought without recourse to a receipt of its departure, a catalogue number, or a recognized title that would establish consensus between the language of his petition and the object itself. Along with a letter to Goltz Sack offered, "A quick sketch of the altar painting made by P. P. Rubens and in the Capuchin church in Aachen which was stolen along with several other art objects during the invasion of the French into our city...and which can no longer be found," in effect a hasty replica of the work drawn up by the

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sent to France; it was thus presumably taken out of its frame, though there is no mention of the frame in the archives: H. Schnock, "Aufzeichnungen eines Haarener Kirchenbuches aus den Kriegsjahren 1792-1795," *Aus Aachens Vorzeit: Mitteilungen des Vereins für Kunde der Aachener Vorzeit* 10, no. 3 (1897): 47.

[63] J.F.M. Michel, *Histoire de la Vie de P. P Rubens* (Brussels: AE. De Bel, 1771), 363-364.

[64] Sack to Goltz, 23 March 1816, I. HA, Rep. 81 alt: Gesandtschaften (Residenturen) u. (General-) Konsulate nach 1807, IX Nr. 30, GStAPK.

[65] Goltz to Sack, 3 June 1816, I. HA, Rep. 81 alt: Gesandtschaften (Residenturen) u. (General-) Konsulate nach 1807, IX Nr. 30, GStAPK.

local artist Ferdinand Jansen.[66] [Fig. 3.4] Jansen included on the sketch the approximate dimensions of the painting (On the front he wrote: "Approximately 10 to 11 feet, width 7 to 8 feet; all of the figures are life-size," and on the back: "Approximately 10 to 12 feet height; width circa 8 feet").[67] On the reverse side of the sketch, after Jansen's title with dimensions and dated signature were a series of supporting affidavits: one from another painter, Rusler, affirming that "the drawing standing beside [this affidavit] is a good likeness of the previously described original painting"; an affidavit from the mayor of the city of Aachen, Cornelius von Guaita, "affirming the previous content [the two previous affidavits from the painters] and verifying the authenticity of their signatures" along with a stamped seal of the city; and finally, an affidavit testifying to the authenticity of the signature of the mayor from the president of the Prussian government in Aachen, August von Reiman, along with a wax seal of the Prussian government. In addition to these assertions of the sketch's validity, and of the validity of its validation handwritten on its reverse, Sack also included an additional sheet of paper with the signatures of four former monks associated with the since disbanded monastery.

> "We the signatories in our own hand, members of the former Capuchin monastery in Aachen, hereby provide evidence that the sketch, created by a painter from the city of Aachen, Mr. Ferdinand Jansen, on the 16th of this month, and confirmed by the aforementioned painter Mr. P. Rufler, does indeed conform to the original by Rubens depicting the birth of the Lord, which the French took in the month of October 1794 from the Capuchin monastery, and specifically from the high altar, and transported to Paris."[68]

This was signed by four previous members of the order, each giving their monastic titles along side their secular names: Johann Joseph Wisdorff ("member of the Capuchin monastery under the name Pater Bernardinus"); Jean Henry Jansen ("otherwise Bruder Sixtus"); Henri Joseph Schnitzeler ("known under the name...Pater Gangolphus"); Jeann Leonard von Wersch ("known under the name Bruder Amatus Questor"). These signatures were, as with the verso of the sketch, verified by the seal and signature of the mayor, von Guaila, which was in turn verified by the seal and signature of the president of the Prussian government in the region.

The accretion of names and stamps validating Jansen's reproduction of the Aachen Rubens was meant to bear witness to its authenticity and truthfulness. The sketch itself was, indeed, mostly accurate. Jansens' only significant departure from the original was his omission of three eggs, which appear in the Rubens version laying on the hay of the manger, the addition of a single egg in the shepherdess' outstretched hand, and the inclusion of a basket of fabrics on top of the head of one of the on-lookers. The fastidious system of verification on its verso, however, also testifies to the sketch's precariousness, despite its relative accuracy, a surrogate object

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[66] Jansen was also reportedly called upon to sketch the missing Aachen columns as part of the reclamation of these objects.

[67] Ferdinand Jansen, "Flüchtiger Entwurf," 16 July 1816, I. HA, Rep. 81 alt: Gesandtschaften (Residenturen) u. (General-) Konsulate nach 1807, IX Nr. 30, GStAPK.

[68] Affidavit, 17 July 1816, I. HA, Rep. 81 alt: Gesandtschaften (Residenturen) u. (General-) Konsulate nach 1807, IX Nr. 30, GStAPK.

desperately trying to find its match by imitating it as closely as possible with only memory as its guide. Jansen's reproduction is in this way an odd inversion of the Academy's plaster casts sitting in Paris: it is part of the material world of representations created through the Kunstraub and the Louvre, but rather than being defined by its proximities to the originals— created from these and sent away—- it was defined by its distance from these— created apart from the original and sent to find them.

In the end, the Aachen *Adoration of the Shepherds* never came back to Aachen, although local authorities pursued its reclamation consistently until 1818 and sporadically thereafter. Rumors surfaced that it was on display in the galleries of the Louvre, or kept in the palace at St. Cloud, but these could never be confirmed. It eventually became known that the painting had been transferred in 1802 as part of a collection to establish a museum of arts in Rouen, where it remains a prized piece of the permanent exhibition.[69] The Quellinus is currently in the collection of the Staatliche Museen in Berlin.

Back to 1814: the delegation's mission and its reliance on inventories and catalogues was heightened by the delicacy of the diplomatic situation. When Henry and Bussler first arrived in Paris, they found themselves confronted with split opinions amongst Prussian officials about the feasibility of the reclamations at all. “The king must reclaim his property straightforwardly and with dignity, and in such a way that he cannot be denied,” Henry intoned in his diary. In May, however, a treaty with France was still being forged and some felt that it would be more prudent to put off any claims that would upset the negotiations.[70] Senior officials remained cautions even after the Peace of Paris (formally suspending France's hegemony over Europe and restoring its borders to those of 1792) had been signed by all the allies and France on May 30, 1814. The legitimacy of the delegation increased, but the precariousness of the reclamation mission continued, especially given that the treaty made no stipulations for the fate of artworks.[71] Prussians were eager to win the complicity of the newly installed Louis XVIII, and some feared that demanding that he give up a major portion of the collections upon which France had built its significant cultural infrastructure from 1794— including the considerable Italian contribution— would have dealt the new monarchy, so dependent on symbols of power and the mastery of culture, an overly visible blow. Days after the signing Bussler and Henry wrote of their instructions that they were to proceed with the utmost caution and go along with whatever the French offered, however unsatisfactory: "In all the cases of reclamations we should proceed with all possible delicacy and artfulness, and especially should take the position in negotiations that we will accept everything, and work afterwards to secure the contrary."[72]

Even without official and explicit provisions in the treaty the Prussians did secure an important verbal agreement during its arbitration that would define the course of the delegation’s reclamation efforts for the remainder of the year. In negotiations the French king had promised Friedrich Wilhelm III and Francis I of Austria that he would willingly support the restitution of property. “Now we must only indicate those objects which were seized,” Henry reported with relief in his diary entry on May 31st, the day after the treaty’s signing when Hardenberg told him

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[69] Goltz to Pradel, 24 October 1816, I. HA, Rep. 81 alt: Gesandtschaften (Residenturen) u. (General-) Konsulate nach 1807, IX Nr. 30, GStAPK.

[70] Jean Henry, *Journal d’un voyage à Paris en 1814* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), 22.

[71] Savoy, *Kunstraub*, 174.

[72] Bussler and Henry, 3 June 1814, Akten und Inventare der Plankammer, Nr. 149, fol. 87, SPGS.

of these developments. “Great happiness.”[73] However, despite the apparent if secret signal of French cooperation, the ‘indication of objects’ became a newly thorny challenge after May 31. Because Louis XVIII had argued that "the army presently places a very great value on possessing these things," it was agreed that only those works that were not exhibited would be subject to restitution.[74]

Technically this was good news. The overwhelming majority of objects from German collections were not on display in the Louvre by 1814, and would thus be fair game. However, the criteria also introduced a new complexity into the reclamation process. The delegation's mission had now to confine itself exclusively to objects whose whereabouts were much less obvious than those visible on the walls of the city’s cultural institutions and which could only be located with the largely unmotivated and frequently unreliable help of local administrators. Further, once those objects had indeed been found, questions arose about what constituted a ‘public exhibition’ according to the terms of the agreement. Was the palace at St. Cloud, where a number of Prussian works were on display, a public gallery or a private residence? "The agreement extends only to the museums of Paris," argued Henry, "and cannot include the palaces as well without becoming farcical…The public will never…notice their disappearance."[75] However, the main negotiator on the French side, Jules Jean-Baptist François de Chardeboeuf, Comte de Pradel, superintendent of the royal residences since his return to France from English exile, protested that the loss of works from the palaces would be too visible.[76] Was the back of the Louvre, where the Lycomedes group, one of the most important works of the Berlin antiquities collection, was installed, visible enough to count as an exhibition or was it storage? Humboldt interceded especially on behalf of this work, writing that "even if it is in the museum, it is still not publicly displayed."[77] Pradel rebutted that all property contained in the museum must be considered a trophy of the military, and any assault on it would be taken as a dangerous violation of the legitimacy of their previous victories.[78]

The loose language around the question of public display gave French administrators ample room to maneuver works out of Prussian grasp, making the delegation unfortunate competitors in what Bénédicte Savoy calls a “Kafkaesque bureaucratic marathon.”[79] The height of this labyrinthine process of wrangling inventories, objects, decrees, and authorities came with the opening of an exhibition in the Louvre of the “primitive schools of Italy and Germany along with many other paintings from various other schools,” a clever move by Denon which placed multiple works from the Prussian collections previously in storage into the untouchable category of the publicly exhibited. “This collection, Monseigneur, which is currently lacking in the museum, and which I had the good fortune to establish during my visits to Germany and Italy,

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[73] Henry, *Journal d’un voyage*, 49.

[74] Eckhardt, “Der napoleonische Kunstraub,” 136.

[75] Henry to Pradel, 6 July 1814, Akten und Inventare der Plankammer, Nr. 149, fol. 155, SPGS.

[76] Henry, Bussler to Goltz 12 July 1814, I. HA, Rep. 81 alt: Gesandtschaften (Residenturen) u. (General-) Konsulate nach 1807, IX Nr. 14, fol. 2, GStAPK.

[77] Humbolt to Bussler, 27 June 1814, Akten und Inventare der Plankammer, Nr. 149, fol. 135, SPGS.

[78] Humbolt to Bussler, 27 June 1814, Akten und Inventare der Plankammer, Nr. 149, fol. 135, SPGS.

[79] Savoy, *Kunstraub*, 178.

establishes the filiation of the arts from their renaissance in Europe until the brilliant century of Leo X," Denon wrote in his proposal for the exhibit just 10 days after the signing of the treaty, invoking the success of his despoliations just at the moment when their reversal seemed imminent.[80] The delegation was outraged, and yet in the end they could only secure the promise from French authorities that the works belonging to them would be delivered upon the closure of the exhibition.[81]

Adding to the delegation's concern with the location of objects were concerns about their condition. Though custodians of German collections were frequently impressed by the restoration work that had been undertaken with their collections on display in French institutions, works that had been in storage had not been guaranteed museum-quality care. A topographical model of Switzerland had been exposed to moisture while in storage and molded so badly during its French tenure that it had cracked in multiple places. Many amber pieces were damaged to such an extent that a separate case of miscellaneous amber fragments was sent along with the collection back to Berlin. The paintings "are mostly in such a state that we are ashamed to accept them in their present condition," Henry and Bussler reported to Humboldt. Some were eaten by worms and on others the paint was coming off. Some works on the list had been substituted for other items, which Denon claimed to be either lost or in different museums. In the end, the Prussians accepted that the reclamation could only be partial, and the first boxes of objects began arriving in Berlin in December 1814. "The promised restitution constitutes only 1/5 of the entirety of your majesty's stolen artworks!" the delegation bemoaned[82]. By the fall, Henry was demoralized at the situation and asked Wilhelm von Humboldt, one of the supervisors of the reclamations in his capacity as Prussian diplomat, to be sent home.[83] Bussler's recall followed in November 1814 after it was decided to wait on further developments in the diplomatic situation in Vienna.[84]

The Prussians would have to wait until the decisive battle of Waterloo ended the resuscitation of Napoleon's reign and the Convention of St. Cloud secured their occupation of Paris on July 3 1815 to begin their reclamation efforts anew. This time Prussian officials, backed by an increasingly charged patriotic public opinion, were determined to avoid the evasive and largely useless back and forth with French museum officials that had characterized the reclamation mission of 1814. The first signal of this new resolve was the willingness of the Prussian army to lend support to the efforts to secure art, not only for the Prussian crown, but for other German and European territories. If 1814 had been the year of diplomatic reserve, 1815 was the year of coercive presence. We have already encountered the demands of General Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher, by then Prince of Wahlstatt, on the porcelain manufacturer at Sevres in Chapter 1. This strategy of putting military personnel in the middle of the negotiations

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[80] Denon to Blacas, 9 June 1814, in *Vivant Denon*, 2:1063.

[81] Goltz to Blacas, 22 August 1814, III.HA III, 18449: Die Reclamation der von den Franzosen hier und in Potsdam entwendeten Kunstsachen, GStAPK.

[82] Bussler, Henry to Friedrich III, 1 July, 1814, I. HA, Rep. 81 alt: Gesandtschaften (Residenturen) u. (General-) Konsulate nach 1807, IX Nr. 14, fol. 3, GStAPK.

[83] Henry and Bussler to Humboldt, 11 September 1814, Akten und Inventare der Plankammer, Nr. 149, fol. 217, SPGS.

[84] Albrecht for FWIII to Hardenberg, Bussler, 3 November 1814, I.HA Rep. 89: Geheimes Zivilkabinett, jüngere Periode, Nr. 20029, fol. 1, GStAPK.

over cultural property was also a feature of the occupation policy in Paris. On July 7, the same day the army arrived in the French capital, the general intendant of Blücher's army, Friedrich von Ribbentrop, visited the Louvre personally and warned Denon that the reclamations would proceed immediately, advising that he should comply with their demands, "since every effort at impeding the process will be answered with military measures."[85] Indeed, the army's presence in these matters was quite literal, as Ribbentrop's brother was assigned to quarter in Denon's personal apartment on the Quai Voltaire.[86]

While Prussia's military leadership intensified the pressure on Denon, the act of locating objects and taking them off the walls was supervised by a somewhat unexpected young man, a romantic scholar of literature and the arts from Cologne, Eberhard von Groote, who has appeared here in previous pages inveighing about the Aachen columns. Groote had come to Paris as a volunteer with the Prussian army with the express purpose of participating in the reclamations process, according to his extensive report on his activities for the journal *Agrippina* in 1824, "because on one hand I came from a province that had almost more to reclaim from this robbery than any other, and because on the other hand I have always had a special proclivity for researching all objects of art from my fatherland, and studying their history."[87] Whereas in 1814 Henry, Bussler, Ternite and Franck had been continually frustrated by their lack of authority, and their inconsistent access to the structures of power that might have made their mission more effective, Blücher and Ribbentrop put near limitless resources at Groote's disposal to enact his demands. On July 10 he received orders from Blücher to partner with Ribbentrop "to take immediate possession of all of the artistic treasures in Paris and its environs that were robbed and plundered from the royal Prussian territories, and to send them back to the places where they were to be found previously." Crucially, Blücher included in his authorization of Groote the stipulation that, "All military and civilian agencies are officially requested and ordered in this regard not only not to put any obstacles in the way of the authorized in the execution of his duties, but rather to support him with all available powers and even through military action."[88] It is easy to understand that the twenty-six year old literature student may have been taken aback to find the Prussian army so suddenly at his disposal. After leaving his meeting with Blücher, he recalled passing by the Jena Bridge (the Point des Invalides) just in time to witness the order for its demolition by Prussian soldiers being rescinded, sparing "one of the most elegant and artful bridges." He saw the moment as a signal of the allied powers' noble commitment to peace, and perhaps also a hopeful sign that he would not have to rely upon the exercise of might with which he had been vested.[89] He proceeded to the Louvre to meet Denon for the first time, of whom he admitted that, "I could hardly look down on…a man, who had wagered his entire career on creating a monument from the artistic treasures of the entire world, for not easily conceding to the destruction of this so arduously constructed, and in and of itself unsurpassable work…"[90]

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[85] Friedrich von Ribbentrop to Denon, 8 July 1815, quoted in Denon, "Précis de ce qui s'est passé au Musée royal depuis l'entrée des alliés à Paris," in *Vivant Denon*, 2:1170.

[86] Savoy, *Kunstraub*, 183. See reference in Denon, "Précis," in *Vivant Denon*, 2:1174.

[87] Eberhard von Groote, "Die Wegnahme der durch die Franzosen geraubten Kunstschätze in Paris, 1815," *Agrippina* 1, no. 25 (25 February 1824): 97-98.

[88] Blücher in Eberhard von Groote, "Die Wegnahme," *Agrippina* 1, no. 26 (27 February 1824): 102.

[89] Groote, "Die Wegnahme" (27 February 1824): 103.

[90] Groote, "Die Wegnahme" (27 February 1824): 103.

Groote may have been somewhat astonished by his new powers, but he was nevertheless determined in his mission. The very next day he arrived at the Louvre to begin with the official reclamation of artworks. Upon meeting with resistance from the Louvre's general secretary Athanase Lavallée, Groote appealed to General von Zeiten, and requested an infantry company to occupy the museum. Zieten was skeptical of "my then still very youthful appearance," Groote wrote, and advised that he try again to secure the artworks by peaceful means. Groote, however, persisted and found himself finally "at the helm of a company, a Pommeranian militia if I remember correctly, and truly, I found myself in a decidedly different disposition [*es wurde mir da ganz anders zu Muthe*.]"[91] He returned to the museum, where soldiers took up posts at the entrance and through the galleries. Rubens' painting, *The Crucifixion of Saint Peter*, seized by the French from the church of St. Peter in Cologne in 1794, was the first work that Groote ordered to be removed from the wall. Not long after, he encountered resistance. A group of French soldiers appeared at the museum entrance, claiming that they had been charged with a twin mission of containment: to prevent any member of the public from entering the galleries, and to prevent any artworks from leaving them. While Groote found himself amenable to the former purpose he took exception to the latter, telling the delegation's leader that if he wanted to fulfill his orders completely he would need an entire company of soldiers to back him up. The French guards stood down and the removal of the German collections continued.[92]

Where the reclamations missions of 1814 had been defined by timid diplomacy and careful reliance on local expertise, the popular image of the 1815 reclamations emphasized the allies' forceful dismantling of the Louvre. The Scottish novelist Walter Scott reported of the scene in the galleries as the Prussians pursued their mission with particular zeal.

> "The French guardians of the Museum...plead, occassionally and timidly, that such a picture formed no part of the cabinet of Potzdam, but had been stolen from some other collection. These demurrers were generally silenced by a "Tais toi" or "Halt [sic] maul," from the veteran of Laon and Waterloo, who is no friend to prolonged discussions. If you ask, whether Prussia had recovered all the pictures which had been carried off at different times, I fancy I may return the same emphatic answer given by an old Scotch serving-man, when his master asked him if he had been careful to pack up all his wardrobe at leaving a friend's house.—"At least, your honour.""[93]

While Scott's colorful image of Blücher's course gallery manner may well be apocryphal, the remark that the Prussians were successful in reclaiming their property *at least* is significant. One of the major concerns over their incursions into the Louvre was that it would set a precedent for other states to remove their works as well. Scott wrote, "It is when the claims of Italy and the Netherlands shall be enforced that the principal disgorging of spoils will take place," and indeed this is what came to pass. In 1814, the Prussians had reassured the French that this should not be the case, given that Italian works had been transferred as part of treaties, whereas the Prussian

[91] Groote, "Die Wegnahme" (29 February, 1824): 105.
[92] Groote, "Die Wegnahme" (3 March 1824): 110-111.
[93] Walter Scott, *Paul's Letters to His Kinfolk* (Edinburgh: Cadell, 1849), 497.

works were not formalized as part of the settlements of war.[94] By 1815, however, these reassurances were no longer on the table. In September, the Netherlands, Austria, Spain, Tuscany, Sardinia, and the Papal States all claimed their property in the Louvre with military and diplomatic support from Britain and Prussia.[95] "'*O mon Dieu*! They won't leave us anything but the walls,' the French said when they saw how people had gone to work on the museum with masonry, hammering, packing, dragging, and extracting," Johann Friedrich Benzenberg reported from the museum in 1815.[96] The Prussians also worked actively on the claims of allied states, including Kassel, Braunschweig, and Schwerin, and led their respective delegates into the Louvre, making sure their work was protected by guards. They also took up claims made on behalf of newly Prussian nobility, including Wilhelm Malte I, Prince of Putbus in the recently annexed Swedish Pommerania, who asked for the delegation's help in returning a silver baton that had been in his family for many centuries.[97]

A hand-colored etching by the British satirist George Cruikshank gives a sense of the cascade of artworks from Paris at the initiative of the Prussian military as allied powers made their claims in 1815. [Fig. 3.5] A parade of the artworks in carts, labeled with their state of origin, wends its way out of the museum and into the distance as Denon and Louis XVIII despair from the portals of the Louvre. The Duke of Wellington, riding atop the lion of St. Mark's cries out to Blücher on horseback behind him: "Go along Blücher, let us haste to return the stolen goods!" However, as we have seen in so many representations of this period, the triumphalism of the imagery should not occlude our perception of the fundamental fantasy it expresses. Yes, most of the most significant works from German collections— the Lycomedes group, the bronze

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[94] Henry, Bussler to Goltz, 12 July 1814, I. HA, Rep. 81 alt: Gesandtschaften (Residenturen) u. (General-) Konsulate nach 1807, IX Nr. 14, fol. 2, GStAPK.

[95] The involvement of the Prussian army in the German reclamations was key to Britain's agreement to provide support to other allied reclamations in the Louvre. On September 11 Castlereagh advised the Prince Regent that the Prussians had set an important precedent for other allied powers, and that the British military must make a commitment to the endeavor: "It becomes Great Britain not the less to see the same measures of justice distributed to her immediate ally, as that which has been obtained by the adjacent states." [Here Castlereagh means specifically the Kingdom of the Netherlands]. Castlereagh in Dorothy Mackay Quynn, "The Art Confiscations of the Napoleonic Wars," *The American Historical Review* 50, no. 3 (April 1945): 451. See also on the reclamations of 1815 and their consequences for the legal protections of cultural property in Wayne Sandholtz, *Prohibiting Plunder: How Norms Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 58-70. On the interesting story of the sculptor Canova's work on the reclamations on behalf of the Papal States see Christopher M.S. Johns, "'This Great Cavern of Stolen Goods": Canova and the Repatriation of the Papal Collections from Paris in 1815" in *Antonio Canova and the Politics of Patronage in Revolutionary and Napoleonic Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

[96] "It was a happy time, and I am happy, that I was able to witness it, in order that I can tell it to those that will come after us." Johann Friedrich Benzenberg, *Briefe geschrieben in Paris im Jahr 1815*, vol. 1 (Dortmund: Mallinckrodt, 1816), 54.

[97] Malte Fürst zu Putbus to Altenstein, 30 July 1815, III. HA: Ministerium der auswärtigen Angelegenheiten, 2.04.1, III, Nr. 18451, fol. 25-26, GStAPK. Despite the efforts of the delegation on Malte's behalf, granted explicitly because of their interest in currying favor with this new subject, the baton was not recovered.

Praying Boy, the Quadriga from atop the Brandenburg Gate, the *Crucifixion of St. Peter*, for example— were by the end of the summer of 1815 on their way back across the Rhine. By the fall, the revered Italian collections were similarly underway. The iconic third convoy of masterpieces that arrived with such pomp in Paris in 1798 seemed to be reversed, and Cruikshank's representation capitalized on this resonance. But the etching, a work of satire, also illustrates the conceit that remained illusory for the Prussian agents and that must interfere with our ability to see the reclamations as a successful unraveling of the Kunstraub and its aftermath. In the center of the image is the Apollo Belvedere at the reins of the team of horses that conveys with him four muses, whose departure signals the end of the Louvre as a place of aesthetic significance and artistic inspiration. Of course the very problem of the reclamations was that these statues would neither drive themselves away, nor determine what kind of lasting effect their absence would cause.[98] Much less could they steer themselves in the right direction, as the Apollo purports to do. "To each his own!" exclaims one of the soldiers from the distance. What exactly "his own" would mean will be the concern of the rest of this chapter.

"The Places Where They Were to Be Found Previously": The Challenge of Church Property

Because Prussian officials and military power had been instrumental to the reclamation of art, not just in Berlin and Potsdam, but on behalf of the cities ceded to Prussia in the settlements of 1815 there was some uncertainty and much consternation about whether these artworks should be amassed in the Prussian capital or restored to their original locations. At first glance the answer appears quite simple. With few exceptions the Prussian government affirmed its commitment to the mandate Blücher had imparted in his authorization of Groote's reclamations mission, "to send [artworks] back to the places where they were to be found previously."[99]

The reasons for this policy were two-fold. First, by repatriating objects to "the places where they were to be found previously," the Prussian state could win allegiance and assert influence in their new territorial holdings. The restitution of Rubens' *Crucifixion of St. Peter* to the parish church of St. Peter in Cologne, where it had hung since Rubens had donated it in 1642 until its removal to Paris in 1794, is revealing in this regard. Cologne officials had been agitating for the return of their Rubens since its departure, and once the Napoleonic regime had fallen, they became particularly anxious that the painting be returned to them, and not become part of a state collection in Berlin.[100] Days after the Prussian arrival in the city, the mayor wrote to Blücher, imploring him with copious adjectival clauses, so as to avoid confusion, to return "the cherished painting, which has fallen in your hands through the rights of victory, and which belongs to this city, and which is found in the Parisian gallery, and which is given the number 509 in the catalogue…"[101] His pleas were successful, due in no small part to the interventions of Groote, who took his advocacy for his native city's property to be a primary feature of his official duties. "I must note here, that the scrupulous upholding of the mandate to bring back everything

[98] I explore in greater depth the problem of art's inability to determine its own location in Chapter 1, and will return to the theme in Chapter 4.

[99] The most visible if temporary exception to this was the Memling Altar from Danzig, which will be the subject of Chapter 4.

[100] Formal reclamations were made in 1796, 1802, and 1808. Savoy, *Kunstraub*, 160-161.

[101] von Mylius in Roland Krischel, "Die Rückkehr des Rubens: Kölns Kunstszene zu Beginn der preußischen Epoche," in *Lust und Verlust: Kölner Sammler zwischen Trikolore und Preußenadler*, ed. Hiltrud Kier and Frank Günter Zehnder (Cologne: Wienand Verlag, 1995), 92.

to the place where it used to be, as it was expressed in the orders of the King and the *Feldmarschall*, was of extraordinary importance, and always the primary goal of my endeavors," Groote recalled in his memoir of his time in Paris. "Perhaps out of misunderstanding or oversight the painting of St. Peter from Cologne would have been spurned without my sincere efforts to the contrary."[102] On July 22, the director of public education in the Lower Rhine Region reported to the mayor, "that Saint Peter has truly shaken the dust of his feet and left Paris on the 16th."[103] The painting arrived in Cologne to the jubilation of its residents on August 2, 1815. Goethe was on hand to witness the scene and confirm its political effect:

> "After a pleasant trip on the Rhine, we were surprised in Cologne with joyous greetings by friends and acquaintances, even from strangers: that the painting by Rubens, painted for his birthplace, and dedicated to the church of the patron of the city, representing the crucifixion of Peter, is being brought back from Paris, and should soon be returned to his former pious position with triumph. We were pleased, that through a simple and great deed, such a numerous group of citizens should have been given this noble feeling to be the subjects of a prince, who is powerful enough to provide justice in such a powerful way, and to restore a bitterly missed belonging."[104]

The second reason for the restitution of artworks to "the places where they were to be found previously" was a growing ethos of historic preservation across Prussia, through which leading scholars of art and architecture vowed an alternative relationship between art and state power to that which they had witnessed in Napoleonic France. Rather than putting objects in a centralized national collection alienated from its original context, the state would assert its control over artworks through administrative and institutional frameworks designed to safeguard objects in different individual localities. "Property of this kind must remain for every district eternally sacred," wrote the architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel in his survey of the artistic holdings of new territories for the Prussian Building Commission in 1815.

> "Nevertheless, these diverse objects, which have in part become unable to be appreciated by virtue of the fate of time, are very often unrecognizable to the public, and therefore have until now nearly been lost for them, these must be given over [to the people] again as a gift from the state in a new form. This could be achieved by bringing these lost objects into the light, in that institutions would be agreed upon, through which their old brilliance could be

[102] Groote, "Die Wegnahme" (5 March, 1824): 114.

[103] Krischel, "Die Rückkehr," 94.

[104] Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Ueber Kunst und Alterthum in den Rhein und Mayn Gegenden*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart: Cottaischen Buchhandlung, 1816), 1-2.

> restored in a clever way, in as far as it is possible in this business, which is difficult and even dangerous to the value of the things.[105]

This endorsement of the importance of respecting local contexts in the service of state interests meant that the *Crucifixion*, although initially deposited in the city hall in Cologne, was eventually, and much to the relief of Cologners, reinstalled in the Church of St. Paul. The transfer provided an opportunity for yet another performance, this one dedicated not only to Prussia's supremacy over Cologne's former French rulers through the work's reclamation, but also their commitment to the work's "pious position," as Goethe wrote, over its civic one. To celebrate this re-gifting of the painting from the state to the church on October 12, 1815, Prussian officials insisted on a festival befitting the "political worth of the occasion," including a parade with seventy formal invitees from Cologne's learned and artistic community.[106] The technical specifications of the event were planned out in elaborate detail, with stipulations for who would carry it when, how it should be conveyed, and what each of these measures should signify: "The painting itself will be covered on the back with a silk cloth, but this will be immediately removed in the church, and its two ends, which will hang down on each side, will be carried by Herr Joseph de Groote, as brother of the man who got the painting returned, and Herr Joseph Steinberg in his capacity as *Kirchmeister* of St. Peter's..."[107] The party began with a service in the city cathedral at 9am and ended late that night with a ball and dancing, long after the Te Deum was said in front of the rehung painting in St. Peters. The return of the *Crucifixion* would be remembered as an important moment in the history of the city throughout the nineteenth century.[108]

The assertion of the state's interest in preserving important works of art by handing them over to regional churches may seem paradoxical. Indeed, the passage from Schinkel's 1815 memorandum cited above appears to grapple with the difficulty of establishing a new and modern bureaucratic system of governance over artifacts, while re-inserting them into religious and thereby ritual contexts. Bringing objects "into the light" in this way was, as he acknowledged, a dangerous and difficult proposition because it required adjudicating between local custom and central authority. One way in which advocates of historical preservation, including Schinkel, reconciled these twin impulses— this new variation on the "brilliant place" that we encountered in the previous chapter—was to forward a conception of a unified national collection that existed in the imaginations of its viewers if not in institutional reality. The return of objects "to the places where they were to be found previously" amounted, as Susan Crane has argued, to an understanding of restoration as the achievement of a theoretical state of completion, where fragmented objects embedded in differing and sometime ruinous environments could be integrated in the consciousness of their beholders into a fantastical whole.[109]

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[105] Karl Friedrich Schinkel, "Memorandum zu Denkmalpflege" (1815), in *Denkmalpflege: deutsche Texte aus drei Jahrhunderten* ed. Norbert Huse (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2006), 70.

[106] Krischel, "Die Rückkehr," 94.

[107] Sitzungsprotokoll in Krische, "Die Rückkehr," 94.

[108] Friedrich Ev. von Mering and Ludwig Reischert, *Zur Geschichte der Stadt Köln: Von ihrer Gründung bis zur Gegenwart*, vol. 3 (Cologne: Dietz, 1839), 308.

[109] Susan Crane, *Collecting and Historical Consciousness in Early Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 44. John Edward Toews explores this

At the level of logistical practice, however, in the restitution of church property Prussian officials found themselves involved in delicate situations of uncertain ownership and contested authority where the state's commitment to ensuring the "eternal sacrality" of objects in their previous homes was not so easily reconciled with local interests. The upheaval of ecclesiastical governance and hierarchies since the demise of the Holy Roman Empire made the redistribution of art into a challege to Prussia's successful management of art in its new territories. The *Crucifixion* had enjoyed a relatively straightforward path back to its position in St. Peter's due in part to its iconic status and to the efforts of Groote, who was in an instrumental position to oversee the return of objects to his native city. In other communities, however, the often disenfranchised custodians of church property found themselves at odds with Prussian authorities acting on behalf of the territories they had acquired in the settlements of the Congress of Vienna in 1815. The reclamation of religious objects pitted not only German cultural administrators against French ones, but also local religious communities against the expanding apparatus of Prussian provincial governance—an awkward reality for a state so invested in putting the care for the arts at the center of its national political identity.

A restitution case in Goslar, a small city in the Harz mountains, shows the delicacy involved in achieving a balance between local and state interests in the care and management of art. At stake was an object whose designation in the catalogue of the Louvre, where it was on display in 1807—"273. *Caisse de bronze quadrangulaire*"— belies its peculiarity on the one hand, and its importance to the history of the city on the other.[110] [Fig. 3.6] The object in question was more popularly known at the time as the Krodo Altar, a long rectangular open bronze box punctuated around the sides by small holes, and supported by four bronze small kneeling and bearded figures draped in cloth. Larger holes through the box's short ends are thought to have once allowed it to be carried on a pole. According to local legend, the altar originated as a vessel with which the heathen Saxons could carry sacrifices for the Pagan god Krodo. When Charlemagne conquered the Saxons, the altar was supposedly repurposed as an altar for a Christian chapel near the Harzburg castle, outside of Goslar. When Goslar became an important seat of the Holy Roman emperors in the 11th century, Heinrich III had presided over the construction of a Gothic/Romanesque collegiate church, dedicated to St. Simon and St. Judas (but known popularly as the cathedral [*Dom*]) and had the altar transferred there.[111] By the early

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theme with regards to Schinkel's work in particular in Toews, *Becoming Historical: Cultural Reformation and Public Memory in Early Nineteenth-Century Berlin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 117-206.

[110] *Statues, Bustes, Bas-reliefs, Bronzes, Et Autres Antiquités, Peintures, Dessins et Objects Curieux* (Paris: Musée Napoleon, 1807), 30.

[111] Already in the first half of the 19th century studies had begun to refute this theory. "For some time it has been called Krodo's Altar, and thus that's what it must be: this is the conclusion of uncritical babblers," wrote Christian Heinrich Delius in his treatise debunking the existence of a god "Krodo." Christian Heinrich Delius, *Ueber den vermeinten Götzen Krodo zur Harzburg: eine historische Untersuchung* (Halberstadt: H. Vogler, 1827), 82. See also Johann Karl Wächter, *Statistik der im Königreiche Hannover vorhandenen heidnischen Denkmäler* (Hannover: Hannoversches Magazin, 1841), 160-161. The altar is currently understood to have been made at or around the time of the church's foundation in the 11th century. Horst Appuhn, "Beiträge zur Geschichte des Herrschersitzes im Mittelalter: II. Teil: der sogenannte Krodo-Altar und der Kaiserstuhl in Goslar," *Aachener Kunstblätter* 54/55 (1986-87): 69–96.

nineteenth century, the altar had became an artifact of the city's prestige and influence within the empire, a status definitively ended through the city's annexation to Prussia and the secularization of the church and its property in 1802. In 1806-1807 the city became part of the French satellite Kingdom of Westphalia under the governance of Napoleon's brother Jerôme Bonaparte, and the altar was sent to Paris.

The Goslar altar was one of the objects that Henry and Bussler succeeded in reclaiming in 1814. Despite some difficulties in convincing French officials to give it up, the delegation eventually prevailed, and by October the altar was en route from the National Library in Paris, where it had been kept after 1807, to Goslar via Frankfurt.[112] More complicated, however, was the question of the object's destination once it had returned to Goslar. The cathedral had been severely neglected during the Westphalian regime: all of its remaining property had been sold off, and no repairs or renovations had been undertaken. It had not hosted a service since the beginning of French rule. For this reason the town's mayor Giesecke, who had initiated the altar's reclamation, felt it would be inappropriate and potentially expensive to reinstall the work in such a derelict environment, where it might be damaged from falling stones, and proposed that it be put in the parish church of St. Stephani, along with the cathedral's stained glass windows, which were also in bad need of repair.[113]

Giesecke's plan met with approval from the regional governor of the new Prussian territorial unit between the Elbe and the Weser, Wilhelm Anton von Klewitz, who authorized the altar's installation in St. Stephani's.[114] Klewitz, had been an influential advisor in the Prussian reform government, was a participant in the constitutional debates after 1815, would go on to serve as minister of finance in 1817, and was the orchestrator of a plan to found academies for the education of women in the name of the late and revered Queen Luise, which would bind a liberated and expanded Prussian state together through national memory.[115] In short, he was involved in the project of making Prussian bureaucratic administration extend and adapt to the conditions of local governance. Just two weeks after authorizing the altar's transfer, however, Klewitz encountered resistance from those who had looked forward to the restoration of the local treasure to its previous installation. One of the protests came from the priest Fabricius. Beginning by expressing his sincere thanks to the Prussian king for securing the altar's return to Goslar, Fabricius went on to warn that since it was Friedrich Wilhelm's intention to preserve the cathedral, he must certainly stand behind the restoration of its belongings to it. "Here the altar of Krodo is in its rightful place," he asserted. Its displacement would continue the plundering of the church instituted under French rule, Fabricius implied. Further, he wrote, the cathedral was

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[112] Bussler to Klewitz, 30 October 1814, I. HA, Rep. 91C: Militär- und Zivilgouvernment für das Land zwischen Weser und Elbe zu Halle bzw. Halberstadt, Nr. 1978, GStAPK.

[113] Giesecke to Klewitz, 23 November 1814, I. HA, Rep. 91C: Militär- und Zivilgouvernment für das Land zwischen Weser und Elbe zu Halle bzw. Halberstadt, Nr. 1978, GStAPK.

[114] Klewitz to Giesecke, 2 December 1814, I. HA, Rep. 91C: Militär- und Zivilgouvernment für das Land zwischen Weser und Elbe zu Halle bzw. Halberstadt, Nr. 1978, GStAPK.

[115] Wilhelm Anton von Klewitz, *Denkmal der Preußen auf ihre verewigte Königin Luise durch weibliche Erziehungsanstalten* (Halberstadt: Büreau für Litteratur und Kunst, 1814).

uniquely suited to the display of the altar because of its Gothic architecture, which fit with the presentation of antiquities.[116]

More forceful opposition came from Karoline Brömmel, the widow of a former custodian of the church, who had provided for her family before the occupation by collecting a fee from visitors who came to see its antiquities, including the altar and the stained glass. Her intervention was thus based on the loss of income she would experience as a result of the altar's displacement. More importantly, however, Brömmel indicted the congregation of St. Stephani as uninterested in the value of the altar and its maintenance. While "all the friends of antiquity had felt the most hearty joy" at the altar's return, the congregation of St. Stephani had met the event with indifference. Indeed, they refused even to open their pockets for the completion of their half-built organ, Brömmel inveighed. How could they be expected to support the display of this valuable artifact?[117] Brömmel also echoed Fabricius' contention that the object required the medieval church as its context in order to be appropriately understood. This Krodo Altar, with its imbrication in the city's imperial history, would look out of place in St. Stephani's, the most recently built church in town.[118]

> "Whether it is fitting that an old altar to a heathen idol be displayed for show in a Christian church, in which services continue to be held, I leave up to your higher judgment. In the old cathedral all these antiquities build a whole; both through their age, as well as their relationship to each other and to the church…In a newly built tasteful Christian church, they would stand out like old torn up rags against a new dress."[119]

Neither Fabricius nor Brömmel's appeals made any difference to Klewitz, who confirmed his order that the Altar of Krodo— still in its packing from France—along with the stained glass windows from the cathedral be moved to the Church of St. Stephani according to plan, and allotted financial resources to support this.[120] Nevertheless, the content of the official response to both parties, formulated by Klewitz based on evidence provided by Giesecke, is revealing of the impact of the critique upon the Prussian authorities. In both cases the Prussian governor rejected their arguments by disputing their right to any interest in the objects. As priest, Klewitz maintained, Fabricius could only participate in the adjudication of church property as long as the

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[116] Fabricius to Klewitz, 18 December 1814, I. HA, Rep. 91C: Militär- und Zivilgouvernment für das Land zwischen Weser und Elbe zu Halle bzw. Halberstadt, Nr. 1978, GStAPK.

[117] Karoline Brömmel to Klewitz, 18 December 1814, I. HA, Rep. 91C: Militär- und Zivilgouvernment für das Land zwischen Weser und Elbe zu Halle bzw. Halberstadt, Nr. 1978, GStAPK.

[118] The Church of St. Stephani was consecrated in 1734.

[119] Karoline Brömmel to Klewitz, 18 December 1814, I. HA, Rep. 91C: Militär- und Zivilgouvernment für das Land zwischen Weser und Elbe zu Halle bzw. Halberstadt, Nr. 1978, GStAPK.

[120] Klewitz to Giesecke, 26 January 1815, I. HA, Rep. 91C: Militär- und Zivilgouvernment für das Land zwischen Weser und Elbe zu Halle bzw. Halberstadt, Nr. 1978, GStAPK.

cathedral college and its chapter were still active. However, since its secularization in 1802/1803, these rights had been severely curtailed and no longer included the prerogative "to voice concerns on matters of this kind."[121] The response to Brömmel followed along the same general outline. Brömmel had no rights to the donations of visitors, Giesecke and Klewitz argued, asserting that although the arrangements made at her husband's death had allowed her to continue to live in the custodian's house in exchange for showing the church to strangers as needed, but there had been no expectation that these visitors remunerate her in exchange. Further, she had other resources (two grown children, a house with a garden, and a small stipend from investments). "It would be, given these circumstances, doubly contrary to our duty if we were to prepare to invest a not insignificant sum into a building that hasn't been able to be visited by guests for some time…just out of pity," Giesecke wrote.[122]

However, Fabricius and Brömmel had not just claimed rights to the Krodo Altar, they had also made substantive points about the appropriate context under which it should be viewed, arguments that have an uncanny similiarity to the German commentary on the Kunstraub and the Louvre that we have encountered thus far. The installation of the altar in the Church of St. Stephani was not only an assault on the livelihood of the cathedral's dependents, but was an assault on the meaning of the altar itself, Brömmel and Fabricius maintained. Klewitz and Giesecke had no answer for this, but their intervention cut to the heart of the problem. Here, the task of returning objects to the "places where they were to be found previously" meant violating rather than upholding local interests, which had, in the meantime shifted. The connection between locality and sacrality which Schinkel had put at the center of Prussian preservation policy was not so easily recovered.

The altar had been installed in St. Stephani's for less than a year when Klewitz faced another challenge to its position, this time from the level of the state rather than the level of the parish. On October 10, 1815, the Prussian general and collector Heinrich Menu von Minutoli wrote to the governor, saying he had heard from his friend Martin Heinrich Klaproth that the Krodo Altar was in danger of being sold. Minutoli, an avid archaeologist and antiquarian, offered instead to buy it, "rescuing this authentic German antiquity for the Prussian monarchy and inserting it into the forefront of the arts and sciences." Minutoli had a record of such salvage missions in Goslar. He had stepped in to buy the *Kaiserstuhl*, the throne of Heinrich III, after it was auctioned off during the Westphalian period and purchased by a woman who purportedly intended to melt it down.[123] In the case of the altar, Minutoli claimed that Goslar's difficult

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[121] Klewitz to Fabricius, 26 January 1815, I. HA, Rep. 91C: Militär- und Zivilgouvernment für das Land zwischen Weser und Elbe zu Halle bzw. Halberstadt, Nr. 1978, GStAPK.

[122] Giesecke to Klewitz, 12 January 1815, I. HA, Rep. 91C: Militär- und Zivilgouvernment für das Land zwischen Weser und Elbe zu Halle bzw. Halberstadt, Nr. 1978, GStAPK.

[123] Carl Wolff, *Die Kunstdenkmäler der Provinz Hannover* (Hannover: Selbstverlag der Provinzialverwaltung, 1901), 45-46. In the case of the *Kaiserstuhl*, Klaproth had also tipped Minutoli off. Klaproth, a chemist, had conducted a mineralogical study of the throne, based on a 200 gran piece he extracted from the side in order to compare its metallurgical composition with the altar. Heinrich Klaproth, *Beiträge zur Chemischen Kenntniss der Mineralkörper*, vol. 6 (Berlin: Nicolaischen Buchhandlung, 1815), 132-133; Theodor Asche, *Die Kaiserpfalz zu Goslar am Harz im Spiegel der Geschichte* (Goslar: Verlag von Ludwig Koch, 1892), 14-15. The

financial situation after the occupation gave sufficient reason to believe that the altar was in danger of the same risky auction. He wrote that he had heard that its transportation from Paris had not yet been paid by the provincial administration, and that this "needy" body should thus be relieved to accept money for the object. Minutoli offered 150 thaler. "I would be much in debt if you would consider this request with the utmost speed, because I feel that otherwise this authentic German artifact will be lost to us in one way or another."[124]

Klewitz forwarded Minutoli's request to Giesecke in Goslar, who emphatically denied that anyone in Goslar was at all interested in selling the altar. "Should a higher authority give the order to deliver this treasure of ancient art to a collection of antiquities, this would occasion universal disappointment here," Giesecke wrote to Klewitz warily. "The altar reminds us of what Goslar once was. And this memory provokes not only a feeling of melancholy, but it is also bound up with other feelings which do good."[125] Most important among these feelings was that of pride, not only in local heritage, but a participatory pride that the congregation of the St. Stephani's that they had succeeded in their efforts to bring back the altar to Goslar and to have it reinstalled. This sensibility could not be compensated for a monetary price, he wrote to Klewitz, who did not intervene, but rather passed on Giesecke's reply to Minutoli. Perhaps somewhat embarrassed to have made an offer on an object that was not for sale, and to have thus indirectly impugned Goslar's right to the altar, which the Prussian government itself had been so integral in placing there, Minutoli responded, justifying his actions as motivated by the "love of art and of the preservation of its fruits for the benefit of the fatherland."[126] "Klaproth had even suggested that the Academy [of Sciences in Berlin] make the purchase; but because I feared the altar would be auctioned before the Academy could reach a resolution on the subject, I told him to leave the purchase to me; because in this way it would be more certain to end up preserved for the state, and my collection will sooner or later end up in the royal collections," Minutoli wrote defensively.

The challenges of Fabricius and Brömmel on one side and Minutoli on the other demonstrate that the policy of restoring artworks "to the places in which they were to be found previously" in order to connect local and state interests was in many ways a fraught proposition. "To each his own" required arbitration and negotiations between stakeholders of different kinds. This kind of situation was repeated across Prussian territories as reclaimed art objects encountered new ecclesiastical and political administrative landscapes, different from those they

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correspondence between the throne and the altar has been a matter of much speculation, with recent theories suggesting that the altar was originally the base for the throne. Appuhn, “Beiträge Zur Geschichte Des Herrschersitzes,” 69–96.

[124] Minutoli to Klewitz, 10 October 1815, I. HA, Rep. 91C: Militär- und Zivilgouvernment für das Land zwischen Weser und Elbe zu Halle bzw. Halberstadt, Nr. 1978, GStAPK.

[125] Giesecke to Klewitz, 17 October 1815, I. HA, Rep. 91C: Militär- und Zivilgouvernment für das Land zwischen Weser und Elbe zu Halle bzw. Halberstadt, Nr. 1978, GStAPK.

[126] Minutoli to Klewitz, 6 November 1815, I. HA, Rep. 91C: Militär- und Zivilgouvernment für das Land zwischen Weser und Elbe zu Halle bzw. Halberstadt, Nr. 1978, GStAPK.

had left. In this context these objects were becoming ever more important prisms for the assertion of local and national identities for the communities in which they were part.[127]

These incidents also indicate that the stakes in these conflicts were not only who would own what, but what this ownership would entail. And on this point Prussian collectors, provincial governors, local mayors, and church officials seemed to agree. The legitimate owner of the object was the one who could care for it according to its historical significance rather than its ritual importance or its religious meaning. "Whether it is fitting that an old altar to a heathen idol be displayed for show in a Christian church in which services continue to be held, I leave up to your higher judgment," Karoline Brömmel had quipped to Giesecke. Indeed, the problem seemed hardly to register for anyone, whether in Goslar or Halberstadt or Berlin. Part of the indifference to this issue was that these were Protestant churches hosting a pagan at worst and medieval at best object that had long lost its ritual use and its spiritual potency in traditional terms. But indifference to the object's religious content did not mean indifference to the object itself. Indeed, the bids for control of the Krodo Altar were fundamentally about who could better treat the object in terms of its cultural and historical worth. Across Prussian territories churches like St. Stephani's and the Goslar cathedral backed up their claims of restitution not by invoking their past privileges but by asserting themselves to be cultural institutions of a new order.

In this, there was another challenge for Prussian officials attempting to secure art's place in its original contexts. For as religious institutions began more and more to formulate their duties towards art in the language of the museum or gallery— speaking of their resources for preservation, their accessibility to visitors, their commitment to history and its display— they became competitors to the designs for centralized, scholarly, and civic collections that were just beginning to take shape after 1815. The cathedral at Halberstadt was one site of this tension. The cathedral had largely escaped the incursions of Jerôme Bonaparte after its secularization on December 1 1810.[128] In 1816, however, the Prussian minister of the interior, Friedrich von

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[127] A particularly complicated example of this genre is the cathedral treasury of Quedlinburg, which had been integrated into the collections of the Museum Fridericianum in Kassel during the Westphalian period. After the fall of the kingdom and Quedlinburg's reinstatement in Prussia (to which it had, like Goslar, belonged since 1802), officials decided that the treasury should be sent to Halberstadt, because there it would be joined by a similarly rich collection and could be better preserved and managed. Johann Heinrich Fritsch, the head priest at Quedlinburg, fought intensively for the treasury's return until 1821 when Fridrich Wilhelm III finally relented and ordered that it be returned to the St. Servatius church, considering the collection's installation there to be a "long term loan" from Potsdam. Johann Heinrich Fritsch, *Geschichte des vormaligen Reichsstifts und der Stadt Quedlinburg*, vol. 2 (Quedlinbug: Basse, 1828), 326. For a long and weird history of the Quedlinburg treasury, including its significant dalliances in the twentieth century, see Siegfried Kogelfranz and Willi A Korte, *Quedlinburg - Texas und zurück : Schwarzhandel mit geraubter Kunst* (München, Germany: Droemer Knaur, 1994).

[128] Since the Reformation the cathedral had been of mixed confession, and since the Peace of Westphalia its treasury was kept in a triple-locked vault, the keys to which were to be in the possession of three different people, each of whose presence was required to open it, E. Hermes, *Der Dom Zu Halberstadt: Seine Geschichte Und Seine Schätze, Eine Festschrift Zum 18. September 1896* (Halberstadt: Louis Koch, 1896), 87. During the secularization, the head priest and his colleauges wrote to Jerôme to spare the collection, which they had, given its

Schuckmann, became concerned with the state of one of its altars, thought to be of the 15th century, which had started its existence as a triptych, but which was by the early nineteenth century missing its right panel.[129] Emphasizing its deplorable condition and inferior preservation in the church, Schuckman ordered the authorities in Halberstadt to send the altar to Berlin. A local administrator forwarded the demand to the cathedral's priests Grahn and Augustin, highlighting Schuckmann's sentiment: "It seems to me that because of its age, this perhaps valuable old painting can only be preserved for the arts [through its transfer to Berlin], and since it…is not even on display in the church…you have no more cause to hesitate to comply with my request."[130] Grahn and Augustin, at this point veterans in the defense of church property from the acquisitive hands of municipal authorities during the Westphalian period, cited in response that church property had been guaranteed protection in 1810 after the success of their repeated efforts to preserve ownership over the cathedral building and associated chapels including their related artifacts.[131] But more importantly, and perhaps more compellingly, the priests backed up their claim by reminding the Prussian authorities that while the altar might be damaged, they had proven their commitment to the preservation of church property through their work to prevent precious artifacts from being dispersed around the globe in the Kunstraub and secularizations of the previous decade. Indeed, their defense of the altar, rather than appealing to religious convictions, or damning the incursions of secular powers on ritual objects, positioned the church as just as worthy a cultural institution as a museum:

> "We do not deny that this painting would be useful to a large art collection, and we would also not think twice of donating it to such a cause if we did not believe ourselves to have a higher obligation to our church and to our city. It is not thus the Protestant religious community to which we defer, for whose practices the altar is neither meant nor suited for, but rather we keep in mind the present and future community of residents of our city, in as far as a taste

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security detail, perhaps never seen: "There is a collection of old parchments, reliquaries, and ritual objects held in a treasury, which stem from the time of the earliest services in the cathedral, and deserve to be kept in the place where they originate, and in the context in which they have value, as cherished monuments of antiquity. Grahn and Augustin in Harald Meller, Ingo Mundt, and Boje E. Hans Schmuhl, eds., *Der Heilige Schatz Im Dom Zu Halberstadt* (Regensburg: Verlag Schnell und Steiner, 2008), 31. Jérome conceded, writing in the margin of the appeal, simply, "*Approuvé!*"

[129] Hans Fuhrmann, ed., *Die Inschriften des Doms zu Halberstadt* (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 2009), 137-8.

[130] Graf von dem Busche to Grahn and Augustin 24 October 1816, I. HA, Rep. 76 Ve Kultusministerium, Sekt. I, Abt. XV: 31 Bd. 1, fol. 119, GStAPK.

[131] Grahn and Augustin to Graf von dem Busche, 29 October 1816, I. HA, Rep. 76 Ve Kultusministerium, Sekt. I, Abt. XV: 31 Bd. 1, fol. 115, GStAPK; Evidence of this guarantee in Ministry of Finance to Ministry of Interior, 8 August 1812, V. HA, Rep. B5 Spez., Nr. 37, Bd. 1, fol. 77, GStAPK.

> for art either resides within them or will in the future be cultivated."[132]

There is a lot in this statement— an argument for the church as just as viable a custodian of the aesthetic tastes of its community, defined by residence rather than faith; a side-note that the altar, the product of a pre-Reformation era in ecclesiastical art cannot be said to either fit or be useful to a contemporary Protestant congregation; an admission of the validity of putting religious art in national secular public museums coming from priests whose careers were defined by their defense of church property. Further, the priests emphasized that the chapel where the altar was kept was slated for improvement, and expressed even the desire to make it into a gallery to centralize all non-ritual objects throughout the church. In 1819, Johann Gustav Gottlieb Büsching wrote of the altar that it was placed in a chancel, which was "damp, musty, and not very friendly," but confirmed that Augustin had told him of the plans to remodel the chapel.[133]

The history of the Prussian reclamation of art with which this chapter has been concerned makes the goal at its center— the identification and return of objects in French museums and collections to their original German owners— appear to be an unattainable fantasy. To be sure, given the physical and political challenges to this operation, an astounding number of objects did make it back in some form, sometimes even to "the places in which they were to be found previously." However, a full restoration of the previous order remained elusive. These things were not quite what they had been before. They were delicate in new ways. Their audiences had changed. Because of this, the stakes of their exhibition and the kinds of care and attention they required intensified. In the next two chapters we will turn to the strategies that were put into practice in order to make art serve new political goals through new kinds of institutions designed to deal with the inheritance of the Napoleonic period.

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[132] Grahn and Augustin to Graf von dem Busche, 29 October 1816, I. HA, Rep. 76 Ve Kultusministerium, Sekt. I, Abt. XV: 31 Bd. 1, fol. 115, GStAPK.

[133] Johann Gustav Büsching, *Reise durch einige Münster und Kirchen des nördlichen Deutschlands im Spätjahr 1817* (Leipzig: Harknoch, 1819), 241.

Chapter 3 Illustrations

Fig. 3.1
Hubert Robert (1733-1808)
La salle des Saisons, 1802-1803 [The grey columns in the background of the painting are from Aachen]
37 cm x 46 cm
Musée du Louvre

Fig. 3.2
Hubert Robert (1733-1808)
La salle du Apollon, 1802-1803[The red columns flanking the Apollo are from Aachen]
64 cm x 82 cm
Pavlovsk Palace

Fig. 3.3
Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640)
Die Anbetung der Hirten, c. 1615-1620
340 cm x 248 cm
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rouen

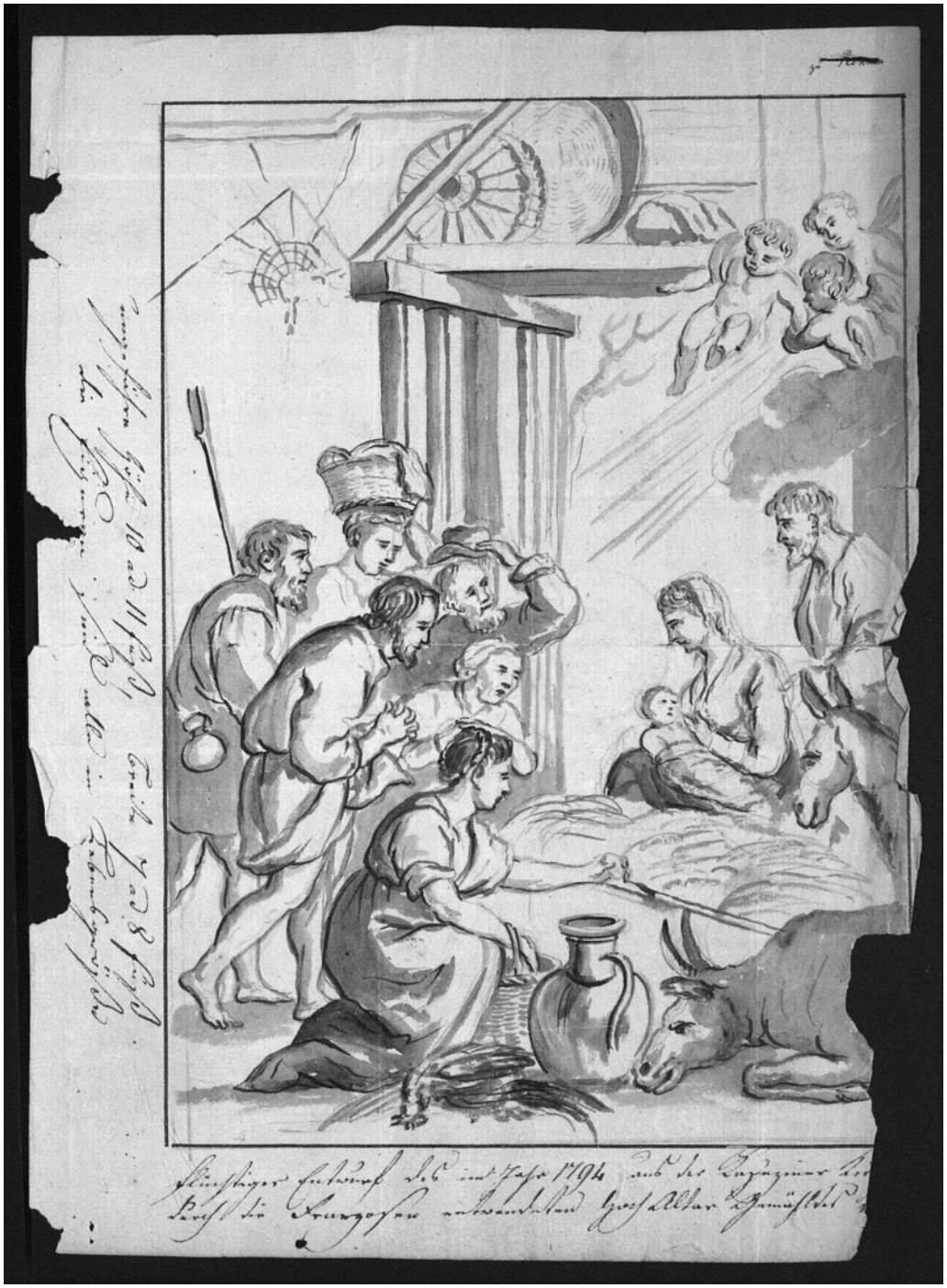

Fig. 3.4
Johann Ferdinand Jansen (1758-1834)
Flüchtiger Entwurf des im Jahr 1794 aus der Kapuziner Kirche durch die Franzosen entwendeten Hoch Altar Gemähldes
I. HA Rep. 81alt Ges. Paris (1807) IX Nr. 30
Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz

Fig. 3.5
George Cruikshank
The Departure of Apollo and the Muses or Farewell to Paris, c. 1815
25 cm x 35 cm
British Museum

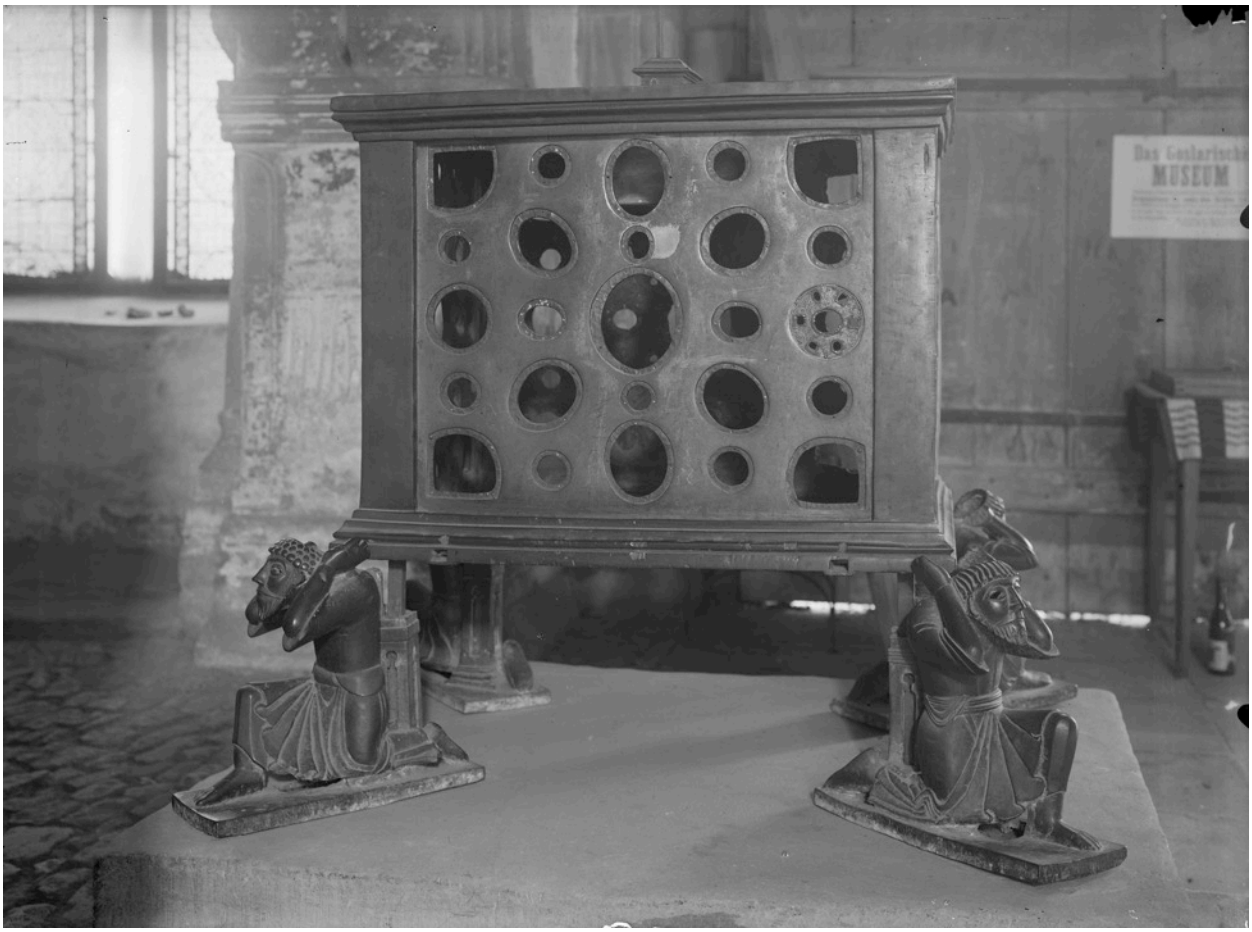

Fig. 3.6
Photographer unknown
Krodo Altar in Goslarer Museum, c. 1916/1923
Foto Archiv Marburg

CHAPTER 4
Stepping Onto the Pedestal: The Liveliness of Art in Prussian Museum Planning, 1815-1820

...In des Lebens frischen Reihn.

— Friedrich Schiller, *Die Antiken zu Paris*

The return of the royal Prussian art collections to Berlin presented an exciting opportunity. After years of lamenting the tragedy of the art object that allowed itself to be packed up and taken away, after years of trying to come to terms with how and in what ways the context of the Napoleonic Louvre had changed the experience of art, and after the difficulties of identifying, locating, and transporting objects back to their original places, it was now possible to begin to plan concretely what to do with reclaimed objects. This was the moment Schiller had promised in 1800, when artworks, finally in the presence of those who knew how to truly understand them, would step off the pedestal "into the fresh dance of life" after their 'stony' tenure in French museums. On one hand, by virtue of their abduction these collections had already become living symbols of Prussian ascendancy and liberation. On the other hand, their vitality was something that could not be taken for granted—it would have to be actively secured. This chapter is about how art was brought to life after its reclamation and how this liveliness became part of its reinscription into the cultural life of the Prussian state.

In 1814 perhaps the most symbolically laden work of art to return from France traversed the central German countryside in a caravan of fifteen crates loaded onto carts on their way east to Berlin. As it passed through towns church bells were rung, and villagers called out "long live the king!" The caravan's detail of twenty-five men and thirty two horses were served refreshments, and young women threw green boughs and flower wreaths in its wake.[1] Well-wishers pinned messages to the sides of the packages, and when the convoy arrived in Berlin these were printed in two volumes as a souvenir of the festive occasion. "Oh if a heart beat in your breast," wrote a young couple from Halberstadt to the shipment, "it would swell up in front of the walls...; because no flame of innocent love for Friedrich Wilhelm blazes higher from its altar than that from our hearts."[2] The impassioned ode was part poetic license and part empirical description. For when the shipment arrived in Halberstadt its chaperones had indeed discovered that the crates were too large to fit through the medieval walls, and it was rerouted around the city. While their abundant messages printed in the commemorative volumes suggest that many

[1] Unknown to Military Government of Halberstadt, 2 June 1814, I. HA, Rep. 91C: Militär- und Zivilgouvernment für das Land zwischen Weser und Elbe zu Halle bzw. Halberstadt, Nr. 1979, GStAPK.

[2] Trinette Koch and Auguste Lucanus in *Vollständige Sammlung der Inschriften, welche an dem zum Transport der Victoria von Paris nach Berlin bestimmten Wagen, bei deren Ankunft in Berlin, befindlich waren*, vol. 2 (Berlin: C.G. Schöne, 1814), 21.

Halberstadters nevertheless saw the caravan in person, a local official bemoaned that due to the detour the residents had been deprived of "a portion of their joy."[3]

The lauded and festooned packages contained the pieces of a statue, perhaps the most poignant and resonant symbol of the Napoleonic period from the Prussian perspective: the goddess Victoria atop a chariot, pulled by four horses all rendered in bronze by Johann Gottfried Schadow in 1793. Seized by the French in 1806, the Quadriga's triumphant return after the fall of Napoleon looms so large in the history and lore of Prussia in this period that it seems both entirely plausible and not a little incredible that such an icon should not fit through the gates of Halberstadt. A caricature commemorating the monument's return to Berlin depicted Victoria driving herself back to her rightful position on top of the Brandenburg Gate, dragging backwards behind her the French convoy that had abducted her several years earlier. [Fig. 4.1] Facing forward, the sculpture was filled with spirited determination and living force. Facing backwards, were its human (and animal) tormentors, exhausted, spiritless, and inert.

The Quadriga has been made to stand for much over the past two centuries since its construction, but it will perhaps not mind if it is made briefly to bear one more representative burden; in any case it cannot do much about it. For in the difference between the Quadriga, whose commemoration was constituted by it driving itself home, and the Quadriga whose commemoration was forestalled because its unwieldy dimensions would not permit its passage through a town's medieval walls, lies the problem of post-war cultural politics with which this chapter is concerned: what kinds of material conditions should be created for artworks whose status as objects of cultural value to the Prussian state had exceeded their material presences? What was to be the relationship between the animate and the inanimate identities of artworks after their restoration? More than a thousand art objects were taken in 1806 by French officials from the royal and Academy collections in Berlin and Potsdam, and incorporated into the massive collections at the Louvre and the French provincial museums that thrived in the Napoleonic regime. When these objects returned from France to Prussia following the reclamations in 1814 and 1815 they brought with them an intense symbolic vitality derived both from their subjugation to the enemy regime and from their eventual deliverance from it. It is odd that the perception of an artwork's vitality should derive from its looting and reclamation— that is, from two events which proved more than ever that not only was it not at all alive, but that it was completely at the mercy of those who were. Many of the messages pinned to the crates of the Quadriga along its journey show this conjunction: "You all were so far away, but it makes no difference if you didn't pick up any French," wrote Carl Ruppin, a saddler from Ziesar, animating the statue's dismembered parts with amusing familiarity before transforming them back into a pile of bronze: "Such an object is cherished, honored, and even if it is often degraded, it is never forsaken."[4] The brothers J. S. and J. M. Kellern of Croppenstedt echoed this dead-or-alive sentiment, "Go home, you royal ornament/ stay firmly in your place…May another enemy never again be so heartless/ as to remove you from this position./ Only when the end of the planet earth approaches,/ is your fall/ into ruin allowed."[5] At the same time that these works returned to Berlin alive in the eyes of their Prussian beholders, they also came back bearing more acutely

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[3] unsigned to Klewitz, Halberstadt, 31 May 1814, I. HA, Rep. 91C: Militär- und Zivilgouvernment für das Land zwischen Weser und Elbe zu Halle bzw. Halberstadt, Nr. 1979, GStAPK.

[4] Carl Ruppin in *Vollständige Sammlung der Inschriften*, 42.

[5] J.S. and J.M. Kellern, in ibid, 57.

than before signs of their material vulnerability and limitations. The intervening period had made clear to the new cultural administrators of the reformed Prussian state that an art object's environment, its physical condition and context mattered more than ever to the kinds of meanings that could be expected to be drawn from it.[6] The challenge would be to establish an environment where art's vitality as well as its materiality could be taken seriously.

The Quadriga exemplifies a momentary difficulty of this duality between vitality and materiality, but at least its ultimate destination was mostly clear, even if it can hardly be said to have driven there itself.[7] Its pedestal, the Brandenburg Gate, was after all one of the most visible monuments of the Prussian capital, and it was re-installed and unveiled there on 9 August 1814, long before most of the other Prussian artworks had even left Paris. For the other crates of art objects that between the winters of 1814 and 1815 returned to Berlin, the cultural epicenter of a newly expanded Prussian state, the possibilities were multiple and contentious. At the center of these was the long brewing plan, interrupted by occupation and defeat, to create a public museum of art from the royal collections. The Napoleonic Louvre and its director, Dominique Vivant Denon, who had personally overseen the despoliations of northern Germany, had given Prussian cultural administrators a powerful example of the utility of such a public institution of culture to the prestige and vibrancy of the civic life of the state.[8] The French example had also, in some ways, confirmed for many Germans that they would do things differently once given the chance. The stakes of museum planning after 1815 were high. Before Napoleon's fall German writers wrote eagerly of the French defiling of art and created an idealist vision of a contrasting German aesthetic encounter. In the words of Schiller, the step off the pedestal and into life's fresh circle was for those who could feel an artwork's living warmth. While this was an argument through which the victims of French looting could preserve a claim to aesthetic ownership even in the aftermath of their states' material losses, with the return of the collections it worked poorly as a concrete plan of action. The task would be to translate the perception of statues that step off their pedestals into the logistical exigencies of planning a museum institution. The following chapter will address the ways in which cultural administrators in Berlin tried to make Prussian art collections, bursting now with both fragility and life, step *onto* their pedestals—that is, to ensure their vitality within institutional constraints.

The Academy of Arts Exhibition of 1815

In 1815 the Academy of Arts staged an exhibition to celebrate the return of art objects to Berlin and Potsdam. The "Paintings and Artworks That Have Been Recaptured Through the Bravery of our Fatherland's Troops" on display in the Academy building on Unter den Linden included 59 paintings that had been seized by the French and taken to Paris after the Prussian defeats of 1806.[9] Having escaped "ingestion into the private gut of the hydra," as one particularly

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[6] See Chapters 1-3.

[7] The Quadriga was restored to the Brandenburg Gate in the middle of the night in August 1814, though in a somewhat altered form: to indicate her triumphant return she was given a stock topped with the newly minted symbol of Prussian military distinction, the iron cross, upon which rested the Prussian eagle. Michael S. Cullen, Uwe Kieling, *Das Brandenburger Tor: Geschichte eines deutschen Symbols* (Berlin: Argon, 1990), 47-48.

[8] See Chapter 2.

[9] The Prussian Academy of Arts was founded in 1696 on the model of the French Academie Royale by the Elector Friedrich III. After its neglect by the Elector's successors

patriotic commentator wrote in a review of the exhibit for the *Berlinische Nachrichten*, these works could be seen for the price of six groschen between the hours of 10am-4:30pm during the week and from 11am on Sundays between October 4 to November 5, 1815.[10] A catalogue by the exhibit's main curator, Johann Gottfried Schadow, containing extensive descriptions of each work, as well as a list of unexhibited sculptures, busts, coins, medals, and additional paintings along with their current locations, was available for purchase at the entrance for two groschen.[11]

The Academy exhibition of 1815 was a somewhat hastily planned affair. However, that it happened on such short notice— the first steps towards organizing the event took place only two months before its opening— indicates the importance of a formal exhibition to the process of repatriating the royal art collections. Initially Schadow, in consultation with administrators in the Hofmarschallamt and the Ministery of the Interior, had planned to include only artworks that had most recently returned from France, but the selection was expanded to include works that were repatriated earlier in the year. Because many of these objects had already been re-installed in their pre-war settings in the royal palaces, they had to be taken down and moved once again in order to be hung in the provisional galleries at the Academy.[12] This was not a festival of re-entry into the city, as with the convoys of Italian antiquities into Paris in 1798, but rather an attempt at reconsecrating works that had been forcibly assimilated into the cultural self-presentation of the Napoleonic state. This reconsecration functioned in three ways. First, it provided visitors with an indication that the royal collections would occupy a more active position in civic life. As Christoph Vogtherr writes, "the return of artworks from France marked a new form of public awareness and the adoption of the idea of art as public property."[13] Most important to this end was the decision to limit the works on display to those belonging directly to the king, excluding the significant stores of repatriated objects from the Kunstkammer, which had been under the administration of the Academy of Arts before 1806. As such, the Academy Exhibition of 1815 was not only an effort to herald the return of looted collections to Prussian ownership, but was more importantly an attempt to establish a new kind of cultural ownership driven by the

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through the eighteenth century, in 1786 the Academy underwent a broad reform, initiated by its members, that increased its stature in Prussian intellectual and culture life. From this time it formalized its administrative structure, furthered its educational programming for the training of artists, including for the royal porcelain manufactury and through the foundation of the Building Academy, administered prizes, organized exhibitions, and held meetings for its membership to discuss matters of artistic import. In 1809 it was put under the administration of the Ministery of the Interior, and in 1817 under the new Ministry of Culture. This newly structured close relationship to the state would be a matter of much debate in the first half of the nineteenth century. Hans Gerhard Hannesen, *Die Akademie der Künste in Berlin: Facetten einer 300jährigen Geschichte* (Berlin: Akademie der Künste, 2005), 20-22, 111-112.

[10] "Notwendige Empfindungen und fromme Wünsche beim Anblick der wiedereroberten preussischen Kunstschätze," *Berlinische Nachrichten von Staats- und gelehrten Sachen* 128 (26 October 1815).

[11] *Verzeichnis von Gemälden und Kunstwerken welche durch die Tapferkeit der vaterländischen Truppen wieder erobert worden…sind* (Berlin: Louis Quiem, 1815).

[12] Bénédicte Savoy, *Kunstraub: Napoleons Konfiszierungen in Deutschland und die europäischen Folgen* (Wien: Böhlau, 2011), 386.

[13] Christoph Martin Vogtherr, "Das koenigliche Museum zu Berlin. Planungen und Konzeption des ersten Berliner Kunstmuseums," *Jahrbuch Der Berliner Museen* 39 (1997): 54.

Academy's interest in centralization, art history, and artistic education. Indeed, the exhibition elicited many calls to make this exceptional access to the collections of the monarchy into a permanent feature of the city's cultural landscape. The anonymous patriot we thank for the image of the French hydra's private gut, was an ardent articulator of this position:

> "Only what one uses vivaciously, and owns productively…can one actually have. The word 'actually' [*wirklich*] comes from 'to act' [*Werken*] and 'to act upon' [*Wirken*]. To actually have something means to act in the spirit of ownership. One can only have artworks when they are consistently and freely accessible, and can transfer their deep meanings to us and bring our talent to fruition."[14]

It was an ambitious call to arms: not only the ownership of the bravely recaptured works could be guaranteed by their integration into a publicly accessible collection, but their very reality was dependent on their circulation in and relevance to contemporary public life. Without the Academy Exhibition of 1815, our patriot intoned, these objects might very well literally and figuratively disappear.

Second, the exhibition's planners signaled a new era for these objects through their curation. Rather than exhibiting all of the royal collections that had been reclaimed Schadow made a careful choice. Of the 86 paintings initially selected for inclusion a few weeks before the opening— a small fraction of the total number of works reclaimed— only 59 were eventually chosen for exhibition[15]. In contrast to the large-scale display of a mass of objects in the Louvre, familiar from the engravings of Denon sitting amongst piles of spoils in the basement of the museum, this idea of public property emphasized the Academy's control over reclaimed collections through the curatorial powers of inclusion and exclusion. “The exhibition makes clear in a visible way the mechanisms through which the exiled artworks would be lent a new aura after their return," writes Bénédicte Savoy.[16] Public property would be defined, the Academy's efforts signaled, in museological terms.

Finally, the reinscription of reclaimed art was also achieved by putting the exhibition in the context of Prussian victory over France. The full title of the exhibition catalogue made clear to visitors that the public display of these works reflected not only the Academy's investment in the artistic patrimony of the state, but the military's as well: *Catalogue of the Paintings and Artworks, which, through the bravery of the fatherland's troops were won back and are publically exhibited in the halls of the Royal Academy of Arts under provisions from the Honorable Ministry of the Interior for the benefit of the injured warriors of the fatherland* [...][17]

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[14] Anonymous, “Notwendige Empfindungen und fromme Wünsche” *Berlinische Nachrichten von Staats- und gelehrten Sachen* (26 October 1815).

[15] Johann Gottfried Schadow, *Kunstwerke und Kunstansichten: Ein Quellenwerk zur Berliner Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte zwischen 1780 und 1845*, Götz Eckhardt, ed., vol. 2 (Berlin: Henschelverlag Kunst und Gesellschaft, 1987), 562.

[16] Savoy, *Kunstraub*, 386.

[17] *Verzeichniß von Gemälden und Kunstwerken, welche durch die Tapferkeit der vaterländischen Truppen wieder erobert worden und auf Verfügung eines Hohen Ministerii des Innern in den Sälen der königl. Akademie der Künste zu Gunsten der verwundeten Krieger des*

In addition, the first paintings visible to a visitor to the Academy Exhibition were in fact not reclaimed works, but rather a group of looted portraits "belonging to Prince Blücher von Wahlstadt, and displayed with his most generous permission" as the catalogue explained.[18] Blücher had taken these paintings of the Bonaparte family circle by David, Gerard, and other contemporary French artists while he was quartered at St. Cloud earlier that year.[19] Their presence at the opening of the exhibition emphasized the works' status as trophies. Perhaps the most iconic of the group, David's *Napoleon Crossing the Alps*, featured the toppled emperor's outstretched right arm pointing now, not to future victory at Marengo, but to the walls of the Prussian Academy in which it had been safely incarcerated and neutralized.

These trophies, however, were also part of the Academy's project to establish a new civic cultural order in Berlin. The French portraits were not only spoils of war and testaments to victory, they were also displayed as concrete evidence of the artistic prowess that could be achieved through the creation of public art museums. These were the fruits of a "renaissance of art" in France, occasioned, in spite of its tyrannous patron, by that nation's commitment to the public exhibition of their collections. "Even if [David] paints like a slave," our patriot conceded as he passed by these works on his way through the Academy galleries, "he nonetheless paints like the slave of a great tyrant, who has given him the opportunity to see something and to learn…"[20]

The Academy Exhibition of 1815 thus issued a powerful promise that through the tools of public display, curatorial intervention, and the support of state power the royal art collections could acquire new civic utility. These "living teachers" hanging on the walls of the Academy spoke not only of the power of a public museum as an assurance of the artistic life of the nation, but also served as the requisite institutional stimuli for the animation of the works themselves. "Dispersed among the palaces they are dead," wrote our anonymous patriot. Friedrich Wilhelm Gubitz, a writer and professor of art, put the notion more positively, asserting its political expediency: "Not only the historical, but also the individual value of these witnesses to the artistic powers of yore desires recognition, and demands it especially in a time in which art,

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Vaterlandes...öffentlich ausgestellt sind [...] (Berlin, 1815). The title echoes the French catalogue of the exhibition of the spoils from the northern German campaigns in 1807: *Statues, Bustes, Bas-Reliefs, Bronzes, et autres antiquites, peintures, dessins, et objets curieux, conquis par la Grande Armée, dans les années 1806 et 1807; dont l'exposition a eu lieu le 14 Octobre 1807, premier anniversaire de la Bataille d'Jéna* (Paris: Dubray, 1807).

[18] Johann Gottfried Schadow, *Verzeichnis von Gemälden und Kunstwerken welche durch die Tapferkeit der vaterländischen Truppen wieder erobert worden […]* (Berlin: Louis Quiem, 1815), 86.

[19] The recollections of Eberhard von Groote of his meeting with Blücher in St. Cloud, before he was charged with leading the reclamation of artworks in the Louvre in 1815, indicates that the field marshall had no qualms about looting French collections himself, even as he sought to undo the looting of the Napoleonic period. Groote writes that Blücher encouraged him to take a book from the palace as a souvenir, remarking that those volumes with 'St. Cloud' stamped on their bindings would be particularly suitable for this purpose. Eberhard von Groote, "Die Wegnahme der durch die Franzosen geraubten Kunstschätze in Paris," *Agrippina: Zeitschrift für Poesie, Literatur, Kritik und Kunst* 1, no. 25 (25 February 1824): 98.

[20] Anonymous, "Notwendige Empfindungen…," *Berlinische Nachrichten* (1815).

having oscillated between being and not-being as a result of political illnesses, can recover with a return to youthful life…"[21]

These ubiquitous and familiar calls for the figurative resuscitation of art in a museum setting, while a convenient discursive foil to the cries of art's death in its Parisian imprisonment, could have, however, no bearing on the strategic concerns of how to make this magic happen. "The noblest metal is nobler when it transforms itself into the treasures of spirit," wrote Gubitz, but with no indication in practical terms of how this transformation ought to take place.[22]

But in the conception of Prussian museum planners after 1815 the idea that art would speak for itself was not just an indication of the object's vitality; it was also an assertion of the work's ability to make pragmatic declarations about how it should be integrated into a museum institution, and how it should be viewed there. This was Schiller's poetic device made into logistical practice. When art spoke in these formulations, it spoke of the museum itself. For those who saw the exhibition as a first step towards the end of a future public museum, the vision of the objects come alive allowed important structural questions to be answered— Where should collections go? What effect should they have? What kind of art history should they represent?— without undermining the primacy of the artworks themselves. As the history of the Napoleonic Kunstraub in the previous chapters has shown, the inanimateness of the art object was a source of tragic limitations: it was breakable, loot-able, defenseless, and dependent. As dead, art made itself vulnerable to any number of "political illnesses." Alive, it could secure its own autonomy and determine its own fate, and after 1815 this formulation no longer concerned an aspirational future, but rather expressed matters of immediate expedience. The task of creating a new cultural institutional order in post-war Prussia could be performed by the art itself. The remainder of this chapter will investigate the ways in which the speaking object came to be an important feature of early museum planning in this transitional post-war decade.

The *Danziger Altar*'s Statement to His Friends

It is perhaps no surprise that the work in the Academy Exhibition around which so many of these questions of placement, interpretation, and ownership coalesced most contentiously should have been the work summoned to speak up on its own behalf. The so-called '*Danziger Altar*,' taken by Denon from the Marienkirche in Danzig in 1807, sent to Berlin in 1815, and restored by Karl Friedrich Wilhelm Bock before its exhibition, was the most evocative of the 59 paintings on display in more ways than one. In its closed position, this fifteenth century funereal triptych of the Last Judgment, now commonly attributed to Hans Memling, conveys a solemn affair.[23] On the exterior of each of its two side panels a figure kneels in solemn prayer: the commissioner of the work on one side, his wife on the other, each as stolid as the stone-y statues—the Virgin and Child, and St. Michael with a demon, each in a small niche—depicted

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[21] Friedrich Wilhelm Gubitz, "Die Ausstellung der wieder ersiegten Kunstwerke in den Sälen der Königlichen Akademie (Der Ertrag für die Verwundeten)," *Berlinische Nachrichten von Staats- und gelehrten Sachen* 122 (12 October 1815).

[22] Gubitz, "Die Ausstellung," *Berlinische Nachrichten* (1815).

[23] On this work see Barbara Lane, *Hans Memling: Master Painter in Fifteenth-Century Bruges* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2009), 129-135; Aby Warburg, "Flandrische Kunst und florentinische Frührenaissance Studien," *Jahrbuch der Königlich Preussischen Kunstsammlungen* 23, no. 3/4 (1902): 247–66; Willi Drost, *Hans Memling: Das Jüngste Gericht in der Marienkirche zu Danzig* (Vienna: Anton Schrill, 1941).

respectively behind them. There is little indication in the portrayal of the dramatic scene that unfolds on its interior. Opening its wings reveals naked bodies emerging from their earthen graves, splayed, half in tumultuous fright and half in dignified calm, across the landscape as the damned are separated from the saved. [Fig. 4.2]

The struggle transpires under the figure of Christ, who sits mounted on a rainbow surrounded by apostles and angels, a lily extending from the left side of his head and a red sword from his right. At the center of the action stands St. Michael, his statue-like presence on the altar's exterior having been brought to life. His gleaming armor reflects the battle of humanity around him as he weighs a pair of bodies to determine their fate. Black-skinned demons herd the unfortunate into the right panel, a firey chasm of tumbling, desperate flesh. On the left panel, St. Peter takes the hands of the righteous, as they are fitted with robes and file into the marble hall of heaven, their entrance serenaded by an orchestra of angels and a shower of flowers. It is a painting that, though its beauty was said to have transcended the purview of human creation, is also deeply corporeal. The eighteenth and nineteenth century commentary on the work featured particularly the impressive "diverse groupings and juxtapositions of an innumerable quantity of figures" that populate its surface, oddly emphasized through their elongation.[24] Some writers pointed out perhaps with raised brow that the descending figures exhibit more nuance and liveliness of expression than the rather flat affects of those ascending [Fig. 4.3].[25] In the exhibition catalogue, however, Schadow maintained that despite the numerous justifiable quips about its form and execution, "If an advanced age, much and extensively applied effort, vast knowledge and talent and the rarity of a master's works give a work of art great value, then this painting…must be deservedly counted amongst the most valuable artistic treasures that exist anywhere, because there is nowhere else anything that can be compared to it."[26] It appeared in the catalogue under Number 1.

Although the *Danziger Altar* was the prize object in the Academy Exhibition in the fall of 1815, its future was highly uncertain. When the governor of Danzig, Eberhard Massenbach, had called for the work's reclamation in April 1814, weeks before the Prussian delegation arrived in Paris, he specifically stipulated for its speedy return to Danzig:

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[24] "Seltene Kunstwerke: das von Danzig nach Paris abgeführte Gemälde vom jüngsten Gericht," *Zeitung für die Elegante Welt* 165 (15 October 1807): 1313-1314. The astronomer Johann Bernoulli derided the elongation of the bodies, "as if they were being tortured." Johann Bernoulli, *Reisen durch Brandenburg, Pommern, Preußen, Curland, Russland und Pohlen in den Jahren 1777 und 1778*, vol. 1, *Reise nach Danzig und Beschreibung der Merkürdigkeiten dieser Stadt* (Leipzig: Caspar Fritsch, 1779), 152. Carl Benjamin Lengnich, the deacon of the Marienkirche in Danzig where the altar was kept, took exception to this interpretation, arguing that the stretched bodies were an artistic device through which to articulate "his own individual ideal of a resurrected dead body." Carl Benjamin Lengnich, "Berichtigungen von Herrn Bern. Tagebuch von Danzig" in *Reisen durch Brandenburg*, Johann Bernoulli, vol. 2, *Rückreise von Danzig über Stettin nach Berlin* (Leipzig: Caspar Fritsch, 1779), 226. Schadow offers a justification for this feature of the work in the exhibition catalogue, noting that "In the fourteenth century the academic study of naked figures was not practiced." Johann Gottfried Schadow, *Verzeichnis von Gemälden und Kunstwerken welche durch die Tapferkeit der vaterländischen Truppen wieder erobert worden […]* (Berlin: Louis Quiem, 1815), 8.

[25] "Seltene Kunstwerke" (17 October 1807): 165.

[26] Schadow, *Verzeichnis von Gemälden* (1815), 27.

> "the citizens [of Danzig] have loudly expressed to me the wish, that […] a painting from one of their main churches, that was robbed from them in 1807 by the French and transported to Paris, be returned. I believe to advocate for the wishes of these citizens, when I entreat you […] to […] bring this painting, which was for years displayed as the pride of said cathedral, temporarily back to Berlin, from whence it can then be brought here [to Danzig]."[27]

Prussian officials forcibly seized the work from the Louvre in July 1815, and it travelled back to Berlin along with other royal collections. However, once on display on Unter den Linden local cultural luminaries such as Schadow and Karl Friedrich Schinkel, backed by the Academy of Arts, tried to make provisions for it to stay in Berlin.[28] The altar would have been "the most meaningful prize for a future museum," Schadow wrote later in his autobiography.[29] In a letter to the president of West Prussia, a group of "Artists and Friends of the Arts of the City of Berlin," formulated a plea to provincial authorities to back their wish to incorporate the work into to the collections for a prospective public museum of art. In addition to offering to host a competition of artists to furnish a replacement painting for the Marienkirche to be made according to the church's specifications, the signatories also argued that their claim to keep the painting was backed by the rights of art's public accessibility.

> "The rights secured by state law and the private rights of the church to ownership of the Danziger painting are countered on the other side of the scale by: first, the right that the Fatherland has to take possession of privately owned works of art; second the right of art itself, if private ownership impedes its free use; third, if the right of ownership has been won with the blood of the people, each of them has an equal right."[30]

This was quite a bold assertion on the behalf of the Academy, and despite its claim of a variety of '*Rechte*' through which the painting must remain in Berlin, these claims were with uncertain legal support or precedent. The reclamation of artworks in other Prussian territories had, as we have seen in Chapter 3, proceeded according to quite the opposite logic, in which objects were at least supposed to be reinstalled in their original pre-war contexts, regardless of their public accessibility and art historical importance. Perhaps for this reason the letter may never have been

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[27] Massenbach to Hardenberg, 19 April 1814, Akten und Inventare der Plankammer, Nr. 149, fol. 62, SPGS.

[28] Friedrich Förster claims that it was the first painting to have been handed over to the Prussians after the army stormed the museum— a contestation of the insistence from Cologne that Ruben's *Crucifixion of St. Peter* was the first painting to have been taken off the wall (see Chapter 3). Friedrich Förster, *Die Sängerfahrt: eine Neujahrsgabe für Freunde der Dichtkunst und Malerey* (Berlin: In der Mauererschen Buchhandlung, 1818), iii.

[29] Schadow, *Kunstwerke und Kunstansichten*, 563.

[30] Schadow et al. to Schön, July 1816, in Paul Simson, *Die Rückkehr des "Jüngsten Gerichts" nach Danzig* (Danzig: A. W. Kafemann, 1916), 9-10.

actually sent, rejected in favor of a more tempered plea.[31] The revised version asked that officials in Danzig consider new terms for an exchange in which the Prussian capital would retain possession of the painting as "national property," to "serve as a model for the renaissance of German art and for the glory of German might," even though it would remain officially the property of Danzig; in return, Danzig would receive a new altar, either a copy of the original or of Raphael's Sistine Madonna in Dresden, as well as a guarantee of three funded student positions reserved for Danzig artists at the Academy in Berlin.[32] Within this new formulation of their request, the writers conceded that there were two legitimate claims to the painting's ownership, and they attempted to triangulate between them: on one side stood the legal right to the preservation of private property and on the other stood a newly emerging right of humanity to the artistic treasures of the fatherland. One of the letter signers, the classicist Aloys Hirt, who we have come across before and will encounter more thoroughly shortly, followed up with a personal appeal that struck at the heart of the difficulty: "I do not doubt that in Danzig there will be some appreciators; but in general it would remain there a dead artistic treasure."[33] Isolated and unseen in the Marienkirche, Hirt and his colleagues argued, the altar would be a curiosity, not an artwork. Without a knowledgeable public to appreciate its merits it was nothing but a mute and inanimate object.

It is completely fitting in this context and also quite remarkable that the *Danziger Altar*, the most evocative and contested work in the Academy exhibition, should enter the conversation on its own museological destiny. It did so courtesy of our patriot from the *Berlinische Nachrichten* cited above, who appended its soliloquy as an addendum to his own exhibition review under the coy heading: "Statement by the Danzig painting depicting the Last Judgment, to his friends."[34] In this two-page editorial, the altar offered its own straight forward and practical opinion on its past, its future, and on the direction of cultural politics in post-Napoleonic Prussia more broadly. Its imagined testimony on its own behalf aimed to unseat the human disagreement over the object's optimal physical location by placing the authority to decide within the painting itself. If the purpose of a public museum was to create a place where art alone "could produce energetic and powerful life," than the *Danziger Altar*'s reported entreaty in the pages of the *Berlinische Nachrichten* was the consummate museum object.[35] Befitting its subject matter, the painting stepped forward to offer the last word on its own fate.

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[31] Danziger historian Paul Simson speculates that because the letter has no number date and because he could not locate a copy of it in the records of the Danzig municipal archives that it was not sent, though he attributes this to the fact that the indemnities it offered the Marienkirche and the city of Danzig were less than previous offers. Simson, *Die Rückkehr*, 10.

[32] Schadow et al. to Schön, 22 July 1816 in Simson, *Die Rückkehr*, 11-12.

[33] Hirt to Schön, 29 July 1816 in Simson, *Die Rückkehr*, 13.

[34] Anonymous, "Schluß der im 128 Stück dieser Zeitung abgebrochenen "Notwendigen Empfindungen und frommen Wünsche, beim Anblick der wiedereroberten preussischen Kunstschätze." —Worte des Danziger Bildes, das jüngste Gericht vorstellend, an seine Freunde," *Berlinische Nachrichten von Staats- und gelehrten Sachen* 130 (31 October 1815).

[35] Karl Sigmund Franz Freiherr vom Stein zum Altenstein, "Denkschrift über die Leitung des preußischen Staates (an Hardenberg)," in *Die Reorganisation des Preussischen Staates unter Stein und Hardenberg; veranlasst und unterstützt durch die preussische Archivverwaltung in Verbindung mit der Notgemeinschaft der deutschen Wissenschaft*, ed. Georg Winter and Rudolf Vaupel, vol. 1, *Allgemeine Verwaltungs- und Behördenreform* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1931), 453.

The altar began its speech by coupling its recent fate as an object with its content as a work of art:

> "Before the Savior came the Antichrist, who added me to his stolen treasures in order to reinforce his empire of lies; by the time his talons ferreted me out from the farthest corner of this vanquished German pedestal, I had lay interred in the same place in a church in Danzig for centuries. […] but I was only first truly known when the tragedy of war drew a mass of people to this place. Declared as a fitting prize by the French, I landed in the museum in Paris, and I would lie if I said I had not found the journey most useful; […] I came to belong once again truly to the living. It was my own resurrection."[36]

Likening its transportation from the Marienkirche in Danzig to the Louvre in Paris to the bodies crawling from their graves towards the afterlife as portrayed on its surface, the *Danziger Altar* launched into a passionate entreaty for the creation of a Prussian public museum of art in Berlin, and for its own inclusion in it. In a variation on the Schillerian theme, the altar argued that its experience in the Louvre had resuscitated it, and that only its continued installation in a similar public national context could ensure that it stay among the sentient. Death was not France, death was the church wall in Danzig, where "a few generations of sextons made some profit by showing me to travellers, who in those parts are not often artists…"[37] Now back on Prussian territory, the altar professed to have discovered its true calling as an instructional work, one with the power to inspire future generations of artists: "I, the Danziger Painting, who am a living example of such an unfortunately as of yet fruitless existence, urgently call upon you to plead with your lord and king to exhibit these trophies of war in a Prussian-German museum for the artistic education of peace. […] I am only something in a place where education and achievement are in practice."[38]

The *Danziger Altar* combated the fictitiousness of its claim to speak for itself by asserting that its perspective was not merely its own, but rather that of its beholders, who had stood in front of it and exclaimed at its excellence: "I have heard one utterance from you, it was the utterance of all, and this was the dearest to me of all those that have been spoken before me, and it is as follows: "[…] this work has a far higher inner purpose than to be a curiosity in a far flung city, or to be a benefice for the servants of the church."" By corroborating its argument with the witness of human beings, overheard and relayed by the painting but not produced by it, the altar fended off the skeptics of its article's conceit. This moment in the altar's statement demonstrates that it is had not only become articulate on behalf of itself, but on behalf of its viewers too. It is not, thus, as Horst Bredekamp has argued, an example of a "spirit in the work that appears to the viewer as his own thought."[39] Instead, the altar extracted its viewer's thoughts from its viewer and confronted him with them as ammunition for an argument on its own behalf. The *Danziger*

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[36] Anonymous, "Worte des Danziger Bildes" (31 October 1815).
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Horst Bredekamp, "Das sprechende Werk: Hans Memlings Danziger Altar," *Lebenswelt und Wissenschaft*, ed. Carl F. Gethmann (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2011), 205.

Altar's statement to his friends reveals an author with human-like subjectivity and the rhetorical capabilities to match. It is not merely reflective or representational. It is oppositional and antagonistic. Before you have heard it, it has already heard you.

The altar ended its statement with an assertion of its omniscience, presiding not only over the minds of its beholders but over time itself:

> "If these words are for naught, if you do not feel their deep truths and you do not want to do anything about it, then I, an old honest German painting, have seen farther than you, and all will remain as it was, because it will not yet be time. Adieu."[40]

For the disenchanted reader, for whom the "Statement by the Danzig painting depicting the Last Judgment, to his friends," could be no more than the masked proxy for a human perspective— that is for our anonymous patriot—this ultimatum might appear to be a concession of its ultimate weakness. The altar could not *actually* take up its quill, and must thus end on an agnostic note. I think we must not, however, dismiss the altar's feat of speech as a clever ruse. While the *Danziger Altar*'s brief feuillitonic career was a clear moment of humor, it also expressed the aspiration of what art should do in its newly public context, a major concern for museum advocates in Berlin. The article (and the fantasy it expressed) was a strategic if fantastical ploy at a moment when so many questions remained to be solved about the museological fate of reclaimed artworks in the cultural institutional landscape of postwar Prussia. If the Altar of Krodo had been able to speak there would have been no question about its final destination. As it was, of course, the restoration of art called for significant human intervention. The speaking altar might be seen thus as an expression of the disappointing muteness of art in these lively times. The altar that gave clear instructions for its installation, that mandated its own viewership, and solved its own problems, was a convenient artifact of wishful thinking.[41] The ideal museum object was not only one who came alive under the institution's auspices, but one who was its own curator, who could determine what those enlivening auspices might be.[42] Further, however, the notion that art might come alive at and in support of a public

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[40] Anonymous, "Worte des Danziger Bildes" (31 October 1815).

[41] Although the altar's statement and the preceding article whose author I have been calling "the patriot" are unsigned, it may be surmised that both pieces were the work of Schadow (or someone in his circle), given that the altar is attributed to Michael Wohlgemuth, and the same assignation appears in Schadow's Academy exhibition catalogue.

[42] There is a delightful resonance in the "Statement by the Danzig painting depicting the Last Judgment, to his friends" with the polemic essay, "New Apology of the Letter h By Itself" in which the eighteenth century philsoopher Johann Georg Hamann summons the object of his critical commentary, in this case the letter *h*, to life in order to protest its elimination through the proposed spelling reforms of Christian Tobias Damm in 1773. For Hamann, however, the animation of the object served as a critique of rationalization through the institutionalization of language; for the anonymous patriot, the animation of the *Danziger Altar* was a voice for institutionalization, this time framed as the guarantor of life rather than its destroyer. "The letter is flesh, and your dictionaries are straw!" wrote Hamann. "The catalogue is what makes the painting flesh," the patriot seems to answer. Johann Georg Hamann, "Neue Apologie des Buchstaben *h*," in *Sämtliche Werke,* ed. Josef Nadler, vol. 3 (Vienna: Herder, 1951), 107;

exhibition was rooted in the emphasis on art's autonomous moral aesthetic power in German cultural discourse at the turn of the nineteenth century. It is to the link between the imagination of what art could do aesthetically and how art should appear museologically that we now turn.

Aloys Hirt and the Characteristic

A visitor to the Academy exhibition of 1815 would have been met with an extra reminder of the frustrating silence of the works on display and the urgency of their imagined ability to speak. At the entrance to the exhibit one could purchase not only Schadow's official catalogue, but a competing critical analysis of it that sought to dismantle its credentials and assertions at nearly every turn. *On This Year's Exhibition at the Royal Academy* was the work of Aloys Hirt, whose 24 pages of revisionist readings of the catalogue's art historical interpretations were a defiant claim to establish his own authority as a scholar of art as opposed to the expertise of Schadow, an artist but not an academician. "The correct judgment about what distinguishes a painting…does not always suffice to identify that unique thing that characterizes a school, a master, or an epoch. For this much looking, much comparing, and a long and continuous investigation is required, for which not even the most valiant artist has time," he wrote pointedly.[43]

The main matter of disagreement between Hirt and Schadow was over the *Danziger Altar*, and on a subject about which the work's testimony in the pages of the *Berlinische Nachrichten* had offered little insight: its authorship. Before the Academy members had formulated their appeals to the West Prussian administration, they had solicited their help in establishing the provenance of the work through local archival records and manuscript collections.[44] Important to the case for its incorporation in a national collection of art was, after all, how 'national' the painting was. In Paris it had been called the work of the Van Eyck brothers, a move that firmly inscribed it in the canon of the northern Renaissance and the history of German painting, and which was for this reason also popular among German commentators.[45] Based on historic references from Danzig and the peculiarities of the composition, Schadow thought it to be the work of Michael Wolgemut, teacher of Albrecht Dürer and illustrator of the *Nuremberg Chronicle*— an even more staunchly Germanic ascription.[46] This was, however, only a theory, and the painting's true authorship remained an open question through this period. As Schadow wrote in his catalogue description, "The preciousness of this picture and its beauty make it worthwhile to continue the research [into its provenance.]"[47] In the exhibition itself, a

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translation in Johann Georg Hamann "New Apology of the Letter *h*," in *Writings on Philosophy and Language*, ed. Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 163.

[43] Though he does not mention Schadow explicitly, he is presumably the 'valiant artist' to whom Hirt somewhat patronizingly refers. Aloys Hirt, *Ueber die diesjährige Kunstausstellung auf der Königlichen Akademie* (Berlin: 1815), 3-4.

[44] According to Simson, this research did not turn up any helpful information about the painting, and its identification could only be definitively established in 1847. Simson, *Die Rückkehr*, 8.

[45] This was also the ascription of Gustav Waagen, who would go on to be the director of the gallery of paintings in the Royal Museum. Gustav Friedrich Waagen, *Ueber Hubert und Johann van Eyck* (Breslau: Im Verlag von Josef Max und Komp., 1822), 244-252.

[46] Schadow, *Verzeichnis von Gemälden*, 1-7.

[47] ibid, 2.

copy of a comparable woodcut from the *Chronicle* was available in both its German and Latin editions next to the altar, so that visitors could trace its origins for themselves. [Fig. 4.4]

Hirt, who had emphasized that the work's transfer to Danzig would amount to its death, had a different assessment. "This exceptional work, which has rightfully incited much amazement, is especially pleasant for us in that we recognized in it an old friend at first sight," he wrote.[48] This old friend, however, was no German, but a master from Antwerp, Hugo von Goes, whose work Hirt had come to know through his Italian travels. Through careful comparison of elements in three different works by Goes, Hirt refuted Schadow's assumption that the altar clearly derived from "the seat of German style and art."[49]

That Hirt should insist on a non-German master of the Danzig Altar appears counterintuitive for such a staunch advocate of the object's inclusion in a museum increasingly framed as a seat of national artistic preservation. Although the altar's statement to its friends had given no definitive account of its origin, it had repeatedly referred to itself as German, and linked this identity with the vitality of its existence in a "Prussian-German museum." The altar wrote, "if a painting such as myself were hanging in a church in Danzig, this would be like a great general or statesman or scholar who could save, lead, or educate the fatherland, a major or civilian guard…or sexton of some far off city where he has good friends but achieves nothing."[50] Hirt, however, had a different kind of idea about what constituted a living artwork and its ability to speak for itself. Rather than as in the altar's statement which relied on a fantastical premise to obfuscate the work's silence, Hirt sought to combine material reality with vital power. A reviewer of his treatise on the Academy exhibition wrote tellingly, "Although it appears somewhat late, this contribution to the art loving public will be quite welcome, as it holds the individual perspectives of a man…in whose admirable memory lives the entire history of art, not in names, but rather in the paintings and artworks themselves…"[51] Through a theory about the unique qualities of art objects, Hirt built a different answer to the question of how to ensure art's engagement in public life while maintaining control over it, an answer which denied the conjured liveliness of the *Danziger Altar*, as well as the triumphalism of the Academy Exhibition. Hirt pointed instead to the material opacity of the royal collections— their solidity and resistance to flights of spiritual fancy, whether nationalist symbolism or animating metaphor— as the guiding principle for their museological display.

We have encountered Aloys Hirt in many different contexts thus far, as a critic of the Louvre, as a proponent of plaster casts, and as an active member of the Academy of Sciences. Most significant to the story, however, is Hirt's role as the originator of the idea for a public museum in Prussia, which he set forth in a 1797 lecture for the Academy of Arts on the occasion of then king Friedrich Wilhelm II's birthday.[52] In his remarks, Hirt laid out the benefits of the centralization of the royal art collections into a single repository for the education of artists and

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[48] Hirt, *Ueber die diesjährige Kunstausstellung*, 4.

[49] Schadow, *Verzeichnis von Gemälden* (1815), 3.

[50] "Worte des Danziger Bildes," (31 October 1815).

[51] Review of *Ueber die diesjährige Kunstausstellung auf der Königlichen Akademie*, by Aloys Hirt, *Berlinische Nachrichten von Staats- und gelehrten Sachen*, 130 (21 October 1815).

[52] Aloys Hirt, "Ueber den Kunstschatz der Königlich-Preußischen Hauses: Eine Vorlesung gehalten bei der öffentlichen Sitzung der Akademie der schönen Künste und mechanischen Wissenschaften, den 25. Sept. 1797," *Berlinische Archiv der Zeit und ihres Geschmacks* (December 1797).

the cultivation of the public at home and abroad. Particularly as Napoleon's army was packing up the collections of Italian cities, which had formed the material basis of art historical training for generations of German artists and scholars, including Hirt, the centralization and curation of the royal stores of art was a matter of particular urgency.[53] A year later he followed this initial concept with a more detailed proposal presented now to the new king Friedrich Wilhelm III, which addressed the logistical questions surrounding the building, the arrangement of artworks, and the employment of supervisory personnel.[54]

In these twin visions, Hirt articulated the primary role of the museum institution to be the education of artists and the public, or as he wrote somewhat opaquely, "the cultivation of taste," through three primary methods: centralizing, classifying, and making publically accessible the royal collections. First, centralization would contribute to the visibility of the artistic treasures of the state. The dispersal of works throughout the palaces meant, according to Hirt, that each was overlooked, and a comprehensive overview was impossible to even the most engaged of visitors. Taking objects out of their decorative niches and down from mantelpieces and putting them in a single building with a cohesive institutional framework would allow visitors to practice what Hirt saw to be the most integral tool of the art historical scholar: comparison. Consistent with the historicist turn in German understandings of art and antiquity in the last half of the eighteenth century, Hirt emphasized that a work could only show its true meaning in conjunction with others, in a kind of cosmopolitanism of objects: “as monuments of the human spirit, [ancient artworks] are the heritage that belongs to all of humanity; every individualization of these is an affront, only by making them communal and putting them in a good and centralized display can they be made the object of true study.”[55] The imperative of centralization was, however, not sufficient to provide the right kind of viewing experience in Hirt’s estimation. For antiquities Hirt wrote, “the display according to the period in which they were created is too precarious,” and he recommended a primary classification according to the subject depicted: gods, half-gods, heroes, etc. For paintings, an ordering by epoch was more suitable, though he emphasized throughout the importance of grouping objects of different sizes together in order to “provide the eye with a comfortable change of pace; the museum will be decorated in such a way as a friend of the arts would decorate his apartment.”[56] Of course the third imperative of Hirt’s proposal was to create not a private space, but a public one, though by no means a free for all. Admission would be geared primarily towards artists and scholars, rather than a general lay audience.

The goal was hardly revolutionary, and yet given the extensive amount of intellectual energy expended in this period on figuring out the forces and mechanisms, visible and invisible, through which to achieve it, Hirt distinguished himself by wasting little time with theories of aesthetic cognition and ethics. He understood, in debt to the classical historicism of Winckelmann, the cultural development of antiquity to have transpired according to a cyclical pattern of progress and decline, and that the status of artistic production corresponded directly to

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[53] Hirt had made a name for himself in Rome, where he lived between 1782-1796 until he was summoned to Berlin at the behest of Gräfin Wilhelmine von Lichtenau, the official mistress of Friedrich Wilhelm II, and made a member of the Academy of Arts and Sciences and advisor on matters of art historical importance to the court.

[54] Paul Seidel, “Zur Vorgeschichte der Berliner Museen; der erste Plan von 1797,” *Jahrbuch der Preußischen Kunstsammlungen*, 49 (1928), 58.

[55] Hirt, “Ueber den Kunstschatz,” 518.

[56] Hirt in Seidel, “Zur Vorgeschichte,” 61.

the enrichment of humanity. Accordingly, the ancient past formed a stable reservoir of artifacts which could model the various stages of development for students wishing to re-attain antiquity's pinnacles.

> "The most recent as well as the older history of art shows a beginning, a general period of progress, a point of the highest development, a decline, and a destruction. Although these observations are very important and illuminating for human understanding in general, they are mostly [important and illuminating] for the philosophical artistic sensibility [*philosophischen Kunstlersinn*], in that they have the greatest effect on the being of art and the correct study of it. Every progression made by a burgeoning art indicates a new development in the powers of the souls of men, and one sees how through this striving the genius of art had to spring forth from its narrow and toilsome path."[57]

This rare glimpse into the soul in Hirt's writings signals its basic insignificance to his museological vision. The purpose of the museum was to stimulate the correspondence between the development of an art object and the development of the human soul by creating contact between the two. As the direct correlate to artistic life, spirit held no particular interest for Hirt. His theory of artistic education was no theory at all, but rather a plan of action for establishing the appropriate material conditions for this contact to have its desired effect on the individual and society.

This is not to say that Hirt had no aesthetic program to which his administrative engagements and his artistic planning work can be linked. Indeed, perhaps his most frequently cited contribution to German intellectual life in the Anglo-American scholarship on cultural history at the turn of the nineteenth century is not his foundational role for the Royal Museum of Art, but rather his contribution to the Laocoön debates, which were perhaps the most important discursive crucible for establishing the future of the science of aesthetics, the place of art in philosophy, and the means and ends of art historical practice at the beginning of the modern period. At stake was the problem of reconciling what Simon Richter as termed "Laocoön's Two Bodies": the description of the statue beginning with Pliny as an aesthetically ideal work of art on the one hand and the empirical reality of the statue since its excavation in 1506 on the other.[58] Since Winckelmann's claim in *Gedancken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Mahlerey und Bilhauerkunst* that the statue exhibited "noble simplicity, quiet grandeur [*edle Einfalt, stille Große*]," one of the focal points of its interpretation had been whether it can be said to scream and if it can, why.

While luminaries of Enlightenment-era aesthetics such as Lessing, Heinse, Herder, and Schiller grappled with this question and its implications for a theory of the arts, Hirt was a late and rather incongruous entrant into the debate. In an essay published in 1797 in Schiller's *Die Horen*, Hirt argued that the reason that the Laocoön sculpture does not scream is not due any stylistic or aesthetic principle, as had been the concern of previous commentators, but is rather

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[57] Hirt, "Ueber den Kunstschatz," 514-515.

[58] Simon Richter, *Laocoon's Body and the Aesthetics of Pain: Winckelmann, Lessing, Herder, Moritz, Goethe* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 13-37.

due to the fact that Laocoön had, at the moment captured in marble, actually suffocated and was clinically unable to emit sound.[59] This pathological take on an artwork enshrined as the culmination of aesthetic beauty was deeply appalling to its other interpreters; Schiller wrote of the "horrifying heaviness" of the analysis.[60] This heaviness was, however, exactly the point. Hirt, in the realism of his perspective, drew the object of the sculpture into direct equivalence with the substance of the body it represented, and thereby offered a highly practical solution, if not to the discernment of the work's ideal aesthetic function, than at least to its proper place within an institution of art and learning. The work's material surface was for Hirt symptomatic of its interior meaning, and its materiality thus not an enemy of but a gateway to its distinct power. When Hirt wrote of the sculpture's circulation, of its skeleton, of its arteries, these were not metaphors but truths of its design and impact, detectable from the symptoms displayed on its surface.[61]

> "Let us get closer to the marble itself: if it had been the intention of the artist to portray a mild expression, a sigh on the face of Laocoön: then one would have to see this mildness in the movement as well as in the position of the limbs. [...] But one only sees the bristling of the hair and the beard, the deeply recessed eyeballs, the terrifying compression of the forehead, the tremor of the nasal muscles and the cheeks: no pain, no resistance, no horror can paint the expression more horribly: Laocoön does not scream because he can no longer scream. The battle with the monster is not beginning, it is ending..."[62]

That is, its life, and its aesthetic traction is derived from its materiality rather than from its expression of a particular ideal. Hirt called this phenomenon the " *Charakteristik*": the thing that the object demanded. Hirt's vision for a museum was of a space which the objects themselves determine their surroundings, and which honors their material specificities.

Given this notion of art as being physically and materially necessary to the communication of its meaning and purpose, it is unsurprising that Hirt's proposal for a museum centered around a close collaboration with its collections and the Academy of Arts, Prussia's main institution of aesthetic education. The connection between academy and museum was for Hirt physical in every way. He envisioned museum objects as literally tangible resources for teachers and students, which they could inspect, compare, copy, and handle in order to derive meaning and expertise. "How much more visual could courses be, if in the midst of the most exquisite artworks [the professor] could simultaneously sensualize his lecture for his listeners, and indicate the objects with his finger from which his teachings are abstracted," he mused in his

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[59] Aloys Hirt, "Laokoon," *Die Horen*, 3 no. 10 (1797): 1-26.

[60] Schiller in Jürgen Zimmer, "Nachrichten über Aloys Hirt und Bibliographie seiner gedruckten Schriften," *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* 41 (1999): 159.

[61] For the radical realism of Hirt's Laocoon description, Inka Mülder-Bach, "Sichtbarkeit und Lesbarkeit: Goethes Aufsatz über Laokoon," in *Das Laokoon-Paradigma: Zeichenregime im 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. Inge Baxmann, Michael Franz, Wolfgang Schäffner (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2000), 472.

[62] Hirt, "Laokoon" (1797), 8-9.

1797 lecture.[63] Further, Hirt proposed that the museum be actually integrated into the existing Academy building on Unter den Linden. The move would require some creative reorganization and remodeling, Hirt admitted: "Because the royal stables as well as those of the Gendarmes regiment are built into [the Academy], and these would be difficult to move to another location, it would in no way be advisable to put the monuments of art in a place where because of the horse feed a fire danger constantly exists, and the paintings would suffer under flatulence and other unavoidable impurities."[64] Equine emissions notwithstanding, the Academy building offered significant benefits, not least the opportunity to store the collections adjacent to the rooms and laboratories where they could be made part of everyday coursework.[65] The collection was to be utilitarian and without unnecessary pomp. Pedestals should be made of wood, and gilded niches or over-crowding of objects should be avoided at all cost lest the galleries look like a "knick-knack shop [*Trödel-Bude*]" rather than a serious site of careful and intensive investigation.

Hirt's plans were cut short in 1797, first by the death of the king and then by the interruption of the Napoleonic Wars, the crisis of the Prussian state and the despoliations of its collections. His insistence on the importance of the museum to the academic study of art, however, retained some currency in the years after 1815 when the foundation of a public museum became once again a viable goal. Directly following the Academy Exhibition of 1815, the king authorized the remodel of the ground floor of the Academy building consistent with Hirt's original recommendation, foreseeing its usefulness as a place to display the Giustiniani collection of Italian renaissance paintings, which he had acquired from a private dealer in Paris that year. The design was undertaken by the Berlin architect and professor at the Building Academy, Friedrich Rabe, and involved the construction of galleries for ancient sculpture on the second story of the front wing of the building, galleries for the Giustiniani collection in the second floor of the wing facing the University, and a passageway across the *Universitätstrasse* giving the two institutions a physical connection to match their correlated missions. The Academy would be moved to the ground floor of the central wing. These plans progressed slowly with much hesitation and little coherence between 1816 and 1822, during which time the Giustiniani collection was installed instead in the University across the street, and Rabe was relieved of his duties due to the delayed and disjointed construction process. Schinkel, since 1815 head building councillor [*Oberbaurat*], was named to a commission dedicated to solving problems within the Academy project and completed a new proposal for the museum construction. Between 1822-1824 new gallery spaces were built for the burgeoning museum collection, now intended to host not only the ancient sculpture collection, plaster casts and the Kunstkammer, but also the newly acquired Solly collection of paintings. New quarters for the Academy of Art and Sciences would follow afterward. Through Schinkel, the museum slowly began to take over the entire Academy project.

Throughout the complications, false starts, and provisional arrangements of the Academy remodel Hirt remained an important player. In 1820, he took charge of the selection of objects to be included in the galleries. He submitted his inventory, along with some criticism of Rabe's design and extensive recommendations for the museum's administrative operations in a

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[63] Hirt, "Ueber den Kunstschatz" (1797), 520.

[64] Seidel, "Zur Vorgeschichte der Berliner Museen," 58.

[65] Hirt also foresaw including the anatomical and natural historical collections of the Royal Kunstkammer, which were administratively under the Academy of Arts.

memorandum of 1820 that conformed in its guiding principles to his pre-war proposals.[66] Schinkel's 1822 designs, formulated in consultation with Hirt, deferred to his original 1797 proposal to put the ancient sculptures and casts on the ground floor of the building, and paintings on the second floor—a reversal of Rabe's organizational schema. Although, as Christoph Vogtherr argues, in many ways Schinkel's concessions to Hirt in this period were based on practical necessity rather than shared museological commitments, they are also evidence of the influence of his original plan and the power of the model that connected the royal collections directly to scholarship and artistic pedagogy.

Hirt's avoidance of the contemporary problems of aesthetic philosophy has won him little praise either from his colleagues or his interpreters. "Hirt was not a critical head of the first order," writes Friedrich Stock, an early historian of the founding of the Royal Museum in Berlin.

> "He could not fully answer the aesthetic questions that had preoccupied and energized educated Germans since Mengs and Winckelmann. He could not deliver a critique of aesthetic idealism, of the boundaries and forms of artistic representational faculties, which had become as important in the study of art as Kant's Critique of Judgement had been for philosophy…He shattered against the shores of Schinkel, Waagen, and Rumohr."[67]

Particularly the monarchy's abandonment of his idea for an academic museum with close ties to the Academy and its turn towards a 'temple of art' model as proposed by Schinkel sealed his fate in the literature as being on the wrong side of history, a classical thinker in the age of romanticism to the generous interpreters, a rigid pedant to the ungenerous. But Hirt's museum plans should not be written off as stodgy and under-theorized. They articulate instead a view of the power of art objects to determine their own interpretation that derives from their status as objects rather than in spite of them.

While the *Danziger Altar* spoke to an ideal of how art should be perceived and encountered, its words could in no way influence the fundamental reality that the cultural administrators of Berlin had most immediately to confront: that the altar said nothing at all. The first to point out the problem of the artificiality of the *Danziger Altar*'s statement in the *Berlinische Nachrichten* was not an advocate for no-nonsense realism, but rather quite the opposite. Joseph Görres, the notoriously polemic editor of the soon-to-be-censored nationalist *Rheinischer Merkur*, who was himself no stranger to journalistic ruses, having published a fake proclamation by Napoleon to the people from Elba in 1814, asserted that the Altar had uttered for him quite a different perspective on its ideal home: [68]

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[66] Hirt to Ministerium der Geistlichen- Unterrichts- und Medizinischen Angelegenheiten 6 December 1820, in Vogtherr, "Das koenigliche Museum zu Berlin," 261-269.

[67] Friedrich Stock, "Vorgeschichte der Berliner Museen, 1786-1807," *Jahrbuch der Preussischen Kunstsammlungen* 49 (1928): 154f.

[68] Joseph Görres, "Napoleons Proklamation an die Völker Europas vor seinem Abzug auf die Insel Elba," *Rheinische Merkur* 51 (3 May 1814).

> "…I, after an exact overhearing of the apostles, holinesses, and all virtuous souls that are ascending to heaven, can verify that all of them are quite unhappy with this artistic determination [*Kunstbestimmung*], and that they are homesick for their church in Danzig…The speaker seems to know nothing of Danzig, otherwise he wouldn't have wanted to put into the heads of us Berliners to steal an artwork…at the expense of another city in our fatherland."[69]

Rather than revealing our patriot behind the curtain, Görres put himself behind one too. But the extension of the strategy exposes its deceitfulness. Whose words are to be believed? While the *Danziger Altar* might testify to its resurrection to the living, it could do nothing to determine which of the eternal lives into which it was enlisted: stoic virtue, or vivacious damnation.

Nothing destroyed the fantasy of the altar's statement more completely than the fact that it returned not a year later to Danzig. Despite the best efforts of Berlin's cultural elite, it was Friedrich Wilhelm III's underwhelmed assessment of the work that carried the day. While Schadow led him through the Academy exhibition in November 1814, he had explained to the king that the altar especially incited the awe of the public, given the reigning popularity of northern Renaissance art. The King replied, according to Schadow, "That this must not be taken too far, such that we go backwards rather than forwards."[70] A letter from Berlin to Professor Beysig in Danzig confirmed the royal decree, "His Majesty has declared thoroughly and vigorously your principle of the holiness of ownership."[71] The altar arrived back in Danzig on December 16, 1816, and it was installed in the Marienkirche on January 17, 1817 amidst a festival celebration.[72] "The Danziger," as Aby Warburg put it, "refused to be trumped by idealistic aesthetic proclivities," and upon its return sentenced the altar to the following utterance, fixed firmly to the bottom of its central panel: "When thieves of treasures captured the eternal judgment, / The just monarch gave us the hard-won [object] back."[73] Even this rather humble maxim, however, fell short of the vicissitudes of the object. It owed its original home in the Marienkirche after all to the Hanseatic pirates who in 1473 had intercepted the ship carrying it from its painter's studio in Bruges to its commissioner's residence in Florence and installed it in their home church in Danzig, despite the vigorous intercessions of the Duke of Burgundy and a bull from Pope Sixtus IV.[74] In the end, it was what the altar did not and could not say that was be the most significant to its museological destiny. Or, put conversely: in the end, what the altar said had absolutely no bearing on its fate.

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[69] Joseph Görres, untitled, *Rheinischer Merkur* 341 (8 December 1815).

[70] The exchange seems to have been brief, as Schadow ends his description of the royal visit here, adding only that "The king went walking on that day amongst the people, though unrecognized by many." Schadow, *Kunst-Werke und Kunst-Ansichten*, 271.

[71] Unknown, quoted in Theodor Hirsch, *Die Oberpfarrkirche von St. Marien in Danzig*, vol. 1 (Danzig: Anhuth, 1843), 429.

[72] Hirsch, *Die Oberpfarrkirche*, 429.

[73] Aby Warburg, "Flandrische Kunst und florentinische Frührenaissance Studien," 251.

[74] Lane, *Hans Memling*, 129.

Chapter 4 Illustrations

Fig. 4.1
Daniel Berger
Allegory of the Return of the Quadriga to the Brandenburg Gate, 1814.
Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz

Fig. 4.2
Hans Memling (c.1435-1494)
The Last Judgment, 1467-1471
Middle panel 241cm x 180.8 cm; wings 242 cm x 90 cm
National Museum, Gdansk

Fig. 4.3
Hans Memling (c.1435-1494)
The Last Judgment, 1467-1471 [detail from right and left panels]
242 cm x 90 cm
National Museum, Gdansk

Fig. 4.4
Michael Wolgemut (1434-1519)
The Last Judgment (fol. 262r) from the *Schedel'sche Weltchronik*, 1493
Klassik Stiftung Weimar

CHAPTER 5
The Limits of Autonomy: Building the Royal Museum of Art in Berlin, 1823-1830

Der allein besitzt die Musen
Der sie trägt in warmen Busen.
Dem Vandalen sind sie Stein!

— Friedrich Schiller, *Die Antiken zu Paris*

On the 8th of January 1823, Karl Friedrich Schinkel presented Friedrich Wilhelm III with a completely revised prospectus for the long conceptualized and not yet realized public museum of art in Berlin.[1] Whereas his plan of the previous year had been based around the goal of repurposing the Academy building on Unter den Linden, involving by the summer of 1822 visions for completely new wings, additional floors, and new exterior elements in an effort to accommodate the designs of his predecessors on the project, in the new year Schinkel dispensed with these accretions in favor of something completely different: a new and architecturally distinct structure, built from the ground up expressly to be the home of the museum. Although it shared many similarities with his previous prospectus for the Academy, Schinkel's new design was a significant bid for freedom on several levels. It was a bid for independence for the court architect from the constraints of earlier visions and requirements that had plagued the Academy's remodel. The 1823 proposal was at the same time a bid for the independence of the museum as a building, a collection, and an institutional structure. Schinkel wrote: "The building proposed here, which will be constructed for the museum alone, possesses a much more beautiful character, more unity and completeness in its inner and outer form, in part because in it only one purpose is expressed…"[2]

This chapter is about this project, and in particular the claims for independence, unity, and coherence, evident in its initial conception, emphasized throughout its construction, and maintained through the present day, that were made on its behalf by its designers, theoreticians, and administrators. Schinkel was not only proposing an independent building in 1823; he was articulating a set of social and political values that set art apart from the rest of life, and made it into an independent and autonomous carrier of meaning. *Dem Vandalen sind sie Stein*—the perspective that art must be freed from its dependencies on the vagaries of temporal politics, human needs, and material utility—was to become, in Schinkel's plan an institutional imperative. The museum, through its unique and separate design was to embody the vision of art's autonomy.

From one angle this is a familiar story. Theodore Ziolkowski gives voice to the general view that, in the intellectual constellation of the early nineteenth century, art "requires a setting that makes explicit its non-functionality: not a cathedral or a palace, where its religious or political purpose would be evident, but a building where it can be contemplated reverentially in its sacral autonomy…a setting, in short, precisely like the temple of art that Schinkel presented to

[1] Karl Friedrich Schinkel to FWIII, 8 January 1823, in *Aus Schinkel's Nachlaß: Reisetagebücher, Briefe und Aphorismen*, ed. Alfred Freiherr von Wolzogen, vol. 3 (Berlin: Verlag der Königlichen Geheimen Ober-Hofbuchdruckerei, 1863), 217-232.

[2] Ibid., 227.

the city of Berlin with the construction of the Altes Museum."[3] In this formulation the museum is the perfect institutional correlate to the demands of theoretical aesthetics, and its embodiment of these principles, by virtue of the language of its aspirations, a *fait accompli*.

The following discussion of the Royal Museum of Art in Berlin will take a different tack. It will look, not to the institution's intellectual foundations for its contribution to Prussian cultural and political life at the beginning of the modern period, but to the attempts at the practical execution of these foundations. This is the story of the effort to make galleries and objects into the material instantiation of the philosophical mandate of art's freedom. It will show that this was not an easy task. Not only was the museum in Berlin meant to bear the realm of the ideal into the physical world, it was meant to realize an ideal with deep suspicions of this world, as Schiller's dictum reveals. The following sections deal with antagonisms over the museum's appearance and mission between Schinkel and his colleague Aloys Hirt, and with the two works of art whose exhibition was more than others purported to embody its ideal autonomy, I will argue that the history of the Royal Museum demonstrates the limitations of aesthetic autonomy as a workable cultural political model, and the challenges of its embodiment in institutional form.

The Royal Museum of Art and The Autonomy of Art

When Schinkel wrote in 1823 that his museum would "[possess] a much more beautiful character, more unity and completeness in its inner and outer form, in part because in it only one purpose is expressed…" he gave no indication of what this "purpose" would actually be. Indeed, the language and structure of his initial proposal was generally technical and concrete, intuiting perhaps correctly that Friedrich Wilhelm III, notoriously unimpressed by the drama of aesthetic concerns, would be more moved by cost-efficiency than by loftily expressed artistic motivations. At this early stage, however, it was the idea of the design's unity, rather than its qualities, that provided its innovative force. Even in its terse pragmatism Schinkel's proposal made clear to the king and to his colleagues on the Museum Commission that in separating the museum building project from the Academy, his architectural strategy could abandon the requirements of already extant institutions and already articulated goals and fully embody a singular vision of how the public engagement with art should function and what it should mean. Every aspect of the new plan would exist in a coterminous and harmonious relationship with its guiding premise, without concessions to outside influence or extraneous considerations. Such was Schinkel's faith in the museum's coherent power that he not only proposed an independent structure for the institution, he also argued that through its construction he would be able to integrate solutions to two other longstanding conundrums of urban design with which he had been engaged in recent years: how to relate the city palace complex to the Lustgarten directly across from its main entrance, and how to resolve the bottleneck of boat traffic at a difficult cleavage in the Spree River. [Fig. 5.1] As it stood, a canal connected one arm of the river to the other along the northern edge of the garden, directly across from the palace's northern face. On the opposite bank from the Lustgarten, in the sightline of the palace was the Packhof, a port installation of facilities for the storage of goods and the administration of shipping. Schinkel proposed filling in this canal and situating the museum in its place, a counterpoint opposite the palace to anchor the Lustgarten on its northern edge. The Packhof would go behind the museum along the river's southern arm, out

[3] Theodore Ziolkowski, *German Romanticism and its Institutions* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton, University Press, 1990), 376-7.

of sight of the grand synthesis thus won of palace, museum, cathedral, and garden. [Fig. 5.2] Schinkel emphasized to the king the museum's consolidating effect in this regard:

> "The attached [plans] portray this project clearly and at the same time explain [*setzen…auseinander*: literally 'set apart'] the advantages of this arrangement in comparison to the Commission's previously constructed plans for the museum and the academic institutions and the associated dissolution of the mews, the horse track, the arsenal, the carriage house and apartments for the military and the royal head court stables [*Ober-Hof-Stallamt*].
>
> "These advantages are gained by having found an advantageous place in the most beautiful area of the city for the building of a new museum alone, and it follows that all those other buildings of such considerable magnitude are no longer of concern, and that the associated buildings, which are required in the arrangement proposed here, are nevertheless comparatively much smaller in scope."[4]

The anchoring point of this radical revision of the urban landscape was, of course, the museum building itself, and its most distinctive architectural feature would emphasize its unifying function. A low and classical entrance would lead into a central domed rotunda, which Schinkel referred to as a '*Pantheon,*' lit by an opening at the top, and ringed by small ancient statues and busts on columns. Connecting galleries would extend out from this central point, with sculpture on the first floor and paintings on the second. The front of the building opposite the palace "had such an extraordinary location, one could say the most beautiful in Berlin, that something very special must be done with it."[5] He proposed a broad and simple hall of columns, with a band of murals on the back wall visible between them. "Perhaps a cycle from the history of humanity's cultural development, which would be a project through which significant talents, such as your Majesty would deem worthy, could present themselves in their entire breadth." In this highly visible location, sculptures with "particular public interest" could also be displayed. The basement level would be devoted to the museum's administrative offices. Schinkel revealed, however, little more about the specifics of his design. The most important aspect of the proposal was the separation of the museum from its previous entanglements, and its unifying effect on the

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[4] "*Die beikommenden fünf Blatt Zeichnungen und ein erläuternder Aufsatz stellen dies Project deutlich dar und setzen zugleich alle Vortheile dieser Anlage, im Vergleich mit dem früher durch die Commission bearbeiteten Plane für das Museum und die wissenschaftlichen Anstalten und die damit zusammenhängenden Abbauten der Stallungen, der Reitbahn, der Wache, der Remisen und Wohnungen für das Militair und das königliche Ober-Hof-Stallamt, auseinander. / Diese Vortheile werden dadurch gewonnen, daß sich in der schönsten Gegend der Stadt ein vortheilhafter Platz für den Bau eines neuen Museums allein gefunden hat, und folglich alle jene Nebenbauten aber, welche bei der hier projectirten Anlage auch nöthig werden, gegen jene nur in sehr geringem Verhältniß stehen.*" Schinkel to FWIII (23 January 1823), in *Aus Schinkels Nachlaß* (1863), 220-221.

[5] Ibid., 231.

Lustgarten complex. Given the radical break of the plans from previous models, and the far-reaching extent of the project on the urban design of the city center, Schinkel's proposal received remarkably speedy authorization from the King.[6] On July 25, 1825 the cornerstone was laid, and on August 3, 1830 the museum was opened to the public.

The notion that the museum should not only stand apart, but in doing so reform the visual and functional panorama of the Prussian capital was, after all, not just a logistical argument, but an important statement of what the place of art in the political and social life of the state should be and what it should achieve. The autonomy of art, secured by the singular unity of the institution, was the linch-pin of its transformative power. Since Kant had postulated the fundamental disinterestedness of aesthetic experience to be constitutive of its universal moral value, German philosophers had been concerned with elaborating the link between art's autonomy and its political and social significance, made even more urgent by the challenge of the revolution in France. Schiller was a programmatic figure in this intellectual trajectory, and his *Die Antiken zu Paris* was just one of many articulations of the moral quality of art's spiritual sovereignty. Engagement with true art—freedom made manifest—would, in contrast to the Vandals, pave the way to the kind of citizenship desired by a modern monarchy and a bureaucratic state ever more interested in history, culture, and aesthetics as a means of defining the community over which it presided. By the post-Napoleonic period this seemed not only like good philosophy but also good policy. After witnessing art's tragic dependencies on the movement of armies, on the goodness of human actors, and on environmental contingencies during the Napoleonic period, the clear assertion of its self-sufficiency was an alluring strategy of protection, as well as a declaration of national distinction.[7]

Apart from its political expediency the assertion of the museum's independence was tied to the strongly spiritual dimension of aesthetic experience that many theorists had asserted since the late eighteenth century. For the Romantic writers who surrounded Schinkel and participated in the museum's conception and operation, the encounter with art was a form of religious expression and as such required a sacred space in order to maximize its power. Ludwig Tieck and Wilhelm Wackenroder's hugely influential 1797 work, *Herzensergießungen eines kunstliebenden Kloserbruders* made clear the museum's charge as preparator of the devotional contemplation demanded by a true work of art: "[Picture galleries] should be temples where in calm and silent humility and in exalting solitude one may admire great artists as the most noble

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[6] Vogtherr argues that this may have been because of the practicality of Schinkel's proposal, which emphasized the cost-efficiency of the project and its ability to solve existing problems of space and urban planning. Christoph Martin Vogtherr, "Das koenigliche Museum zu Berlin. Planungen und Konzeption des ersten Berliner Kunstmuseums," *Jahrbuch Der Berliner Museen* 39 (1997): 113.

[7] Altenstein's *Denkschrift* of 1807, which we encountered in Chapter 1, is illustrative in this regard, as it advocates for the state to "clear all impediments that stand in the way of the free development [of the arts]," including censorship, and argues that only through civic administration and leadership can the arts achieve this freedom and effectiveness to political life. Karl Sigmund Franz Freiherr vom Stein zum Altenstein, "Denkschrift über die Leitung des Preußischen Staates (an Hardenberg)," in *Die Reorganisation des Preussischen Staates unter Stein und Hardenberg; veranlasst und unterstützt durch die preussische Archivverwaltung in Verbindung mit der Notgemeinschaft der deutschen Wissenschaft*, ed. Georg Winter and Rudolf Vaupel, vol. 1, *Allgemeine Verwaltungs- und Behördenreform* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1931), 456-457.

of mortals, and where in long, uninterrupted contemplation of their works one may warm oneself in the sun of the most enchanting thoughts and emotions."[8] The classical form that Schinkel selected for the building drew from the genre of the Greek temple, emphasizing to viewers that this was to be an institution not only of classical *Bildung* but of *Andacht* [reverence].[9] A preparatory sketch from 1829 shows this function in action. [Fig. 5.3] In a view of the second floor looking from the painting galleries out through the colonade onto the Lustgarten two figures, a man and child on the left side of the composition stand entralled by a painting, *Genuss der Kunst*, proposed by Schinkel but not executed until 1869-70. Their arms thrown back, they appear caught up by the museum's force, suggested not only by the painting, but by the sweeping gridlines radiating out from the building's front portico. To their right, another figure leans over the railing gazing out from the museum, training the viewer's attention to the grand scene framed by the columns, apparently so moved by the institution's aesthetic power as to risk his own safety for a better look.[10]

In its political and spiritual guise the effect of this autonomy was not only an independent museum building but one which claimed to correspond at every point to the romantic-idealist program of aesthetics it sought to embody in the world, like Borges' diligent cartographer working at at the mimetic scale of one-to-one. Furthermore in doing so it would become so permeated with ideals that it would virtually transform from material into a spiritual creation. In 1823, the same year that Schinkel proposed his independent institution, Hegel had traced this trajectory in his lectures on aesthetics, here on architecture as art's first determinate form:

> "Architecture prepares the way for the god, builds the temple for him, makes a space for him, purifies the ground for him; it reworks externality in the god's service so that it might leave nothing external to the god, instead all being fit to let the god appear, be expressed, be apprehended. […] Suddenly the lightening flash of individuality pervades it, the god stands there within it, is portrayed there, the statues are erected in the temple. Now what is spiritual has completely taken over the material, infinite form has concentrated itself in corporeality, in the inert mass built up into infinte form."[11]

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[8] Ludwig Tieck, Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder, *Herzensergießungen eines Kunstliebenden Klosterbruders* (Berlin: Johann Friedrich Unger, 1797), 160-161. Translation in Wilhelm Wackenroder, "Outpourings from the Heart of an Art-Loving Monk," in *Nineteenth-Century Theories of Art*, ed. Joshua Charles Taylor, trans. Richard Murray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 137.

[9] On the relationship between art and religion in Romanticism in respect to the museum, Ziolkowski, *German Romanticism and its Institutions*, 329-337.

[10] *Karl Friedrich Schinkel: Geschichte und Poesie*, ed. Hein-Th. Schulze Altcappenberg, Rolf H. Johannsen und Christiane Lange, exh. cat. (Munich: Hirmer Verlag, 2012), 169.

[11] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, "The World of the Individual Arts: Architecture Sculpture, Painting, Music, Poetry," in *Lectures on the Philosophy of Art: The Hotho Transcript of the 1823 Berlin Lectures*, trans. and ed. Robert F. Brown (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2014), 216-17.

The radical alliance between content and form, material and spiritual expression in Hegel's formulation could be the motto of Schinkel's design, and indeed the close relationship between these thinkers has been explicated thoroughly in many places.[12] But what is important about this relationship between what Felix Saure has recently called Schinkel's "empire of ideas" and his "structures of stone and mortar," is the onus it put on the design of the museum's physical space and the logistical execution of its construction.[13] This was not just a construction project, but one that hoped, in the end, to conjure the lightening flash that would eviserate the "coarse externality" of "mechanical masses and weights," in the wake of spiritual fulfillment.[14] Beat Wyss emphasizes the difficulty of the museum's transformation in this regard: "[The Museum's] blueprint outlines the figure of thought in the theory of history that Hegel proposed in his aesthetics: the ideal is resolved in the path of history: present and yet buried in the intangible, while the gods reside in the Pantheon [Wyss means here the Rotunda]. With their apotheosis disappeared also the reality of their claim to happiness."[15]

The problem with this position was, of course, that reality didn't disappear into the distance at all. Instead, each small particularity of the institution became a site of contention and debate about how this museological vision ought to be realized. The following will explore some of these sites of contention, focusing in particular on the debate between Schinkel and the classicist Aloys Hirt, who not only exposed the limitations of radical autonomy in his critique of the museum design, but also inscribed these limitations into the face of the institution itself.

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[12] Beat Wyss, *Hegel's Art History and the Critique of Modernity*, trans. Caroline Dobson Saltzwedel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Annette Gilbert, "'Die ästhetische Kirche'. Zur Entstehung des Museums am Schnittpunkt von Kunstautonomie und –religion," *Athanäum. Jahrbuch der Friedrich Schlegel Gesellschaft* 19 (2009): 45-85; Elsa van Wezel, "Die Konzeptionen des Alten und Neuen Museums zu Berlin und das sich wandelnde historische Bewusstsein," *Jahrbuch Der Berliner Museen* 43 (2001): 3.

[13] Felix Saure, "'Refiner of all human relations': Karl Friedrich Schinkel as an Idealist Theorist," in *The Impact of Idealism: The Legacy of Post-Kantian German Thought*, eds. Nicholas Boyl and Liz Disley, vol. 3, *Aesthetics and Literature*, ed. Christoph Jamme and Ian Cooper (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 206.

[14] Hegel, "The World of the Individual Arts: Architecture Sculpture, Painting, Music, Poetry," 216. The idea of the suddenness of this transformation is a consistent facet of this line of thinking, found also in Schleiermacher's *Reden über die Religion* of 1799, for whom art can produce sudden epiphany. Investigation of this idea of instantaneity in the museum would be an interesting contribution to the question of how the museum mediates between scales of time in its presentation of an eternally fixed ideal of beauty vs. a chronology of artistic development.

[15] "*Sein Grundriß beschreibt die geschichtsphilosophische Figur, wie sie Hegel in seiner Ästhetik entwarf. Das Ideal ist im Gang der Geschichte aufgehoben: Anwesend und doch ins Ungreifbare entrückt, weilen die Göttergestalten im Pantheon; mit ihrer Apotheose hat sich auch der Realitätsanspruch ihrer Glücksversprechen in der Ferne verflüchtigt.*" Beat Wyss, "Klassizismus und Geschichtsphilosophie im Konflikt: Aloys Hirt und Hegel," in *Kunsterfahrung und Kulturpolitik im Berlin Hegels*, ed. Otto Pöggeler und Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1983), 128.

The *Museumstreit*

In 1836, Karl Immermann characterized the vehement discussions over plans for the new museum of art in Berlin.

> "The old fashioned way…of only bothering with making sure that every valuable work was tolerably lit, was thoroughly contrary to the clarity of consciousness with which everything in this grand city was conducted. There should be, as one used to say around here, an idea that reigned in the new national museum, the history of art should beam out of the collection, and not the history of art, as it had been customarily and wrongly handed down, but the purified version, created through the newest archaeological research."[16]

The only problem was what this *idea* should actually be in practice. "In short," Immermann teased, "those who had been entrusted with worrying about this business splashed around in a sea of objections and misgivings. They wanted to be sure about things, and protect their consciences from the shame of overlooking or falsely creating a *Cinquecentist*, and amidst this critical striving, the workmen never got down to hammering their nails." The notion that an idea should reign in the museum was, in this satirical portrayal, a hinderance to the museum's realization, rather than an aid. "One smart aleck said that the paintings would not be hung until the learned men of the city had been," Immermann wrote. "Another answered the question of when the large gallery would be completed: "after the Thirty Years War."[17]

Immermann's satirical rendering of bourgeois life in the Prussian capital may have overstated the arresting effect of thought on construction, but his portrait is a useful reminder that the idealism that was to pervade the institution did not go unchallenged. Even as Schinkel's 1823 proposal to separate the museum from the Academy met with the speedy approval of Friedrich Wilhelm, it provoked an intense dissent that continued throughout its construction. The most prominent voice of this dissent was Aloys Hirt, whose deep conceptual investment in the connection between the royal collections and the educative mission of the Academies of Art and Science had been threatened by Schinkel's proclamation of the museum's autonomy.[18] Hirt registered his disapproval at the first possible opportunity. On February 4 the Museum Commission, comprised at this point of Schinkel, Hirt, Altenstein, Bülow, Albrecht, Witzleben, and Tzschoppe, met to discuss the new proposal at the behest of the king. "According to the excerpted and reverentially submitted meeting minutes, the majority of the commission has fully approved Schinkel's plan…and found it recommendable," Bülow and Altenstein reported to the king.[19] However, the "minority of the commission, and in particular councillor Hirt" had some significant objections.

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[16] Karl Immermann, *Die Epigonen: Familienmemoiren in neun Büchern*, vol. 2, book 6 (Berlin: Verlag von A. Hofmann & Comp., 1865), 43.

[17] Ibid., 43-44.

[18] See Chapter 4.

[19] Altenstein and Bülow to FWIII, 18 February 1823, I.HA Rep. 89, 20441, fol. 23, GStAPK.

Hirt, surely aware that he was outnumbered and that Schinkel's plans were bound to be authorized, offered his official reponse with the awkward prefatory admission that "I find the new proposal…for the building of the museum very appropriate, although I admit that I would prefer the beautiful location of the Academy."[20] His myriad complaints about nearly every aspect of the design could be summed up by a single phrase in Bülow and Altenstein's gloss of his position: "*zu großartig* [too grandiose]." Hirt found the museum's scale to be incommensurate with the purposes of an institution devoted to the close study of works of art. The rotunda, the centerpiece of Schinkel's design, was too large, he argued, and would overwhelm the sculpture collections within it; the columns planned to line its perimeter would not match the objects; and the lighting afforded from the skylight in the center of the dome would be insufficient. The entire building was situated on a ground floor level which was too high off the ground, and its open staircase too grand and potentially dangerous in Berlin's damp northern climate. The two-story columns along the museum's palace-facing front were too large and expensive and should be reduced to one-story in height; the columns throughout the building's galleries were overly intrusive and would impede the appropriate placement of artworks. Decrying the superfluity of many of Schinkel's design elements, Hirt concluded that a revision of the proposal must take into consideration the "diverse purposes that the building must serve," and this meant above all the accomodation of objects, which he listed in five categories, along with their associated administrative and operational infrastructures, including rooms for personnel, copying, and storage.

Schinkel's rebuttal called Hirt's battery of attacks on the project's scale an assault on the premise of overarching unity that was the centerpiece and the true innovation of his design: "Such a proposal is a totality, whose parts hang together so precisely, that nothing significant can be altered within it without making its form into a deformity [*ohne aus der Gestalt eine Mißgestalt zu machen*]."[21] This was not an excuse, but the very heart of the matter. The autonomy of the museum, in other words, made the purposefulness of its features unassailable. It could not be justified in terms of isolated quips with the utility of its features (although Schinkel tried, carefully answering Hirt's objections at every point, replicating the language of cost-efficiency, practicality, and comparative simplicity to the previous Academy plans with which he had first introduced his proposal for the museum's overarching unity to the Commission and king). It was, as Christoph Vogtherr writes, "purely conceptual," and stood above if not completely independent of tangibly grounded concerns.[22] Schinkel's answer to Hirt's complaint about the rotunda's scale made this point clear:

> "The size of the rotunda proposed here is in no way overly colossal and does not even stand out in comparison to the statues to be exhibited there as the proportions entered in pencil on the drawings show; however, a larger and thereby more beautiful and more worthy space could also never be a disadvantage to the exhibited objects in it; quite the opposite, it will benefit these, because in it

[20] Aloys Hirt, 4 February 1823, in *Aus Schinkels Nachlaß*, vol. 3, 241.
[21] Schinkel, 4 February 1823, in *Aus Schinkels Nachlaß*, vol. 3, 244.
[22] Vogtherr, "Das koenigliche Museum zu Berlin," 121.

> the visitor will feel himself elevated and thus more receptive to their enjoyment."[23]

That the rotunda should defy rationality or functionality was quite besides the point. Its true purpose was not to be an appropriate host to objects, or to facilitate their close and careful study, but something much less measurable, beyond the pencilled proportions on the plan's sketches: the elevation of the viewer, and his preparation for a spiritual encounter with art. As Schinkel concluded,

> "finally, the composition of such a powerful building, which the museum will be in any case, cannot sacrifice such a worthy focal point, which must be the sacrality, in which the most precious valuables are kept. One enters this space first when one has passed through the outer hall, and here the sight of a beautiful and noble space must make one amenable to and lend one an attitude for the enjoyment and the comprehension of that which the building actually contains."[24]

This reasoning was persuasive. On February 18, 1823 the majority of the commissioners refuted Hirt's objections, and declared themselves in their report to Friedrich Wilhelm to be "for Schinkel's plan, and in particular [we] must find all partial modifications of the same to be disadvantageous."[25] The king approved the plan according to the majority recommendation.

Despite this initial resolution, the antagonism between the two museum visionaries was to be the beginning of a significant reckoning that called into question the optimism of the view of the museum's unassailable totality and its consequences. On one hand, Hirt was objecting to the reframing of the museum's mission away from the concerns of the Academy and the practical education of artists and towards a more generalized conception of public edification and elevation through art. As Ziolkowski writes, the adoption of Schinkel's museum constituted a "shift in emphasis from the narrowly academic purposes advocated by Meyer and Hirt to the broadly cultural impulse of the new age."[26] On the other hand, however, and more impressive to

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[23] Schinkel, 4 February 1823, in *Aus Schinkels Nachlaß*, vol. 3, 245.

[24] Ibid., 248.

[25] Altenstein and Bülow to FWIII, 18 February 1823, I.HA Rep. 89, 20441, fol. 23, GStAPK.

[26] Ziolkowski, *German Romanticism and its Institutions*, 314. 'Meyer' refers here to Johann Heinrich Meyer, a Weimar classicist who advocated for the utility of paintings and antiquities collections for the education of artists in a 1799 article for Goethe's *Propyläen*. In this piece his credentials as "narrowly academic" were perhaps secured: "[O]ne must procure many volumes of the best poets and historians and lend these to the students, and through these they would be able to obtain sufficient knowledge for themselves in their spare time, and thus be free to apply themselves to their studies without interruption. For anatomy, for elementary mathematics, and for perspective in contrast, it would be best to hire regular teachers who would give lessons that the students of the Academy would be obliged to attend. […] We do not think it in any way unreasonable to institute compulsory rules in this regard, because anatomy, mathematics and perspective are not attractive to beginners and thus are easily disregarded."

the museum's future development, Hirt was pointing out the extent to which that cultural impulse could be made manifest in a museum of objects. *Zu großartig* was not simply an objection to Schinkel's architectural style, nor a mere refutation of an idea of what the museum should aspire towards, but rather an argument about what the relationship between those aspirations and the building itself could be. *Zu großartig* was an exposure of the false equivalence between the features of the building and the ideals that had inspired them. In opposition to his assertion that objects themselves should determine the conditions and purpose of their of their own viewership, evident in his theory of the *Charakteristik* discussed previously, the rotunda, the massive columned façade, the sweeping broad staircase, and the elevation of the building itself was a hubrisitic supercession of the material relationship between a person and a work of art. "The objects are not there because of the building, but rather the building must conform to the objects," Hirt wrote a year later.[27]

Having been mostly shut out of questions of the museum's exterior design following his dissent of 1823, Hirt focused his continued participation in the project largely around this insistance on the institution's duty to its objects.[28] Continuing his assignment from 1820 to select works for inclusion in the galleries, and to make plans for their arrangement, Hirt advocated for a historically rigorous collection and display, qualities that he believed would set the Royal Museum in Berlin apart from its counterparts across Europe.[29] Soon, however, this task too would come into conflict with Schinkel's architectural design, which he so vehemently opposed. In the spring of 1824, as he took the opportunity offered by the spring weather to begin on a series of scaled sketches of the paintings in the Academy according to their dimensions, showing how they should hang in the future museum galleries he discovered that Schinkel was pursuing a plan for the galleries in which "the system of display, through which the most important and individual qualities of the collection should be emphasized, would instead suffer."[30] Hirt wrote to implore the king to reconsider his authorization of Schinkel's plans, writing baldly: "I have devoted my entire life to the study of the arts, and have these efforts to thank for the graciousness that your Majesty has honored me with thus far. However, I cannot sacrifice to this merciful grace the most precious thing that I have in the world in order to comply with something which would put my convictions and my honor at risk."[31] Hirt's vague plea "that the rooms of the institutions are organized such that the different classes of objects of which the museum is supposed to be comprised can be suitably exhibited," yielded a demand from the king for a new proposal for the museum's interior, on which Schinkel and Hirt collaborated in 1825.[32]

Heinrich Meyer, "Ueber Lehranstalten, zu Gunsten der bildenden Künste: Fortsetzung," *Propyläen* 2, no. 2 (1799): 145.

[27] Hirt to Friedrich Wilhelm III, 15 May 1824, in *Aus Schinkels Nachlaß* (1863), 253.

[28] Hirt complained in 1824 that he was not being informed of important developments in the building process. Ibid., 252.

[29] Hirt and Schinkel to Altenstein, 1 March 1823, I.HA Rep. 137, IID, I, fol. 5, GStAPK. Hirt was also charged with the completion of provisional catalogues of museum collections to assist in the construction process: Altenstein to Rauch, 30 June 1824, I.HA Rep. 137, IIE, 2, GStAPK.

[30] Hirt to Friedrich Wilhelm III, 15 May 1824, in *Aus Schinkels Nachlaß* (1863), 252.

[31] Ibid., 250.

[32] Hirt and Schinkel to Friedrich Wilhelm III, 31 October 1825, I.HA Rep. 137, IID, I, fol. 115, GStAPK.

For the paintings this involved not only a hanging according to historical periods, but the enclosure of each room such that the individual qualities of each grouping could be examined in isolation. For the ancient sculpture collections, which would fill the galleries of the first floor with the exception of the rotunda, this meant positioning them close enough together to avoid a sense of emptiness, but far enough apart that their multitude not be overly evident. The impressive scale of the rotunda would be met with the largest of the Academy's plaster casts, so that it would have the "true appearance of an ancient Pantheon": the metaphorical gesture of the museum's sacrality would be brought to earth by the actual physical presence of statues of gods, which "would be above all highly instructive." Further stipulations included rooms for the collections of the Kunstkammer, modern sculpture, and antiquities cabinet.[33]

Perhaps Hirt's most significant contribution to the museum's design, however, came in 1827, when he had the chance to inscribe the *Museumsstreit*, as his conflict with Schinkel is known, into the face of the building itself, confirming the significance of his antipathy to the museum's identity in both figurative and literal terms. In the spring of 1827, Schinkel asked Hirt to come up with an inscription to be installed on the frieze at the front of the building, proclaiming its public mission and commemorating its royal benefactor to visitors, passersby, and no less importantly, to the residents of the palace, facing it across the Lustgarten. It is somewhat surprising that Schinkel should have made such a request given the by now years-long legacy of the two men's difference of opinion about what exactly that mission was. In any case, however, Hirt's compliance with Schinkel's request brought to a head the deep divisions over what the museum under construction would mean upon completion, and—ultimately more expedient in its still unfinished state in 1827—how this meaning ought to be made manifest.

Hirt arrived at a phrase that fully encapsulated his own sense of how the institution should be defined, and what it should be for: *FRIDERICUS GUILLEMUS III STUDIO ANTIQUITATIS OMNIGENAE ET LIBERALIUM ARTIUM MUSEUM CONSTITUIT MDCCCXXVIII*. It contained the fraught issue of study (*STUDIO*), the prosaic reference to objects (*ANTIQUITATIS*) and made the museum the grammatical host of these pursuits. Perhaps Schinkel had misunderstood the implications of Hirt's proposal when he forwarded it to the king for approval, translating it for Friedrich Wilhelm with the notable exemption of the word 'museum': "Friedrich Wilhelm has dedicated this place of repose to the study of all kinds of antiquities and the liberal arts [*Friedrich Wilhelm III hat dem Studium jeder Art Alterthümer und der freien Künste dieser Ruheort gestiftet 1828*]."[34] Friedrich Wilhelm approved and the inscription was formed and affixed to the front of the building where it remains to this day.

It was not until the scaffolding had been removed from the building that Hirt's colleagues began to register their total abhorrence of the inscription. The delay in their dissent seems to have been due either to simple oversight or to misnunderstanding. Alexander von Humboldt reported to Albrecht that "Our great philologist, Herr Professor Böckh, has come forward of his own accord in order to, as he says, clear himself of the suspicion that he could have given his consent "to such a completely vulgar and offensive-to-language [*sprachwidrigen*] inscription."" Hirt had shown him the proposal, Humboldt admitted on the university professor and Academy member August Böckh's behalf, but he had told him immediately that "every word of [it] would have to be changed." Because Hirt had resisted his suggestions, and because the date on the draft

[33] Ibid.

[34] Schinkel to Friedrich Wilhelm III, June 1827, I.HA Rep. 89, 20441, fol. 120, GStAPK.

read 1829 or 1830, Böckh had assumed that there would be time to negotiate and thought the matter best dropped for the time being. "After his return from Göttingen at the end of the holidays, he had seen with horror that the unrevised inscription had been executed in all its stupendous ridiculousness, to be seen by the entirety of Germany."[35]

On October 15 Schinkel made the unrest known to the King, who authorized a full report on the already-inscribed inscription to be prepared by the Historical-Philological department of the Academy. "Although many unfounded statements against [the inscription] have appeared in print, and in popular conversation more jokes may have been made than serious objections, there is still sufficient occasion for well-founded criticism," the compliant department assured the King.[36] The members took to the task with astounding thoroughness, registering individually authored disagreements in addition to a collectively drafted memorandum.[37] The objections to the inscription were, as the philologist Böckh's dismay betrays, mostly quips of language. 'Artes liberalis' was not in accordance with the authentic Roman usage; 'omnigenus' was an obsolete term; the word order made it unclear; it was ambiguous whether the genitive sequence 'antiquitatis omnigenae et liberalium artium' related to 'Studio' or 'Museum' or both. Multiple testimonies complained that it simply sounded bad. "The inscription has no sonority or rhythm whatsoever, and these [qualities] are particularly injured through the repetition of 'ium' and 'eum' three times consecutively as well as through the bad ending made by 'constituit' which doesn't descend so much as thud," wrote Süvern.[38] The members of the Historical-Philological department of the Academy agreed: "Furthermore, the inscription is not rhythmic enough, and by virtue of its repetitive consonance it flatters the ear too little to cover up through its excellence in this regard for its other shortcomings."[39]

But behind these seemingly superficial objections were much larger issues about the kind of institution being built—for whom, for what, and to what end. Of particular concern was the word one might think everyone could agree on: '*MUSEUM*.' The trouble was that although by 1827 everyone referred informally and in professional correspondence to the institution being built on the Lustgarten as 'Museum,' in its Latin guise in Hirt's inscription it carried a different classical connotation. "In antiquity only places were given this name that were dedicated to scholarship [*Wissenschaft*] and its practice," Süvern wrote, invoking the Alexandrian library—"a kind of Academy." At stake was separating Schinkel's museum from the academic enterprise of the university and Academies of Arts and Science, and opening its use up to a broader conception of public.[40] Ludwig Tieck went even farther: "The Greeks exhibited their art

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[35] Alexander von Humboldt to Albrecht, 20 October 1827, in *Aus Schinkel's Nachlaß* (1863), 275-276.

[36] Gutachten der historisch-philologischen Klasse der Academie, n.d., I.HA Rep. 89, 20441, fol. 161, GStAPK.

[37] Schinkel to FWIII, 15 October 1827, I.HA Rep. 89, 20441, fol. 125, GStAPK.

[38] Gutachten des Staatraths Süvern, 15 October 1827, in *Aus Schinkel's Nachlaß* (1863), 272.

[39] Gutachten der historisch-philologischen Klasse der Academie, n.d., I.HA Rep. 89, 20441, fol. 161, GStAPK.

[40] Süvern in *Aus Schinkel's Nachlaß* (1863), 272.

collections in temples and in their holy environs…If something similar could be intimated by the inscription on the museum, this would appear much to be desired."[41]

Hirt was quick to defend his choice of words, and was careful to do so by making them fit in with the museological conflict he understood was taking place by proxy through grammatical quibbling. It was true, he conceded, that '*MUSEUM*' had an academic meaning according to the ancients, and designated a place where scholars would come together to research and discuss ideas and science. He insisted, however, that it worked as a conveniently double term. Not only did it encompass his original vision for the institution, since excluded from the designs for the Berlin project, it also could indicate a sacred building dedicated to the muses, much more in line with the current plan. The word '*STUDIO*,' he further clarified, did not interrupt this sense of the institution's purpose of aesthetic contemplation, but "given the richness of its collections and given its inner order, it is conceived not only for pleasure, but substantively also for instruction," he wrote mildly. The use of '*ANTIQUITATIS*' was only a reference to the variety and diversity of the antiquities collections; '*LIBERALIUM ARTIUM*' was entirely consistent with ancient usage; '*CONSTITUIT*' was chosen merely to reflect the fact that the king's funds had sponsored not only the building, but had also underwritten the appropriate arrangement of the whole organization. Finally, Hirt wrote in *charakteristisch* fashion, "Ultimately, the final inscription contained the number of words that the length of the frieze appeared to demand."[42]

The Historical-Philological department had offered, however, not only a resounding critique of Hirt, but provided some suggestions of their own. And in compiling them, they had run into some difficulties themselves. Portraying a broad notion of public was "difficult to arrive at, because the art loving public, for whom the building is meant, appears to be too vague a term."[43] Further, the inscription could give no exact indication of the building's contents because these were still under discussion, and Latin had no good general term for "fine arts." Such was the uncertainty that Altenstein furnished Friedrich Wilhelm with a list of all the possible inscriptions the department had come up with,

> "because it is possible that your Majesty would like a longer list of possibilities to choose from, should your Majesty have concerns about the meaning or the content of the inscription proposed by the Academy, or have other considerations such as shortness or lengthiness. […] Given that the removal of the current inscription and the installation of a new one will carry considerable difficult and significant cost, it is highly desirable, that these challenges not

[41] The uproar about the inscription is also revealing of the extent to which the conception of the museum had transformed in the decade since the Academy exhibition of 1815 and the subsequent remodel of the Academy building to host the new museum. A latin inscription along the Unter den Linden side of the building had been a part of these early plans, and it was to include the word 'museum,' as well as a reference to the year of the Prussian liberation from France, but due to the illegibility of its designs the exact phrasing is unknown. Vogtherr, "Das koenigliche Museum zu Berlin," 100n692.

[42] Aloys Hirt to FWIII, 21 December 1827 in *Aus Schinkel's Nachlaß* (1863), 277-280.

[43] Gutachten der historisch-philologischen Klasse der Academie, n.d., I.HA Rep. 89, 20441, fol. 161, GStAPK.

> be made worse without sufficient reason, and that another modification not become necessary."[44]

The list contained 25 alternate inscriptions from the terse slogan—

> "Friedrich Wilhelm III for painting and fine arts, 1828"[45]

—to the short story—

> "King Friedrich Wilhelm III has collected multiple monuments of antiquity from the forefathers and intends that these, along with new treasures of fine art, be for public use, after the construction of the museum, in the year 1828."[46]

Eventually, they settled on *FRIDERICUS GUILLEMUS III REX SIGNIS TABULISQUE ARTE VETUSTATE EXIMIIS DECORE COLLOCANDIS THESAURUM EXSTRUXIT. MDCCCXXVIII*. [King Friedrich Wilhelm III constructed this building of treasures for the proper exhibition of paintings and sculptures distinguished by their art and age in the year 1828].[47] But in the end, this was not entirely satisfactory either. The Academy ended their deliberations with a shrug: "Without wanting to conclude that no one could produce a better inscription…the department does believe to be able to maintain that there stands no meaningful objections against this proposal from the position of experts in the field."[48] In the end, Hirt's inscription remained in place where it is still to be found today.

Hirt has been almost uniformly portrayed in the history of the museum of art as the representative of an outdated way of thinking who could not get with the times, and his impudence on the matter of the inscription figures in this narrative as a petty last ditch effort to control the institution's design even as he recognized the project to be slipping away from his influence. Christoph Vogtherr writes, "Hirt's inscription comprised once again a conception of the museum that had been for a long time no more relevant to the new building and its system."[49] Indeed, Hirt found himself increasingly marginalized from the planning process, and eventually left his position on the Museum Commission in 1829. The museum that was opened in 1830 was hardly a manifestation of the proposal he had made in 1797 and for which he had persistantly

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[44] Altenstein to Albrecht, 22 March 1828, I.HA Rep. 89, 20441, fol. 153, GStAPK.

[45] "*Friedrich Wilhelm III für Malerei und bildende Kunst 1828*." Altenstein to Albrecht, 22 March 1828, I.HA Rep. 89, 20441, fol. 153, GStAPK.

[46] "*König Friedrich Wilhelm III hat die von den Vorfahren erworbenen und von Ihm mit neuen Schätzen vermehrten Denkmale des Alterthums und Werke der bildenden Kunst, nach Erbauung des Museums, zur öffentlichen Benutzung bestimmt im Jahre 1828*." Altenstein to Albrecht, 22 March 1828, I.HA Rep. 89, 20441, fol. 153, GStAPK.

[47] "*König Friedrich Wilhelm III hat zur angemessen Aufstellung von den durch Kunst und Alter ausgezeichneten Bildwerken und Gemälden das Schatz-Gebäude errichtet im Jahr 1828*." Altenstein to Albrecht, 22 March 1828, I.HA Rep. 89, 20441, fol. 153, GStAPK.

[48] Gutachten der historisch-philologischen Klasse der Academie, n.d., I.HA Rep. 89, 20441, fol. 161, GStA.

[49] Vogtherr, "Das koenigliche Museum zu Berlin," 123.

advocated since. However, that Hirt's vision lost out to the views of Schinkel, Humboldt, Waagen, and others should not diminish the salience of his critique of the museum's idealism to the institution's establishment and operation. The Historical-Philological department of the Academy could not arrive conclusively at an inscription that adequately captured in language the indeterminate concepts of "the art loving public" and the multiple kinds of experiences, both aesthetic and historical, that the institution hoped to inspire. Even as they opposed Hirt's inscription and museological vision for which it stood, museum planners failed to render their own in material form. As such, they did not find an answer to Hirt's substantive claim of the incommensurability between the museum's spiritual pretensions and the material requirements of the encounter with objects it claimed to host. That Hirt's inscription made it onto the façade of a building that did not espouse the mission it professed was not an awkward aberration in the museum's construction, but rather the perfect emblem of the problem of linking objects with ideas that consumed the institution's early history.

Transcending the Object: The Granite Bowl and the Betende Knabe

As the debates over the museum's inscription show, the difficulty of creating embodiment at every point concerned not only the functional aspects of the building's design, but also the question of the institution's self-representation. How would the museum convey to its visitors at first encounter its mission of aesthetic transcendence? In the same section of his *Herzensergießungen eine Kunstliebenden Kloserbruders* in which he had called for the construction of a 'temple of art,' Wackenroder and Tieck wrote that in order to experience art one needed to approach it from the correct perspective, primed by the environment to engage with it as sacred rather than everyday: "Your magical figures are silent and closed off if you look at them coldly; your heart must first introduce itself with all its strength if they are to speak to you, and exercise their full force upon you."[50] The museum, in introducing itself in the proper way to the beholder, was the necessary intermediary through which one could prepare one's heart, mind, and body to enter into this spiritual transaction. In the following I will focus on two such devices through which museum planners sought to embody the museum's overarching goals and model the kinds of encounters with art it strove to host.

In 1826 Friedrich Wilhelm III became interested in the work of Gottlieb Christian Cantian, the royal building inspector and sculptor, who had exhibited a large bowl made out of granite at the annual Academy exhibition that year. The king purchased the work for the Charlottenburg Palace, but upon hearing that the Duke of Devonshire had purchased a much larger version decided to commission an even grander one. Upon hearing of the commission, Schinkel made plans for the work to be installed in the museum at the center of the building's all-important rotunda, a vessel for the rays of light filtering into the space from the dome's skylight, and a focal point for the gazes of all the antiquities which would surround the perimeter, as a later sketch shows.[51]

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[50] "*Ihre Zaubergestalten sind stumm und verschlossen, wenn ihr sie kalt anseht; euer Herz muß sich zuerst mächtiglich anreden, wenn sie sollen zu euch sprechen, und ihre ganze Gewalt an euch versuchen können.*" Tieck, Wackenroder, *Herzensergießungen*, 160-61.

[51] On the story of the basin's construction and integration into the museum project, Paul Ortwin Rave, "Zur Aufstellung der großen Granitschale vor dem Alten Museum in Berlin" in *Festschrift Friedrich Winkler*, ed. Hans Möhle (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1959); Sibylle

As a symbolic object, Cantian's basin grafted the museum's goal to elevate and make visible the beauty evident in ancient art to its self-conception as an institution in the service of a Prussian national community. These twin commitments were not always so easily paired. One emphasized the normative timelessness of the classical ideal; the other asserted art's historical development over time, and left room for the possibility of an aesthetic renaissance in a Prussian guise. The basin would accomplish both at once by wedding a classical form to a national material. Granite had become of particular interest to sculptors and architects in the 1820s as a native Prussian geological phenomenon, and had made appearances in such noteworthy constructions as the Luther monument in Wittenberg, the Blücher monument in Rostock, and the mausoleum in Charlottenburg.[52] The work, projected to be approximately 17 feet in diameter, would underscore the ascendency of Prussian art and industry through Cantian's craftmanship, a message the sculptor hoped to feature by placing it on a pedestal made of four intertwined eagles.[53] It had also gained a foothold as a concern of the German literary tradition, most relevant to the period in the writings of Goethe.[54] The form of the bowl on the other hand evoked the porphyry basin from the Roman emperor Nero's Domus Aurea in the Sala Rotonda of the Museo Pio-Clementino. This institution had served as a frequent source of inspiration for Schinkel, who had visited in 1803 and 1824, and used it as a model for his own rotunda.

If Friedrich Wilhelm hoped to show up the Duke of Devonshire, he was amply rewarded. In the spring of 1827 Cantian found a boulder from which to fashion the basin for the museum, "on the left bank of the Spree, approximately ¾ miles from the river, across from the town of Fürstenwalde, in the so-called Rauen Mountains, in the royal forest district of Colpin and approximately four hundred feet above sea level."[55] One of the so-called '*Markgrafensteine*,' the glacial boulder was, according to the geologist Klöden, "26 feet long, 25 feet thick, 27 feet high, and 95 feet in diameter," and thus exceeded all expectations for the work's initially projected dimensions.[56] "It would be a shame to cut it down to 17 feet," Cantian wrote to the

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Einholz, "Die Große Granitschale im Lustgarten: zur Bedeutung eines Berliner Solitärs," *Der Bär von Berlin: Jahrbuch des Vereins für die Geschichte Berlin* 46 (1997): 41-62.

[52] See for example the essay by the geologist and director of the Royal School of Industry, Karl Friedrich von Klöden, who wrote of the suitability of granite for artworks in "Über die Steingeschiebe in naturhistorischer und technischer Hinsicht," *Journal für die Baukunst* 2, no. 1 (1830): 48-53. On granite and its significance as a spiritual and philosophical material the early nineteenth century, see Thomas Raff, *Die Sprache der Materialien: Anleitung zu einer Ikonologie der Werkstoffe* (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1994), 110-125.

[53] Schinkel favored intertwined lions for the base.

[54] Goethe wrote two essays on granite, which he conjectured to be an *Urgestein* from which one could discover the primary component and subsequent morphology of the earth. He devoted two further short essays to the subject in 1828: Johann Wolfgang Goethe, "Granitarbeiten in Berlin," and "Der Markgrafenstein auf dem Rauhischen Berge bey Fürstenwalde, von Julius Schoppe an Ort und Stelle gezeichnet und von Tempeldey lithographirt," *Über Kunst und Alterthum*, 6, no. 2 (1828), 420-422; 422-423.

[55] Gottlieb Christian Cantian, "Einige Nachrichten von der Bearbeitung und dem Transport der für das Museum zu Berlin bestimmten, 22 Fuss im Durchmesser haltenden Schale aus einem Granit-Blocke," *Journal für die Baukunst* 2 (1830): 158.

[56] von Klöden, "Über die Steingeschiebe," 47.

museum planners.[57] Having received confirmation from Schinkel that the new dimensions would still be suitable for the space, he proceeded to harvest the largest cross section of granite possible from the boulder. The rock was cut down into a plate 5 foot thick and, with the help of "23 lifting devices of various kinds operated by 90 to 100 workers," it was repositioned in April of 1828, after which the basin could be carved out and the exterior formed.[58] Once the stone had been shaped, it was loaded through much engineering and manpower onto a contraption that could convey it overland to the Spree. With between 200-600 feet a day of progress, the journey to the river took several weeks. Four days later, on November 12 1828, after some rejiggering of bridges and locks to allow the extra-wide cargo to pass, the basin arrived at the new Packhof, which was under construction along the Kupfergraben according to Schinkel's designs.[59]

Once on land in Berlin, Cantian went to work finishing the basin for its museum debut. He found and installed a ten horsepower steam engine that had been used to drive in piles at the nearby palace bridge to aid in the final shaping and polishing of the granite after its difficult journey. After the interior of the basin was finished, the basin was turned in order to continue with the exterior in the spring of 1830. The work took over two years to complete, and during this time, Cantian discovered several worrisome cracks in the granite. Nevertheless, the process was considered to be a novel example of the use of machine power. Samuel Heinrich Spiker, the royal librarian, memorialized the enterprise in his collections of engravings and essays on Berlin, noting in particular that especially the rotation of the colossal object afforded "a tremendous view," and that the work "reminded one completely of the grandiose performances of antiquity."[60]

The monumentality of the industry involved in processing the basin was documented by Johann Erdmann Hummel in a trilogy of paintings, two of which show it during polishing: *Die Granitschale in der Schleifmaschine* [The Granite Basin in the Polishing Machine, 85cm x 45cm], and *Die Umlegung der Granitschale* [The Rotation of the Granite Basin, 135cm x 190cm], the latter having been the largest work in Hummel's oeuvre until it was destroyed in the Second World War. The paintings are remarkable views of the labor and infrastructure that went into the basin's production. The first displays with insistant realism a view bombarded by the bowl strapped into its apparatus in the workshop at the Packhof, as if through a fish-eye lens. [Fig. 5.4] There is nothing but basin and mechanism, and the rough and worn surfaces of the latter set off the polish of the former. The only hint of a larger surrounding comes through the play of reflections on the basin itself. The detailed uniqueness of the stone's granularity, the very quality for which it was prized, both asserts its own presence at the same time that it is reflective of its surroundings: the windows of the warehouse, through which one can detect the blue of the sky, litter the surface with such geometric exactitude as to convey both the shape of the building and the shape of the basin in one. A single large panel reflection on the center left suggests a larger and unpaned opening, through which one can vaguely detect another image of reflection: a dark outline against a clouded sky mirrored in water, perhaps the adjacent canal. The second painting, known to us through a photograph of the work from the early 20th century, gives a

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[57] Cantian in Paul Ortwin Rave, *Karl Friedrich Schinkel: Lebenswerk*, vol. 2, *Berlin: Stadtbaupläne, Brücken, Straßen, Tore, Plätze* (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1948), 124.

[58] Cantian, "Einige Nachrichten," 159.

[59] Cantian, "Einige Nachrichten," 164-166.

[60] Samuel Heinrich Spiker, *Berlin und Seine Umgebungen im Neunzehten Jahrhundert* (Berlin: George Gropius, 1833), 93-94.

much broader context in which to understand the events that are taking place. [Fig. 5.5] The basin appears here strapped onto a frame of four struts which are attached via a pulley system to a large frame in order to turn it over after polishing. Cantian is visible in the center of the apparatus, directing teams of workers operating large turnstile cranks.

Hummel may have been particularly invested in portraying the technology and labor involved in the basin's construction because of his personal ties to its creation. Cantian was his former student, as was Julius Schoppe, who had done a painting of the *Markgrafenstein* before its excavation in the Rauen mountains. Further, Hummel's brother's company had constructed part of the apparatus used to turn the basin after its polishing.[61] Whatever the specific motivation, however, Hummel took the opportunity in these composition to exercise his own technical skills, which had earned him the moniker by his Berlin colleauges, "Perspektiv Hummel," or as Beat Wyss characterizes his reputation, "crusader of the vanishing point."[62] Hummel, a professor of optics at the Academy of Art, was a passionate scholar of perspective, and his paintings are typically replete with virtuosic studies on reflection, shadows, and scale applied to complex shapes in the context of intimate and concrete scenes of Berlin life. His work has been firmly categorized as emblematic of the Biedermeier aesthetic, with its impassive and prosaic portrayals of bourgeois domesticity and sociability, and would eventually become problematic because of its technicality, which threatened its status as 'art.'[63] However, the basin paintings, exhibited to great acclaim in 1832, guard an interesting commentary on the object as an element of the museum project. Rather than providing an indication of its future role as vessel that would embody the classical ideal for museum-goers, and prepare them for the aesthetic experience of transcendence, Hummel celebrated instead the basin under construction in the mechanical infrastructures of the Packhof, the installation the museum was designed to shield from the gentility of the City Palace and Lustgarten. Certainly, the basin appears here as an object of tremendous reflective potential, but the mirror shows the monumental and concrete technicality of modern industry and craftsmanship, both of Hummel and his brother. The construction of the basin triumphs over its autonomous aesthetic power. Although we do not know for certain how Schinkel viewed these works, I think it is reasonable to expect that they must have annoyed the architect of the 'empire of ideals.' In the spring of 1831, in the same year that Hummel completed these works, Schinkel wrote to Albrecht imploring him, now that the polishing work was done, to speed along the basin's removal from the Packhof, and to order the building constructed for it to be dismantled. He complained about the slow progress with the work's

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[61] Marsha Morton hypothesized that because this brother had originally owned versions of the *Granitschale in der Schleifmaschine* and *Aufstellung der Granitschale im Lustgarten*, that he may have commissioned them to feature in particular his technical contributions to the project. Marsha Lee Morton, "Johann Erdmann Hummel: A Painter of Biedermeier Berlin" (PhD diss., New York University, 1986), 413.

[62] Wyss, *Hegel's Art History*, 91.

[63] Marsha L. Morton has been the primary analyst of Hummel's Biedermeier credentials: Marsha L. Morton, "Johann Erdmann Hummel and the Flemish Primitives: The Forging of a Biedermeier Style," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 52, no.1 (1989): 46-67; and Marsha L. Morton, "Johann Erdmann Hummel: A Painter of Biedermeier Berlin," (1986). On the critical (as in uncharitable) reception of Hummel's work, Hans Holländer, "Schein und Widerschein: Über die Schachbilder von Johann Erdmann Hummel," *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* 43 (2001).

installation, and accused Cantian of dallying with the task in hope that the king would pay a visit to his impressive workshop, and give him recognition for his undertaking.[64] The material considerations of the basin project were threatening to overshadow its true role as museum object.

Indeed by this point the basin had impeded Schinkel's visions with its material solidity quite without Hummel's help. However impressive the colossal basin might have been, and however prominent and evocative of ancient glory its planned integration to his design, by the time of its arrival in Berlin, Schinkel had begun to have second thoughts. He realized that its massive stature would not fit into the building as well as he had anticipated. 'Fit' for Schinkel was both a literal and a stylistic consideration. In addition to the disadvantage that visitors would not be able to fully appreciate the entirety of its scale in an enclosed space, Schinkel noted that if the basin were to be moved into the museum's interior, it would delay the closure of several openings in the roof before the winter frosts, and thus set back the completion of the building.[65] In an appeal to the King in February 1829, Schinkel admitted that when he had proposed the basin for the rotunda, he had envisioned it to be no larger than 12 to 16 feet wide. Now that Cantian's industry had yielded an object 22 feet in diameter it would have to be tilted on its side in order to enter the museum, necessitating an elaborate construction project in the middle of Schinkel's already delicately ornamented building.[66] At 1600 zentners (approximately 72,500 kg), this would be a delicate and dangerous operation for the safety and security of the building and its workers. Further, it would block the view of the sculptures in the rotunda in between the columns of the building, an important feature of the museum's design. To emphasize his point, Schinkel completed two drawings of the bowl to submit with his 1829 appeal. One showed the basin has he had originally anticipated: "size of the basin, 12 to 16 feet diameter," the caption below the sketch read. A counterpoint to the light filled opening of the rotunda's dome, the object sits low to the ground, below the pedestals of the statues around the perimeter of the space, and seems to draw these works' sight-lines towards its central point. A second drawing showed the basin as executed, this time with its dimension—"22 feet diameter"— sketched directly onto the object itself, as its size left no space for caption. The other sculptures in the room are completely obscured, except for two, as is the light filled door to the museum's galleries at the far end of the rotunda.

As an alternative Schinkel suggested that the space in front of the museum building directly below the steps into the Lustgarten would provide a far more desirable location. Here, it could serve as an ornamentation to the museum entrance, and correspond appropriately to the museum building, the plantings and fountain in the garden, and the palace complex across the way. Schinkel provided two sketches of the new plan, and noted to the king that "I purposefully avoided executing [the sketches] with too much polish in order that nothing would intrude to corrupt the eye, but rather that your Majesty could see the simple truth."[67] The king approved.

The granite bowl was moved from the Packhof into the Lustgarten in 1831. Hummel's third painting in his trilogy shows the work in its final resting place.[68] [Fig. 5.6] As in the other

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[64] Schinkel in Rave, *Karl Friedrich Schinkel* (1948), 127.

[65] Schinkel to Albrecht, 28 November 1828 in *Aus Schinkels Nachlaß* (1863), 283.

[66] Schinkel to FWIII, 4 February 1829 in *Aus Schinkels Nachlaß* (1863), 285.

[67] Schinkel to FWIII, 4 February 1829 in *Aus Schinkels Nachlaß* (1863), 287.

[68] Final for the 19th century that is. In 1934 the Nazi regime moved the basin to the east side of the museum in order to clear the *Lustgarten* for mass demonstrations. In 1981 it was

two in the series, Hummel reserved the composition's central focus for the elements of the basin's construction in two ways. First, apart from the work itself, the painting is as centrally about its pedestal, which lifts the object above the heads of the people that surround it. A far cry from the proposals of bronze lions or eagles forwarded by Schinkel and Cantian, a single and unfinished tower of layered blocks of stone and wood hold the work in a clearly provisional arrangement. Loose stones around the base await their insertion into its platform. The scene documented yet another concession. Once the project had proven to be much delayed and over-budget, Schinkel was forced to abandon hopes for an elaborate bronze pedestal. The king insisted instead on a simple three-pillared design, but its installation was delayed until 1834. Second, and in common with the other two works, Hummel's execution of the basin itself was a *tour de force* of his own powers of perspective, this time amplifying his skill by placing human figures around its perimeter as objects to be reflected on its surface. The images of these viewers are subsumed both into the marvel of its machine-won polish, and into the exhibition of the mastery of Hummel's painterly hand. Nowhere to be seen in the glassy surface is, astonishingly, the museum. In his blurb for the Academy catalogue of the exhibition of 1832, Hummel made this absence conspicuous, by making the reflectivity of the basin into the constitutive element of its (and the painting's) content: "Some may notice that the same basin appears to be portrayed in a different color in each of these three views; On this matter, I would like to point out that it has been polished, and thus takes on the color of the objects that surround it. E.H."[69]

It is hardly surprising that Johann Erdmann "Perspectiv-Hummel" and Aloys "Surgical Method" Hirt were very close friends, and the former shared the latter's ridicule and was pilloried as 'anachronistic' by some of his contemporaries. "The artistic quality of his work, one might even say the romanticism of his ideas, was crusted over by craftsmanship and pedagogical intent, as well as by pure mathematical exhibitionism," as G.F. Hartlaub puts it.[70] However, like Hirt, Hummel also insisted on pointing out the museum as a project of stones at the expense of spirit. His views of the granite basin tell the story of an object which ended up challenging rather than channeling the transcendent meaning it was supposed to embody. The shining mirrored surfaces in Hummel's granite trilogy, set alongside the story of the basin's failed integration into Schinkel's rotunda, become statements about what museum objects ultimately reflect: in this case, the prosaic physical laws of mathematics, and the industrial infrastructures involved in their production.

If Cantian's granite basin was the museum's first installed object, its most celebrated was a work that appeared in the 1830 catalogue as "*Anbetender Knabe*," or "Praying Boy."[71] [Fig. 5.7] After receiving special permission from the king to accession into the museum this rare ancient Greek bronze statue of a young boy with his head upturned and arms outstretched as if in an act of prayer, Schinkel gave it a prize location in the museum in the entrance to the north

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returned to its place in front of the museum where it stands today. Sibylle Einholz, "Die Große Granitschale im Lustgarten," 56.

[69] Johann Erdmann Hummel in Holländer, "Schein und Widerschein," 205.

[70] G.F. Hartlaub, *Zauber des Spiegels: Geschichte und Bedeutung des Spiegels in der Kunst* (Munich: Piper and Co., 1951), 114.

[71] Christian Friedrich Tieck, *Verzeichniss der antiken Bildhauerwerke des Königlichen Museums zu Berlin* (Berlin: Königliche Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1831), 7.

gallery on the first floor.[72] As the first object visible to visitors approaching the museum through the rotunda, the *Knabe* stood in the sightline left vacant by the decision to displace the granite basin to the Lustgarten. Positioned between the assertion of the absolute and ethereal ideal of classical beauty in the rotunda and the argument for art's historical development in the galleries, it served as a bridge between two words, a feat which Schinkel achieved, according to Beat Wyss, "with aplomb."[73] The *Knabe*'s gesture of prayer was central to its efficacy in this regard. It served as the perfect indication of what viewership in the museum should look like. In Wackenroder's influential formulation:

> "I compare the enjoyment of the finest works of art to a prayer. [...] He who is beloved by the heavens...lays bare his noble soul; then he kneels, and turns his open breast in silent rapture towards heaven's brilliance and nourishes himself with ethereal light; then he stands up...full and light of heart, and puts his hand on a great and good work of art. This is the true meaning of prayer."[74]

A watercolor of the scene by the architectural painter Carl Emanuel Conrad gives a sense of the effect of the work's placement in Schinkel's design, and makes visible its place in the alchemy of aesthetic transcedence. [Fig. 5.8] The "Praying Boy" is the kernel at the heart of a composition dominated by the impressive domed ceiling and the skylight at the top. This was a world striving for ascension. A column of light shining from the windows on the northern wall of the museum behind the bronze boy makes these pretensions manifest. The beam also, however, signaled the difficulty of their fulfillment. Once it had been installed in 1830, museum administrators found that it was horribly backlit from the windows behind it. Humboldt recommended a swivel mechanism be installed in its pedestal so "so that the most beautiful of our statues...can be seen from the front and from the sides in good lighting..."[75] The visitor devout enough to follow Wackenroder's instructions for proper viewership to reach out to touch the Adorant would have been have been met thus, not only with a stern reprimand from the attending gallery supervisor, but with a surprise twist of the work in its status as a museum object. Transcendence in the museum could rely not only on the assertion of an object's meaning in a new context; it was also

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[72] Vogtherr notes that while the majority of the antiquities to be exhibited in the museum were ceded through larger inventories in July 1829, Friedrich Wilhelm III signed a separate edict for the *Knabe*, a testament to its significance within the royal collections. Vogtherr, "Das Königliche Museum zu Berlin," 165. Consistent with the as-of-yet poorly understood connections between Greek and Roman art, many scholars of this period actually thought the work to be of Roman origin; its primary interpreter, Konrad Levezow, of whom more shortly, identified it to be the work of Boidas, son of the famed Greek sculptor Lysippos, who worked in the fourth century BCE. Today the sculpture is widely accepted to be of the Hellenistic period.

[73] Wyss, *Hegel's Art History*, 108.

[74] Tieck, Wackenroder, *Herzensergießungen*, 159.

[75] Wilhelm von Humboldt to Christian Friedrich Tieck, 10 August 1830, Autographensammlung 0643.001, Zentralarchiv, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. The precise date of the completion of the swiveling pedestal is unknown. Uwe Peltz, "Nineteenth Century Solutions," 8.

dependent on a device of engineering which rendered visible (or tangible) the delicate material artifice upon which these meanings were based.

Beyond its hidden swivel, the *Knabe*'s symbolic prayer, so important to its enrollment in the Royal Museum, had grown from a complicated history of interpretation, often in an uncertain relationship to the history of the physical object. Its first definitive ascription as a 'praying statue,' or *Adorant*, had occurred in 1806, when the Academy of Arts in Berlin gathered to write a letter pleading Napoleon to spare the Prussian royal collections from looting. In this moment of crisis, they turned to the bronze statue as a symbol of their plight. Friedrich II had acquired the work for Sanssouci in 1747—its ninth court of residence after its excavation in Rhodes in 1503—and it had been closely associated with the Prussian king's legacy since it had stood outside his library window, his favorite object in his burgeoning collections.[76] The work evoked a time of collaboration and cosmopolitanism between French and Prussian learned communities, and the Academy members hoped that by invoking its presence in their plea, they might move the French emperor, and by proxy, Denon, to clemency. In their formulation, however, the statue became a strange mouthpiece for their own message:

> "The only monument of the collection that could merit the honor of being taken away as a trophy is that of the Adorant. He raises his eyes and his hands as if to implore the great love and generosity of the victor. This beautiful bronze represents so well the state of the supplicant, and portrays very well our situation, to which we cannot add anything to express more strongly and more deeply our prayers and our hopes."[77]

The beseeching stature of the artwork, pleading to the French occupiers to spare it, was at the same time, and by the Academy's own admission, a worthy trophy. The metaphor of the praying statue had overshot its target. By fulfilling so perfectly the plight of the conquered, the statue was the perfect emblem of the conqueror. By interceding on its own behalf, the *Adorant* condemned itself. Indeed, despite its call to prayer (or maybe because of it), the work was transported to Paris and appeared in the German exhibition at the Louvre the following year.

Once in Paris, the now-christened *Adorant* began to reveal even further the troubling discrepancy between its figurative prayer and its physical stature as a problem of art historical meaning, and not just a case of a rhetorical device gone wrong. The Berlin art historian Konrad Levezow had first examined the object in the City Palace in Berlin in 1803, and suggested then in an article published in *Der Freimüthige* that the work could be in the act of prayer were it not for his realization that the arms, the key component of the gesture of prayer, bore cracks along

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[76] On Friedrich II's relationship to the bronze, see the thorough account by Thomas Fischbacher, *Des Königs Knabe: Friedrich der Große und Antinous* (Weimar: Verlag und Datenbank für Geisteswissenschaften, 2011); Whitney Davis, *Queer Beauty: Sexuality and Aesthetics from Winckelmann to Freud and Beyond* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 24-29; Jörg Kuhn, "Der 'Betende Knabe von Sanssouci'. Die Rezeptionsgeschichte des Knaben vom 18. Jahrhundert bis heute" in *Der Betende Knabe: Original und Experiment*, ed. Gerhard Zimmer, and Nele Hackländer (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1997).

[77] Akademie der Wissenschaften to Napoleon, 22 November 1806, Historische Abteilung, PAW I-XV: 8a, fol. 1, AdW.

the shoulder and were probably modern additions.[78] In the Louvre, under better conditions of lighting and display, Levezow confirmed these cracks and discovered more. This would seem to end the hope for the *Adorant* as such, at least as any matter of scholarly certainty. Levezow, however, was equipped with a commitment "to arm oneself against the appeal of overly hasty, if seemingly obvious judgments through cold deliberateness and through tireless patience in the examination [of antiquities]," and to this end had brought with him to the museum a live boy against which he could evaluate the sculpture's musculature.[79] He emerged from his scrutiny with the definitive conclusion that the statue's arms, the linch pin of its prayer, had been indeed separated from its body when it was excavated in the 16th century. However, Levezow wrote in a treatise on the work in 1808, not only had the ancient arms been reattached and were thus originals, but this had occurred with no perceptible change to their original position:

> "[W]hen [the left arm] was lifted from the shadows, in which it laid buried...it was cemented and fit back perfectly onto the ancient shoulder; [...] And likewise, I could observe that the right arm had also been returned to the shoulder; and that another [modern] hand had taken pains at forming and polishing its whole surface, and that...the ancient arm...was similarly formed and joined to the body, and thus that the boy had also been raising this arm in the same gesture..."[80]

Levezow thus came away from his investigations with the assertion that the breaks in the arms confirmed rather than disputed the authenticity of the gesture. It was, however, a tenuous position, and Levezow recognized this. The statue's gesture had been secured, but what it ought to mean was still left to be determined. Prayer required a step further. He turned thus in the last words of his reading of the work to the importance of the feeling and idea of the gesture rather than its anatomy:

> If [the viewer] properly considers the expression of the mouth and especially of the eyes as an emotion (*πάθημα*), he will necessarily understand that this is directed towards the sky, the image of someone praying and making an urgent demand. And if you perceive, and join together in your mind, the appearance of the face and expression gazing [upwards], together with the arrangement of the arms and the form of the whole body standing...it cannot be otherwise than that willingly...you will form

[78] Konrad Levezow, "Die Kunstschätze des Königl. Preußischen Hauses," *Die Freimüthige oder Berlinische Zeitung für gebildete unbefangene Leser* 16 (28 January 1803): 63; and 17 (31 January 1803): 67.

[79] Konrad Levezow, *Über den Raub des Palladiums auf den geschnittenen Steinen des Alterthums* (Braunschweig: Friedrich Vieweg, 1801), vi-vii.

[80] Konrad Levezow, *De Iuvenis Adorantis Signo Ex Aere Antiquo* (Berlin: August Friedrich Kuhn, 1808), 7.

> for yourself the idea of a certain youth worshipping, that is, pouring forth prayers and reverently worshipping the gods.[81]

In a move away from the difficult decoding of cracks and surfaces, Levezow asked his readers and other viewers of the work, to follow the statue's gaze into the skies, and to allow the idea of the prayer to derive from an act of imagination. In the end, the ascription of the statue as an '*Adorant*' was a leap of faith.[82]

The history of the *Knabe* shows that its gesture of prayer had to leave its material body behind, not only in 1830, but from the very beginning of its career as worshipper. For this reason it is difficult to adopt the perspective of Schinkel, as channeled by a visitor to the museum in 1858: "The earthly, which in the figure of the *Adorant* strives towards the divine, is in every fiber already so filled with the transcendent, that the relationship between the two worlds can hardly be more fittingly manifested than in this complete harmony between both the beauty of the body and of the soul."[83] The *Knabe*'s prayer did not strive towards transcendence, it reached it, completely leaving behind the statue from which it issued, and eliding the difficulties of the object that might expose its hidden profanity. In this way, however, the *Knabe* and Cantian's overly colossal basin, were perhaps the most fitting icons of the museum's claim for the place of art in the Prussian state. One stood on its provisional pedestal in front of the building it was too massive to enter, the other held up its questionable arms on its specially designed swivel mechanism. Both stood at the entrance to the post-Napoleonic Prussian state's grandest effort to render philosophy into stone, and stood for much more than a seamless ascension into a world of ideal beauty. They were instead testaments to the institutional and infrastructural challenges that this effort would require to support it.

This chapter has been concerned with a series of wrinkles in the practice of founding an institution based on the notion of the autonomy of art—wrinkles in which the needs of objects diverged from assertions of their meaning, where mundane contingencies prevented the execution of ideal plans, and where matter defied spirit as the founding premise of the Royal Museum of Art. Although the institution was driven by actors for whom the spiritual sovereignty

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[81] Levezow, *De Iuvenis*, 8.

[82] The leap of faith has stuck. While there is some variation of opinion among classicists and archeologists, the statue continues to be known by its 'praying' gesture: *'Der Betende Knabe*' in both scholarly literature and in the official catalogues of the Altes Museum. At the same time, Levezow's assertion of the ancient origins of the statue's arms has been overturned. Both arms are now thought to have originated from its French tenure during the seventeenth century. There is no consensus, however, on whether or not they occupy the position of the work's original gesture. Archeologists think that ancient Greeks frequently offered up sculpted replicas of limbs and body parts to the gods, including eyes, ears, genitalia, legs, arms and internal organs made of marble, limestone, terra cotta or bronze. However, there is some uncertainty in many of these finding as to whether these objects represent complete offerings, or fragments of entire bodies. See the introductory essay and bibliography on the subject in Heike Tahödl, "Zu Antiken Gliederweihungen," in *Die Götter Beschenken: Antike Weihegaben aus der Antikensammlung der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin* ed. Moritz Kiderlen and Volker Michael Strocka (Munich: Biering & Brinkmann, 2005), 27-29. If the *Knabe* can be said to be praying, it may be doing so in offering up its original arms to the gods.

[83] Anonymous, "Der Adorant," *Westermann's Monatshefte* 4 (1858): 98.

of art within Prussian society was the highest motivation and goal, this wrinkly history shows that aesthetic idealism was of limited utility as a course of logistical practice during the museum's foundation, and that what could be achieved rhetorically could not always be achieved in the flesh.

This was a problem for an institution whose material presence was supposed to be shot through with spirit at every turn, but this should not mean that the institution failed at its goal. This is an arguments instead for a new understanding of the museum's contribution to Prussian cultural and political life at the beginning of the nineteenth century. "[Schinkel's museum] was," Ziolkowski writes, "largely in harmony with the spirit of the times," in that it embodied simultaneously art's religiosity, its autonomy, and its history. This is to take Schinkel and his collaborators at their word. To take them in practice, however, is to understand that the museum was rather the place where the harmonious embodiment of these precepts was, although sought after, also always contested. Spirit was not the institution's automatic consequence, but its central challenge.

In 1798, at the height of the Kunstraub in Italy, Goethe wrote in the introductory essay to his new journal, *Die Propyläen* that in the face of such upheaval of the art collections of Europe artists should conceive of an "ideal body" of art through which to nourish their artistic development. By 1823, these artworks had largely returned, and yet the imperative to form an "ideal body" remained. The question became, as we have seen, how to create an ideal in a world, not of material loss, but of material presence, how to forge an "empire of ideals" in a regime of stones. Goethe, with typical skepticism of those who would make art melt away into pure spirit, anticipated this conjunction in his opening lines:

> "The youth attracted by nature and art believes that with a lively effort he will soon be able to penetrate the innermost sacrality; the man realizes after extensive wandering that he is still in the vestibule. […] Stair, gate, door, entry hall, the space between inside and outside, between the sacred and the mundane can be the only place where we will typically remain with our friends."[84]

These words were an explanation of the journal's humble goals to its first readers. But they were also a diagnosis of the twin worlds of art that were emerging in that period, and whose reconciliation had become, as we have seen, an urgent cultural political project. "What in the act of demolition itself has perished, will probably always be a secret," Goethe wrote. But what had been created out of this loss was the vestibule itself. Enumerating the architectural fields of the intermediary—the interstitial spaces that contain the constant dual possibility of going in and out—Goethe described the efforts to make objects serve the ideal aspirations of the state with which this chapter has been concerned. The rotunda, the inscription, the granite bowl, the

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[84] *"Der Jüngling, wenn Natur und Kunst ihn anziehen, glaubt, mit einem lebhaften Streben, bald in das innerste Heiligthum zu dringen; der Mann bemerkt, nach langem Umherwandeln, daß er sich noch immer in den Vorhöfen befinde. […] Stufe, Thor, Eingang, Vorhalle, der Raum zwischen dem Innern und Aeussern, zwischen dem Heiligen und Gemeinen kann nur die Stelle seyn, auf der wir uns mit unsern Freunden gewöhnlich aufhalten werden."* Johann Wolfgang Goethe, "Einleitung," *Propyläen* 1, no. 1 (1798): iii.

praying boy, indeed the entire museum project made manifest the overwhelming significance of the material world of art to the social and political order museum planners were trying to create. At the same time, they signalled this world's constant interruption of the efforts to establish an order on ideal, and thus immaterial, terms.

Chapter 5 Illustrations

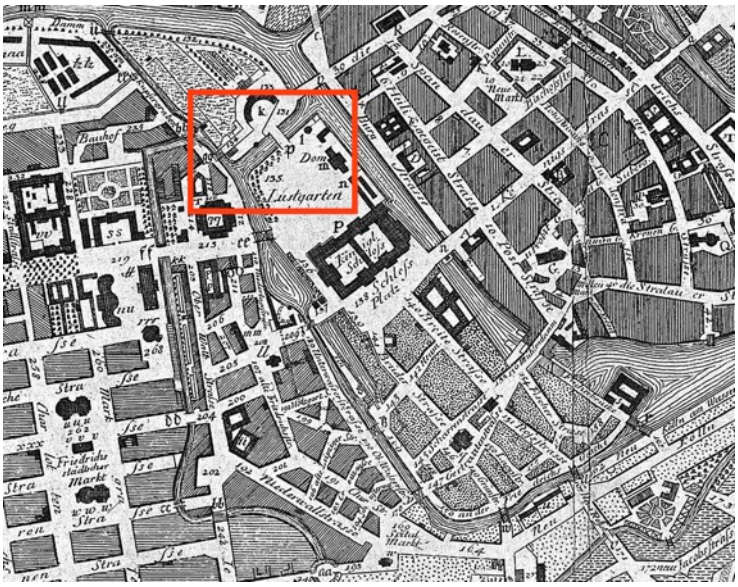

Fig. 5.1
Daniel Friedrich Sotzmann (1754-1840)
Grundriss der Königl. Residenzstädte Berlin, 1786 [detail of museum site]
43.9 cm x 32.7 cm
Zentral- und Landesbibliothek Berlin

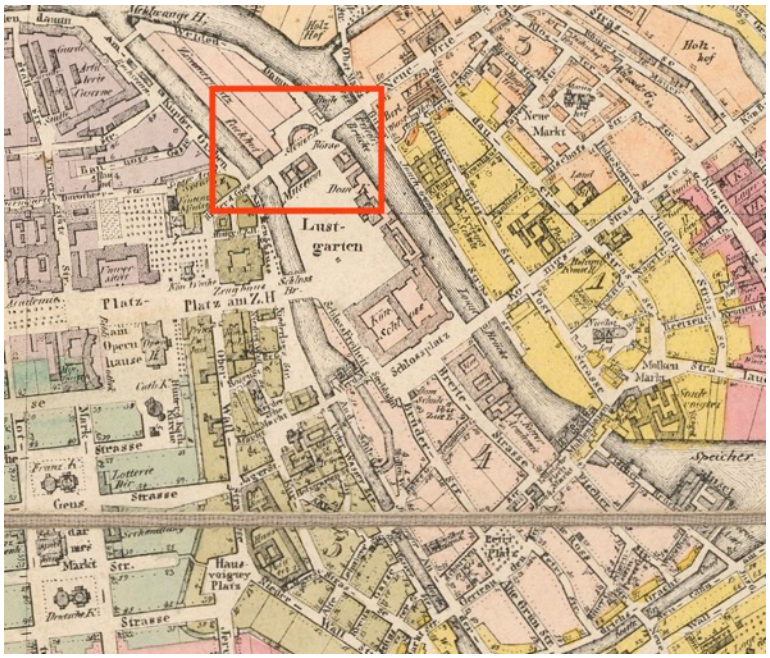

Fig. 5.2
Wichard v. Möllendorf
Grundriss von Berlin, 1826 [detail of museum site]
43.5 x 51.5 cm
Landesarchiv Berlin

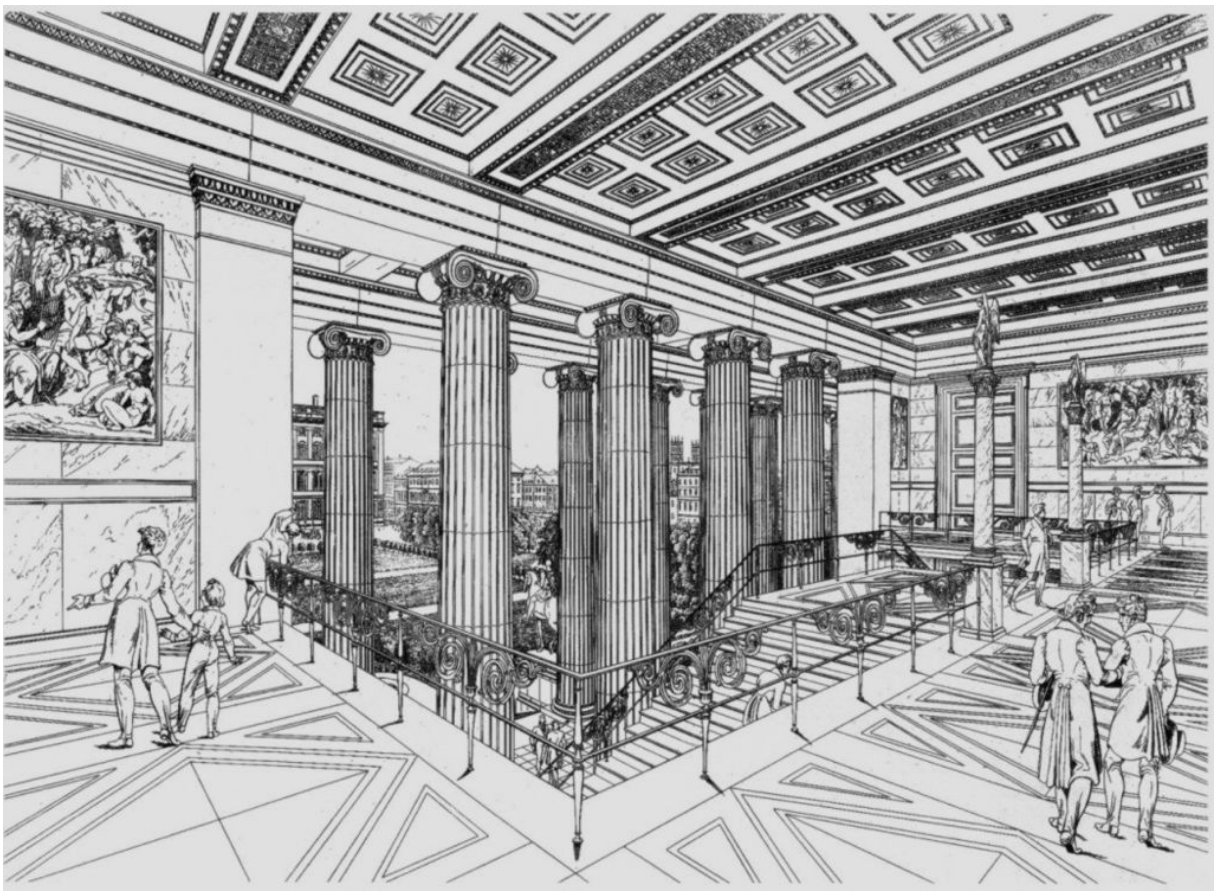

Fig. 5.3
Karl Friedrich Schinkel (1781-1841)
Sketch of Staircase from Interior, 1829

Fig. 5.4
Johann Erdmann Hummel (1769-1852)
Die Granitschale in der Schleifmaschine, 1831
85 cm x 45 cm
Alte Nationalgalerie Berlin

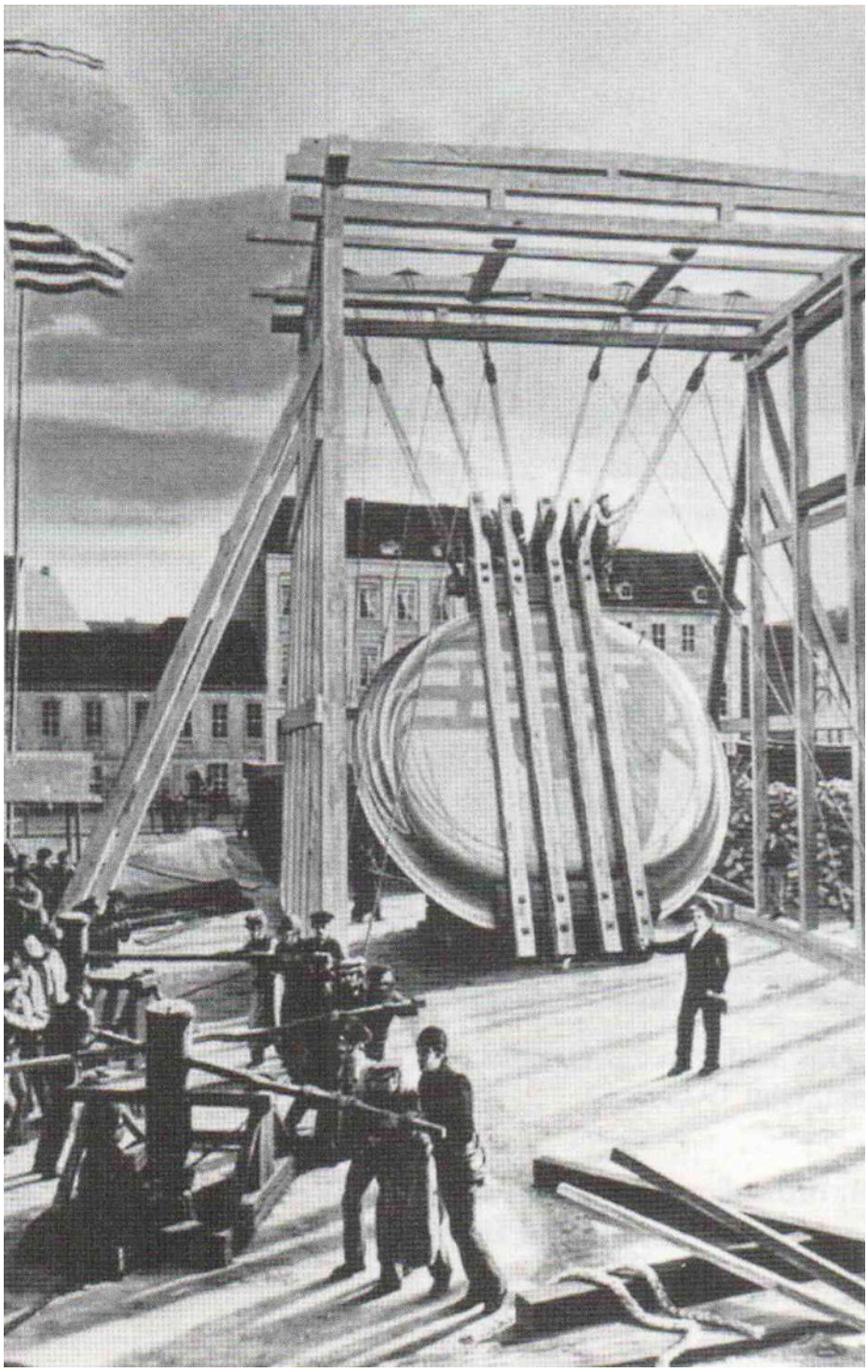

Fig. 5.5
Johann Erdmann Hummel (1769-1852)
Die Umlegung der Granitschale, 1831
135 cm x 190 cm
[Destroyed in WWII]

Fig. 5.6
Johann Erdmann Hummel (1769-1852)
Die Granitschale im Berliner Lustgarten, 1831
66 cm x 81 cm
Alte Nationalgalerie Berlin

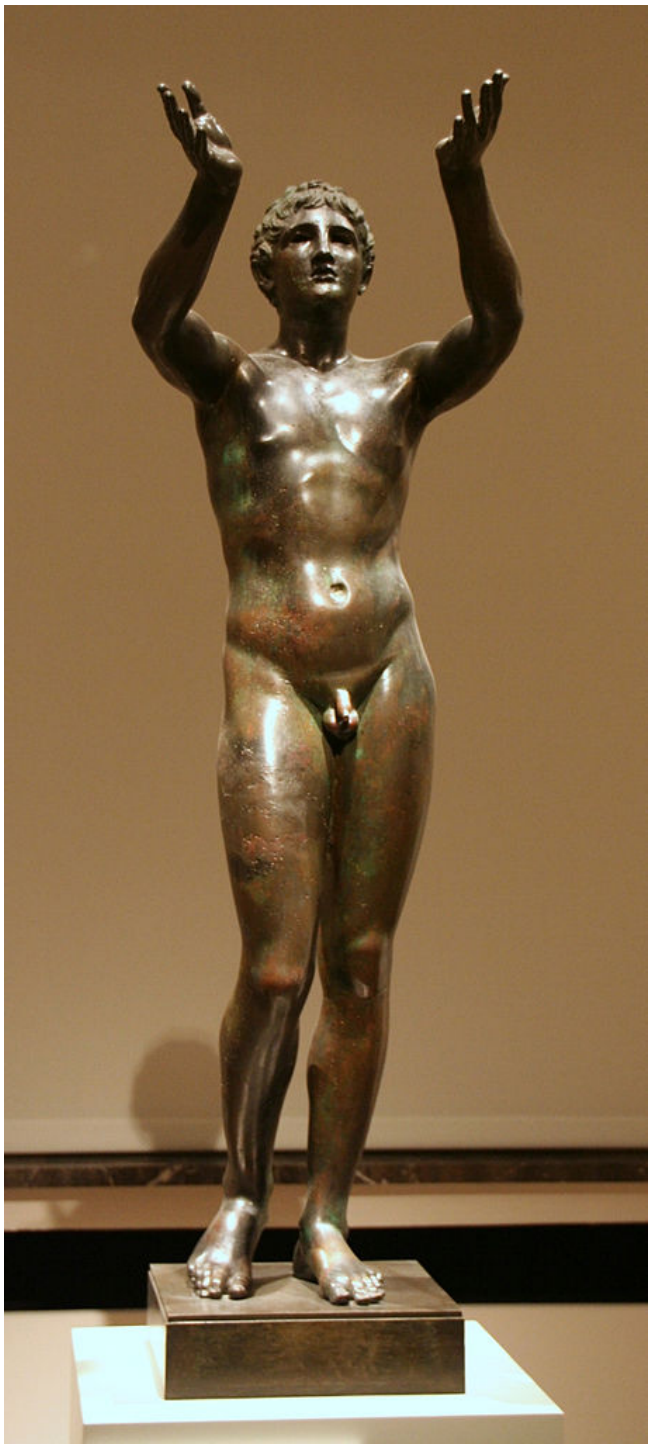

Fig. 5.7
Betender Knabe, c. 300BCE
128 cm x 69 cm
Altes Museum Berlin

Fig. 5.8
Carl Emanuel Conrad (1810-1873)
Rotunde des Museums am Lustgarten, c. 1830
45.7 cm x 42.1 cm
Stiftung Preussischer Schlösser und Gärten

AFTERWORD

In the spring of 1835 a "society of ladies" entered the Royal Museum of Art in Berlin and demanded to see the backs of the van Eyck paintings on display. The attending servant in the gallery demurred, informing the society—allegedly without getting up from his seat—that this could only happen with the permission of his superior, which he was unwilling or unable to procure. It ought not to have been so confounding a request. The six paintings in question were panels of the *Ghent Altar*, and as such were painted on the front and back. Indeed each painted surface was itemized in the catalogue of the collection separately for a total of twelve works: these visitors were simply asking to see those works listed as part of the collection, but not visible in the display.[516] Eventually the women were able to find a servant in the sculpture galleries downstairs who was willing to help. The incident, however, provoked a frustrated letter from the museum's director Carl von Brühl to his staff, admonishing them that they were obliged to be polite to the public, and especially that they must not sit when approached by a visitor. Beyond the formalities of etiquette, however, Brühl appeared torn about how questions such as these ought to be handled in the gallery. "Without wanting to insist that every individual without exception should have the van Eyck paintings turned around for them—which cannot happen in reality [*was in der That nicht geschehen kann*]—surely we can make an exception to the rules if either important people, artists, or scholars wish it; or if an entire society requests it," he wrote equivocally.[517] The letter ended with a reminder that servants ought to exercise particular care in supervising the gallery entrances in order to prevent incidents "like the most recent case in which a beautiful portrait of flowers by Rachel Ruysch was scribbled upon in pencil by a mischevious hand." Sorting through the physical dimensions of how to engage its visitors productively, Brühl was stuck between the desire to facilitate an immersive aesthetic experience on one hand and the limited realities of the museum's material constraints on the other.

This dissertation has been concerned with reorienting the early history of the public museum of art around the conflict, evident in Brühl's letter to his staff, that the institution strove to do something ideally which it could not always fulfill "*in der That*." It has presented a history of this problem in the displacement of German art collections during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars and the Prussian effort to build a museum that transcended the limitations of objects that had been made evident in this period. Carl von Brühl's exasperation at his staff's inability to recognize the right moment to turn around the van Eycks was rooted in a historical

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[516] Gustav Friedrich Waagen, *Verzeichniss der Gemälde-Sammlung des Königlichen Museums zu Berlin* (Berlin: Königlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1830), 130-132. The panels from the *Ghent Altar* were acquired as part of the Solly collection in 1821, and considered to be its among its most treasured works. Christoph Martin Vogtherr, "Das Koenigliche Museum zu Berlin. Planungen und Konzeption des ersten Berliner Kunstmuseums," *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* 39 (1997): 86-89. On Schinkel's framing of the panels, Bettina Roenne, *Ein Architekt rahmt Bilder: Karl Friedrich Schinkel und die Berliner Gemäldegalerie* (Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 2007), 72.

[517] Carl von Brühl to Castelans, 30 July 1835, I/GG, folio 61, Zentralarchiv der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin.

moment in which facilitating an appropriate encounter with art was tied up with questions of German national pasts and political futures.[518]

This question of how to balance the museum as an ideal and practical enterprise also has, however, an important resonance with current museum practice and in particular the new forms of engaged participation that have accompanied this historical institution's bid for contemporary relevance. If the van Eyck episode had happened today, one could easily imagine the museum director not only admonishing his staff for having impeded access to the works, but reinstalling the panels on rotating frames so they could be turned by visitors themselves; or at the least placing digital touchscreen renderings of the hidden paintings beside the originals, that could be manipulated to allow viewers to get closer than they ever could to the physical object. The struggle to overcome material limitations is no longer about the achievement of an ideal, moral, and rational state of life and citizenship. In some guises, it is an effort to participate in an entertainment economy in which instutions produce and market experiences rather than material goods.[519] In others, it is an effort to expand constituencies by inserting the museum into a variety of social contexts beyond the appreciation of art on its own terms.[520] In these related frameworks, 'participation,' and 'interactivity,' have become important buzzwords of exhibit design and programming, which seek to break down traditional barriers between people and objects to different but equally expansive ends. This is a reach outwards rather than upwards, to borrow the idiom of the *Betende Knabe*.

The contemporary trend towards revised terms of openness shares, nevertheless, many affinities with the early public museum's transcendent impulses, not least of which is the uncertainty about the place of objects in the institution. Two positions, drawn from the debates of the early nineteenth century, dominate current literature according to Randolph Starn's survey of museum studies literature: on one hand the condemnation of the museum as a 'mausoleum,' and the correlated call to abandon traditional object collections, and on the other hand the faith in

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[518] The encounter with the work of the Van Eycks was particularly important in this regard, as their work had become an important part of establishing a German historical canon of art. Johanna Schopenhauer's popular book on the van Eycks, published in 1822, began with the declaration that "Soon it will be recognized with joyous astonishment, that we too, just like the Italians, may boast our own, originally German school of art, which blossomed on the lower Rhine, and for centuries distinguished itself from all others…" Johanna Schopenhauer, *Sämmtliche Schriften von Johanna Schopenhauer*, vol. 4.1, *Johann van Eyck und seine Nachfolger* (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1830), 9-10. On the reception of the van Eycks and the importance of northern Renaissance art to German nationalism in the nineteenth century, Bernhard Ridderbos, "From Waagen to Friedländer," and Wessel Krul, "Realism, Renaissance and Nationalism," in *Early Netherlandish Paintings: Rediscovery, Reception, and Research*, ed. Bernhard Ridderbos, Anne van Buren, Henk Th. van Veen (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005).

[519] Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore, *The Experience Economy: Work is Theater and Every Business a Stage* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1999) is the foundational text of this trend. An early and forceful critique of the experiential turn in museum practice is Hilde S. Hein, *The Museum in Transition: A Philosophical Perspective* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 2000).

[520] An exemplary statement of this principle in contemporary museum practice is Nina Simon, *The Participatory Museum* (Santa Cruz, CA: Museum 2.0, 2010).

museum objects as gateways into higher immaterial meanings.[521] Neither appears particularly to address the insistent profaneness of the art object with which this dissertation has been concerned, perferring instead various forms of subversion. A particularly clever example was featured in the redesign of the Detroit Institute of Arts in 2007, where curators installed a white table in the galleries of eighteenth century French tableware with a video projector mounted above it.[522] Visitors can pull up a chair and activate a video that plays on the tabletop, showing the same objects that surround them in use at an aristocratic dinner party, piled with aspics, marzipans, and suckling pig. The projected forearms of dinner guests and servants manipulating the silver and porcelain line up to the position of the seated visitor, creating the illusion of ones own arms participating in the feast. But what of the actual silver and porcelain secured in the vitrines surround the display? The projection table opens up a visitor's imagination to ideas of the objects in use, at the same time that it taunts her with the still silence of the objects behind glass, and her arms useless at her sides. "Please don't lick the paintings" the Oakland Museum of California self-consciously jokes with its visitors at the entrance to its art galleries. Old barriers are being lifted, but new ones rise up in their place. The esape from the material in museum studies and practice is an illusion.

As such, contemporary museums have been subjected to a number of artistic interventions that seek to expose their profane worlds to a variety of ends. These works dwell on the irony of the gap between material and immaterial with which the institution often secretly contends. In her performance, *Little Frank and His Carp*, the artist Andrea Fraser enters the Guggenheim Bilbao, and, while listening to the audio guide croon about the building's innovative curves, approaches a wall and lifts up her dress in order to take seriously the eroticism latent in the guide's proclamation, "isn't this a wonderful place? It's uplifting." The Guggenheim's claim to evade the carceral solidity of previous museum forms is revealed in Fraser's acts, and in a subsequent essay, to contain below the surface bleak material infrastructures, built and maintained by marginalized labor and exacerbating of economic disparities.[523] A radically different dweller in the gap is Fred Weisman's recent film *National Gallery*, a documentary of the mundane yet lively world of London's National Gallery of Art, presented without narration except for the sounds of the institution's actual workings: the clacking of shoes on the floor, the hum of bodies moving through the space, and perhaps most importantly, the silence of the paintings on the walls.[524] "So we're now in the National Gallery having a look quite quietly, *but* what we must remember is how this was originally intended to

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[521] Randolph Starn, "A Historian's Brief Guide to New Museum Studies," *The American Historical Review* 110, no. 1 (February 2005): 80-84; and the full expression of the worry about the decline in the relevance of objects in Steven Conn, *Do Museums Still Need Objects?* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

[522] This feature, titled, *The Art of Dining* was the work of Lisa Strausfeld for Pentagram, who also designed other interactive features throughout the DIA over the course of its renovation. "New Work: Detroit Institute of Arts," Pentagram Design, accessed May 1, 2015, http://new.pentagram.com/2008/05/new-work-detroit-institute-of-1/

[523] Andrea Fraser, ""Isn't This a Wonderful Place?" (A Tour of the Guggenheim Bilbao)," in *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations*, ed. Ivan Karp, Corinne A. Kratz, Lynn Szwaja, and Tomás Ybarra-Frausto (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

[524] *National Gallery*, directed by Frederick Wiseman (2014: Cambridge, MA: Zipporah Films).

be seen," a guide explains to her tour group as they stand in front of the fourteenth century San Pier Maggiore altarpiece. The statement stands in stark contrast to the film's insistance on the primacy of the museum space itself in all its dimensions. Do not imagine where you might be, Wiseman seems to say, look at where you are. An ode to the institution, rather than a critique, *National Gallery* elicits realizations that reside within in rather than inspite of the museum's profane surfaces.

Lifting the veil on the museum's transcendent rhetoric can produce discomfort. It catches people saying one thing and doing another. It introduces the possibility that a work of art might never be a totally reliable partner in the goals towards which the museum strives. These works show that there is, nonetheless, promise in these discrepancies where objects and ideals misalign. They provoke action, reflection, and humor. How museums might themselves become places where the gap is recognized rather than subverted will remain an open challenge, and a promising enterprise. For now, in the words of Andrea Fraser, "I want to give the walls another good grope."[525]

[525] Fraser, ""Isn't This a Wonderful Place?" (A Tour of the Guggenheim Bilbao)," 153.

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NL Rauch: Nachlaß Christian Daniel Rauch

I/GG: Gemäldegalerie

I/KKM: Kunstkammer

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