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Sculpted Glyphs: Egypt and the Musée Charles X

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Abstract:

This article proposes that the linguist Jean-François Champollion posited a new theory of Egyptian art in the mid-1820s and takes his theory as a means for interpreting France's first museum of Egyptian antiquities, the Musée Charles X, of which he was curator. This interpretation is made possible through the unprecedented use of digital tools to visualize a historic museum display. In addition to a scholarly essay and downloadable primary source material, this article invites readers to explore a fully-navigable, three-dimensional model of the Musée Charles X.

Digital Humanities and Art History

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Sculpted Glyphs: Egypt and the Musée Charles X by Elizabeth Buhe

Passing through Paris in 1815 on his way to take up his post as British consul-general in Cairo, Henry Salt (1780–1827) observed the forced restitution of the spoliated Greek and Roman antiquities that had been seized in 1797 from the Papal States by General Bonaparte.^[1] He wrote from Geneva on October 7, 1815:

Nothing has produced so strong a sensation among the French as the taking away of the pictures and statues from the Louvre. This very sensible and politic measure has rendered the malignant part of the populace perfectly furious, as it at once lowers their pride in the face of the world, and will serve as an everlasting testimony of their having been conquered.^[2]

As Salt noted, the French were profoundly affected by this sudden loss; Paris had in a matter of months fallen from its preeminent place as the symbolic center of history. A void—a wound, even—was left in classical antiquity’s place. History had been given material form in the Greco-Roman sculptures, which also signified the height of artistic production and the most advanced aesthetic notions of the time. The void, then, was not only visibly manifest in the emptied galleries of the Louvre, but also conceptually rooted in the disappearance of the illustrious classical past that had been appropriated for the French nation.

By penning these words in 1815 and mitigating the sentiment they expressed by later selling to the French crown the largest of the three collections he amassed in Egypt, Salt aligns the return of the Bourbon monarchy and the contingencies of its historical moment with a broadly-conceived reexamination of history, and of Egypt specifically. Beginning less than a decade after the departure of the classical papal collection, France purchased three major Egyptian collections in relatively quick succession: that of Edmé-Antoine Durand in 1824, Salt in 1826, and Bernardino Drovetti in 1827.^[3] However, in 1821, just three years before the Durand purchase, the Louvre rejected a large and important Egyptian collection, an incident that speaks to the tentativeness with which this new understanding of history was being constructed: at that date, a reconceptualization of history vis-à-vis Egypt was not yet possible. With the arrival of these Egyptian antiquities in Paris, Egypt was substituted for Greece. It was a tall order for the Egyptian antiquities to meet the prestige and art-historical value of the repatriated classical artworks they replaced. Yet the terms upon which Egyptian works of art could be understood, both as historical documents and archaeological or fine art objects, had not yet been determined, nor had the very conditions for viewing them. One writer noted that these Egyptian artifacts changed the character of the Louvre: “in effect, the Museum can no longer be considered a temple of Fine Arts, but has also become that of letters and of history, a mass of customs, uses, Religions, and the science of antiquity that will there be reunited.”^[4]

Something fundamental about the role of the museum, and indeed of history, seemed to be changing.

The Musée Charles X, a museum of Greco-Roman and Egyptian antiquities housed within the Louvre, stood at the center of this complicated matrix of historicism, nationalism, and museum politics.^[5] A royal decree of May 15, 1826 established its two separate sections and accorded four galleries for the display of each ancient civilization within an enfilade of the Cour Carrée's south wing (fig. 1).^[6] Scholar Jean-François Champollion (1790–1832) was appointed curator of the Egyptian division, a position he held from 1827 until his death. There, he determined the terms on which ancient Egypt would be presented to the French public for the first time, and he did so through a complex and highly-ordered display that was broadly thematic by gallery—two funerary rooms, a room of civil life, and a room of the gods—and contained chronological series within these thematic divisions.

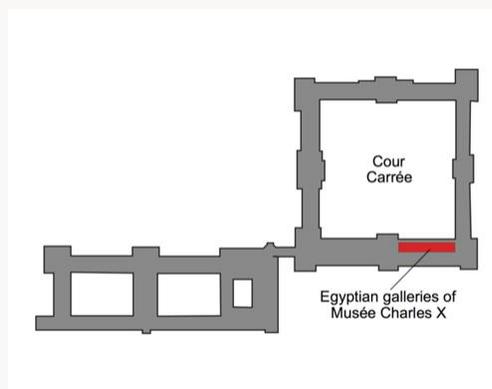


Fig. 1, Map of second floor of the Louvre indicating location of the Musée Charles X's Egyptian galleries. © Elizabeth Buhe. [\[larger image\]](#)

Champollion developed a theory of Egyptian art that was reflected both in the Musée Charles X and in the pages of his written works. Despite his curatorial work, he must first be considered a linguist and a historian; indeed, it was because of his decipherment of hieroglyphics in September 1822 that he had risen to prominence. The key to understanding ancient Egyptian writing had come with Champollion's realization that hieroglyphic text (specifically the text outside cartouches, which hold the names of Egyptian royalty or deities) could be read phonetically rather than pictorially.^[7] His expertise therefore lay in the structures of language and the conveyance of meaning through a complex web of numerous constituent parts, and his ideas about Egyptian sculpture were thus cross-disciplinary and heavily influenced by his understanding of Egyptian writing. (Until his death, he continued to return to and revise his work on hieroglyphic script as inscriptions on newly discovered monuments became available.) While this aesthetic aspect of his writing has heretofore been overshadowed by the controversy and competition surrounding the decipherment, Champollion's theory of Egyptian art and its influence on his curatorial strategy deserves considered analysis: with his newfound ability to read the inscriptions on Egyptian antiquities, he brought the empirical thrust of the eighteenth century to bear on Egyptian history and, as a result, on its art.

In this article, I aim to provide a historical context and interpretative framework for the Musée Charles X as it existed during Champollion's lifetime and to demonstrate that Champollion's theory of Egyptian sculpture undergirded his display of Egyptian antiquities in the museum. I therefore focus solely on those aspects of Champollion's approach to ancient Egypt that were freely conceptualized by him alone. Many other studies have treated the official apparatus of the Louvre and its administrators, including the politics and reception of the Musée Charles X's ceiling paintings and décor.^[8] Because Champollion was often at odds with his colleagues at the Louvre, his intellectual and curatorial approach is best understood when treated in a way that recognizes his as a singular perspective within a heterogeneous environment of competing voices.

The theory of Egyptian art that Champollion postulated was in critical dialogue with preceding and contemporaneous archaeologists, art theorists, and art historians, including Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768) and Raoul Rochette (1790–1854). Most important among these thinkers, however, is Antoine Chrysostôme Quatremère de Quincy (1755–1849), one of the most prolific and influential art writers of his time. Quatremère had gained particular notoriety early in his career after winning the essay competition for the Prix Caylus of 1785 with a submission later republished under the title *De l'architecture égyptienne considérée dans son origine, ses principes et son goût, et comparée sous les mêmes rapports à l'architecture grecque* (1803), which advanced scholarship on Egyptian architecture and made Quatremère one of the foremost authorities on Egyptian art.^[9] Because he wrote much more extensively on aesthetic questions than Champollion, Quatremère's is an important voice, complementing and sometimes serving as a foil to Champollion's theories.

While Champollion's views diverged from those of his predecessors concerning the static nature of Egyptian artistic production, he agreed with the traditional view that Egyptian art failed to engage with the concept of the *beau idéal*, that synthesis of perfect forms unattainable in nature that was later perfected by the Greeks. Whereas for others this was a shortcoming warranting the dismissal of Egyptian art from the aesthetic canon, for Champollion, requiring the *beau idéal* from Egyptian art was simply a misguided application of a conceptual model devised for works of art made under wholly different conditions. He posed methodological questions about bringing to bear ideas “contrary to reason and to fairness each time one judges Egyptian art by taking the terms of appreciation . . . of the Greeks, which is to say those of a people entirely foreign to Egypt, not only by physical constitution but also by their customs, their political institutions, and their habits.”^[10] Filtering Egyptian sculpture through Egyptian linguistic structures provided a way for Champollion to challenge the claims that Egyptian art was inferior by those who viewed it through a lens created to promote the moral and intellectual superiority of Greek sculpture. Given the insufficiency of existing structures of aesthetic valuation, Champollion turned toward both linguistics and science for guidance. In other words, Champollion was not reorienting Winckelmannian aesthetics to understand Egyptian art, but instead appropriating the language and interpretative methods of alternative disciplines.

It is notable that the two publications containing Champollion's clearest articulations of his theory of Egyptian art both date to the same year, 1824: his *Précis du système hiéroglyphique des anciens égyptiens*, and the first of his *Lettres à M. le duc de Blacas d'Aulps, relatives au musée royal de Turin*. Taken together, the *Précis* and the *Lettres à M. le duc de Blacas* constitute the first attempt

to integrate Egyptian art with what was now a confident understanding of the complexities of the forms and structures of Egyptian writing. In fact, all three of these factors—Egyptian language, Egyptian chronology, and a measured analysis of Egyptian objects themselves—were crucial to Champollion’s theory. In particular, I argue that the hieroglyph, and Champollion’s advancement of its depth and complexity as a structure for spoken and written communication in ancient Egypt, provided a theoretical and empirical basis for understanding Egyptian sculpture.

Two years after Champollion’s decipherment, these two publications sketched out a means for applying the linguistic principles of hieroglyphics to the monuments themselves, but each to a different end. The *Précis*, published in April 1824, provided a detailed explication of the three elements of hieroglyphic writing (a basic alphabet of phonetic values, other partially phonetic signs, and hundreds of non-phonetic figurative and symbolic signs), a demonstration of how each functioned, and a summary of the state of the field. He published inscriptions and their translations to demonstrate how phonetic, symbolic, and figurative signs combined to create words, confirming the reliability of his system by achieving consistent results. The *Précis* not only asserted Champollion’s superiority over other Egyptian linguists, but it also contained a germ of his theory regarding the relationship between hieroglyphic figures and the works of art onto which they were inscribed.

Champollion wrote the first volume of his *Lettres à M. le duc de Blacas* in July 1824 from the Royal Museum at Turin. There, he had been studying the Egyptian collection bought by Charles Felix, King of Sardinia, from Italian antiquarian Bernardino Drovetti (1776–1852), who had been appointed French consul in Egypt by Bonaparte. It was in Turin that Champollion was confronted for the first time with a diverse set of Egyptian statues, vessels, sarcophagi, and papyri; not only could he now perform comparisons of like objects from vastly different dynasties, but he could also begin the process of analyzing each object’s inscriptions and evaluating them against his developing chronology of ancient Egyptian pharaohs. These letters reveal Champollion’s excitement and simultaneously register his realization of the wholly inadequate state of extant theories on Egyptian history and art: “it is only in the Royal Museum of Turin, amidst this mass of remains from an ancient civilization, that the history of *Egyptian art* seemed to me to remain entirely still to be written.”^[11] Champollion’s *Lettres à M. le duc de Blacas* reads as a descriptive assessment of the relative placement of the Egyptian objects he scrutinized on a temporal continuum, and the primarily empirical thrust of this analytic endeavor is underscored by a chronology that appears at the end of each letter and relates to the Egyptian objects Champollion treated therein.

While the *Précis* and the *Lettres à M. le duc de Blacas* outline Champollion’s theoretical approach to Egyptian art in a primarily abstract way, his guidebook to the museum, published in 1827, as well as archival inventories, speak more concretely to his curatorial strategy. Titled *Notice descriptive des monuments égyptiens du Musée Charles X*, the guidebook elucidates how Champollion conceptualized grouping objects within the museum’s display by categories, such as series M, “instruments and products of the arts and crafts,” and series X, “funerary stelae.”^[12] Despite its specificity in describing works of art and translating their inscriptions, the catalogue fails to indicate where these objects were placed inside the galleries of the Musée Charles X. For this we must turn to the inventories of the Durand, Salt, and Drovetti collections, which contain marginalia specifying each artifact’s precise location.^[13] These

inventories serve as the primary documentation for the three-dimensional, virtual model of the museum published in this article.

Champollion's lifelong work to construct a precise history of Egyptian pharaohs would perhaps suggest his preference for a chronological approach in his display of antiquities. Yet while chronology informed his display in the cabinets of the Musée Charles X, it was not his main aim, and this article instead shows that he was deeply invested in providing a basis for the understanding of Egyptian art in its own context. In other words, Champollion sought to disavow the supremacy and indeed the relevancy of Greco-Roman norms to Egyptian art. To this end, he demonstrated the radically dissimilar functions of art in Egypt and emphasized that different means of evaluating it must be developed. This is not to assert that Champollion had all the answers, but rather to suggest that he recognized this necessity and aimed to provide a model in the Musée Charles X through which ancient Egyptian civilization could be newly understood.

Hieroglyph as Model

In putting forth his theory of Egyptian art, Champollion saw it as his first task to dispel the widespread notion that Egyptian artists were locked in a static mode of artistic production, able to reproduce only the same sculptural type despite the passage of centuries. Champollion's entire intellectual career had been formed in the wake of the Napoleonic conquests in Egypt, and his studies were informed in particular by the engravings and written accounts of Vivant Denon's twenty-three volume *Description de l'Égypte*, published between 1809 and 1829.^[14] In 1798, Denon (1747–1825) had joined the Commission d'Égypte, the group of engineers and savants tasked with measuring, recording, and unveiling Egypt. In the intervening years between his return to France and the publication of the *Description*, Denon published his own *Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute Égypte* (1803), a work that, though essentially a travel journal, was itself inflected with the scientific tenor and assumption of objective realism characteristic of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century expeditions. In his *Voyage*, Denon wrote that "Egyptians copied nature; they copied their own nature; and the Greeks only added fables to that which they stole from the Egyptians," and even asserted that the capitals of Egyptian columns were "composed of leaves and branches of palm trees."^[15] Denon's view that Egyptians were looking to the forms of their own country was notable, if theoretically unsophisticated, because it allowed for artistic variation and change. Because he was a member of the Commission, Denon was among the first to take a more empirical approach to evaluating Egyptian art.

In contrast to Denon's views, the then-dominant interpretation of Egyptian art was one that had trickled down to the eighteenth century from Plato, who described Egyptian art (though in admiring terms) as the fixed product of an unchanging system of artistic laws. "It is forbidden," he wrote, "to . . . introduce any innovation or invention . . . you will find that the things depicted or graven there ten thousand years ago (I mean what I say, not loosely but literally ten thousand years), are neither better nor worse than the productions of today; but are wrought with the same art."^[16] Winckelmann, writing in the mid-eighteenth century, was the direct inheritor of the argument for stasis in Egyptian art, though his view took into account the determining effects of climate on a people's physiognomy and mentality.^[17] Winckelmann claimed that the source of Egyptian art's deficiency lay in the unappealing

physiognomies of the Egyptian people themselves, so different from what he thought of as the physical beauty of the ancient Greeks, which he believed to be at the root of the perfection of their art. His conclusions, though, were based on a few unrepresentative examples, in contrast to Denon's approach, which was built upon close observation of many data points. (Of all the men discussed here, only Denon had set foot in Egypt before publishing his observations.) Despite a growing body of evidence of the variety of forms in Egyptian art based on the work of the Commission, Winckelmann's early disregard for close looking in favor of a principled aesthetic value system nevertheless continued well into the nineteenth century.^[18]

Championing this disregard, Quatremère de Quincy asserted in the preamble to his 1803 *De l'architecture égyptienne* that "without direct knowledge gained from seeing the original [Egyptian] monuments themselves, a writer can claim to grasp sufficiently the system or genius which oversaw their creation."^[19] Indeed, despite Quatremère's opportunistic publication of *De l'architecture égyptienne* just two years after the completion of the French campaign in Egypt, he stressed that his earlier 1785 work had been "conceived from a point of view and within a system of research and criticism that is in large measure independent of the positive observations the results of which the public is now awaiting."^[20] This gave him license to overtly ignore the *Description's* empirical findings as irrelevant to his speculative inquiry in the second, 1803 version. Though Quatremère lamented the dearth of empirical data on Egyptian architecture, he signaled in the title of his 1803 publication a focus on its origins, principles, and taste, rather than on any factors requiring close observation, thereby eschewing archaeological exactitude.^[21] Indeed, although he had traveled to Rome before the submission of his 1785 essay, the majority of his observations were reconsiderations of traditional ideas, and his sources were often textual, such as Richard Pococke's *A Description of the East, and Some Other Countries* (1743).^[22] It is perhaps in part for this reason that Quatremère fell in line with his predecessors, claiming "the highest degree of uniformity reigns between [Egyptian sculptures]," which show no perceptible signs of advancement despite the immense intervals of time during which they were produced.^[23] Moreover, "even among so many examples of Egyptian sculpture," Quatremère wrote, "everything nevertheless seems to be the work of a single manufacturer . . . nothing indicates the varied styles of the epochs nor changes in taste, nor the smallest of steps toward true imitation, nor toward the study of the human body."^[24]

Thus Quatremère carried into the nineteenth century the view of Egyptian sculpture as stagnant, monumental, and uninventive, a position most forcefully brought to Champollion's moment by the archaeologist Raoul Rochette. Though he was curator of antiquities at the Bibliothèque Royale in Paris, Rochette likewise had few works at hand upon which to base his conclusions, since at this time the Bourbon monarchy had yet to make any major Egyptian acquisitions, and the library contained primarily numismatic antiquities. In his *Considérations sur le caractère des arts de l'antique Égypte* (1823), Rochette propagated a vision of Egyptian artists as so imprisoned by their strict religious beliefs that they were capable only of mechanically executing figures that were characterized by a sterility of invention.^[25] For him, Egyptian sculptures "always have the same traits, the same physiognomy, the same age, the same sex; in a word, it is always the same person, not portraits of different people . . . [the Egyptians] never represented man from nature, but only a conventional figure . . . because they saw in all of Egypt only one Egyptian."^[26]

In this same vein was a decision about the potential acquisition of the Thédénant-Duvent collection solicited in 1821 by the minister of the interior from a committee assembled for that purpose, which concluded that it would be unwise to

multiply in our museums the number of Egyptian statues and sculptures, because art for the Egyptians never approached the degree of perfection to which it was elevated for the Greeks and in our modern times, [Egyptian sculptures] seem to have stayed stationary . . . devoid of all expression with their sharp, cramped, stocky forms, [and] their immobile and uniform poses.^[27]

It was against such denunciations of creativity on the part of Egyptian artists and of variety in their artworks that Champollion took up his pen in 1824. Champollion was quick to critique what he viewed as Winckelmann's superficial approach and accused him of unjust conclusions drawn from a paucity of Egyptian monuments in Europe, which consisted of, "for the most part, only some of the crudest catacombs."^[28] Champollion's reproach begins to reveal a fundamental divergence in his theoretical position toward Egyptian art vis-à-vis his contemporaries. Brought to Egyptian antiquities via linguistics, precision of detail was crucial to his intellectual practice. While working to decipher hieroglyphics, the accuracy of drawings and engravings of monuments, particularly their inscriptions, was of the utmost importance; it was for this reason that Champollion often lamented the inexactitude of the hieroglyphic characters published in the plates of the *Description*.^[29] From his close observation of Egyptian sculpture, Champollion held that it did indeed exhibit widely divergent formal differentiations. He wrote:

[this] group of Egyptian statues from the Drovetti collection proves above all else, and against general opinion, that Egyptian artists were not at all held to slavishly imitating a small number of primitive types, giving to each person they represented, whether gods or simple mortals, a conventional model that was always the same.^[30]

For Champollion, as for Denon, Egyptian artists were indeed looking to nature. Bolstered in this belief by his translations of each sculpture's hieroglyphic inscriptions, Champollion increasingly could correlate given works with historical figures, leading him to believe that—at least to some extent—a face could be a signifier of individual identity. "We are struck," he wrote, "by the extreme variety of physiognomies [of these sculptures]," which nonetheless shared a kind of "air de famille."^[31] His voyage to Egypt in 1828 further confirmed these views, as he described a colossal head of Ramesses II, which he also sketched in his notebook:

His physiognomy was sufficient for me to recognize him as a statue of Sesostris [Ramesses II], since it was by and large the most faithful portrait of the beautiful Sestrosis at Turin; the inscriptions on the arms, the pectoral, and the belt confirmed my conjecture, and there is no longer any doubt that there exists, at Turin and at Memphis, two *portraits* of the greatest of pharaohs (fig. 2).^[32]

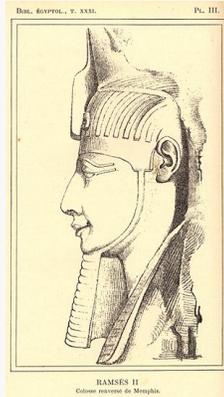


Fig. 2, Ramsès II, *Lettres et journaux de Champollion*, vol. 2, *Lettres et journaux écrites pendant le voyage d'Égypte* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1909), 98ff. [\[larger image\]](#)

To Champollion, Egyptian artists “were endeavoring to imitate the forms that they had beneath their very eyes.”^[33] These faces were, then, more generally, Egyptian faces, exhibiting the characteristic traits of the Egyptian race.

Though he clearly saw variety in the faces of Egyptian sculpture, Champollion concurrently acknowledged a certain uniformity in their poses; the naturalism he identified was contained within in a set of representational boundaries. The body was most often “simple and severe,” constituting a sculptural typology; however, it was a type distinct from that “prétendu type obligé” he found fault with in others’ writings, because the sculpture’s face was still able to signal divergence from the supposed unchanging model through its manifestation of the natural difference brought about by observation.^[34] The variation of faces allowed Champollion to posit a certain degree of representational verity as central to Egyptian sculpture’s adaptability over time. Concurrently, he could claim that all Egyptian sculptures fell into a general typology, or set of formal limits. What resulted was a kind of hybrid model in which a minimal amount of change was permissible within the relative rigidity of the figure’s pose.

Champollion’s engagement with the concept of type found its most immediate corollary in Quatremère’s theory of Egyptian architecture. In *De l’architecture égyptienne*, Quatremère rejected the longstanding argument of Vitruvius, later canonized by the Abbé Laugier in 1755, that all architecture sprang from the unique model of the primitive wooden hut. Instead, Quatremère fragmented this monogenetic model by theorizing three separate “types” that developed simultaneously rather than having evolved from each other chronologically. These types were the cave, the tent, and the wooden hut, which corresponded respectively with Egyptian, Chinese, and Greek civilizations. Drawing upon the eighteenth-century understanding of language as comprised of universal grammatical principles, Quatremère set out to prove that Greek architecture was not a derivative of Egyptian architecture, stating, “the invention of architecture must be seen as parallel to the invention of language. That is to say that neither one nor the other invention can be attributed to any man because both are attributes of men.”^[35] While the three typologies of architecture—the cave, the tent, and the

wooden hut—developed in parallel, in Quatremère’s opinion only the Greek hut had possessed the potential to advance, through imitation, into a noble art. For him, only Greek artists had worked in a context that permitted intellectual development. While more traditional theories of mimesis simply depended on the reproduction of a model, and thus allowed for a certain degree of stasis, Quatremère’s theory replaced nature with intellect, stressing the importance of change and transformation. According to Quatremère, stagnant civilizations, like those of China and Egypt, had not been provided with adequate conditions for artistic advancement, while in Greece progress had been enabled by social and political systems based on freedom and popular democracy. Egypt’s impediment to development was perceived to be an effect of the conflation of its governmental and religious institutions; the doctrines of Egyptian religion demanded rigid representational rules.

While Quatremère provided one of the clearest articulations of this view, it was in fact widespread and informed the positions of other writers, including Winckelmann and Rochette. Champollion also believed that the strict nature of Egyptian religious dogma had been a limiting factor in Egyptian representation, and it was in part to this cause that he ascribed the uniform pose among Egyptian sculptures.^[36] Just as geographic and climatic conditions were contributing factors to a country’s primitive architectural type, they were also seen to affect the development of that country’s arts and languages. Therefore, Champollion (following Winckelmann) held that in addition to being constrained by national institutions, the characteristic immobility of Egyptian sculpture was reinforced by the conditions of Egypt’s hot climate, which necessitated a habitual state of “calm and restfulness” in its people, as exemplified in its statues.^[37]

Crucial to Champollion’s understanding of Egyptian art was that he continued to consider it alongside Egypt’s civic and religious institutions. A key component of Champollion’s theory of Egyptian art was his recognition that it did not function as a composite reconstitution of the perfect and most beautiful forms of nature through the intellectual intervention of the artist, as was understood to be the case for classical sculpture:

Finally, if one is surprised to not notice in these Egyptian statues, these graceful or sublime forms that the chisel of the Greeks knew how to forge out of the most precious marbles or the most common materials, it is because we incessantly forget that the Egyptians looked to copy nature as their country revealed it to them, whereas the Greeks tended to and succeeded in embellishing and modifying it according to an ideal type that their genius knew how to invent.^[38]

Hence, for Champollion, Egyptian art did not engage with the concept of the *beau idéal*, that unified vision residing only in the mind of the artist—essentially Champollion was in agreement with Quatremère on this point. But for Champollion, Egyptian art, created by a wholly different people, did not serve the same functions that Greek art did. It was therefore unjust to submit it to the same kind of aesthetic evaluation.^[39] Yet Egyptian art still conformed to its own typology, one that, despite its art’s capacity for naturalism through the sculpted face, was also generalized and abstracted from nature just as Greek sculpture was.

This notion of type could be extrapolated, of course, beyond a discussion of architecture. If the cave, the tent, and the hut were the primitive typologies of architecture, the equivalent

basic archetype of representational art—most significantly for our discussion of sculpture—was the hieroglyph.^[40] As mimetic symbols, hieroglyphs held a privileged place at the nexus of art and language and were therefore of critical interest to Enlightenment thinkers as they turned toward the study of originary structures. Many eighteenth-century writers were influenced by *The Divine Legation of Moses* by William Warburton, Bishop of Gloucester, published in 1741 (and translated into French three years later), which contained a lengthy discussion of hieroglyphs.^[41] He was the first to overturn the perceived mysticism of hieroglyphic writing, which had been understood as a symbolic structure created by a priestly cast to conceal knowledge, and instead argued that it was an original, and public, form of communication. Further, Warburton posed hieroglyphics as a veritable language even though each individual character was but a representation, and he acknowledged the minimal abstraction between each hieroglyph and the object in nature to which it referred. Therefore the hieroglyph was a mysterious but decipherable symbol, albeit one that only had the capacity to call to mind a limited number of objects or ideas, as suggested by its mimetic nature.

The typology of the hieroglyph was important for Champollion's understanding of Egyptian art, but again it was Quatremère who wrote most lucidly on the relationship of the hieroglyph to sculpture. Quatremère's theory, which he published in 1805 as a series of articles in the *Archives littéraires* and the *Moniteur universel*, is striking in that it proposes the hieroglyph as the single and original type for mimetic sculpture in Egypt as well as in Greece. Such a view was in contrast to the three architectural typologies he proposed in *De l'architecture égyptienne*, because it necessarily suggested the transference of sculptural form from one civilization to the next.^[42] The hieroglyph allowed Quatremère to discuss at length his theory of imitation, which these 1805 articles put in perspective as a refutation of the realism characteristic of art produced under the Napoleonic Empire and of Toussaint-Bernard Éméric-David's *Recherches sur l'art statuaire*, published in the same year.^[43]

For Quatremère, the hieroglyph exemplified the most ideal kind of imitation because it was not a simple copying of nature—which he called “particular or individual imitation”—such as a portrait, but rather was based on an abstract idea of a thing, which, as a conceptualization, had never been given physical or tangible form in the world. As he put it,

the hieroglyphic trait of a man, for example, does not show him in relation to the individual, nor in relation to space, but only by the idea of these relationships. It is a non-imitative imitation, which is only suited to the most general of appearances and forms of people or bodies: hieroglyphic imitation is consequently the most general imitation.^[44]

As an initial site of the generalized form, according to Quatremère, the hieroglyph provided a framework for abstraction on which Greek artists could base their own model of ideal imitation. Because imitation of the individual man was “vulgar,” and it was only by “generalizing this image by imitation from nature” that one could create an ideal, the hieroglyph was a powerful conceptual tool that acted as an antidote against the slavish copying of natural forms.^[45]

Since antiquity, Quatremère noted, ancient authors such as Pausanias and Strabo had equated the primitive style of Greek sculpture with that of Egyptian sculpture. For Quatremère, the possibility for an artist to leave behind the original, rudimentary type and break free of its limits by productive, intellectual imitation was always tied to societal conditions. This was as true for the hieroglyphic type as it had been for Quatremère's three typologies of architecture. Because the hieroglyph was born in Egypt, and that country's oppressive institutions—he called them “religious shackles”—forbade any alteration to the meaning attributed to each hieroglyphic signifier, Egyptian sculpture's potential for adaptability over time, as well as any semblance of artistic freedom, was blocked.^[46] Moreover, in Quatremère's opinion, Egyptian art could not take on any loftier purpose than the one it already had: conveying through abstracted mimesis the idea of the thing in nature that it signified. In Greece, on the other hand, where the hieroglyph as type was released of its function as a signifier—while retaining its valence as an abstracted imitation—the generalized hieroglyphic beings became images of people who were “imaginary in reality but real for the imagination.”^[47] Necessarily, these figures of the ideal style could only be notional; once the original meaning of the hieroglyph had been left behind, imitation in Greece took on its role as an intellectual reconstitution of the ideal. The sign itself was replaced “with another order,” a new world of ideas, which could be “embellished at will.”^[48]

Champollion appropriated this typology of the hieroglyph in order to refute the very conclusions Quatremère drew from it. For Quatremère, the hieroglyphic type was the generalized, abstracted ideal, whereas Egyptian sculpture itself was ignoble: “the flaw of imitation, which forms the base of the Egyptian system, consists of too great a similarity with that which served as its model.”^[49] It thus risked approaching, in Quatremère's view, “similitude” or reality, which, in attempting to reproduce the thing itself, rested entirely outside the realm of artistic production.^[50] Champollion's proposition that the Egyptian sculptural figure was a generalized, abstracted sculptural type challenged Quatremère's assertion that Egyptian art tried to recreate reality. More importantly, however, Champollion opposed Quatremère's use of hieroglyphic typology to condemn Egyptian art by attacking the very premise upon which Quatremère's theory was built. Specifically, in Quatremère's use of the hieroglyph, Champollion found fault with the superficiality of Quatremère's explication of how the hieroglyph conveyed meaning in the Egyptian context, and therefore—consequently and more concretely—the relationship between the hieroglyph as linguistic signifier and sculptural form. To level this critique, Champollion proposed his own theory based on the notion of the hieroglyph as type in which he made explicit the direct analogy between sculpture and the hieroglyph as a carrier of meaning:

Sculpture and painting were never in Egypt anything but veritable branches of *writing*. Their imitation had only to be pushed up until a certain point; a statue was in reality but a simple *sign*, a true *character* of writing; and so, as soon as the artist had rendered with care and truth the traits of the person whose idea he wished to recall . . . his goal was from that moment achieved: the arms, the torso, the legs, all considered accessory parts, were quite neglected, because to execute their completion to a perfect finish would not have added anything to their value nor to the real clarity of the sign.^[51]

By equating sculpture with language generally and written signs specifically, Champollion opened up the possibility of an interpretative position based upon the complexities and nuances of the hieroglyphic script, which he had definitively sketched out in his *Précis* the

same year.^[52] The sculpture's static pose contributed to its status as a hieroglyphic type, but, within the limits of this typology and like individual hieroglyphic characters themselves, each sculpture also possessed the capacity for nearly innumerable variation through its facial composition.^[53] Sculptures, furthermore, like hieroglyphs, were capable of conveying divergent meanings, and the way they did so correlated with the three different kinds of hieroglyphic characters—the figurative, the symbolic, and the phonetic—and their functions as Champollion had identified them in his *Précis*.

The first of these, figurative characters, offered near-exact contours, and often colors, of the real objects that they imitated. As the simplest form, they conveyed the idea of the thing they represented, such as star, turtle, bread, and moon. Figurative characters were limited in their expressive capacity because they were restricted to signifying only concrete items, to “the simple notation of several isolated ideas, and cannot, in any case . . . express man's many relationships with external objects, nor the various relationships between these objects.”^[54] This type of hieroglyphic character, which held the capacity to express only “purely physical beings, but not one abstract idea” was the one upon which Quatremère had built his hieroglyphic theory. Indeed, the understanding of the hieroglyph as a solely figurative character was commonplace in the eighteenth century and was perpetuated, for instance, by the categorization of the hieroglyph alongside heraldic (“blazon”) and ideal characters in Diderot and D'Alembert's “Système figuré des connaissances humaines” in the *Encyclopédie*.^[55] Champollion associated the figurative character with the art of painting, thereby positioning himself within a long line of historical thought that posited pictures as the original, pre-linguistic, form of communication.^[56] This view was upheld by Champollion's observation that in Egypt the same spoken words, which had preserved their ancient meanings, expressed the verbs “to paint” and “to write”; the nouns “writing” and “painting”; and the appellations “scribe” and “painter.”^[57] Like figurative characters, Egyptian painting had the ability to portray things only in an “instantaneous manner,” because it was unable to express abstract ideas such as time.^[58] In tomb paintings, for example, Champollion noted that depictions of animals were shown only in profile, a mode of representation that could “be accounted for by [the image's] intended goal: the art of drawing was not generally used except as a means of writing; it was driven in principle by the question of giving form.”^[59] Some Egyptian art, according to Champollion, belonged to this simplest mode of representation, including paintings depicting scenes of private life, bas-reliefs, and images of single individuals.^[60]

Champollion's true innovation, however, lay in his identification of two other types of hieroglyphic characters: the symbolic and the phonetic. It was in these characters that the hieroglyph's ideational capacity resided. By building on this point, Champollion was able to postulate a theory that took Egyptian art beyond the realm of simple imitation into the conceptual realm of writing and thought. It was in this sense that he made the significant claim that Egyptian art “devoted itself to the *notation of ideas* rather than to the representation of things.”^[61] Symbolic characters expressed objects or ideas not embodied in the hieroglyphic form itself, but related by associative principles.^[62] Meaning thus proceeded through synecdoche, the use of the part for the whole; by metonymy, the substitution of one object for another with which it is closely related (“cause for effect”); and by metaphor, the application of a term to an unrelated object to suggest a resemblance.^[63] Examples include two arms holding a bow and an arc to signify battle (synecdoche), the crescent moon to signify month (metonymy), or the bee to express “a people obeying their king” (metaphor).^[64] It was particularly in the categories of metonymy and metaphor that the conceptual gained entry

into hieroglyphic writing. Phonetic characters, however, more evidently than symbolic ones, unequivocally proved the capability of hieroglyphic writing to express abstract principles. As the most frequently employed type of character, they were, as in many other languages, alphabetic, and allowed Egyptian writing to stretch to express “a certain order of ideas” not constrained by the parameters of merely representational signs.[\[65\]](#)

The capacity of the hieroglyph to hold concepts based on its relationship to other individual characters was crucial to Champollion’s theory of Egyptian art. Stringing together hieroglyphs in a certain syntagmatic order conveyed meaning so that a hieroglyph’s signification was clearest when situated among other hieroglyphic signs.[\[66\]](#) As Champollion put it, invoking the notion of hieroglyphic type,

the imitation of physical objects, pushed only up to a certain point, was sufficient for the proposed goal; a more sustained effort in its execution would have added nothing to the clarity nor the expression desired of the painted or sculpted image, [it was] *a true sign of writing, almost always tied to a vast composition of which it was itself but one single element* [emphasis added].[\[67\]](#)

Here Champollion speaks of the sculpted object just as much as he speaks of the hieroglyph; it was his discovery of the hieroglyph’s phonetic and metaphorical capacities that allowed him to transpose the significance of meaning between written signs to that between sculpted ones.[\[68\]](#) For Champollion, Egyptian sculpture’s primary importance lay in its ability to tell the history of its people. Each statue was but a single sign embedded in a chain of signs, and meaning was conveyed as a fabric of signification, such that the differences between sculptural signs arranged in relation to each other could convey, for example, a pharaonic chronology. Champollion had proven that neither history nor conceptual thought were excluded in ancient Egypt.

Figurative, symbolic, and phonetic characters were consistently combined, Champollion summarized in his *Précis*, “in the same text, in the same sentence, I would say almost in the same word.”[\[69\]](#) In treating the hieroglyph as nothing more than a primitive sculptural type, Quatremère’s theory failed to take into account the hieroglyph’s function as a linguistic sign within a syntagmatic structure that existed to convey meaning. As Quatremère put it, “because it was the nature of [the hieroglyph’s] use to indicate nothing more than objects, it was also the nature of its form to make visible only the most general relationships.”[\[70\]](#) Instead, Champollion showed that hieroglyphic writing functioned akin to the words of a sentence, capable of expressing “the most metaphysical ideas, the most delicate nuances of language, inflections, and all grammatical forms.”[\[71\]](#)

Champollion’s theory had its limits: he remained unclear on several points, including the particulars of his abstract hieroglyphic “type,” which for Quatremère had been so well ideated. Moreover, Champollion did not match the phonetic character’s function with any kind of artwork, so that it was instead left to operate conceptually as the overarching possibility for abstract thought as embodied in grammatical structure. Finally, the precise role of the disjunction between a sculpture’s naturalistic face and monolithic body remained underdeveloped. Despite these shortcomings, Champollion had posited the crucial notion that Egyptian sculpture signified best not when isolated as a rarefied aesthetic object, but rather

when situated among other like works. At its simplest, Champollion's key insight was to treat sculptural form as sign rather than as representation. This, in turn, allowed for interpretation based on the notion that signs can be constituted only in relation to other signs. Importantly, this syntagmatic property could operate on two levels: one that sought to illuminate chronological correlations between Egyptian sculptures, and one that made visible a fabric of multidirectional contextual links among Egyptian artifacts. In this, Champollion took vital steps toward postulating a theory of Egyptian art that obviated the use of a model for evaluating Greek sculpture in favor of one that strove to understand Egyptian sculpture in terms born of Egyptian structures of thought and communication.

Chains of Meaning

Champollion's museum invented a history of Egyptian art for the French public where none had existed before, and did so through the dual strategies of theme and chronology. Crucially, image and text were one and the same for Champollion, not only in the sense explored above, whereby artwork was equated with signifier, but also insofar as many Egyptian antiquities bore inscriptions, therefore doubling as philological documents. Writing on the occasion of the Musée Charles X's opening in 1827, Egyptologist Nestor L'Hôte (1804–1842) best characterized the shift evinced by Champollion's curatorial project:

Until now, the collections of Egyptian monuments, formed with the goal of illuminating the history of art, of studying the method of sculpture and painting of different peoples and following its progress, could be classified only according to the order of their materials, in some way, arbitrarily. Here, since it is a matter of illuminating the entire history of Egypt, M. Champollion has had to consider at the same time both the subject of each monument and its specific use, and determine, with this knowledge, the place reserved for it; it was necessary to display, as completely as possible, the series of gods and of sovereigns, and to classify methodically all the objects related to the public and private lives of the Egyptians; in this way all the civil and religious monuments will be systematically reunited.^[72]

Upon entering the Musée Charles X, the visitor was confronted with four galleries, each characterized by a broad theme. (Only objects of small sizes were exhibited in Champollion's four second-floor galleries, while monumental Egyptian sculptures were displayed on the Louvre's ground floor directly underneath the Musée Charles X.)^[73] Traversing the rooms east to west from the museum's point of entry at the *escalier de la colonnade* at the southeast corner of the Cour Carrée, he or she first encountered a funerary room, then a room of civil life, followed by another funerary room, and finally, a room of the gods, at which point the suite of galleries opened up onto the *salle des colonnes*, a shared space between the Greco-Roman and Egyptian divisions of the Musée Charles X.

The interpretation of Champollion's strategy of display that follows seeks to illuminate the sophistication of his conceptualization of Egyptian society, which informed his means of exhibiting it in the Musée Charles X. His was a museography that allowed the chronological, thematic, and iconographical aspects of Egyptian art simultaneously to be addressed and affirmed as worthy.

[Launch the 3D Model of Champollion's Exhibition](#)

Passing through the arched doorway from the first gallery into the second, the visitor encountered objects of Egyptian daily life. Antiquities labeled with stickers corresponding to categories laid out in the *Notice descriptive* and designated by letters of the alphabet were grouped in seven tall display cases along the room's perimeter and two small vitrines placed in window alcoves. Significantly for a room meant to display civil life, the armoires on either side of the doorway contained primarily statues and amulets representing Egyptian kings and queens (series D) from the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Dynasties, and each also included at least one Twenty-Sixth Dynasty sovereign. In effect, Champollion was positing a chronology of Egyptian rulers in this gallery that suggested, straightaway, the prominence and relevancy of these royal figures in the daily lives of ordinary Egyptians. These two armoires, filled with dozens of statues of different Egyptian rulers, enabled Champollion to put forth a diachronic history of Egypt within his larger thematic divisions (fig. 3). Moreover, he definitively demonstrated the variability of Egyptian sculpture within a broader figural type to prove the point on which he disagreed with his predecessors and contemporaries, who insisted on Egyptian artists' servile and stagnant imitation of primitive forms. Champollion believed that the facial characteristics of different rulers were plainly reflected by Egyptian artists in their sculptures, which he sought to demonstrate in these cabinets by bringing together a wide chronological spectrum of pharaohs.



Fig. 3, Screenshot of virtual model of the Musée Charles X, *salle civile*, showing cabinets 1, 2, and 7.
[\[larger image\]](#)

Proceeding clockwise through the room of civil life, the visitor would next be presented with a large wall cabinet containing funerary images (series Q), figurines of ordinary Egyptians (series G), domestic utensils (series L), and products of the arts and crafts (series M). Having already set the stage by presenting Egyptian kings on both sides of the gallery's entryway, Champollion here turned to members of diverse Egyptian classes, ranging from a temple guardian (N864) to a member of the priestly cast (N1575). Other objects in this cabinet related to the functions of the people represented within it; for example, a bronze vase (N908) pictures the son of the deceased priest-scribe Chapochonsis performing funerary duties, while a scribe's writing palette (N3014) offers visual testimony to his occupation.

Of particular interest in this cabinet of the *salle civile* are a series of ushabtis or funerary figurines (such as N2965), whose hieroglyphic inscriptions allowed Champollion to identify precisely the individuals depicted (often the same person was represented by multiple

figurines, as the ushabtis functioned as substitutes for the deceased, in case he or she was asked to perform manual labor in the afterlife). Grouping these works together allowed Champollion again to exhibit the variety of form among a like type, and also to show the same Egyptian individual sculpted in varying materials and by the hand of different artists. In his *Notice descriptive*, Champollion wrote extensively about ushabtis, noting that they

usually contain the proper name and line of descent of an individual, and moreover, the indication of the public function that the deceased had fulfilled in his lifetime; one can therefore, in bringing together with care this genre of monuments, which, at first glance, offers so little variety, form a sequence of the highest interest, because, in classing them according to the indications given by their inscriptions, one can recompose the series of casts, that of public functions, and in a word a faithful picture of the social organization of Egyptians. Such care was taken in the creation of these figurines that a large number among them genuinely offer the *portrait* of the person to whom they were consecrated. [74]

What is striking about this passage is that it appears toward the end of the *Notice descriptive* in a chapter devoted to the description of objects shown in the funerary rooms, where similar ushabtis were on display. In the *salle civile*, however, Champollion took ushabtis out of their funerary context to demonstrate a cross-section of Egyptian society by exhibiting individuals of varying socioeconomic classes. A similar strategy of display is evident in Champollion's second funerary room, where he mixed objects from non-funerary groups (such as a model of a bed from series M, "instruments and products of the arts and crafts") as if pulling together artifacts that would convey the function and appearance of a tomb. An artwork's signification within Champollion's display, then, was not limited strictly to its intended function in ancient Egyptian society or theology. Instead, each object's meaning was variable based on the conditions of those objects around it, and according to Champollion's specific curatorial intent in any one section of the Musée Charles X.

Continuing through the room of civil life in a clockwise direction, the visitor would encounter cabinets dedicated to articles of clothing and personal care (cabinet 3), domestic utensils (cabinet 4), instruments of the cult and products of the arts and crafts (cabinets 5 and 6), and Egyptian kings, as already discussed (cabinet 7). The categories in which Champollion classified the Louvre's Egyptian artifacts appear to have helped him conceptualize their display by cabinet, since as a general practice he seems to have grouped objects of several distinct, but often related, series into one cabinet, rather than indiscriminately mixing objects from all categories in a given display. Champollion also imposed further classification within these series. Take, for instance, series M, "instruments and products of the arts and crafts" in the room of civil life. It is broken down into subdivisions entitled "weapons," "musical instruments," "objects related to agriculture," "hunting and fishing," etc. The sequence of a given series across cabinets in any one gallery did not necessarily follow the sequential order of series Champollion laid out in the guidebook (fig. 4). Nor did series follow one another in alphabetical order. Instead, the juxtaposition of one series with another seems to have been based on a conceptual relationship rather than on the objects' materials or the visual appeal of the display. "Everything will pass successively under the eyes of spectators," Champollion wrote, "and each object, *set in relation with those of the same class*, will take on new interest" [emphasis added]. [75] Through developing and juxtaposing categories of like objects,

Champollion privileged the contextual relationships between objects over their unique formal or functional properties.

TABLE DES DIVISIONS ADOPTÉES DANS CETTE NOTICE.		TABLE DES DIVISIONS.	
1 ^{re} . SALLE DES DIEUX.			
A. — Images de Divinités égyptiennes. Page	1	vii	Ustensiles et Instrumens du culte. Page 69
B. — Emblèmes de Divinités, Animaux symboliques et Animaux sacrés.	38	I. — Objets d'habillement.	72
C. — Scarabées représentant des Divinités ou des Emblèmes de Divinités.	49	J. — Ustensiles de toilette.	74
2 ^e . SALLE CIVILE.		K. — Bijoux et Objets de parure.	76
D. — Statuettes, Figurines et Amulettes représentant des Rois égyptiens.	54	L. — Ustensiles domestiques.	92
E. — Scarabées portant des images ou des légendes de Rois de race égyptienne.	60	M. — Instrumens et Produits des Arts et Métiers.	96
F. — Contrats originaux portant des dates du règne de Rois grecs d'Égypte.	62	3 ^e . SALLES FUNÉRAIRES.	
G. — Figurines, Statuettes et Statues représentant des membres des diverses Castes égyptiennes.	63	N. — Momies humaines.	112
		O. — Cercueils de Momies.	113
		P. — Ornemens funéraires.	118
		Q. — Images funéraires.	131
		R. — Coffrets destinés à renfermer les Images funéraires.	137
		S. — Vases funéraires.	139
		T. — Manuscrits funéraires.	144
		U. — Statuettes ayant servi d'étuis aux Manuscrits funéraires.	156
		V. — Tableaux funéraires.	159
		X. — Stèles funéraires.	161
		Y. — Cônes funéraires.	164
		Z. — Tresses grecques funéraires.	166

Fig. 4, Table of Contents, *Notice descriptive des monuments égyptiens du Musée Charles X* (Paris: Imprimerie de Crapelet, 1827), vii-viii. [\[larger image\]](#)

In a note written during his voyage to Egypt in 1828, Champollion observed that it is “through nomenclature that one has managed to sort out the chaos of creation; to avoid confusion it has been necessary to first arrange each object according to the relationships which exist between them, then to group them according to their relationships by genre, by species, by family; one has thus gone down to the individual, even to chemical analysis.”^[76] Champollion’s divisions and subdivisions, conceptually drawn from a Linnaean taxonomic system of classification, were determined according to the use or representational value of each object. The categories Champollion devised were often shown in close proximity to each other in the museum, facilitating comparison between them.^[77]

As L’Hôte noted in the quotation cited at the beginning of this section (see also n. 72), the scientific rigor of Champollion’s approach was newly brought to bear on his display of Egyptian antiquities in the Musée Charles X. Yet in his endeavor to make sense of the artifacts of Egyptian civilization, Champollion assumed a place in a long line of scholars seeking to order antiquity. Many before him had published “paper museums” or multi-volume books pairing texts with engravings. Champollion’s thematic gallery designations—funerary rites, civil life, and Egyptian gods—recalled the functional order in which the five-volume *L’antiquité expliquée et représentée en figures* was structured. This work, published by the French Benedictine monk Bernard de Montfaucon (1655–1741) between 1719 and 1724, featured sections pertaining to the gods, cults, customs of private and civil life, and funerals and tombs.^[78] Montfaucon’s aim was to produce a firm relationship between text and image; the antiquities served primarily to supplement *a priori* notions of ancient history.^[79] Several decades later, Anne-Claude-Philippe de Caylus (1692–1765) recommended a construction of history that privileged the primacy of the object in his seven-volume *Recueil d’antiquités égyptiennes, étrusques, grecques, romaines et gauloises*. In the first volume of this series, begun in 1752, Caylus articulated the shift from an approach like that of Montfaucon to one of close observation:

When I began to engrave this collection, I first had in mind the man of letters who seeks in monuments only their relations with the testimony of the ancients. I seized on these relations when they presented themselves naturally and when they seemed clear and evident to me; but being neither a scholar nor patient enough always to use this method, I often preferred another way that will perhaps be of interest to those who love the arts. It consists in studying faithfully the mind and hand of the artist, penetrating his views, following him in their execution, and, in a word, looking at monuments as the proof and expression of the taste that reigns in a century and in a country.^[80]

Caylus proposed an approach based on close looking, one that would reach beyond the chronology of events and actions, but he also suggested that it would reflect the whims of the *amateur*. At issue was the methodological question of reconciling external evidence with a work of art's internal, formal characteristics, a reconciliation that, in the case of Egyptian antiquities, was impossible to achieve before Champollion's decipherment of hieroglyphics. The *Recueil d'antiquités* can thus be seen as occupying a liminal space between the impulse for empirical exactitude and its achievement, a misalignment echoed by the ambiguity apparent in the frontispiece to Caylus's third volume (fig. 5). In it, winged men who represent time attend an Egyptian goddess, hardly visible amidst swaths of billowing fabric. It is unclear if they are pulling away or straining to hold up these weighty folds with the brute strength of their sculpted muscles. The ambiguity of the action resonates in the accompanying explication: "The frontispiece represents Antiquity, in the form of an Egyptian figure, prodigious in size, covered by an immense veil, pulled back by [the spirits of] time who rush in, and use all their efforts to hide and obscure her."^[81] In depicting this simultaneous veiling and unveiling, the artist alludes not only to the allegorical meaning of time (which allows glimpses of the past while also obscuring it), but also suggests the impossibility of a full revelation of Egyptian antiquity within the *Recueil d'antiquités's* pages.



Fig. 5, Frontispiece, *Recueil d'antiquités égyptiennes, étrusques, grecques, romaines, et gauloises* (Paris: N. M. Tilliard, 1759), vol. 3. [\[larger image\]](#)

It is tempting to see Champollion's curatorial project as a synthesis of the antiquarian and proto-archaeological practices that preceded him; indeed, it is striking that for Champollion one did not necessarily come at the exclusion of the other. In part, what is so compelling about Champollion's curatorial strategy and therefore his museum is that it envisioned a

presentation of Egypt that at once valued chronology, iconography, and the themes or categories that would allow access to understanding ancient Egyptian societal, cultural, and theological structures. Therefore, Champollion proffered not a closed system but a radically open one that was constructed to accommodate additions and shifts in knowledge. The web of signification that Champollion built was generous and malleable, and it was conceived as both a system of classification based on material evidence and as a conceptual construct. On an abstract level, any future modifications meant the possibility of inserting, for example, a newly-recognized pharaoh into the chronology or a god into the pantheon; on the most tangible level it meant the possibility of adding or removing antiquities from the armoires of the Musée Charles X, which served as a simulacrum of a wider body of knowledge about ancient Egypt.

Scholars could continue to build upon and amend the field of Egyptology, which would, in Champollion's view, reach an increased state of precision within his broadly-conceived categories of knowledge. In fact, his travels in Egypt following the inauguration of the Musée Charles X were largely consumed by the goal of verifying, through the study of inscriptions, the propositions he made in the museum about the structure of ancient Egyptian civilization, and, in his *Lettres à M. le duc de Blacas* of 1824, about pharaonic chronology: "Egyptian monuments lend themselves much better than those of the Greeks and Romans to a scientific and methodical classification. Each object always bears an original inscription which indicates without uncertainty its intent and its use."^[82] In claiming for Egyptian art the clarity of scientific rigor, Champollion demonstrated its distance from the biases of aesthetic tradition. He sought recourse in other fields of thought—particularly linguistics, as described above, and science—to develop a new means of interpreting Egyptian art.

The other crucial aspect of Champollion's travels in Egypt was to provide evidence for the debate about the influence of Egypt on Greek art and vice versa. Writing on his return journey in 1829, Champollion claimed that he had copied down in his notebook monuments of the highest interest because of the proof they offered for the "general history of fine arts, and in particular, for their transmission from Egypt to Greece."^[83] He put it even more strongly earlier that year in a forceful denial of the influence of Greek art on Egypt: "*Egyptian art owes to no one but itself* all that it has produced that is great, pure, and beautiful." Thereby, he wrote, "the arts began in Greece as the result of servile imitation of Egyptian arts . . . Ancient Egypt educated Greece in the arts which contributed to the most sublime development: but without Egypt, Greece would probably never have become the classical civilization of fine arts that it is."^[84] Champollion's ardent claims about the unidirectionality of artistic influence between Egypt and Greece reinforced his belief in the insufficiency and irrelevancy of the extant systems of understanding and aesthetic evaluation of Greco-Roman antiquities for Egyptian artifacts. His letters from Egypt are, in this sense, yet another assertion of the fundamental differences between the two cultures, and the necessity of developing a means by which to look at the art of ancient Egypt on its own terms.^[85]

Asserting Egypt's artistic independence from Greece took on particular urgency in the context of the Louvre, where Champollion's Egyptian galleries opened directly into the four Greco-Roman ones accorded to the comte Frédéric de Clarac (1777–1847), curator of sculpture and antiquities at the Louvre. The optimal condition for viewing Egyptian antiquities, Champollion realized, was not as isolated objects of sublime beauty, but, as discussed,

contextualized among related objects, which would lend them meaning.^[86] Champollion's decisions for the display of Egyptian artifacts in the museum were undergirded by a new understanding—impossible before the decipherment of hieroglyphics—that recognized that art in Egypt most often served a functional, rather than aesthetic, role. His curation in the Musée Charles X not only allowed individual objects to be read according to their particular use, but also painted a broad picture of Egyptian society and its customs that made explicit the uniqueness of this early civilization and made implicit its distinctness from ancient Greece.^[87]

Perhaps the clearest articulation challenging the assumption of the Greek ideal as the model of artistic perfection came from Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), whose writings on Winckelmann's theories were conceived toward the end of the eighteenth century, but were not published until the end of the nineteenth. Herder's words could very well have been those of Champollion:

The Egyptians are older than the Greeks, and would have to be judged not according to them, but from within themselves: What was art for them? How did they, in their old age, develop it? And what was its meaning? – If they, in all these matters, had nothing in common with the Greeks, you should not place the works of both within one framework, but let each serve its place and its time: because originally the Egyptians would probably neither have wanted to work for the Greeks nor for us.^[88]

To hold Egyptian art to the hitherto dominant Hellenic standard would be to always condemn it to failure, as Champollion—who noted that “the genius of these people [the Greeks and the Egyptians] exhibited itself in essentially different ways”—realized.^[89] Significantly, Champollion's early role in determining new viewing conditions for these works of art was made possible in the 1820s, in the midst of Restoration France, where the supremacy of the male nude had broken down and new modes of representation and visibility were urgently being sought. Thus freed of the moralizing and intellectualizing imperatives thrust upon it by the structures built for the evaluation of Greek sculpture, Egyptian art could, in the Musée Charles X, not only be evaluated on its own terms, but could also constitute a different way of looking at, and thinking about, history.

Conclusion

While Champollion's museum was innovative in its remarkably sophisticated treatment of Egyptian civilization, the motivation to bring alive the art of a past beyond that of ancient Greece and Rome was part of a larger trend toward historicism whose roots predated the nineteenth century.^[90] Relevant in the present context is not this historical impulse as such, but more specifically its material manifestation in the Louvre, an institution bound up with notions of erudite taste and the officially-sanctioned canon of the *beaux arts*. Following the ruptures of the Revolution, the rise and fall of the Empire, and the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy, conditions were such in 1820s Paris that the Louvre could both collect and display objects from periods in the history of art previously considered barbaric.^[91]

As suggested in the introduction, the French crown's rejection of the first Drovetti collection in 1821 points to the contingencies of the moment: it was deemed too much of a financial outlay by the *Ministre de la Maison du Roi* for a collection in which “very few objects would find their

place in the royal museum, which is devoted to masterpieces rather than to curiosities of sculpture.”[\[92\]](#) (Indeed, the almost anachronistic use of the word “curiosity” here, recalling eighteenth-century cabinets of the same name, further speaks to the heterogeneity and aesthetic indeterminacy of this moment.) Yet, the Drovetti collection’s loss was almost universally lamented in the subsequent years, and was held up as a justification for the later purchase of Egyptian collections. Auguste Forbin (1777–1841), general director of museums from 1816, articulated this sentiment in 1824 when arguing for the acquisition of the Durand collection, and Champollion did the same when writing in favor of attaining the Salt collection in 1825.[\[93\]](#)

The Louvre collected widely during the Restoration, beyond the narrow purview of Egyptian antiquities. One such example was the Durand collection, which entered the Louvre in 1824 and contained an important group of French medieval and Renaissance works of fine and decorative art in addition to its Egyptian component. Other like collections followed, notably that of the painter Pierre-Henri Révoil (1776–1842) in 1828, whose “gothic” objects were eventually displayed in galleries located alongside the Egyptian rooms of the Musée Charles X.[\[94\]](#) A Musée de la Marine exhibiting model ships and naval accessories on the first floor of the Cour Carrée’s north wing was established in the same royal decree as was the Musée Charles X, which also recommended including “all Oriental, Phoenician, Persian, and Hindu monuments that exist in the museum or that will be added to it” in Champollion’s half of the museum, though no evidence suggests that this was ever done.[\[95\]](#) Moreover, the author of a letter proposing the founding of a museum of Egyptian antiquities advocated for establishing a special museum for monuments of industry and the indigenous peoples of Oceania, demonstrating the breadth of interest in non-Western (and even contemporary) cultures as early as 1826.[\[96\]](#) In 1839, Edmé-François Jomard (1777–1862), a member of the Expedition of Egypt who had long hoped to be named curator of Egyptian art instead of Champollion, was finally appointed head of an ethnographic museum housed in the royal library.[\[97\]](#)

What is significant in all this is not only the radically expanded scope of the Louvre’s willingness to collect on a large scale the art of new geographies and time periods, but that the rapid rate of acquisitions during this period exceeded the Louvre administration’s ability to develop a language to speak about it, testimony to the urgency with which it was felt that history needed to be rehabilitated or even “filled in.” The contemporaneous press was consistent in its use of the term “history” when writing about the Musée Charles X, but what was less clear was how artifacts of history and fine art, here conceived of as sculpture, could be reconciled. In other words, what was it that the Musée Charles X purported to enable scholars and the public to study? If it was history, was it the history of objects, the history of civilizations, or of people themselves? By the 1870s, Adrien de Longpérier (1816–1882), curator of sculpture (including Egyptian and later Assyrian art) at the Louvre following the death of Clarac, would go so far as to claim that Champollion’s Egyptian display was, indeed, an early instantiation of ethnography.[\[98\]](#) For naturalist André Étienne d’Audebert, Baron de Férussac (1786–1836), in whose journal (*Bulletin universel des sciences et de l’industrie* [*Bulletin Férussac*]) Champollion often published, the Egyptian museum was a means for “understanding the history of people,” while for Jomard, the first ethnographic museum found its seeds in the Musée de la Marine.[\[99\]](#) Indeed, the difference between what was art and what was history stood at the center of these debates, whose outcome very tangibly affected the presentation of these new collections, and therefore of history, to the French public. While Champollion’s museum was one among many other contemporaneous government-funded museums in and

around the Louvre in the 1820s, and may stand apart from them due to the thoughtful nature and the unique expertise with which he curated its collections, it is the most complete archival picture left to us and therefore offers unique insight into exhibition practices of that moment.

Further and more telling than the “messy” shift toward historicism evinced by the Louvre’s expanded collecting practices of the 1820s, though, was Forbin’s admission of a more deeply-rooted justification for acquiring the Durand works: “ever since the fate of war has come to strip the museum of the trophies it had accumulated, never has a more favorable opportunity presented itself to return this great establishment to all its splendor.”^[100] The link was explicit: Egypt entered the vaunted galleries of the Louvre by way of a loss. Motivated by the lasting wound inflicted by the restitution of the Napoleonic spoils, Egypt became a consolation, if not necessarily a substitute, for the literal and metaphorical space vacated by the ideal of Greek sculpture. The rupture of historical certainty in the Restoration is distilled by an episode in the completion of the Musée Charles X’s decorative scheme. François-Edouard Picot (1786–1868), preparing to paint his plafond entitled *Study Crowned with Laurels and the Genius of the Arts Unveiling Ancient Egypt to Greece* (1827) in the Egyptian museum’s fourth gallery, initially conceived of unveiling Egypt not to Minerva, led by winged allegories of Genius and Study, but to the city of Paris itself, complete with an obelisk honoring King Charles X alongside the spires of Notre-Dame.^[101] Picot’s substitution of ancient Greece for modern France expresses just how uncertain the role of Egypt was for the French conception of history (though its unveiling was no longer in question as it had been in Caylus’s frontispiece). Furthermore, it speaks to the scholarly advances, in particular Champollion’s own claims, about the direct impact of Egyptian art on Greek art. More broadly still, Picot’s late alteration emblemizes the tentativeness with which history was being constructed at this moment—a provisionality that Champollion himself had exploited and incorporated into the malleable structural apparatus that formed the base of his display. Given this fluidity of the conception of Egypt in the French consciousness, and moreover the volatility of the very notion of history, Champollion seized the opportunity to shape the public’s view of Egypt through his sophisticated curation of the Musée Charles X.

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Notes

All translations are by the author unless otherwise indicated.

[1] As early as April 1814 Pope Pius VII had demanded the return of his archives; by June 1814 over one hundred paintings and *objets d’art* had been returned to Prussia, but it was not until Antonio Canova’s negotiations on behalf of the Pope in Paris in September 1815 that the return of such treasures as the *Apollo Belvedere*, the *Laocoön*, the *Dying Gaul*, etc. was secured. Cecil

Gould, *Trophy of Conquest: The Musée Napoléon and the Creation of the Louvre* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965), 116–130. For a discussion of Quatremère de Quincy's opposition to the spoliation, which informed Canova's position, see Dominique Poulot, "The Cosmopolitanism of Masterpieces," in *Letters to Miranda and Canova on the Abduction of Antiquities from Rome and Athens* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2012).

[2] J. J. Halls, *The Life and Correspondence of Henry Salt* (London: Richard Bentley, 1834), 1:425.

[3] For a brief introduction to these initial acquisitions, see Monique Kanawaty, "Les acquisitions du Musée Charles X," *Bulletin de la Société Française d'Égyptologie* 104 (October 1985). Another overview is given in Guillemette Andreu, Marie-Hélène Rutschowskaya, and Christiane Ziegler, *L'Égypte ancienne au Louvre* (Paris: Hachette, 1997), 13–20.

[4] Archives Nationales O3 1428, undated. "En effet, le musée ne peut plus des lors être considéré seulement comme le temple des Beaux-arts, il devient aussi celui des lettres et de l'histoire, cette foule de monuments des mains, des usages, des Religions, des sciences de l'antiquité qui veut y être réunis, lui donnant un nouvel aspect nécessite quelques modifications dans son organisation et l'adjonction d'un homme habile dans l'arrangement et la conservation de ces monuments purement littéraires ou historiques." Though the letter is unsigned, this quote is attributed to the Baron Férussac in Monique Kanawaty, "Les principes muséologiques de Champollion," *International Congress of Egyptologists* 1 (1988): 56–57. This article remains one of the most thorough analyses of Champollion's curatorial work.

[5] Neither historical nor contemporary sources show consistent usage of the name "Musée Charles X," which technically refers to both the Greco-Roman and Egyptian divisions of the museum. Sometimes the term "Musée Égyptien" is used to denote Champollion's half of the museum, though it does not seem that this was ever its official title. In this article, I simply use the term "Musée Charles X."

[6] The galleries were located on the second floor ("premier étage" in French) of the south wing of the Cour Carrée.

[7] On Champollion's decipherment, see Maurice Pope, *The Story of Decipherment: From Egyptian Hieroglyph to Linear B* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975), 74–84.

[8] On the Louvre during the Restoration, see Marie-Claude Chaudonneret, *L'État et les artistes: De la Restauration à la monarchie de Juillet (1815–1833)* (Paris: Flammarion, 1999); on the Musée Charles X in particular, see Marie-Claude Chaudonneret, "Permanence et innovation: le musée du Louvre dans les années 1820," in *Hommage à Michel Laclotte: Etudes sur la peinture du Moyen Âge et de la Renaissance*, ed. Pierre Rosenberg (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1994), 532–537. For an analysis of the significance of the painting cycles in the Musée Charles X and elsewhere in the Louvre, see Sébastien Allard, *Le Louvre à l'époque romantique. Les décors du Palais (1815–1835)* (Paris: Fage, 2006). Of the four ceiling paintings, all are still in situ except for Antoine-Jean Gros's *The King Giving the Musée Charles X to the Arts*, replaced after the fall of the Restoration. For a contextualization of this painting within Gros's larger oeuvre, see David O'Brien, *After the Revolution: Antoine-Jean Gros, Painting and Propaganda Under Napoleon* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), chapter 6.

[9] Sponsored by the Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres in 1785, the competition was begun by Anne-Claude-Philippe de Caylus in 1754 as a yearly prize for the study of antiquities. In his essay, Quatremère responded to the formulation put forth by the Académie, "What was the state of Egyptian architecture and what do the Greeks seem to have borrowed from it." His 1785 manuscript was later published as a comprehensively expanded and revised version in 1803, which is the version referred to throughout this paper. See Antoine Chrysostôme Quatremère de Quincy, *De l'architecture égyptienne considérée dans son origine, ses principes et son goût, et comparée sous les mêmes rapports à l'architecture grecque* (Paris: Barrios l'aîné et fils, 1803). For an important analysis of the differences between the 1785 and 1803 versions, which consisted most significantly in a change from a monogenetic theory of origins to a multigenetic one, see Sylvia Lavin, *Quatremère de Quincy and the Invention of a Modern Language of Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 57.

[10] Jean-François Champollion, *Lettres à M. le duc de Blacas d'Aulps, relatives au Musée royal égyptien de Turin, Première Lettre* (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1824), 8: "s'il est permis de s'exprimer ainsi, porter des arrêts contraires à la raison comme à l'équité, toutes les fois qu'on a voulu juger l'art égyptien en prenant pour terme d'appréciation et de parallèle l'art des Grecs, c'est-à-dire celui d'un peuple totalement étranger à l'Égypte, non par la constitution physique seule, mais surtout par les moeurs, les institutions politiques et les habitudes."

[11] Champollion, *Lettres à M. le duc de Blacas*, 5: "Mais c'est seulement dans le Musée Royal de Turin, au milieu de cette masse de débris si variés d'une vieille civilisation, que l'histoire de l'Art égyptien m'a semblé rester encore entièrement à faire." Emphasis in the original. Please see

[Primary Sources](#) for links to digitized versions of Champollion's primary publications mentioned in this and the preceding two paragraphs.

[12] Jean-François Champollion, *Notice descriptive des monuments égyptiens du Musée Charles X* (Paris: Imprimerie de Crapelet, 1827). The Musée Charles X opened to the public on December 15, 1827, and Champollion's guidebook was printed on December 7, 1827, allowing him the maximum time to organize the catalogue based on his display of objects. Sylvie Guichard, *Jean-François Champollion: Notice descriptive des monuments égyptiens du Musée Charles X* (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 2013), 56. This extremely useful annotated republication of the 1827 guidebook includes contemporary accession numbers for identified objects still conserved in the Department of Egyptian Antiquities, preceded by a detailed essay collating many relevant archival sources. I am indebted to Sylvie Guichard for her continued support and for sharing her research with me at an early stage.

[13] The inventories of the Durand, Salt, and Drovetti collections with marginalia indicating the placement of objects by room and cabinet are conserved in the Archives des musées nationaux at the Louvre. See 7DD*2 for Durand; 7DD*4 and 7DD*5 for Salt; and 7DD*8 for Drovetti.

[14] For an analysis of the *Description's* plates, see Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby, "Egypt's Size: Stone/Paper," chap. 1 in *Colossal: Engineering the Suez Canal, Statue of Liberty, Eiffel Tower, and Panama Canal* (Pittsburgh: Periscope, 2012).

[15] Vivant Denon, *Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute Égypte pendant les campagnes du Général Bonaparte* (1802), vol. 2, description for plate 59. Quoted in Vassiliki Petridou, "A. C. Quatremère de Quincy et son mémoire sur l'architecture égyptienne," in *L'Égypte imaginaire de la renaissance à Champollion*, ed. Chantal Grell (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2001), 181. "Les Égyptiens ont copié la nature; ils ont copié la leur; et les Grecs n'ont qu'ajouté des fables aux vols qu'ils leur ont faits"; "composé de branches de feuilles du palmier."

[16] Laws 2.656e in Plato, *Plato. Laws. Books I–VI* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), 102–103; and Plato, *The Collected Dialogues of Plato, Including the Letters* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 1254. Quoted in Brian Curran, et. al., *Obelisk: A History* (Cambridge, MA: The Burndy Library, 2009), 210. For more on Plato's assessment of Egyptian art, see Whitney Davis, "Plato on Egyptian Art," *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 65 (1979): 121–127.

[17] Winckelmann wrote that a rule had been "established and adopted in [Egyptian] statues, according to which they must be executed after one and the same model." Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *History of Ancient Art*, vol. 1, trans. G. Henry Lodge (Boston: James R. Osgood, 1873), 253.

[18] Winckelmann's observations were based on a significant, if small, body of Egyptian art in Rome with which he was well acquainted.

[19] Quatremère, *De l'architecture égyptienne*, 5: "sans la connoissance immédiate des monumens et acquise par la vue des originaux eux-mêmes, un écrivain peut se flatter de saisir convenablement le système ou le génie qui présidèrent à leur création."

[20] Quatremère, Letter to the Academy, Archives de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, MS E305. Translated in Lavin, *Quatremère de Quincy*, 45.

[21] This observation is made by Lavin in *ibid.*, 46–47.

[22] Anne-Claude-Philippe de Caylus's *Recueil d'antiquités égyptiennes, étrusques, grecques et romaines* contained engravings of Egyptian antiquities, but no plates of Egyptian architecture. For a list of textual sources available to Quatremère, see Lavin, *Quatremère de Quincy*, 207 n. 34. Lavin also notes that Quatremère was familiar with the Egyptian antiquities in the Borgia collection in Veletri and those that he himself owned.

[23] Quatremère, *De l'architecture égyptienne*, 51–52: "la plus entière uniformité règne entr'eux."

[24] *Ibid.* "Cependant tous paroissent le travail d'une seule manufacture . . . aucune n'annonce ni des époques de style divers, ni des changements de goût, ni le moindre pas vers la véritable imitation, vers l'étude du corps humain."

[25] Raoul Rochette, *Considérations sur le caractère des arts de l'antique Égypte, lues par M. Raoul-Rochette, dans sa séance générale des quatre académies, le 24 avril* (Paris: Imprimerie de C.-J. Trouvé, 1823), 4–5 and 8.

[26] *Ibid.*, 6. "Ce sont toujours les mêmes traits, la même physionomie, le même âge, le même sexe; en un mot, c'est toujours le même personnage, et non pas les portraits de personnage divers"; "les statuaires égyptiens ne faisoient qu'une seule figure, parce qu'ils ne voyoient dans toute l'Égypte qu'un seul Égyptien." Champollion expressed his vindication the next year when Rochette passed through the Turin museum, and, according to Champollion, altered his views on the stagnancy of Egyptian forms: "Je l'ai conduit au Musée et j'ai pris quelque plaisir à le

mettre en face des colosses de Thoutmosis de Mœris, d'Aménophis II et surtout de Sésostriis, qu'il a regardés avec une componction visible. Sa conclusion a été que ces statues-là sont de véritables portraits d'une très belle sculpture, et que nous n'avions point encore à Paris des idées justes sur l'art Égyptien. Je suis sûr qu'il regrette beaucoup d'avoir lu publiquement le ridicule *Pasticcio* de sa composition sur l'unité de type, de formes et de physionomie dans les monuments d'ancien style. Il partira d'ici contrit et humilié, et je m'attends à ce qu'il reçoive du *caput equinum* une bonne perruque pour avoir cru trouver dans ces statues précisément le contraire de ce que professe le grand Q. de Q.!" Hermine Hartleben, ed., *Lettres de Champollion le Jeune*, vol. 1, *Lettres écrites d'Italie*, Bibliothèque Égyptologique 30 (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1909), 45.

[27] Archives Nationales O3 1406 dossier 15, quoted in Sylvie Guichard, "Une collection d'antiquités égyptiennes méconnue: la collection Thédénat-Duvent," *Revue d'égyptologie* 58 (2007): 207. The committee was comprised of Joseph Fourier, Edme-François Jomard, Pierre-Simon Girard, Georges Cuvier, and Jean Antoine Letronne. "Ce serait une dépense peu fructueuse que de multiplier dans nos musées le nombre des statues et des sculptures égyptiennes parce que l'art chez les Égyptiens n'a jamais approché du degré de perfection où il s'est élevé chez les Grecs et dans nos temps modernes et qu'il semble y être resté stationnaire parce que les statues égyptiennes, dénuées de toute expression avec leurs formes sèches, étroites et ramassées, leurs poses immobiles et uniformes."

[28] Champollion, *Lettres à M. le duc de Blacas*, 5: "Quelle idée juste pouvait-on en effet acquérir de la sculpture égyptienne, lorsque les seuls produits qu'on en possédait alors en Europe sortaient, pour la plupart, des catacombes les plus vulgaires."

[29] See, for example, his July 1827 *Mémoire sur un projet de voyage littéraire en Égypte*, reprinted in Hartleben, *Lettres écrites d'Italie*, 435–436. "Ont-ils attaché moins d'intérêt à copier avec exactitude les longues inscriptions en caractères sacrés dans les bas-reliefs historiques: ils les ont presque toujours négligées, et souvent même, en copiant quelques scènes de ces bas-reliefs, on s'est contenté de marquer seulement la place occupée par ces légendes."

[30] Champollion, *Lettres à M. le duc de Blacas*, 6. "[cet] ensemble des statues égyptiennes de la collection Drovetti prouve surtout, contre l'opinion générale, que les artistes égyptiens ne furent point tenus d'imiter servilement un petit nombre de types primitifs, en donnant aux personnages qu'ils devaient représenter, soit dieux, soit simples mortels, cette figure de convention et toujours la même."

[31] *Ibid.*, 7. "Nous resterons frappés de l'extrême variété des physionomies. . . . Toutefois, la plupart de ces têtes présentent entre elles, quant à la disposition générale des traits, une certaine analogie, cette sorte d'*air de famille* que l'on verra également empreint dans les ouvrages de tout autre peuple, comparés entre eux."

[32] Hermine Hartleben, ed., *Lettres et journaux de Champollion*, vol. 2, *Lettres et journaux écrites pendant le voyage d'Égypte*, Bibliothèque Égyptologique 31 (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1909), 114. "Sa physionomie suffit pour me le faire reconnaître comme une statue de Sésostriis, car c'est en grand le portrait le plus fidèle du beau Sésostriis de Turin; les inscriptions des bras, du pectoral et de la ceinture confirmèrent mon idée, et il n'est plus douteux qu'il existe, à Turin et à Memphis, deux portraits du plus grand des Pharaons." Emphasis in the original.

[33] Champollion, *Lettres à M. le duc de Blacas*, 7: "les artistes s'efforçant d'imiter les formes qu'ils avaient perpétuellement sous les yeux."

[34] *Ibid.*, 6–7.

[35] Quatremère, *De l'architecture égyptienne*, 13. Translated in Lavin, *Quatremère de Quincy*, 59.

[36] See, for instance, Champollion, *Lettres à M. le duc de Blacas*, 8–9. "L'artiste égyptien, trop souvent contraint, par les institutions nationales, d'unir les têtes de divers animaux à des corps humains, et de figurer des êtres sans type réel dans la nature, en sortant ainsi forcément des limites du vrai, se vit aussi dans la nécessité de se créer un art en quelque sorte conventionnel dans presque toutes ses parties; et s'il parvint, ce que prouvent d'ailleurs une foule de monuments, à s'élever jusques au vrai beau, ce ne peut être que dans quelques portions de ses ouvrages, considérées isolément."

[37] Champollion, *Lettres à M. le duc de Blacas*, 6. "Il est vrai que les poses de ces statues sont peu variées . . . cela tenait sans doute, ou à la nature du pays dont le climat ardent fait, du calme et du repos, le premier besoin et l'état habituel des individus." Champollion's recourse to the Egyptian climate's relationship to the formal properties of its sculptures is a kind of shorthand explanation that took the place of a more penetrating or considered analysis, and indicates a shortcoming in Champollion's knowledge at this date, one he acknowledged and claimed to hope to illuminate more fully. Such a discussion of climate had a long history in European literature on Egypt, most notably in Winckelmann's *History of Ancient Art*: "The [climate], with its uniform temperature and warm skies, enabled the people to pass life, in general, pleasantly, and

find support easily; and propagation was encouraged, because their children went naked until maturity.” Winckelmann, *History of Ancient Art* (above, n. 17), 195.

[38] Ibid., 8. “Si on s’étonne enfin de ne point remarquer dans les statues égyptiennes, ces formes gracieuses ou sublimes que le ciseau des Grecs sut imprimer au marbre le plus précieux comme à la matière la plus commune, c’est qu’on oublie sans cesse que les Égyptiens cherchèrent à copier la nature telle que leur pays la leur montrait, tandis que les Grecs tendirent et parvinrent à l’embellir et à la modifier d’après un type idéal que leur génie sut inventer.” I am grateful to Clarisse Fava-Piz for her help in translating this passage.

[39] The views of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) on Egyptian art as put forth in his lectures on aesthetics can be considered alongside those of Quatremère insofar as Hegel identified Egyptian art as deficient because, according to him, it fell short of ideal beauty. In Hegel’s schema of the three forms of art, “symbolic art” (such as Egyptian art) did not reach an ideal state because it did not allow for the free expression of spirit, “classical art” (such as Greek art) fulfilled his concept of art and attained true beauty, and “romantic art” (such as Renaissance art) exceeded such beauty. For Hegel, Greek art was the rubric by which Egyptian art was evaluated: “Studying particular features of Egyptian sculpture, we may note that the eyes are not deeply set, as in the Greek ideal. The eyebrows, eyelids, and contours of the mouth are represented generally by engraved lines. . . . A higher, more self-conscious sense of one’s own individuality than the Egyptians possessed had to be attained before such vagueness and indeterminate superficiality in art could cease to satisfy and the higher claims of intellect, reason, motion, expression, soul, and beauty upon art be seriously met.” Translated and quoted in Henry Paolucci, *Hegel: On the Arts, Selections from G. W. F. Hegel’s Aesthetics or the Philosophy of Fine Art* (Smyrna, DE: Griffon House, 2001), 98–99.

[40] For historical accounts of the understanding of hieroglyphs across the centuries, see Madeleine V. David, *Le débat sur les écritures et l’hieroglyphe aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles, et l’application de la notion de déchiffrement aux écritures mortes* (Paris: SEVPEN, 1965), and Erik Iversen, *The Myth of Egypt and its Hieroglyphs* (Copenhagen: GEC Gad, 1961).

[41] William Warburton, *The Divine Legation of Moses Demonstrated on the Principles of a Religious Deist*, 2 vols. (London: Fletcher Gyles, 1737–1741). The section on hieroglyphs was translated by Léonard Des Malpeines and published separately in France as *Essai sur les hiéroglyphes des égyptiens* (Paris: Hippolyte-Louis Guérin, 1744).

[42] The realization, shared by Quatremère and Champollion, that Greek statues derived stylistically from Egyptian ones, and that this implied a chronology in which Egyptian civilization predated the development of the arts in Greece, represented an advancement in the field of art history at this time. In his *History of Ancient Art*, Winckelmann had claimed otherwise: “this resemblance does not prove that the Greeks learnt their art from the Egyptians. In fact, they had no opportunity of doing so; for prior to the reign of Psammetichus, one of the last Egyptian kings, foreigners were not allowed to enter Egypt; but the Greeks had cultivated art long before this time.” Winckelmann, *History of Ancient Art*, 199–200.

[43] Éméric-David argued that Greek art was perfect because it was true to nature, a view strongly denied by Quatremère. See Toussaint-Bernard Éméric-David, *Recherches sur l’art statuaire: considéré chez les anciens et chez les modernes; ou, mémoire sur cette question proposée par l’Institut National de France: Quelles ont été les causes de la perfection de la sculpture antique, et quels seroient les moyens d’y atteindre?* (Paris: Nyon Ainé, 1805).

[44] Quatremère, “Fin de l’article sur l’idéal dans les arts du dessin,” *Archives littéraires* (1805), 301. “Le trait hiéroglyphique d’un homme, par exemple, ne le désigne, ni sous le rapport d’individu, ni sous le rapport de l’espèce, mais seulement sous l’idée de ces rapports. C’est une imitation inimitative, à laquelle ne peut convenir que ce qu’il y a de plus général dans l’apparence [sic] et la forme des êtres ou des corps: l’imitation hiéroglyphique est par conséquent l’imitation la plus généralisée.”

[45] Ibid., 18. “Particulariser, par l’imitation de l’individu, l’image de l’homme, c’est l’imitation vulgaire. Généraliser cette image par l’imitation de la nature, c’est faire de l’idéal.”

[46] Quatremère, *De l’architecture égyptienne*, 205: “sous toute les espèces d’entraves religieuses.”

[47] Quatremère, *Archives littéraires*, 305: “les images d’êtres ou de personnages imaginaires à la vérité, mais réels pour l’imagination.”

[48] Ibid., 306. “Un autre ordre d’idées . . . un nouveau monde, que l’imagination se plut à peupler, et qu’elle embellit à son gré.”

[49] Quatremère, *De l’architecture égyptienne*, 183: “Le défaut de l’imitation, qui fait la base du système égyptien, consiste dans une trop grande identité avec ce qui lui servit de modèle.”

[50] Ibid., 206. “Donc tout mode ou tout genre d’imitation qui tend le plus possible à s’approcher de ce point de similitude, dont l’effet est de faire croire que l’image qu’il présente

d'une chose, est la chose même, tend aussi le plus possible à détruire ou à diminuer le plaisir qui doit résulter de l'imitation."

[51] Champollion, *Lettres à M. le duc de Blacas*, 10. "La sculpture et la peinture ne furent jamais en Égypte que de véritables branches de l'écriture. L'imitation ne devait être poussée qu'à un certain point seulement; une statue ne fut en réalité qu'un simple *signe*, un véritable *caractère* d'écriture; or, lorsque l'artiste avait rendu avec soin et vérité la partie essentielle et déterminative du *signe*, c'est-à-dire la tête de la statue, soit en exprimant avec fidélité les traits du personnage humain dont il s'agissait de rappeler l'idée . . . son but était dès-lors atteint: les bras, le torse et les jambes, regardés comme des parties accessoires, étaient tout-à-fait négligés, parce qu'un fini précieux dans leur exécution n'eût rien ajouté ni à la valeur ni à la clarté réelle du signe." Emphasis in the original.

[52] The *Précis* built substantially on Champollion's less comprehensive account of hieroglyphic principles in his announcement of the decipherment in 1822; see Champollion, *Lettre à M. Dacier, secrétaire perpétuel de l'Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, relative à l'alphabet des hiéroglyphes phonétiques* (Paris: Firmin Didot Père et Fils, 1822).

[53] Champollion explicitly criticized what he saw as the excessive detail of colossal ancient Roman sculpture: "Tout détail trop minutieux sur une grande échelle est une faute capitale, et l'artiste qui, faisant une statue colossale, n'a point, comme les Égyptiens, la sagesse de n'exprimer que la strict nécessaire, ce qui n'exclut nullement certaines finesses, ne produira jamais qu'une face monstrueuse, une *grossière caricature*, comme les têtes impériales précitées." Emphasis in the original. Hartleben, *Lettres et journaux*, 104.

[54] Jean-François Champollion, *Précis du système hiéroglyphique des anciens égyptiens ou recherches sur les éléments premiers de cette écriture sacrée, sur leurs diverses combinaisons, et sur les rapports de ce système avec les autres méthodes graphiques égyptiennes*, 2nd ed. (1824; repr. with a foreword by Champollion and his *Lettre à M. Dacier*, Paris: Imprimerie royale, 1828), 328. Page references are to the 1828 edition.

"La notation seule de quelques idées isolées, et ne peut, dans aucun cas . . . exprimer les nombreux rapports de l'homme avec les objets extérieurs, ni tous les divers rapports de ces objets entre eux."

[55] *Ibid.*, 332. "Des êtres purement physiques; mais aucune idée abstraite ne pouvait être directement représentée par cette méthode." A passage in Quatremère's *De l'architecture égyptienne* demonstrates his inadequate understanding of hieroglyphic writing. He believed there were three types of hieroglyphs, two of which were figurative characters, and a third—which was actually hieratic or cursive hieroglyphic writing—that was capable of conveying phonetic sounds. This was the dominant view espoused by Warburton, whose writings Quatremère was likely familiar with. In addition, Quatremère's cousin, Étienne Quatremère, was a linguist who had published on hieroglyphic writing. See Quatremère, *De l'architecture égyptienne*, 162. For more on Diderot's use of the term hieroglyph to designate a figurative or representational sign akin to a cipher, see James Doolittle, "Hieroglyph and Emblem in Diderot's *Lettre sur Les Sourds et Muets*," *Diderot Studies* 2 (1952): 148–167; and Kate E. Tunstall, "Hieroglyph and Device in Diderot's 'Lettre sur les sourds et muets,'" *Diderot Studies* 28 (2000): 161–172.

[56] Condillac, for example, perpetuated this view. See Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, *An Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge. Being a Supplement to Mr. Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding*, trans. Mr. Nugent (London: Lamb, 1756), 277. I have not explored the relationship between painting and poetry, or *ut pictura poesis*, since Champollion's theory deals primarily with sculpture, despite the connection between the figurative character and painting. For the relationship of sculpture to the painting-poetry debate, see Jacqueline Lichtenstein, *The Blind Spot: An Essay on the Relations between Painting and Sculpture in the Modern Age*, trans. Chris Miller (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2008); see also James Hall, *The World as Sculpture: The Changing Status of Sculpture from the Renaissance to the Present Day* (London: Random House, 1999).

[57] Champollion, *Précis*, 311–312.

[58] *Ibid.*, 329.

[59] Champollion, unpublished journal, MS. 20.077, 137–138, quoted by Jean Capart, "Champollion et l'art égyptien," *Recueil d'études égyptologiques dédiées à la mémoire de Jean-François Champollion*, Bibliothèque de l'École des hautes études 234 (Paris: Champion, 1922), 67. "Ils ne représentaient pas autrement que de profil et cela s'explique par le but qu'ils se proposaient: l'art du dessin n'était généralement employé que comme moyen d'écrire; il s'était agi en principe de consacrer les formes."

- [60] He designated temples as “representative” rather than “figurative,” though the distinction between these two nomenclatures remains undeveloped and the two terms remain, without further clarification, indistinguishable.
- [61] Champollion, *Lettres à M. le duc de Blacas*, 10: “[l’art égyptien] se consacra à la notation des idées plutôt qu’à la représentation des choses.” Emphasis in the original.
- [62] Recognizing the necessity for symbolic characters to express abstract concepts, Champollion associated them with images of the gods, which he called “the emblems of abstract ideas,” in a passage at the end of the *Précis* without elucidating further. Champollion, *Précis*, 431.
- [63] *Ibid.*, 338–340.
- [64] *Ibid.*
- [65] *Ibid.*, 430.
- [66] On syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations in semiotic analysis, see Jonathan Culler, *Ferdinand de Saussure* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), 119–121.
- [67] Champollion, *Précis*, 432. “L’imitation des objets physiques, poussée à un certain point seulement, était suffisante pour le but proposé; une plus grande recherche dans l’exécution n’eût rien ajouté à la clarté ni à l’expression voulues de l’image peinte ou sculptée, véritable signe d’écriture, presque toujours lié à une vaste composition dont il n’était lui-même qu’un simple élément.”
- [68] As Foucault paraphrased the philosopher Constantin-François Volney, “when a people possesses nothing but a figurative form of writing, its politics must exclude history, or at least all history other than pure and simple conservation.” Constantin-François Volney, *Les Ruines ou méditation sur les révolutions des Empires* (Paris: Bossange Frères, 1791), chap. 14. Translated in Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 112.
- [69] Champollion, *Précis*, 375. “L’écriture hiéroglyphique est un système complexe, une écriture tout-à-la-fois figurative, symbolique, et phonétique, dans un même texte, une même phrase, je dirais presque dans le même mot.”
- [70] Quatremère de Quincy, “Sur l’idéal dans les arts du dessin,” *Moniteur universel* 79 (10 December 1805): 301. “Comme il était de la nature de son emploi de ne faire qu’indiquer les objets, il était aussi de la nature de son dessin de n’en faire voir que les plus grands rapports.” I am grateful to Christina Michelon for her help in locating this volume.
- [71] Champollion, *Précis*, 374.
- [72] Nestor L’Hôte, “Ouverture du Musée d’antiquités égyptiennes au Louvre,” *Revue encyclopédique* 36 (1827): 831. “Jusqu’alors les Collections de monumens égyptiens, formées dans le but d’éclairer l’histoire de l’art, d’étudier les procédés de la sculpture et de la peinture chez les différens peuples et d’en suivre la direction, ne pouvaient être classées que d’après l’ordre des matières, et en quelque sort arbitrairement. Ici, puisqu’il s’agissait d’éclairer l’histoire entière de l’Égypte, M. Champollion devait avoir égard à la fois au sujet de chaque monument et à sa destination spéciale, et déterminer, d’après cette connaissance, la place qui lui serait réservée; il fallait présenter, aussi complète que possible, la série des divinités, celle des souverains, et classer avec méthode tous les objets relatifs à la vie publique et privée des Égyptiens; de cette manière se trouvaient réunis systématiquement les monumens civils et religieux.”
- [73] No detailed account exists detailing how these larger antiquities were displayed. In the row of galleries on the southern side of the south wing of the Cour Carrée, which run alongside the Musée Charles X, the intention was described by Delécluze to display “in armoires boxes containing the rich royal collection of drawings of the Grand Masters.” Étienne-Jean Delécluze [signed D.] “Beaux-Arts. Fondation du Musée Charles X – Achèvement du Louvre,” *Journal des Débats* (January 17, 1828), 2.
- [74] Champollion, *Notice descriptive*, 264. “Les inscriptions dont ces statuètes sont chargées, contiennent habituellement le nom propre et la filiation d’un individu, et de plus, l’indication des fonctions publiques que le défunt avait remplies de son vivant; on peut donc, en recueillant avec soin ce genre de monuments, qui, au premier coup d’œil, offre si peu de variété, en former une suite de plus haut intérêt, puisque, en les classant d’après les indications fournies par leurs légendes, on recomposera ainsi la série des castes, celle des fonctions publiques, et en un mot le tableau fidèle de l’organisation sociale des Égyptiens. On pourrait un soin tellement religieux dans la fabrication de ces figurines, qu’un grand nombre d’entre elles offriraient réellement le portrait du personnage auquel elles étaient consacrées.” Emphasis in the original.
- [75] Hartleben, *Lettres écrites d’Italie*, 420–421. “Tout passera successivement sous les yeux des spectateurs et chaque objet mis en relation avec ceux d’une même classe, en prendra un nouvel intérêt.”

[76] Bibliothèque Nationale, Département des Manuscrits Occidentaux, *Voyage archéographique et pittoresque dans la vallée du Nil ou Lettres, croquis, et souvenirs recueillis pendant la voyage par M. Champollion le Jeune en Égypte et en Nubie*, NAF20377, MF 5671. “C’est par la nomenclature qu’on est parvenu à débrouiller le chaos de la création; il a fallu pour éviter la confusion, classer d’abord chaque objet selon les rapports qui existent entr’eux, les réunir ensuite d’après ces rapports par genres, par espèces, par familles, et l’on est ainsi descendu jusqu’aux individus, jusqu’à l’analyse chimique.”

[77] Champollion believed strongly in establishing broad categories of knowledge about Egyptian civilization, followed by more specific sub-categories. In 1828 he wrote to his brother from Egypt outlining a logic for the illustrated book he hoped to publish upon his return. He suggested the following categories: agriculture; arts and crafts; military life; song, music, and dance; education of livestock; games, exercises, and pastimes; domestic law; housework; historical monuments; religious monuments; navigation; and zoology. See Hartleben, *Lettres et journaux*, 134–138. The book was finally published posthumously as *Monuments de l’Égypte et de la Nubie* in four volumes between 1835 and 1845.

[78] Alain Schnapp, *The Discovery of the Past* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1997), 235–237.

[79] *Ibid.*

[80] Anne-Claude-Philippe de Caylus, *Recueil d’antiquités égyptiennes, étrusques, grecques et romaines* (Paris: N. M. Tilliard, 1752), 1:vi–vii. Translated in Anthony Vidler, *The Writing of the Walls: Architectural Theory in the Late Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1987), 125.

[81] Caylus, *Recueil d’antiquités égyptiennes, étrusques, grecques, romaines et gauloises* (Paris: N. M. Tilliard, 1759), vol. 3, n.p. “Le Frontispice représente l’Antiquité sous la forme d’une Figure Égyptienne, prodigieuse en grandeur, & couverte d’un voile immense rabattu [sic] par les Tems qui s’empresment, & font tous leurs efforts pour la cacher & l’obscurcir.”

[82] Hartleben, *Lettres écrites d’Italie*, 17. “Les monuments Égyptiens se prêtent bien mieux que ceux des Grecs et des Romains à une classification à la fois méthodique et scientifique. Chaque objet porte toujours une inscription originale qui indique sans incertitude et son but et sa destination.” In his *Mémoire sur un projet de voyage littéraire en Égypte*, presented to King Charles X in 1827, Champollion listed the verification of chronology as one of the anticipated outcomes of the expedition: “C’est, en d’autres termes, recueillir les éléments positifs de l’histoire et de la chronologie de l’art en Égypte.” *Ibid.*, 435.

[83] “Sous le rapport des recherches scientifiques qui en étaient l’objet principal, mes espérances ont été pour ainsi dire surpassées: la richesse de mes portefeuilles ne laisse rien à désirer, et les dessins qu’ils renferment, éclaircissant une foule de points historiques, donnent en même temps des lumières du plus piquant intérêt sur les formes de la civilisation égyptienne jusques dans ses plus petits détails. J’ai recueilli enfin des notions certaines pour l’histoire générale des beaux-arts, et en particulier pour celle de leur transmission de l’Égypte à la Grèce.” Hartleben, *Lettres et journaux*, 453.

[84] “Je le répète encore: *l’art égyptien ne doit qu’à lui-même* tout ce qu’il a produit de grand, de pur et de beau, et, n’en déplaise aux savants qui se font une religion de croire fermement à la *génération spontanée* des arts en Grèce, il est évident pour moi, comme pour tous ceux qui ont bien vu l’Égypte, ou qui ont une connaissance réelle des monuments égyptiens existants en Europe, que les arts ont commencé en Grèce par une imitation servile des arts de l’Égypte, *beaucoup plus avancés* qu’on ne le croit vulgairement, à l’époque où les premières colonies égyptiennes furent en contact avec les sauvages habitants de l’Attique ou du Péloponnèse. La ville Égypte enseigna les arts à la Grèce, celle-ci leur donna le développement le plus sublime, mais sans l’Égypte, la Grèce ne serait probablement point devenue la terre classique des beaux-arts.” Emphasis in the original. Reprinted in *ibid.*, 335–336.

[85] This kind of cultural relativism predates Champollion. It can be found, for instance, in Winckelmann’s *History of the Art of Antiquity*, where he articulated the superiority of Greek art over Roman art based on cultural conditions such as democracy, and made similar distinctions when discussing Egyptian art due to contextual factors such as climate. On this subject, Alex Potts has written: “By representing classical Greek sculpture as the product of a particular historical moment, [Winckelmann] opened the way to a historicizing perspective on art, an approach that played a key role throughout the nineteenth century.” See Alex Potts, “Introduction,” in Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *History of the Art of Antiquity*, trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2006), 1.

[86] For the display of Greco-Roman antiquities in the Louvre prior to the Restoration, see Geneviève Bresc-Bautier, “La Salle des antiques du Palais du Louvre,” in *Les antiques du Louvre: une histoire du goût d’Henri IV à Napoléon Ier*, ed. Jean-Luc Martinez (Paris: Fayard, 2004); Philippe Malgouyres, *Le Musée Napoléon* (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1999); and Daniela Gallo, “Les antiques au Louvre: une accumulation de chefs-d’œuvre,” in *Dominique-Vivant Denon: L’œil*

de Napoléon, ed. Dominique Poulot, exhibition catalogue (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1999), 182–194.

[87] Alongside his efforts to provide a means for understanding Egyptian art that distanced itself from the standards established for Greek art, Champollion was adamant that the architecture of the four rooms of the Musée Charles X under his direction be decorated in an Egyptianizing style rather than a Greco-Roman one, but his wishes were not followed by architects Charles Percier and Pierre Fontaine. See Hartleben, *Lettres écrites d'Italie*, 395–396: “Il faut absolument, pour obéir aux convenances et au bon sens, que mes salles soient décorées à l’Égyptienne. Et les décorations Égyptiennes, qui valent certainement bien les décorations grecques, coûteront beaucoup moins que les marbres qu’on achèterait pour faire dispendieusement une mauvaise chose . . . les murs et tous les meubles, armoires et tables, doivent être de style vrai Égyptien: c’est le seul moyen de faire bien et de faire du neuf en même temps.”

[88] Johann Gottfried Herder, *Sämmtliche Werke*, vol. 8 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1892), 476. “Und so wage ich nur noch Ein Wort über die Kunst der Aegypter als eine zweite Probe. Dass Winkelmann die Kunst derselben nicht als Grieche, zum Lehrgebäude Griechischer Kunst wohl beäugelt habe, ist unleugbar, denn das Schöne und das Wesen der Kunst ist überall nur Eins und beruht auf Einerlei Regeln; anders aber ist, wenn die Geschichte der Kunst nur als Geschichte, nicht als Lehrgebäude betrachtet werden sollte. Da sind die Aegypter älter als die Griechen, und müssen nicht nach diesen, sondern aus sich selbst beurtheilt werden: was bei ihnen die Kunst war? Wie sie in ihrem hohen Alter darauf gekommen sind? Und was sie bei ihnen sollte? – Wenn sie in alle diesem mit den Griechen nichts Gemeinschaftliches hatten, so muss man beider Werke auch nicht auf Ein Gerüst stellen, sondern jedes seinem Ort und seiner Zeit lassen dienen: denn ursprünglich haben die Aegypter wohl weder für die Griechen noch für uns arbeiten wollen.” The beginning of this citation, preceding the portion quoted above, can be translated as follows: “And thus, I dare only one more word about the art of the Egyptians as a second proof. The fact that Winckelmann not as a Greek has peered at their art as a differential doctrine to Greek art cannot be denied, because the beauty and the essence of art is only one everywhere and relies on the same rules; this is different however.” I am grateful to Mareike Spindel for her translation of this quote. For a discussion of Herder on this point in relation to Winckelmann, see Alex Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 23–33.

[89] Champollion, *Précis*, 431. The same realization cannot be claimed for Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831), who continued to evaluate Egyptian art against a rubric of ideal beauty. In his lectures on aesthetics, he claimed that “Egyptian sculpture remained through its entire history incapable of uniting universal meaning and the individuality of visible shape, as the ideal of sculpture requires. . . . A higher, more self-conscious sense of one’s own individuality than the Egyptians possessed had to be attained before such vagueness and indeterminate superficiality in art could cease to satisfy and the higher claims of intellect, reason, motion, expression, soul, and beauty upon art be seriously met.” Paolucci, *Hegel on the Arts* (above, n. 39), 98–99.

[90] Among many other studies on the subject, see Alex Potts, “Political Attitudes and the Rise of Historicism in Art Theory,” *Art History* 1, no. 3 (June 1978); and Beth Wright, *Painting and History during the French Restoration: Abandoned by the Past* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[91] Here, Alexandre Lenoir’s 1795 *Musée des Monuments français*, which displayed French medieval and Renaissance sculptures removed from churches and castles during the Revolution, is the key example insofar as it necessarily existed as an independent entity, separate from the Louvre. Not only was it antithetical to the ideology of the Revolution to showcase French royalty, but Lenoir’s inventive strategy of display, whereby he created elaborate environments “evocative but not too specific” to historical accuracy, did not align comfortably with the edifying aims of the Musée central des arts. The phrase is from Andrew McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre: Art, Politics, and the Origins of the Modern Museum in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 179.

[92] Quoted in Monique Kanawaty, “Vers une politique d’acquisitions: Drovetti, Durand, Salt, et encore Drovetti,” *La revue du Louvre et des Musées de France* 4 (1990): 267. “Fort peu de ces objets trouveraient place au musée royal, qui est consacré aux chefs-d’œuvre plutôt qu’aux curiosités de la sculpture.”

[93] Forbin to the Vicomte de la Rochefoucauld, November 19, 1824, quoted in Louis Courajod, *La Collection Durand et ses Séries du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance au Musée du Louvre* (Caen: Henri Delesques, 1888), 18: “Rappelons-nous l’unanimité des regrets causés par la vente que M. Drovetti a faite au Piémont de sa riche collection. Les idées d’économie étroite sont la mort de la véritable richesse nationale.” Hartleben, *Lettres écrites d’Italie*, 244: “Je tâcherai de faire que tout cela nous vienne consoler à Paris de la perte à jamais regrettable de la collection Drovetti.”

[94] On the Révoil collection, see the correspondence of Clarac and Forbin reprinted as “La Collection Révoil,” *Bulletin Monumental* 6, vol. 2 (1886): 143–474, 257–286. See also Paul Léon, “La Querelle des classiques et des gothiques,” *La Revue de Paris*, vol. 4 (July–August 1913): 361–386.

[95] According to Delécluze, the Musée de la Marine planned to “placer, par ordre chronologique, toutes les espèces d'embarcations, de navires, de vaisseaux armés, etc., qui ont servi anciennement ou servent encore à la navigation et à la marine de guerre.” Étienne-Jean Delécluze [signed D.] “Beaux-Arts. Fondation du Musée Charles X – Achèvement du Louvre,” *Journal des Débats* (January 17, 1828), 2. On the decree founding the Musée Charles X, see Archives Nationales, O3 1418, 15 mai 1826, Rapport au Roi, 10. “Dans cette deuxième division seront aussi compris tous les monuments orientaux, phéniciens, persépolitains et indous qui existent au musée ou qui pourront y être ajoutés.”

[96] Archives Nationales, O3 1428 (see also n. 4): “La seconde partie du projet que j’ai l’honneur de vous soumettre, Monsieur le Duc, c’est la création d’un musée spécial pour les monuments de l’industrie et du culte des peuples indigènes à l’océanie (c’est à dire à l’archipel d’Asies et aux innombrables îles qui composent les nombreux archipels de la mer du Sud) et aux deux Amériques. Ce musée formerait une 5^{ème} section du Musée Royal du Louvre. Bientôt il ne restera plus aucune trace des monuments de ces peuples indigènes, monuments qui seuls cependant peuvent nous éclairer sur leurs mœurs, leurs usages, leur religion, sur l’état de leur civilisation avant que la fréquentation ou la domination des Européens ne leur ait fait perdre leur physionomie primitive.”

[97] Salvandy, Ministre de l’Instruction Publique, to Jomard, March 11, 1839, reprinted in Ernest-Théodore Hamy, “Les Origines du Musée d’Ethnographie,” *Revue d’Ethnographie* 8 (1889): 514. On Jomard, see Yves Laissus, *Jomard, le dernier Égyptien* (Paris: Fayard, 2004).

[98] Longpérier summarized in Hamy, “Les Origines,” 351: “Il est vrai que le Louvre étant surtout un musée d’art, on pouvait craindre en y amenant tout l’ensemble des choses ethnographiques appartenant à l’État, que les collections utiles à l’histoire de l’art et aux comparaisons d’un intérêt purement esthétique, fassent seules l’objet des attentions d’une administration aussi spéciale que celle de la rue de Valois. L’exemple du Musée égyptien était fait cependant pour calmer les appréhensions de cette nature; l’ethnographie avait conservé une très large place dans ce magnifique ensemble, sans que les collections artistiques aient jamais cherché à restreindre le développement des séries purement scientifiques.”

The debates around the incorporation of an ethnographic museum in the years immediately following the opening of the Musée Charles X are telling in this regard insofar as they reveal a conceptualization not simply of relationships within individual museums, but between them. The Baron Férussac, in a report proposing the creation of an ethnographic museum, wrote that it “must not be split away from other collections with which it shares an essential dependence. Can one, in effect, separate Hindu and Egyptian monuments? Must we not, on the contrary, bring them closer to grasp the connections and observe the differences between them?” Baron Férussac, “Sur le projet d’un musée ethnographique,” undated (1831?) pamphlet reprinted in Hamy, “Les Origines,” 444.

[99] Hamy, “Les Origines,” 440 and 459, respectively. According to the *Abrégé du dictionnaire de l’Académie française* of 1835, anthropology was defined as the “natural history of man . . . considered principally from a physical point of view”; archaeology as “the science of monuments from antiquity”; and ethnography as “the study and description of diverse peoples.” M. P. Lorain, ed., *Abrégé du dictionnaire de l’Académie française*, vol. 1 (1835), 67, 82, and 560 respectively.

[100] Forbin to the Vicomte de la Rochefoucauld, November 19, 1824. Courajod, *La Collection Durand*, 15: “Depuis que les hasards de la guerre sont venus dépouiller le musée des trophées qu’elle y avait amoncelés, il ne s’est jamais présenté une plus belle occasion de rendre toute sa splendeur à ce grand établissement que celle dont je vais vous entretenir.”

[101] This episode is captured in a May 15, 1826 letter from Champollion to Champollion-Figeac quoted in Kanaway, “Principes muséologiques de Champollion,” 57. The letter is conserved in the Bibliothèque municipale d’Art et d’Histoire de Grenoble, I MI 17, XVII. “M. Picot, habile artiste et chargé des peintures de plafond, s’est concerté avec moi pour le sujet: une allégorie représentant le génie de la France relevant et dévoilant d’une main l’antique Égypte, assise, appuyée auprès d’un vieux temple orné de cartouches des plus grands rois, montrant de l’autre main et dans le lointain Paris avec les tours de Notre-Dame, quelques vestiges et un obélisque en l’honneur de Charles X. Ce sujet a plu au peintre mais nous devons en reparler. Si tu as quelque idée à cet égard, marque le moi et bien vite.” Allard does not mention this alteration in his discussion on Picot’s work; see Allard, *Le Louvre à l’époque romantique*, 76–78. For a discussion of the role of antiquities in decorative schemes in the Louvre, including the possibility of the inspiration of the artifacts shown at the feet of Egypt in Picot’s painting from Egyptian

antiquities in the Louvre's collection, see Felicity Bodenstein, "Framing the Artifact: Murals for the Display of Antiquity in the Louvre," *Museum History Journal* 5, no. 2 (June 2012): 167–186.

Illustrations

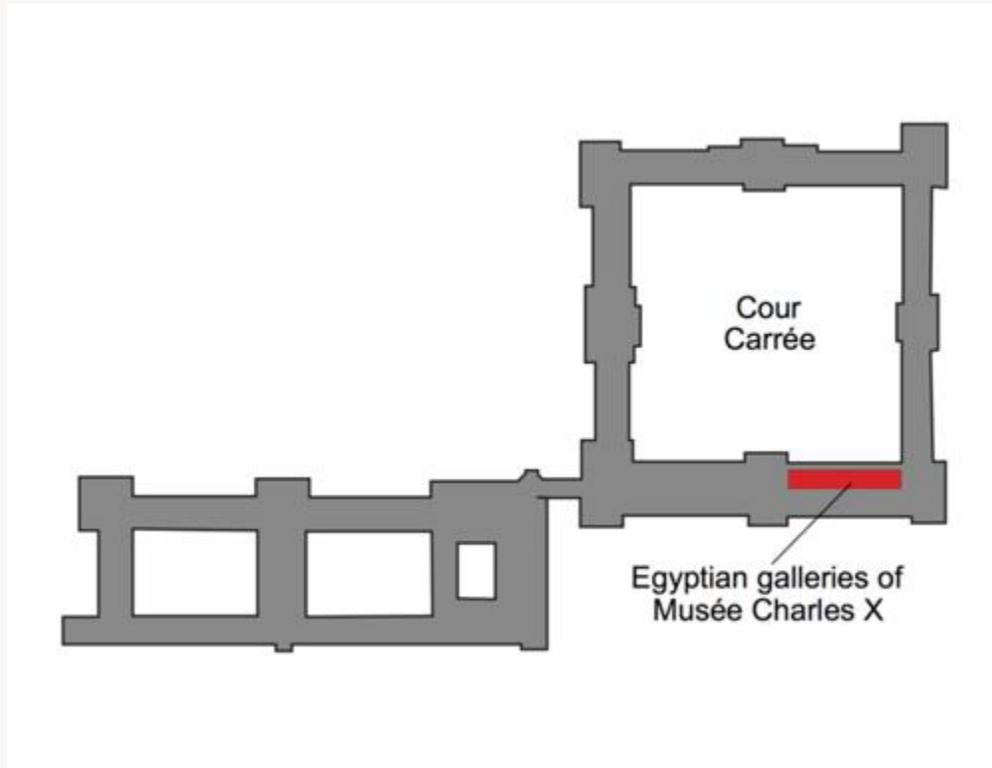


Fig. 1, Map of second floor of the Louvre indicating location of the Musée Charles X's Egyptian galleries.

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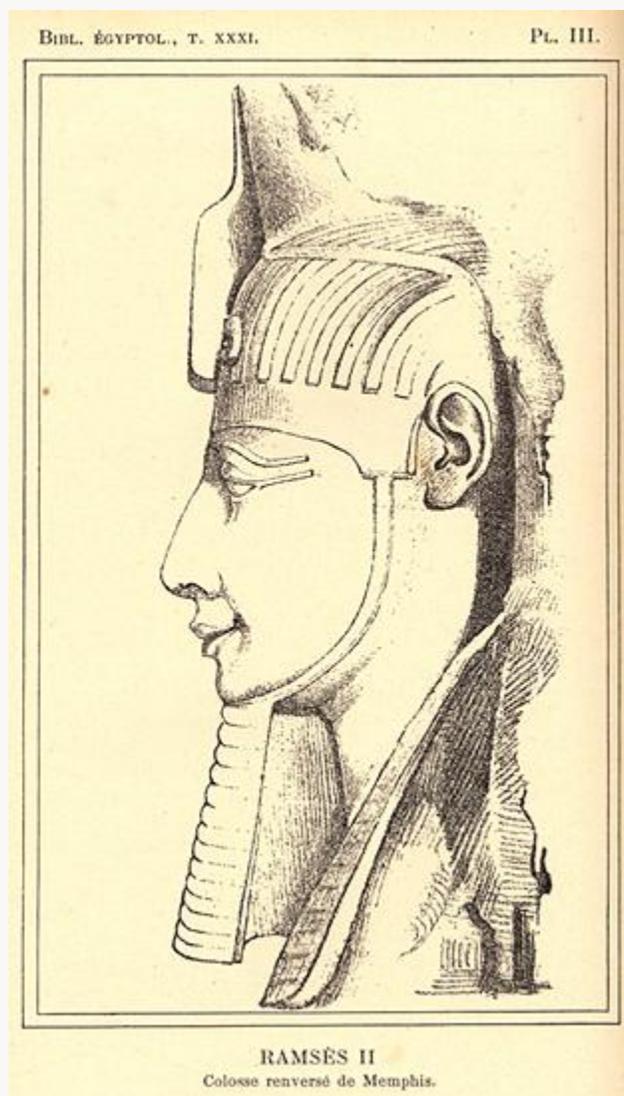


Fig. 2, Ramsès II, *Lettres et journaux de Champollion*, vol. 2, *Lettres et journaux écrites pendant le voyage d'Égypte* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1909), 98ff. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 3, Screenshot of virtual model of the Musée Charles X, *salle civile*, showing cabinets 1, 2, and 7.
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Fig. 4, Table of Contents, *Notice descriptive des monuments égyptiens du Musée Charles X* (Paris: Imprimerie de Crapelet, 1827), vii-viii. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 5, Frontispiece, *Recueil d'antiquités égyptiennes, étrusques, grecques, romaines, et gauloises* (Paris: N. M. Tilliard, 1759), vol. 3. [\[return to text\]](#)