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**Boullée’s Forgotten Fountain:**
The Redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi, 1785

by

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ABSTRACT

In the mid-1780’s a mature Etienne-Louis Boullée (1728-1799) was commissioned to redesign
the royal library of the French monarchy. His proposal was expressed through twenty-six
architectural drawings, but the scheme was never built. These drawings were among the
last that the French architect produced. Shortly after his death Boullée fell into obscurity and
remained largely unknown well into the twentieth century. He was resurrected by historians
Emil Kaufmann, Helen Rosenau and Jean-Marie Pérouse de Montclos. Their publications
feature only modest written synopses of the redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi.

Scholarship has since canonized these synopses. Today’s historians generally agree that
Boullée produced three unique elevation drawings depicting the library’s primary facade and
new entrance. Each drawing is recognized as a distinct yet equally feasible alternative. In
this thesis I propose that only two of the three elevation drawings correspond to the library’s
primary facade. I assert that the third elevation drawing—the one depicting twin figures of
Atlas—was intended to be situated opposite the library’s new entrance and conceived to
frame an urban place and house a public fountain. This thesis demonstrates that in our haste
to allegorize Boullée’s unbuilt redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi we failed to adequately
interrogate the architectural drawings he produced. In this thesis I unearth drawn and built
architectural artifacts evidencing Boullée’s forgotten fountain.

My method of inquiry hypothesizes that the same discursive tools can be used to both produce
and critically interrogate orthographic drawings. The practice of search in this thesis yields
discovery, not through the investigation of an historical work of architecture as it relates to
history, but rather through the investigation of a set of drawings as they relate to design.

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NOTE:
This thesis was written, designed, printed and fabricated in room 7-403 at MIT. The resulting document is intended to produce a very specific reading experience incorporating both textual and graphic forms of literacy. It is intended to be printed and viewed on 11” x 12” Mohawk Loop Inxwell Vellum Eco White 80lb Text paper bound with a black plastic spiral coil. Regrettably, the digital version of this thesis lacks much of the content found in the physical version. Any inquiries related to missing content or the acquisition of a physical copy should be directed to the author. The digital version of this thesis is best viewed in a facing page format.
Boullée’s Forgotten Fountain
The Redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi, 1785
All of the work in this thesis except those portions covered by footnotes is the original work of the author. Special thanks are due my thesis supervisor, Mark Goulthorpe and my readers, Mark Jarzombek and Edward A. Eigen. I am grateful to the communities at MIT’s School of Architecture and Planning, Harvard University’s Graduate School of Design and The Cooper Union. The first part of this thesis is a development of the paper I wrote for David Gissen’s Fragment course he taught at MIT in fall 2015. The second part of this thesis is a development of the paper I wrote for Kristel Smentek’s Enlightenments course she taught at MIT in spring 2016. The Louis C. Rosenburg Travel Fellowship funded my archival research at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in addition to fieldwork and site documentation. Diego Gonzalez, a classmate at The Cooper Union, helped stimulate much of the thinking that led to this thesis.

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Foreword
Context

In 1785 the French architect Etienne-Louis Boullée (1728-1799) was commissioned by the comte d'Angiviller, director of the Département des Bâtiments du Roi, to redesign the existing Bibliothèque du Roi in Paris. Boullée’s proposal was never built but the drawings remain and have occupied the imaginations of architects and historians for the past half-century. Today, the best-known drawing Boullée produced for this project is a single-point perspective depicting the library’s reading room. Another well-known drawing is an elevation depicting twin figures of Atlas supporting a celestial sphere over their heads. This second drawing is universally accepted as one of three designs that Boullée produced for the library’s new entrance and is often referred to as the “atlas facade.” In this thesis I construct a different narrative, one in which the atlas facade was not intended to be one of three designs for the library’s new entrance. Instead, I propose that the atlas facade was to be located directly opposite the library’s new entrance where it would have framed an urban place and housed a public fountain. My argument will unfold in two parts. First, I will conduct a close reading of Boullée’s eighteenth-century architectural drawings. Second, I will invent a new historical narrative contextualizing Boullée’s redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi.

Need

Eighteenth-century architects did not build buildings, they drew representations of buildings in their design studios. This practice of drawing was not new to the eighteenth-century architect
and it is not dissimilar to what architects do today. It is in this sense that architecture is a unique art: its practitioners do not labor directly over the objects of their thought, and the act of drawing in architecture does not effect nor constitute the action for which it speaks. Perlocution is defined as, “an act of speaking or writing that has an action as its aim but that in itself does not effect or constitute the action.” It could be said that in the way perlocution is to speaking and writing, drawing is to the design of architecture. It would therefore seem logical that before historicizing a work of unbuilt architecture scrupulous attention be directed toward its drawn manifestations. In the case of Boullée’s unbuilt redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi the drawings remain inadequately considered. Through this thesis I enact a method of historical research that targets the objects over which architects labor: drawings.

**Task**

In fall 2012 I was a third-year student at The Cooper Union studying for my Bachelor of Architecture degree. I was enrolled in a studio titled “Precedent Analysis in Three Parts: Documentation, Kit-of-Parts, Collage,” that began by asking students to select a library from a list of precedents. I selected Boullée’s unbuilt redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi and began compiling copies of the original drawings and familiarizing myself with relevant scholarship before redrawing eight of the architect’s original works. The design scheme I witnessed differed from the scheme that scholars had allegorized in the twentieth century. I soon learned that the allegorized version of Boullée’s project had not been prefaced by a close reading of the architect’s drawings. The first part of this thesis offers a close reading of Boullée’s architectural drawings because one does not yet exist. This thesis evidences that the drawn artifacts comprising Boullée’s redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi depict the atlas facade as a public fountain opposite the library’s new entrance. This discovery not only attributes new meaning to the atlas facade but the entirety of Boullée’s redesign and thus warrants the invention of a new historical narrative for the architect’s project.
Object

It is only through the act of redrawing Boullée’s eighteenth-century drawings that certain arguments presented in the following pages become legible. It is in this sense that many of the arguments in this thesis have, quite literally, been drawn out of Boullée’s drawings. I have redrawn Boullée’s project because I am not an historian and my capacity to affect disciplinary knowledge in architecture is not rooted in practices related to historiography but those practices related to design. One of my aims in this thesis has been that of understanding the inventive logics governing architectural design at the end of the eighteenth century. The practice of search in this thesis yields discovery, not through the investigation of an historical work of architecture as it relates to history, but through the investigation of a set of historical drawings as they relate to design.

Findings

Formatting a close reading of Boullée’s architectural drawings for an audience including architects and historians resulted in a two-part document. Through written and drawn modes of intellection the first part outlines how a close reading of Boullée’s drawings yield an understanding of his design that is different than the one currently circulating. The first part of this thesis evidences that the atlas facade was to be situated opposite the library’s new entrance where it would have framed an urban place and housed a public fountain. The second part of this thesis invents a new historical narrative contextualizing Boullée’s project within eighteenth-century architectural discourse. My findings suggest that as integral to architecture as the orthographic drawing has been for the past several hundred years, it still requires scrupulous analysis and careful consideration in historiographic contexts. The two sequential parts of this thesis evidence that only after closely reading orthographic drawings can the content therein serve as the basis for additional inquiry and contextualization.
Conclusions

My hypothesis is that the same discursive tools used in the production of architectural drawings can be used in the critical interrogation of historical architectural drawings. It does not seem unreasonable to suggest that architecture's history should be witnessed before its writing, but in the case outlined in the following pages, this did not happen. Boullée's redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi was allegorized before the drawings and the content therein was witnessed. Cultural theorist Gregory Ulmer tells us that, “The deconstructive strategy... is to appropriate the hypotext carrying the myths of the dominant ideology, and to subvert that discourse by introducing into its flow new versions, alternatives that are more liberating, open to the receiver's participation, which is to say that it submits to the necessity to participate in what it denounces.”¹ My version of Ulmer's hypotext might appropriately be called hypodrawings and they are those that Boullée produced at the end of the eighteenth century. To subvert the discourse of dominant ideologies this thesis proposes that architectural design rhetorics be brought into the forum in which the debate, discussion and formation of historiographic practices takes place. This thesis applies Ulmer's teachings to architecture history and in doing so encourages new versions, alternatives and various forms of participation so that blind spots, limits and new ideologies can be witnessed.


Perspectives

Orthographic drawings are, perhaps contrary to popular belief, not easy to read. And although the orthographic drawing has been a constitutive part of the architectural design canon for several hundred years, its future relevance is uncertain. The practice of architecture today relies increasingly less on orthographic modes of intellection and, as a result, students are educated increasingly less in an orthographic tradition. The result will be fewer designers and even fewer historians who know how to read orthographic drawings. This thesis explores one instance where the absence of an intimate knowledge of orthography resulted in architecture's
fostering of an incorrect reading of Boullée’s unbuilt redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi. It is quite possible that in a few decade’s time a knowledge of orthography and its discursive applications will be of less priority to young architects and historians than it is now. This would be unfortunate as there is still much to learn from architecture’s history through the reading of orthographic drawings. This thesis evidences a persisting need for scholars who are literate in an orthographic tradition and who can be tasked with reading drawings in the context of architecture history.
The introduction to “Part One: A Close Reading” will do two things. First, it will present the twentieth-century scholarship that produced the current narrative governing Boullée’s redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi and the role of the atlas facade within Boullée’s scheme. Second, it will define “close reading” and outline its role in this thesis. This introduction evidences that a close reading of Boullée’s drawings has never taken place and that it should.
The Three Facades

Etienne-Louis Boullée (1728-1799) was largely unknown well into the twentieth century. It was architecture historian Emil Kaufmann who famously resurrected Boullée in “Three Revolutionary Architects: Boullée, Ledoux, Lequeu” in a 1952 edition of Transactions of the American Philosophical Society. In the introduction Kaufmann acknowledges that his earlier publication on Boullée, titled “Etienne-Louis Boullée” and featured in a 1939 edition of The Art Bulletin, was the only prior biographical study of the architect.¹ Kaufmann died in 1953 when Boullée’s Architecture, essai sur l’art was edited and annotated by Helen Rosenau. In 1976 she oversaw the Essai’s translation into English for her book Boullée and Visionary Architecture. Jean-Marie Pérouse de Montclos is considered the leading living scholar on Boullée and has published at least three books on the French architect. Etienne-Louis Boullée, 1728-1799: de l’architecture classique à l’architecture révolutionnaire was published in 1969, Etienne-Louis Boullée, 1728-1799: Theoretician of Revolutionary Architecture followed in 1974, and Etienne-Louis Boullée appeared in 1994.

The six studies named above makeup the canonical works on Boullée from the twentieth century and each can appropriately be called a biographical study. These studies engage the entirety of Boullée’s oeuvre and feature only modest written synopses of the architect’s redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi from 1785. These synopses have since been canonized in place of orchestrating a close reading of Boullée’s architectural drawings.

In the introduction to “Three Revolutionary Architects” Kaufmann wrote, “This book ventures into unmapped territory. It attempts to lay the groundwork for an investigation of the architecture of the era.” The investigation outlined in this thesis takes Kaufmann’s words as an admonition that subsequent investigations would need careful framing and acknowledgment of the successes and potential shortcomings of existing scholarship. Kaufmann was not only was the first person to publish a biographical study of Boullée, but he only did so on two occasions. It makes sense that his studies, and those immediately thereafter, were biographical. Kaufmann reintroduced Boullée to architectural discourse, while Rosenau and Montclos refined and enhanced the architect’s biography. By the late-twentieth century their collective efforts resulted in a comprehensive understanding of the French architect. Rosenau edited and annotated Boullée’s Essai, translated it into English, and presented it alongside a number of Boullée’s architectural drawings. Montclos contemporaneously acted to engage all of Boullée’s drawings and situate the architect as an eighteenth-century visionary. The work of Rosenau and Montclos was pioneering and took four decades to complete, but other historians and architects began exhibiting an active interest in Boullée as early as the 1960’s and their work paralleled that of Rosenau and Montclos. It was in the 1980’s and 1990’s that the work of Kaufmann, Rosenau and Montclos was canonized and scholarship on Boullée adopted a more direct tone. Boullée’s redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi is arguably one of his most unique, richly drawn and enigmatic projects but the affiliated scholarship is scarce and insufficient. In a haste to allegorize this project architectural historians failed to adequately interrogate the architectural drawings Boullée produced and have fostered an incorrect reading of the project as a result. In offering a close reading of Boullée’s drawings for the redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi I aim to produce an entirely new design narrative to define the project in contemporary discourse.

Today, we find universal agreement that Boullée produced three distinct elevation drawings. However, the associated scholarship is insufficient and insufficient. In offering a close reading of Boullée’s drawings for the redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi I aim to produce an entirely new design narrative to define the project in contemporary discourse.
Figure 1: "Temple-Front"

Figure 2: "Portal"

Figure 3: "Atlas"
for this project. The first elevation drawing depicts a temple-front with Corinthian columns supporting an entablature with allegorical frieze, (fig. 1). The second elevation drawing depicts a bare wall with a central portal flanked by ten sculptural niches, (fig. 2). The third elevation drawing depicts another bare wall with a central portal, this time flanked by twin figures of Atlas supporting a celestial sphere overhead, (fig. 3).

Kaufmann does not address the library project in “Etienne-Louis Boullée” and only briefly mentions the elevation drawing depicting twin figures of Atlas in “Three Revolutionary Architects” from 1952. “The central motif of the library facade,” he writes, “…is the portal flanked by two Atlantes carrying a mighty globe.”5 Credited with having identified the astral symbols related to autumn inscribed upon this globe, Rosenau tells us, “The facade was to have been adorned with reliefs, the most interesting design, dated 1788, showing twin figures of Atlas carrying the globe, incised with astral constellations related to autumn, thus symbolizing the harvest of learning.”6 Montclos writes that the three elevation drawings correspond to “trois modèles differents,” which he goes on to describe as either Le Premier, Le Second, or Le Troisième. Le Troisième refers to the atlas facade which Montclos calls the, “plus spectaculaire.”7

It is easy to see how each of the elevation drawings presented on the adjacent page could be read as depicting one of three alternatives for the library’s new entrance. Each drawing is of similar dimensions, each depicts a facade of similar proportions, and each evidences possible means of entering into a building, but Kaufmann, Rosenau and Montclos arrived at their readings of these elevation drawings within the context of broader inquiry. Each scholar was looking at Boullée’s redesign of the royal library while looking to nearly every other project credited to the architect. Their reading of the atlas facade as one of three alternatives providing entry into the library is precursory and has since been cemented in architectural discourse. In

5. Kaufmann, 466.
“Standing on the Shoulders of Giants: Boullée’s ‘Atlas’ Facade for the Bibliothèque du Roi”

Paula Young Lee structured a paper for the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* around the question: “Why suspend a giant globe over the entrance to a library?”

Lee’s inquiry into the atlas facade takes the work of Kaufmann, Rosenau and Montclos as its point of departure but, like its parent texts, is not founded in a close reading of the drawings that constitute Boullée’s design. This warrants addressing because a close reading of Boullée’s drawings evidences that only two of the three elevation drawings correspond to options for the library’s new entrance. The elevation drawing depicting twin figures of Atlas is drawn as being situated directly opposite the library’s new entrance with the intent of framing an urban place and housing a public fountain.

**The Field of Investigation**

As a constituent of architectural discourse Boullée’s redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi should only be considered through the architectural drawings associated with the project. This is because the project remains unbuilt. There is no built manifestation of Boullée’s project to which we may turn for definitive answers. Remaining faithful to this logic, I will begin this thesis by presenting the drawings Boullée produced for this project. Acting like many architects of the late-eighteenth century Boullée produced orthographic drawings to articulate his design. Apart from the single-point perspective drawings of the reading room, all of the drawings comprising his proposal can appropriately be called orthographic.

An orthographic drawing is a drawing depicting an orthographic projection. An orthographic projection is a means of representing three-dimensional objects (buildings) through two-dimensions (a sheet of drawing paper). This representation of a three-dimensional object onto a two-dimensional surface can happen a number of ways, one is parallel projection. In parallel projection all of the projection lines are constructed perpendicular to the projection plane. As
orthographic drawing relates to drawing a proposal for a building in the late-eighteenth century, a flat plane (the projection plane) is oriented horizontally or vertically and is imagined to literally cut through architectural form (three-dimensional objects). Anything cut by this flat projection plane is then drawn as it intersects the cutting plane. Any three-dimensional object that falls beneath (plan) or beyond (section) this cutting plane is projected back to the cutting plane via perpendicular lines.

Orthographic drawing is not specific to architectural design but has been widely used by architects since the sixteenth century. The context in which Boulée produced his drawings for the redesign of the royal library was eighteenth-century Paris and architectural drawings were completed through the deployment of established representational methods of orthographic projection outlined above.

In eighteenth-century architectural practice three of the most common orthographic drawings were plan, section and elevation, but plan, section nor elevation constituted a typology within orthographic projection. Rather, the plan, section and elevation were among the most common ways in which architects deployed orthographic projectional techniques to represent buildings. The plan, section and elevation each offered a different abstraction of three-dimensional architectural space. In a plan drawing this abstraction was constructed via a horizontal cutting plane. The resulting architectural drawing looked downward at the architectural form and toward the surface of the earth. The plan view was considered parallel to the earth’s surface as it was imagined to be an infinitely flat datum. In a section drawing the architectural space was abstracted via a vertical cutting plane. The resulting drawing was one that looked perpendicular to the architectural form and perpendicular the earth’s surface as it was imagined as a flat datum. In an elevation drawing the abstraction of form was arrived at again via a vertical plane, but the conceptual cut—unlike that of a section—did not act to slice

9. Drawings produced by architects during the sixteenth century demonstrate the widespread use of orthography, even if it was not yet a canonized practice. See, among others, the work of Pierre Lescot (1510-1578), Jacques I Androuet du Lerceau (1510-1584) and Philibert de l’Orme (1514-1570). For an outline of the history of drawing in architecture and the role orthography played in architectural representation in the sixteenth century see, Patrick Maynard, Drawing Distinctions: The Varieties of Graphic Expression, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).
the building. The vertically oriented cutting plane was located at an infinite distance from the surface of the building. The resulting image was not one that was impossible to see, but one in which there was no perspectival depth and one which depicted the elevation or facade of the building without considering any privileged point of view. An elevation could also be called a zero-point perspective.

Orthographic projection was popular among architects in the eighteenth century because it allowed for the exchange of formal and spatial ideas among two-dimensional representational types. Again, this was not unique to the plan, section nor elevation drawing, but an inherent quality of orthographic projection as it was constructed via techniques of parallel projection. While plan, section and elevation were unique orthographic projections, they could be read collectively to articulate a single three-dimensional space. They could also be used to project one form of representation out of another. This is to say that a plan drawing could be used to partially construct a section drawing; a plan drawing could also be used to partially construct an elevation drawing; a section drawing could be partially used to construct a plan drawing and so on.

This definition of orthography and its application in eighteenth-century architectural practice is important to consider because it forms the basis from which a close reading of the drawings outlining Boullée’s proposed redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi will take place. The close reading of Boullée’s drawings that will unfold in the following pages will consider each of the architect’s orthographic drawings as they relate to a holistic proposal for a singular three-dimensional space. My reading of Boullée’s proposal is not abstract nor arrived at through the isolation of individual drawings as I believe prior scholars have done. Instead, I will consider Boullée’s project as a comprehensive set of two-dimensional representations of a singular three-dimensional space.
Deciding which of Boullée’s drawings will be included in a close reading is now necessary. There are three iterations of Boullée’s proposed redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi and each is held by the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. The first iteration is titled *Projet pour la bibliothèque royale de la rue Richelieu*, (hereafter referred to as *Projet*), and the Bibliothèque Nationale assigns four drawings to this iteration. The second iteration is titled *Restauration de la bibliothèque nationale*, (hereafter referred to as *Restauration*), and the Bibliothèque Nationale assigns fifteen drawings to this iteration. The final iteration is titled *Mémoire sur les moyens de procurer à la bibliothèque du Roi les avantages qui ce monument exige*, (hereafter referred to as *Mémoire*), and the Bibliothèque Nationale assigns seven engravings to this iteration. The engravings which makeup this final iteration of Boullée’s project are contained within a bound volume from 1785. Altogether there are twenty-six extant drawings which makeup three iterations of Boullée’s redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi.

Consulting all twenty-six drawings at once suggests that there are two drawings which have been cataloged incorrectly. Two elevation drawings have been cataloged as belonging to the *Restauration* iteration of Boullée’s project and rather should be cataloged alongside the *Projet* drawings, (figs. 4 & 5). Three points evidence this claim. First, the two elevation drawings in question are nearly twice as large as the largest drawings belonging to the *Restauration*, but seem to “match” the dimensions of those drawings belonging to the *Projet*. Second, as far as it can be reasoned from available forms of documentation the paper used for the *Projet* drawings is different than the paper used for the *Restauration* drawings. The paper used for both outlying elevation drawings matches that used for the other *Projet* drawings. Third, the *Projet* iteration of Boullée’s redesign contains two plans, a longitudinal section and a transverse section. As it is currently cataloged the *Projet* does not include any elevation drawings. It could be argued that the *Projet* would be conceptually “complete” if the two outlying elevation drawings were added to it.

Existing scholarship has only published a handful of drawings belonging to one iteration of Boullée’s project, the *Restauration de la bibliothèque nationale*. See Helen Rosenau’s *Boullée and Visionary Architecture* and Jean-Marie Pérouse de Montclos’ *Etienne-Louis Boullée* publications from 1969, 1974 and 1994. While Rosenau, Montclos and others acknowledge that three versions of Boullée’s project exist, their publications only engage those drawings from the *Restauration*.


11. *Restauration de la bibliothèque nationale*, Bibliothèque Nationale, Estampes: Ha-56 Fl 7 (1-14), Ha-56 Fl 4 (15). Boullée’s project was renamed to represent the newly established Bibliothèque Nationale sometime after 1792.


13. To see all twenty-six drawings at once and printed at 1:10 scale see, “Addendum No. 1: The Three Projects” on page 179.

14. For the remainder of this thesis I will consider these outlying elevation drawings as part of the *Projet pour la bibliothèque royale de la rue Richelieu*. 
Because the drawings belonging to the Projet iteration of Boullée’s project have never been published nor written about in a scholarly context they will not serve as the primary documents of my close reading. As far as existing scholarship may serve as a record these drawings have never been the basis of inquiry related to Boullée's redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi. These drawings are not irrelevant, but they have not contributed to the false narrative I seek to amend. Because the engravings in the bound Mémoire can have their origins credibly traced to the drawings belonging to the Restauration they too will be excluded as primary documents of my close reading.16 Because the drawings belonging to the Restauration are those that are most frequently published and because published documentation of these drawings has contributed to the false narrative contextualizing the atlas facade they will serve as the primary documents of my close reading.

To conclude the introduction to “Part One: A Close Reading” it can be said that the historians who charged themselves with bringing Boullée into discourse about architecture of the late-eighteenth century did so through the production of biographical studies which engaged the entirety of Boullée’s life and work. These biographical studies produced written synopses of the redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi which have since been canonized. My hypothesis states that a close reading of Boullée’s drawings for this project can produce a new architectural design narrative relating to the atlas facade; a close reading requires that the drawings constituting Boullée’s redesign be read as a comprehensive set of two-dimensional representations of a single three-dimensional space; and, minus the two elevation drawings which belong to the Projet, the primary documents of inquiry in this close reading will be the thirteen drawings comprising Boullée’s Restauration.

16. It is clear that some of the drawings belonging to the Restauration served as models from which the plates used to produce the engravings for the Mémoire were made. Both Montclos and Rosenau confirm this. See, “Handlist of Drawings and Engravings” in Rosenau’s Boullée and Visionary Architecture. Seven listings referencing drawings belonging to the Restauration are accompanied by the phrase, “Prototype for the Mémoire.”
A CLOSE READING IN FOUR PARTS

The following section will enact a close reading of the thirteen drawings comprising Boullée’s *Restauration de la bibliothèque nationale*. The close reading will take place in four sequential parts. The deconstruction of notational languages used in Boullée’s plan drawings will take place first. The identification of the vestibule fragments and their contextualization within Boullée’s proposal will take place second. Locating the atlas facade within the planimetric drawings will follow. The identification of the Colbert Street Fountain and its affect on Boullée’s proposal will be the fourth and final part.
Notational Languages

Restricting my inquiry to the drawings belonging to the *Restauration* is appropriate because these drawings best evidence the nature of Boullée's architectural project: the redesign of an existing set of buildings. The *Restauration* drawings depict Boullée's scheme in various evolutionary stages as it matures from one iteration to another. The *Restauration* drawings also offer the opportunity to deconstruct Boullée's notational language which will allow for a clearer understanding of what the architect drew in the eighteenth century, and the production of new architectural drawings today. These new drawings will be based on the notational language Boullée used in the *Restauration* drawings and will function as intermediary drawings which serve the purpose of isolating certain moments of design within Boullée's scheme so that the logic of my close reading may unfold step-by-step. This will yield a syntactical close reading of Boullée's drawings.

The first drawing to consider is the *Plan du rez-de-chaussée* *(plan en grand)*, (fig. 6). The first task will be to look at the notational language of this drawing. An attempt will be made to understand the various lines and washes as they appear on this drawing and their collective meaning. This will serve as the foundation of an architectural vocabulary specific to Boullée's drawings. Fortunately, the notational language deployed in the *Plan du rez-de-chaussée* is not only very easy to understand, it is one that was widely used in eighteenth-century Paris. The notational language consists of three primary elements and each of these elements signifies

Plan du rez-de-chaussée [plan en grand].
a different architectural operation. Critical to understanding these signified architectural operations is the fact that Boullée’s commission was framed as a redesign. This is to say that the site was not void of architectural content when the architect was commissioned to submit a proposal. The site had many buildings upon it and the utilization of these existing buildings in the redesign was not only encouraged but expected. In the Plan du rez-de-chaussée those architectural elements existing on the site prior to Boullée’s redesign are represented by black poché. These architectural elements are ones that Boullée proposed keeping on the site and utilizing in his redesign. The Plan du rez-de-chaussée also depicts figures outlined by black ink and filled with red wash, what might be called red poché. These are new architectural elements that Boullée proposed inserting into the site. Finally, the figures in the Plan du rez-de-chaussée outlined by uniformly dashed lines of black ink signify those architectural elements that Boullée planned to removed from the site.

The three architectural operations signified by Boullée’s notational language outlined above have been extracted from Boullée’s Plan du rez-de-chaussée and reproduced in three drawings on the next page. The uppermost image is a redrawing of the plan of the library before Boullée’s intervention, (fig. 7). The middle drawing isolates the architectural elements Boullée proposed inserting into the site, (fig. 8). The bottommost drawing isolates those architectural elements Boullée proposed removing from the site, (fig. 9). These drawings should evidence Boullée’s design initiatives. It can be seen that the amphitheater has been inserted into the courtyard space of the existing building; two rows of columns have been inserted to frame the library’s relocated entrance on Rue Colbert; the building across from the library’s new entrance on Rue Colbert has been removed from the site; the wall defining the rearmost edge of the courtyard of this building has been continued so as to match the width of rowed columns defining the library’s entrance; and a hemispherical figure has entered into the space of the building that previously occupied the area opposite the library’s new entrance.
Figure 7: "Preexisting"

Figure 8: "Addition"

Figure 9: "Subtraction"
To conclude this taxonomy of notational languages a few more claims can be made. First, the series of figures outlined in black ink and filled with green-colored wash notate a formal garden Boullée proposed for the “Bibliothéquaire General,” (fig. 10). Second, the rectilinear blocks of gray wash surrounding much of the drawing notate neighboring buildings, (fig. 11). Third, the text on the drawings is in French and affords certain clarity as it relates to identifying streets, the naming of neighboring structures and proposed architectural programs. Finally, there is an architectural scale drawn in the largest block of gray wash showing that the drawing is to be measured in Toises, (fig. 12).21

Now that the graphic language expressing the spatial and tectonic ideas found within Boullée’s architectural drawings is clearly defined, other drawings from the Restauration can be read through a similar lens. The Plan du premier étage is another planimetric drawing belonging to Boullée’s proposal, but evidences a different version of the architect’s design, (fig. 13). In

21. The Toise was the pre-revolutionary unit of measure in France. 1 Toise = 6 pied du Roi = 1.949 meters. All of Boullée’s drawings for this project were measured and executed in Toises.
Plan du premier étage
the Plan du premier étage there is a single row of columns defining the library’s new entrance and the neighboring building has been preserved. In the Plan du rez-de-chaussée the same neighboring building was notated with uniformly dashed lines signifying its proposed removal from the site. Boullée identifies this as the “Maison Appartenant au Roy,” (fig. 14).

This reading of difference among the design propositions found in each plan drawing begins to establish a framework through which Boullée’s design can be seen to evolve from one iteration to another. It is also after having established a set of discursive tools with which to read Boullée’s drawings that one can begin to associate various orthographic drawings with one another to establish “sets” of drawings within the Restauration. Although it is only the plan drawings that deploy notational languages signifying existing, proposed and removed architectural elements, these can be credibly matched with corresponding section drawings. The section drawing titled Coupe sur la longueur has two rows of columns defining its entrance and allegorical busts lining the perimeter of the reading room, (fig. 15). This section drawing can be paired with the Plan du rez-de-chaussée because both drawings depict two rows of columns at the library’s entrance. The transverse section titled Coupe sur la largeur can also be brought into this set, as it too, when compared to the Coupe sur la longueur, depicts allegorical busts lining the perimeter of the reading room, (fig. 16).
At this moment four drawings from the *Restauration* have been presented while nine remain.

Apart from the four drawings named in prior paragraphs there are two more plan drawings, two sections, two perspective drawings of the reading room and the three elevation drawings presented at the onset of this inquiry. Contextualizing these remaining drawings is not difficult. The two remaining plan drawings are near-copies of the scheme presented in the *Plan du rez-de-chaussée*. This is to say that one plan drawing depicts the scheme at the ground floor level and the other depicts the same scheme at the first floor level. Each drawing evidences two rows of columns at the entrance to the library and additionally depicts the removal of the buildings opposite the library’s new entrance, (fig. 17). These drawings are different than the *Plan du rez-de-chaussée* in that they are significantly smaller. The *Plan du rez-de-chaussée* measures 117cm x 44cm and the *Plan du premier étage* measures 117cm x 43cm. The plans depicted in figure 17 each measure 56cm x 21cm and this dimension is identical to the dimension of the plan drawings featured in the bound *Mémoire*. Although the composition of the smaller plan drawings from the *Restauration* and those found in the *Mémoire* differs, the dimensional similarity would suggest that the *Restauration* drawings were used as models from which to etch the plates that would have been used to print the engravings found in the *Mémoire*.23

There are also two additional section drawings from the *Restauration* to address. These two section drawings are not only near-copies of those presented in previous pages but they bear identical titles. The defining qualities of these two section drawings are the lack of allegorical busts, the inclusion of human figures populating the reading room and a single row of columns marking the library’s entrance, (figs. 18 & 19). Noting that one of these section drawings depicts a single row of columns defining its entrance is important because it allows me to group these section drawings with the *Plan du premier étage*.23

22. The plan drawings depicted in figure 17 have only ever been published by Helen Rosenau in Boullée and Visionary Architecture where she published just the drawing located on the lower half of the larger sheet of drawing paper. Today, the Bibliothèque Nationale’s digital archive presents this drawing as two separate drawings, accessed and viewed without any mention that they are mounted together and on a single sheet of drawing paper. To learn this, one would either need to visit the archives at the Bibliothèque Nationale in person or purchase photographic reproductions of the images as I did in February 2017. The fact that this drawing has been presented as two separate drawings without a notice that they share a single sheet of drawing paper is not a trivial matter. The formatting of these drawings (as it is depicted here) matches the formatting of plan drawings in Boullée’s bound *Mémoire* and aids in an understanding of how these drawings relate to Boullée’s proposal and their intended function within the project and its dissemination.

From left to right: Figures 22, 23 & 24.
The two perspective drawings are variants on the same perspectival view of the reading room, (figs. 20 & 21). The composition of books in the stacks and human figures populating the space change slightly. One drawing depicts an allegorical frieze framing the oculus of the barrel-vaulted ceiling.²⁴

The three remaining drawings are unique elevations and were presented at the onset of this inquiry. One depicts sixteen Corinthian columns supporting an entablature complete with architrave, allegorical frieze and cornice. Stairs and three portals can be seen behind the columnar screen, (fig. 22). A second drawing depicts a central portal framed by two Ionic columns and small pediment flanked by ten sculptural niches, (fig. 23). The third drawing depicts a bare wall with twin figures of Atlas carrying a giant celestial sphere framing a central portal. Bollards compositionally frame the base of a bare wall while sculptural wreathes and a single row of dentils frame the top, (fig. 24).

All thirteen drawings belonging to the *Restauration* project have now been presented. Excluding the two perspective drawings there are eleven orthographic drawings corresponding to either planimetric, sectional or elevational projections. It was noted earlier that orthographic drawings constructed via techniques of parallel projection are relational. The next step is to evidence how these orthographic drawings are related and how reading them as such might result in a new understanding of Boullée's proposal.

Finally, the grouping of Boullée’s drawings from the *Restauration* into smaller and more localized design endeavors deserves a moment of reflection. In the preceding paragraphs Boullée’s *Plan du premier étage* was seen to depict one row of columns defining the library’s new entrance and the building labeled “*Maison Appartenant au Roy*” remaining intact. The *Plan du rez-de-chaussée* was seen to depict two rows of columns defining the library’s entrance.
Figure 25:
The vestibule fragments.
and the removal of the neighboring maison. It was also established that within the Restauration there are two versions of both the Coupe sur la longueur and Coupe sur la largeur and that a subset can be established because one of each drawing depicts allegorical busts lining the reading room. These two section drawings depicting allegorical busts can be paired with the Plan du rez-de-chaussée because the Coupe sur la longueur depicting allegorical busts also depicted two rows of columns at the library’s entrance.

The Vestibule Fragments

Thus far my energies have been directed toward setting up the framework through which a close reading can take place. It might be said that to reread Boullée’s project it was first necessary to deconstruct it. A point has been reached where the Restauration version of Boullée’s project has been presented; the language comprising Boullée’s architectural drawings has been deconstructed; and a desire to read the drawings comprising this version of the project as a set of two-dimensional representations of a singular three-dimensional space has been made clear. These are all firsts for scholarship targeting Boullée’s redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi, and while the work in the preceding pages arguably constitutes original scholarship, it is insomuch as it relates to the critique of existing scholarship and archival work related to the preservation and interpretation of Boullée’s architectural drawings. The trajectory moving forward is one which aims to produce an entirely original design narrative associated with Boullée’s redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi.

Prefacing this part of my inquiry is the fact that as a result of there being no record of a close reading of Boullée’s architectural drawings for this project ever having taken place, some of the more enigmatic content belonging to his design remains overlooked. The standout among overlooked content might be that depicted on the adjacent page, (fig. 25).
The question of what this is not only remains unanswered but unannounced in a proper forum. In the following pages an attempt will be made to explain what this is and how it functions in Boullée’s proposal. It will help to begin by saying that this is really a these and that hereafter they will be referred to as the vestibule fragments. My hypothesis is that at one point in time before the late 1960’s these were two individual pieces of paper and not attached to the larger sheet of drawing paper upon which the Plan du rez-de-chaussée was completed. Bibliographical citations provided by the Bibliothèque Nationale, publications featuring this drawing, and today’s archivists who work with these drawings fail to clearly state what these fragments are and how they operate. Among other questions, whether or not the Plan du rez-de-chaussée is a drawing comprised of a single piece of paper remains unclear. I assert that it is a drawing comprised of at least three pieces of paper. Although it is likely that the vestibule fragments are now fixed to the larger sheet of drawing paper, they were not before 1969, and publications by Jean-Marie Pérouse de Montclos evidence this claim. While neither Emil Kaufmann nor Helen Rosenau published reproductions of Boullée’s Plan du rez-de-chaussée drawing, Montclos published black and white photographic reproductions of this drawing in 1969, 1974 and 1994, (figs. 26, 27 & 28). Each reproduction should be considered distinct within architecture historiography as each image constitutes a unique representational perspective and was published separately over the span of twenty-five years. However, it should be easy enough to see that the images are identical but for some cropping of the image published in 1969. This image, (fig. 26), has been cropped so as to remove the meter stick visible in the subsequent publications of this image in 1974, (fig. 27), and 1994, (fig. 28). One of the vestibule fragments is not visible in any of Montclos’ three images. The meter stick—depicted in published images from 1974 and 1994—has been placed upon the drawing in a way that would have it covering part of the rightmost fragment in the Plan du rez-de-chaussée as it exists today, (fig. 25).

25. During my visit to the archives at the Bibliothèque Nationale in August 2016 I was not allowed to see the Plan du rez-de-chaussée drawing accompanied by the vestibule fragments. I was also told by a lead archivist and a PhD student of art history, (both of whom had seen the drawing), that the drawing in question was comprised of a single sheet of paper.

26. Montclos notes in an appendix in editions of Etienne-Louis Boullée from 1969 and 1994 that the Plan du rez-de-chaussée belonging to the Restauration de la bibliothèque nationale was accompanied by, “un vestibule construit au-dessus de la rue de Richelieu.” (Montclos, Etienne-Louis Boullée, 1969, 244). Montclos does not mention this “vestibule” in the main part of his text nor expand upon its role in Boullée’s project. For my thoughts on why an appendix might constitute an improper forum for this declaration see, “Addendum No. 3: Montclos and the Vestibule Fragments” on page 189.
The smallest sliver of black wash beneath the right fragment evidences that it was placed on top of the left fragment.
Montclos’s publication of the *Plan du rez-de-chaussée* from 1969 should validate a claim that the vestibule fragments were not fixed to the larger drawing before the documentation used for his publication was completed. Validating this claim better positions us to understand the nature of Boullée’s vestibule fragments. Knowing that the vestibule fragments were initially two pieces of paper and not attached to the larger sheet of drawing paper, one might ask how they were intended to function alongside the *Plan du rez-de-chaussée*.

The vestibule fragments are planimetric representations—one at the rez-de-chaussée (ground floor) level and the other at the premier étage (first floor) level—of the elevation drawing depicting a bare wall with portal entry flanked by sculptural niches, (fig. 29). Before their fixture, and in a state of mobility, the vestibule fragments would have been able to be placed on top of the planimetric representation of the library’s entrance to express what an “alternate” facade would mean for the overall design scheme. In the *Plan du rez-de-chaussée* two rows of columns located in front of two staircases signify the entrance to the library. The elevation drawing of the temple-front depicts the same spatial composition as it would manifest in an elevational orthographic projection, (fig. 30). This parallel between the temple-front’s representation in elevation and plan is clear. What is perhaps unclear is how the vestibule fragments can be read as planimetric depictions of the second elevation drawing and how they might find their way onto the existing plan in a legible way.

First, I will evidence the vestibule fragments as planimetric representations of the elevation drawing depicting a facade with a central portal flanked by sculptural niches. Second, I will evidence how the fragments were to be used prior to their having been fixed to the larger sheet of drawing paper. The evidence supporting these arguments is most clearly read through drawn argumentative logics.
Briefly, I should offer some clarity as to how Boullée’s redesign transformed the library’s existing buildings. In particular I will offer clarity as to how Boullée’s redesign transformed the library’s entrance as it was envisioned moving from Rue Richelieu to Rue Colbert. Two drawings will be considered. One drawing reconstructs the plan of the library as it was before Boullée’s redesign, (fig. 31). The second drawing reconstructs the entirety of the Plan du rez-de-chaussée, (fig. 32). It is important to note that while it might initially seem that Boullée’s stacked amphitheater occupies the entire space of the courtyard and that the architect took the courtyard’s rectilinear shape and filled it completely with the amphitheater, this is not the case. Boullée displaces the existing corridor space framing the courtyard on one side and Rue Colbert on the other. He displaces this existing corridor space by moving it into the courtyard. He does this so that his facade can occupy the newly created void. We can see this through his having notated the stairs leading from the courtyard into the corridor in dashed lines. These stairs formerly occupied an exterior space that was part of the courtyard, in Boullée’s redesign they are positioned within the displaced corridor, (fig. 33).

Returning to the function of the vestibule fragments, the drawings on the following page might be called a “creative reconstruction” and evidences what both of the vestibule fragments would have looked like in a state prior to their deterioration and prior to their having been fixed to the larger sheet of drawing paper, (fig. 34). In their reconstructed state the fragments are the same width as the library’s new entrance. Knowing that the fragments were once mobile we can hypothesize their placement on top of the library’s entrance as it is currently drawn in the Plan du rez-de-chaussée, (figs. 35 & 36). The argumentative rhetoric of this creative reconstruction is strengthened by the fact that all three of Boullée’s elevation drawings express clear compositional symmetry and in the Plan du rez-de-chaussée drawing, through acts of adding and subtracting architectural elements from the existing site, Boullée works towards compositional symmetry about a central axis. This same central axis passes through the

Figure 33

Plan du rez-de-chaussée

Figure 33
"creative reconstruction" of rez-de-chaussée fragment. This drawing depicts the reconstructed rez-de-chaussée vestibule fragment located within the redrawn Plan du rez-de-chaussée. In this orientation the vestibule fragment articulates the methods of treating existing architectural elements required to have the portal facade built as the library's new entrance on Rue Colbert. As opposed to the temple-front facade, in this iteration the circulation between the ground floor (rez-de-chaussée) and first floor (premier étage) is contained within the "vestibule" space.

A "creative reconstruction" of the vestibule fragments based on Montclos' documentation of the Plan du rez-de-chaussée drawing from 1969, 1974 and 1994. The resulting rez-de-chaussée fragment (bottom-left in the reconstruction above) is identical to that documented by Montclos.

Figure 35 (right): Using the vestibule fragments as they are depicted in photographic reproductions available from the Bibliothèque Nationale, this drawing demonstrates how, in three easy steps, the fragments would have been used to articulate a different entry condition into the library from Rue Colbert.

Step 1: Remove

Step 2: Rotate 90° clockwise

Step 3: Place over drawing
library’s proposed entrance on Rue Colbert. The compositional symmetry carries through from
the design of the temple-front facade to its planimetric representation. The same logic would
rightly apply to the design of the portal facade in elevation and again, in plan.

The aim of this first drawing was to arrive at a convincing planimetric reconstruction of the
vestibule fragments. These redrawn fragments can now be used to construct a convincing
plan-oblique drawing evidencing that the vestibule fragments are planimetric representations
of the portal facade. Because the temple-front facade is very easy to identify across
orthographic representational types, a plan-oblique projection of the temple-front's planimetric
representation is constructed first, (fig. 37). The same representational techniques are then
used to invent the plan-oblique drawing of the portal facade via the redrawn vestibule
fragments. The resulting drawing evidences that by constructing a drawing via plan-oblique
techniques with the reconstructed vestibule fragments as a source, the result bears striking
similarity to the portal facade elevation drawing, (fig. 38).

Substantiation to these claims can be found by consulting the plan drawings of the Projet
pour la bibliothèque royale de la rue Richelieu. Two plan drawings belong to this iteration of
Boullée’s project. One depicts the rez-de-chaussée (ground floor) while the other depicts the
premier étage (first floor). The two fragments I have presented represent the same facade
but at different planimetric datums. One fragment depicts the portal facade at the rez-de-
chaussée level and could be placed over the larger plan drawing of the same level. The same
is true for the fragment depicting the premier étage level of the portal facade. In the case of
the plan drawings belonging to the Projet two things are important. First, these plan drawings
are accompanied by what I believe to be loose fragments depicting an identical scheme to
the ones I have presented here. Two, the documentation of these drawings, currently available
through the Bibliothèque Nationale’s online archive includes the placement of these loose

Figure 37: "Temple-Front"

Figure 38: "Portal"
Plan du premier étage

Plan du rez-de-chaussée
fragments in the orientation that I have proposed in figure 35, but is located incorrectly relative to planimetric datums. The plan drawing of the rez-de-chaussée level has been documented with the fragment corresponding to the premier étage placed over its entrance. The opposite is true for the plan drawing of the premier étage which has been documented with the rez-de-chaussée fragment over its entrance, (figs. 39 & 40). It is unlikely that Boullée would have drawn these fragments in a manner that situated them incorrectly to the degree evidenced by contemporary documentation. It is more likely that the fragments, as they exist in the archives at the Bibliothèque Nationale today, are loose and they were documented in a manner that was correctly oriented on the drawing but incorrectly located relative to orthographic projectional datums. The documentation of these drawings by the Bibliothèque Nationale confirms, albeit through the identification of a strange series of mishaps in archival practices, that the fragments in Boullée’s Plan du rez-de-chaussée from the Restauration de la bibliothèque nationale were, at one point in time, individual pieces of paper and were intended to be placed on top of the plan to evidence what would change in the scheme if the portal facade was preferred to the temple-front represented within the larger plan.

If we agree that the vestibule fragments belonging to Boullée’s Plan du rez-de-chaussée of the Restauration are planimetric representations of the portal facade and we recall that the current narrative defining Boullée’s redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi states that each of the three elevation drawings was intended as a possible facade providing entry into the library, then we must ask next, why are there no vestibule fragments representing the atlas facade?

27. Why were the fragments belonging to the Projet pour la bibliothèque royale de la rue Richelieu not fixed to the larger sheet of drawing paper like those belonging to the Restauration de la bibliothèque nationale? The answer to this question is threefold. First, the drawings making up the Projet are significantly larger than those of the Restauration. The fragments belonging to the former project measure 5.5” x 25.5” while those of the latter are only 2.25” x 10” and therefore significantly smaller and easier to misplace. Second, the fragments belonging to the Restauration iteration of Boullée’s project have suffered irreparable damage. Gluing these fragments to the larger sheet of drawing paper aids in their preservation. Third, the drawings belonging to the Projet iteration, though owned by the Bibliothèque Nationale, are held by the Département des cartes et plans at the François Mitterrand Library. This is a different department at a different site than the Cabinet des estampes et de la photographie of the Richelieu Library which holds the drawings belonging to the Restauration iteration of Boullée’s project.

Figures 39 & 40 (opposite page): *Addendum No. 3: Montclos and the Vestibule Fragments* on page 189 features a creative reconstruction of these drawings as I would have documented them if I had a position as an archivist at the Bibliothèque Nationale.
The *Plan de Turgot* from 1736 shows what the site of the Bibliothèque du Roi looked like before Boullée's commissioned redesign. Although the buildings contained within the footprint of the library’s site changed significantly before 1785, the composition of Rue Colbert and its outer limits were almost identical to their composition depicted at right. See also, the above drawing which extracts from Boullée's *Plan du rez-de-chaussée* his depiction of the existing site.

Photo in figure 43 taken from this spot.
Locating the Atlas Facade

An Applied Reading

The drawing on the adjacent page depicts the plan of the library and neighboring buildings on Rue Colbert as they were before Boullée’s redesign was commissioned, (fig. 41). The area that will require special attention is outlined in red. The primary architectural element here is the wall that defined interior from exterior as it related to the interior space of the royal library and the exterior space of Rue Colbert. Boullée proposed relocating the library’s entrance here. The general form of these existing buildings photographed in 2016 evidence precisely what Rue Colbert looked like at the end of the eighteenth century, (fig. 43). The images of Rue Colbert presented here serve to give a clear understanding of what the wall acting to frame the southern edge of Rue Colbert looked like. This wall is important to consider because it relates directly to the alternate facades Boullée proposed for the library’s new entrance.

The title assigned to the elevation drawing that depicts a central portal is Élévation assujettie au mur actuel (elevation subject to the existing wall). This is an appropriate title because this elevation, had it been constructed, would only require that the existing wall be smoothed, a portal entrance located at its center, and a total of ten sculptural niches carved into the wall.

The title assigned to the elevation drawing that depicts a temple front is Élévation non assujettie (elevation not subject to [the existing wall]). This facade, had it been constructed, could be imagined to require significantly more demolition and subsequent effort directed toward reconstruction. The wall defining the library’s perimeter would need to

28. This drawing is based on Boullée’s Plan du rez-de-chaussée and therefore constitutes a trace of the architect’s representation of the existing site. The content of my drawing can be confirmed as an “accurate” representation of the site. See, among others, plan drawings of the Bibliothèque du Roi from 1754 found in Alfred Franklin’s Les Anciennes Bibliothèques de Paris, (Paris: 1870), 194. See also, the Plan de Turgot, 1736, (fig. 42).

29. Even though Henri Labrouste redesigned this library in 1868, after it had become the Bibliothèque Nationale, his design did not affect neighboring buildings nor the outermost bounds of the buildings bordering Rue Colbert. This is to say that despite a new design built in 1868, the site still retains some of its eighteenth-century characteristics.

30. Élévation assujettie au mur actuel, Bibliothèque Nationale, Estampes: Ha-56 Ft 7, Pl. 37, 118cm x 56cm.

31. Élévation non assujettie, Bibliothèque Nationale, Estampes: Ha-56 Ft 7, Pl. 35, 119cm x 56cm.
Figure 44: The only elevation drawing from the *Bibliothèque Publique, 1784* (top) and two of the three elevation drawings from *Bibliothèque du Roi, 1785* (bottom).
be demolished before two rows of sixteen columns each could be put in its place. As confirmed by the title of this drawing and the previous one, these facades are inverses of one another, both operationally and formally. One facade proposes keeping the existing wall and introducing a single portal while the other proposes removing the wall and replacing it with Corinthian columns. The ideas expressed separately in these two facades have been culled from Boullée’s Bibliothèque publique sur l’emplacement des ci-devant religieuses Capucines de la place Vendôme, 1784, (fig. 44).  

The elevation drawing depicting the atlas facade is titled Élévation de la façade rue Colbert (elevation of the facade facing Rue Colbert). In relation to the titles assigned the other two elevation drawings this title is an outlier. It is not particularly striking as either of the other two elevation drawings could have borne this title or some variant of it, but perhaps it is important that they do not. It is also notable that the title of this elevation drawing relates it to Rue Colbert and not the existing architecture of the library (the wall mentioned in the other titles). This is not enough to prove the atlas facade was anything other than a facade providing entry into the library, but it does set the stage for it to become something different.

In an earlier reading of the notational languages used in Boullée’s plan drawings it was acknowledged that in the Plan du rez-de-chaussée a hemispherical figure was inserted into the site in place of the removed Maison Appartenant au Roy, (fig. 45). Is it possible to read this hemispherical figure as a planimetric representation of the atlas facade?

Much like reading the vestibule fragments as planimetric representations of the portal facade, this argument will most effectively be evidenced through drawings. These drawings will evidence that the hemispherical figure drawn in Boullée’s Plan du rez-de-chaussée is a planimetric representation of his atlas facade.
Even though the rectilinear shapes filled with red wash are not “accurate” representations of a flat plane intersecting the upper back area of two Atlases, this is a form of representational abstraction that Boullée has employed elsewhere in this same project. Boullée proposed crowning the reading room with allegorical statues, stating in his Essai that one should depict Minerva, (Rosenau, 105). In the Plan du premier étage, Boullée's cutting plane would have intersected these figures, but he represents them as rectilinear blocks filled with red wash.
The width of the wall created after removing the buildings comprising the *Maison Appartenant au Roy* is the same dimension as the proposed facade of the library. This is the wall from which the hemispherical figure protrudes into the space in front of the new entrance to the royal library. In plan this wall is depicted as being completely bare. It measures twenty-five and one-half *Toises* long, or fifty meters. While none of the elevation drawings Boullée produced in the *Restauration* include drawn scales, it can be reasoned, based on the width of the library’s entrance, that the facades are each fifty meters wide. This means that the facades are approximately eighteen meters tall. What can also be reasoned is that the horizontal cutting plane producing the planimetric drawing at the rez-de-chaussée level is taken at a height approximately four and one-half meters above the ground plane. It is also not unreasonable to approximate the height of an eighteenth-century woman at one hundred and seventy centimeters. Boullée's drawing of the atlas facade depicts two women at the feet of the towering Atlases. One is seated and the other stands. If the standing woman is approximately one hundred and seventy centimeters tall it also means that the horizontal cutting plane, at a height of four and one-half meters (four hundred and fifty centimeters), would occur just above the bottommost part of the sphere supported by twin figures of Atlas. This horizontal cutting plane would also cut through the area between each Atlas’ chest and haunched upper back. As it is related to the elevation drawing of the atlas facade, this cutting plane would not pass through any other formal elements, (fig. 46).

What kind of a plan drawing results when a horizontal cutting plane is applied to the elevation drawing of the atlas facade at a height of four and one-half meters? The drawings on the adjacent page explore just that, (fig. 47).

The drawings in figure 47 suggest that the figure Boullée drew opposite the library’s new entrance in his *Plan du rez-de-chaussée* is the atlas facade and evidence that the outermost
half-circle belonging to the hemispherical figure is a parallel projection of the outermost circumference of the hemisphere supported by twin figures of Atlas. The four smaller and uniformly spaced half-circles represent the stairs leading from the street to the space beneath the Atlases. The two square figures interrupting these lines of the stairs are abstractions of the planimetric cutting plane's intersection with the haunched backs of the Atlases. Finally, the smallest two half-circles represent the planimetric cutting plane's intersection of the bottommost portion of the hemisphere supported by the Atlases.

With the discovery of the atlas facade's planimetric representation in Boullée's Plan du rez-de-chaussée all eleven orthographic drawings belonging to the architect's Restauration have been assigned a verifiable role within his architectural proposal. The same cannot be said for other narratives as there is no drawn evidence in the form of “atlas fragments” or otherwise suggesting that the atlas facade was intended to function as one of three possible entrances to the library. I believe that this is because prior scholars have not read the atlas facade as one drawing among thirteen belonging to an architectural proposal comprised of two-dimensional representations of a singular three-dimensional space. The version of Boullée's project that has been affirmed by contemporary scholarship is one in which all but one drawing—the atlas facade—maintain planimetric representations. If it can be done credibly, the atlas facade drawing should be assigned a position among Boullée's planimetric drawings in the same manner as the other orthographic drawings.

Currently, my hypothesis is the only one acting to define the hemispherical figure opposite the library’s entrance.

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It is through the deployment of a full arsenal of architectural tools of intellection that Boullée’s atlas facade might now be read as having been drawn, not as a facade proving entry into the library, but a facade opposite the library’s new entrance on Rue Colbert. This reading is based in the translational quality of orthographic drawings and relies on an architect’s capacity to both read and produce drawings. Until now the act of close reading has been directed toward developing an architectural design vocabulary as it relates to Boullée’s drawings. Those design vocabularies are now being deployed to activate new readings of the project. This might be understood to constitute a form of graphic literacy relating to architectural design and, more specifically, relating to Boullée’s eighteenth-century drawings comprising his unbuilt redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi.

**Plausibility**

Why is a reading of the atlas facade situated opposite the library’s new entrance plausible? It is plausible because the rhetoric acting to contextualize the atlas facade as one of three possible alternatives which would belong to the library’s entrance does not make sense.

As it relates to architectural composition, the atlas facade is much better situated opposite the library’s entrance than in its place. This is true because of formal and spatial symmetry. It was mentioned earlier that part of Boullée’s efforts in this redesign were to establish symmetry and balance throughout the planimetric and sectional composition of the existing buildings. Inserting an amphitheater of books into the courtyard does this on a grand scale and to ensure continuity of the amphitheater’s form, one would have entered into this amphitheater from below. This can be read in the section drawing, (figs. 49 & 50). Upon passing through two rows of columns at the entrance and entering into the interior space of the building an occupant would confront a half-dome just before entering into the vast reading room. Boullée’s plan shows this moment represented as a half-circle. The plan also depicts an identical figure...
All four of the circular geometries highlighted in the plan drawing above were introduced to the site by Boullée in the pursuit of establishing a central axis of symmetry. This is compelling because we can see that the redesigned geometry of the formal garden on the right side of the plan is about equidistant from the hemisphere proving entry into the right side of the reading room as it is oriented above as the atlas facade is from the left hemisphere. Had Boullée's atlas facade been situated in the place of the columns defining the library's entrance, it would disrupt the compositional symmetry and balance of the scheme in its current state. As it relates to the overall balance of Boullée's scheme, the Atlas facade is much better situated opposite the library's entrance than in its place.
located at the opposite end of the reading room. These half-circles are also in dialogue with the hemisphere figure outside the library's entrance as well as a newly designed garden for the Bibliothéquaire General. These four figures share identical dimensions and are aligned about a single axis, (fig. 51).

It probably does not need stating but Boullée was a competent draughtsman and thinker. If this is agreeable then there are incongruences among scholarly narratives guiding contemporary interpretations of Boullée’s design and what can be read in the drawings. It has been established that Boullée’s Plan du rez-de-chaussée depicts the temple-front facade as the library’s entrance and that the vestibule fragments could have been used to lay over this part of the drawing to express an alternate facade and alternate means of treating existing architectural elements in terms of entry, egress and circulation. It has also been acknowledged that both of these facades—the temple-front and the portal—come from prior schemes belonging to Boullée and employ elements of the architect’s well-established design vocabulary.35 Tracing the atlas facade within Boullée’s oeuvre is impossible. There are no prior instances in which the design vocabulary used in the atlas facade can be identified. This might be the reason scholars like Montclos have called the atlas facade the “plus spectaculare” of the three and what allowed Paula Young Lee to structure a paper for the Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians around the question, “Why suspend a giant globe over the entrance to a library?” The atlas facade is undoubtedly unique and has been recognized as such by architectural historians but is their reading correct?

If the atlas facade was intended to be one of three options for the Bibliothèque du Roi’s new entrance and it was so remarkable that it has since been called, “…the most specific vision of them all,” why did Boullée choose not to draw it in the plan?36 He drew the temple-front facade and the portal facade. Why not draw the planimetric projection of the atlas facade in place of

35. See “Addendum No. 4: A Selection From Boullée’s Oeuvre” on page 199 to see Boullée’s design vocabulary and its deployment in his design of both the temple-front and portal facades.

the temple front or as a second set of fragments? If the current narrative persists, scholarship will continue fostering a reading of Boullée’s project wherein the architect did not fully recognize the significance of his own design. In his own words Boullée called the Bibliothèque du Roi, “The building that is most precious to a Nation...”37 Why would he choose to abstain from presenting one his most unique and specific visions as the face of this project in the plan drawings? Is it possible that the architect was aware of the significance of his design and its uniqueness relative to his other projects and envisioned it as a different kind of architectural expression than it is currently understood? Is it possible that prevailing scholarship is incorrect? It would be difficult to structure a scholarly paper around the significance of either of the other two facades. Only the atlas facade warrants such inquiry. Motivating this polemic is the fact that scholars and designers alike are enthralled by Boullée’s atlas facade. They like this image and what it suggests. They gravitate toward it and publish work that orbits it. What they have not yet done is attempt to understand it locally as it relates to its immediate context. The drawing is one orthographic drawing among many and, in the tradition of architectural design, acts to describe a complex spatial proposition through two-dimensional representational techniques. Boullée’s project is one that has occupied the architectural imagination of historians, designers and students alike. If the atlas facade can be situated within Boullée’s overall scheme and credibly repositioned within his architectural proposal it should be.

As a final, and perhaps slightly contradictory note, it should be acknowledged that as an entry to the royal library Boullée’s atlas facade would have constituted an ideal solution. This is partly because the cost of the redesign was of paramount concern to Boullée. He wrote in his Mémoire that, “The building project [that of the Bibliothèque du Roi] has always caused alarm because of the considerable expense involved,” and that the success he hoped for was, “... due to his good fortune in having discovered how to utilize the existing buildings.”38 It was acknowledged earlier that the temple-front facade and the portal facade approached utilizing

37. Rosenau, 104.
38. Rosenau, 104-5.
This drawing, appearing in Alfred Franklin’s *Les Anciennes Bibliothèques de Paris*, 1870, is uncredited, but it is the only image that I could find identifying the **Colbert Street Fountain**. The fountain’s location in this drawing is arguably not precise but it would seem to be situated approximately halfway between Rue Richelieu and Rue Vivienne.
the existing wall bordering Rue Colbert differently: building the temple-front would necessitate
the wall’s removal while constructing the portal facade would allow for the wall’s repurposing.
While the temple-front facade is more compelling and much more celebratory than the portal
facade, it would have also cost significantly more. Is the atlas facade not a perfect balance of
opulence and cost? It would have utilized the existing wall in the way that the portal facade
proposed and it would have constituted a fittingly opulent entrance to royal library at the same
time. This narrative is reasonable and might even contribute to the current understanding
of Boullée’s drawings but it is a narrative which is in direct opposition to the one evidenced
through a close reading of the architectural drawings. If this narrative were the authentic one,
why do Boullée’s drawings evidence another?

The Colbert Street Fountain

Measured through Boullée’s authorial intention it seems that the atlas facade was not intended
to function as one of the library’s three possible entrances, but an independent facade situated
opposite Rue Colbert. To echo Paula Young Lee’s question: why would Boullée suspend a
globe over an empty niche opposite the newly redesigned royal library? The answer can be
found hiding in plain sight.

The Plan du premier étage depicts Boullée’s design in a moment when the removal of
the neighboring Maison Appartenant au Roy had not yet been envisioned. The buildings
comprising the maison along with a wall framing the accompanying courtyard establish
a flush and flat wall which frames Rue Colbert. This wall is continued all the way through
to the easternmost edge of the site. It is bordered on one side by Rue Colbert and on the
other by gray wash defining neighboring buildings. Near the edge of the site there is a small
architectural moment that could easily go unnoticed as it occupies an area of the drawings that
is less than a few centimeters square. This small area of the drawing represents the Colbert
The Colbert Street Fountain

as it was in 2016. The masqueron no longer functions to disguise a water spout but a "service des eaux" metal disk located in the sidewalk speaks to the fountain's history.
The history of Parisian fountains is an entirely different investigatory topic but a few words on fountain design in the eighteenth century will allow for an adequate contextualization of the fountain on Rue Colbert. Until the nineteenth century the history of Parisian fountains was the history of the city’s struggle to provide clean drinking water to its growing population. The construction of early fountains depended largely upon the governing forces of gravity. This meant that the Right Bank of Paris (the eighteenth-century site of the Bibliothèque du Roi) saw most of its fountains erected before those of the Left Bank. Constructed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, many of these early fountains were demolished or destroyed to allow for new and technologically superior means of delivering clean water to the growing masses of Paris. Jean Beausire (1651-1743) was the Contrôleur des Bâtiments de Paris in the years between 1684 and 1740. He oversaw the construction of more than thirty fountains. One of these was the Colbert Street Fountain and it was constructed in 1708. Though it no longer functions, and renovations to the building upon which it is sited have resulted in its incremental demolition, vestiges of the Colbert Street Fountain can still be identified today, (fig. 54).

The year in which the Colbert Street Fountain was built situate it as one whose construction would have been overseen by Jean Beausire. This also places it on the site neighboring the bibliothèque du Roi long before Boullée’s commissioned redesign. It is also important that Beausire’s aesthetic preferences have been described as being reserved and subtle but dignified. Scholarship states that his fountains were typically small, set against a wall, placed with an un-ornamented niche and featured a single spout of pouring water. The photomontage in figure 53 shows the remnants of a fountain which match this description. The
The drawing on the left is Boullée’s *Plan du premier étage* in which only one row of columns define the library’s entrance on Rue Colbert and the neighboring *maison* was left untouched. The drawing on the right is Boullée’s *Plan du rez-de-chaussée* in which two rows of columns define the library’s entrance and the neighboring *maison* was envisioned as being removed from the site. The Colbert Street Fountain is affected by both proposals differently. The drawing on the left proposes keeping the Colbert Street Fountain on the site. The drawing on the left proposes removing the fountain from the Rue Colbert. The latter drawing is the one that included Boullée’s place and atlas fountain.
drawing on the adjacent page evidences how the figure that Boullée drew could be read as a planimetric representation of the Colbert Street Fountain, (fig. 55). And for drawn confirmation that this part of Boullée’s plan drawing depicts the Colbert Street Fountain one can consult a plan drawing of Henri Labrouste’s redesign of same site from 1868 which labels the same part of the drawing, “Fontaine Publique,” (fig. 56).

If the Plan du premier étage evidenced Boullée’s acknowledgment of the Colbert Street Fountain’s presence on the site, then its depiction in the Plan du rez-de-chaussée evidences its intended removal from the site, (fig. 57). In the Plan du rez-de-chaussée Boullée has drawn the fountain using a uniformly dashed line. Because the quality of this line matches those lines used to describe the proposed removal of the Maison Appartenant du Roy and the dashed line in question is a continuation of the line defining the exterior of the maison’s exterior wall it can be ascertained that the fountain was also intended to be removed from the site.

The fountain’s proposed removal from the site is interesting because it could be considered a very bad idea within the context of eighteenth-century architectural discourse. This is a claim that is explored in depth in the next part of this thesis, but it will suffice to say here that contemporaries of Boullée, namely Marc-Antoine Laugier (1713-1769), Voltaire (1694-1778) and Pierre Patte (1723-1814), wrote of the benefits of embellissements like public squares, sidewalks, street paving and fountains. In their eyes Paris was in desperate need of more fountains, not fewer. If his redesign for the Bibliothèque du Roi in 1785 not only acted to reinforce the monarchy’s ownership of cultural institutions but also acted to remove one of the city’s few public fountains, Boullée would certainly have been criticized by his contemporaries.
Maybe Boulée was aware of the opinions of his contemporaries and appropriately envisioned an alternate future for the Colbert Street Fountain and not merely its erasure from the site. In the *Plan du rez-de-chaussée [plan en petit]*, one of the plan drawings produced as a primer for the engravings found in the bound *Mémoire*, there is text belonging to a taxonomical subgroup of notational languages. Text, though belonging to a literate tradition, plays a significant role in architectural representation. It is most often deployed to label things like streets, room typologies and other important information in drawings.

If one directs their attention the area of the *Plan du rez-de-chaussée [plan en petit]* located between the temple-front of the library and the hemispherical figure that is the atlas facade, three words can be identified. Although the words are written in eighteenth-century French, they can be read by a contemporary English speaker. One word is written so that it can be read the way that the drawing is most-often oriented. The word is “*place.*” If one tilts their head ninety-degrees clockwise the other two words become legible. One word is “*Colbert*” as in Rue Colbert. The third word, positioned directly in front of the planimetric representation of the atlas facade, is “*Fontaine,*” (fig. 58).

...That’s French for fountain.
Conclusion

To summarize, it was in deconstructing the notational languages used throughout Boullée’s plan drawings that a clearer understanding of the entire proposal was achieved. Identifying the vestibule fragments and their role in Boullée’s scheme demonstrated that there are planimetric representations of both the temple-front and portal facades. The planimetric representations of these facades confirm their status as alternatives for the library’s new entrance on Rue Colbert. The search for a planimetric rendition of the atlas facade led to the discovery of the Colbert Street Fountain and a literal reading of Boullée’s drawings led to the identification of the atlas facade as a public fountain acting to frame a new urban place.

The conclusion of “Part One: A Close Reading” will function in two parts. First, it will conclude a close reading of Boullée’s drawings by engaging a few lingering questions. These questions address the legibility of architectural drawings and the intellectual apparatuses through which historical research in architecture is conducted and framed for contemporary discourse. The first part of the conclusion addresses the discursive discrepancies dividing architecture history and design. Second, it will stage “Part Two: Generative Historiography” by acknowledging the consequences of having newly situated the atlas facade in Boullée’s redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi.
The Possibility of Generative Historiography

Boullée’s redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi exists in the realm of the unbuilt and this makes a close reading of his drawings indispensable to architectural discourse. The blurring between signifier and signified is particularly difficult to parse with the unbuilt and this is perhaps why twentieth-century scholars saw the elevation drawing of the atlas facade as one that looked similar to the other facade drawings and assumed it signified something similar. The narrative defining the atlas facade was then allegorized in architecture historiography. Although the orthographic projectional techniques that yield what is often called an “elevation” in architectural discourse do frequently end up referencing an elevation of the building for which the drawing was constructed, this is an assumption made on the basis of likelihood. Unfortunately, this is not what an elevation drawing is. An elevation drawing is a name given to a form of orthographic projection commonly used architecture, it is a type of orthographic projection and not a signifier for what part of a building that drawing references. Earlier, perlocution was framed as a constitutive part of what it means to draw in architectural discourse and now it might be evident that historiographic practices must be cognizant of this fact.

Perlocution participates in a process like the one through which the words, “Colbert,” “Place” and “Fontaine” were identified. Each word is written in eighteenth-century French but can be read by an English speaker in the twenty-first century. It is also important to note that while
these words tell a viewer what the drawing is proposing, these words do not speak directly to the actions they signify. First and foremost “Colbert” is a name. It is the last name of Jean-Baptiste Colbert (1619-1683) who was Louis XIV’s Minster of Finance and after whom the street outside the Bibliothèque du Roi was named. In the context of a close reading of Boullée’s architectural drawings, “Colbert” is a signifier which identifies the area on the drawing as a street named Colbert. “Place” is a signifier too, but one which speaks to the intention of the acts of architectural design represented in the drawing. In eighteenth-century Paris a place was an open space in the city, usually round or square in shape. Place also functions in contemporary English and while it might immediately be read as a signifier speaking to a specified location, it can also be interpreted to mean the same thing it did in eighteenth-century French. “Fontaine” is also very closely related to its modern English counterpart. Here Boullée is telling a viewer what the drawing depicts. The drawing as a signifier might have been perceived to not carry enough meaning so an additional signifier was added to prevent possible mis-interpretation. While these acts of writing constitute convention in eighteenth-century architectural design, they are still subject to misunderstandings and re-readings, despite the best of intent on the part of the author or draughtsman. Reading (in the medium-non-specific sense), constitutes an ongoing performance in which all of these things—misunderstanding, intention, performance and convention—are recast and reassembled.

Recasting and Reassembling the component parts of graphic languages in architectural drawings is important to architecture’s history because it is a history that has been both written and drawn. And while many scholars are suited to read text, few are suited to read architectural drawings. Even though Boullée wrote the word Fontaine on iterations of the plan du rez-de-chaussée, it has never been read because drawings are not part of the same literate tradition that writing is a part of. Reading an architectural drawing from eighteenth-century Paris is dissimilar to reading an architectural treatise from the same era. Boullée did not write in his
My reading of Boullée's project does not aim to produce a single authoritative reading. Alternative meaning might be constitutive of what it means to draw and this is evidenced in Boullée's application of notational languages in his plan drawings. Two examples show that alternative meaning was structured into Boullée's mode of intellection. In the plan drawings black poché signified a preexisting architectural element that Boullée wished to keep; red poché signified an architectural element Boullée proposed inserting into the site; and uniformly dashed lines signified preexisting architectural elements Boullée's proposal would remove from the site. It is now clear that the portal facade was designed with the intent of utilizing the existing wall bordering Rue Colbert. Puncturing this preexisting wall to create ten sculptural niches would require that the architect somehow notate an act of “subtraction” on top of an act of “keep this preexisting element.” Through the notational languages deployed in the drawings this would happen by notating the sculptural niches with uniformly dashed lines on top of black poché notating the intent to keep the existing wall bordering Rue Colbert. Dashed lines in black ink on top of black wash would not be visible. What does Boullée do? He modifies his notational language to work within a singular moment of design. Within the vestibule fragments Boullée draws the existing wall bordering Rue Colbert as it would be if the portal facade were executed. He then notates the inner edges of the sculptural niches with red poché. The red poché signifies the portals’ “addition” to the wall. Here, Boullée's deployment of his own architectural notational languages is incorrect in the sense that the direct translational quality of the construction actions required to execute this act and the architectural drawing which
prescribes it do not match. It is correct in the sense that this allows for the drawing to be read, (fig. 58). Regardless of whether Boullée chose the correct or incorrect way to notate the portal facade in the vestibule fragments is irrelevant because the possibility of alternative meaning might be constitutive of the act of drawing in architecture.⁴¹

It is also true that Boullée did not use a flat and level cutting plane as convention dictates he should when executing his Plan du rez-de-chaussée. To construct this drawing Boullée used a cutting plane that constantly changed. If one were to locate the cutting plane on the longitudinal section at a height that would make sense for a rez-de-chaussée projection, the architectural content that falls below this cutting plane would produce a different drawing than that seen in Boullée’s Plan du rez-de-chaussée. Why did Boullée deploy an established set of discursive tools comprising orthographic projection only to diverge from convention? He departs from convention because this allowed him to articulate a variety of architectural ideas in one drawing. This was done for practical reasons. The Plan du rez-de-chaussée measures 117cm x 44cm and is thus quite large. To make different drawings at different cut levels would have been time-consuming and expensive. The drawing thus had to be constructed to provide maximum information. Had Boullée drawn the plan with a fixed and singular horizontal cutting plane, he would have sacrificed being able to communicate all that he wanted to. The amphitheater is a perfect example of this. Through the design of the amphitheater Boullée invented a new method by which books would be stored and subsequently brought to readers in a reading room. The architectural design allowing for this new method of book circulation was one that could be evidenced through a plan drawing. The Plan du rez-de-chaussée confirms that this method of moving books would take place via an ambulatory hidden beneath the amphitheater’s tiers. This ambulatory sectionally spanned two floor heights (rez-de-chaussée and premier étage levels) so a representational technique had to be invented if Boullée wanted to depict it in a single drawing. Boullée located the cutting plane for the Plan ⁴¹

41. To complicate matters it should be noted that all but two of the sculptural niches from Boullée’s elevation drawing of the portal facade are represented in the vestibule fragments as perforations. It is true that the portal facade seems to depict sculptural niches that do not fully perforate the wall. I can only offer that it is possible Boullée’s design changed between the time he drew the fragments and the portal facade or vice versa and he did not amend one drawing to match the other. See, “Addendum No. 3: Montclos and the Vestibule Fragments” on page 189 where I critically frame Jean-Marie Pérouse de Montclos’ framing of these fragments and their content.
The image above this block of text relates plan, longitudinal and transverse section drawings of Boullée’s scheme to evidence that more than one horizontal cutting plane was used to construct the plan drawing resulting in the Plan du rez-de-chaussée. The image at right is a detail looking at the circulatory system Boullée proposed situating beneath his amphitheater of books. The inability to represent this circulatory system via established means of orthographic projection required that Boullée deploy a flexible and changing cutting plane. He wrote about his architectural solution in the Essai, “Let us imagine in this vast amphitheatre attendants placed in different rows in such a way they can pass the books from hand to hand. You will agree that the service will be almost as rapid as the spoken word and in addition there will be no fear of the dangers that can result from ladders,” (Rosenau, 105).
du rez-de-chaussée at a datum more appropriately suited to project the Plan du premier étage. He did this because it allowed the entirety of the amphitheater to be located beneath the horizontal cutting plane as opposed to half of it. Then he imagined the amphitheater having no surface so that the ambulatory hidden beneath could be seen via the imagined orthographic projection. Finally, to more effectively relate the resulting drawing of the ambulatory to the rez-de-chaussée planimetric projection, he notated the ambulatory as though it was being cut by the orthographic cutting plane, (fig. 60). The rest of the Plan du rez-de-chaussée also evidences variation in the cutting plane used to construct the planimetric orthographic projection.

This is not unique to Boullée’s drawings. There are numerous instances throughout the history of orthographic projection in architectural design where architects have modified established notational languages and conventions of orthographic projection to express an idea otherwise rendered unclear by the generative logics of intellection. This thesis might demonstrate that architectural drawings are not only difficult to read, but that a single, reproducible method as a “way through” might be an impossible target for architecture historiography.

An Apparatus Shift

As an interlocutor I entered into an ongoing historiographic project allegorizing Boullée’s redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi at time after historians have read his drawings, the resulting narrative governing his design circulated, and this narrative having served as the foundation for subsequent inquiry. Nonetheless, my intervention precedes the current evolution of Boullée’s project and seeks rediscovery beneath histories already communicated. My interlocution evidences that a different set of procedures are needed to research architectural drawings from the eighteenth century today than were needed in 1939 when Emil Kaufmann first reintroduced Boullée to architectural discourse, or before Montclos’ 1969 black and white publication of the Plan du rez-de-chaussée, or before 2007 when Boullée’s drawings for this project were
My narrative for Boullée’s redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi is the only one that assigns the content found within each orthographic drawing a place within the *Plan du rez-de-chaussée* drawing.
digitized and made publicly available online. I have at my disposal digital archives that allow comprehensive searches through Boullée's entire oeuvre. I can download drawings instantly, locate them in Photoshop, and begin speculatively reconstructing them. I can place these drawings in CAD software and redraw them in their entirety and create new drawings to argue claims of transmutability among established representational types. These methods of working with architectural artifacts are unique to our contemporary ontology and through such methods we are able to recognize the shortcomings in contemporary discourse while envisioning future practices of historiography.

Since the second half of the twentieth century, historians, preservationists, archivists, architects and students of these disciplines have studied Boullée’s redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi. Not one of these people has conducted a close reading of the drawings comprising Boullée’s project. The absence of a close reading is due, in part, to the fact that Boullée's drawings have not been available to a general audience for very long. Throughout the twentieth century the general public could only turn to a limited number of publications featuring black and white photographic reproductions of Boullée's drawings and it was not until 2007 that the project was digitized by the Bibliothèque Nationale. Still what any object signifies when it is consulted in the archive versus a black and white photograph in a book versus a digital projection on a computer screen is different. If disciplinary knowledge is collective but access to these art-historical objects is limited, on an individual basis, and dependent upon available sources, allied institutions and modernizing technologies, is it not more reasonable to suggest that instead of searching for one true and authorial reading, the forum be opened to a variety of presentations, representations, revisions and creative reconstructions which are all considered to constitute original and authentic scholarship?

The current paradigm is one in which archival practices, the accessibility to knowledge and
modes of disseminating it, and the role of the architect in historiography are changing. What happens when established historical narratives need revision, not because they were wrongly written, but because available technology and new modes of intellection have changed the nature of what can be seen and how it can be seen? Are there other instances where rereading architectural drawings through a contemporary set of discursive lenses might codify new ways of engaging architecture’s history? Is it possible that among all the historians and students of architecture who have seen these drawings that no public declaration has been made questioning nor hypothesizing what the hemispherical figure opposite the library’s entrance could be, not because it was not seen, but because there has not yet been a forum in which such speculative and revisionist inquires are encouraged, cultivated and disseminated? I argue the need for such a forum in architectural discourse.

Whether or not the reading of Boullée’s atlas facade outlined in the preceding pages is correct in that it corresponds to the architect’s intent might matter very little. What would it mean to further legitimate a creative reconstruction of Boullée’s project? What would it mean to contextualize the atlas facade as a fountain accompanied by a public place in eighteenth-century architectural discourse on the eve of the French Revolution? What would it mean to bring Boullée into a dialogue surrounding the practice of architecture in the Enlightenment-era city? How might history have been different if Boullée’s library had been built? These questions constitute historical inquiry that is yet unwritten and can only be invented after having witnessed the iteration of Boullée’s project that is evidenced through a close reading of his architectural drawings.
The introduction to “Part Two: Generative Historiography” will do three things. First, it will present the atlas facade as framing an urban place and housing a public fountain as a new reading of Boullée's redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi requiring new historical contextualization. Second, it will situate existing scholarship on Boullée as a point of departure for a new historical narrative. Third, it will introduce two components of late-eighteenth-century architectural discourse that relate to a rereading of the atlas facade: the embellissement and the public sphere. My primary concern in this part of the thesis is to sketch a way to allow a close reading of architectural drawings to generate a new historical narrative.
A New Historical Narrative

Locating Boullée’s atlas facade opposite the library’s new entrance on Rue Colbert where it would have framed an urban place and housed a public fountain creates an architectural diptych: a royal library’s columnar facade on one side of an urban place and a public fountain flanked by towering figures of Atlas against a blank wall on the other, (fig. 1). My reading of Boullée’s project also prompts the invention of an historical narrative that will newly position the French architect in eighteenth-century architectural discourse. In the following pages Boullée’s redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi will be brought into ongoing debates about the practice of architecture in Enlightenment-era Paris.

Scholarship on Boullée currently positions him as a visionary whose built work remains unremarkable in comparison to his evocative drawings.¹ As a result, Boullée has been distanced from debates surrounding the practice of architecture as it related to designing and constructing buildings in the eighteenth century.² Rereading the atlas facade as a public fountain demands that the entirety of Boullée’s project be recast. The historical narrative I will invent for the redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi makes Boullée’s willful urge to build unmistakable and offers new insight to the architect as an eighteenth-century practitioner and critic.


². The practice of architecture in the eighteenth century took many forms. For clarity of meaning the words “practice” and “practitioner” will herein be used to reference the practice of architecture as it related to the design and subsequent construction of buildings.
Located at 16 Rue de la Ville l'Evêque in Paris is Boullée's only remaining work of built architecture. Unfortunately a significantly more modern structure has literally been built on top of it. Ionic columns, barely visible beyond the glass-panelled entry, belong to Boullée’s Hôtel Alexandre, 1763.
Boullée after Boullée, 1799-2016

Restating Boullée’s biography as it has been written numerous times throughout the twentieth century does not serve any immediate need. However, there are details within the primary source documents from which Boullée’s earliest biographies were based that are relevant to my inquiry. Two of these sources mention Boullée’s redesign the Bibliothèque du Roi but their doing so has gone largely unacknowledged by more recent scholarship.

Boullée was reintroduced to architectural discourse by Emil Kaufmann in his 1939 essay “Etienne Louis Boullée” in The Art Bulletin. Kaufmann’s biographical study of the architect was based on a limited number of primary sources. One source was the Papiers de Etienne-Louis Boullée. This is a series of bound and loose-leaf documents held by the Bibliothèque Nationale and includes, among other documents, drafts of Boullée’s Architecture, essai sur l’art and an obituary posted shortly after the architect’s death in the Gazette Nationale on the thirtieth day of the pluviôse in the Seventh Year of the French Republic (18 February 1799). Another of Kaufmann’s primary sources was the Notice sur la vie et les travaux d’Etienne-Louis Boullée written by “citoyen Villar, secrétaire” which appeared in the June 1801 edition of the Mémoires de l’Institut National des Sciences et Arts. This served a critical role in Kaufmann’s account of Boullée’s life and the architect’s reception by his eighteenth-century contemporaries.

Both the obituary and Villar’s Notice are generous and suggest that Boullée’s contemporaries were fond of him. The obituary states that Boullée’s Essai was written with, “…such energy, such elevation which characterizes all that has come out of his hands.” The obituary also specifies that Boullée acquired great celebrity without having been to Italy. It also says, “You will remember the design of the national library for which a large model was built.” Two things from this final statement need highlighting. First, a model for the redesign of the library was
“Vous remarquerez ait-tout le plan pour la bibliothèque nationale, dont le modèle en grand a été exécuté.”

“...il s’était acquis une grande célébrité; sans avoir été en Italie, il en avait deviné les beautés.”
built. What happened to the model and where it was exhibited remain unknown. Second, the obituary refers to the project as the national library, or “Bibliothèque Nationale.” In 1785 when Boullée produced the drawings for the redesign of the royal library it was the “Bibliothèque du Roi” (library of the king). Although the very building Boullée was redesigning would come to be known as the French National Library, and this would happen during his lifetime, at the time of the commission and through to the completion of the drawings, it was not the Bibliothèque Nationale but the Bibliothèque du Roi. As it might be considered an architectural program, the idea of a national library remained in ferment until the time between 1789-1793. In the years between Boullée’s commission (1785) and his death (1799) his contemporaries had displaced his design from one signified entity to another. Boullée completed a commission to redesign the Bibliothèque du Roi in the years leading up to the Revolution. In the years thereafter Boullée’s scheme became a signifier for the design of the newly established Bibliothèque Nationale and it was publicly known as such.

In the Notice sur la vie et les travaux d’Etienne-Louis Boullée Villar mentions the redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi and also refers to it as the Bibliothèque Nationale. In addition to that information learned in the obituary one learns that the model for the library was exhibited in 1790. Villar expresses admiration for Boullée’s design when he writes, “Boullée designed a new edifice for the project, where all the literary treasures, gathered under one roof, cannot offer more to the sciences nor the arts those subjects from which they are founded.” In addition to the library project the Notice acknowledges, “Three other projects of national interest that occupied the inexhaustible architect’s leisure.” These were Boullée’s unrealized designs for the Church of the Madeleine (1777), Versailles (1780) and the Palais St. Germain (1785).

The obituary from the Gazette Nationale and Villar’s Notice evidence that Boullée was beloved
by his contemporaries. It is also evident that Boullée’s architectural designs—all executed before 1789—were classified by his contemporaries as belonging to a modern trajectory. I will see if it is possible that Boullée, seen through his redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi, was aware of changing sociopolitical values at the end of the eighteenth century and sought some kind of participation through his architecture.\textsuperscript{14}


In more recent decades the biographical study has given way to more specified inquiry. In “Boullée and The Exotic” Robin Middleton looks to Boullée as a model for the absorption and subsequent distillation of the exotic in late-eighteenth-century Paris.\textsuperscript{15} It was noted earlier that in “Standing on the Shoulders of Giants: Boullée’s ‘Atlas’ Facade for the Bibliothèque du Roi” Paula Young Lee structures a paper for the \textit{Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians}

\textsuperscript{14} Architecture was highly politicized at the end of the eighteenth century. Claude-Nicolas Ledoux (1736-1806) was the last \textit{Architecte du Roi} and was literally fighting for his life in the aftermath of the French Revolution. His architectural output reflects this. In the years between 1780 and 1800 his work transitions from built toll gates marking the civic boundaries of Paris (some of which were burned in protest in 1789) to unbuilt drawings of homes celebrating the working individual.

around the question, “Why suspend a giant globe over the entrance to a library?” In *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture* Pier Vittorio Aureli titles one chapter “Architecture as a State of Exception: Etienne-Louis Boullée’s Project for a Metropolis.” The ensuing inquiry looks to Aldo Rossi’s introduction to a 1967 translation of Boullée’s *Essai* from French to Italian. Aureli explores Rossi’s use of the phrase “razionalismo esaltato” to describe Boullée’s architectural sensibilities. Most recently, Anthony Vidler wrote an article for Architectural Review titled, “Etienne-Louis Boullée” which he concludes by writing, “More recent historians have tried to demolish [Boullée’s] claim to originality… But no amount of careful philology will ever fully explain his extraordinary dream world nor deny his evocative influence…” Heeding Vidler’s warning I will not attempt to fully explain Boullée nor deny existing narratives unrelated to the redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi. Instead, I will try to reinforce Boullée’s evocative influence and build upon the latent potential for his “extraordinary dream world” to develop more fully by relating him to the practice of architecture in eighteenth-century Paris.

*Embellissements*

As an architectural typology the *embellissement* will allow me to frame a discussion about the practice and criticism of architecture in the eighteenth century as it was a synthesis of the two discursive genres. I will frame Boullée’s urban *place* and public fountain as acts of urban *embellissement* to substantiate my reading beyond what is offered in the architectural drawings. The Atlases and celestial sphere depicting the astral symbols of autumn speak to eighteenth-century fountain design. Boullée’s fountain also suggests his not only having read contemporary criticism of architecture’s role in urbanization, but constitute his active response to such criticisms. Two more important facets of this inquiry will explain why Boullée’s proposal was so unique. First, I will relate Boullée’s redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi to prior commissions for the same task. Second, I will evidence Boullée’s having looked to Rome for architectural design precedents and potential models to emulate in the pursuit of a properly
embellished Paris.

In *Symbolic Space: French Enlightenment Architecture and Its Legacy*, Richard Etlin offers a look at eighteenth-century architectural practice in Paris through four overlapping spatial typologies: the space of magnificence, of hygiene, of clarity and of emulation. He writes that, “Together these overlapping conceptual realms constituted the Enlightenment ideal of *embellissement,*” and reminds us that the English language iteration of *embellissement* as “embellishment” should, “…be understood to include cultural aspirations and functional amenities as well as aesthetic pleasures.” The eighteenth-century architectural imagination saw Paris not just in terms of paths, edges, districts and landmarks, but a treasure to be improved upon and preserved. Etlin tells us the version of Paris that its architects and critics envisioned was one that saw the city as a monument to Western civilization.

Etlin’s headings—magnificence, hygiene, clarity and emulation—paired with his reading of the *embellissement* as an eighteenth-century architectural typology embodying desire and pleasure in addition to function allows a way of sketching the architecture of the era. Other scholars have situated the *embellissement* within eighteenth-century architectural theory and practice in a similar manner to Etlin. In the introduction to *L’Embellissement des Villes: L’Urbanisme Français au XVIIIe Siècle*, Jean-Louis Harouel frames the *embellissement* as embodying architectural desires for an urban condition that was at once practical, aesthetically pleasing and political. Rodolphe el-Khoury challenges readings like those of Etlin and Harouel citing an, “…insistence on the ambiguity of *embellissement,*” in which the opportunity to, “…collapse beauty and utility into bourgeois ideology… is missed or avoided.” Regardless the dialectical positioning, the working definitions of *embellissement* are similar and include either a layering or seamlessness among such qualities as cultural aspiration, beauty and function.

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20. Ibid.


To position Boullée within a discussion about *embellissement* architecture as it took place in the eighteenth century some of the relevant historical actors should be known. These actors belonged to one of two groups: critics and practitioners. Both groups maintained prominent influence but the rhetoric of their arguments differed, sometimes greatly. The critics—Marc-Antoine Laugier (1713-1769), Voltaire (1694-1778) and Quatremère de Quincy (1755-1849)—foregrounded the shortcomings of eighteenth-century Paris as published written prose. The practitioner will be represented by an architect who utilized the graphic rhetoric of architectural drawing to express his concerns. Though he often expressed his views through writing, Pierre Patte (1723-1814) used architectural drawings and the embedded rhetoric as effective means of making his criticisms publicly known during Boullée’s lifetime.

My aim is not to understand what *embellissement* architecture was nor how it should be defined by contemporary scholarship. Rather, I aim to use the *embellissement* as a tool through which to locate Boullée’s redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi within architectural design as it related to the production of urban space in eighteenth-century Paris.

Reading Boullée’s atlas facade as an embellissement in the form of a public fountain acting to frame an urban place affects the entirety of his proposal for the redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi. My reading of Boullée’s project sees him redesigning the library and neighboring urban fabric. This is a dramatic and consequential act of design within the context of the redesign of monarch’s library in the heart of Paris on the eve of the Revolution. Though not commonly known, Boullée’s project is uniquely positioned within his oeuvre because it is one of very few that speaks to the design of architecture within an existing urban context. For Boullée the royal library held potential to not simply remain an act of architectural design in an urban context, but to become an act of architectural design with urban consequence. Boullée did not simply propose a redesign but opportunistically proposed a place and a public fountain to

23. Jean-Marie Pérouse de Montclos, *Etienne-Louis Boullée*, (Paris: Flammarion, 1994), 257. The majority of Boullée’s projects deal with architecture in imagined contexts. Those projects that confronted existing sites did not propose redesigns but wholly original compositions. The redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi is an outlier among Boullée’s oeuvre precisely because the design entailed extensive use of existing buildings on the site.
accompany it. Design of this nature cannot be seen in any of the architect’s other projects.

The redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi can now be seen as a precursor of a kind to the architectural project pursued by Louis Napoleon and Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. Richard Etlin connects Haussmann’s renovation of Paris to his introduction of the *embellissement*, calling Haussmann an heir to, “…the Enlightenment urban ideal that envisaged the city holistically according to overlapping symbolic dimensions.”

Reading Boullée’s *place* and fountain as constitutive of the overall design scheme allows for a reading in which Boullée’s design enters a more complex discussion about revolutionary ferment in the years between 1785 and 1799, the emerging Parisian public sphere and the Enlightenment citizen’s simultaneous engagement with architecture and urban life. Boullée’s scheme for the royal library can only now be read as a testing ground for these concepts of Enlightenment architecture.

Coming at the end of his life and the final days of the monarchy, Boullée’s redesign of the royal library might now be seen as a total synthesis of his life’s work. In my reading of Boullée’s project he does not design an internalized public space—a common reading of his work—but an overlap, exchange, and evidenced reciprocity between the city and the architecture comprising it. The *embellissement* as a moment of conjecture among desire, aesthetics and practicality is perfectly suited to frame a connection between Boullée’s atlas fountain and the practice of architecture in eighteenth-century Paris.

**The Public Sphere**

In a famous essay from 1784 in which he responded to the question “What is Enlightenment?” Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) posits a definition that links an individual’s capacity to reason with their ability to apply reason in a public space. He calls this the, “…*public* use of reason,”
and claims that, “...it alone can bring about enlightenment among men.”27 In his essay Kant explores the parameters of the application of reason and furthers an idea about those who act as “guardians” of this emerging public realm. What he does not offer, and what might occupy the thoughts of an architect, is a description of what this public realm looks like and through what kinds of spaces it might manifest. And though Kant does not offer an alternative he does claim that current institutions are failing in their support of Enlightenment ideals.28 Kant’s public might not be a space so much as it is a group of people, but there are still architectural consequences to his definition of Enlightenment.29 In the eighteenth century an applied use of one’s private reason was a new idea about how individuals acted publicly and it required new spaces to unfold.

Because my inquiry does not aim to define what the Enlightenment is or was, and rather targets the work of an eighteenth-century architect, it will serve me to construct a more spatial definition of the public sphere as it related to architecture and the city of Paris in the years leading up to 1789.

Jürgen Habermas may serve as a transition from Kant’s definition of Enlightenment to the changing architecture of eighteenth-century Paris. Habermas provides a brief history of the public sphere in his introduction to The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. He links the concept of the public sphere to the physical space of the Hellenic forum and claims that the forum is an architectural space, “…in which the private people come together to form a public.”30 In “The Most Polite Age and the Most vicious:’ Attitudes Towards Culture as a Commodity, 1660-1800” John Brewer expands upon the nature of Habermas’ forum-like spaces of the eighteenth century. “He [Habermas] sees this phenomenon as having a specific site (the term ‘forum’ is significant here), one which is urban rather than courtly, and which is embodied in a number of institutions, most notably the clubs, salons, coffeehouse coteries,
and tavern societies that flourished in such abundance..."  


32. Ibid., 349.


too are the forums within which architectural reasoning occurs. In eighteenth-century Paris, architectural discourse was not reserved for the architect. Architecture in the Enlightenment city was a discipline that engaged a variety of people and societal actors. With this in mind, my investigation will not confuse the public, nor the Enlightenment, with analytical categories. Instead I will ask what historical actors did with newly emerging ideas about the public to see how it was a used as a concept to formulate and legitimize particular claims. I will demonstrate that Boullée's proposed urban place and public fountain were envisioned as agents for social change.
In the following pages Boullée will be reread as a critic and polyvalent practitioner of architecture at the end of the eighteenth century. First, he will be read as a critic. His redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi and the atlas fountain outside its entrance will be shown to evidence his sympathies toward a diversifying public realm. It will also be shown that Boullée's contemporaries were campaigning for the design of fountains and open public spaces in Paris' densifying medieval city center. Second, Boullée will be read as a practitioner in three sections. The first two sections are subtitled “The Architect as Urban Surgeon” and “Caractère” and will introduce preexisting scholarship defining architectural practice at the end of the eighteenth century. I will then locate Boullée’s redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi within these debates. The third section of reading Boullée as a practitioner is subtitled “The Mémoire” and will look to the bound volume of drawings and text associated with Boullée's redesign the Bibliothèque du Roi. This bound volume warrants exploration because it is the only instance in Boullée’s life that we see him offer architectural drawings accompanied by written text.
As a Critic

A new contributor to architectural discourse in the eighteenth century was the critic. The Parisian critics of Boullée’s time were Marc-Antoine Laugier (1713-1769), Voltaire (1694-1778) and Pierre Patte (1723-1814), among others. It will be shown that Boullée was responding to the criticisms of Laugier, Voltaire and Patte with his design of an urban place and public fountain. These two acts of architectural design would have constructed a space that was not only public, but a space that addressed nuanced and marginal constituents of the public realm in the late-eighteenth century. Boullée exhibits having read contemporary criticisms and a capacity to transfigure them into an architectural proposal.

The Colbert Street Fountain, introduced during the close reading of Boullée’s architectural drawings, was for public use, (fig. 4). I previously argued Boullée’s proposed relocation of the Colbert Street Fountain opposite the entry to the Bibliothèque du Roi was plausible according to his architectural drawings. Now, I will show that this decision was also aligned with architectural rhetoric of the era. The Colbert Street Fountain was constructed in 1708 and designed in a reserved but dignified manner, but many of the more publicized and elaborate fountains built in the same era made reference to mythology and the seasons.35 If Boullée were attempting to amend an existing fountain from street marginalia to that of an act of urban embellissement opposite the royal library it makes sense that he would ornament it according to contemporary fashion. The addition of two monumental Atlases supporting a globe four
meters in diameter depicting the astral signs of autumn would constitute an appropriate
design. As this relates to Boullée’s operative function as a critic, it should be noted that the
Bibliothèque du Roi was a private institution with limited access. Habermas’ bourgeois male
might have had access to the library, but women, children, the poor and many others did not.
The place, and the fountain in particular, would have been used by a more diverse public than
the one using the library’s interior spaces.

To design the interior of the library Boullée imagined a public comprised of literate bourgeois
men. The architect’s perspective drawing of the library’s reading room depicts an architectural
space surrounded on all sides by a towering amphitheater of books. This space would have
facilitated the very kind of public use of private reason Immanuel Kant described in his essay
defining enlightenment. Literate individuals who secured necessary permission to access
the library’s collection would have been required—through the architectural design of the
space—to read collectively, argue and make public use of their private reason. In “Standing
on the Shoulders of Giants” Paula Young Lee agrees. She writes that Boullée’s library was,
“…intended for group rather than individual use.”36 Relating Boullée’s proposal to the ancient
library of Alexandria, Lee foregrounds issues related to Boullée’s use of the “public” as
something to design for. She writes, “Hence, the project [Alexandria’s library] was ‘public’ in
that it was concerned with conserving, controlling, and containing written knowledge as the
official culture defined by the long rule of the Ptolemies. Yet it was also ‘without a public,’ in
that the general population had no access to these materials.”37 Lee’s link between Boullée’s
design and antiquity is compelling if only because Boullée’s perspective drawing of the reading
room depicts Greek figures engaged in debate over something they have presumably just read.
Lee notes that the Greekness of these figures is no accident when she acknowledges that
their composition within Boullée’s drawing is a clear emulation of Raphael’s School of Athens,
1509, (fig. 5).38 And it was Habermas who traced the emergence of a new public sphere in

37. Ibid., 424.
38. Ibid., 416, 424. Lee’s reading
draws from Boullée’s Essai
when he writes, “I was deeply
impressed by Raphael’s
sublime design for the School
of Athens and I have tried
to execute it; doubtless I
owe what success I have
had to this idea,” (Rosenau,
104). Compositionally there
is no doubt of similarity. I
would like to complicate
the link between Boullée’s
Bibliothèque du Roi and
Raphael’s School of Athens
by adding a third entity in
the form of Boullée’s design
of a public library. “Addendum No.
6: Boullée’s School of Athens”
on page 207 shows that the
drawings Boullée produced
for the Bibliothèque Publique
project could be interpreted
as an architectural rendition
of the architectural space
developed in Raphael’s fresco.
Boullée’s drawings for the
Bibliothèque Publique and
Bibliothèque du Roi constitute
two distinct projects, each
created under different
circumstances but both
perhaps acting to emulate
qualities—tectonic as well as
programmatic—of Raphael’s
fresco.
the eighteenth century to the Hellenic forum. References to mythology and the occult, found throughout Boullée’s project, make reference to Greek Antiquity.39

Unlike the perspective drawing of the reading room depicting robed men in debate, the figures found in the atlas facade drawing are very clearly women and children, (fig. 6). This dichotomy of representational figures—men occupying the interior spaces while women and children occupy the exterior—evidences a contrasting and opposed set of spatial typologies. Is it possible that Boullée proposed dueling facades in this project—the permeable temple-front of the library and the twin figures of Atlas supporting a hemisphere protruding from a blank wall—because the spaces each facade acted to signify were in opposition? The temple-front belonged to the library and would have facilitated passage from the urban streets of Paris to the reading room of the Bibliothèque du Roi. Oppositely, the atlas facade would have framed an urban place and provided clean drinking water to the neighboring populace and passerbys. It is important that the other two facade drawings Boullée produced for this project do not depict human figures of any kind. Not only does the depiction of women and children in the drawing of the atlas facade evidence it as a representational outlier among the three facade drawings, (thus strengthening a reading stating that it cannot function as an alternative entrance), but it evidences my claim that Boullée was designing for a diversifying public realm. Boullée’s drawing of the atlas facade celebrates an anticipated user who can be represented by women and children.

The use of scaled figures in eighteenth-century architectural drawings was not uncommon and therefore it would be difficult to suggest that Boullée chose men to occupy the library’s interior space and women and children to occupy the exterior by accident. The deliberate use of these gendered figures signify eighteenth-century ideas about the public sphere. It was noted earlier that in the case of Voltaire’s criticisms the public sphere was not so much a who but a what.

39. In addition to the Greek figures populating the reading room Boullée proposed crowning the space with statues of Minerva. “This Basilica has at either end two types of Triumphal Arch, under which there could be two allegorical statues. It would doubtless be appropriate that one of the two should be a statue of Minerva,” (Rosenau, 105).
Boullée tackles both who and what in his drawings for the royal library. “Who” is men on the interior and women and children on the exterior. “What” is a reading room in which you deploy a public use of private reason on the interior and a public fountain from which potable water is collected on the exterior. If architectural reasoning occurs through the production of drawings and drawings are produced through forms of graphic literacy, then Boullée’s claims for how the library was to be used, how each of its spaces function, and for whom they function are explicitly clear.

In addition to engaging a diversifying public realm Boullée’s fountain is relevant to other forms of eighteenth-century architectural discourse. Voltaire wrote extensively on Parisian public works and the design of fountains. “We have only two fountains in good taste,” he wrote, “and they should certainly be better placed. All of the others are worthy of a village.” Marc-Antoine Laugier also wrote of a need for fountains. In his *Essai sur l’architecture* he wrote, “Squares may be ornamented with fountains and statues. We have properly no fine fountain.” Notably, I have not sourced these passages randomly. We know that Boullée read the works of Voltaire and Laugier. Shortly after Boullée’s death an inventory of his library was written by the notary known only as Doulcet. The *Papiers de Boullée* contain Doulcet’s inventory and listed among many other works are *Oeuvres de Voltaire* and *Observations sur l’architecture* by Marc-Antoine Laugier. Boullée did not publish written work during his life but he was a prolific draughtsman. Would a proposal for a properly embellished fountain outside the entrance to the Bibliothèque du Roi not constitute an affirmation of the sentiments by eighteenth-century critics as influential as Laugier and Voltaire?

Boullée’s fountain might also be seen as a way of making the redesign of the monarch’s library more palatable to an increasingly discontent public. The *place* and its fountain tell the general public that although the royal library is being renovated, the new entrance will provide

40. Voltaire, 181. “Nous n’avons que deux fontaines dans le grand goût, et il s’en faut bien qu’elles soient avantageusement placées; toutes les autres sont dignes d’un village.”


42. Doulcet’s list of the contents of Boullée’s library can be found in Montclos’ *Etienne-Louis Boullée*, 1994, 274-6.
an open urban space and a new fountain that is not only functionally useful, but embellished in a way that makes it sensorially appeasing. In *The Place Royale and Urban Design in the Ancien Regime* Richard Cleary wrote, “One means of expressing these achievements [of the monarchy] through architecture was with building programs that served the public as well as representing the monarch’s *gloire.*”

Boullée’s redesign of the royal library responds to reigning criticisms of existing urban form through the promotion of the monarch’s *gloire.* As Cleary suggests was practiced in the time, Boullée was proposing to democratize urban space in the city. The fountain he proposed would have been used by the public as a source of potable water and was sensorially appeasing because it was decorated in the contemporary style. A grandiose fountain in a newly formed public *place* situated directly outside the Bibliothèque du Roi affirms Boullée’s own sentiments as well. In his *Essai* Boullée calls the Bibliothèque du Roi, “…the building which is most precious to a nation.”

Boullée’s commission to redesign the Bibliothèque du Roi required that he redesign the library. The design of the urban *place* and the public fountain were by his own volition. An urban *embellissement* that would have brought potable water to the city’s inhabitants; the representation of women and children in the atlas facade drawing; and reciprocity among the architect’s proposal and reigning criticisms of the day all point to Boullée’s participation in eighteenth-century architectural discourse. While it might be a whispered proclamation, Boullée’s redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi advocates for the diversification of the public realm in late-eighteenth-century Paris.

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Incision

<noun>

A mark or decoration cut into a surface; the action or process of cutting into something
As a Practitioner

The Architect as Urban Surgeon

The definition of incise is to mark or decorate with a cut or series of cuts. In “The Scenes of the Street: Transformations in Ideal and Reality, 1750-1871” Anthony Vidler likens incision to the methodology through which architects designed in the eighteenth-century city. Incision, as it is defined above, also relates to architectural drawing. The orthographic drawing—plan, section and elevation—is constructed via marked, although conceptual, cuts through space.45

Pierre Patte (1723-1804) is one of the architects who embodies Anthony Vidler’s metaphor of incision as architectural design. Vidler calls Patte, “…[the] technically minded, professional architect-urbanist.”46 Patte is a good architect through whom to look at Boullée because of two reasons. The first reason is that Patte was a vocal proponent for the practical and functional aspects of architecture. He preached of practice and an architect’s direct engagement with built form. I am trying to read Boullée as someone with similar concerns. The second reason is that Patte and Boullée share a disciplinary heritage: both architects were students of Jacques-François Blondel (1705-1774).47

In Mémoires sur les objets les plus importans de l’architecture Patte writes, “Everywhere it will be seen that all things have been sacrificed to grandeur, to magnificence, but no effort has ever been made to procure true well-being for men, to preserve their lives, their health, their property, or to ensure that the air is salubrious in their respective lodgings,” he continues, “…the essential point is to envisage, when situating them [public monuments], their use, the convenience or needs of the inhabitants and above all to proceed in a manner suited to ensuring the greatest possible space for those that will be the most frequented.”48 Patte’s concerns align with the ways in which built form should facilitate the well-being of Parisians

45. In the eighteenth century architectural drawings were constructed via incised marks upon a sheet of paper. Many of the tools used by an eighteenth-century draughtsman would “mark” the sheet of drawing paper with a “cut” of some kind. Boulée’s use of a compass to construct the circles which define the columns in his plan drawing is an act of incision, (fig. 8).


48. Pierre Patte, Mémoires sur les objets les plus importans de l’architecture,” (Paris: 1769), 5-14. “Sans cesse on remarquera qu’on a tout sacrifié à la grandeur, à la magnificence, mais qu’on n’a jamais fait d’efforts pour procurer un véritable bien-être aux hommes, pour conserver leur vie, leur santé, leurs biens, et pour assurer la salubrité de l’air de leurs demeures… Le point essentiel est d’envisager dans leur emplacement, leur usage, la commodité ou les besoins des habitants, et sur-tout de faire en sorte de donner, à ceux qui doivent être les plus fréquentés, beaucoup de dégagements.”
and his energies are directed towardsremedying the flaws in urban life. In subsequent
passages Patte condemns draughtsmanship when it is not in service to the building of
architecture. Here, the role of draughtsmanship in Patte’s architecture might seem to differ
from the role it plays in Boullée’s, but this is a result of the popularized scholarship acting to
historicize the two men. Boullée is often called a paper-architect and his designs have been
called enigmatic, imaginative and unrealizable. While the eighteenth-century architectural
practices of Boullée and Patte are not often equated, Boullée’s redesign of the Bibliothèque
du Roi might provide an opportunity to do just that. The redesign of the royal library was a
unique project for Boullée precisely because it was not a project he undertook for the sake of
draughtsmanship. Boullée was commissioned to submit a proposal for the library’s redesign
and his architectural solution was one rooted in practical and functional concerns. Boullée’s
scheme can be read through the same characterization Vidler makes of Patte when he calls
him a technically minded architect-urbanist. It will become evident that Boullée was concerned
with such matters as cost and the effective utilization of preexisting buildings. It will also
become evident that with this project, more than any other, Boullée exhibited a desire to see
one of his final architectural designs constructed.

Reading Boullée through Pierre Patte’s Monumens égrigés en France à la loire de Louis XV will
clarify Boullée’s practical concerns as they related to the place and accompanying fountain.
Patte’s objective in Monumens was to survey the major architectural undertakings of Louis
XV. Patte’s Plan de Paris brought together on a single drawing the various projects for grandes
places that had been submitted in the competition for the placement of Louis XV’s statue,
(fig. 9). Vidler notes that this image of the city is one of multiple foci because the drawing
speaks to the potential for architectural interventions to surgically insert themselves into the
urban fabric of Paris. Vidler also notes that in Monumens, when Patte is writing about Parisian
embellishments, he condemned the city’s narrow and tortuous streets. Patte’s work in

Figure 10:
Boullée’s place as it would
exist today, contextualized among neighboring urban space.

Given site conditions

Architectural design through erasure
Monumens and the Plan de Paris presented eighteenth-century architectural remedies of both theoretical and practical natures. Vidler concludes, “The city as a forest, to be tamed by the arts of cultivation, was now such as a body in varying states of sickness and disease, to be cured by the arts of medicine. And, just as with a patient, radical surgery was the last resort of prolonged therapy.”

Vidler’s proposition that the Parisian architect of the eighteenth century could be likened to an urban surgeon is exhibited through Boullée’s place in front of the royal library. Not only is Boullée proposing an embellished place—the same urban design typology depicted in Patte’s Plan de Paris—but he is envisioning its insertion into the urban fabric with surgical precision. Boullée’s role as an urban surgeon manifests through the notational languages he used in his plan drawings. The first operation related to preexisting architectural elements that were to be preserved through the redesign. These elements were drawn in black poché. The second operation was additive: those architectural elements that Boullée proposed inserting into the existing plan were outlined by black ink and filled with red wash. The final operation was subtractive: the architectural elements Boullée proposed removing from the site were outlined by uniformly dashed lines of black ink. The tectonic operations embedded in these notational languages evidence that Boullée designed the empty space of the place in front of the library’s entrance through an architectural design methodology that can be likened to surgical incision, (fig. 11). Too often design is associated with the making of form. Design can also manifest through the removal of form, (fig. 12). This is what Boullée proposed when he drew, as part of his redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi, the removal of neighboring buildings so that the creation of an urban void could be realized.

Robin Middleton confirms similarities drawn between Boullée’s public fountain and Patte’s Plan de Paris. “The guiding principles for the generation of Patte’s plan were similar to those upheld

Figure 12: Humphry Repton’s Ferney Hall Red Book from 1789 provides another example of architectural design through acts of erasure.
by Laugier—though Patte’s tone is not quite so enthusiastic,” he writes, “…clean water in large quantities was to be introduced with the building of fountains and the dignity of the whole city was to be upheld and given expression in the form of new roads, squares and embellissements [sic]. Remedial action of this kind was almost preferable to beginning from scratch.”51 Middleton’s reading of Patte’s architectural desires for Paris links the design of urban squares and fountains to embellissement architecture that she calls a preferred “remedial action.” A preference for remedial action should read similarly to Vidler’s understanding of the eighteenth-century architect as an urban surgeon and his claim that radical surgery was a last resort. Boullée’s atlas fountain incorporated all of the descriptors that Vidler and Middleton have assigned Pierre Patte, the practicing architect-urban-surgeon of the late-eighteenth century.

It should be clear that architects and critics alike were invested in improving Paris. Many of these improvements demanded an architect’s skill set and called for the creation of space through the removal of existing urban form in often unhygienic medieval city centers. Richard Cleary writes of the proposals for the place royale, “[They] contrasted with their surroundings by inverting the traditional high density of French cities and offered a model of organization that dispersed growth around a series of designated spaces rather than by layering it around a dense central core.”52 Boullée’s place and public fountain in front of the Bibliothèque du Roi work toward the same goals Cleary, Middleton and Vidler outline for the design of built form in Paris at the end of the eighteenth century.

Caractère

Writing about the work of another eighteenth-century architect, and one who saw many of his projects built, Anthony Vidler writes that the work of Claude-Nicolas Ledoux (1736-1804) engaged, “…contemporary notations of the proper characterization of buildings to their logical conclusions.”53 He then broadens the claim when he says that what was once a, “...
The astral constellations depicted on the Coronelli Globe of the cosmos correspond to Louis XIV’s autumn birth month, September 1638. It is likely that Boullée copied the astral symbols when designing his celestial sphere. The Coronelli Globes were highly prized by the French monarchy.
vague and polite admonition to architects that their buildings should be endowed with a character ‘suitable to them and no other,’ now became an over-riding theory and practice of expression.” Vidler then acknowledges that four-fifths of the French population in the eighteenth century was illiterate, that available literature was vulgarized, and that philosophers of language noted, “…only the hieroglyph would communicate: ‘the people,’ proposed the poet Saint-Lambert, ‘are led neither by reason nor by definitions; one must impress their sense by distinctive marks.’ Vidler concludes by claiming that Ledoux’s architecture was hieroglyphic: it was legible even to the most illiterate of people. Can a reading like Vidler’s of Ledoux’s built work be applied to Boullée’s place and fountain?

“To give a building character,” Boullée wrote in his Essai, “is to make judicial use of every means of producing no other sensation than those related to the subject.” Here, Boullée is expressing the potential for an architectural order based upon eighteenth-century ideas of sensationalism and characterization. Acting as embellissements the place and fountain embody character in the way that they communicate their meaning through distinctive marks. It was previously noted that Helen Rosenau was the first to note that the sphere supported by twin figures of Atlas was incised with astral constellations related to autumn and that these symbols signified the harvest of learning associated with the library as a civic institution, (fig. 13). Recent scholarship has affirmed Rosenau’s reading of the globe and though these scholarly emulations maintain authority, reading the atlas facade as a fountain adds even more depth to Rosenau’s initial contextualization of the celestial body.

Mythology and the harvests associated with different seasons is linked to eighteenth-century fountain design, a famous example being the Fontaine des Quatre Saisons, 1738, (fig. 14). More commonly known as the Grenelle Street Fountain, this eighteenth-century embellissement was proclaimed a model to emulate. “Will they look back upon Grenelle Street to make me see
Figure 14: These measurements were taken during a survey of the Grenelle Street Fountain in August 2016. They are useful to consider because Boullée’s place outside the Bibliothèque du Roi would have provided nearly twenty meters of urban void between the atlas and temple-front facades. This is six meters more than the fourteen meters between the deepest point of the Grenelle Street Fountain and neighboring buildings. Although Boullée’s proposal might initially be seen as providing too little urban space to constitute a proper place, the Grenelle Street Fountain shows, through a built precedent, that although the dimensions of Boullée’s place were doubtless small, it was nonetheless feasible.
anything better,” wrote the critic Laugier, “I confess that I find fine statues and fine marble. I think I see the decoration of an altar, and I am very much astonished to learn by the water that runs down that it is a fountain. One cannot enough commend the rare talents and the noble emulation of the celebrated Bouchardon.”

Boullée’s depiction of the astral symbols of autumn might now be seen to symbolize the harvest of learning and earthly resources.

Now is a good time to recall Sylvia Lavin’s reading of Quatremère de Quincy’s *Dictionnaire d’Architecture*. Lavin defined an emerging eighteenth-century public sphere comprised of architecturally literate individuals. Vidler builds on this definition by offering the hieroglyph as a metaphor for architectural literacy. This ongoing discussion now includes Boullée’s deployment of an architectural vocabulary that is rooted in circulating discussions—both written and drawn—about the character of architecture and the need for public works in the form of fountains. Boullée’s proposal that the atlas facade function as a public fountain offered Parisians a legible architectural hieroglyph.

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60. Laugier, 190-1. “Me renverrait-on à la rue de Grenelle, pour m’y faire voir quelque chose de mieux? J’avoue qu’ici je trouve de belle statues et du beau marbre. Je crois voir un retable d’Autel, et je suis fort étonné d’apprendre par l’eau qui coule au bas, que c’est une fontaine. On ne peut assez louer les rares talents et la noble émulation du célèbre Bouchardon.”
The Mémoire

Two iterations of Boullée’s redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi are comprised entirely of individually formatted drawings. A third iteration exists as a bound volume of engravings and text. Compiled in 1785 the volume is titled Mémoire sur les moyens de procurer à la bibliothèque du Roi les avantages que ce monument exige.61 This bound publication marks the only known time in Boullée’s life that he produces a written text fit for publication before drafting the Essai. Furthermore, this is the only time Boullée seeks to publish written text alongside architectural drawings. It is the deployment of textual and drawn architectural discursive tools that make the Mémoire unique.62 This is the only instance in Boullée’s oeuvre that graphic and literate modes of intellection intersect and this is indicative of changing modes of architectural discourse in the eighteenth century. Architectural criticism was often issued by non-architects (Voltaire nor Laugier were trained architects) via written treatises. Nonetheless these texts were effectively reasoned and widely read by an increasingly literate public. Someone like Pierre Patte situates himself between practice and criticism as both a draughtsman and writer. Boullée was a draughtsman and a teacher for most of his career and it was only in the last decade of his life, starting in 1794, that he began drafting his Essai.63

In the Mémoire Boullée asserts the feasibility of his redesign and goes into great depth outlining his considerations for the commission. His concerns range from the economic constraints of his patrons to the increasing rate at which the library’s collection is expanding. He addresses the precise dimensions of the site and how he plans to intervene so that he may posit an architectural solution that is at once dignified and deserving of such a monument, but also remedies the inconveniences presented by the site in its current layout. Writing in the third person, “The success he dares to hope for will be due to his good fortune in having discovered how to utilize the existing buildings, and in knowing how to take advantage of premises that it was thought would have to be abandoned because it was assumed that it would not be

61. Estampes: Ha-43 fol. (1-7). The Mémoire is the only one of its kind and is held by the Cabinet des estampes et de la photographie of the Bibliothèque Nationale. The text featured in the Mémoire can also be found in Boullée’s Essai where it includes a new section prefaced with, “n.b.” for nota bene. It reads, “The extension of the library is becoming indispensable for it houses nearly three hundred thousand volumes...” The tone of this additional body of text and its reference to a library with three hundred thousand volumes suggest that Boullée is here writing sometime after 1794. This implies that he transcribed the text from the Mémoire to the Essai after what might have been a failed attempt at wider distribution.

62. Drafts of Boullée’s Essai in the Papiers de Boullée do not suggest that he had plans to publish the Essai alongside architectural drawings.

63. Kaufmann, “Three Revolutionary Architects,” 470. The tone of Boullée’s writing in the Essai and his mentioning of Napoleon’s Egyptian Campaign of 1798, even in the earliest drafts, imply that the Essai was written at the very end of the architect’s life. “Je prends pour exemple l’expédition de Bonaparte. Ce grand général et les savans qui l’ont suivi apprendront au monde entier l’art de former un grand établissement.”
Figure 17

Timber Frame

Plaster Coffer
possible to incorporate there all that is necessary for a Library; finally, in having achieved with
twelve or fifteen hundred thousand livres what would have required on another site fifteen
to eighteen million.”  

Boullée’s considerations with this project are very much rooted in the
constraints of a real project. This is not an imaginary project, nor is it a radical vision for the
future contingent upon unforeseen construction methods and building materials. Comparing
Boullée’s drawings of the project and the text outlining his ambitions evidence a real proposal
for a real project.

The degree to which Boullée was concerned with asserting the feasibility of his design
is perhaps most evident when he writes about the coffered barrel vault that would have
transformed the existing library’s courtyard into an enormous reading room. “Some people
seem to want the vaulting which was intended to be in timber to be executed in stonework,”
he writes, “Nothing could be simpler. By placing several retaining walls in the surrounding
buildings a buttress of more than thirty-six feet would be formed, with a resistance that would
support considerably larger vaulting.” This is an instance where reading Boullée’s text not
only lends clarity to understanding the overall design scheme evidenced in his drawings, but
one through which we see the architect desperately wanting his project realized. The barrel-
vaulted reading room is the image most conjured when thinking about Boullée’s redesign
of the royal library. From an architectural design perspective it is difficult to imagine such a
magnificent space erected via a timber frame. This is because the coffered barrel vault would
have been “faked” had it been built from timber, (fig. 17). Although it might have appeared
monumental from the interior, the vault would have been sculpted of plaster and paint, as is
clearly visible in the section, which shows a thin plaster surface on a wood lattice frame. The
rhetoric deployed by Boullée in his Mémoire suggests that the timber frame was not something
required by his patrons, but an elective decision and one the architect himself believed in.
Boullée is acting out of character here. He is not envisioning an impossible-to-build structure

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64. Rosenau, 105. Papiers de
Boullée, fol. 122v.

65. Ibid.
as he often did, he is being practical beyond even the expectations of his bureaucratic patrons.

The comparison of textual and drawn elements of Boullée’s proposal evidence another instance of Boullée’s practical concerns. Boullée wrote that he had, “…good fortune in having discovered how to utilize the existing buildings…”66 This is seen throughout the redesign but is particularly relevant when the titles assigned to two of the project’s three elevation drawings are considered. In “Part One: A Close Reading” the titles of these drawings were explored as they related to the architectural operations they signified. Here, the titles can be explored as they relate to construction costs. The title assigned to the elevation drawing depicting the portal facade was “Élévation assujettie au mur actuel” (Elevation subject to the existing wall), (fig. 18).67 The title assigned to the elevation drawing depicting the temple-front facade was “Élévation non assujettie,” (Elevation not subject to [the existing wall]), (fig. 19).68 In relocating the library’s entrance to Rue Colbert Boullée was given a preexisting blank wall from which to initiate his redesign. As it is represented in the plan drawings, the Élévation non assujettie (temple-front facade) would have required the removal of this blank wall, (fig. 20). The Élévation assujettie au mur actuel (portal facade) would have opportunistically utilized the preexisting wall, (fig. 21). We can imagine the construction of the portal facade to require only the smoothing of the existing wall and the incision of ten sculptural niches and a single portal. It might also be presumed that the portal facade, in its clever use of the existing wall bordering Rue Colbert, would be significantly cheaper to erect than the temple-front facade. This is perhaps clearest when we acknowledge that Boullée drew the Plan du rez-de-chaussée with the temple-front as a constitutive part of the drawing while drawing the portal facade as separate fragments. The temple-front facade might reasonably be seen as Boullée’s preferred but more costly option. The fragments depicting the portal facade would have required placement on top of the temple-front to be read and one can speculate that a patron interested in cutting costs could have been shown the alternative facade—through the placement of the

66. Ibid.
67. Estampes: Ha-56 Ft 7, Pl. 35.
68. Estampes: Ha-56 Ft 7, Pl. 37.
portal facade fragments on top of the temple-front in the plan drawing—and told that the new scheme, the one with the portal facade in place, could be built at a cheaper price.

The rereading of Boullée as a critic and multivalent practitioner conducted in the previous pages is not final nor resolved. It is offered as a framework for future inquiry. My findings suggest that contemporary scholarship has not adequately contextualized Boullée as a participant in discussions about the practice of architecture in Paris in the eighteenth century. His use of caractère in the public realm and his desire to publish the Mémoire as a document containing text and engravings newly position Boullée in ongoing scholarly debates about architecture and the public sphere. Boullée’s concern for practicality and feasibility, his active engagement in architectural criticism and his applied use of caractère all hold potential to complicate existing historical narratives and generate new ones.
Here, Boullée’s redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi will be read through precedents and emulations. The precedents will be numerous unbuilt redesigns of the Bibliothèque du Roi that predate Boullée’s. These precedent redesigns will evidence the uniqueness of Boullée’s proposal as it can be related to contemporaneous designs dealing with the same architectural site. To identify the emulative qualities of Boullée’s proposal my focus will turn to Rome where I will identify distant and unrelated fragments that the architect—knowingly or unknowingly—reassembled through his redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi.
Redesigning the Bibliothèque du Roi, 1717-1785

In *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture* Pier Vittorio Aureli offers a reading of Aldo Rossi's 1967 introduction to a translation of Boullée's *Essai* from the native French to Italian. More specifically, Aureli targets Rossi's method of distinguishing Boullée's work from that of other French architects in the eighteenth century. “Rossi distinguishes between Boullée’s ‘razionalismo esaltato’ (exalted rationalism) and the rationalism of French classicism, which he defines as ‘razionalismo convenzionale’ (conventional rationalism).” Aureli then goes on to tell his readers that, for Rossi, exalted rationalism was a method of architectural expression in which subjective and exceptional decisions leading to the production of architectural compositions resulted in the codification of a framework needed to transmit those architectural compositions. I would like to try and read Boullée’s atlas facade as a moment of radical subjectivity in his position toward essential problems of architectural design in late-eighteenth-century Paris.

In this section, special attention will be directed toward the history of the redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi as it predated Boullée. The intent is to discover how Boullée's approach to redesigning the royal library differed from his predecessors. Drawings presented by Jacques-François Blondel (1705-1774) in his *Architecture française, ou Recueil des plans, élévations, coupes et profils des églises, maisons royales, palais, hôtels […]* from 1754 evidence what the library and neighboring buildings looked like prior to Boullée's commission, (figs. 22 & 23).
Architect Robert de Cotte (1656-1735) issued no fewer than seven unrealized redesigns of the same site between 1717 and 1734. His drawings are useful to consider for two reasons. First, through the lens of the very same commission, they evidence the uniqueness of Boullée’s proposal. Second, the number of iterations—seven—speak to the importance of the library’s redesign to the monarchy in its final decades. Writing in the Mémoire, Boullée was undoubtedly aware of the importance of the commission when he wrote, “The necessity of enlarging these buildings [those of the existing library] has been recognized for so long that successive Ministers have all been concerned with this important subject.”

Robert de Cotte’s various proposals also reveal that he and Boullée used identical notational languages. Black poché signifies an existing architectural element and red poché signifies the addition of a new architectural element. Robert de Cotte’s planimetric drawings differ from Boullée’s in that they do not employ uniformly dashed lines to signify the removal of existing buildings. This is not because a different type of line was used to signify such an architectural operation. Rather, it is because de Cotte never proposes removing buildings from the site. Each of his seven schemes offers a slight variation of a single concept: connecting the existing buildings that frame the library’s courtyard, (figs. 24, 25 & 26). It is in this manner—slight variation of a single concept—that de Cotte’s schemes are unremarkable. Each variation proposes a continuation of the library’s existing architectural language through the construction of annexes and additional corridors lined with bookshelves. Each proposal also maintains the library’s entrance upon Rue Richelieu. As these precedents relate to Boullée, a proposition that the Bibliothèque du Roi should include a publicly accessible space remains unseen.

In architectural and urban design terms this means that the drawings produced by architects like Boullée, Pierre Patte and others, and the radical visions they held for the future of Paris, were unique. For an eighteenth-century architect like Robert de Cotte a commission to

71. Rosenau, 104, Papiers de Boullée, fol. 120r.

72. The buildings that Boullée proposed removing so that his urban place could be realized were collectively known as the Hôtel des Nevers. The westernmost building that bordered Rue Richelieu belonged to the Bibliothèque du Roi at the beginning of the eighteenth century and was even connected to the library’s main buildings via a second-story passageway. The building to the east belonged to the marquise de Lambert who refused to offer her residence to the library until her death, which came in 1733, one year before Robert de Cotte’s final submission, (fig. 26). This might explain one part of the reason de Cotte was unable to envision the removal of these buildings but Boullée was.
redesign the royal library was an opportunity to do just that: redesign the library. Boullée regarded the same commission as an opportunity to redesign the entirety of the library and to propose an urban *place* and a public fountain through the removal of neighboring urban fabric. Boullée's scheme, in that it demanded the removal of neighboring buildings to create urban space, is not only complex, but evidences a design sensibility similar to the one Anthony Vidler assigned Pierre Patte and Claude-Nicolas Ledoux: technically minded and professional. Boullée displays characteristics of an exemplary eighteenth-century practitioner through the confluence of architectural and urban design executed through tectonic as well as spatial surgical incisions.

Boullée's proposal, presented here through his drawings and the text he wrote for the *Mémoire*, departs from the proposals of Robert de Cotte in that it evidences a desire to engage contemporary architectural discourse. Such questions as how architecture should perform in the city and what new architectural typologies will come to define the urban public sphere are targeted by Boullée's proposal. This is made explicit when one considers that the redesigns envisioned by Robert de Cotte did not propose any measurable effect on the existing urban fabric of Paris. Boullée's redesign envisioned a new space for the literate bourgeois male who had sought necessary permission to use the library as well as an urban *place* and a public fountain for a more diverse and inclusive public.

**Rome**

Looking beyond the immediate of context of Paris is not only important to this inquiry but it was important to eighteenth-century architectural critics. Richard Cleary writes, “The benchmark by which the political and cultural elite of the *Ancien Régime* measured their achievements was the Roman Empire.” The same could be said for art and architecture. The eighteenth-century Parisian critic saw Rome as the zenith of artistic and architectural
achievement. Writing about fountains in his *Essai sur l’architecture* Laugier proclaimed, “We must go to Rome to learn the best taste in fountains. They are there in great numbers, and though very different from one another, they have all of them.” He continues, “Is there any thing so happy, so noble, so in character, as the fountain of the Piazza Navona? Behold a model to which we have never approached.” Voltaire and Pierre Patte echoed the sentiments of Laugier in their respective publications and Boullée too was fascinated by Rome. Reflecting on a lifetime of work in the *Essai* he makes certain to mention numerous Roman precedents. Raphael’s *School of Athens*, mentioned earlier, was one such precedent. Paula Young Lee writes, “Raphael’s works had been positioned as the major point of stylistic reference for the French academies and, more generally, as ‘the supreme embodiment of the classical ideal.’”

It was addressed earlier that Boullée clearly emulated Raphael’s fresco when he appropriated the collection of scholars in the lower right-hand corner of the composition for his own perspective drawing depicting the library’s reading room. Perhaps Boullée was also drawing from Raphael’s *Four Sibyls* fresco in the Chigi Chapel at Santa Maria della Pace when he designed iterations of the main facade of the new entrance to the royal library. Boullée is more explicit when he writes on the title page of the final draft of the *Essai*, “ed io anche son pittore.” In conversational Italian the French architect writes, “and I too am a painter.”

It is also by turning to Roman precedents that we learn Boullée’s atlas facade has already been entered into a discourse about fountains, albeit unknowingly. Jean-Marie Pérouse de Montclos noted that Boullée’s Atlas figures mimic those in Piranesi’s etching of the Albani Villa in Rome, 1769, (fig. 27). Although Montclos buries the claim in an appendix it is significant now. Piranesi’s etching not only depicts Atlases emulated by Boullée in his elevation drawing, but Piranesi’s support a fountain over their heads.

The most compelling Roman precedent for Boullée’s library might be Pietro da Cortona’s

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74. Laugier, 191-2. “Il faut aller à Rome pour prendre le goût des belles fontaines. Elles y font en grand nombre, et quoique fort différentes les unes des autres... Y a-t-il rien de si heureux, de si noble, de si caractérisé que la fontaine de la Place Navone? Voilà un modèle dont nous n’avons point encore approché.”

75. Lee, 417.

76. *Papiers de Boullée*, fol. 69v.

1. Desired facade.

2. Witnessing of neighboring architectural form.


4. Desired urban condition.

Figure 28: The hemispherical figure of Cortona’s facade looks very similar to Soufflot’s planimetric representation of the atlas facade.

Figure 29: Cortona’s facade projected into the street more than was allowable by the existing composition of neighboring buildings. In this drawing the architect draws neighboring urban form so that he may witness its existence before proposing its removal from the site.

Figure 30: Faintly dashed lines signify those architectural elements belonging to neighboring buildings that Cortona proposed removing from the site.

Figure 31: This drawing depicts the place as Cortona envisioned its use by Rome’s inhabitants. The place is represented as being larger and more open than the neighboring architecture would allow. It would seem that to construct this drawing a bent sectional datum was used, and the neighboring buildings to the southeast of Santa Maria della Pace were imagined to not exist.

Figure 32:

The facade and place of Santa Maria della Pace.
redesign of the facade of the church of Santa Maria della Pace, 1656. This is an important analogy because Cortona was only commissioned to redesign the church’s facade but ended up designing an urban place too. In numerous ways Boullée’s scheme is identical to Cortona’s. Cortona’s facade is represented in plan by a hemispherical figure, one that looks very similar to Boullée’s planimetric projection of the atlas facade, (fig. 28); Cortona’s baroque facade projected into the street significantly more than the prior facade did, (fig. 29); and, to create an adequate urban void to surround the church’s new entrance neighboring buildings were selectively demolished, (fig. 30). It is also important that drawing, as a mode of architectural thought, is what led to Cortona’s proposal that the neighboring buildings be removed. Cortona uses existing surveys of Rome to first draw the buildings neighboring Santa Maria della Pace in plan. Once he had drawn the existing buildings in tact and as they existed before his redesign, he very selectively, and with surgical precision, decided where and how to incise the buildings so that an urban void could be created. As a final step to this architectural process Cortona drew the plan as he envisioned the end result: with the church’s new baroque facade in place and uniformly dashed lines signifying the removal of neighboring buildings and the invention of his urban place, (fig. 31). It might be said that this kind of architectural reasoning is one in which bearing witness to one event must take place before the invention of another. This is to say that, as evidenced by the drawings, Cortona could only invent the removal of those buildings neighboring Santa Maria della Pace after having witnessed their existence through their planimetric representation in an earlier drawing.

Boullée’s drawings of the redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi are to be read through an identical discursive tradition. He first drew the Plan du premier étage in which the temple-front facade had a single row of columns and the neighboring buildings were drawn in tact and as they existed before the redesign. I assert that Boullée considered this scheme too limiting in the amount of urban void remaining at the building’s new entrance. In subsequent
plan drawings, like the *Plan du rez-de-chaussée*, two rows of columns can be seen defining the library’s temple-front facade and the neighboring buildings—now that they have been witnessed graphically—have been notated in uniformly dashed lines to signify their proposed removal from the site. Boullée takes this mode of architectural intellection one step further to recognize that the wall nearly fifty meters in length created after the removal of these neighboring buildings could not remain bare, and would benefit greatly from an urban *embellissement* in the form of a public fountain flanked by two Atlases and a celestial sphere depicting astral symbols of the autumn harvest.

Boullée’s deployment of an architectural design sensibility that mimics Cortona’s at Santa Maria della Pace some one hundred years earlier is unique. Boullée is nearing the end of his life when he completes the drawings for the royal library and he has never done anything like this before. He designed only a handful of buildings with real sites; he never designed on a site that had preexisting building on it; he never drew a single project as many as three times; he never sought to publish a bound volume of text and drawings for a single project; and he never designed a facade depicting allegorical figures nor a celestial sphere. The redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi was the singularly unique project in Boullée’s oeuvre and the atlas facade, as it would have acted to frame an urban *place* and house a public fountain, was the singularly unique moment of design in the library project.

How can this singularly unique moment be unpacked? First, it can be shown that Boullée often generated architectural designs that could be traced through his prior works. The allegorical frieze, the sculptural niche, the multiplication of Classical elements, the coffered barrel vault, these are all architectural design elements Boullée used many times over. It was mentioned earlier that in the context of the royal library project the temple-front facade and the portal facade derive from Boullée’s slightly earlier design of a public library, (fig. 35). An addendum
at the end of this document explores Boullée’s reuse of architectural elements more fully but for now it will suffice to say that such architectural design elements as those mentioned above appear in almost all of Boullée’s projects. What is not seen by looking to any of Boullée’s prior projects is the Atlases nor the celestial sphere. One might reasonably wonder, where did these elements come from?

The majority of Boullée’s architectural designs were conceived without a site. In doing this Boullée afforded himself certain liberties necessary to design the spectacular and the sublime. The problems that most architects encounter are precisely those that Boullée avoided: site constraints and cause-and-effect relationships. While Boullée clearly desired more empty space in front of the library’s entrance so that his temple-front facade could be more effectively located in the urban fabric and a potential viewer could adequately engage the facade at a distance, this was not something that the architect could remedy through the adjustment of a perspectival position in drawn presentations of the project. What he had to do was remove the existing buildings opposite the library’s entrance. It might be seen that Boullée did not so much envision the place as part of his design as he did invent it after recognizing that moving the library’s entrance from Rue Richelieu to Rue Colbert would require him to do so.

If the urban place was something Boullée had to design as a result of relocating the library’s entrance, how did he go about designing it and embellishing it appropriately? As it has been argued in previous sections, he looked to his contemporaries and listened to their admonitions. So what happened? The aging architect embellished a place with a public fountain because the most vocal and influential architectural critics in Paris at the time said he should; he looked to Rome to conceive of how and through what means to execute his ideas most effectively; and unlike any project before this, he found precedents that were outside his own body of work. This is why my reading of the atlas facade as being located opposite the library’s entrance and

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79. See “Addendum No. 4: A selection from Boullée’s Oeuvre” on page 199 to see Boullée’s design vocabulary as it manifests throughout the architect’s work.
intended to house a public fountain is reasonable: it is a non-canon act of design—formally and conceptually—located within a non-canon project. Whether or not one believes that the atlas facade was to house a fountain opposite the library’s entrance, the facade undoubtedly constitutes a departure from Boullée’s own design rhetoric. It is clearly something different and as of yet scholarship has not contextualized it as such. The work undertaken in this thesis positions the atlas facade within Boullée’s redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi in a manner that announces it as something different and unique.

It might be now that a reintroduction of Pier Vittorio Aureli’s reading of Aldo Rossi’s introduction to Boullée’s *Essai* is warranted. The atlas facade is Boullée’s moment of exalted rationalism. Aureli offers an interpretation of Boullée’s work in which Boullée was outlining a city comprised of enclosed and isolated urban spaces. Aureli argues that the spaces Boullée conceived were so enormous that each building typology constituted its own public space. My reading of Boullée’s redesign of the royal library differs significantly from the design narrative presented by Aureli but nonetheless aligns with Aureli’s interest in Rossi’s exalted rationalism. The Bibliothèque du Roi marks the first time that Boullée actually designs architecture and the city as a complex negotiation among different and sometimes opposed publics, spatial types, and formal solutions to problems as diverse as personal hygiene and political revolution. The atlas facade should be seen not as something Boullée designed so much as it was something he was forced to invent under the circumstances unique to this commission. The atlas facade has embedded within it a number of unique and radical propositions and the drawing depicting it should be historicized in a way that makes this known.
Conclusion

Boullée is no longer beholden to his status as a visionary paper-architect. His redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi provided the opportunity to reread him as a practitioner invested in remedying the shortcomings of Enlightenment-era Paris through acts of architectural design. The architect has been contextualized among (not alongside) his contemporaries and has been brought into numerous discussions about the design of built form in Paris at the end of the eighteenth century.

The conclusion to “Part Two: Generative Historiography” will unfold in two parts. The first part will summarize the new historical narrative produced in the preceding sections that contextualize Boullée as a practitioner in late-eighteenth-century Paris. The second part will look back at the generative logics governing my historical research. I will look at the framework within which my research took place as a platform from which to legitimize and conduct additional research into architecture’s history.
A Registration of Revolutionary Events

Contextualizing a close reading of Boullée’s drawings for the redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi resulted in a new understanding of the architect’s role in architectural discourse at the end of the eighteenth century. It is now clear that Boullée not only read the work of critics like Marc-Antoine Laugier and Voltaire but sought means to actively respond to their concerns through the design of a public fountain directly outside the Bibliothèque du Roi. Reading Boullée’s urban place through the lens of existing scholarship targeting the work of a practitioner like Pierre Patte or Claude-Nicolas Ledoux allows us to credibly situate the architect within ongoing debates about the practice of architecture in the late-eighteenth century. Learning that Boullée made direct reference to Raphael’s School of Athens in his perspective drawing of the royal library’s reading room and that he might have emulated Pietro da Cortona’s redesign of the facade of Santa Maria della Pace shows that Boullée was actively engaging Roman precedents. Boullée took the admonition of a critic like Marc-Antoine Laugier literally when Laugier wrote, “We must go to Rome to learn the best taste of fountains.” Boullée’s redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi has not been a part of these ongoing debates because his atlas facade has remained one of three alternatives facilitating entry into the library. I have demonstrated that liberating Boullée’s atlas facade from its current status allows the entirety of the redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi to participate in a new historical narrative.

Beyond the scope of this thesis there are other historical narratives that Boullée’s project
can influence. Earlier it was noted that both Boullée’s obituary from 1799 and the Notice sur la vie et les travaux d’Étienne-Louis Boullée from 1801 mentioned the redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi among his most memorable projects. It is remarkable that in the years between 1785 and 1799 Boullée’s redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi was appropriated by his contemporaries to symbolize one of the French Revolution’s greatest outcomes: the founding of the Bibliothèque Nationale. Both the obituary and the Notice also tell us that a model for Boullée’s project was exhibited. Precisely when this model was constructed, where it was exhibited, and whether or not it depicted the urban place and atlas facade opposite the library’s new entrance on Rue Colbert all remain unknown. Boullée’s redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi was renamed to represent the newly established Bibliothèque Nationale and produces a rare instance of architectural design bracketing the French Revolution. In an article titled “Researching Revolutionary Architecture” Anthony Vidler writes, “If the only monument remaining from the Revolution was the empty Champ de Mars, an open field, then this was not only a field outside Paris but also a field of historical investigation. History that has generally stopped before 1789 or begun after 1799, in the belief that everything between was in ferment or was never built, has now to be rewritten.” The scholarship that will act to define Boullée’s library project in its transformation from Bibliothèque du Roi to Bibliothèque Nationale will write an historical narrative occupying the time between 1785 and 1799. The earliest biographies on Boullée positioned him as one of three revolutionary architects, but Vidler tells us the task of contemporary scholarship is not to ask how architects like Boullée can be considered revolutionary, but rather to ask, “…to what extent did their work after 1789 register the influence of revolutionary events?” I have tried to position Boullée’s redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi not as a revolutionary project but one that registers the influence of revolutionary events.


82. Ibid.
Architecture History’s Theories and Methods

The historical narrative presented in the preceding pages requires the precedent findings of a close reading of Boullée’s eighteenth-century architectural drawings in which the atlas facade is not accepted as one of three facades providing entry into the redesigned Bibliothèque du Roi but one acting to frame an urban *place* and house a public fountain opposite the library’s new entrance.

The urban *place* and fountain at the entrance to the royal library open Boullée’s project to debates about the emergence of a new public sphere in the eighteenth century; the role of the city in architectural design; and the argumentative logics governing architectural thought. Boullée has also been positioned as a practitioner, and though he did not see this project realized, the drawings and his text in the *Mémoire* evidence an urge to see one of his final designs built.

What kind of registered effects does a new historical narrative for Boullée’s redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi have on architecture history? Daniel Abramson recently investigated why scholars have taken an interest in the unbuilt works of historical figures like Boullée, Piranesi, Ledoux and others. He notes that these architects’ rise to popularity was during the third quarter of the twentieth century and while active interest in these historical figures has resulted in copious scholarship, the schism between built and unbuilt works of architecture has received relatively little attention in architectural history.83 The unbuilt and the prophetic are not the same thing and Boullée’s redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi, unlike many of his prior projects, exists in the realm of the unbuilt. Abramson tells us that this may not be a bad thing, even though the unbuilt is sometimes framed historiographically as lacking, being insufficient, or as having ideas which remain unrealized. It is true that although Boullée intended for his redesign of the royal library to be built, it never was. Does this mean that the architectural ideas remain unrealized or

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Boullée's unbuilt place de la Bibliothèque du Roi à la Rue Colbert.
void of historiographic significance?

It was stated earlier that although architects are often credited with having built buildings this is not what architects do. Architecture's practitioners draw representations of buildings in design studios and in doing so they do not directly labour over the objects of their thought. In “Translations from Drawing to Building” Robin Evans noted that, “What comes out [in architectural drawing] is not always the same as what goes in... Architecture has nevertheless been thought of as an attempt at maximum preservation in which both meaning and likeness are transported from idea through drawing to building with minimum loss.”84 The scholarship surrounding Boullée's redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi evidences that meaning and likeness are difficult to trace, even in their transportation from idea to drawing.

The absence of interdisciplinary knowledge among those who make drawings and those who read drawings is what Evans addresses and it is the absence of interdisciplinary knowledge that produced the fodder for this thesis. I have enacted two scenarios—a close reading and the invention of a new historical narrative—evidencing that the ideas which went into Boullée’s eighteenth-century drawings is not what was brought out by twentieth-century scholars. Evans reminds us that drawing in architecture is not illocutionary and that the syntactical deployment of graphic vocabularies in architectural drawing does not constitute the action for which it speaks. In Boullée’s Plan du rez-de-chaussée he deployed a sophisticated but commonly used set of notational languages. Black poché, red poché and uniformly dashed lines all spoke to different architectural operations but the deployment of those notational languages did not constitute the operations for which they spoke. In the case of the unbuilt the transportation of meaning and likeness from idea through drawing to building is completely lost. Visiting Rue Colbert today confirms this as Boullée’s scheme was never realized and the site has retained many of its eighteenth-century formal characteristics, (fig. 37). Nonetheless, there is

still cause to read and reread drawings. Boullée did not write in his *Essai* nor his *Mémoire* that he envisioned an urban *place* and public fountain outside the newly situated entrance to the Bibliothèque du Roi. Textual nor built evidence speak to the atlas facade’s intended location nor function. To discover these components of the proposal and to formulate an historical investigation based upon these discoveries, the close reading of drawings was a necessary precursor.

Drawings that articulate explicit changes to our built environment make architecture unique. Boullée’s redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi has been featured within architectural discourse for the past three quarters of a century. This thesis marks the first time that scholarship has recognized Boullée’s *place* and accompanying fountain. I have shown that Boullée not only drew the *place* and the fountain but wrote the words “*place*” and “*fontaine*” on the drawings that have been published numerous times in the twentieth century and have been available to anyone with internet access since 2007. This thesis has produced a body of historical research that architecture history has thus far been blind to. The evidence is there, it is simply that we have not looked in the correct places nor through the correct lenses. Looking beyond the boundaries of the delineated lines of scholarly sight we might find that exciting discoveries lay directly in front of us. By simply recalibrating our focus these discoveries become plainly visible.
Afterword
This is a thesis of what might be called “structural analysis of architectural drawings.” Writing of the difference between structural analysis and the serials arts, Umberto Eco wrote, “The fundamental goal of serial thought is to make the codes evolve historically and to discover new ones, and not to return progressively toward the original generative Code (the structure). Serial thought envisions the production of history, and not the rediscovery beneath history of the intemporal forms of all possible communication.”¹ The recurring affirmation of a twentieth-century allegory of Boullée’s redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi is due to serial thought. Conversely, the structural analysis of Boullée’s drawings, as choreographed by me in this thesis, allowed for the rediscovery of an architectural project beneath histories already written. Identifying the atlas facade’s planimetric representation opposite the library’s entrance; contextualizing the vestibule fragments; using eighteenth-century notational languages discursively in the twenty-first century; identifying the Colbert Street Fountain; and identifying the words place and fontaine on the plan drawings all constitute new discoveries. When these discoveries are read aggregatively they provide the syntax for the invention of a new historical narrative defining Boullée’s project.

This thesis has tried to celebrate the rediscovery of Boullée’s redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi beneath histories already written and the contributory methods of research. My hope is that the discoveries presented in this thesis will require that the prior narrative governing Boullée’s unbuilt library cede its position and a new narrative assume its place.

Addendum No. 1: The Three Projects

This addendum presents every extant drawing that contributed to Boullée’s redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi. The drawings are grouped into three projects, each project is dated 1785-1788 and owned by the Bibliothèque Nationale. The three projects are Projet pour la bibliothèque royale de la rue Richelieu, Restauration de la bibliothèque nationale and Mémoire sur les moyens de procurer à la bibliothèque du Roi les avantages qui ce monument exige. Although some of these drawings appear on larger sheets of drawing paper alongside others, they are presented here independently. Every drawing is presented at a 1:10 scale.

Note: The call numbers, titles, and dimensions listed for each drawing are copied from the catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale as it was in September 2016.
Projet pour la bibliothèque royale de la rue Richelieu

Mémoire sur les moyens de procurer...

Restauration de la bibliothèque Nationale
What you get in the archive can be very different than what you get from the archive. In this addendum I acknowledge three instances of discrepancy between digital representations of Boullée’s work and the work as it exists in the archive of the Cabinet des estampes et de la photographie of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. This addendum aims to evidence a need for historiographic practices that pursue rediscoveries beneath histories already written. This addendum also affords insight to those moments that led to the deconstructive tone of this thesis.
The reproduction of one of Boulée’s perspective drawings, available via Gallica, the Bibliothèque Nationale’s digitized archive, is markedly different than the corresponding drawing that is held by the library’s archive in Paris. The physical drawing is mounted on museum board and on this museum board are two written titles. One title associates the drawing with, “…l’agrandissement de la bibliothèque du Roi” while the other title associates it with, “…l’agrandissement de la bibliothèque nationale.” In another instance, a title assigned Boullée’s atlas facade drawing does not appear in the drawing’s representation on Gallica. The title of the drawing that is viewable in the physical archive contains the word “nationale.” Close inspection reveals that all but the final “e” of “nationale” was written on a small piece of paper fixed on top of the larger piece of museum board that the drawing is now mounted to. I hypothesize that the “e” below “national” belonged to the word “royale” and that the small piece of paper with the word “national” was mounted on top of the existing title after the drawing’s signified meaning had been transferred from the Bibliothèque Royale to the Bibliothèque Nationale. The manner in which I draw through the second instance of discrepancy might be called a “creative reconstruction” in a similar spirit to that of the vestibule fragments appearing on page 58 of this thesis. In the example that follows the creative reconstruction is textual, not graphic. A third instance of discrepancy evidences the impact that high-quality photographic reproductions have in the research of historical artifacts.

Acknowledging discrepancies like those outlined in this addendum is important because they
The (physical) archive, accessed August 2016.
Bibliothèque Nationale, Département des estampes et de la photographie, 58 Rue de Richelieu, 75002 Paris, France.

The (digital) archive, image posted by BnF on 15 October 2007.
http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b77010108/f9.item.
r=bibliothèque+du+roi,+boullee.langEN
speak to the historicization of Boullée’s project in ways yet unexplored by historians. In the main part of this thesis I mentioned that Boullée’s redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi was appropriated by his contemporaries as the redesign of the Bibliothèque Nationale in the years after the French Revolution. Boullée’s drawings reflect this change in the project’s transferred meaning and coincidentally, it is these portions of Boullée’s drawings that have been excluded from the digitized and most widely available versions of Boullée’s project. It is not trivial that Boullée’s drawing of the reading room, the most famous drawing belonging this project and among the most well-known drawings Boullée ever produced, has two titles. The drawing is dated 1785-88 and there can be little doubt that it was produced before the revolution. It is remarkable that it bears one title speaking to the Bibliothèque du Roi and another speaking to the Bibliothèque Nationale, the latter not existing until 1792.

Lastly, and in the spirit of a thesis that has directed the entirety of its focus toward the design of a library, I have included a bit a light reading in the form of an article that appeared in the New York Times on 20 November 2016 titled “Victoria’s Secrets” and written by Julia Baird. It is an Op. Ed. piece in the same spirit as this thesis.
The innermost red outline marks the edge of this drawing as it appears online, via Gallica, where it was published in 2007. This marks the outermost edge of "content" that is accessible to a viewer not located in the Bibliothèque Nationale's physical archive in Paris. The outermost red outline marks the extremities of the object that is Boullée's atlas facade drawing.
This exploration takes the title from the Boullée’s atlas facade drawing (located at center of the area of blue museum board below the Atlases), and enacts a "creative reconstruction" of its content and means of fabrication. During my visit to the archives at the Bibliothèque Nationale I inquired about the status of the blue museum board the drawing at left, (fig. 6), is currently mounted to and when this title might have been written and subsequently augmented. The archivists with whom I spoke could not speak to the drawing’s history beyond the early 2000’s. My interest in the history of the title assigned to this drawing is based in how it evidences the physical labor which might have gone into recasting Boullée’s redesign of the royal library as that of the national library. If my hypothesis is correct and the fragment of paper with "national" written on it covers the word "royale" then there is now a manifestation of the formerly abstract efforts that went toward translating Boullée’s project from one signified entity to another.
Victoria’s Secrets

BY JULIA BARD

The author of the forthcoming "Victoria: The Queen" and a contributing opinion writer.

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

O work in the Royal Archives at Windsor Castle in England is one of the most delicious prizes for a researcher. Climbing the steps to the Round Tower, where you can read centuries-old correspondence between monarchs and their ministers, unite ribbons binding intimate family records and feel the parchment cracking in your fingers, is viscerally thrilling.

You are also, at every stage, reminded of the privilege it is. You must pass through layers of security, dress appropriately and use only "non-professional" pencils. Visitors must expect to be escorted to the bathroom and searched before departure.

It’s rarefied, elevated. Lofty. And extremely frustrating.

Established by King George V in 1914, the archives are a private collection, with no public right of access. Their records are exempt from freedom of information laws and the rules that have traditionally allowed for the release of most government documents after 30 years.

Even for highly qualified scholars, it is difficult to gain entry to the Royal Archives, which cover two and a half centuries and hold roughly two million documents. An unspecified number of members of the royal family is understandable, but why must those of monarchs long dead remain shaded?

My recent request to study in the Round Tower were repeatedly rebuffed — despite my credentials as a writer working on a forthcoming biography of Queen Victoria and a clear commitment to good scholarship. After several attempts and many months, my request was rejected — on the grounds that I had not written a biography or royal history before.

It was not until Quentin Bryce, a former governor general (Queen Elizabeth II’s representative in Australia), pressed my cause that I was finally admitted. Having first been crushed, I was jubilant — but what of the many other worthy historians who happened not to have an influential supporter? After my senior archivist read my doctoral dissertation and selected the Royal Archives are well known among academics and historians, many of whom have encountered delay and censorship by the archives’ custodians. Attempts to control what is published have led to protracted disputes.

Royal archivists hide dirty linen from view.

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While the success of TV dramas like “The Crown” and “Victoria” proves the enduring popular appeal of fictional accounts of the British royal family, historians are still fighting submarine battles to tell the unenclosed truth. And the censors can be capricious.

“On one occasion something was taken out of my Queen Mother book,” says the biographer Hugo Vickers — only for the information to appear later in another book. “That made me cross.”

When writing a book about Victoria’s daughter Louise, Lucinda Hawksley was warned off even trying the archives by other authors. “You will come up against a brick wall,” she was told. Princess Louise, an artist and a beauty, married a man assumed to be gay and enjoyed a storied love life; her lovers are believed to have included her brother-in-law and a prominent sculptor said to have died in her presence.

When Ms. Hawksley requested Louise’s file, she was simply told, it was closed. She thinks this is purely censorship — and that Louise, famously candied, would have been “horrified” at this Bowdlerization.

The purpose of my book on Victoria was to hack through the thickets of clichés around the great queen: that she was an implacable puritan, a harsh mother who hated her children, a reluctant monarch, a puppet and a creature of the men around her, and a widow who refused to rule. But what I learned through my interactions with the Royal Archives was that their control of vital records make it hard for historians not to hew to the myths.

I have great respect for the archival librarians, who are calm, rigorous and exacting, and I was very grateful for the opportunity to study there. But after my senior archivist read my dissertation and selected the Royal Archives are well known among academics and historians, many of whom have encountered delay and censorship by the archives’ custodians. Attempts to control what is published have led to protracted disputes.

Still, there is hope.

One historian who has researched in the archives (but wished not to be named for fear of repercussions) reports signs of “more openness” at Windsor since the appointment in 2014 of the respected Oliver Urrughar Irvine as the royal librarian. But there is a long way to go. The Times of London is campaigning to see documents relating to correspondence between the royal family and the Nazi regime before World War II.

“Without compelling individual reasons otherwise,” a Times editorial argued, “there should be a systematic presumption that royal documents will be made public. Royal history is British history.” And not just British history but the history of the Commonwealth, and of the countries of the former British Empire.

It is as though the archives’ keepers have taken too literally the words of the Victorian constitution’s first prime minister, Walter Bagehot: “We must not let in day-light upon magic.” He meant only that the queen must be kept above politics, not that she should be kept in ignorance.

By rationing access and suppressing evidence, the Royal Archives have accomplished the reverse of their intention. In the absence of the full historical truth about the British monarchy, sensationalism, suspicion and spin have reigned for too long.
geles, which is home to the largest undocumented population in the country. Esmeralda came to the United States at age 6. She told me she was scared, especially because she is one of about 700,000 undocumented young people who registered in the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, which offers short-term protection from deportation as well as the right to work. Mr. Trump has repeatedly vowed to repeal it.

To apply for the program, undocumented youths had to give their names, birth dates and addresses to the very government that Mr. Trump claims to be tough, but you’re not going anywhere. We are not going anywhere.”

The fear of the first days after the election has turned into resilience and determination, all the while knowing that under President Trump, the worst-case scenario, our nightmare, may prove to be reality. The people who devised anti-immigrant laws (Kris Kobach, the secretary of state of Kansas who helped write the “show me your papers” law in Arizona), pushed for those laws in Congress (Jeff Sessions of Alabama, the leading immigration hard-liner in the Senate) and enforced those laws (Joe Arpaio of Arizona, charged by federal prosecutors with contempt for defying a judge’s orders to stop targeting Latinos) have been or are likely to be given prominent roles in the Trump administration.

Though there are a lot of questions about what President Trump will do when it comes to immigration, I have a few questions directed at my fellow Americans.

How many more Rich Fischers are out there allies who will stand up for undocumented immigrants?

How many local school districts will declare themselves sanctuaries for immigrant families? How many police actions against
Addendum No. 3: Montclos and the Vestibule Fragments

In this addendum I critically interrogate Jean-Marie Pérouse de Montclos’ publication of Boullé’s plan drawings in 1969 and again in 1994. The source material contributing to the opinions outlined in this addendum appears on pages 241-9 and in figure 96 in *Etienne-Louis Boullée*, 1969 and on pages 257-8 and in figure 97 in *Etienne-Louis Boullée*, 1994.

*Note: I have reached out to Montclos for comment on the content of this thesis and his role in architecture history’s twentieth-century resurrection of Boullée. He has not yet returned my phone call.*
The intent of this addendum is not to discredit Montclos nor the pioneering work he did by contextualizing Boullée for twentieth-century scholarship. Rather, the intent is to make evident the challenges that accompany reading architectural drawings and offering an interpretation of their content to scholarly audiences. Montclos’ *Etienne-Louis Boullée* publication from 1969 is nearly three hundred pages long and attempts much more than a close reading of the drawings outlining Boullée’s redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi. My grievances with scholarship targeting Boullée’s library project are not so much directed at an historian like Montclos, but those of us who fail to adequately evaluate canonical works for their contemporary legibility. I can imagine that in 1969, almost forty years before the Bibliothèque Nationale digitized Boullée’s drawings, Montclos’ publication had a monumental impact on Boullée scholarship. The book’s one hundred and fifty-five black and white photographic reproductions on glossy photo paper would be considered substandard today, but the publication of these drawings constituted a considerable contribution to available scholarship surrounding Boullée’s drawings in the late 1960’s. Nonetheless, the apparatuses through which scholars conduct their research and communicate their findings has changed dramatically over four decades. Like this thesis, this addendum highlights the effects these changing apparatuses have on scholarship.

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Figure 1:
The image above this caption is a reproduction of the *Plan du rez-de-chaussée* as it appears in Montclos’ *Etienne-Louis Boullée*, 1969. The image below this caption is a bibliographic citation appearing in Montclos’ book some forty pages before the *Plan du rez-de-chaussée* and functions as the written description of the drawing represented in figure 96.

— Ha 56, pl. 32 (fig. 96). « Plan du rez-de-chaussée » en grand de la première variante, avec un vestibule construit au-dessus de la rue de Richelieu. Légèrement détérioré. 117 × 44.
There are eight extant plan drawings belonging to Boullée’s 1785 redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi. Only two of these plan drawings have been featured in publications on the architect. Montclos published the *Plan du rez-de-chaussée* from the *Restauration de la bibliothèque nationale* iteration of Boullée’s project in 1969 and subsequently published reproductions of the same drawing in 1974 and 1994. Helen Rosenau published the *Plan du premier étage* from the *Restauration de la bibliothèque nationale* iteration of Boullée’s project in *Boullée and Visionary Architecture*, 1976. In this addendum my attention will be directed toward Montclos’ publications from 1969 and 1994. What I would like to highlight are the methods by which Montclos contextualized historical architectural drawings through written analysis.

I will frame my grievances both textually and graphically. In the accompanying pages I have reproduced written descriptions belonging to two of Boullée’s drawings for the redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi from Montclos’ publication *Etienne-Louis Boullée*, 1969. The excerpts are from “Annexe II: Inventaire des écrits et des dessins de Boullée” and appear on page 244 and 249 respectively. I have also reproduced figure 96 from the same publication which appears on an unnumbered page of an insert composed of black and white photographic reproductions of Boullée’s drawings.

Montclos writes in the *Annexe* that the plan drawing featured in figure 96 of his book is accompanied by a “…vestibule construit au-dessus de la rue de Richelieu,” (fig. 1). Later, within the same appendix, Montclos identifies another vestibule in a plan drawing belonging to a different iteration of Boullée’s project. This second plan drawing is not reproduced in *Etienne-Louis Boullée*, 1969, and Montclos calls this undocumented fragment a “retombe.” He additionally specifies that it is a planimetric representation of the elevation drawing depicting the portal facade. If we position ourselves as readers of Montclos’ book sometime shortly after its publication, or any time before 2007 when the twenty-six drawings comprising Boullée’s redesign were published digitally, we can imagine it being difficult to imagine what
Figure 2
these fragments belonging to the second plan drawing look like because the drawing which they accompany had not, until 2007, been published. Any reader who had not visited the Département des cartes et plans of the Bibliothèque Nationale’s François Mitterand branch—a different branch of the Bibliothèque Nationale than the one holding the other twenty-two drawings belonging to Boullée’s redesign—would not only be unaware that three iterations of Boullée’s project existed, but they would have struggled to know what the various drawings comprising these iterations looked like without having seen them. It is not unreasonable to believe that a reader would be all but unable to speculatively reason that the vestibule from the Plan du rez-de-chaussée of the Restauration iteration was identical to that in the unpublished Plan du rez-de-chaussée of the Projet iteration. Montclos is offering the graphic reproduction of one vestibule while writing elsewhere that a different vestibule appears in another drawing and that this second vestibule, belonging to a drawing that has not been reproduced graphically in his book nor anywhere else, corresponds to a planimetric representation of the portal facade.

In summary, the navigability of Montclos’ book is not easy. It would seem to me that the content of the vestibule fragments, as drawings among others contributing to Boullée’s proposal, would be best situated among Montclos’ description of the project in the section titled “Le projet pour la bibliothèque royale de la rue de Richelieu” appearing on pages 166-7 of Etienne-Louis Boullée, 1969. These are the pages that the text comprising the caption of figure 96 instructs the reader to visit, (fig. 1). The caption for figure 96 does not direct readers to the appendix in which Montclos acknowledges the content and size of the associated drawing, nor does it direct readers to the part of the appendix in which Montclos mentions that another plan drawing, one belonging to Boullée’s Projet, depicts a vestibule that represents the portal facade and could have been laid over the library’s entrance to articulate the redesign Boullée proposed. The appendix, as framed by Montclos, is a listing of bibliographic information originally produced for these drawings by the Bibliothèque Nationale. Because
As it relates only to a comprehensive understanding of Boullée’s redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi, it might be said that Montclos should have published a photographic reproduction like the one reconstructed above with the correct vestibule fragment located on the Plan du rez-de-chaussée from the Projet iteration of Boullée’s redesign. Return to page 61 to see this plan drawing and the related Plan du premier étage as they have been documented by the Bibliothèque Nationale.

The passage above, taken from page 249 of Montclos’ book reads, “Plan du rez-de-chaussée. Pen and black ink, brown, rose and green wash. Without the layovers, portico with double colonnade like Ha 56, pl. 39 and no place on the rue Colbert. The first layover is a drawing of the place on rue Colbert; the second, a drawing of a closed vestibule instead of the portico: this last variant corresponds to the elevation Ha 56, pl. 37.” Montclos’ tone and manner of describing the vestibule fragments or “retombes” makes me believe that he was fully aware of their planimetric cutting datums and how they would have appropriately been placed on top of Boullée’s drawings. It is also perhaps worth noting that Montclos does not mention the second fragment in the case of the plan drawings belonging to the Projet. We know that there are two fragments because of existing documentation by the Bibliothèque Nationale.
the two drawings I have referenced here belong to different iterations of the redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi and are additionally held by different departments within the Bibliothèque Nationale and at different physical locations, the bibliographic listings within Montclos’ book are five pages apart and do not accompany the drawings that they reference. This mode of presentation would seem to conflate the meaning of Boullée’s drawings as it dually relates to an architectural redesign of an eighteenth-century library and artifactual objects that have been subject to two hundred years of archival practices within the Bibliothèque Nationale.

Finally, I would like to note that Montclos’ presentation of Boullée’s project belongs to a genre of scholarship that I am working against in this thesis. It is perhaps clear that Montclos’ formatting of text, image and bibliographic referents is different than the formatting of identical components within this thesis document. Montclos presents a written synopses of Boullée’s redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi on pages 166-7 of Etienne-Louis Boullée, 1969 in “Chapitre VI: Le Museum et La Bibliothèque.” Later, he offers written bibliographic descriptions of the associated drawings in “Annexe II: Inventaire des écrits et des dessins de Boullée.” The written description of the Plan du rez-de-chaussé from the Restauration appearing on page 244 in the appendix is nineteen words long. This written description also includes a reference to figure 96 which appears on an unnumbered page among black and white photographic reproductions located just before the book’s final two sections: “Sources de l’Illustration” and “Table des Noms Cités.” Appearing on page 249 of Montclos’ book is the written description of the Plan du rez-de-chaussée from the Projet for which there is no accompanying figure. The drawing depicted in figure 3 on the adjacent page, with the correct vestibule fragment located over the library’s entrance, would have been a suitable addition to Montclos’ reproductions of Boullée’s drawings.

In the spirit of amicability I wonder if the reconstructed drawing in figure 3 was not included
in Montclos’ book because he did not foresee the vestibule fragments being fixed to the Plan du rez-de-chaussée and could not have possibly imagined one being fixed on top of a portion of another? Montclos’ photographic reproduction of the Plan du rez-de-chaussée from the Restauration version of Boullée’s project depicts a single vestibule fragment in its entirety, (fig. 6). This vestibule fragment is also the one corresponding to the planimetric projection of the portal facade at the rez-de-chaussée (ground floor) level. Had the Bibliothèque Nationale not fixed the vestibule fragments to the larger sheet of drawing paper and had not fixed the rightmost fragment on top of a portion of the leftmost fragment and also not acted to document the drawing in its resulting state, my “creative reconstruction” undertaken in this thesis might not have been necessary. I bring this up because Montclos’ written description of the vestibule in the Plan du rez-de-chaussée from the Projet version of Boullée’s project would seem to suggest that he was fully aware of the differences among planimetric projections. These two points lead me to believe that Montclos participation in the decision to fix the vestibule fragments to the larger Plan du rez-de-chaussée drawing of the Restauration is unlikely. I would posit that his participation in the incorrect documentation of the vestibule fragments within the Projet is also unlikely. Montclos’ probable exclusion from these archival practices is problematic. Fixed to the Plan du rez-de-chaussée and with the right fragment located on top of a portion of the left fragment significantly alters the vestibule fragments and makes them something very different, and much more difficult to comprehend, than they were when Montclos encountered them as loose fragments in the 1960’s. Could it be said that the Plan du rez-de-chaussée of the Restauration, accompanied by loose fragments, of which we only have Montclos’ photography to evidence, is a wholly different object than the drawing that I encounter today, online and through purchased photographic reproductions? At the very least the object encountered by Montclos was plural and the object I encounter today is singular. Is it accurate to say that Montclos and myself are dealing with entirely different projects?
This addendum presents a selection of drawings from Boullée’s oeuvre spanning the years 1777-1791. My primary objective is to demonstrate that both the temple-front facade and the portal facade from the redesign of the Bibliothèque du Roi feature architectural design elements used throughout Boullée’s work. The selection of projects exhibited here are those that relate to civic programs.
La Madeleine, 1777

Basilique, 1781

Opéra au Carrousel, 1777

Palais du Justice, 1781

La Pont de la place Louis XV, 1787

Arc de Triomphe, 1781

Palais National, 1791

Note: The Palais du Justice, 1781 might be seen as a precursor to the Bibliothèque Publique for which the facade was used to create two alternatives for a single facade of the Bibliothèque du Roi.

Note: The design of the Palais National, 1791, features an identical amphitheater to that defining the reading room in the Bibliothèque du Roi. This amphitheater is also barrel-vaulted and features a coffered ceiling.

Note: None of the projects represented here depict architectural features that clearly predate (or result from) the design of the atlas facade in 1785. It is also evident that Boullée deployed a similar set of discursive elements in his architecture. The coffered barrel vault, the Corinthian column, even the ingenious stepped amphitheater framing the reading room of the royal library can be seen again in Boullée's design of a national palace. Also of note is the variety in architectural programs represented here. Despite projects ranging from a church to a national palace and a bridge, Boullée finds use for the same architectural elements and the deployment of similar symbolic rhetorics.
Addendum No. 5: A Walking Tour of Parisian Fountains

“Qu’est que vous faisiez?” My American origins were clear, even with my back turned to the woman who had spoken these words. Before I could say anything she asked again, “What are you doing?”

“This was once a fountain,” I said.

She took a long drag from the cigarette she was smoking. The ash had built up to form a long but brittle stem. She told me that although she had always thought this was a fountain, her suspicions had not been verified until this moment.

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The Colbert Street Fountain is not well-documented in architecture history nor the history of Parisian fountain design. The year during which the Colbert Street Fountain was constructed and its precise physical location on Rue Colbert are critical to this thesis as they give reason to why Boullée thought to design a fountain opposite the entrance of the Bibliothèque du Roi. In an effort to evidence through graphic means of argumentation that the Colbert Street Fountain was one that Jean Beausire—Contrôleur des Bâtiments de Paris in the years between 1684 and 1740—would have overseen the construction of, I decided to document other Parisian fountains from the same era. In August 2016 I photographed eight fountains built between 1671 and 1733. As Google Maps will tell you, the “tour” that I framed for myself takes a minimum 1 hour and 37 minutes to complete on foot.
1. Fontaine de Soubise, 1705
2. Fontaine Maubuée, 1733
3. Fontaine de la Reine, 1732
4. Fontaine Boucherat, 1699
5. Fontaine Trogneux, 1719
6. Fontaine de la Petite-Halle, 1724
7. Fontaine St. Victor, 1671
8. Fontaine de l'Abbaye de St. Germain de Près, 1715
1. Fontaine de Soubise, 1705
2. Fontaine Maubuée, 1733
3. Fontaine de la Reine, 1732

4. Fontaine Boucherat, 1699
5. Fontaine Trogneux, 1719

6. Fontaine de la Petite-Halle, 1724
7. Fontaine St. Victor, 1671

8. Fontaine de l'Abbaye de St. Germain de Près, 1715
Addendum No. 6: Boullée's School of Athens

In this addendum I would like to briefly redirect attention from the composition of human figures populating Raphael's fresco to the architecture they inhabit. The architectural space imagined by Raphael might be seen as having been copied by Boullée when he conceived his design for the Bibliothèque publique sur l’emplacement des ci-devant religieuses Capucines de la place Vendôme, 1784.
Primary Sources


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Secondary Sources


Illustration Credits

Note: As of May 2017 the Bibliothèque Nationale de France has undergone a “renumeration” project that affects all of Boullée’s drawings included in this thesis. Every effort has been made to supply the appropriate and correct credits.
Part One: A Close Reading


Bibliothèque Nationale, Département des Cartes et Plans: 39 (Ge: AA 1999 pl. 1); 40 (Ge: AA 1999 pl. 4).

Bibliothèque Nationale, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie: 6, 10, 11, 12, 25, 29, 30, 33, 34, 35, 47, 48, 59, 60, 61 (Ha-56 Ft 7 pl. 32), 17, 45, 58 (Ha-56 Ft 7 pl. 39 & 40); 15, 49, 50, 60, 61 (Ha-56 Ft 7 pl. 34); 16, 60, 61 (Ha-56 Ft 7 pl. 42); 13, 14, 53, 57 (Ha-56 Ft 7 pl. 33); 19 (Ha-56 Ft 7 pl. 38); 18 (Ha-56 Ft 7 pl. 43); 20 (Ha-56 Ft 7 pl. 36); 4 (Ha-56 Ft 7 pl. 35); 1, 22, 30, 44, 61 (Ha-56 Ft 7 pl. 44); 2, 23, 29, 44, 61 (Ha-56 Ft 7 pl. 46); 5 (Ha-56 Ft 7 pl. 37); 3, 24, 46, 47, 61 (Ha-56 Ft 7 pl. 45); 21 (Ha-56 Ft 4 pl. 15); 56 (HD-1019-2 Ft 6 pl. 39); 44 (IFN-7701011; n.4).


Kyoto University Library, Documents of French Architecture and Topography: 41.

Part Two: Generative Historiography

Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Grafica e oggetti d’arte: 28 (Cod. Chig. P VII, 9, fol. 72); 29 (Cod. Chig. P VII, 9, fol. 71); 30, 34 (Cod. Chig. P VII, 9, fol. 74).

Bibliothèque Nationale, Département des Cartes et Plans: 9 (GE D-5423 pl. 39).

Bibliothèque Nationale, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie: 1, 8, 34 (Ha-56 Ft 7 pl. 32); 17 (Ha-56 Ft 7 pl. 42); 11 (Ha-56 Ft 7 pl. 33); 5 (Ha-56 Ft 7 pl. 36); 11 (Ha-56 Ft 7 pl. 40); 1, 19, 35 (Ha-56 Ft 7 pl. 44); 18, 35 (Ha-56 Ft 7 pl. 46); 1, 6, 7, 13, 27, 36 (Ha-56 Ft 7 pl. 45); 24 (HC-15 Ft 6 pl. 4); 25 (HC-15 Ft 6 pl. 32); 26 (HC-15 Ft 6 pl. 34); 35 (IFN-7701011; n.4).


Google Maps: 10.


The Morgan Library and Museum: 12.

Papiers de Etienne-Louis Boullée, architecte, membre de l’Institut, mort le 17 pluviôse an VII (5 févr. 1799), Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département des manuscrits, Français 9153: 3

Stanza della Segnatura, Palazzi Pontifici, Vatican: 5.

Addendum No. 1: The Three Projects

Bibliothèque Nationale, Département des Cartes et Plans: 2 (Ge: AA 1999 pl. 1); 6 (Ge: AA 1999 pl. 2); 3 (Ge: AA 1999 pl. 3); 1 (Ge: AA 1999 pl. 4).

Bibliothèque Nationale, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie: 8 (Ha-56 Ft 7 pl. 32); 13 (Ha-56 Ft 7 pl. 39); 12 (Ha-56 Ft 7 pl. 40); 9 (Ha-56 Ft 7 pl. 34); 14 (Ha-56 Ft 7 pl. 42); 7
Addendum No. 2: Notes From The Archive

Bibliothèque Nationale, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie: 1; 2, 3, 7 (Ha-56 Ft 7 pl. 36); 4, 5, 6 (Ha-56 Ft 7 pl. 45).

Addendum No. 3: Montclos and the Vestibule Fragments
Bibliothèque Nationale, Département des Cartes et Plans: 3 (Ge: AA 1999 pl. 1).

Bibliothèque Nationale, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie: 2 (Ha-56 Ft 7 pl. 32); 4 (Ha-56 Ft 7 pl. 37); 5 (Ha-56 Ft 7 pl. 39).


Addendum No. 4: A Selection From Boullée’s Oeuvre

Bibliothèque Nationale, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie: 1, 2 (IFN-7701003; n. 2, n. 3); 3, 4 (IFN-7701002; n. 3, n. 7); 5, 6 (IFN-7701012; n. 6, n. 9); 8, 9 (IFN-7701004; n.2, n.4); 7 (IFN-7701008; n.3); 10 (IFN-7701032); 11 (IFN-7701030; n. 2).

Addendum No. 5: A Walking Tour of Parisian Fountains
All images belong to the author.
Addendum No. 6: Boullée's School of Athens

Bibliothèque Nationale, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie: 1 (Ha-56 Ft 7 pl. 36); 3, 5 (IFN-7701011, n. 2, n. 3).

Stanza della Segnatura, Palazzi Pontifici, Vatican: 2, 4.