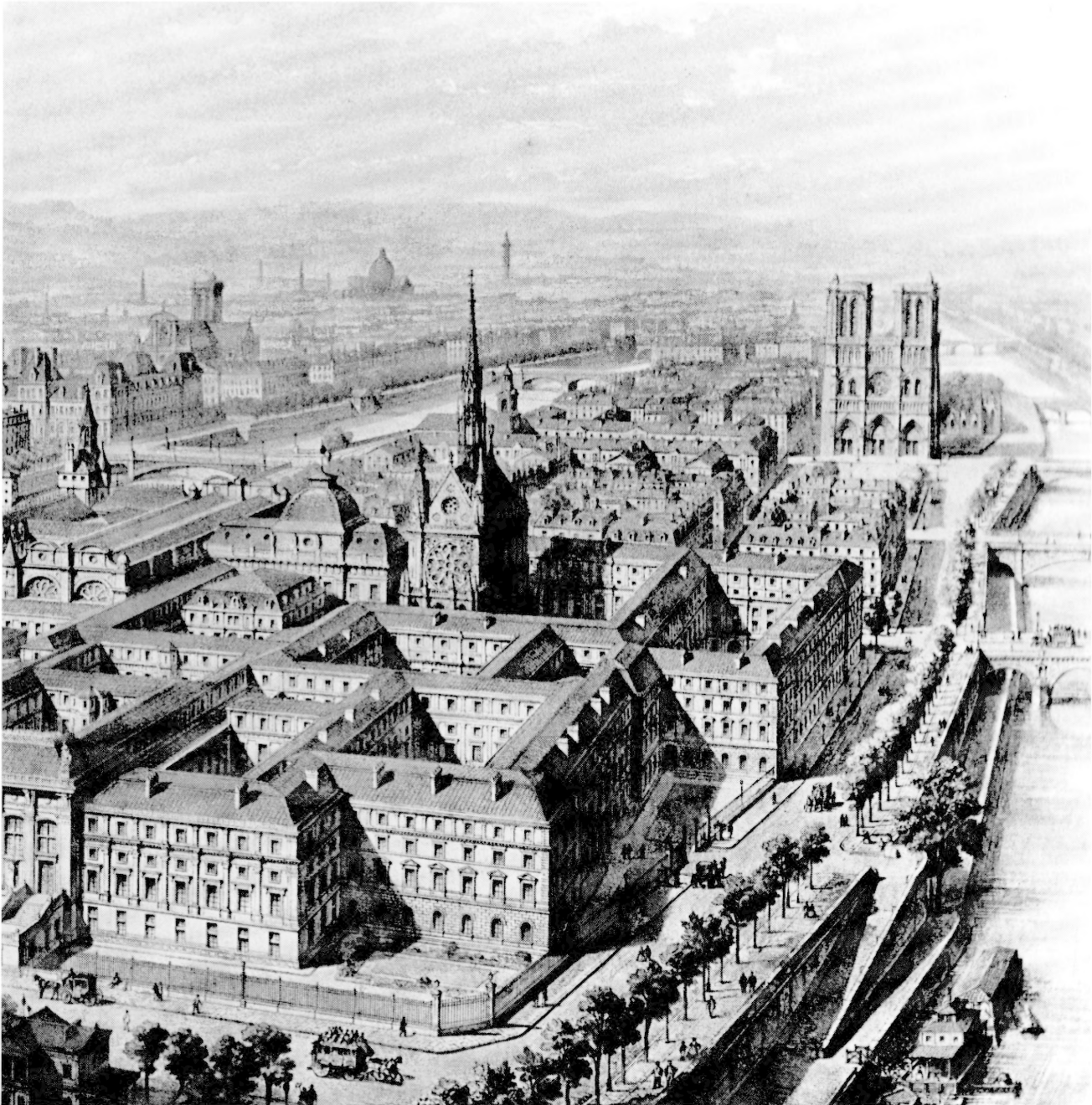




Designing Paris



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Designing Paris

*The Architecture of Duban,
Labrouste, Duc, and Vaudoyer*

David Van Zanten

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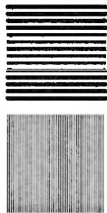
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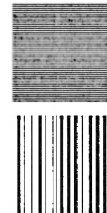
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DESIGNING PARIS**



*In memory of Ann
and for Clara*

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS x

INTRODUCTION xiii

- One* THE STUDENT WORK: THE *ENVOIS* FROM
THE FRENCH ACADEMY IN ROME 2
- Two* THE FORMULATION OF THE APPROACH:
THE THEORY OF
REYNAUD, FORTOUL, AND VAUDOYER 44
- Three* THE FIRST BUILDINGS: THE ECOLE DES BEAUX-ARTS,
BIBLIOTHEQUE SAINTE-GENEVIEVE,
AND CONSERVATOIRE DES ARTS ET METIERS 70
- Four* THE ORGANIZATION
OF THE ARCHITECTURAL PROFESSION 114
- Five* VAUDOYER'S MARSEILLES CATHEDRAL 136
- Six* DUC'S PALAIS DE JUSTICE 176
- Seven* LABROUSTE'S BIBLIOTHEQUE NATIONALE 224

CONCLUSION 247

NOTES 249

BIBLIOGRAPHY 315

INDEX 327

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This book grew out of my experiences in Paris in 1968–69 as a Fulbright scholar from Harvard completing my doctoral dissertation, “The Architectural Polychromy of the 1830’s.” That topic was only tangentially French, and my choice of Paris as a place to pursue it was essentially practical, but once there that extraordinary city and its social and architectural tradition impressed itself forcefully upon my mind. French nineteenth-century architecture became the subject of my research for the next eighteen years.

I had been prepared for Paris by my undergraduate advisor at Princeton, Donald Drew Egbert, the first American historian of Beaux-Arts architecture, and by my uncle, Theodore Young, an architect who was once a designer for John Russell Pope. They had always assumed that France was the center of things.

In Paris I met Neil Levine, now a professor at Harvard and then a fellow Fulbright scholar. He was in Paris to study French modern architecture in general and the extraordinary work of the mid-nineteenth-century designer Henri Labrouste in particular. I was already exploring the work of Labrouste’s generation, that of 1830, but it was through Levine that I perceived the real complexity and beauty of the subject. He made me especially aware of Labrouste and his close friends Félix Duban, Louis Duc, and Léon Vaudoyer and showed me how subtle, complex, and revolutionary were their conceptions of historicism and rationalism. He made it clear that the turn-of-the-century classical Beaux-Arts tradition at its origin in these men’s work was something different and more profound than had been previously pictured. I owe him an incalculable debt: this volume exists because of his ideas, insights, and example.

During that illuminating year in Paris I met the first of a number of European scholars who have been unstintingly kind and helpful: Marcel Brion, advisor to the Fulbright scholars in art history; Mme. Bouleau-Rabaud, then librarian of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, and her able assistant (and soon her successor), Annie Jacques; Jacques Dupont; Karl Hammer; Bruno Foucart; Françoise Bercé; Michel Gallet. I owe them thanks for favors and suggestions of all sorts over the years.

After 1969 I continued my research, focusing increasingly on mid-nineteenth-century France. Mme. Hautecoeur, librarian of the Institut de France, kindly placed me in contact with the Vaudoyer family in its several branches. They were helpful and kind in permitting me to study the drawings and letters of their ancestor and in answering my questions and guiding my research. I express to them a tremendous debt of gratitude.