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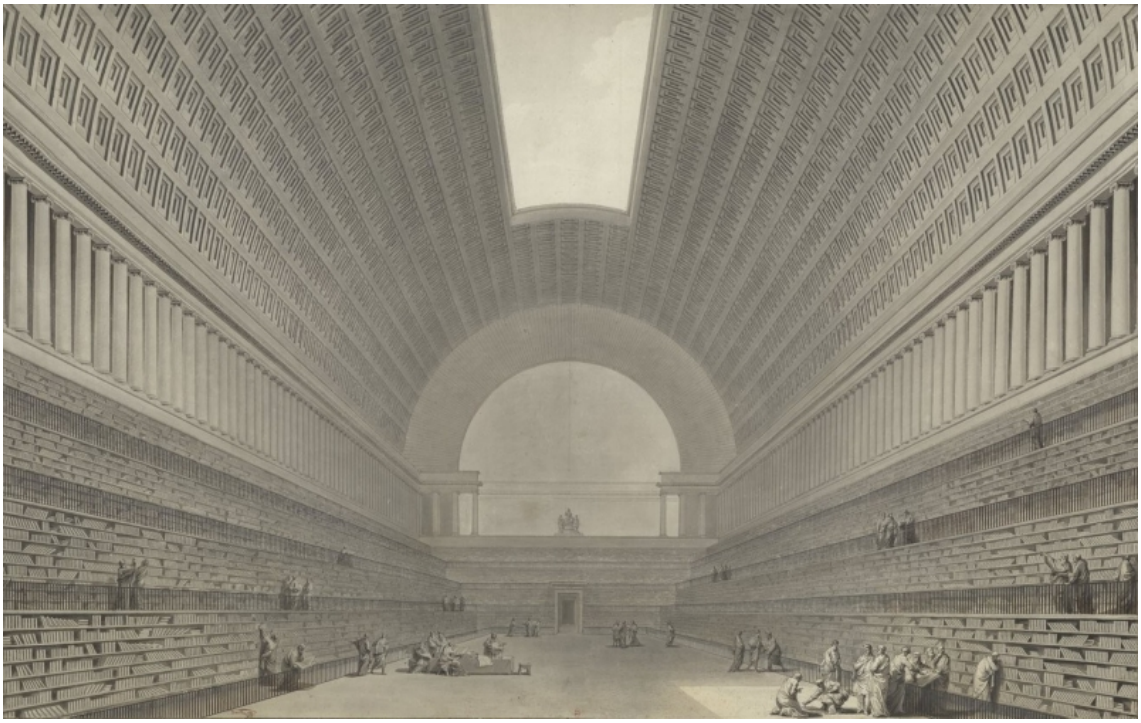
1 Describing his project for the *Bibliothèque du Roi*, a large library in Paris housing the royal collection, French architect Étienne-Louis Boullée (1728-1799) stated his ambition to execute "the sublime conception of Raphael's School of Athens".[1] Indeed, the perspective view of the interior of his proposal features an impressive vault under which men in ancient costume discourse, recalling the philosophers in Raphael's celebrated fresco (Figs. 1-3). The anachronism, here, might appear obvious: figures from the past pace the halls of an architectural project for the future. However, this apparently simple observation is based on a specific vision of historical time that does not necessarily match the designer or his contemporaries' understanding of this picture. The present article will pursue an analysis that interrogates the concept of anachronism – and its validity within different intellectual and perceptual frameworks – by replacing the project within Boullée's architectural thought, within a specific visual

culture, and within eighteenth-century conceptions of time. We will thus often – but not always – proceed beyond the concept of anachronism, to reveal how the juxtaposition operated by portraying ancient philosophers under a modern vault opens up interpretations far richer – and more interesting – than the simple "error" that is often implied by this notion. [2] Indeed, a detailed examination of temporality within this widely appreciated yet little-studied image will allow us to uncover several key conceptions underlying the library project, the French architecture of the late eighteenth century, and ultimately this cultural context's understanding of its own position within history.

Figure 1. Étienne-Louis Boullée, *Perspective view of the Bibliothèque du Roi reading room*, ink and grey wash, before 1785, Paris.



Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Figure 2. Raphael, *The School of Athens*, fresco, 1509-1511, Rome, Vatican Palace.

Wikimedia Commons / Public Domain.

Figure 3. Étienne-Louis Boullée, detail from Fig. 1 (right foreground).

Bibliothèque nationale de France.

1. Media and Temporality

2 Boullée's design for the *Bibliothèque du Roi* appears in two sets of drawings, which only feature minor differences in their portrayal of

the gallery's interior. [3] Some of these images were published as a print series, [4] accompanied by a short text that would later be reproduced – with minor variations – in Boullée's treatise *Architecture. Essai sur l'art*, which remained unpublished until the twentieth century. [5] The architect's design for the library is one of the most practical and realistic within the series of projects for public buildings – probably functioning in part as pedagogical models for his students – that occupied him during the last, and most celebrated, phase of his career. While his other works from this period were often conceived on an impossibly large scale, and imagined either within an entirely empty space or an imaginary topographical setting that perfectly suited the project's volumetry, the library project was site-specific: indeed, Boullée suggested using the walls of the existing *Bibliothèque*'s courtyard (which, to this day, contains the *Bibliothèque nationale de France*'s Richelieu quadrangle and reading room) as foundations for the wide barrel vault that can be seen in the picture, entirely made of wood. His description insists on the constructional simplicity and low cost of his proposal, no doubt in the hope that this design – among his many grandiose visions – would be the most likely to be erected. [6] This realistic quality and destination constitute the framework within which the issue of anachronism must be analysed: in the architect's purely imaginary visions, by contrast, the dates of the buildings remain fictional, or even unknown (are they set in modern times? in Antiquity? or in an imaginary, non-historical context?), and temporality can thus function very differently than in the more strictly-grounded *Bibliothèque*.

3 The library project, though far smaller than many of Boullée's other conceptions, seeks a similarly impressive effect to his gigantic imaginary monuments: as Jean-Marie Pérouse de Montclos has pointed out, the architect's impossibly large designs often function in pairs with smaller – but not necessarily less grand – proposals. [7] Boullée has here succeeded in inserting an iteration of his ideal conception of space into the normally disordered and constrained reality of Paris, an achievement that would probably have led visitors to forget the complexity of their urban surroundings and to enjoy the grandeur of this self-contained interior, thus loosening their sense of location within geographical space and historical time. [8]Yet, and even more so since the gallery was never built, perceptions of this project and of its designer's conception are

strongly mediated by Boullée's image, and chiefly by its inclusion of ancient figures. The latter, bringing extremely rich cultural and intellectual themes into the scene, inflect our understanding of the architectural design itself: an analysis of the library project must thus include a discussion of Boullée's image, precisely, as a picture rather than purely as a work of architecture, especially as far as its anachronisms are concerned.

4 This entails that the perspective view of the library must be examined both alongside Raphael's *School of Athens* and within a larger corpus of architectural images from its own day, subject to specifically pictorial compositions and temporalities. This line of enquiry has not yet been sufficiently pursued in the extant scholarship on Boullée, which has largely ignored the later eighteenth century's widespread interest in architectural representation.[9] The success attained in the 1770s and 80s by Hubert Robert's ruin paintings, attested both by their extremely high selling price and the critical acclaim they enjoyed, reveals the popularity of this genre.[10] Perhaps yet more significantly for our argument, one of the key themes of Robert's oeuvre is a play on complex temporalities. There was also a frequent overlap between the work of painters and of architects: the latter produced attractive perspective views of their projects, but also of imaginary buildings, gardens, landscapes and ruins.[11] Boullée himself had initially wished to become a painter, rather than an architect, and this ambition remains visible not only in the pictorial conception of his drawings, but also in his imitation of Raphael – then regarded as the absolute model for young painters, who were often tasked with copying his works as part of their academic education (incidentally, Boullée's interest in the *School of Athens* is apparent not only in his library project, but also in the sculpted groups adorning the pediments of several of his other designs).[12]

5 Besides painting, Boullée's works should also be compared to another (quasi-pictorial) medium: the theatre,[13] then immensely popular, to the point of constituting an essential component of the French elites' visual culture. Boullée would have been familiar with a typology of drawings, mostly penned by architects, showing projects for stage sets inhabited by figures in theatrical costumes (Fig. 4).[14] Since the plays' action was set in Antiquity, and the actors wore togas or crested helmets, but the architecture was in the taste of the late eighteenth century, these images are often remarkably similar to the library picture, both in terms of their visual effect and of their ana-

chronisms. Boullée reinforced this resemblance by representing his gallery, which would certainly have functioned in part as a reading room, unrealistically void of furniture. The open space thus created in the drawing resembles a theatre stage occupied by actors, which was the spatial typology within which eighteenth-century viewers were accustomed to see ancient figures. [15]

Figure 4. Charles de Wailly, *Stage set project for Racine's* Athalie, ink, grey and brown wash, 1783, Paris.

Bibliothèque nationale de France.

6 Within the present discussion of Boullée's library project, the specificity of pictures (as well as pictorially-conceived theatrical scenes) lies in their ability to represent temporalities more easily than built architecture can. It is true that a building can deceive its viewers as regards its construction date or the dates of its various parts: indeed, this was the period when artificial ruins set off to conquer the landscape gardens of France. However, it is more difficult for architecture to transport its viewer to a fictional or historical present, as images do: an observer of the library picture may quite easily accept that it represents a moment set in Antiquity, but a visitor to the actual space

– if it had been completed – would at best have experienced a somewhat imprecise sense of removal from their own time, rather than believing to have been transported to the period of Plato. Boullée, perhaps due to his inclination for painting, created a drawing that plays with the possibilities of the medium and the complex temporalities that it allows. The latter are naturally also the necessary conditions for Raphael's representation of an ideal past, and for paintings by Hubert Robert – such as *The Port of Ripetta* (Paris, ENSBA) – that combine elements of European history in so complex a manner that their fictional present is situated entirely outside of historical time. As concerns Boullée, however, while the study of his perspective drawing as an *image* is an oft-overlooked dimension of his work that must be carefully reconsidered, its simultaneous status as picture and proposal for a future reality raises further implications that will lead us to better understand his conception of the entire project.

2. The Ancient and the New Athens

7 The relation between Boullée's library picture and Raphael's *School of Athens* requires that these two images be set side-by-side for more detailed study. While the general similarity between their figures has been noted, Boullée – or perhaps draughtsman Jean-Michel Moreau, upon whom he often relied to complete his drawings[16]– did not directly copy the Renaissance painter's philosophers. Only the group in the right-hand foreground, surrounding the man holding a compass, and the figures sitting around the table, could be interpreted as loose quotations of the fresco (Fig. 3). Besides these examples, not only are the figures' poses and spatial relationships different from Raphael's, but their faces are also far less distinct from one another in terms of hair colour, age, type, and expression. While the painter's philosophers are the main focus of his fresco, and he has invested time and energy into detailing and varying each figure's pose and facial features, those in the architect's drawing are small, modest sketches aiming to animate the architectural space and refer to a general idea of philosophy rather than to rival the work of the most celebrated painter of modern times.

8 This difference in the function of the figures entails that the viewer will observe these two pictures in dissimilar ways: in Raphael's fresco, the titles of the books held by Plato and Aristotle (*Timaeus* and *Ethics*) are inscribed within the picture, thus clearly indicating the identity of

their bearers and inviting viewers to pursue their identification of the other philosophers. Indeed, eighteenth-century descriptions of the *School of Athens*[17] (except those by particularly architecturally-minded commentators) are chiefly interested in the figures, and in the meanings conveyed by the latter.[18] Boullée's picture, inversely, is essentially a presentation of an architectural project, and striving to identify his philosophers would make little sense. Any attempt to directly transpose art-historical interpretations of Raphael's fresco onto Boullée's drawing would therefore be far too simplistic, since it would ignore the significant differences between sixteenth-century allegory and eighteenth-century architectural and historical imagery (and thus would likely constitute a scholarly anachronism!).[19]

9 Despite the loose quality of Boullée's quotation, it remains clear that the figures in the library picture rely on the viewer's visual culture to refer, perhaps not to individual ancient thinkers, but to the general ideas conveyed by Raphael's fresco. Thus, the group of philosophers simultaneously constitutes a glorious reference to ancient Greece and indicates a compilation of the knowledge developed by various scholarly fields: as such, it represents the future contents of the library.[20] This idea of bringing together the sum of human knowledge naturally resembles another great endeavour of the French Enlightenment, the *Encyclopédie*. Besides the members of the Greek school of philosophy, it also recalls the famous libraries of Antiquity, and chiefly that of Alexandria, which remained a celebrated cultural reference.[21] Indeed, Boullée's picture articulates these two representations of a sum of knowledge: where Raphael represents the latter only as a group of Greek scholars[22], the architect's drawing doubles this with a library, and if the project had been executed, only the books would remain. The figures' function within the library picture is thus not only to underscore the similarities between Raphael and Boullée's architectural conceptions, but also – according to this interpretation – to provide a transitional image revealing how Raphael's representation of a group of philosophers is replaced, in a real library, by the books authored by these same figures.

10 A similar idea is expressed by Boullée in his theoretical essay, where he argues that a library's user is "inspired by the spirits of famous men" and encouraged to "walk in the footsteps of great men":[23] a physical presence of these revered minds within the library is thus

both suggested by the architect's language, and fictionally represented in his perspective view.[24] Nevertheless, this interpretation must be further qualified by pointing out that the library picture is by no means the only architectural drawing from this period to include ancient figures. Besides examples due to other architects – including Charles de Wailly's famous representation of his project for the Odéon theatre, exhibited at the Salon of 1771 – most of Boullée's pictures also contain ancient figures.[25] The latter have merely been adapted, in the library image, to all appear as adult males recalling Raphael's philosophers, leaving out the women and children in ancient dress that often grace his other drawings. The togas in Boullée's representation of the library project thus cannot be explained only as a reference to Raphael, or as an imaginary presence of ancient authors: further, parallel interpretations of this picture's unclear temporality must be sought, acknowledging a complexity that is fully consistent with Reinhart Koselleck's demonstration that multiple perceptions of time can coexist.[26]

11 A first point to be made is that Paris, during this period, was often called "The New Athens". A book with this title was published in 1759 by Antoine-Martial Le Fevre, who justified the phrase by tracing the origins of French scholarship to ancient Greece, claiming that his nation was the true heir to the ancients, and that its intellectuals had attained the level of the greatest cities of Antiquity: "Paris today is in no way inferior to the scholars of Athens and Rome".[27] The formula was used frequently during the following decades, not least as the title for a chapter of Louis Sébastien Mercier's *Tableau de Paris*, in which he claimed that men sought the praise of Paris (then granted chiefly to Voltaire, Rousseau and Frederick the Great), in the same way they had once wished for the approbation of Athens.[28] Moreover, celebrated modern philosophers were often represented in ancient clothing: this was already the case in several portraits of Montesquieu, depicted in profile like the emperors featured on coins or medals,[29] while the many statues of Voltaire and Rousseau from Houdon's studio often show them in togas. When the remains of the two latter philosophers were moved to the French Panthéon during the Revolution, effigies of them in ancient costume were carried through the streets of Paris.[30]

12 This perception of Paris as a new ancient city rested upon a cyclical interpretation of history, whereby Antiquity could be – indeed was being – recreated. Naturally, this vision bears significant implications for the analysis of the ancient figures animating eighteenth-century architects' drawings: Boullée's library project provided an updated version of Raphael's imaginary "Athenian" building, to be erected in the "New Athens".[31] The figures in his pictures could be interpreted not only as the Renaissance painter's ancient Greek philosophers, but also as Paris's modern intellectuals, forming a "School of the New Athens" dressed in ancient costume like Montesquieu, Rousseau and Voltaire.[32] Furthermore, since Boullée's design is obviously a project for the future, his philosophers are perhaps not only to be understood as those of the past – whether recent or ancient – but may be set in times to come: according to this interpretation, his drawing constitutes a statement of confidence in the future evolution of French scholarship, while simultaneously suggesting that his library will be the most appropriate environment for these future intellectuals, by fulfilling their documentary requirements, by serving as a space for reflexion, discussion and the development of great ideas, and by providing an architectural setting worthy of their grand achievements. This positive outlook is fully coherent with the idea of a national regeneration, in other words a period of national progress in the near future, which became increasingly popular during the 1780s and was to play an important part in the French Revolution.

13 While this interpretation underscores the drawing's position at the nexus of complex relations to past, present and future, it must still be further qualified. The modern scholars using the library would not be wearing ancient costumes, and thus the image does not constitute an exact representation of a possible future. Indeed, the period's tendency to show great modern philosophers in ancient clothing bears significant implications regarding temporality: by declaring them worthy to dress like Plato or Aristotle, it separates these figures' representations from the reality of their eighteenth-century costume. The cyclical vision of history may have claimed that the nation, and in this case its scholars, had attained the exalted level of the ancients, and this was expressed by the ancient costumes in which philosophers were represented, but the actual clothing of the time was not concerned by this cycle. There were, admittedly, attempts to apply

this grand vision of history to costume by drawing inspiration for new fashions from ancient models, especially in the case of women's dresses, but also in some male garments: this is revealed, for instance, in Jacques-Louis David's designs for Revolutionary magistrates' uniforms.[33] However, toga-like costumes, being unsuited to modern European lifestyles, naturally never caught on. The cyclical vision of history was applied to the nation, to its philosophical qualities and – as we shall see – to its architecture, but could not be fully transferred to its use of everyday costume: in other words, the idea of a cycle concerned some aspects of daily life in France, but not others.

14 Nevertheless, the use of ancient clothing in images and during festivals indicates that the modern French liked to imagine themselves – or the most worthy among them – dressed as ancients: the cyclical vision of time, although it could not be applied to the everyday reality of costume, at least functioned in France's imaginary perceptions of its own inhabitants. The future users of Boullée's library would most likely not be wearing ancient clothing, but their contemporaries may well imagine them doing so. This interpretation can very well exist alongside those suggested above, and interact with them, thus forming a complex network of historical perceptions within which the notion of "anachronism" – earlier used in a description of the architect's drawing according to twenty-first century conceptions of time – will require renewed consideration.

3. Architecture: Equalling or Surpassing the Ancients?

15 Historical visions have so far been analysed in regard to perceptions of the greatness of nations, of the quality of their philosophy and of the style of their clothing. But in the case under study, their impact on understandings of another human creation – architecture – is perhaps yet more complex and significant. The multiple relations of architecture to temporality form a particularly labyrinthine web, simultaneously encompassing the theoretical positions formulated by architects, the specificities of their buildings and drawings, and the comments on architecture made by members of a broader public. During the period under consideration, this situation is complicated yet further by the cultural importance granted to architectural paint-

ing and the emergence of a widespread interest in ruins. The latter suppose a distinction between the period of erection of a building and the moment in which it is seen or represented, creating a temporal relation which can easily be manipulated, both by painters and by designers of the artificial ruined pavilions then being erected in landscape gardens around Paris. Although Boullée's gallery shows no sign of decay, his period's taste for ruins does create a context where the potential complexity of architecture's relation to time would have become strongly apparent.

16 Boullée's drawing, hitherto analysed chiefly as an image, must now be examined as an architectural project, and replaced within the architectural thought prevalent at the time of its creation. Once more, the idea of a historical cycle is key to a first exploration of the temporality of French perceptions of architecture. Under the reign of Louis XIV, Augustin Charles d'Aviler spoke of the "antique [architecture] we have today" – which, replacing the Gothic, ensured a return to the glorious days of the ancients[34]. During Boullée's lifetime, Pierre Patte remarked that several of the proposed "ideas for embellishment of this capital, and projects for squares [dedicated to Louis XV], would have honoured the most skilled architects of Antiquity."[35] Likewise, Marie-Joseph Peyre later stated that "the porch of the École de Chirurgie is even more conform [than other contemporary buildings] to the manner of the ancients",[36] and the *Almanach de Versailles* noted that the recent church of Saint-Symphorien had "the shape and the aspect of ancient temples".[37] Peyre further explained his position by stating that he wished to identify "the principles of the Greeks and Romans" and then "develop [them] and … appropriate them for ourselves."[38] During the same years, Hubert Robert painted imaginary ancient-looking, partly ruined architectural environments, within which he often placed decaying monuments that recalled the architectural vocabulary of his own day: constructions from these two eras were thus perceived to be interchangeable.[39] The most celebrated buildings of the time were therefore understood, on a certain level of consciousness, as ancient constructions, and their architects were perceived not only as imitators of the ancients, but – in a sense – as having become ancients themselves: according to this interpretation, Antiquity had become contemporaneous. This is perhaps most clearly explained in Claude-Nicolas Le-

doux's treatise: "Taste is invariable, it is independent from fashion. The man of genius gains only that which the centuries that preceded him had lost".[40] Thus, architectural value is an eternal, unchanging ideal that is only attained by a small number of privileged societies, including ancient Greece and Rome, as well as Renaissance Italy and modern France. Ancient taste is therefore identical to the best modern taste, which is also, put quite simply, good taste.

17 This commonly held eighteenth-century view allows an interpretation of Boullée's drawing as a representation of a timeless architecture, simultaneously ancient and modern (and, naturally, also typical of the Italian Renaissance through its reference to Raphael, another artist then considered to have attained this eternal quality). Incidentally, this may also apply to the figures, whose ancient costume was the only style of clothing that could evoke timelessness, an interpretation that is confirmed by the aforementioned use of ancient dress in representations of modern great men. Following this line of analysis, if Boullée's drawing is indeed a representation of an eternal, timeless (or "out-of-time") environment – and despite its simultaneous status as a perspective view detailing a modern project – then the initial premise of this article must be reconsidered: the elements of this picture, far from being anachronical, function within their own, coherent but ahistorical time. Indeed, an anachronism can only exist within an understanding of time that supposes key differences between the culture and society of historical periods, even when the latter imitate one another's intellectual or formal creations. In other words, anachronisms cannot exist within the timeless quality to which the summits of a strictly cyclical history constantly return.

18 Nevertheless, this idea of timeless form – though it is frequently encountered in eighteenth-century architectural thought and allows a coherent reading of Boullée's image – functions in parallel with other, conflicting visions of historical time, illustrating the vitality of French Enlightenment discussions of this issue. Boullée's own treatise argues that the rich and varied possibilities of architectural expression that he seeks to discover have been historically neglected, and are only beginning to be explored in his own day: "am I not, in a sense, correct to point out that architecture remains in its infancy …?"[41] Here, the architect appears to be fully in step with the idea of progress, which is characteristic of some strands of the Enlightenment, and underlies

the notion of national regeneration that became widespread during these years.

19 However, Boullée's position is less distant from the theory of historical cycles than might appear in this particular passage. Indeed, throughout his theoretical writings he cites Greek architecture as a model, and his projects almost always contain or even constitute clear references to ancient architecture.[42] Moreover, his discussion of the *Bibliothèque du Roi* explicitly states his intention to realise the architectural conception of Raphael's *School of Athens*, which the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries interpreted as a Renaissance attempt at representing an ancient space (a Greek "gymnasium" – or school for the development of mind and body – according to Roland Fréart de Chambray).[43]

20 Thus, though Boullée set himself the task of improving on the ancients, this idea should be understood within a cyclical conception of architectural history. His treatise suggests returning to an idea of Antiquity, but exploiting its full possibilities to an extent unexplored by the ancients themselves: the cycle may be rising, rather than returning to its earlier *maximum*. He remains close to other architects' aforementioned intention to identify the principles of the ancients and appropriate them for modern use: in other words, not to simply reproduce the forms of ancient buildings, but to understand their underlying rules and investigate the possibilities opened up by the latter for modern design. This process might lead to results that may well be slightly different – indeed, slightly better – than ancient architecture. According to this conception, Boullée's knowledge of historical architecture has led him to design a gallery that is close to ancient principles, but proceeds even further than Antiquity in its exploitation of architecture's potential for grandiose perspectives.

21 Boullée's statement that architecture has not progressed beyond its "infancy", and that it thus remains possible to improve on ancient models, may partly constitute an acknowledgement that his own designs should not be expected to resemble the latter too exactly. Indeed, he did not attempt to reach accuracy of form or detail in his references to Antiquity, despite living in the second half of the eighteenth century, when numerous representations of ancient sites in the Eastern Mediterranean became available. Significantly for our

discussion of the *Bibliothèque* project, this new documentation soon led scholars to pay more attention to the differences between Greek and Roman architecture.[44] Boullée was certainly aware that the Greeks did not build large arches or vaults, and therefore – as the reader will no doubt have noted – that the ancient Athenian philosophers never set foot in any structure remotely resembling his library, or Raphael's imaginary gallery.[45] In other words, Boullée would have known that the architecture in Raphael's *School of Athens* was wildly anachronical (moreover, the anachronism within Raphael's group of figures – philosophers who lived during different periods – was by then common knowledge, having been mentioned in widely-read works by Roland Fréart de Chambray, Giovanni Pietro Bellori, and Roger de Piles[46]). While it has been pointed out here that the notion of anachronism was not meaningful within certain eighteenth-century visions of history, we have now reached a conception of time within which this concept was used. None less than Diderot, commenting on Hubert Robert's paintings, urged the artist to follow this linear vision of history, avoiding what may be described as anachronisms:

> Travel the entire planet, but may I always know where you are: in Greece, Egypt, Alexandria, Rome. Embrace all periods; but may I never ignore the date of a monument. Show me all genres of architecture and all types of buildings; but with some characters that specify the places, the mores, the times, the manners and the people. May your ruins, in this sense, be also erudite.[47]

22 Such ideas will appear familiar to the reader, since they form the uncontested basis for understandings of history developed since the nineteenth century. They operate in conjunction with the idea that artistic form is determined by the conditions and constraints present in a given society, and that an accurate recreation of the architecture of a past era is very rare. During the last decades of the eighteenth century, other critics and art theorists increasingly began to demand that painters' works reflect a detailed knowledge of the architecture, furniture, costume and even hairstyles favoured by specific historical periods.[48] Nevertheless, Boullée, operating within the same context, included ancient figures both in the library picture and in other representations of his architectural projects: whether or not his contem-

poraries raised the issue of anachronism when discussing these images, it was clearly not of concern to him within his artistic creation. Yet, while it is clear that Boullée was not working within our strict present-day conception of time, it is important to point out that when his projects were drawn, the detailed study of the evolution of artistic forms in historical time – and hence the idea of anachronism – was already becoming available, alongside other understandings of temporality.

23 Finally, though Early Modern France's vision of history was dominated by the relation between ancient and modern times, any discussion involving the reception of the *School of Athens* must also bring in Raphael and his own historical period. Indeed, the reading-room image – a modern French reinterpretation of an Italian Renaissance fresco, which was in turn inspired by ancient Roman architecture but purported to show the greatest hour of Greece – brought together the four summits of Western or even human history, as defined within the cyclical vision established by Voltaire in his *Siècle de Louis XIV*.[49] This process, uniting in one place – Boullée's project – the four greatest cultures in history, can be read both in terms of the building's form and of its function, since this "bringing together" would have been present not only in the library's design but also in its contents (one is reminded of the list of cities later inscribed on the vault of the *Bibliothèque nationale*'s oval reading room, symbolically featuring Athens, Rome and Paris at three of its cardinal points, with London filling in the fourth).

24 Coming back, more specifically, to Raphael himself, it is important to point out that Boullée's drawing has not only inherited formal qualities from the Italian painter's fresco, but also the features that have formed the basis of the present investigation of its temporality. Naturally, Boullée's drawing would have been understood solely within eighteenth-century visions of history, and it is not our purpose here to identify in it a remnant of sixteenth-century conceptions of time, which would notably have included a strong religious strain.[50] Nevertheless, the presence of Greek philosophers under a barrel-vault – whether or not it bothered Boullée and his public – stems from the imitation of the earlier artist's fresco, meaning that the architect's very selection of this particular model lies at the root of the present discussion. While Boullée drew inspiration from the *School of Athens*

due to the qualities of its architectural background, the force of its idea, and its suitability to the site he had in mind, the revered status of the fresco was certainly also a key reason for his choice: Raphael, of course, was then widely considered to be one of the greatest artists of modern times, and his cultural authority, which likely impacted both Boullée's conception and his contemporaries' reactions to the drawing, must not be overlooked. The architect and his public would not only have seen the library project and drawing as a dialogue between Antiquity and modern France, but also as a reference to a Renaissance painting that had become one of the most celebrated images in Western culture. The exalted status of the *School of Athens* would thus have contributed to the legitimation of Boullée's proposal.

25 This reminds us that the idea of Antiquity, during the Early Modern Period, was heavily mediated by the Renaissance, and especially by its painters and their representations of architecture: Boullée himself, as well as his teacher Jacques-François Blondel, recommended using Raphael's images as models for architectural projects.[51] Several painters also referred to the *School of Athens* in their works,[52] including Hubert Robert, whose *Finding of the Laocoon* (1773)[53] recalls Raphael's fresco both through its architecture and the group of figures in the left foreground: Boullée was by no means the only artist of his time to draw inspiration from the *School of Athens*, which then constituted a commonly available model for attempts at portraying an ancient environment.

26 Besides this standard vision of Antiquity mediated by Italo-French pictorial tradition, the study of actual ancient sites was gathering pace, producing increasingly numerous images of real Greek and Roman architecture, which formed an alternate idea of Antiquity. Thus, Boullée's models for the gallery's decoration may have included features from the Pantheon's interior, as well as the Roman crypto-portici drawn by Piranesi, and perhaps the monumental avenue at Palmyra and interior of the temple of Bacchus in Baalbek (eighteenth-century prints insisted on these last two examples' long colonnaded spaces ending in arches or serliana).[54] Once more, these references were used not only by Boullée but also by several other artists from his time, including Hubert Robert. Formal resemblances between works by Boullée and the latter artist are often striking, likely indicat-

ing an exchange of artistic ideas: the reading-room's lateral steps, serliana on a high base and part-subterranean character strongly resemble Robert's contemporaneous *Architectural Landscape with a Canal* (1783),[55] which perhaps also draws upon the Palmyra avenue.[56] Boullée and his period thus had access both to the Renaissance vision of Antiquity and to a new, documentary one, but also transformed these two visions according to their own architectural intentions and to the new ideas developed by their colleagues: it is from this intricate network of forces – merging, inflecting or opposing one another – that the temporal complexities of late-eighteenth-century architectural images emerge.

27 The avenues of thought explored in this analysis of Boullée's drawing constitute multiple alternative explanations of its temporality, based on eighteenth-century French visions of historical time, which may well have coexisted within the architect's conception and his public's perceptions of the image. The present article, setting out to reveal the pitfalls of an analysis of this eighteenth-century drawing according to twenty-first-century notions of time, has attempted to replace the latter by those current during Boullée's lifetime. Yet, by so doing, it has inevitably led the issue to appear more complex than it would have seemed to the architect and his contemporaries, for whom the interplay of these temporalities – being rooted in commonly accepted discourses – would have remained far more organic. After these theoretical enquiries, it is on a more straightforward note that this investigation will conclude, bringing the discussion down to the more practical working of Boullée's project and its representation within a social environment. Indeed, the temporality of the *Bibliothèque du Roi* drawing played a key role in legitimizing his project for the public, as images and stage sets often did throughout the field of Early Modern architecture:[57] pictures purporting to represent ancient structures showed buildings that, in reality, closely resembled the designs developed by architects of their own day. Thus, these images provided imaginary, inexistant antique precedents that would justify new projects through their (largely fake) historical authority. While several examples from Boullée's period might be quoted here,[58] his reading-room drawing is especially interesting in that, by inserting toga-clad philosophers into his composition, he is applying this process to his own project: the latter is legitimized by being set in Antiquity and

presented as a building that could have been designed, used and valued by the ancients themselves. The project's architectural design, pictorial model, and underlying concepts regarding time, philosophy and the nation, are thus all tied together within its creator's own presentation of its appearance. Boullée, in the first lines of his treatise, argued that architecture is not the "art of construction" but a "production of the mind":[59] his gallery picture, thanks to – rather than despite – its temporal complexity, expresses the generative idea of his library project far better than the completed building ever could have.

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1 "la sublime conception de l'Ecole d'Athènes par Raphaël" (Boullée 1976: 134, fol. 119r). I would like to thank Profs. Basile Baudez, Christian Michel and Victor Tschudi, as well as my two anonymous reviewers, for their insightful comments and suggestions on the draft of this article.

2 For an analysis of temporality in Early Modern architectural images, focusing on an earlier period but providing essential methodological insights, see Tschudi 2017. This field and line of enquiry are only now beginning to be widely explored, and the present article thus hopes to contribute to the dissemination of an interest in temporality within Early Modern architectural studies. A broader theoretical framework on perceptions of historical time is provided by Koselleck (1985) and Hartog (2003). On anachronisms within ancient culture and its Western reception, see Rood, Atack and Phillips (2020).

3 These are preserved at the Bibliothèque nationale de France (catalogue numbers for the perspective views: RESERVE HA-57-FT 4 and RESERVE AG-134-BOITE FT 7). A third drawing is at The Morgan Library, New York, accession number 2017.17. Minor differences between these drawings include the surface treatment of the background arch, as well as the presence or not of a sculpted frieze around the roof opening, and of two figures at the right-hand foot of said arch, whose pictorial role is to indicate that this space is accessible.

4 Boullée 1785.

5 Boullée 1976: 134-135, fol. 119v-123r. Differences between the two versions of the text are minor: besides reformulations and the provision of details regarding the history of the commission process, the manuscript from the 1790s chiefly reflects the Revolutionary context within which it was penned, thus omitting all mention of Louis XVI, as well as the statue of the monarch that was suggested in the earlier, printed version.

6 Boullée 1785: 3-5; Boullée 1976: 135, fol. 121v-122v.

7 Pérouse de Montclos 1974: 25. Pérouse notes several cases where the smaller project led to a larger one, for example when Boullée's suggestion for the Madeleine church provided a model for his ideal *basilique*. In the case of the library, however, it was the project for a very large building near Place Vendôme that was transformed into the far more realistic proposal analysed here. (Boullée 1785: 2; Boullée 1976: 135, fol. 121r)

8 This is of course largely due to the absence of windows, a consequence of the use of a pre-existing courtyard surrounded by other interior spaces. Yet this conception is also typical of Boullée, who expressed his aversion for "multiplied openings … within a façade" (Boullée 1976: 131, fol. 110r), instead favouring buildings with windowless exteriors and top lighting, even when other solutions were available (see for instance his project for a National Palace; also Pérouse de Montclos 1969: 116). The architect's inclination to isolate buildings – and especially their interiors – from the surrounding environment is revealed by the various terraces or colonnaded courtyards he places around them. See Boullée 1976: 129, fol. 104v. The courtyard he planned for the entrance to the library constitutes a case in point, which has been carefully analysed by Nicholas Pacula (2017). For a different interpretation of Boullée's take on urban environments, see Madec 1986: 105-121.

9 On the rapid evolution of the modalities of architectural drawing during the French eighteenth century, see Baudez (2012 and 2021).

10 On the Paris art market during this period, see Patrick Michel (2007: chiefly 279-280). Jean de Cayeux (1989) documents the prices at which Hubert Robert sold many of his paintings.

11 The most evocative selection of pictures from this context remains the catalogue of the 1976 exhibition *Piranèse et les Français* (Brunel, 1976).

12 The epigraph to Boullée's treatise, quoting Correggio, is "*Ed io anche son pittore*". See also Pérouse de Montclos 1994: 12-14. Henry (2006) has carefully compared Boullée's architectural drawings to Roger de Piles's artistic theory and to the aesthetics of Early Modern painting. On Raphael's importance for French painters, see Rosenberg 1994: especially 134-135. Boullée's bas reliefs inspired by the *School of Athens* adorn the pediments of his projects for Versailles and the Madeleine church. In the latter example, the colonnaded gallery represented as a quasi-bidimensional bas-relief on the pediment also announces the tridimensional colonnaded nave inside the building, thus creating a complex interplay between image and space.

13 It has also been suggested that Raphael's fresco was itself based on the typologies of stage sets then being developed in Renaissance Italy (Joost-Gaugier 2002: 86).

14 The best examples, among many possible choices, are probably Charles de Wailly's drawing for *Athalie* (1783; Paris, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, ESQUISSES ANCIENNES-5 (1)) and François-Joseph Bélanger's gallery for *Alceste* (1784; ESQUISSES ANCIENNES-5 (4)).

15 One could pursue this investigation further by pointing out the broader similarity of Boullée's library room – a stage-like space surrounded by stepped higher levels reached by an elaborate system of galleries and stairs – to his design for a *Colisée*, despite the difference in scale: the word *amphithéâtre* is used in his descriptions of both projects (Boullée 1976: 132 and 135, fol. 112v and 122r). Indeed, the term was then used not only for spaces devoted to spectacle, but also for lecture rooms, including that designed by Jacques Gondouin for the *École de Chirurgie*. Besides, Anthony Vidler (2015: 81) has perceptively observed the similarity between Boullée's library interior and Piranesi's *Scuola antica* etching, which also shows stepped levels around a central flat plane.

Interestingly, the amphitheatre in the *Bibliothèque du Roi* would not have been occupied by viewers, but by books, which Boullée describes as a decoration, and even a "spectacle des livres" (Boullée 1976: 135, fol. 122r). In his descriptions of projects for the *Colisée* and *Théâtre*, Boullée also posited that the best decoration is constituted by the spectators and their costumes, especially the dresses of elegant ladies (Boullée 1976: 127, 129 and 132 , fol. 97v, 98r, 104v and 112v). This interesting inversion of the conventional direction of the gaze thus also applies to the *Bibliothèque*: the spectators are now in the centre, in a stage-like space, observing the decoration (books) that occupies what would normally have been the amphitheatre's seating spaces.

16 Pérouse de Montclos 1994: 12.

17 Although this title was not given to the fresco by Raphael himself, it remains compatible with the idea – expressed in a 1508 speech by Battista Casali in the Sistine Chapel – according to which Pope Julius II's literary patronage had created a "new Athens" in Rome (Rowland 1997: 139). The exact formula *The School of Athens* has been used as a title for the fresco since the seventeenth century (see Wood 1988) and appears in Boullée's own treatise (1976: 134, fol. 119r). Roger de Piles (1708: 56), however, noted that

the philosophers he recognised in the painting had not all lived in Athens. Several recent interpretations also place Roman authors in the picture, but it appears likely that Boullée – following the scholarship then available – would have thought of them as Greek. See Joost-Gaugier 2002: 81.

18 Piles 1708: 75-93; Dezallier d'Argenville 1762: 5.

19 It also appears difficult to prove, as has sometimes been suggested, that Boullée wished to posit the centrality of specific branches of learning by placing them in the foreground, within a patch of daylight (which, incidentally, is positioned differently in the print than in the drawing). The group on the right (Fig. 3) has simply been transposed from a similar position in Raphael's fresco. Moreover, the kneeling figures are best suited to a foreground location, and the small attribute held by one of them – a compass – would become invisible if placed further from the pictorial plane. The globe, however, does offer a more interesting hint at the contents of the library, since Boullée's plans indicate a separate chamber in which Coronelli's famous giant globes would be kept. The presence of a smaller globe in the gallery image is thus a reference both to Raphael's fresco and to the existence of celebrated belongings of the *Bibliothèque du Roi* that remain invisible in the picture. On the symbolism of globes in Boullée's library project, see Paula Young Lee (1998).

20 This period witnessed the development of the idea of a "museum", which still remained ill-defined in the late eighteenth century: the distinction between libraries and museums remained blurred, as can be observed in Boullée's own projects. See Vogt 1969: 218. The idea of a "sum of human knowledge" ("*somme des connaissances humaines*") has also been suggested in Pérouse de Montclos's analysis of this picture (1969: 167).

21 The *Encyclopédie* (1751-1772: vol. 2, 230) insists on the library of Alexandria in its article "*Bibliothèque*".

22 To be precise, the *School of Athens* was also linked to a library, since the *Stanza della Segnatura* originally housed the Pope's collection of books (Hall 1997: 6). Raphael's virtual architecture, designed as a decoration for a library wall, thus became – in Boullée's vision – a project for a real space that would, itself, contain a library. One might have argued that this continues the interplay between virtuality and reality that defines the connection between Raphael and Boullée's works, were it not for the fact that the *Stanza*'s original function had been forgotten during the intervening centuries. It remains noteworthy, however, that Raphael and Boullée both deemed the *School of Athens* picture to be ideally suited to a library.

23 “on se croit inspiré par les mânes de ces hommes célèbres ”; “le désir de marcher sur les traces de ces grands hommes” Boullée 1976: 134, fol. 119r.

24 One of the two versions of the library project, not illustrated in the perspective views, includes statues in the gallery, which are undoubtedly those of famous philosophers and scholars. These figures, whether ancient or modern, would have inflected the temporality of the design and of the drawing if they had been included. Boullée’s textual description of the library in 1785 also mentions two statues under the arches at either end of the room, one representing Minerva, the other Louis XVI. Significantly, his drawing only shows the Minerva statue, which can function both within an understanding of the picture as an ancient Greek scene (all the more since she was, precisely, the patron goddess of Athens) or as a modern French space.

25 The chief exceptions are the projects for Versailles and the Paris opera house, which are amongst the more realistic of Boullée’s projects, and are designed to be used by members of a highly hierarchical social structure including the monarchy itself (the figures descending the stairs in the Opéra pictures are likely the royal couple, surrounded by their guard and retinue).

26 Koselleck 1985: xxii-xxiii.

27 “Paris aujourd’hui ne cède en rien aux savants d’Athènes et de Rome” Le Fevre 1759: viii.

28 Mercier 1782: 18-19.

29 See for example an anonymous painting at the Musée national des châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, MV 2976. Also a print published by Jean François Daumont between 1755 and 1775 (for example British Museum, 1901, 1022.649).

30 See the following prints: Claude Nicolas Malapeau after Jean Jacques Lagrenée, [1795] (copy in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, QB-1 (1791-07-11)-FOL); Anonymous, [1791] (copy in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, QB-1 (1791-07-11)-FOL); Abraham Girardet after Pierre Gabriel Berthault, 1798 (copy in the British Museum, 1861,1012.34).

31 In Raphael’s time, Rome was also referred to at least once as a “new Athens” (Rowland 1997: 139), though Boullée would not have been aware of this. Besides, Henry Keazor suggests that other eighteenth-century artworks referring to Raphael’s fresco also aimed to present modern sites as

the "New Athens" (notably Potsdam, as well as – once more – Paris, in a painting from 1794, postdating Boullée's drawing). Keazor 2021: 125 and 159.

32 The topic of Boullée's intellectual inspirations, and of the modern philosophers quoted in his treatise, has been analysed most recently by Brancasi (2014).

33 See for example Jacques-Louis David's *Study for a Costume of a Civil Official*, c. 1792, Minneapolis Institute of Art, 65.43.1.

34 "l'architecture […] antique que nous avons aujourd'hui" D'Aviler 1691: Preface.

35 "des pensées d'embellissement pour cette capitale, et des projets de place dont se seraient honorés les plus habiles architectes de l'antiquité." Patte 1765: 120.

36 "Le porche de l'école de chirurgie est encore plus conforme à la manière des anciens" Peyre 1795: 17.

37 "la simplicité du plan, ainsi que la décoration générale et particulière, donne à cette construction la forme et l'air de ces temples antiques, et font un ensemble qui réussit assez." Blaizot 1775: 54-55.

38 "les principes des Grecs et des Romains"; "développer les principes des anciens et nous les approprier" Peyre 1795: 5 and 22.

39 Among many possible examples, one might quote the *Architectural Capricio with Bridge and Triumphal Arch* (Barnard Castle, Bowes Museum), which strongly recalls Peyre's project for the *Hôtel de Condé* and Pierre Rousseau's *Hôtel de Salm*.

40 "Le goût est invariable, il est indépendant de la mode. L'homme de génie ne gagne que ce que les siècles qui l'ont précédé ont laissé perdre" Ledoux 1804: 20.

41 "ne suis-je pas, en quelque sorte, fondé à avancer que l'architecture est encore dans son enfance … ?" Boullée 1976: 119.

42 These sometimes include Egyptian or Mesopotamian forms, which suppose a yet more complex vision of architectural creation's relation to history, although they do not concern the case under consideration here. Lankheit 1973: 19; Middleton 1990.

43 The interpretation of this space as a gymnasium, based on Vitruvius's descriptions, appears in Fréart de Chambray 1662: 108. The hall represented in the *School of Athens* is now generally considered to have been inspired by

Bramante's project for Saint Peter's. Several art historians have argued that the pagan philosophers – thus figured within a church interior – are advancing towards an altar crowned by the Holy Trinity, featured in the *Disputation of the Holy Sacrement* on the opposite wall of the *Stanza della Segnatura* (see for instance Verdon 1997). This is however a twentieth-century interpretation that would not have been available to Boullée, who would moreover have known the *School of Athens* only through prints, and perhaps remained unaware of its spatial relation with other images. For an analysis of the architecture represented in Raphael's fresco, see Lieberman 1997.

44 Within the French context, the most important publications on Greek architecture, leading to a total reconsideration of the history of ancient architecture, were those of Le Roy (1758) and Dumont (1769).

45 This issue gets yet more complex when one looks at other passages within Boullée's architectural treatise, revealing contradictions or different parallel interpretations of his work by the architect himself. In the discussion of his *Basilique*, he describes an interior colonnade (lining a wall beneath a vault) as a reference to Greek architecture (Boullée 1976: 125, fol. 88v-89r and 92r): he may thus have perceived the similar motif in his library in the same way (he also uses the word "*basilique*" in his description of this space: Boullée 1785). However, he considered not only his basilica's dome but also its barrel vault to be typical of the "Goths": here he was thinking within a linear vision of architectural history rather than a cyclical one, yet not acknowledging the clear model for his barrel vault, which is ancient Rome. Indeed, while his treatise occasionally recognises his debt to Roman models – and his work is more closely related to ancient Rome and Renaissance Italy than to any other culture – it is simultaneously highly critical of the latter, preferring to quote Greece as his model. This may be due to the perceived starkness of Greek decoration, more suitable to Boullée's intentions than the richer Roman ornamentation, yet it adds to the ambiguity concerning the architect's own perception of his gallery design and of its possible Greekness.

46 Fréart de Chambray 1662: 113; Bellori 1695: 15 (Bellori uses the word "*anacronismo*"); Piles 1708: 78. For a detailed discussion of these descriptions, see Christian Michel 2007. A recent analysis of the anachronisms within Raphael's fresco has been provided by Rood, Atack and Phillips (2020: 199-206) and by Nagel and Wood (2010: 347-365). The latter scholars (2010: 350) explain the anachronism of the *School of Athens* figures by analysing

the fresco as a secular *sacra conversazione* image: this implies that Boullée's drawing is unconsciously heir to yet another complex artistic tradition.

47 "Parcourez toute la terre, mais que je sache toujours où vous êtes, en Grèce, à Alexandrie, en Égypte, à Rome. Embrassez tous les temps, mais que je ne puisse ignorer la date du monument. Montrez-moi tous les genres d'architecture et toutes les sortes d'édifices ; mais avec quelques caractères qui spécifient les lieux, les moeurs, les temps, les usages et les personnes ; qu'en ce sens vos ruines soient encore savantes." Diderot 1957-1967: vol. 3, 246.

48 Cochin (1771: 171) already reacted against this tendency, which is perhaps best represented by Lenoir (1798) and Valenciennes (1799: 392).

49 Voltaire 1751: 2-4. The essential difference is that, while Voltaire asserted that the fourth summit – followed only by decline – was the reign of Louis XIV, the late eighteenth century believed itself to still be progressing towards the peak of French cultural glory.

50 See for example Rood, Atack and Phillips 2020: 204-205; and Rowland 1997.

51 Blondel 1771-1776: vol. 1, 186.

52 See Keazor 2021.

53 This title, possibly misleading, was given to the picture long after Robert's death.

54 Piranesi 1762: several plates, chiefly XII; Wood 1753: especially plate XXXV; Wood 1757: plates XXXV, XXXVI and XL.

55 Saint Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum, ГЭ-1294.

56 One must also note both works' resemblance with Piranesi's *Braccio di città* pensile and his *Scuola antica* print of 1750. See Vidler 2015: 81.

57 See Tschudi 2017.

58 For example, Hubert Robert depicted ancient figures holding a ceremony in Louis-François Trouard's *Chapelle des catéchismes* in Versailles (the painting, known as *L'intérieur d'un temple antique*, is in the Dijon Musée des beaux-arts, CA 456). Charles de Wailly, in the aforementioned drawing, applies the same strategy as Boullée, by placing figures in ancient costume within his own design for the Odéon theatre. De Wailly was simultaneously a member of both the Academy of Architecture and that of Painting, the latter appointment probably constituting a means to publicise his architec-

tural work by exhibiting drawings of his projects at the Salon. See Mosser / Rabreau 1979.

59 "Qu'est ce que l'architecture ? La définirai-je avec Vitruve, l'art de bâtir ? Non. … Nos premiers pères n'ont bâti leurs cabanes qu'après en avoir conçu l'image. C'est cette production de l'esprit … qui constitue l'architecture." Boullée 1976: 119, fol. 70v.

English

Étienne-Louis Boullée, describing his project for the *Bibliothèque du Roi* in Paris, claimed Raphael's *School of Athens* as his chief source of inspiration. This statement is confirmed by the architect's drawing of the suggested gallery, in which groups of ancient figures converse, disposed similarly to the philosophers in the Renaissance fresco. Placing ancient costumes in a modern project may at first appear to constitute a simple anachronism, stemming – in this case – from the direct imitation of a model. This article will however contend that far more complex and significant temporalities can be inferred from setting Boullée's image both within the field of architectural representations (including stage sets and ruin painting) that were so highly appreciated in this age, and within conceptions of time characterising perceptions of the development of the French nation, of its philosophy, its architecture and its use of costume. The tension between linear and cyclical conceptions of time, in particular, leads to renewed interpretations of the library project, especially when one points out that France was then believed to have recreated ancient architecture, and that this "School of Athens" was to be erected in a city frequently named "The New Athens" due to the quality of its intellectual life. The picture will be set within these complex and conflicting visions of history, which suggest that multiple simultaneous readings of Boullée's drawing and architectural project lay open to his eighteenth-century public.

Français

Étienne-Louis Boullée, décrivant son projet pour la *Bibliothèque du Roi* à Paris, revendiqua *L'École d'Athènes* de Raphaël comme modèle et source d'inspiration. Son assertion est confirmée par un dessin représentant une vue perspective de la galerie proposée, espace dans lequel il insère des figures à l'antique, disposées à la manière des philosophes de la fresque italienne. Si ceci peut sembler un simple anachronisme dû à l'imitation d'un modèle célèbre, le présent article soutient que des temporalités autrement plus complexes et signifiantes peuvent être inférées d'une analyse replaçant l'image de Boullée à la fois parmi les représentations architecturales alors si appréciées (y compris les décors de théâtre et la peinture de ruines) et au sein de conceptions du temps déterminant la perception de l'évolution de la nation française, de sa philosophie, de son architecture et de son usage du

costume. La tension entre conceptions linéaires et cycliques du temps, en particulier, conduira à une interprétation inédite du projet de bibliothèque, en rappelant que l'architecture française de cette époque était comprise comme une recréation de celle de l'Antiquité, et que cette nouvelle « École d'Athènes » devait être construite au sein d'une ville dont la renommée intellectuelle lui avait valu le surnom de « Nouvelle Athènes ». L'image sera replacée parmi plusieurs visions historiques complexes et parfois contraires, suggérant que de multiples interprétations simultanées du dessin et du projet architectural de Boullée étaient ouvertes à son public du dix-huitième siècle.

Mots-clés
Boullée (Étienne-Louis), Raphaël, École d'Athènes (L'), architecture, temporalité, cycle historique, anachronisme

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Boullée (Étienne-Louis), Raphael, School of Athens, architecture, temporality, historical cycle, anachronism

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