

# III

## ICONOCLASTS AND VANDALS





# 5

## **Rethinking Revolutionary Vandalism: Destruction and Creation in a Drawing by Hubert Robert**

*Frédérique Baumgartner*

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A luxuriant nature, stunning architectures, and dramatized perspectives are among the most recurrent and appealing features of the graphic oeuvre of Hubert Robert (Paris, 1733–1808). The red chalk drawing from the Musée Carnavalet discussed in this chapter, known as *Transport of a Statue of Minerva* and completed by the artist in 1794 as he was confined in a Parisian prison during the “Terror” of the French Revolution, presents none of these characteristics (Figure 5.1). Its overall execution is minimalist, with at least three-quarters of the  $9\frac{1}{2} \times 13$ -inch page consisting of large expanses of barely modulated sky and ground. The technique is precise, allowing two motifs to stand out against the delicately sketched sky: on the left, the statue of a draped seated woman, whose warrior attributes, including a helmet and a spear, evoke the Roman goddess Minerva; and on the right, a massive pedestal, firmly set on the ground. The function of the pedestal is suspended—its surface is conspicuously empty—but only temporarily: By dint of great efforts, a group of ten figures, represented parallel to the picture plane and spreading out across the composition, is methodically moving, in the direction of the pedestal, the cart on which Minerva is resting. Some men are pushing it from the back, others are pulling it from the front with the aid of ropes, their bodies bent by the weight of their load. In a few moments, the statue, curiously human in appearance—her left arm seems made of flesh rather than stone—will find

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**Figure 5.1** *Transport of a Statue of Minerva* (1794). Hubert Robert. Red chalk, 9½ × 13 inches.

Musée Carnavalet, Paris.

in the pedestal a permanent home, thus restoring some life to the desolate surroundings.

*Transport of a Statue of Minerva*, displaying a restrained handling of chalk, is a sober work of art, especially in comparison to other more spectacular scenes depicted by Robert. Thanks to these reduced means of expression, the drawing, emphasizing exertion and will, gains a kind of solemnity that incites one to try to ascribe meaning to the unfolding narrative. One way to articulate this meaning would be as follows: the visual and semantic transformation of space (corresponding to the placement of a specific figure on a monumental pedestal) by means of human agency. In phrasing the narrative in these conceptual terms, the reason for the inclusion of a chapter focusing on *Transport of a Statue of Minerva* in a section titled “Iconoclasts and Vandals” in *The Art of Revolutions* becomes clearer. Indeed, it brings to mind other instances of individuals engaged in acts of visual and semantic transformation of space through the manipulation of sculpture, which itself resonates with the impulse that lay behind



the attacks perpetrated on royal statues displayed in public spaces during the so-called Age of Revolutions<sup>1</sup>—the underlying theme of Robert’s drawing. For as visual and historical documentation suggests, *Transport of a Statue of Minerva* implicitly refers to the destruction in 1793 of Bouchardon’s equestrian statue of Louis XV, which stood on the Place de la Révolution (formerly Place Louis XV, today Place de la Concorde),<sup>2</sup> soon replaced by a statue of Liberty designed by the sculptor François-Frédéric Lemot. However, in his drawing, Robert transformed Lemot’s *Liberty* into an image of Minerva.

For today’s audiences, these narratives of destruction also bring to mind much more contemporary images, including the photographs and video stills documenting the recent wave of mutilation of statues commemorating Confederate leaders in the United States, with which Wendy Bellion very aptly opened her talk on the 1776 attack of New York’s equestrian statue of King George III, itself a reminder of the geographical scope of iconoclasm during the Age of Revolutions.<sup>3</sup> The video still of the collapsed statue of a Confederate soldier in front of the old Durham County Courthouse in North Carolina, just days after the deadly violence that erupted in Charlottesville on August 12, 2017, over the city’s plan to remove the equestrian statue of Robert E. Lee, is characteristic, insofar as the pedestal is still present, but no longer serving its purpose (Figure 5. 2). As such, the image captures the moment when the values disseminated in public space, embedded in the statue, suddenly shift. Although in this image, the shift takes the form of a condemnation of a heritage, *Transport of a Statue of Minerva*, in contrast, eludes the past and announces a new beginning, as an intact statue is about to be placed on the lacking pedestal. In other words, instead of focusing strictly on destruction, Robert’s drawing also brings creation into its semantic field.

The term “vandalism” has been used widely in the reporting about the recent fate of the statue in Durham, and the term is also inevitable

<sup>1</sup> The designation “Age of Revolutions” was used in the call for papers for the *Art of Revolutions* conference, with the chronology 1770s–1840s attached to it.

<sup>2</sup> Louis XV’s statue was commissioned to Edme Bouchardon in 1748. The artist completed the model in 1757, but died before finishing the allegorical figures for the pedestal. The latter were completed by Jean-Baptiste Pigalle.

<sup>3</sup> The title of Wendy Bellion’s talk at the *Art of Revolutions* conference was “Kill the King: Revolutionary Iconoclasm in New York and Germany.” Her first image was a photograph of the fallen Confederate soldier in Durham. I am using a video still from the same event in this essay, as its composition is most relevant for my discussion of *Transport of a Statue of Minerva*.



**Figure 5.2** Video still posted on CNN.com on August 16, 2017, with the headline “Seven Arrested in Toppling of Confederate Statue in North Carolina.” Accessed 12/14/17 at <http://www.cnn.com/2017/08/14/us/confederate-statue-pulled-down-north-carolina-trnd/index.html>

when contextualizing Robert’s drawing historically.<sup>4</sup> However, one must look more closely at the circumstances that prompted the use of the term in these two entirely different historical contexts: The mutilation of the statue in Durham (and other similar monuments) was the result of popular action, related to the complex national debate about the presence in public and semi-public spaces of memorials celebrating oppression, in a political climate marked by profound divisions. Conversely, the recent removal of other Confederate monuments, following decisions made by officials, does not qualify as vandalism, even though these monuments’ meaning is also what guided these decisions. The removal and destruction of royal statues during the French Revolution—the specific aspect of iconoclasm that *Transport of a Statue of Minerva* alludes to—were, for the most part, sponsored by the state; yet, they are commonly referred to in the literature as “vandalism.” Therefore, it appears that the term is used more selectively today, reflecting a differentiation between popular and official action. It remains, however, that the desire to change the visual and semantic nature of space characterizes all of these events.

Let us now consider the issue from a visual point of view: *Transport of a Statue of Minerva* and the Durham video still rely on the same three

<sup>4</sup> Among the first ten results of a Google search conducted on 12/14/17 with the keywords “Durham,” “Confederate statue” and “vandalism” were articles published in the online editions of *The Washington Post* (article by Alex Horton and Janell Ross published on 08/15/17); *The New York Times* (article by Jonathan Katz published on 08/17/17); and *The Atlantic* (article by David Graham published on 08/15/17). All three articles used the term “vandalism” or “vandalized” in the body of the text.

compositional elements—a statue, a pedestal, and human presence. However, the absence of a mutilated statue in Robert’s composition places the drawing in an entirely different register from other images of vandalism, from those created at the time of the French Revolution, when the term was first coined, to those recently published in the news to document popular opposition to Confederate monuments. In this respect, *Transport of a Statue of Minerva* offers a timely opportunity to reconsider the imagery of what is referred to as “vandalism” and, by extension, to rethink this phenomenon, which has repeatedly divided art historians and historians of the French Revolution. Indeed, Robert’s drawing does not include the conventional motifs conjured by the word “vandalism”—violence, disfigured statues, animated crowds—even though vandalism is one of its core themes.

This essay does not purport to analyze the case of attacks on Confederate statues, even less so to offer some answer to the controversy.<sup>5</sup> Nor does it address other contemporary examples of vandalism, including the destruction of monuments and works of art located in zones of conflicts, such as Iraq, which led the United Nations Security Council to pass on March 24, 2017, for the first time, a resolution pertaining exclusively to the protection of the cultural patrimony.<sup>6</sup> Instead, the mention of these current events is meant to establish the framework for this essay, that is to say, how *Transport of a Statue of Minerva*, in challenging our collective vision of vandalism, allows us to rethink this phenomenon during the French Revolution. In doing so, it also underscores the importance of studying the historical specificity of acts of transformation of public spaces involving art, in order to avoid dangerous amalgams, as my own preliminary essay had suggested.<sup>7</sup> Accordingly, it is necessary to offer a brief review of the history of the destruction of royal statues during the French Revolution in light of the much broader and multifaceted phenomenon that the term “revolutionary vandalism” encompasses.

### **A SHORT HISTORY OF VANDALISM AGAINST ROYAL STATUES DURING THE FRENCH REVOLUTION**

From the beginning of the French Revolution, the question of the integration of the artistic heritage from the *ancien régime* into *nouveau régime* France

<sup>5</sup> Much has been written on statues and the public space since the present text was submitted for publication. See one of the recent articles, written by Paul B. Preciado, “When Statues Fall,” *Artforum International* 59, no. 3 (Dec. 2020): 150–57.

<sup>6</sup> This was reported, for example, in the French daily paper *Le Monde* on March 24, 2017. Zainab Bahrani dedicated the epilogue of her book *Art of Mesopotamia* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2017) to the question of the preservation of the artistic heritage in Iraq and other zones of modern conflict.

<sup>7</sup> Speakers’ papers were circulated prior to the conference.

engendered intense political debates.<sup>8</sup> The case of royal representations was particularly sensitive: In a context of nascent emancipation from the Father-King, royal representations were considered incarnations of the monarchy obstructing man's liberation, as the deputy Alexandre de Lameth argued at the National Assembly on June 19, 1790.<sup>9</sup> Many deputies subscribed to Lameth's view, and the following day, the first iconoclast decree of the Revolution, ordering the partial dismantling of a statue of Louis XIV, was passed.<sup>10</sup> Other deputies, however, called for the preservation of the monuments of the past, which resulted in the creation of the Commission des Monuments on October 13, 1790.<sup>11</sup> In other words, during the so-called Liberal Revolution, two competing views on the ancien régime's artistic heritage coexisted.

Notwithstanding the creation of the *Commission*, royal statues and other monuments of the past became the object of mutilations in the wake of the fall of the monarchy on August 10, 1792.<sup>12</sup> This phenomenon is sometimes referred to as the "iconoclasm of the Year II," as the destructions peaked

<sup>8</sup> The question of the artistic heritage was first raised when the property of the Church was nationalized on November 2, 1789, making the nation the possessor of a huge artistic patrimony, which grew even more when the properties of the Crown, the émigrés, and the "suspects" were seized.

<sup>9</sup> Lameth questioned the presence of Louis XIV's statue on the Place des Victoires as the proceedings for the upcoming Federation Festival were being discussed. He indicated that the statue was on the path that the Festival participants were going to follow, which was problematic as nothing on that path should evoke "des idées d'humiliation et de servitude, ni frapper les yeux d'un spectacle que des hommes libres ne peuvent supporter" ("ideas of humiliation and servitude, or strike the eyes by a spectacle that free men cannot bear.") Quoted in Édouard Pommier, "La Théorie des arts," in *Aux Armes et Aux Arts! Les Arts de la Révolution 1789–1799*, eds. Philippe Bordes and Régis Michel (Paris: Adam Biro, 1988), 176.

<sup>10</sup> The decree read: "L'Assemblée nationale, considérant qu'il importe à la gloire de la nation de ne laisser subsister aucun monument qui rappelle des idées d'esclavage ... décrète que les quatre figures enchaînées au pied de la statue de Louis XIV seront enlevées le 14 juillet prochain." ("The National Assembly, considering that it matters to the glory of the Nation not to let survive any monument that recalls ideas of enslavement ... rules that the four chained figures at the base of the statue of Louis XIV will be removed on July 14.") Quoted in Louis Réau, *Histoire du vandalisme. Les Monuments détruits de l'art français* (Paris: Robert Lafont, 1994, rev. ed.), 303. The four chained slaves, also known as the "four captives," symbolized Spain, the Empire, the Brandebourg, and Holland, i.e., the four states involved in the treaties of Nimègue (1678–79). Designed by Martin van den Bogaert, known as *Desjardins*, in 1682, they were also meant to embody hope, resignation, despondency, and revolt. The enslaved figures were not destroyed but stored at the Louvre and then temporarily kept at the Invalides before joining the Louvre's collection in 1960. For a study of official revolutionary iconoclasm, see Pommier, "La Théorie des arts," in *Aux Armes et Aux Arts!* 167–199 and "Discours iconoclaste, discours culturel, discours national, 1790–1794," in *Révolution française et vandalisme révolutionnaire. Actes du colloque international de Clermont-Ferrand, 15–17 décembre 1988*, eds. Simone Bernard-Griffiths, Marie-Claude Chemin, and Jean Ehrard (Paris: Universitas, 1992), 299–313. The issue of iconoclasm is also discussed in Pommier's larger study on the revolutionary artistic discourse, *L'Art de la liberté. Doctrines et débats de la Révolution française* (Paris: Gallimard, 1991).

<sup>11</sup> The *Commission des Monuments*, whose creation was decided by the National Assembly, recommended that each Department proceeded to the inventory of books in libraries and objects in churches. The most significant items were to be retained by the nation, whereas the others could be sold.

<sup>12</sup> For an overview of the destructions of royal statues, both in Paris and in the province, see Réau, *Histoire du vandalisme*, 296–321.

during the Terror, but as noted earlier, is more often called “vandalism”—the accusatory term advocated by the Abbé Grégoire in the immediate aftermath of the fall of Robespierre: “I created the word to kill the thing,” as he famously wrote in his memoirs.<sup>13</sup> The elimination of contentious artistic heritage, until recently considered a patriotic gesture by the most fervent revolutionaries, became the counterrevolutionary act par excellence.

Bronislaw Baczko has masterfully demonstrated how Grégoire’s association of vandalism with the Terror during the fifteen months that followed 9 Thermidor was a way to explicitly differentiate the Revolution from the Terror, in order to redeem the former.<sup>14</sup> However, the first public opening of the Museum of the Louvre in the midst of the Terror—arguably the most significant cultural achievement of the Revolution—obviously complicates Grégoire’s construction of the period of the Terror as the enemy of the arts and, more generally, as a purely destructive force. In fact, many initiatives intended for the preservation of artistic heritage were implemented from the Fall of 1793 onward. As the Terror was in full swing, patrimonial consciousness developed.<sup>15</sup>

The art that Hubert Robert produced during the French Revolution is a unique corpus through which to study the way in which an artist responded to the fundamental transformation of the cultural sphere during this

<sup>13</sup> “Je créai le mot pour tuer la chose.” Henri Grégoire, *Mémoires de Grégoire, ancien évêque de Blois, député à l’Assemblée constituante*, vol. 1 (Paris: A. Dupont, 1837), 346. The paternity of the word *vandalisme* has been much debated. Joseph Lakanal, in particular, claimed to have used it in a June 1793 speech to the Convention, but his claim was eventually refuted. On the history of the word *vandalisme*, see Catherine Volpilhac, Dany Hadhadj, and Jean-Louis Jam, “Des vandales aux vandalisme,” in *Révolution française et vandalisme révolutionnaire*, 15–27. On the association of terrorism and barbarism, see Pierre Michel, *Les Barbares, 1789–1848: un mythe romantique* (Lyon: Presses Universitaires, 1981), especially chapter 2, “L’apocalypse révolutionnaire,” 45–58.

<sup>14</sup> See Bronislaw Baczko, “The Vandal People,” in *Ending the Terror. The French Revolution after Robespierre*, trans. Michel Petherman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press and Paris: Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l’homme), 185–223.

<sup>15</sup> Renouard, Romme, Mathieu, and Vicq d’Azyr, among others, were responsible for these initiatives. Moreover, it is telling that in a speech from December 17, 1793, the artist Jacques-Louis David proposed to change the name of the committee in charge of the Louvre from Commission to Conservatoire—a term he chose specifically to emphasize that the primary mission of the Louvre was to preserve (“conserver”) works of art. David argued: “Le mot de Commission était devenu insignifiant, parce qu’il signifiait tout; je vous propose l’idée et la dénomination d’un *Conservatoire* du Muséum des arts, qui sera sans cesse, par son nom même, rappelé à ses devoirs.” (“The term Commission had become insignificant, because it meant everything; I propose the idea and denomination of a *Conservatory* of the Muséum des arts, that will be constantly reminded, by its very name, of its duties.”) Reproduced in Yveline Cantarel-Besson, *La Naissance du Musée du Louvre. La Politique muséologique sous la Révolution d’après les archives des Musées Nationaux*, vol. 1 (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1981), 213.

decade.<sup>16</sup> For although Robert was most productive prior to 1789, his pictorial repertoire expanded during the French Revolution to include the representation of events that embodied the complete redefinition of the cultural landscape during the period, an effort in which he was himself involved, as demonstrated by his participation in the revolutionary government's project of making the Louvre a public museum.<sup>17</sup>

Among the events that Robert depicted are scenes of antimonarchical vandalism, the most famous one being *The Violation of the Royal Vaults in Saint-Denis* (Paris, Musée Carnavalet), which depicts the state-sponsored vandalism of the kings' mortal remains from the crypt of the Saint-Denis Basilica in October 1793. (The attacks on the sumptuous funerary monuments—also the result of an official decision—had occurred in August 1793.) *Transport of a Statue of Minerva* is another example of a work of art addressing antimonarchical vandalism, though more indirectly. This essay argues that Robert's drawing, through the combination of a statue of the Roman goddess, an empty pedestal, and a group of revolutionary figures, critically assesses revolutionary vandalism in focusing on artistic creation rather than destruction and, more broadly, on the Revolution's commitment to develop a cultural project as monuments were in the process of being destroyed. In other words, it contends that Robert's drawing represents destruction and creation as codependent rather than mutually exclusive forces.<sup>18</sup> It is from this point of view that *Transport of a Statue of Minerva* offers crucial insight into the key question of the historical specificity of the phenomenon of artistic destructions during the French Revolution. It is important to note that the meaning that emerges from Robert's drawing differs significantly from the narrative that Grégoire disseminated, which continues, in part, to shape the discourse on revolutionary iconoclasm. Robert's drawing thus not only broadens one's understanding of the Revolution, but also allows a more critical outlook on its historiography. Such

<sup>16</sup> My article "Two Rediscovered Paintings by Hubert Robert and their French Revolutionary Context," *The Burlington Magazine* 155, no. 1322 (May 2013): 317–23, which focuses on Robert's paintings of the Federation Festival of 1790, is an example of such a study.

<sup>17</sup> Robert's implication in the project of transformation of the Grande Galerie of the Louvre into a public museum began in 1778, i.e., when the comte d'Angiviller, as *Directeur des bâtiments du roi*, was supervising the project. Robert's participation was interrupted in September 1792 when Jean-Marie Roland put together a new Commission, from which he excluded the artist. In April 1795, when the second *Conservatoire* was established (the first one, created in 1793, was deemed inefficient), Robert regained his position. The *Conseil* that replaced the *Conservatoire* in January 1797 still included him. His involvement finally came to an end in November 1802, when Dominique Vivant Denon was named *Directeur* of the Louvre by Napoléon Bonaparte. Robert thus devoted over twenty years of his career to the creation and development of the Museum of the Louvre.

<sup>18</sup> Paula Radisich also perceived a "hyphenated subject, 'creation-destruction'" in Robert's 1798 painting *Young Girls Dancing around an Obelisk* (Montreal, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts), interpreting it as a commentary on the French Revolution, though not specifically on revolutionary vandalism. See Radisich, *Hubert Robert. Painted Spaces of the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 139.



**Figure 5.3** *Destruction of the Equestrian Statue of Louis XIV (1792)*. Jacques Bertaux. Pencil, gray ink and black ink, 9½ × 14½ inches.

Musée du Louvre, Paris.

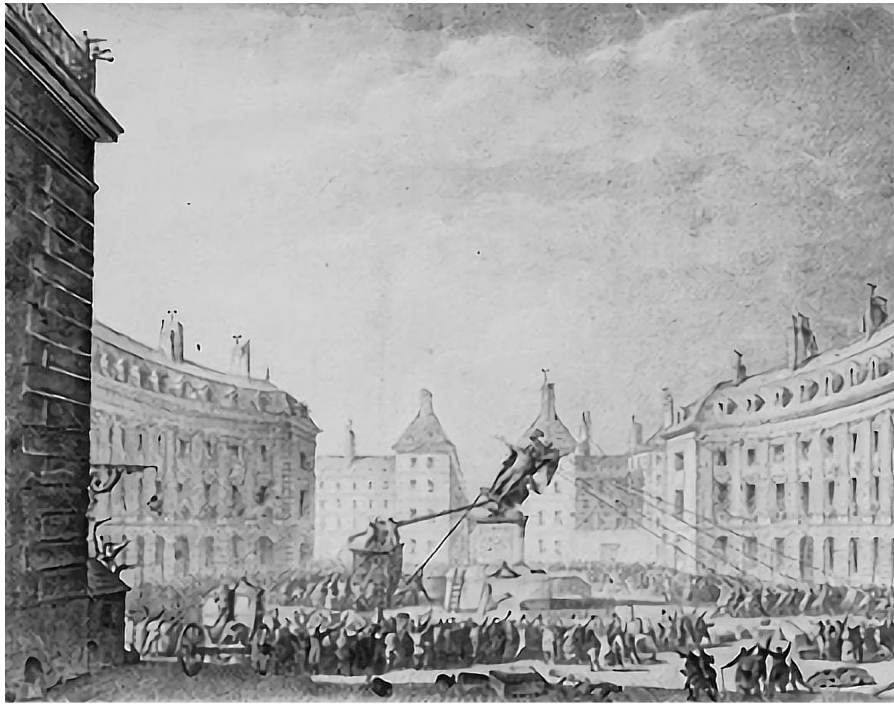
criticality vis-à-vis the construction of narratives is perhaps the most remarkable import of *Transport of a Statue of Minerva* for today's audiences.

### THE DESTRUCTION OF ROYAL STATUES IN VISUAL CULTURE: THE EXAMPLES OF BERTAUX AND PRIEUR

Hubert Robert was certainly not the only artist to choose as a subject matter the destruction of royal statues, perpetrated immediately after the fall of the monarchy and sanctioned by a decree voted by the Legislative Assembly on August 14, 1792.<sup>19</sup> Other artists who engaged with the subject matter included Jacques Bertaux and Jean-Louis Prieur.<sup>20</sup> The two draftsmen, respectively, depicted the destruction, on August 12, of Girardon's equestrian statue of Louis XIV on the Place Vendôme, renamed Place des Piques (Figure 5.3), and the removal, from August 11 through August 13,

<sup>19</sup> The decree put forward two arguments in favor of the destruction of royal statues: first, they symbolized tyranny; and second, the bronze from which they were made was necessary to manufacture the cannons required for the war effort. As suggested earlier in this essay, it is important to differentiate official iconoclasm from spontaneous destructions. As Pommier has shown, during the French Revolution, artistic destructions were predominantly sponsored by the State rather than a corollary of popular uprisings.

<sup>20</sup> There are many examples of prints and drawings representing the removal of royal statues. For example, in the 4–11 August 1792 issue of *Les Révolutions de Paris*, six anonymous engravings on the topic were published. The statues at stake were those of the Pont-Neuf, Place Royale, Place Louis XV, Hôtel de Ville, Place Vendôme, and Place des Victoires.



**Figure 5.4** *Statue of Louis XIV Brought Down, Place des Victoires (1792)*. Jean-Louis Prieur. Pencil, 7<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 10 inches.

Musée Carnavalet, Paris.

of Desjardins's own rendering of the Sun-King on the Place des Victoires (the statue was destroyed shortly thereafter; Figure 5.4).<sup>21</sup> Their drawings, much closer in effect to the Durham video still than to *Transport of a Statue of Minerva*, highlight the originality of Robert's take on the issue.

In Bertaux's drawing, two men, including one wearing a liberty cap and brandishing a hammer, have climbed on the statue that has collapsed on the ground. The horse's body lies on its left flank and the rider is already deprived of one of his feet. On the right, their comrades, having climbed a ladder, strike the empty pedestal with their scythes. On the left, two passers-by inspect the mutilated foot of the statue, indeed the only element that survived, along with two fingers. In Prieur's drawing, a dense crowd is cheering the methodical removal of the statue that is taking place before their eyes. The statue is being at once pushed from the left by men handling long beams and pulled toward the right by men holding ropes tightened

<sup>21</sup> Though deprived of its enslaved figures since 1790 (see note 9), Desjardins's statue of Louis XIV was still standing on the eve of the monarchy's fall.



to the statue. Standing precariously on one of the edges of its base, the statue will be reduced to remains scattered on the ground in just a few moments.<sup>22</sup>

Bertaux and Prieur conceived their compositions differently: Bertaux, offering a close-up on the statue and its wreckers, ignored the surroundings. Prieur, in contrast, chose a distant point of view that allowed him to contextualize his scene architecturally and put greater emphasis on the collective aspect of the iconoclast enterprise.<sup>23</sup> That said, both drawings are extremely explicit vis-à-vis what is happening: the deliberate destruction of statues. In addition, because the drawings refer to acts of vandalism that are historically attested, they effectively position the Terror as a force deprived of patrimonial consciousness.

### **TRANSPORT OF A STATUE OF MINERVA: BETWEEN REALITY AND FICTION**

Robert's approach in *Transport of a Statue of Minerva* is much more restrained than Bertaux and Prieur's. No fallen or falling statue offends the viewer's eye. Equally important, the viewer is not witnessing a historical event but a fictional scene, one that Robert imagined while he was incarcerated in the Saint-Lazare prison, as evidenced by the initials "S.-L." that follow his signature, "Robert," at the bottom center of the sheet.<sup>24</sup> At the same time, the motifs that Robert incorporates in his composition are far from historically random. As such, his composition oscillates between reality and fiction.

As is often the case with the sculptural elements included in Robert's compositions, the pedestal—which closely resembles the ones depicted in Bertaux and Prieur's drawings—bears a Latin inscription, which translates into "H. Robert in Saint-Lazare dedicates to Minerva his late-night

<sup>22</sup> The statue of the Place des Victoires was replaced in 1793 by a wood pyramid imitating porphyry, engraved with the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, the names of the eighty-three French departments, and the names of the patriots killed on August 10, 1792. During the Restoration, a new statue of Louis XIV, designed by François-Joseph Bosio, was installed. It is still in place today.

<sup>23</sup> Prieur's drawing belongs to the series of sixty-seven drawings that the artist made for the *Tableaux historiques de la Révolution française*. On this series, see Philippe de Carbonnières, *Prieur. Les Tableaux historiques de la Révolution. Catalogue raisonné des dessins originaux* (Paris: Paris Musées, 2006).

<sup>24</sup> Robert was arrested in the wake of the law on suspects (an intentionally broad concept designed to maximize the number of arrests), voted on September 17, 1793. Robert was imprisoned from October 29, 1793, until August 4, 1794, first at Sainte-Pélagie, then at Saint-Lazare. For references of the archival documents pertaining to his arrest and release, see Catherine Voiriot, "Chronologie biographique," in *Hubert Robert (1733–1808). Un peintre visionnaire*, ed. Guillaume Faroult (Paris: Somogy and Louvre éditions, 2016), 496–98.



**Figure 5.5** *A Capital Execution, Place de la Révolution* (c. 1793). Pierre-Antoine Demachy. Oil, 14½ × 21 inches.

Musée Carnavalet, Paris.

works.”<sup>25</sup> In addition to being mentioned in the inscription, Minerva is present in the form of the seated statue. The protagonists involved in her transport are all dressed identically: soft hats, short jackets, and ankle pants; in other words, a group of *sans-culottes*.<sup>26</sup>

As noted in previous scholarship, Robert’s statue of Minerva bears a very close resemblance to the statue of Liberty designed by Lemot for the Place de la Révolution.<sup>27</sup> Lemot’s statue appears, for example, on the far left of *A Capital Execution, Place de la Révolution*, a painting attributed to Pierre-Antoine Demachy (Figure 5.5). There is no doubt that Robert

<sup>25</sup> The Latin inscription reads “H. Robert In Sti. Lazari Ae Dibus Nocturnos Suos Labores Minervae Dicat.” The English translation here is based on the French translation of the Latin inscription provided in Catherine Boulot and Jean de Cayeux, *Hubert Robert et la Révolution* (Valence: Musée de Valence, 1989), 108. *Transport of a Statue of Minerva* is the catalogue entry no. 32.

<sup>26</sup> Sarah Catala discusses Robert’s drawing in her article “‘Carcer Socratis Domus Honoris.’ Les dessins d’Hubert Robert dans les prisons de la Terreur,” in *De David à Delacroix. Du tableau au dessin. Onzièmes rencontres internationales du Salon du dessin, 30 et 31 mars 2016*, eds. Louis-Antoine Prat and Pierre Rosenberg (Paris: Société du Salon du dessin and Dijon: Échelle de Jacob, 2016), 37–45 and 182–85. She reads the figures pulling the statue of Minerva as “doubles” of Robert, in light of the artist’s dedication of his drawing to the goddess.

<sup>27</sup> See Boulot, *Hubert Robert et la Révolution*, 108.

knew Lemot's *Liberty*, because he represented it very accurately at least three times, including in a painting auctioned in New York by Sotheby's on January 29, 2015, and in a drawing kept in Vizille at the Musée de la Révolution française. Both works are entitled *The Fountain of Liberty*, with the inscriptions "St.-L" and "Fons Libertatis" (i.e., "Source of Liberty") appearing on the pedestal in the painted version (Figure 5.6).<sup>28</sup> In these two works, the statue serves as a fountain, where a group of women, children, and sans-culottes peacefully drink. The sans-culottes' outfit, enhanced by the red of the cap in the painting, is identical to the one worn by the men depicted in *Transport of a Statue of Minerva*, thus confirming their identity in our drawing. Other figures, some carrying pikes, as sans-culottes often did, are coming down from the mountain visible on the left to join their peers at the fountain.<sup>29</sup> A tree—a symbol of Liberty at the time—rises by the spring.<sup>30</sup>

In *Transport of a Statue of Minerva*, Robert kept from Lemot's *Liberty* the seated pose, the position of the arms and legs, and the drapery and spear, but substituted the liberty cap and the orb for a helmet and a shield, on which Minerva's right arm rests. Most important for our purpose, Lemot's *Liberty* was installed on August 8, 1793, on the pedestal where Bouchardon's equestrian statue of Louis XV stood from 1763 through 1792, that is, until the vandal wave struck it. The formal relationship between Robert's image of Minerva and Lemot's *Liberty* therefore implies that the empty pedestal depicted on the right of our drawing is not just any pedestal, but the one where the statue of Louis XV used to stand. Had Robert retained the image of Liberty, the drawing would be essentially a record of the event that took place on August 8, 1793, and, more broadly, a testimony to the architectural "republicanization" of Paris at the time.<sup>31</sup> However, in alluding to Lemot's *Liberty* while deliberately converting it into a figure of Minerva, Robert's

<sup>28</sup> A watercolor on the same subject was auctioned in London by Christie's on July 4, 2000. In a talk entitled "From Fountains of Apollo to Fountains of Liberty. Artificial Landscape as Political Spectacle in Eighteenth-Century France," Sophie Matthieson discussed yet another painting based on that same composition but showing Minerva instead of Liberty. Accessed on YouTube on 06/22/18. Matthieson identified this painting during her doctoral research ("The Prison-made Object in the French Revolution." PhD diss., Monash University, 2016).

<sup>29</sup> The motif of the mountain might be an allusion to the political group of *La Montagne*, as Philippe Bordes has suggested. See catalogue entry no. 68 in Philippe Bordes and Alain Chevalier, *Catalogue des peintures, sculptures et dessins: Musée de la Révolution française* (Vizille: Musée de la Révolution française and Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1996), 242–44.

<sup>30</sup> On the planting of trees as a symbolic act of liberty, see Pascal Simonetti, "'Vivants piliers': les arbres de la liberté," in *Fêtes et Révolution* (Paris: Délégation à l'action artistique de la ville de Paris, 1989), 156–77. The painting *The Fountain of Liberty* would deserve a much more thorough analysis.

<sup>31</sup> On this topic, see James Leith, "The Republicanization of Paris," *Space and Revolution: Projects for Monuments, Squares, and Public Buildings in France, 1789–1799* (Montreal: McGill and Queen's University Press, 1991), 119–49.



**Figure 5.6** *The Fountain of Liberty* (1794). Hubert Robert. Oil, 22 × 18½ inches.

Present location unknown.

drawing departs from the principle of representing an actual episode. At the same time, although no statue of Minerva was erected in Paris during this specific period, her image was not unusual in the 1790s. Minerva, a personification of Wisdom, was appropriate for symbolizing a range of revolutionary concepts, including the nation and the constitution,<sup>32</sup> which

<sup>32</sup> On this topic, see Annie Jourdan, *Les Monuments de la Révolution, 1770–1804: une histoire de la représentation* (Paris: Champion, 1997).

both claimed wisdom as an intrinsic value; hence Minerva's presence in many allegorical compositions from the period.<sup>33</sup>

Finally, the motif of the statue of Minerva appeared previously in Robert's oeuvre, including in a drawing dated from 1772 entitled *Laundresses at the Basin of a Fountain with a Statue of Minerva* (Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett).<sup>34</sup> However, the fact that the artist self-consciously transformed Liberty into the Roman goddess and added a special dedication to her implies that he did not choose her randomly from his iconographic repertoire, but because she held a specific meaning at this precise historical juncture. In this context, it is necessary to examine the symbolic resonance of Minerva—a personification of Wisdom but also the goddess of arts and sciences—in the revolutionary context.

### MINERVA AS A REMEDY FOR THE TERROR

Robert's representation of and dedication to Minerva must be considered in relation to the hostile environment in which he created his drawing, that is, prison. It could be argued that the connection that *Transport of a Statue of Minerva* establishes between vandalism and Robert's incarceration—note that the reference to the artist's confinement in Saint-Lazare appears on the pedestal dispossessed of its statue—relates to the Abbé Grégoire's understanding of vandalism as a phenomenon that did not limit itself to the destruction of monuments, but extended to artists' fate during the Terror. In his last report on vandalism—Grégoire presented to the Convention a total of three reports<sup>35</sup>—the abbé provided a list of “talented men” who were unjustly thrown in jail in the Year II. He included the

<sup>33</sup> As Elizabeth Rudy has shown in “Pierre-Paul Prud'hon (1758–1823) and the Problem of Allegory.” (PhD diss., Harvard, 2007), Prud'hon included Minerva in many of his allegorical compositions from the revolutionary period. Moreover, as Jules Renouvier's study, *Histoire de l'art pendant la Révolution considéré principalement dans les estampes* (Paris: Renouard, 1863), indicates, the figure of Minerva also appeared in the work of Andrieu, Dupré, Sauvage, and Vérité (among others). To Renouvier's artists' list can be added the name of Debucourt, who represented Minerva prominently in his *Almanach National* (1790), a print discussed by Richard Taws in his article “Material Futures: Reproducing Revolution in P.-L. Debucourt's *Almanach National*,” *The Art Bulletin* 92, no. 3 (September 2010): 169–87. Important in light of the geographical scope of the present volume, Minerva can also be found in imagery pertaining to the American Revolution: in Jean-Honoré Fragonard's allegorical drawing *To the Genius of Franklin* (1778), Minerva is represented at the side of Franklin, then plenipotentiary representative of the United States of America in France. On this topic, see Pierre Rosenberg, “Franklin and Fragonard,” in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 150, no. 4 (December 2006): 575–90.

<sup>34</sup> For further details on this drawing, see Victor Carlson, “Drawings by Hubert Robert in the Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin,” *Master Drawings* 47, no. 2 (June 2009): 131–58. The drawing is reproduced as figure 16, p. 144.

<sup>35</sup> According to Pommier, Grégoire was asked by the Convention to prepare a report on artistic destructions before Thermidor; however, he presented it after Robespierre's fall, in three installments (14 Fructidor Year II, 3 Brumaire Year III, and 24 Frimaire Year III, i.e., between August and December 1794). This chronology speaks to the consideration of the patrimony during the Terror.

name of Robert on it.<sup>36</sup> According to Grégoire, an avid defender of early revolutionary ideals and an important actor of the Liberal Revolution, these arrests were unacceptable because the Revolution, stemming from the Enlightenment, was the friend of the artists. Therefore, similar to vandalism, artists' privation of liberty was counterrevolutionary.

Unlike Grégoire, Robert, whose political opinions are unfathomable, very rarely expressed himself on the political situation. One rare instance is found in a letter he wrote in April 1793 to his friend the painter François-Xavier Fabre, who was traveling in Italy at the time. In it, Robert encouraged Fabre to stay in Florence as the "moment of crisis" that France was experiencing was not beneficial for artists who only "craved and needed peace."<sup>37</sup> But more generally, Robert was very quiet when it came to politics per se, especially in comparison to a public figure like Grégoire.<sup>38</sup>

That said, it is significant that the abbé emphasized the absence of freedom that reigned during the Terror, including the absence of freedom of expression,<sup>39</sup> whereas Robert, who completed his drawing as the Terror was happening, invoked wisdom. It is tempting to perceive Minerva, to whom Robert dedicated the art he created from his prison cell, as a kind of remedy for the Terror and for the artist's own ordeal. Indeed, in proposing a refocus on rational thought, *Transport of a Statue of Minerva* imagines a

<sup>36</sup> Grégoire stated: "Les conspirateurs n'ayant pu faire de la France un vaste cimetière, en avaient fait au moins une immense prison. À la liste qu'on vous a présentée des hommes à talents incarcérés [a first series of names was provided in the first report] on peut ajouter: Florian, Chabert, Millin, Landine, Garat, Clément-Deris, Molé, Larive, Blessig, Arnoud, Bonneville, Patteau, Quatremère, les deux Gérard, Teissier, Barthelemy, Fleurieu, Lafosse, Robert, Dutrone, Belin, Delille de Salles." ("The conspirators, unable to turn France into a vast cemetery, turn it at least into an immense prison. To the list presented to you of incarcerated talented men, we may add..."). Grégoire, "Troisième rapport sur le vandalisme," in *Patrimoine et cité: textes choisis* (Bordeaux: Confluences, 1999), 51.

<sup>37</sup> Robert's letter read: "Si vous êtes tranquille à Florence, je vous conseille bien d'y rester, car ce moment de crise n'est point fait pour les artistes qui ne désirent et n'ont besoin que de la paix." Published in Ferdinand Boyer, "Jean-Joseph de Laborde protecteur de F.-X. Fabre et sa collection confisquée en 1794. Documents inédits de Vien et d'Hubert Robert," *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de l'Art Français* (1954): 220.

<sup>38</sup> We can note here that Robert and Grégoire knew each other, as evidenced by a letter written by Robert in September 1795, in which he recalls having met "le citoyen Grégoire" at the Committee of Public Instruction. The letter is reproduced in Pierre Rosenberg, "Les Relations artistiques entre la Toscane et la France sous la Révolution: à propos de l'échange d'un Le Sueur," in *Florence et la France. Rapports sous la Révolution et l'Empire. Actes du colloque de Florence, 2,3, 4 juin 1977* (Florence: Centro Di and Paris: Editart Quatre-Chemins, 1979), 136–37.

<sup>39</sup> In his first report, Grégoire stated: "Quelques individus dont le goût peut être faux, dont les lumières peuvent être très resserrées, formeraient un tribunal révolutionnaire qui proscrirait arbitrairement des écrivains, et prononcerait des arrêts de mort contre leurs écrits." ("A few individuals whose taste might be wrong, whose enlightenment might be very limited, would form a revolutionary tribunal that would arbitrarily proscribe writers, and would sentence their writings to death.") Grégoire, "Rapport sur les destructions opérées par le vandalisme, et sur les moyens de le réprimer," in *Patrimoine et cité*, 18.



Revolution that would progress under the guidance of wisdom<sup>40</sup>—the absence of which, some historians have argued, triggered the Terror. As such, the drawing makes an insightful historiographical statement, reminiscent of Patrice Higonnet's characterization of the Terror as a "sleep of reason"—a phrase accounting for the rise of a profoundly irrational state of mind among the revolutionary leaders, *caused* by the overpowering realization that their project could fail and which translated into a relentless recourse to violence.<sup>41</sup>

### ART, CULTURE, AND THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE REVOLUTION

Robert's troubles during the Terror were probably a factor in his shift from Liberty to Minerva, and admittedly, the representation of the public installation of a statue of Liberty in the wake of his own arrest perhaps seemed too ironic, even for the good-humored artist. Furthermore, Robert's status as an artist made his affinity with the goddess of arts and sciences predictable. However, to understand fully the meaning of Minerva in Robert's drawing, it is also crucial to emphasize the Revolution's desire to incorporate art, culture, and learning in its transformation of society.

From the perspective of the French Revolution's leaders, revolutionary reality did not exist without a significant cultural and educational component. The opening of the Museum of the Louvre on the first anniversary of the fall of the monarchy (August 10, 1793), which granted public access to formerly private art collections, best exemplifies this fundamental intersection. A concrete expression of the Revolution's advancement, the inauguration of the Louvre was the perfect symbol of triumph over the fallen monarchy. It is from this point of view that the minister of the Interior Jean-Marie Roland's statement—"The Louvre strives to consolidate the Revolution"—takes its full meaning.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, it is the Revolution's cultural dimension that stimulated Robert's creativity, as *Transport of a*

<sup>40</sup> In her catalogue entry on the drawing, Catherine Boulot made a somewhat similar observation, noting that as far as her association with war went, Minerva embodied discernment and intelligence, whereas Mars, the god of War, embodied brutality. See Boulot, *Hubert Robert et la Révolution*, 108.

<sup>41</sup> Patrice Higonnet, "Le Sommeil de la raison," *La Revue historique* 312, no. 653 (2010): 99–159. Higonnet also develops this explanation of the Terror in an earlier article, "Terror, Trauma and the 'Young Marx' Explanation of Jacobin Politics," *Past and Present* 191, no. 1 (2006): 121–64. For Sarah Catala (42–43), the presence of Minerva as symbol of wisdom in Robert's drawing amounts to a deliberate attack against the politics of the *Convention*.

<sup>42</sup> "Le Louvre travaille à consolider la Révolution." Quoted in Claude Fourteau, "La Renaissance de la gratuité au Louvre," in *Les Institutions culturelles au plus près du public*, ed. Claude Fourteau (Paris: La Documentation française, 2002), 114.



**Figure 5.7** *The Grande Galerie, Around 1795* (c. 1795). Hubert Robert. Oil, 14 3/5 × 16 3/5 inches.

Musée du Louvre, Paris.

*Statue of Minerva*, as well as the artist's depictions of public museums, including the Louvre, where he worked as a curator, attest. His painting known as *The Grande Galerie, Around 1795*, which shows the Gallery roughly in the state in which it was when it first opened to the public, is one example among others (Figure 5.7).

The prominent place that Minerva is about to occupy in Robert's drawing—a place previously occupied by the king himself—suggests that the goddess of arts and sciences was the most relevant substitute. As such, the drawing, which acknowledges the past but ultimately looks toward the future, reflects the Revolution's core principle of emancipation through culture, which the artist explored more concretely in *The Grande Galerie, Around 1795*, where the emphasis is placed on the public's appropriation of the museum's public space. Considered in this broader context, *Transport of a Statue of Minerva* is one of Robert's most symbolic artistic gestures



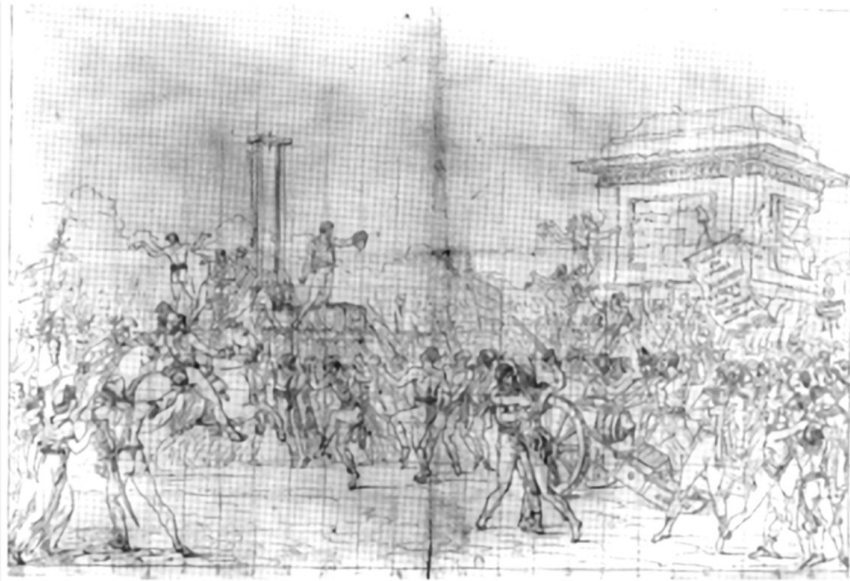
in his steady examination of the Revolution's potential for bringing about cultural change.

### THE SANS-CULOTTES, AGENTS OF CULTURAL CHANGE

It is noteworthy that in *Transport of a Statue of Minerva*, the cultural change is performed by a group of sans-culottes. The militant sans-culottes, alternatively praised as dedicated patriots and denounced as bloodthirsty criminals, were often portrayed, in writing and visually, as a violent and impulsive group, not only by their opponents but also by their supporters. For example, in September 1792, the poet and political activist Sylvain Maréchal, editor-in-chief of *Les Révolutions de Paris*, published in the newspaper the following harangue: "How come the sans-culottes have not yet gone to Saint-Denis to have the executioner exhume the vile bones of all these arrogant monarchs who, from the bottom of their tombs, still seem today to defy the laws of equality?"<sup>43</sup> As far as the visual arts are concerned, Pierre-Étienne Lesueur's drawing entitled *The Execution of Louis XVI*, a preparatory work from 1794 for a painting intended for the *Concours de l'An II*, is particularly relevant for our purpose as its composition relates to *Transport of a Statue of Minerva* (Figure 5.8). As in Robert's drawing, the scene takes place on the Place de la Révolution, where the king was indeed guillotined. On the right, the empty pedestal, also featured in Robert's drawing, is visible. (Louis XVI was executed on January 21, 1793, that is, about six months prior to the installation of Lemot's statue, hence its absence in Lesueur's drawing.) The juxtaposition of the pedestal where the statue of Louis XV used to stand and of the freshly severed head of Louis XVI underscores the importance of eliminating all royal presence, symbolic and real, from the French soil. Moreover, it dramatizes the collapse of the monarchy, which has fallen from its glorifying pedestal to meet the blade of the guillotine. This radical eradication provokes intense rejoicing among the sans-culottes attending the execution: waving of liberty caps, brandishing of pikes, fraternal embraces, and macabre dances that evoke a fierce spirit, whose moral judgment, in view of Maréchal's words, ultimately rests with the viewer.

In contrast, Robert depicts the sans-culottes as participants, in the capacity of workforce, in the Revolution's cultural enterprise. Depicted as a pacific group in *The Fountain of Liberty* discussed earlier, their involve-

<sup>43</sup> "Comment les sans-culottes ne se sont-ils pas transportés à Saint-Denis pour y faire exhumer par la main du bourreau les vils ossements de tous ces monarques orgueilleux qui, du fond de leur tombes, semblent encore aujourd'hui braver les lois de l'égalité?" Quoted in Réau, *Histoire du vandalisme*, 287.



**Figure 5.8** *The Execution of Louis XVI* (1794). Pierre-Étienne Lesueur. Black ink, 10¼ × 15 inches.

Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

ment in the installation of the new sculpture in *Transport of a Statue of Minerva* associates them with the constructive effort of the Revolution. The following year, in the view of the Grande Galerie also discussed previously, Robert will take a further step in this direction: on the left, he portrays a group of three figures wearing liberty caps, in the process of drawing (perhaps copying the painting placed on the easel next to them), that is, benefiting from the Revolution's commitment to public access to art. It must be noted that these three figures include one man and two women. Women associated with the sans-culotterie were even more stigmatized than their male counterparts. Their inclusion in *The Grande Galerie, Around 1795* speaks to Robert's attentiveness to diversity in terms of class—"sans-culotte" conjures the notion of "the people"—as well as in terms of gender, within the Revolution's cultural scheme.

Returning to *Transport of a Statue of Minerva*, the drawing not only shows the sans-culottes as agents of cultural change, but also subtly comments on their social status and related public perception. The majority of the sans-culottes were not on the fringe of society, as some historians have argued, although it is true that their association with the lowest social

class goes back to the time of the French Revolution.<sup>44</sup> Often, the sans-culottes were artisans, and it is important to note that Minerva was the protector of artisans. Her imminent public display by her disciples thus awards the latter an unprecedented level of visibility and legitimacy, while inviting today's viewer to rethink the sans-culottes' social status.

### HISTORIOGRAPHICAL DECONSTRUCTION: DESTRUCTION AND CREATION AS CODEPENDENT FORCES

So far, this essay has emphasized how *Transport of a Statue of Minerva* reflects the Revolution's desire to integrate cultural experience within its larger project of renewal, or "regeneration," to use a concept central to the revolutionary rhetoric. In agreement with this concept, which aimed, according to its most radical defenders, "to undo the work of the past,"<sup>45</sup> Robert's drawing shows the pedestal deprived of its original statue, with its clear surface symbolizing the revolutionary effort of *tabula rasa*, eliminating the past. However, still in alignment with the notion of regeneration, which also implies renewal, the drawing simultaneously shows artistic creation, as exemplified by the image of the freshly sculpted statue, her arm's supple flesh evoking her brand-newness. From this point of view, *Transport of a Statue of Minerva* invites one to revisit the French Revolution's historiography on vandalism, which goes back to the 1790s.

After 9 Thermidor, the French people faced the daunting task of having to interpret their recent terrorist past. The Abbé Grégoire was very involved in this effort, including through his reports on vandalism, which, in agreement with the Thermidorian mindset, strove to condemn the Terror without compromising the revolutionary project as a whole. However, his reports have remained a landmark in the history of vandalism rather than in the defense of the ideals of 1789. In fact, they are important for understanding the historiographical conflict that occurred in the late 1860s, opposing detractors of the Revolution, who underscored the destructions

<sup>44</sup> As Patrice Higonnet wrote, "the typical sans-culotte was neither a worker in the Gobelins factory nor an indigent living on a boarding house but an artisan, a journeyman, or owner of a small business." Higonnet, "Sans-culottes," in *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution*, eds. François Furet and Mona Ozouf, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1989), 394. For a discussion of the connections existing between the sans-culotterie and the bourgeoisie, as well as the existence of a sans-culotte oligarchy, see Richard Andrews, "Social Structures, Political Elites and Ideology in Revolutionary Paris, 1792–94: A Critical Evaluation of Albert Soboul's 'Les Sans-culottes parisiens en l'an II,'" *Journal of Social History* 19, no. 1 (1985): 71–112.

<sup>45</sup> Mona Ozouf, "Regeneration," in *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution*, 784.

and neglected the artistic efforts of the period (a view developed by Georges d'Heilly), to supporters of the Revolution, who minimized the destructions and emphasized the artistic contributions (a perspective adopted by Eugène Despois).<sup>46</sup> Grégoire's reports have also fueled the discourse of contemporary art historians, including François Souchal, who have dismissed the Revolution's commitment to the expansion of the cultural public sphere.<sup>47</sup>

Robert's drawing takes a different route: reconciling visually the antagonistic interpretations grounded in rival ideologies that have characterized the historiography, it proposes a third view, namely, that destruction and creation are codependent forces that work concomitantly. As such, *Transport of a Statue of Minerva*, in bringing together destruction and creation, appears as a particularly adequate reply to the "historiographical deconstruction" that Serge Bianchi has been calling for, on account that "artistic creations (museums, monuments, representations) have never been more intense than during the period characterized as the Terror, which has been denied until today by a historiography hostile to Jacobinism."<sup>48</sup> For Bianchi, destructions were a necessary stage in the Revolution's regenerative ambition—"destroy in order to build," as he summarized it.<sup>49</sup> This ambition, reminiscent of the revolutionary concept of "regeneration," is questionable, considering the Revolution's toll on the art of the past, as well as of its present: as Laura Auricchio observed during the *Art of Revolutions* conference, the artist Adélaïde Labille-Guiard (Paris, 1749–1803) wit-

<sup>46</sup> See Georges d'Heilly, *L'Extraction des cercueils royaux à Saint-Denis en 1793* (Paris: Hachette, 1868) and Eugène Despois, *Le Vandalisme révolutionnaire. Fondations littéraires, scientifiques et artistiques de la Convention* (Paris: Germer-Baillière, 1868). D'Heilly and Despois's conflicting views were assessed by Jules Guiffrey in his article "Le Vandalisme révolutionnaire. Examen critique de quelques publications récentes relatives à l'histoire de la Révolution," *Revue critique d'histoire et de littérature* no. 41 (October 10, 1868): 228–240. In this article, Guiffrey is slightly more favorable to Despois's view.

<sup>47</sup> See François Souchal, *Le Vandalisme de la Révolution* (Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Latines, 1993), where the author denounces the disastrous effect of the Revolution on the art of the past.

<sup>48</sup> "Les créations (musées, monuments, représentations) artistiques n'ont jamais été plus intenses qu'à l'époque qualifiée de Terreur, ce qu'a nié jusqu'à aujourd'hui une historiographie hostile au jacobinisme." Serge Bianchi, "Le 'Vandalisme révolutionnaire' et la politique artistique de la Convention au temps des 'terreurs': essai de bilan raisonné," in *Les Politiques de la Terreur*, ed. Michel Biard (Rennes: Presses Universitaires and Paris: Société des Études Robespierriennes, 2008), 404. Bianchi's understanding of Grégoire's position during Thermidor is reminiscent of Bacsko's analysis; however, Bianchi's main reason for criticizing Grégoire's position is that it continues to contaminate contemporary historiography. Additional writings by Bianchi on this question include "Le 'vandalisme révolutionnaire' ou la naissance d'un mythe," in *La Légende de la Révolution. Actes du colloque international de Clermont-Ferrand, juin 1986*, eds. Christian Croisille and Jean Ehrard (Clermont-Ferrand: Centre de recherches révolutionnaires et romantiques, 1988), 189–199 and *La Révolution culturelle de l'an II* (Paris: Aubier, 1982).

<sup>49</sup> Bianchi, "Le 'Vandalisme révolutionnaire' et la politique artistique de la Convention au temps des 'terreurs': essai de bilan raisonné," 409. Pierre-Yves Balut put forward an argument similar to Bianchi's, but worded it somewhat more provocatively, asserting that artistic destructions were "un acte patrimonial de refus d'héritage" ("a patrimonial act of refusal of heritage"). Balut, "La Double inconstance: patrimoine et conservation, vandalisme et destruction," in *Révolution française et vandalisme révolutionnaire*, 9.

nessed the destruction of her portraits of the royal family in a bonfire in 1793.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, Bianchi's claim that the denial of artistic creation during the Terror is the effect of anti-Jacobinism reveals his own partisan view. But it remains that *Transport of a Statue of Minerva*, in highlighting the complexity of the cultural policies during the French Revolution through its conflation of destruction and creation, anticipates the historiographical deconstruction that Bianchi has called for. Most important, it blurs the boundaries between these two phenomena through the intervention of a group of sans-culottes installing a statue of the goddess of arts and sciences, symbolizing a new set of values. In doing so, the drawing embodies the Revolution's promise for new cultural experiences, which Robert himself worked toward through his role at the Louvre.

*Transport of a Statue of Minerva*, indifferent to political ideologies, exceeds a construction of the Terror as either fully destructive or intensely creative, while at the same time recognizing the Revolution's consistent commitment to integrate art, culture, and education within the republican experience. The power of Robert's drawing is not to offer a universal answer to the phenomenon of vandalism, but on the contrary, to stand as an account informed by the artist's unique assessment of his historical condition. It is in recognizing the historical specificity of *Transport of a Statue of Minerva*, that is, its nontranshistorical nature, that Robert's drawing remains relevant for today's audiences as they reflect on public monuments from the past and for the future.

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<sup>50</sup> The episode is studied by Laura Auricchio in her book *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard: Artist in the Age of Revolution* (Los Angeles, CA: J. Paul Getty Trust, 2009), 84–91.