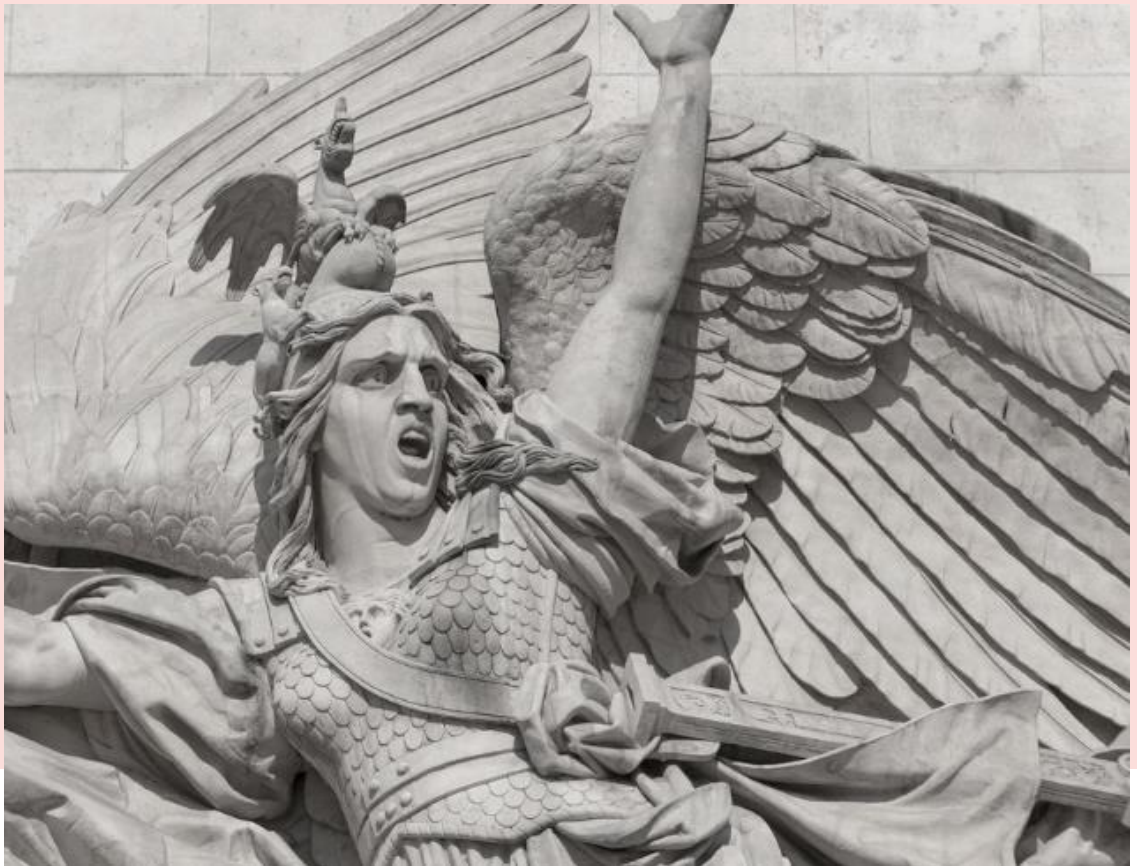




ARC DE
TRIOMPHE

THE SCULPTED DECORATIONS



+ LEARNING
RESOURCE



RÉPUBLIQUE
FRANÇAISE

*Liberté
Égalité
Fraternité*

CENTRE DES MONUMENTS NATIONAUX

THE ICONOGRAPHIC PROGRAM OF THE SCULPTED DECORATIONS OF THE ARC DE TRIOMPHE, BETWEEN ARTISTIC CHOICE AND POLITICAL DECISION.

The iconographic program of the decorations currently present on the Arc de Triomphe is not the one originally envisioned. The construction of the monument spanned thirty years (from 1806 to 1836), and the program underwent numerous revisions over the years, involving different architects and political regimes. The sculptures and their subjects were commissioned based on architectural choices and on the political significance that each regime wished to attribute to the monument. Various events, personalities, armies, and ideas were glorified depending on the ruling regime and its symbols and ideals. Initially dedicated to the *Grande Armée* (the French Imperial Army), the monument's dedication was later changed by the Bourbons* to celebrate the royal army of the Pyrenees, ultimately expanding the dedication to both the *Grande Armée* and the armies of the French Revolution. Despite all these changes and construction interruptions, the Arc de Triomphe ultimately achieved stylistic homogeneity in its architecture and sculpted decorations.

LEARNING RESOURCE TO GO FURTHER: [1](#).
AT THE END OF THE DOCUMENT

Adolphe Thiers commissioned the sculptures on the Arc de Triomphe. A passionate art enthusiast, collector, and critic, he served as the Minister of the Interior during the July Monarchy*. In agreement with King Louis-Philippe I, he decided to have symbolic military events from the French Revolution, the Consulate, and the Empire represented on the Arc. These events united the population around the idea of the homeland. The King of this emerging monarchy aimed to establish a certain legitimacy by reconnecting with the past and sought a balance between the Empire and the French Revolution. This explains the choice of historical references found on the monument.

Among the chosen sculptors, some belonged to the Classical school, while others were associated with the new Romantic movement. Those from the Classical school also represented various sub-categories. Behind this selection of artists, there was a desire to depict the two main and competing sculpture schools of the time, in all their diversity. In total, twenty-two sculptors worked on the monument, a fact that some criticized as a lack of aesthetic homogeneity. However, it was a very deliberate choice. Louis-Philippe aimed to undertake a “social” project, providing employment for a large number of artists, and achieving a result that illustrated the various artistic movements of the time.

The result is a modern iconographic program illustrating contemporary French history. The sculpted decorations of the Arc de Triomphe contrast with its architecture based on models from antiquity, an architectural style more commonly associated with allegories* and scenes in the antique style, rather than the representation of recent events.

The study of the sculpted program of the Arc de Triomphe, in addition to its interest through the lens of art history, explains the institutional and political status of the monument.

This educational document aims to describe the various decorations of the Arc de Triomphe in order to enable knowledge and understanding of it.

In order to enhance readability, the sculpted decorations located on the exterior facades of the monument will be described first, followed by the interior reliefs visible from beneath the Arc de Triomphe. Within these two sections, the sculptures will be described one by one, starting from the bottom on the lower part of the piers* of the arch and progressing upward, ending at the top of the attic*. This exploration of the decorations will then conclude with a discussion of recurring sculpted elements, such as palm fronds, for example.



01. Jules-Denis Thierry, *Ornaments of the attic, console, archivolt, and frame*, 1836

* **Lexicon**

See the glossary, page 27

The piers of the Arc de Triomphe are adorned with four sculpted groups, each depicting a specific event from the history of France. These reliefs were sculpted by three different artists before the inauguration of the monument, between 1833 and 1836.

**THE DEPARTURE OF THE VOLUNTEERS,
KNOWN AS LA MARSEILLAISE,
FRANÇOIS RUDE**



High relief in Chérence stone

11.60 meters in height;
6 meters in width

On the Avenue des Champs-Élysées side,
right pier (northeast)

This high relief represents the *Génie de la Patrie* (literally the “Genius* of Homeland”) in the form of a winged woman, screaming at the top of her lungs. Wearing a Phrygian cap, she brandishes her sword and calls upon the people to fight. This cap is a reference to the 1789 Revolution and the symbol of the freed slaves of the Roman Republic, which the young French Republic used as a model. At the top left of the composition, the rooster of the French Republic dominates the scene from the top of the French flag’s pole. The troops that the Genius urges to fight are in the foreground. A bearded warrior, wearing chainmail, leads a young naked man by the shoulder while waving his helmet as a sign of gathering and departure. He seems not to hear the advice given by an old man behind them. On the right, another warrior, covered with a cloak, grabs his sword and shield, preparing to join the movement. On the left, a soldier braces himself to draw his bow, while behind him, another blows the trumpet. In the background, a horseman can be seen restraining his neighing horse, ready to answer the call of the Genius. They are prepared for the battle.

This sculpted group represents the **Battle of Valmy** (September 20, 1792). It marks the first victory of revolutionary France against the European monarchies that had formed a coalition. 200,000 men defended the country in response to the call of the Legislative Assembly, facing foreign armies that had gathered against the revolutionaries. The favorable outcome of this battle was attributed to the singing of the *chant de l’Armée du Rhin* (the future *Marseillaise*), which is said to have led the troops to victory. It is a major event in revolutionary history, and Louis-Philippe liked to recall his participation in it.

Although this high relief* depicts an event from French history, the subject is treated allegorically. François Rude represents a modern event but does not use costumes or weapons from the period in which the scene unfolds. Instead, he includes soldiers in ancient attire, giving a timeless dimension to the work. It becomes a symbol of the people, whoever they may be, defending what belongs to them.



02. François Rude, *The Departure of the Volunteers*



* **Lexicon**

See the glossary, page 27



François Rude was an artist who gradually transitioned from Neoclassicism* to Romanticism*. Artists within the Romantic movement sought to evoke the turmoil and passions of the human soul by depicting highly expressive bodies and faces. The exaggerated expression of the Genius reveals the sculptor's inclination towards the principles of Romanticism at this point in his career.

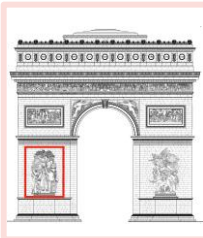
TO GO FURTHER: ¶1.

But behind this screaming face hides another artist: Sophie Rude. A painter and the sculptor's wife, she posed herself and served as a model for the *Génie de la Patrie*, aiming to imbue it with the utmost expressiveness. It is now known that the couple always worked closely together, with the goal of refining each other's artistic practices.

The Departure of the Volunteers links the monument to the French Revolution of 1789. The commissioning of this work is a political choice made by the July Monarchy, the regime of Louis-Philippe under which the construction of the Arc de Triomphe was completed. It is a commission that aims to bring together various political tendencies of the time, satisfying republican sentiment while emphasizing the origins of the existing constitutional monarchy to legitimize it.

TO GO FURTHER: ¶2.

**THE TRIUMPH OF NAPOLEON,
PIERRE CORTOT**



High relief in Chérence stone
11.60 meters in height;
6 meters in width
On the Avenue des Champs-Élysées side,
left pier (southeast)

Also known as *The Triumph of 1810*, this sculpture represents Napoleon dressed in ancient attire, pressing a sword against his chest. He is surrounded by allegorical figures illustrating his glory. One of them, a Victory*, places a laurel crown on his head. To the right, a kneeling and bowed man represents a prisoner at the feet of his conqueror. He is in a submissive posture, presented as a war trophy. On the left, the allegory of a conquered city, crowned with crenellated walls, kneels before the Emperor, who covers it with a protective hand. Behind this allegory stands Clío, the Muse of History, engraving on a tablet the

great battles won by Napoleon and his armies. The names *Pyramides*, *Marengo*, and the initial letters of *Austerlitz* can be read. Overlooking the scene, Fame* carries a banner topped with the Imperial Eagle. The monogram "EF", for *Empire Français* ("French Empire" in English), is inscribed on it. Fame blows the trumpet, proclaiming the Emperor's achievements. Behind her, at the top of the composition, a palm tree evokes Napoleon's expedition to Egypt and the glory he received upon returning from that campaign.



03. Pierre Cortot, *The Triumph of Napoleon*

The sculpted group refers to the year 1810, marking the zenith of the Napoleonic reign. This date is notable for numerous victories and conquests, as well as Napoleon's marriage to Marie-Louise of Austria, securing his offspring and thereby ensuring the future of his dynasty.



* **Lexicon**

See the glossary, page 27



The Fame depicted here is the counterpart to the *Génie de la Patrie* from Rude's *Departure of the Volunteers*. Cortot's sculpted group is a classical composition, contrasting with the heightened romanticism of Rude's sculpted group on the opposite pier. In fact, it is with these words that the sculptor David d'Angers described *The Triumph of Napoleon*:



The sculpture by Cortot is icy. It is flawless in terms of proportions, measurements, and limbs, but life, the soul, is absent.

THE RESISTANCE, ANTOINE ETEX



High relief in Chérence stone

11.60 meters in height;
6 meters in width

On the Avenue de la Grande-Armée
side, right pier (southwest)

At the center of this composition, there is a young warrior, nude, preparing to defend his homeland and protect his loved ones. His left fist is clenched, while he holds a sword in his right hand. On the left, an old man tries to hold him back by clinging to his leg. This man is most likely his father. On the other side of the composition, a woman is depicted carrying a lifeless child, conveying a sense of mourning and tragedy. She appears to be imploring the warrior to consider ending the battle. In the background, a bearded rider falling from his horse appears mortally wounded, as if struck down in the midst of action. This image symbolizes the patriot's sacrifice for his country. At the top of the relief, a winged figure dominates the scene. It is the *Génie de l'Avenir* ("Genius of the Future") who, with his left fist clenched and a sword in his right hand, dictates to the warrior his duty of resistance. A flame erupting from the top of his head symbolizes peace.

This sculpted group represents the resistance of the nation against the **invasion of the allied foreign forces** against the Napoleonic Empire in **1814**. The Russians and Austrians had invaded and occupied parts of French territory, even reaching Paris. It is a challenging year during which a climate of fear prevails in the country.



04. Antoine Etex, *The Resistance*

The Resistance of Etex is one of the most expressive and romantic high reliefs on the Arc de Triomphe, alongside *The Departure of the Volunteers*. The composition evokes fear, mourning, and despair. However, the soldier at the center of the composition reassures with his unperturbed demeanor in the face of the surrounding environment. The Genius of the Future, on the other hand, provides hope and confidence in the future.

In 1871, *The Resistance* was damaged by bombings during the Paris Commune. Etex then repaired it in his workshop, and the traces of this restoration are now almost invisible.

PEACE, ANTOINE ETEX



High relief in Chérence stone

11.60 meters in height;
6 meters in width

On the Avenue de la Grande-Armée side,
left pier (northwest)

In this second high relief sculpted by Antoine Etex, a nude and helmeted soldier sheathes his sword, symbolizing that the battles and wars are over. This soldier gives the impression of protecting the scene unfolding behind him. On the left of the composition, a woman holds her child on her lap, while a young boy reads beside them. On the right, a peasant is kneeling, busy examining a plowshare. Behind him, wheat spikes symbolize agriculture. Wheat, along with other cereals, has been the main source of sustenance for the population for centuries. Behind the soldier, a plowman tries to control his bull to return it to the plow. At the top of the scene is Minerva, helmeted and armed with a spear, watching over them all.

Minerva, Goddess of War and Civilization, embodies above all military strategy. She symbolizes organized warfare and the art of self-defense, rather than combat in its violence, which is more commonly associated with Mars. Minerva thus represents war as a means to return to peace and ensure the survival of the city. As a civilizing goddess, she protects the city as well as the activities that exist within it during times of peace. These activities may include art, craftsmanship, and labor, among others.

This sculpted group symbolizes the return to peace after the **Treaty of Paris** in **1815**. This treaty marks the end of Napoleon's attempt to return to power during the Hundred Days, a period that culminates in his greatest defeat: the Battle of Waterloo. It is from this event that a desire for change will arise, calling for more peace and stability, away from battles, wars, and defeats. Therefore, this sculpture represents the promise of a France that can resume work and rebuild itself.

It brings together all the fundamental activities of a prosperous society. Peace is presented as a promise, evident in the very composition of the artwork, which seems somewhat frozen, suggesting a certain stability. There is

also a promise of education and learning, represented by the young boy opening his book. Beside him, a mother cradles her young child. It is the promise of a gentler future, where this child may not go to war. The final promise that emerges through this artwork is the promise of abundance, symbolized by plants framing the scene. A farmer examines the plowshare, preparing for this period of flourishing agriculture.

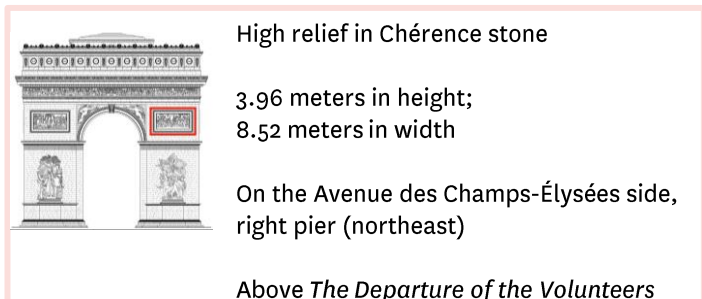
The two high reliefs by Antoine Etex are like two extremes responding to each other, one evoking life, while the other evokes death. There are, in fact, many similarities in their composition. Both are composed of six or seven individuals, including a soldier at the center, brandishing his sword or sheathing it. He is always surrounded by a man and a woman carrying a child. In the background, there is a man accompanied by an animal, with the two front legs not touching the ground. Both sculpted groups are topped by a figure dominating the scene, namely the Genius of the Future for *The Resistance* and Minerva for *Peace*.



05. Antoine Etex, *Peace*

The upper part of the piers of the Arc de Triomphe is adorned with four high reliefs sculpted by four different artists.

THE FUNERAL OF GENERAL MARCEAU, PHILIPPE-JOSEPH-HENRI LEMAIRE



On September 21, 1796, at the **Battle of Altenkirchen** (September 20, 1796), General Marceau died at the age of twenty-seven. He was leading the Army of Sambre and Meuse.

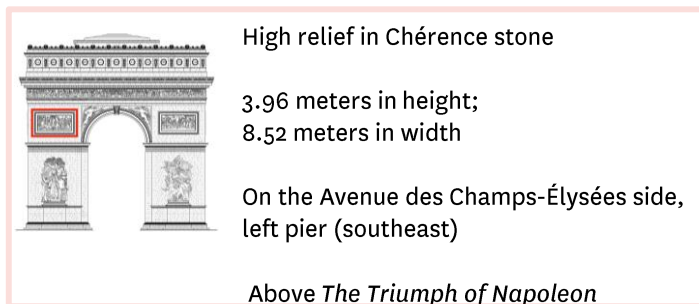


06. Henri Lemaire, *The Funeral of General Marceau*

The Lemaire relief depicts the funeral of General Marceau. Draped in a cloak, his body lies on a stretcher in the center of the composition. On the left, four Austrian officers stand alongside Archduke Charles of Austria. Despite being the leader of the opposing army, the Archduke pays tribute to General Marceau by placing a wreath on his remains. Their presence at the funeral demonstrates that this young French general was perceived as a brave and virtuous soldier, to whom even enemies show their respect. On the right, soldiers from the Army of Sambre and Meuse mourn their leader. An officer weeps on the chest of another, who is also in tears. A third soldier pays his respects to the general while holding his horse, while a fourth leans on his

rifle. In the background, buildings and trees are represented. The inscription “ALTENKIRKEN XXI 7^{BRE} 1796” is visible on one of the houses. On the left, the sculptor signed “H. LEMAIRE, 1834” on one of the structures. Depicting the Battle of Altenkirchen and General Marceau on the Arc de Triomphe was a choice made by Louis-Philippe I, who wanted to pay tribute to the young sacrifices of the Revolution.

THE BATTLE OF ABOUKIR, BERNARD-GABRIEL SEURRE, NAMED SEURRE AÎNÉ



The Battle of Aboukir (July 25, 1799), depicted in this high relief, took place during the **campaign in Egypt**. On July 11, 1799, as Bonaparte faced difficulties in Egypt, a Turkish army of 18,000 men landed at Aboukir. Napoleon quickly gathered 10,000 soldiers and launched an offensive before receiving reinforcements from the Kléber division. Murat’s cavalry led the charge against the Turkish entrenched camp, and the Ottoman generalissimo Kincei Mustapha Pasha was captured by Murat himself.



07. Seurre Aîné, *The Battle of Aboukir*




2. THE UPPER RELIEFS OF THE PIERS



In Seurre l’Aîné’s relief, we can see Napoleon accompanied by Murat. They are on horseback, and, followed by French soldiers, they head to the prisoners’ camp where Mustapha Pasha is located. An *aide-de-camp* presents the generalissimo of the Turkish armies to them. Captives follow the pasha, and one of them prostrates, imploring clemency from Bonaparte. The Emperor’s horse steps over a corpse, while behind them, the flag of the 22nd brigade flies.

**CROSSING THE ARCOLE BRIDGE,
JEAN-JACQUES FEUCHÈRE**



High relief in Chérence stone

3.96 meters in height;
8.52 meters in width

On the Avenue de la Grande-Armée side,
right pier (southwest)

Above *The Resistance*

Jean-Jacques Feuchère refers here to the crossing of the Bridge of Arcole (November 15, 1796). It is a famous episode from the **Italian campaign** taking place in the marshes near Verona, facing the Austrian armies. Upon arriving at the scene, Napoleon is said to have realized the failure of the attack led by General Augereau on the Bridge of Arcole. He then reportedly seized the flag of the 1st battalion and the 51st half-brigade, shouting, *Suivez votre général !*, which can be translated as “Follow your general!”. Followed by Augereau’s grenadiers*, he would have then rushed onto the bridge despite the hail of bullets decimating soldiers and officers. In this heroic initiative, the Emperor would have put his life in peril to win this decisive battle.

However, in this narrative, the Napoleonic legend has replaced Augereau, the true “hero” of this battle, with Bonaparte. Indeed, it was General Augereau who seized the Bridge of Arcole and defended it until the arrival of the Emperor. This bridge may not have even been crossed.

The battles took place around it, and the bridge was blocked, but it reportedly was never actually crossed. The crossing of the bridge and Napoleon’s participation in this event are therefore in the realm of myth. Napoleon himself perpetuated this legend by recounting it in his memoirs during his exile on Saint Helena.

The high relief sculpted by Feuchère depicts Bonaparte crossing the wooden bridge, a sword in his right hand, and a flag in his left hand. His aide-de-camp, General Muiron, lies on the ground, mortally wounded, vainly attempting to restrain the Emperor. Behind them, soldiers follow the example and rush after Bonaparte, like the young drummer beating the charge. Behind Napoleon is General Augereau leading his men. On the bridge, one can read the inscription “JEAN FEUCHERE, 1834”. Feuchère’s work is dynamic, slightly overflowing from its frame, and contains few details that are not visible from the ground.



08. Jean-Jacques Feuchère, *Crossing the Arcole Bridge*

* **Lexicon**
See the glossary, page 27

2. THE UPPER RELIEFS OF THE PIERS

**THE CONQUEST OF ALEXANDRIA,
JEAN-ÉTIENNE CHAPONNIÈRE,
NAMED JOHN CHAPONNIÈRE**



High relief in Chérence stone

3.96 meters in height;
8.52 meters in width

On the Avenue de la Grande-Armée
side, left pier (northwest)

Above *Peace*

preparing to stab him. A soldier climbs the final steps to access the rampart, and another beckons his comrades with a gesture. The flag of the Army of the Orient emerges, while at the foot of the rampart, the Mameluke* standard lies as a symbol of defeat. On the right, the inscription “J.E. CHAPONNIERE, 1835” can be read, it is the sculptor's signature.

Depicting this episode emphasizes the victorious period of the Egyptian campaign, without mentioning that it was a very ephemeral time. Indeed, on August 1, 1798, British Admiral Horatio Nelson destroyed the French fleet in Aboukir Bay, thus regaining control of the Mediterranean.

The capture of Alexandria, like the Battle of Aboukir, is an episode from the **Egyptian campaign**. This operation took place on July 2, 1798, very shortly after the French armies landed in Egypt. After a thirteen-kilometer night march, Napoleon launched five thousand soldiers from the Army of the Orient against the fortifications of Alexandria. General Menou took the fort, while Bonaparte and Kléber took the city gates. This battle, concluded in half a day, opened the road to Cairo for Napoleon.



09. John Chaponnière, *The Conquest of Alexandria*

The Chaponnière relief depicts General Kléber, followed by his troops, reaching the top of the ramparts of Alexandria. Injured in the head, he raises his hand to his forehead. With his left hand, he points out the enemy to his soldiers, brandishing his sword. Meanwhile, a French soldier thrusts his bayonet into the chest of the Turk who wounded the general. He seems unaware of the Egyptian

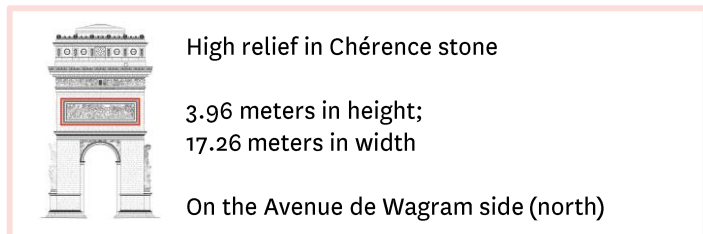
* **Lexicon**

See the glossary, page 27

n 2. THE UPPER RELIEFS OF THE PIERS

The lateral sides of the Arc de Triomphe, facing the Wagram Avenue and the Kléber Avenue, are also adorned with reliefs. These compositions are located at the same height as the upper reliefs of the piers, described earlier.

THE BATTLE OF AUSTERLITZ, JEAN-FRANÇOIS-THÉODORE GECHTER



The victory of Austerlitz concluded the **campaign in Germany**. It was won on December 2, 1805, the first anniversary of the Emperor's coronation. During this battle, Napoleon set a trap for the Russians and Austrians, then allies, by leaving them the Pratzen plateau. When he heard the Austrian troops maneuvering in dense fog, he sent Soult's corps to occupy the plateau. As the fog lifted, with the majority of allied troops engaged in the lowlands, he launched the attack. It is thanks to this tactical feat that the French infantry* defeated the Russians and Austrians. Vanquished, some of the enemy soldiers attempt to flee by crossing a frozen pond.

It seems this victory prompted Napoleon to build the Arc de Triomphe because. On this occasion, he made a promise to his victorious troops:



As you return to your homes you will pass below triumphal arches!

When one looks at the center of the high relief, Napoleon on horseback comes into view. Motionless, he observes the battle and with a hand gesture, restrains the soldier following him. On the right, the Imperial Guard remains static, while the French infantry charges the enemy with bayonets. General Friant, dismounted from his horse, tries to make his way with his rifle. Meanwhile, the ice breaks beneath the feet of the Russian and Austrian cavalry, which has been pushed towards the frozen ponds. The soldiers then fall into the Sokolnitz pond. Some cavalrymen have only half of their bodies visible, almost engulfed. One of them seeks to save himself by clinging to the shoulder of an infantryman. The artist engraved his signature on a piece of ice: "T. GECHTER, 1836".



10. Théodore Gechter, *The Battle of Austerlitz*

* Lexicon

See the glossary, page 27

2. THE UPPER RELIEFS OF THE PIERS

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10

THE BATTLE OF JEMMAPES, CHARLES MAROCHETTI



High relief in Chérence stone

3.96 meters in height;
17.26 meters in width

On the Avenue Kléber (south)

On November 6, 1792, General Dumouriez, accompanied by forty thousand soldiers, faced the Duke of Teschen on the heights of Jemappes. The momentum and ardor of Dumouriez and his generals were necessary to urge the young volunteers, inexperienced and hesitant to attack the Austrians. Among these generals leading them into battle is the Duke of Chartres, who would later become King Louis-Philippe. He was nineteen years old at the time of this battle. The victory at Jemappes would enter into legend, not for its strategic military qualities, but because it was **one of the early successes of the young Republic.**

General Dumouriez is the central figure in Marochetti's high relief. Mounted on a rearing horse, he waves his hat to rally his troops. He is followed by his general staff, *maréchaux de camp* Ferrand, Stennebosse, Rosières, Bloisières, and the Duke of Chartres. On the left, General Drouet, with a broken leg, is assisted by a medical officer. Behind him, General Thouvenot charges to attack the enemy on its right flank. Seen from behind, he holds his sword and hat aloft. To the right of the composition, the battle is engaged between Austrian cavalry and French infantry. One of the Austrian officers, taken prisoner, is depicted with a bandaged arm and bareheaded. On a broken wheel in the center of the work, is the artist's signature.



11. Charles Marochetti, *The Battle of Jemmapes*

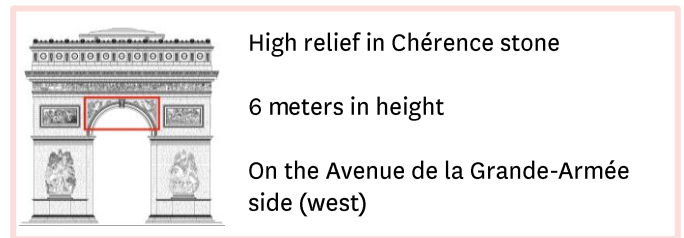
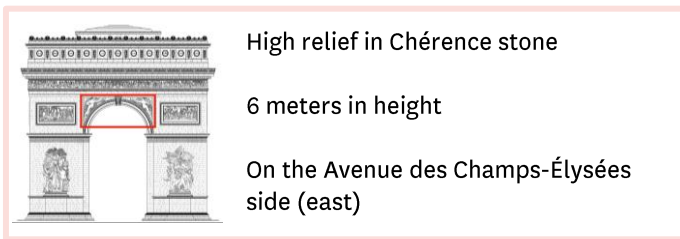
3. THE LATERAL UPPER RELIEFS

FAMES,

JEAN-JACQUES PRADIER, NAMED JAMES PRADIER

Now back on the two main facades of the monument, we will focus on the spandrels* of the large arches, where we can see Fame figures sculpted by James Pradier.

The sculptor created these four figures from molds of the Arch of Titus in Rome. These molds had been commissioned by the French Academy in Rome under the direction of Jean-Nicolas Huyot, one of the architects of the Arc de Triomphe. Pradier's *Fames* are much more imposing than their models.



On the side of the Avenue de la Grande-Armée, Fames brandish a laurel crown tied with ribbons. The figure on the left tympanum holds a trumpet in one hand and a palm in the other.



13. James Pradier, *Fames*

On the Champs-Élysées side, Fames sound the trumpet. The figure on the left tympanum holds an oak crown, while the one on the right tympanum holds a laurel crown. Nude but covered with draperies, Fames have outspread wings and hair blowing in the wind.

On the Champs-Élysées Avenue side, Fames sound the trumpet to encourage the soldiers departing for battle as they pass under the Arc, while on the Grande-Armée side, the soldiers are celebrated upon their return from the battlefield with laurel crowns. These spandrels recall the initial function of a triumphal arch, which has two ways: the departure of the armies and their return.



12. James Pradier, *Fames*

* Lexicon

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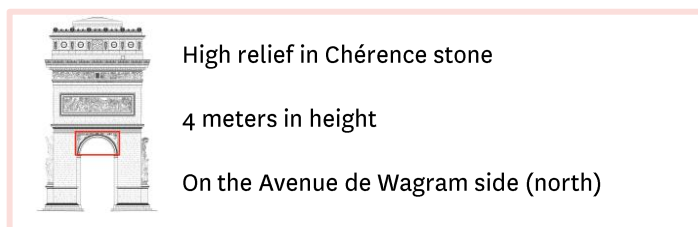
The spandrels of the small arches located on the lateral faces of the monument are also adorned with figures. These represent two corps of the army.

The spandrels of the inner small arches also refer to two other army corps. They will be described below, in the section dedicated to the decorations on the inner part of the monument.

Thus, the figures sculpted on the four small arches of the Arc de Triomphe refer to the four major divisions of the army. Each of these figures is both historical and allegorical, combining heroic nudity and contemporary weapons.

Now, here are the decorations represented on the two outer small arches, located on the lateral facades of the monument.

INFANTRY, THÉOPHILE BRA

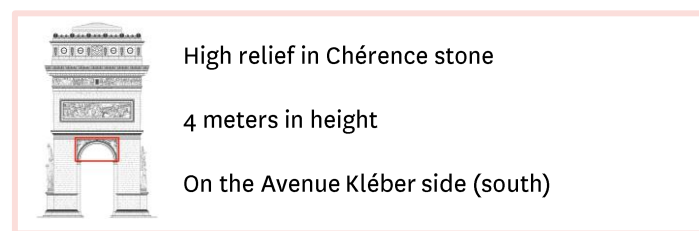


On the left tympanum, a naked grenadier holds a rifle at rest in his right hand and an oak branch in his left hand. His foot is placed on a sphere, while a French flag topped with the Imperial Eagle flies behind him. On the right tympanum, a naked hunter also holds an oak branch and presses his rifle against himself. At the keystone of the arch, the word *INFANTRIE* (French word for “infantry”) can be read.



14. Théophile Bra, *Infantry*

CAVALRY, ACHILLE-JOSEPH-ÉTIENNE VALOIS



A carabinier is on the left spandrel. He is naked, seen from the back, with his head in profile. In one hand, he holds his guidon, while in the other, he brandishes a saber. Various elements decorate the tympanum, such as stirrups, a bit, a carbine, and a bugle. On the right side, a naked lancer faces forward. He grasps his saber with his right arm and holds a carbine in his left hand. A helmet rests on the barrel of the weapon, and stirrups, epaulettes, and a cartridge box decorate the background of the tympanum. The term *CAVALERIE* (French word for “cavalry”) is inscribed at the keystone of the arch.



15. Étienne Valois, *Cavalry*

The friezes* of the entablature* are two friezes that surround the monument, extending over a length of 137 meters. They are evenly distributed among six different artists.

It is a parade of troops that encircles the Arc de Triomphe.

THE DEPARTURE OF THE ARMIES



The first frieze of the entablature is called *The Departure of the Armies*. It begins at the midpoint of the lateral side of the monument facing Avenue Kléber, continues facing the Champs-Élysées Avenue, and ends at the midpoint of the side facing Avenue de Wagram.

The Departure of the Armies opens and closes with two winged geniuses. They inscribe the names of the soldiers departing for battle. This frieze is divided into three distinct parts, each sculpted by a different artist.

HUSSARS AND SAPPERS OF THE ENGINEERS, GEORGES JACQUOT



High relief in Chérence stone

2,10 meters in height

Side of Avenue Kléber (south)
and side of Avenue des Champs-Élysées (southeast)

This section of *The Departure of the Armies*, sculpted by Jacquot, includes the right half of the frieze on the Avenue Kléber

side, as well as the left part of the frieze on the Avenue des Champs-Élysées side. On the Avenue Kléber side, the infantry is on the march. A winged genius opens the frieze, marking its beginning. Soldiers keep an eye on baggage carried on a cart, while further to the right, a soldier bids farewell to his wife and child, and another ties his gaiters. On the Avenue des Champs-Élysées side, you can see a troop of hussars, accompanied by sappers, leading the infantry procession.



16. Georges Jacquot, *Hussars and Sappers of the Engineers*



17. Georges Jacquot, *Hussars and Sappers of the Engineers*

GREAT FIGURES OF THE REVOLUTION AND THE EMPIRE, SYLVESTRE-JOSEPH BRUN



High relief in Chérence stone

2,10 meters in height

Central part of the frieze on the Avenue
des Champs-Élysées side (east)

This part of the frieze is centered around a central altar, on which the word *PATRIE* ("Homeland") is inscribed. At the top of this altar, the terms *LA LOI* ("The Law") and *LE ROI* ("The King") are engraved on a double table.



* Lexicon

See the glossary, page 27

n 5. THE FRIEZES OF THE ENTABLATURE

+ LEARNING
RESOURCE

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On either side of this central element, significant figures from this period take flags and distribute them. The names of these individuals appear on a banner above them. These representations are quite faithfully inspired by existing busts and costumes of the time. To cite a few examples, Brun depicted Mirabeau's face marked by traces of the smallpox from which he suffered and used the actual costume of the Duke of Orléans to create his portrait.

Among these prominent figures of the time are notably Kléber, Augereau, David, the Duke of Bourbon, La Fayette, Hoche, Rouget de Lisle, etc. Two women have also been depicted by Brun. Beneath an elm tree is Joséphine de Beauharnais, who, alongside her son Eugène, carries her granddaughter in her arms. The second female figure present in this relief is Manon Roland. A revolutionary *salonnière* (a woman hosting or presiding over a *salon*, a gathering of intellectual and cultural individuals), she played a major role within the Girondins club. This woman is an exemplary figure in the struggle for freedom and equality.

CAVALRYMEN AND GRENADIERS,
CHARLES-RENÉ LAITÉ



High relief in Chérence stone

2,10 meters in height

On the Avenue des Champs-Élysées side (northeast) and on the Avenue de Wagram side (north)

The gallery of great figures by Brun concludes with Rouget de Lisle, the creator of the *Marseillaise*, the French anthem. This is where the portion of the frieze sculpted by Laitié begins. Cavalry and grenadiers are depicted, along with the *grognard* of Napoleon Bonaparte's Guard. On half of the frieze on the Avenue de Wagram side, artillery is displayed. A winged genius marks the end of *The Departure of the Armies* frieze here.



19. Charles-René Laitié, *Cavalrymen and Grenadiers*



18. Sylvestre Brun, *Great Figures of the Revolution and the Empire*

n 5. THE FRIEZES
OF THE ENTABLATURE

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THE RETURN OF THE ARMIES



The second frieze of the entablature is *The Return of the Armies*. It is also composed of three parts, created by three distinct artists.

Completing *The Departure of the Armies*, it starts on the lateral side of the arch, on the Avenue Wagram side, continues on the facade facing the Avenue de la Grande-Armée, and concludes on the Avenue Kléber side.

THE RETURN OF THE ARMY FROM EGYPT, FRANÇOIS RUDE



High relief in Chérence stone

2,10 meters in height

On the Avenue de Wagram side (north)
and on the Avenue de la Grande-Armée side (northwest)

The beginning of the frieze is marked by a winged genius who, on an obelisk, inscribes the achievements of the expedition in hieroglyphics. Further to the right, a group of cuirassiers is followed by horses pulling a wagon. In it, wounded individuals are being transported, including one who is Egyptian. His presence symbolizes the kindness of the French army.



20. François Rude, *The Return of the Army from Egypt*

On the portion facing the Avenue de la Grande-Armée, the people pass under a triumphal arch and move towards the soldiers. The latter bring back a sphinx on a chariot pulled by four bulls.



21. François Rude, *The Return of the Army from Egypt*

ALLEGORY, LOUIS-DENIS CAILLOUETTE



High relief in Chérence stone

2,10 meters in height

Central part of the frieze on the Avenue de
la Grande-Armée side (west)

Two triumphal arches delimit the portion of the frieze created by Caillouette. In the center of the composition, an allegory of France is surrounded by Peace and Abundance, distributing laurel crowns to the victorious armies. Cavalrymen, grenadiers, drummers, and infantrymen, whether able-bodied or wounded, lay trophies and flags at her feet, taken from their defeated enemies. One of these soldiers wears a turban, representing the numerous foreign soldiers who fought for France. Behind the allegory of France, one can read the inscription *AUX BRAVES, LA FRANCE RECONNAISSANTE* (meaning “To the brave, grateful France”).



22. Louis-Denis Caillouette, *Allegory*

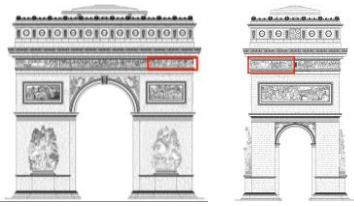


5. THE FRIEZES OF THE ENTABLATURE

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16

THE RETURN OF THE ARMY FROM ITALY,
BERNARD-GARBIEL, NAMED SEURRE L'AÎNÉ



High relief in Chérence stone

2,10 meters in height

On the Avenue de la Grande-Armée side (southwest)
and on the Avenue Kléber side (south)

On the portion of the frieze facing the Avenue de la Grande-Armée, two men and two women welcome a group of soldiers. These soldiers are heading towards a triumphal arch on which it is possible to read the inscription *À L'ARMÉE D'ITALIE* (which can be translated as "To the army of Italy"). The soldiers precede a chariot pulled by four horses, one of which is bending under the weight of fatigue. They transport the ancient statue of the *Tibre*, a work that adorned the Villa Borghese before becoming part of the Louvre's collections.

On the portion of the frieze on the Avenue Kléber side, soldiers are followed by a cart pulled by oxen, on which wounded soldiers and an Italian woman carrying her child in her arms are depicted. This woman has been represented to symbolize the submission of Italy to France. To conclude this frieze, a Victory inscribes the names of the victors.



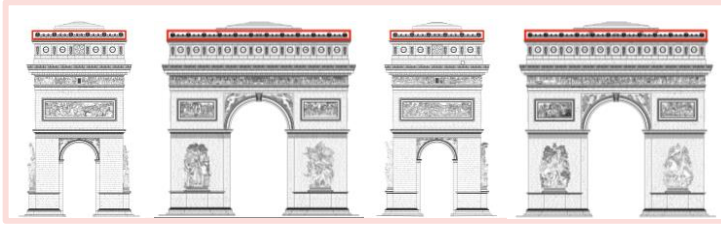
23. Seurre Aîné, *The Return of the Army from Italy*

5. THE FRIEZES OF THE ENTABLATURE

+ LEARNING
RESOURCE

17

THE LION HEADS



Close to forty-five lion heads adorn the cornice* of the attic level of the Arc de Triomphe. They are regularly repeated, alternating with stylized plant motifs. These feline heads are what are called modillions*.

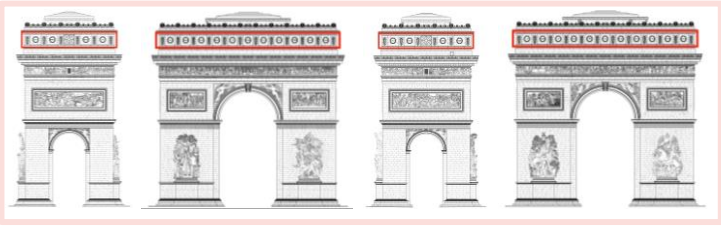
During a restoration campaign of the Arc, one of these lions was replaced by a replica on the facade of the monument. The original is now displayed in the mezzanine floor, inside the monument.



24. The cornice's ornaments

THE SHIELDS

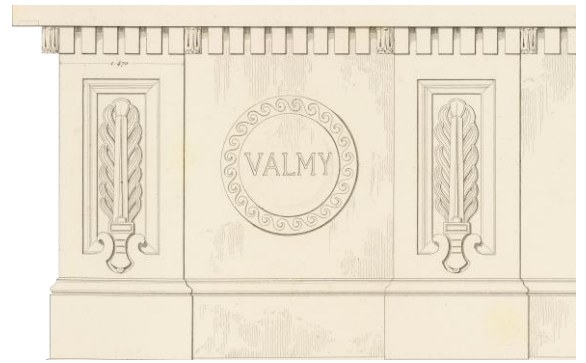
Thirty names of French victories are inscribed on the thirty shields adorning the attic of the monument. These battles have been chosen from those that would have most influenced the destiny of the country. Swords separate these shields, and the two motifs alternate along the attic.



The reading direction has been designed counterclockwise, starting with Valmy (1792) at the southeast corner, facing the Avenue des Champs-Élysées, and ending with Ligny (1815) facing the Avenue Kléber.

* Lexicon

See the glossary, page 27



25. The attic's ornaments

THE MEDUSAS



The top of the monument is crowned with a balustrade composed of thirty-six Medusa* heads. These mythological figures are connected to each other by palmettes*. At the time, this crowning also served as a railing.



26. The Medusas

PROJECTS FOR CROWNING THE ARC DE TRIOMPHE

The design and construction of the Arc de triomphe spanned many years and went through different architects and political regimes. There were numerous proposals for decorating the monument, and many of them never came to fruition. Among them was the idea of having a large sculpted group crowning the Arc, which, despite numerous proposals in the 1830s-1840s, remained an unrealized project. Even though the leading sculptors of the time were invited to submit proposals, none of those were actually accepted. Today, you can notice the acroterion on the roof of the monument, which was supposed to receive this crowning.

Among the most accomplished crowning projects, only three would progress beyond the conceptual stage. One notable example was the one of Bernard-Gabriel Seurre, representing a victorious France. It depicts an allegory of France, leading a chariot drawn by six horses. In 1838, it was executed in wood, plaster, and painted canvas.



27. Bernard Seurre, *Crowning project*, 1838

Although well-received, Seurre Aîné's project was replaced two years later by a proposal from Guillaume Abel Blouet, on the occasion of Napoleon's *retour des cendres* (literally 'return of the ashes'). Blouet revisited a project he had created in 1834 but replaced the initially planned allegory of France with a figure of the Emperor.



28. Guillaume-Abel Blouet, *Crowning project*, 1840

TO GO FURTHER: 13.

Much later, Alexandre Falguière created a *Triomphe de la Révolution* for July 14th in the year 1882. An allegory of the Republic is depicted seated, holding a flag in one hand and a Declaration of the Rights of Man in the other. A couple of workers and a soldier falling in battle accompany her, symbolizing both civic and military duty. The sketch of this project met with great success, so it was decided to create

it in plaster and to hoist it to the top of the Arc to assess its appearance. However, the result proved to be less convincing. Nevertheless, the sculpted group remained on the monument for four years before being destroyed by the weather due to its material. The idea of a crowning was then definitively abandoned.



29. Alexandre Falguière, *Crowning project at the Arc de triomphe*, 1882

In addition to these more accomplished crowning projects, there were other proposals that were not accepted. For example, Chauvin proposed a massive royal crown adorned with eagles and roosters.



30. Chauvin, *Crowning project of the Arc de triomphe by a monumental crown*

There were also ephemeral crownings. During the Second Empire, every August 15th (the birthday of Napoleon Bonaparte), his nephew Napoleon III adorned the Arc with temporary decorations in his honor.

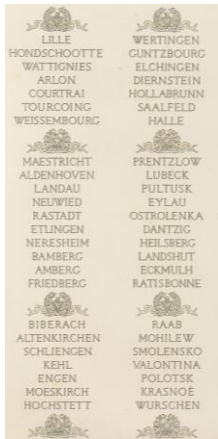
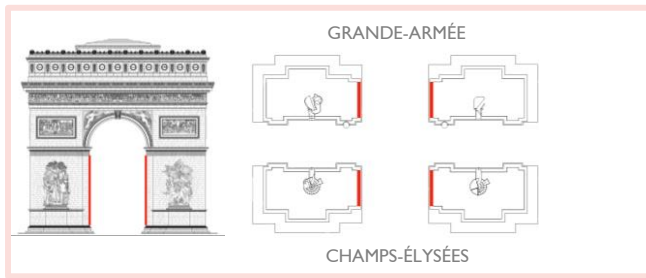


31. Adrien Provost, *15th of August Celebration. Illumination of the Arc de Triomphe*, 1869

7. A CROWNING FOR THE ARC DE TRIOMPHE

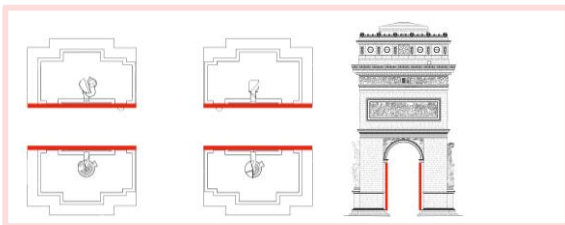
COMMEMORATIVE TABLES

Adolphe Thiers had decided to inscribe names of battles and generals on the interior piers, as they were perceived as too sparsely decorated. It was felt that their bareness contrasted with the rest of the monument.



The inner part of the piers of the bigger arch is covered with names of victorious battles and sieges. Between each group of names, there is a bird. There is an alternation between the Gallic rooster, surrounded by an oak crown, and the Imperial Eagle, surrounded by a laurel crown. These 128 battles are distributed on the four surfaces, in alignment with the four cardinal points.

32. Commemorative tables (side facing Avenue Kléber)



The names of the generals, on the other hand, are inscribed on the interior pillars of the small arch, distributed according to the geographical areas in which they fought. Each of these plaques is adorned with the Legion of

Honour* cross. Some names are underlined, indicating that the officer lost their life on the battlefield.

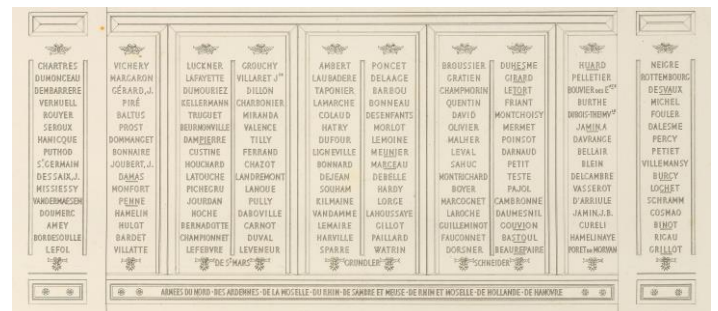
When the monument was inaugurated, complaints arose from citizens who wished to see the name of a forgotten family member inscribed on it. Victor Hugo, in particular, was disappointed not to find his father's name on these plaques. His poem *À l'Arc de triomphe* concludes with these verses, evoking this regret:

“ When my thought thus, aging your attack, Turns the future into a splendid past, Then beneath your grandeur, I bend, afraid, I admire, and, as a pious son, a passerby enlivened by art, I regret nothing before your sublime wall, Neither the absent Phidias nor my forgotten father.

Victor Hugo

Les Voix intérieures, 2 février 1837

The government then announced that each claim regarding a forgotten general would be examined, leading to additional requests. It was only four years later that the issue was addressed, and space was found for some missing generals. The commemorative plaques welcomed new names until 1895. The final list now stands at 660 surnames.



33. Commemorative tables

(interior of the northwest pillar, Avenue de Wagram side)

* Lexicon

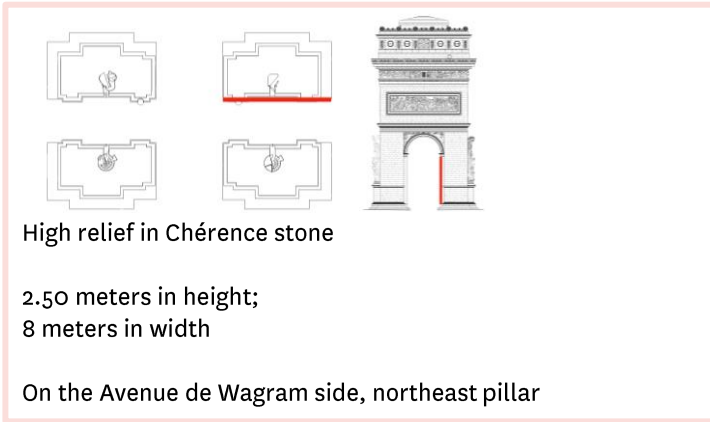
See the glossary, page 27

Now that the decorative elements located on the exterior facade of the Arc de Triomphe have been seen, we will be able to study the reliefs adorning the interior part of the monument, visible from underneath.

7. COMMEMORATIVE TABLES

On the interior pillars of the small arch, above the commemorative plaques, there are four high reliefs for four Victories.

**VICTORY OVER THE EAST,
WALCHER**

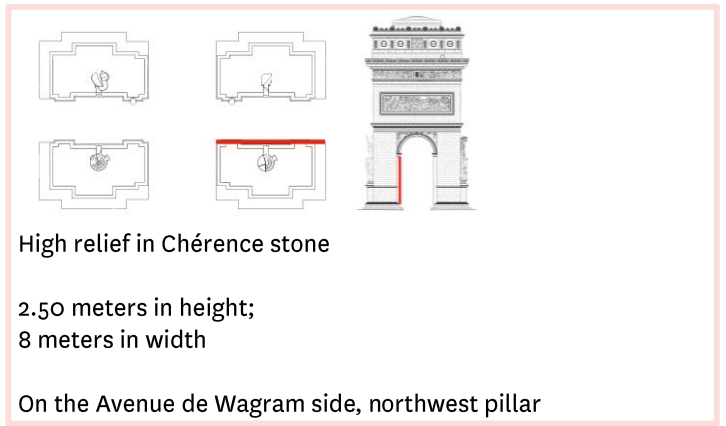


A winged Victory is at the center of the composition. She holds a palm branch in one hand and a tablet in the other. On this marble tablet, the names of the major Napoleonic battles in the East are engraved: *Alexandrie, Pyramides, Aboukir, Héliopolis*. On the left, a genius has planted a flag in the ground, a symbol of taking possession of the conquered provinces. To his left, another genius tries to pull him away. On the other side of the relief, two geniuses hold hands, and one of them places a crown on the head of the other. In this work, several elements symbolize the East. For example, one can see Turkish flags with a crescent atop the pole, a crocodile, or even pyramids in the background.



34. Walcher, *Victory over the East*

**VICTORY OVER THE NORTH,
ASTYANAX-SCAEVOLA BOSIO**



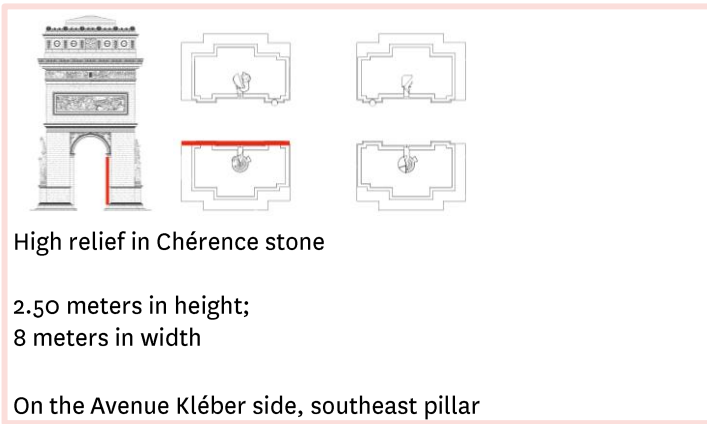
Opposite *Victory over the East* is *Victory over the North*, sculpted by Astyanax-Scaevola Bosio. He depicts a Victory holding in her left hand a tablet on which the names *Austerlitz, Iéna, Friedland, Ulm, Wagram* and *Eylau* are written. These are names of battles won by the French troops against the Austrian, Russian, and Prussian armies. Her right hand still holds the stylus with which she engraved the inscriptions. Four geniuses are depicted amidst weapons, supporting a garland from which the ends release fruits.



35. Astyanax-Scaevola Bosio, *Victory over the North*

**8. THE RELIEFS ON THE
INTERIOR PILLARS**

**VICTORY OVER THE SOUTH,
ANTOINE-FRANÇOIS GÉRARD**

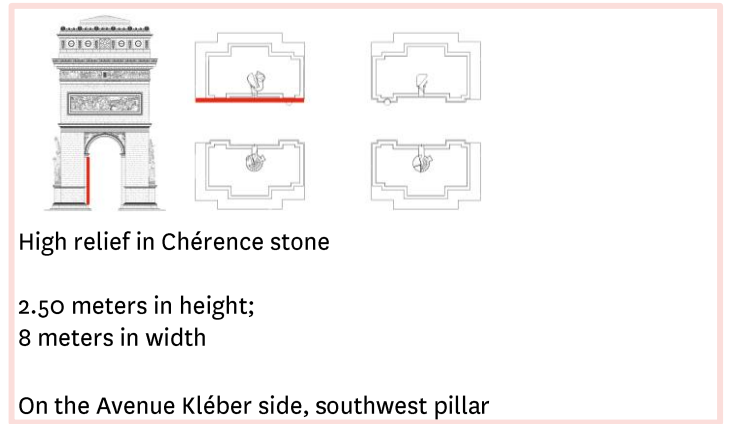


Seated at the center of the composition, a Victory holds in her right hand a scepter topped with the Imperial Eagle. In her other hand is a tablet on which the names *Marengo*, *Rivoli*, *Arcole*, and *Lodi* are engraved, the great victories of Napoleon in Italy. On the left, two geniuses create a trophy from conquered weapons. On the right, a genius is finishing the sculpture of a bust of Bonaparte, while another places a crown on the sculpted head. On the pedestal is an Imperial Eagle holding a crown with the cipher of Napoleon I: “N”.



36. Antoine-François Gérard, *Victory over the South*

**VICTORY OVER THE WEST,
JEAN-JOSEPH ESPERCIEUX**



Just like on the other high reliefs of the interior pillars, Victory stands at the center of the composition. She has outstretched arms, covering military geniuses with laurels. Two of them carry a garland of interwoven fruits and flowers, symbolizing the idea of abundance. One of the geniuses, on the left side of the composition, offers a broken scepter to Victory. Behind him, the names of the battles *Jemmapes* and *Fleurus* are inscribed on a shield. The genius on the far right presents a mutilated diadem to the Victory, while leaning on an anchor on which the artist signed “ESPERCIEUX 1830”.

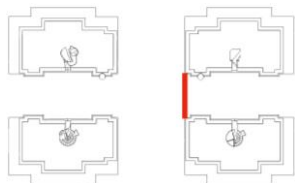


37. Jean Espercieux, *Victory over the West*

**8. THE RELIEFS ON THE
INTERIOR PILLARS**

The spandrels of the small interior arches, like those of the small exterior arches, are adorned with allegorical figures referring to the major branches of the army. Two divisions are represented on the spandrels of the small exterior arches, and two others on the interior arches. The former were displayed on page 13.

**NAVY,
CHARLES-ÉMILE-MARIE SEURRE, NAMED SEURRE JEUNE**



High relief in Chérence stone

3 meters in height

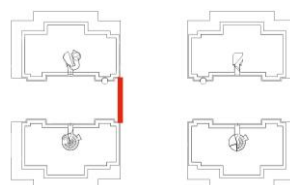
On the Avenue de Wagram side, facing Avenue Kléber

Two nude figures are depicted amidst weapons and various elements referencing the navy. Notably, there are navigation instruments, a compass, and ropes. The figure on the left tympanum is a sailor. With his hand on the helm, he is surrounded by sails and instruments, with marine plants at his feet. On the right tympanum, a marine soldier, a baldric over his shoulder, holds an olive branch in his hand. The keystone of the arch bears the inscription *MARINE*.



38. Seurre Jeune, *Navy*

**ARTILLERY,
JEAN-BAPTISTE-JOSEPH DEBAY**



High relief in Chérence stone

3 meters in height

On the Avenue Kléber side, facing Avenue de Wagram

On the left tympanum, a nude soldier symbolizes heavy artillery. With one foot on a cannonball, he holds a crown in one hand and a flag in the other. On the right tympanum, another soldier embodies light artillery, holding a map and compass in one hand and the reins of his horse in the other. The head of the animal is visible. On the keystone of the arch, the inscription *ARTILLERIE* (“artillery”) can be read.



39. Joseph Debay, *Artillery*

* **Lexicon**
See the glossary, page 27

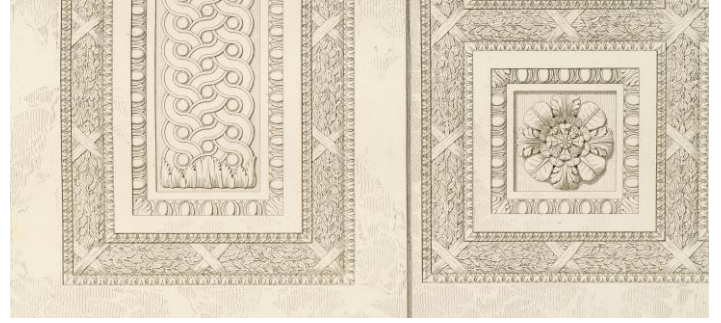
**n 9. THE INTERIOR
SPANDRELS**

+ **LEARNING
RESOURCE**

23

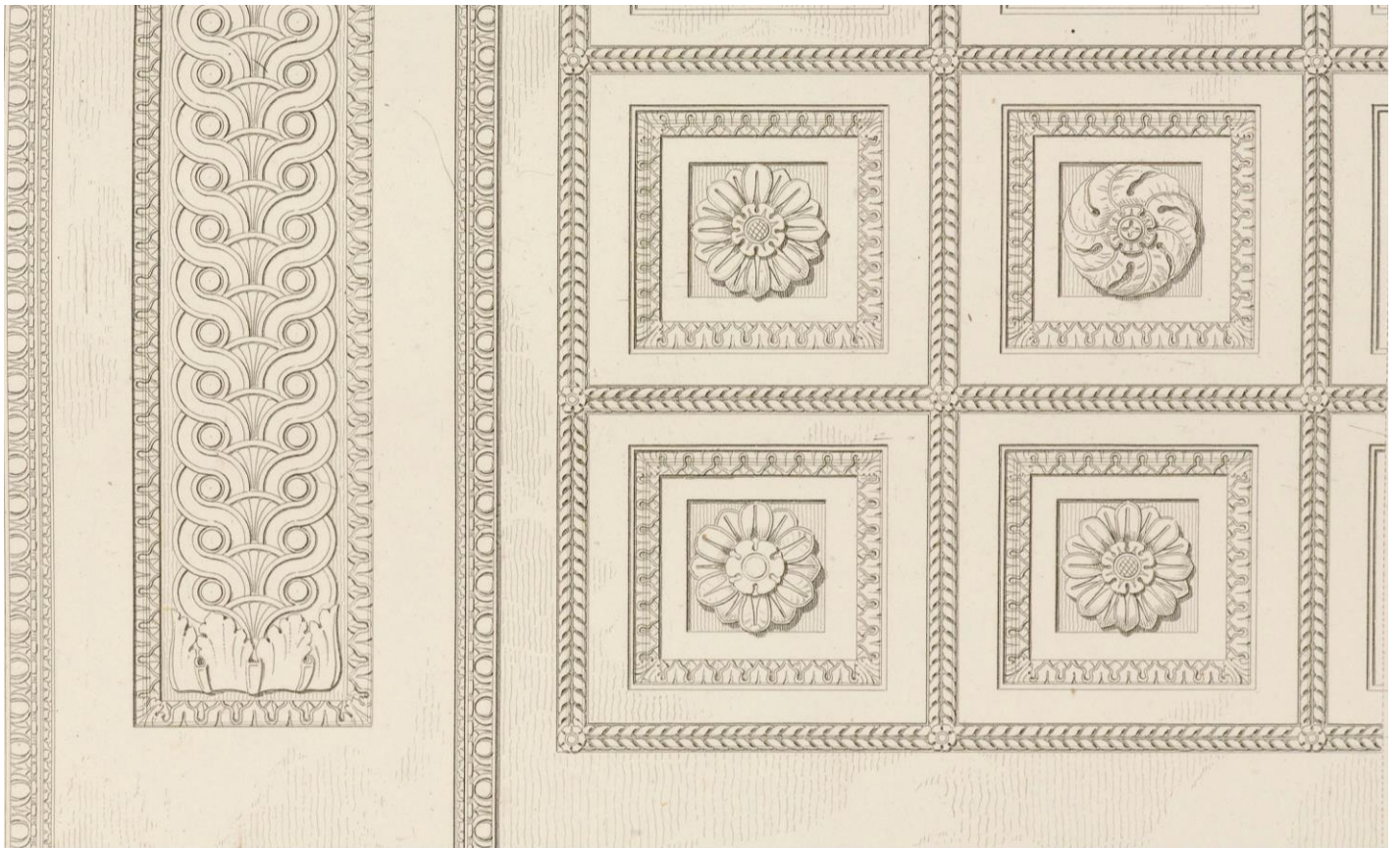
THE VAULTS

The vaults of the Arc de Triomphe are adorned with carved coffers, in which blossomed acanthus leaves are present. This plant with intricately carved leaves originates from the Mediterranean. It is an element that was frequently featured in Greek architecture, especially on Corinthian order capitals, then in Roman and Romanesque architecture, and even experienced a revival during the Baroque period. As the Arc de Triomphe incorporates codes used in Roman arches, it is not surprising to find acanthus leaves among its sculpted decorations.



40. Details of the grand vault

The vault of the grand arch is composed of twenty-one coffers, adorned with rosettes featuring acanthus leaves. They are separated by a torus* made of laurel branches, as if held by ribbons. The vaults of the small arches are each decorated with forty-five rosette coffers.



41. Details of the small vaults

* Lexicon

See the glossary, page 27

Some elements or motifs are frequently represented on the Arc de Triomphe. This is notably the case for certain plant motifs or certain animals.

VEGETAL PATTERNS

Vegetal motifs are visible throughout the entire monument. They represent a classical element of ancient-style decoration, which was particularly fashionable during the construction period of the Arc de Triomphe.

The **palm**, for example, has often been mentioned in this context because it is highly present among the decorations of the Arc de Triomphe. A symbol of victory and glory since antiquity, the palm is still used in french everyday expressions such as *Remporter la palme* (“To win the palm”) or *Décerner la palme* (“To award the palm”) for instance. Awards like the *Palme d’Or* at the Cannes Film Festival are also linked to this symbolism. Numerous bronze palm leaves can be found inside the monument as well. They are present in the eponymous hall as well as in the museum hall located at the level of the attic. These palm leaves were offered as a tribute to the Unknown Soldier.

TO GO FURTHER: +2.

The **laurel** is also highly present on the Arc de Triomphe. Inherited from the Greco-Roman ancient world, the symbol of the laurel, like the palm, conveys the concepts of victory and the immortality of individuals who have left their mark on history through their genius, bravery, or actions. The laurel mentioned here should not be confused with other types of laurels. This evergreen plant, belonging to the *Lauraceae* family, is known as the *Laurus nobilis*, true laurel, or more commonly, bay laurel. Over time, the laurel also became the emblem of Emperor Napoleon I. During triumphant army parades, he wore a gold laurel crown. This crown was held above his head by a slave, who continuously repeated *Memento Mori* (which means “Remember that you will die”) to remind that victory is fleeting, but fame aims for immortality. Considering its symbolism and history, it is not surprising to find the laurel repeatedly present on the Arc de Triomphe.

THE ANIMALS OF THE ARC DE TRIOMPHE

In total, the **eagle** is represented thirty-eight times on the Arc de Triomphe. It is a bird that soars high, with a piercing gaze and quick reactions. Dating back to antiquity, this symbol was notably associated with the prestige of the Roman Empire. It later became the symbol of the First Empire of Napoleon I before also becoming the one of the Second Empire.

Eighteen **roosters** are present on the monument. This is a symbol that also dates back to antiquity. The association of this animal with France initially stems from a play on words with the Latin term *gallus*, which means both “Gallic” and “rooster”. Linked to lust in the Middle Ages, the rooster was long perceived negatively. It wasn’t until Pope Leo IV that the animal began to be seen as the one that brings light to Christ, undergoing its first rehabilitation. Later, Louis IV included it among the symbols of his reign. Finally, it became a symbol of the French Revolution, replacing the *fleur-de-lis*. On the Arc de Triomphe, it is the symbol of the Republic, notably surmounting *The Departure of the Volunteers* by François Rude.

The **horse** is also among the animals often depicted on the monument. Serving as a symbol of both agricultural and military life, there are approximately seventy of them among the sculpted decorations. In *The Departure of the Volunteers*, the horse illustrates the distress experienced by an animal preparing to go to the battlefield. It is representative of the Romantic movement, which explores human emotions as well as those of nature. On *The Resistance*, the horse sculpted by Etex symbolizes sacrifice. Many other horses are found in the friezes of the entablature, as well as in depictions of battles. In this context, these animals generally represent the armies.

A PROTOTYPE OF THE ARC DE TRIOMPHE

This learning resource depicts the current iconographic program of the Arc de Triomphe. However, before reaching this final result, the monument underwent several projects, such as this prototype created in 1810.

On April 1st and 2nd, 1810, the marriage between Napoleon I and Marie-Louise of Austria took place. The imperial couple had a planned itinerary for the second day of this grand event: they were to travel from the Saint-Cloud Palace (where the civil marriage took place the day before) to the Louvre Palace for the religious ceremony. This meant passing through the Place de l'Étoile, where the Arc de Triomphe was still under construction. Far from being completed, only the base of the four piers had emerged from the ground.

It was then decided to create a life-size model resembling the completed monument. The plan was to construct a framework covered with canvases commissioned from the painter Louis Lafitte. From his workshop, he and his colleagues created decorations, painted in trompe-l'œil on the canvases. These were then stretched over a 45-meter-high wooden frame. The replica was produced in just twenty days, and five hundred workers were mobilized to ensure it was completed on time. During the production of this large model, the weather conditions were harsh, and the carpenters went on strike due to poor working conditions and low wages. The Prefect of Police arrested six of them, and the others saw their income increase from four francs to twenty-four francs per day. The cost of this project turned out to be very high, but it allowed the architect Chalgrin to have a glimpse of his work on a full scale and make modifications accordingly. He added offsets*, reduced the proportions of the attic, and modified the ornamentation of the facades, among other changes.



42. Anonyme, *Entry of Napoleon and Marie-Louise into Paris on April 2, 1810, 1810*

The bas-reliefs painted by Louis Lafitte for this model depict the theme of the marriage between Emperor Napoleon and Marie-Louise of Austria. Below, you will find an idea of what these decorations looked like on this life-size replica.

On the attic of the model, one could read: *À NAPOLEON ET À MARIE-LOUISE, LA VILLE DE PARIS* ("To Napoleon and Marie-Louise, the city of Paris").

The pilasters were adorned with medallions and inscriptions. For instance, there was a medallion depicting the Emperor. Below there was the inscription *LE BONHEUR DU MONDE EST DANS SES MAINS* ("The happiness of the world is in his hands").

Bas-reliefs decorated the base of the vault. On the facade facing Avenue de Kléber, there was the *Alliance de leurs majestés*. It featured Napoleon, accompanied by Empress Marie-Louise, surrounded by various elements reminiscent of France and Austria. Both dressed in imperial attire, they held hands as a symbol of alliance, on an altar at the feet of the statue of Peace. On the left was the bust of Janus symbolizing the past and the future, along with the Muse of History. Another representation of the Empress stood in a chariot drawn by horses guided by the figure of Love. A woman stood by her side, holding a scepter, emblem of her power. On the other side, an array of various weapons represented the trophies of victories. Further to the right, the allegorical figure of the Seine was depicted, above which a Fame rose, announcing the news of this union. She poured the contents of a cornucopia onto the people, who appeared joyous about this alliance.



43. Louis Lafitte, *Alliance of Their Majesties, 1810*

* Lexicon

See the glossary, page 27

12. A PROTOTYPE OF THE ARC DE TRIOMPHE

* **Allegory**

Representation of an idea through a figure endowed with symbolic attributes.

* **Attic**

Upper section at the top of a construction. It is placed above an entablature.

* **Bourbons**

The Bourbons are a royal dynasty that played a significant role in European history. They ruled France from 1589 to 1789 and then from 1814 to 1830. With the abdication of Charles X in 1830, the last sovereign of the senior branch of the Bourbons to rule in France, the July Monarchy was established, placing Louis-Philippe I on the throne as a member of a younger branch of the House of Bourbon.

* **Cornice**

Upper horizontal part of an entablature or elevation, formed by moldings overhanging one another.

* **Spandrel**

Surface included between the curve of an arch and its orthogonal framing.

* **Entablature**

Upper part of a monument or located above a column that includes the architrave, frieze, and cornice.

* **Frieze**

Ornamental or historiated border in the form of a continuous band.

* **Genius**

Allegorical figure representing an art, a science, or another abstract idea.

* **Grenadier**

Soldier belonging to an elite infantry corps.

* **High relief**

Sculpted relief whose protruding forms represent more than half of the volume of the depicted object.

* **Infantry**

Military units fighting on foot. The soldiers of the infantry are called infantrymen or foot soldiers.

* **Legion of Honour**

The highest French ceremonial decoration, introduced by Napoleon I.

* **Mameluke**

Literally "possessed" in Arabic, the term "mameluke" refers to members of a militia composed of emancipated slaves, usually of Turkish or Slavic origin. This elite militia served as the personal guard to the sultan.

* **Medusa**

Character from Greek mythology. One of the three Gorgons, who turned to stone those who gazed upon her. She was slain by Perseus.

* **Modillion**

Modillions are ornaments found beneath a cornice or under a balcony.

* **July Monarchy**

Name given to the reign of Louis-Philippe I (1830-1848), called to power after the revolution of July 27, 28, and 29, 1830, known as the *Trois Glorieuses*.

* **Neoclassicism**

Neoclassicism is an emerging movement around 1750. It advocates a return to the purity of ancient art.

* **Palmette**

Palm-shaped ornament.

* **Pier**

Vertical support on which an arch or vault rests.

* **Fame**

Divine allegory, messenger of Jupiter.

* **Offset**

Projection or protrusion that interrupts a vertical plane.

* **Romanticism**

Intellectual, literary, and artistic movement rejecting classical and rationalist rules. It advocates nature, sensitivity, emotions, historical truth, dreams, and imagination.

* **Torus**

Round molding, most often found in the lower part of a column.

* **Victory**

Divine figure, most often represented as a winged woman holding a crown in one hand and a palm branch in the other.

S Guillaume-Abel Blouet (1795-1853)

Born in 1795 in Passy-sur-Seine, Guillaume-Abel Boulet is a French architect. In 1814, he entered the Beaux-Arts de Paris, Jules Delespine's studio, and won numerous awards during his studies before completing his training in Rome as a resident of the Villa Medici. He was the last architect of the Arc de Triomphe, the one who would finish the construction. He was appointed in 1832, which means he was in charge of the site when the decision was made to create the large sculpted ensembles, from 1833 to 1836.

S Louis Lafitte (1770-1828)

Louis Lafitte was a painter who was keen to define himself as a history painter, a label justified by his artistic training. He began his apprenticeship with the engraver Gilles-Antoine Demarteau before joining the workshop of Jean-Baptiste Regnault, a rival and competitor of Jacques Louis David in the 1780s. Admitted to the Royal Academy of Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture in 1784, he excelled in his academic career. His success earned him a place at the French Academy in Rome, but the political situation in France was not appreciated by the Roman government at the time, limiting his opportunities there. After a stay in Florence, the painter returned to France, where he faced challenges in practicing his art as he wished due to the lack of a workshop and the absence of public commissions. It was under the Empire that he received significant official commissions, such as the replica of the Arc de Triomphe created in 1810. Eventually, his enthusiastic support for the Restoration established him as a draftsman for the King's Cabinet, thus concluding his career. In the absence of public clients, Louis Lafitte turned to a private clientele for most of his life, which his title of history painter and his skills were able to attract and maintain.

S Louis-Philippe Ier (1773-1850)

Louis-Philippe was an Orléans, belonging to a cadet branch of the House of Bourbon. He was a cousin of Charles X, the king whose reign ended with the revolutionary events of July 1830. Like his father, Louis-Philippe was sympathetic to the revolutionary ideas. He was a member of the Jacobin club and fought in the battles of Valmy and Jemmapes. He was a supporter of the French Revolution. In 1830, he was crowned *roi des Français* under the July Monarchy and reigned as such until his abdication following the revolution of 1848. Louis-Philippe was very different from his predecessors; he was a king one could encounter in the street wearing a suit and top hat, shaking hands with citizens.

S Manon Roland (1754-1793)

Manon Roland was a woman of struggle and conviction. Coming from a bourgeois and educated background, she became a *salonnière* and a revolutionary, and one of the prominent figures of the Girondins' club. She had a significant influence on the political life of her time and did not hesitate to fight for her ideas, advocating for freedom and equality. Some eventually found her unsettling, and she was ultimately guillotined. The phrase she proclaimed in front of the statue of Liberty as she ascended the scaffold would go down in history: *Ô Liberté ! Que de crimes on commet en ton nom !* ("O Liberty! What crimes are committed in your name!").

S François Rude (1784-1855)

Born in Dijon, François Rude arrived in Paris in 1807 to attend courses at the Beaux-Arts de Paris. After winning the Rome Prize in 1812, this French sculptor gained attention in 1831 by exhibiting at the *Salon des Arts Décoratifs* with a sculpture of an innovative style. Known for his sense of expression and movement, he is considered a master of romantic sculpture, especially for his work *Napoléon s'éveillant à l'immortalité* (1845), displayed at the Musée d'Orsay in Paris.

Sophie Rude (1797-1867)

Sophie Frémiet, who would become Sophie Rude after her marriage to the artist François Rude, was born in Dijon on June 15, 1797. In her youth, she aspired to develop her artistic practice, but official education was reserved for men at the time. Thanks to her father's connections, she attended her first drawing classes in the studio of the painter Anatole Devosge, who initially introduced Sophie Frémiet to neoclassicism. Despite her brilliance, the fall of Napoleon and the ascent of Louis XVIII to the throne forced her to flee France at the age of eighteen because her father had compromised himself by defending Napoleon during the Hundred Days episode. Sophie Frémiet went to Brussels with her family and found a new teacher, none other than the painter David, who was also in exile. It was during her stay in Belgium that she married one of her father's proteges: François Rude. She then became one of David's most talented students and began exhibiting portraits in art salons. She returned to Paris in 1827, after painting and presenting *Ariane abandonnée dans l'île de Naxos*, a neoclassical painting revealing her mastery of depth and the geometrization of natural elements, while hinting at the beginnings of her romantic expression. She gradually abandoned mythological subjects to focus on historical ones. She was particularly recognized for her ability to depict the right emotion and the psychological depth of her subjects. Unfortunately, her marriage to François Rude contributed to overshadowing Sophie Rude behind the success of her husband.

Adolphe Thiers (1797-1877)

Adolphe Thiers, a politician, journalist, and historian, founded the newspaper *Le National* in 1830, where he advocated for a parliamentary monarchy modeled on the English system. During the July Monarchy, he was appointed several times as Minister of Finance, Minister of the Interior, President of the Council, and Minister of Foreign Affairs. He couldn't save Louis-Philippe in 1848. Appointed head of the executive power in 1871, he crushed the Paris Commune uprising. He became President of the Republic in August 1871, but he was overthrown in 1873 by a coalition of monarchist and conservative parties. He then became the leader of the republican opposition.

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Learning resource – Arc de triomphe

+2. page 25

Learning resource – The Unknown Soldier

1. page 04

Theme: Neoclassicism and Romanticism

Continue your visit: The Pantheon (Paris) and The Church of Sainte-Marie-Madeleine (Paris) for Neoclassicism in sculpture. The Palace of Versailles and the Louvre Museum (Paris) for the works of Jacques-Louis David, a major French figure in neoclassical painting. The Musée de la Vie romantique (Paris) for its romantic collections, and the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Dijon.

2. page 04

Theme: The works of François and Sophie Rude

Continue your visit: The works of François Rude at the Louvre Museum (Paris), especially the sketches of *The Departure of the Volunteers*, the Musée Carnavalet (Paris) for its sketches, the moulding of the *Génie de la Patrie* at the Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine (Paris), the Musée Rude (Dijon), and the Musée des Augustins (Bordeaux). The Musée des Beaux-Arts de Dijon for the paintings of Sophie Rude and the sculptures of François Rude.

3. page 19

Theme: *Les retour des cendres*

Continue your visit: The tomb of Napoleon at Les Invalides (Paris), the collection of the Musée Carnavalet (Paris).

Cultural and Educational Department at the Arc de Triomphe

Centre des monuments nationaux
service.educatifarc@monuments-nationaux.fr

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Arnaud Vuille
Administrator of the Arc de Triomphe

Research, writing, and layout

Sidonie Assouly
Education Outreach Coordinator

Proofreading and editing

Viviana Gobbato
Head of the Cultural and Educational Department,
in charge of Public Engagement and Programs

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