

Conceiving a National Museum in the Federal State

On the Founding of the *Schweizerisches Landesmuseum* in Zurich¹

Cristina Gutbrod

In 1891, Zurich was chosen by the Federal Assembly as the seat of the *Schweizerisches Landesmuseum* (Swiss National Museum; today the *Landesmuseum Zürich* / National Museum Zurich).² The choice had been preceded by a fierce dispute among Bern, Zurich, Basel, and Lucerne over the location of the museum, each city competing with a different concept (see fig. 3).³ On the political level, opposition played out between liberal forces supportive of centralizing efforts and conservative forces supportive of federal structures. The national self-image associated with the creation of the Swiss National Museum was crystallized in the submissions put forth by the different cantons, including the architecture they proposed for the museum building.⁴

National Self-Discovery

The Federal Council Hall and the Main Building of the Federal Polytechnic School

When the Swiss Confederation, as the modern state is officially called, was founded in 1848, the Federal Assembly elected Bern as 'federal city'.⁵ In return, the rival city of Zurich was chosen as the location for the *Eidgenössische Polytechnikum* (Federal Polytechnic School).⁶ Between 1859 and 1868, the canton of Zurich erected a building for the

1 English translation by Jennifer Bartmess.

2 The National Museum Zurich was inaugurated in 1898 as the *Schweizerisches Landesmuseum*. Today, the Swiss National Museum brings together the National Museum Zurich, the *Château de Prangins*, the Forum of Swiss History Schwyz, and the Collection Centre in Affoltern am Albis. See <https://www.landesmuseum.ch/en/about-us/organisation>.

3 On the founding of the Swiss National Museum, see Zimmermann 1987; Capitani 1998; Draeyer 1998; Draeyer 1999; Sturzenegger 1999; Capitani 2000; Lafontant Vallotton 2007.

4 On the subject of searching for a national Swiss identity, see, for example, Capitani and Germann 1987; Marchal and Mattioli 1992; *Schweizerisches Landesmuseum* 1998.

5 *Bundesstadt*, seat of federal government. See Kölz 1998.

6 See Weidmann 2010, 369–376.

polytechnical school designed by Gottfried Semper, which also housed the cantonal university in its south wing. Andreas Hauser describes the structure as Switzerland's "*geistiges Bundeshaus*", or federal building of arts and sciences.⁷ The city of Bern fulfilled its obligations to the Swiss Confederation by constructing the *Bundesrathhaus* (Federal Council Hall),⁸ the architecture of which corresponded more to that of an administrative building than a national monument.⁹ The disposition of the Federal Council Hall reflected the bicameral system that had been established in 1848 on the model of the American Congress. The side wings contained the halls for the two legislative bodies, the National Council representing the population and the Council of States the cantons. The hall for the executive Federal Council was placed in the central building. This organizational scheme was based on plans designed in 1850 by Ferdinand Stadler, who had also proposed the Italianate *Rundbogenstil* (Round-Arch Style) with its republican connotations.¹⁰

Historical Identities for the Federal State

The creation of the Federal Constitution of 1848 was preceded by a military confrontation (Sonderbund War of 1847) in which liberal (mainly Protestant but also Catholic) cantons, seeking greater centralization, prevailed over an alliance of conservative Catholic cantons (Lucerne, Uri, Schwyz, Unterwalden, Zug, Fribourg, Valais) that defended cantonal sovereignty.¹¹ If a new identity as a federal state was to be formed, then national historiography would have to "do everything possible to cover up smouldering conflicts and heal the open wounds".¹² In the search for a common origin, in 1854 Ferdinand Keller – founder of the *Antiquarischen Gesellschaft in Zürich* (Antiquarian Society in Zurich) in 1832 – interpreted the wooden posts found in the shallow water close to the shore of Lake Zurich as the remains of a prehistoric village.¹³ His concept of the so-called pile dwellings reverberated strongly, as it provided a national history free of linguistic and confessional conflicts.¹⁴

7 Hauser 2001.

8 The Federal Council Hall is the oldest part of the Federal Palace and was built between 1852 and 1857 by Jakob Friedrich Studer; today it is known as *Bundeshaus West*. On the Federal Palace in Bern, see, for example, Hauser 2002; Minta and Nicolai 2014; Rüedi 2016; Bilfinger 2020.

9 Hauser 2003, 196. With regard to the National Museum, see Capitani 1998, 26–27. In 1845/1846, the Swiss architect Johann Georg Müller designed a Swiss national monument whose architectural sequence consisted of a temple, a monumental staircase, a courtyard, and a domed structure. The project was never realized, but it is of significance to the process of national self-discovery.

10 Hauser 1976, 202–211; Hauser 2003, 195–196. In his 1848 project for Zurich's bid to become the federal city, Stadler had also used this organizational scheme, combined with Gothic-style grammar.

11 See, for example, Maissen 2010, 196–204. On the occasion of the 175th anniversary of the Federal Constitution, see Schweizerisches Nationalmuseum 2023. In the same year the National Museum Zurich also celebrated 125 years since its opening.

12 "*alles daran setzen, die schwelenden Konflikte zu überspielen und die offenen Wunden zu heilen*"; Capitani 2000, 4. See also Capitani 1998, 27.

13 See, for example, Altorfer 2006; Corboud and Schaeren 2017, 4–8.

14 Capitani 1998, 27–29; Capitani 2000, 5.

As a result of scholarly analysis of pre-Reformation history in the late nineteenth century, national historiography also shifted its focus from Swiss founding myths to the war-like successes of the Confederation, achieved in the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries. In his *Geschichte der Schweiz*, published in three volumes between 1884 and 1887, the historian Karl Dändliker would describe this time period as the height of the Confederation, followed by a sixteenth-century emergence of a common culture, despite confessional antagonisms.¹⁵

This historiographical claim found a counterpart in the research of the art historian Johann Rudolf Rahn. His major work *Geschichte der bildenden Künste in der Schweiz: Von den ältesten Zeiten bis zum Schlusse des Mittelalters* (1876), though concluding with the late Middle Ages, stated in its introduction that a genuine Swiss art form developed only in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, in the domain of craftwork.¹⁶ Rahn would later determine the Swiss National Museum's acquisition policy in its founding phase:¹⁷ the relevant federal commission acquired a large number of arts and crafts objects from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, including the parlour from the Rosenberg in Stans (1566; acquired 1887), the parlour from Mellingen (1467; acquired 1888), and the medallions from the ceiling of the hall of Arbon Castle (1515; acquired 1888).

Towards a Swiss National Museum

Initial Influences

The Helvetic Republic (1798–1803), imposed by France, replaced the old confederation of states with its complex networks but then failed as a unitary state. Significantly, however, the project of a Swiss national museum had been promoted during the Helvetic period by Philipp Albert Stapfer, Minister of Arts and Sciences. At the end of the 1870s, the proposition built momentum with the support of the Bernese city parliament member, banker, and collector Friedrich Bürki.¹⁸ Bürki considered it his life's mission to found a museum to house his substantive collection of Swiss historical art.¹⁹

In 1880, the theologian Friedrich Salomon Vögelin, who, alongside Rahn, taught the newly created subject of cultural and art history at the University of Zurich,²⁰ brought Bürki's idea to the Federal and National Councils – to no avail. In the same year, Bürki committed suicide without leaving a will, whereupon his heirs auctioned off his collection in Basel. As Bürki intended, the history museum opened in Bern in 1882, in the Baroque *Bibliotheksgalerie* (Library Gallery) built by Niklaus Sprüngli (fig. 1). The museum incorporated, among other things, the already extant *Bernische Antiquarium* (Bern Antiquarium), the Burgundian carpets owned by the city, the collection of historical weapons

15 Capitani 2000, 5.

16 See Hauser 2012.

17 See Lafontant Vallotton 2007, 185–189.

18 On Bürki's efforts, see Zimmermann 1987, 117–119; Zimmermann 1994, 371–372; Sturzenegger 1999, 35–36; Lafontant Vallotton 2007, 95.

19 Rahn 1883, 300.

20 See Abegg 2012.

from the cantonal armoury,²¹ and a number of glass paintings from Bürki's dispersed collection, which had been purchased at auction.²²

Fig. 1: Historical museum in the Library Gallery in Bern, view from the north, undated photograph. The museum opened in the new building on Helvetiaplatz in 1894.



The Preservation of Historical Art and Cultural Assets

Numerous historical objects from the property of families, communities, or monasteries were sold in Switzerland as a result of political upheaval following the failure of the Helvetic Republic in 1803.²³ This included the *Basler Münsterschatz* (Basel Cathedral Treasury), most of which was auctioned off following the division of Basel into two cantons in 1833. The loss of Bürki's collection gave further impetus to efforts to protect historical art and cultural assets in Switzerland. The *Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Erhaltung historischer Kunstdenkmäler* (Swiss Society for the Preservation of Historical Monuments), founded in 1880 as a result of Rahn's concerns for the former church of Königsfelden Monastery and specifically its stained-glass choir, sought to bring public attention to the preservation of historical monuments and works of art.²⁴ A milestone in its development was the exhibition *Alte Kunst* at the first Swiss national exposition, held in Zurich in 1883 and curated

21 Zimmermann 1994, 372.

22 Rahn 1883, 327–328, 340–341; Historisches Museum Bern 1899, IV.

23 Lapaire 2010.

24 Haupt 2012, 355–357.

by Vögelin along with, among others, Rahn and Heinrich Angst, a silk merchant, collector, and later director of the Swiss National Museum.²⁵ In the context of the exhibition, Vögelin renewed his plea for a national museum, and that same year he would build on this in an influential speech to the National Council.²⁶

In his speech, Vögelin evoked “the national idea”²⁷ that could not be captured in state regulations but rather manifested itself in popular festivities. He described artwork as its lasting form, expressing that “there are forms in which the national idea has found its imperishable and monumental expression. These are the historical monuments of a people, which bear witness more vividly than any other to their will and ability, to their deeds and fortunes, to their hopes and ideals”.²⁸ Vögelin anticipated that the question of the seat of the Swiss National Museum would prove particularly difficult within the federalist state.²⁹ He offered to discuss dividing the institute, with one historical museum to be established in Bern (with the Burgundian carpets at its core), or alternatively in Lucerne (as the first city of the old confederation), and a museum of art or arts and crafts in either Zurich (as the seat of the Federal Polytechnic School), Basel, or Geneva.

As for the architecture of a national museum, he had an existing building in mind: the former monastery church of Königsfelden, near Brugg. Here, Vögelin imagined a *Kunst-Museum* (art museum) unlike any other in the world.³⁰

National and Cantonal Museums

In his speech, Vögelin tried to refute the objection that a centralized museum would reduce interest in local museums.³¹ He emphasized the importance of a national museum for the preservation of Swiss artistic and cultural assets, arguing that such an institution would supplement, not replace, the several historical museums that had been founded – with the support of associations, societies, and private collectors – in various cantons during the last third of the nineteenth century.³² The collections of these museums were mostly housed in prominent architectural monuments,³³ for example in *Haus Buol* in Chur (opened 1872), in the former grain and salt storage house in Stans (opened 1873), in the so-called *Hexenturm* (Witches’ Tower) of the thirteenth-century Lower Sarnen Cas-

25 Lafontant Vallotton 2007, 64.

26 See, for example, Draeyer 1999, 8–10.

27 “den nationalen Gedanken”; Vögelin 1883, 3.

28 “Aber es gibt Formen, in welchen der nationale Gedanke seinen unvergänglichen und monumentalen Ausdruck gefunden hat. Das sind die geschichtlichen Denkmäler eines Volkes, die lebendiger als alle Andere Zeugniß ablegen von seinem Wollen und Können, von seinen Thaten und Geschicken, von seinen Hoffnungen und Idealen”; *ibid.*

29 See *ibid.*, 10–13.

30 “ein Kunst-Museum [...], dessengleichen in der ganzen Welt nicht mehr existirt”; *ibid.*, 11. Letterspaced in the original text.

31 *Ibid.*, 4–9.

32 See Deuchler 1981, 32–36; Lafontant Vallotton 2007, 15–25.

33 In Neuchâtel, the new building of the *Musée des Beaux-Arts* (Museum of Fine Arts) by the architect Léo Châtelain was inaugurated in 1884. As of 1885, it also housed the city’s history museum.

tle (installed 1876–1880),³⁴ in the medieval Valeria Castle of Sitten (opened 1883) (fig. 2),³⁵ on the ground floor of the castle of Nyon (installed 1888)³⁶ and in the Knights' Hall of Thun Castle (opened 1888).³⁷

Fig. 2: Photograph by Auguste Garcin showing the installation of historical museums in architectural monuments, 1880; on the right: Valeria Castle (museum opened 1883); on the left: Tourbillon Castle, Sion, in the canton of Valais.



Although the Swiss Confederation had laid the foundation for its own collection by purchasing the physician Victor Gross's collection of pile-dwelling remnants in 1884, it did not want to prejudice the creation of a national museum. Despite various requests from the cantons to show the pile-dwelling collection, it was exhibited in the Federal Council Hall.³⁸ The federalist opposition to a centralized museum, originating with the councillors of state Johann Baptist Rusch and Gustav Muheim, demanded an official statement on the matter.³⁹ By an 1886 law concerning the participation of the federal government in the preservation of historical art and cultural assets of national importance, the Swiss Confederation foregrounded its role as the ultimate authority in this arena. It granted a subsidy that supported federal acquisitions of objects, cantonal collections, as well as involvement in excavations and the preservation of historical monuments.⁴⁰ In doing so, the Federal Council distinguished between "antiquities of local (cantonal)

34 Studach 1988, 135.

35 Morand 2003, 8–10.

36 Lieber 2011, 71.

37 Keller 1930, 9–20.

38 See Zimmermann 1987, 127–137; Draeyer 1998, 159–162; Sturzenegger 1999, 40–46.

39 Zimmermann 1987, 187.

40 See *ibid.*, 137–139; Sturzenegger 1999, 44–46.

interest and those of general importance for the fatherland and the confederation".⁴¹ In consideration of local museums, it rejected Vögelin's motion to create a national museum. At the same time, the council did not want to limit the federal government's room to manoeuvre: it thus reserved the right to revisit the issue, should the Confederation receive an important historical collection or an artistically outstanding monument that granted a firm basis for the project.⁴² Regarding the open question of the founding of a Swiss national museum, in 1888, in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, Heinrich Angst advertised the construction of such a museum in Zurich, thus triggering a competition for the seat among the cities of Basel, Bern, Zurich, and Lucerne (see fig. 3).⁴³

From 'Nationalmuseum' to 'Landesmuseum'

In view of the cities' submissions, the Federal Council ultimately felt compelled to draw up a programme for a national museum. It entrusted this task to the *Eidgenössische Kommission für Erhaltung schweizerischer Alterthümer* (Federal Commission for the Preservation of Swiss Antiquities), which had been formed in 1887 from the board of the Swiss Society for the Preservation of Historical Monuments to administer an *Altertümerkredit* (antiquities subsidy) based on the law of 1886.⁴⁴ During the deliberations, its actuary Carl Brun,⁴⁵ who had studied art history with Rahn and Vögelin at the University of Zurich, proposed "to change the pompous name 'National Museum' [*Nationalmuseum*] [...] to 'State Museum' [*Landesmuseum*]. One can speak of a Swiss people, but not of a Swiss nation. Our confederate republic is actually a body fused together from the fractions of three nationalities".⁴⁶ The commission applied the change of name – only in the German language

41 "Alterthümern von lokalem (kantonalem) Interesse und solchen von allgemein vaterländischer gemeineidgenössischer Bedeutung. Wir halten beispielsweise die Heldenschlachten des Schwabenkrieges und der Burgunderkriege [...] nicht für kantonale, sondern für eidgenössische Ereignisse. Ja, wir sind sogar geneigt, die Schlacht bei Sempach, in der zwar keine Zürcher und keine Berner mitfochten, für einen eidgenössischen, nicht nur für einen Luzerner oder Unterwaldner Ehrentag zu halten"; "Botschaft des Bundesrathes an die Bundesversammlung" 1886, 748. See Draeyer 1998, 163.

42 "Sollte sich die Sachlage ändern, indem eine bedeutende historische Sammlung oder ein künstlerisch hervorragendes Baudenkmal der Eidgenossenschaft zur Verfügung gestellt würde, sodas eine feste Grundlage für das Projekt gewonnen wäre, so würden wir uns vorbehalten auf die Angelegenheit zurückzukommen"; "Botschaft des Bundesrathes an die Bundesversammlung" 1886, 750–751.

43 The city of Geneva was the first to submit an application but did not pursue the matter further. The cities' bids, which were gradually fleshed out between 1888 and 1890, were prepared by committees that brought together personalities from politics, science, business, architecture, and art.

44 For details on the elaboration of the programme by the commission, see Lafontant Vallotton 2007, 267–276; Zimmermann 1987, 139–142. See also Draeyer 1998, 165–166; Sturzenegger 1999, 51–55.

45 See Battaglia-Greber 2004. In 1891, the *Eidgenössische Landesmuseumskommission* (Federal National Museum Commission) was created, and Brun was responsible for taking the committee's minutes until the year the museum opened, in 1898.

46 "den pompösen Namen 'Nationalmuseum' [...] in 'Landesmuseum' um[zu]ändern. Man kann vom einem Schweizer Volke, nicht aber von einer schweizerischen Nation reden. Unsere Conföderativrepublik ist eigentlich ein aus den Bruchtheilen dreier Nationalitäten zusammengesetzter Körper"; Swiss Federal Archives, E84#1000/1163#4*, Eidgenössische Kommission für Erhaltung schweizerischer Altertümer, Protokoll zur Vorstandssitzung vom 9. Juni 1888 in Basel (copy), 11. See Zimmermann 1987, 141; Lafontant Vallotton 2007, 271.

– within its programme for the national museum, confirmed by the subsequent federal resolution of 1890.⁴⁷

Fig. 3: Heinrich Jenny, *Struggle of the cantons competing for the Swiss National Museum* (*Das kantonale Käsdrücken um das schweizerische Nationalmuseum*), caricature. Helvetia is shown as auctioneer, thronged by the candidates: the Lucerne Lion (depicted as Bertel Thorvaldsen's *Löwendenkmal* of 1821), the Zurich Lion, the Basel Basilisk, and the Bernese Bear, with the Basel Läl-lenkönig in the back; front right: the representatives of the cantons trying to push each other off the centre of the bench.



Submissions from the Cities

To vie for the seat of the national museum, cities emphasized in their submissions not only their individual merits and distinctive identities but also their capacity for representing the Swiss Confederation.⁴⁸

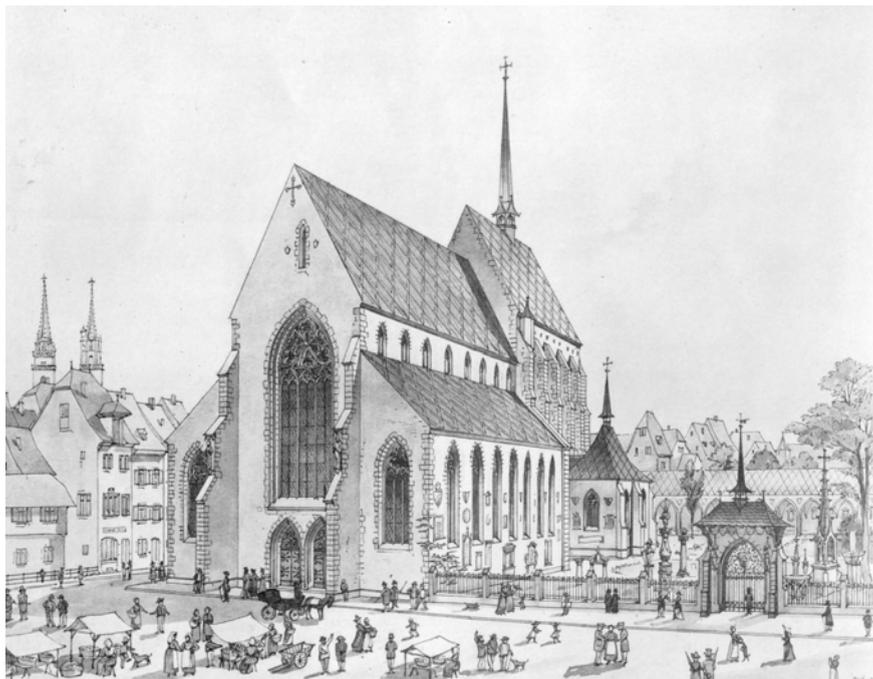
47 “*Nous préférons le titre de Landesmuseum à celui de National-Museum, bien que nous n'ayons pas su trouver de traductions française et italienne à ce titre. Il faudra, dans ces langues, conserver les expressions de Musée National et Museo Nazionale*”; Swiss Federal Archives, E84#1000/1163#4*, Théodore de Saussure to Federal Councillor Carl Schenk, Genthod, 16 June 1888, 2. See Lafontant Vallotton 2007, 271.

48 Tommy Sturzenegger elucidates the political connections in the dispute over the seat of the national museum and discusses the bids and strategies of the cities. See Sturzenegger 1999, 91–114, 157–175.

Basel: "Hie Basel, hie Schweizerboden!"⁴⁹

The authors of the submission from Basel emphasized that the city, which had joined the Confederation in 1501, had not yet housed a federal institution. Moreover, they refuted the notion that a relatively peripheral site, at the northwestern Swiss border, would be a disadvantage. To underpin a Swiss national museum, Basel could offer the Medieval Collection with origins reaching back to the Amerbach Cabinet, acquired by the city in 1661. This collection contained outstanding objects such as the Iselin Room from 1607, from the *Bärenfelser Hof* in Basel. For the museum building, the authors proposed the fourteenth-century *Barfüßerkirche*, which had been deconsecrated in 1794 and for which no definitive purpose had yet been found (fig. 4).⁵⁰ The architecture of the church suited the objects: the collection could be better accommodated in a historical room that constituted an artwork in itself⁵¹ – as at the exemplary *Musée du Sommerard* (today the *Musée de Cluny – musée national du Moyen Âge / Cluny Museum – National Museum of the Middle Ages*) in Paris and the *Germanisches Nationalmuseum* (Germanic National Museum). [▶ Gottlob-Linke]

Fig. 4: "Hie Basel, hie Schweizerboden!" Basel's bid for the seat of the Swiss National Museum, application from 1888: *Barfüßerkirche* after the Restoration.



49 "Basel und das Schweizerische Nationalmuseum" 1888, 10. Bold in the original text.

50 See Settelen-Trees 1994, 9–16. On Basels application, see, with further literature and sources, also Egli 2009.

51 "Basel und das Schweizerische Nationalmuseum" 1888, 9.

Lucerne: “die erste Stadt im Bunde”⁵²

The city of Lucerne presented itself as the cradle of the old confederation, situated in the natural beauty of Switzerland’s geographical centre. In 1332, Lucerne was the first city to join forces with the rural communes of Uri, Schwyz, and Unterwalden in the Battle of Sempach (1386) against the Habsburgs. Lucerne could boast diverse holdings from the armoury, archives, and libraries, as well as those from churches and private properties, but it lacked a large historical collection.⁵³ The city compensated by offering an important historical building: the town hall, built around 1600 (as documented by Wilhelm Lübke and August Ortwein in their works on the German Renaissance), supplemented by the *Freienhof* (1400–1600; demolished 1948–1949) on the opposite side of the river. The town hall (fig. 5) had served as a museum since 1879, when the Lucerne Historical Museum opened on its ground floor; art exhibitions had been displayed in the space since 1873.⁵⁴

Fig. 5: “Die erste Stadt im Bunde”: The historic town hall (built 1602–1606 by Anton Isenmann) for a Swiss National Museum in Lucerne, application from 1890.



52 “Eingabe der luzernischen Behörden” 1890, 6.

53 *Ibid.*, 7–8.

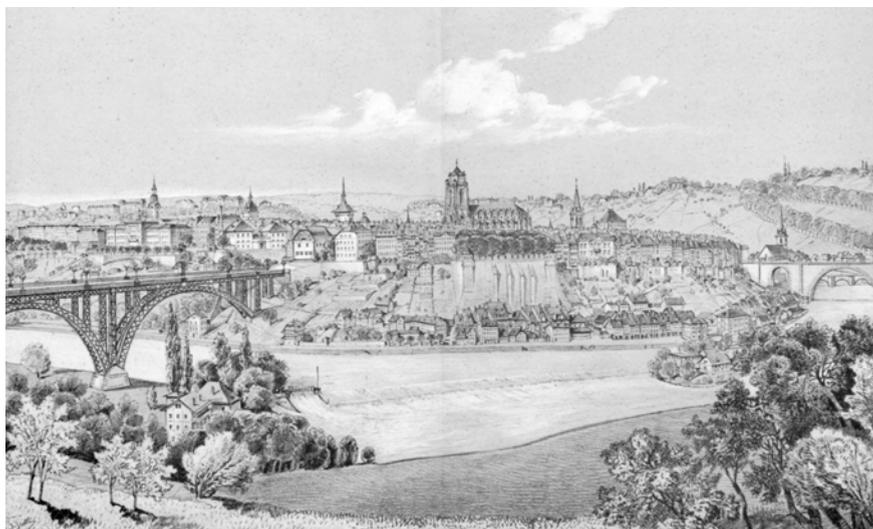
54 Brülisauer 1997, 29–32.

Bern: “an der Stätte, wo Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft des Vaterlandes ihren würdigsten, in seiner Gesamtheit einzig richtigen Ausdruck finden”⁵⁵

In Bern, the authorities of the canton and the city relied on their historical significance and exceptional status as the *Bundesstadt* (federal city):

Bern as a historical city, as the most outstanding bearer of its own consistent and purposeful policy in the bosom of the old, loose Confederation – and at the head of the new Confederation, strengthened as a federal state – should be the given place above all others for the collection of the monuments of our patriotic history.⁵⁶

Fig. 6: “At the place where the past, present and future of the fatherland find their most dignified, total and singularly correct expression”. View of the city of Bern from the Kirchenfeld. From right: Nydeggerkirche, Rathaus, St Peter and Paul (built 1859–1864), Bern Münster, Zeitlockenturm, Käfigturm, old Inselspital, Bundesrathhaus (today Bundeshaus West), Heiliggeistkirche; foreground left: Kirchenfeldbrücke to Helvetiaplatz.



As far as collections were concerned, Bern, unlike any other city in Switzerland, possessed objects that would provide an overview of cultural development from prehistoric times to the present: a “complete picture of cultural development from prehistoric times to the present day”.⁵⁷ The trophies from Burgundy were the main pieces highlighted, and, the authors of the proposal argued, as “witnesses to the politically greatest time of

55 “Schweizerisches Nationalmuseum” 1888, 13.

56 “Bern als historische Stadt sodann, als hervorragendste Trägerin einer eigenen, konsequenten und zielbewussten Politik im Schoße der alten, lockeren – und an der Spitze der neuen, als Bundesstaat gekräftigten Eidgenossenschaft, dürfte für die Sammlung der Denkmäler unserer vaterländischen Geschichte vor allen anderen der gegebene Ort sein”; *ibid.*, 4. “[H]istorische” letterspaced in the original text.

57 “vollständiges Gesamtbild der Kulturentwicklung von der prähistorischen Zeit bis in die Gegenwart”; *ibid.*

our fatherland”⁵⁸ these should not be absent from the national museum, nor could they belong to the museum were it located outside of Bern.⁵⁹ To house the new museum, the city offered a site on the *Kirchenfeld* near *Helvetiaplatz* (fig. 6), from where one could appreciate the panorama of the historic city with its architectural monuments. The urban fabric would represent the historical and political development of Bern: “the museum of the great architectural monuments [...], which clearly show us the historical and political development of the city and the state, as well as their relations with the Confederation”.⁶⁰ The city completed its bid in 1890 with Adolphe Tèche’s building project, characterized by stylistic references to Swiss buildings from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries.⁶¹

Zurich: “Landesmuseum und Polytechnikum”⁶²

The fundamental idea behind Zurich’s submission for the museum seat was to combine the Swiss National Museum and the Federal Polytechnic School, as Zurich’s Friedrich Salomon Vögelin had envisaged in his aforementioned speech of 1883. The authors sought a connection with Gottfried Semper’s doctrine, according to which “architecture had to derive its forms from the industrial arts”.⁶³ Also conducive to this idea was the merger with the *Kunstgewerbeschule* (School of Decorative Arts) and the *Gewerbemuseum* (Museum of Trade and Industry), both institutions initiated in the 1870s by Semper’s former assistant Julius Stadler. A core object of Zurich’s submission was the famous *Seidenhofzimmer* (Seidenhof Room) from the holdings of the Museum of Trade and Industry.⁶⁴ Supplemented by the collections of the Antiquarian Society in Zurich, the Swiss National Museum would become the scientific centre for archaeological and historical research in Switzerland.⁶⁵ In addition, Zurich promised the Swiss National Museum the collection of historical weapons from the cantonal armoury and two important rooms from the former *Fraumünster* convent, among other holdings. Finally, the city offered a magnificent site: the *Platzpromenade*, where the industrial hall had stood at the national exposition in 1883, thus being already anchored in the nation’s collective memory. For the museum building, the authors of Zurich’s submission were able to present a novel project, with a picturesque, medieval-inspired design by the young, local architect Gustav Gull (fig. 7).

58 “Zeugen der politisch größten Zeit unseres Vaterlandes”; *ibid.*, 5.

59 *Ibid.*, 5.

60 “das Museum der großen architektonischen Monumente [...], die in deutlicher Weise die historische und politische Entwicklung der Stadt und des Staates, sowie deren Beziehungen zur Eidgenossenschaft uns vor Augen führen”; *ibid.*, 8–9. “Museum der großen architektonischen Monumente” letterspaced in the original text.

61 Biland 1994, 7. On the founding of the *Bernisches Historisches Museum* (Bern Historical Museum), see also Castellani Zahir 1993, II, 75–101.

62 “Zürich und das Schweizerische Landes-Museum” 1890, 17 (title).

63 “die Baukunst ihre Formensprache von den technischen Künsten abzuleiten habe”; *ibid.*, 18.

64 On the suggested site, the design proposal for the building itself, and the contents of the collection, see “Zürich und das Schweizerische Landes-Museum” 1890. Like the Lucerne’s town hall, the Seidenhof Room had also been described by Lübke and Ortwein. On the period rooms in the Landesmuseum Zurich see Sonderegger 2019.

65 “Zürich und das Schweizerische Landes-Museum” 1890, 13.

Fig. 7: Gustav Gull's bid for the Swiss National Museum seat in Zurich.



Gustav Gull's Museum Building

Gull succeeded in developing an “imaginary national architecture”⁶⁶ for the future museum building. He designed a building conglomerate that organically incorporated the original rooms and architectural elements, which together with the parlours offered in Zurich's bid were the key objects of the federally owned collection, thereby also emphasizing the arts-and-crafts orientation of Zurich's submission for the museum seat. That he could depart from Semper's neo-Renaissance style was due in no small part to the art historian Johann Rudolf Rahn. Gull referenced a sixteenth-century Swiss architecture that Rahn had characterized in 1881 as a continuation of Gothic building traditions, combined with Renaissance ornamentation.⁶⁷ Bern had already failed to find a suitable architecture for a national museum in the architectural competition of 1889, where the projects considered by the jury had largely taken the form of massive neo-Renaissance palace designs. Compared to the innovative Zurich project, in which the so-called *Agglomerations-Prinzip* (agglomeration principle)⁶⁸ was first implemented for a new museum building, Tîèche's symmetrically designed museum project also failed, whereupon Bern withdrew it, replacing it in 1891 with one by André Lambert.⁶⁹ Unlike Lambert, who provided architectural models for his design,⁷⁰ Gull included a multitude of references in his composition without committing himself to specific architectural monuments for

66 “*imaginäre Nationalarchitektur*”; Thome 2015, 222. On the architecture of the National Museum Zurich, see, with further literature, Draeyer 1999; Sonderegger and Indermühle 2016; Curran 2016, 28–35; Sonderegger 2019; “*Zeitschrift*” 2021.

67 See Gutbrod 2012, 279–282.

68 See Verband Deutscher Architekten und Ingenieurvereine 1891.

69 On Lambert's draft, see, for example, Biland 1994, 7–12; Crettaz-Stürzel 2005, 176–178.

70 See Lambert 1891.

the design of the exterior. His architectural synthesis offered a surface for identification, in which various elements of Swiss building culture could be recognized.⁷¹

Determining the Museum's Location

The Federal Assembly's choice of the seat was finally determined by a controversial decision-making process.⁷² The museum directors August W. Franks, Alfred Darcel, and August von Essenwein, who had been consulted in 1890 to assess the bids, favoured Bern because of the Burgundian collection, but also Zurich because of the proposed museum building; Basel and Lucerne were not seen as competitive, given the historical buildings they offered to house the museum.⁷³ Once Basel and Lucerne dropped out, the Council of States supported Zurich's bid, and the National Council that of Bern. Zurich's support by the Council of States was in keeping with the desires of the cantons of western Switzerland, which, according to the press at the time, did not want to increase Bern's power.⁷⁴ It is possible that the National Council members who rejected Zurich's proposal voted in favour of Bern to prevent a decision from being made.⁷⁵ The time that elapsed between the votes in the councils was riddled with conspiracies and accusations. Heinrich Angst, for example, supported the construction of the Catholic *Liebfrauenkirche* (built 1893–1894) in Protestant Zurich to win the Catholic councillors' votes for the Zurich location.⁷⁶ Not least against the backdrop of the first national jubilee in 1891 – an occasion for demonstrating unity rather than discord – the councils finally reached an agreement in favour of Zurich.⁷⁷

Already during the bidding process, the Bernese had decided to realize their museum project regardless of the competition's outcome.⁷⁸ Basel also actualized its project in the *Barfüsserkirche*: by the end of 1890, it was already clear that Basel would not be considered by the Federal Assembly as a museum site, but work had already begun on the restoration of the church. Therefore, state archivist Rudolf Wackernagel in particular campaigned to promote cantonal museums in opposition to a national museum.⁷⁹ The museums in Basel and Bern opened while the Swiss National Museum in Zurich was still under construction, in 1894. The opening of the museum in Zurich in 1898 was celebrated with a parade by the cantons. Zurich presented itself as a city of education and science, as documented by photographs taken of several participating cantonal groups against the backdrop of large educational buildings, including the Federal Polytechnic School.

71 Lafontant Vallotton 2007, 278.

72 For the chronology of events, see Sturzenegger 1999, 75–86.

73 *Ibid.*, 63–75.

74 *Ibid.*, 77–78.

75 *Ibid.*, 78–80.

76 *Ibid.*, 122–123.

77 The jubilee was referring to the constitutional document of the Federal Charter of 1291. See, for example, Kreis 2011.

78 The name '*Schweizerisches Nationalmuseum*' remained in use for the museum in Bern until 1893. See Germann 1994, 259.

79 On the *Antimuseums-Petition* (antimuseum petition), see Sturzenegger 1999, 134–144.

Epilogue

Gull's outstanding architectural career began with the design of the Swiss National Museum in Zurich in 1890.⁸⁰ In the municipal architecture office between 1895 and 1900 and as a freelance architect and professor at the Federal Polytechnic School as of 1900, he played a leading role in transforming Zurich's medieval monastic grounds into municipal complexes that referenced the former building fabric. He won the competition for the expansion of the Federal Polytechnic School in 1909, for which he extended Semper's main building with a rotunda, later distinguished by a dome (built 1914–1925). Gull thus established the architectural core of the *Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich* (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich, known as ETH Zurich)⁸¹ and drew a parallel with Hans Wilhelm Auer's parliament building in Bern (built 1894–1902 as the main part of the Federal Palace), in which the Semper-influenced Swiss neo-Renaissance tradition culminated around 1900.⁸² In the context of Gull's work, the National Museum Zurich and the extension of the main building of ETH Zurich form stylistic counterpoints. Nevertheless, the structures belong together (fig. 8): conceived as national monuments and as complementary educational sites in Zurich's 1890 bid for the seat of the Swiss National Museum, the two represent architectural poles in the search for a national identity between the old confederation of states and the modern federal state.

80 On Gustav Gull's architectural career, see, for example, Gutbrod and Kurz 2017, 123–132.

81 In 1911, the Federal Polytechnic School was renamed the *Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule* (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology). See <https://ethz.ch/en/the-eth-zurich/portrait/history/epochs/1904-1911.html>. On the expansion of the ETH's main building by Gull, see Hassler and Kainz 2016.

82 See, for example, Hauser 2003, 215–216.

Fig. 8: Photograph by Adolf Moser showing the city of Zurich, 1902. Left: Schweizerisches Landesmuseum (built 1892–1898 by Gustav Gull); right: Hauptbahnhof (built 1865–1871 by Jakob Friedrich Wanner), and in the background behind the museum building the Eidgenössisches Polytechnikum (built 1859–1868 by Gottfried Semper), view from the northwest; foreground: Zollbrücke and the tram bridge over the Sihl River. The tower of the Predigerkirche, designed by Gustav Gull in 1896, and the towers of the Grossmünster are visible in the urban fabric.



Bibliography

- Abegg, Regine, "Gemeinsam für die Schweizer Kunst und Kunstgeschichte: Friedrich Salomon Vögelin und Johann Rudolf Rahn", in *Zeitschrift für Schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte* 69.3-4 (2012), 259–268.
- Altorfer, Kurt, "Pfahlbauer", in *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz*, version 27 September 2010, URL: <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/de/articles/027699/2004-08-26/>.
- Basel und das Schweizerische Nationalmuseum: *Der h. Bundesversammlung gewidmet*, Basel 1888. ("Basel und das Schweizerische Nationalmuseum" 1888)
- Battaglia-Greber, Katharina, "Brun, Carl", in *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz*, version 26 August 2004, URL: <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/de/articles/027699/2004-08-26/>.
- Biland, Annemarie, *Bernisches Historisches Museum: Architekturführer* (Schweizerische Kunstführer, LV, no. 549/550), Bern 1994.
- Bilfinger, Monica, *The Federal Palace in Bern* (Schweizerische Kunstführer, CVIII, no. 1077/1078), Bern 2020.
- Botschaft des Bundesrathes an die Bundesversammlung betreffend die Betheiligung des Bundes an den Bestrebungen zur Erhaltung und Erwerbung vaterländischer Alterthümer* (Bern, 14 June 1886). ("Botschaft des Bundesrathes an die Bundesversammlung" 1886)
- Brülisauer, Josef, "Geschichte des Museums", in *Das Historische Museum Luzern*, Lucerne 1997, 29–38.
- Capitani, François de, and Georg Germann (eds), *Auf dem Weg zu einer schweizerischen Identität 1848–1914. Probleme – Errungenschaften – Misserfolge* (8. Kolloquium der Schweizerischen Akademie der Geisteswissenschaften), Freiburg 1987.
- Capitani, François de, "Nationale Identität im Wechselspiel zwischen Geschichte, Monument und Museum: Das schweizerische Beispiel", in *Zeitschrift für Schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte*, 55.1 (1998), 25–34.
- Capitani, François de, "Das Schweizerische Landesmuseum – Gründungsidee und wechselvolle Geschichte", in *Zeitschrift für Schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte*, 57.1 (2000), 1–16.
- Castellani Zahir, Elisabeth, *Die Wiederherstellung von Schloss Vaduz 1904 bis 1914. Burgen- denkmalpflege zwischen Historismus und Moderne*, vols 1–2, Vaduz 1993.
- Corboud, Pierre, and Gishan F. Schaeren, *Pile Dwellings in Switzerland* (Schweizerische Kunstführer, XCIX, no. 988/989), Bern 2017.
- Crettaz-Stürzel, Elisabeth, *Heimatstil: Reformarchitektur in der Schweiz 1896–1914*, vol. 1, Frauenfeld 2005.
- Curran, Kathleen, *The Invention of the American Art Museum: Form Craft to Kulturgeschichte, 1870–1930*, Los Angeles 2016.
- Deuchler, Florens, "Sammler, Sammlungen und Museen", in *Museen der Schweiz*, Zurich 1981.
- Draeyer, Hanspeter, "Die 'besten Schädel arischer Rasse' als Katalysator für die Gründung des Schweizerischen Landesmuseums", in *Die Erfindung der Schweiz 1848–1998: Bildentwürfe einer Nation* (exhib. cat. Zurich), Zurich 1998, 158–169.
- Draeyer, Hanspeter, *Das Schweizerische Landesmuseum Zürich: Bau und Entwicklungsgeschichte 1889–1998*, Zurich 1999.

- Eingabe der luzernischen Behörden an die hohe Bundesversammlung betreffend die Bewerbung Luzerns um den Sitz des Schweiz. Landesmuseums*, Lucerne 1890. ("Eingabe der luzernischen Behörden" 1890)
- Egli, Benedikt, "...geneigt, grosse Opfer zu bringen...": Die Bewerbung Basels um das Nationalmuseum 1888", in *Historisches Museum Basel: Jahresbericht 2009*, Basel 2010, 5–17.
- Germann, Georg, "Vom Wunschbild zum Leitbild", in *100 Jahre Bernisches Historisches Museum 1894–1994*, *Berner Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Heimatkunde*, 56.3 (1994), 257–266.
- Gutbrod, Cristina, "'Nicht nur im Innern, sondern auch durch sein Äußeres geschichtlich docieren' – Gustav Gull's Landesmuseum als bauliche Umsetzung von Johann Rudolf Rahns Verständnis schweizerischer Kunst und Architektur", in *Zeitschrift für Schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte*, 69.3-4 (2012), 275–284.
- Gutbrod, Cristina, and Daniel Kurz, "Festliches Pathos – sachliches Dienen: Gustav Gull und Hermann Herter als Stadtbaumeister von Zürich", in Wolfgang Sonne and Markus Jäger (eds), *Großstadt gestalten: Stadtbaumeister in Europa* (Bücher zur Stadtbaukunst), Berlin 2017, 122–145.
- Hassler, Uta, and Korbinian Kainz, *Die polytechnische Welt. Wissensordnung und Bauideal. Planmaterialien zum Zürcher Polytechnikum*, vols 1–2, Munich 2016.
- Haupt, Isabel, "'Kirche mit Düngerhaufen!' – Rahn, Königsfelden und die Gründung des Vereins zur Erhaltung vaterländischer Kunstdenkmäler", in *Zeitschrift für Schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte*, 69.3-4 (2012), 355–362.
- Hauser, Andreas, *Ferdinand Stadler (1813–1870): Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Historismus in der Schweiz*, Zurich 1976.
- Hauser, Andreas, "Das Eidgenössische Polytechnikum als geistiges Bundeshaus. Gottfried Semper und die Zürcher Hochschul-Träume", in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (21–22 April 2001), 79–80.
- Hauser, Andreas, "Das schweizerische Capitol: Vom Bundesratspalazzo zum Nationaldenkmal", in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (23–24 March 2002), 81.
- Hauser, Andreas, "Gottfried Semper und der Rathausbau: Politische Ikonologie im 19. Jahrhundert", in *architectura*, 33 (2003), 189–216.
- Hauser, Andreas, "Provinzialität als Stärke: Rahns Konstruktion einer anti-elitären Schweizer Kunst", in *Zeitschrift für Schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte*, 69.3-4 (2012), 241–252.
- Historisches Museum Bern, *Führer durch das historische Museum in Bern*, Bern 1899.
- Keller, Hans Gustav, *Die Geschichte des historischen Museums im Schloß Thun*, Thun 1930.
- Kölz, Alfred, "Bern als 'Sitz der Bundesbehörden': Die föderalistische Weisheit des Entscheids von 1848", in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (27 November 1998), 15.
- Kreis, Georg, "Bundesfeier", in *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz*, version 16 March 2011, URL: <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/de/articles/017438/2011-03-16/>.
- Lafontant Vallotton, Chantal, *Entre le musée et le marché. Heinrich Angst: collectionneur, marchand et premier directeur du Musée national suisse*, Bern / Berlin, 2007.
- Lapaire, Claude, "Kunsthandel", in *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz*, version 3 March 2020, URL: <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/de/articles/010996/2010-03-03/>.
- Lambert, André, *Entwurf zu einem National-Museum in Bern*, Bern 1891.
- Lieber, Vincent, *Histoire/s du château de Nyon*, Nyon 2011.

- Marchal, Guy P., and Aram Mattioli (eds), *Erfundene Schweiz: Konstruktionen nationaler Identität*, Zurich 1992.
- Maissen, Thomas, *Geschichte der Schweiz*, Baden 2010.
- Minta, Anna, and Bernd Nicolai (eds), *Parlamentarische Repräsentationen: Das Bundeshaus in Bern im Kontext internationaler Parlamentsbauten und nationaler Strategien* (Neue Berner Schriften zur Kunst, XIV), Bern 2014.
- Morand, Marie Claude, "Petite histoire du Musée d'histoire", in *Musée cantonal d'histoire: Guide des collections*, Sion 2003, 8–24.
- Rahn, J[ohann] Rudolf, "Erinnerungen an die Bürki'sche Sammlung", in *Kunst- und Wanderstudien aus der Schweiz*, Vienna 1883, 298–345.
- Rüedi, Martin, *Das Parlamentsgebäude von Bern (1894–1902). Genese eines Nationaldenkmals*, doctoral dissertation, Freie Universität Berlin 2016.
- Schweizerisches Nationalmuseum: Eingabe der Bernischen Behörden an den hohen Bundesrath*, Bern 1888. ("Schweizerisches Nationalmuseum" 1888)
- Schweizerisches Landesmuseum (ed.), *Die Erfindung der Schweiz 1848–1998: Bildentwürfe einer Nation* (exhib. cat. Zurich), Zurich 1998.
- Schweizerisches Nationalmuseum (ed.), *Zum Geburtstag viel Recht. 175 Jahre Bundesverfassung*, Dresden 2023.
- Settellen-Trees, Daniela, "Historisches Museum Basel in der Barfüsserkirche 1894–1994: Rückblicke in die Museumsgeschichte", in *Historisches Museum Basel: Jahresbericht 1993*, Basel 1994, 5–58.
- Sonderegger, Christina, and Joya Indermühle, *The National Museum in Zurich: Old Building – Renovation – Extension* (Schweizerische Kunstführer, XCIX, no. 981/982), Bern 2016.
- Sonderegger, Christina (ed.), *Period Rooms: Die Historischen Zimmer im Landesmuseum Zürich*, with contributions by Regine Abegg et al., Zurich 2019.
- Studach, Willi, "Der Archivturm zu Sarnen: Bemerkungen zu seiner Geschichte", in *Obwaldner Geschichtsblätter*, 17 (1988), 126–142.
- Sturzenegger, Tommy, *Der grosse Streit: Wie das Landesmuseum nach Zürich kam* (Mitteilungen der Antiquarischen Gesellschaft, LXVI), Zurich 1999.
- Thome, Markus, "Narrativer Überbau: Museumsarchitektur und Raumgestaltungen in Formen einer nationalen Baukunst", in Constanze Breuer, Bärbel Holtz, and Paul Kahl (eds), *Die Musealisierung der Nation: Ein kulturpolitisches Gestaltungsmodell des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin / Boston 2015, 201–236.
- Verband Deutscher Architekten und Ingenieurvereine (ed.), "Das Landes-Museum in Zürich", in *Deutsche Bauzeitung*, 25.90 (1891), 547.
- Vögelin, Salomon, *Die Errichtung eines schweizer. National-Museums: Rede, gehalten im schweizer. Nationalrath, den 9. Juli 1883, von Sal[omon] Vögelin, Professor*, Uster 1883.
- Weidmann, Dieter, *Sempers 'Polytechnikum' in Zürich: Ein Heiligtum der Wissenschaften und Künste*, doctoral dissertation, ETH Zurich 2010.
- Zeitschrift für Schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte*, 78.2-3, special issue, Westflügel des Landesmuseums Zürich (2021). ("Zeitschrift" 2021)
- Zimmermann, Karl, "Pfahlbauromantik im Bundeshaus: Der Ankauf der 'Pfahlbausammlung' von Dr. Victor Gross durch die Eidgenossenschaft im Jahre 1884 und die Frage der Gründung eines schweizerischen National- oder Landesmuseums", in *Berner Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Heimatkunde*, 49.3 (1987), 117–151.

Zimmermann, Karl, "Chronikalisches Notizen zur Museumsgeschichte", in *100 Jahre Bernisches Historisches Museum 1894–1994*, *Berner Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Heimatkunde*, 56.3 (1994), 371–459.

Zürich und das Schweizerische Landes-Museum: Den hohen eidgenössischen Räten gewidmet. Im Dezember 1890, Zurich 1890. ("Zürich und das Schweizerische Landes-Museum" 1890)

Illustration Credits

Fig. 1: Burgerbibliothek Bern, FR.E.706.

Fig. 2: ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, Bildarchiv, Ans_05121-FL.

Fig. 3: *Nebelspalter* 14, 30 June 1888, no. 27. e-periodica.

Fig. 4: "Basel und das Schweizerische Nationalmuseum" 1888. Zentralbibliothek Zürich, Alte Drucke, DW 1920.

Fig. 5: "Eingabe der luzernischen Behörden" 1890. Zentralbibliothek Zürich, Alte Drucke, Fol. 407.

Fig. 6: "Schweizerisches Nationalmuseum" 1888. University Library Bern, BeM KMU YB 2501.

Fig. 7: "Zürich und das Schweizerische Landes-Museum" 1890, pl. 2. gta Archiv / ETH Zurich.

Fig. 8: Baugeschichtliches Archiv der Stadt Zürich.

The Birth of National Museums in Rome after the Italian Unification

Cultural Policies and Education¹

Maria Vittoria Marini Clarelli

Museums and Heritage

When Rome was proclaimed the capital of Italy on 3 February 1871, the main museums of the city were the Vatican, which remained closed at the disposal of the pope,² and the *Musei Capitolini* (Capitoline Museums),³ which were owned by the municipality. Although all the capitals of the pre-unification states owned rich collections of antiquities and art, it was decided to leave them in their original contexts, and in some cases even in their current buildings. Therefore, a constellation of national museums and galleries is spread across the Italian peninsula. To understand the reasons for this choice – as a result of which the Italian state lacks a museum on the scale of the British Museum, London, the *Musée du Louvre* (Louvre Museum), Paris, or the *Эрмитаж* (Hermitage), Saint Petersburg – we must consider that, already in the eighteenth century in Italy, the museum had become a metaphor for the country.⁴ In this ‘widespread museum’, destination of the Grand Tour, if the collections of the *Gallerie degli Uffizi* (Uffizi Galleries) had left Florence or those of the *Museo Borbonico* (Bourbon Museum) had left Naples, the cultural world would have revolted. The museum city *par excellence*, however, was Rome itself. As Antoine-Chrysostome Quatremère de Quincy wrote in 1796:

The real museum of Rome, the one I am talking about, certainly consists of statues, colossi, temples, obelisks, [...] etc ., but nevertheless it is composed of places, sites, mountains, roads, ancient streets, the respective positions of the ruined city, geograph-

1 English translation by Antonio Plescia.

2 On the Vatican Museums in the nineteenth century, see Pietrangeli 1985, 169–196.

3 Magagnini 1994; Parisi Presicce 2010; Arata 2016.

4 Marini Clarelli 2008, 73–74.

ical relationships, relationships between all objects, memories, local traditions, the still existing uses, the comparisons that cannot be made except in the country itself.⁵

Quatremère de Quincy's notion of Rome as a 'museum city' was still alive when it came to deciding how to set up the national museums of the capital. This was, in my opinion, the first of four main factors that influenced their creation.⁶

The second factor was the cultural and topographic relationship among ancient, papal, and modern Rome.⁷ The paradigm of three cities became a source of conflict between the municipality, which was still linked to the second, and the state, which sought to unify the third with the first. The model of the open-air museum could be used to assign greater visibility to the archaeological remains of the Roman past.⁸ The third factor was the tension between the local vision and the national one. This was a common theme of the cultural debates in the new-born Kingdom of Italy, but in Rome it had a deeper meaning. Indeed, only here was the local dimension also international. Many foreign intellectuals were disappointed with the transformation of the universal city into another national capital among many.⁹ In addition, Roman identity was stronger than its Italian counterpart: it coincided with a model of citizenship (*civis romanus*) and of Catholicism (*romana ecclesia*). The Capitoline Museums themselves resulted from Pope Sixtus IV's 1471 donation of a group of Roman bronzes – including the symbolic she-wolf – to the *populus romanus*.¹⁰

Finally, the fourth factor was the entanglement with reformed approaches to the preservation of cultural heritage, which in Rome meant confronting two urgent issues: the management of archaeological materials found during urban-expansion projects, and the risk of dispersal of family art and antiquity collections. Papal legislation survived¹¹ until 1902, when a less protective national law on the conservation of

5 "Le véritable muséum de Rome, celui dont je parle, se compose, il est vrai, de statues, de colosses, de temples, d'obélisques –, de colonnes triomphales, de thermes, de cirques, d'amphithéâtres, d'arcs de triomphe, de tombeaux, de stucs, de fresques, de bas-reliefs, d'inscriptions, de fragments d'ornements, de matériaux de construction, de meubles, d'ustensiles, etc. etc. mais il ne se compose pas moins des lieux, des sites, des montagnes, des carrières, des routes antiques, des positions respectives des villes ruinées, des rapports géographiques, des relations de tous les objets entre eux, des souvenirs, des traditions locales, des usages encore existants, des parallèles et des rapprochements qui ne peuvent se faire que dans le pays même"; Quatremère de Quincy 1796, 22.

6 On the birth of state museums in Rome, see Bernini 1997. On the archaeological museums, see Curzi 1998; Dyson 2019, 129–153.

7 On the three cities, see Marini Clarelli 2021.

8 Dyson 2019, 5.

9 Ibid.

10 Parisi Presicce 2000.

11 In the midst of the Napoleonic invasion of Italy, the edict of 2 October 1802 issued by Cardinal Doria Pamphilj extended existing prohibitions on the destruction of ancient buildings, whether publicly or privately owned, as well as the requirement of licenses for the export of objects and the imposition of a twenty percent tax on such exports. Thereafter, the edict of 7 April 1820 issued by Cardinal Pacca was the most comprehensive heritage legislation in Europe. See Volpe 2007, 49–51.

monuments, antiquities, and fine-art objects was passed,¹² but, as we shall see later, gradually the safeguard of cultural patrimony became more and more important in the nation-building process.¹³ While the legislative procedure was quite long, the reform of the preservational model inherited from the papacy was almost immediate and the institution of ministerial offices dealing with excavations and monuments was parallel to that of new museums. Significantly, the Crown did not intervene in this process. The Vatican and the Capitoline, the two hills where the existing authorities were based, each housed a museum that was historically connected to the power they embodied. On the contrary, the palace on the third and most important hill, the Quirinal, was found completely empty by King Victor Emmanuel II (r. 1861–1878), when he settled there on 2 July 1871, leaving his dynastic collection in Turin. While the Quirinal was transformed into a royal palace, the state museums initially shared the same location as the parliament, the ministries, and other state offices, all of which were provisionally housed in ecclesiastical buildings confiscated from the religious orders.

The Citadel of Culture

The first minister of education to address the question of museums was an intellectual of the calibre of Ruggiero Bonghi (1826–1895), a university professor of philosophy and ancient literature and a member of parliament famous for his oratory skills.¹⁴ The occasion was the passage to the state, in 1873, of the entire Jesuit *Collegio romano* (Roman College), where the university and the schools of the company were located, together with the *Musaeum Kircherianum* (Kircherian Museum), which had been founded in 1651 by father Athanasius Kircher, whose collections encompassed everything from natural sciences to physics, from archaeology to esoterism. In 1870, immediately after the capture of Rome, the first public high school in the capital – named after the archaeologist Ennio Quirino Visconti – was founded in one part of the building, alongside an astronomical observatory and the illustrious Jesuit who had made it famous, Father Angelo Secchi. Bonghi set up a sort of interdisciplinary citadel of culture, consisting of the *Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Roma* (National Central Library of Rome), the *Circolo Filologico* (Philological Circle), the *Società Geografica* (Geographical Society), the Kircherian Museum, which was refurbished to include only the archaeological collection, and six new museums of an educational and experimental type. (fig. 1) Instead of competing with the great collections of the Vatican and the municipality, as well as with the private museum Prince Torlonia was opening at the same time to present his collection of classical statuary,¹⁵ an

12 On the legislative debate on heritage protection from law no. 286 of 28 June 1871 to law no. 185 of 12 June 1902, see Volpe 2007, 60–77; Thatcher 2018, 75–76.

13 On the relationship between cultural heritage and nation-building in Europe, see Poulot 2006, 134–136.

14 On Bonghi as minister of education, see Ciampi 2004.

15 The Torlonia Museum at the *Palazzo Corsini alla Lungara* was founded by Prince Alessandro Torlonia in 1875 following a long series of acquisitions of ancient Greek and Roman sculptures. It is still highly representative of the history of the collecting of antiquities in Rome from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries. See Settis and Gasparri 2020.

attempt was made to inaugurate collections corresponding to new orientations within academic research and pedagogy. The *Museo scolastico* (Educational Museum) was tasked with proposing “the best didactic systems” and “examples and models of everything pertaining to the schools of the Kingdom”.¹⁶ The *Museo dei Gessi* (Plaster Museum), deemed “necessary for a well-founded and effective teaching of archaeology”,¹⁷ already had the casts of the Aegina pediment and the part of the Parthenon frieze left in Athens, and efforts were underway to acquire the casts of the sculptures kept in the British Museum. In addition, there was the *Museo del Medioevo e del Rinascimento* (Museum of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance) for the study of applied arts, founded by Prince Baldassarre Odescalchi and the jeweller and art dealer Augusto Castellani on the model of the South Kensington Museum (today the Victoria and Albert Museum), London.¹⁸ Three new archaeological museums were set up on the first floor, which, as the minister declared in his inaugural speech on 14 March 1876, “have no ambition to appear splendid; they are and want to remain modest in all their appearances, and assume only that they can become a reliable and serious object of study”.¹⁹ The choice to start from archaeology was aligned with the creation, in 1875, of the *Direzione Centrale degli Scavi e Musei del Regno* (Central Directorate for Excavations and Museums within the Ministry), entrusted to the illustrious archaeologist Giuseppe Fiorelli.²⁰ It was also a way of joining ancient and modern Rome, leaving on the sidelines the second Rome, that of the popes. Bonghi noted that

the *Museo Preistorico* [Prehistoric Museum] is meant to divulge knowledge of the conditions of the peoples of this Italy of ours before they had a history, they who were

-
- 16 “Entrati nella Corte che ci si para dinanzi, si vede dirimpetto il Museo scolastico creato anch'esso in questi ultimi anni, ed inteso così a svegliare l'amore della discussione come a migliorare e chiarire le idee intorno a' migliori ordinamenti didattici, e a fornire esempi e modelli di ogni cosa attinente alle scuole del Regno elementari e secondarie, classiche e tecniche, ed a fornire di libri e di aiuti i Professori”; Bonghi 1876, 11.
- 17 “Dirimpetto alla prima tesa della scala un'altra porta mette nel Museo dei Gessi, istituzione appena iniziata, ma di grande e riconosciuta utilità, poiché è necessario ad un fondato ed efficace insegnamento dell'archeologia l'aver dinanzi agli occhi ordinata e continua la serie delle principali e più antiche opera che la ispirazione dell'arte ha create”; *ibid.*, 11. That first nucleus of the Plaster Museum became the property of the University of Rome, thanks to the efforts of the Austrian archaeologist Emanuel Löwy, who, after his nomination as professor of History of Ancient Art in 1889–1890, worked to create a collection that could compete with the university plaster-cast collections that had arisen in Europe. He directed the museum until 1915. On its history, see Barbanera 1995.
- 18 This museum had been founded in 1872 under the name *Museo Artistico Industriale* (Museum of Industrial Arts), for the purpose of collecting artifacts from ancient times to the seventeenth century and, at the same time, of training craftsmen. It was inaugurated on 23 February 1874 in the former convent of *San Lorenzo in Lucina*. Its second venue (1875–1880) was the Roman College; from there, it moved to the convent of *San Giuseppe a Capo le Case* (1880–1913). When the museum closed, the collections were dismembered and moved to the storerooms of various Roman museums. See Borghini 2005; Coen 2020, 69–78; Raimondi 2021.
- 19 “Non hanno nessuna ambizione di apparire splendidi; sono e vogliono rimanere modesti in ogni loro apparenza, e presumono solo di poter diventare oggetto sicuro e serio di studio”; Bonghi 1876, 20.
- 20 The first state office dealing with cultural heritage in Rome was the *Soprintendenza per gli scavi di antichità e per la custodia e conservazione dei monumenti* (Superintendent for Excavations of Antiquities and for the Stewardship and Conservation of Monuments), directed by Pietro Rosa from 1870 until its dissolution in 1875. See Delpino and Dubbini 2011.

among the first to have one, and who then held such a great place in it; the other, the *Museo Italic* [Italic Museum], is meant to inform about those Italic civilizations that developed before the Roman, and lived for several centuries next to it; the third, the *Museo Lapidario* [Lapidary Museum], is meant to show in the scientifically arranged inscriptions the organization of that powerful social, political, religious life which had its centre here for so many centuries, and which from here conquered with weapons and then shaped with its ideas the civilized and barbarian world with which it gradually came in contact.²¹

Fig. 1: Antonio Bonamore, *The Education Museum in the Collegio Romano*.



21 “Il pensiero onde son mossi è questo, di dare, l'uno, il Museo preistorico, cognizione delle condizioni dei popoli di questa Italia nostra prima che avessero una storia, essi che sono stati tra i primi ad averne una, e soli poi, non hanno cessato mai di tenervi così gran posto, l'altro, il Museo Italic, di dare notizia di quelle civiltà italiche che si svilupparono prima della romana, e vissero per più secoli accanto a questa, il terzo, il Museo Lapidario di mostrare nelle iscrizioni scientificamente disposte l'ordinamento di quella potente vita sociale, politica, religiosa che ebbe centro qui per tanti secoli, e di qui conquistò colle armi e plasmò di nuovo colle sue idee il mondo civile e barbaro con il quale venne via via in contatto”; Bonghi 1876, 20–21. See also Bruni 2001, 778–779. On the Italic Museum, projected by Gianfrancesco Gamurrini, see Magagnini 1998; Delpino 2001, 632–633.

The Museum of Prehistory and Ethnography

Of these new museums, the only one that remained at the Roman College after the fall of the government on 18 March 1876 – that is, four days after the inauguration – was the *Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico* (National Museum of Prehistory and Ethnography, fig. 2), now named after its founder, Luigi Pigorini, who in 1881 summarized the museum's duties as follows:

it is divided into two large classes, the prehistoric and the ethnographic. The first includes what the various peoples left in the Italian provinces and in the foreign districts, from the Palaeolithic Age to the end of the Early Iron Age. In the other, we admire what living families manufacture or use, which have remained some more, some less in conditions of civilization inferior to ours, starting from the savage state. And the reason for the parallel between the two classes lies in the fact that in the infinite variety of uses and customs of peoples less civilized than us, we still find today the image of our more distant past, the explanation of the way of life and industrial processes of prehistoric populations.²²

The first group of materials was collected thanks to a circular (no. 458, dated 8 November 1875) from Fiorelli, Director General of Excavations and Museums, who invited the regional inspectors of excavations and monuments to collaborate on the foundation of the museum, namely, by contributing a selection of significant 'prehistoric relics' found in their territories.²³ "It was necessary to find out and collect those antiquities for the museum, that would fill gaps in national history, to find in the most distant ages the features of our country when it was called for the first time Italy",²⁴ Pigorini wrote some years later. In 1882, the museum acquired the prehistoric materials still preserved in the Kircherian Museum, and by the last decades of the nineteenth century the institution proved to be most conducive to nation-building, in that its main goal was to demonstrate how ancient the history of Italy was. As Maria Gabriella Lerario has pointed out,

according to Pigorini, prehistoric populations moved from the north to the south of the Italian peninsula, creating new settlements; in doing so, they established the cultural basis, which connected the territory and shaped Italy. In this interpretation, the present and the past were tightly connected to the freshly established Italian unity.²⁵

22 "Il Museo è diviso in due grandi classi, la preistorica e l'etnografica. Comprende la prima quanto nelle provincie italiane e nelle contrade estere lasciarono le varie genti, dall'età archeolitica al chiudersi della prima età del ferro. Nell'altra ammirasi ciò che fabbricano od usano famiglie viventi, rimaste quali più, quali meno in condizioni di civiltà inferiori alla nostra, a partire dallo stato selvaggio. E la ragione del ostume fra le due ostumeta in ciò, che nella infinita varietà di usi e ostume di popoli meno civili di noi, trovasi ancora l'immagine del nostro passato più lontano, la spiegazione della maniera di vita e dei processi industriali delle popolazioni preistoriche"; Pigorini 1881, 3.

23 See Lerario 2012, 60.

24 "Era necessario cercare e raccogliere in un museo simili antichità, per colmare delle lacune nella storia nazionale, per trovare nelle età più lontane la ragione di quello che era il nostro paese allorché ebbe per la prima volta il nome d'Italia"; Pigorini, 1891, 599. See also Lerario 2012, 67.

25 Lerario 2012, 50.

Therefore, the debate on the *Antiquity of the Italian Nation*, as Antonino de Francesco titled his book on this subject,²⁶ referring to the autochthony of some or all of the pre-Roman inhabitants of the Italia peninsula, assumed a museological form. Pigorini also made the museum a driving force for palaeo-ethnological studies through the courses the chair entrusted to him.²⁷

Fig. 2: View of the Foreign Ethnography section of the Museum of Prehistory and Ethnography.



26 De Francesco 2013.

27 Enriched with many other collections, the museum, named Luigi Pigorini after its founder, remained at the Roman College until 1962, when it began its transfer to the *Palazzo delle Scienze* in the EUR district of Rome, completed in 1977. Since 2016, it has been part of the Museum of Civilizations; for its history, see Lerario 2005.

The Project of a Museum of Ancient and Modern Art

The policy of small study museums continued for a few years, with the opening of antiquarian galleries in the archaeological areas subject to excavations. However, the city's expansion efforts were bringing to light a growing number of important finds that needed to be preserved and exhibited. In 1880, Fiorelli commissioned Pietro Rosa to present a project for a large national archaeological museum in which the plaster casts, the collections of the Kircherian museum, the *Museo Palatino* (Palatine Museum),²⁸ and the *Museo Tiberino* (Tiberine Museum),²⁹ plus the *Accademia di Belle Arti* (Academy of Fine Arts), would converge. The chosen area was that of the Baths of Diocletian, a complex which included the former monastery of *Santa Maria degli Angeli e dei Martiri*, built on a design by Michelangelo and still occupied by the Carthusian monks though falling under the jurisdiction of the municipality, while the sixteenth-century cloister belonged to the Ministry of War, which used it as a warehouse for materials. The location was strategic, because the baths were located close to the railway station, faced the modern *piazza dell'Esedra*, and dominated the elegant *via Nazionale*, but both the Carthusians and the municipality opposed the project.³⁰ The following year, in 1881, the doctor Guido Baccelli was appointed minister of public education.³¹ Taking up the question of museums, he immediately asked Rosa to modify the project to also accommodate a national gallery of modern art – which, at that time, existed only on paper – within the complex of the Baths of Diocletian. What had brought about this change of course?

Baccelli immediately transformed the Directorate General of Monuments and Excavations, with the archaeological sector in its purview, into the *Direzione Generale Antichità e Belle Arti* (Directorate General of Antiquities and Fine Arts), which remained under Fiorelli's responsibility yet on which the academies of fine arts would also depend. As an advisory body for the artistic part, the *Commissione Permanente di Belle Arti* (Permanent Commission of Fine Arts) was created, again in 1881, consisting of painters, sculptors, and architects. Within these bodies, there emerged a conviction that it was necessary to separate the roles of teaching archaeology and art from those of managing museums. Therefore, with the Royal Decree of 13 March 1882 (no. 678), it was decided that “the galleries, art galleries and archaeological museums, annexed to the universities, academies and institutes of fine arts, would cease to be part of the aforementioned scientific or artistic institutes, and will have their own administration”.³²

The separation of institutions of teaching from those focused on the conservation of monuments and works of art had little effect on universities but greatly impacted

28 The Palatine Museum had been created in 1863 by the archaeologist Pietro Rosa to house archaeological materials excavated on Palatine Hill during the reign of Napoleon III. The building was razed in 1882 to connect the Roman Forum with Palatine Hill. See Tomei 1997.

29 The Tiberine Museum opened in 1879 in the botanical garden at the Lungara. It consisted of a garden with the remains of the Valentinian Bridge and four rooms with archaeological objects discovered during the excavations on the left bank of the Tiber. See Bruni 2001, 780.

30 Frezzotti 2011, 50–51.

31 On his biography, see Borghi 2015.

32 Marini Clarelli 2008, 83–85.

the academies of fine arts, which in many cases were equipped with important museums. Let us call to mind the *Pinacoteca di Brera* (Brera Pinacotheca) in Milan or the *Gallerie dell'Accademia di Venezia* (Accademia Gallery of Venice), which became national galleries. The artists lost their traditional role as museum directors, and in return the minister promised to create a national gallery of modern art. In 1883, still nothing had been done, and the artists – led by the sculptor Ettore Ferrari, and also thanks to his high rank in the Masonic hierarchy – promoted a parliamentary interrogation. Thus, on 26 July 1883, “a national gallery of modern art, which will consist of excellent works in painting, sculpture and engraving, without distinction of genre or manner”,³³ and relating to the period following the unification of Italy, was finally established.

For this reason Minister Baccelli asked Pietro Rosa and his architect son, Salvatore, to modify their project for a single museum of ancient and modern art located in the Baths of Diocletian, where only part of the archaeological structure was accessible.³⁴ Strange as it may seem now, this proposal had the same political implications as the connection between ancient and modern Rome that was pursued through the archaeological excavations. The new square in front of the baths was to host the *Accademia dei Lincei* (Lincaean Academy), the *Istituto di Archeologia* (Institute of Archaeology), and the Academy of Fine Arts in order to maintain the link among museums, research, and education. The Permanent Commission of Fine Arts, however, rejected the museum project, as the necessary works would have altered Michelangelo's cloister.³⁵

The National Gallery of Modern Art and the National Roman Museum

Under the new minister, Michele Coppino, the *Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna* (National Gallery of Modern Art) was temporarily placed in the *Palazzo delle Esposizioni*; the new exhibition space was erected on *via Nazionale* by Pio Piacentini, the winning architect of the 1877 design competition, and opened in 1883 (fig. 3).³⁶ On 5 March 1885, the National Gallery of Modern Art was inaugurated with 115 works crammed into 350 square metres that had been made available, very reluctantly, by the municipality of Rome, the owner of the building.³⁷

33 Royal Decree, 26 July 1883, no. 1526, article 1: “E' istituita in Roma una galleria nazionale d'arte moderna, la quale si comporrà di lavori eccellenti in pittura, scultura, disegno ed incisione, senza distinzione di genere o maniera”.

34 The baths were commissioned by Maximian in honour of Diocletian in 298 and built between May 305 and July 306, by which point both of them had already abdicated. Restored at the beginning of the fifth century, they remained in use until 537. In 1561, Pius IV ordered their transformation into a Carthusian monastery and a church dedicated to *Santa Maria degli Angeli e dei Martiri*, following a design by Michelangelo, but the construction continued throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In 1884, the Carthusians abandoned the charterhouse.

35 No more fortunate was another design made by Giuseppe Sacconi at the request of Fiorelli between 1885 and 1886, see Frezzotti 2011, 52.

36 Pirani 2021, with full bibliography.

37 Lafranconi 2006, 19–26.

Fig. 3: Dante Paolucci, *Palazzo delle Esposizioni. Central Hall*.



Meanwhile, for a national archaeological museum, an agreement was being sought between the state and the municipality.³⁸ Fiorelli, supported by Mayor Leopoldo Torlonia, was assisted by Rodolfo Lanciani, an engineer and archaeologist destined for a brilliant career.³⁹ At first, two buildings were conceived, one for the urban antiquities, run by the municipality, and the other for those found outside the city limits, run by the state. Ultimately, however, the decision was made to build an entirely new venue on the Caelian Hill, as attested by the minutes of the *Commissione Archeologica Comunale di Roma* (Municipal Archaeological Commission) from 1884 to 1887.⁴⁰ In 1887, Lanciani prepared the scientific project, and the architect Costantino Sneider the design.⁴¹ On 15 February 1887, an agreement was reached stipulating that two thirds of the costs be borne by the state and one third by the municipality; the latter would also give the antiquities already in its possession, excluding those of the Capitoline Museums. But the new minister Paolo Boselli, worried about the very high costs, did not agree to these terms. Thus, in 1889, the *Museo Nazionale Romano* (National Roman Museum) was established by the state alone (Royal Decree, 7 February 1889, no. 5958), with its holdings displaced to two locations, each insufficient: the section of urban antiquities was placed within the complex of the Baths of Diocletian (fig. 4), and that of extra-urban antiquities provisionally at *Villa Giulia*, in the building designed by Vignola, where today the *Museo Nazionale Etrusco* (Etruscan Museum) is located.⁴²

38 Bruni 2011, 782–785.

39 On Lanciani, see Palombi 2006.

40 Pallottino and Volpe 2021, 167–168. The commission was created in 1872 for managing the archaeological sites and museums of the city, overseeing excavations, and preserving the finds. Lanciani was its first secretary.

41 Bernini 1997, 26–30, 75–76; Arata and Balestrieri 2010, 269–271.

42 Santagati 2004.

Fig. 4: View of the National Roman Museum at the Baths of Diocletian, between 1890 and 1911.



The arrangement of the objects in both venues was the work of Felice Barnabei, who had also brought together the archaeological collections of the Kircherian Museum, and in 1890 the museum was inaugurated. In the same year, the Austrian Emmanuel Löwy was installed as Chair of Classical Antiquities at the University of Rome – where he would teach until 1915⁴³ – and in 1892 he created the Plaster Museum, also incorporating the items previously housed in the Roman College.⁴⁴ On the Caelian Hill, instead of a museum, the municipal archaeological warehouse, known as the *Antiquarium*, was erected on Sneider's design and opened on 7 May 1894.⁴⁵ In the inner garden of the *Palazzo dei Conservatori*, an octagonal wooden pavilion designed by Virginio Vespignani was erected as a temporary gallery.⁴⁶ It was demolished in 1903, when Lanciani reorganized the Capitoline Museums.⁴⁷

43 Barbanera 2015, 88–94.

44 Barbanera 1995, 1–19.

45 Palombi 2006, 143–146.

46 Sommella 1992, 146.

47 Palombi 2006, 93.

Meanwhile, a plan had been approved by law in 1887 to create an enormous archaeological park encompassing most of the major Roman ruins.⁴⁸ It was a political success on the part of Minister Baccelli, but this over-ambitious goal was never entirely achieved. Nonetheless, it marked the beginning of a process that led, on the one hand, to the creation of the largest archaeological area in a town centre and, on the other hand, to Fascism's inheritance of a useful tool for manipulating urban planning in the name of a new imperial Rome.

The National Gallery of Ancient Art and the Borghese Gallery

Guido Baccelli returned to his role as minister between 1893 and 1895, and – in addition to facilitating the nomination of the director of the National Gallery of Modern Art in the person of the painter Francesco Jacovacci, who would hold the position until 1908⁴⁹ – he resumed another project of which we have not yet spoken: that of the *Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica* (National Gallery of Ancient Art), begun in 1883 with the purchase of *Palazzo Corsini alla Lungara* and the donation to the state of its rich picture gallery.⁵⁰ Like other great Roman galleries formed by the papal or cardinal families (the Borghese, the Barberini, the Colonna, the Spada, the Doria, the Torlonia, the Boncompagni Ludovisi, the Sciarra, the Rospigliosi, etc.), the Corsini collection remained intact on account of the inheritance clause of *fidecommisso*.⁵¹ However, the only way to ensure that these historic Roman art galleries would be for public use was to acquire them, either by buying them or by having them donated by the owners when the state bought the building in which they were housed. The Corsini gallery was therefore the first nucleus of the National Gallery of Ancient Art (fig. 5), which, upon its establishment by the Royal Decree of 6 June 1895, also included the collections of the Torlonia and Odescalchi families and of a financial agency called the Monte di Pietà. The museum was commissioned by Adolfo Venturi, the famous art historian who would become its director in 1898, and was inaugurated on 9 June 1895 in the presence of the king of Italy. In subsequent years, the additions to the collection followed one after the other at an intense pace, with the purchase of the Sciarra (1896), Hertz (1915), and Chigi (1918) collections. The state, however, chose to leave the most important of the Roman collections, the Borghese, where it was.

48 Law no. 4730 of 14 July 1887, *Piano per la sistemazione della zona monumentale di Roma*.

49 Lafranconi 2006, 24–28.

50 On the collection and its history, see Borsellino 2017.

51 Law no. 286 of 29 June 1871 established that the principle of the *maggiorasco*, or primogeniture, would also be suppressed for the artistic collections, reiterating, however, the prohibition, on the part of the heirs as a whole, to divide or sell them, see Volpe 2007, 60–67.

Fig. 5: Ludovico Tuminello, *The First Hall of the Galleria Corsini*, 1883.



In 1887, the Borghese family, involved in a financial crash, began to put pressure on the state by asking that it decide either to buy the collection or to drop a restriction that disallowed the owners from selling the works abroad. Wilhelm von Bode, director of the *Staatliche Museen zu Berlin* (Berlin State Museums), was commissioned to estimate, on a piece-by-piece basis, the value of the works. Two factions emerged in parliament: the first favoured finding a solution that mitigated state spending through the acquisition of some of the Borghese works for free and the owners' sale of the remaining works on the free market; meanwhile, the opposing party favoured the purchase of the entire collection at a cost that was certainly much lower than market estimates, given the endurance of the sale restriction, but was in any case still substantial in an economy that was anything but thriving. While the negotiation was in progress, Baron Rothschild offered to purchase a single work – namely, Titian's *Sacred and Profane Love*, for 4,000,000 lire – while the rest of the collection would be passed on to the state without any charge. Although the offer was tempting and the Borghese agreed to it, it was rejected on the advice of an artistic commission of three experts appointed by Minister Baccelli, which included Venturi, who had rearranged the collection in 1891 and published the catalogue in 1893. The complex in which the collection was displayed was bought in 1901 for a sum of 3,600,000 lire, less than that proposed by Rothschild.⁵² It was opened to the public in 1902, and the first director was Giovanni Piancastelli. Venturi had already left for the University of Rome, where a chair of art history was finally created for him, after twelve years

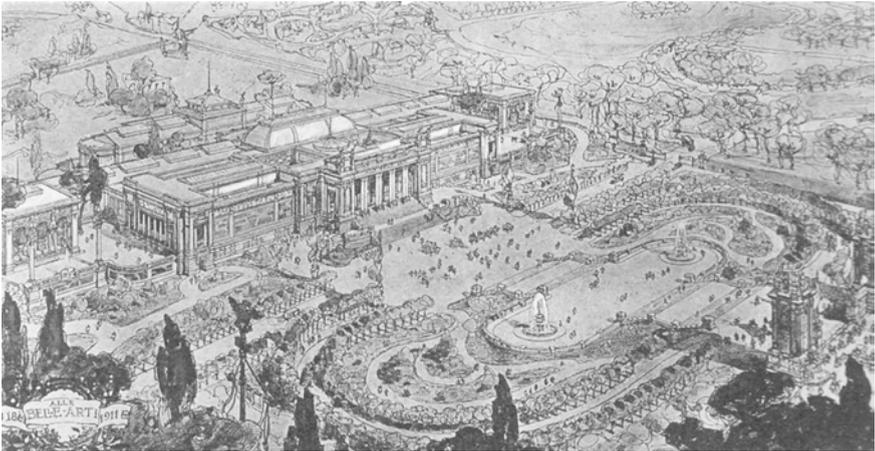
52 Staccioli 1995. On the same date, the expropriation of *Villa Borghese* was approved by vote, with an indemnity of 3,000,000.

of teaching.⁵³ His monumental *Storia dell'arte italiana*, published in forty volumes, would become the greatest testimony against the possibility of encompassing the breadth and variety of Italian works of art in a single national museum.

The Exhibitions of 1911

The epilogue of our story coincides with the fiftieth anniversary of the unification of Italy and with the celebrations organized for that occasion. It was a favourable period. In 1909, a new law on the preservation of cultural heritage had increased ministerial control over the cataloguing, excavations, exportation, and modification of cultural assets.⁵⁴ It was the victory of a coalition of intellectuals and senior administrators from the Ministry of Education, who shared the belief that cultural heritage was essential for national identity.⁵⁵ Not by accident, the minister of education Luigi Rava and the director general Corrado Ricci were born in the same city, Ravenna.

Fig. 6: Unknown artist, *The Park of Fine Arts and the Pavilion of the National Gallery of Modern Art, engraving, 1911.*



53 Cavenago 2020. He was also the founder of the postgraduate school of art history at the same university.

54 Law no. 364 for antiquities and the fine arts of 20 June 1909, see Balzani 2004.

55 Thatcher 2018, 76–78.

The 1911 *Esposizione internazionale d'arte* (International Exhibition of Art) solved the problem of the seat of the National Gallery of Modern Art (fig. 6). In fact, the mayor of Rome at the time, Ernesto Nathan, had in 1908 proposed the purchase of a private property, the Cartoni vineyard in Valle Giulia, as the location of the exhibition pavilions, allocating the main one to the modern-art gallery.⁵⁶ Designed by Cesare Bazzani in a beaux-arts style,⁵⁷ it was the only new museum erected in Rome and the only one whose collection was composed from a national perspective. At the same time, the 1911 exposition's executive committee opted to host the great archaeological exhibition in the Baths of Diocletian (fig. 7), and this was an opportunity to expropriate any private structures and to free the complex from other offices, thereby recovering its archaeological character. A commission headed by Rodolfo Lanciani ordered the demolition of any postclassical additions,⁵⁸ including the Baroque façade of the church of *Santa Maria degli Angeli e dei Martiri*, designed by Luigi Vanvitelli.⁵⁹ The scientific project of the exhibition conceived by Lanciani aimed to offer “a picture of Roman civilization, asking of each of the thirty-three provinces some memories of the benefits which they had from Rome under the various aspects of civil and private life and the especially in the area of public works”.⁶⁰ It is worth mentioning that this celebration of the Roman Empire fell in the same year of the capture of Libya by the Italian army.⁶¹ The colonial implications were not the only legacy this exhibition left to Fascist rhetoric: the austere and essentialist language employed in the display's design was also an anticipation of the cold aesthetics of the *romanità*, as Domenico Palombi has remarked.⁶² Moreover, for purposes of cultural nationalism, Fascism emphasized the connection between ancient and modern Rome by focusing especially on archaeology and contemporary art.

56 In exchange, the municipality would receive the garden of *Villa Borghese* from the state, which it would “open to strolls”.

57 On the design competition, see Pasquarelli 1980. On Bazzani's project, see Racheli 1980.

58 On the removal of modern structures, see Guidi and Paribeni 1911. On the history of the monument in the nineteenth century, see Serlorenzi and Laurenti 2002, 147–155. On the 1911 archaeological exhibition, see Palombi 2009; Liberati 2014; Caruso 2019. On the role of Rodolfo Lanciani, see Palombi 2006, 179–198.

59 Ricci 1909, 365.

60 “*Un quadro della civiltà romana, domandando a ciascuna delle sue trentatré provincie qualche ricordo dei benefici avuti da Roma sotto i vari aspetti della vita civile e privata, e specialmente nel ramo delle opere pubbliche*”; Lanciani 1911, 9, review ed. by Strong 1911.

61 Palombi 2009; Dyson 2019, 150–152.

62 Palombi 2009, 90.

Fig. 7: Cover of the catalogue for the archaeological exhibition at the Baths of Diocletian, 1911.



In 1911, the gigantic national monument to Victor Emmanuel II, the first king of Italy, was finally inaugurated (fig. 8), which, through this figure, presents the most emphatic celebration of the *Risorgimento* – that is, the ‘resurgence’, or the process of national independence and unity – whose heroes and battlefields had already been evoked in Rome by a new toponymy and the dissemination of political statues in squares and parks.⁶³ The architect of this so-called *Vittoriano*, Giuseppe Sacconi, who had won the second design competition in 1885, died in 1905 without seeing its realization. Indeed, the structure was not completed until thirty years after the inauguration, and the *Museo Centrale del Risorgimento* (Central Museum of the Resurgence), whose creation had been proposed in 1890 and whose location Sacconi had already foreseen in 1905, opened another thirty years after that.⁶⁴ Many other museums of the *Risorgimento* have been founded in Italy since

63 Tobia 1991, 100–129; Berggren and Sjöstedt 1996; Brice 1997; Tobia 2021.

64 On the *Vittoriano*, see Porzio 1987–1988; Tobia 1998; Brice 2005; Coen 2020, 95–127, 235–278.

1884, when the first exhibition dedicated to it was held in Turin,⁶⁵ but none evolved into an institution devoted to national history. The *Vittoriano*, where the *Altare della Patria* (Altar of the Fatherland) and the *Tomba del Milite Ignoto* (Tomb of the Unknown Soldier) would also eventually be located, became the thermometer of patriotic sentiment – to be loved, hated, forgotten, and, only in the third millennium, rediscovered as a national symbol.⁶⁶

Fig. 8: Roberto Reale or Domenico Anderson, *Inauguration of the Monument to Victor Emmanuel II*, 4 June 1911, Museo di Roma AF 8634.



Bibliography

- Arata, Paolo Francesco, and Nicoletta Balestrieri, “L’Antiquarium comunale del Celio”, in Daniele Manacorda and Riccardo Santangeli Valenzani (eds), *Il Primo Miglio della Via Appia a Roma*, Rome 2010, 269–282.
- Arata, Francesco Paolo, *Il secolo d’oro del Museo Capitolino (1733–1838). Nascita e formazione della prima collezione pubblica di antichità*, Rome 2016.
- Baioni, Massimo, “La religione della patria”. *Musei e istituti del culto risorgimentale (1884–1918)*, Quinto di Treviso 1994.
- Balzani, Roberto, *Per le antichità e le belle arti. La legge n. 364 del 20 giugno 1909 e l’Italia Giolittiana*, Bologna 2004.

65 Baioni 1994.

66 Brice 2005, 5.

- Barbanera, Marcello, *Università la Sapienza. Museo dell'arte classica "La Gipsoteca"*, Rome 1995.
- Barbanera, Marcello, *Storia dell'archeologia classica in Italia. Dal 1764 ai giorni nostri*, Rome / Bari 2015.
- Barnabei, Felice, *Memorie di un archeologo*, ed. Filippo Delpino, Rome 1991.
- Berggren, Lars, and Lennart Sjöstedt, *Lombra dei grandi: monumenti e politica monumentale a Roma (1870–1895)*, Rome 1996.
- Bernini, Dante, *Origini del sistema museale dello Stato a Roma*, annex to *Bollettino d'Arte*, 82.99 (1997).
- Bonghi, Ruggero, *La Biblioteca Vittorio Emanuele e i Musei: Collegio Romano*, Rome 1876.
- Borghesi, Luca, *Il medico di Roma. Vita, morte e miracoli di Guido Baccelli (1830–1916)*, Rome 2015.
- Borghini, Gabriele (ed.), *Del M.A.I. Il Museo artistico industriale di Roma*, Rome 2005.
- Borsellino, Enzo, *La collezione Corsini di Roma. Dalle origini alla donazione allo Stato italiano. Dipinti e sculture*, Rome 2017.
- Brice, Catherine, "Pouvoirs, liturgies et monuments politiques à Rome (1870–1911)", in Maria Antonietta Visceglia and Catherine Brice (eds), *Cérémonial et rituel à Rome (XVIIe–XIXe siècle)* (Collection de l'École française de Rome, CCXXXI), Rome 1997, 369–391.
- Brice, Catherine, *Il Vittoriano. Monumentalità pubblica e politica a Roma*, Rome 2005.
- Bruni, Silvia, "Rapporti fra Stato e Municipio di Roma (1870–1911). L'istituzione di un Museo archeologico in Roma Capitale", in *Melanges de l'École française de Rome, Italie et Méditerranée*, 113.2 (2001), 775–789.
- Caruso, Carlotta, "L'Opera meritoria. La mostra archeologica e le Terme di Diocleziano", in Trinidad Tortosa Rocamora (ed.), *Patrimonio arqueológico español en Roma: "Le mostre internazionali di archeologia" de 1911 y 1937 como instrumentos de memoria histórica*, Rome 2019, 71–90.
- Cavenago, Marco, "Adolfo Venturi" in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 98, Rome 2020, URL: https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/adolfo-venturi_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/.
- Ciampi, Gabriella, "Ruggiero Bonghi ministro della Pubblica istruzione", in Maria Luisa Storchi (ed.), *Ruggiero Bonghi. La figura e l'opera attraverso le carte dell'archivio privato*, Rome 2004, 163–178.
- Coen, Paolo, *Il recupero del Rinascimento. Arte, politica. Mercato nei primi decenni di Roma capitale (1870–1911)*, Milan 2020.
- Curzi, Valter, "Per una storia dei musei di Roma: il dibattito sui musei archeologici e l'istituzione del Museo nazionale romano", in *Ricerche di storia dell'arte*, 66 (1998), 49–67.
- De Francesco, Antonino, *The Antiquity of the Italian Nation. The Cultural Origins of a Political Myth of Modern Italy, 1796–1943*, Oxford 2013.
- Delpino, Filippo, and Rachele Dubbini, "Pietro Rosa e la tutela delle antichità a Roma tra il 1870 e il 1875", in *Annali della fondazione per il museo "Claudio Faina"*, 18 (2011), 397–407.
- Delpino, Filippo, "Paradigmi museali agli albori dell'Italia unita. Museo etrusco 'centrale', Museo italico, Museo di Villa Giulia", in *Melanges de l'École française de Rome, Italie et Méditerranée*, 113.2 (2001), 623–639.

- Dyson, Stephen L., *Archaeology, Ideology and Urbanism in Rome from the Grand Tour to Berlusconi*, Cambridge 2019.
- Frezzotti, Stefania, “La ricerca della sede”, in Stefania Frezzotti and Patrizia Rosazza (eds), *La Galleria nazionale d'arte moderna. Cronache e storia 1911–2011*, Rome 2011, 49–63 and 266–279.
- Guidi, Pietro, and Roberto Paribeni, “Lavori d'isolamento delle Terme Diocleziane”, in *Bollettino d'arte*, 5.9 (1911), 347–361.
- Lafranconi, Matteo, “Da Via Nazionale a Valle Giulia. Il trentennio d'esordio dell'istituzione e l'Ottocento come ‘arte vivente’”, in Elena Di Majo and Matteo Lafranconi (eds), *Galleria nazionale d'arte moderna. Le collezioni. XIX secolo*, Milan 2006, 14–29.
- Lanciani, Rodolfo, “Il magazzino archeologico comunale”, in *Bollettino della Commissione archeologica comunale*, 12 (1894), 138–151.
- Lanciani, Rodolfo, “Introduzione”, in *Catalogo della Mostra Archeologica alle Terme di Diocleziano. Esposizione Internazionale di Roma* (exhib. cat. Rome), Rome 1911, 5–11.
- Lerario, Maria Gabriella, *Il Museo “Luigi Pigorini”. Dalle raccolte etnografiche al mito della Nazione*, Florence 2005.
- Lerario, Maria Gabriella, “The National Museum of Prehistory and Ethnography ‘Luigi Pigorini’ in Rome: the Nation on Display”, in Dominique Poulot, Felicity Bodenstein, and José María Lanzarote Guiral (eds), *Great Narratives of the Past. Traditions and Revisions in National Museums* (EuNaMus Report, IV), Linköping 2012, University Electronic Press: <https://ep.liu.se/ecp/078/ecp11078.pdf> (online since 30 October 2012), 49–67.
- Liberati, Anna Maria “La mostra archeologica del 1911 alle Terme di Diocleziano”, in *Bollettino di Numismatica. Studi e ricerche*, 2 (2014), URL: <https://www.bdnonline.numismaticadellostato.it/apriArticolo.html?idArticolo=53&from=>.
- Magagnini, Antonella, *I Musei capitolini e il collezionista Augusto Castellani*, Rome 1994.
- Magagnini, Antonella, “Un frammento di museologia ottocentesca: il Museo italico al Collegio romano”, in *Bollettino dei musei comunali di Roma*, 12 (1998), 74–90.
- Marini Clarelli, Maria Vittoria, “Musei, mostre e pubblico nell'Ottocento italiano”, in *Ottocento da Canova al Quarto Stato* (exhib. cat. Rome), Milan 2008, 73–89.
- Marini Clarelli, Maria Vittoria, “Le tre città. Lo sguardo dei viaggiatori su Roma 1870–1915”, in Flavia Pesci, Federica Pirani, and Gloria Raimondi (eds), *Roma: Nascita di una capitale (1870–1915)* (exhib. cat. Rome), Rome 2021, 329–334.
- Palombi, Domenico, *Rodolfo Lanciani e l'archeologia a Roma tra Ottocento e Novecento*, Rome 2006.
- Palombi, Domenico, “Rome 1911. L'Exposition archéologique du cinquantenaire de l'Unité italienne”, in *Anabase*, 9 (2009), 71–100.
- Pallottino, Elisabetta, and Rita Volpe, “‘Città antica’ e ‘Città moderna’ nella costruzione di Roma Capitale. La Commissione archeologica Comunale: un laboratorio di sperimentazione topografica”, in Flavia Pesci, Federica Pirani, and Gloria Raimondi (eds), *Roma: Nascita di una capitale (1870–1915)* (exhib. cat. Rome), Rome 2021, 161–173.
- Parisi Presicce, Claudio, “I grandi bronzi di Sisto IV dal Laterano al Campidoglio”, in Fabio Benzi and Claudio Crescentini, *Sisto IV: le arti a Roma nel primo Rinascimento. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi*, Rome 2000, 188–200.

- Parisi Presicce, Claudio, “Cenni storici”, in Eugenio La Rocca and Claudio Parisi Presicce (eds), *I Musei Capitolini. I. Le sculture del Palazzo Nuovo*, Milan 2010, 17–29.
- Pasquarelli, Silvio, “Il concorso per il Palazzo dell’Esposizione Internazionale di Belle Arti”, in Gianna Piantoni (ed.), *Roma 1911. Catalogo* (exhib. cat. Rome), Rome 1980, 279–284.
- Pesci, Flavia, Federica Pirani, and Gloria Raimondi (eds), *Roma: Nascita di una capitale (1870–1915)* (exhib. cat. Rome), Rome 2021.
- Piantoni, Gianna (ed.), *Roma 1911. Catalogo* (exhib. cat. Rome), Rome 1980.
- Pietrangeli, Carlo, *I musei vaticani. Cinque secoli di storia*, Rome 1985.
- Pigorini, Luigi, *Il Museo Nazionale Preistorico ed Etnografico di Roma. Prima relazione a S.E. il Ministro della Pubblica Istruzione*, Rome 1881.
- Pigorini, Luigi, “Il Museo Nazionale Preistorico ed Etnografico di Roma”, in *Nuova Antologia*, 34.16 (1891), 596–617.
- Pirani, Federica, “Il teatro delle esposizioni (1883–1916). Il palazzo di via Nazionale e le Associazioni degli artisti”, in Flavia Pesci, Federica Pirani, and Gloria Raimondi (eds), *Roma: Nascita di una capitale (1870–1915)* (exhib. cat. Rome), Rome 2021, 367–377.
- Poulot, Dominique, “Elementi in vista di un’analisi della ragione patrimoniale in Europa, secoli XVIII–XX”, in *Antropologia*, 7 (2006), 129–154.
- Porzio, Pierluigi (ed.), *Il Vittoriano. Materiali per una storia*, 2 vols, Rome 1987–1988.
- Quatremère de Quincy, Antoine Christostome, *Lettres sur le prejuge qu’occasionneroit aux Art et à la Science, le déplacement des monuments de l’Art de l’Italie, le démembrement de ses Ecoles, et la spoliations de ses Collections, Galeries, Musées, etc.*, Paris 1796, URL: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k64608381/f35.double.shift#>.
- Racheli, Alberto Maria, “La Galleria nazionale d’arte moderna di Cesare Bazzani e le vicende della sua costruzione. Primi risultati di indagini documentarie”, in Gianna Piantoni (ed.), *Roma 1911. Catalogo* (exhib. cat. Rome), Rome 1980, 285–290.
- Raimondi, Gloria, “Una scuola per gli operai del pensiero e del bello: Roma e il suo museo artistico industriale. Gli inizi”, in Flavia Pesci, Federica Pirani, and Gloria Raimondi (eds), *Roma: Nascita di una capitale (1870–1915)* (exhib. cat. Rome), Rome 2021, 378–383.
- Ricci, Corrado, “Santa Maria degli Angeli e Terme dioclezianee. Piano parziale di sistemazione”, in *Bollettino d’arte*, 3.10 (1909), 361–372.
- Santagati, Federica Maria Chiara, *Il Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia: origine e metamorfosi di un’istituzione museale del XIX secolo*, Rome 2004.
- Serlorenzi, Mirella, and Stefania Laurenti, *Terme di Diocleziano. Santa Maria degli Angeli*, Rome 2002.
- Settis, Salvatore, and Carlo Gasparri (eds), *I marmi Torlonia. Collezione capolavori* (exhib. cat. Rome), Milan 2020.
- Sommella, Anna Maria, “L’Antiquarium comunale e le raccolte capitoline da ‘Roma Capitale’ ai progetti per la loro sistemazione, 1870–1992”, in *Invisibilità. Rivedere i capolavori, vedere i progetti* (exhib. cat. Rome), Rome 1992, 145–150.
- Staccioli, Sara, “Amor sacro e Amor profano alla Galleria Borghese”, in Maria Grazia Bernadini (ed.), *Tiziano. Amor sacro e Amor profano* (exhib. cat. Rome), Milan 1995, 53–60.

Strong, Sandford Arthur, "The Exhibition Illustrative of the Provinces of the Roman Empire, at the Baths of Diocletian, Rome", in *The Journal of Roman Studies*, 1 (1911), 1–49, URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/295846?seq=60>.

Thatcher, Mark, "State Production of Cultural Nationalism: Political Leaders and Preservation Policies for Historic Buildings in France and Italy", in *Nations and Nationalism*, 24.1 (2018), 64–87.

Tobia, Bruno, *Una patria per gli Italiani: spazi, itinerari, monumenti nell'Italia unita (1870–1900)*, Rome / Bari, 1991.

Tobia, Bruno, *L'Altare della patria*, Bologna 1998.

Tobia, Bruno, "Monumenti nella città. La memoria di marmo e la nuova toponomastica", in Flavia Pesci, Federica Pirani, and Gloria Raimondi (eds), *Roma: Nascita di una capitale (1870–1915)* (exhib. cat. Rome), Rome 2021, 43–48.

Tomei, Maria Antonietta, *Il Museo Palatino*, Milan 1997.

Volpe, Giulio, *Manuale di diritto dei beni culturali. Storia e attualità*, 2nd ed., Rome 2007.

Illustration Credits

Fig. 1: *L'illustrazione italiana*, 23 April 1876.

Fig. 2: Lerario 2012, fig. 2.

Fig. 3: *L'illustrazione italiana*, 21 January 1883.

Fig. 4: © Ministero della Cultura- Museo nazionale romano.

Fig. 5: © Musei Vaticani.

Fig. 6: Piantoni 1980.

Fig. 7: Cover of the catalogue for the archaeological exhibition at the Baths of Diocletian, 1911.

Fig. 8: Museo di Roma AF 8634. From: Pesci, Pirani, and Raimondi 2021, 285.

