

Chapter 4: Art as Bonaparte's Tool of Propaganda

Courting the *Idéologues*

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Shortly after the signing of the Treaty of Campo Formio, *médailleur* Benjamin Duvivier struck a [medal](#) honoring Bonaparte's recent successes. [1](#) The face of this work displays a portrait of the general; the reverse features an image of a mounted Bonaparte, holding an olive branch in his right hand. [2](#) Before the "hero of Italy," allegories of Prudence and Valor lead his horse while an allegory of Victory follows, holding in her right hand a laurel crown, which she has extended over the figure of the general. It is what Victory holds in her left hand, however, that reveals much about the public's perception of Bonaparte: Victory holds a statue of Apollo Belvedere and a collection of manuscripts, representing all the paintings, statues, and scientific specimens collected under the aegis of Napoleon and sent to Paris as the spoils of war. [3](#) This image is indicative of the public perception that Bonaparte was much more than simply the most successful military leader of the Revolution. In this one image, one sees brought together many of the themes that Bonaparte stressed in his various propaganda efforts: Bonaparte, triumphant in war; Bonaparte, the giver of peace; and Bonaparte, the intellectual and patron of the arts.

As with his masterful manipulation of the print media, Bonaparte also realized the potential propagandistic value of the visual arts and of associating himself with the intellectual elites. Early in his career, for example, he fostered relationships with several leading scholars and with artists who promoted his reputation, not only as a victorious general but also as a man of culture and intellect. This image-making process proved key to Bonaparte's future political successes and was particularly important in his ability to win over the leading intellectuals and influential political thinkers of France known as the *Idéologues*.

The *Idéologues* and the Directory

This group of thinkers included such luminaries as the Comte de Tracy, Pierre Jean George Cabanis, Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès, the Marquis de Condorcet, and the Comte de Volney, who saw themselves as the successors of the Enlightenment *philosophes*. They sought to create the type of society envisioned by their predecessors by securing the goals of the Revolution of 1789. Their crowning achievement was realized in 1795 with the creation of the National Institute, combining a new Class of Moral and Political Science with the revolutionized vestiges of the former royal academies of art and the sciences. Through this institution, they hoped to influence the establishment of a rational, honest government in order to complete the reforms initiated by the Revolution. Although they initially supported the Directory, they tired of its reputation for corruption and profiteering. [4](#) As their disillusionment with the Directory grew, they increasingly began to see the hero of Italy as the potential key to the completion of their plans. [5](#) Their newspapers, notably *La Decade Philosophique* and the *Journal de Paris*, lauded the military and diplomatic accomplishments of the young general, and they celebrated

his harvest of masterpieces for the benefit of the *Muséum Centrale des Arts*, a policy the *Idéologues* readily endorsed. This combination of a willingness to see in Bonaparte what they desired to see, coupled with Bonaparte's own skill at portraying himself in the most favorable light and as someone whose ideals closely paralleled their own, cemented a relationship that would ultimately assist Napoleon's coming to power in November 1799.

Bonaparte and the Confiscation of Italian Art

The confiscation of artwork by French armies did not originate with Napoleon Bonaparte, but was already an established practice well before Bonaparte was named general-in-chief of the Army of Italy in 1796. As Wilhelm Treue, Cecil Gould, and a host of other historians have noted, this practice was first systematized by the Convention during the 1794 French campaign in Belgium; the Directory (and Bonaparte) merely followed established practices. ⁶ Not only was some of the captured art to be sold to make war pay for itself, but the French Revolutionaries also systematically acquired art to be displayed for public consumption in Paris and around France. According to the *Idéologues*, once placed in museums rather than hidden away in private collections, the artwork would be used to help teach the French population the values of the new Republic. ⁷ At a minimum, such a public display would demonstrate the cultural superiority of republican France over the monarchies of Europe.

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Early during the Italian campaign, the Directors informed Napoleon that "the time had come when the reign of the *beaux-arts* should pass to France in order to affirm and embellish its liberty," an idea in perfect keeping with the ideals of the *Idéologues*. ⁸ The subsequent behavior of the young general ensured that the wishes of the French government would be fulfilled, and on an unprecedented scale. Between 1796 and 1797, over two hundred paintings alone were collected and sent to Paris, including works by Raphaël, da Vinci, Correggio, and Barbieri (*dit le Guerchin*). ⁹ Statues, *objets d'art*, manuscripts, and scientific samples added to the treasure convoys that made their ways north to Paris. While most of the items selected were seized under the aegis of the artists and savants who composed the *Commission pour la recherche des objets de Science et d'Art*, Bonaparte himself played an important (and very visible) role in transporting Italian art to Paris, especially in the opening months of the campaign. Perhaps the most important role fulfilled by the young general was in the wording of his various treaties with the governments conquered or neutralized by his Army of Italy.

Italian Treaties and the Arts

Among his conditions for suspending hostilities with the Duke of Parma, for example, Bonaparte included an article specifically on the arts: "The Duke will relinquish twenty paintings, chosen by the general-in-chief, from among those currently residing in the duchy." ¹⁰ Such a demand should come as no surprise, given the French government's policies toward the arts. What is perhaps surprising is the personal interest Napoleon took in the matter. The stipulation regarding the Duke's art collection was premeditated. Three days before the treaty was signed, Bonaparte wrote to Guillaume-Charles Fappoult, the French plenipotentiary in Genoa, requesting information on the

Dukes of Parma, Plaisance, and Modena. Of paramount importance, the general stressed, was a "note of the paintings, statues, collections, and curiosities to be found in Milan, Parma, Plaisance, Modena and Bologna." [11](#)

Even earlier, Bonaparte apparently had considered but rejected the idea of including an article on the transfer of artwork in a treaty. In a conversation with the Piedmontese representative following the signing of the Treaty of Cherasco (28 April 1796), the general revealed that he

wanted to include an item in the recently concluded treaty, a very beautiful painting by Gerard Dou, which the King of Sardinia possesses and which is said to be a masterpiece of the Flemish school, but I could not see how I could place this painting in a treaty (and feared that it would seem a bizarre novelty....) [12](#)

The idea apparently lost its novelty several weeks later when drafting the terms of the treaty with the Duke of Parma. From this point forward, future treaties written during the Italian campaign typically contained specific articles designating not only the number and types of objects to be surrendered to the French, but in some cases even specific works of art, manuscripts, and scientific samples.

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Perhaps the most famous of these treaties is the armistice concluded between the French Republic and the Papacy on 23 June 1796. In addition to the pope's denying the use of ports to the enemies of France, ceding control over key territories and fortifications to the Army of Italy, and the granting of passage to French troops throughout the Papal States, Bonaparte included in Article 8 of this treaty a demand for:

One hundred paintings, busts, vases or statues, as determined by the commissioners who will be sent to Rome. Among the objects to be included are the bronze bust of Janus Brutus and the marble bust of Marcus Brutus that are on the Capitol and five hundred manuscripts to be selected by the aforementioned commissioners. [13](#)

Later, in the secret articles of Bonaparte's conditions for the 16 May 1797 armistice with Venice, he included provisions for the confiscation of another 20 works of art and 500 manuscripts, "to be selected by the general-in-chief." [14](#) These transfers of artistic masterpieces and manuscripts were perhaps the most anticipated and celebrated of the entire Revolutionary era, particularly those originating in Rome. Such activities were also particularly praised by the *Idéologues*. Their newspapers, *La Décade Philosophique* and the *Journal de Paris*, carried articles on the debate over the transfer of artworks from Italy, detailed the journey of the artwork and manuscripts from Rome to Paris, and lauded the triumphant general for his role in the process. In one sense this praise was not surprising, considering that one of the founders of

the former newspaper, Pierre-Louis Ginguené, was also the Director of Public Instruction and thus oversaw all national libraries and museums, which were the primary recipients of all Bonaparte's artistic conquests. [15](#)

Bonaparte's Role in the Confiscation of the Arts

It was not just that Bonaparte became associated *de facto* with the transfer of art from Italy to Paris; his personal involvement in the selection of the art and his skill in prolonging the media coverage of his military accomplishments and artistic levies reinforced the connections between Napoleon Bonaparte and the arts. This was particularly true during the opening months of the campaign following the first few treaties with Italian powers. Among the first of Bonaparte's dispatches to allude to his connection with the arts was his 6 May 1796 letter to the Directory. He closes his summary of events with a request for "three or four known artists" as a prelude to establishing the *Commission pour la recherche des objets de Science et d'Art* which would help choose works of art to be transported to Paris. [16](#) This letter was followed several days later by another to Lazare Carnot, announcing that he was sending the government "twenty paintings by premier artists, including Correggio and Michelangelo," referencing the paintings mentioned in his armistice with the Duke of Parma. [17](#)

 [Saint Jerome](#) On 18 May, Bonaparte announced in a dispatch to the Directory that the first shipment of twenty paintings had left Milan for Paris, including "the celebrated *Saint Jerome* by Correggio"; the general also included a detailed list of all the works in transit and their place of origin. [18](#) What is interesting about these initial dispatches  [Correggio](#) is the frequent use of the pronoun "I" as Bonaparte describes the fate of these works. In his letter to Carnot, for example, he wrote "I am sending to you twenty paintings ..."; this is very much in keeping with the earlier wording of the armistice with the Duke of Parma, which stipulated that the choice of the paintings belonged to the general-in-chief. [19](#) More important, perhaps, was the fact that many of Bonaparte's dispatches were published verbatim in the newspapers of Paris, ensuring that the reading public knew who was responsible for the enriching of the Louvre. [20](#)

With the long-anticipated treaty with the pope and its stipulation for additional artwork and manuscripts, even though this treaty stipulated that the choices would be determined by the commissioners, Bonaparte became ever more closely associated with the artistic conquest of Italy. [21](#) And because of the volume of materials removed from Rome—requiring no less than three convoys—each shipment meant yet another opportunity to reemphasize the connection between Bonaparte and the arts. On 2 July 1796, for example, Bonaparte informed the Directory of the commission's work and of the departure of an 80-wagon convoy for Paris, containing the 110 works of art thus far collected. [22](#) Frequently, such letters were supplemented in the press by letters from the commissioners themselves, describing the nature of their work and the painstaking efforts made to ensure the safety of the art and artifacts garnered from Italy. [23](#) In fact, from late summer through the early fall of 1796, rarely did a week pass without some news appearing in the pages of *La Décade Philosophique*, *Le Moniteur*, or other Parisian newspapers regarding the status of the art

acquisitions. With each appearance, whether written by Bonaparte or by others, the levies of art became associated with the military triumphs of Napoleon. As the campaign wound down following the fall of Mantua in February 1797, Bonaparte was able to report to the Directory that:

The commission of savants has made a good harvest in Ravenna, Rimini, Pesaro, Ancona, Loreto, and Perugia. Everything will be sent to Paris as soon as possible. Along with the objects sent from Rome, we shall have everything of beauty in Italy, except a few objects that can be found in Turin and Naples. [24](#)

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 [Arena in Verona](#) At one point, the general even suggested to the Executive Directory that the Arena in Verona be transported, stone by stone, to Paris and reassembled on the Champs de Mars. [25](#)

By September 1797, the commission had completed its task, and Bonaparte commended its services to the Directory:

These men, distinguished by their talents, have served the Republic with a zeal, an activity, a modesty, and a selflessness without equal ... in the delicate mission with which they were charged, they served as examples of the virtues that almost always accompany distinguished talent. [26](#)

Much the same could have been said of Bonaparte himself, as his other propagandistic endeavors attempted to prove. By reporting on the activities of the commission, by participating in the selection of the various paintings and works of art, and by making it *known* that he was participating, Bonaparte succeeded in fostering an image of himself as a man of great cultural sensitivity and as a patron of the arts.

Art Confiscations and the Press

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As early as April 1796, *La Décade Philosophique* ran a series of articles by F. Pomereul discussing the influence of Italian art on contemporary artists. [27](#)

While not necessarily inspired by Bonaparte's actions, it does convey the anticipation of the art levies that were soon to follow. As the Italian campaign intensified, the editors increased their coverage of Napoleon Bonaparte's activities and, where possible, of his association with the arts. Several weeks later, *La Décade Philosophique* published the terms of Bonaparte's treaty with the pope, which designated one hundred works of art, including the selected statues from the Capitol. [28](#) Over the next year and a half, it was rare for a month to go by without at least some mention of the artistic conquests of the Army of Italy; letters from the commissioners and dispatches from Napoleon listed the great works of art selected by both the general and the commission. Articles frequently detailed the painstaking efforts of the commissioners to safely transport the masterworks to Paris, and updates traced the progress of the convoys and noted their arrival. [29](#) Still

other articles provided a forum for debate on the propriety of removing the artworks and manuscripts to Paris at all. ³⁰ Shortly after  [Laocoön](#) the arrival and display  [Apollo Belvedere](#) of the *Laocoön* group and the *Apollo Belvedere* in Paris, for example, Roederer's *Journal de Paris* included a description of the statues sent from Italy in the *Mélanges* section of his newspaper, as well as excerpts from Winkelmann's influential *Histoire de l'art de l'antiquité*, which had argued for the wholesale transfer of the masterworks of antiquity to Paris. ³¹ Other newspapers also called attention to the transfers of art made possible by Bonaparte's victories. This point was further enhanced during an exhibition of the first paintings to arrive from Italy. The official "Notice" or catalogue of the exposition was dedicated "to the Army of Italy." ³² And just prior to his election to the Institute of France in December 1797, the editors of *La Décade Philosophique* announced that Bonaparte had been the guest of honor at a celebratory dinner at the *Muséum Central des Arts*, at which 800 guests recognized Bonaparte's role in enriching the museum with new masterpieces. ³³ The most impressive aspect relating to the transfer of artworks and manuscripts from Italy, however, was the massive state celebration given in conjunction with the arrival of the final convoy in Paris.

The Triumphal Entry of the Arts into Paris

Although the convoy arrived on 15 July 1798, too late to be part of the Bastille Day festivities, the government decided to organize a fête to coincide with the anniversary of Robespierre's fall. As Marie-Louis Blumer has argued, the idea of a celebratory entry of the arts had been discussed for at least a year, not only by government ministers, but  also by members of the *Commission pour la recherche des objets de Science et d'Art* themselves. One of the most revealing elements of this discussion appears in a 21 July 1797 letter from Commissioner André Thouin to Napoleon Bonaparte in which he suggested that each clearly identified wagon should enter Paris beneath a banner reading "Monument of the victories of the Army of Italy." ³⁴ Thouin also argued for the moral impact of the art, as it would teach "the French people a grand and sublime truth" that the arts and sciences were the crowning achievements of victory and of liberty. ³⁵ These ideas were echoed in the Directory's planning for the 9 *thermidor* (27 July 1798) celebration.

The procession of art-laden wagons entered Paris at the Port de l'Hôpital (the present-day Quai d'Austerlitz) and made its way along streets decorated with flags and other trophies captured in Italy, first to the Natural History Museum and finally to the Champs de Mars for the official reception by the members of the Executive Directory. ³⁶ Each of the



commissioners present received a medal (designed by François Andrieux, a member of the Institute) acknowledging their efforts. ³⁷ The celebration of the captured artwork continued over the next four days, culminating on 31 July with the official reception of art at the Louvre beneath banners which commemorated the role of the army in securing the masterpieces for the glory of the Republic and in ensuring their continued residence in a land of

free men. According to contemporary reports, this final celebration lasted into the early hours of the morning. Contemporary popular vaudevilles pronounced that "Rome is no longer in Rome/it is all in Paris." [38](#) Also of interest is that among the decorations for this gala event were sixteen pyramids, no doubt a subtle reference to General Bonaparte's expedition to Egypt, which had departed France months earlier. [39](#)

The Association of Bonaparte with the Arts

In addition to the ongoing press coverage and triumphal entry of the plundered artworks, poems and other pieces paid homage to the person who ultimately made the enrichment of the *Muséum Central* possible. On 18 June 1796, as the *Idéologues* and others awaited news from Italy, Th. Desourges referred to Bonaparte's anticipated conquest of Rome (and its artworks) in his poem, "Fragments of an Essay on Italy": "... The Capitol awaits your liberating arms/There young warrior, our most beautiful victory...." [40](#)

Several months later, F. O. Denesle's poem, "Sur la paix," proclaimed, "The liberator of the Lombards,/the conqueror of Italy,/the friend of peace and of the arts:/the people sing your glory...." [41](#) As the campaign in Italy drew to a close and peace negotiations began, the editors of the *Journal de Paris* published a poem by P. J. Audouin, which also made connections between Bonaparte and the fine arts:

... Bonaparte forbids Bellonne to fight,
He holds Minerva back.
Voices sing of our numerous heroes,
And of their fierce virtues and magnanimous feats.
Lyre, revel and celebrate their rest:
Mars has tired of victims.
Beaux-arts, appear; crown their exploits;
Crown my country, resting place of glory;
Our undefeatable soldiers have preserved our rights;
Carry throughout the centuries their memory.... [42](#)

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To Audouin and the editors of the *Journal de Paris*, Bonaparte's crowning achievement was the transfer of arts, ranking even higher than his military exploits. Several weeks later, the editors of *La Décade Philosophique* announced the title of the winning poem from a contest in the department of Yonne: "La conquête faite par l'armée d'Italie des grands monumens de peinture et de sculpture anciens et modernes," demonstrating the widespread interest in the transfer of Italian art and of Bonaparte's role in that transfer. [43](#) Later, following the triumphal entry of these artworks into

Paris, J. Lavallée wrote his eleven page "Poème sur les tableaux dont l'armée d'Italie a enrichi le museum, et sur l'utilité morale de la peinture" ["Poem on the Paintings with which the Army of Italy Has Enriched the Museum, and on the Moral Utility of Painting"], which argued that, among other things, the various pieces of art had suffered morally because of their monarchical patrons, but that under the Republic the arts would achieve their true glory. [44](#)

Bonaparte and the Savants

Napoleon Bonaparte did not only ingratiate himself with the *Idéologues* through the confiscation of Italian artwork. The general's expressed attitudes concerning the importance of knowledge and learning and his relationships with various Italian and French savants benefited his rapport with the *Idéologues* as well. During the course of the Italian campaign, Bonaparte struck up life-long friendships with several key members of the *Commission pour la recherche des objets de Science et d'Art* and publicly fostered relationships with still others, with the press reprinting selected pieces of the resulting correspondence. All of this further cemented the association of the general with the intellectual elite of Europe.

But these relationships and academic interests were not passing fancies. On at least one occasion during the campaign in Italy, Bonaparte expressed a desire to find time to do the work necessary to "merit the honor of being part of the Institute." ⁴⁶ The future Duchess of Abrantès echoed this sentiment in her memoirs, noting a sometimes-overlooked motivation for Bonaparte's Egyptian campaign: "Jealous of all glory, [Bonaparte] wanted to surround himself with the brilliance of the arts and sciences. He wanted to make a contribution to the Institute." On another occasion, the general expressed his sympathies with the sciences in a private letter:

Do you think that if I had not become a general and an instrument of sorts for a great people, I would have pursued offices and salons to become, in some capacity, a minister or an ambassador? No, No! I would have thrown myself into the study of the physical sciences. I would have made my path along the route of Galileo, of Newton. Since I have constantly succeeded in my great endeavors, well, I would achieve great distinction for works of science as well. I would have made great discoveries. No other glory could have tempted my ambition. ⁴⁷

Such a boast is not beyond the realm of reason. During his time at the *École Militaire*, Napoleon was acknowledged as "the strongest mathematician in the school," and his general intelligence was considered noteworthy. ⁴⁸ As *général-en-chef* of the Army of Italy, Bonaparte had the opportunity to develop these inclinations. Not only did he have regular contact with members of the Commission, but he actively sought out relationships with leading Italian scientists and scholars as well. Bonaparte achieved this goal partly by impressing these savants with his own understanding of science and mathematics and partly with flattery. ⁴⁹

Bonaparte and Italian Men of Letters

One of the first instances of the latter can be seen in Bonaparte's 24 May 1796 letter to the astronomer, Oriani:

The sciences, which ennoble human intelligence, and the arts, which embellish life and transmit great events to posterity, ought to be honored by free governments. All men of genius, all those

who have attained a distinguished place in the Republic of Letters, are Frenchmen, whatever may have been their country of birth.

In Milan, the learned have not enjoyed the consideration that they should have. Withdrawn in their laboratories, they count themselves lucky if kings and priests do not treat them ill.

That is not so today; thought has become free in Italy. No longer is there an inquisition, or intolerance, or despots. Invite the men of learning to meet and to tell me their needs and their views on what should be done to give new life and a new existence to the sciences and fine arts. All who wish to go to France will be welcomed with honors by the Government. The French attach a greater value to a knowledgeable mathematician, a reputable painter, or a man of distinction of whatever profession, than to the richest and most populous city.

Will you then, Citizen, carry these sentiments to the distinguished men of learning in Milan? [50](#)

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This letter was intended, then, not only for Oriani, but for all the artists and savants of Lombardy. The audience of this letter, however, extended far beyond the territory of northern Italy; it was reprinted in various Parisian newspapers, displaying to the French Bonaparte's sympathies with the arts and sciences. [51](#) On the same day Bonaparte wrote to Oriani, he also wrote a letter to the Municipalities of Milan and Pavia, expressing similar sentiments and encouraging the "celebrated University of Pavia" to resume its normal classes. [52](#)

This expression of solidarity with artists and intellectuals, however, was not limited to this single occasion. Bonaparte followed up on his offers, meeting with Oriani in Milan and by making the acquaintance of the Abbé Mascheroni, a geometrician at the University of Padua and creator of a new branch of mathematics, "geometry of the compass." In fact, following his election to the National Institute in December 1797, Bonaparte himself presented Mascheroni's ideas and posed a mathematical problem based on those ideas that would not be solved until 1909! [53](#) In December 1796, Bonaparte replied to a letter from the director of the observatory in Milan, Citizen Lalande, saying that, "of all the sciences, astronomy was the most useful to reason and to commerce," and again expressing his willingness to assist the director's scientific endeavors. [54](#) The two would continue to exchange letters throughout the Italian campaign, and through Lalande Napoleon gained introductions to other scientists, including several astronomers in Verona. [55](#)

When war disrupted the activities of these scientists, Bonaparte made good on his promise to assist scholars. In a 6 July 1797 letter to Antonio

Garruchio, an astronomer in Verona, Bonaparte not only agreed to reimburse the scientist for the losses he had suffered in a recent uprising, but ordered that Garruchio be given an additional sum of money to create the "Italian Society of Verona" to promote the study of science. [56](#) Napoleon continued to support and to expand this organization until his departure for Rastadt and Paris in November 1797. [57](#)

In addition to these Italian savants, Napoleon Bonaparte also cultivated relationships with a number of leading French men of letters. The primary way the general was able to achieve this was through his association with the *Commission pour la recherche des objets de Science et d'Art*. Not only did he maintain his connections with various members while they executed their duties, but the nature of their work also attracted the attention of those in Paris who had professional or artistic interests in the manuscripts, scientific specimens, and artwork that they were selecting for removal to France. One such group was the inspectors of the Conservatory of Music, who encouraged Bonaparte not to forget musical manuscripts as the commission went about its work. In his reply, Bonaparte assured the inspectors that he had not forgotten their concerns and then proceeded to flatter them with how important music was to him. "Of all the beaux-arts," wrote Bonaparte, "music is that which has the greatest influence on the passions and which the legislature should encourage more." [58](#)

Bonaparte and the Members of the Commission

Even more important than the occasional opportunity to correspond with men of letters in France, Bonaparte enjoyed the company of those savants who made up the Commission itself. Among these intellectuals, Bonaparte's most important and lasting relationships were with Gaspard Monge, a geometrician; Pierre-Simon Laplace, a mathematician who had been Napoleon's professor at the *École Militaire*; and Claude-Louis Berthollet, a chemist. Like Bonaparte, they were men of incredible mental energy and competence (a trait greatly admired by the general). When time allowed during the Italian campaign, Bonaparte would join them in discussions of scientific and mathematic principles.

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In 1798, Monge and Berthollet eagerly accompanied  [Scientific expedition](#) Napoleon to Egypt as part of the scientific expedition and returned with him to France in 1799 aboard the *Muiron*. During the Consulate and the Empire, all three scholars participated in the founding of the *École Polytechnique*, earned positions of importance, and were showered with honors and titles. During the Empire, for example, Monge served Napoleon as senator (becoming President of the Senate in 1806), and became a Grand Officer in the *Légion d'Honneur*. Laplace briefly served as Napoleon's first Minister of the Interior during the Consulate. In addition to becoming a senator, Berthollet served as the first professor of chemistry at the *École Polytechnique* and, like Monge, became a Grand Officer in the *Légion d'Honneur*. All three men also received original memberships in the Institute. When they returned to France in the fall of 1797 upon the completion of the Commission's task, they actively campaigned for Bonaparte's election to the National Institute to fill the seat recently vacated by Lazare Carnot, who was exiled after the *coup*

d'état of 18 fructidor. [59](#)

General-in-Chief and Member of the Institute

Following the close of the campaign, in Italy and aided by the relationships and the public image Bonaparte had deliberately fostered during the course of that campaign, the young general was about to achieve one of his goals, one that would also serve to ingratiate himself with the politically influential *Idéologues*. In the months prior to the December session of the Institute, the French press (and especially the editors of *La Décade Philosophique*) speculated about the possibility of General Bonaparte becoming one of the Institute's new members. [60](#) On 26 December 1797, Bonaparte took his seat in the National Institute of France. According to *La Décade Philosophique*, "the public session of the Institute was very crowded and full of excitement and great curiosity. The hero of the continent, Bonaparte, came to be associated with this body of savants." [61](#) In his brief inaugural speech, Bonaparte echoed the sentiments he had expressed earlier in his letter to the astronomer Oriani, seeming to confirm his sympathy with the ideals of the *Idéologues*: "True conquests, the only ones made without regret," he said, "are those that one makes over ignorance. The most honorable occupation, and the most useful for nations, is to contribute to the extension of humane ideas...." [62](#) With his election to the Institute, Napoleon Bonaparte galvanized his relationship with the *Idéologues* and reinforced his broader public persona as a sort of eighteenth-century Renaissance man, the image that was perfectly captured in Duvivier's medal.  In the months ahead, Bonaparte would continue to develop his connections with scientists and scholars through the founding of the Institute of Egypt and its publication, *La Décade Égyptienne*. And when the opportunity came in November 1799 for Bonaparte to assume a greater political role, with his participation in the *coup d'état* of 18-19 brumaire, it was, at least in part, this image that made possible the fruition of his political ambitions.

Bonaparte and the Recruitment of Artists

Bonaparte also made use of artists to increase his popularity and further develop his public image. As early as April 1796, for example, the general commissioned a Genoese artist to produce his likeness as an engraved portrait for popular distribution. With this modest commission, Napoleon began his series of relationships with many of the leading artists and engravers of France and Italy. Long before the close of the first Italian campaign, the general's image and visual representations of his victories would become the most popular subjects for engravings and among the more popular subjects for the art salons of Paris.

In a 13 May 1796 letter to Citizen Guillaume-Charles Faypoult, Bonaparte thanked the plenipotentiary for a set of engravings he had sent to the general, "which were received with great pleasure by the army." Napoleon sent the sum of 25 louis to the artist, with a commission to produce another engraving "of the astonishing crossing of the bridge at Lodi." [63](#) Already Bonaparte understood how art might be used to enhance one's image. As Charles-Otto Zieseniss notes in his *Napoléon et les peintres de son temps*,

Bonaparte's time in Milan and in its palaces, surrounded by artwork, music, scholars, and artists profoundly affected him. And while he would never become a connoisseur of art, this experience did give Napoleon a deeper understanding of art's potential political impact. [64](#)

Andrea Appiani

It was in Milan that Napoleon Bonaparte first met the Italian artist Andrea Appiani, a Milanese painter known for his frescos, and it was Appiani who painted the first official portrait of the triumphant general. This portrait was subsequently rendered as an engraving for the mass market by P. M. Alix in early 1797, with some versions bearing the inscription taken from Horace's *Carmina*: "Cui laurus acternos honores italico peperit triumpho" ("The hero of Italy, by triumph, is crowned forever with laurels"). [65](#) At



Bonaparte's request, Appiani also served as a member of the *Commission pour la recherche des objets de Science et d'Art*, further tying the artist's fortunes to the general's. Later, when Napoleon became First Consul and then emperor, he did not forget the services and loyalty of Appiani, naming him "First Painter" to the Kingdom of Italy, commissioning several official paintings, and even appointing the artist to restore da Vinci's *Last Supper*. From his first meeting with General Bonaparte until a stroke cut his career short in 1813, Andrea Appiani also produced numerous portraits, along with his best-known work, a fresco in the National Palace in Milan entitled *The Apotheosis of Napoleon*. [66](#)

 [Andrea Appiani](#)

 [Napoleon Ist](#)
 [The Apotheosis of Napoleon](#)

Antoine-Jean Gros

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Napoleon Bonaparte did not attract the services only of established artists like Appiani; one of the most important relationships that the general deliberately fostered was with the young expatriate French artist, Antoine-Jean Gros. A student of Jacques-Louis David's, Gros journeyed to Italy in 1793 at his own expense to further his artistic education. Running low on funds by the summer of 1794, Gros made his way to Genoa and eked out a living as a portrait painter, something that he saw as beneath his talents. [67](#) His fortunes would change, however, when Josephine Bonaparte visited Genoa on her way to meet her husband in Milan in August 1796.

 [Antoine-Jean Gros](#)

Through a mutual friend, Guillaume-Charles Faypoult, Gros obtained a meeting with Josephine "for the sole desire of making a portrait of the general." [68](#) He showed Madame Bonaparte a sample of his work and offered to paint her husband's portrait. Seeing his talent, she quickly agreed to Gros's proposal, and when they arrived in Milan, Josephine not only introduced the young artist to Napoleon and arranged for a sitting, but she encouraged her husband to offer Gros accommodations in the Palazzo Serbelloni, Napoleon's Milan residence. [69](#) According to Gros's biographer Delestre, "Josephine was like a guardian angel for Gros; she never let an occasion escape to assist and to encourage the artist." [70](#)

 [Bonaparte at the](#) Thus it was largely due to Josephine's eye for talent

[Bridge of Arcole](#) that Antoine-Jean Gros got his big break. By February 1797, the artist had completed the portrait that would become known as *Bonaparte at the Bridge of Arcole*, a true masterpiece and, as David O'Brien has shown, a revolutionary development in the nature of portrait painting.

In this painting lay the artistic cornerstone of the Napoleonic myth. Gros portrayed Bonaparte exhorting his men to follow him across the crucial bridge, which, the painting implies, leads to his victory over the Austrians. Once before, at Lodi, General Bonaparte had exposed himself to enemy fire while rallying his troops to cross a hotly contested bridge.

And as at Lodi, the crossing was attempted several  [The Battle of Lodi](#) times, led at different times by different generals. In the case of Arcole, the crossing was attempted by both Generals Augereau and Bonaparte, and four other generals were wounded during the battle.

 [The Battle of Arcole](#) Both of their attempts to seize the bridge failed. Ultimately, the bridge was taken two days later after a flanking maneuver against the Austrian positions. Bonaparte freely acknowledged these facts in his dispatches to the Executive Directory. [71](#)

Thus, one crucial aspect of Gros's painting seems to be fiction.

To be sure, although Bonaparte's attempt to rally his exhausted soldiers in the face of withering enemy fire was not the decisive moment of the battle (that honor belonged to General Masséna's flanking maneuver), it was the most dramatic moment. A battle won by a maneuver that made the enemy position untenable does not capture one's imagination the way selfless heroism and leading by example would. [72](#) And it was drama above all else that both Napoleon Bonaparte and Antoine-Jean Gros sought in this painting. For Bonaparte, the image of leading by heroic example perfectly matched the public image he had been fostering since the beginning of the campaign. For Gros, the dramatic nature of the painting allowed him to transform the art of portraiture.

Although Gros drew on an existing tradition of military portraiture, his subtle innovations changed the way people would see such paintings in the future. Bonaparte is depicted in three-quarters length, holding a sword in his right hand and a flag in his left hand; the flag was Josephine's idea. [73](#) Gros's use of color and line—especially in the general's hair and in the drapery of the flag—convey a sense of movement, a characteristic more associated with the style of the Romantics than with the style perfected by his mentor, Jacques-Louis David. Unlike traditional military portraits, however, the subject does not face the audience, but rather glances back toward his troops, seemingly attempting to will them to emulate his example. Gros also placed his subject in the center of the action, whereas in earlier paintings in the genre the battle typically raged in the background. [74](#) Gros's background, in fact, is hazy and indistinct—it is Bonaparte and his heroism that become the sole focus of one's attention.

Both patron and painter were pleased with the result. According to one of the

general's aides-de-camp, it was "an amazing likeness of Bonaparte as he was at the time." [75](#) Napoleon Bonaparte offered Gros 250 louis to



have engravings of the portrait made. These proved to be incredibly popular, increasing the fame of both the general and the artist. Gros's image of Bonaparte, notes Armand Dayot, also became the model for many other images of the future emperor, from the contemporary medal by Luigi Manfredini to the satirical cartoons by Gillray and Cruikshank to the Romantic-era medal by David d'Angers. [76](#) Soon after completing his portrait of Bonaparte, Gros also received a commission from General Alexandre Berthier, Napoleon's chief of staff, to paint a family portrait of him, his wife, and his sister-in-law. [77](#) That portrait was well received in the Salon of 1798, but, interestingly, Gros choose not to publicly display his *Bonaparte at the Bridge of Arcole* until the Salon of 1801. [78](#)

Bonaparte did not give the artist time to rest before assigning him a new task. In January 1797, Bonaparte named Antoine-Jean Gros to the *Commission pour la recherche des objets de Science et d'Art*, and later instructed that the artist receive a remuneration of 250 livres per month. Gros's initial reaction was surprise: he was not a well-known artist at the time, and serving on the commission meant he was joining the company of established artists, like Jean-Baptiste Wicar, and scholars, like Gaspard Monge, Pierre-Simon Laplace, and Claude-Louis Berthollet. [79](#) His surprise quickly turned to delight, however, as Gros was finally able to visit Rome, something he had not been able to afford previously. Only now was he able to see the city's vast stores of art treasures, including the *Laocoön* group and the *Apollo Belvedere*. When the work of the commission concluded during the summer of 1797, Gros returned to Milan and continued his painting, which included, among other works, a second portrait of Berthier (and one of his mistress). [80](#)

Antonio Canova

Andrea Appiani and Antoine-Jean Gros, however, were not the only artists in Italy whose talents Napoleon Bonaparte tried to co-opt for his propaganda campaign. Bonaparte also made overtures to Antonio  [Antonio Canova](#) in the fall of 1797. The *général-en-chef* had received news from a friend of Canova that the sculptor was in dire financial straits because of his recently lost Venetian pension, which had evaporated as a direct result of the French actions toward the Republic. In an August 1797 letter to Canova in Rome, Napoleon promised to restore that pension:

I have come to understand, Monsieur, from one of your friends, that you have been deprived of [your] Venetian pension. The French Republic acknowledges the great talents that you possess. As a celebrated artist, you have a special right to be protected by the Army of Italy. I am ordering that your pension should be restored to you in full. I hope that you will let me know if this order has not been fulfilled and that you believe the pleasure it gives me to do something useful for you. [81](#)

Later that year, Bonaparte offered Canova a commission to carve a stele relief portrait of Napoleon for the city of Padua, but the sculptor resisted Bonaparte's offer. ⁸² Not only was he outraged by Bonaparte's confiscations of Italian art and by the general's high-handed treatment of Venice in the Treaty of Campo Formio, but the artist also found himself trapped in Rome by a French siege in December 1797. Following the city's fall, Canova then became the victim of a pro-French republican mob, which invaded his studio in an attempt to destroy his current project, the statue *Ferdinand of Naples*. Later French diplomatic and military actions further increased his disdain for the French Republic and for its most celebrated general. ⁸³ In fact, most of the sculptor's contemporary pieces can be seen as distinctly pro-Italian and anti-French. ⁸⁴ The sole exceptions to this trend are the two works resulting from Count Sommariva's commission to Canova to create a full-length statue of the then-First Consul, *Napoleon as Mars the Peacemaker* (eventually completed in 1812) and the accompanying earlier study, a bust entitled *Napoleon as First Consul* (1802). ⁸⁵

Jacques-Louis David

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Having failed to enlist the support of the era's most celebrated sculptor, Napoleon Bonaparte proved much more successful in recruiting to his cause the most celebrated French painter of the day, Jacques-Louis David.

 [Jacques-Louis David](#) The two met at an official reception in 1797, and from the moment of their first meeting Napoleon went to great lengths to enlist David as a supporter. As Bonaparte prepared for the Egyptian campaign, for example, the general even invited the artist to accompany the expedition. ⁸⁶ Considering David's standing as an artist and his previous experience as "pageant-master" of the Revolution during the Convention, few people could have presented a more favorable Republican image of the triumphant general than Jacques-Louis David. ⁸⁷

David, however, declined the invitation, but  [David's Unfinished Portrait](#) did arrange for a portrait session to depict Bonaparte's recent victory at Rivoli, resulting in the *Unfinished Portrait of Bonaparte* (Napoleon never found the time to return for the anticipated follow-up sessions). By the end of that initial three-hour sitting, Napoleon's dynamic personality had completely captivated the painter. Emerging from his atelier, David exclaimed to his students: "At last my friends, this is a man to whom one would have raised altars in antiquity; yes, my friends; yes my dear friends; Bonaparte is my hero!" ⁸⁸ Three years later, following a second successful Italian campaign, the then-First Consul commissioned Jacques-Louis

 [Napoleon Crossing the St. Bernard](#) David to paint the now famous *Napoleon Crossing the St. Bernard* to memorialize the event. ⁸⁹ Bonaparte also nominated David to the French Senate and offered him the title "Painter of the Government," but the artist refused these honors. ⁹⁰ With the establishment of the Empire four years later, however, David could no longer escape Napoleon's honors.

In 1804, the artist was made a member of the newly  [The Coronation of Napoleon I](#) formed *Légion d'Honneur*, given the title "First Painter of the Empire," and commissioned to memorialize Napoleon's coronation with a series of four paintings, the most famous of which is *The Coronation of Napoleon I*. ⁹¹

The Popularization of Bonaparte's Image

As Bonaparte's fame in France increased during the course of his Italian campaign, paintings, engravings, and statues of the general and of his army began to appear in the Salons of Paris. ⁹² Few (if any) of these works were commissioned by Bonaparte, but they served to maintain Bonaparte's association with high art, and they provide an indication of the general's  [Augereau](#) incredible popularity. The first works inspired by Bonaparte's successes in Italy began to appear in the Salon of 1798 and included not only Gros's portrait of Berthier and Thévenin's painting of Augereau at Arcole but also a remarkable bust portrait of General Bonaparte sculpted by Charles-Louis Corbet (which was to be executed in marble for the government). ⁹³ In this  [Portrait bust](#) same exhibition, and in the *Muséum Central des Arts* (the future Louvre), Louis Lafite presented a sketch entitled *Sur l'armée d'Italie*, Joseph Chinard presented an allegorical sketch dedicated to General Bonaparte, L.-S. Boisot displayed a plaster medallion of Bonaparte, and Benjamin Duvivier presented a medal. In an exhibition where more works on military topics had been shown than ever before, more pieces of art were dedicated to or inspired by Napoleon Bonaparte than any other figure. ⁹⁴ But it was not just high art that helped to spread the fame of Napoleon Bonaparte.

A host of colporteurs and lesser artists also tried to turn a profit from thousands of engravings produced for the mass audience.

 [New engravings](#) One of the first of these inexpensive engravings to appear was advertised in the 16 July 1796 issue of *Le Moniteur Universel*; it was part of a series being offered by F. Bonneville for ten sous each. ⁹⁵ This advertisement, the first one of its type for the year 1796, already indicates a public interest in the young, "unknown" general. As his victories mounted, other engravings soon followed, especially as the end of the campaign in Italy became imminent.

By 1797, advertisements for engravings appeared not only in *Le Moniteur*, but also in virtually every other Parisian newspaper. The *Clef du Cabinet*, for example, offered a "distinguished" portrait of Bonaparte with the inscription: "A spirit vast and profound, a soldier prudent and brave/He gave Europe freedom and victory [over] slavery." ⁹⁶ In March, the same newspaper advertised a colored engraving of General Bonaparte by [P. M. Alix](#) (after a painting by Andrea Appiani) for eight livres, proclaiming that, "This portrait appears to us perfectly executed and one of the most life-like we have seen." ⁹⁷ The *Journal de Paris* called attention to Schiavonetti's engraving of a portrait of Bonaparte by Coscia for five livres, and to another after a portrait by Carle Vernet for only three livres. ⁹⁸ The *Journal des Hommes Libres* also advertised engravings of the *héros italique*. In April 1798, it noted an engraved portrait of Bonaparte by Emira Marceau Sergent for 24 livres. Later, the paper called attention to an engraving by Citizen Hennequin, entitled "*La Liberté d'Italie*" for twelve livres, noting that, "the extremely life-like portrait of Bonaparte adds much to

this composition." [99](#)

Perhaps the most extraordinary offer for Napoleon's portrait appeared in the 12 February 1799 issue of the *Clef du Cabinet*. The primary purpose of this advertisement was to announce the sale of *Tableaux historiques des campagnes et aux révolutions d'Italie*, complete with original drawings by the military artist Carle Vernet. As an incentive to get potential readers to order this expensive work (120 francs) as quickly as possible, the publishers made an additional offer: all readers who subscribed before 1 *germinal* (21 March) would also receive as a bonus an introduction to *Tableaux historiques* that contained a frontispiece portrait of General Bonaparte. [100](#) Through such means, by the time of Napoleon Bonaparte's *coup d'état* countless thousands of these relatively inexpensive engravings had flooded the French and Italian markets, making Bonaparte's image one of the most popular of the Revolutionary era. [101](#) The popularity of his likeness parallels the overwhelming popularity of the general himself.

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From his initial efforts to manipulate the French press through the careful wording and timing of his dispatches, to the founding of his own newspapers, which further affected the reading public, to his use and patronage of the arts, Napoleon Bonaparte had shaped the idealized, heroic image of himself that would enable him to become the ultimate political player of the Revolutionary era. His image-making campaign, however, contained one more (and less well-known) aspect, the use of commemorative medals, which is the subject of the next chapter.

Notes:

Note 1: Mark Jones, *The Art of the Medal* (London: British Museum Publishing Ltd., 1979), 101; and Michel Hennin, *Histoire numismatique de la Révolution Française, ou description raisonnée des médailles, monnies, et autres monumens numismatique relatifs aux affaires de la France depuis l'ouverture des États-généraux jusqu'à l'établissement du gouvernement consulaire*, 2 vols. (Paris: J. S. Merlin, 1826; reprint, Maastricht: A. G. van der Dussen, 1987), I: 569; cf. *Gazette nationale ou le Moniteur universel* (Paris), 28 *germinal*, an 6 (17 April 1798). The advertisement in *le Moniteur* listed this medal at 6 francs for bronze and 26 francs for those made of silver. As with the newspaper subscriptions, the cost of commemorative medals was beyond the reach of most people. Certainly, however, the price for bronze medallions was affordable to many French *bourgeoisie*. [Back.](#)

Note 2: Hennin, I: 568; cf. Hennin, II: 81. Volume II of this set contains pen and ink plates of the medals described in Volume I. [Back.](#)

Note 3: Martyn Lyons, *France Under the Directory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 127, and Hennin, I: 569; cf. Hennin, II: 81. [Back.](#)

Note 4: Jay W. Stein, "Beginnings of 'Ideology'," *The South Atlantic Quarterly*

55 (1956): 165-67, and Jay W. Stein, "A Scholarly Temple from National to Napoleonic," *History of Education Quarterly* 1 (1961): 7-8.[Back.](#)

Note 5: Stein, "Ideology," 167-68.[Back.](#)

Note 6: Wilhelm Treue, *Art Plunder: The Fate of Works of Art in War and Unrest*, trans. Basil Creighton (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1961), 139-41; Cecil Gould, *Trophy of Conquest: The Musée Napoléon and the Creation of the Louvre* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965), 31-32; Raymond J. Maras, "Napoleon and Levis on the Arts and Sciences," *Consortium on Revolutionary Europe, 1750-1850: Proceedings* 17 (1987): 433; Martha L. Turner, "Art Confiscations in the French Revolution," *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Western Society for French History* 4 (1976): 274-76; Ferdinand Boyer, "Le Général Bonaparte et la recherche des objets de science et d'art en Lombardie (1796)," *Revue de l'institute Napoléon* 122 (January 1972): 7-8; Ferdinand Boyer, "Quelques considerations sur les conquêtes artistiques de Napoléon," *Rivista Italiana di Studi Napoleonici* 7 (1968): 190; and Ferdinand Boyer, "Les Responsibilités de Napoléon des le transfert à Paris des oeuvres d'art de l'étranger," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 11 (October-December 1964): 242-43.[Back.](#)

Note 7: Treue, 140, and Jay W. Stein, "Scholarly Temple," 7.[Back.](#)

Note 8: Quoted in Emmanuel Bondeville, "Napoléon et les arts," *Société belge d'études napoléoniennes* 88 (1974): 13. See also Turner, 274.[Back.](#)

Note 9: Marie-Louis Blumer, "Catalogue des Peintures Transportées d'Italie en France de 1796 à 1814" *Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire de l'art française* (1936): 256-60 and 347. In a recent paper delivered at a meeting of the Consortium on Revolutionary Europe, 1750-1850, Bette Oliver noted that in 1797 the director of the Committee of Public Instruction, Pierre-Louis Ginguené, allotted 60,000 francs from his "Extraordinary Museum Expenses" to help offset the expenses of transporting these works to Paris and another 300,000 francs for the restoration of the greatest works requiring attention. These figures represented almost a third of the funds allocated for museums, libraries, and literary depots. See Bette W. Oliver, "More than Canvas, Stone, and Paper: Pierre-Louis Ginguené, from Literary Historian to Director of Public Instruction" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Consortium on Revolutionary Europe, 1750-1850, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 22-24 February 2002).[Back.](#)

Note 10: Napoleon Bonaparte, *Correspondence de Napoléon Ier*, Vol.1 (Paris: Henri Plon, 1858), 303, [no. 368](#). Hereafter abbreviated *Corr.* followed the volume number, page number, and by the appropriate document number.[Back.](#)

Note 11: *Corr.* I: 251-52, [no. 280](#).[Back.](#)

Note 12: Quoted in Marie-Louis Blumer, "La commission pour la recherché des objets de sciences et arts en Italie (1796-1797)," *La Révolution Française* 87 (1934): 67. See also Gould, 43-44.[Back.](#)

Note 13: *Corr.* I: 529, [no. 676](#); cf. *Corr.* II: 446-47, [no. 1511](#).[Back.](#)

Note 14: *Corr.* III: 67, [no. 1804](#).[Back.](#)

Note 15: Oliver, "More than Canvas."[Back.](#)

Note 16: *Corr. I*: 283, [no. 337](#).[Back.](#)

Note 17: *Corr. I*: 301, [no. 366](#).[Back.](#)

Note 18: *Corr. I*: 352-53, [no. 443](#), and *Corr. I*: 353-54, [no. 444](#). As with the armistice with the Duke of Parma, Bonaparte's later treaty with Venice also stipulated that the choice of levied artwork remained that of the general-in-chief.[Back.](#)

Note 19: *Corr. I*: 301, [no. 366](#); cf. *Corr. I*: 303, [no. 368](#).[Back.](#)

Note 20: The 8 June 1796 (20 *prairial, an 4*) issue of *La Décade Philosophique* (Paris), for example, reprints Napoleon's armistice with the Duke of Parma; and the 2 July 1796 (14 *messidor, an 4*) issue of *L'Historien* (Paris) contained Napoleon's list of transported art.[Back.](#)

Note 21: *Corr. II*: 446-47, [no. 1511](#); cf. *Corr. I*: 529, [no. 676](#).[Back.](#)

Note 22: *Corr. I*: 557-58, [no. 710](#).[Back.](#)

Note 23: *La Décade Philosophique* (Paris), 10 *fructidor, an 4* (27 August 1796); *La Décade Philosophique* (Paris), 30 *fructidor, an 4* (16 September 1796); and *La Décade Philosophique* (Paris), 10 *vendémiaire, an 5* (1 October 1796).[Back.](#)

Note 24: *Corr. II*: 441, [no. 1509](#); cf. *Gazette nationale ou le Moniteur universal* (Paris), 15 *ventôse, an 5* (5 March 1797).[Back.](#)

Note 25: *Corr. I*: 440, [no. 559](#); cf. *Gazette nationale ou le Moniteur universal* (Paris), 29 *prairial, an 4* (28 June 1796); and Maras, 438.[Back.](#)

Note 26: *Corr. III*: 389-90, [no. 2192](#).[Back.](#)

Note 27: *La Décade Philosophique, littéraire, et politique* (Paris), 30 *germinal, an 4* (19 April 1796).[Back.](#)

Note 28: *La Décade Philosophique* (Paris), 20 *messidor, an 4* (8 July 1796).[Back.](#)

Note 29: Amazingly, of the 227 paintings confiscated from northern Italy during the First Italian Campaign, only two were lost (including da Vinci's *Head of the Virgin*, taken from the Bibliothèque Ambrosienne on 24 May 1796). 110 of those works were repatriated in 1815, and 115 remained in various museums in France. See Blumer, "Catalogue des Peintures," 347.[Back.](#)

Note 30: *La Décade Philosophique* (Paris), 30 *messidor, an 4* (18 July 1796); *La Décade Philosophique* (Paris), 10 *fructidor, an 4* (27 August 1796); *La Décade Philosophique* (Paris), 30 *fructidor, an 4* (16 September 1796); *La Décade Philosophique* (Paris), 10 *vendémiaire, an 5* (1 October 1796); *La Décade Philosophique* (Paris), 30 *brumaire, an 5* (20 November 1796); *La Décade Philosophique* (Paris), 10 *frimaire, an 5* (30 November 1796); *La Décade Philosophique* (Paris), 20 *floréal, an 5* (9

May 1797); *La Décade Philosophique* (Paris), 30 floréal, an 5 (19 May 1797); *La Décade Philosophique* (Paris), 30 prairial, an 5 (18 June 1797); *La Décade Philosophique* (Paris), 20 floréal, an 5 (9 May 1797); *La Décade Philosophique* (Paris), 20 messidor, an 5 (8 July 1797); *La Décade Philosophique* (Paris), 30 messidor, an 5 (18 July 1797); *La Décade Philosophique* (Paris), 20 thermidor, an 5 (7 August 1797); *La Décade Philosophique* (Paris), 20 fructidor, an 5 (6 September 1797); and *La Décade Philosophique* (Paris), 30 vendémiaire, an 6 (9 May 1797).[Back.](#)

Note 31: *Journal de Paris* (Paris), 8 vendémiaire, an 6 (29 September 1797).[Back.](#)

Note 32: *Notice des Pincipaux Tableaux Recueillis dans la Lombardie par les Commissions du Government Française, don't l'exposition proviso ire aura lieu dans le grand salon du Muséum, les Octidis, Noidis et Dédadis de chaque Décade, à compter du 18 pluviose, jusqu'au 30 prairial, an VI* (Paris: Imprimerie des Sciences et Arts, an 6).[Back.](#)

Note 33: *La Décade Philosophique* (Paris), 30 frimaire, an 6 (20 December 1797).[Back.](#)

Note 34: Marie-Louis Blumer, "La commission," 237-38. "See also *Objets venus d'Italie, 6 thermidor an VI (24 juillet 1798)*," volume 20, Collection Deloynes, Salle des Estampes, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris; and "*Entrée triomphant des sciences et des arts, 9 thermidor an VI (27 juillet 1798)*," volume 20, Collection Deloynes, Salle des Estampes, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.[Back.](#)

Note 35: Blumer, "La commission," 238.[Back.](#)

Note 36: "*Entrée triomphant des sciences et des arts.*" This part of the celebration was also captured in an engraving by Berthault entitled "*Entrée triomphale des monuments des sciences et arts en France*," a copy of which is in the Collection Vinck at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris.[Back.](#)

Note 37: Paul Delaroche, Henriquel Dupont, and Charles Lenormant, *Médailles de la Révolution Française, depuis l'ouverture des États-généraux (5 mai 1789) jusqu'a la proclamation de l'Empire (18 mai 1804)* (Paris: Bureau du Trésor de numismatique et de glyptique, 1836), 90-91.[Back.](#)

Note 38: "*Entrée triomphant des sciences et des arts....*"[Back.](#)

Note 39: Blumer, "La commission," 248; cf. *La Décade Philosophique* (Paris), 20 prairial, an 6 (8 June 1797). It is also interesting to note that P. M. Alix's engraving of Bonaparte (after Gros's famous painting) was advertised in the same issue, connecting, at least by juxtaposition, Bonaparte and the arts.[Back.](#)

Note 40: *La Décade Philosophique* (Paris), 30 prairial, an 4 (18 June 1796).[Back.](#)

Note 41: *La Décade Philosophique* (Paris), 10 prairial, an 5 (29 May 1797).[Back.](#)

Note 42: *Journal de Paris* (Paris), 9 brumaire, an 6 (30 October 1797).[Back.](#)

Note 43: *La Décade Philosophique* (Paris), 30 brumaire, an 6 (20 November

1797). The title of the poem translates: "The conquest of the great monuments of ancient and modern painting and sculpture made by the Army of Italy."[Back.](#)

Note 44: J. Lavallée, *Poème sur les tableaux dont l'armée d'Italie a enrichi le museum, et sur l'utilité morale de la peinture; lu à la séance publique de la société philotechnique, le 20 floréal, an VI* (Paris: Imprimerie e Charles Houel, an 6).[Back.](#)

Note 45: Quoted in John Charpentier, *Napoléon et les Hommes de Lettres de Son Temps* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1935), 43.[Back.](#)

Note 46: Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Nortre ami Bonaparte* (Paris: Pierre Waleffe, 1968), 96-97.[Back.](#)

Note 47: M. d'Ocagne, *Napoléon et les savants* (Vannes: Imprimerie Lafolye et J. de Lamarzelle, 1934), 15-16.[Back.](#)

Note 48: d'Ocagne, 3 and 4.[Back.](#)

Note 49: Charpentier, 43.[Back.](#)

Note 50: *Corr. I*: 392-93, [no. 491](#).[Back.](#)

Note 51: See, for example, *L'Historien* (Paris), 17 *messidor, an 4* (7 July 1796).[Back.](#)

Note 52: *Corr. I*: 393, [no. 492](#). This letter was also reprinted in the Paris newspapers. Again, see *L'Historien* (Paris), 17 *messidor, an 4* (7 July 1796).[Back.](#)

Note 53: *Corr. I*: 517, [no. 663](#); and d'Ocagne, 3 and 4.[Back.](#)

Note 54: *Corr. II*: 175-76, [no. 1231](#).[Back.](#)

Note 55: *Corr. III*: 145-46, [no. 1901](#).[Back.](#)

Note 56: *Corr. III*: 228, [no. 1997](#).[Back.](#)

Note 57: *Corr. III*: 577-78, [no. 2359](#).[Back.](#)

Note 58: *Corr. III*: 265-66, [no. 2042](#).[Back.](#)

Note 59: M. d'Ocagne, 5-6, 9-12, and 13-14; and Marie-Louis Blumer, "La commission," 73.[Back.](#)

Note 60: *La Décade Philosophique* (Paris), 30 *vendémiaire, an 6* (21 October 1797); *La Décade Philosophique* (Paris), 30 *brumaire, an 6* (20 November 1797).[Back.](#)

Note 61: *La Décade Philosophique* (Paris), 20 *nivôse, an 6* (9 January 1798).[Back.](#)

Note 62: *Corr. III*: 614, [no. 2392](#); cf. *La Décade Philosophique* (Paris), 20 *nivôse, an 6* (9 January 1798); and *Corr. I*: 392-93, [no. 491](#).[Back.](#)

Note 63: *Corr.* I: 332, [no. 417.Back.](#)

Note 64: Charles-Otto Zieseniss, *Napoléon et les peintres de son temps* (Paris: Palais de l'Institute, 1986), 1.[Back.](#)

Note 65: Jean Tulard, Alfredo Fierro, and Jean-Marc Leri, *L'Histoire de Napoléon par la peinture* (Paris: Belfond, 1991), 10.[Back.](#)

Note 66: Jean Tulard et al., 309; Alvar Gonzalez-Palacios, *David e la Pittura Napoleonica* (Milan: Fratelli Fabbri, 1967), 89; and Ferdinand Boyer, "Le Peintre Andrea Appiani: documents," *Rivista Italiana di Studi Napoleonici* 7 (1968): 134-35.[Back.](#)

Note 67: David Joseph O'Brien, "The Art of War: Antoine-Jean Gros and French Military Painting, 1795-1804" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1994), 67-70.[Back.](#)

Note 68: Quoted in J. B. Delestre, *Gros et ses ouvrages; ou mémoires historiques sur le vie et les tableaux de ce célèbre artiste* (Paris: Jules Labitte, 1845), 30-31; and O'Brien, 74.[Back.](#)

Note 69: Delestre, 31-32; and O'Brien, 74-75.[Back.](#)

Note 70: Delestre, 35.[Back.](#)

Note 71: *Corr.* II: 147-148, [no. 1196.Back.](#)

Note 72: See pages 78-83 of O'Brien's "The Art of War: Antoine-Jean Gros and French Military Painting, 1795-1804" for an excellent discussion of the development and importance of the Arcole legend.[Back.](#)

Note 73: Jean Tulard et al., 10.[Back.](#)

Note 74: O'Brien, 84-85; and Armand Dayot, *Napoléon raconté par l'image après les sculptures, les graveurs et les peintures* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1902), 24.[Back.](#)

Note 75: Quoted in Timothy Wilson-Smith, *Napoleon and His Artists* (London: Constable and Company, 1996), 68.[Back.](#)

Note 76: Dayot, 24[Back.](#)

Note 77: Delestre, 34-35; and O'Brien, 87-88.[Back.](#)

Note 78: Michel Régis, *Aux armes et aux arts! Les arts de la Révolution, 1789-1799* (Paris: Adam Biro, 1988), 76-77. Ironically, Charles Thévenin's painting of Augereau at Arcole was also displayed in the Salon 1798.[Back.](#)

Note 79: Blumer, "La commission," 126. See also *Corr.* II: 440, [no. 1506](#); and O'Brien, 89-90.[Back.](#)

Note 80: O'Brien, 90-91.[Back.](#)

Note 81: *Corr.* III: 296, [no. 2079.Back.](#)

Note 82: Christopher Johns, "Canova's Portraits of Napoleon: Mixed Genre and the Question of Nudity in Revolutionary Portraiture," *Consortium on Revolutionary Europe, 1750-1850: Proceedings* 20 (1990): 368-69.[Back.](#)

Note 83: Jean Henry, "Antonio Canova, the French Imperium, and Emerging Nationalism in Italy," *Consortium on Revolutionary Europe, 1750-1850: Proceedings* 2 (1980): 84-85.[Back.](#)

Note 84: Henry, 86-87.[Back.](#)

Note 85: Johns, 369. Ironically, the larger-than-life *Napoleon as Mars the Peacemaker* is on display at Apsley House, the Duke of Wellington's London residence. Even in this monumental work, however, Canova managed to demonstrate his independence from Bonaparte's desires. Instead of portraying the general-become-emperor in contemporary dress, much to the dismay of his subject, the sculptor portrays Napoleon as a heroic, allegorical nude, thus "challenging the patron's agenda" (371-72).[Back.](#)

Note 86: Jules David, *Le Peintre Louis David 1748-1825: souvenirs et documents inédits* (Paris: Victor Harvard, 1880), 338-40.[Back.](#)

Note 87: Paul Spencer-Longhurst, "Premier Peintre de l'Empereur," *The Connoisseur* 193 (December 1976), 318; and Felix Markham, "Napoleon and his Painters," *Apollo* 80 (September 1964), 187. For further reading on David's role as "pageant-master" and propagandist of the Revolution, see David Lloyd Dowd, *Pageant-Master of the Republic: Jacques-Louis David and the French Revolution* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1948).[Back.](#)

Note 88: M. E. J. Delecluze, *Louis David: son école et son temps* (Paris: Didier, 1855), 203. See also Spencer-Longhurst, 317. This particular portrait of Bonaparte remained unfinished. David originally wanted to show Bonaparte on the battlefield of Rivoli holding the Treaty of Campo Formio, but a busy and impatient Napoleon never returned to David's studio so that the work could be completed.[Back.](#)

Note 89: Although this canvas commemorated an actual event, few elements of the painting are true to life. For example, David wanted to show Bonaparte, sword in hand, leading his victorious army at Marengo, but Napoleon objected. The First Consul wanted "*le beau idéal*," not necessarily realism. "Battles are not won by the sword," Bonaparte said. "I wish to be painted tranquil on a fiery [sic] horse." Reluctantly, David agreed, depicting Bonaparte, dressed in a military uniform and a billowing red cape, riding a rearing white charger in the midst of a raging storm. In actuality, when crossing the Alps, Napoleon wore civilian clothes and rode a mule; however, the less-dramatic truth would not have produced the desired effect on the French people. See Helen Rosenau, "Inherited Myths, Unprecedented Realities: Paintings under Napoleon," *Art in America* 63 (March-April 1975), 49-50.[Back.](#)

Note 90: Jules David, 336; Spencer-Longhurst, 318; and M. Miette de Villars, *Mémoires de David: Peintre et Député à la Convention* (Paris: Chez Tous Les Libraries, 1850), 180.[Back.](#)

Note 91: Jules David, 407-09; Verbraeken, 56; Miette, 185; and Delecluze, 242. The proposed paintings in the series were: *The Coronation of Napoleon I*,

The Distribution of the Eagles, The Arrival of Napoleon at Notre Dame, and Napoleon's Entrance into the Hôtel de Ville. Of the four, only the first two reached completion; in 1810, the last two were canceled. See Delecluze, 242; and Spencer-Longhurst, 320.[Back.](#)

Note 92: David O'Brien, in fact, makes a case that this was one of the reasons Bonaparte was so pleased with the work of Antoine-Jean Gros. An artist of that talent, painting works inspired by the activities of the "hero of Italy," was likely to have his works exhibited in the Salons on a regular basis. This, of course, meant that Bonaparte would have yet one more way of keeping his achievements before the public. See O'Brien, 94-95.[Back.](#)

Note 93: *Explication des Ouvrages de Peinture et Dessins, Sculpture, Architecture et Gravure, des Artistes Vivant Exposée au Muséum Central des Arts d'après l'Arrêté du Ministre de l'Intérieur, le 1er thermidor, an VI* (Volume 19, Collection Deloynes, Salle des Estampes, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris), 80; and *Exposition du Salon de l'an VI; ou les Tableaux en vaudevilles* (Volume 19, Collection Deloynes, Salle des Estampes, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris), 7-8.[Back.](#)

Note 94: See *Explication des Ouvrages de Peinture...* [Back.](#)

Note 95: *Le Moniteur* (Paris), 28 messidor, an 4 (16 July 1796).[Back.](#)

Note 96: *Clef du Cabinet* (Paris), 28 frimaire, an 6 (18 December 1797).[Back.](#)

Note 97: *Clef du Cabinet* (Paris), 3 germinal, an 6 (23 March 1798). This same artist also accomplished another "perfectly executed" color engraving of General Berthier, Napoleon's indispensable chief-of-staff. See *Clef du Cabinet* (Paris), 19 prairial, an 6 (7 June 1798); cf. *La Décade Philosophique* (Paris), 10 prairial, an 6; and *La Décade Philosophique* (Paris), 10 prairial, an 6.[Back.](#)

Note 98: *Journal de Paris* (Paris), 2eme jour complémentaire, an 5 (18 September 1797); and *Journal de Paris* (Paris), 3eme jour complémentaire, an 5 (19 September 1797).[Back.](#)

Note 99: *Journal des Hommes Libres* (Paris), 8 floréal, an 6 (27 April 1798); and 28 floréal, an 6 (17 May 1798).[Back.](#)

Note 100: *Clef du Cabinet* (Paris), 27 pluviôse, an 7 (15 February 1799); cf. *La Décade Philosophique* (Paris), 10 prairial, an 7.[Back.](#)

Note 101: For a brief discussion of engravings in the Italian market, see Christian Marc Bosséno, "Figures et personnages de l'Iconographie politique Italienne (1789-1799)" *Annales Historiques de la Révolution Française* 289 (1992): 407-16.[Back.](#)

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