The Civic Architecture of Paul Cret

ELIZABETH GREENWELL GROSSMAN
Rhode Island School of Design

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THE YEARS IN LYON

Piecing together Cret's early life, from birth, death, and marriage notices and educational records, indicates that Cret had come from a working-class family and had found his career in architecture through a twist of fate abetted by his own talent and determination.[1] Paul Philipe Cret was born in Lyon on 24 October 1876, to Paul Adolphe Cret, age 32, and Anna Caroline Durand, age 24. At the time of Cret's birth his mother was unemployed, but she had worked before, as had her husband, as an employee in some unspecified business. Probably like so many Lyonnais they had unskilled jobs in one of the commercial firms connected with the production of silk fabrics and notions. Data from 1866 indicate that one in two Lyonnais workers was connected with La Fabrique, as the silk industry was called.[2]

Cret had not been born in economically propitious times, however. The year 1876 marked the start of a decline in silk manufacturing in France, with two-thirds of its workers unemployed in 1877.[3] By 1880 Cret's parents had given up their own household to live with Anna's mother and father, a dyer. That same year Anna's father died, and the year after her husband died also.[4] Fortunately, Cret's mother apparently had some technical skills and soon she was working as a tailor. By the time Cret was twelve his mother and her younger married sister were in business together as dressmakers.[5]

How much Cret's mother, by her efforts and ability, had improved the family circumstances cannot be determined, but certainly those years cannot have been easy ones. The significant change in their lives, and in Cret's prospects, came through her sister's marriage. Anna's new brother-in-law worked in the white-goods trades and apparently made enough money so that his wife and Anna were able to give up their business. Anna went to live with them. More important for Cret's future, his new uncle by marriage was the younger brother of Joannès Bernard, a Lyonnais architect who was active in

Lyon's prestigious professional society, the Société Académique d'Architecture de Lyon (SAAL), and was known for his churches designed in various medieval styles.[6] Cret's connection with Joannès Bernard was apparently close. He worked for him when he was a student at the École des Beaux-Arts in Lyon and inherited some of his books.[7]

Perhaps it was due to the mentoring of his bachelor uncle-in-law that Cret, before going to the École des Beaux-Arts, received a liberal education at a venerable private school rather than a technical education at the École Technique de la Martinière in Lyon, as architect Tony Garnier (1869–1948), the son of silk workers, had done.[8] Cret went for three years to the Lycée Lalande in the small town of Bourg-en-Bresse, about sixty miles from Lyon, where he enrolled not in the classical track, which would in any case have required him to have had two years of Latin, but in the "modern and special" curriculum for the *baccalauréat*.[9] With its emphasis on living languages and science, and the chance to study freehand and analytical drawing, this curriculum offered a valuable foundation for his architectural studies.

The records show that Cret excelled. The speeches on award day suggest that the school fostered respect for "apostles of democracy."[10] One can imagine the young scholarship student being encouraged and inspired by an ethos that recognized hard work and ability regardless of social station;[11] yet Cret apparently was too eager to study architecture to complete his degree at the Lycée. To the dismay of the school, which implored Cret's mother to dissuade her son from forgoing a credential as valuable as the *baccalauréat* and which even offered him more financial assistance to persuade him to stay, Cret at age 17 returned to Lyon to live with his family in the Rue St. Nizier, just two blocks away from the École des Beaux-Arts in the Place des Terraux (Fig. 1).[12]

The school that Cret entered, though part of the national system of schools of fine arts, was a particularly Lyonnais institution that in its traditions and practices challenged the privileging of the fine over the decorative arts, encouraged a distrust of centralized power, and reinforced ideas about the possibility of social mobility through artistic ability. Although the record of Cret's life at the École does not itself testify to his absorption of these attitudes, his subsequent work and writing do.

The École des Beaux-Arts in Lyon that Cret entered in 1893 had been founded in the eighteenth century as a school of design to train designers for the city's textile industry. Although in 1876 the École de Dessin had become officially the École Nationale des Beaux-Arts, the decorative arts courses continued with prestigious prizes attached to them.[13] Not only were local traditions maintained, but in the 1890s speakers at the school's prize ceremonies gave support to the struggle to end the advantages enjoyed by the famed École des Beaux-Arts in Paris and to decentralize the French system

Figure 1. Place des Terreaux – Hôtel de Ville, Fontaine Bartholdi, and Palais des Arts – Lyon. (Photo: c. 1920, reproduction by J. Gastineau; Archives Municipales de Lyon.)

of fine-arts education.[14] Lyonnais architects objected to the fact that Paris alone was able to give students dispensation from two years of military service and, more important, to offer the architectural *diplôme,* the second most important professional credential an architect could have (the first being the Grand Prix de Rome, which theoretically was open to any Frenchman).

Significantly, this fight for pedagogical equality was tied to the Lyonnais architectural profession's resistance to the idea of a national aesthetic imposed from without. As a president of the Société Academique d'Architecture de Lyon offered: "We would not wish to prevent anyone from following the Parisian mode, but could one not do it without being obliged to pass through the hands of Commissions from the capital."[15]

Architectural independence had its corollary in the Lyonnais belief in the city as more republican than Paris.[16] Indeed, one prominent architect, Gaspard André (1840–96), who was in the forefront of the fight for regional equality, allegedly characterized the city's *hôtel de ville* as a "fortress of liberty."[17] It is provocative that Cret's first partner would claim that André was the architect whom Cret most admired when he was young.[18]

Cret's thinking about the role of institutions seems to have been marked by these struggles. He displayed in his later professional life a profound dis-

trust for the artistic and political consequences of centralized authority and a willingness to speak out against it. In 1924, in a telling case, Cret warned against the "unity of doctrine" being advocated by his French colleague Albert Ferran, who was teaching in an American university and urging Americans to adopt the French system of centralized architectural pedagogy. Cret claimed:

> Centuries of centralized government have accustomed people [in France] to the rule of an administration somewhat akin to the system of government carried out in China by the Mandarins. In America, government bureaus have so far taken no part in aesthetic questions, an indifference for which we may well be thankful when we consider what effect such election might have upon our most cherished creeds.[19]

Cret's years at the École in Lyon were shaped on the one hand by financial pressures and on the other by his determination to win the Prix de Paris with its generous stipend and its opportunity to study in Paris. That the difficulties marked him is suggested by the vividness with which he remembered his grueling schedule and lack of money.

> I was there [at home] only to sleep: École des Beaux-Arts from eight to noon, office of Joannès Bernard, then that of [Louis] Rogniat [another architect also active in the Société Académique d'Architecture de Lyon] from 1:30 to six, evening course from eight to ten, or the library on the days that I didn't have class. – I certainly did not know what it was to spend a whole evening with friends, except sometimes to go to an opera for sixty centimes, the price of the top gallery.[20]

Cret's record reveals both his hard work and talent.[21] Passage through the École in Lyon, like that in Paris, was based on acquiring a sufficient number of points in the school's weekly *concours* through the winning of mentions or medals.[22] Some of these competitons carried the added incentive of rather substantial monetary awards. Cret completed the preliminary course in a year and a half, during that time winning second prize in the SAAL's annual archaeological competition. The following year as a student in the Second Division of the class in architecture he won first prize in the SAAL's Concours d'architecture. The next year he won first prize for his record in the École's weekly *concours* and first prize for a decorative composition in a national competition open to all French art students and run by the Société d'Encouragement à l'Art et à l'Industrie.[23] Clearly Cret was proving his talent both within and beyond the École.

By the academic year 1895–6 Cret, still in the Second Division, was training for the Prix de Paris, which was awarded to only one of the painting, sculpture, and architectural students at the École in Lyon. That year, though

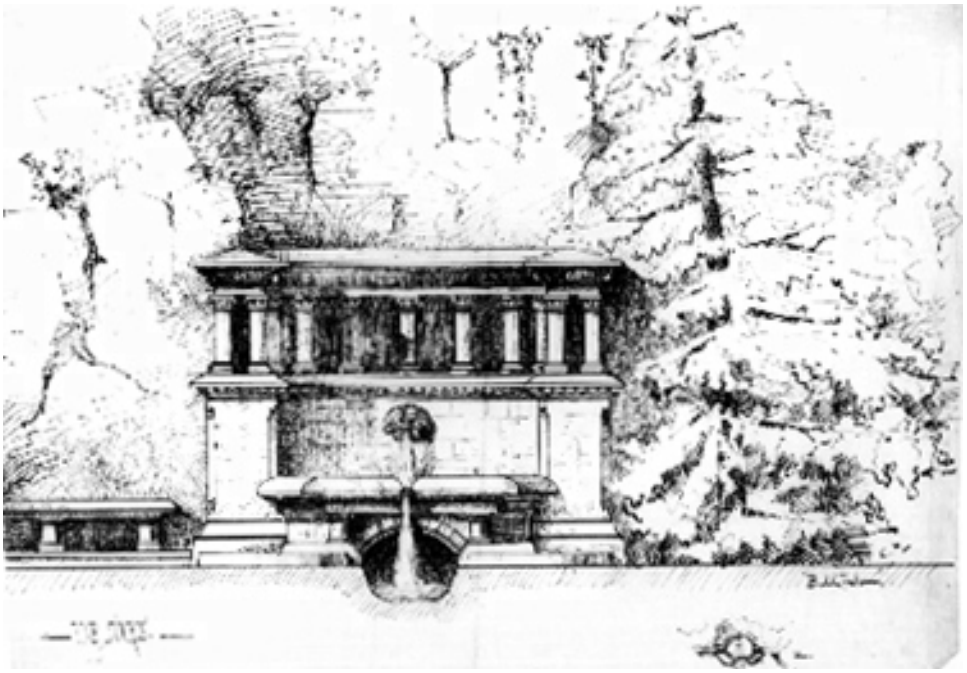

Figure 2. Paul Philippe Cret. "Une Source" (a fountain), student work, École des Beaux-Arts, Lyon. (Paul P. Cret Collection, Architectural Archives of the University of Pennsylvania, gift of John F. Harbeson.)

he was admitted to the competition, he did not receive a mention;[24] but the following year, in addition to winning first prize in the annual *concours* and first prize for his record in the weekly *concours*, Cret won the Prix de Paris.[25] He had been at the school only four years.

Unfortunately, it is not possible from the little surviving material to assess specifically what Cret learned about architectural design while in Lyon. It seems, however, that he was taught the fundamental principle of Beaux-Arts design, which was to convey the character of an institution.[26] At the award ceremony, Cret's winning Prix de Paris design for a *chateau d'eau* or waterworks was described as distinguished "by an aspect of the force and resistance to the pressure of the waters collected in the reservoirs," whereas the second place entry merely had "elegant cachet."[27] Cret's work, in short, was praised for conveying the essential function of a civic waterworks, which was to manage the flow of water. Although his Prix de Paris drawings have not come to light, a modest pen and ink drawing for "Une Source" (a spring or fountain) done while Cret was in Lyon shows a similar concern for appropriate character. Here the abundance of the water is conveyed through the splitting of the rim of the stone basin (Fig. 2).[28]

Whereas the emphasis on institutional characterization was a tenet of French Beaux-Arts architectural pedagogy, Cret's ability to use architectural form vividly may have been developed by Lyon's brilliant young professor of architecture, Eugène Huguet (1863–1914).[29] Huguet, who had studied at the École in Lyon, had gone on to the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris where he had entered the atelier Blondel. In 1891 he assumed the position of professor of architecture at the École in Lyon on the retirement of his own professor.

In these years, when the appeal of the flowing lines of art nouveau was challenging the hegemony of classical architecture, Huguet, by means of intensity of scale and clarity of profiles, demonstrated the expressive value of classicism.[30] In his most famous civic building, the Palais Municipal des Expositions et Conservatoire in Lyon, his control of the depth and contours of the window reveals allowed him to contrast an extremely open interior with a densely rusticated facade wall (Figs. 3,4). Although this work was not designed until 1902, after Cret had left Lyon, Cret would have known Huguet's *maisons à loyer* at 7–9 rue Bonnel. There the play is between the trompe l'oeil details of knotted ropes, pendulous bunches of fruit and soft drapery, and a deeply shadowed rustication of Piranesian weight (Figs. 5–6).

A fellow student at the École, writing many years later about Cret's work, suggested: "one recognizes the underlying influence of Huguet in the elegant simplicity of certain [of Cret's] molding profiles."[31] Certainly, in the late 1920s, when Cret saw classicism threatened by both the fashion for art deco and the revolution of radical modernism, he, like his first *patron,* proposed in his own work a revitalization through unexpected syntax and details.

Winning the Prix de Paris guaranteed Cret an income of eighteen hundred francs annually for three years. Although this amount would hardly provide for a comfortable life-style, still it was a significant amount from a working-class perspective.[32] Appropriately, a speaker at that year's prize ceremony rehearsed the Lyonnais tradition of social mobility through talent. Listeners were reminded of those students who "after a full day come from behind the counters, from the stores, from the atelier in order to finish their evening in study" and of "the artists who have suddenly appeared [in Lyon], like miracles of nature in the families of workers and tradespeople."[33] Cret could see his personal circumstances mirrored in this image of the Lyonnais republican ethos.

AT THE ÉCOLE DES BEAUX-ARTS IN PARIS

Cret did not follow Lyonnais tradition and enroll in the atelier Blondel at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris as Huguet and also Tony Garnier had

Figure 3. *(above)* Eugène Huguet. Palais Municipal des Expositions et Conservatoire, quai de Bondy, Lyon, 1902–4; facade. (Photo: author.)

Figure 4. *(right)* Eugène Huguet. Palais Municipal des Expositions et Conservatoire; *vestibule d'honneur.* (Photo: author.)

done, probably because Paul Blondel, who had personal ties to Lyon, was no longer its *patron*.[34] Instead he entered the atelier Pascal, which was one of the more venerable of the ateliers not directly sponsored by the school, and interestingly the one the Lyonnais chauvinist Gaspard André had attended. Cret's choice of atelier, however, needs no arcane explanation. In the years that Cret was studying in Lyon, students of Jean-Louis Pascal (1837–1920) had won the Prix de Rome three times, and the atelier had become one of the most popular at the École.[35]

Pascal had, beyond his recent string of Prix de Rome successes, a particular distinction as a teacher. He was known for helping students to develop their own conceptions. As one scholar has characterized his significance: "Pascal contributed to formalizing the method of intervention of the professor on the project of the student. He was the principal contriver of a pedagogy specific to the project: this idea by which the professor, adopting the project of the student, must help him to pull it off."[36] Cret would in time become one of the most renowned teachers of architecture in the United States by using a similar approach with students at the University of Pennsylvania, and his own oeuvre would be built upon insistence on the uniqueness of the project at hand.[37]

The projects at the École, at least by the end of the century, focused not on issues of style but on problems that encouraged architects to take an active role in the development of building types. The published lectures of Julien Guadet (1834–1908), who had become professor of theory at the École in 1894, centered upon those institutions most representative of a secular republic – museums, libraries, courthouses, and so on.[38]

What was significant about Guadet's teaching, however, was not simply this emphasis on civic buildings but the concern for modernity and "experimental progress."[39] Students were taught that architecture could register the current state of society through the design of institutional buildings with a character appropriate to modern conditions. Their first task was to perceive within the *programme* (the given set of functional requirements) the latent potential for change within the institution. Then they were to design a building that would make their *parti* legible, relying on a general set of (classical) compositional conventions – symmetry, hierarchy, axiality, proportion. Although it had not always been the case, by the 1860s the preferred plan type was that of the *cour d'honneur*, that is, a courtyard screened from the street in which minor functions were distributed along the flanks and the most important ones located in the position of honor at the "head" of the court.[40] Through decisions about which type of rooms to place where, their relative proportions, and their individual characterization, architects

Figure 5. *(above)* Eugène Huguet. *Maisons à loyer,* 7–9, rue de Bonnel, Lyon, 1895–7; facades. (Photo: author.)

Figure 6. *(right)* Eugène Huguet. 9, rue de Bonnel, Lyon; facade. (Photo author.)

could make known their interpretation of the present possibilities for the institution.

Like his good friend Guadet, Jean-Louis Pascal showed throughout his career the importance of initiative in the interpretation of the program. One scholar, who characterized Pascal's winning Grand Prix design as "brilliant," has stressed that to achieve his compelling result, "Pascal had to simplify the complex and perverse program."[41] Pascal himself said at a speech in 1914, on the occasion of being awarded the Gold Medal of the Royal Institute of British Architects, that it was necessary to "put in order" the program one was given by the client.[42]

Significantly, Cret's successes in competitions for civic buildings in the United States were accomplished in good part by his willingness to do just

that – to cut through the complexities and ambiguities that must accrue to any program owing to the circumstances of institutional history and the conflicting interests of the building's constituencies, and to offer a design that seemed by its simplicity to reveal the immediate character of the institution.

Cret arrived at the École at a time when the infamous Dreyfus case was exposing the vulnerability of republican institutions to prejudice and special interests.[43] A link between Guadet's architectural teaching and republican ideals may be found in the introduction Cret's *patron* Pascal would write in 1909 to Guadet's *Eléments et théorie de l'architecture* when he traced the family lineage of his recently deceased friend Guadet back to the revolutionaries of 1789.[44] Thus the Beaux-Arts method of education Cret encountered at the École encouraged architects to take an active role in a progressive characterization of institutions at the very time that the intellectual and political climate fostered a sense of the susceptibility of social institutions to antirepublican forces. Institutional definition was hardly a matter to be taken lightly.

How sensitive Cret became to the difficulty of institutions in maintaining republican ideals may be judged from a letter he wrote to his wife Marguerite during World War I, wherein he decried the "narrow castes protecting their privileges" that he thought dominated France:

> [T]he Institute, the Judiciary, the Polytechnicians, the Administration, etc., all have only one preoccupation: the defense and extension of their privileges. . . . The pseudo-rights (which are the privileges abolished solemnly in 1789 and reestablished in quiet) . . . are for them only the barriers put between them and the crowd, in the shelter of which they can sleep in peace without risk of being awakened by the harried people. . . .

And he did not exclude the architectural profession from this fault:

> The little coterie of grands-Prix [*sic*], for example, is made up of people who in the great majority are very worthy of regard . . . Pascal, Bernier, Hébrard . . . are people more than estimable. Why is it necessary that as a group, they lose their individual good sense and let themselves slide, for the benefit of the caste, into improprieties that would make them blush if they were to their individual profit?[45]

So strongly did Cret feel about institutional privilege that he chose not to take advantage of certain wartime benefits that the French government had granted to *architectes diplômés*.[46]

Cret's record at the École in Paris, like the one he achieved in Lyon, suggests that he was among the more talented students even in this highly competitive environment and that he was in a hurry, probably because he could not financially afford to go slowly.[47] It took the average student two to four

years to accumulate sufficient points in the *concours* merely to pass into the first class.[48] Cret's stipend from the Prix de Paris would run out in three.

Although Cret placed first among all the students in the competition for admission, by the end of his first year he had acquired only one *valeur* for an *esquisse,* a twelve-hour sketch problem done *en loge* that required only one drawing. The biggest hurdle of second class was the series of construction problems. In addition, students had to get at least two points on a *projet rendu,* the two-month rendered drawing problems set every other month, which meant they had to earn either one first mention or two second mentions. However, they could not even enter this type of *concours* until they had received mentions on two *analytiques,* which tested students' facility in using the classical orders. It took Cret another year and a half, until 6 August 1900, to clear all these requirements and enter the first class.

Cret tore through the requirements of the first class, which were primarily *projets rendus* and *esquisse* problems. By the end of his first full year at this level, he had accumulated sixteen points in eleven competitions. That year he was awarded the Grande Médaille d'Émulation, which was given to the student with the most points for the year. With the honor came the Prix Jean Leclaire of the Académie des Beaux-Arts, which carried a purse of five hundred francs.

PASCAL AND CRET, *PATRON* AND *ÉLÈVE*

The circumstantial evidence, based on comparison of Cret's student work and the buildings of his *patron,* suggests that Cret learned from Pascal to adopt a latitudinarian approach to classicism that allowed the program to suggest the appropriate variant of the classical language. Throughout his career Pascal would adjust the style of his architecture so as to clarify the subject of the problem.[49] Thus, for example, for the memorial (done with Ernest-Georges Coquart) at the École des Beaux-Arts to Henri Regnault and the other students killed in the Franco–Prussian War, Pascal designed a tabernacle with a stiff Aeolian Ionic order backed by a mosaic of foliage, with a wall that appeared to be made of tautly stretched embossed fabric (Fig. 7). In other words, for a work so intimately connected by both program and location with the École, he used elements in keeping with the *néo-grec* architecture of Duban's building.[50] For the monument to Charles Garnier, architect of the *néo-baroque* Opéra, however, he used the lush curves and heavy ornament appropriate for Garnier's most famous work.

Even within a single building Pascal was prepared to use a variety of classical idioms to characterize the institution. In 1877 he had placed third in

the competition for the new Faculté de Médecine in Bordeaux and was given the commission because of the economy of his design.[51] The second phase of this important work was still in progress while Cret was at the École and would not be completed until 1914. With this building Pascal had the opportunity to contribute to the definition of a quintessentially republican institution, for the Faculté de Médecine was directly related both to the increase in scientific specialization and to the republican government's efforts to foster a meritocracy through public education.[52] In the words of the mayor of Bordeaux, on the inauguration of the new building in 1888, it was

> born of that necessity imposed on democratic societies that wish to survive, not only to expand everywhere and to develop instruction at all levels, but also to raise the standard in order to call forth from there, in the service of the nation, an élite of men and citizens capable of directing and preserving it from the formidable threats of despotism and anarchy.[53]

Appropriately, the significance attributed to regional education in these years may be read in the facade of Pascal's building. Earlier in the nineteenth century, schools and libraries had been conceived, like prisons and hospitals, as background structures for more symbolic governmental buildings.[54] However, the Bordeaux Faculté de Médecine, with its rusticated base, projecting central pavilion articulated with Ionic columns, and its elaborate roof treatment, is in its scale and detailing undeniably grand (Fig. 8). It is also Bordelais, recalling the famous public square designed by Jacques Gabriel in Bordeaux in the 1740s.[55]

Within, by contrast, although the sequence of public spaces is quite extended, the classicism is subtly utilitarian, in keeping with the scientific function of the institution. In the "*atrium*," for example, the Ionic columns of the piers together with the brackets and beams of the ceiling form an austere gridded structure. Not only is the grand staircase made of metal but the rivets are left visible (Fig. 9).

A review of some of Cret's surviving drawings shows his willingness to use style, as Pascal's work taught, to help characterize an institution. However, instead of the big-boned classicism of his *patron*'s work, Cret's drawings suggest a taste for surface refinement, as well as reveal his great facility as a draftsman.

For "Un Trône épiscopal" (bishop's throne), the 1901 problem for the Concours Rougevin, a seven-day competition in *ornement et d'ajustement en loge,* Cret used a luminous Romanesque–Byzantine style and created an aura of formal yet intimate religiosity (Fig. 10).[56] The contrast between the sharply focused tabernacle, which he has rendered as if it were of polished ivory, and the mottled, indeterminate wall surfaces of pale golds and blues,

Figure 7. Vue du monument à Regnault dans la cour du Mûrier à l'École des Beaux-Arts (view of the monument to [Henri] Regnault in the cour du Mûrier at the École des Beaux-Arts), 1877; Pascal and Coquart, architects, Chapt and Degeorge, sculptors. (Photo: Émile Camut; Paris, École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts.)

highlighted with deeper blues and reds, works to keep the eye on the key architectural feature. The program had required that there be enough room on the dais for two attendants to robe the bishop. Cret disposed them asymmetrically, and in postures that gently animate the formal composition and the rituals of the Church.

Cret was awarded a *première médaille* and the six-hundred-franc prize for this drawing. The balance between the breadth and shimmer of the color and the subtle grid of horizontal and vertical breaks in plane, between the abstraction of the technique and the rendering of details – a few dots of gold are seen to be braziers, undulating lines come into focus as carved figures – is typical of the visual and conceptual depth of Cret's drawings.[57]

For an *esquisse* problem, "Une Tribune dans une salle de fêtes" (a mezzanine in a room for formal social gatherings), Cret melded a programmatically appropriate stylistic choice with a technique evocative of the quickness

Figure 8. Jean-Louis Pascal. Faculté de Médecine et de Pharmacie de Bordeaux, 1879–88; facade on the Place d'Aquitaine. (Photo: Bermard Chabot, © Inventaire Général France, SPADEM; courtesy Claude Laroche.)

Figure 9. *(below)* Jean-Louis Pascal. Faculté de Médecine et de Pharmacie de Bordeaux, *l'atrum.* (Photo: Claude Laroche; courtesy Claude Laroche.)

Figure 10. Paul Philippe Cret. "Un Trône épiscopal" (an episcopal throne), Prix Rougevin, 19 Feb 1901. (Paris, École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts.)

Figure 11. Paul Philippe Cret. "Une Tribune dans une salle de fêtes" (a mezzanine in a room for formal social gatherings). Esquisse de 1ère classe, 1ère seconde médaille, 11 October 1900. (Paris, École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts.)

with which the drawing was done – in twelve hours *en loge* (Fig. 11). The delicate cascade of ink lines, with splashy accents of blue and gold, appears vaguely baroque, vaguely rococo, even, because of the asymmetry of the acute perspective, vaguely art nouveau; in short, a witty confection of styles suggestive of elegant events.[58] He received a *1ère seconde médaille* in this *concours* in 1900.

In his *projet rendu*, for "Un Musée pour un chef-lieu d' arrondissement," both the elevation and the plan drawing show that he understood the issue of the *concours* (Figs. 12, 13).[59] At a time when many regional cities were

Figure 12. *(above)* Paul Philippe Cret. "Un Musée pour un chef-lieu d'arrondissement" (a museum for the principal town of an *arrondissement*). Projet rendu de 1ère classe, 1ère seconde médaille, 2 April 1901; [elevation]. (Paul P. Cret Collection, Architectural Archives of the University of Pennsylvania, gift of John F. Harbeson.)

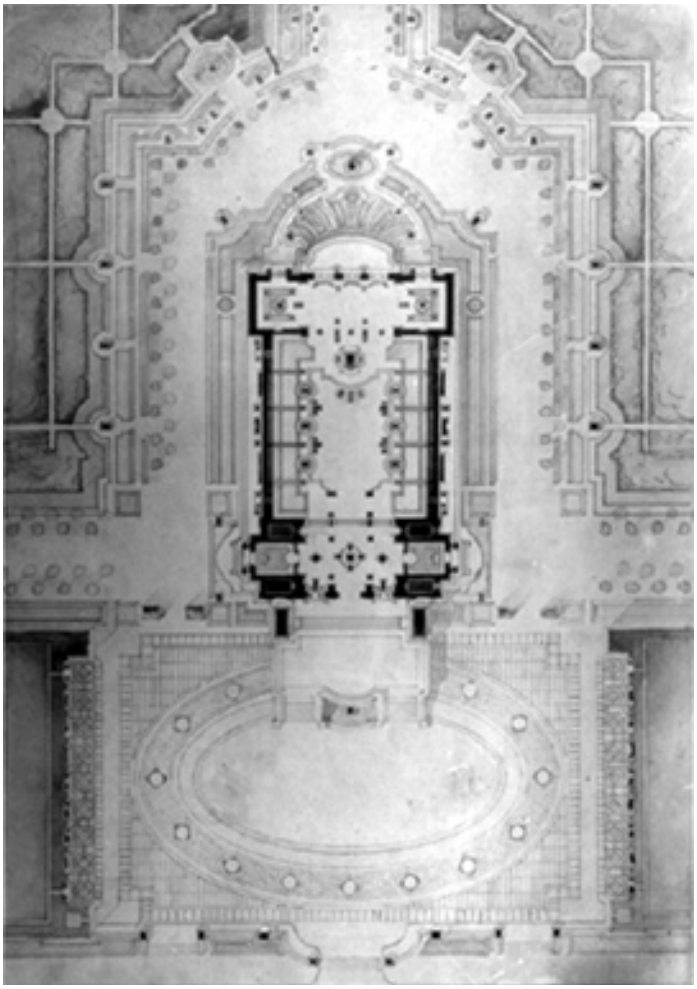

Figure 13. *(right)* Paul Philippe Cret. "Un Musée pour un chef-lieu d'arrondissement" [plan]. (*Les Médailles des Concours d'Architecture à l'École Nationale des Beaux-Arts à Paris, 3e année scolaire* [1900–1]. Paris: A. Guerinet, Librairie d'Architecture et d'Art Décoratif [1901].)

building or enlarging their museums, the problem was to distinguish between a major and minor art museum.[60] This one was clearly to be modest, for the program specified only one gallery for paintings and one for sculpture, with the rest of the collection assumed to be drawings, engravings, and small objets d'arts. There were to be no foyers or grand staircases but only a vestibule, the least imposing of circulation spaces. For the *entourage*, the setting, what was wanted was a garden preceded by a small *place,* a public square, framed with porticos or walls decorated with fragments of art.

Cret's plan shows that he had learned to manipulate the École's graphic conventions and to put a program "in order" (see Fig. 13). The contrast between the *mosaïque,* the tapestry of broken lines that represent decorative floor and ceiling patterns, and the *poché,* the more heavily inked lines that indicate structure, make clear that the arrangement is a linear succession of volumes, with two relatively narrow rooms bracketing the more ample one at the center. The heavy unbroken outline of the main space underscores the lack of windows and reliance on top lighting, and thus its use for paintings and works on paper. The *mosaïque* is more than decoration; it visually interweaves the volumes and defines a broad axial *promenade,* or path of movement, from the entrance to what is presumably the sidelit sculpture gallery that opens to a cascade of stairs leading down to the garden of fragments. All the pieces of a good Beaux-Arts plan are here: the clear proportions of the independent volumes, the axial disposition of openings, the warp and weft of the details, and the telling use of the graphic conventions of *poché* and *mosaïque* so the design appears at once simpler than the sum of its parts and more ample than one might expect of a small museum.

The understated elevation is in keeping with the simplicity of the plan and elaborates on the character of the museum (see Fig. 12). The broken lines of the hipped roof articulate the higher nave and lower alcoves within. In keeping with the modest size of the institution, the compact volume is articulated not by the classical orders but by gridded triple arches that open the museum to the public. The cypresses and stark background identify the location as a regional town, one that may have once been more illustrious, judging from the Roman triumphal arch and a porch from a medieval church on the grounds, and that now displays its contemporary cultural ambition through its new museum. Cret earned a *1ère seconde médaille* for this project in 1901.

By the end of his first year in the first class, Cret had compiled more than enough values for the *diplôme,* which had become by this time an international sign of professional competence and which only required earning ten *valeurs* in the *concours.* In addition, however, this degree required the stu-

dent to spend at least a year on a building site working "assiduously" on construction, to pass an oral and written examination, and to do an individual design project.[61] It was not until June 1903, six years after arriving at the École in Paris, that Cret earned the *diplôme* by designing a crèche, a nursery school for the children of working parents.[62]

Cret could have continued at the École to compete for the Prix de Rome. He had already shown promise in it.[63] When still in the second class he had been among the thirty students who had gotten through to the second stage of this competition, which assured the winner a sinecure for life as a civic architect in France. However, Cret had already decided by December 1902 to take a teaching position in the United States offered to him by the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. A fellow student in Pascal's studio, Paul Davis, an alumnus of that university's School of Architecture, had made the contact between Cret and Warren P. Laird, head of the school.[64]

Laird agreed that Cret might have a salary of 15,000 francs ($3,000) – rather "large compared to that given to new instructors" – assured him that it was his "intention to allow the largest liberty in teaching method to our Professor of Design," and promised that Cret would have the time "to be engaged in practise."[65] He met, in short, all Cret's stipulations.[66] Cret would be joining a young institution – the School of Architecture had been founded in 1890 – but with his hiring the University of Pennsylvania would join those élite schools that could boast of a French *patron*.[67] Cret would have not only a starting income more comfortable than what he could hope for in France but also the opportunity to pursue a career outside the professional and bureaucratic hierarchies that controlled civic architecture there.[68]

His *patron* Pascal was disappointed, and wrote of "the regret that your acceptance [of the position] causes me because I see at the door one of the most serious probable contestants for the Concours de Rome."[69] Cret, however, was jubilant. He wrote to his uncle Fleury Bernard:

> Thus here I am, very happy since you know that I would like to try the American life a bit. I couldn't do it under better conditions.[70]

Cret would try the American life for a long time, teaching at the University of Pennsylvania until ill health forced his retirement in 1937, and living in Philadelphia until his death in 1945. He would become an American citizen in 1927.[71]