Teaching Architectural History in France: A Shifting Institutional Landscape

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The Institutional Landscape

In the thirty-five years since student revolts in France brought down the monopoly of the École des Beaux-Arts and called into question values and disciplinary boundaries in the university system, the teaching of architectural history in France has grown exponentially. In 1968, only a handful of art historians devoted themselves primarily to the study of architecture, and the teaching of architectural history in a studio setting was almost exclusively the work of architects and rarely a place for innovative thinking. Thirty years later, when an informal tradition of Parisian architectural historians dining together annually was formalized as the Association Française des Historiens de l'Architecture (AFHA), the first issue of the fledgling society's Bulletin listed some one hundred members. Membership has more than doubled in the four years since that time, despite the association's relatively low level of activity. This great explosion in the last three decades, which has created both characteristic sets of methodological concerns and distinct professional subcultures, can be traced to two nearly contemporary, if independent, developments: the foundation of the Inventaire Général des Monuments et Richesses Artistiques de la France in 1964, during André Malraux's tenure as minister of culture, and the decree of December 6, 1968, which set up the current system of architectural schools as a response to the events of May 1968.

The Inventaire created overnight a need for professional architectural historians and had a significant impact on the great expansion of universities in the 1960s, which was every bit as dramatic in France as it was in the United States. The brainchild of André Chastel, arguably the most influential and publicly visible French art historian of the postwar period, the Inventaire called for nothing less than a thorough survey of the artistic, architectural, urban, and landscape heritage of the country. This enormous task, which is still far from complete, was gradually implemented through a series of offices in the regional administrations of cultural affairs. Many of the brightest of an entire generation of art historians, in particular, Chastel's students, found themselves converted to architectural history and cataloguing the architectural heritage of France. As the Inventaire matured, the definition of its objects of study broadened increasingly. Heavily influenced by Italian urban history, several of Chastel's former students, led by Françoise Boudon, pioneered a new approach to studying the interaction between urban fabric and architectural form in their seminal analysis of the Parisian central market quarter. Conducted as Victor Baltard's Halles were slated for demolition, the report focused not only on Baltard's great iron-and-glass market halls of the Second Empire, but also on the morphology of party-wall housing that had developed since the late Middle Ages in central Paris. Its archaeological exactitude, applied to the Renaissance and modern periods, as well as its underlying assumptions about typology and urban morphology, set a pattern that challenged the formal models of art history. For at least a generation, a significant cross-fertilization took place between the academic teaching of architectural history and the mission of the Inventaire, even as the Inventaire focused attention on the built fabric as an equivalent to the written archives that formed the ethos of French historical research in the wake of the historiographical revolution of the Annales school (the approach to historical research associated with the periodical known as Les Annales, and which concentrated on economic and social patterns over long periods of time as historical determinants, playing down the traditional emphasis on political power). Over time, the increased professionalization of the Inventaire weakened its ties with the university, but in the past few years a new trend has emerged, creating links between the worlds of architectural preservation and academic architectural history. With the ever greater importance accorded cultural heritage (patrimoine) in both the public and private sectors—in tandem with its increasing connection to tourism and economic development—not only have many new jobs been created in what is emerging as a distinct career path, but a series of diploma programs in universities specifically related to issues of heritage administration have been developed. Another phenomenon occurring since the 1980s is the impressive growth of several archival centers for architects' papers. The project received its first and long sustained impulse in the 1970s due almost single-handedly to the
The efforts of Maurice Culot in Brussels and after 1987 in Paris with the formation of the archival department of the Institut Français d’Architecture. Today this center is jointly administered with the national archives and features a particular emphasis on the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The center has been emulated in numerous regional architectural archives, all of which have created a new focus for master’s- and doctoral-level research.

Along with the establishment of the Inventaire, the vociferous 1968 attack on the École des Beaux-Arts’s philosophy of education also led, indirectly, to a revival of interest in architectural history as a vital part of architectural education. The École was perceived as the locus of entrenched academicism, which by 1968 translated as a kind of modernist orthodoxy, and the reaction against it took the form of embracing historical research, a new respect for the city, and a rejuvenated interest in a critical historical approach to the modern movement. In the sweeping reorganization of professional education that ensued, the twenty new or reconfigured schools of architecture—including the six created in Paris and the Paris region out of the old ateliers of the École—were placed under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Public Works (Ministère de l’Équipement), where they became allied with the official response to urban problems confronting France during the post-Gaullist period of expansion. Conceived in the same spirit of preparing professionals for state service, the new schools of architecture thus did not fall under the domain of the Ministry of Education (Ministère de l’Éducation Nationale), which controls both the budgets and the curricular requirements for universities. In May 1995, the budget for architecture schools was transferred to the Ministry of Culture (Ministère de la Culture), which undertook a significant reform (decree of 27 November 1997), outlining, among other changes, ways of reorganizing the curriculum so that it would mimic the system of stages, or cycles, of university education. Since professional design education in France is usually pursued, as is the case generally in Europe, directly after secondary education and in lieu of university training, this reform allowed greater movement between the two tracks by making the four years of architectural training the equivalent of the first two cycles of university training. As a result, students with an undergraduate architectural diploma are now able to go on to pursue a research degree, often in new joint programs set up with universities. Since only universities grant doctoral degrees, the decree constitutes an important step toward bringing these two parallel universes into orbits that allow for interaction, a first significant challenge to the historic separation of academic and design cultures. Both for these reasons—internal to debates on French education—and as a consequence of mounting pressure from the European community to create greater ease of movement among faculties and schools in various countries (formalized in the Bologna declaration of 1999), there has been an increasing drive for closer alliances between university faculties and schools of architecture.

Since 1968, French schools of architecture, moreover, have enjoyed near total autonomy from one another, allowing for enormous variety in philosophies not only of design education, but also of the role of history in the education of the architect. While some schools, such as those at Lille or Nancy, have a long tradition of teaching history, in others, for example, at Rouen, history has been taught only by non-tenured faculty members, and thus has neither the political weight nor the longevity of philosophy and research projects that mark a small number of schools as real centers of historical thinking. In 2002, yet another government-sponsored study is under way to address the perennial debate over whether the schools of architecture should be brought under the control of the university system and the Ministry of Education.

One of the greatest challenges of such a merger would be bridging the cultural and professional differences that have emerged in the thirty-five years in which architectural history has developed in two entirely autonomous settings. It is not surprising that the handful of doctoral-level programs organized in the last few years as collaborations between schools of architecture and universities have side-stepped art history departments. Both the program at the School of Architecture at Belleville (Paris), organized in conjunction with the University of Paris VIII, and the one established a few years ago at the School of Architecture at Versailles in collaboration with the Université de Saint-Quentin en Yvelines are alliances with departments of urbanism and history at their respective partner universities. For as the culture of architectural history has developed in the decades since 1968, in architecture schools it has rapidly abandoned both an intellectual and a collegial tie to the history of art in favor of intellectual models drawn from the social sciences and from the typological and morphological studies associated with Italian critical historians such as Manfredo Tafuri and Saviero Muratori. Tafuri was in particular a formative influence on the School of Architecture at Belleville, which in many ways has served as a model for historical research and pedagogy in French schools of architecture. These tendencies were fostered by the creation in 1972 of the Comité de la Recherche et du Développement en Architecture (CORDA), which for nearly two decades made government funds available for research and publication. The CORDA not only yielded an
important list of publications during its heyday in the 1970s and early 1980s, but it also gave rise to a whole culture of architectural history within architectural education. It turned many architects in the direction of historical research and they defined an approach based as much in design as in historical questions, since few practitioners, if any, had prior training as historians. Today, in contrast, many of those teaching history in schools of architecture have combined initial training in architecture with a doctoral degree, often in history or urbanism.

If architectural history in France in 1968 was a stepchild of art history, the occasional pastime of a teaching architect, or the private passion of an homme de lettres like Louis Hautecoeur of the Académie Française, in 2002 the membership directory of the AFHA bears witness to a diverse and vibrant profession whose institutional affiliations reveal the extraordinary complexity of the mosaic of French architectural history education. The membership includes not only instructors in university art-history faculties and schools of architecture, but also historians on the staff of the Inventaire and of the Monuments Historiques (the state office that is involved directly with the restoration of France’s historic monuments), as well as curators in the departments of architecture of the museums and archives created since 1968, including the Musée d’Orsay, the Centre Pompidou, and the Institut Français d’Architecture. The expansion of the field has been accompanied by tremendous change and growing pains, which have been instrumental in exposing some of the ideological rifts in the teaching of French architectural history. Today, further changes are occurring (as discussed above), as architecture schools and university faculties launch cooperative doctoral programs and the importance of patrimoine has reached a new level, with the continued decentralization of regional and local administrations, whose heritage budgets have grown enormously. This trend is bound to increase further in coming years as a result of the decision in 2002 to put the administration of both the Inventaire and the Monuments Historiques under the control of local governments.

At the same time, two new Parisian institutions are positioned to play a major role in reshaping the contours of the institutional landscape: the Institut National d’Histoire de l’Art (INHA), in the planning stages for almost a decade and now completing its first year of operation, and the Cité de l’Architecture et du Patrimoine, a museum planned to occupy the shell of the Musée des Monuments Français in the Palais de Chaillot. Both are currently seeing years of planning placed in the balance as a new minister of culture, the architectural historian Jean-Jacques Aillagon, reviews priorities and budgets, an indication of the extent to which the plate tectonics of the French institutional landscape register significant shifts in party politics. Both institutions have set out to investigate the state of architectural history, its intellectual questions as well as its material resources. Both represent new focal points, as the effects of twenty years of decentralization in French education and cultural policy have stimulated competition with the Parisian monopoly on art and architectural history. To attempt to
create a snapshot of the state of teaching architectural history in early-twenty-first-century France is to describe a landscape in transition, not only one in which new centers are emerging, potentially shaping future growth and research, but one in which the country, like many members of the European union, is looking outside its borders for models, and even for students and research topics.

Despite the reputation of post-Napoleonic France as a land of centralization and state control, understanding the current debate in relation to the teaching of architectural history requires charting a complex institutional landscape and some of the historical factors that shaped it. This was already the case even as the institutions of art history were being put in place in the opening years of the Third Republic. Lyne Therrien, historiographer of French art history, notes that at the time of the creation of the first professorial chair in the new discipline (at the Collège de France in 1878), French art history was already fragmented among a multitude of independent and sometimes rival institutions. This trend has continued unabated ever since.

The University

Historically, architectural history in the university system has been primarily a subspecialty of art history departments, which themselves have only gradually become distinct from history departments during the course of the twentieth century. The slow birth of the discipline of art history from history and from archaeology is perhaps best symbolized by the very building of the Institut d’Art et d’Archéologie in Paris. The immense brick neo-Byzantine palace was designed by Paul Bigot and opened in 1931. Ringed with terra-cotta casts of Assyrian relief sculpture, it presents an unexpected and exotic jagged profile on the prominent corner it occupies along the tree-lined avenue, leading from the Palais de Luxembourg to the Observatoire. The entrance faces the rue Michelet, named for France’s most famed nineteenth-century historian, Jules Michelet. Indeed, “rue Michelet” in common parlance is synonymous with the two most powerful faculties: the art history departments of the Université de Paris I and the Université de Paris IV, the products of a split institutionalized in 1968 and ever since colored by political overtones. Paris I and Paris IV share the Institut building but little else; they operate independently and have strong differences in personality and pedagogical and ideological philosophies. Both have comprehensive art history curricula and students may concentrate in architectural history at the master’s level (maitrise), although only a handful of courses are devoted solely to architectural history in the first years of study through the license (roughly the equivalent of undergraduate-level training in the U.S.).

The Diplôme d’Études Approfondies (DEA; analogous to a Master of Arts degree) in architectural history at Paris I—created in 1993—is the only degree of its kind in France that recognizes architectural history as a distinct subject. Conceived to allow students to transfer from other tracks, including schools of architecture, the program is a sign of a desire for greater fluidity between the university and professional training. With its emphasis on architecture since the eighteenth century, it also defies the long-standing truism that the history of the modern movement and an interest in contemporary architecture were the exclusive domain of schools of architecture. Alongside the very active Centre
Ledoux, which focuses on the architecture of the eighteenth century throughout Europe, Paris I has also developed courses as well as textbooks for a broad-based study of the twentieth century. Until recently, Paris I also had an innovative set of courses on the history of construction, offering an approach to architectural history quite distinct from that of either the new or the old art history. In the same spirit, programs that examine the history of technology, the organization of resources, and the history of professions rather than the history of styles are shaping the curricula of two very different institutions that train designers and planners: the École Spéciale d’Architecture, France’s only private school of architecture, and the Université Technologique de Compiègne, which educates future engineers and city managers. The mere fact that this kind of approach has found both adherents and curricular support in such diverse settings is evidence of the shifting contours of the current landscape of architectural history teaching in France.

By contrast, at Paris IV, a conscious effort is made in the curriculum to embed architectural history within the history of art for each period taught. In recent years, new appointments in the history of patrimony and in the history of design and of decorative arts have also expanded this notion of a universal, trans-media study of art history, in which architecture is an integral part of a larger visual culture. Interviewed for this article, Bruno Foucart, a pioneer in the revival of study of the nineteenth century, underscored that in his opinion the rapprochement of architectural historians at the university with those in schools of architecture is currently waning and cannot be compared to the rich interchanges that characterized the 1970s. For Foucart, architectural history as taught in the academy is based in historian Jean-Marie Perouse de Montclos’s seminal 1988 survey of types and styles, Architecture. Vocabulaire, which remains a fundamental reference. At Paris I, much attention has been devoted to researching and writing a series of textbooks intended to reorient the study of modern architecture in particular to the history of national institutions and practices rather than the history of style or masterworks, which characterized older texts. While these texts codify the influential teaching of Gérard Monnier at Paris I, it remains to be seen how widespread their influence will be.

While at Paris IV framing architectural history within art history is a conscious decision, outside the University of Paris few provincial universities have faculty sufficiently specialized in architecture to allow art history students to focus exclusively on architectural history. In many cases, a strong tradition of regional studies in art history departments—dating from the administrative reform of 1885, which allowed university faculties to receive donations and grants for research focused on regional subjects—and an almost universal insistence on archival training in master’s-level research have resulted in numerous master’s theses and doctoral dissertations devoted to local architecture, particularly monographs on significant local buildings or architects. Examples include the Université de Bordeaux, where the architecture of Bordeaux and the Aquitaine have long been a focus of both teaching and research, and the Université d’Aix-Marseille, which has developed a focus on the art and architecture of Provence. At Aix-Marseille, the master’s-level seminar on Provençal art and architecture also calls on local museum curators and historians on the staff of the regional office of the Inventaire, making for a blurring of those boundaries that have often developed elsewhere between academic and professional practice. A similar rapprochement, organized by the École d’Architecture de Versailles under the direction of François Loyer, takes the form of a monthly seminar bringing together master’s students and historians from the Inventaire of the Paris region.

Other regional centers in which local architectural research is a central focus include the Université de Lyon, where an active series of publications has concentrated on local architectural and urban issues, as well as on decorative arts in France’s second city. By contrast, several faculties are associated primarily with the study of individual periods: Besançon and Poitiers with medieval art history, and Tours with its internationally known Institute for the Study of the Renaissance (Centre d’Études Supérieures de la Renaissance). At Rennes (Université de Bretagne), the focus is the local architecture of Brittany, particularly in the nineteenth century. Rennes has launched an important series of publications paying particular attention to architectural preservation and heritage—unusual, given a generally weak French market for monographs on architectural history. Finally, Strasbourg has long been a center for architectural history, and its program is more typical, offering a broad range of art history in courses that incorporate architectural history rather than treat it as a separate subject.

Although the notion still persists that university art history departments are bastions of tradition dominated by the history of style and an emphasis on masterworks, there is ample evidence of innovation. The important growth is in new university programs specifically designed to train professionals in preservation and heritage management, although these remain for the time being diploma rather than doctoral programs. Art history departments have responded, notably Paris I and Paris IV, both of which have created tenured posts in the history and theory of patrimoine, which in France also includes the cultural context of...
preservation and related cultural history, such as the study of "institutions and sites of memory," an approach strongly associated with the work of historian Pierre Nora. The coursework at Paris IV reflects the recent expansion of the Inventaire's research to include industrial archaeology and the history of infrastructure, while at Paris I, the history of museums and collections is examined in depth. In addition to academic specializations, there are numerous professional training options, which mix academic courses with internships, such as those offered under the rubric of the Institut Universitaire Technique (IUT) and lead to a Maîtrise des Sciences et Techniques (MST) or a Diplôme d'Études Supérieures Spécialisées (DESS). Most of the training in these programs is focused on patrimoine, although significant attention is also given to urbanism. A unique, master's-level DESS program at Paris I, in collaboration with the Versailles school of architecture, concentrates on garden and landscape design. The curriculum spans art history, law, preservation, botany, geography, and landscape, and includes internships (often paid) with state restoration architects on urban renovation projects.

Outside the University

Although the university has been upheld increasingly as a model to which even the schools of architecture might aspire, training in architectural history is matched, even rivaled, by courses of study provided by the mosaic of institutions of advanced learning that exist parallel to the university system—one of the great particularities of the French system of higher education. These range from the famous Grandes Écoles, prestigious training grounds for France's professional elite in many domains, to smaller but no less highly competitive professional schools that prepare restoration architects or historians to work in the state services of patrimoine, to schools that primarily turn out museum curators, archivists, and librarians. Many students combine instruction in more than one of these institutions before entering into the state-run system of competitions that still serve as the principal means of recruitment for positions in French museums, universities, and government administrations.

The École du Louvre, founded in 1882 as the first French faculty specializing in art history and archaeology, was conceived to train curators for France's national and provincial museums. It offers a three-year-long diploma program in art history, which mixes required lecture courses that survey the history of art with individual specializations, including architectural history, in which there are numerous elective courses. Many students combine study in the school's lecture courses (which are also open to the public) with pursuit of a higher degree at another institution. Without a permanent faculty of its own, the École du Louvre serves as a forum for museum curators, patrimoine specialists and administrators, and archivists to teach their areas of specialization. Although not compulsory for entry into the professional ranks of France's highly centralized system of curatorial posts, which in recent years requires a diploma from the Institut National du Patrimoine, the École du Louvre retains a vital role in preparing students for the competitions that admit candidates to curatorial posts.

The venerable model for the École du Louvre, the École Nationale des Chartes in Paris, founded in 1821 to offer training for professionals involved in archival work, including librarians and curators, has long been associated with the evolution of art history as a discipline. Art history instruction, with a particular emphasis on medieval archaeology, has been a mainstay of the curriculum, but in the last decade a marked development of teaching in architectural history has taken place. Students are offered a survey of art and architectural history from the Middle Ages to the present during their three years of formal course work, after which they must write a thesis, which must demonstrate both the ability to research an original subject and to use and catalogue an array of archival resources pertaining to that subject. The emphasis is on primary sources, in the great tradition of this archival training school. Students are held to a strict time limit of two and a half years to produce the thesis, with the result that the overwhelming number of subjects chosen are Parisian and monographic. The École des Chartes's students in art history also enroll in the doctoral seminars offered at the École des Hautes Études, where members of the École de Chartes faculty offer seminars with a methodological slant on topics in architectural history. In recent years, this dual training has developed into a parallel track to university training in architectural history.

A whole area of research work by Chartistes, as the École de Chartes's graduates are known, exhibits a highly historical and documentary emphasis, and this approach is reflected in a new journal, Livraisons d'Histoire de l'Architecture, which primarily publishes student research. École de Chartes professor Jean-Michel Leniaud insists that architectural history as a discipline has yet to realize its full scholarly potential, and he cites the quantitative methods of historical research as a standard to be set in the future, encouraging his students to focus on the history of the architectural profession, the administrative framework of architectural practice in France, and the history of the architectural press and publications.

The newest of the professional schools to be estab-
lished (1991) is the École Nationale du Patrimoine, now renamed the Institut National du Patrimoine (INP), which prepares future conservateurs du patrimoine, an important percentage of whom will work directly with architecture either as part of the Inventaire Général or in the administration of Monuments Historiques. The highly selective admission is by competition, and most of the candidates have already trained at another institution, often the École du Louvre or the École des Chartes, the latter having a specially designed competition for entry to the INP. While graduates of the INP work largely in curatorial posts, the Centre des Hautes Études de Chaillot prepares students who have already received an architectural degree to pursue restoration work. This direction is an outgrowth of the studies in medieval architectural history established in the 1880s at the Musée de la Sculpture Comparée (today the Musée des Monuments Français, which, under the direction of Jean-Louis Cohen, is being transformed into the Cité de l’Architecture et du Patrimoine). The museum and its courses were conceived to counter the classical bias of the École des Beaux-Arts and thus might be seen as an indirect outgrowth of Viollet-le-Duc’s ill-fated attempt to introduce teaching of national (medieval) art history into the architecture curriculum at the École des Beaux-Arts under Napoleon III.¹⁷ Today, the school is headed by Loyer, a leading figure in both architectural history and national preservation policy in France who has long served as a mediating force between the academic and professional realms.¹⁸

Schools of Architecture

The greatest number of architectural historians teaching in France, as in many countries, is employed in schools of architecture, although the commitment to architectural history and the philosophy of its role in the curriculum varies enormously from school to school. Traditionally, courses in architectural history have been taught by architects to architects, but in recent years architecture schools have begun to hire trained historians (holders of a doctorate) to lead these courses, and the variety and commitment to research has increased enormously as a result. While there is stiff competition for these highly sought-after positions, particularly since there have been only a few posts available in university art history departments in recent years, most schools of architecture are vociferous in preferring historians with architectural training.¹⁹ Unlike in the U.S., the trend is for historians to have doctorates from a school of architecture or an art history department. French schools of architecture, because of their autonomy from the university, cannot offer the doctorate degree and thus no equivalent bifurcation within the university itself is possible. Instead, there is a growing group of historians in France who have combined advanced research in history at a university with their undergraduate architecture training, but in most cases their doctoral work in architectural history was undertaken in either the social sciences, often the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, or with a specialist in urbanism or history, since doctoral students in France have their primary ties to a thesis director rather than to a university department. Only a very few architects have pursued doctoral studies under the direction of an art historian.²⁰ This preference for urbanism or one of the social sciences as a framework for doctoral research, rather than the history of art, is at once a reflection on and a reinforcement of the important ideological differences between historians teaching in universities and in schools of architecture. For many educated and teaching in schools of architecture, architectural history consists of a set of specific questions and methods that can best be developed within urban history and allied with the specific abilities of an architect to think in terms of form and design methods. The historical relationship of the discipline to art history is no longer relevant.

Although there is enormous disparity in both the quantity and quality of architectural history instruction in schools of architecture, a fairly well established bare-bones pattern is followed in most of them. Architectural history is generally required in the first three years of study, and sometimes also in the fourth, while in the fifth and final year it is almost always offered only as an elective. In the first two years (since the 1997 reform, the first cycle), students are offered survey courses, generally covering antiquity to the present, but in some schools instruction begins only with the Renaissance. In the third and fourth years (second cycle), more topical courses are offered, such as the Italian Renaissance, social housing, or Le Corbusier, who remains a point of reference. Students who enroll in elective seminars in the fifth year are generally those who intend to develop an important historical component in their final diploma work or, increasingly, to pursue a higher degree in architectural history after completing their professional training. Overwhelmingly, instruction beyond the second year concentrates on the twentieth century, with a strong focus on the masters of the modern movement (Le Corbusier, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Frank Lloyd Wright, Alvar Aalto, and Louis Kahn predominate). Very frequently, history courses are complemented by classes that require students to prepare measured drawings of historical buildings, a skill that remains one of the great traditions of French architectural education.
There is widely held sentiment, however, that the glorious and experimental role of history in architectural education has passed. One even finds considerable nostalgia, among architectural historians in the architecture schools, for the approach of the late Bernard Huet, for whom architectural history had an important pedagogical function in design education, one in which history was an integral but distinct part of studio culture. During Huet’s time, particularly at Belleville, where he taught, there was the sense that a radical concept was possible: namely, that a good education in architectural history could produce a good architect. Today the situation is profoundly different. With several notable exceptions, in most schools of architecture in France history is largely compartmentalized within the curriculum and the reigning ethos is that instruction in history should serve the interests of training professionals. The current complex and often difficult debate raging on the specificity of architectural history within schools of architecture is so prevalent that it is safe to say that the rift is no longer between the world of the university and that of schools of architecture, but rather within schools of architecture, between two different professions. While it is almost universally agreed that the compartmentalization of historical courses presents a problem, there is no consensus on how to address the issue and on how historical instruction should be positioned in design schools. Opinions run the gamut, from those who maintain that history should always be framed in relation to the issues under investigation in the design studio at each stage of the student’s education, to those who argue, sometimes vehemently, for a curriculum in which history is framed as a distinct discourse, with its own problematic and its own raison d’être. More often than not, the latter position is held by younger architectural historians who have doctorates in urbanism, history, or less frequently art history, and who may or may not have undergraduate training in design. Many of them feel that, if only to establish its legitimacy, architectural history must assert itself as an autonomous and critical discipline, one allied with history and the social sciences. These historians do not question its relevance to design, but they do maintain that it can best be found through a kind of interdisciplinarity rather than an instrumentalization of history. The debate divides frequently along fairly clear generational lines more than along purely professional ones. But the very vigor of the discussion, and the great number of those who hold that topics for teaching and research can be independent of design work, is evidence that after more than three decades a self-sustaining and autonomous historical profession has emerged within the culture of the architecture school. For them it is self-evident that a school of architecture might contain students as well as faculty members for whom design talents and sensibilities are a background rather than a foreground of the work of historical thought. This is not to say that there are not significant centers of innovation, places where the two points of view yield creative tension rather than rifts and ghettoization. One of them is the architecture school in Versailles, whose program is informed by the legacy of Huet and architects of the 1970s who defined themselves through historical and theoretical work. Over the years, this approach has not only increasingly influenced the school’s curriculum, but has also inspired a number of undergraduate architects to pursue careers as historians. The fourth-year seminar in research methods is modeled on similar seminars in university history departments. The school has also hired historians with doctorates in art history and in urbanism, who have helped craft not only a fine-tuned undergraduate curriculum, but also a DEA track, launched with the Université de Saint-Quentin en Yvelines. The DEA program consists of seminars in architectural history taught by members of Versailles’s architecture faculty, and sessions on methodology offered by the historians of the university’s Laboratoire de Recherche d’Histoire Architecturale et Urbaine-Sociétés, which is dominated by social historians. This two-year course is open to students who have completed either the second cycle at a university or a diploma-level program at a school of architecture, and thus represents a leading edge in the current debate over the new bridges to be built between the world of the university and that of the school of architecture. Nevertheless, it is significant that the program was established with historians rather than with an art history department.

The program represents strikingly a philosophy underscored some years ago by Anne-Marie Châtelet, who argues that the role of architectural history is clearly delineated today: it is “the history of architectural production linked to an urban context and a specific culture,” an approach that thus draws simultaneously on social and cultural history and on the notion of architectural production derived from understanding the act of design and of making architecture. The importance of history in the life of the school of architecture at Versailles is clearly reflected in the school’s review, *REVUE*, which publishes not only work produced at the school, but also articles based on lectures presented by visiting historians and critics, and translations into French of extracts from architectural theory that might serve the future growth of the curriculum. Versailles is by no means alone in its support for history, but it occupies a position enviable for its long tradition and its highly articulated sense
of the purpose of history, shared by a diverse faculty. It offers a model for the teaching of architectural history in relation to design culture at every stage in a student's education—from first-year courses for undergraduates to guided research on the doctoral level—in a setting that connects the culture of the school of architecture and that of the university.

It is difficult to sum up definitively the field of the teaching of architectural history in France, in which so much reform, a good deal of it voluntary, is the dominant trend. The different worlds, especially of the university and of the historical culture that has grown up within schools of architecture since 1968, will necessarily become more closely linked in the years to come, not the least to respond to new directives from the European community intended to facilitate movement across national boundaries. Recently, many architects interested in history have belatedly written doctoral theses, so that future exchange of faculty between the increasingly permeable spheres of the architecture schools and the universities is likely. Out of this cross-fertilization the distinct profession of the architectural historian has emerged. While in the previous few decades historical instruction was enriched considerably by architects self-taught as historians, today this is an increasingly rare breed. As universities and architecture schools negotiate new relationships, it is clear that not only the settings, but also the practices, discourses, and subjects of architectural history will again be in flux.

Appendix

Respondents
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Marc Bédarida, École d'Architecture, Paris-La Villette
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Vincent Bradel, École d'Architecture, Nancy
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Bruno Foucart, Université de Paris IV
Françoise Hamon, Université de Paris IV
Claude Larroche, Inventaire Général, Direction Régionale des Affaires
Culturelles (DRAC) d'Acquitaine, Bordeaux
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Philippe Louguet, École d'Architecture, Lille
Claude Massu, Université d'Aix-Marseille, Aix-en-Provence
Jean-Paul Midant, École d'Architecture, Paris-Belleville
Gérard Monnier, Université de Paris I
Thierry Paquot, Université de Paris XII
Antoine Pincon, Graduate School of Design, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts
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Gilles Ragot, École d'Architecture, Bordeaux
Frédéric Seitz, École Spéciale d'Architecture and Université Technologique de Compiègne

Notes
3. In 1964, only two regions, Alsace and Brittany, were given an infrastructure, or Secrétariat de la Commission Régionale de l’Inventaire, and it took another two decades before all regions had a permanent professional staff.
5. In addition to the numerous publications that have resulted from this archival effort under the banner of the Institut Français d’Architecture, one can consult Direction des Archives de France, Archives d’architectes. État des fonds XIXe–XXe siècles (Paris, 1996).
8. A summary of the situation in France, which was covered in a symposium organized by the École d’Architecture, Nancy, edited by Vincent Bradel, is scheduled to be published soon. We are grateful to him for providing us with a typescript, “Compte-rendu de la table ronde sur l’enseignement de l’histoire de l’architecture.”
12. The Institut d’Art et d’Archéologie was built to house the important art
history library the Bibliothèque Doucet, which was moved in 1993 to the former Bibliothèque Nationale, where it now is a cornerstone of the ambitious art history library being established for the INHA.

13. This approach has been emulated in several schools of architecture as well, notably at Lille, Grenoble, and Rouen.


16. The École du Louvre also offers a second cycle (or master's degree) in museum conservation and exhibition technology and a third cycle (though not recognized as the equivalent of a university doctorate) in research in art history.


18. For a synopsis in English of Loyer's approach, see Barry Bergdoll's review of his Paris XIXe siècle in JSAH 47 (1988), 420–22.

19. Numerous retirements are in the offering and many people speak of an imminent generational shift in university art and architectural history.

20. One of the rare exceptions is the group trained by François Loyer, whose interests and approach are much informed by the urban and morphological studies developed by architect-historians in the 1960s and 1970s.

21. This phenomenon has been so widely recognized as a problematic situation that the Ministry of Culture's Direction de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine has recently commissioned an architectural historian from the architecture school in Bordeaux to prepare a report on the teaching of architectural history in architecture schools.

22. The two founders of the program are Philippe Panerai and Jean Castex, currently the head of the school's faculty. Panerai and Castex defined a typological approach to urban analysis most famously explicated in their study Formes urbaines. De l'ilot à la barre (1977) and in Versailles. Lecture d'une ville (1979). Anne-Marie Châtele, who teaches the fourth-year seminar in research methods, trained in architecture at Versailles before obtaining a doctorate under François Loyer in architectural history.


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