

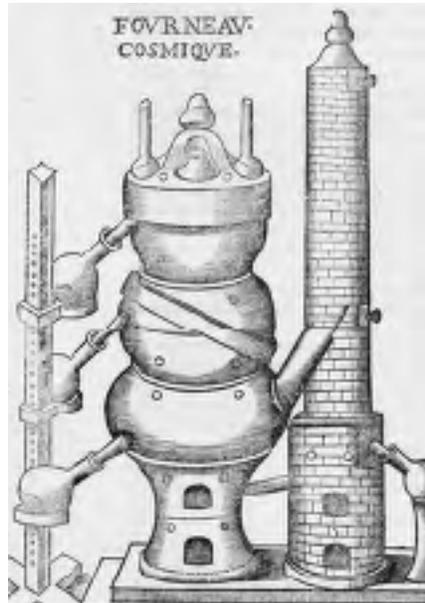
ATHANOR XXXVIII



FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF ART HISTORY

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Cosmic over or Athanor from Annibal Barlet, *Le Vray Cours de Physique*, Paris, 1653.

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ATHANOR XXXVIII

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Günther Stamm Prize for Excellence

Mia Hafer was awarded the Günther Stamm Prize for Excellence for "Indices in Ivory: Aspiring Affective Piety with a Walrus Ivory Christ" presented at the 2021 Art History Graduate Student Symposium.

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At the Center of the Globe: Empiricism and Empire in Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux's *Fontaine des Quatres-Parties-du-Monde*

Hoyon Mephokee

In 1874, Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux's (1827-1875) *Les Quatre Parties du monde soutenant la sphère céleste* (*The Four Parts of the World Supporting the Celestial Sphere*), also referred to as the *Fontaine des quatre-parties-du-monde* (*Fountain of the Four Parts of the World*), was installed at the southern end of the Luxembourg Gardens in Paris (Figure 1). The monumental bronze sculpture was commissioned by Jean-Antoine-Gabriel Davioud in 1867 to be the centerpiece of a new fountain and is accompanied by equestrian figures designed by Emmanuel Fremiet.¹ The commission was a part of a massive public works project to renovate and reshape Paris, initiated during the Second French Empire by Emperor Napoléon III in 1853 and executed by Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann. Although the Second Empire's war against Prussia and subsequent collapse in 1870 temporarily halted Carpeaux's progress, work on the monument resumed in 1872 when Napoléon III's successors in the Third Republic adopted the project. In 1874, shortly before Carpeaux's death, the *Fontaine* was installed at the Luxembourg Gardens, where it stands today.

Carpeaux's sculptural group comprises four nude female figures, who represent the continents of Europe, America, Africa, and Asia (Figures 2-5). Each allegorical figure is distinguished from the others via a combination of ethnographically verisimilar physiognomy and, to a far lesser extent, external accoutrements. Facing North towards the Luxembourg Palace and its gardens, Europe is cast as racially white; America faces East and is presented as an Indigenous American, depicted with a headdress and earrings; placed directly across Europe and facing South towards the Paris Observatory is Africa, who is depicted as a Black African with earrings and broken shackles on her right ankle—a sign of her recent emancipation from slavery; and facing West is Asia, personified as a vaguely east Asian woman with braided hair. Even as they are united through their placement on even ground and the similarities of their classicizing body types, their physiognomic features differentiate them from one another in a way that upholds a racial hierarchy.² Together, these figures support an armillary sphere, a spherical grid that represents celestial longitude and latitude. A globe is placed at the center of this frame, around which revolves a band adorned with the symbols of the West-

ern zodiac.³

There is a physical and symbolic alignment between scientific and imperial power inherent to the monument's composition that is also mirrored in its site. Placed between the Luxembourg Palace and the Paris Observatory, Carpeaux's piece has been interchangeably referred to as the *Fontaine du Luxembourg* (*The Fountain of the Luxembourg*) and the *Fontaine de l'Observatoire* (*The Fountain of the Observatory*). These sites lie on the Paris meridian, an imaginary north-to-south line that runs through the city that, until the early twentieth century, served as a cartographic, geographic, and navigational reference. While the Luxembourg Palace and its gardens are typically thought of as separate from the Paris Observatory and Paris meridian, the *Fontaine* spatially unites and activates these sites of political and historical significance.

By interrogating the *Fontaine's* site and iconography vis-à-vis the Second French Empire, this paper demonstrates that the monument celebrated science as constitutive of French statecraft and empire-building and signaled the institutional relationship of science and politics that justified and supported French colonialism. Thus, the *Fontaine* reveals itself to be a powerful expression and agent of Napoléon III's regime, as well as an embodiment of its contradictions; beneath the façade of objective and unbiased scientific empiricism, the Second Empire outwardly championed progressive ideals as it built and sustained itself on imperial and racial conservatism.

It makes sense to examine the *Fontaine* within the politics of the Second Empire, given how intimately Carpeaux's career was tied to that of Napoléon III's. As an academic artist in late nineteenth-century France, Carpeaux's career was built around the state infrastructure, from his formal education at the École des Beaux-Arts and his training in Italy, funded by the Grand Prix de Rome, to his professional practice. As sculptors were dependent upon government support, sculptural production and practice were largely circumscribed to subjects and styles that conformed to government ideologies.⁴ Carpeaux demonstrated a profound awareness of the role of sculpture in state policy and propaganda and actively pursued opportunities to produce works to fulfill such roles, such as his

I would like to express my gratitude to the Florida State University Department of Art History for the opportunity to present and publish my research, as well as to Dr. Juliet Bellow, whose insights and guidance were critical to this project and its afterlives.

1 Davioud's contributions to the Parisian landscape include the *Fontaine Saint-Michel de Paris* and the former *Palais du Trocadéro*.

2 Anne Middleton Wagner, *Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux: Sculptor of the Second Empire* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), 266.

3 The zodiac band was designed by Eugène Legrain, who was one of Carpeaux's students. Although these signs are placed in the correct order in terms of both their celestial positions and the dates associated with them, this order is reversed. While Lisa Salay Miller examines the significance of this feature, it seems that Carpeaux had little control over the design of the zodiac band. What is significant, and what this paper deals with, is the synergistic relationship, writ large, between the cosmic imagery of the sphere and of the monument's site, as well as the racial iconography of the continents. Lisa Salay Miller, "Carpeaux's America: Art and Sculptural Politics," in *Art and the Native American: Perceptions, Reality, and Influences*, eds. Mary Louise Krumrine and Susan Clare Scott (Philadelphia, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 196 to 223.

4 Albert Boime, *Hollow Icons: The Politics of Sculpture in Nineteenth-Century France* (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 1987), 4.

Le Prince Impérial et son Chien Néro (The Imperial Prince and his dog Nero) of 1865 (Figure 6).

The fact that Carpeaux's career is so closely identified with Napoléon III's government makes it all the more surprising that the *Fontaine*, a major public monument at the heart of Paris, has received little scholarly attention. The early scholarship on Carpeaux focuses less on the politics of his works and more on their style and relationship to his life—especially the two-volume biography penned in 1934 and 1935 by Louise Clément-Carpeaux, the artist's daughter, aptly titled *La Vérité sur l'oeuvre et la vie de J.-B. Carpeaux (The Truth about the Works and Life of J.B. Carpeaux)*. Similarly, Ernest Chesneau's 1880 *Le Statuaire J.-B. Carpeaux : sa vie et son oeuvre (The Statuary of J.B. Carpeaux: His Life and Works)* and André Mabilille de Poncheville's 1921 *Carpeaux inconnu, ou, la tradition recueillie (Carpeaux Unknown, or, the Collected Traditions)* present Carpeaux as a Michelangeloesque, larger-than-life artist by focusing on his large-scale monumental Salon pieces.⁵

The later twentieth century situated Carpeaux's oeuvre more fully in relation to the politics of the Second Empire. Anne Wagner's 1986 *Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux: Sculptor of the Second Empire* is the only English-language monograph on the artist to date, and its publication dramatically shifted the focus of Carpeaux towards governmental institutions and Napoléon III's politics. Although the *Fontaine* appears only briefly in its conclusion, Wagner's text provides a valuable starting point from which to examine the work. She identifies in the *Fontaine* an unorthodox materiality and sensuousness that is indicative of Carpeaux's eagerness to break from sculptural conventions. His bodies, despite being classicized, effectively reject the kind of idealized forms favored by the Académie in favor of a more realist type that is particular to their subjects even when, as in this case, the subjects are allegorical. The palpable physicality and ethnographic realism of the four figures of the *Fontaine* lend the monument well to the postcolonial approach taken by this paper.

The cursory scholarly attention given to the *Fontaine* is mirrored in Albert Boime's 1987 *Hollow Icons: The Politics of Sculpture in Nineteenth-Century France*, in which he began a brief but important discussion of its racial iconography in relation to French imperial politics.⁶ Boime specifically notes that the figure of Europe seems to bear the celestial sphere with comparative ease. Suggesting that the armillary sphere visually subjugates the other three non-European figures, Boime argues that the *Fontaine* reflected the colonial aspirations of the Second Empire by invoking French histories of astronomy, navigation, and imperialist expansion. Stating that the monument "translated the cosmic function of the site into an imperialist dream of world domination," he reframed the conversation by suggesting the importance of the monument's site to our understanding of the *Fontaine* and Second Empire colo-

5 A 2012 exhibition at the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Valenciennes titled *Michel-Ange au siècle de Carpeaux* and its accompanying catalog are prime examples of this trend continuing well into the twenty-first century. Mehdi Korchane ed., *Michel-Ange au siècle de Carpeaux* (Cinsello Balsamo, Milan: Silvana).

6 Boime, *Hollow Icons*, 78-83.

nia politics writ large.⁷

This study builds upon these arguments by synthesizing art-historical and historical research in a socio-historical and postcolonial examination of the *Fontaine*. It first traces the history and development of the Second Empire to show the regime relied on two pillars to prolong its tenuous grip on power: a large-scale urban and infrastructure renewal project that was centered around Paris and a foreign policy program that began with a subtle form of cultural imperialism and mutated into stark colonialist expansionism. These two pillars were designed to unite the French populace and signal to them and their neighbors the modern, effective, and powerful nature of Napoléon III's regime. By attending to the *Fontaine's* commission and site, this paper reads the sculpture as a site-specific object that illuminates the importance of the sciences and their institutionalization to Napoléon III's regime. Not only did they provide the principles for the construction of Paris from an outdated city into one organized to exert control, but they also produced the colonial attitudes that ideologically supported and practically enabled French overseas expansion. This paper then focuses on the monument's racial iconography, outlining how the monument expressed these conservative ideas on race and resonated with the Second Empire's colonial agenda. Lastly, it suggests that the mechanisms by which the *Fontaine* succeeded within the politics of the Second Empire may have allowed it to, not only survive the dramatic transition between the Second Empire and the Third Republic, but also become adopted by Napoléon III's successors. Indeed, considering the monument as a political and cultural nexus between these disparate regimes suggests the existence of a remarkable, and perhaps unexpected, degree of ideological and cultural continuity between them.

Napoléon III and the Problem of Uninherited Power

The complexities of the *Fontaine* are inherently tied to those of Napoléon III's regime, which were a product of a confluence of factors and contexts surrounding the Emperor's youth and rise to power. As the Bonapartes were forced into exile upon Napoléon I's removal from power, Charles-Louis Napoléon Bonaparte, also known as Louis-Napoléon, spent his youth exiled from France. Even before he became Emperor of the French, Louis-Napoléon's political career and philosophy on statecraft were deeply impacted by the events of, and ripples from, his uncle's reign. As the de facto heir to the Bonaparte dynasty, Louis-Napoléon firmly believed that it was his destiny to return to his native France and restore the Napoleonic state that his uncle had first established in 1804.⁸ This

7 As scholarship on Carpeaux has grown slowly, so has the application of critical approaches to his oeuvre. While texts like the *Passions of Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux*, edited by James Draper and Édouard Papet, Charmaine A. Nelson's *Representing the Black Female Subject in Western Art*, and Francisco Bethencourt's *Racisms: From the Crusades to the Twentieth Century* address the *Fontaine* and its racial imagery at one point or another and to varying degrees, the monument remains relatively underexamined. Consequently, so does its socio-historical and postcolonial complexities vis-à-vis Napoléon III's empire. Boime, *Hollow Icons*, 78.

8 Roger Price, *Documents on The Second French Empire, 1852-1870* (London, UK: Palgrave, 2015), 16.

personal destiny was rooted in his upbringing, through which he understood his duty as being “first to the Napoleonic dynasty, and then to France.”⁹

Hearing of the February Revolution of 1848, the collapse of the French monarchy, and the establishment of a new and fragile Republic, Louis-Napoléon returned to France in hopes of heading the Second French Republic as its inaugural president. Focusing on appealing to both the political left and right, he launched his presidential campaign by exploiting popular Bonapartist sentiments among a populace weary of revolution and looking to return France to a perceived bygone era of glory and prosperity.¹⁰ In December of 1848, he won the election from overwhelming support from the peasantry and began his tenure as the president of the Republic.¹¹

From the beginning of his reign, Louis-Napoléon made efforts to prolong his grip on power. The continuing turmoil within France and the administration of the Second Republic offered a prime opportunity for him to campaign for an amendment to the constitution, which limited his presidency to a single term. However, the constitutional revision did not receive the three-quarters majority vote that was required of it in the National Assembly. Louis-Napoléon was nonetheless in an advantageous position to mount a coup d'état through the considerable power he wielded over the army and law enforcement. On December 2, 1851, he seized power and, the following year, officially reinstated the French Empire, crowning himself Napoléon III, Emperor of the French.

Because his mandate from the French people was largely illusory, Napoléon III was forced to continually reinforce his legitimacy as France's rightful ruler in order to preserve a façade of republicanism and stave off further revolution. He understood that his popularity lay in his ability to position himself as the embodiment of revolutionary ideals and worked to emphasize this in his messaging throughout his reign. For example, following the dissolution of the National Assembly during his 1851 coup, he claimed that his sole duty was “to preserve the Republic and save the country by invoking the solemn judgment of the only sovereign [he recognized] in France, the people.”¹² At the same time, however, he emulated the First Empire, employing several policies that his uncle had executed to maintain stability and preserve the public order.¹³ He clamped down on all aspects of participatory democracy, such as by outlawing political parties and by deploying law enforcement to censor free speech and suppress opposition, especially from the urban working classes.¹⁴ Throughout his rule, Napoléon III's approach to governance was a constant juggling act of drawing from Napoléon I enough to capitalize on his uncle's legacy while maintaining a safe distance from

the perceived flaws of the First Empire. As the regime grew, however, so too did Napoléon III's emulation of past regimes, including the re-creation of his capital and his reliance on racist ideologies to support his quest for French hegemonic rule.

Mapping the *Fontaine*

Domestically, Napoléon III deployed the machinery of his government to support his right to rule, including through public art, public works projects, and urban planning, so as to produce a total and all-encompassing environment that could project his legitimacy and power. His project to beautify and revitalize Paris, carried out by Baron Haussmann, is particularly important as it reshaped the political and cultural heart of his empire and provided Carpeaux with a network of symbolic spaces within which to construct his monument.

While Haussmannization is often discussed as a distinctly modern phenomenon and as an emblem of France's assertion of its status as a modern nation, it was also designed to recall axial city planning forms adopted by French absolutist monarchs in the seventeenth century, most notably exemplified by Louis XIV's palace and gardens at Versailles (Figure 7). Described by Spiro Kostof as a “Grand Manner” of Baroque urban design, these principles were largely developed in Italy with the intent to reinforce a hierarchy in which the ruler was supreme and absolute.¹⁵ The hallmarks of this style include scientific and mathematically informed elements, such as straight streets, architectural uniformity and standardization, a rectilinear urban layout, ceremonial axes, and spatial expansiveness that convey a rationality of order that “presupposes an unentangled decision-making process.”¹⁶ As such, while it is true that Haussmann's changes to the medieval city expressed Napoléon III's empire as a modern and effective one, they also placed the regime in direct and explicit conversation with the tradition of French absolutism. What Kostof calls “the urbanism of dominion” is evident, for example, in the convergence of twelve streets at the Arc de Triomphe in Paris.¹⁷

The *Fontaine* was placed at a particularly meaningful node within this charged urban geometry: it lays on the Paris meridian and along an axis demarcated by buildings that embody French scientific and political authority, with the Paris Observatory on one end and the Luxembourg Gardens on the other. By activating these sites, the *Fontaine* visually signaled the importance of the sciences to Napoléon III's control over France and his global ambitions.

The Paris meridian traces its roots to 1667 with the building of the Paris Observatory under the authority of Louis XIV. The sciences that these institutions were engaged in were linked to navigation and its applications to trade, warfare, and

9 Price, *Second French Empire*, 44.

10 Price, *Second French Empire*, 16.

11 Price, *Second French Empire*, 18.

12 Price, *Second French Empire*, 8.

13 Christina Carroll, “Imperial Ideologies in the Second Empire: The Mexican Expedition and the Royaume Arabe,” *French Historical Studies* 42, no. 1 (February 2019): 71.

14 Price, *Documents on The Second French Empire*, 146-153.

15 Spiro Kostof, *The City Shaped: Urban Patterns and Meanings Throughout History* (Boston, MA: Little Brown, 1991), 215.

16 Kostof, *City Shaped*, 230-275.

17 Kostof, *City Shaped*, 271.

transportation.¹⁸ As geographic positioning required knowledge of a standard “home” meridian and the development of a meridian required the work of astronomers and geodesists, the Paris Observatory became critical in determining the Paris meridian for the French state. Furthermore, the establishment of a Paris meridian also had domestic applications, such as in railway travel, as it allowed for standardized measurements of time and space within the country, effectively eliminating the confusion of having local and regional variations in practices of measurement.¹⁹ The meridian connected the city to the world and placed it longitudinally at zero degrees, effectively making France, and more importantly, Paris, a global reference point for space and time. The *Fontaine* is thus situated along a line that connects Paris, the political, economic, and cultural heart of Napoléon III’s empire, to the global macrocosm.

The Paris Observatory also played a central role in developing a number of scientific disciplines including astronomy, geodesy, horology, and metrology. As the science of measurement, metrology is itself at the heart of the work of observatories and an expression of political power. By measuring and mapping its territory, the French government not only claimed what it saw as existing within its borders but also contributed to the creation of a distinct and unified “French space.”²⁰ In many ways, geography and geographical education reshaped France from an inert place to an intentional shared and collective social, political, cultural, and economic space.²¹

In addition to giving France the scientific and philosophical means to “create” itself, the Observatory, in developing cosmography and the observatory sciences, also allowed France to define and measure its colonial interests. The work of the institution is inherently colonial, as colonialism operated not simply through political, military, and economic domination, but also, in a Foucauldian sense, through academic, intellectual, and scientific intervention into and mastery of the natural world.

The sciences also fueled a French exceptionalism and racial supremacism that justified these pursuits. The development of social sciences, such as anthropology, also took the white French (and European) race as the standard from which to study all other races, resulting inevitably in a French conception of racial superiority that justified French colonial intervention and involvement in America, Africa, and Asia. These disciplines and sciences—natural, physical, and social—must be viewed not as separate or discrete but as two

18 Guy Boistel, “Training Seafarers in Astronomy: Methods, Naval Schools, and Naval Observatories in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century France,” in *The Heavens on Earth: Observatories and Astronomy in Nineteenth-Century Science and Culture*, eds. David Aubin, Charlotte Bigg, and H. Otto Sibum (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 149.

19 Charles Withers, “International Standards? Metrology and the Regulation of Space and Time, 1787-1884,” in *Zero Degrees: Geographies of the Prime Meridian* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 107.

20 Dana Kristofor Lindaman, *Becoming French: Mapping the Geographies of French Identity, 1871-1914* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2016), 5.

21 Lindaman, *Becoming French*, 6.

parts of a whole that is the French institution of science.²² The placement of the *Fontaine* attests to the union of the sciences with state politics and its importance to Napoléon III, in both how it enabled the French to go overseas to colonize and how it generated nationalistic sentiments and recalled the history of French exceptionalism.

The colonial nature of the *Fontaine*’s site is difficult to ignore when considering the monument’s placement in the Luxembourg Gardens and the specific evocation of botany and the plant sciences. Beginning in the fifteenth century, a “Green Wave” brought Europeans into contact with flora from distant territories.²³ As the observatory, earth, and naval sciences developed, increasing cross-cultural contact allowed the French to diversify their knowledge of, and access to, global plant life. The resulting development of horticulture as a distinct field of study in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is a testament to the colonial roots of the discipline.²⁴ The very act of cultivating nature and creating spaces for such a purpose is itself an expression of power. This celebration of the role of the sciences in advancing colonial policies is important, given the influence that botany and horticulture enjoyed over the French state, especially beginning in the 1830s when horticultural societies and publications began to increase in number and membership. While small, these organizations were actively collecting plants and animals, displaying them at expositions, and setting up botanical gardens and agricultural programs in territories like Saigon.²⁵

With the aid of Haussmann, Napoléon III recreated Paris in such a way to augment the connection between these sites of political, scientific, and historical significance. Through the *Fontaine* and its activation of this network of spaces, the emperor was able to tap into a complex history of authoritarian and legitimate French rulership and its reliance on the institutionalization of the sciences to highlight state power and pursue domestic and international goals.

The Fontaine as Colonial Iconography

In addition to its site, the *Fontaine*’s iconography—above all, its four allegorical figures—communicated Napoléon III’s ambitions as a global hegemon and created meaning within the political and cultural context of Napoléon III’s empire. There are colonial politics inherent to the racial iconography of the four continents supporting a celestial sphere that are compounded when considering the visual and compositional choices that Carpeaux made when producing this work. Specifically, this paper examines the figures of Africa and America to suggest that the *Fontaine* operates by both expressing the underlying racist ideologies that drove French colonialism and reflecting Napoléon III’s aspirations for a global and multina-

22 Maurice Crosland, *Science Under Control: The French Academy of Sciences, 1795-1914* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 12.

23 Colta Ives, *Public Parks, Private Gardens: Paris to Provence* (New York, NY: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2018), 3.

24 Ives, *Public Parks, Private Gardens*, 4.

25 Frederick Quinn, *The French Overseas Empire* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2000), 167.

tional French Empire.

The complexities of the monument's iconography expose the difficult positions that military conquest and colonial expansion occupied in Napoléon III's politics. He began his reign refraining from direct military intervention and focusing on a more ideological form of imperialism by fashioning himself as the defender of nationalities in Europe and, by extension, the defender of peace on the continent.²⁶ Indeed, in his 1839 *Des idées napoléoniennes*, Napoléon III praised his uncle's vision of a European confederation with France at its helm. He argued that circumstances had forced his uncle to advance too rapidly in warfare and that he would have been successful had he more time to focus on the subtle intricacies of empire-building.²⁷ Napoléon III's international engagements were, therefore, designed to signal to his neighbors that his only goals were to spread freedom and ensure peace in Europe. Notably, he actively supported nationalist independence movements within Europe, such as in 1859, when he sent troops to Italy to aid in Victor Emmanuel II's campaign against the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In this initial phase of the Second Empire, Napoléon III defined his government as one that integrated revolutionary principles with imperialism to spread its progressive ideology to its European neighbors.²⁸

However, by the time that Carpeaux received the commission for the *Fontaine*, support for and confidence in the Second Empire had sharply declined. Issues including fears of war with Prussia and the high taxes that the emperor demanded to finance his public works projects raised serious concerns over Napoléon III's ability to rule. In the face of growing public frustration with the regime and an increasingly fracturing political and social climate, the emperor took steps to associate his empire with legacies of past regimes and aggressively pursued colonialism to consolidate his power and increase his popularity. Envisioning his empire as the heir to that of the Romans, he recast the Second Empire as a multinational colonial empire. Citing his uncle's writing once more, Napoléon III saw war and imperialism as necessary to consolidate the increasingly fracturing and divided climate of his empire and argued that "in the aftermath of revolution, an external war was necessary... to amalgamate the remains of all the parties."²⁹ Having undergone a period of internal conflict and distrust, France required an external enemy against whom to recalibrate its identity and unite its citizens. For Napoléon III, who vowed against taking unnecessary and aggressive actions against his European neighbors, colonialism offered a solution: since he could not expand his empire within Europe, he would do so overseas.

This more explicitly colonialist and expansionary vision for the Second Empire began in the 1860s, during which Napoléon III re-envisioned his empire as the heir to that of the Romans and recast his regime as a multinational colonial em-

pire. Drawing from the legacy of the Romans, he sought to reunite those he saw as sharing with France a common *latinité*—a Roman cultural heritage—beginning in 1862, when he attempted to establish Ferdinand Maximilian as the emperor of Mexico. Unlike Italy, where the French military was sent to support an independence movement, Mexico was an independent state that the emperor invaded and one where he instituted a new ruler and a new form of government.³⁰

Commissioned in the final years of the Second Empire, the iconography of the *Fontaine* embodies both phases of French imperialism. It forces the incompatible central ideals of both the earlier and later periods of Napoléon III's regime to co-exist within a single sculptural program. The result is a work that is contradictory and unstable in meaning: one that espouses self-governance and egalitarianism as well as white supremacy and French exceptionalism.

While the iconography of a grouping of figures supporting a sphere is hardly new, an analysis of Carpeaux's treatment of this motif exposes contradictions inherent to the *Fontaine*'s visual program.³¹ Beginning in the sixteenth century, allegorical figures of the four continents began to populate the title cartouches and borders of European maps of the world.³² As these figures are understood to pictorialize a European conception of the ordering of the races, the most well-known manifestations of the allegory were literal and visual top-down hierarchies. First published in 1507, Abraham Ortelius's *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, the first significant printed atlas of the world, presents a notable example (Figure 8). Relying primarily on external signifiers of race to distinguish these racial types from one another, the frontispiece of Ortelius's work visually places Europe at the top of the racial hierarchy, with Asia and Africa occupying spaces below, and with America located at the bottom.

Sculptural works like Francesco Bertos's *Allegorical Groups Representing the Four Continents* series, produced between 1710 and 1725, and Aimé-Jules Dalou's 1867 *Caryatids: The Four Continents* show how separating the continents and races from one another in a series of sculptures allows the hierarchy inherent to this allegory to become externally located (Figures 9-13). Bertos's and Dalou's series include four autonomous sculptural groups, each standing for a continent; the hierarchical relationships between these allegorical figures exist not within the objects themselves, but rather be-

26 Carroll, "Imperial Ideologies," 71.

27 William E. Echard, *Napoleon III and the Concert of Europe* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 3.

28 Echard, *Napoleon III and the Concert of Europe*, 73.

29 Price, *French Second Empire*, 406.

30 Carroll, 75.

31 Dirk Kocks has put forth a number of precedents of this theme of an arrangement of figures supporting a sphere. Dirk Kocks, "La Fontaine de l'Observatoire von Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux: Zur Ikonographie der Kosmos-Vorstellung im 19. Jahrhundert," *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch* 38 (1976): 131 to 144.

32 Alex Zukas, "Class, Imperial Space, and Allegorical Figures of the Continents on Early-Modern World Maps," *Environment, Space, Place* 10, 2 (Fall 2018): 29.

tween them.³³

However, in the *Fontaine*, Carpeaux presents a confounding and contradictory image by combining the various allegorical figures into a single sculptural group, applying to it the motif of figures supporting a sphere, and privileging ethnographic realism and physiognomy at the expense of external markers of race. Placing these types on even ground, Carpeaux creates a visually equalizing composition and negates hierarchy in a sculptural group that is inherently hierarchical. The result is a difficult composition and unstable iconography that reflects well Napoléon III's failure to reconcile his aspirations with the realities of his reign.

Given the importance of science to Napoléon III's public image, it makes sense for Carpeaux to have produced a monument for the Second Empire in a naturalist style that privileges ethnographic and anatomical verisimilitude, as described by Anne Wagner. This preoccupation is significantly apparent in not only the removal of external signifiers of race but also in Carpeaux's desire to patinate his sculptural group, evidenced in a letter addressed to fellow sculptor Victor Bernard. In it, he asked,

... how can I be allowed to patinate my group as I dreamed, with the coloring of the races? I entrust you with this mission, that of proving [to Davioud] how much shape and line will be distinguished by the hue. I can see from here the dreadful green wax caking on the shape and the suppleness of the details.³⁴

While the idea was ultimately rejected, it nonetheless connects the monument to the ways that sculpture in the nineteenth century served as a site in which color, race, representation, and otherness intersected with one another.

Notably, polychrome sculptures, such as those of Charles-Henri-Joseph Cordier, were seen not in artistic terms but rather as scientific objects that belonged in natural history and anthropology museums (Figure 14).³⁵ His works reveal the political dimensions of the medium that confirmed the racial difference and inferiority of non-European cultures and peoples, thus supporting France's colonization efforts. Cordier used contrasting materials and hues to differentiate clothing from skin tone: the dark onyx marble that he used throughout his career can be read as a marker of race, especially given how the whiteness of the marble used in classical Greco-Roman sculptures similarly operated as a signifier of racial white-

ness. These images also essentialized race and took a reductive view of Black individuals that saw them as ethnographic types. At least in the late nineteenth century, polychromy was the sculptural interest in ethnographic realism and accuracy taken to its ideological and aesthetic extreme. The politics of medium and representation, as well as Carpeaux's arrangement and depiction of the allegory of the continents, make Carpeaux's allegorical figures compelling subjects of postcolonial study.

However, Napoléon III's interventions in North Africa make it strange that this figure is distinctly not northern African—Algerian, Egyptian, or otherwise—but one whose physiognomy more closely aligns her to sub-Saharan Africa and one who has been recently freed from slavery, as indicated by the broken shackles on her ankle. It is fascinating that Carpeaux would depict this figure in such a way, especially given that he received the commission for the *Fontaine* roughly two decades after the abolition of slavery and in a time when North Africa featured prominently in Napoléon III's colonial program and the French collective consciousness.

Examining European conceptions of Blackness and the way that the African continent was understood vis-à-vis Europe and the Orient suggests why Carpeaux decided to produce this image of Africa and place her directly across from the figure of Europe. Charmaine A. Nelson discusses how, while colonial discourse, as Edward Said analyzed it, sought to homogenize and distinguish racial types through geography, the vast physical, cultural, linguistic, and geographical differences between northern and sub-Saharan Africa presented a challenge.³⁶ The African continent, therefore, disrupted European racial ideology, which sought to reduce and essentialize racial types. The solution was to theorize Blackness as existing at varying degrees of proximity to whiteness, such that physical and geographical distance came to stand for moral, intellectual, and racial distance. The further away from the racial center of Europe a body was, the more divergent it was in its color, physiognomy, and anatomy, with "total blackness" as its most extreme Other.³⁷

Furthermore, Christopher L. Miller proposes that the "Black African" occupies an ambiguous space vis-à-vis Europe and the Orient, as it existed beyond this binary.³⁸ Miller suggests that the almost obsessive European preoccupation with the color black reflects and plays a role in this characterization of Africa and its peoples. Drawing from Charles Baudelaire, Miller discusses how Blackness is associated with the unknown and the absent and how "black is to color as zero is to infinity."³⁹ If black is, as Baudelaire suggests, meaningless and solitary zero, then light and color are positive values.⁴⁰ As Cohen writes, "the Africans' color drew much attention

33 A project carried out at the University of Vienna cataloged the allegory as it appeared on immovable media, such as fresco, in the Southern Holy Roman Empire between the late-sixteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries, and provides a comprehensive database of examples of this theme. Marion Romberg, "Continent Allegories in the Baroque Age – A Database," accessed April 17, 2020, <http://www.journal18.org/issue5/continent-allegories-in-the-baroque-age-a-database/>.

34 Edouard-Désiré Fromentin, "Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux: Essai biographique, la vie, l'œuvre du statuaire valenciennois d'après sa correspondance," *Valentina* 19 (June 1997): 174.

35 Laure de Margerie, Facing the Other: Charles Cordier (1827-1905), *Ethnographic Sculptor*, trans. Laurel Hirsch, Lenora Ammon, Claire Palmieri (New York, NY: Harry N. Abrams, 2004), 20.

36 Charmaine A. Nelson, *Representing the Black Female Subject in Western Art* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2010), 120.

37 Nelson, *Representing the Black Female Subject*, 164.

38 Christopher L. Miller, *Blank Darkness: Africanist Discourse in French* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

39 C. Miller, *Blank Darkness*, 80.

40 C. Miller, *Blank Darkness*, 88.

because of the shock that Europeans experienced in seeing people of dark skin."⁴¹ The implied Blackness in the figure of Africa and the placement of this figure opposite Europe insist upon a racial difference that is ideologically and politically motivated. To depict an identifiably Arab figure to stand for the African continent and to place this figure anywhere but the furthest point away from the figure of Europe would have been to forgo the opportunity to depict a racial type that was the most distant from that of Europe.

Carpeaux's decision to depict the figure of Africa with broken shackles points to the complex relationship that the Second Empire had with Black Africans. The fractured shackles may have been designed to mitigate the negative and inferior connotations of racial Blackness by presenting the figure of Africa as liberated and by alluding to the status of Black individuals as productive members of French society and the French economy post-abolition.⁴² In contemporaneous French consciousness, however, Blackness was unavoidably entangled with the history of slavery and the debates surrounding its abolition, which were bound to the myth of the noble savage. Abolitionists supported their cause by invoking this trope, which characterized Indigenous non-white populations as happy, uncorrupted by modern life, and living in perfect harmony with nature. This myth argued that the presumed simplicity of the African did not warrant abasement, but rather praise.⁴³ However, they were nonetheless "savage"—Abbé Raynal, for instance, discussed the virtues of Africans while cautioning that the defense of their humanity may lead to an exaggeration of their qualities.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the sciences contributed to the noble savage myth by suggesting that Africans were closer to the primates than Europeans were. The African's ability to live freely in nature was proof of this association, while the European's life in civilization was proof that he was far from animality.⁴⁵

The endurance of these ideas is also evident in Carpeaux's 1868 *Pourquoi naître esclave?* (Figure 15). This bust was created from his study of a live model in preparation for the full-length figure that would become a part of the *Fontaine*. Carpeaux's bust depicts an ethnographically and racially verisimilar Black female through physiognomy and phrenology. She turns to the left and looks up as ropes bind her arms and bare chest. The bust exhibited at the Salon includes the inscription "*pourquoi naître esclave ?*" or "why born a slave?" at

its base.⁴⁶ It was reproduced to be sold to private buyers in a number of versions, mediums, and dimensions, including terra cotta, bronze, polychrome plaster, and marble; many editions did not include the original inscription.⁴⁷ The result is an instability of meaning: the sculpture could either communicate an abolitionist message through the inscription that challenges the institution of slavery or tamp down this message by omitting the inscription. Carpeaux could avoid committing the bust to a singular meaning and appease a wide range of viewers and buyers.

Through this duality of meaning, Carpeaux's *Pourquoi naître esclave?* can be thought of as simultaneously promoting and disavowing abolition and, by extension, French colonialism. More significantly, the work, being the forerunner of the allegorical figure of Africa, explicitly ties the *Fontaine* to a broader discourse of slavery and abolition. Consequently, Carpeaux's allegorical figure overtly expresses the conservative ideologies that, while they may have supported the end to abolition, nonetheless reinforced the supremacy of racial whiteness by defining what it was not: Blackness.

If the figure of Africa expresses the racist ideologies that enabled colonialism, then the allegory of America reflects Napoléon III's project to unite the *latinité* world under the French flag—a significant colonial project that was designed to restore the emperor to the status of a global hegemon. Although Lisa Miller argues that Carpeaux's allegory of America does not stem from the myth of the noble savage, Carpeaux's choice to depict this figure almost identically as he did the allegory of Europe suggests otherwise.⁴⁸ Indeed, while Carpeaux's figure of America takes on the image of an Indigenous American woman, there is little about her physiognomy that differentiates her from the figure of Europe.⁴⁹ The figure is identifiable almost entirely through external signifiers—the earrings and headdress—that signal her racial difference and delineate her as distinctly non-white. The image of America as a vaguely Indigenous person has a two-fold significance in how the continent and its inhabitants occupied European consciousness and in the figure's relationship to Napoléon III's ambitions in Central America.

A cornerstone of the ideologies that fueled this cam-

46 Although the scholarship seems to disagree on whether the bust exhibited at the Salon was a bronze or marble, Louis Auvray's 1869 *Exposition des beaux-arts : Salon de 1869* indicates that a bronze was displayed. Part of this confusion likely stems from Ernest Chesneau's *Le Statuaire J.-B. Carpeaux: sa vie et son œuvre*, written after the death of the artist, in which the author misremembers the bust as being of marble. Being among the major primary biographical sources on Carpeaux, it is possible that Chesneau's text established the tradition of mislabeling the bust exhibited at the Salon as being made in bronze.

47 A catalog of sculptures by the *Atelier J.-B. Carpeaux* lists under "Busts: portraits, decorative compositions" an almost half-size reduction of the original *Pourquoi naître esclave?* bust with the inscription included. Reductions without the inscription have also been produced, including a porcelain version produced by the Manufacture Nationale de Sèvres. Furthermore, lifesize casts of the bust with and without the inscription exist in collections globally. *Catalogue de Sculptures Originales: terres cuites, plâtres, Bronzes, groupes statuettes, bustes, Médallions, Esquisses* (Paris: Galérié Manzi-Joyant, 1913), 24.

48 L. Miller, *Carpeaux's America*, 200.

49 L. Miller, *Carpeaux's America*, 199.

41 William B. Cohen, *The French Encounter with Africans: White Response to Blacks, 1530-1880* (Bloomington, IL: Indiana University Press, 1980), 13.

42 Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby, "Still Thinking About Olympia's Maid," *Art Bulletin* 97, no. 4 (December 2015): 430-451.

43 Cohen, *French Encounter*, 71.

44 Cohen, *French Encounter*, 72.

45 Cohen, *French Encounter*, 89.

paign was the myth of the noble savage, translated to the New World and adapted to support Napoléon III's attempts to install a puppet monarch overseas. Many of the ways that Africans were characterized were applied to Indigenous Americans, who were portrayed as naked, happy, content, and uncorrupted from living in a temperate landscape that yielded all of their needs.⁵⁰ In 1845, Charles Baudelaire, upon seeing a group of the Ojibwa brought to France by George Catlin, lauded the "free character and the noble expression of these splendid fellows" and noted that, "with their fine attitudes and their ease of movement, these savages make antique sculpture comprehensible."⁵¹ However, the source of their nobility was also the source of their potential downfall—while they were uncorrupted by civilization, they were also removed from the Gospel and were, therefore, prey to the devil.⁵² As such, they were positioned well to receive "the gift of civilization" from the colonial powers of Europe. This trope and the way that Europeans saw Indigenous American populations have strong parallels to both Carpeaux's monument and the way that Napoléon III framed his conquest of Central America.

The faux-egalitarian presentation of the races, therefore, becomes clear when examining how the French saw themselves vis-à-vis the Mexicans and how Napoléon III used France's Roman heritage to elevate his empire. Like the inhabitants of France and Mexico, Carpeaux's figures are, to borrow a phrase, separate but equal. There is something unmistakably regal and noble about Europe that does not seem present in America. While Europe looks upward, her facial features indicating the relative ease with which she supports the sphere, America exerts herself, as evident in her furrowed eyebrows and contorted body. Should America shed the external signifiers of its racial difference and embrace European governance, as Napoléon III and his predecessors hoped it would, it would be less "savage" and more "civilized." In presenting Europe and America in these ways, Carpeaux reflected the Second Empire that Napoléon III re-imagined: one that was powerful in its mastery of the New World, something that his predecessors had failed to do, but one that was also glorious and noble in its loyalty to its Roman heritage. Thus, the politics of race, primitivism, and colonialism that undergirds Napoléon III's 1861-1867 *latinité* campaign in Central America manifest in Carpeaux's allegory of Africa, as well as in the physiognomic similarities that Carpeaux's America shares with Europe.

A Monument for the French Colonial Empire

Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux's *Les Quatre parties du monde soutenant la sphère céleste* offers a comprehensive window into Second Empire colonial politics. Physically and ideologically placed in the heart of his new empire, the *Fontaine*—its site and iconography—is a powerful expression of the ideologies and goals of the Second Empire, as well as a reminder

50 L. Miller, *Carpeaux's America*, 200.

51 Charles Baudelaire, "Salon de 1846," in *Oeuvres complètes des Baudelaire* (Paris: Éditions de la Nouvelle revue française, 1918): 903-904.

52 Francisco Bethencourt, "Hierarchies of Continents and Peoples," in *Racisms: From the Crusades to the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 108.

to the French populace of the supposed greatness of the Napoleonic State that the emperor had promised to revive. The Second Empire's birth from the ashes of the Second Republic was tenuous, and Napoléon III's illegitimate seizure of power haunted him for the remainder of his tenure as emperor of the French. By tracing the development of Napoléon III's domestic and foreign affairs policies, we see how this illegitimacy became a prevailing driving force behind much of the decisions that he made during his leadership, from how he reshaped his capital city to his extensive plans for global domination. By foregrounding science, progress, and objectivity and combining these themes with French dominance and racial superiority, Carpeaux's monument attempts to justify the beliefs and aspirations that Napoléon III had for his state. While located in Paris, the *Fontaine* nonetheless connects the heart of the Napoleonic State to the global macrocosm in its placement along the Paris meridian and between the Luxembourg Palace and the Paris Observatory. Through the commission and creation of the *Fontaine*, Carpeaux revealed himself to be a powerful agent of the Second Empire, as the *Fontaine* celebrated the union of empiricism and empire.

However, considering the *Fontaine's* installation by the Third Republic raises questions regarding the politics of Napoléon III's administration and that of his successors. The monument's straddling of two regimes, the latter that defined itself against the former, is the result of the Third Republic's adoption of Haussmann's work and its related projects. While in 1870, Napoléon III dismissed Haussmann in an unsuccessful attempt to appease his critics, the widespread unpopularity of the empire, combined with the stresses of war against Prussia, ensured the emperor's removal from office that very year. The Third Republic nonetheless employed his staff and completed his projects.⁵³ Among these was the *Fontaine*, for which Carpeaux was instructed to make minor adjustments before its installation in 1874: to decrease the space between the figures of Africa and Asia and remove a support peg placed at the center of the plinth.⁵⁴

It is curious that the Third Republic adopted the *Fontaine*, given Carpeaux's deep connections to the Second Empire. While it would have made fiscal sense to continue funding the *Fontaine*, rather than to commission an entirely new project, the fact that Carpeaux was not given more dramatic recommendations to alter his composition suggests that the Third Republic saw in this monument a racial and colonial politics that it could capitalize on. Adopting Haussmann's project and retrofitting Carpeaux's sculptural group into its republican iconography, the Third Republic revealed how, like its predecessor, it relied on colonial policy and imagery to assert a concept of French identity in its pursuit of legitimacy and stability. That the Third Republic would retrofit the *Fontaine*

53 Peter Soppelsa, "How Haussmann's Hegemony Haunted the Early Third Republic," in *Is Paris Still the Capital of the Nineteenth Century? Essays on Art and Modernity, 1850-1900*, eds. Hollis Clayson and André Dombrowski (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), 38.

54 Extract from meeting minutes of the Commission des Beaux-Arts signed by Michaud, secretary of the Commission, January 15, 1872, Item 10, Fontaine du Luxembourg Dossier, Archives Municipales de Valenciennes, Valenciennes, France.

taine into its iconography suggests that, despite its disavowal of Napoléon III and his regime, the two are united in profound and meaningful ways. Visually uniting what have been considered to be disparate regimes, the *Fontaine* may be thought of as a monument for not only Napoléon III's regime, but also as one for the French colonial Empire. Through its highly charged site and iconography, as well as its celebration of a complicated and problematic history, Carpeaux's *Fontaine* enables a critical reconsideration and discourse on the legacy of nineteenth-century French sculpture.

American University

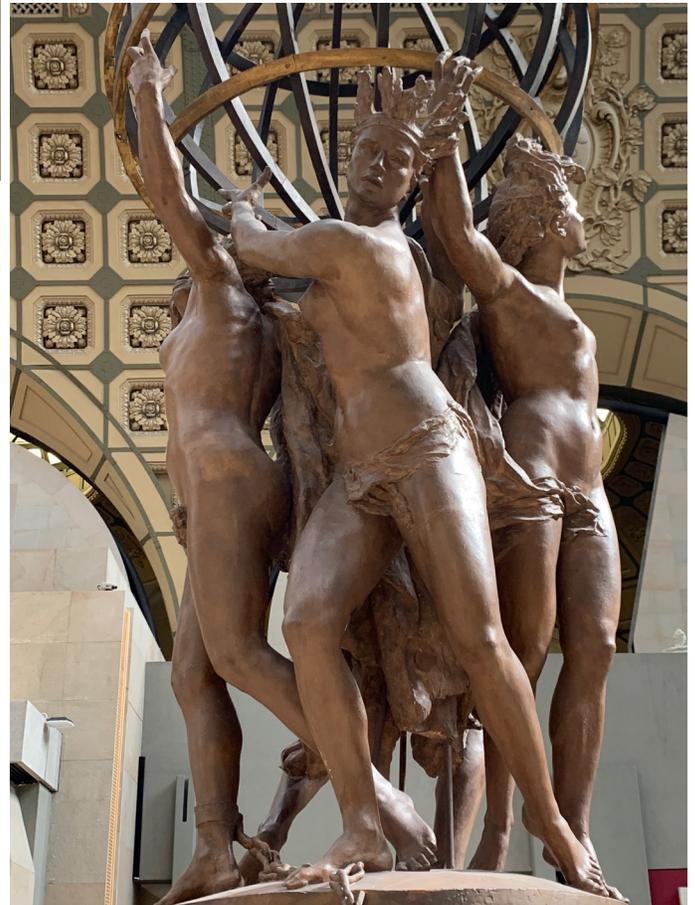


Figure 1: Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux, *Les Quatre parties du monde soutenant la sphère céleste* (*The Four Parts of the World Supporting the Celestial Sphere*), bronze, 280 x 177 x 145 cm. Personal photograph by the author.



Figure 2: Carpeaux, *Europe*, from *Les Quatre parties du monde soutenant la sphère céleste*, 1872, varnished plaster model, 280 x 177 x 145 cm. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Figure 3: Carpeaux, *America*, from *Les Quatre parties du monde soutenant la sphère céleste*, 1872, varnished plaster model, 280 x 177 x 145 cm. Musée d'Orsay, Paris. Personal photograph by the author.



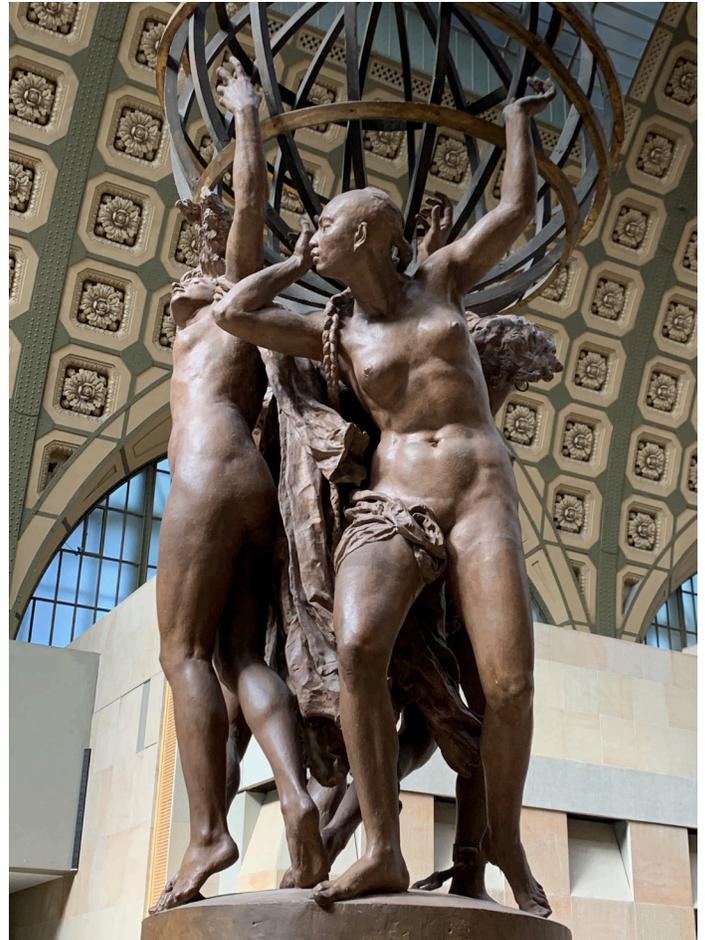


Figure 4: Carpeaux, *Africa*, from *Les Quatre parties du monde soutenant la sphère céleste*, 1872, varnished plaster model, 280 x 177 x 145 cm. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Figure 5: Carpeaux, *Asia*, from *Les Quatre parties du monde soutenant la sphère céleste*, 1872, varnished plaster model, 280 x 177 x 145 cm. Musée d'Orsay, Paris. Personal photograph by the author.

Figure 6: Carpeaux, *Le Prince Impérial et son chien Nero* (*The Imperial Prince and his dog Nero*), 1865, marble, 140 x 65.4 x 61.5 cm. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

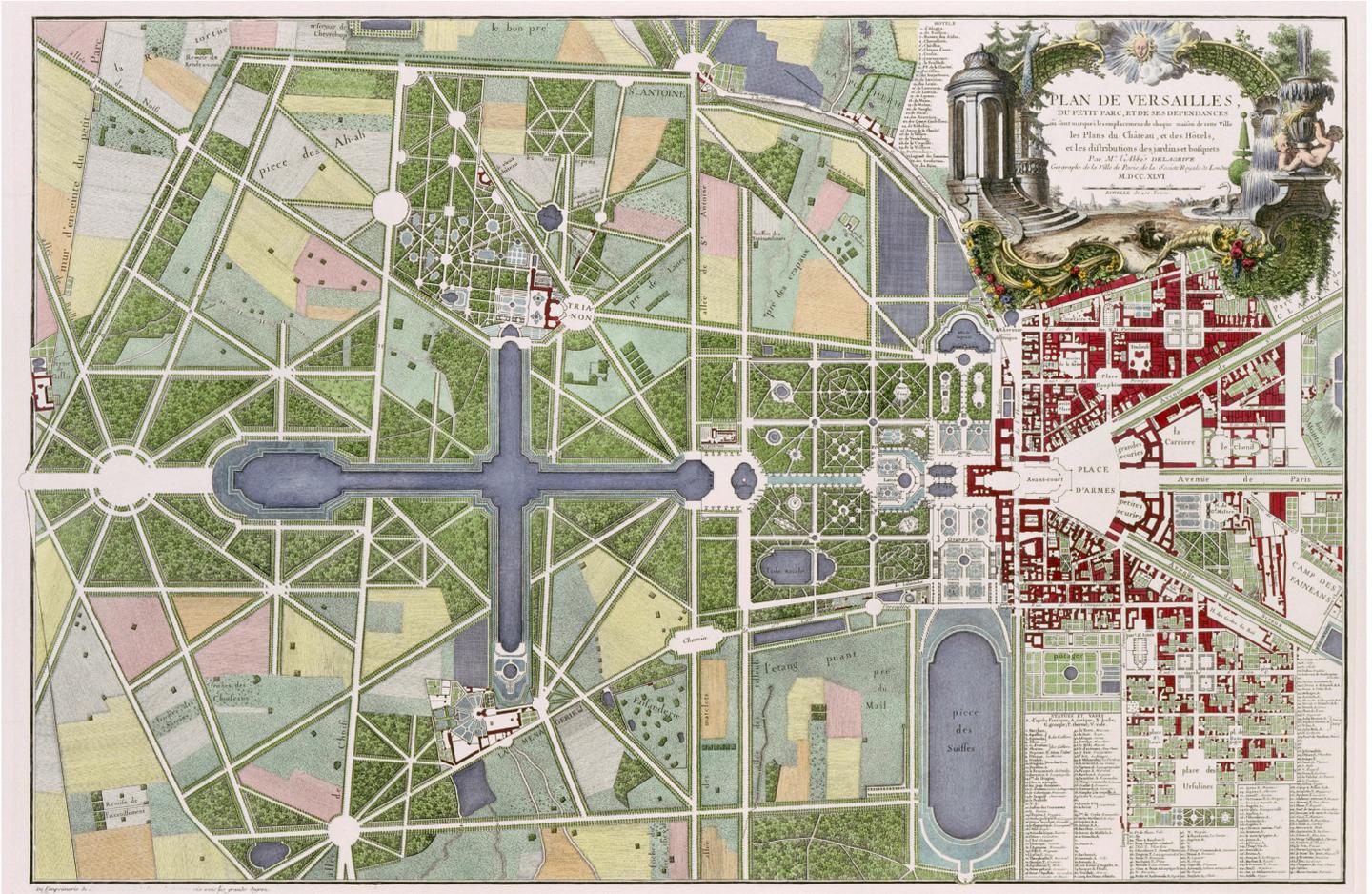


Figure 7: Jean-Almar Piganiol de La Force, *Nouvelle description des chateaux et parcs de Versailles et de Marly : contenant une explication historique de toutes les peintures, tableaux, statues, vases & ornemens qui s'y voient : leurs dimensions : & les noms des peintres, des sculpteurs & des graveurs qui les ont faits*, 1724, drawing. The Metropolitan Museum, New York.

Figure 8: Abraham Ortelius, *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum: Title-page with Four Figures which Embody the Four Known Continents*, 1570, print, 37 x 23 cm. Norman B. Leventhal Map Center, Boston Public Library, Boston.

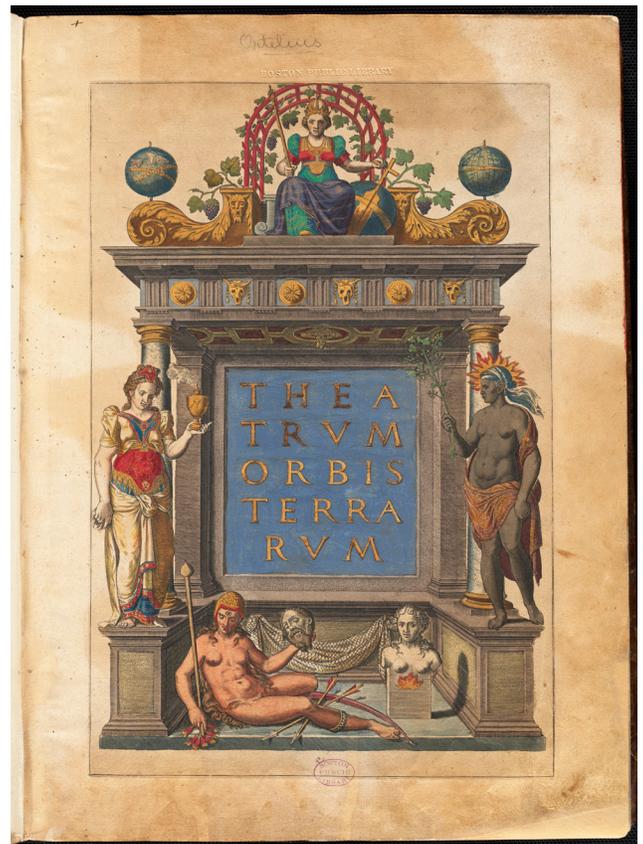




Figure 9: Francesco Bertos, *Allegorical Groups Representing the Four Continents: Europe*, 1710-25, bronze, 63.5 x 45 x 36.7 cm. Walters Art Museum, Baltimore



Figure 10: Bertos, *Allegorical Groups Representing the Four Continents: America*, 1710-25, bronze, 69 x 38 x 44.9 cm. Walters Art Museum, Baltimore



Figure 11: Bertot, *Allegorical Groups Representing the Four Continents: Africa*, 1710-25, bronze, 64.5 x 46 x 32.7 cm, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore



Figure 12: Bertot, *Allegorical Groups Representing the Four Continents: Asia*, 1710-25, bronze, 63.8 x 34.8 x 43 cm, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore

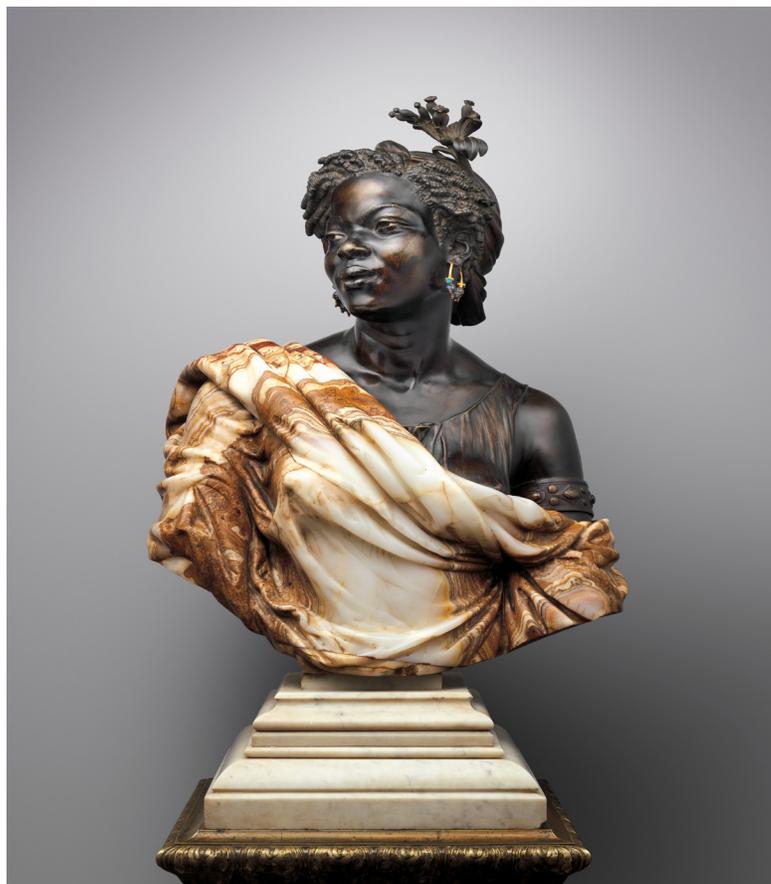


Figure 13: Aimé-Jules Dalou, *Caryatids: The Four Continents*, 1867, patinated plaster. Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

Figure 14: Charles Cordier, *Woman from the French Colonies (Originally called La Capresse des Colonies)*, 1861. Algerian onyx-marble, bronze, and gilt bronze, enamel, amethyst; white marble socle. 105.1 x 46.4 x 46.4 x 29.8 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Figure 15: Carpeaux, *Pourquoi naître esclave ?*, 1868, terra cotta, 58.4 x 55.9 x 45.7 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.